

POEMS.

THE SNAWY KIRKYARD.

A' NATURE lay dead, save the cauld whistlin' blast
That chilled the bleak earth to the core as it passed,
And heaved in high ridges the thick chokin' drift
That cam in wreathed swirls frae the white marled lift,
And winter's wild war, wearied baith heart and ee,
As we warsled richt sair ower the drear muirland lea,
 And our feet skyted back on the road freezing hard,
 As we wended our way to the Snawy Kirkyard.

O! snelly the hail smote the skeleton trees
That shivering shrunk in the grasp o' the breeze,
Nor birdie, nor beast, could the watery ee scan,
A' were cowerin' in corners, save grief-laden man;

Tho' the heart may be broken, the best maun be spared
To mak up a wreath in the Snawy Kirkyard.

The wee Muirland Kirk, whar the pure Word o' God
Mak's warm the cauld heart, and mak's light the lang road,
The slee hill-side yill-house, whaur lasses meet lads,
Whaur herds leave their collies, and lairds tie their yauds,
Kirk-bell and house riggin', the white drift has squared,
But there's ae yawning grave in the Snawy Kirkyard.

Through a' the hale parish, nae Elder was known
That was likit by a' like my grandfather John,
And drear was that day when we bore him awa',
Wi' his gowd stores o' thought, and his haffits o' snaw ;
I was then a wee callant, rose-cheek'd and gowd-hair'd,
When I laid his auld pow in the Snawy Kirkyard.

And aye when I think on thae times lang gane by,
Saft thoughts soothe my soul, and sweet tears dim my eye,
And I see the auld man, as he clapp'd my wee head,
While a sigh heaved his breast, for my faither lang dead ;
He nursed me, he schooled me,—how can I regard
But wi' warm-gushing heart tears, a Snawy Kirkyard ?

In soothing sad sorrow, in calming mad mirth,
His breath, like the south wind, strewed balm ower the earth,

And weary souls laden wi' grief aft were driven
 To seek comfort frae him, wha aye led them to Heaven,
 O! sweet were the seeds sown, and rich was the braird
 That sprung frae that stock in the Snawy Kirkyard.

Now age wi' his hoar-frost has crispit my pow,
 And my locks, ance sae gowden, are silvery now,
 And tho' I hae neither high station nor power,
 I hae health for my portion, and truth for my dower,
 And my hand hath been open, my heart hath been free,
 To dry up the tear-drops frae sorrow's dull ee,
 And mony puir bodies my awmrie hae shared,
 'Twas my counsel frae him in the Snawy Kirkyard.

NAEBODY'S BAIRN.

SHE was Naebody's Bairn, she was Naebody's Bairn,
 She had mickle to thole, she had mickle to learn,
 Afore a kind word or kind look she could earn,
 For naebody cared about Naebody's Bairn.

Tho' faither or mither ne'er owned her ava,
 Tho' reared by the fremmit for fee unca sma',
 She grew in the shade like a young lady-fern ;
 For Nature was bounteous to Naebody's Bairn.

Tho' toited by some, and tho' lightlied by mair,
 She never compleened, tho' her young heart was sair ;
 And warm virgin tears that might melted cauld airn
 Whiles glist in the blue ee o' Naebody's Bairn.

Though nane cheered her childhood, an' nane hailed her birth,
 Heaven sent her an angel to gladden the earth ;

And when the earth doomed her in laigh nook to dern,
 Heaven couldna but tak again "Naebody's Bairn."

She cam smiling sweetly as young mornin' daw,
 Like lown simmer gloamin' she faded awa,
 And lo ! how serenely that lone e'enin' starn
 Shines on the green sward that haps Naebody's Bairn !

A SON TO HIS MOTHER.

MINE ain wee, mensefu', mindfu' minny,
 Sae couthy, kindly, cosh, an' canny,
 Just sit ye still a wee, an' dinna
 Tent your ain callant,
 Until he sketch your picture in a
 Wee hamely ballant.

There sit ye on your creepy stool,
 Weel clad wi' flannen-coat an' cowl;
 While simmering by the chumley jowl
 Sits your tea-patty,
 An' at your feet wi' kindly yowl,
 Whurrs your wee catty.

And when the simmer comes wi' flowers,
 On the door-stap thou sits for hours,
 An' ilka birdie round thee cowers,
 Cock, hen, an' chickens,
 While wi' an open hand thou showers
 Them walth o' pickin's.

An' tho' ye now are frail an' doited,
 Your back sair bowed, your pace sair toyted,
 Langsyne to ilka ploy invited,
 Your queenly air
 Made a' your neighbour dames sair spited
 At tryst or fair.

On Sunday, when the kirk-bell's jow
 Set ilka haly heart a-lowe,
 To the auld kirk ye went to row,
 Toddlin' wi' me,
 Aye welcomed by the Elder's bow
 An' Pastor's ee.

Thou'st been to me my mair than mither,—
 Mither and Faither baith thegither;
 In days o' dearth thou didna swither
 To scrimp thy coggie,
 To schule an' cleed as weel's anither,
 Thy wee wild roguie.

While manhood's vigour nerves my arm,
 While in my breast life's blood rins warm,
 Frae ilka danger, skaith, or harm
 I'll keep thee free,
 Till death shall break the mystic charm
 An' close thine ee!

LAMENT FOR ANCIENT EDINBURGH.

COME listen, cronies, ane an' a',
 While on my dowie reed I blaw;
 And mourn the sad untimely fa'
 O' our auld toun,
 Whilk, spite o' justice, sense, an' law,
 They're dingin' down.

Auld streets and closes, wynds and houses,
 The scenes o' mony genial bouzes,
 Whaur Burns an' Ramsay woo'd the Muses
 In days lang past,
 Wi' sacrilegious dunts an' bruises
 Are fa'ing fast.

Our city wa's, wi' yetts sae stout,
 That keepit midnight reivers out,
 And saved our sires frae mony a bout
 O' southern foe,
 To hain us twa three staps about
 Are now laid low.

The ancient Krames whaur weanies tottit,
 Whaur a' wee wairdless callants trottit,
 Though scantly fed, an' scrimply coatit,
 To spend their a'
 On dirlin' drums or ba's that stottit
 Against the wa'.

Whaur wee lead penny watches glanced,
 Whaur wee pig penny horses pranced,
 Whaur crowds o' bairnies gazed entranced
 A' round in rings,
 While timmer tumblers swung an' danced
 On horse-hair strings.

An' bawbee Dalls the fashions apit,
 Sae rosy cheekit, jimpy shapit,
 An' wee bit lassies gazed an' gapit
 Wi' mouth an' ee,
 Till frae their mithers they had scrapit
 The prized bawbee.

The City Guard sae proud an' dorty,
 Brave remnant o' the twa-and-forty,
 Wad gie their Highland beaks a snortie
 And ban in Earse,
 Then sally forth in warlike sortie
 Right bauld an' fierce.

Whaur tinklers rang their earthen muggies,
 Whaur stands were cramm'd wi' wudden luggies,
 Whaur scarlet cats and sky-blue doggies
 Stood brawly spattit,
 Whaur callants wi' white mice an' puggies
 Like hares lay squattit.

An' there were frail auld men, knee-breekit,
 Wi' mumlin' tongues an' een half steekit,
 Wha daunnerit on thegither cleekit
 To some lown beild,
 And in the sunshine sat an' beekit
 Their healthy eild.

A wean I striddled on their backs,
 A callant joined their forenoon walks,
 An' humour'd a' their auld knick-knacks
 Right leal an' kind,
 While wi' Auld Reekie's choicest cracks
 They stored my mind.

The howffs whaur a' thae arts grew great in,
 Whaur a' thae worthies held their state in,
 Whaur worn-out wights fand snug retreat in,
 Frae wranglin' spouse,
 Hae felt the heavy hand o' fate on
 Their hoary pows.

Nae ferlie though I mak my mane
 For thae black smeeakit wa's now gane,
 Linkit an' twined round every stane,

Is some auld notion,
 That drives my bluid through ilka vein,
 Wi' wild emotion.

THE AULD ELBOW-CHAIR.

O SEE ye yon cot on the edge o' the muir,
 Whaur a' things look couthie, tho' a' things look puir,
 Whaur barefitted lassies amang the green braes,
 In the wee gushing burn ringe their siller-white claes ;
 Whaur bluff callants gump out the red freckled trout,
 And snug on yon knowe lies the lazy herd lout,
 While an auld tidie wifie to pree the fresh air,
 Sits at the cot-door in an auld Elbow-Chair.

Twa trees fauld their arms ower the auld gable tap,
 Like friends gieing ither a bien cozy hap ;
 A wee whitened bole through the green leaves is seen,
 Whaur mony saft story's been whisper'd at e'en ;
 Auld Crummie's snug byre, and wee Grumphie's bit stye,
 Though biggit ahint, yet ye needna rin bye,
 They're tidy and sonsy, sae keek ye in there,
 While I gaze on her in the auld Elbow-Chair.

O there did I nestle, and there did I climb,
 Wi' short dookit cleedin' and round dumpy limb,
 An' while our four arms were around ither's necks,
 And our four een were glowrin' through ae pair o' specks,
 And our four lips were lowin' wi' kisses o' love,
 And our twa hearts were lit wi' a lowe frae above ;
 Oh then was there kissing and blessing to spare,
 A warm nest o' love was that auld Elbow-Chair.

Syne when I gat breekums and gaed to the school,
 How proud was my grannie that I proved nae fool,
 But brought hame a prize-book and ettled to teach,
 Syne clam to the chair-back and minted to preach ;
 While neebour bairns gather'd around our bien hearth,
 Her ee glistened bright as she joined in their mirth ;
 But brighter at e'en when she wished in her prayer,
 I might rise to a poopit frae that Elbow-Chair.

Wi' a warm bounding breast could I kneel at her feet,
 And, big burly loun, like a bairn could I greet ;
 But sic sudden transports her heart-strings might crack,
 Gin trowing her grandson in life had come back,
 The pride o' her heart, and the light o' her ee—
 What evil ee wiled me awa to the sea,
 To leave the kind heart to the world's icy care,
 That nursed my young days in that auld Elbow-Chair.

Oh! hard has my fate been, and chequer'd my lot,
 But these stirring heart-scenes were never forgot,
 In roar of the whirlwind, in lull of the breeze,
 'Mid snow-crested billows and dark-bosom'd seas ;
 When sinking desponding 'mid tempest and storm,
 Still through the deep gloom shone in brightness that form,
 And beckon'd me hameward ; then is nae it fair
 I should tend her auld days in her auld Elbow-Chair ?

THE OLD CHURCH ROAD.

TREAD yon straggling pathway, seen
 Peeping through the hedgerows green,
 By the arching willows shaded,
 By the briar and bramble braided,
 Where the chequering sunbeams throw
 Fretted network down below,
 Glistening 'mid the velvet sod,
 Woven o'er the Old Church Road.

Hanging footpaths, creeping flowers,
 Laugh in sun and weep in showers,
 Yellow whins and bells of blue
 Mingle with the turf's green hue ;
 While the thistle in his pride
 Woos the wild rose by his side :
 Love and Peace have blest abode
 In the quiet Old Church Road.

Cross yon ancient Roman bridge,
 Mark its solitary ridge ;

'Mid its rent and tottering walls
 Trees spring, while the structure falls :
 So Rome lies in ruins grey,
 While old Scotia blooms like May ;
 Here her heroes dauntless strode,
 Freedom kept the Old Church Road.

Leave the streamlet's silver tide ;
 Now we'll climb the green hill-side,
 Winding up our wooded way,
 Peeping through our covert gay,
 Glints of blue in sky and burn
 Woo our eye at every turn ;
 Fancy's fairy feet ne'er trode
 Pathway like the Old Church Road.

Now we near the Old Churchyard,
 Where amid the long rank sward
 Graves are sinking, stones are crumbling,
 Monuments and aisles are tumbling ;
 Waving trees with moaning sound
 Sigh like weeping mourners round,
 Shading those who wont to plod
 Weekly by the Old Church Road.

Now the Gothic pile appears,
 Green with moss, and gray with years ;

Knight and baron, bold and free,
 Here have humbly bent the knee ;
 Priest and Monk have chanted praise,
 Knox hath sung his fervid lays :
 Warm hearts, panting after God,
 Hallow still the Old Church Road.

See yon Elder hoary grown,
 Tend the Widow as his own,
 And the blooming youthful pair
 Knit more close in mutual prayer ;
 What though cold-eyed age may see
 Childhood in unbridled glee ;
 Wisdom his grey head may nod,
 Children love the Old Church Road.

Thus while Love lies slumbering mild
 In this sweet sequester'd wild,
 Let us rest on this old stile,
 Let us stay our thoughts a while,
 Let us mingle heart and eye
 With the holy lullaby,
 Let us chant our peaceful Ode
 'Mid the quiet Old Church Road.

Hail, sweet goddess, gentle Peace !
 May War's deadly reign soon cease ;

Crown'd in glory, soon may'st thou
 Twine the olive round his brow :
 Soon may foolish man be free
 From all bonds, save Love and Thee ;
 Truth, thy harbinger, abroad,
 Make the earth one sweet Church Road.

CASTLES IN THE AIR.

THE bonnie, bonnie bairn, sits pokin' in the ase,
 Glowerin' in the fire wi' his wee round face ;
 Laughin' at the fuffin' lowe—what sees he there ?
 Ha ! the young dreamer 's biggin' castles in the air !

His wee chubby face, an' his touzy curly pow,
 Are laughin' an' noddin' to the dancin' lowe,
 He'll brown his rosy cheeks, and singe his sunny hair,
 Glowrin' at the imps wi' their castles in the air.

He sees muckle castles towerin' to the moon,
 He sees little sodgers pu'in' them a' down ;
 Warlds whomling up an' down, bleezin' wi' a flare,
 Losh ! how he loups, as they glimmer in the air.

For a' sae sage he looks, what can the laddie ken ?
 He's thinkin' upon naething, like mony mighty men,
 A wee thing mak's us think, a sma' thing mak's us stare,—
 There are mair folk than him biggin' castles in the air

Sic a night in winter may weel mak him cauld ;
His chin upon his buffy hand will soon mak him auld ;
His brow is brent sae braid, oh pray that Daddy Care
Wad let the wean alane wi' his castles in the air.

He'll glower at the fire, an' he'll keek at the light ;
But mony sparkling stars are swallow'd up by Night ;
Aulder een than his are glamour'd by a glare,
Hearts are broken—heads are turned—wi' castles in the air.

THE DAGGY DAY.

THE pale sun glints ower the heigh black houses
 Wi' a hazy brow, an' a drumlie ee ;
 The cauld clud o' sleet dissolves an' oozes
 Through a' the abodes o' chill penury :
 The bare-fitted bairnies, hardy an' wee,
 Tot ower the causey, sae slippy an' daggy,
 Wi' grannie's wee pickle sugar an' tea,
 Or the sour-milk can, an' sma' meal baggy—
 Alack! but the stock is e'en scrimpit an' scraggy.

The sun has gane down, he downa appear,
 An' even the daylight snoozing dozes ;
 Puir shiverin' wretches, meagre an' drear,
 Stand at the taps o' the laigh-brow'd closes ;
 An' tears, a' dyed wi' yestreen's fause roses,
 Their sallow faces trickle adown :
 While her wiles an' wants, lean Vice discloses,
 In the tatter'd shreds o' each faded gown,
 And grim an' ghastly death lurks in each haggard frown.

Frae the lang dark stairs o' each close an' wynd
 The beggars come hirplin' an' bauchlin' out ;
 They fain to be cripple, they fain to be blind,
 When ower the doorstane they set their snout ;
 While some, wha for weeks hae been housed wi' mout,
 Get happit in big coat or raughan grey,
 An a' set out on their weel huntit rout,
 Kennin' few hearts can send them away
 Unserved frae their doors on siccan an eerie day.

The day daggles on—an' but few are seen,
 Save them wha maun seek a hame in the street ;
 The jaded coal horses, scranky an' lean,
 Are a' droukit through wi' the cauld raw sleet,
 Nae wreathing o' smoke tokens inward heat,
 But ilka rib sticks through their lank thin hides ;
 Their red-faced drivers breathe steam through the weet,
 That bodes a fire in their drouthy insides,
 Wad swallow ocean up, unslaked wi' a' its tides.

In ilka heigh attic, an' laigh dark door,
 In ilka slee corner an' shelter'd nook,
 Are drowsy faces a' peeping out ower
 Wi' surly brow an' wi' girnigo look :
 The window gaes up, the head gies a jouk,
 Syne doun fa's the sash wi' rickety din ;
 While some gape an' gaunt, an' some spell a book,

An' some frae their thoughts strive pleasure to win ;
 But there's little comes out, whaur there's little gaes in.

The day dwines awa', and the night comes on,
 The smeekit sleet fa'in' faster and faster,
 Till the wind begins wi' low hollow moan,
 Swelling out to a snoring sou-waster ;
 Scotch skies are dour, but the wind their master,
 Will clear the stars frae the cluds through the night,
 An' this daggy day will serve to foster
 Love for the mornin', all radiant and bright,
 That will steek out the darkness, an' let in the light.

An' the sun shall arise ower the gude auld town,
 Wi' a braid brent brow, an' a sparklin' ee ;
 An' Nature shall wauk frae her winter swoon,
 And the young buds shall prick thro' the steeve auld tree,
 An' the wee birds shall chirp fu' merrily,
 An' the weans shall daff in their pranksome play ;
 An' the town's sweet face smilin' cheerily,
 When kiss'd by the sun, like a bridegroom gay,
 Shall blush like blooming bride, upon her bridal day.

Stand proud on thy summit, bold rock-built town,
 Though whiles ower thy beauties dark clouds may lower,
 Foul fa' the Scot wha wad whomle thee down,
 Forgetting thine ancient glory an' power ;

The sun blinks bonnily after a shower,
The young wheat peeps green frae among the white snaw
And thou, Edina, sweet Freedom's strong tower,
Art dearer to me ilka time I'm awa',—
Exiled were I frae thee, my heart wad burst in twa.

THE RAINY HARVEST DAY.

GREY-BEARDED Day nods drowsily,
 Cauld hazy cluds hang ower the plain,
 And Nature looks wi' pensive ee
 On rich ripe fields o' gowden grain ;
 A' droukit heavy louting low,
 Like mourners shedding tears o' woe.

The craws in conclave crowd the dyke,
 The sparrows cluster round the barn,
 Aneath the cart-shed cowers the tyke,
 Ahint the stooks the poultry dern ;
 Nor leaf, nor stem, nor bough is stirr'd,
 Nor sound is heard o' beast or bird.

Thick vapours gather ower the glens,
 The shaggy hills are veil'd in grey,
 The sheep are gather'd in their pens,
 Nae shepherd climbs thae heights to-day ;
 And browsing 'neath the drowsy trees,
 Are cattle clover'd to the knees.

Doun fa's the thick an' grizly weet,
 Plout, ploutin', on our auld trough-stane,
 The bairnies wi' their raw red feet,
 Dance through the drumlie dubs o' rain ;
 While loaded leaf, an' steekit flower,
 Keep joukin' frae the peltin' shower.

Doun pours the rain, doun fa's the grain,
 Its gowden tresses press the earth,
 Oh ! dool and wae, sic harvest day
 Gies cause to fear for coming dearth ;
 And mak's us doubt His high behest,
 As if He kenn'd nae what was best.

The shearers listless lounge about
 In shed an' stable, barn an' byre,
 The anxious farmer 'gins to doubt
 Gin e'er the weather will be dryer,
 And shakin' slow his touzy head,
 Growls, " This is sair to thole indeed."

But noo he taps the weather-glass,
 His brow is flush'd—he sees it rise ;
 Th' excited reapers round him press
 Wi' ruddy cheeks an' sparklin' eyes ;
 And in each strong right hand is seen
 A sickle gleaming sharp and keen.

And, lo, the sun streams brightly down,
The hazy cluds dissolve in air,
While Nature wears a shining crown
Of glory on her forehead fair;
Hymning anew o'er hill and dale,
"Seed-time and harvest ne'er shall fail."