

Classic Poetry Series

James Hebblethwaite
- poems -

Publication Date:

2012

Publisher:

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James Hebblethwaite(22 September 1857 – 13 September 1921)

James Hebblethwaite was an English-born Australian poet, teacher and clergyman.

Hebblethwaite was born in Preston, Lancashire, England, the son of William Hebblethwaite, a corn miller, and his wife Margaret, née Cundall. His family was originally prosperous but later suffered heavy financial losses, and Hebblethwaite practically educated himself by gaining scholarships. Hebblethwaite was at St John's College, Battersea, London in 1877-8, and entering on a teaching life became headmaster of a board school, and lecturer in English at the Harris Institute, Preston.

In 1892 Hebblethwaite emigrated to Tasmania for health reasons, and obtained a position on the staff of the Friends' School, Hobart. In 1896 a little volume, *Verses*, was published at Hobart. About this time he entered the Congregational ministry, and in 1899 was principal of Queen's College, Latrobe, Tasmania. In 1900 *A Rose of Regret* was published. He was ordained as a deacon in the Church of England in 1903 and in 1904 became a priest. He was vicar of George Town, Tasmania, from 1905 to 1908, Swansea, Tasmania, from 1908 to 1909, and D'Entrecasteaux Channel from 1909 to 1916, when he retired. Another volume, *Meadow and Bush*, had appeared in 1911, and a collected edition of his poems in 1920. *New Poems* was published in 1921 and he died in that year. In addition to his poetry he wrote a novel, *Castle Hill*, published in England in 1895. He was twice married and left a widow and one son.

Hebblethwaite was a man of charming personality. Apparently immersed in a world of dreams, he never allowed himself to neglect his work as a parish clergyman. He was interested in his young men and their sports, and his own simple and sincere piety earned him much respect and affection. As a writer of lyrical poems he has a secure place among the Australian poets of his time.

Merrymind

MERRYMIND, Merrymind, whither art thou roaming?

Merrymind, Merrymind, nay, art thou sleeping yet?

Oh, to us, sweet minstrel dear, wilt thou not be homing?

Or we shall forget.

Vale of toil so waste and drear, hear him now advancing,

Playing on the golden strings, the midnight maiden's boon;

Breaks the sunshine on the hills, the princess falls to dancing

In a bridal noon!

Oh, the joyfulness and kissing of that fiddle's flowings,

Giving rest and happiness, and laughter delicate!

Fling out from this iron world to his merry bowings,

Oh, be not too late!

Lancelot, Lancelot, ride with song and gleaming

Robin, wind in greenwood shaw thy dreaming silvery horn,

Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down thy hair a-beaming,

Yellow as the corn!

Pride, begone, thou hateful curse of narrowed blood and breeding,

Cruel growth of heaviness and dull, cold ignorance;

Come, thou golden Charity, lend to us thy leading

In a sunny dance!

James Hebblethwaite

Perdita

The sea coast of Bohemia
Is pleasant to the view
When singing larks spring from the grass
To fade into the blue,
And all the hawthorn hedges break
In wreaths of purest snow,
And yellow daffodils are out,
And roses half in blow.

The sea-coast of Bohemia
Is sad as sad can be,
The prince has ta'en our flower of maids
Across the violet sea;
Our Perdita has gone with him,
No more we dance the round
Upon the green in joyous play,
Or wake the tabor's sound.

The sea-coast of Bohemia
Has many wonders seen,
The shepherd lass wed with a king,
The shepherd with a queen;
But such a wonder as my love
Was never seen before,
It is my joy and sorrow now
To love her evermore.

The sea-coast of Bohemia
Is haunted by a light
Of memory fair of lady's eyes,
And fame of gallant knight;
The princes seek its charmèd strand,
But ah, it was our knell
When o'er the sea our Perdita
Went with young Florizel.

The sea-coast of Bohemia
Is not my resting-place,
For with her waned from out the day

A beauty and a grace:
O had I kissed her on the lips
I would no longer weep,
But live by that until the day
I fall to shade and sleep.

James Hebblethwaite

The Symbol

Thus pass the glories of the world!
He lies beneath the pall's white folds:
His sword is sheathed, his pennon furled,
Him silence holds.

The pilgrim staff, the cockle shell,
The crown, the sceptre of his pride,
The simple flower from forest dell,
Heap at his side.

And add thereto the wild-heart lute
The voice of love and twilight song;
Those passioned strings though he is mute
Remember long.

And move not thence his evening book,
The sifted grains of calm and storm;
And bow before that dust-strewn nook
And silent form.

To-morrow hath no hope for him,
No clasp of friend, no grip of foe:
Remember, love, with eyes tear-dim,
We too must go.

James Hebblethwaite

Wanderers

AS I rode in the early dawn,
While stars were fading white,
I saw upon a grassy slope
A camp-fire burning bright;
With tent behind and blaze before,
Three loggers in a row
Sang all together joyously—
Pull up the stakes and go!
As I rode on by Eagle Hawk,
The wide blue deep of air,
The wind through the glittering leaves,
The flowers so sweet and fair,
The thunder of the rude salt waves,
The creek's soft overflow,
All joined in chorus to the words—
Pull up the stakes and go!

Now by the tent on forest skirt,
By odour of the earth,
By sight and scent of morning smoke,
By evening camp-fire's mirth,
By deep-sea call and foaming green,
By new stars' gleam and glow,
By summer trails in antique lands—
Pull up the stakes and go!

The world is wide, and we are young,
And sounding marches beat,
And passion pipes her sweetest call
In lane and field and street;
So rouse the chorus, brothers all,
We'll something have to show
When Death comes round and strikes our tent—
Pull up the stakes and go!

