

Classic Poetry Series

**John Boyle O'Reilly**  
**- poems -**

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# John Boyle O'Reilly(28 June 1844 - 10 August 1890)

John Boyle O'Reilly was an Irish-born poet, journalist and fiction writer. As a youth in Ireland, he was a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, or Fenians, for which he was transported to Western Australia. After escaping to the United States, he became a prominent spokesperson for the Irish community and culture, through his editorship of the Boston newspaper *The Pilot*, his prolific writing, and his lecture tours.

## **Early Life**

O'Reilly was born at Dowth Castle, County Meath, near Drogheda in Ireland at the onset of the Great Irish Famine. Ireland was at that time a part of the United Kingdom, and many Irish people bitterly resented British rule. There was a strong nationalist movement. O'Reilly's relatively wealthy family was fiercely patriotic; his mother was closely related to John Allen, who had played an important role in Robert Emmet's rising in 1803.

The son of a schoolmaster, O'Reilly received a good early education. When he was about thirteen, his older brother contracted tuberculosis(TB), and O'Reilly took his place as apprentice at a local newspaper. At the age of fifteen, he moved to Preston, Lancashire to live with his aunt and uncle, and took up work on a local newspaper. In June 1861, O'Reilly enrolled in the 11th Lancashire Rifle Volunteers, with which he received some military training. He must have enjoyed military life, because on returning to Ireland in 1863, he enlisted with the 10th Hussars in Dublin.

Some time in 1865, O'Reilly joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood, then commonly known as the "Fenians", a secret society of rebels dedicated to an armed uprising against British rule. He turned his energies to recruiting more Fenians within his regiment, bringing in up to 80 new members. By late 1865, the Fenians had become such a large and popular movement that they could no longer evade detection by the British authorities. The government made a number of raids, seized records, and gathered evidence from informers. Many Fenians were arrested, including O'Reilly (see Fenian Rising).

## **Transportation**

For his part in the Fenian conspiracy, O'Reilly was sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude. It appears he was originally sentenced to death but his sentence was commuted to 20 years. He served nearly two years in English prisons before

being put aboard the convict ship Hougoumont for transportation to the British colony of Western Australia. The Hougoumont's passage was the last convict ship transport to Western Australia. After arriving in Fremantle on 9 January 1868, O'Reilly was admitted to the Convict Establishment (now Fremantle Prison), but after a month he was transferred to Bunbury. He was assigned to a party of convicts tasked with building the Bunbury–Vasse road.

At Bunbury, O'Reilly quickly developed a good relationship with his warder Henry Woodman, and was appointed probationary convict constable. As assistant to the warder, he did record and account keeping, ordering of stores, and other minor administrative duties. He was frequently used as a messenger, which required him to travel regularly between the work camp and the district convict prison in Bunbury. The warder apparently used O'Reilly to maintain contact with his family, for the prisoner became a regular visitor to the Woodman family home, and at some point began a romantic liaison with Woodman's daughter Jessie. This ended badly, at least for O'Reilly; he wrote poetry expressing his agony of mind, and hints at romantic causes. On 27 December 1868, O'Reilly attempted suicide by cutting the veins of his left arm. After falling into a faint from loss of blood, he was discovered by another convict, and his life was saved.

### **<b>Escape</b>**

While in Bunbury, O'Reilly formed a strong friendship with the local Catholic priest, Father Patrick McCabe. Late in 1869, McCabe offered to arrange for O'Reilly to escape the colony. By February, McCabe's plan was ready for execution. On 18 February 1869, O'Reilly absconded from his work party, and met up with a party of Irish settlers from the local town of Dardanup. Together they rode to the Collie River where a rowboat was waiting for them. They rowed out of the Leschenault Inlet into the Indian Ocean, and north about twelve miles up the coast. O'Reilly hid in the dunes, awaiting the departure from Bunbury of the American whaling ship *Vigilant*, which Father McCabe had arranged would take him on board. The ship was sighted the next day, and the party rowed out to it, but the captain reneged on the agreement, and the *Vigilant* sailed off without acknowledging the people in the rowboat. O'Reilly had to return to the shore and hide again while his friends tried to make arrangements with another ship. After two weeks, they succeeded in making a deal with the captain of the American whaler *Gazelle*. O'Reilly and his friends met the *Gazelle* three miles out to sea on 2 March, and he was taken on board. With him was a ticket of leave convict named James Bowman, who had heard of the intended escape. He had blackmailed the conspirators into allowing him to join O'Reilly.

McCabe had arranged for the *Gazelle* to take O'Reilly only as far as Java, but

adverse weather prevented the ship's finding safe passage through the Sunda Strait. The captain decided to sail for Roderiquez, Mauritius, at that time a British colony. As soon as the Gazelle arrived at Roderiquez, it was boarded by a magistrate and a contingent of police, who claimed to have information that the Gazelle carried an escaped convict from Western Australia, and demanded that he be given up. The crew gave up Bowman, but denied having O'Reilly on board. The Gazelle's next port of call was to be Saint Helena, another British colony. The captain recommended that O'Reilly transfer to another ship before then. On 29 July, the Gazelle met the American cargo vessel Sapphire on the high seas, and O'Reilly changed ships. The Sapphire arrived at Liverpool on 13 October, and O'Reilly transferred to another American ship, the Bombay. The Bombay docked in Philadelphia on 23 November 1869, where O'Reilly was enthusiastically welcomed by Irish compatriots.

### <b>Recognition</b>

O'Reilly settled in Charlestown, a neighborhood in Boston, which had a large Irish community, and soon found work on the newspaper the Pilot, started by a Jesuit Catholic priest. His first major assignment was coverage of the Fenian convention in New York in 1870, and the subsequent third Fenian invasion of Canada. The invasion was a disaster, and his experience of covering it prompted O'Reilly to reverse his opinion on military Fenianism. In rejecting militancy, he turned to achieving Ireland's independence by raising the status and self-esteem of its people.

O'Reilly expressed his views through his prolific writing, his lecture tours, and his work on the Pilot. He was well received by Boston's large Irish-born population, and the Pilot's readership grew until it was one of the most-read newspapers in the country. O'Reilly soon became its editor, and eventually part-owner.

### <b>Marriage and Family</b>

In 1872 O'Reilly married Mary Murphy, a journalist who wrote for the Young Crusader under the name of Agnes Smiley. They had four daughters: Mollie, Eliza, Agnes and Blaid. Agnes O'Reilly went on to marry the philosopher William Ernest Hocking soon after he earned his PhD from Harvard, where he would later teach. A decade later when they returned to Cambridge, Mary started an open-air school that developed into Shady Hill School. It continues today near Harvard Square. Their three children were Richard, Joan, and Hester.

### <b>Poetry</b>

O'Reilly published his first book of poems, *Songs from the Southern Seas*, in 1873. Over the next fifteen years, he published three collections of poetry, a novel, and a treatise on health and exercise. His poetry was extremely popular, and he was often commissioned to write poems for important commemorative occasions. By the late twentieth century, most of his earlier work was dismissed as popular verse, but some of his later, more introspective poetry, such as his best known poem, "The Cry of the Dreamer", is still highly regarded.

In 1875, John Devoy sought O'Reilly's advice on how the Clan na Gael might rescue the six military Fenians serving time in Western Australia. The first plan was to storm Fremantle Prison and rescue the Fenians by force of arms; O'Reilly rejected that. He suggested that a rescue party pick up the escapees according to a prearranged plan. He also recommended their buying a whaling ship for the purpose, as it could have an appearance of legitimate business in Fremantle. O'Reilly's plan was adopted, and ultimately led to the Catalpa rescue.

In his later years, O'Reilly became prone to illness, and suffered from bouts of insomnia. Late in the evening of 9 August 1890, while suffering from insomnia, he took some of his wife's sleeping medicine, which contained chloral hydrate. In the early hours of the morning, he was found dead. There remains doubt as to the cause of death. Public announcements attributed O'Reilly's death to heart failure, but the official death register claims "accidental poisoning". If O'Reilly died by an overdose of chloral hydrate, then it is possible that he took his life, or misused his wife's medicine.

### **<b>Legacy and Honors</b>**

1896, a multi-figure bronze sculpture in O'Reilly's honor was created by Chester Daniel French and erected on the Fenway in Boston.

Named for him, the John Boyle O' Reilly Club in Springfield, Massachusetts celebrated their 125th anniversary in 2005.

In the early 1900s, Boyle O'Reilly Terrace, an estate built on the north side of Drogheda, was named after him.

In 2002 an interpretative display was opened for John Boyle O'Reilly, in Western Australia on the Leschenault Peninsula Conservation Park, from where he escaped to America

In April 2011 The John Boyle O'Reilly Association was established in Netterville his ancestral home, near Drogheda, Ireland.

## <b>In Popular Culture</b>

O'Reilly is said to have been US President John F. Kennedy's favorite poet.

The song "Van Diemen's Land" on U2's Rattle and Hum (1988) album refers to and is dedicated to O'Reilly.

The county Clare folk singer Sean Tyrrell has set a number of O'Reilly's poems to music. A trilogy was included on his 1994 album, Cry of a Dreamer.

The musician and local historian Brendan Woods wrote The Catalpa, a play about the 1876 escape from Fremantle Prison. It premiered on 15 November 2006 to a sell-out audience at Fremantle Town Hall and ran until 25 November. The play

was based on the diaries of Denis Cashman, with the poetry of John Boyle O'Reilly set to music and dance, supported by a five-part musical ensemble.

Woods released a CD entitled: John Boyle O'Reilly & The Fenian Escape from Fremantle Gaol (2006).

## “from, That Fair Land And Drear Land In The South”

From, that fair land and drear land in the South,  
Of which through years I do not cease to think,  
I brought a tale, learned not by word of mouth,  
But formed by finding here one golden link  
And there another; and with hands unskilled  
For such fine work, but patient of all pain  
For love of it, I sought therefrom to build  
What might have been at first the goodly chain.

It is not golden now: my craft knows more  
Of working baser metal than of fine;  
But to those fate-wrought rings of precious ore  
I add these rugged iron links of mine.

John Boyle O'Reilly

## 406 [unfinished]

I do not know the meaning of the sign,  
But bend before its power, as a reed bends  
When the black tornado fills the valley to the lips.  
Three times in twenty years its shape has come  
On lines of fire on the black veil of mystery;  
At first, tho' strange, it seemed familiar,  
And lingered on the mind as if at rest;  
The second time if flashed a thrill came, too,  
For supernature spoke, or tried to speak;  
The third time, like a blow upon the eyes,  
It stood before me, as a page might say:  
'Read, read,—and do not call for other warning'.

John Boyle O'Reilly



# A Builder's Lesson

'HOW shall I a habit break?'  
As you did that habit make.  
As you gathered, you must lose;  
As you yielded, now refuse.  
Thread by thread the strands we twist  
Till they bind us neck and wrist;  
Thread by thread the patient hand  
Must untwine ere free we stand.  
As we builded, stone by stone,  
We must toil unhelped, alone,  
Till the wall is overthrown.

But remember, as we try,  
Lighter every test goes by;  
Wading in, the stream grows deep  
Toward the center's downward sweep;  
Backward turn, each step ashore  
Shallower is than that before.

Ah, the precious years we waste  
Leveling what we raised in haste;  
Doing what must be undone  
Ere content or love be won!  
First across the gulf we cast  
Kite-borne threads, till lines are passed,  
And habit builds the bridge at last!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# A Dead Man

Trapper died—our hero—and we grieved;  
In every heart in camp the sorrow stirred.  
'His soul was red!' the Indian cried, bereaved;  
'A white man, he!' the grim old Yankee's word.

So, brief and strong, each mourner gave his best—  
How kind he was, how brave, how keen to track;  
And as we laid him by the pines to rest,  
A negro spoke, with tears: 'His heart was black!'

"Island of Destiny! Innisfail! for thy faith is the payment near!  
The mine of the future is opened, and the golden veins appear.  
Thy hands are white and thy page unstained. Reach out for thy glorious years,  
And take them from God as his recompense for thy fortitude and tears.'

John Boyle O'Reilly

# A Dissapointment

HER hair was a waving bronze, and her eyes  
Deep wells that might cover a brooding soul;  
And who, till he weighed it, could ever surmise  
That her heart was a cinder instead of a coal!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# A Kiss

LOVE is a plant with double root,  
And of strange, elastic power:  
Men's minds are divided in naming the fruit,  
But a kiss is only the flower.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# A Legend Of The Blesses Virgin

THE day of Joseph's marriage unto Mary,  
In thoughtful mood he said unto his wife,  
Behold, I go into a far-off country  
To labor for thee, and to make thy life  
And home all sweet and peaceful.' And the Virgin  
Unquestioning beheld her spouse depart:  
Then lived she many days of musing gladness,  
Not knowing that God's hand was round her heart.

And dreaming thus one day within her chamber,  
She wept with speechless bliss, when lo! the face  
Of white-winged angel Gabriel rose before her,  
And bowing spoke, ' Hail! Mary, full of grace,  
The Lord is with thee, and among the nations  
Forever blessed is thy chosen name.'  
The angel vanished, and the Lord's high Presence  
With untold glory to the Virgin came.

A season passed of joy unknown to mortals,  
When Joseph came with what his toil had won,  
And broke the brooding ecstasy of Mary,  
Whose soul was ever with her promised Son.  
But nature's jealous fears encircled Joseph,  
And round his heart in darkening doubts held sway.  
He looked upon his spouse cold-eyed, and pondered  
How he could put her from his sight away.

And once, when moody thus within his garden,  
The gentle girl besought for some ripe fruit  
That hung beyond her reach, the old man answered,  
With face averted, harshly to her suit:  
'I will not serve thee, woman! Thou hast wronged me;  
I heed no more thy words and actions mild;  
If fruit thou wantest, thou canst henceforth ask it  
From him, the father of thy unborn child!'

But ere the words had root within her hearing,  
The Virgin's face was glorified anew;  
And Joseph, turning, sank within her presence,

And knew indeed his wondrous dreams were true.  
For there before the sandaled feet of Mary  
The kingly tree had bowed its top, and she  
Had pulled and eaten from its prostrate branches,  
As if unconscious of the mystery.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# A Lost Friend

MY friend he was; my friend from all the rest;  
With childlike faith he oped to me his breast;  
No door was locked on altar, grave or grief;  
No weakness veiled, concealed no disbelief;  
The hope, the sorrow and the wrong were bare,  
And ah, the shadow only showed the fair!

I gave him love for love; but, deep within,  
I magnified each frailty into sin:  
Each hill-topped foible in the sunset glowed,  
Obscuring vales where rivered virtttes flowed.  
Reproof became reproach, till common grew  
The captious word at every fault I knew.  
He smiled upon the censorship, and bore  
With patient love the touch that wounded sore;  
Until at length, so had my blindness grown,  
He knew I judged him by his faults alone.

Alone, of all men, I who knew him best,  
Refused the gold, to take the dross for test!  
Cold strangers honored for the worth they saw;  
His friend forgot the diamond in the flaw.

At last it came—the day he stood apart  
When from my eyes he proudly veiled his heart;  
When carping judgment and uncertain word  
A stern resentment in his bosom stirred;  
When in his face I read what I had been,  
And with his vision saw what he had seen.

Too late! too late! Oh, could he then have known,  
When his love died, that mine had perfect grown;  
That when the veil was drawn, abased, chastised,  
The censor stood, the lost one truly prized.

Too late we learn—a man must hold his friend  
Unjudged, accepted, trusted to the end.

John Boyle O'Reilly



# A Man

A MAN is not the slave of circumstance,  
Or need not be, but builder and dictator;  
He makes his own events, not time nor chance;  
Their logic his: not creature, but creator.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# A Message Of Peace

THERE once was a pirate, greedy and bold,  
Who ravaged for gain, and saved the spoils;  
Till his coffers were bursting with bloodstained gold,  
And millions of captives bore his toils.

Then fear took hold of him, and he cried:  
'I have gathered enough; now, war should cease!'  
And he sent out messengers far and wide  
(To the strong ones only) to ask for peace.

'We are Christian brethren!' thus he spake;  
'Let us seal a contract—never to fight!  
Except against rebels who dare to break  
The bonds we have made by the victor's right.'

And the strong ones listen; and some applaud  
The kindly offer and righteous word;  
With never a dream of deceit or fraud,  
They would spike the cannon and break the sword.

But others, their elders, listen, and smile  
At the sudden convert's unctuous style.  
They watch for the peacemaker's change of way;  
But his war-forges roar by night and by day.  
Even now, while his godly messengers speak,  
His guns are aflame on his enemies weak.  
He has stolen the blade from the hand of his foe,  
And he strikes the unarmed a merciless blow.

To the ends of the earth his oppression runs;  
The rebels are blown from the mouths of his guns;  
His war-tax devours his subject's food;  
He taxes their evil and taxes their good;  
He taxes their salt till he rots their blood.  
He leaps on the friendless as on a prey,  
And slinks, tail-down, from the strong one's way.  
The pharisee's can't goes up for peace;  
But the cries of his victims never cease;  
The stifled voices of brave men rise

From a thousand cells; while his rascal spies  
Are spending their blood-money fast and free.

And this is the Christian to oversee  
A world of evil! a saint to preach!  
A holy well-doer come to teach!  
A prophet to tell us war should cease!  
A pious example of Christian peace!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# A Nation's Test

I.

A NATION'S greatness lies in men, not acres;  
One master-mind is worth a million hands.  
No royal robes have marked the planet-shakers,  
But Samson-strength to burst the ages' bands.  
The might of empire gives no crown supernal—  
Athens is here—but where is Macedon?  
A dozen lives make Greece and Rome eternal,  
And England's fame might safely rest on one.

Here test and text are drawn from Nature's preaching:  
Afric and Asia—half the rounded earth—  
In teeming lives the solemn truth are teaching,  
That insect-millions may have human birth.  
Sun-kissed and fruitful, every clod is breeding  
A petty life, too small to reach the eye:  
So must it be, with no man thinking, leading,  
The generations creep their course and die.

Hapless the lands, and doomed amid the races,  
That give no answer to this royal test;  
Their toiling tribes will droop ignoble faces,  
Till earth in pity takes them back to rest.  
A vast monotony may not be evil,  
But God's light tells us it cannot be good;  
Valley and hill have beauty—but the level  
Must bear a shadeless and a stagnant brood.

II.

I bring the touchstone. Motherland, to thee,  
And test thee trembling, fearing thou shouldst fail;  
If fruitless, sonless, thou wert proved to be,  
Ah, what would love and memory avail?

Brave land! God has blest thee!  
Thy strong heart I feel,  
As I touch thee and test thee—  
Dear land! As the steel

To the magnet flies upward, so rises thy breast,  
With a motherly pride to the touch of the test.

### III.

See! she smiles beneath the touchstone, looking on her distant youth,  
Looking down her line of leaders and of workers for the truth.  
Ere the Teuton, Norseman, Briton, left the primal woodland spring,  
When their rule was might and rapine, and their law a painted king;  
When the sun of art and learning still was in the Orient;  
When the pride of Babylonia under Cyrus' hand was shent;  
When the sphinx's introverted eye turned fresh from Egypt's guilt;  
When the Persian bowed to Athens; when the Parthenon was built;  
When the Macedonian climax closed the Commonwealths of Greece;  
When the wrath of Roman manhood burst on Tarquin for Lucrece—  
Then was Erin rich in knowledge—thence from out her Ollamh's store—  
Kenned to-day by students only—grew her ancient Senchus More;  
Then were reared her mighty builders, who made temples to the sun—  
There they stand—the old Round Towers—showing how their work was done:  
Thrice a thousand years upon them—shaming all our later art—  
Warning fingers raised to tell us we must build with rev'rent heart.  
Ah, we call thee Mother Erin! Mother thou in right of years;  
Mother in the large fruition—mother in the joys and tears.  
All thy life has been a symbol — we can only read a part:  
God will flood thee ,yet with sunshine for the woes that drench thy heart.  
All thy life has been symbolic of a human mother's life:  
Youth's sweet hopes and dreams have vanished, and the travail and the strife  
Are upon thee in the present; but thy work until to-day  
Still has been for truth and manhood—and it shall not pass away:  
Justice lives, though judgment lingers—angels' feet are heavy shod—  
But a planet's years are moments in th' eternal day of God!

### IV.

Out from the valley of death and tears,  
From the war and want of a thousand years,  
From the mark of sword and the rust of chain,  
From the smoke and blood of the penal laws,  
The Irishmen and the Irish cause  
Come out in the front of the field again!

What says the stranger to such a vitality?

What says the statesman to this nationality?  
Flung on the shore of a sea of defeat,  
Hardly the swimmers have sprung to their feet,  
When the nations are thrilled by a clarion-word,  
And Burke, the philosopher-statesman, is heard.  
When shall his equal be? Down from the stellar height  
Sees he the planet and all on its girth—  
India, Columbia, and Europe—his eagle-sight  
Sweeps at a glance all the wrong upon earth.  
Races or sects were to him a profanity:  
Hindoo and Negro and Kelt were as one;  
Large as mankind was his splendid humanity,  
Large in its record the work he has done.

V.

What need to mention men of minor note,  
When there be minds that all the heights attain?  
What school-boy knoweth not the hand that wrote  
'Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain'  
What man that speaketh English e'er can lift  
His voice 'mid scholars, who hath missed the lore  
Of Berkeley, Curran, Sheridan, and Swift,  
The art of Foley and the songs of Moore?  
Grattan and Flood and Emmet—where is he  
That hath not learned respect for such as  
Who loveth humor, and hath yet to see  
Lover and Prout and Lever and Maclise?

VI.

Great men grow greater by the lapse of time:  
We know those least whom we have seen the latest;  
And they, 'mongst those whose names have grown sublime,  
Who worked for Human Liberty, are greatest.

And now for one who allied will to work,  
And thought to act, and burning speech to thought;  
Who gained the prizes that were seen by Burke—  
Burke felt the wrong—O' Council felt, and fought.

Ever the same—from boyhood up to death:  
His race was crushed—his people were defamed;  
He found the spark, and fanned it with his breath,  
And fed the fire, till all the nation flamed!

He roused the farms—he made the serf a yeoman;  
He drilled his millions and he faced the foe;  
But not with lead or steel he struck the foeman:  
Reason the sword—and human right the blow.

He fought for home—but no land-limit bounded  
O'Connell's faith, nor curbed his sympathies;  
All wrong to liberty must be confounded,  
Till men were chainless as the winds and seas.

He fought for faith—but with no narrow spirit;  
With ceaseless hand the bigot laws he smote;  
One chart, he said, all mankind should inherit,—  
The right to worship and the right to vote.  
Always the same—but yet a glinting prism:  
In wit, law, statecraft, still a master-hand;  
An 'uncrowned king,' whose people's love was chrism;  
His title—Liberator of his Land!

'His heart's in Rome, his spirit is in heaven'—  
So runs the old song that his people sing;  
A tall Round Tower they builded in Glasnevin—  
Fit Irish headstone for an Irish king!

VII.

Oh Motherland! there is no cause to doubt thee:  
Thy mark is left on every shore to-day.  
Though grief and wrong may cling like robes about thee,  
Thy motherhood will keep thee queen away.  
In faith and patience working, and believing  
Not power alone can make a noble state:  
Whate'er the land, though all things else conceiving,  
Unless it breed great men, it is not great.  
Go on, dear land, and midst the generations  
Send out strong men to cry the word aloud;  
Thy niche is empty still amidst the nations—

Go on in faith, and God must raise the cloud.

John Boyle O'Reilly



## A Passage

THE world was made when a man was born;  
He must taste for himself the forbidden springs,  
He can never take warning from old-fashioned things;  
He must fight as a boy, he must drink as a youth,  
He must kiss, he must love, he must swear to the truth  
Of the friend of his soul, he must laugh to scorn  
The hint of deceit in a woman's eyes  
That are clear as the wells of Paradise.  
And so he goes on, till the world grows old,  
Till his tongue has grown cautious, his heart, has grown cold,  
Till the smile leaves his mouth, and the ring leaves his laugh,  
And he shirks the bright headache you ask him to quaff;  
He grows formal with men, and with women polite,  
And distrustful of both when they're out of his sight;  
Then he eats for his palate, and drinks for his head,  
And loves for his pleasure,—and 'tis time he was dead!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# A Savage

DIXON, a Choctaw, twenty years of age,  
Had killed a miner in a Leadville brawl;  
Tried and condemned, the rough-beards curb their rage,  
And watch him stride in freedom from the hall.

'Return on Friday, to be shot to death!'  
So ran the sentence—it was Monday night.  
The dead man's comrades drew a well-pleased breath;  
Then all night long the gambling dens were bright.

The days sped slowly; but the Friday came,  
And flocked the miners to the shooting-ground;  
They chose six riflemen of deadly aim,  
And with low voices sat and lounged around.

'He will not come.' 'He's not a fool.' 'The men  
Who set the savage free must face the blame.'  
A Choctaw brave smiled bitterly, and then  
Smiled proudly, with raised head, as Dixon came.

Silent and stern—a woman at his heels;  
He motions to the brave, who stays her tread.  
Next minute—flame the guns: the woman reels  
And drops without a moan—Dixon is dead.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# A Seed

A KINDLY act is a kernel sown,  
That will grow to a goodly tree,  
Shedding its fruit when time has flown  
Down the gulf of eternity.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# A Song For Soldiers

WHAT song is best for the soldiers?

Take no heed of the words, nor choose yon the style of the story;  
Let it burst out from the heart like a spring from the womb of a mountain,  
Natural, clear, resistless, leaping its way to the levels;  
Whether of love or hate or war or the pathos and pain of affliction;  
Whether of manly pluck in the perilous hour, or that which is higher,  
And highest of all, the slowly bleeding sacrifice,  
The giving of life and its joys for the sake of men and freedom;—  
Any song for the soldier that will harmonize with the life-throbs;  
For he has laved in the mystical sea by which men are one;  
His pulse has thrilled into blinding tune with the vaster anthems  
Which God plays on the battle-fields when he sweeps the strings of nations,  
And the song of the earth-planet bursts on the silent spheres.  
Shot through like the cloud of Etna with flames of heroic devotion,  
And shaded with quivering lines from the mourning of women and children!

Here is a song for the soldiers—a song of the Cheyenne Indians,  
Of men with soldierly hearts who walked with Death as a comrade.  
Hush! Let the present fade; let the distance die; let the last year stand:  
We are far to the West, in Montana, on the desolate plains of Montana;  
We ride with the cavalry troopers on the bloody trail of the Cheyennes,  
Forty braves of the tribe who have leaped from the reservation  
Down on the mining camps in their desecrated valleys,  
Down to their fathers' graves and the hunting-ground of their people.

Chilled with the doom of Death they gaze on the white men's changes:  
Ruthless the brutal force that has crushed their homes and their manhood,  
And ruthless the hearts of the Cheyenne braves as they swoop on the camps of  
the miners!  
Back to the hills they dash, with reeking trophies around them:  
But swift on their trail the cavalry ride, and their trumpets  
Break on the ears of the braves with a threat of oncoming vengeance.

At last they are bayed and barred—corraled in a straightwalled valley,—  
The Indians back to the cliffs with the shattered rocks as a breastwork,  
The soldiers in lined stockades across the mouth of the valley.  
Hungriily hiss the bullets, not wasted in random firing,  
But every shot for a mark,—thrice their number of soldiers  
Raking the Cheyenne rocks with a pitiless rain of missiles,

One to three in the firing, but every Cheyenne bullet  
Tumbled a reckless trooper behind his fence in the stockade.

'God! they are brave!' cried the captain. 'Seven hours we've held them,  
Three, ay, five to one, if you count their dead and their wounded:  
Damn them! why don't they yield for the sake of their lives and their wounded?'

But never a sign but flame and the hiss of the leaden defiance  
Comes from the Cheyenne braves, though their firing slackens in vigor  
To grow in fatal precision—grim as the cliff above them  
They fight their fight, and the valley is lined with death from their rifles.  
Cried the captain, "Men, we must charge!" and he grieves for his boys and their  
foemen;

'But show them a sign of quarter;' and he swings them a flag to tell them  
That his side is willing to parley: the Indians riddle the ensign,  
And the captain groans in his heart as he gives the order for charging.  
Terrible getting ready of men who prepare for a death-fight:—  
Scabbards are thrown aside and belts unstrapped for the striking,  
Ominous outward signs of the deadlier inner preparing  
When the soul flings danger aside and the human heart its mercy.

Out from the fatal earthworks, their eyes like fire in a  
With naked blades the troopers, and nerves wire-strung for the onset,  
When suddenly, up from the rocks, a sign at last from the Cheyennes!

Two tall braves on the rocks—'Re-form!' brays the cavalry trumpet,  
And grimly the soldiers return, reluctantly leaving the conflict.  
Still on the rocks two forms of bronze, as if prepared for the stormers,  
Then down to the field, and behold, they dash toward the wondering troopers!  
The soldiers stare at the charge, but no man laughs at the foemen,  
Instead of a sneer a tremor at many a mouth in sorrow.  
On they come to their death, and, standing at fifty paces,  
They fire in the face of the squadron, and dash with their knives to the death-  
grip!  
Fifty rifles give flame, and the breasts of the heroes are shattered;  
But falling, they plunge toward the fight, and their knives sink deep in the  
meadow!

'On to the rocks!' and the soldiers have done with their feelings of mercy—  
But never a foe to meet them nor a shot from the deadly barrier.  
First on the rocks the captain, with a cheer that died as he gave it,—  
A cheer that was half a groan and a cry of admiration.

Awed stood the troopers who followed, and lowered their swords with their  
leader,  
Homage of brave to the brave, saluting with souls and weapons;  
There at their feet lay the foemen—every man dead on his rifle—  
The two who had charged the troops were the last alive of the Cheyennes!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# A Tragedy

A SOFT-BREASTED bird from the sea  
Fell in love with the light-house flame;  
And it wheeled round the tower on its airiest wing,  
And floated and cried like a lovelorn thing;  
It brooded all day and it fluttered all night,  
But could win no look from the steadfast light.

For the flame had its heart afar,—  
Afar with the ships at sea;  
It was thinking of children and waiting wives,  
And darkness and danger to sailors' lives;  
But the bird had its tender bosom pressed  
On the glass where at last it dashed its breast.  
The light only flickered, the brighter to glow;  
But the bird lay dead on the rocks below.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# A White Rose

THE red rose whispers of passion,  
And the white rose breathes of love;  
O, the red rose is a falcon,  
And the white rose is a dove.

But I send you a cream-white rosebud  
With a flush on its petal tips;  
For the love that is purest and sweetest  
Has a kiss of desire on the lips

John Boyle O'Reilly



# A Year

IN the Spring we see:

Then the buds are dear to us—immature bosoms like lilies swell.

In the Summer we live:

When bright eyes are near to us, oh, the sweet stories the false lips tell!

In the Autumn we love:

When the honey is dripping, deep eyes moisten and soft breasts heave;

In the Winter we think:

With the sands fast slipping, we smile and sigh for the days we leave.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# America

NOR War nor Peace, forever, old and young,  
But Strength my theme, whose song is yet unsung,  
The People's Strength, the deep alluring dream  
Of truths that seethe below the truths that seem.

The buried ruins of dead empires seek,  
Of Indian, Syrian, Persian, Roman, Greek:  
From shattered capital and frieze upraise  
The stately structures of their golden days:  
Their laws occult, their priests and prophets ask.,  
Their altars search, their oracles unmask,  
Their parable from birth to burial see,  
The acorn germ, the growth, the dense-leafed tree,  
A world of riant life; the sudden day  
When like a new strange glory, shone decay,  
A golden glow amid the green; the change  
From branch to branch at life's receding range,  
Till nothing stands of towering strength and pride  
Save naked trunk and arms whose veins are dried;  
And these, too, crumble till no signs remain  
To mark its place upon the wind-swept plain.

Why died the empires? Like the forest trees  
Did Nature doom them? or did slow disease  
Assail their roots and poison all their springs?

The old-time story answers: nobles, kings,  
Have made and been the State, their names alone  
Its history holds; its wealth, its wars, their own.  
Their wanton will could raise, enrich, condemn;  
The toiling millions lived and died for them.  
Their fortunes rose in conquest fell, in guilt;  
The people never owned them, never built.  
Those oldeti times! how many words are spent  
In weak regret and shallow argument  
To prove them wiser, happier than our own!  
The oldest moment that the world has known  
Is passing now. Those vaunted times were young;  
Their wisdom from unlettered peasants sprung;

Their laws from nobles arrogant and rude:  
Their justice force, their whole achievement crude.

With men the old are wise: why change the rule  
When nations speak, and send the old to school?  
Respect the past for all the good it knew:  
Give noble lives and struggling truths their due;  
But ask what freedom knew the common men  
Who served and bled and won the victories then?  
The leaders are immortal, but the hordes  
They led to death were simply human swords,  
Unknowing what they fought for, why they fell.

What change has come? Imperial Europe tell!  
Death's warders cry from twenty centuries' peaks:  
Platsea's field the word to Plevna speaks;  
The martial draft still wastes the peasants' farms—  
A dozen kings,—five million men in arms  
The earth mapped out estate-like, hedged with steel;  
In neighboring schools the children bred to feel  
Unnatural hate, disjoined in speech and creed;  
The forges roaring for the armies' need;  
The cities builded by the people lined  
With scowling forts and roadways undermined;  
At every bastioned frontier, every State,  
Suspicion, sworded, standing by the gate!

But turn our eyes from these oppressive lands:  
Behold! one country all defenseless stands,  
One nation-continent, from East to West,  
With riches heaped upon her bounteous breast;  
Her mines, her marts, her skill of hand and brain,  
That bring Aladdin's dreams to light again!

Where sleep the conquerors? Here is chance for spoil:  
Such unwatched fields, such endless, priceless toil!  
Vain dream of olden time! The robber strength  
That swept its will is overmatched at length.  
Here, not with swords but smiles the people greet  
The foreign spy in harbor, granary, street;  
Here towns unguarded lie, for here alone  
Nor caste, nor king, nor privilege is known.

For home our farmer plows, our miner delves,  
A land of -toilers, toiling for themselves;  
A land of cities, which no fortress shields,  
Whose open streets reach out to fertile fields;  
Whose roads are shaken by no armies' tread;  
Whose only camps are cities of the dead!  
Go stand at Arlington the graves among:  
No ramparts, cannons there, no banners hung,  
No threat above the Capitol, no blare  
To warn the senators the guns are there.

But never yet was city fortified  
Like that sad height above Potomac's tide;  
There never yet was eloquence in speech  
Like those ten thousand stones, a name on each;  
No guards e'er pressed such claims on court or king  
As these Praetorians to our Senate bring;  
The Army of Potomac never lay  
So full of strength as in its camp to-day!

On fatal Chaeronea's field the Greeks  
A lion raised—a sombre tomb that speaks  
No word, no name,—an emblem of the pride  
Of those that ruled the insect host that died.

But by her soldiers' graves Columbia proves  
How fast toward morn the night of manhood moves.  
Those low white lines at Gettysburg remain  
The sacred record of her humblest slain,  
Whose children's children in their time shall come  
To view with pride their hero-father's tomb,  
While down the ages runs the patriot line,  
Till rich tradition makes each tomb a shrine.

Our standing army these, with specter glaives;  
Our fortified towns their battle-ordered graves.  
Here sleep our valiant, sown like dragon's teeth;  
Here new-born sons renew the pious wreath;  
Here proud Columbia bends with tear-stirred mouth,  
To kiss their blood-seal, binding North and South,  
Two clasping hands upon the knot they tied  
When Union lived and Human Slavery died!

Who doubt our strength, or measure it with those  
Whose armed millions wait for coming foes,  
They judge by royal standards, that depend  
On hireling hands to threaten or defend,  
That keep their war-dogs chained in time of peace,  
And dread a foe scarce less than their release.  
Who hunt wild beasts with cheetahs, fiercely tame,  
Must watch their hounds as well as fear their game.

Around our veterans hung no dread nor doubt  
When twice a million men were mustered out.  
As scattered seed in new-plowed land, or flakes  
Of spring-time snow descend in smiling lakes,  
Our war-born soldiers sank into the sea  
Of peaceful life and fruitful energy.  
No sign remained of that vast army, save  
In field and street new workmen, bronzed and grave;  
Some whistling teamsters still in army vest;  
Some quiet citizens with medaled breast.

So died the hatred of our brother feud;  
The conflict o'er the triumph was subdued.  
What victor King e'er spared the conquered foe?  
How much of mercy did strong Prussia show  
When anguished Paris at her feet lay prone?  
The German trumpet rang above her moan,  
The clink of Uhlan spurs her temples knew,  
Her Arch of Triumph spanned their triumph, too.

Not thus, O South! when thy proud head was low,  
Thy passionate heart laid open to the foe—  
Not thus, Virginia, did thy victors meet  
At Appomattox him who bore defeat:  
No brutal show abased thine honored State:  
Grant turned from Richmond at the very gate!  
O Land magnanimous, republican!  
The last for Nationhood, the first for Man!  
Because thy lines by Freedom's hand were laid  
Profound the sin to change or retrograde.  
From base to cresting let thy work be new;  
'Twas not by aping foreign ways it grew.

To struggling peoples give at least applause;  
Let equities not precedent subtend your laws;  
Like rays from that great Eye the altars show,  
That fall triangular, free states should grow,  
The soul above, the brain and hand below.  
Believe that strength lies not in steel nor stone;  
That perils wait the land whose heavy throne,  
Though ringed by swords and rich with titled show,  
Is based on fettered misery below;  
That nations grow where every class unites  
For common interests and common rights;  
Where no caste barrier stays the poor man's son  
Till step by step the topmost height is won;  
Where every hand subscribes to every rule,  
And free as air are voice and vote and school!  
A Nation's years are centuries. Let Art  
Portray thy first, and Liberty will start  
From every field in Europe at the sight.  
'Why stand these thrones between us and the light  
Strong men will ask: 'Who built these frontier towers  
To bar out men of kindred blood with ours?'

O, this thy work, Republic! this thy health,  
To prove man's birthright to a commonwealth;  
To teach the peoples to be strong and wise,  
Till armies, nations, nobles, royalties,  
Are laid at rest with all their fears and hates;  
Till Europe's thirteen Monarchies are States,  
Without a barrier and without a throne,  
Of one grand Federation like our own!

John Boyle O'Reilly

## An Art Message

HE gathered cherry-stones, and carved them quaintly  
Into fine semblances of flies and flowers;  
With subtle skill, he even imaged faintly  
The forms of tiny maids and ivied towers.

His little blocks he loved to file and polish;  
And ampler means he asked not, but despised.  
All art but cherry-stones he would abolish,  
For then his genius would be rightly prized.

For such rude hands as dealt with wrongs and passions  
And throbbing hearts, he had a pitying smile;  
Serene his way through surging years and fashions,  
While Heaven gave him his cherry-stones and file!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# An Old Picture

THERE are times when a dream delicious  
Steals into a musing hour,  
Like a face with love capricious  
That peeps from a woodland bower;  
And one dear scene comes changeless;  
A wooded hill and a river;  
A deep, cool bend, where the lilies end,  
And the elm-tree shadows quiver.

And I lie on the brink there, dreaming  
That the life I live is a dream;  
That the real is but the seeming,  
And the true is the sun-flecked stream.  
Beneath me, the perch and the bream sail past  
In the dim cool depths of the river;  
The struggling fly breaks the mirrored sky  
And the elm-tree shadows quiver.

There are voices of children away on the hill;  
There are bees thro' the flag-flowers humming;  
The lighter-man calls to the lock, and the mill  
On the farther side is drumming.  
And I sink to sleep in my dream of a dream,  
In the grass by the brink of a river,  
Where the voices blend and the lilies end  
And the elm-tree shadows quiver.

Like a gift from the past is the kindly dream,  
For the sorrow and passion and pain  
Are adrift like the leaves on the breast of the stream,  
And the child-life comes again.  
O, the sweet sweet pain of a joy that died—  
Of a pain that is joy forever!  
O, the life that died in the stormy tide  
That was once my sun-flecked river.

John Boyle O'Reilly



# An Old Vagabond

HE was old and alone, and he sat on a stone to rest for awhile from the road:  
His beard was white, and his eye was bright, and his wrinkles overflowed  
With a mild content at the way life went; and I closed the book on my knee:  
'I will venture a look in this living book,' I thought, as he greeted me.

And I said: ' My friend, have you time to spend to tell me what makes you glad?'  
'Oh, ay, my lad,' with a smile; 'I'm glad that I'm old, yet am never sad!'

'But why?' said I; and his merry eye made answer as much as his tongue;  
'Because,' said he, 'I am poor and free who was rich and a slave when young.  
There is naught but age can allay the rage of the passions that rule men's lives;  
And a man to be free must a poor man be, for unhappy is he who thrives:  
He fears for his ventures, his rents and debentures, his crops, and his son, and  
his wife;  
His dignity's slighted when he's not invited; he fears every day of his life.  
But the man who is poor, and by age has grown sure that there are no surprises  
in years,  
Who knows that to have is no joy, nor to save, and who opens his eyes and his  
ears  
To the world as it is, and the part of it his, and who says: They are happy, these  
birds,  
Yet they live day by day in improvident way—improvident? What were the words  
Of the Teacher who taught that the field-lilies brought the lesson of life to a  
man?  
Can we better the thing that is school-less, or sing more of love than the  
nightingale can?  
See that rabbit—what feature in that pretty creature needs science or culture or  
care?  
Send this dog to a college and stuff him with knowledge, will it add to the  
warmth of his hair?  
Why should mankind, apart, turn from Nature to Art, and declare the exchange  
better-planned?  
I prefer to trust God for my living than plod for my bread at a master's hand,  
A man's higher being is knowing and seeing, not having and toiling for more;  
In the senses and soul is the joy of control, not in pride or luxurious store.  
Yet my needs are the same as the kingling's whose name is a terror to  
thousands: some bread,  
Some water and milk,—I can do without silk,—some wool, and a roof for my  
head.

What more is possest that will stand the grim test of death's verdict? What riches remain

To give joy at the last, all the vanities past?—Ay, ay, that's the word—they are vain

And vexatious of spirit to all who inherit belief in the world and its ways.

And so, old and alone, sitting here on a stone, I smile with the birds at the days.'

And I thanked him, and went to my study, head bent, where I laid down my book on its shelf;

And that day all the page that I read was my age, and my wants, and my joys, and myself.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# At Best

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The faithful helm commands the keel,  
From port to port fair breezes blow;  
But the ship must sail the convex sea,  
Nor may she straighter go.

So, man to man; in fair accord,  
On thought and will the winds may wait;  
But the world will bend the passing word,  
Though its shortest course be straight.

From soul to soul the shortest line  
At best will bended be:  
The ship that holds the straightest course  
Still sails the convex sea.

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John Boyle O'Reilly

## At Fredericksburg—dec. 13, 1862

GOD send us peace, and keep red strife away;  
But should it come, God send us men and steel!  
The land is dead that dare not face the day  
When foreign danger threatens the common weal.

Defenders strong are they that homes defend;  
From ready arms the spoiler keeps afar.  
Well blest the country that has sons to lend  
From trades of peace to learn the trade of war.

Thrice blest the nation that has every son  
A soldier, ready for the warning sound;  
Who marches homeward when the fight is done,  
To swing the hammer and to till the ground.

Call back that morning, with its lurid light,  
When through our land the awful war-bell tolled;  
When lips were mute, and women's faces white  
As the pale cloud that out from Sumter rolled.

Call back that morn: an instant all were dumb,  
As if the shot had struck the Nation's life;  
Then cleared the smoke, and rolled the calling drum,  
And men streamed in to meet the coming strife,

They closed the ledger and they stilled the loom.  
The plow left rusting in the prairie farm;  
They saw but ' Union' in the gathering gloom;  
The tearless women helped the men to arm;

Brigades from towns—each village sent its band:  
German and Irish—every race and faith;  
There was no question then of native land,  
But—love the Flag and follow it to death.

No need to tell their tale: through every age  
The splendid story shall be sung and said;  
But let me draw one picture from the page—  
For words of song embalm the hero dead.

The smooth hill is bare, and the cannons are planted,  
Like Gorgon fates shading its terrible brow;  
The word has been passed that the stormers are wanted,  
And Burnside's battalions are mustering now.  
The armies stand by to behold the dread meeting;  
The work must be done by a desperate few;  
The black-mouthed guns on the height give them greeting—  
From gun-mouth to plain every grass blade in view.  
Strong earthworks are there, and the rifles behind them  
Are Georgia militia—an Irish brigade—  
Their caps have green badges, as if to remind them  
Of all the brave record their country has made.

The stormers go forward—the Federals cheer them;  
They breast the smooth hillside—the black mouths are dumb;  
The riflemen lie in the works till they near them,  
And cover the stormers as upward they come.  
Was ever a death-march so grand and so solemn?  
At last, the dark summit with flame is enlind;  
The great guns belch doom on the sacrificed column,  
That reels from the height, leaving hundreds behind.  
The armies are hushed—there is no cause for cheering:  
The fall of brave men to brave men is a pain.  
Again come the stormers! and as they are nearing  
The flame-sheeted rifle-lines, reel back again.  
And so till full noon come the Federal masses—  
Flung back from the height, as the cliff flings a wave;  
Brigade on brigade to the death-struggle passes,  
No wavering rank till it steps on the grave.

Then comes a brief lull, and the smoke-pall is lifted,  
The green of the hillside no longer is seen;  
The dead soldiers lie as the sea-weed is drifted,  
The earthworks still held by the badges of green.  
Have they quailed? is the word. No: again they are forming—  
Again comes a column to death and defeat!  
What is it in these who shall now do the storming  
That makes every Georgian spring to his feet?

' O God! what a pity!' they cry in their cover,  
As rifles are readied and bayonets made tight;

"Tis Meagher and his fellows! their caps have green clover;  
'Tis Greek to Greek now for the rest of the fight!  
Twelve hundred the column, their rent flag before them,  
With Meagher at their head, they have dashed at the hill!  
Their foemen are proud of the country that bore them;  
But, Irish in love, they are enemies still.  
Out rings the fierce word, ' Let them have it! ' the rifles  
Are emptied point-blank in the hearts of the foe:  
It is guen against green, but a principle stifles  
The Irishman's love in the Georgian's blow.  
The column has reeled, but it is not defeated;  
In front of the guns they re-form and attack;  
Six times they have done it, and six times retreated;  
Twelve hundred they came, and two hundred go back.  
Two hundred go back with the chivalrous story;  
The wild day is closed in the night's solemn shroud;  
A thousand lie dead, but their death was a glory  
That calls not for tears—the Green Badges are proud!

Bright honor be theirs who for honor were fearless,  
Who charged for their flag to the grim cannon's mouth;  
And honor to them who were true, though not tearless,—  
Who bravely that day kept the cause of the South.  
The quarrel is done—God avert such another;  
The lesson it brought we should evermore heed:  
Who loveth the Flag is a man and a brother,  
No matter what birth or what race or what creed.

John Boyle O'Reilly

## At School

The bees are in the meadow  
And the swallows in the sky;  
The cattle in the shadow  
Watch the river running by.  
The wheat is hardly stirring;  
The heavy ox-team lags;  
The dragon-fly is whirring  
Through the yellow-blossomed flag.  
And down beside the river,  
Where the trees lean o'er the pool,  
Where the shadows reach the quiver  
A boy has come to school.  
His teachers are the swallow  
And the river and the trees;  
His lessons are the shallows  
And the flowers and the bees.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Bone And Sinew And Brain

YE white-maned waves of the Western Sea,  
That ride and roll to the strand,  
Ye strong-winged birds, never forced a-lee  
By the gales that sweep toward land,  
Ye are symbols of death, and of hope that saves,  
As ye swoop in your strength and grace,  
As ye roll to the land like the billowed graves  
Of a past and puerile race.

Cry, 'Presto, change!' and the lout is lord,  
With his vulgar blood turned blue;  
Go dub your knight with a slap of a sword,  
As the kings in Europe do;  
Go grade the lines of your social mode  
As you grade the palace wall,—  
The people forever to bear the load,  
And the gilded vanes o'er all.

But the human blocks will not lie as still  
As the dull foundation stones,  
But will rise, like a sea, with an awful will,  
And engulf the golden thrones;  
For the days are gone when a special race  
Took the place of the gilded vane;  
And the merit that mounts to the highest place  
Must have bone and sinew and brain.

Let the cant of ' the march of mind ' be heard,  
Of the time to come, when man  
Shall lose the mark of his brawn and beard  
In the future's leveling plan:  
'Tis the dream of a mind effeminate,  
The whine for an easy crown;  
There is no meed for the good and great  
In the weakling's leveling down.

A nation's boast is a nation's bone,  
As well as its might of mind;  
And the culture of either of these alone



Is the doom of a nation signed.  
But the cant of the ultra-suasion school  
Unsinews the hand and thigh,  
And preaches the creed of the weak to rule,  
And the strong to struggle and die.

Our schools are spurred to the fatal race,  
As if health were the nation's sin,  
Till the head grows large, and the vampire face  
Is gorged on the limbs so thin.  
Our women have entered the abstract fields,  
And avaunt with the child and home:  
While the rind of science a pleasure yields  
Shall they care for the lives to come?  
And they ape the manners of manly times  
In their sterile and worthless life,  
Till the man of the future augments his crimes  
With a raid for a Sabine wife.

Ho, white-maned waves of the Western Sea,  
That ride and roll to the strand!  
Ho, strong-winged birds, never blown a-lee  
By the gales that sweep toward land!  
Ye are symbols both of a hope that saves,  
As ye swoop in your strength and grace,  
As ye roll to the land like the billowed graves  
Of a suicidal race.  
Ye have hoarded your strength in equal parts;  
For the men of the future reign  
Must have faithful souls and kindly hearts,  
And bone and sinew and brain.

John Boyle O'Reilly

## Chunder Ali's Wife

'I AM poor,' said Chunder Ali, while the Mandarin above him  
Frowned in supercilious anger at the dog who dared to  
speak; 'I am friendless and a Hindoo: such a one meets few to  
love him Here in China, where the Hindoo finds the truth alone is  
weak. I have naught to buy your justice; were I wise, I had not  
striven. Speak your judgment; ' and he crossed his arras and bent  
his quivering face. Heard he then the unjust sentence: all his goods and gold  
were given To another, and he stood alone, a beggar in the place.

And the man who bought the judgment looked in triumph  
and derision At the cheated Hindoo merchant, as he rubbed his hands  
and smiled At the whispered gratulation of his friends, and at the  
vision Of the more than queenly dower for Ahmeer, his only  
child. Fair Ahmeer, who of God's creatures was the only one  
who loved him, She, the diamond of his treasures, the one lamb within  
his fold, She, whose voice, like her dead mother's, was the only  
power that moved him,— She would praise the skill that gained her all this  
Hindoo's  
silk and gold.

And the old man thanked Confucius, and the judge, and him who pleaded.  
But why falls this sudden silence? why does each one hold his breath?  
Every eye turns on the Hindoo, who before was all unheeded,  
And in wond'ring expectation all the court grows still as death.

Not alone stood Chunder Ali: by his side Ahmeer was standing,  
And his brown hand rested lightly on her shoulder as he smiled  
At the sweet young face turned toward him. Then the father's voice commanding

Fiercely bade his daughter to him from the dog whose touch defiled.  
But she moved not, and she looked not at her father or the others  
As she answered, with her eyes upon the Hindoo's noble face:  
'Nay, my father, he defiles not: this kind arm above all others  
Is my choosing, and forever by his side shall be my place.  
When you knew not, his dear hand had given many a sweet love-token,  
He had gathered all my heartstrings and had bound them round his life;  
Yet you tell me he defiles me; nay, my father, you have spoken  
In your anger, and not knowing I was Chnder Ali's wife.'

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Conscience

I CARE not for the outer voice  
That deals out praise or blame;  
I could not with the world rejoice  
Nor bear its doom of shame—  
But when the Voice within me speaks  
The truth to me is known;  
He sees himself who inward seeks—  
The riches are his own.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Constancy

'You gave me the key of your heart, my love;  
Then why do you make me knock?'  
'O, that was yesterday, Saints above!  
And last night—I changed the lock!'

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Crispus Attucks

WHERE shall we seek for a hero, and where shall we find a story?  
Our laurels are wreathed for conquest, our songs for completed glory.  
But we honor a shrine unfinished, a column uncapped with pride,  
If we sing the deed that was sown like seed when Crispus Attucks died.

Shall we take for a sign this Negro-slave with unfamiliar name—  
With his poor companions, nameless too, till their lives leaped forth in flame?  
Yea, sorely, the verdict is not for us, to render or deny;  
We can only interpret the symbol; God chose these men to die—  
As teachers and types, that to humble lives may chief award be made;  
That from lowly ones, and rejected stones, the temple's base is laid!

When the bullets leaped from the British guns, no chance decreed their aim:  
Men see what the royal hirelings saw—a multitude and a flame;  
But beyond the flame, a mystery; five dying men in the street,  
While the streams of severed races in the well of a nation meet!

O, blood of the people! changeless tide, through century, creed and race!  
Still one as the sweet salt sea is one, though tempered by sun and place;  
The same in the ocean currents, and the same in the sheltered seas;  
Forever the fountain of common hopes and kindly sympathies;  
Indian and Negro, Saxon and Celt, Teuton and Latin and Gaul—  
Mere surface shadow and sunshine; while the sounding unifies all!  
One love, one hope, one duty theirs! No matter the time or ken,  
There never was separate heart-beat in all the races of men!

But alien is one—of class, not race—he has drawn the line for himself;  
His roots drink life from inhuman soil, from garbage of pomp and pelf;  
His heart beats not with the common beat, he has changed his life-stream's hue;

He deems his flesh to be finer flesh, he boasts that his blood is blue:  
Patrician, aristocrat, tory—whatever his age or name,  
To the people's rights and liberties, a traitor ever the same.  
The natural crowd is a mob to him, their prayer a vulgar rhyme;  
The freeman's speech is sedition, and the patriot's deed a crime.  
Wherever the race, the law, the land,—whatever the time, or throne,  
The tory is always a traitor to every class but his own.

Thank God for a land where pride is clipped, where arrogance stalks apart;

Where law and song and loathing of wrong are words of the common heart;  
Where the masses honor straightforward strength, and know, when veins are  
bled,  
That the bluest blood is putrid blood—that the people's blood is red!

And honor to Crispus Attucks, who was leader and voice that day;  
The first to defy, and the first to die, with Maverick. Carr, and Gray.  
Call it riot or revolution, his hand first clenched at the crown;  
His feet were the first in perilous place to pull the king's flag down;  
His breast was the first one rent apart that liberty's stream might flow;  
For our freedom now and forever, his head was the first bid low.

Call it riot or revolution, or mob or crowd, as you may,  
Such deaths have been seed of nations, such lives shall be honored for aye.  
They were lawless hinds to the lackeys—but martyrs to Paul Revere;  
And Otis and Hancock and Warren read spirit and meaning clear.  
Ye teachers, answer: what shall be done when just men stand in the dock;  
When the caitiff is robed in ermine, and his sworders keep the lock;  
When torture is robbed of clemency, and guilt is without remorse;  
When tiger and panther are gentler than the Christian slaver's curse;  
When law is a satrap's menace, and order the drill of a horde—  
Shall the people kneel to be trampled, and bare their neck to the sword?

Not so! by this Stone of Resistance that Boston raises here!  
By the old North Church's lantern, and the watching of Paul Revere!  
Not so! by Paris of 'Ninety-Three, and Ulster of 'NinetyEight!  
By Toussaint in St. Domingo! by the horror of Delhi's gate!  
By Adams's word to Hutchinson! by the tea that is brewing still!  
By the farmers that met the soldiers at Concord and Bunker Hill!

Not so! not so! Till the world is done, the shadow of wrong is dread;  
The crowd that bends to a lord to-day, to-morrow shall strike him dead.  
There is only one thing changeless: the earth steals from under our feet,  
The times and manners are passing moods, and the laws are incomplete;  
There is only one thing changes not, one word that still survives—  
The slave is the wretch who wields the lash, and not the man in gyves!

There is only one test of contract: is it willing, is it good?  
There is only one guard of equal right: the unity of blood;  
There is never a mind unchained and true that class or race allows;  
There is never a law to be obeyed that reason disavows;  
There is never a legal sin but grows to the law's disaster,

The master shall dropp the whip, and the slave shall enslave the master!

O, Planter of seed in thought and deed has the year of right revolved,  
And brought the Negro patriot's cause with its problem to be solved?  
His blood streamed first for the building, and through all the century's years,  
Our growth of story and fame of glory are mixed with his blood and tears.  
He lived with men like a soul condemned—derided, defamed, and mute;  
Debased to the brutal level, and instructed to be a brute.  
His virtue was shorn of benefit, his industry of reward;  
His love!—O men, it were mercy to have cut affection's cord;  
Through the night of his woe, no pity save that of his fellow-slave;  
For the wage of his priceless labor, the scourging block and the grave!

And now, is the tree to blossom? Is the bowl of agony filled?  
Shall the price be paid, and the honor said, and the word of outrage stilled?  
And we who have toiled for freedom's law, have we sought for freedom's soul?  
Have we learned at last that human right is not a part but the whole?  
That nothing is told while the clinging sin remains part unconfessed?  
That the health of the nation is periled if one man be oppressed?

Has he learned—the slave from the rice-swamps, whose children were sold—has  
he,  
With broken chains on his limbs, and the cry in his blood, 'I am free!'  
Has he learned through affliction's teaching what our Crispus Attucks knew—  
When Right is stricken, the white and black are counted as one, not two?  
Has he learned that his century of grief was worth a thousand years  
In blending his life and blood with ours, and that all his toils and tears  
Were heaped and poured on him suddenly, to give him a right to stand  
From the gloom of African forests, in the blaze of the freest land?  
That his hundred years have earned for him a place in the human van  
Which others have fought for and thought for since the world of wrong began?

For this, shall his vengeance change to love, and his retribution burn,  
Defending the right, the weak and the poor, when each shall have his turn;  
For this, shall he set his woeful past afloat on the stream of night;  
For this, he forgets as we all forget when darkness turns to light;  
For this, he forgives as we all forgive when wrong has changed to right.

And so, must we come to the learning of Boston's lesson to-day;  
The moral that Crispus Attucks taught in the old heroic way;  
God made mankind to be one in blood, as one in spirit and thought;  
And so great a boon, by a brave man's death, is never dearly bought!



John Boyle O'Reilly

# Destiny

SOLDIER, why do you shrink from the hiss of the hungry lead?  
The bullet that whizzed is past; the approaching ball is dumb.  
Stand straight! you cannot shrink from Fate: let it come!  
A comrade in front may hear it whiz—when you are dead.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Distance

THE world is large, when its weary leagues two loving hearts divide;  
But the world is small, when your enemy is loose on the other side.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Dolores

IS he well blessed who has no eyes to scan  
The woeful things that shadow all our life:  
The latent brute behind the eyes of man,  
The place and power gained and stained by strife,  
The weakly victims driven to the wall,  
The subtle cruelties that meet us all  
Like eyes from darksome places? Blessed is he  
Who such sad things is never doomed to see!

The crust of common life is worn by time,  
And shines deception, as a thin veneer  
The raw plank hides, or as the frozen mere  
Holds drowned men embedded in its slime;  
The ninety eat their bread of death and crime,  
And sin and sorrow that the ten may thrive.

O, moaning sea of life! the few who dive  
Beneath thy waters, faint and short of breath,  
Not Dante-like, who cannot swim in death  
And view its secrets, but must swiftly rise,—  
They meet the light with introverted eyes,  
And hands that clutch a few dim mysteries!

Our life a harp is, with unnumbered strings,  
And tones and symphonies; but our poor skill  
Some shallow notes from its great music brings.  
We know it there; but vainly wish and will.

O, things symbolic! Things that mock our sense—  
Our five-fold, pitiable sense—and say  
A thousand senses could not show one day  
As sight infinite sees it; fruitful clay,  
And budding bough, and nature great with child  
And chill with doom and death—is all so dense  
That our dull thought can never read thy words,  
Or sweep with knowing hand thy hidden chords?

Have men not fallen from fair heights, once trod  
By nobler minds, who saw the works of God,

The flowers and living things, still undefiled,  
And spoke one language with them? And can we,  
In countless generations, each more pure  
Than that preceding, come at last to see  
Thy symbols full of meaning, and be sure  
That what we read is all they have to tell?

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Dying In Harness

ONLY a fallen horse, stretched out there on the road.  
Stretched in the broken shafts, and crushed by the heavy load;  
Only a fallen horse, and a circle of wondering eyes  
Watching the 'frighted teamster goading the beast to rise.

Hold! for his toil is over—no more labor for him;  
See the poor neck outstretched, and the patient eyes grow dim;  
See on the friendly stones how peacefully rests the head  
Thinking, if dumb beasts think, how good it is to be dead;  
After the weary journey, how restful it is to lie  
With the broken shafts and the cruel load—waiting only to die.

Watchers, he died in harness—died in the shafts and straps—  
Fell, and the burden killed him: one of the day's mishaps—  
One of the passing wonders marking the city road—  
A toiler dying in harness, heedless of call or goad.

Passers, crowding the pathway, staying your steps awhile,  
What is the symbol? Only death—why should we cease to smile  
At death for a beast of burden? On, through the busy street  
That is ever and ever echoing the tread of the hurrying feet.

What was the sign? A symbol to touch the tireless will?  
Does He who taught in parables speak in parables still?  
The seed on the rock is wasted—on heedless hearts of men,  
That gather and sow and grasp and lose—labor and sleep— and then—  
Then for the prize!—A crowd in the street of ever-echoing tread—  
The toiler, crushed by the heavy load, is there in his harness—dead!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Ensign Epps, The Color-Bearer

ENSIGN EPPS, at the battle of Flanders,  
Sowed a seed of glory and duty  
That flowers and flames in height and beauty  
Like a crimson lily with heart of gold,  
To-day, when the wars of Ghent are old  
And buried as deep as their dead commanders.

Ensign Epps was the color-bearer,—  
No matter on which side, Philip or Earl;  
Their cause was the shell—his deed was the pearl.  
Scarce more than a lad, he had been a sharer  
That day in the wildest work of the field.  
He was wounded and spent, and the fight was lost;  
His comrades were slain, or a scattered host.

But stainless and scatheless, out of the strife,  
He had carried his colors safer than life.  
By the river's brink, without weapon or shield,  
He faced the victors. The thick-heart mist  
He dashed from his eyes, and the silk he kissed  
Ere he held it aloft in the setting sun,  
As proudly as if the fight were won,  
And he smiled when they ordered him to yield.

Ensign Epps, with his broken blade,  
Cut the silk from the gilded staff,  
Which he poised like a spear till the charge was made,  
And hurled at the leader with a laugh.  
Then round his breast, like the scarf of his love,  
He tied the colors his heart above,  
And plunged in his armor into the tide.  
And there, in his dress of honor, died.

Where are the lessons your kinglings teach?  
And what is text of your proud commanders?  
Out of the centuries, heroes reach  
With the scroll of a deed, with the word of a story,  
Of one man's truth and of all men's glory,  
Like Ensign Epps at the battle of Flanders.

John Boyle O'Reilly



# Erin

"Come, sing a new song to her here while we listen!"  
They cry to her sons who sing;  
And one sings: ' Mavourneen, it makes the eyes glisten  
To think how the sorrows cling,  
Like the clouds on your mountains, wreathing  
Their green to a weeping gray! '  
And the bard with his passionate breathing  
Has no other sweet word to say.

'Come sing a new song!' and their eyes, while they're speaking,  
Are dreaming of far-off things;  
And their hearts are away for the old words seeking,  
Unheeding of him who sings.  
But he smiles and sings on, for the sound so slender  
Has reached the deep note he knows;  
And the heart-poem stirred by the word so tender  
Out from the well-spring flows.

And he says in his song: 'O dhtar dheelish! the tearful!  
She's ready to laugh when she cries!  
And they sob when they hear: 'Sure she's sad when she's cheerful;  
And she smiles with the tears in her eyes!'

And he asks them : What need of new poets to praise her?  
Her harpers still sing in the past;  
And her first sweet old melodies com fort and raise her  
To joys never reached by her last.

What need of new hero, with Brian? or preacher,  
With Patrick? or soldier, with Conn?  
With her dark Ollamh Fohla, what need of a teacher,  
Sage, ruler, and builder in one?

What need of new lovers, with Deirdre and Imer?  
With wonders and visions and elves  
Sure no need at all has romancer or rhymer,  
When the fairies belong to ourselves.

What need of new tongues? O, the Gaelic is clearest,

Like Nature's own voice every word;  
'Ahagur! Acushla! SavourneenI' the dearest  
The ear of a girl ever heard.

They may talk of new causes! Dhar Dhia .' our old one  
Is fresher than ever to-day;  
Like Erin's green sod that is steaming to God  
The blood it has drunk in the fray.

They have scattered her seed, with her blood and hate in it,  
And the harvest has come to her here;  
Her crown still remains for the strong heart to win it,  
And the hour of acceptance is near.

Through ages of warfare and famine and prison  
Her voice and her spirit were free:  
But the longest night ends, and her name has uprisen:  
The sunburst is red on the sea!

What need of new songs? When his country is singing.  
What word has the Poet to say,  
But to drink her a toast while the joy-bells are ringing  
The dawn of her opening day?  
'O Bride of the Sea! may the world know your  
As well as it knows your tears!

As your past was for Freedom, so be your hereafter;  
And through all your coming years  
May no weak race be wronged, and no strong robber feared;  
To oppressors grow hateful, to slaves more endeared;  
Till the world comes to know that the test of a cause  
Is the hatred of tyrants, and Erin's applause!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Experience

THE world was made when a man was born,  
He must taste for himself the forbidden springs;  
He can never take warning from old-fashion'd things;  
He must fight as a boy, he must drink as a youth,  
Of the friend of his soul; he must laugh to scorn  
The hints of deceit in a woman's eyes--  
They are clear as the wells of Paradise.

And so he goes on till the world grows old,  
Till his tongue has grown cautious, his heart has grown cold,  
Till the smile leaves his mouth, till the ring leaves his laugh,  
And he shirks the bright headache you ask him to quaff.  
He grows formal with men, and with women polite,  
And distrustful of both when they're out of his sight.  
Then he eats for his palate and drinks for his head,  
And loves for his pleasure,--and 'tis time he was dead.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Farewell

Farewell! Oh how hard and how sad 'tis to speak  
That last word of parting—forever to break  
The fond ties and affection that cling round the heart  
From home and from friends and from country to part.  
'Though it grieves to remember, 'tis vain to regret.  
The sad word must be spoken, and memory's spell  
Now steals o'er me sadly. Farewell! Oh farewell!

Farewell to thy green hills, thy valleys and plains,  
My poor blighted country! In exile and chains  
Are the sons doomed to linger. Of God who didst bring  
Thy children to Zion from Egypt's proud king,  
We implore Thy great mercy! Oh stretch forth Thy hand,  
And guide back her sons to their poor blighted land.

Never more thy fair face am I destined to see;  
E'en the savage loves home, but 'tis crime to love thee.  
God bless thee, dear Erin, my loved one, my own,  
Oh! how hard 'tis these tendrils to break that have grown

Round my heart. But 'tis over, and memory's spell  
Now steals o'er me sadly. Farewell! Oh, Farewell!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Forever

THOSE we love truly never die,  
Though year by year the sad memorial wreath,  
A ring and flowers, types of life and death,  
Are laid upon their graves.

For death the pure life saves,  
And life all pure is love; and love can reach  
From heaven to earth, and nobler lessons teach  
Than those by mortals read.

Well blest is he who has a dear one dead:  
A friend he has whose face will never change—  
A dear communion that will not grow strange;  
The anchor of a love is death.

The blessed sweetness of a loving breath  
Will reach our cheek all fresh through weary years.  
For her who died long since, ah! waste not tears,  
She's thine unto the end.

Thank God for one dead friend,  
With face still radiant with the light of truth,  
Whose love comes laden with the scent of youth,  
Through twenty years of death.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# From The Earth, A Cry

CAN the earth have a voice? Can the clods have speech,  
To murmur and rail at the demigods?  
Trample them! Grind their vulgar faces in the clay!

The earth was made for lords and the makers of law;  
For the conquerors and the social priest;  
For traders who feed on and foster the complex life;  
For the shrewd and the selfish who plan and keep;  
For the heirs who squander the hoard that bears  
The face of the king, and the blood of the serf,  
And the curse of the darkened souls!

O Christ! and O Christ! In thy name the law!  
In thy mouth the mandate! In thy loving hand the whip!  
They have taken thee down from thy cross and sent thee to scourge the people;  
They have shod thy feet with spikes and jointed thy dead knees with iron,  
And pushed thee, hiding behind, to trample the poor dumb faces!

The spheres make music in space. They swing  
Like fiery cherubim on their paths, circling their suns,  
Mysterious, weaving the irrevealable,  
Full of the peace of unity—sphere and its life at one—  
Humming their lives of love through the limitless waste of creation.

God! thou hast made man a test of Thyself!  
Thou hast set in him a heart that bleeds at the cry of the helpless:  
Through Thine infinite seas one world rolls silent,  
Moaning at times with quivers and fissures of blood;  
Divided, unhappy, accursed; the lower life good,  
But the higher life wasted and split, like grain with a cankered root.  
Is there health in thy gift of life, Almighty?  
Is there grief or compassion anywhere for the poor?  
If these be, there is guerdon for those who hate the wrong  
And leap naked on the spears, that blood may cry  
For truth to come, and pity, and Thy peace.  
The human sea is frozen like a swamp; and the kings  
And the heirs and the owners ride on the ice and laugh.  
Their war-forces, orders, and laws are the crusted field of a crater,  
And they stamp on the fearful rind, deriding its flesh-like shudder.

Lightning! the air is split, the crater bursts, and the breathing  
Of those below is the fume and fire of hatred.  
The thrones are stayed with the courage of shotted guns.  
The warning dies.  
But queens are dragged to the block, and the knife of the guillotine sinks  
In the garbage of pampered flesh that gluts its bed and its hinges.

Silence again, and sunshine. The gaping lips are closed on the crater.  
The dead are below, and the landless, and those who live to labor  
And grind forever in gloom that the privileged few may live.

But the silence is sullen, not restful. It heaves like a sea, and frets,  
And beats at the roof till it finds another vent for its fury.  
Again the valve is burst and the pitch-cloud rushes,—the old seam rends anew—  
Where the kings were killed before, their names are hewed from the granite—  
Paris, mad hope of the slave-shops, flames to the petroleuse!  
Tiger that tasted blood—Paris that tasted freedom!  
Never, while steel is cheap and sharp, shall thy kinglings sleep without  
dreaming— Never, while souls have flame, shall their palaces crush the hovels.

Insects and vermin, ye, the starving and dangerous myriads,  
List to the murmur that grows and growls! Come from your mines and mills,  
Pale-faced girls and women with ragged and hard-eyed children,  
Pour from your dens of toil and filth, out to the air of heaven—  
Breathe it deep, and hearken! A Cry from the cloud or beyond it,  
A Cry to the toilers to rise, to be high as the highest that rules them,  
To own the earth in their lifetime and hand it down to their children!

Emperors, stand to the bar! Chancellors, halt at the barracks!  
Landlords and Lawlords and Tradelords, the specters you conjured have risen—  
Communists, Socialists, Nihilists, Rent-rebels, Strikers, behold!  
They are fruit of the seed you have sown—God has prospered your planting.  
They come From the earth, like the army of death. You have sowed the teeth of  
the dragon!  
Hark to the bay of the leader! You shall hear the roar of the pack  
As sure as the stream goes seaward. The crust on the crater beneath you  
Shall crack and crumble and sink, with your laws and rules  
That breed the million to toil for the luxury of the ten—  
That grind the rent from the tiller's blood for drones to spend—  
That hold the teeming planet as a garden plot for a thousand—  
That draw the crowds to the cities from the healthful fields and woods—

That copulate with greed and beget disease and crime—  
That join these two and their offspring, till the world is filled with fear,  
And falsehood wins from truth, and the vile and cunning succeed,  
And manhood and love are dwarfed, and virtue and friendship sick,  
And the law of Christ is a cloak for the corpse that stands for Justice! —  
As sure as the Spirit of God is Truth, this Truth shall reign,  
And the trees and lowly brutes shall cease to be higher than men.  
God purifies slowly by peace, but urgently by fire.

John Boyle O'Reilly



# From The Heights

"COME to me for wisdom," said the mountain;  
In the valley and the plain  
There is Knowledge dimmed with sorrow in the gain;  
There is Effort, with its hope like a fountain;  
There, the chained rebel, Passion;  
Laboring Strength and fleeting Fashion;  
There, Ambition's leaping flame,  
And the iris-crown of Fame;  
But those gains are dear forever  
Won from loss and pain and fever.  
Nature's gospel never changes:  
Every sudden force deranges;  
Blind endeavor is not wise:  
Wisdom enters through the eyes;  
And the seer is the knower,  
Is the doer and the sower.

'Come to me for riches,' said the peak;  
'I am leafless, cold and calm;  
But the treasures of the lily and the palm—  
They are mine to bestow on those who seek.  
I am gift and I am giver  
To the verdured fields below,  
As the motherhood of snow  
Daily gives the new-born river.  
As a watcher on a tower,  
Listening to the evening hour,  
Sees the roads diverge and blend,  
Sees the wandering currents end  
Where the moveless waters shine  
On the far horizon line—

All the storied Past is mine;  
All its strange beliefs still clinging;  
All its singers and their singing;  
All the paths that led astray,  
All the meteors once called day;  
All the stars that rose to shine—  
Come to me—for all are mine!

'Come to me for safety,' said the height;  
'In the future as the past,  
Road and river end at last  
Like a raindropp in the ever-circling sea.  
Who shall know by lessened sight  
Where the gain and where the loss  
In the desert they must cross?  
Guides who lead their charge from ills,  
Passing soon from town to town,  
Through the forest and the down,  
Take direction from the hills;  
Those who range a wider land,  
Higher climb until they stand  
Where the past and future swing  
Like a far blue ocean-ring;  
Those who sail from land afar  
Leap from mountain-top to star.  
Higher still, from star to God,  
Have the spirit-pilots trod,  
Setting lights for mind and soul  
That the ships may reach the goal.

"They shall safely steer who see:  
Sight is wisdom. Come to me!"

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Golu

ONCE I had a little sweetheart  
In the land of the Malay,—  
Such a little yellow sweetheart!  
Warm and peerless as the day  
Of her own dear sunny island,  
Keimah, in the far, far East,  
Where the mango and banana  
Made us many a merry feast.

Such a little copper sweetheart  
Was my Golu, plump and round,  
With her hair all blue-black streaming  
O'er her to the very ground.  
Soft and clear as dew-dropp clinging  
To a grass blade was her eye;  
For the heart below was purer  
Than the hill-stream whispering by.

Costly robes were not for Golu:  
No more raiment did she need  
Than the milky budding breadfruit,  
Or the lily of the mead;  
And she was my little sweetheart  
Many a sunny summer day,  
When we ate the fragrant guavas,  
In the land of the Malay.

Life was laughing then. Ah! Golu,  
Do you think of that old time,  
And of all the tales I told you  
Of my colder Western clime?  
Do you think how happy were we  
When we sailed to strip the palm,  
And we made a lateen arbor  
Of the boat-sail in the calm?

They may call you semi-savage,  
Golu! I cannot forget  
How I poised my little sweetheart

Like a copper statuette.  
Now my path lies through the cities;  
But they cannot drive away  
My sweet dreams of little Golu  
And the land of the Malay.

John Boyle O'Reilly

## Grant—1885

BLESSED are Pain, the smiter,  
And Sorrow, the uniter!  
For one afflicted lies—  
A symbol of sacrifice—  
And all our rancor dies!

No North, no South! O stern-faced Chief,  
One weeping ours, one cowed Grief—  
Thy Country—bowed in prayer and tear—  
For North and South—above thy bier!

For North and South! O Soldier grim,  
The broken ones to weep for him  
Who broke them! He whose terrors blazed  
In smoking harvests, cities razed;  
Whose Fate-like glance sent fear and chill;  
Whose wordless lips spoke deathless will—  
Till all was shattered, all was lost—  
All hands dropped down—all War's red cost  
Laid there in ashes—Hope and Hate  
And Shame and Glory!

### Death and Fate

Fall back! Another touch is thine;  
He drank not of thy poisoned wine,  
Nor blindly met thy blind-thrown lance,  
Nor died for sightless time or chance—  
But waited, suffered, bowed and tried,  
Till all the dross was purified;  
Till every well of hate was dried;  
And North and South in sorrow vied,  
And then—at God's own calling—died!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Haunted By Tigers

NATHAN BEANS and William Lambert were two wild New England boys,  
Known from infancy to revel only in forbidden joys.

Many a mother of Nantucket bristled when she heard them come,  
With a horrid skulking whistle, tempting her good lad from home.  
But for all maternal bristling little did they seem to care,  
And they loved each other dearly, did this good-for-nothing pair.

So they lived till eighteen summers found them in the same repute,—  
They had well-developed muscles, and loose characters to boot.  
Then they did what wild Nantucket boys have never failed to do,—  
Went and filled two oily bunks among a whaler's oily crew.  
And the mothers,—ah! they raised their hands and blessed the lucky day,  
While Nantucket waved its handkerchief to see them sail away.

On a four years' cruise they started in the brave old 'Patience Parr,'  
And were soon initiated in the mysteries of tar.  
There they found the truth that whalers' tales are unsubstantial wiles,—  
They were sick and sore and sorry ere they passed the Western Isles;  
And their captain, old-man Sculpin, gave their fancies little scope,  
For he argued with a marlinspike and reasoned with a rope.  
But they stuck together bravely, they were Ishmaels with the crew:  
Nathan's voice was never raised but Bill's support was uttered too;  
And whenever Beans was floored by Sculpin's cruel marlinspike,  
Down beside him went poor Lambert, for his hand was clenched to strike.  
So they passed two years in cruising, till one breathless burning day  
The old 'Patience Parr' in Sunda Straits with flapping canvas lay.  
On her starboard side Sumatra's woods were dark beneath the glare,  
And on her port stretched Java, slumbering in the yellow air,—  
Slumbering as the jaguar slumbers, as the tropic ocean sleeps,  
Smooth and smiling on its surface with a devil in its deeps.  
So swooned Java's moveless forest, but the jungle round its root  
Knew the rustling anaconda and the tiger's padded foot.  
There in Nature's rankest garden, Nature's worst alone is rife,  
And a glorious land is wild-beast ruled for want of human life.  
Scarce a harmless thing moved on it, not a living soul was near  
From the frowning rocks of Java Head right northward to Anjier.  
Crestless swells, like wind-raised canvas, made the whaler rise and dip,  
Else she lay upon the water like a paralytic ship;

And beneath a topsail awning lay the lazy, languid crew,  
Drinking in the precious coolness of the shadow,—all save two:  
Two poor Ishmaels,—they were absent, Heaven help them!— roughly tied  
'Neath the blistering cruel sun-glare in the fore-chains, side by side.  
Side by side as it was always, each one with a word of cheer  
For the other, and for his sake bravely choking back the tear.  
Side by side, their pain or pastime never yet seemed good for one;  
But whenever pain came, each in secret wished the other gone.

You who stop at home and saunter o'er your flower scattered path,  
With life's corners velvet cushioned, have you seen a tyrant's wrath? —  
Wrath, the rude and reckless demon, not the drawing-room display  
Of an anger led by social lightning-rods upon its way.  
Ah! my friends, wrath's raw materials on the land may sometimes be,  
But the manufactured article is only found at sea.

And the wrath of old-man Sculpin was of texture Number One:  
Never absent,—when the man smiled it was hidden, but not gone.  
Old church-members of Nantucket knew him for a shining lamp,  
But his chronic Christian spirit was of pharisaic stamp.  
When ashore, he prayed aloud of how he'd sinned and been forgiven,—  
How his evil ways had brought him 'thin an ace of losing heaven;

Thank the Lord! his eyes were opened, and so on; but when the ship  
Was just ready for a voyage, you could see old Sculpin's lip  
Have a sort of nervous tremble, like a carter's long-leashed whip  
Ere it cracks; and so the skipper's lip was trembling for an oath  
At the watch on deck for idleness, the watch below for sloth,  
For the leash of his anathemas was long enough for both.

Well, 'twas burning noon off Java: Beans and Lambert in the chains  
Sank their heads, and all was silent but the voices of their pains.  
Night came ere their bonds were loosened; then the boys sank down and slept,  
And the dew in place of loved ones on their wounded bodies wept.

All was still within the whaler,—on the sea no fanning breeze,  
And the moon alone was moving over Java's gloomy trees.  
Midnight came,—one sleeper's waking glance went out the moon to meet:  
Nathan rose, and turned from Lambert, who still slumbered at his feet.  
Out toward Java went his vision, as if something in the air  
Came with promises of kindness and of peace to be found there.  
Then toward the davits moved he, where the lightest whaleboat hung;

And he worked with silent caution till upon the sea she swung,  
When he paused, and looked at Lambert, and the spirit in him cried  
Not to leave him, but to venture, as since childhood, side by side;  
And the spirit's cry was answered, for he touched the sleeper's lip,  
Who awoke and heard of Nathan's plan to leave th' accursed ship.

When 'twas told, they rose in silence, and looked outward to the land,  
they only saw Nantucket, with its homely, boat-lined strand;  
But they saw it—oh! so plainly—through the glass of coming doom.  
Then they crept into the whale-boat, and pulled toward the forest's gloom,—  
All their suffering clear that moment, like the moonlight on their wake,  
Now contracting, now expanding, like a phosphorescent snake.  
Hours speed on: the dark horizon yet shows scarce a streak of gray  
When old Sculpin comes on deck to walk his restlessness away.  
All the scene is still and solemn, and mayhap the man's cold heart  
Feels its teaching, for the wild-beast cries from shoreward make him start  
As if they had warning in them, and he o'er its meaning pored,  
Till at length one shriek from Java splits the darkness like a sword;  
And he almost screams in answer, such the nearness of the cry,  
As he clutches at the rigging with a horror in his eye,  
And with faltering accents mutters, as against the mast he leans,  
'Darn the tigers! that one shouted with the voice of Nathan Beans!'

When the boys were missed soon after, Sculpin never breathed a word  
Of his terror in the morning at the fearful sound he'd heard;  
But he entered in the log-book, and 'twas witnessed by the mates,  
Just their names, and following after, 'Ran away in Sunda Straits.'

Two years after, Captain Sculpin saw again the Yankee shore,  
With the comfortable feeling that he'd go to sea no more.  
And 'twas strange the way he altered when he saw Nantucket light:  
Holy lines spread o'er his face, and chased the old ones out of sight.  
And for many a year thereafter did his zeal spread far and wide,  
And with all his pious doings was the township edified;  
For he led the sacred singing in an unctuous, nasal tone,  
And he looked as if the sermon and the scriptures were his own.

But one day the white-haired preacher spoke of how God's justice fell  
Soon or late with awful sureness on the man whose heart could tell  
Of a wrong done to the widow or the orphan, and he said  
That such wrongs were ever living, though the injured ones were dead.  
And old Sculpin's heart was writhing, though his heavy eyes were closed,—



For, despite his solemn sanctity, at sermon times he dozed;  
But his half-awakened senses heard the preacher speak of death  
And of wrongs done unto orphans, and he dreamed with wheezing breath  
That cold hands were tearing from his heart its pharisaic screens,  
That the preacher was a tiger with the voice of Nathan Beans!  
And he shrieked and jumped up wildly, and upon the seat stood he,  
As if standing on the whaler looking outward on the sea;  
And he clutched as at the rigging with a horror in his eye,  
For he saw the woods of Java and he heard that human cry,  
As he crouched and cowered earthward. And the simple folk around  
Stood with looks of kindly sympathy: they raised him from the ground,  
And they brought him half unconscious to the humble chapel door,  
Whence he fled as from a scourging, and he entered it no more;  
For the sight of that old preacher brought the horror to his face,  
And he dare not meet his neighbors' honest eyes within the place,  
For his conscience like a mirror rose and showed the dismal scenes,  
Where the tiger yelled forever with the voice of Nathan Beans.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Heart Hunger

THERE is no truth in faces, save in children:  
They laugh and frown and weep from nature's keys;  
But we who meet the world give out false notes,  
The true note dying muffled in the heart.

O, there be woeful prayers and piteous wailing,  
That spirits hear, from lives that starve for love!  
The body's food is bread; and wretches' cries  
Are heard and answered: but the spirit's food  
Is love; and hearts that starve may die in agony  
And no physician mark the cause of death.

You cannot read the faces; they are masks—  
Like yonder woman, smiling at the lips,  
Silk-clad, bejeweled, lapped with luxury,  
And beautiful and young—ay, smiling at the lips,  
But never in the eyes from inner light:  
A gracious temple, hung with flowers without—  
Within, a naked corpse upon the stones!

O, years and years ago the hunger came—  
The desert-thirst for love—she prayed for love—  
She cried out in the night-time of her soul for Jove!  
The cup they gave was poison whipped to froth.  
For years she drank it, knowing it for death;  
She shrieked in soul against it, but must drink:  
The skies were dumb—she dared not swoon or scream.  
As Indian mothers see babes die for food,  
She watched dry-eyed beside her starving heart,  
And only sobbed in secret for its gasps,  
And only raved one wild hour when it died!

O Pain, have pity! Numb her quivering sense;  
O Fame, bring guerdon! Thrice a thousand years  
Thy boy-thief with the fox beneath his cloak  
Has let it gnaw his side unmoved, and held the world;  
And she, a slight woman, smiling at the lips,  
With repartee and jest—a corpse-heart in her breast!

John Boyle O'Reilly

## Her Refrain

Do you love me?' she said, when the skies were blue,  
And we walked where the stream through the branches glistened;  
And I told and retold her my love was true,  
While she listened and smiled, and smiled and listened.

Do you love me?' she whispered, when days were drear,  
And her eyes searched mine with a patient yearning;  
And I kissed her, renewing the words so dear,  
While she listened and smiled, as if slowly learning.

"Do you love me?" she asked, when we sat at rest  
By the stream enshadowed with autumn glory;  
Her cheek had been laid as in peace on my breast,  
But she raised it to ask for the sweet old story.

And I said: 'I will tell her the tale again—  
I will swear by the earth and the stars above me!  
And I told her that uttermost time should prove  
The fervor and faith of my perfect love;  
And I vowed it and pledged it that nought should move;  
While she listened and smiled in my face, and then  
She whispered once more, ' Do you truly love me? '

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Hidden Sins

FOR every sin that comes before the light,  
And leaves an outward blemish on the soul,  
How many, darker, cower out of sight,  
And burrow, blind and silent, like the mole.  
And like the mole, too, with its busy feet  
That dig and dig a never-ending cave,  
Our hidden sins gnaw through the soul, and meet  
And feast upon each other in its grave.

A buried sin is like a covered sore  
That spreads and festers 'neath a painted face;  
And no man's art can heal it evermore,  
But only His—the Surgeon's—promised grace.  
Who hides a sin is like the hunter who  
Once warmed a frozen adder with his breath,  
And when he placed it near his heart it flew  
With poisoned fangs and stung that heart to death.

A sculptor once a granite statue made,  
One-sided only, just to fit its place:  
The unseen side was monstrous; so men shade  
Their evil acts behind a smiling face.  
O blind! O foolish! thus our sins to hide,  
And force our pleading hearts the gall to sip;  
O cowards! who must eat the myrrh, that Pride  
May smile like Virtue with a lying lip.

A sin admitted is nigh half atoned;  
And while the fault is red and freshly done,  
If we but dropp our eyes and think,—'tis owned,—  
'Tis half forgiven, half the crown is won.  
But if we heedless let it reek and rot,  
Then pile a mountain on its grave, and turn,  
With smiles to all the world,—that tainted spot  
Beneath the mound will never cease to burn.

John Boyle O'Reilly

## In Bohemia

I'D rather live in Bohemia than in any other land;  
For only there are the values true,  
And the laurels gathered in all men's view.  
The prizes of traffic and state are won  
By shrewdness or force or by deeds undone;  
But fame is sweeter without the feud,  
And the wise of Bohemia are never shrewd.  
Here, pilgrims stream with a faith sublime  
From every class and clime and time,  
Aspiring only to be enrolled  
With the names that are writ in the book of gold;  
And each one bears in mind or hand  
A palm of the dear Bohemian land.  
The scholar first, with his book—a youth  
Aflame with the glory of harvested truth;  
A girl with a picture, a man with a play,  
A boy with a wolf he has modeled in clay;  
A smith with a marvelous hilt and sword,  
A player, a king, a plowman, a lord—  
And the player is king when the door is past.  
The plowman is crowned, and the lord is last!

I'd rather fail in Bohemia than win in another land;  
There are no titles inherited there,  
No hoard or hope for the brainless heir;  
No gilded dullard native born  
To stare at his fellow with leaden scorn:  
Bohemia has none but adopted sons;  
Its limits, where Fancy's bright stream runs;  
Its honors, not garnered for thrift or trade,  
But for beauty and truth men's souls have made.  
To the empty heart in a jeweled breast  
There is value, maybe, in a purchased crest;  
But the thirsty of soul soon learn to know  
The moistureless froth of the social show;  
The vulgar sham of the pompous feast  
Where the heaviest purse is the highest priest;  
The organized charity, scrimped and iced,  
In the name of a cautious, statistical Christ;

The smile restrained, the respectable cant,  
When a friend in need is a friend in want;  
Where the only aim is to keep afloat,  
And a brother may drown with a cry in his throat.  
Oh, I long for the glow of a kindly heart and the grasp of a friendly hand,  
And I'd rather live in Bohemia than in any other land.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Inscription To Western Australia

Nation of sun and sin,  
Thy flowers and crimes are red,  
And thy heart is sore within  
While the glory crowns thy head.  
Land of the songless birds,  
What was thine ancient crime,  
Burning through lapse of time  
Like a prophet' s cursing words!

Aloes and myrrh and tears  
Mix in thy bitter wine: -  
Drink, while the cup is thine,  
Drink, for the draught is sign  
Of thy reign in the coming years.

John Boyle O'Reilly



## Ireland - 1882

'ISLAND of Destiny! Innisfail!' they cried, when their weary eyes  
First looked on thy beauteous bosom from the amorous, ocean rise.  
'Island of Destiny! Innisfail!' we cry. dear land, to thee,  
As the sun of thy future rises and reddens the western sea!

Pregnant as earth with its gold and gems and its metals strong and fine,  
Is thy soul with its ardors and fancies and sympathies divine.

Mustard seed of the nations! they scattered thy leaves to the air,  
But the ravisher pales at the harvest that flourishes everywhere.  
Queen in the right of thy courage! manacled, scourged, defamed,  
Thy voice in the teeth of the bayonets the right of a race proclaimed.

'Bah!' they sneered from their battlements, 'her people cannot unite;  
They are sands of the sea, that break before the rush of our ordered might!'

And wherever the flag of the pirate flew, the English slur was heard,  
And the shallow of soul re-echoed the boast of the taunting word.

But we—O sun, that of old was our god, we look in thy face to-day,  
As our Druids who prayed in the ancient time, and with them we proudly say:

'We have wronged no race, we have robbed no land, we have never oppressed  
the weak!'

And this in the face of Heaven is the nobler thing to speak.  
We can never unite—thank God for that! in such unity as yours,  
That strangles the rights of others, and only itself endures  
As the guard of a bloodstained spoil and the red-eyed watch of the slave;  
No need for such robber-union to a race free-souled and brave.

The races that band for plunder are the mud of the human stream,  
The base and the coward and sordid, without an unselfish gleam.

It is mud that unites; but the sand is free—ay, every grain is free,  
And the freedom of individual men is the highest of liberty.

It is mud that coheres; but the sand is free, till the lightning smite the shore,  
And smelt the grains to a crystal mass, to return to sand no more.  
And so with the grains of our Irish sand, that flash cleareyed to the sun,

Till a noble Purpose smites them and melts them into one.

While the sands are free, O Tyrants! like the wind are your steel and speech;  
Your brute-force crushes a legion, but a soul it can never reach.

Island of Destiny! Innisfail? for thy faith is the payment near:  
The mine of the future is opened, and the golden veins appear.

Thy hands are white and thy page unstained. Reach out for the glorious years,  
And take them from Grod as His recompense for thy fortitude and tears.

Thou canst stand by the way ascending, as thy tyrant goes to the base:  
The seeds of her death are in her and the signs in her cruel face.  
On her darkened path lie the corpses of men, with whose blood her feet are red;  
And the curses of ruined nations are a cloud above her head.

O Erin, fresh in the latest day, like a gem from a Syrian tomb,  
The burial clay of the centuries has saved thy light in the gloom.

Thy hands may stretch to a kindred world: there is none that hates but one;  
And she but hates as a pretext for the rapine she has done.

The night of thy grief is closing, and the sky in the East is red:  
Thy children watch from the mountain-tops for the sun to kiss thy head.

O Mother of men that are fit to be free, for their test for freedom borne,  
Thy vacant place in the Nations' race awaits but the coming morn!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Jacqueminots

I MAY not speak in words, dear, but let my words be flowers,  
To tell their crimson secret in leaves of fragrant fire;  
They plead for smiles and kisses as summer fields for showers,  
And every purple veinlet thrills with exquisite desire.

O, let me see the glance, dear, the gleam of soft confession  
You give my amorous roses for the tender hope they prove;  
And press their heart-leaves back, love, to drink their deeper passion,  
For their sweetest, wildest perfume is the whisper of my love!

My roses, tell her, pleading, all the fondness and the sighing,  
All the longing of a heart that reaches thirsting for its bliss;  
And tell her, tell her, roses, that my lips and eyes are dying  
For the melting of her love-look and the rapture of her kiss.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# John Mitchel

I.

DEAD, with his harness on him:  
Rigid and cold and white,  
Marking the place of the vanguard  
Still in the ancient fight.

The climber dead on the hill-side,  
Before the height is won:  
The workman dead on the building,  
Before the work is done!

O, for a tongue to utter  
The words that should be said—  
Of his worth that was silver, living,  
That is gold and jasper, dead!

Dead—but the death was fitting:  
His life, to the latest breath,  
Was poured like wax on the chart of right,  
And is sealed by the stamp of Death!

Dead—but the end was fitting:  
First in the ranks he led;  
And he marks the height of his nation's gain,  
As he lies in his harness—dead!

II.

Weep for him, Ireland—mother lonely;  
Weep for the son w'ho died for thee.  
Wayward he was, but he loved thee only,  
Loyal and fearless as son could be.  
Weep for him, Ireland—sorrowing nation  
Faithful to all who are true to thee:  
Never a son in thy desolation  
Had holier love for thy cause than he.

Sons of the Old Land, mark the story—

Mother and son in the final test:  
Weeping she sits in her darkened glory,  
Holding her dead to her stricken breast.  
Only the dead on her knees are lying—  
Ah, poor mother beneath the cross!  
Strength is won by the constant trying,  
Crowns are gemmed by the tears of loss!

Sons of the Old Land, mark the story—  
Mother and son to each other true:  
She called, and he answered, old and hoary,  
And gave her his life as a man should do.  
She may weep—but for us no weeping:  
Tears are vain till the work is done;  
Tears for her—but for us the keeping  
Our hearts as true as her faithful son.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Liberty

I am Liberty-God's daughter!

My symbols-a law and a torch;  
Not a sword to threaten slaughter,  
Nor a flame to dazzle or scorch;  
But a light that the world may see,  
And a truth that shall make men free.

I am the sister of Duty,  
And I am the sister of Faith;  
To-day adored for my beauty,  
To-morrow led forth for death.  
I am she whom ages prayed for;  
Heroes suffered undismayed for;  
Whom the martyrs were betrayed for.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Liberty Lighting The World

MAJESTIC warder by the Nation's gate,  
Spike-crowned, flame-armed like Agony or Glory,  
Holding the tablets of some unknown law,  
With gesture eloquent and mute as Fate,—  
We stand about thy feet in solemn awe,  
Like desert-tribes who seek their Sphinx's story,  
And question thee in spirit and in speech:  
What art thou? Whence? What comest thou to teach?  
What vision hold those introverted eyes  
Of Revolutions framed in centuries?  
Thy flame — what threat, or guide for sacred way?  
Thy tablet — what commandment? What Sinai?  
Lo! as the waves make murmur at thy base,  
We watch the somber grandeur of thy face,  
And ask thee—what thou art.

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My symbols—a law and a torch;  
Not a sword to threaten slaughter,  
Nor a flame to dazzle or scorch;  
But a light that the world may see,  
And a truth that shall make men free.

I am the sister of Duty,  
And I am the sister of Faith;  
To-day, adored for my beauty,  
To-morrow, led forth to death.  
I am she whom ages prayed for;  
Heroes suffered undismayed for;  
Whom the martyrs were betrayed for!

I am a herald republican from a land grown free under feet of kings;  
My radiance, lighting a century's span, a sister's love to Columbia brings.  
I am a beacon to ships at sea, and a warning to watchers ashore;  
In palace and prairie and street, through me, shall be heard the ominous ocean-roar.  
I am a threat to oppression's sin, and a pharos-light to the weak endeavor;  
Mine is the love that men may win, but lost—it is lost forever!  
Mine are the lovers who deepest pain, with weapon and word still wounding sore;

With sanguined hands they caress and chain, and crown and trample—and still adore!

Cities have flamed in my name, and Death has reaped wild harvest of joy and peace,

Till mine is a voice that stills the breath, my advent an omen that love shall cease!

In My name, timid ones crazed with terror! In My name, Law with a scourging rod!

In My name, Anarchy, Cruelty, Error! I, who am Liberty,—daughter of God!—

Peace! Be still! See my torch uplifted,—

Heedless of Passion or Mammon's cause!

Round my feet are the ages drifted,

Under mine eyes are the rulers sifted,—

Ever, forever, my changeless laws!

I am Liberty! Fame of nation or praise of statute is naught to me;

Freedom is growth and not creation: one man suffers, one man is free.

One brain forges a constitution; but how shall the million souls be won?

Freedom is more than a resolution—he is not free who is free alone.

Justice is mine, and it grows by loving, changing the world like the circling sun;  
Evil recedes from the spirit's proving as mist from the hollows when night is done.

I am the test, O silent toilers, holding the scales of error and truth;

Proving the heritage held by spoilers from hard hands empty, and wasted youth.

Hither, ye blind, from your futile banding; know the rights, and the rights are won;

Wrong shall die with the understanding—one truth clear and the work is done.

Nature is higher than Progress or Knowledge, whose need is ninety enslaved for ten;

My word shall stand against mart and college: THE PLANET BELONGS TO ITS LIVING MEN!

And hither, ye weary ones and breathless, searching the seas for a kindly shore,  
I am Liberty! patient, deathless—set by Love at the Nation's door.

John Boyle O'Reilly



# Life Is A Confluence

HUNGER goes sleeplessly  
Thinking of food;  
Evil lies painfully  
Yearning for good.  
Life is a confluence:  
Nature must move,  
Like the heart of a poet,  
Toward beauty and love.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Living

To toil all day and lie worn-out at night;  
To rise for all the years to slave and sleep,  
And breed new broods to do no other thing  
In toiling, bearing, breeding — life is this  
To myriad men, too base for man or brute.

To serve for common duty, while the brain  
Is hot with high desire to be distinct;  
To fill the sand-grain place among the stones  
That build the social wall in million sameness,  
Is life by leave, and death by insignificance.

To live the morbid years, with dripping blood  
Of sacrificial labor for a Thought;  
To take the dearest hope and lay it down  
Beneath the crushing wheels for love of Freedom;  
To bear the sordid jeers of cant and trade,  
And go on hewing for a far ideal, —  
This were a life worth giving to a cause,  
If cause be found so worth a martyr life.

But highest life of man, nor work nor sacrifice,  
But utter seeing of the things that be!  
To pass amid the hurrying crowds, and watch  
The hungry race for things of vulgar use;  
To mark the growth of baser lines in men;  
To note the bending to a servile rule;  
To know the natural discord called disease  
That rots like rust the blood and souls of men;  
To test the wisdoms and philosophies by touch  
Of that which is immutable, being clear,  
The beam God opens to the poet's brain;  
To see with eyes of pity laboring souls  
Strive upward to the Freedom and the Truth,  
And still be backward dragged by fear and ignorance;  
To see the beauty of the world, and hear  
The rising harmony of growth, whose shade  
Of undertone is harmonized decay;  
To know that love is life — that blood is one

And rushes to the union — that the heart  
Is like a cup athirst for wine of love;  
Who sees and feels this meaning utterly,  
The wrong of law, the right of man, the natural truth.  
Partaking not of selfish aims, withholding not  
The word that strengthens and the hand that helps:  
Who waits and sympathizes with the pettiest life,  
And loves all things, and reaches up to God  
With thanks and blessing — He alone is living.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Love Was True To Me

LOVE was true to me,  
True and tender;  
I who ought to be  
Love's defender,  
Let the cold winds blow  
Till they chilled him;  
Let the winds and snow  
Shroud him—and I know  
That I killed him.

Years he cried to me  
To be kinder;  
I was blind to see  
And grew blinder.  
Years with soft hands raised  
Fondly reaching,  
Wept and prayed and praised,  
Still beseeching.

When he died I woke,  
God! how lonely,  
When the gray dawn broke  
On one only.  
Now beside Love's grave  
I am kneeling;  
All he sought and gave  
I am feeling.

John Boyle O'Reilly

## Love, And Be Wise

NOT on the word alone  
Let love depend;  
Neither by actions done  
Choose ye the friend.

Let the slow years fly—  
These are the test;  
Never to peering eye  
Open the breast.

Psyche won hopeless woe,  
Reaching to take;  
Wait till your lilies grow  
Up from the lake.

Gather words patiently;  
Harvest the deed;  
Let the winged years fly,  
Sifting the seed.

Judging by harmony,  
Learning by strife;  
Seeking in unity  
Precept and life.

Seize the supernal—  
Prometheus dies;  
Take the external  
On trust—and be wise.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Love's Sacrifice

LOVE'S Herald flew o'er all the fields of Greece,  
Crying: '

Love's altar waits for sacrifice!'

And all folk answered, like a wave of peace,  
With treasured offerings and gifts of price.

Toward high Olympus every white road filled  
With pilgrims streaming to the blest abode;  
Each bore rich tribute, some for joys fulfilled,  
And some for blisses lingering on the road.

The pious peasant drives his laden car;  
The fisher youth bears treasure from the sea;  
A wife brings honey for the sweets that are;  
A maid brings roses for the sweets to be.

Here strides the soldier with his wreathed sword,  
No more to glitter in his country's wars;  
There walks the poet with his mystic word,  
And smiles at Eros' mild recruit from Mars.

But midst these bearers of propitious gifts,  
Behold where two, a youth and maiden, stand:  
She bears no boon; his arm no burden lifts,  
Save her dear fingers pressed within his hand.

Their touch ignites the soft delicious fire,  
Whose rays the very altar-flames eclipse;  
Their eyes are on each other—sweet desire  
And yearning passion tremble on their lips.

So fair—so strong! Ah, Love! what errant wiles  
Have brought these two so poor and so unblest?  
But see! Instead of anger, Cupid smiles;  
And lo! he crowns their sacrifice as best!

Their hands are empty, but their hearts are  
Their gifts so rare for all the host suffice:  
Before the altar is their life-wine spilled—

The love they long for is their sacrifice.

John Boyle O'Reilly

## Love's Secret

LOVE found them sitting in a woodland place,  
His amorous hand amid her golden tresses;  
And Love looked smiling on her glowing face  
And moistened eyes upturned to his caresses.

'O sweet,' she murmured, 'life is utter bliss!'  
'Dear heart,' he said, 'our golden cup runs over!'  
'Drink, love,' she cried, 'and thank the gods for this!'  
He drained the precious lips of cup and lover.

Love blessed the kiss; but, ere he wandered thence,  
The mated bosoms heard this benediction:  
"Love lies within the brimming bowl of sense:  
Who Jceeps this full has joy—who drains, affliction."

They heard the rustle as he smiling fled:  
She reached her hand to pull the roses blowing.  
He stretched to take the purple grapes o'erhead;  
Love whispered back, 'Nay, Keep their beauties growing.'

They paused, and understood: one flower alone  
They took and kept, and Love flew smiling over.  
Their roses bloomed, their cup went brimming on—  
She looked for love within, and found her lover.

John Boyle O'Reilly



# Loving Is Dreaming

Life is a certainty,  
Death is a doubt;  
Men may be dead  
While they're walking about.  
Love is as needful  
To being as breath;  
Loving is dreaming,  
And waking is death.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Macarius The Monk

IN the old days, while yet the Church was young,  
And men believed that praise of God was sung  
In curbing self as well as singing psalms,  
There lived a monk, Macarius by name,  
A holy man, to whom the faithful came  
With hungry hearts to hear the wondrous Word.  
In sight of gushing springs and sheltering palms,  
He dwelt within the desert: from the marsh  
He drank the brackish water, and his food  
Was dates and roots,—and all his rule was harsh,  
For pampered flesh in' those days warred with good.  
From those who came in scores a few there were  
Who feared the devil more than fast and prayer,  
And these remained and took the hermit's vow.  
A dozen saints there grew to be; and now  
Macarius, happy, lived in larger care.  
He taught his brethren all the lore he knew,  
And as they learned, his pious rigors grew.  
His whole intent was on the spirit's goal:  
He taught them silence—words disturb the soul;  
He warned of joys, and bade them pray for sorrow,  
And be prepared to-day for death to-morrow;  
To know that human life alone was given  
To prove the souls of those who merit heaven;  
He bade the twelve in all things be as brothers,  
And die to self, to live and work for others.  
'For so," he said, 'we save our love and labors,  
And each one gives his own and takes his neighbor's.'

Thus long he taught, and while they silent heard,  
He prayed for fruitful soil to hold the Word.  
One day, beside the marsh they' labored long,—  
For worldly work makes sweeter sacred song,—  
And when the cruel sun made hot the sand,  
And Afric's gnats the sweltering face and hand  
Tormenting stung, a passing traveler stood  
And watched the workers by the reeking flood.  
Macarius, nigh with heat and toil was faint;  
The traveler saw, and to the suffering saint

A bunch of luscious grapes in pity threw.  
Most sweet and fresh and fair they were to view,  
A generous cluster, bursting-rich with wine,  
Macarius longed to taste. 'The fruit is mine,'  
He said, and sighed; 'but I, who daily teach,  
Feel now the bond to practice as I preach.'  
He gave the cluster to the nearest one,  
And with his heavy toil went patient on.

As one athirst will greet a flowing brim,  
The tempting fruit made moist the mouth of him  
Who took the gift; but in the yearning eye  
Rose brighter light: to one whose lip was dry  
He gave the grapes, and bent him to his spade.  
And he who took, unknown to any other,  
The sweet refreshment handed to a brother.  
And so, from each to each, till round was made  
The circuit wholly—when the grapes at last,  
Untouched and tempting, to Macarius passed.  
'Now God be thanked! ' he cried, and ceased his toil;  
'The seed was good, but better was the soil.  
My brothers, join with me to bless the day.'  
But, ere they knelt, he threw the grapes away.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Mary

DEAR honored name, beloved for human ties,  
But loved and honored first that One was given  
In living proof to erring mortal eyes  
That our poor earth is near akin to heaven.

Sweet word of dual meaning: one of grace,  
And born of our kind advocate above;  
And one by memory linked to that dear face  
That blessed my childhood with its mother-love,

And taught me first the simple prayer, 'To thee,  
Poor banished sons of Eve, we send our cries.'  
Through mist of years, those words recall to me  
A childish face upturned to loving eyes.

And yet to some the name of Mary bears  
No special meaning and no gracious power;  
In that dear word they seek for hidden snares,  
As wasps find poison in the sweetest flower.

But faithful hearts can see, o'er doubts and fears,  
The Virgin link that binds the Lord to earth;  
Which to the upturned trusting face appears  
A more than angel, though of human birth.

The sweet-faced moon reflects on cheerless night  
The rays of hidden sun to rise to-morrow;  
So unseen God still lets His promised light,  
Through holy Mary, shine upon our sorrow.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Mayflower

THUNDER our thanks to her—guns, hearts and lips!  
Cheer from the ranks to her,  
Shout from the banks to her—  
Mayflower! Foremost and best of our ships.  
Mayflower! Twice in the national story  
Thy dear name in letters of gold—  
Woven in texture that never grows old-  
Winning a home and winning glory!  
Sailing the years to us, welcomed for aye;  
Cherished for centuries, dearest to-day.  
Every heart throbs for her, every flag dips—  
Mayflower! First and last—best of our ships!

White as a seagull, she swept the long passage,  
True as the homing-bird flies with its message.  
Love her? O, richer than silk every sail of her.  
Trust her? More precious than gold every nail of her.  
Write we down faithfully every man's part in her;  
Greet we all gratefully every true heart in her.  
More than a name to us, sailing the fleetest,  
Symbol of that which is purest and sweetest.  
More than a keel to us, steering the straightest:  
Emblem of that which is freest and greatest.  
More than a dove-bosomed sail to the windward:  
Flame passing on while the night-clouds fly hindward.  
Kiss every plank of her! None shall take rank of her ;  
Frontward or weatherward, none can eclipse.  
Thunder our thanks to her! Cheer from the banks to her!  
Mayflower! Foremost and best of our ships!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Midnight—september 19, 1881

DEATH OF PRESIDENT GARFIELD.

ONCE in a lifetime, we may see the veil  
Tremble and lift, that hides symbolic things;  
The Spirit's vision, when the senses fail,  
Sweeps the weird meaning that the outlook brings.

Deep in the midst of turmoil, it may be—  
A crowded street, a forum, or a field,—  
The soul inverts the telescope to see  
To-day's event in future's years revealed.

Back from the present, let us look at Rome:  
Behold, what Cato meant, what Brutus said.  
Hark! the Athenians welcome Cimon home!  
How clear they are those glimpses of the dead!

But we, hard toilers, we who plan and weave  
Through common days the web of common life,  
What word, alas! shall teach us to receive  
The mystic meaning of our peace and strife?

Whence comes our symbol? Surely, God must speak—  
No less than He can make us heed or pause:  
Self-seekers we, too busy or too weak  
To search beyond our daily lives and laws.

From things occult our earth-turned eyes rebel;  
No sound of Destiny can reach our ears;  
We have no time for dreaming—Hark! a knell—  
A knell at midnight! All the nation hears!

A second grievous throb! The dreamers wake—  
The merchant's soul forgets his goods and ships;  
The weary workmen from their slumbers break;  
The women raise their eyes with quivering lips;

The miner rests upon his pick to hear;

The printer's type stops midway from the case;  
The solemn sound has reached the roysterer's ear,  
And brought the shame and sorrow to his face.

Again it booms! O Mystic Veil, upraise!  
—Behold, 'tis lifted? On the darkness drawn,  
A picture lined with light! The people's gaze,  
Prom sea to sea, beholds it till the dawn!

A death-bed scene—a sinking sufferer lies,  
Their chosen ruler, crowned with love and pride;  
Around, his counselors, with streaming eyes;  
His wife, heart-broken, kneeling by his side:

Death's shadow holds her—it will pass too soon;  
She weeps in silence—bitterest of tears;  
He wanders softly—Nature's kindest boon;  
And as he murmurs, all the country hears:

For him the pain is past, the struggle ends;  
His cares and honors fade—his younger life  
In peaceful Mentor conies, with dear old friends;  
His mother's arms take home his dear young wife.

He stands among the students, tall and strong,  
And teaches truths republican and grand;  
He moves—ah, pitiful—he sweeps along  
O'er fields of carnage leading his command!

He speaks to crowded faces—round him surge  
Thousands and millions of excited men:  
He hears them cheer—sees some vast light emerge—  
Is borne as on a tempest—then—ah, then,

The fancies fade, the fever's work is past;  
A deepened pang, then recollection's thrill;  
He feels the faithful lips that kiss their last.  
His heart beats once in answer, and is still!

The curtain falls: but hushed, as if afraid,  
The people wait, tear-stained, with heaving breast;  
'Twill rise again, they know, when he is laid

With Freedom, in the Capitol, at rest.

John Boyle O'Reilly



# Muley Malak

THUNDER of guns, and cries—banners and spears and blood!  
Troops have died where they stood holding the vantage points—  
They have raced like waves at a wall, and dashed themselves to death.

Dawn the fight begin, and noon was red with its noon.  
The armies stretch afar—and the plain of Alcazar  
Is drenched with Moorish blood.

On one side, Muley the King—Muley Malek the Strong.  
He had seized the Moorish crown because it would fit his brows.  
Hamet the Fair was king; but Muley pulled him down, because he was strong.

The fierce sun glares on the clouds of dust and battlesmoke,  
The hoarsened soldiers choke in the blinding heat.  
Muley the King is afield, but sick to the death.  
Borne on a litter he lies, his blood on fire, his eyes  
Flaming with fever light.  
Hamah Tabah the Captain, stands by the curtained bed,  
Telling him news of the fight—how the waves roll and rise, and clash and mingle  
and seethe.  
And Hamah bends to the scene. He peers under arched hand—  
As an eagle he stoops to the field. One hand on the hilt  
Is white at the knuckles, so fiercely gripped; while the hand  
That had parted the curtains before now clutches the silk and wrings.  
Hamet's squadrons are moving in mass—their lines are circling the plain!  
The thousands of Muley stand, like bison dazed by an earthquake;

They are stunned by the thud of the fight, they are deer without a leader;  
Their charge has died like the impulse of missiles freed from the sling;  
Their spears waver like shaken barley,—they are dumbstruck and ready to fly!

Hamah Tabah the Captain, in words like the pouring of pitch, has painted  
The terrible scene for the sick King, and terrible answer follows.  
Up from the couch of pain, disdaining the bonds of weakness;  
Flinging aside disease as a wrestler flings his tunic;  
Strong with the smothered fire of fever, and fiercer far than its flaming,  
Rises in mail from the litter Muley Malek the King!

Down on his plunging stallion, in the eyes of the shuddered troops,

His bent plume like a smoke, and his sword like a flame,  
Smelting their souls with his courage, he rides before his soldiers!  
They bend from his face like the sun—their eyes are blind with shame—  
They thrill as a stricken tiger thrills, gathering his limbs from a blow;  
They raise their faces, and watch him, sworded and mailed and strong;  
They watch him, and shout his name fiercely—'Muley, the King!'  
Grimly they close their ranks, drinking his face like wine;  
Strength to the arm and wrath to the soul, and power—  
Fuel and fire he was—and the battle roared like a crater!

Back to the litter, his face turned from the lines, and fixed  
In a stare like the faces in granite, the King  
Rode straight and strong, holding his sword  
Soldierly, gripped on the thigh, grim as a king in iron!

Stiff in the saddle, stark, frowning—one hand is raised,  
The mailed finger is laid on the mouth:  
'Silence!' the warning said to Haman Tabah the Captain.

Help from his horse they give, moving him, still unbending,  
Down to the bed, and lay him within the curtains.  
Mutely they answer his frown, like ridges of bronze, and sternly  
Again is the mailed hand raised and laid on the lips in warning:  
'Silence!' it said, and the meaning smote through their blood like flame,  
As the tremor passed through his armor and the grayness crept o'er his  
features—  
Muley the King was dead!

Furious the struggle and long, the armies with teeth a-clench  
And dripping weapons shortened, like athletes whose blows have killed pain.  
The soldiers of Hamet were flushed—but the spirit of Muley opposed them;  
The weak of Muley grew strong when they looked at the curtained litter.  
Their thought of the King was wine in the thirst of the fight;  
They saw that Hamah was there, still bending over the bed;  
Holding the curtains wide and taking the order that came  
From the burning lips of the King, and sending it down to his soldiers;  
They knew that Hamah the Captain was telling him of the onset,  
How they swept like hail on the fields, and left them like sickled grain.  
Back, as the waves in a tempest are flung from a cliff and scattered,  
Burst and horribly broken and driven beneath with the impact,  
Shivered, for once and forever, the conquered forces; King Hamet  
Was slain by the sword, and the foreign monarch who helped him,

And the plain was swept by the besom of death:  
There never was grander faith in a king!

Trophies and victors' crowns, bring them to bind his brow!  
Circle his curtained bed—thousands and thousands, come!  
It will cure him, and kill his pain—we must see him tonight again:  
One glance of his love and pride for all the hosts that died—  
To his bedside—come!

Rigid, with frowning brow, his finger laid on his lips,  
They saw him—saw him and knew, and read the word that he spake,  
Stronger than death, and they stood in their tears, and were silent,  
Obeying the King!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# My Mother's Memory

There is one bright star in heaven  
    Ever shining in my night;  
God to me one guide has given  
    Like the sailor's beacon light,  
Set on every shoal of danger  
    Sending out its warning ray  
To the homebound weary stranger  
    Looking for the land-locked bay.  
In my farthest, wildest wand'rings  
    I have turned me to that love,  
As a diver, neath the water,  
    Turns to watch the light above.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# My Native Land

IT chanced to me upon a time to sail  
Across the Southern Ocean to and fro;  
And, landing at fair isles, by stream and vale  
Of sensuous blessing did we ofttimes go.  
And months of dreamy joys, like joys in sleep,  
Or like a clear, calm stream o'er mossy stone,  
Unnoted passed our hearts with voiceless sweep,  
And left us yearning still for lands unknown.

And when we found one,—for 'tis soon to find  
In thousand-isled Cathay another isle,—  
For one short noon its treasures filled the mind,  
And then again we yearned, and ceased to smile.  
And so it was, from isle to isle we passed,  
Like wanton bees or boys on flowers or lips;  
And when that all was tasted, then at last  
We thirsted still for draughts instead of sips.

I learned from this there is no Southern land  
Can fill with love the hearts of Northern men.  
Sick minds need change; but, when in health they stand  
'Neath foreign skies, their love flies home again.  
And thus with me it was: the yearning turned  
From laden airs of cinnamon away,  
And stretched far westward, while the full heart burned  
With love for Ireland, looking on Cathay!

My first dear love, all dearer for thy grief!  
My land, that has no peer in all the sea  
For verdure, vale, or river, flower or leaf,—  
If first to no man else, thou'rt first to me.  
New loves may come with duties, but the first  
Is deepest yet,—the mother's breath and smiles:  
Like that kind face and breast where I was nursed  
Is my poor land, the Niobe of isles.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# My Troubles

I WROTE down my troubles every day;  
And after a few short years,  
When I turned to the heart-aches passed away,  
I read them with smiles, not tears.

John Boyle O'Reilly

## Night Poetry 2

Oh! no! I would not love again  
E'en had I still the power given;  
I would not risk its pain and fears  
E'en though its joys were taste of heaven.  
A breath may blight the heart we prize;  
A whisper weave deceit around it;  
And then our heart's most tender chord  
Is wounded by the chain that bound it.

'Tis hard to see death's chilling hand  
The life-strings of our treasure sever:  
But harder still when loving hearts  
Are rudely rent apart for ever.  
But ah! such griefs are naught to those  
That fill the heart where passion burned  
Till falsehood burst the mask and showed  
That love by heartless scorn returned

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Night Thoughts 1

Have I no future left me?  
Is there no struggling ray  
From the sun of my life outshining  
Down on my darksome way?

Will there no gleam of sunshine  
Cast o'er my path its light?  
Will there no star of hope rise  
Out of this gloom of night?

Have I 'gainst heaven's warnings  
Sinfully, madly rushed?  
Else why thus were my heart strings severed?  
Why was my love-light crushed?

Oh! I have hopes and yearnings—  
Hopes that I know are vain  
And knowledge robs life of pleasure—  
And death of its only pain

John Boyle O'Reilly



# Peace And Pain

THE day and night are symbols of creation,  
And each has part in all that God has made;  
There is no ill without its compensation,  
And life and death are only light and shade.  
There never beat a heart so base and sordid  
But felt at times a sympathetic glow;  
There never lived a virtue unrewarded,  
Nor died a vice without its meed of woe.

In this brief life despair should never reach us;  
The sea looks wide because the shores are dim;  
The star that led the Magi still can teach us  
The way to go if we but look to Him.  
And as we wade, the darkness closing o'er us,  
The hungry waters surging to the chin,  
Our deeds will rise like stepping-stones before us—  
The good and bad—for we may use the sin.

A sin of youth, atoned for and forgiven,  
Takes on a virtue, if we choose to find:  
When clouds across our onward path are driven,  
We still may steer by its pale light behind.  
A sin forgotten is in part to pay for,  
A sin remembered is a constant gain:  
Sorrow, next joy, is what we ought to pray for,  
As next to peace we profit most from pain.

John Boyle O'Reilly

## Poet And Lord

GOD makes a poet: touches soul and sight,  
And lips and heart, and sends him forth to sing;  
His fellows hearing, own the true birthright,  
And crown him daily with the love they bring.

The king a lord makes, by a parchment leaf;  
Though heart be withered, and though sight be dim  
With dullard brain and soul of disbelief—  
Ay, even so; he makes a lord of him.

What, then, of one divinely kissed and sent  
To fill the people with ideal words,  
Who with his poet's crown is discontent,  
And begs a parchment title with the lords?

John Boyle O'Reilly

## Prologue To Western Australia

Nor gold, nor silver are the words set here,  
Nor rich-wrought chasing on design of art;  
But rugged relics of an unknown sphere  
Where fortune chanced I played one time apart.  
Unthought of here the critic blame or praise,  
These recollections all their faults atone;  
To hold the scenes, I've writ of men and ways  
Uncouth and rough as Austral ironstone.

It may be, I have left the higher gleams  
Of skies and flowers unheeded or forgot;  
It may be so,— but, looking back, it seems  
When I was with, them I beheld them not.  
I was no rambling poet, but a man  
Hard pressed to dig and delve, with naught of ease  
The hot day through, save when the evening's fan  
Of sea-winds rustled through the kindly trees.

It may be so; but when I think I smile  
At my poor hand and brain to paint the charms  
Of God's first-blazoned canvas! here the aisle  
Moonlit and deep of reaching gothic arms  
From towering gum, mahogany, and palm,  
And odorous jam and sandal; there the growth  
Of arm-long velvet leaves grown hoar in calm,—  
In calm unbroken since their luscious youth.

How can I show you all the silent birds  
With strange metallic glintings on the wing ?  
Or how tell half their sadness in cold words,—  
The poor dumb lutes, the birds that never sing?  
Of wondrous parrot-greens and iris hue  
Of sensuous flower and of gleaming snake,—  
Ah! what I see I long that so might you,  
But of these things what picture can I make?

Sometime, maybe, a man will wander there,—  
A mind God-gifted, and not dull and weak;  
And he will come and paint that land so fair,

And show the beauties of which I but speak.  
But in the hard, sad days that there I spent,  
My mind absorbed rude pictures: these I show  
As best I may, and just with this intent,—  
To tell some things that all folk may not know.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Prometheus - Christ

LASHED to the planet, glaring at the sky,  
An eagle at his heart—the Pagan Christ!

Why is it, Mystery? O, dumb Darkness, why  
Have always men, with loving hearts themselves,  
Made devils of their gods?

The whirling globe  
Bears round man's sweating agony of blood,  
That Might may gloat above impotent Pain!

Man's soul is dual—he is half a fiend,  
And from himself he typifies Almighty.  
O, poison-doubt, the answer holds no peace:  
Man did not make himself a fiend, but God.

Between them, what? Prometheus stares  
Through ether to the lurid eyes of Jove—  
Between them, Darkness!

But the gods are dead-  
Ay, Zeus is dead, and all the gods but Doubt,  
And Doubt is brother devil to Despair!  
What, then, for us? Better Prometheus' fate,  
Who dared the gods, than insect unbelief—  
Better Doubt's fitful flame than abject nothingness!

O, world around us, glory of the spheres!  
God speaks in ordered harmony—behold!  
Between us and the Darkness, clad in light,—  
Between us and the curtain of the Vast,—two Forms,  
And each is crowned eternally—and One  
Is crowned with flowers and tender leaves and grass,  
And smiles benignly; and the other One,

With sadly pitying eyes, is crowned with thorns:  
O Nature, and O Christ, for men to love  
And seek and live by—Thine the dual reign—  
The health and hope and happiness of men!

Behold our faith and fruit!—

What demon laughs?

Behold our books, our schools, our states,  
Where Christ and Nature are the daily word;  
Behold our dealings between man and man,  
Our laws for home, our treaties for abroad;  
Behold our honor, honesty, and freedom,  
And, last, our brotherhood! For we are born  
In Christian times and ruled by Christian rules!

Bah! God is mild, or he would strike the world  
As men should smite a liar on the mouth.  
Shame on the falsehood! Let us tell the truth—  
Nor Christ nor Nature rules, but Greed and Creed  
And Caste and Cant and Craft and Ignorance.  
Down to the dust with every decent face,  
And whisper there the lies we daily live.  
O, God forgive us! Nature never can;  
For one is merciful, the other just.

Let us confess: by Nations first—our lines  
Are writ in blood and rapine and revenge;  
Conquest and pride have motive been and law—  
Christ walks with us to hourly crucifixion!

As Men? Would God the better tale were here:  
Atom as whole, corruption, shrewdness, self.  
Freedom? A juggle—hundreds slave for one,—  
That one is free, and boasts, and lo! the shame,  
The hundreds at the wheel go boasting too.  
Justice? The selfish only can succeed;  
Success means power—did Christ mean it so?—  
And power must be guarded by the law,  
And preachers preach that law must be obeyed,  
Ay, even when Right is ironed in the dock,  
And Rapine sits in ermine on the bench!  
Mercy? Behold it in the reeking slums  
That grow like cancers from the palace wall;  
Go hear it from the conquered—how their blood  
Is weighed in drops, and purchased, blood for gold;

Go ask the toiling tenant why he paid  
The landlord's rent and let his children starve;  
Go find the thief, whose father was a thief,  
And ask what Christian leech has cured his sin?  
Honesty? Our law of life is Gain—  
We must get gold or be accounted fools;  
The lovable, the generous, must be crushed  
And substituted by the hard and shrewd.  
What is it, Christ, this thing called Christian life,  
Where Christ is not, where ninety slave for ten,  
And never own a flower save when they steal it,  
And never hear a bird save when they cage it?  
Is this the freedom of Thy truth? Ah, woe  
For those who see a higher, nobler law  
Than his, the Crucified, if this be so!

O, man's blind hope—Prometheus, thine the gift-  
That bids him live when reason bids him die!  
We cling to this, as sailors to a spar—  
We see that this is Truth: that men are one,  
Nor king nor slave among them save by law;  
We see that law is crime, save God's sweet code  
That laps the world in freedom: trees and men  
And every life around us, days and seasons,  
All for their natural order on the planet,  
To live their lives, an hour, a hundred years,  
Equal, content, and free—nor curse their souls  
With trade's malign unrest, with books that breed  
Disparity, contempt for those who cannot read;  
With cities full of toil and sin and sorrow,  
Climbing the devil-built hill called Progress!  
Prometheus, we reject thy gifts for Christ's!  
Selfish and hard were thine; but His are sweet—  
'Sell what thou hast and give it to the poor!'  
Him we must follow to the great Commune,  
Reading his book of Nature, growing wise  
As planet-men, who own the earth, and pass;  
Him we must follow till foul Cant and Caste  
Die like disease, and Mankind, freed at last,  
Tramples the complex life and laws and limits  
That stand between all living things and Freedom!

John Boyle O'Reilly



## Released—january, 1878

On the 5th of January, 1878, three of the Irish political prisoners, who had been confined since 1866, were set at liberty. The released men were received by their fellow-countrymen in London. 'They are well,' said the report, 'but they look prematurely old.'

THEY are free at last! They can face the sun;  
Their hearts now throb with the world's pulsation;  
Their prisons are open—their night is done;  
'Tis England's mercy and reparation!

The years of their doom have slowly sped—  
Their limbs are withered—their ties are riven;  
Their children are scattered, their friends are dead—  
But the prisons are open—the 'crime' forgiven.

God! what a threshold they stand upon:  
The world has passed on while they were buried;  
In the glare of the sun they walk alone  
On the grass-grown track where the crowd has hurried.

Haggard and broken and seared with pain,  
They seek the remembered friends and places:  
Men shuddering turn, and gaze again  
At the deep-drawn lines on their altered faces.

What do they read on the pallid page?  
What is the tale of these woeful letters?  
A lesson as old as their country's age,  
Of a love that is stronger than stripes and fetters.

In the blood of the slain some dip their blade,  
And swear by the stain the foe to follow:  
But a deadlier oath might here be made,  
On the wasted bodies and faces hollow.

Irishmen! You who have kept the peace—  
Look on these forms diseased and broken:  
Believe, if you can, that their late release,

When their lives are sapped, is a good-will token.

Their hearts are the bait on England's hook;  
For this are they dragged from her hopeless prison;  
She reads her doom in the Nation's book—  
She fears the day that has darkly risen;

She reaches her hand for Ireland's aid—  
Ireland, scourged, contemned, derided;  
She begs from the beggar her hate has made;  
She seeks for the strength her guile divided.

She offers a bribe—ah, God above!  
Behold the price of the desecration:  
The hearts she has tortured for Irish love  
She brings as a bribe to the Irish nation!

O, blind and cruel! She fills her cup  
With conquest and pride, till its red wine splashes:  
But shrieks at the draught as she drinks it up—  
Her wine has been turned to blood and ashes.

We know her—our Sister! Come on the storm!  
God send it soon and sudden upon her:  
The race she has shattered and sought to deform  
Shall laugh as she drinks the black dishonor.

John Boyle O'Reilly

## Resurgite!- June, 1877

NOW, for the faith that is in ye,  
Polander, Slav, and Kelt!  
Prove to the world what the lips have hurled  
The hearts have grandly felt.

Rouse, ye races in shackles!  
See in the East, the glare  
Is red in the sky, and the warning cry  
Is sounding—'Awake! Prepare!'

A voice from the spheres—a hand downreached  
To hands that would be free,  
To rend the gyves from the fettered lives  
That strain toward Liberty!

Circassia! the cup is flowing  
That holdeth perennial youth:  
Who strikes succeeds, for when manhood bleeds  
Each dropp is a Cadmus' tooth.

Sclavonia! first from the sheathing  
Thy knife to the cord that binds;  
Thy one-tongued host shall renew the boast:  
'The Scythians are the Winds!'

Greece! to the grasp of heroes,  
Flashed with thine ancient pride,  
Thy swords advance: in the passing chance  
The great of heart are tried.

Poland! thy lance-heads brighten:  
The Tartar has swept thy name  
From the schoolman's chart, but the patriot's heart  
Preserves its lines in flame.

Ireland! mother of dolours,  
The trial on thee descends:  
Who quailleth in fear when the test is near,  
His bondage never ends.

Oppression, that kills the craven,  
Defied, is the freeman's good:  
No cause can be lost forever whose cost  
Is coined from Freedom's blood!

Liberty's wine and altar  
Are blood and human right;  
Her weak shall be strong while the struggle with wrong  
Is a sacrificial fight.

Earth for the people—their laws their own—  
An equal race for all:  
Though shattered and few who to this are true  
Shall flourish the more they fall.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Rules Of The Road

WHAT man would be wise, let him drink of the river  
That bears on its bosom the record of time  
A message to him every wave can deliver  
To teach him to creep till he knows how to climb  
Who heeds not experience, trust him not; tell him  
The scope of one mind can but trifles achieve:  
The weakest who draws from the mine will excel him  
The wealth of mankind is the wisdom they leave.

For peace do not hope—to be just you must break it  
Still work for the minute and not for the year;  
When honor comes to you, be ready to take it;  
But reach not to seize it before it is near.  
Be silent and safe—silence never betrays you;  
Be true to your word and your work and your friend;  
Put least trust in him who is foremost to praise you,  
Nor judge of a road till it draw to the end.

Stand erect in the vale, nor exult on the mountain;  
Take gifts with a sigh—most men give to be paid;  
'I had' is a heartache, 'I have' is a fountain,—  
You're worth what you saved, not the million you made.  
Trust toil not intent, or your plans will miscarry;  
Your wife keep a sweetheart, instead of a tease;  
Rule children by reason, not rod; and, mind, marry  
Your girl when you can—and your boy when you please.

Steer straight as the wind will allow; but be ready  
To veer just a point to let travelers pass:  
Each sees his own star—a stiff course is too steady  
When this one to Meeting goes, that one to Mass.  
Our stream's not so wide but two arches may span it—  
Good neighbor and citizen; these for a code,  
And this truth in sight,—every man on the planet  
Has just as much right as yourself to the road.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Silence, Not Death

I START! I have slept for a moment;  
I have dreamt, sitting here by her chair—  
Oh, how lonely! What was it that touched me?  
What presence, what heaven-sent air?

It was nothing, you say. But I tremble!  
I heard her, I knew she was near—  
Felt her breath, felt her cheek on my forehead—  
Awake or asleep, she was here!

It was nothing—a dream? Strike that harp-string;  
Again—still again—till it cries  
In its uttermost treble—still strike it—  
Ha? vibrant but silent! It dies—

It dies, just as she died. Go, listen—  
That highest vibration is dumb.  
Your sense, friend, too soon finds a limit  
And answer, when mysteries come.

Truth speaks in the senseless, the spirit;  
But here in this palpable part  
We sound the low notes, but are silent  
To music sublimed in the heart.

Too few and too gross our dull senses,  
And clogged with the mire of the road,  
Till we loathe their coarse bondage; as seabirds  
Encaged on a cliff, look abroad

On the ocean and limitless heaven,  
Alight with the beautiful stars,  
And hear what they say, not the creakings  
That rise from our sensual bars.

O life, let me dream, let her presence  
Be near me, her fragrance, her breath;  
Let me sleep, if in slumber the seeking;  
Sleep on, if the finding be death.

John Boyle O'Reilly

## Songs That Are Not Sung

DO not praise: a smile is payment more than meet for what is done;  
Who shall paint the mote's glad raiment floating in the molten sun?  
Nay, nor smile, for blind is eyesight, ears may hear not, lips are dumb;  
From the silence, from the twilight, wordless but complete they come.

Songs were born before the singer : like white souls awaiting birth,  
They abide the chosen bringer of their melody to earth.  
Deep the pain of our demerit: strings so rude or rudely strung,  
Dull to every pleading spirit seeking speech but sent unsung;  
Round our hearts with gentle breathing still the plaintive silence plays,  
But we brush away its wreathing, filled with cares of common days.  
Ever thinking of the morrow, burdened down with cares and needs,  
Once or twice, mayhap, in sorrow, we may hear the song that pleads;  
Once or twice, a dreaming poet sees the beauty as it flies,  
But his vision who shall know it, who shall read it from his eyes?  
Voiceless he,—his necromancy fails to cage the wondrous bird;  
Lure and snare are vain when fancy flies like echo from a word.  
Only sometime he may sing it, using speech as 'twere a bell,  
Not to read the song but ring it, like the sea-tone from a shell.  
Sometimes, too, it comes and lingers round the strings all still and mute,  
Till some lover's trembling fingers draw it living from the lute.  
Still, our best is but a vision which a lightning-flash illumines,  
Just a gleam of life elysian flung across the voiceless glooms.

Why should gleams perplex and move us? Must the soul still upward grow  
To the beauty far above us and the songs no sense may know?

John Boyle O'Reilly



# Spring Flowers

O THE rare spring flowers! take them as they come:  
Do not wait for summer buds—they may never bloom.  
Every sweet to-day sends, we are wise to save;  
Roses bloom for pulling: the path is to the grave.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Star-Gazing

LET be what is: why should we strive and wrestle  
With awkward skill against a subtle doubt?  
Or pin a mystery 'neath our puny pestle,  
And vainly try to bray its secret out?

What boots it me to gaze at other planets,  
And speculate on sensate beings there?  
It comforts not that, since the moon began its  
Well-ordered course, it knew no breath of air.

There may be men and women up in Venus,  
Where science finds both summer-green and snow  
But are we happier asking, " Have they seen us?  
And, like us earth-men, do they yearn to know?

On greater globes than ours men may be greater.  
For all things here in fair proportion run;  
But will it make our poor cup any sweeter  
To think a nobler Shakespeare thrills the sun?

Or, that our sun is but itself a minor,  
Like this dark earth—a tenth-rate satellite,  
That swings submissive round an orb diviner,  
Whose day is lightning, with our day for night?

Or, past all suns, to find the awful center  
Round which they meanly wind a servile road;  
All, will it raise us or degrade, to enter  
Where that world's Shakespeare towers almost to God?

No, no; far better, 'lords of all creation'  
To strut our ant-hill, and to take our ease;  
To look aloft and say, ' That constellation  
Was lighted there our regal sight to please!'

We owe no thanks to so-called men of science,  
Who demonstrate that earth, not sun, goes round;  
'Twere better think the sun a mere appliance  
To light man's villages and heat his ground.

There seems no good in asking or in humbling;  
The mind incurious has the most of rest;  
If we can live and laugh and pray, not grumbling,  
'Tis all we can do here—and 'tis the best.

The throbbing brain will burst its tender raiment  
With futile force, to see by finite light  
How man's brief earning and eternal payment  
Are weighed as equal in th' Infinite sight.

'Tis all in vain to struggle with abstraction—  
The milky way that tempts our mental glass;  
The study for mankind is earth-born action;  
The highest wisdom, let the wondering pass.

The Lord knows best: He gave us thirst for learning;  
And deepest knowledge of His work betrays  
No thirst left waterless. Shall our soul-yearning,  
Apart from all things, be a quenchless blaze?

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Amber Whale

WE were down in the Indian Ocean, after sperm, and three years out;  
The last six months in the tropics, and looking in vain for a spout,—  
Five men up on the royal yards, weary of straining their sight;  
And every day like its brother,—just morning and noon and night—  
Nothing to break the sameness: water and wind and sun  
Motionless, gentle, and blazing,—never a change in one.  
Every day like its brother: when the noonday eight-bells came,  
'Twas like yesterday; and we seemed to know that to-morrow would be the  
same.

The foremast hands had a lazy time: there was never a thing to do;  
The ship was painted, tarred down, and scraped; and the mates had nothing  
new.

We'd worked at sinnet and ratline till there wasn't a yarn to use,  
And all we could do was watch and pray for a sperm whale's spout—or news.  
It was whaler's luck of the vilest sort; and, though many a volunteer  
Spent his watch below on the look-out, never a whale came near,—  
At least of the kind we wanted: there were lots of whales of a sort,—  
Killers and finbacks, and such like, as if they enjoyed the sport  
Of seeing a whale-ship idle; but we never lowered a boat  
For less than a blackfish, —there's no oil in a killer's or finback's coat.  
There was rich reward for the look-out men,—tobacco for even a sail,  
And a barrel of oil for the lucky dog who'd be first to 'raise' a whale.  
The crew was a mixture from every land, and many a tongue they spoke;  
And when they sat in the fo'castle, enjoying an evening smoke,  
There were tales told, youngster, would make you stare—stories of countless  
shoals

Of devil-fish in the Pacific and right-whales away at the Poles.  
There was one of these fo'castle yarns that we always loved to hear,—  
Kanaka and Maori and Yankee; all lent an eager ear  
To that strange old tale that was always new,—the wonderful treasure-tale  
Of an old Down-Eastern harpooneer who had struck an Amber Whale!  
Ay, that was a tale worth hearing, lad: if 'twas true we couldn't say,  
Or if 'twas a yarn old Mat had spun to while the time away.

'It's just fifteen years ago,' said Mat, 'since I shipped as harpooneer  
On board a bark in New Bedford, and came cruising somewhere near  
To this whaling-ground we're cruising now; but whales were plenty then,  
And not like now, when we scarce get oil to pay for the ship and men.  
There were none of these oil wells running then,—at least, what shore folk term

An oil well in Pennsylvania,—but sulphur-bottom and sperm  
Were plenty as frogs in a mud-hole, and all of 'em big whales, too;  
One hundred barrels for sperm-whales; and for sulphur-bottom, two.  
You couldn't pick out a small one: the littlest calf or cow  
Had a sight more oil than the big bull whales we think so much of now.  
We were more to the east, off Java Straits, a little below the mouth,—  
A hundred and five to the east'ard and nine degrees to the south;  
And that was as good a whaling-ground for middling-sized, handy whales  
As any in all the ocean; and 'twas always white with sails  
From Scotland and Hull and New England,—for the whales were thick as frogs,  
And 'twas little trouble to kill 'em then, for they lay as quiet as logs.  
And every night we'd go visiting the other whale-ships 'round,  
Or p'r'aps we'd strike on a Dutchman, calmed off the Straits, and bound  
To Singapore or Batavia, with plenty of schnapps to sell  
For a few whale's teeth or a gallon of oil, and the latest news to tell.  
And in every ship of that whaling fleet was one wonderful story told,—  
How an Amber Whale had been seen that year that was worth a mint of gold.  
And one man—mate of a Scotchman—said he'd seen, away to the west,  
A big school of sperm, and one whale's spout was twice as high as the rest;  
And we knew that that was the Amber Whale, for we'd often heard before  
That his spout was twice as thick as the rest, and a hundred feet high or more.  
And often, when the look-out cried, 'He blows!' the very hail  
Thrilled every heart with the greed of gold,—for we thought of the Amber Whale.

'But never a sight of his spout we saw till the season there went round,  
And the ships ran down to the south'ard to another whaling-ground.  
We stayed to the last off Java, and then we ran to the west,  
To get our recruits at Mauritius, and give the crew a rest.  
Five days we ran in the trade winds, and the boys were beginning to talk  
Of their time ashore, and whether they'd have a donkey-ride or a walk,  
And whether they'd spend their money in wine, bananas, or pearls,  
Or drive to the sugar plantations to dance with the Creole girls.  
But they soon got something to talk about. Five days we ran west-sou'-west,  
But the sixth day's log-book entry was a change from all the rest;  
For that was the day the mast-head men made every face turn pale,  
With the cry that we all had dreamt about,—'He Blows! The Amber Whale!'  
And every man was motionless, and every speaker's lip  
Just stopped as it was, with the word half-said: there wasn't a Sound in the ship  
Till the Captain hailed the masthead, 'Whereaway is the whale you see?'  
And the cry came down again, 'He blows! about four points on our lee,  
And three miles off, sir,—there he blows! he's going to leeward fast!'  
And then we sprang to the rigging, and saw the great whale at last!

'Ah! shipmates, that was a sight to see: the water was smooth as a lake,  
And there was the monster rolling, with a school of whales in his wake.  
They looked like pilot-fish round a shark, as if they were keeping guard;  
And, shipmates, the spout of that Amber Whale was high as a sky-sail yard.  
There was never a ship's crew worked so quick as our whalemens worked that  
day,—

When the captain shouted, ' Swing the boats, and be ready to lower away!'  
Then, 'A pull on the weather-braces, men! let her head fall off three points!'  
And off she swung, with a quarter-breeze straining the old ship's joints.  
The men came down from the mastheads; and the boat's crews stood on the rail,  
Stowing the lines and irons, and fixing paddles and sail.  
And when all was ready we leant on the boats and looked at the Amber's spout,  
That went up like a monster fountain, with a sort of a rumbling shout,  
Like a thousand railroad engines puffing away their smoke.  
He was just like a frigate's hull capsized, and the swaying water broke  
Against the sides of the great stiff whale: he was steering south-by-west, —  
For the Cape, no doubt, for a whale can shape a course as well as the best.  
We soon got close as was right to go; for the school might hear a hail,  
Or see the bark, and that was the last of our Bank-of-England Whale.  
'Let her luff,' said the Old Man, gently. 'Now, lower away, my boys,  
And pull for a mile, then paddle,—and mind that you make no noise.'

'A minute more, and the boats were down; and out from the hull of the bark  
They shot with a nervous sweep of the oars, like dolphins away from a shark.  
Each officer stood in the stern, and watched, as he held the steering oar,  
And the crews bent down to their pulling as they never pulled before.

'Our Mate was as thorough a whalerman as I ever met afloat;  
And I was his harpooneer that day, and sat in the bow of the boat.  
His eyes were set on the whales ahead, and he spoke in a low, deep tone,  
And told the men to be steady and cool, and the whale was all our own.  
And steady and cool they proved to be: you could read it in every face,  
And in every straining muscle, that they meant to win that race.  
'Bend to it, boys, for a few strokes more,—bend to it steady and long!  
Now, in with your oars, and paddles out,—all together, and strong!'  
Then we turned and sat on the gunwale, with our faces to the bow;  
And the whales were right ahead,—no more than four ships' lengths off now.  
There were five of 'em, hundred-barrelers, like guards round the Amber Whale.  
And to strike him we'd have to risk being stove by crossing a sweeping tail;  
But the prize and the risk were equal. 'Mat,' now whispers the Mate,  
'Are your irons ready?' 'Ay, ay, sir.' 'Stand up, then, steady, and wait

Till I give the word, then let 'em fly, and hit him below the fin  
As he rolls to wind'ard. Start her, boys! now's the time to slide her in!  
Hurrah! that fluke just missed us. Mind, as soon as the iron's fast,  
Be ready to back your paddles,—now in for it, boys, at last.  
Heave! Again!

'And two irons flew: the first one sank in the joint,  
'Tween the head and hump,—in the muscle; but the second had its point  
Turned off by striking the amber case, coming out again like a bow,  
And the monster carcass quivered, and rolled with pain from the first deep blow.  
Then he lashed the sea with his terrible flukes, and showed us many a sign  
That his rage was roused. 'Lay off,' roared the Mate, ' and all keep clear of the  
line!'

And that was a timely warning, for the whale made an awful breach  
Right out of the sea; and 'twas well for us that the boat was beyond the reach  
Of his sweeping flukes, as he milled around, and made for the Captain's boat,  
That was right astern. And, shipmates, then my heart swelled up in my throat  
At the sight I saw: the Amber Whale was lashing the sea with rage,  
And two of his hundred-barrel guards were ready now to engage  
In a bloody fight, and with open jaws they came to their masters aid.  
Then we knew the Captain's boat was doomed; but the crew were no whit  
afraid,—

They were brave New England whalemens,—and we saw the harpooneer  
Stand up to send in his irons, as soon as the whales came near.  
Then we heard the Captain's order, 'Heave!' and saw the harpoon fly,  
As the whales closed in with their open jaws: a shock, and a stifled cry  
Was all that we heard; then we looked to see if the crew were still afloat,—  
But nothing was there save a dull red patch, and the boards of the shattered  
boat!

'But that was no time for mourning words: the other two boats came in,  
And one got fast on the quarter, and one aft the starboard fin  
Of the Amber Whale. For a minute he paused, as if he were in doubt  
As to whether 'twas best to run or fight. 'Lay on!' the Mate roared out,  
'And I'll give him a lance!' The boat shot in; and the Mate, when he saw his  
chance  
Of sending it home to the vitals, four times he buried his lance.  
A minute more, and a cheer went up, when we saw that his aim was good;  
For the lance had struck in a life-spot, and the whale was spouting blood!  
But now came the time of danger, for the school of whales around  
Had aired their flukes, and the cry was raised, 'Look out! they're going to sound!'  
And down they went with a sudden plunge, the Amber Whale the last,

While the lines ran smoking out of the tubs, he went to the deep so fast.  
Before you could count your fingers, a hundred fathoms were out;  
And then he stopped, for a wounded whale must come to the top and spout.  
We hauled slack line as we felt him rise; and when he came up alone,  
And spouted thick blood; we cheered again, for we knew he was all our own.  
He was frightened now, and his fight was gone,—right round and round he spun,  
As if he was trying to sight the boats, or find the best side to run.  
But that was the minute for us to work: the boats hauled in their slack,  
And bent on the drag-tubs over the stern to tire and hold him back.  
The bark was five miles to wind'ard, and the mate gave a troubled glance  
At the sinking sun, and muttered, 'Boys, we must give him another lance,  
Or he'll run till night; and, if he should head to windward in the dark,  
We'll be forced to cut loose and leave him, or else lose run of the bark.  
'So we hauled in close, two boats at once, but only frightened the whale;  
And, like a hound that was badly whipped, he turned and showed his tail,  
With his head right dead to wind'ard; then as straight and as swift he sped  
As a hungry shark for a swimming prey; and, bending over his head,  
Like a mighty plume, went his bloody spout. Ah, shipmates, that was a sight  
Worth a life at sea to witness! In his wake the sea was white  
As you've seen it after a steamer's screw, churning up like foaming yeast;  
And the boats went hissing along at the rate of twenty knots at least.  
With the water flush with the gunwhale, and the oars were all apeak,  
While the crews sat silent and quiet, watching the long, white streak  
That was traced by the line of our passage. We hailed the bark as we passed,  
And told them to keep a sharp look-out from the head of every mast;  
'And if we're not back by sundown,' cried the Mate, 'you keep a light  
At the royal cross-trees. If he dies, we may stick to the whale all night.'

'And past we swept with our oars apeak, and waved oar hands to the hail  
Of the wondering men on the taffrail, who were watching our Amber Whale  
As he surged ahead, just as if he thought he could tire his enemies out;  
I was almost sorrowful, shipmates, to see after each red spout  
That the great whale's strength was failing: the sweep of his flukes grew slow,  
Till at sundown he made about four knots, and his spout was weak and low.  
Then said the Mate to his boat's crew: 'Boys, the vessel is out of sight  
To the leeward: now, shall we cut the line, or stick to the whale all night?'  
'We'll stick to the whale!' cried every man. 'Let the other boats go back  
To the vessel and beat to wind'ard, as well as they can, in our track.'  
It was done as they said: the lines were cut, and the crews cried out, 'Good  
speed!'  
As we swept along in the darkness, in the wake of our monster steed,  
That went plunging on, with the dogged hope that he'd fire his enemies still,—



But even the strength of an Amber Whale must break before human will.  
By little and little his power had failed as he spouted his blood away,  
Till at midnight the rising moon shone down on the great fish as he lay  
Just moving his flukes; but at length he stopped, and raising his square, black  
head  
As high as the topmast cross-trees, swung round and fell over—dead!

'And then rose a shout of triumph,—a shout that was more like a curse  
Than an honest cheer; but, shipmates, the thought In our hearts was worse,  
And 'twas punished with bitter suffering. We claimed the whale as our own,  
And said that the crew should have no share of the wealth that was ours alone.  
We said to each other: We want their help till we get the whale aboard,  
So we'll let 'em think that- they'll have a share till we get the Amber stored,  
And then we'll pay them their wages, and send them ashore—or afloat,  
If they show their temper. Ah! shipmates, no wonder 'twas that boat  
And its selfish crew were cursed that night. Next day we saw no sail,  
But the wind and sea were rising. Still, we held to the drifting whale,—  
And a dead whale drifts to windward,—going farther away from the ship,  
Without water, or bread, or courage to pray with heart or lip  
That had planned and spoken the treachery. The wind blew into a gale,  
And it screamed like mocking laughter round our boat and the Amber Whale.

'That night fell dark on the starving crew, and a hurricane blew next day;  
Then we cut the line, and we cursed the prize as it drifted fast away,  
As if some power under the waves were towing it out of sight;  
And there we were, without help or hope, dreading the coming night.  
Three days that hurricane lasted. When it passed, two men were dead;  
And the strongest one of the living had not strength to raise his head,  
When his dreaming swoon was broken by the sound of a cheery hail,  
And he saw a shadow fall on the boat,—it fell from the old bark's sail!  
And when he heard their kindly words, you'd think he should have smiled  
With joy at his deliverance; but he cried like a little child,  
And hid his face in his poor weak hands,—for he thought of the selfish plan,—  
And he prayed to God to forgive them all. And, shipmates, I am the man! —  
The only one of the sinful crew that ever beheld his home;  
For before the cruise was over, all the rest were under the foam.  
It's just fifteen years gone, shipmates,' said old Mat, ending his tale;  
'And I often pray that I'll never see another Amber Whale.'

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Celebes

DEAR islands of the Orient,  
Where Nature's first of love was spent;  
Sweet hill-tops of the summered land  
Where gods and men went hand in hand  
In golden days of sinless earth!  
Woe rack the womb of time, that bore  
The primal evil to its birth!  
It came; the gods were seen no more:  
The fields made sacred by their feet,  
The flowers they loved, grown all too sweet,  
The streams their bright forms mirrored,  
The fragrant banks that made their bed,  
The human hearts round which they wove  
Their threads of superhuman love—  
These were too dear and desolate  
To sink to fallen man's estate;  
The gods who loved them loosed the seas,  
Struck free the barriers of the deep,  
That rolled in one careering sweep  
And filled the land, as 'twere a grave,  
And left no beauteous remnant, save  
Those hill-tops called the Celebes.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The City Streets

A CITY of Palaces! Yes, that's true: a city of palaces built for trade;  
Look down this street—what a splendid view of the temples where fabulous gains  
are made.

Just glance at the wealth of a single pile, the marble pillars, the miles of glass,  
The carving and cornice in gaudy style, the massive show of the polished brass;  
And think of the acres of inner floors, where the wealth of the world is spread for  
sale;

Why, the treasures inclosed by those ponderous doors are richer than ever a  
fairy tale.

Pass on the next, it is still the same, another Aladdin the scene repeats;  
The silks are unrolled and the jewels flame for leagues and leagues of the city  
streets!

Now turn away from the teeming town, and pass to the homes of the merchant  
kings,

Wide squares where the stately porches frown, where the flowers are bright and  
the fountain sings;

Look up at the lights in that brilliant room, with its chandelier of a hundred  
flames!

See the carpeted street where the ladies come whose husbands have millions or  
famous names;

For whom are the jewels and silks, behold: on those exquisite bosoms and  
throats they burn;

Art challenges Nature in color and gold and the gracious presence of every turn.  
So the winters fly past in a joyous rout, and the summers bring marvelous cool  
retreats;

These are civilized wonders we're finding out as we walk through the beautiful  
city streets.

A City of Palaces!—Hush! not quite: a, city where palaces are, is best;  
No need to speak of what's out of sight: let us take what is pleasant, and leave  
the rest:

The men of the city who travel and write, whose fame and credit are known  
abroad,

The people who, move in the ranks polite, the cultured women whom all applaud.

It is true, there are only ten thousand here, but the other half million are vulgar  
clod;

And a soul well-bred is eternally dear—it counts so much more on the books of

God.

The others have use in their place, no doubt; but why speak of a class one never meets?

They are gloomy things to be talked about, those common lives of the city streets.

Well, then, if you will, let us look at both: let us weigh the pleasure against the pain,

The gentleman's smile with the bar-room oath, the luminous square with the tenement lane.

Look round you now; 'tis another sphere, of thin-clad women and grimy men; There are over ten thousand huddled here, where a hundred would live of our upper ten.

Take care of that child: here, look at her face, a baby who carries a baby brother;

They are early helpers in this poor plane, and the infant must often nurse the mother.

Come up those stairs where the little ones went: five flights they groped and climbed in the dark;

There are dozens of homes on the steep ascent, and homes that are filled with children—hark!

Did you hear that laugh, with its manly tones, and the joyous ring of the baby voice?

'Tis the father who gathers his little ones, the nurse and her brother, and all rejoice.

Yes, human nature is much the same when you come to the heart and count its beats;

The workman is proud of his home's dear name as the richest man on the city streets.

God pity them all! God pity the worst! for the worst are reckless, and need it most:

When we trace the causes why lives are curst with the criminal taint, let no man boast:

The race is not run with an equal chance: the poor man's son carries double weight;

Who have not, are tempted; inheritance is a blight or a blessing of man's estate.

No matter that poor men sometimes sweep the prize from the sons of the millionaire:

What is good to win must be good to keep, else the virtue dies on the topmost stair;

When the winners can keep their golden prize, still darker the day of the laboring poor:

The strong and the selfish are sure to rise, while the simple and generous die obscure.

And these are the virtues and social gifts by which Progress and Property rank over Man!

Look there, O woe! where a lost soul drifts on the stream where such virtues overran:

Stand close—let her pass! from a tenement room and a reeking workshop graduate:

If a man were to break the iron loom or the press she tended, he knows his fate;

But her life may be broken, she stands alone, her poverty stings, and her guideless feet,

Not long since kissed as a father's own, are dragged in the mire of the pitiless street.

Come back to the light, for my brain goes wrong when I see the sorrows that can't be cured.

If this is all righteous, then why prolong the pain for a thing that must be endured?

We can never have palaces built without slaves, nor luxuries served without ill-paid toil;

Society flourishes only on graves, the moral graves in the lowly soil.

The earth was not made for its people: that cry has been hounded down as a social crime;

The meaning of life is to barter and buy; and the strongest and shrewdest are masters of time.

God made the million to serve the few, and their questions of right are vain conceits;

To have one sweet home that is safe and true, ten garrets must reek in the darkened streets.

'Tis Civilization, so they say, and it cannot be changed for the weakness of men. Take care! take care! 'tis a desperate way to goad the wolf to the end of his den. Take heed of your Civilization, ye, on your pyramids built of quivering hearts; There are stages, like Paris in '93, where the commonest men play most terrible parts.

Your statutes may crush but they cannot kill the patient sense of a natural right; It may slowly move, but the People's will, like the ocean o'er Holland, is always in

sight.

'It is not our fault!' say the rich ones. No; 'tis the fault of a system old and strong;

But men are the makers of systems: so, the cure will come if we own the wrong. It will come in peace if the man-right lead; it will sweep in storm if it be denied: The law to bring justice is always decreed; and on every hand are the warnings cried.

Take heed of your Progress! Its feet have trod on the souls it slew with its own pollutions;

Submission is good; but the order of God may flame the torch of the revolutions!

Beware with your Classes! Men are men, and a cry in the night is a fearful teacher;

When it reaches the hearts of the masses, then they need but a sword for a judge and preacher.

Take heed, for your Juggernaut pushes hard: God holds the doom that its day completes;

It will dawn like a fire when the track is barred by a barricade in the city streets.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Cry Of The Dreamer

I am tired of planning and toiling  
In the crowded hives of men;  
Heart-weary of building and spoiling,  
And spoiling and building again.  
And I long for the dear old river,  
Where I dreamed my youth away;  
For a dreamer lives forever,  
And a toiler dies in a day.

I am sick of the showy seeming  
Of a life that is half a lie;  
Of the faces lined with scheming  
In the throng that hurries by.  
From the sleepless thoughts' endeavour,  
I would go where the children play;  
For a dreamer lives forever,  
And a thinker dies in a day.

I can feel no pride, but pity  
For the burdens the rich endure;  
There is nothing sweet in the city  
But the patient lives of the poor.  
Oh, the little hands too skillful,  
And the child-mind choked with weeds!  
The daughter's heart grown willful,  
And the father's heart that bleeds!

No, no! from the street's rude bustle,  
From the trophies of mart and stage,  
I would fly to the woods' low rustle  
And the meadows' kindly page.  
Let me dream as of old by the river,  
And be loved for the dream away;  
For a dreamer lives forever,  
And a toiler dies in a day.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Dead Singer

'SHE is dead!' they say; 'she is robed for the grave; O there are lilies upon her breast;

Her mother has kissed her clay-cold lips, and folded her hands to rest;  
Her blue eyes show through the waxen lids: they have hidden her hair's gold crown;

Her grave is dug, and its heap of earth is waiting to press her down.'

'She is dead!' they say to the people, her people, for whom she sung;  
Whose hearts she touched with sorrow and love, like a harp with life-chords strung.

And the people hear—but behind their tear they smile as though they heard  
Another voice, like a mystery, proclaim another word.

'She is not dead.' it says to their hearts; 'true Singers can never die;  
Their life is a voice of higher things, unseen to the common eye;  
The truths and the beauties are clear to them, God's right and the human wrong,

The heroes who die unknown, and the weak who are chained and scourged by  
the strong.'

And the people smile at the death-word, for the mystic voice is clear:  
'THE SINGER WHO LIVED IS ALWAYS ALIVE: WE HEARKEN AND ALWAYS HEAR!'

And they raise her body with tender hands, and bear her down to the main,  
They lay her in state on the mourning ship, like the lily-maid Elaine;  
And they sail to her isle across the sea, where the people wait on the shore  
To lift her in silence with heads all bare to her home forevermore,  
Her home in the heart of her country; oh, a grave among our own  
Is warmer and dearer than living on in the stranger lands alone.

No need of a tomb for the Singer! Her fair hair's pillow now  
Is the sacred clay of her country, and the sky above her brow  
Is the same that smiled and wept on her youth, and the grass around is deep  
With the clinging leaves of the shamrock that cover her peaceful sleep.

Undreaming there she will rest and wait, in the tomb her people make,  
Till she hears men's hearts, like the seeds in Spring, all stirring to be awake,  
Till she feels the moving of souls that strain till the bands around them break;  
And then, I think, her dead lips will smile and her eyes be oped to see,  
When the cry goes out to the Nations that the Singer's land is free!



John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Dead Who Died For Ireland

The dead who died for Ireland!  
Oh, these are living words  
To nerve the hearts of patriots —  
to steel avenging swords —  
They thrill the soul when spoken,  
and lowly bend the head  
With reverence for the memories  
of all our martyred dead.

The dead who died for Ireland —  
the noble ones — the best,  
Who gave their lives for Motherland,  
Who poured upon her breast,  
In Freedom's cause, the blood she gave —  
Who with their dying breath,  
Sent prayers to God to heal her woes —  
then sealed their love in death.

The dead who died for Ireland,  
How hallowed are their graves!  
With all the memories fresh and green,  
Oh! how could we be slaves?  
How could we patient clang the chain?  
How could we fawn and bow?  
How could we crouch like mongrels  
'neath the keeper's frowning brow?

Be proud, ye men of Ireland!  
Be proud of those who died;  
Never men o'er all the earth  
Had greater cause for pride —  
Hope and strive, and league for freedom,  
And again the souls will rise  
Of the dead who died for Ireland  
To cheer you to the prize.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Dog Guard: An Australian Story

There are lonesome places upon the earth  
That have never re-echoed a sound of mirth,  
Where the spirits abide that feast and quaff  
On the shuddering soul of a murdered laugh,  
And take grim delight in the fearful start,  
As their unseen fingers clutch the heart,  
And the blood flies out from the griping pain,  
To carry the chill through every vein;  
And the staring eyes and the whitened faces  
Are a joy to these ghosts of the lonesome places.

But of all the spots on this earthly sphere  
Where these dismal spirits are strong and near,  
There is one more dreary than all the rest,—  
'Tis the barren island of Rottenest.  
On Australia's western coast, you may—  
On a seaman's chart of Fremantle Bay—  
Find a tiny speck, some ten miles from shore:  
If the chart be good, there is something more,—  
For a shoal runs in on the landward side,  
With five fathoms marked for the highest tide.  
You have nought but my word for all the rest,  
But that speck is the island of Rottenest.

'Tis a white sand-heap, about two miles long,  
And say half as wide; but the deeds of wrong  
Between man and his brother that there took place  
Are sufficient to sully a continent's face.  
Ah, cruel tales! were they told as a whole,  
They would scare your polished humanity's soul;  
They would blanch the cheeks in your carpeted room,  
With a terrible thought of the merited doom  
For the crimes committed, still unredrest,  
On that white sand-heap called Rottenest.

Of late years the island is not so bare  
As it was when I saw it first; for there  
On the outer headland some buildings stand,  
And a flag, red-crossed, says the patch of sand

Is a recognized part of the wide domain  
That is blessed with the peace of Victoria's reign.  
But behind the lighthouse the land's the same,  
And it bears grim proof of the white man's shame;  
For the miniature vales that the island owns  
Have a horrible harvest of human bones!

And how did they come there? that's the word;  
And I'll answer it now with a tale I heard  
From the lips of a man who was there, and saw  
The bad end of man's greed and of colony law.  
Many years ago, when the white man first  
Set his foot on the coast, and was hated and cursed  
By the native, who had not yet learned to fear  
The dark wrath of the stranger, but drove his spear  
With a freeman's force and a bushman's yell  
At the white invader, it then befell  
That so many were killed and cooked and eaten,  
There was risk of the whites in the end being beaten;  
So a plan was proposed,—'twas deemed safest and best  
To imprison the natives in Rottenest.

And so every time there was white blood spilled,  
There were black men captured; and those not killed  
In the rage of vengeance were sent away  
To this bleak sand isle in Fremantle Bay;  
And it soon came round that a thousand men  
Were together there, like wild beasts in a pen.  
There was not a shrub or grass-blade in the sand,  
Nor a piece of timber as large as your hand;  
But a government boat went out each day  
To fling meat ashore—and then sailed away.

For a year or so was this course pursued,  
Till 'twas noticed that fewer came down for food  
When the boat appeared; then a guard lay round  
The island one night, and the white men found  
That the savages swam at the lowest tide  
To the shoal that lay on the landward side,—  
'Twas a mile from the beach,—and then waded ashore;  
So the settlers met in grave council once more.

That a guard was needed was plain to all;  
But nobody answered the Governor's call  
For a volunteer watch. They were only a few,  
And their wild young farms gave plenty to do;  
And the council of settlers was breaking up,  
With a dread of the sorrow they'd have to sup  
When the savage, unawed, and for vengeance wild  
Lay await in the wood for the mother and child.

And with doleful countenance each to his neighbor  
Told a dreary tale of the world of labor  
He had, and said, ' Let him watch who can,  
I can't;' when there stepped to the front a man  
With a hard brown face and a burglar's brow,  
Who had learned the secret he uttered now  
When he served in the chain-gang in New South Wales.  
And he said to them: ' Friends, as all else fails,  
These 'ere natives are safe as if locked and barred,  
If you'll line that shoal with a mastiff guard!'

And the settlers looked at each other awhile,  
Till the wonder toned to a well-pleased smile  
When the brown ex-burglar said he knew,  
And would show the whole of 'em what to do.

Some three weeks after, the guard was set;  
And a native who swam to the shoal was met  
By two half-starved dogs, when a mile from shore,—  
And, somehow, that native was never seen more.  
All the settlers were pleased with the capital plan,  
And they voted their thanks to the hard-faced man.

For a year, each day did the government boat  
Take the meat to the isle and its guard afloat.  
In a line, on the face of the shoal, the dogs  
Had a dry house each, on some anchored logs;  
And the neck-chain from each stretched just half way  
To the next dog's house; right across the Bay  
Ran a line that was hideous with horrid sounds  
From the hungry throats of two hundred hounds.

So one more year passed, and the brutes on the logs

Had grown more like devils than common dogs.  
There was such a hell-chorus by day and night  
That the settlers ashore were chilled with fright  
When they thought—if that legion should break away,  
And come in with the tide some fatal day!

But they 'scaped that chance; for a man came in  
From the Bush, one day, with a 'possum's skin  
To the throat filled up with large pearls he'd found  
To the north, on the shore of the Shark's Bay Sound.  
And the settlement blazed with a wild commotion  
At sight of the gems from the wealthy ocean.

Then the settlers all began to pack  
Their tools and tents, and to ask the track  
That the bushman followed to strike the spot,—  
While the dogs and natives were all forgot.  
In two days, from that camp on the River Swan,  
To the Shark's Bay Sound had the settlers gone;  
And no merciful feeling did one retard  
For the helpless men and their terrible guard.

It were vain to try, in my quiet room,  
To write down the truth of the awful doom  
That befell those savages prisoned there,  
When the pangs of hunger and wild despair  
Had nigh made them mad as the fiends outside:  
'Tis enough that one night, through the low ebb tide,  
Swam nine hundred savages, armed with stones  
And with weapons made from their dead friends' bones.  
Without ripple or sound, when the moon was gone,  
Through the inky water they glided on;  
Swimming deep, and scarce daring to draw a breath,  
While the guards, if they saw, were as dumb as death.  
'Twas a terrible picture! O God! that the night  
Were so black as to cover the horrid sight  
From the eyes of the Angel that notes man's ways  
In the book that will ope on the Day of Days!

There were screams when they met,—shrill screams of pain!  
For each animal swam at the length of his chain,  
And with parching throat and in furious mood

Lay awaiting, not men, but his coming food.  
There were short, sharp cries, and a line of fleck  
As the long fangs sank in the swimmer's neck;  
There were gurgling growls mixed with human groans,  
For the savages drave the sharpened bones  
Through their enemies' ribs, and the bodies sank,  
Each dog holding fast with a bone through his flank.

Then those of the natives who 'scaped swam back;  
But too late! for scores of the savage pack,  
Driven mad by the yells and the sounds of fight,  
Had broke loose and followed. On that dread night  
Let the curtain fall: when the red sun rose  
From the placid ocean, the joys and woes  
Of a thousand men he had last eve seen  
Were as things or thoughts that had never been.

When the settlers returned,—in a month or two,—  
They bethought of the dogs and the prisoned crew.  
And a boat went out on a tardy quest  
Of whatever was living on Rottenest.  
They searched all the isle, and sailed back again  
With some specimen bones of the dogs and men.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Dukite Snake

Well, mate, you've asked about a fellow  
You met to-day, in a black-and-yellow  
Chain-gang suit, with a peddler's pack,  
Or with some such burden, strapped to his back.  
Did you meet him square? No, passed you by?  
Well, if you had, and had looked in his eye,  
You'd have felt for your irons then and there;  
For the light in his eye is a madman's glare.  
Ay, mad, poor fellow! I know him well,  
And if you're not sleepy just yet, I'll tell  
His story,—a strange one as ever you heard  
Or read; but I'll vouch for it, every word.

You just wait a minute, mate: I must see  
How that damper's doing, and make some tea.  
You smoke? That's good; for there's plenty of weed  
In that wallaby skin. Does your horse feed  
In the hobbles? Well, he's got good feed here,  
And my own old bush mare won't interfere.  
Done with that meat? Throw it there to the dogs,  
And fling on a couple of banksia logs.

And now for the story. That man who goes  
Through the bush with the pack and the convict's clothes  
Has been mad for years; but he does no harm,  
And our lonely settlers feel no alarm  
When they see or meet him. Poor Dave Sloane  
Was a settler once, and a friend of my own.  
Some eight years back, in the spring of the year,  
Dave came from Scotland, and settled here.  
A splendid young fellow he was just then,  
And one of the bravest and truest men  
That I ever met: he was kind as a woman  
To all who needed a friend, and no man—  
Not even a convict—met with his scorn,  
For David Sloane was a gentleman born.  
Ay, friend, a gentleman, though it sounds queer:  
There's plenty of blue blood flowing out here,  
And some younger sons of your "upper ten"



Can be met with here, first-rate bushmen.  
Why, friend, I—Bah! curse that dog! you see  
This talking so much has affected me.

Well, Sloane came here with an axe and a gun;  
He bought four miles of a sandal-wood run.  
This bush at that time was a lonesome place,  
So lonesome the sight of a white man's face  
Was a blessing, unless it came at night,  
And peered in your hut, with the cunning fright  
Of a runaway convict; and even they  
Were welcome, for talk's sake, while they could stay.  
Dave lived with me here for a while, and learned  
The tricks of the bush,—how the snare was laid  
In the wallaby track, how traps were made,  
How 'possums and kangaroo rats were killed,  
And when that was learned, I helped him to build  
From mahogany slabs a good bush hut,  
And showed him how sandal-wood logs were cut.  
I lived up there with him days and days,  
For I loved the lad for his honest ways.  
I had only one fault to find: at first  
Dave worked too hard; for a lad who was nursed,  
As he was, in idleness, it was strange  
How he cleared that sandal-wood off his range.  
From the morning light till the light expired  
He was always working, he never tired;  
Till at length I began to think his will  
Was too much settled on wealth, and still  
When I looked at the lad's brown face, and eye  
Clear open, my heart gave such thought the lie.  
But one day—for he read my mind—he laid  
His hand on my shoulder: "Don't be afraid,"  
Said he, "that I'm seeking alone for pelf.  
I work hard, friend; but 'tis not for myself."

And he told me then, in his quiet tone,  
Of a girl in Scotland, who was his own,—  
His wife,—'twas for her: 'twas all he could say,  
And his clear eye brimmed as he turned away.  
After that he told me the simple tale:  
They had married for love, and she was to sail

For Australia when he wrote home and told  
The oft-watched-for story of finding gold.

In a year he wrote, and his news was good:  
He had bought some cattle and sold his wood.  
He said, "Darling, I've only a hut,—but come."  
Friend, a husband's heart is a true wife's home;  
And he knew she'd come. Then he turned his hand  
To make neat the house, and prepare the land  
For his crops and vines; and he made that place  
Put on such a smiling and homelike face,  
That when she came, and he showed her round  
His sandal-wood and his crops in the ground,  
And spoke of the future, they cried for joy,  
The husband's arm clasping his wife and boy.

Well, friend, if a little of heaven's best bliss  
Ever comes from the upper world to this,  
It came into that manly bushman's life,  
And circled him round with the arms of his wife.  
God bless that bright memory! Even to me,  
A rough, lonely man, did she seem to be,  
While living, an angel of God's pure love,  
And now I could pray to her face above.  
And David he loved her as only a man  
With a heart as large as was his heart can.  
I wondered how they could have lived apart,  
For he was her idol, and she his heart.

Friend, there isn't much more of the tale to tell:  
I was talking of angels awhile since. Well,  
Now I'll change to a devil,—ay, to a devil!  
You needn't start: if a spirit of evil  
Ever came to this world its hate to slake  
One mankind, it came as a Dukite Snake.

Like? Like the pictures you've seen of Sin,  
A long red snake,—as if what was within  
Was fire that gleamed through his glistening skin.  
And his eyes!—if you could go down to hell  
And come back to your fellows here and tell  
What the fire was like, you could find no thing,

Here below on the earth, or up in the sky,  
To compare it to but a Dukite's eye!

Now, mark you, these Dukites don't go alone:  
There's another near when you see but one;  
And beware you of killing that one you see  
Without finding the other; for you may be  
More than twenty miles from the spot that night,  
When camped, but you're tracked by the lone Dukite,  
That will follow your trail like Death or Fate,  
And kill you as sure as you killed its mate!

Well, poor Dave Sloane had his young wife here  
Three months,—'twas just this time of the year.  
He had teamed some sandal-wood to the Vasse,  
And was homeward bound, when he saw in the grass  
A long red snake: he had never been told  
Of the Dukite's ways,—he jumped to the road,  
And smashed its flat head with the bullock-goad!

He was proud of the red skin, so he tied  
Its tail to the cart, and the snake's blood dyed  
The bush on the path he followed that night.

He was early home, and the dead Dukite  
Was flung at the door to be skinned next day.  
At sunrise next morning he started away  
To hunt up his cattle. A three hours' ride  
Brought him back: he gazed on his home with pride  
And joy in his heart; he jumped from his horse  
And entered—to look on his young wife's corse,  
And his dead child clutching his mother's clothes  
As in fright; and there, as he gazed, arose  
From her breast, where 'twas resting, the gleaming head  
Of the terrible Dukite, as if it said,  
"I've had vengeance, my foe: you took all I had."

And so had the snake—David Sloane was mad!  
I rode to his hut just by chance that night,  
And there on the threshold the clear moonlight  
Showed the two snakes dead. I pushed in the door  
With an awful feeling of coming woe:

The dead was stretched on the moonlit floor,  
The man held the hand of his wife,—his pride,  
His poor life's treasure,—and crouched by her side.  
O God! I sank with the weight of the blow.

I touched and called him: he heeded me not,  
So I dug her grave in a quiet spot,  
And lifted them both,—her boy on her breast,—  
And laid them down in the shade to rest.  
Then I tried to take my poor friend away,  
But he cried so woefully, "Let me stay  
Till she comes again!" that I had no heart  
To try to persuade him then to part  
From all that was left to him here,—her grave;  
So I stayed by his side that night, and, save  
One heart-cutting cry, he uttered no sound,—  
O God! that wail—like the wail of a hound!

'Tis six long years since I heard that cry,  
But 'twill ring in my ears till the day I die.  
Since that fearful night no one has heard  
Poor David Sloane utter sound or word.  
You have seen to-day how he always goes:  
He's been given that suit of convict's clothes  
By some prison officer. On his back  
You noticed a load like a peddler's pack?  
Well, that's what he lives for: when reason went,  
Still memory lived, for the days are spent  
In searching for Dukites; and year by year  
That bundle of skins is growing. 'Tis clear  
That the Lord out of evil some good still takes;  
For he's clearing this bush of the Dukite snakes.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Empty Niche

A KING once made a gallery of art,  
With portraits of dead friends and living graced;  
And at the end, 'neath curtains drawn apart,  
An empty marble pedestal was placed.

Here, every day, the king would come, and pace  
With eyes well-pleased along the statued hall;  
But, ere he left, he turned with saddened face,  
And mused before the curtained pedestal.

And once a courtier asked him why he kept  
The shadowed niche to fill his heart with dole;  
'For absent friends,' the monarch said, and wept;  
'There still must be one absent to the soul.'

And this is true of all the hearts that beat;  
Though days be soft and summer pathways fair,  
Be sure, while joyous glances round us meet,  
The curtained crypt and vacant plinth are there.

To-day we stand before our draped recess:  
There is none absent—all we love are here;  
To-morrow's hands the opening curtains press,  
And lo, the pallid pediment is bare!

The cold affection that plain duty breeds  
May see its union severed, and approve;  
But when our bond is touched, it throbs and bleeds—  
We pay no meed of duty, but of love.

As creeping tendrils shudder from the stone,  
The vines of love avoid the frigid heart;  
The work men do is not their test alone,  
The love they win is far the better chart.

They say the citron-tree will never thrive  
Transplanted from the soil where it matured;  
Ah, would 'twere so that men could only live  
Through working on where they had love secured!

'The People of the Book,' men called the Jews—  
Our priests are truly ' People of the Word; '  
And he who serves the Master must not choose—  
He renders feudal service to the Lord.

But we who love and lose will, like the king,  
Still keep the alcove empty in the hall,  
And hope, firm-hearted, that some day will bring  
Our absent one to fill his pedestal.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Exile Of The Gael

IT is sweet to rejoice for a day,—  
For a day that is reached at last!  
It is well for wanderers in new lands,  
Slow climbers toward a lofty mountain pass,  
Yearning with hearts and eyes strained ever upward,  
To pause, and rest, on the summit,—  
To stand between two limitless outlooks,—  
Behind them, a winding path through familiar pains and ventures;  
Before them, the streams unbridged and the vales untraveled.

What shall they do nobler than mark their passage,  
With kindly hearts, mayhap for kindred to follow?  
What shall they do wiser than pile a cairn  
With stones from the wayside, that their tracks and names  
Be not blown from the hills like sand, and their story be lost forever?

'Hither,' the cairn shall tell, 'Hither they came and rested!'  
'Whither?' the searcher shall ask, with questioning eyes on their future.

Hither and Whither! O Maker of Nations! Hither and Whither the sea speaks,  
Heaving; the forest speaks, dying; the Summer whispers,  
Like a sentry giving up the watchword, to the muffled Winter.  
Hither and Whither! the Earth calls wheeling to the Sun;  
And like ships on the deep at night, the stars interflash the signal.

Hither and Whither, the exiles' cairn on the hill speaks,—  
Yea, as loudly as the sea and the earth and the stars.  
The heart is earth's exile: the soul is heaven's;  
And God has made no higher mystery for stars.

Hither—from home! sobs the torn flower on the river:  
Wails the river itself as it enters the bitter ocean;  
Moans the iron in the furnace at the premonition of melting;  
Cries the scattered grain in Spring at the passage of the harrow.  
In the iceberg is frozen the rain's dream of exile from the fields;  
The shower falls sighing for the opaline hills of cloud;  
And the clouds on the bare mountains weep their daughter-love for the sea.

Exile is God's alchemy! Nations he forms like metals,—

Mixing their strength and their tenderness;  
Tempering pride with shame and victory with affliction;  
Meting their courage, their faith and their fortitude,—  
Timing their genesis to the world's needs!

'What have ye brought to our Nation-building, Sons of the Gael?  
What is your burden or guerdon from old Innisfail?  
Here build we higher and deeper than men ever built before;  
And we raise no Shinar tower, but a temple forevermore.  
What have ye brought from Erin your hapless land could spare?  
Her tears, defeats, and miseries? Are these, indeed, your share?  
Are the mother's caoine and the banshee's cry your music for our song?  
Have ye joined our feast with a withered wreath and a memory of wrong?  
With a broken sword and treason-flag, from your Banba of the Seas?  
O, where in our House of Triumph shall hang such gifts as these?'

O, Soul, wing forth! what answer across the main is heard?  
From burdened ships and exiled lips,—write down, write down the word!

'No treason we bring from Erin — nor bring we shame nor guilt!  
The sword we hold may be broken, but we have not dropped the hilt!  
The wreath we bear to Columbia is twisted of thorns, not bays;  
And the songs we sing are saddened by thoughts of desolate days.  
But the hearts we bring for Freedom are washed in the surge of tears;  
And we claim our right by a People's fight outliving a thousand years!'

'What bring ye else to the Building?'

'O, willing hands to toil;  
Strong natures tuned to the harvest-song, and bound to the kindly soil;  
Bold pioneers for the wilderness, defenders in the field,—  
The sons of a race of soldiers who never learned to yield.  
Young hearts with duty brimming—as faith makes sweet the due;  
Their truth to me their witness they cannot be false to you!'

'What send ye else, old Mother, to raise our mighty wall?  
For we must build against Kings and Wrongs a fortress never to fall?'

'I send you in cradle and bosom, wise brain and eloquent tongue,  
Whose crowns should engild my crowning, whose songs for me should be sung.  
O, flowers unblown, from lonely fields, my daughters with hearts aglow,  
With pulses warm with sympathies, with bosoms pure as snow,—  
I smile through tears as the' clouds unroll—my widening river that runs!



My lost ones grown in radiant growth—proud mothers of free-born sons!  
My seed of sacrifice ripens apace! The Tyrant's cure is disease:  
My strength that was dead like a forest is spread beyond the distant seas!

'It is well, aye well, old Erin! The sons you give to me  
Are symbolled long in flag and song—your Sunburst on the Sea!  
All mine by the chrism of Freedom, still yours by their love's belief;  
And truest to me shall the tenderest be in a suffering mother's grief.

Their loss is the change of the wave to the cloud, of the dew to the river and  
main;  
Their hope shall persist through the sea, and the mist, and thy streams shall be  
filled again.  
As the smolt of the salmon go down to the sea, and as surely come back to the  
river,  
Their love shall be yours while your sorrow endures, for God guardeth His right  
forever! '

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Feast Of The Gael

St. Patrick's Day

I.

WHAT a union of hearts is the love of a mother  
When races of men in her name unite!  
For love of Old Erin, and love of each other,  
The boards of the Gael are full to-night!  
Their millions of men have one toast and one topic—  
Their feuds laid aside and their envies removed;  
From the pines of the Pole to the palms of the Tropic,  
They drink: 'The dear Land we have prayed for and loved!'  
They are One by the bond of a time-honored fashion;  
Though strangers may see but the lights of their feast,  
Beneath lies the symbol of faith and of passion  
Alike of the Pagan and Christian priest!

II.

When native laws by native kings  
At Tara were decreed,  
The grand old Gheber worship  
Was the form of Erin's creed.  
The Sun, Life-giver, was God on high;  
Men worshipped the Power they saw;  
And they kept the faith as the ages rolled  
By the solemn Beltane law.  
Each year, on the Holy Day, was quenched  
The household fires of the land;  
And the Druid priest, at the midnight hour,  
Brought forth the flaming brand,—  
The living spark for the Nation's hearths,—  
From the Monarch's hand it came,  
Whose fire at Tara spread the sign—  
And the people were One by the flame!  
And Baal was God! till Patrick came,  
By the Holy Name inspired;  
On the Beltane night, in great Tara's sight,  
His pile at Slane was fired.  
And the deed that was death was the Nation's life,

And the doom of the Pagan bane;  
For Erin still keeps Beltane night,  
But lights her lamp at Slane!  
Though fourteen centuries pile their dust  
On the mound of the Druid's grave,  
To-night is The Beltane! Bright the fire  
That Holy Patrick gave!  
To-night is The Beltane! Let him heed  
Who studieth creed and race:  
Old times and gods are dead, and we  
Are far from the ancient place;  
The waves of centuries, war, and waste,  
Of famine, gallows, and goal,  
Have swept our land; but the world to-night  
Sees the Beltane Fire of the Gael!

### III.

O land of sad fate! like a desolate queen,  
Who remembers in sorrow the crown of her glory,  
The love of thy children not strangely is seen—  
For humanity weeps at thy heart-touching story.  
Strong heart in affliction! that draweth thy foes  
Till they love thee more dear than thine own generation:  
Thy strength is increased as thy life-current flows,—  
What were death to another is Ireland's salvation!  
God scatters her sons like the seed on the lea,  
And they root where they fall, be it mountain or furrow;  
They come to remain and remember; and she  
In their growth will rejoice in a blissful to-morrow!

They sing in strange lands the sweet songs of their home,  
Their emerald Zion enthroned in the billows;  
To work, not to weep by the rivers they come:  
Their harps are not hanged in despair on the willows.  
The hope of the mother beats youthful and strong,  
Responsive and true to her children's pulsations,  
No petrified heart has she saved from the wrong—  
Our Niobe lives for her place 'mong the nations!

Then drink, all her sons—be they Keltic or Danish,  
Or Norman or Saxon—one mantle was o'er us;

Let race lines, and creed lines, and every line, vanish—  
We drink as the Gael: 'To the Mother that bore us! '

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Fisherman Of Wexford

THERE is an old tradition sacred held in Wexford town,  
That says: 'Upon St. Martin's Eve no net shall be let down;  
No fishermen of Wexford shall, upon that holy day,  
Set sail or cast a line within the scope of Wexford Bay.'  
The tongue that framed the order, or the time, no one could tell;  
And no one ever questioned, but the people kept it well.  
And never in man's memory was fisher known to leave  
The little town of Wexford on the good St. Martin's Eve.

Alas! alas for Wexford! once upon that holy day  
Came a wondrous shoal of herring to the waters of the Bay.  
The fishers and their families stood out upon the beach,  
And all day watched with wistful eyes the wealth they might not reach.  
Such shoal was never seen before, and keen regrets went round—  
Alas! alas for Wexford! Hark! what is that grating sound?  
The boats' keels on the shingle! Mothers! wives! ye well may grieve,—  
The fishermen of Wexford mean to sail on Martin s Eve!

'Oh, stay ye!' cried the women wild. 'Stay!' cried the men white-haired;  
'And dare ye not to do this thing your fathers never dared.  
No man can thrive who tempts the Lord!' 'Away!' they cried: 'the Lord  
Ne'er sent a shoal of fish but as a fisherman's reward.'  
And scoffingly they said, 'To-night our net shall sweep the Bay,  
And take the Saint who guards it, should he come across our way!'  
The keels have touched the water, and the crews are in each boat;  
And on St. Martin's Eve the Wexford fishers are afloat!

The moon is shining coldly on the sea and on the land,  
On dark faces in the fishing-fleet and pale ones on the strand,  
As seaward go the daring boats, and heavenward the cries  
Of kneeling wives and mothers with uplifted hands and eyes.

' Oh Holy Virgin! be their guard! ' the weeping women cried;  
The old men, sad and silent, watched the boats cleave through the tide,  
As past the farthest headland, past the lighthouse, in a line  
The fishing-fleet went seaward through the phosphor-lighted brine.

Oh, pray, ye wives and mothers! All your prayers they sorely need  
To save them from the wrath they've roused by their rebellious greed.

Oh! white-haired men and little babes, and weeping sweethearts, pray  
To God to spare the fishermen to-night in Wexford Bay!

The boats have reached good offing, and, as out the nets are thrown,  
The hearts ashore are chilled to hear the souging sea-wind's moan:

Like to a human heart that loved, and hoped for some return,  
To find at last but hatred, so the sea-wind seemed to mourn.  
But ah! the Wexford fishermen! their nets did scarcely sink  
One inch below the foam, when, lo! the daring boatmen shrink  
With sudden awe and whitened lips and glaring eyes agape,  
For breast-high, threatening, from the sea uprose a Human Shape!

Beyond them,—in the moonlight,—hand upraised and awful mien,  
Waving back and pointing landward, breast-high in the sea 'twas seen.  
Thrice it waved and thrice it pointed,—then, with clenched hand upraised,  
The awful shape went down before the fishers as they gazed!  
Gleaming whitely through the water, fathoms deep they saw its frown,—  
They saw its white hand clenched above it,—sinking slowly down!  
And then there was a rushing 'neath the boats, and every soul  
Was thrilled with greed: they knew it was the seaward-going shoal!

Defying the dread warning, every face was sternly set,  
And wildly did they ply the oar, and wildly haul the net.  
But two boats' crews obeyed the sign, —God-fearing men were they,—  
They cut their lines and left their nets, and homeward sped away;  
But darkly rising sternward did God's wrath in tempest sweep,  
And they, of all the fishermen, that night escaped the deep.  
Oh, wives and mothers, sweethearts, sires! well might ye mourn next day;  
For seventy fishers' corpses strewed the shores of Wexford Bay!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Flying Dutchman

LONG time ago, from Amsterdam a vessel sailed away,—  
As fair a ship as ever flung aside the laughing spray.  
Upon the shore were tearful eyes, and scarfs were in the air,  
As to her, o'er the Zuyder Zee, went fond adieu and prayer;  
And brave hearts, yearning shoreward from the outwardgoing ship,  
Felt lingering kisses clinging still to tear-wet cheek and lip.  
She steered for some far eastern clime, and, as she skimmed the seas,  
Each taper mast was bending like a rod before the breeze.

Her captain was a stalwart man,—an iron heart had he,—  
From childhood's days he sailed upon the rolling Zuyder Zee:  
He nothing feared upon the earth, and scarcely heaven feared,  
He would have dared and done whatever mortal man had dared!  
He looked aloft, where high in air the pennant cut the blue,  
And every rope and spar and sail was firm and strong and true.  
He turned him from the swelling sail to gaze upon the shore,—  
Ah! little thought the skipper then 'twould meet his eye no more:  
He dreamt not that an awful doom was hanging o'er his ship,  
That Vanderdecken's name would yet make pale the speaker's lip.  
The vessel bounded on her way, and spire and dome went down,—  
Ere darkness fell, beneath the wave had sunk the distant town.  
No more, no more, ye hapless crew, shall Holland meet your eye.  
In lingering hope and keen suspense, maid, wife, and child shall die!

Away, away the vessel speeds, till sea and sky alone  
Are round her, as her course she steers across the torrid zone.  
Away, until the North Star fades, the Southern Cross is high,  
And myriad gems of brightest beam are sparkling In the sky.  
The tropic winds are left behind; she nears the Cape of Storms,  
Where awful Tempest ever sits enthroned in wild alarms;  
Where Ocean in his anger shakes aloft his foamy crest,  
Disdainful of the weakly toys that ride upon his breast.

Pierce swell the winds and waters round the Dutchman's gallant ship,  
But, to their rage, defiance rings from Vanderdecken's lip:  
Impotent they to make him swerve, their might he dares despise,  
As straight he holds his onward course, and wind and wave defies.  
For days and nights he struggles in the weird, unearthly fight.  
His brow is bent, his eye is fierce, but looks of deep affright

Amongst the mariners go round, as hopelessly they steer:  
They do not dare to murmur, but they whisper what they fear.  
Their black-browed captain awes them: 'neath his darkened eye they quail,  
And in a grim and sullen mood their bitter fate bewail.  
As some fierce rider ruthless spurs a timid, wavering horse,  
He drives his shapely vessel, and they watch the reckless course,  
Till once again their skipper's laugh is flung upon the blast:  
The placid ocean smiles beyond, the dreaded Cape is passed!

Away across the Indian main the vessel northward glides;  
A thousand murmuring ripples break along her graceful sides:  
The perfumed breezes fill her sails,—her destined port she nears,—  
The captain's brow has lost its frown, the mariners their fears.  
'Land ho!' at length the welcome sound the watchful sailor sings,  
And soon within an Indian bay the ship at anchor swings.  
Not idle then the busy crew: ere long the spacious hold  
Is emptied of its western freight, and stored with silk and gold.

Again the ponderous anchor's weighed; the shore is left behind,  
The snowy sails are bosomed out before the favoring wind.  
Across the warm blue Indian sea the vessel southward flies,  
And once again the North Star fades and Austral beacons rise.  
For home she steers I she seems to know and answer to the word,  
And swifter skims the burnished deep, like some fair oceanbird.  
'For home! for home!' the merry crew with gladsome voices cry,  
And dark-browed Vanderdecken has a mild light in his eye.

But once again the Cape draws near, and furious billows rise;  
And still the daring Dutchman's laugh the hurricane defies.  
But wildly shrieked the tempest ere the scornful sound had died,  
A warning to the daring man to curb his impious pride.  
A crested mountain struck the ship, and like a frightened bird  
She trembled 'neath the awful shock. Then Vanderdecken heard  
A pleading voice.—within the gale,—his better angel spoke,  
But fled before his scowling look, as mast-high mountains broke  
Around the trembling vessel, till the crew with terror paled;  
But Vanderdecken never flinched, nor 'neath the thunders quailed.  
With folded arms and stern-pressed lips, dark anger in his eye,  
He answered back the threatening frown that lowered o'er the sky.  
With fierce defiance in his heart, and scornful look of flame,  
He spoke, and thus with impious voice blasphemed God's holy name:  
'Howl on, ye winds! ye tempests, howl! your rage is spent in vain:



Despite your strength, your frowns, your hate, I'll ride upon the main.  
Defiance to your idle shrieks! I'll sail upon my path:  
I cringe not for thy Maker's smile,—I care not for His wrath!

He ceased. An awful silence fell; the tempest and the sea  
Were hushed in sudden stillness by the Ruler's dread decree.  
The ship was riding motionless within the gathering gloom;  
The Dutchman stood upon the poop and heard his dreadful doom.  
The hapless crew were on the deck in swooning terror prone,—  
They, too, were bound in fearful fate. In angered thunder-tone  
The judgment words swept o'er the sea: 'Go, wretch, accurst, condemned!  
Go sail for ever on the deep, by shrieking tempests hemmed!  
No home, no port, no calm, no rest, no gentle favoring breeze,  
Shall ever greet thee. Go, accurst! and battle with the seas!  
Go, braggart! struggle with the storm, nor ever cease to live,  
But bear a million times the pangs that death and fear can give!  
Away! and hide thy guilty head, a curse to all thy kind  
Who ever see thee struggling, wretch, with ocean and with wind!  
Away, presumptuous worm of earth! Go teach thy fellow worms  
The awful fate that waits on him who braves the King of Storms!

'Twas o'er. A lurid lightning flash lit up the sea and sky  
Around and o'er the fated ship; then rose a wailing cry  
From every heart within her, of keen anguish and despair;  
But mercy was for them no more,—it died away in air.

Once more the lurid light gleamed out,—the ship was still at rest,  
The crew were standing at their posts; with arms across his breast  
Still stood the captain on the poop, but bent and crouching now  
He bowed beneath that fiat dread, and o'er his swarthy brow  
Swept lines of anguish, as if he a thousand years of pain  
Had lived and suffered. Then across the heaving, angry main  
The tempest shrieked triumphant, and the angry waters hissed  
Their vengeful hate against the toy they oftentimes bad kissed.  
And ever through the midnight storm that hapless crew must speed:  
They try to round the stormy Cape, but never can succeed.  
And oft when gales are wildest,, and the lightning's vivid sheen  
Flashes back the ocean's anger, still the Phantom Ship is seen  
Ever sailing to the southward in the fierce tornado's swoop,  
With her ghostly crew and canvas, and her captain on the poop,  
Unrelenting, unforgiven! and 'tis said that every word  
Of his blasphemous defiance still upon the gale is heard!

But Heaven help the ship near which the dismal sailor steers,—  
The doom of those is sealed to whom that Phantom Ship appears:  
They'll never reach their destined port,—they'll see their homes no more,—  
They who see the Flying Dutchman—never, never reach the shore!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Infinite

The Infinite always is silent:  
It is only the Finite speaks.  
Our words are the idle wave-caps  
On the deep that never breaks.  
We may question with wand of science,  
Explain, decide, and discuss;  
But only in meditation  
The Mystery speaks to us.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The King Of The Vasse

A LEGEND OF THE BUSH.

MY tale which I have brought is of a time  
Ere that fair Southern land was stained with crime,  
Brought thitherward in reeking ships and cast  
Like blight upon the coast, or like a blast  
From angry levin on a fair young tree,  
That stands thenceforth a piteous sight to see.  
So lives this land to-day beneath the sun,—  
A weltering plague-spot, where the hot tears run,  
And hearts to ashes turn, and souls are dried  
Like empty kilns where hopes have parched and died.  
Woe's cloak is round her,—she the fairest shore  
In all the Southern Ocean o'er and o'er.  
Poor Cinderella! she must bide her woe,  
Because an elder sister wills it so.  
Ah! could that sister see the future day  
When her own wealth and strength are shorn away,  
she, lone mother then, puts forth her hand  
To rest on kindred blood in that far land;  
Could she but see that kin deny her claim  
Because of nothing owing her but shame,—  
Then might she learn 'tis building but to fall,  
If carted rubble be the basement-wall.

But this my tale, if tale it be, begins  
Before the young land saw the old land's sins  
Sail up the orient ocean, like a cloud  
Far-blown, and widening as it neared,—a shroud  
Fate-sent to wrap the bier of all things pure,  
And mark the leper-land while stains endure.  
In the far days, the few who sought the West  
Were men all guileless, in adventurous quest  
Of lands to feed their flocks and raise their grain,  
And help them live their lives with less of pain  
Than crowded Europe lets her children know.  
From their old homesteads did they seaward go,  
As if in Nature's order men must flee

As flow the streams,—from inlands to the sea.

In that far time, from out a Northern land,  
With home-ties severed, went a numerous band  
Of men and wives and children, white-haired folk:  
Whose humble hope of rest at home had broke,  
As year was piled on year, and still their toil  
Had wrung poor fee from -Sweden's rugged soil.  
One day there gathered from the neighboring steads,  
In Jacob Eibsen's, five strong household heads,—  
Five men large-limbed and sinewed, Jacob's sons,  
Though he was hale, as one whose current runs  
In stony channels, that the streamlet rend,  
But keep it clear and full unto the end.  
Eight sons had Jacob Eibsen,—three still boys,  
And these five men, who owned of griefs and joys  
The common lot; and three tall girls beside,  
Of whom the eldest was a blushing bride  
One year before. Old-fashioned times and men,  
And wives and maidens, were in Sweden then.  
These five came there for counsel: they were tired  
Of hoping on for all the heart desired;  
And Jacob, old but mighty-thewed as youth,  
In all their words did sadly own the truth,  
And said unto them, 'Wealth cannot be found  
In Sweden now by men who till the ground.  
I've thought at times of leaving this bare place,  
And holding seaward with a seeking face  
For those new lands they speak of, where men thrive.  
Alone .I've thought of this-; but now you five—  
Five brother men of Eibsen blood—shall say  
If our old stock from here must wend their way,  
And seek a home where anxious sires can give  
To every child enough whereon to live.'

Then each took thought in silence. Jacob gazed  
Across them at the pastures worn and grazed  
By ill-fed herds; his glance to corn-fields passed,  
Where stunted oats, worse each year than the last,  
And blighted barley, grew amongst the stones,  
That showed ungainly, like earth's fleshless bones.  
He sighed, and turned away. 'Sons, let me know

What think you?'

Each one answered firm, 'We go.'  
And then they said, 'We want no northern wind  
To chill us more, or driving hail to blind.  
But let us sail where south winds fan the sea,  
And happier we and all our race shall be.'  
And so in time there started for the coast,  
With farm and household gear, this Eibsen host;  
And there, with others, to a good ship passed,  
Which soon of Sweden's hills beheld the last.

I know not of their voyage, nor how they  
Did wonder-stricken sit, as day by day,  
'Neath tropic rays, they saw the smooth sea swell  
And heave; while night by night the north-star fell,  
Till last they watched him burning on the sea;  
Nor how they saw, and wondered it could be,  
Strange beacons rise before them as they gazed:  
Nor how their hearts grew light when southward blazed  
Five stars in blessed shape,—the Cross! whose flame  
Seemed shining welcome as the wanderers came.

My story presses from this star-born hope  
To where on young New Holland's western slope  
These Northern-farming folk found homes at last,  
And all their thankless toil seemed now long past.  
Nine fruitful years chased over, and nigh all  
Of life was sweet. But one dark dropp of gall  
Had come when first they landed, like a sign  
Of some black woe; and deep in Eibsen's wine  
Of life it hid, till in the sweetest cup  
The old man saw its shape come shuddering up.  
And first it came in this wise: when their ship  
Had made the promised land, and every lip  
Was pouring praise for what the eye did meet,—  
For all the air was yellow as with heat  
Above the peaceful sea and dazzling sand  
That wooed each other round the beauteous land,  
Where inward stretched the slumbering forest's green,—  
When first these sights from off the deck were seen,  
There rose a wailing stern wards, and the men

Who dreamt of heaven turned to earth agen,  
And heard the direful cause with bated breath,—  
The land's first gleam had brought the blight of death!

The wife of Eibsen held her six-years' son,  
Her youngest, and in secret best-loved one,  
Close to her lifeless: his had been the cry  
That first horizonwards bent every eye;  
And from that opening sight of sand and tree  
Like one deep spell-bound did he seem to be,  
And moved by some strange phantasy; his eyes  
Were wide distended as in glad surprise  
At something there he saw; his arms reached o'er  
The vessel's side as if to greet the shore,  
And sounds came from his lips like sobs of joy.

A brief time so; and then the blue-eyed boy  
Sank down convulsed, as if to him appeared  
Strange sights that they saw not; and all afeard  
Grew the late joyous people with vague dread;  
And loud the mother wailed above her dead.  
The ship steered in and found a bay, and then  
The anchor plunged aweary-like: the men  
Breathed breaths of rest at treading land agen.

Upon the beach by Christian men untrod  
The wanderers kneeling offered up to God  
The land's first-fruits; and nigh the kneeling band  
The burdened mother sat upon the sand,  
And still she wailed, not praying.

'Neath the wood  
That lined the beach a crowd of watchers stood:  
Tall men spear-armed, with skins like dusky night,  
And aspect blended of deep awe and fright.  
The ship that morn they saw, like some vast bird,  
Come sailing toward their country; and they heard  
The voices now of those strange men whose eyes  
Were turned aloft, who spake unto the skies!

They heard and feared, not knowing, that first prayer,  
But feared not when the wail arose, for there

Was some familiar thing did not appall,—  
Grief, common heritage and lot of all.  
They moved and breathed more freely at the cry,  
And slowly from the wood, and timorously,  
They one by one emerged upon the beach.  
The white men saw, and like to friends did reach  
Their hands unarmed; and soon the dusky crowd  
Drew nigh and stood where wailed the mother loud.  
They claimed her kindred, they could understand  
That woe was hers and theirs; whereas the band  
Of white-skinned men did not as brethren seem.  
But now, behold! a man, whom one would deem  
From eye and mien, wherever met, a King,  
Did stand beside the woman. No youth's spring  
Was in the foot that naked pressed the sand;  
No warrior's might was in the long dark hand  
That waved his people backward; no bright gold.  
Of lace or armor glittered; gaunt and old,—  
A belt, half apron, made of emu-down,  
Upon his loins; upon his head no crown  
Save only that which eighty years did trace  
In whitened hair above his furrowed face.  
Nigh nude he was: a short fur boka hung  
In toga-folds upon his back, but flung  
From his right arm and shoulder,—ever there  
The spear-arm of the warrior is bare.

So stood he nigh the woman, gaunt and wild  
But king-like, spearless, looking on the child  
That lay with livid face upon her knees.  
Thus long and fixed he gazed, as one who sees  
A symbol hidden in a simple thing,  
And trembles at its meaning: so the King  
Fell trembling there, and from his breast there broke  
A cry, part joy, part fear; then to his folk  
With upraised hands he spoke one guttural word,  
And said it over thrice; and when they heard,  
They, too, were stricken with strange fear and joy.

The white-haired King then to the breathless boy  
Drew closer still, while all the dusky crowd  
In weird abasement to the earth were bowed.



Across his breast the aged ruler wore  
A leathern thong or belt; whate'er it bore  
Was hidden 'neath the boka. As he drew  
Anigh the mother, from his side he threw  
Far back the skin that made his rich-furred robe,  
And showed upon the belt a small red globe  
Of carven wood, bright-polished, as with years:  
When this they saw, deep grew his people's fears,  
And to the white sand were their foreheads pressed.

The King then raised his arms, as if he blest  
The youth who lay there seeming dead and cold;  
Then took the globe and oped it, and behold!  
Within it, bedded in the carven case,  
There lay a precious thing for that rude race  
To hold, though it as God they seemed to prize, —  
A Pearl of purest hue and wondrous size!

And as the sunbeams kissed it, from the dead  
The dusk King looked, and o'er his snowy head  
With both long hands he raised the enthroned gem,  
And turned him toward the strangers: e'en on them  
Before the lovely Thing, an awe did fall  
To see that worship deep and mystical,  
That King with upraised god, like rev' rent priest  
With elevated Host at Christian feast.

Then to the mother turning slow, the King  
Took out the Pearl, and laid the beauteous Thing  
Upon the dead boy's mouth and brow and breast,  
And as it touched him, lo! the awful rest  
Of death was broken, and the youth uprose!

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Nine years passed over since on that fair shore  
The wanderers knelt,—but wanderers they no more.  
With hopeful hearts they bore the promise-pain  
Of early labor, and soon bending grain  
And herds and homesteads and a teeming soil  
A thousand-fold repaid their patient toil.

Nine times the sun's high glory glared above,  
As if his might set naught on human love,  
But yearned to scorn and scorch the things that grew  
On man's poor home, till all the forest's hue  
Of blessed green was burned to dusty brown;  
And still the ruthless rays rained fiercely down,  
Till insects, reptiles, shriveled as they lay,  
And piteous cracks, like lips, in parching clay  
Sent silent pleadings skyward,—as if she,  
The fruitful, generous mother, plaintively  
Did wail for water. Lo! her cry is heard,  
And swift, obedient to the Ruler's word,  
From Southern Iceland sweeps the cool sea breeze,  
To fan the earth and bless the suffering trees,  
And bear dense clouds with bursting weight of rain  
To soothe with moisture all the parching pain.

Oh, Mercy's sweetest symbol! only they  
Who see the earth agape in burning day,  
Who watch its living things thirst-stricken lie,  
And turn from brazen heaven as they die,—  
Their hearts alone, the shadowy cloud can prize  
That veils the sun,—as to poor earth-dimmed eyes  
The sorrow comes to veil our joy's dear face,  
All rich-in mercy and in God's sweet grace!

Thrice welcome, clouds from seaward, settling down  
O'er thirsting nature! Now the trees' dull brown  
Is washed away, and leaflet buds appear,  
And youngling undergrowth, and far and near  
The bush is whispering in her pent-up glee,  
As myriad roots bestir them to be free,  
And drink the soaking moisture; while bright heaven  
Shows clear, as inland are the spent clouds driven;  
And oh! that arch, that sky's intensate hue!  
That deep, God-painted, unimagined blue  
Through which the golden sun now smiling sails,  
And sends his love to fructify the vales  
That late he seemed to curse! Earth throbs and heaves  
With pregnant prescience of life and leaves;  
The shadows darken 'neath the tall trees' screen,  
While round their stems the rank and velvet green

Of undergrowth is deeper still; and there,  
Within the double shade and steaming air,  
The scarlet palm has fixed its noxious root,  
And hangs the glorious poison of its fruit;  
And there, 'mid shaded green and shaded light,  
The steel-blue silent birds take rapid flight  
From earth to tree and tree to earth; and there  
The crimson-plumaged parrot cleaves the air  
Like flying fire, and huge brown owls awake  
To watch, far down, the stealing carpet snake,  
Fresh-skinned and glowing in his changing dyes,  
With evil wisdom in the cruel eyes  
That glint like gems as o'er his head flits by  
The blue-black armor of the emperor-fly;  
And all the humid earth displays its powers  
Of prayer, with incense from the hearts of flowers  
That load the air with beauty and with wine  
Of mingled color, as with one design  
Of making there a carpet to be trod,  
In woven splendor, by the feet of God!

And high o'erhead is color: round and round  
The towering gums and tuads, closely wound  
Like cables, creep the climbers to the sun,  
And over all the reaching branches run  
And hang, and still send shoots that climb and wind  
Till every arm and spray and leaf is twined,  
And miles of trees, like brethren joined in love,  
Are drawn and laced; while round them and above,  
When all is knit, the creeper rests for days  
As gathering might, and then one blinding blaze  
Of very glory sends, in wealth and strength,  
Of scarlet flowers o'er the forest's length!

Such scenes as these have subtile power to trace  
Their clear-lined impress on the mind and face;  
And these strange simple folk, not knowing why,  
Grew more and more to silence; and the eye,  
The quiet eye of Swedish gray, grew deep  
With listening to the solemn rustling sweep  
From wings of Silence, and the earth's great psalm  
Intoned forever by the forest's calm.

But most of all was younger Jacob changed:  
From morn till night, alone, the woods he ranged,  
To kindred, pastime, sympathy estranged.  
Since that first day of landing from the ship  
When with the Pearl on brow and breast and lip  
The aged King had touched him and he rose,  
His former life had left him, and he chose  
The woods as home, the wild, uncultured men  
As friends and comrades. It were better then,  
His brethren said, the boy had truly died  
Than they should live to be by him denied,  
As now they were. He lived in somber mood,  
He spoke no word to them, he broke no food  
That they did eat: his former life was dead,—  
The soul brought back was not the soul that fled!  
'Twas Jacob's form and feature, but the light  
Within his eyes was strange unto their sight.

His mother's grief was piteous to see;  
Unloving was he to the rest, but she  
Held undespairing hope that deep within  
Her son's changed heart was love that she might win  
By patient tenderness; and so she strove  
For nine long years, but won no look of love!

At last his brethren gazed on him with awe,  
And knew untold that from the form they saw  
Their brother's gentle mind was sure dispelled,  
And now a gloomy savage soul it held.  
From that first day, close intercourse he had  
With those who raised him up,—fierce men, unclad,  
Spear-armed and wild, in all their ways uncouth,  
And strange to every habit of his youth.  
His food they brought, his will they seemed to crave,  
The wildest bushman tended like a slave;  
He worked their charms, their hideous chants he sung;  
Though dumb to all his own, their guttural tongue  
He often spoke in tones of curt command,  
And kinged it proudly o'er the dusky band.

And once each year there gathered from afar

A swarming host, as if a sudden war  
Had called them forth, and with them did they bring  
In solemn, savage pomp the white-haired King,  
Who year by year more withered was and weak;  
And he would lead the youth apart and speak  
Some occult words, and from the carven case  
Would take the Pearl and touch the young man's face,  
And hold it o'er him blessing; while the crowd,  
As on the shore, in dumb abasement bowed.  
And when the King had closed the formal rite,  
The rest held savage revelry by night,  
Round blazing fires, with dance and orgies base,  
That roused the sleeping echoes of the place,  
Which down the forest vistas moaned the din,  
Like spirits pure beholding impious sin.

Nine times they gathered thus; but on the last  
The old king's waning life seemed well-nigh past.  
His feeble strength had failed: he walked no more,  
But on a woven spear-wood couch they bore  
With careful tread the form that barely gasped,  
As if the door of death now hung unhasped,  
Awaiting but a breath to swing, and show  
The dim eternal plain that stretched below.

The tenth year waned: the cloistered bush was stilled,  
The earth lay sleeping, while the clouds distilled  
In ghostly veil their blessing. Thin and white,  
Through opening trees the moonbeams cleft the night,  
And showed the somber arches, taller far  
Than grandest aisles of built cathedrals are.  
And up those dim-lit aisles in silence streamed  
Tall men with trailing spears, until it seemed,  
So many lines converged of endless length,  
A nation there was gathered in its strength.

Around one spot was kept a spacious ring,  
Where lay the body of the white-haired King,  
Which all the spearmen gathered to behold  
Upon its spear-wood litter, stiff and cold.  
All naked, there the dusky corse was laid  
Beneath a royal tuad's mourning shade;

Upon the breast was placed the carven case  
That held the symbol of their ancient race,  
And eyes awe-stricken saw the mystic Thing  
That soon would clothe another as their King!  
The midnight moon was high and white o'erhead,  
And threw a ghastly pallor round the dead  
That heightened still the savage pomp and state  
In which they stood expectant, as for Fate  
To move and mark with undisputed hand  
The one amongst them to the high command.  
And long they stood unanswered; each on each  
Had looked in vain for motion or for speech:  
Unmoved as ebon statues, grand and tall,  
They ringed the shadowy circle, silent all.

Then came a creeping tremor, as a breeze  
With cooling rustle moves the summer trees  
Before the thunder crashes on the ear;  
The dense ranks turn expectant, as they hear  
A sound, at first afar, but nearing fast;  
The outer crowd divides, as waves are cast  
On either side a tall ship's cleaving bow,  
Or mold is parted by the fearless plow  
That leaves behind a passage clear and broad:  
So through the murmuring multitude a road  
Was cleft with power, up which in haughty swing  
A figure stalking broke the sacred ring.  
And stood beside the body of the King!

'Twas Jacob Eibsen, sad and gloomy-browed,  
Who bared his neck and breast, one moment bowed  
Above the corse, and then stood proud and tall,  
And held the carven case before them all!  
A breath went upward like a smothered fright  
From every heart, to see that face, so white,  
So foreign to their own, but marked with might  
From source unquestioned, and to them divine;  
Whilst he, the master of the mystic sign,  
Then oped the case and took the Pearl and raised,  
As erst the King had done, and upward gazed,  
As swearing fealty to God on high!

But ere the oath took form, there thrilled a cry  
Of shivering horror through the hush of night;  
And there before him, blinded by the sight  
Of all his impious purpose, brave with love,  
His mother stood, and stretched her arms above  
To tear the idol from her darling's hand;  
But one fierce look, and rang a harsh command  
In Jacob's voice, that smote her like a sword.  
A thousand men sprang forward at the word,  
To tear the mother from the form of stone,  
And cast her forth; but, as he stood alone,  
The keen, heart-broken wail that cut the air  
Went two-edged through him, half reproach, half prayer.

But all unheeding, he nor marked her cry  
By sign or look within the gloomy eye;  
But round his body bound the carven case,  
And swore the fealty with marble face.

As fades a dream before slow-waking sense,  
The shadowy host, that late stood fixed and dense,  
Began to melt; and as they came erewhile,  
The streams flowed backward through each moonlit aisle;  
And soon he stood alone within the place,  
Their new-made king,—their king with pallid face,  
Their king with strange foreboding and unrest,  
And half-formed thoughts, like dreams, within his breast.  
Like Moses' rod, that mother's cry of woe  
Had struck for water; but the fitful flow  
That weakly welled and streamed did seem to mock  
Before it died forever on the rock.

The sun rose o'er the forest, and his light  
Made still more dreamlike all the evil night.  
Day streamed his glory down the aisles' dim arch,  
All hushed and shadowy like a pillared church;  
And through the lonely bush no living thing  
Was seen, save now and then a garish wing  
Of bird low-flying on its silent way.

But woeful searchers spent the weary day  
In anxious dread, and found not what they sought,—

Their mother and their brother: evening brought  
A son and father to the lonesome place  
That saw the last night's scene; and there, her face  
Laid earthward, speaking dumbly to her heart,  
They found her, as the hands that tore apart  
The son and mother flung her from their chief,  
And with one cry her heart had spent its grief.

They bore the cold earth that so late did move  
In household happiness and works of love,  
Unto their rude home, lonely now; and he  
Who laid her there, from present misery  
Did turn away, half-blinded by his tears,  
To see with inward eye the far-off years  
When Swedish toil was light and hedgerows sweet;  
Where, when the toil was o'er, he used to meet  
A simple gray-eyed girl, with sun-browned face,  
Whose love had won his heart, and whose sweet grace  
Had blessed for threescore years his humble life.  
So Jacob Eibsen mourned his faithful wife,  
And found the world no home when she was gone.  
The days that seemed of old to hurry on  
Now dragged their course, and marred the wish that grew,  
When first he saw her grave, to sleep there too.  
But though to him, whose yearning hope outran  
The steady motion of the seasons' plan,  
The years were slow in coming, still their pace  
With awful sureness left a solemn trace,  
Like dust that settles on an open page,  
On Jacob Eibsen's head, bent down with age;  
And ere twice more the soothing rains had come,  
The old man had his wish, and to his home,  
Beneath the strange trees' shadow where she lay,  
They bore the rude-made bier; and from that day,  
When round the parent graves the brethren stood,  
Their new-made homesteads were no longer good,  
But marked they seemed by some o'erhanging dread  
That linked the living with the dreamless dead.  
Grown silent with the woods the men were all,  
But words were needed not to note the pall  
That each one knew hung o'er them. Duties now,  
With straying herds or swinging scythe, or plow,



Were cheerless tasks: like men they were who wrought  
A weary toil that no repayment brought.  
And when the seasons came and went, and still  
The pall was hanging o'er them, with one will  
They yoked their oxen teams and piled the loads  
Of gear selected for the aimless roads  
That nature opens through the bush; and when  
The train was ready, women-folk and men  
Went over to the graves and wept and prayed,  
Then rose and turned away, but still delayed  
Ere leaving there forever those poor mounds.

The next bright sunrise heard the teamsters' sounds  
Of voice and whip a long day's march away;  
And wider still the space grew day by day  
From their old resting-place: the trackless wood  
Still led them on with promises of good,  
As when the mirage leads a thirsty band  
With palm-tree visions o'er the arid sand.

I Snow not where they settled down at last:  
Their lives and homes from out my tale have passed,  
And left me naught, or seeming naught, to trace  
But cheerless record of the empty place,  
Where long unseen the palm-thatched cabins stood,  
And made more lonely still the lonesome wood.  
Long lives of men passed over; but the years  
That line men's faces with hard cares and tears,  
Pass lightly o'er a forest, leaving there  
No wreck of young disease or old despair;  
For trees are mightier than men, and Time,  
When left by cunning Sin and dark-browed Crime  
To work alone, hath ever gentle mood.  
Unchanged the pillars and the arches stood,  
But shadowed taller vistas; and the earth,  
That takes and gives the ceaseless death and birth,  
Was blooming still, as once it bloomed before  
When sea-tired eyes beheld the beauteous shore.

But man's best work is weak, nor stands nor grows  
Like Nature's simplest. Every breeze that blows,  
Health-bearing to the forest, plays its part

In hasting graveward all his humble art.

Beneath the trees the cabins still remained,  
By all the changing seasons seared and stained;  
Grown old and weirdlike, as the folk might grow  
In such a place, who left them long ago.

Men came, and wondering found the work of men  
Where they had deemed them first. The savage then  
Heard through the wood the axe's death watch stroke  
For him and all his people: odorous smoke  
Of burning sandal rose where white men dwelt,  
Around the huts; but they had shuddering felt  
The weird, forbidden aspect of the spot,  
And left the place untouched to mold and rot.  
The woods grew blithe with labor: all around,  
From point to point, was heard the hollow sound,  
The solemn, far-off clicking on the ear  
That marks the presence of the pioneer.  
And children came like flowers to bless the toil  
That reaped rich fruitage from the virgin soil;  
And through, the woods they wandered fresh and fair,  
To feast on all the beauties blooming there.  
But always did they shun the spot where grew,  
From earth once tilled, the flowers of rarest hue.  
There wheat grown wild in rank luxuriance spread,  
And fruits grown native; but a sudden tread  
Or bramble's fall would foul goanos wake,  
Or start the chilling rustle of the snake;  
And diamond eyes of these and thousand more  
Gleamed out from ruined roof and wall and floor.  
The new-come people, they whose axes rung  
Throughout the forest, spoke the English tongue,  
And never knew that men of other race  
From Europe's fields had settled in the place;  
But deemed these huts were built some long-past day  
By lonely seamen who were cast away  
And thrown upon the coast, who there had built  
Their homes, and lived until some woe or guilt  
Was bred among them, and they fled the sight  
Of scenes that held a horror to the light.

But while they thought such things, the spell that hung,  
And cast its shadow o'er the place, was strung  
To utmost tension that a breath would break,  
And show between the rifts the deep blue lake  
Of blessed peace,—as next to sorrow lies  
A stretch of rest, rewarding hopeful eyes.  
And while such things bethought this 'new-come folk,  
That breath was breathed, the olden spell was broke:  
From far away within the unknown land,  
O'er belts of forest and o'er wastes of sand,  
A cry came thrilling, like a cry of pain  
From suffering heart and half-awakened brain;  
As one thought dead who wakes within the tomb,  
And, reaching, cries for sunshine in the gloom.

In that strange country's heart, whence comes the breath  
Of hot disease and pestilential death,  
Lie leagues of wooded swamp, that from the hills  
Seem stretching meadows; but the flood that fills  
Those valley-basins has the hue of ink,  
And dismal doorways open on the brink,  
Beneath the gnarled arms of trees that grow  
All leafless to the top, from roots below  
The Lethe flood; and he who enters there  
Beneath their screen sees rising, ghastly-bare,  
Like mammoth bones within a charnel dark,  
The white and ragged stems of paper-bark,  
That drip down moisture with a ceaseless drip,  
From lines that run like cordage of a ship;  
For myriad creepers struggle to the light,  
And twine and mat o'erhead in murderous fight  
For life and sunshine, like another race  
That wars on brethren for the highest place.  
Between the water and the matted screen,  
The baldhead vultures, two and two, are seen  
In dismal grandeur, with revolting face  
Of foul grotesque, like spirits of the place;  
And now and then a spear-shaped wave goes by,  
Its apex glittering with an evil eye  
That sets above its enemy and prey,  
As from the wave in treacherous, slimy way  
The black snake winds, and strikes the bestial bird,

Whose shriek-like wailing on the hills is heard.

Beyond this circling swamp, a circling waste  
Of baked and barren desert land is placed,—  
A land of awful grayness, wild and stark,  
Where man will never leave a deeper mark,  
On leagues of fissured clay and scorching stones,  
Than may be printed there by bleaching bones.  
Within this belt, that keeps a savage guard,  
As round a treasure sleeps a dragon ward,  
A forest stretches far of precious trees;  
Whence came, one day, an odor-laden breeze  
Of jam-wood bruised, and sandal sweet in smoke.  
For there long dwelt a numerous native folk  
In that heart-garden of the continent,—  
There human lives with aims and fears were spent,  
And marked by love and hate and peace and pain,  
And hearts well-filled and hearts athirst for gain,  
And lips that clung, and faces bowed in shame;  
For, wild or polished, man is still the same,  
And loves and hates and envies in the wood,  
With spear and boka and with manners rude,  
As loves and hates his brother shorn and sleek,  
Who learns by lifelong practice how to speak  
With oily tongue, while in his heart below  
Lies rankling poison that he dare not show.

Afar from all new ways this people dwelt,  
And knew no books, and to no God had knelt,  
And had no codes to rule them writ in blood;  
But savage, selfish, nomad-lived and rude,  
With human passions fierce from unrestraint,  
And free as their loose limbs; with every taint  
That earth can give to that which God has given;  
Their nearest glimpse of Him, o'er-arching heaven,  
Where dwelt the giver and preserver,—Light,  
Who daily slew and still was slain by Night.

A savage people they, and prone to strife;  
Yet men grown weak with years had spent a life  
Of peace unbroken, and their sires, long dead,  
Had equal lives of peace unbroken led.

It was no statute's bond or coward fear  
Of retribution kept the shivering spear  
In all those years from fratricidal sheath;  
But one it was who ruled them,—one whom Death  
Had passed as if he saw not,—one whose word  
Through all that lovely central land was heard  
And bowed to, as of yore the people bent,  
In desert wanderings, to a leader sent  
To guide and guard them to a promised land.  
O'er all the Austral tribes he held command,—  
A man unlike them and not of their race,  
A man of flowing hair and pallid face,  
A man who strove by no deft juggler's art  
To keep his kingdom in the people's heart,  
Nor held his place by feats of brutal might  
Or showy skill, to please the savage sight;  
But one who ruled them as a King of kings,  
A man above, not of them,—one who brings,  
To prove his kingship to the low and high,  
The inborn power of the regal eye.  
Like him of Sinai with the stones of law,  
Whose people almost worshiped when they saw  
The veiled face whereon God's glory burned;  
But yet who, mutable as water, turned  
From that veiled ruler who had talked with God,  
To make themselves an idol from a clod:  
So turned one day this savage Austral race  
Against their monarch with the pallid face.  
The young men knew him not, the old had heard  
In far-off days, from men grown old, a word  
That dimly lighted up the mystic choice  
Of this their alien King,—how once a voice  
Was heard by their own monarch calling clear,  
And leading onward, where as on a bier  
A dead child lay upon a woman's knees;  
Whom when the old King saw, like one who sees  
Far through the mist of common life, he spoke  
And touched him with the Pearl, and he awoke,  
And from that day the people owned his right  
To wear the Pearl and rule them, when the light  
Had left their old King's eyes. But now, they said,  
The men who owned that right were too long dead;

And they were young and strong and held their spears  
In idle resting through this white King's fears,  
Who still would live to rule them till they changed  
Their men to puling women, and estranged  
To Austral hands the spear and coila grew.  
And so they rose against him, and they slew  
The white-haired men who raised their hands to warn,  
And true to ancient trust in warning fell,  
While o'er them rang the fierce revolters' yell.  
Then midst the dead uprose the King in scorn,  
Like some strong, hunted thing that stands at bay  
To win a brief but desperate delay.  
A moment thus, and those within the ring  
'Gan backward press from their unarmed King,  
Who swept his hand as though he bade them fly,  
And brave no more the anger of his eye.  
The heaving crowd grew still before that face,  
And watched him take the ancient carven case,  
And ope it there, and take the Pearl and stand  
As once before he stood, with upraised hand  
And upturned eyes of inward worshiping.

Awe-struck and dumb, once more they owned him King,  
And humbly crouched before him; when a sound,  
A whirring sound that thrilled them, passed o'erhead,  
And with a spring they rose. a spear had sped  
With aim unerring and with deathful might,  
And split the awful center of their sight,—  
The upraised Pearl! A moment there it shone  
Before the spear-point,—then forever gone!

\* \* \* \* \*

The spell that long the ruined huts did shroud  
Was rent and scattered, as a hanging cloud  
In moveless air is torn and blown away  
By sudden gust uprising; and one day  
When evening's lengthened shadows came to hush  
The children's voices, and the awful bush  
Was lapt in somber stillness, and on high  
Above the arches stretched the frescoed sky,—  
When all the scene such chilling aspect wore  
As marked one other night long years before,

When through the reaching trees the moonlight shone  
Upon a prostrate form, and o'er it one  
With kingly gesture. Now the light is shed  
No more on youthful brow and daring head,  
But on a man grown weirdly old, whose face  
Keeps turning ever to some new-found place  
That rises up before him like a dream;  
And not unlike a dreamer does he seem,  
Who might have slept, unheeding time's sure flow,  
And woke to find a world he does not know.  
His long white hair flows o'er a form low bowed  
By wondrous weight of years: he speaks aloud  
In garbled Swedish words, with piteous wist,  
As long-lost objects rise through memory's mist.  
Again and once again his pace he stays,  
As crowding images of other days  
Loom up before him dimly, and he sees  
A vague, forgotten friendship in the trees  
That reach their arms in welcome; but agen  
These olden glimpses vanish, and dark men  
Are round him, dumb and crouching, and he stands  
With guttural sentences and upraised hands,  
That hold a carven case,—but empty now,  
Which makes more pitiful the aged brow  
Full-turned to those tall tuads that did hear  
A son's fierce mandate and a mother's prayer.

Ah, God! what memories can live of these,  
Save only with the half-immortal trees  
That saw the death of one, the other lost!

The weird-like figure now the bush has crost  
And stands within the ring, and turns and moans,  
With arms out-reaching and heart-piercing tones,  
And groping hands, as one a long time blind  
Who sees a glimmering light on eye and mind.  
From tree to sky he turns, from sky to earth,  
And gasps as one to whom a second birth  
Of wondrous meaning is an instant shown.  
Who is this wreck of years, who all alone,  
In savage raiment and with words unknown,  
Bows down like some poor penitent who fears

The wrath of God provoked?—this man who hears  
Around him now, wide circling through the wood,  
The breathing stillness of a multitude?  
Who catches dimly through his straining sight  
The misty vision of an impious rite?  
Who hears from one a cry that rends his heart,  
And feels that loving arms are torn apart,  
And by his mandate fiercely thrust aside?  
Who is this one who crouches where she died,  
With face laid earthward as her face was laid,  
And prays for her as she for him once prayed?

'Tis Jacob Eibsen, Jacob Eibsen's son,  
Whose occult life and mystic rule are done,  
And passed away the memory from his brain.  
'Tis Jacob Eibsen, who has come again  
To roam the woods, and see the mournful gleams  
That flash and linger of his old-time dreams.

The morning found him where he sank to rest  
Within the mystic circle: on his breast  
With withered hands, as to the dearest place,  
He held and pressed the empty carven case.

That day he sought the dwellings of his folk;  
And when he found them, once again there broke  
The far-off light upon him, and he cried  
From that wrecked cabin threshold for a guide  
To lead him, old and weary, to his own.  
And surely some kind spirit heard his moan,  
And led him to the graves where they were laid.  
The evening found him in the tuads' shade,  
And like a child at work upon the spot  
Where they were sleeping, though he knew it not.  
Next day the children found him, and they gazed  
In fear at first, for they were sore amazed  
To see a man so old they never knew,  
Whose garb was savage, and whose white hair grew  
And flowed upon his shoulders; but their awe  
Was changed to love and pity when they saw  
The simple work he wrought at; and they came  
And gathered flowers for him, and asked his name,



And laughed at his strange language; and he smiled  
To hear them laugh, as though himself a child.  
Ere that brief day was o'er, from far and near  
The children gathered, wondering; and though fear  
Of scenes a long time shunned at first restrained,  
The spell was broken, and soon naught remained  
But gladsome features,, where of old was dearth  
Of happy things and cheery sounds of mirth.  
The lizards fled, the snakes and bright-eyed things  
Found other homes, where childhood never sings;  
And all because poor Jacob, old and wild,  
White-haired and fur-clad, was himself a child.  
Each day he lived amid these scenes, his ear  
Heard far-off voices growing still more clear;  
And that dim light that first he saw in gleams  
Now left him only in his troubled dreams.

From far away the children loved to come  
And play and work with Jacob at his home.  
He learned their simple words with childish lip,  
And told them often of a white-sailed ship  
That sailed across a mighty sea, and found  
A beauteous harbor, all encircled round  
With flowers and tall green trees; but when they asked  
What did the shipmen then, his mind was tasked  
Beyond its strength, and Jacob shook his head,  
And with them laughed, for all he knew was said.

The brawny sawyers often ceased their toil,  
As Jacob with the children passed, to smile  
With rugged pity on their simple play;  
Then, gazing after the glad group, would say  
How strange it was to see that snowy hair  
And time-worn figure with the children fair.

So Jacob Eibsen lived through years of joy,—  
A patriarch in age, in heart a boy.  
Unto the last he told them of the sea  
And white-sailed ship; and ever lovingly,  
Unto the end, the garden he had made  
He tended daily, 'neath the tuads' shade.

But one bright morning, when the children came  
And roused the echoes calling Jacob's name,  
The echoes only answered back the sound.  
They sought within the huts, but nothing found  
Save loneliness and shadow, falling chill  
On every sunny searcher: boding ill,  
They tried each well-known haunt, and every throat  
Sent far abroad the bush man's cooing note.  
But all in vain their searching: twilight fell,  
And sent them home their sorrowing tale to tell.  
That night their elders formed a torch-lit chain  
To sweep the gloomy bush; and not in vain,—  
For when the moon at midnight hung o'erhead,  
The weary searchers found poor Jacob—dead!

He lay within the tuad ring, his face  
Laid earthward on his hands; and all the place  
Was dim with shadow where the people stood.  
And as they gathered there, the circling wood  
Seemed filled with awful whisperings, and stirred  
By things unseen; and every bushman heard,  
From where the corse lay plain within their sight,  
A woman's heart-wail rising on the night.  
For over all the darkness and the fear  
That marked his life from childhood, shining clear,

An arch, like God's bright rainbow, stretched above,  
And joined the first and last,—his mother's love.

They dug a grave beneath the tuads' shade,  
Where all unknown to them the bones were laid  
Of Jacob's kindred; and a prayer was said  
In earnest sorrow for the unknown dead,  
Hound which the children grouped.

Upon the breast  
The hands were folded in eternal rest;  
But still they held, as dearest to that place  
Where life last throbbed, the empty carven case.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The King's Evil

They brought them up from their huts in the fens,  
The woeful sufferers gaunt and grim;  
They flocked from the city's noisome dens  
To the Monarch's throne to be touched by him.  
'For his touch,' they whisper, 'is sovereign balm,  
The anointed King has a power to heal.'  
Oh, the piteous prayers as the royal palm  
Is laid on their necks while they humbly kneel!

Blind hope! But the cruel and cold deceit  
A rich reward to the palace brings;  
A snare for the untaught People's feet,  
And a courtier's lie for the good of Kings.  
But the years are sands, and they slip away  
Till the baseless wall in the sun lies bare;  
The touch of the King has no balm to-day,  
And the Right Divine is the People's share.

The word remains: but the Evil now  
Is caused, not cured, by imperial hands,—  
The lightless soul and the narrow brow,  
The servile millions in armed bands;  
The sweat-wrung gold from the peasant's toil  
Flung merrily out by the gambling lord,  
Who is reckless owner of serf and soil,  
And master of church and law and sword.

But the night has receded: the dawn like a tide  
Creeps slow round the world, till the feet of the throne  
Are lapped by the waves that shall seethe and ride  
Where the titles are gulfed and the shields overblown.  
Our Kings are the same as the Kings of old,  
But a Man stands up where there crouched a clown;  
The Evil shall die when his hand grows bold,  
And the touch of the People is laid on the Crown!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Last Of The Narwhale

THE STORY OF AN ARCTIC NIP.

AY, ay, I'll tell you, shipmates,  
If you care to hear the tale,  
How myself and the royal yard alone  
Were left of the old Narwhale.  
'A stouter ship was never launched  
Of all the Clyde-built whalers;  
And forty years of a life at sea  
Haven't matched her crowd of sailors.  
Picked men they were, all young and strong,  
And used to the wildest seas,  
From Donegal and the Scottish coast,  
And the rugged Hebrides.  
Such men as women cling to, mates,  
Like ivy round their lives:  
And the day we sailed, the quays were lined  
With weeping mothers and wives.  
They cried and prayed, and we gave 'em a cheer,  
In the thoughtless way of men;  
God help them, shipmates—thirty years  
They've waited and prayed since then.  
'We sailed to the North, and I mind it well,  
The pity we felt, and pride  
When we sighted the cliffs of Labrador  
From the sea where Hudson died.  
We talked of ships that never came back,  
And when the great floes passed,  
Like ghosts in the night, each moonlit peak  
Like a great war frigate's mast,  
'Twas said that a ship was frozen up  
In the iceberg's awful breast,  
The clear ice holding the sailor's face  
As he lay in his mortal rest.  
And I've thought since then, when the ships came home  
That sailed for the Franklin band,  
A mistake was made in the reckoning  
That looked for the crews on land.

'They're floating still,' I've said to myself,  
'And Sir John has found the goal;  
The Erebus and the Terror, mates,  
Are icebergs up at the Pole!'

'We sailed due North, to Baffin's Bay,  
And cruised through weeks of light;  
'Twas always day, and we slept by the bell,  
And longed for the dear old night,  
And the blessed darkness left behind,  
Like a curtain round the bed;  
But a month dragged on like an afternoon  
With the wheeling sun o'erhead.  
We found the whales were farther still,  
The farther north we sailed;  
Along the Greenland glacier coast,  
The boldest might have quailed,  
Such shapes did keep us company;  
No sail in all that sea,  
But thick as ships in Mersey's tide  
The bergs moved awfully  
Within the current's northward stream;  
But, ere the long day's close,  
We found the whales and filled the ship  
Amid the friendly floes.

'Then came a rest: the day was blown  
Like a cloud before the night;  
In the South the sun went redly down —  
In the North rose another light,  
Neither sun nor moon, but a shooting dawn,  
That silvered our lonely way;  
It seemed we sailed in a belt of gloom,  
Upon either side, a day.  
The north wind smote the sea to death;  
The pack-ice closed us round —  
The Narwhale stood in the level fields  
As fast as a ship aground.  
A weary time it was to wait,  
And to wish for spring to come,  
With the pleasant breeze and the blessed sun,  
To open the way toward home.

'Spring came at last, the ice-fields groaned  
Like living things in pain;  
They moaned and swayed, then rent a main,  
And the Narwhale sailed again.  
With joy the dripping sails were loosed  
And round the vessel swung;  
To cheer the crew, full south she drew,  
The shattered floes among.  
We had no books in those old days  
To carry the friendly faces;  
But I think the wives and lasses then  
Were held in better places.  
The face of sweetheart and wife to-day  
Is locked in the sailor's chest:  
But aloft on the yard, with the thought of home,  
The face in the heart was best.  
Well, well—God knows, mates, when and where  
To take the things he gave;  
We steered for home—but the chart was his,  
And the port ahead—the grave!

'We cleared the floes: through an open sea  
The Narwhale south'ard sailed,  
Till a day came round when the white fog rose,  
And the wind astern had failed.  
In front of the Greenland glacier line,  
And close to its base were we;  
Through the misty pall we could see the wall  
That beetled above the sea.  
A fear like the fog crept over our hearts  
As we heard the hollow roar  
Of the deep sea thrashing the cliffs of ice  
For leagues along the shore.

'The years have come and the years have gone,  
But it never wears away—  
The sense I have of the sights and sounds  
That marked that woeful day.  
Flung here and there at the ocean's will,  
As it flung the broken floe—  
What strength had we 'gainst the tiger sea

That sports with a sailor's woe?  
The lifeless berg and the lifeful ship  
Were the same to the sullen wave,  
As it swept them far from ridge to ridge,  
Till at last the Narwhale drave  
With a crashing rail on the glacier wall—  
As sheer as the vessel's mast—  
A crashing rail and a shivered yard;  
But the worst, we thought, was past.  
The brave lads sprang to the fending work,  
And the skipper's voice rang hard:  
'Aloft there, one with a ready knife—  
Cut loose that royal yard!'  
I sprang to the rigging, young I was,  
And proud to be first to dare:  
The yard swung free, and I turned to gaze  
Toward the open sea, o'er the field of haze,  
And my heart grew cold, as if frozen through,  
At the moving shape that met my view—  
O Christ! what a sight was there!

'Above the fog, as I hugged the yard,  
I saw that an iceberg lay—  
A berg like a mountain, closing fast—  
Not a cable's length away!  
I could not see through the sheet of mist  
That covered all below,  
But I heard the cheery voices still,  
And I screamed to let them know.  
The cry went down, and the skipper hailed,  
But before the word could come  
It died in his throat—and I knew they saw  
The shape of the closing doom!

'No sound but that—but the hail that died  
Came up through the mist to me;  
Thank God, it covered the ship like a veil,  
And I was not forced to see—  
But I heard it, mates: O, I heard the rush,  
And the timbers rend and rive,  
As the yard I clung to swayed and fell:— I lay on the ice, alive!  
Alive! O God of mercy! ship and crew and sea were gone!

The hummocked ice and the broken yard,  
And a kneeling man—alone!

'A kneeling man on a frozen hill,  
The sounds of life in the air—  
All death and ice—and a minute before  
The sea and the ship were there!  
I could not think they were dead and gone,  
And I listened for sound or word:  
But the deep sea roar on the desolate shore  
Was the only sound I heard.  
O mates, I had no heart to thank  
The Lord for the life He gave;  
I spread my arms on the ice and cried  
Aloud on my shipmates' grave.  
The brave strong lads, with their strength all vain,  
I called them name by name;  
And it seemed to me from the dying hearts  
A message upward came—  
Ay, mates, a message, up through the ice  
From every sailor's breast:  
'Go tell our mothers and wives at home  
To pray for us here at rest.'

'Yes, that's what it means; 'tis a little word;  
But, mates, the strongest ship  
That ever was built is a baby's toy  
When it copes with an Arctic Nip.'

John Boyle O'Reilly



# The Loss Of The Emigrants

The Steamer ' Atlantic ' Was Wrecked Near Halifax, N. S., April1, 1873, And 560 Lives Lost.

FOR months and years, with penury and want  
And heart-sore envy did they dare to cope;  
And mite by mite was saved from earnings scant,  
To buy, some future day, the God-sent hope.

They trod the crowded streets of hoary towns,  
Or tilled from year to year the wearied fields,  
And in the shadow of the golden crowns  
They gasped for sunshine and the health it yields.

They turned from homes all cheerless, child and man,  
With kindly feelings only for the soil,  
And for the kindred faces, pinched and wan,  
That prayed, and stayed, unwilling, at their toil.

They lifted up their faces to the Lord,  
And read His answer in the westering sun  
That called them ever as a shining word,  
And beckoned seaward as the rivers run.

They looked their last, wet-eyed, on Swedish hills,  
On German villages and English dales;  
Like brooks that grow from many mountain rills  
The peasant-stream flowed out from Irish vales.

Their grief at parting was not all a grief,  
But blended sweetly with the joy to come,  
When from full store they spared the rich relief  
To gladden all the dear ones left at home.

'We thank thee, God!' they cried; 'The cruel gate  
That barred our lives has swung beneath Thy hand;  
Behind our ship now frowns the cruel fate,  
Before her smiles the teeming Promised Land!'

Alas! when shown in mercy or in wrath,  
How weak we are to read God's awful lore!  
His breath protected on the stormy path,  
And dashed them lifeless on the promised shore!

His hand sustained them in the parting woe,  
And gave bright vision to the heart of each  
His waters bore them where they wished to go,  
Then swept them seaward from the very beach!

Their home is reached, their fetters now are riven,  
Their humble toil is o'er,—their rest has come;  
A land was promised and a land is given,—  
But, oh! God help the waiting ones at home!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Loving Cup Of The Papyrus

WISE men use days as husbandmen use bees,  
And steal rich drops from every pregnant hour;  
Others, like wasps on blossomed apple-trees,  
Find gall, not honey, in the sweetest flower.

Congratulations for a scene like this!  
The olden times are here—these shall be olden  
When, years to come, remembering present bliss,  
We sigh for past Papyrian dinners golden.

We thank the gods! we call them back to light—  
Call back to hoary Egypt for Osiris,  
Who first made wine, to join our board to-night,  
And drain this loving cup with the Papyrus.

He comes! the Pharaoh's god! fling wide the door—  
Welcome, Osiris! See—thine old prescription  
Is honored here; and thou shalt drink once more  
With men whose treasured ensign is Egyptian.

A toast! a toast! our guest shall give a toast!  
By Nilus' flood, we pray thee, god, inspire us!  
He smiles—he wills—let not a word be lost—  
His hand upon the cup, he speaks:—  
'Papyrus!

"I greet ye! and mine ancient nation shares  
In greeting fair from Ammon, Ptah, and Isis,  
Whose leaf ye love—dead Egypt's leaf, that bears  
Our tale of pride from Cheops to Cambyses.

'We gods of Egypt, who are wise with age—  
Five thousand years have washed us clean of passion—  
A golden era for this board presage,  
While ye do keep this cup in priestly fashion.

'We love to see the bonds of fellowship  
Made still more sacred by a fine tradition;  
We bless this bowl that moves from lip to lip  
In love's festoons, renewed by every mission.

'Intern the vessel from profaning eyes;  
The lip that kisses should have special merit;  
Thus every sanguine draught shall symbolize  
And consecrate the true Papyrian spirit.

'For brotherhood, not wine, this cup should pass;  
Its depths should ne'er reflect the eye of malice;  
Drink toasts to strangers with the social glass,  
But drink to brothers with this loving chalice.

'And now, Papyrus, each one pledge to each:  
And let this formal tie be warmly cherished.  
No words are needed for a kindly speech—  
The loving thought will live when words have perished.'

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Lure

"WHAT bait do you use,' said a Saint to the Devil,  
When you fish where the souls of men abound?'  
'Well, for special tastes,' said the King of Evil,  
'Gold and Fame are the best I've found.'  
'But for common use?' asked the Saint. 'Ah, then,'  
Said the Demon, 'I angle for Man, not men,  
And a thing I hate  
Is to change my bait,  
So I fish with a woman the whole year round.'

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Monster Diamond

A TALE OF THE PENAL COLONY OF WEST AUSTRALIA.

'I'LL have it, I tell you! Curse you!—there!'  
The long knife glittered, was sheathed, and was bare.  
The sawyer staggered and tripped and fell,  
And falling he uttered a frightened yell:  
His face to the sky, he shuddered and gasped,  
And tried to put from him the man he had grasped  
A moment before in the terrible strife.  
'I'll have it, I tell you, or have your life!  
Where is it?' The sawyer grew weak, but still  
His brown face gleamed with a desperate will.  
'Where is it?' he heard, and the red knife's drip  
In his slayer's hand fell down on his lip.  
'Will you give it?' 'Never!' A curse, the knife  
Was raised and buried.

Thus closed the life  
Of Samuel Jones, known as 'Number Ten'  
On his Ticket-of-Leave; and of all the men  
In the Western Colony, bond or free,  
None had manlier heart or hand than he.

In digging a sawpit, while all alone,—  
For his mate was sleeping,—Sam struck a stone  
With the edge of the spade, and it gleamed like fire,  
And looked at Sam from its bed in the mire,  
Till he dropped the spade and stooped and raised  
The wonderful stone that glittered and blazed  
As if it were mad at the spade's rude blow;  
But its blaze set the sawyer's heart aglow  
As he looked and trembled, then turned him round,  
And crept from the pit, and lay on the ground,  
Looking over the mold-heap at the camp  
Where his mate still slept. Then down to the swamp  
He ran with the stone, and washed it bright,  
And felt like a drunken man at the sight  
Of a diamond pure as spring-water and sun,

And larger than ever man's eyes looked on!

Then down sat Sam with the stone on his knees,  
And fancies came to him, like swarms of bees  
To a sugar-creamed hive; and he dreamed awake  
Of the carriage and four in which he'd take  
His pals from the Dials to Drury Lane,  
The silks and the satins for Susan Jane,  
The countless bottles of brandy and beer  
He'd call for and pay for, and every year  
The dinner he'd give to the Brummagem lads,—  
He'd be king among cracksmen and chief among pads,  
And he'd sport a—  
Over him stooped his mate,  
A pick in his hand, and his face all hate.  
Sam saw the shadow, and guessed the pick,  
And closed his dream with a spring so quick  
The purpose was baffled of Aaron Mace,  
And the sawyer mates stood face to face.  
Sam folded his arms across his chest,  
Having thrust the stone in his loose shirt-breast,  
While he tried to think where he dropped the spade.  
But Aaron Mace wore a long, keen blade  
In his belt,—he drew it,—sprang on his man:  
What happened, you read when the tale began.

Then he looked—the murderer, Aaron Mace—  
At the gray-blue lines in the dead man's face;  
And he turned away, for he feared its frown  
More in death than life. Then he knelt him down,—  
Not to pray,—but he shrank from the staring eyes,  
And felt in the breast for the fatal prize.  
And this was the man, and this was the way  
That he took the stone on its natal day;  
And for this he was cursed for evermore  
By the West Australian Koh-i-nor.

In the half-dug pit the corpse was thrown,  
And the murderer stood in the camp alone.  
Alone? No, no! never more was he  
To part from the terrible company  
Of that gray-blue face and the bleeding breast

And the staring eyes in their awful rest.  
The evening closed on the homicide,  
And the blood of the buried sawyer cried  
Through the night to God, and the shadows dark  
That crossed the camp had the stiff and stark,  
And horrible look of a murdered man!  
Then he piled the fire, and crept within  
The ring of its light, that closed him in  
Like tender mercy, and drove away  
For a time the specters that stood at bay,  
And waited to clutch him as demons wait,  
Shut out from the sinner by Faith's bright gate.  
But the fire burnt low, and the slayer slept,  
And the key of his sleep was always kept  
By the leaden hand of him he had slain,  
That oped the door but to drench the brain  
With agony cruel. The night wind crept  
Like a snake on the shuddering form that slept  
And dreamt, and woke and shrieked; for there,  
With its gray-blue lines and its ghastly stare,  
Cutting into the vitals of Aaron Mace,  
In the flickering light was the sawyer's face!  
Evermore 'twas with him, that dismal sight,—  
The white face set in the frame of night.

He wandered away from the spot, but found  
No inch of the West Australian ground  
Where he could hide from the bleeding breast,  
Or sink his head in a dreamless rest.

And always with him he bore the prize  
In a pouch of leather: the staring eyes  
Might burn his soul, but the diamond's gleam  
Was solace and joy for the haunted dream.

So the years rolled on, while the murderer's mind  
Was bent on a futile quest,—to find  
A way of escape from the blood-stained soil  
And the terrible wear of the penal toil.

But this was a part of the diamond's curse,—  
The toil that was heavy before grew worse,



Till the panting wretch in his fierce unrest  
Would clutch the pouch as it lay on his breast,  
And waking cower, with sob and moan,  
Or shriek wild curses against the stone  
That was only a stone; for he could not sell,  
And he dare not break, and he feared to tell  
Of his wealth: so he bore it through hopes and fears—  
His God and his devil—for years and years.

And thus did he draw near the end of his race,  
With a form bent double and horror-lined face,  
And a piteous look, as if asking for grace  
Or for kindness from some one; but no kind word  
Was flung to his misery: shunned, abhorred,  
E'en by wretches themselves, till his life was a curse,  
And he thought that e'en death could bring nothing worse  
Than the phantoms that stirred at the diamond's weight,—  
His own life's ghost and the ghost of his mate.  
So he turned one day from the haunts of men,  
And their friendless faces: an old man then,  
In a convict's garb, with white flowing hair,  
And a brow deep seared with the word, 'Despair.'  
He gazed not back as his way he took  
To the untrod forest; and oh! the look,  
The piteous look in his sunken eyes,  
Told that life was the bitterest sacrifice.

But little was heard of his later days:  
'Twas deemed in the West that in change of ways  
He tried with his tears to wash out the sin.  
'Twas told by some natives who once came in  
From the Kojunnp Hills, that lonely there  
They had seen a figure with long white hair;  
They encamped close by where his hut was made,  
And were scared at night when they saw he prayed  
To the white man's God; and on one wild night  
They had heard his voice till the morning light.

Years passed, and a sandal wood-cutter stood  
At a ruined hut in a Kojunup wood:  
The rank weeds covered the desolate floor,  
And an ant-hill stood on the fallen door;

The cupboard within to the snakes was loot,  
And the hearth was the home of the bandicoot.  
But neither at hut nor snake nor rat  
Was the woodcutter staring intent, but at  
A human skeleton clad in gray,  
The hands clasped over the breast, as they  
Had fallen in peace when he ceased to pray.

As the bushman looked on the form, he saw  
In the breast a paper: he stooped to draw  
What might tell him the story, but at his touch  
From under the hands rolled a leathern pouch,  
And he raised it too,—on the paper's face  
He read 'Ticket-of-Leave of Aaron Mace.'  
Then he opened the pouch, and in dazed surprise  
At its contents strange he unblest his eyes:  
'Twas a lump of quartz,—a pound weight in full,-  
And it fell from his hand on the skeleton's skull!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Mutiny Of The Chains

PENAL COLONY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA, 1857

THE sun rose o'er dark Fremantle,  
And the Sentry stood on the wall;  
Above him, with white lines swinging,  
The flag-staff, bare and tall:  
The flag at its foot—the Mutiny Flag—  
Was always fast to the line,—  
For its sanguine field was a cry of fear,  
And the Colony counted an hour a year  
In the need of the blood-red sign.

The staff and the line, with its ruddy flash,  
like a threat or an evil-bode,  
Were a monstrous whip with a crimson lash,  
Fit sign for the penal code.

The Sentry leant on his rifle, and stood  
By the mast, with a deep-drawn breath;  
A stern-browed man, but there heaved a sigh  
For the sight that greeted his downward eye  
In the prison-square beneath.

In yellow garb, in soldier lines,  
One hundred men in chains;  
While the watchful warders, sword in hand,  
With eyes suspicious keenly scanned  
The links of the living lanes.

There, wary eyes met stony eyes,  
And stony face met stone.  
There was never a gleam of trust or truce;  
In the covert thought of an iron loose,  
Grim warder and ward were one.

Why was it so, that there they stood,—  
Stern driver and branded slave?  
Why rusted the gyve in the bondman's blood,

No hope for him but the grave?  
Out of thousands there why was it so  
That one hundred hearts must feel  
The bitterest pang of the penal woe,  
And the grind of a nation's heel?

Why, but for choice—the bondman's choice?  
They balanced the gains and pains;  
They took their chance of the chains.  
There spake in their hearts a hidden voice  
Of the blinding joy of a freeman's burst  
Through the great dim woods. Then the toil accurst;  
The scorching days and the nights in tears  
The riveted rings for years and years;  
They weighed them all—they looked before  
At the one and other, and spoke them o'er,  
And they saw what the heart of man must see,  
That the uttermost blessing is Liberty!  
Ah, pity them, God! they must always choose,  
For the life to gain and the death to lose.  
They dream of the woods and the mountain spring,  
And they grasp the flower, to clutch the sting.

Even so: they are better than those who bend  
Like beasts to the lash, and go on to the end  
As a beast will go, with to-day for a life,  
And to-morrow a blank. Offer peace and strife  
To a man enslaved—let him vote for ease  
And coward labor, and be content;  
Or let him go out in the front, as these,  
With their eyes on the doom and the danger, went.  
And take your choice—the man who remains  
A self-willed serf, or the one who stains  
His sudden hand with a drive for light  
Through a bristling rank and a gloomy night.  
This man for me—for his heart he'll share  
With a friend: with a foe, he'll fight him fair.  
And such as he are in every rank  
Of the column that moves with a dismal clank  
And a dead-march step toward the rock-bound place  
Where the chain-gangs toil—o'er the beetling face  
Of the cliff that roots in the Swan's deep tide:

Steep walls of granite on either side,  
At the precipice' foot the river wide;  
Behind them in ranks the warders fall;  
And above them, the Sentry paces the wall.

Year in, year out, has the Sentry stood  
On the wall at the foot of the mast.  
He has turned from the toilers to watch the flood  
Like, his own slow life go past.  
He has noted the Chains grow fat and lean;  
He has sighed for their empty spaces,  
And thought of the cells where their end had been,  
Where they lay with their poor dead faces,  
With never a kiss, or prayer, or knell—  
They were better at rest in the river;  
He thinks of the shadow that o'er them fell  
From the mast with its whip-like quiver;  
He has seen it tipped with its crimson lash  
When the mutiny-flood had risen  
And swept like a sea with an awful swash  
Through the squares and the vaulted prison.  
His thoughts are afar with the woeful day,  
With the ranged dead men and the dying,  
And slowly he treads till they pass away—  
Then a pause, and a start, and a scuffling sound,  
And a glance beneath, at a battle-ground,  
Where the lines are drawn, and the Chains are found

Their armed guards defying!  
A hush of death—and the Sentry stands  
By the mast, with the halyards tight in his hands,  
And the Mutiny Flag is flying!

Woe to the weak, to the mutineers!  
The bolt of their death is driven;  
A mercy waits on all other tears,  
But the Chains are never forgiven.  
Woe to the rebels!—their hands are bare,  
Their manacled bodies helpless there;  
Their faces lit with a strange wild light,  
As if they had fought and had won the fight!

No cry is uttered—upraised no hand;  
All stilled to a muscle's quiver;  
One line on the brink of the cliff they stand,  
Their shadows flung down on the river.  
The quarry wall is on either side,  
The blood-red flag high o'er them;  
But the lurid light in their eyes defied  
The gathering guards before them.  
No parley is held when the Chains revolt:  
Grimly silent they stand secure  
On the outward lip of the embrasure;  
Waiting fierce-eyed for the fatal bolt.  
A voice from the guard, in a monotone;  
A voice that was cold and hard as stone: —  
'Make ready! Fire!'  
O Christ, the cry  
From the manacled men! not fear to die,  
Or whine for mercy; rebelled they stood,  
Well knowing the price of revolt was blood;  
Well knowing—but each one knew that he  
Would sell his blood for his liberty!

Unwarned by a word, uncalled, unshriven,  
They dare by a look—and the doom is given.  
They raise their brows in the wild revolt,  
And God's wrath flames in the fierce death-bolt;  
God's wrath?—nay, man's; God never smote  
A rebel dead whose swelling throat  
Was full with protest. Hear, then smite;  
God's justice weighs not shrieks the right.

'Make ready! Fire!'  
Again outburst  
The horror and shame for the deed accurst!  
O, cry of the weak, as the hot blood calls  
From the burning wound, and the stricken falls  
With his face in the dust; and the strong one stands,  
With scornful lips and ensanguined hands;  
O, blood of the weak, unbought, unpriced,  
Thy smoke is a piteous prayer to Christ!

They stand on the brink of the cliff—they bend

To the dead in their chains; then rise, and send  
To the murdering muzzles defiant eyes.

'Make ready! Fire!'

The smoke-clouds rise:

They are still on the face of the cliff—they bend

Once more to the dead—they whisper a word

To the hearts in the dust—then, undeterred,

They raise their, faces, so grimly set,

Till the eyes of slayer and doomed have met.

O merciful God, let thy pity rain

Ere the hideous lightning leaps again!

They have sinned—they have erred—let the living stand

They have dared and rued—let thy loving hand

Be laid on those brows that bravely face

The death that shall wash them of all disgrace!

Be swift with pity—O, late, too late!

The tubes are leveled—the marksmen wait

For the word of doom—the spring is pressed

By the nervous finger—the sight is straight—

'Make ready!'—

Why falters the dread command?

Why stare as affrighted the armed band?

Why lower the rifles from shoulder to hip.

Why dies the word on the leader's lip,

While the voice that was hard grows husky deep

And the face is a-tremble as if to weep?

The Chains on the brink of the cliff are lined;

The living are bowed o'er the dead—they rise

And they face the rifles with burning eyes;

Then they bend again, and with one set mind

They raise the dead and the wounded raise

In their loving arms with words of praise

And tender grief for the torturing wounds.

One backward step with a burdened tread—

They bear toward the-precipice wounded and dead—

Then they turned on the cliff to front the guard

With faces like men that have died in fight;

Their brows were raised as if proud reward

Were theirs, and their eyes had a victor's light.

They spoke not a word, but stood sublime  
In their somber strength, and the watchers saw  
That they smiled as they looked, and their words were heard  
As they spoke to the dying a loving word.

They were Men at last—they knew naught of crime;  
They were masters and makers of life and law.  
They turned from the guard that quailed and shrank  
From the gleaming eyes of the burdened rank;  
They turned on the cliff, and a sob was heard  
As they looked far down on the darkened river;  
They raised their eyes to the sky—they grasped  
The dead to their breasts, while the wounded clasped  
The necks of the brothers who bore their weight—  
Then they sprang from the cliff, as a horse will spring  
For his life from a precipice—sprang to death  
In silence and sternness—one deep breath,  
As they plunged, of liberty, thrilled their souls,  
And then—the Chains were at rest forever!

John Boyle O'Reilly



# The Old School Clock

'Twas a quaint old clock with a quaint old face,  
and great iron weights and chain.  
It stopped when it liked, and before it struck  
it creaked as if 'twere in pain.  
It had seen many years, and it seemed to say,  
'I'm one of the real old stock',  
To the youthful fry, who with reverence looked  
on the face of the old school clock.  
What a terrible frown did the old clock wear  
to the truant who timidly cast  
An anxious eye on those merciless hands,  
that for him had been moving too fast!  
But its frown soon changed, for it loved to smile  
on the thoughtless, noisy flock,  
And it creaked and whirred, and struck with glee,  
Did that genial, good humoured old clock.  
Well, years had passed, and my mind was filled  
with the world, its cares and ways,  
When again I stood in that little school  
where I passed my boyhood days.  
My old friend was gone! And there hung a thing  
that my sorrow seemed to mock,  
As I gazed with a tear and a softened heart  
at a new-fashioned Yankee clock.

'Tis the way of the world. Old friends pass away  
and fresh faces arise in their stead.  
But still 'mid the din and bustle of life  
we cherish fond thoughts of the dead.  
Yes, dearly those memories cling round my heart,  
and bravely withstand Time's rude shock;  
But not one is more dear or more hallowed to me  
than the face of that old school clock.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Patriot's Game

I.

TEAR down the crape from the column! Let the shaft stand white and fair!  
Be silent the wailing music—there is no death in the air!  
We come not in plaint or sorrow—no tears may dim our sight:  
We dare not weep o'er the epitaph we have not dared to write.  
Come hither with glowing faces, the sire, the youth, and the child;  
This grave is a shrine for reverent hearts and hands that are undefiled:  
Its ashes are inspiration; it giveth us strength to bear,  
And sweepeth away dissension, and nerveth the will to dare.

In the midst of the tombs a Gravestone—and written thereon no word!  
And behold! at the head of the grave, a gibbet, a torch, and a sword!  
And the people kneel by the gibbet, and pray by the nameless stone  
For the torch to be lit, and the name to be writ, and the sword's red work to be done!

II.

With pride and not with grief  
We lay this century leaf  
Upon the tomb, with hearts that do not falter:  
A few brief, toiling years  
Since fell the nation's tears,  
And lo, the patriot's gibbet is an altar!

The people that are blest  
Have him they love the best  
To mount the martyr's scaffold when they need him;  
And vain the cords that bind  
While the nation's steadfast mind,  
Like the needle to the pole, is true to freedom!

III.

Three powers there are that dominate the world-  
Fraud, Force, and Right—and two oppress the one:  
The bolts of Fraud and Force like twins are hurled—  
Against them ever standeth Right alone.

Cyclopians stroke the brutal allies give:  
Their fetters massive and their dungeon walls;  
Beneath their yoke, weak nations cease to live,  
And valiant Right itself defenseless falls!

Defaced is law, and justice slain at birth;  
Good men are broken—malefactors thrive;  
But, when the tyrants tower o'er the earth,  
Behind their wheels strong right is still alive!

Alive, like seed that God's own hand has sown—  
Like seed that lieth in the lowly furrow,  
But springs to life when wintry winds are blown:  
To-day the earth is gray—'tis green to-morrow.

The roots strike deep despite the rulers' power,  
The plant grows strong with summer sun and rain,  
Till autumn bursts the deep red-hearted flower,  
And freedom marches to the front again!

While slept the right, and reigned the dual wrong,  
Unchanged, unchecked, for half a thousand years,  
In tears of blood we cried, 'O Lord, how long!'  
And even God seemed deaf to Erin's tears.

But, when she lay all weak and bruised and broken,  
Her white limbs seared with cruel chain and thorn—  
As bursts the cloud, the lightning word was spoken,  
God's seed took root—His crop of men was born!

With one deep breath began the land's progression:  
On every field the seeds of freedom fell:  
Burke, Grattan, Flood, and Curran in the session—  
Fitzgerald, Sheares, and Emmet in the cell!

Such teachers soon aroused the dormant nation—  
Such sacrifice insured the endless fight:  
The voice of Grattan smote wrong's domination—  
The death of Emmet sealed the cause of right!

IV.

Richest of gifts to- a, nation! Death with the living crown!  
Type of ideal manhood to the people's heart brought down!

Fount of the hopes we cherish—test of the things we do;  
Gorgon's face for the traitor—talisman for the true!

Sweet is the love of a woman, and sweet is the kiss of a child;  
Sweet is the tender strength, and the bravery of the mild;

But sweeter than all, for embracing all, is the young life's peerless price—  
The young heart laid on the altar, as a nation's sacrifice.

How can the debt be canceled? Prayers and tears we may give—  
But how recall the anguish of hearts that have ceased to live?

Flushed with the pride of genius—filled with the strength of life—  
Thrilled with delicious passion for her who would be his wife—

This was the heart he offered—the upright life he gave—  
This is the silent sermon of the patriot's nameless grave.

Shrine of a nation's honor—stone left blank for a name  
Light on the dark horizon to guide us clear from shame

Chord struck deep with the keynote, telling us what can save—  
'A nation among the nations,' or forever a nameless grave.

Such is the will of the martyr—the burden we still must bear;  
But even from death he reaches the legacy to share:

He teaches the secret of manhood—the watchword of those who aspire—  
That men must follow freedom though it lead through blood and fire;

That sacrifice is the bitter draught which freemen still must quaff—  
That every patriotic life is the patriot's epitaph.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Pilgrim's Fathers

ONE righteous word for Law—the common will;  
One living truth of Faith—God regnant still;  
One primal test of Freedom—all combined;  
One sacred Revolution—change of mind;  
One trust unflinching for the night and need—  
The tyrant-flower shall cast the freedom-seed.

So held they firm, the Fathers aye to be,  
From Home to Holland, Holland to the sea—  
Pilgrims for manhood, in their little ship,  
Hope in each heart and prayer on every lip.  
They could not live by king-made codes and creeds;  
They chose the path where every footstep bleeds.  
Protesting, not rebelling; scorned and banned;  
Through pains and prisons harried from the land;  
Through double exile,—till at last they stand  
Apart from all,—unique, unworldly, true,  
Selected grain to sow the earth anew;  
A winnowed part—a saving remnant they;  
Dreamers who work—adventurers who pray!  
What vision led them? Can we test their prayers?  
Who knows they saw no empire in the West?  
The later Puritans sought land and gold,  
And all the treasures that the Spaniard told;  
What line divides the Pilgrims from the rest?

We know them by the exile that was theirs;  
Their justice, faith, and fortitude attest;  
And those long years in Holland, when their band  
Sought humble living in a stranger's land.  
They saw their England covered with a weed  
Of flaunting lordship both in court and creed.  
With helpless hands they watched the error grow,  
Pride on the top and impotence below;  
Indulgent nobles, privileged and strong,  
A haughty crew to whom all rights belong;  
The bishops arrogant, the courts impure,  
The rich conspirators against the poor;  
The peasant scorned, the artisan despised;

The all-supporting workers lowest prized.  
They marked those evils deepen year by year:  
The pensions grow, the freeholds disappear,  
Till England meant but monarch, prelate, peer.  
At last, the Conquest! Now they know the word:  
The Saxon tenant and the Norman lord!  
No longer Merrie England: now it meant  
The payers and the takers of the rent;  
And rent exacted not from lands alone—  
All rights and hopes must centre in the throne:  
Law-tithes for prayer—their souls were not their own!

Then o'er the brim the bitter waters welled;  
The mind protested and the soul rebelled.  
And yet, how deep the bowl, how slight the flow!  
A few brave exiles from their country go;  
A few strong souls whose rich affections cling,  
Though cursed by clerics, hunted by the king.  
Their last sad vision on the Grimsby strand  
Their wives and children kneeling on the sand.

Then twelve slow years in Holland—changing years—  
Strange ways of life—strange voices in their ears;  
The growing children learning foreign speech;  
And growing, too, within the heart of each  
A thought of further exile—of a home  
In some far land—a home for life and death  
By their hands built, in equity and faith.

And then the preparation—the heart-beat  
Of wayfarers who may not rest their feet;  
Their Pastor's blessing—the farewells of some  
'Who stayed in Leyden. Then the sea's wide blue!—  
'They sailed,' writ one,' and as they sailed they knew  
That they were Pilgrims!'

On the wintry main  
Grod flings their lives as farmers scatter grain.  
His breath propels the winged seed afloat;  
His tempests swerve to spare the fragile boat;  
Before His prompting terrors disappear;  
He points the way while patient seamen steer;

Till port is reached, nor North, nor South, but HERE!

Here, where the shore was rugged as the waves,  
'Where frozen nature dumb and leafless lay,  
And no rich meadows bade the Pilgrims stay,  
'Was spread the symbol of the life that saves:  
To conquer first the outer things; to make  
Their own advantage, unallied, unbound;  
Their blood the mortar, building from the ground;  
Their cares the statutes, making all anew;  
To learn to trust the many, not the few;  
To bend the mind to discipline; to break  
The bonds of old convention, and forget  
The claims and barriers of class; to face  
A desert land, a strange and hostile race,  
And conquer both to friendship by the debt  
That Nature pays to justice, love, and toil.

Here, on this rock, and on this sterile soil,  
Began the kingdom not of kings, but men:  
Began the making of the world again.  
Here centuries sank, and from the hither brink  
A new world reached and raised an old-world link,  
When English hands, by wider vision taught,  
Threw down the feudal bars the Normans brought,  
And here revived, in spite of sword and stake,  
Their ancient freedom of the Wapentake!  
Here struck the seed—the Pilgrims' roofless town,  
Where equal rights and equal bonds were set,  
Where all the people equal-franchised met;  
Where doom was writ of privilege and crown;  
Where human breath blew all the idols down;  
Where crests were nought, where vulture flags were furled,  
And common men began to own the world!

All praise to others of the vanguard then!  
To Spain, to France; to Baltimore and Penn;  
To Jesuit, Quaker,—Puritan and Priest;  
Their toil be crowned—their honors be increased!  
We slight no true devotion, steal no fame  
From other shrines to gild the Pilgrims' name.  
As time selects, we judge their treasures heaped;

Their deep foundations laid; their harvests reaped;  
Their primal mode of liberty; their rules  
Of civil right; their churches, courts, and schools;  
Their freedom's very secret here laid down,—  
The spring of government is the little town!  
They knew that streams must follow to a spring;  
And no stream flows from township to a king.  
Give praise to others, early-come or late,  
For love and labor on our ship of state;  
But this must stand, above all fame and zeal:  
The Pilgrim Fathers laid the ribs and keel.  
On their strong lines we base our social health,—  
The man—the home—the town—the commonwealth!

Unconscious builders? Yea: the conscious fail!  
Design is impotent if Nature frown.  
No deathless pile has grown from intellect.  
Immortal things have God for architect,  
And men are but the granite He lays down.  
Unconscious? Yea! They thought it might avail  
To build a gloomy creed about their lives,  
To shut out all dissent; but naught survives  
Of their poor structure; and we know to-day  
Their mission was less pastoral than lay—  
More Nation-seed than Gospel-seed were they!

The Faith was theirs: the time had other needs.  
The salt they bore must sweeten worldly deeds.  
There was a meaning in the very wind  
That blew them here so few, so poor, so strong,  
To grapple concrete work, not abstract wrong.  
Their saintly Robinson was left behind  
To teach by gentle memory; to shame  
The bigot spirit and the word of flame;  
To write dear mercy in the Pilgrims' law;  
To lead to that wide faith his soul foresaw,—  
That no rejected race in darkness delves;  
There are no Gentiles, but they make themselves;  
That men are one of blood and one of spirit;  
That one is as the whole, and all inherit!

On all the story of a life or race,



The blessing of a good man leaves its trace.  
Their Pastor's word at Leyden here sufficed:  
'But follow me as I have followed Christ!'  
And, 'I believe there is more truth to come!'  
O gentle soul, what future age shall sum  
The sweet incentive of thy tender word!  
Thy sigh to hear of conquest by the sword:  
'How happy to convert, and not to slay! '  
When valiant Standish killed the chief at bay.  
To such as thee the Fathers owe their fame;  
The Nation owes a temple to thy name.  
Thy teaching made the Pilgrims kindly, free,—  
All that the later Puritans should be.  
Thy pious instinct marks their destiny.  
Thy love won more than force or arts adroit—  
It writ and kept the deed with Massasoit;  
It earned the welcome Samoset expressed;  
It lived again in Eliot's loving breast;  
It filled the Compact which the Pilgrims signed—  
Immortal scroll! the first where men combined  
From one deep lake of common blood to draw  
All rulers, rights, and potencies of law.

When waves of ages have their motive spent  
Thy sermon preaches in this Monument,  
Where Virtue, Courage, Law, and Learning sit;  
Calm Faith above them, grasping Holy Writ;  
White hand upraised o'er beauteous, trusting eyes,  
And pleading finger pointing to the skies!

The past is theirs—the future ours; and we  
Must learn and teach. Oh, may our record be  
Like theirs, a glory, symbolled in a stone,  
To speak as this speaks, of our labors done.  
They had no model; but they left us one.

Severe they were; but let him cast the stone  
Who Christ's dear love dare measure with his own.  
Their strict professions were not cant nor pride.  
Who calls them narrow, let his soul be wide!  
Austere, exclusive—ay, but with their faults,  
Their golden probity mankind exalts,

They never lied in practice, peace, or strife;  
They were no hypocrites; their faith was clear;  
They feared too much some sins men ought to fear:  
The lordly arrogance and avarice,  
And vain frivolity's besotting vice;  
The stern enthusiasm of their life  
Impelled too far, and weighed poor nature down;  
They missed God's smile, perhaps, to watch His frown.  
But he who digs for faults shall resurrect  
Their manly virtues born of self-respect.  
How sum their merits? They were true and brave;  
They broke no compact and they owned no slave;  
They had no servile order, no- dumb throat;  
They trusted first the universal vote;  
The first were they to practice and. instill  
The rule of law and not the rule of will;  
They lived one noble test: who would be freed  
Must give up all to follow duty's lead.  
They made no revolution based on blows,  
But taught one truth that all the planet knows,  
That all men think of, looking on a throne—  
The people may be trusted with their own!

In every land wherever might holds sway  
The Pilgrims' leaven is at work to-day.  
The Mayflower's cabin was the chosen womb  
Of light predestined for the nations' gloom.  
God grant that those who tend the sacred flame  
May worthy prove of their Forefathers' name.  
More light has come,—more dangers, too, perplex:  
New prides, new greeds, our high condition vex.  
The Fathers fled from feudal lords,, and made  
A freehold state; may we not retrograde  
To lucre-lords and hierarchs of trade.  
May we, as they did, teach in court and school,  
There must be classes, but no class shall rule:  
The sea is sweet, and rots not like the pool.  
Though vast the token of our future glory,  
Though tongue of man hath told not such a story,—  
Surpassing Plato's dream, More's phantasy,—still we  
Have no new principles to keep us free.  
As Nature works with changeless grain on grain,

The truths the Fathers taught we need again.  
Depart from this, though we may crowd our shelves,  
With codes and precepts for each lapse and flaw,  
And patch our moral leaks with statute law,  
We cannot be protected from ourselves!  
Still must we keep in every stroke and vote  
The law of conscience that the Pilgrims wrote;  
Our seal their secret: LIBERTY CAN BE;  
THE STATE IS FREEDOM IF THE TOWN IS FREE.  
The death of nations in their work began;  
They sowed the seed of federated Man.  
Dead nations were but robber-holds; and we  
The first battalion of Humanity!  
All living nations, while our eagles shine,  
One after one, shall swing into our line;  
Our freeborn heritage shall be the guide  
And bloodless order of their regicide;  
The sea shall join, not limit; mountains stand  
Dividing farm from farm, not land from land.

O People's Voice! when farthest thrones shall hear;  
When teachers own; when thoughtful rabbis know;  
When artist minds in world-wide symbol show;  
When serfs and soldiers their mute faces raise;  
When priests on grand cathedral altars praise;  
When pride and arrogance shall disappear,  
The Pilgrims' Vision is accomplished here!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Poison-Flower

IN the evergreen shade of an Austral wood,  
Where the long branches laced above,  
Through which all day it seemed  
The sweet sunbeams down-gleamed  
Like the rays of a young mother's love,  
When she hides her glad face with her hands and peeps  
At the youngling that crows on her knee:  
'Neath such ray-shivered shade,  
In a banksia glade,  
Was this flower first shown to me.

A rich pansy it was, with a small white lip  
And a wonderful purple hood;  
And your eye caught the sheen  
Of its leaves, parrot-green,  
Down the dim gothic aisles of the wood.  
And its foliage rich on the moistureless sand  
Made you long for its odorous breath;  
But ah! 'twas to take  
To your bosom a snake,  
For its pestilent fragrance was death.

And I saw it again, in a far northern land,—  
Not a pansy, not purple and white;  
Yet in beauteous guise  
Did this poison-plant rise,  
Fair and fatal again to my sight.  
And men longed for her kiss and her odorous breath  
When no friend was beside them to tell  
That to kiss was to die,  
That her truth was a lie,  
And her beauty a soul-killing spell.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Press Evangel

GOD'S order, 'Light!' when all was void and dark  
Brought mornless noon, a flame without a spark.  
A gift unearned, that none may hold or hide,  
An outer glory, not an inner guide;  
But flamed no star in heaven to light the soul  
And lead the wayward thought toward Freedom's goal.

O Wasted ages! Whither have ye led  
The breeding masses for their daily bread?  
Engendered serfs, across a world of gloom,  
The wavelike generations reach the tomb.  
Masters and lords, they feared a lord's decree,  
Nor freedom knew nor truth to make them free.

But hark! A sound has reached the servile herd!  
Strong brows are raised to catch the passing word;  
From mouth to mouth a common whisper flies;  
A wild fire message burns on lips and eyes;  
Far-off and near the kindred tidings throng—  
How hopes come true, how heroes challenge wrong;  
How men have rights above all law's decrees;  
How weak ones rise and sweep the thrones like seas!  
Behold! The people listen—question! Then  
The inner light has come—the boors are men!

What read ye here—a dreamer's idle rule?  
A swelling pedant's lesson for a school?  
Nay, here no dreaming, no delusive charts;  
But common interests for common hearts;  
A truth, a Principle—beneath the sun  
One vibrant throb—men's rights and wrongs are one.  
One heart's small keyboard touches all the notes;  
One weak one's cry distends the million throats;  
Nor race nor nation bounds the human kind—  
White, yellow, black—one conscience and one mind!

How spread the doctrine I See the teachers fly—  
The printed messages across the sky;  
From land to land, as never birds could wing;

With songs of promise birds could never sing;  
With mighty meanings clearing here and there;  
With nations' greetings kings could never share;  
With new communions whispering near and far;  
With gathering armies bent on peace, not war;  
With kindly judges reading righteous laws;  
With strength and cheer for every struggling cause.

Roll on, O cylinders of light, and teach  
The helpless myriads tongue can never reach.  
Make men, not masses: pulp and mud unite—  
The single grain of sand reflects the light.  
True freedom makes the individual free;  
And common law for all makes Liberty!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Priceless Thing

THOSE are vulgar things we pay for, be they stones for crowns of kings;  
While the precious and the peerless are unpriced symbolic things.

Common debts are scored and canceled, weighed and measured out for gold;  
But the debts from men to ages, their account is never told.

Always see, the noblest nations keep their highest prize unknown;  
Clueronea's deathless lion frowned above unlettered stone.

Ah, the Greeks knew! Come their victors honored from the sacred games,  
Under arches red with roses, flushed to hear their shouted names;

See their native cities take them, breach the wall to make a gate!  
What supreme reward is theirs who bring such honors to their state?

In the forum stand they proudly, take their prizes from the priest:  
Little wreaths of pine and parsley on their naked temples pressed!

We in later days are lower? When a manful stroke is made,  
We must raise a purse to pay it—making manliness a trade,

Sacrifice itself grows venal—surely Midas will subscribe;  
And the shallow souls are gratified when worth accepts the bribe.

But e'en here, amidst the markets, there are things they dare not prize;  
Dollars hide their sordid faces when they meet anointed eyes.

Lovers do not speak with jewels—flowers alone can plead for them;  
And one fragrant memory cherished is far dearer than a gem.

Statesmen steer the nation safely; artists pass the burning test;  
And their country pays them proudly with a ribbon at the breast.

When the soldier saves the battle, wraps the flag around his heart,  
Who shall desecrate his honor with the values of the mart?

From his guns of bronze we hew a piece, and carve it as a cross;  
For the gain he gave was priceless, as unpriced would be the loss.

When the poet sings the love-song, or the song of life and death,  
Till the workers cease their toiling with abated wondering breath;

When he gilds the mill and mine, inspires the slave to rise and dare;  
Lights with love the cheerless garret, bids the tyrant to beware;

When he steals the pang from poverty with meanings new and clear,  
Reconciling pain and peace, and bringing blissful visions near;—

His reward? Nor cross nor ribbon, but all others high above;  
They have won their glittering symbols—he has earned the people's love!

John Boyle O'Reilly



# The Priests Of Ireland

YOU have waited, Priests of Ireland, until the hour was late:  
You have stood with folded arms until 'twas asked—Why do they wait?  
By the fever and the famine you have seen your flocks grow thin,  
Till the whisper hissed through Ireland that your silence was a sin.  
You have looked with tearless eyes on fleets of exile-laden ships,  
And the hands that stretched toward Ireland brought no tremor to your lips;  
In the sacred cause of freedom you have seen your people band,  
And they looked to you for sympathy: you never stirred a hand;  
But you stood upon the altar, with their blood within your veins,  
And you bade the pale-faced people to be patient in their chains!  
Ah, you told them—it was cruel—but you said they were not true  
To the holy faith of Patrick, if they were not ruled by you;  
Yes, you told them from the altar—they, the vanguard of the Faith—  
With your eyes like flint against them—that their banding was a death—  
Was a death to something holy: till the heart-wrung people cried  
That their priests had turned against them—that they had no more a guide—  
That the English gold had bought you—yes, they said it— but they lied!

Yea, they lied, they sinned, not knowing you—they had not gauged your love:  
Heaven bless you, Priests of Ireland, for the wisdom from above,  
For the strength that made you, loving them, crush back the tears that rose  
When your country's heart was quiv'ring 'neath the statesman's muffled blows:  
You saw clearer far than they did, and you grieved for Ireland's pain;  
But you did not rouse the people—and your silence was their gain;  
For too often has the peasant dared to dash his naked arm  
'Gainst the saber of the soldier: but you shielded him from harm,  
And your face was set against him—though your heart was with his hand  
When it flung aside the plow to snatch a pike for fatherland!

O, God bless you, Priests of Ireland! You were waiting with a will,  
You were waiting with a purpose when you bade your flocks be still;  
And you preached from off your altars not alone the Word Sublime,  
But your silence preached to Irishmen—'Be patient: bide your time!'  
And they heard you. and obeyed, as well as outraged men could do:—  
Only some, who loved poor Ireland, but who erred in doubting you,  
Doubting you, who could not tell them why you spake the strange behest—  
You, who saw the day was coming when the moral strength was best—  
You, whose hearts were sore with looking on your country's quick decay—  
You, whose chapel seats were empty and your people fled away—

You, who marked amid the fields where once the peasant's cabin stood—  
You, who saw your kith and kindred swell the emigration flood—  
You, the soggarth in the famine, and the helper in the frost—  
You, whose shadow was a sunshine when all other hope was lost—  
Yes, they doubted—and you knew it—but you never said a word;  
Only preached, ' Be still: be patient!' and, thank God, your voice was heard.  
Now, the day foreseen is breaking—it has dawned upon the land,  
And the priests still preach in Ireland: do they bid their flocks disband!  
Do they tell them still to suffer and be silent? No! their words  
Flash from Dublin Bay to Connaught, brighter than the gleam of swords!  
Flash from Donegal to Kerry, and from Waterford to Clare,  
And the nationhood awaking thrills the sorrow-laden air.  
Well they judged their time—they waited till the bar was glowing white,  
Then they swung it on the anvil, striking down with earnest might,  
And the burning sparks that scatter lose no luster on their way,  
Till five million hearts in Ireland and ten millions faraway  
Feel the first good blow, and answer; and they will not rest with one:  
Now the first is struck, the anvil shows the labor well begun;  
Swing them in with lusty sinew and the work will soon be done!  
Let them sound from hoary Cashel; Kerry, Meath, and Ross stand forth;  
Let them ring from Cloyne and Tuam and the Primate of the North;  
Ask not class or creed: let 'Ireland! ' be the talismanic word;  
Let the blessed sound of unity from North to South be heard;  
Came the words: 'No creed distinctions!' on O'Connell's granite tomb,  
And his dust will feel their meaning and rekindle in the gloom.  
Priest to priest, to sound the summons—and the answer, man to man;  
With the people round the standard, and the prelates in the van.  
Let the heart of Ireland's hoping keep this golden rule of Cloyne  
Till the Orange fades from Berry and the shadow from the Boyne.  
Let the words be carried outward till the farthest lands they reach:  
'After Christ, their country's freedom do the Irish prelates preach!'

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Real Good

'What is the real good?'  
I ask in a musing mood.

'Order,' said the law court;  
'Knowledge,' said the school;  
'Truth,' said the wise man;  
'Pleasure,' said the fool;  
'Love,' said the maiden;  
'Beauty,' said the page;  
'Freedom,' said the dreamer;  
'Home,' said the sage;  
'Fame,' said the soldier;  
'Equity,' said the seer.  
Spake my heart fully sad:  
'The answer is not here.'

Then within my bosom,  
Softly this I heard:  
'Each heart holds the secret:  
'Kindness' is the word.'

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Ride Of Collin Graves

AN INCIDENT OF THE FLOOD IN MASSACHUSETTS, ON MAY 16, 1874.

NO song of a soldier riding down  
To the raging fight from Winchester town;  
No song of a time that shook the earth  
With the nations' throes at a nation's birth;  
But the song of a brave man, free from fear  
As Sheridan's self or Paul Revere;  
Who risked what they risked, free from strife,  
And its promise of glorious pay—his life!

The peaceful valley has waked and stirred,  
And the answering echoes of life are heard:  
The dew still clings to the trees and grass,  
And the early toilers smiling pass,  
As they glance aside at the white-walled homes,  
Or up the valley, where merrily comes  
The brook that sparkles in diamond rills  
As the sun comes over the Hampshire hills.

What was it, that passed like an ominous breath—  
Like a shiver of fear, or a touch of death?  
What was it? The valley is peaceful still,  
And the leaves are afire on top of the hill.  
It was not a sound—nor a thing of sense—  
But a pain, like the pang of the short suspense  
That thrills the being of those who see  
At their feet the gulf of Eternity!

The air of the valley has felt the chill:  
The workers pause at the door of the mill;  
The housewife, keen to the shivering air,  
Arrests her foot on the cottage stair,  
Instinctive taught by the mother-love,  
And thinks of the sleeping ones above.

Why start the listeners? Why does the course  
Of the mill-stream widen? Is it a horse—

Hark to the sound of his hoofs, they say—  
That gallops so wildly Williamsburg way!

God! what was that, like a human shriek  
From the winding valley? Will nobody speak?  
Will nobody answer those women who cry  
As the awful warnings thunder by?

Whence come they? Listen! And now they hear  
The sound of the galloping horsehoofs near;  
They watch the trend of the vale, and see  
The rider who thunders so menacingly,  
With waving arms and warning scream  
To the home-filled banks of the valley stream.  
He draws no rein, but he shakes the street  
With a shout and the ring of the galloping feet;  
And this the cry he flings to the wind:  
'To the hills for your lives! The flood is behind!'

He cries and is gone; but they know the worst—  
The breast of the Williamsburg dam has burst!  
The basin that nourished their happy homes  
Is changed to a demon—It comes! it comes!

A monster in aspect, with shaggy front  
Of shattered dwellings, to take the brunt  
Of the homes they shatter—white-maned and hoarse,  
The merciless Terror fills the course  
Of the narrow valley, and rushing raves,  
With death on the first of its hissing waves,  
Till cottage and street and crowded mill  
Are crumbled and crushed.

But onward still,  
In front of the roaring flood is heard  
The galloping horse and the warning word.  
Thank God! the brave man's life is spared!  
From Williamsburg town he nobly dared  
To race with the flood and take the road  
In front of the terrible swath it mowed.

For miles it thundered and crashed behind,

But he looked ahead with a steadfast mind;  
'They must be warned!' was all he said,  
As away on his terrible ride he sped.

When heroes are called for, bring the crown  
To this Yankee rider: send him down  
On the stream of time with the Curtius old;  
His deed as the Roman's was brave and bold,  
And the tale can as noble a thrill awake,  
For he offered his life for the people's sake.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Shadow

THERE is a shadow on the sunny wall,  
Dark and forbidding, like a bode of ill;  
Go, drive it thence. Alas, such shadows fall  
From real things, nor may be moved at will.

There is a shadow on my heart to-day,  
A cloudy grief condensing to a tear:  
Alas, I cannot drive its gloom away—  
Some sin or sorrow casts the shapeless fear.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Statues In The Block

"LOVE is the secret of the world,' he said;  
'The cup we drain and still desire to drink.  
The loadstone hungers for the steel; the steel,  
Inert amid a million stones, responds to this.  
So yearn and answer hearts that truly love:  
Once touch their life-spring, it vibrates to death;  
And twain athrill as one are nature-wed.'

But silent stood the three who heard, nor smiled  
Nor looked agreement. Strangers these who stood  
Within a Roman studio—still young,  
But sobered each with that which follows joy  
At life's fresh forenoon, and the eye of each  
Held deep within a restless eager light,  
As gleams a diamond in a darkened room  
With radiance hoarded from the vanished sun.

'The meteor-stone is dense and dark in space,  
But bursts in flame when through the air it rushes,  
And our dull life is like an aerolite  
That leaps to fire within the sphere of love.'  
Unchecked his mood ran on: 'Sweet amorous hours  
That lie in years as isles in tropic seas,  
You spring to view as Art is born of Love,  
And shape rich beauties in this marble block!'

Before them rose within the shaded light  
A tall and shapely mass of Alp-white crystal  
Fresh from the heart of a Carrara quarry.  
'Opaque to you this marble; but to me,  
Whose eyes the chrism of passion has anointed,  
The stone is pregnant with a life of love.  
Within this monolith there lives a form  
Which I can see and would reveal to you,  
Could hand and chisel swiftly follow sight.  
From brow to foot her lissome form stands forth—  
The ripe lips smiling reached; with nestling press,  
As round the sailor frozen in the berg  
The clear ice closes on the still dead face,



The marble, grown translucent, touches soft  
Each comely feature—rippled hair, and chin,  
And lily sweep of bust and hip and limb—  
Ah, sweet mouth pouting for the lips that cling,  
And white arms raised all quivering to the clasp—  
Ah, rich throat made for burning lover's kiss,  
And reckless bodice open to the swell,  
And deep eyes soft with love's suffusion—Love!  
O Love! still living, memory and hope,  
Beyond all sweets thy bosom, breath, and lips—  
My jewel and the jewel of the world!

They stood in silence, each one rapt and still,  
As if the lovely form were theirs as his,  
Till one began—harsh voice and clouded face—  
With other presence in his eye—and said:  
'Opaque to me with such a glow-worm ray  
As Love's torch flings—but, mark, the dense rock melts  
When from my soul on fire the fiercer beam,  
The mighty calcium-glare of hate leaps out  
And eats the circumambient marble—See!  
Laid bare as corpse to keen anatomist,  
With every sinuous muscle picked with shadow,  
And every feature tense with livid passion,  
And all the frame aheave with sanguine throbs—  
The ecstasy of agonized Revenge!  
O stone, reveal it—how my parting kiss  
Was wet upon her mouth when other lips  
Drank deep the cursed fountain; how the coin  
I hung with rapture 'tween her glowing breasts,  
And fondly thought if I should die and she  
Should live till age had blanched her hair and flesh,  
This golden medal's touch would still have power  
To light the love-fire in the faded eyes  
And swell the shriveled breast to maiden roundness—  
This thought I nursed—O Stygian abyss!—  
Away thy picture of the rippled hair!  
Her hair was rippled and her eyes were deep,  
Her breasts and limbs were white and lily-curved,  
But all the woman, soul and wondrous flesh,  
Was poison-steeped and veined with vicious fire;  
And I, blind fool who trusted, was but one

Who swooned with love beside her—But I drank  
The wine she filled, and made her eat the dregs—  
I drenched her honey with my sea of gall.  
I see her in the marble where she shrinks  
In shuddered fear, as if my face were fire—  
Her cowering shadow making whiter still  
The face of him that writhes beside her feet.  
I see him breathe, the last deep breath, and turn  
His eyes upon me horror-filled—his hand,  
Still hot with wanton dalliance, clutched hard  
Across the burning murder in his side—  
And now he sinks still glaring—And my heart  
Is there between them, petrified, O God!  
And pierced by that red blow that struck their guilt.  
O balm and torture! he must hate who loves,  
And bleed who strikes to see thy face, Revenge!

Grown deep the silence for the words that died,  
And paler still the marble for its grief.

'Ah, myrrh and honey!' spake a third, whose eyes  
Were deep with sorrow for the woe; ' blind hands  
That grope for flowers and pierce the flesh with thorns!  
All love of woman still may turn to hate,  
As wine to bitterness, as noon to night.  
But sweeter far and deeper than the love  
Of flesh for flesh, is the strong bond of hearts  
For suffering Motherland—to make her free!  
Love's joy is short, and Hate's black triumph bitter,  
And loves and hates are selfish—save for thee,  
O chained and weeping at thy pillar's foot,  
Thy white flesh eaten by accursed bands.  
No love but thine can satisfy the heart,  
For love of thee holds in it hate of wrong,  
And shapes the hope that molds humanity!  
Not mine your passions, yet I weigh them well—  
Who loves a greater sinks all lesser love,  
Who hates a tyrant loses -lesser hate.  
My Land! I see thee Id the marble, bowed  
Before thy tyrant, bound at foot and wrist—  
Thy garments rent—thy wounded shoulder bare—  
Thy chained hand raised to ward the cruel blow—

My poor love round thee scarf-like, weak to hide  
And powerless to shield thee—but a boy  
I wound it round thee, dearest, and a man  
I drew it close and kissed thee—Mother, wife!  
For thee the past and future days; for thee  
The will to trample wrong and strike for slaves;  
For thee the hope that ere mine arm be weak  
And ere my heart be dry may close the strife  
In which thy colors shall be borne through fire,  
And all thy griefs washed out in manly blood—  
And I shall see thee crowned and bound with love,  
Thy strong sons round thee guarding thee. O star  
That lightens desolation, o'er her beam,  
Nor let the shadow of the pillar sink  
Too deep within her, till the dawn is red  
Of that white noon when men shall call her Queen!

The deep voice quivering with affection ceased,  
And silent each they saw within the stone  
The captive nation and the mother's woe.  
Yet while their hearts the fine emotion warmed,  
Ere ebbed the deep-pulsed throb of brotherhood,  
The last one spoke, and held the wave at full:—

'Yea, brothers, his the noblest for its grief;  
Your love was loss—but his was sacrifice.  
Your light was sunlight, for the shallow sense  
That bends the eyes on earth and thinks it sees;  
His love was nightlike, when we see the stars,  
Forgetting petty things around our feet.  
Yet here, too, find his weakness, for his hope  
Is still for sunlight, and your shallow sense,  
And golden crowns and queendom for his love.  
I, too, within the stone behold a statue,  
Far less than yours, but greater, for I know  
My symbol a beginning, not an end.  
O, Grief, with Hope! The marble fades—behold!  
The little hands still crossed—a child in death.  
My link with love—my dying gift from her  
Whose last look smiled on both, when I was left  
A loveless man, save this poor gift, alone.  
My heart had wound its tendrils round one life,

But when my joy was deepest, she was stricken,  
And I was powerless to save. My prayers  
And piteous cries were flung against my face—  
My life was blighted by the curse of Heaven!  
But from the depths her love returned to soothe:  
Her dear hand readied from death and placed her child  
Where she had lived, within the riven tendrils,  
And firmly these closed round their second treasure.  
And she, my new love, in her infant hold  
Took every heart-string as her mother's gift,  
And touched such tender fine-strung chords, and played  
Such music in my heart as filled my life  
With trembling joy and fondness for the child.  
I feared to be so blest—her baby cheek,  
When laid on mine, was Heaven's sweetest touch;  
And when she looked me in the eyes, I saw  
Her mother look at me from deep within,  
And bless me for the love I gave and won.  
Yet, when I loved her most she, too, was doomed:  
I saw it come upon her like a shadow,  
And watched the change, appalled at first, but  
To ward the danger from my darling. She,  
As day by day still failing, grew so tender  
And crept so often to my heart, as if,  
Though but a babe who could not speak a word,  
She knew full well my life would soon be shattered.  
But all my love was fruitless, and my prayers  
To leave her with me beat the gates in vain.  
I thought my love must hold her, till at last  
I held the tiny body like a leaf  
All day and night within my arms; and so,  
Close nestled to my yearning heart, Death passed,  
As merciless as God, but left that look  
Of two dead loves, as if Death's self knew pity.  
And I was lost heart-withered in a night  
That knew no star and held no ray of hope,  
And heard no word but my despairing curse  
With lifted hands, at life and Him who gave it!  
My graves were all. I had—the little mound  
Where my hands laid her, with the sweet young grass—  
The tiny hill that, grew until the sun  
Was hid behind it, and I sat below

And gnawed my heart in grief within its shadow.  
So one day bowed in woe beside the grave  
The weight grew deadly, and I called aloud  
That God should witness to my life in ruin.  
And God's word reached me through the little grave  
Where in the grass my face was buried weeping—  
His peace came through it like a pent-up breath  
That rolled from some great world whose gates had oped,  
And blew upon my wild and hardened heart,  
And swept my woe before it like a leaf.  
My dried heart drank the meaning of the peace:  
True love shall trust, and selfish love must die,  
For trust is peace, and self is full of pain;  
Arise, and heal thy brother's grief; his tears  
Shall wash thy love and it will live again.  
O little grave, I thought 'twas love had died,  
But in thy bosom only lies my sorrow.  
I see my darling in the marble now—  
My wasted leaf—her kind eyes smiling fondly,  
And through her eyes I see the love beyond,  
The biding light that moves not—and I know  
That when God gives to us the clearest sight  
He does not touch our eyes with Love, but Sorrow.'

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Temple Of Friendship

IN the depths of the silent wood the temple of Friendship stood,  
Like a dream of snow-white stone, or a vestal all alone,  
Undraped beside a stream.

The pious from every clime came there to rest for a time,  
With incense and gifts and prayer; and the stainless marble stair  
Was worn by fervent knees.

And everywhere the fame of the beautiful temple came,  
With its altar white and pure, and its worship to allure  
From gods that bring unrest.

The goddess was there to assuage (for this was the Golden Age)  
The trials of all who staid and trustingly tried and prayed  
For the perfect grace.

Soldier and clerk and dame in couples and companies came;  
There were few who rode alone, for none feared the other one,  
So placid and safe the creed.

There came from afar one day, with a suite in rich array,  
A lady of beauty rare, who bent to the plaintive air  
A handsome minstrel sung.

Her face was as calm and cold as the stamp of a queen on gold,  
And the song the poet sung to a restful theme was strung,  
A tranquil air of peace.

But, as they happily rode to the holy and white abode,  
They were watched from a cloud above by the mischievous god of Love,  
Who envied Friendship's reign.

They dreamt not of danger near, and their hearts felt no shade of fear,  
As they laid their rich offerings of flowers and precious things  
At Friendship's lovely feet.

They lingered long near the shrine, in the air of its peace divine;  
By the shadowed stream they strayed, where often the heavenly maid  
Would smile upon their rest.

One day, with her white robe flown, she passed like a dream alone,  
Where they sat in a converse sweet, with the silver stream at their feet  
As still and as wise as they.

To the innermost temple's room, to the couch, and the sacred loom  
Where she weaves her placid will, the goddess came, smiling still,  
Unrobing for blissful rest.

O lily of perfect mold, the world had grown young, not old,  
Had it bowed at thy milk-white feet with a love not of fire, but heat,—  
Sweet lotus of soft repose!

Like the moon her body glows, like the sun-flushed Alpine snows;  
Her arms 'neath her radiant head, she sleeps, and lo! o'er her bed  
The wicked Cupid leans.

Even he cannot fly the feast which nor vestal nor hoary priest  
Had ever enjoyed before. But, stealing her robe from the floor,  
He dons it and is gone.

By the stream, in the silent shade, he walks where the two have made  
Their resting-place for the noon: "Tis Friendship!" they cry; and soon  
Love's guile on their hearts is laid.

'O, the goddess is good!' she said, as she bent her golden head  
And looked in the minstrel's face. 'She stands by our resting-place  
And blesses our peaceful love!'

As she spoke, a flame shot through her breast, and her eyes of blue  
Grew moist with a subtle bliss. 'Sweet friend!' she cried, and her kiss  
Clung soft on the poet's lips.

'Ah, me!' he sighed, 'if they knew, those feverish lovers who woo  
For the passion of tears and blood, how soothing and pure and good  
Is a friendly kiss—like this!'

'O, list! ' she cried, ' 'tis a dove; he calls for his absent love;  
They will sit all day and coo calm friendship, like mine for you,—  
Dear friend, like mine for you.'

Their hands were joined, and a thrill of desire and passionate will

Brought his eyes her eyes above in a marvelous look of love,  
And Cupid smiled and drew near.

'O sweetest!' she whispered softly. 'See! the goddess is leaning over me,  
And smiling with eyes like yours! O Goddess! thy presence cures  
The restful unrest of friends!'

And Cupid laughed in her eyes as he threw off the white disguise  
And bent down to kiss her himself—but cuff! cuff! on the ears of the elf  
From the goddess who sought her robe.

And the river flowed on through the wood, and the temple of Friendship stood  
Like a dream of snow-white stone. But the minstrel returned alone  
From his pilgrimage.

John Boyle O'Reilly



# The Three Queens

IN the far time of Earth's sweet maiden beauty,  
When Morning hung with rapture on her breast;  
When every sentient life paid love for duty,  
And every law was Nature's own behest;  
When reason ruled as subtle instinct taught her;  
When joys were pure and sin and shame unseen;  
Then God sent down His messenger and daughter,  
His kiss upon her lips, to reign as Queen!

Her name was Liberty! Earth lay before her,  
And throbbed unconscious fealty and truth;  
Morning and night men hastened to adore her,  
And from her eyes Peace drew perennial youth.  
Her hair was golden as the stars of heaven;  
Her face was radiant with the kiss of Jove;  
Her form was lovelier than the sun at even;  
Death paled before her: Life was one with Love.

O time traditioned! ere thy dismal sequel,  
Men owned the world, and every man was free;  
The lowest life was noble; all were equal  
In needs and creeds,—their birthright Liberty.  
Possession had no power of caste, nor learning;  
He was not great who owned a shining stone;

No seer was needed for the truth's discerning,  
Nor king nor code to teach the world its own.  
Distinction lived, but gave no power o'er others,  
As flowers have no dominion each o'er each;  
What men could do they did among their brothers  
By skill of hand or gift of song or speech.

Dear Golden Age! that like a deathless spirit  
Fills our traditions with a light sublime;  
Like wheat from Egypt's tombs our souls inherit  
Sweet dreams of freedom from thy vanished time.

O Goddess Liberty! thy sun was cleaving  
Its golden path across a perfect sky,

When lo! a cloud, from night below upheaving,  
And underneath a shadow and a cry!

In lurid darkness spread the thing of error,  
Swift ran the shudder and the fear beneath;  
Till o'er the Queen's face passed the voiceless terror,  
And Love grew pale to see the joy of Death.

Men stood benumbed to wait unknown disaster;  
Full soon its sworded Messenger was seen;  
'Behold!' he cried, 'the weak shall have a master!  
The Strong shall rule! There reigns another Queen!'  
Then rushed the forces of the night-born Power,  
And seized white Liberty, and cast her down;  
Man's plundered birthright was the new Queen's dower,  
The sorrow of the weak ones was her crown.

Her name was Law! She sent her proclamation  
Through every land and set her crimson seal  
On every strangled right and revocation  
Of aim and instinct of the common weal.  
She saw the true Queen prisoned by her creatures;  
Who dared to speak, was slain by her command.  
Her face was lusterless. With smileless features  
She took the throne—a weapon in her hand!

Her new code read: 'The earth is for the able'  
(And able meant the selfish, strong, and shrewd):  
'Equality and freedom are a fable;  
To take and keep the largest share is good.'  
Her teachers taught the justice of oppression,  
That taxed the poor on all but air and sun;  
Her preachers preached the gospel of possession,  
That hoards had rights while human souls had none.

Then all things changed their object and relation;  
Commerce instead of Nature—Progress instead of Men;  
The world became a monstrous corporation,  
Where ninety serfs ground luxury for ten.  
The masters blessed, the toilers cursed the system  
That classified and kept mankind apart;  
But passing ages rained the dust of custom

Where broken Nature showed the weld of art.

But there were some who scorned to make alliance,  
Who owned the true Queen even in the dust;  
And these, through generations, flung defiance  
From goal and gibbet for their sacred trust.  
Then came the Christ, the Saviour and the Brother,  
With truth and freedom once again the seed;  
'Woe to the rich! Do ye to one another  
As each desires for self '—man's primal creed.  
But, lo! they took the Saviour and they bound him,  
And set him in their midst as he were free;  
They made His tied hands seal their deeds around Him,  
And His dumb lips condemn fair Liberty!

'Then woe!' cried those faint-hearted; 'woe for dreaming,  
For prayers and hopes and sufferings all in vain!'  
O Souls despondent at the outward seeming,  
Here at the cry, behold the light again!  
Here at the cry, the answer and solution:  
When strong as Death the cold usurper reigns,  
When human right seems doomed to dissolution,  
And Hope itself is wrung with mortal pains;  
When Christ is harnessed to the landlord's burden;  
His truth to make men free a thing of scorn;  
God hears the cry, and sends the mystic guerdon,—  
Earth thrills and throes—another Queen is born!  
O weak she comes, a child and not a woman;  
Needing our nursing and devotion long;  
But in her eyes the flame divine and human,  
To strengthen weak ones and restrain the strong.

Her name is Learning! Her domain unbounded;  
Of all the fetters she commands the key;  
Through her babe-mouth man's wrong shall be confounded,  
And link by link her sister Queen set free.  
Her hand shall hold the patriotic passes,  
And check the wrong that zeal would do for right;  
Her whispered secrets shall inflame the masses  
To read their planet-charter by her light.  
Round her to-day may press the base Queen's minions,  
Seeking alliance and approval. Nay!

The day and night shall mingle their dominions  
Ere Nature's rule and Mammon's join their sway.

Our new Queen comes a nursling, thus to teach us  
The patience and the tenderness we need:  
To raise our natures that the light may reach us  
Of sacrifice and silence for a creed.

A nursling yet,—but every school and college  
Is training minds to tend the heavenly maid;  
And men are learning, grain by grain, the knowledge  
That worlds exist for higher ends than trade.  
Grander than Vulcan's are these mighty forges  
Where souls are shaped and sharpened like fiery swords,  
To arm the multitude till Might disgorges,  
And save the Saviour from the selfish hordes.

Around us here we count those Pharos stations,  
Where men are bred to do their Queen's behest:  
To guard the deep republican foundations  
Of our majestic freedom of the West!  
From our high place the broken view grows clearer,  
The bloodstained upward path the patriots trod;  
Shall we not reach to bring the toilers nearer  
The law of Nature, Liberty, and God?

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Treasure Of Abram

I.

IN the old Rabbinical stories,  
So old they might well be true,—  
The sacred tales of the Talmud,  
That David and Solomon knew,—  
There is one of the Father Abram,  
The greatest of Heber's race,  
The mustard-seed of Judea  
That filled the holy place.  
'Tis said that the fiery heaven  
His eye was first to read,  
Till planets were gods no longer,  
But helps for the human need;  
He taught his simple people  
The scope of eternal law  
That swayed at once the fleecy cloud  
And the circling suns they saw.  
But the rude Chaldean peasants  
Uprose against the seer,  
And drave him forth—else never came  
This Talmud legend here.  
With Sarah his wife, and his servants,  
Whom he ruled with potent hand,  
The Patriarch planted his vineyards  
In the Canaanitish land;  
With his wife—the sterile, but lovely,  
The fame of whose beauty grew  
Till there was no land in Asia  
But tales of the treasure knew.  
In his lore the sage lived—learning  
High thought from the starlit skies;  
But heedful, too, of the light at home,  
And the danger of wistful eyes;  
Till the famine fell on his corn-fields,  
And sent him forth again,  
To seek for a home in Egypt,—  
The laud of the amorous men.

## II.

Long and rich is the caravan that halts at Egypt's gate,  
While duty full the stranger pays on lowing herd and freight.  
Full keen the scrutiny of those who note the heavy dues;  
From weanling foal to cumbrous wain, no chance of gain they lose.

But fair the search—no wealth concealed; while rich the gifts they take  
From Abram's hand, till care has ceased, and formal quest they make.  
They pass the droves and laden teams, the weighted slaves are past,  
And Abram doubles still the gifts; one wain—his own—is last—  
It goes unsearched! Wise Abram smiles, though dearly stemmed the quest;

But haps will come from causes slight,  
And hidden things upspring to light:  
A breeze flings wide the canvas fold, and deep within the wain, behold  
A brass-bound, massive chest!

'Press on!' shouts Abram. 'Hold!' they cry; 'what treasure hide ye here?'  
The word is stern—the answer brief: 'Treasure! 'tis household gear;  
Plain linen cloth and flaxen thread.' The scribes deceived are wroth;  
'Then weigh the chest—its price shall be the dues on linen cloth!'

The face of Abram seemed to grieve, though joy was in his breast,  
As carefully his servants took and weighed the mighty chest.  
But one hath watched the secret smile; he cries—'This stranger old  
Hath used deceit: no cloth is here—this chest is filled with gold!'  
'Nay, nay,' wise Abram says, and smiles, though now he hides dismay;  
'But time is gold: let pass the chest—on gold the dues I pay!'  
But he who read the subtle smile detects the secret fear:  
'Detain the chest! nor cloth nor gold, but precious silk is here!'

Grave Father Abram stands like one who knoweth well the sword  
When tyros baffle thrust and guard; slow comes the heedful word:  
'I seek no lawless gain—behold! my trains are on their way,  
Else would these bands my servants break, and show the simple goods I take,  
That silk ye call; but, for time's sake, on silk the dues I pay!'

'He pays too much!' the watcher cries; 'this man is full of guile;  
From cloth to gold and gold to silk, to save a paltry mile!  
This graybeard pay full silken dues on cloth for slave-bred girls!  
Some prize is here—he shall not pass until he pay for pearls!'

Stern Abram turned a lurid eye, as he the man would slay;  
An instant, rose the self-command; but thin the lip and quick the hand,  
As one who makes a last demand: 'On pearls the dues! pay!'

'He cannot pass!' the watcher screamed, as to the chest he clung;  
'He shall not pass! Some priceless thing he hideth here.  
Quick—workmen bring!  
I seize this treasure for the King!  
Old Abram stood aghast; it seemed the knell of doom had rung.

III.

Red-eyed with greed and wonder,  
The crowd excited stand;  
The blows are rained like thunder  
On brazen bolt and band;  
They burst the massive hinges,  
They raise the ponderous lid,  
And lo! the peerless treasure  
That Father Abram hid:

In pearls and silk and jewels rare,  
Fit for a Pharaoh's strife;  
In flashing eyes and golden hair—  
Sat Abram's lovely wife!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Trial Of The Gods

NEVER nobler was the Senate,  
Never grander the debate:  
Rome's old gods are on their trial  
By the judges of the state!  
Torn by warring creeds, the Fathers  
Urge to-day the question home—  
'Whether Jupiter or Jesus  
Shall be God henceforth in Rome?'

Lo, the scene! In Jove's own temple,  
As of old, the Fathers meet;  
Through the porch, to hear the speeches,  
Press the people from the street.  
Pontiffs, rich with purple vesture,  
Pass from senate chair to chair;  
Learned augurs, still as statues—  
Voiceless statues, too—are there;  
Vestal virgins, white with terror,  
Mutely asking—what has come?  
What new light shall turn to darkness  
Vesta's holy fire in Rome?

Answer, Quindecemvirs! Surely,  
Of this wondrous Nazarene  
Ye must know, who keep the secrets  
Of the prophet Sibylline?  
Nay, no word! Here stand the Flamens:  
Have ye read the omens, priests?  
Slain the victims, white and sable,  
Scanned the entrails of the beast?

Priest of Pallas, see! the people  
Ask for oracles to-day:  
Silent! Priests of Mars and Venus?  
Lo, they turn, dumb-lipped, away!  
Priest of Jove? Flamen dialis!  
Here in Jove's own temple meet  
In debate the Roman Senate,  
And Jove's priest with timid feet



Stands beyond the altar railing!  
Gods, I feel ye frown above!  
In the shadow of Jove's altar  
Men defy the might of Jove!

Treason riots in the temple  
At the sacrilege profound:  
Virgins mocked, and augurs banished,  
And divinities discrowned!  
Hush! Old Rome herself appeareth,  
Pleading for the ancient faith:  
Urging all her by-gone glory—  
That to change the old were death.  
Rudely answer the patricians,  
Scoffing at the time-worn snare:  
Twice a thousand years of sacrifice  
Have melted into air;  
Twice a thousand years of worship  
Have bitterly sufficed  
To prove there is no Jupiter!  
The Senate votes for Christ!

Not aimless is the story,  
The moral not remote:  
For still the gods are questioned,  
And still the Senates vote.  
Men sacrifice to Venus;  
To Mars are victims led;  
And Mercury is honored still;  
And Bacchus is not dead;—  
But these are minor deities  
That cling to human sight:  
Our twilight they—but Right and Wrong  
Are clear as day and night.  
We know the Truth: but falsehood  
With our lives is so inwove—  
Our Senates vote down Jesus  
As old Rome degraded Jove!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Unhappy One

'HE is false to the heart!' she said, stern-lipped; 'he is all untruth;  
He promises fair as a tree in blossom, and then  
The fruit is rotten ere ripe. Tears, prayers and youth,  
All withered and wasted! and still—I love this falsest of men!'

Comfort? There is no comfort when the soul sees pain like a sun:  
It is better to stare at the blinding truth: if it blind, one woe is done.  
We cling to a coward hope, when hope has the seed of the pain:  
If we tear out the roots of the grief, it will never torment again.  
Ay, even if part of our life is lost, and the deep-laid nerves  
That carry all joy to the heart are wounded or killed by the knife;  
When a gangrene sinks to the bone, it is only half-death that serves;  
And a life with a cureless pain is only half a life.

But why unhealed must the spirit endure? There are drugs for the body's dole;  
Have we wholly lived for the lower life? Is there never a balm for the soul?  
O Night, cry out for the healer of woe, for the priest-physician cry,  
With the pouring oil for the bleeding grief, for the life that may not die!  
'He is false to the heart!' she moaned; 'and I love him and cannot hate!'  
Then bitterly, fiercely —'What have I done, my God, for such a fate?'

'Poor heart!' said the Teacher; 'for thee and thy sorrow the daily parables speak.  
Thy grief, that is dark, illumines for me a sign that was dim and weak.  
In the heart of my garden I planted a tree —I had chosen the noblest shoot:  
It was sheltered and tended, and hope reached out for the future's precious fruit.  
The years of its youth flew past, and I looked on a spreading tree  
All gloried with maiden blossoms, that smiled their promise to me.  
I lingered to gaze on their color and shape—I knew I had chosen well;  
And I smiled at the death that was promise of life as the beautiful petals fell.  
But the joy was chilled, though the lip laughed on, by the withered proof to the  
eye:  
The blossoms had shielded no tender bud, but cradled a barren lie.  
Before me it lay, the mystery—the asking, the promise, the stone;  
The tree that should give good fruit was bare—the cause unseen, unknown!

'But I said: ' Next year it shall burgeon, my part shall be faithfully done;  
My love shall be doubled—I trust my tree for its beautiful strength alone.'  
But tenderness failed, and loving care, and the chalice of faith was dried  
When the next spring blossoms had spoken their promise smiled at the sun and

lied;

The heart of the petals was withered to dust. Then, for duty, I trusted again;  
For who should stand if God were to frown on the twice-told failures of men?  
Unloving I tended, with care increased, but never a song or smile;  
For duty is love that is dead but is kept from the grave for a while.

The third year came, with the sweet young leaves, and I could not fear or doubt;

But the petals smiled at the sun and lied,—and the curse in my blood leaped out!

'This corpse,' I cried, 'that has cumbered the earth, let it hence to the waste be  
torn!'

That moment of wrath beheld its death—while to me was a life-truth born:  
The straight young trunk at my feet lay prone; and I bent to scan the core,  
And there read the pitiful secret the noble sapling bore.

Through the heart of the pith, in its softest youth, it had bored its secret way,  
A gnawing worm, a hideous grief,—and the life it had tortured lay  
Accursed and lost for the cruel devil that nestled its breast within.  
Ah, me, poor heart! had I known in time, I had cut out the clinging sin,  
And saved the life that was all as good and as noble as it seemed!

He ceased, and she rose, the unresigned, as one who had slept and dreamed;  
Her face was radiant with insight: 'It is true! it is true!' she said;  
'And my love shall not die, like your beautiful tree, till the hidden pain is dead!'

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Useless Ones

Poets should not reason:  
Let them sing!  
Argument is treason —  
Bells should ring.

Statements none, nor questions;  
Gnomic words.  
Spirit-cries, suggestions,  
Like the birds.

He may use deduction  
Who must preach;  
He may praise instruction  
Who must teach;

But the poet duly  
Fills his part  
When the song bursts truly  
From his heart.

For no purpose springing;  
For no pelf:  
He must do the singing  
For itself.

Not in lines austerely  
Let him build;  
Not the surface merely  
Let him gild.

Fearless, uninvited,  
Like a spring.  
Opal-words, inlighted,  
Let him sing.

As the leaf grows sunward  
Song must grow;  
As the stream flows onward  
Song must flow.

Useless? Ay, — for measure;  
Roses die,  
But their breath gives pleasure —  
God knows why!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Value Of Gold

There may be standard weight for precious metal,  
But deeper meaning it must ever hold;  
Thank God, there are some things no law can settle,  
And one of these—the real worth of gold.

The stamp of king or crown has common power  
To hold the traffic-value in control;  
Our coarser senses note this worth—the lower;  
The higher comes from senses of the soul.

This truth we find not in mere warehouse learning—  
The value varies with the hands that hold;  
The worth depends upon the mode of earning;  
And this man's copper equals that man's gold.

With empty heart, and forehead lined with scheming,  
Men's sin and sorrow have been that man's gain;  
But this man's heart, with rich emotions teeming,  
Makes fine the gold for which he coins his brain.

But richer still than gold from upright labor—  
The only gold that should have standard price—  
Is the poor earning of our humble neighbor,  
Whose every coin is red with sacrifice.

Mere store of money is not wealth, but rather  
The proof of poverty and need of bread.  
Like men themselves is the bright gold they gather  
It may be living, or it may be dead.

It may be filled with love and life and vigor,  
To guide the wearer, and to cheer the way;  
It may be corpse-like in its weight and rigor,  
Bending the bearer to his native clay.

There is no comfort but in outward showing  
In all the servile homage paid to dross;  
Better to heart and soul the silent knowing  
Our little store has not been gained by loss.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Wail Of Two Cities

Chicago, October 9,1871.

GAUNT in the midst of the prairie,  
She who was once so fair;  
Charred and rent are her garments,  
Heavy and dark like cerements;  
Silent, but round her the air  
Plaintively wails, 'Miserere!'

Proud like a beautiful maiden,  
Art-like from forehead to feet,  
Was she till pressed like a leman  
Close to the breast of the demon,  
Lusting for one so sweet,  
So were her shoulders laden.

Friends she had, rich in her treasures:  
Shall the old taunt be true,—  
Fallen, they turn their cold faces,  
Seeking new wealth-gilded places,  
Saying we never knew  
Aught of her smiles or her pleasures?

Silent she stands on the prairie,  
Wrapped in her fire-scathed sheet:  
Around her, thank God! is the Nation,  
Weeping for her desolation,  
Pouring its gold at her feet,  
Answering her 'Miserere!'

Boston, November 9,1872.

O broad-breasted Queen among Nations!  
O Mother, so strong in thy youth!  
Has the Lord looked upon thee in ire,  
And willed thou be chastened by fire,  
Without any ruth?



Has the Merciful tired of His mercy,  
And turned from thy sinning in wrath,  
That the world with raised hand sees and pities  
Thy desolate daughters, thy cities,  
Despoiled on their path?

One year since thy youngest was stricken:  
Thy eldest lies stricken to-day.  
Ah! God, was thy wrath without pity,  
To tear the strong heart from our city,  
And cast it away?

O Father! forgive us our doubting;  
The stain from our weak souls efface;  
Thou rebukest, we know, but to chasten;  
Thy hand has but fallen to hasten  
Return to thy grace.

Let us rise purified from our ashes  
As sinners have risen who grieved;  
Let us show that twice-sent desolation  
On every true heart in the nation  
Has conquest achieved.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Well's Secret

I KNEW it all my boyhood: in a lonesome valley meadow,  
Like a dryad's mirror hidden by the wood's dim arches near;  
Its eye flashed back the sunshine, and grew dark and sad with shadow;  
And I loved its truthful depths where every pebble lay so clear.

I scooped my hand and drank it, and watched the sensate quiver  
Of the rippling rings of silver as the beads of crystal fell;  
I pressed the richer grasses from its little trickling river,  
Till at last I knew, as friends know, every secret of the well.

But one day I stood beside it on a sudden, unexpected,  
When the sun had crossed the valley and a shadow hid the place;  
And I looked in the dark water—saw my pallid cheek reflected—  
And beside it, looking upward, met an evil reptile face:

Looking upward, furtive, startled at the silent, swift intrusion;  
Then it darted toward the grasses, and I saw not where it fled;  
But I knew its eyes were on me, and the old-time sweet illusion  
Of the pure and perfect symbol I had cherished there was dead.

O, the pain to know the perjury of seeming truth that blesses!  
My soul was seared like sin to see the falsehood of the place;  
And the innocence that mocked me, while in dim unseen recesses  
There were lurking fouler secrets than the furtive reptile face.

And since then,—O, why the burden?—when the joyous faces greet me,  
With their eyes of limpid innocence, and words devoid of art,  
I cannot trust their seeming, but must ask what eyes would meet me  
Could I look in sudden silence at the secrets of the heart!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The White Rose

The red rose whispers of passion,  
And the white rose breathes of love;  
O, the red rose is a falcon,  
And the white rose is a dove.

But I send you a cream-white rosebud  
With a flush on its petal tips;  
For the love that is purest and sweetest  
Has a kiss of desire on the lips.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Wonderful Country

THERE once was a time when, as old songs prove it,  
The earth was not round, but an endless plain;  
The sea was as wide as the heavens above it—  
Just millions of miles, and begin again.  
And that was the time—ay, and more's the pity  
It ever should end!—when the world could play,  
When singers told tales of a crystal city  
In a wonderful country far away!

But the schools must come, with their scales and measures,  
To limit the visions and weigh the spells;  
They scoffed at the dreams and the rainbow treasures,  
And circled the world in their parallels;  
They charted the vales and the sunny meadows,  
Where a poet might ride for a year and a day;  
They sounded the depths and they pierced the shadows,  
Of that wonderful country far away.

For fancies they gave us their microscopics;  
For knowledge, a rubble of fact and doubt;  
Wing-broken and caged, like a bird from the tropics,  
Romance at the wandering stars looked out.  
Cold Reason, they said, is the earthly Eden;  
Go, study its springs, and its ores assay;  
But fairer the flowers and fields forbidden  
Of that wonderful country far away.

They questioned the slumbering baby's laughter,  
And cautioned its elders to dream by rule;  
All mysteries past and to come hereafter  
Were settled and solved in their common school.  
But sweeter the streams and the wild birds singing,  
The friendships and loves that were true always;  
The gladness unseen, like a far bell ringing,  
In that wonderful country far away.

Nay, not in their Reason our dear illusion,  
But truer than truths that are measured and weighed—  
O land of the spirit! where no intrusion

From bookmen or doubters shall aye be made!  
There still breaks the murmuring sea to greet us  
On shadowy valley and peaceful bay;  
And souls that were truest still wait to meet us  
In that wonderful country far away!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# The Word And The Deed

THE Word was first, says the revelation:  
Justice is older than error or strife;  
The Word preceded the Incarnation  
As symbol and type of law and life.  
And always so are the mighty changes:  
The word must be sown in the heart like seed;  
Men's hands must tend it, their lives defend it,  
Till it burst into flower as a deathless Deed.

The primal truth neither dies nor slumbers,  
But lives as the test of the common right,  
That the laws proclaimed by the sworded numbers  
May stand arraigned in the people's sight.  
The Word is great, and no Deed is greater,  
When both are of God, to follow or lead;  
But, alas, for the truth when the Word comes later,  
With questioned steps, to sustain the Deed.

Not the noblest acts can be true solutions;  
The soul must be sated before the eye,  
Else the passionate glory of revolutions  
Shall pass like the flames that flash and die.  
But forever the gain when the heart's convictions,  
Rooted in nature the masses lead;  
The cries of rebellion are benedictions  
When the Word has flowered in a perfect Deed.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# There Is Blood On The Earth

THERE is blood on the face of the earth-  
It reeks through the years, and is red:  
Where Truth was slaughtered at birth,  
And the veins of Liberty bled.

Lo! vain is the hand that tries  
To cover the crimson stain:  
It spreads like a plague, and cries  
Like a soul in writhing pain.

It wasteth the planet's flesh;  
It calleth on breasts of stone:  
God holdeth His wrath in a leash  
Till the hearts of men atone.

Blind, like the creatures of time;  
Cursed, like all the race,  
They answer: " The blood and crime  
Belong to a sect and place! "

What are these things to Heaven—  
Races or places of men?  
The world through one Christ was forgiven—  
Nor question of races then.

The wrong of to-day shall be rued  
In a thousand coming years;  
The debt must be paid in blood,  
The interest, in tears.

Shall none stand up for right  
Whom the evil passes by?  
But God had the globe in sight,  
And hearkens the weak one's cry.

Wherever a principle dies—  
Nay, principles never die!  
But wherever a ruler lies,  
And a people share the lie;

Where right is crushed by force,  
And manhood is stricken dead—  
There dwelleth the ancient curse,  
And the blood on the earth is red!

John Boyle O'Reilly



# Though It Lash The Shallows That Line The Beach

Though it lash the shallows that line the beach,  
Afar from the great sea deeps,  
There is never a storm whose might can reach  
Where the vast leviathan sleeps.  
Like a mighty thought in a quiet mind,  
In the clear, cold depths he swims;  
Whilst above him the pettiest form of his kind  
With a dash o'er the surface skims.

There is peace in power: the men who speak  
With the loudest tongues do least;  
And the surest sign of a mind that is weak  
Is its want of the power to rest.  
It is only the lighter water that flies  
From the sea on a windy day;  
And the deep blue ocean never replies  
To the sibilant voice of the spray.

John Boyle O'Reilly

## Three Graves

HOW did he live, this dead man here,  
With the temple above his grave?  
He lived as a great one, from cradle to bier  
He was nursed in luxury, trained in pride,  
When the wish was born, it was gratified;  
Without thanks he took, without heed he gave.  
The common man was to him a clod  
From whom he was far as a demigod.  
His duties? To see that his rents were paid;  
His pleasure? To know that the crowd obeyed.  
His pulse, if you felt it, throbbed apart,  
With a separate stroke from the people's heart.  
But whom did he love, and whom did he bless?  
Was the life of him more than a man's, or less?  
I know not. He died. There was none to blame,  
And as few to weep; but these marbles came  
For the temple that rose to preserve his name!

How did he live, that other dead man,  
From the graves apart and alone?  
As a great one, too? Yes, this was one  
Who lived to labor and study and plan.  
The earth's deep thought he loved to reveal;  
He banded the breast of the land with steel;  
The thread of his toil he never broke;  
He filled the cities with wheels and smoke,  
And workers by day and workers by night,  
For the day was too short for his vigor's flight.  
Too firm was he to be feeling and giving:  
For labor, for gain, was a life worth living.  
He worshiped Industry, dreamt of her, sighed for her.  
Potent he grew by her, famous he died for her.  
They say he improved the world in his time,  
That his mills and mines were a work sublime.  
When he died—the laborers rested, and sighed;  
Which was it—because he had lived, or died?

And how did he live, that dead man there,  
In the country churchyard laid?

O, he? He came for the sweet field air;  
He was tired of the town, and he took no pride  
In its fashion or fame. He returned and died  
In the place he loved, where a child he played  
With those who have knelt by his grave and prayed.  
He ruled no serfs, and he knew no pride;  
He was one with the workers side by side;  
He hated a mill, and a mine, and a town,  
With their fever of misery, struggle, renown;  
He could never believe but a man was made  
For a nobler end than- the glory of trade.  
For the youth he mourned with an endless pity  
Who were cast like snow on the streets of the city.  
He was weak, maybe; but he lost no friend;  
Who loved him once, loved on to the end.  
He mourned all selfish and shrewd endeavor;  
But he never injured a weak one—never.  
When censure was passed, he was kindly dumb;  
He was never so wise but a fault would come;  
He was never so old that he failed to enjoy  
The games and the dreams he had loved when a boy.  
He erred, and was sorry; but never drew  
A trusting heart from the pure and true.  
When friends look back from the years to be,  
God grant they may say such things of me.

John Boyle O'Reilly

## To A.S. On His Daughter's Wedding

THERE is no joy all set apart from pain,  
The opening bud has loss as well as gain.  
The brightest dewdropp gems a bending flower,  
The rarest day has wept one little shower;  
But wholly blest the parting pain and ruth  
That hold and fold the joining love of youth.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# To My Dear Old Friend, Mr. A. Shuman

NOT many friends  
Wish I you;  
Love makes amends  
For the few.

Slight bonds are best  
For the new;  
Here is the test  
Of the true:

Pay to your friend  
Your own due;  
Lone to the end,  
Through and through;  
Let him, commend,  
And not you.

Friends of this kind,  
Tried and true,  
May you, friend, find,—  
Just a few.

John Boyle O'Reilly

## To My Little Blaid

I told her a story, a fairy story,  
My little daughter with eyes of blue  
And with clear, wide gaze as the splendours brightened,  
She always asked me—'Oh, is it true?'  
Always that word when the wonder reached her,  
She pictured beauty so grand and new —  
When the good were paid and the evil punished,  
Still, with soft insistent—'Is it true?'  
Ah, late, drear knowledge from sin and sorrow,  
How will you answer and answer true,  
Her wistful doubt of the happy ending? —  
Wise child! I wondered how much she knew.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# To-Day

Only from day to day  
The life of a wise man runs:  
What matter if seasons far away  
Have gloom or have double suns?

To climb the unreal path,  
We stray from the roadway here;  
We swim the rivers of wrath,  
And tunnel the hills of fear.

Our feet on the torrent's brink,  
Our eyes on the cloud afar,  
We fear the things we think,  
Instead of the things that are.

Like a tide our work should rise—  
Each later wave the best;  
To-day is a king in disguise,  
To-day is the special test.

Like a sawyer's work is life:  
The present makes the flaw,  
And the only field for strife  
Is the inch before the saw.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Trust

A MAN will trust another man, and show  
His secret thought and act, as if he must;  
A woman—does she tell her sins? Ah, no!  
She never knew a woman she could trust.

John Boyle O'Reilly



## Two Lives

TWO youths from a village set out together  
To seek their fortune the wide world through;  
One cried, 'Hurra for the autumn weather!'  
The other sighed, 'Winter is almost due!'  
One failed, they said, for he never was thrifty,  
Returned to the village, and laughed and loved.  
The other succeeded, and when he was fifty  
Had millions and fame, and the world approved.

But the failure was happy, his smile a blessing,  
The dogs and the children romped at his feet,  
While from him who succeeded, tho' much possessing,  
The little ones shrank when they chanced to meet.  
One purchased respect by his lordly giving:  
The other won love by his loving ways;  
And if either had doubts of his way of living,  
It wasn't the one with the humble days.  
They never knew it, but both were teachers  
Of deep life-secrets, these village youths—  
The one of a school where Facts are preachers—  
The other of a world that worships Truths.

John Boyle O'Reilly

## Uncle Ned's Tale: An Old Dragoon's Story

I OFTEN, musing, wander back to days long since gone by,  
And far-off scenes and long-lost forms arise to fancy's eye.  
A group familiar now I see, who all but one are fled,—  
My mother, sister Jane, myself, and dear old Uncle Ned.  
I'll tell you how I see them now. First, mother in her chair  
Sits knitting by the parlor fire, with anxious matron air;  
My sister Jane, just nine years old, is seated at her feet,  
With look demure, as if she, too, were thinking how to meet  
The butcher's or the baker's bill,—though not a thought has she  
Of aught beside her girlish toys; and next to her I see  
Myself, a sturdy lad of twelve,—neglectful of the book  
That open lies upon my knee,—my fixed admiring look  
At Uncle Ned, upon the left, whose upright, martial mien,  
Whose empty sleeve and gray mustache, proclaim what he has been.  
My mother I had always loved; my father then was dead;  
But 'twas more than love—'twas worship—I felt for Uncle Ned.  
Such tales he had of battle-fields,—the victory and the rout,  
The ringing cheer, the dying shriek, the loud exulting shout!  
And how, forgetting age and wounds, his eye would kindle bright,  
When telling of some desperate ride or close and deadly fight!  
But oft I noticed, in the midst of some wild martial tale,  
To which I lent attentive ear, my mother's cheek grow pale;  
She sighed to see my kindled look, and feared I might be led  
To follow in the wayward steps of poor old Uncle Ned.  
But with all the wondrous tales he told, 'twas strange I never heard  
Of his last fight, for of that day he never spoke a word.  
And yet 'twas there he lost his arm, and once he e'en confessed  
'Twas there he won the glittering cross he wore upon his breast.  
It hung the center of a group of Glory's emblems fair,  
And royal hands, he told me once, had placed the bauble there.  
Each day that passed I hungered more to hear about that fight,  
And oftentimes I prayed in vain. At length, one winter's night,—  
The very night I speak of now,—with more than usual care  
I filled his pipe, then took my stand beside my uncle's chair:  
I fixed my eyes upon the Cross,—he saw my youthful plan;  
And, smiling, laid the pipe aside and thus the tale began:

'Well, boy, it was in summer time, and just at morning's light  
We heard the 'Boot and Saddle!' sound: the foe was then in sight,

Just winding round a distant hill and opening on the plain.  
Each trooper looked with careful eye to girth and curb and rein.  
We snatched a hasty breakfast,—we were old campaigners then:  
That morn, of all our splendid corps, we'd scarce one hundred men;  
But they were soldiers, tried and true, who'd rather die than yield:  
The rest were scattered far and wide o'er many a hard fought field.  
Our trumpet now rang sharply out, and at a swinging pace  
We left the bivouac behind; and soon the eye could trace  
The columns moving o'er the plain. Oh! 'twas a stirring sight  
To see two mighty armies there preparing for the fight:  
To watch the heavy masses, as, with practiced, steady wheel,  
They opened out in slender lines of brightly flashing steel.  
Our place was on the farther flank, behind some rising ground,  
That hid the stirring scene from view; but soon a booming sound  
Proclaimed the opening of the fight. Then war's loud thunder rolled,  
And hurtling shells and whistling balls their deadly message told.  
We hoped to have a gallant day; our hearts were all aglow;  
We longed for one wild, sweeping charge, to chase the flying foe.  
Our troopers marked the hours glide by, but still no orders came:  
They clutched their swords, and muttered words 'twere better not to name.  
For hours the loud artillery roared,—the sun was at its height,—  
Still there we lay behind that hill, shut out from all the fight!  
We heard the maddened charging yells, the ringing British cheers,  
And all the din of glorious war kept sounding in our ears.  
Our hearts with fierce impatience throbbed, we cursed the very hill  
That hid the sight: the evening fell, and we were idle still.  
The horses, too, were almost wild, and told with angry snort  
And blazing eye their fierce desire to join the savage sport.  
When lower still the sun had sunk, and with it all our hope,  
A horseman, soiled with smoke and sweat, came dashing down the slope.  
He bore the wished-for orders. 'At last!' our Colonel cried;  
And as he read the brief dispatch his glance was filled with pride.  
Then he who bore the orders, in a low, emphatic tone,  
The stern, expressive sentence spoke,—'He said it must be done!'  
'It shall be done!' our Colonel cried. 'Men, look to strap and girth,  
We've work to do this day will prove what every man is worth;  
Ay, work, my lads, will make amends for all our long delay,—  
The General says on us depends the fortune of the day!'  
'No order needed we to mount,—each man was in his place,  
And stern and dangerous was the look on every veteran face.  
We trotted sharply up the hill, and halted on the brow,  
And then that glorious field appeared. Oh! lad, I see it now!

But little time had we to spare for idle gazing then:  
Beneath us, in the valley, stood a dark-clad mass of men:  
It cut the British line in two. Our Colonel shouted, 'There!  
Behold your work! Our orders are to charge and break that square!'  
Each trooper drew a heavy breath, then gathered up his reins,  
And pressed the helmet o'er his brow; the horses tossed their manes  
In protest fierce against the curb, and spurned the springy heath,  
Impatient for the trumpet's sound to bid them rush to death.

'Well, boy, that moment seemed an hour: at last we heard the words,—  
'Dragoons! I know you'll follow me. Ride steady, men! Draw swords!'  
The trumpet sounded: off we dashed, at first with steady pace,  
But growing swifter as we went. Oh! 'twas a gallant race!  
Three-fourths the ground was left behind: the loud and thrilling 'Charge!'  
Rang out; but, fairly frantic now, we needed not to urge  
With voice or rein our gallant steeds, or touch their foaming flanks.  
They seemed to fly. Now straight in front appeared the kneeling ranks.  
Above them waved a standard broad: we saw their rifles raised,—  
A moment more, with awful crash, the deadly volley blazed.  
The bullets whistled through our ranks, and many a trooper fell;  
But we were left. What cared we then! but onward rushing still!  
Again the crash roared fiercely out; but on! still madly on!  
We heard the shrieks of dying men, but recked not who was gone.  
We gored the horses' foaming flanks, and on through smoke and glare  
We wildly dashed, with clenched teeth. We had no thought, no care!  
Then came a sudden, sweeping rush. Again with savage heel  
I struck my horse: with awful bound he rose right o'er their steel!

'Well, boy, I cannot tell you how that dreadful leap was made,  
But there I rode, inside the square, and grasped a reeking blade.  
I cared not that I was alone, my eyes seemed filled with blood:  
I never thought a man could feel in such a murderous mood.  
I parried not, nor guarded thrusts; I felt not pain or wound,  
But madly spurred the frantic horse, and swept my sword around.  
I tried to reach the standard sheet; but there at last was foiled.  
The gallant horse was jaded now, and from the steel recoiled.  
They saw his fright, and pressed him then: his terror made him rear,  
And falling back he crushed their ranks, and broke their guarded square!  
My comrades saw the gap 'he made, and soon came dashing in;  
They raised me up,—I felt no hurt, but mingled in the din.  
I'd seen some fearful work before, but never was engaged  
In such a wild and savage fight as now around me raged.

The foe had ceased their firing, and now plied the deadly steel:  
Though all our men were wounded then, no pain they seemed to feel.  
No groans escaped from those who fell, but horrid oaths instead,  
And scowling looks of hate were on the features of the dead.  
The fight was round the standard: though outnumbered ten to one,  
We held our ground,—ay, more than that,—we still kept pushing on.  
Our men now made a desperate rush to take the flag by storm.  
I seized the pole, a blow came down and crushed my outstretched arm.  
I felt a sudden thrill of pain, but that soon passed away;  
And, with a devilish thirst for blood, again I joined the fray.  
At last we rallied all our strength, and charged o'er heaps of slain:  
Some fought to death; some wavered,—then fled across the plain.

'Well, boy, the rest is all confused: there was a fearful rout;  
I saw our troopers chase the foe, and heard their maddened shout.  
Then came a blank: my senses reeled, I know not how I fell;  
I seemed to grapple with a foe, but that I cannot tell.  
My mind was gone: when it came back I saw the moon on high;  
Around me all was still as death. I gazed up 'at the sky,  
And watched the glimmering stars above,—so quiet did they seem,—  
And all that dreadful field appeared like some wild, fearful dream.  
But memory soon came back again, and cleared my wandering brain,  
And then from every joint and limb shot fiery darts of pain.  
My throat was parched, the burning thirst increased with every breath;  
I made no effort to arise, but wished and prayed for death.  
My bridle arm was broken, and lay throbbing on the sword,  
But something still my right hand grasped: I thought it was my sword.  
I raised my hand to cast it off,—no reeking blade was there;  
Then life and strength returned,—I held the Standard of the Square!  
With bounding heart I gained my feet. Oh! then I wished to live,  
'Twas strange the strength and love of life that standard seemed to give!  
I gazed around: far down the vale I saw a camp-fire's glow.  
With wandering step I ran that way,—I recked not friend or foe.  
Though stumbling now o'er heaps of dead, now o'er a stiffened horse,  
I heeded not, but watched the light, and held my onward course.  
But soon that flash of strength had failed, and checked my feverish speed;  
Again my throat was all ablaze, my wounds began to bleed.  
I knew that if I fell again, my chance of life was gone,  
So, leaning on the standard-pole, I still kept struggling on.  
At length I neared the camp-fire: there were scarlet jackets round,  
And swords and brazen helmets lay strewn upon the ground.  
Some distance off, in order ranged, stood men,—about a score:

O God! 'twas all that now remained of my old gallant corps!  
The muster-roll was being called: to every well-known name  
I heard the solemn answer,—' Dead!' At length my own turn came.  
I paused to hear,—a comrade answer, ' Dead! I saw him fall!'  
I could not move another step, I tried in vain to call.  
My life was flowing fast, and all around was gathering haze,  
And o'er the heather tops I watched my comrades' cheerful blaze.  
I thought such anguish as I felt was more than man could bear.  
O God! it was an awful thing to die with help so near!  
And death was stealing o'er me: with the strength of wild despair  
I raised the standard o'er my head, and waved it through the air.  
Then all grew dim: the fire, the men, all vanished from my sight,  
My senses reeled; I know no more of that eventful night.  
'Twas weeks before my mind came back: I knew not where I lay,  
But kindly hands were round me, and old comrades came each day.  
They told me how the waving flag that night had caught their eye,  
And how they found me bleeding there, and thought that I must die ;  
They brought me all the cheering news,—the war was at an end.  
No wonder 'twas, with all their care, I soon began to mend.  
The General came to see me, too, with all his brilliant train,  
But what he said, or how I felt, to tell you now 'twere vain.  
Enough, I soon grew strong again: the wished-for route had come,  
And all the gallant veteran troops set out with cheers for home.  
We soon arrived; and then, my lad, 'twould thrill your heart to hear  
How England welcomed home her sons with many a ringing cheer.  
But tush! what boots it now to speak of what was said or done?  
The victory was dearly bought, our bravest hearts were gone.  
Ere long the King reviewed us. Ah! that memory is sweet!  
They made me bear the foreign flag, and lay it at his feet.  
I parted from my brave old corps: 'twere matter, lad, for tears,  
To leave the kind old comrades I had ridden with for years.  
I was no longer fit for war, my wanderings had to cease.  
There, boy, I've told you all my tales. Now let me smoke in peace.'  
How vivid grows the picture now! how bright each scene appears!  
I trace each loved and long-lost face with eyes bedimmed in tears.  
How plain I hear thee, Uncle Ned, and see thy musing look,  
Comparing all thy glory to the curling wreaths of smoke!  
A truer, braver soldier ne'er for king and country bled.  
His wanderings are forever o'er. God rest thee, Uncle Ned!

John Boyle O'Reilly

## Uncle Ned's Tales: How The Flag Was Saved

'Twas a dismal winter's evening, fast without came down the snow,  
But within, the cheerful fire cast a ruddy, genial glow  
O'er our pleasant little parlor, that was then my mother's pride.  
There she sat beside the glowing grate, my sister by her side;  
And beyond, within the shadow, in a cosy little nook  
Uncle Ned and I were sitting, and in whispering tones we spoke.  
I was asking for a story he had promised me to tell,—  
Of his comrade, old Dick Hilton, how he fought and how he fell;  
And with eager voice I pressed him, till a mighty final cloud  
Blew he slowly, then upon his breast his grisly head he bowed,  
And, musing, stroked his gray mustache ere he began to speak,  
Then brushed a tear that stole along his bronzed and furrowed cheek.  
'Ah, no! I will not speak to-night of that sad tale,' he cried,  
'Some other time I'll tell you, boy, about that splendid ride.  
Your words have set me thinking of the many careless years  
That comrade rode beside me, and have caused these bitter tears;  
For I loved him, boy,—for twenty years we galloped rein to rein,—  
In peace and war, through all that time, stanch comrades had we been.  
As boys we rode together when our soldiering first began.  
And in all those years I knew him for a true and trusty man.  
One who never swerved from danger,—for he knew not how to fear,—  
If grim Death arrayed his legions, Dick would charge him with a cheer.  
He was happiest in a struggle or a wild and dangerous ride:  
Every inch a trooper was he, and he cared for naught beside.  
He was known for many a gallant deed: to-night I'll tell you one,  
And no braver feat of arms was by a soldier ever done.  
'Twas when we were young and fearless, for 'twas in our first campaign,  
When we galloped through the orange groves and fields of sunny Spain.  
Our wary old commander was retiring from the foe,  
Who came pressing close upon us, with a proud, exulting show.  
We could hear their taunting laughter, and within our very sight  
Did they ride defiant round us,—ay, and dared us to the fight.  
But brave old Picton heeded not, but held his backward track,  
And smiling said the day would come to pay the Frenchmen back.  
And come it did: one morning, long before the break of day,  
We were standing to our arms, all ready for the coming fray.  
Soon the sun poured down his glory on the hostile lines arrayed,  
And his beams went flashing brightly back from many a burnished blade,  
Soon to change its spotless luster for a reeking crimson stain,

In some heart, then throbbing proudly, that will never throb again.  
When that sun has reached his zenith, life and pride will then have fled,  
And his beams will mock in splendor o'er the ghastly heaps of dead.  
Oh, 'tis sad to think how many—but I wander, lad, I fear;  
And, though the moral's good, I guess the tale you'd rather hear.  
Well, I said that we were ready, and the foe was ready, too;  
Soon the fight was raging fiercely,—thick and fast the bullets flew,  
With a bitter hiss of malice, as if hungry for the life  
To be torn from manly bosoms in the maddening heat of strife.  
Distant batteries were thundering, pouring grape and shell like rain,  
And the cruel missiles hurtled with their load of death and pain,  
Which they carried, like fell demons, to the heart of some brigade,  
Where the sudden, awful stillness told the havoc they had made.  
Thus the struggle raged till noon, and neither side could vantage show;  
Then the tide of battle turned, and swept in favor of the foe!  
Fiercer still the cannon thundered,—wilder screamed the grape and shell,—  
Onward pressed the French battalions,—back the British masses fell!  
Then, as on its prey devoted, fierce the hungered vulture swoops,  
Swung the foeman's charging squadrons down upon our broken troops.  
Victory hovered o'er their standard,—on they swept with maddened shout,  
Spreading death and havoc round them, till retreat was changed to rout!  
'Twas a saddening sight to witness; and, when Picton saw them fly,  
Grief and shame were mixed and burning in the old commander's eye.  
We were riding in his escort, close behind him, on a height  
Which the fatal field commanded; thence we viewed the growing flight.  
'But, my lad, I now must tell you something more about that hill,  
And I'll try to make you see the spot as I can see it still.  
Bight before us, o'er the battle-field, the fall was sheer and steep;  
On our left the ground fell sloping, in a pleasant, grassy sweep,  
Where the aides went dashing swiftly, bearing orders to and fro,  
For by that sloping side alone they reached the plain below.  
On our right—now pay attention, boy—a yawning fissure lay,  
As if an earthquake's shock had split the mountain's side away.  
And in the dismal gulf, far down, we heard the angry roar  
Of a foaming mountain torrent, that, mayhap, the cleft had wore,  
As it rushed for countless ages through its black and secret lair;  
But no matter how 'twas formed, my lad, the yawning gulf was there.  
And from the farther side a stone projected o'er the gorge,—  
'Twas strange to see the massive rock just balanced on the verge;  
It seemed as if an eagle's weight the ponderous mass of stone  
Would topple from its giddy height, and send it crashing down.  
It stretched far o'er the dark abyss; but, though 'twere footing good,



'Twas twenty feet or more from off the side on which we stood.  
Beyond the cleft a gentle slope went down and joined the plain,—  
Now, lad, back to where we halted, and again resume the rein.  
I said our troops were routed. Far and near they broke and fled,  
The grape-shot tearing through them, leaving lanes of mangled dead.  
All order lost, they left the fight,—they threw their arms away,  
And joined in one wild panic rout,—ah! 'twas a bitter day!

'But did I say that all was lost? Nay, one brave corps stood fast,  
Determined they would never fly, but fight it to the last.  
They barred the Frenchman from his prey, and his whole fury braved,—  
One brief hour could they hold their ground, the army might be saved.  
Fresh troops were hurrying to our aid,—we saw their glittering head,—  
Ah, God! how those brave hearts were raked by the death-shower of lead!  
But stand they did: they never flinched nor took one backward stride,  
They sent their bayonets home, and then with stubborn courage died.  
But few were left of that brave band when the dread hour had passed,  
Still, faint and few, they held their flag above them to the last.  
But now a cloud of horsemen, like a shadowy avalanche,  
Sweeps down: as Picton sees them, e'en his cheek is seen to blanch.  
They were not awed, that little band, but rallied once again,  
And sent us back a farewell cheer. Then burst from reckless men  
The anguished cry, ' God help them!' as we saw the feeble flash  
Of their last defiant volley, when upon them with a crash  
Burst the gleaming lines of riders,—one by one they disappear,  
And the chargers' hoofs are trampling on the last of that brave square!  
On swept the squadrons! Then we looked where last the band was seen:  
A scarlet heap was all that marked the place where they had been!  
Still forward spurred the horsemen, eager to complete the rout;  
But our lines had been reformed now, and five thousand guns belched out  
A reception to the squadrons,—rank on rank was piled that day  
Every bullet hissed out ' Vengeance!' as it whistled on its way.

'And now it was, with maddened hearts, we saw a galling sight:  
A French hussar was riding close beneath us on the right,—  
He held a British standard! With insulting shout he stood,  
And waved the flag,—its heavy folds drooped down with shame and blood,—  
The blood of hearts unconquered: 'twas the flag of the stanch corps  
That had fought to death beneath it,—it was heavy with their gore.  
The foreign dog! I see him as he holds the standard down,  
And makes his charger trample on its colors and its crown!  
But his life soon paid the forfeit: with a cry of rage and pain,

Hilton dashes from the escort, like a tiger from his chain.  
Nought he sees but that insulter; and he strikes his frightened horse  
With his clenched hand, and spurs him, with a bitter-spoken curse,  
Straight as bullet from a rifle—but, great Lord! he has not seen,  
In his angry thirst for vengeance, the black gulf that lies between!  
All our warning shouts unheeded, starkly on he headlong rides,  
And lifts his horse, with bloody spurs deep buried in his sides.

God's mercy! does he see the gulf? Ha! now his purpose dawns  
Upon our minds, as nearer still the rocky fissure yawns:  
Where from the farther side the stone leans o'er the stream beneath,  
He means to take the awful leap! Cold horror checks our breath,  
And still and mute we watch him now: he nears the fearful place;  
We hear him shout to cheer the horse, and keep the headlong pace.  
Then comes a rush,—short strides,—a blow!—the horse bounds wildly on,  
Springs high in air o'er the abyss, and lands upon the stone!  
It trembles, topples 'neath their weight! it sinks! ha! bravely done!  
Another spring,—they gain the side,—the ponderous rock is gone  
With crashing roar, a thousand feet, down to the flood below,  
And Hilton, heedless of its noise, is riding at the foe!  
'The Frenchman stared in wonder: he was brave, and would not run,  
'Twould merit but a coward's brand to turn and fly from one.  
But still he shuddered at the glance from 'neath that knitted brow:  
He knew 'twould be a death fight, but there was no shrinking now.  
He pressed his horse to meet the shock: straight at him Hilton made,  
And as they closed the Frenchman's cut fell harmless on his blade;  
But scarce a moment's time had passed ere, spurring from the field,  
A troop of cuirassiers closed round and called on him to yield.  
One glance of scorn he threw them,—all his answer in a frown,—  
And riding at their leader with one sweep he cut him down;  
Then aimed at him who held the flag a cut of crushing might,  
And split him to the very chin!—a horrid, ghastly sight!  
He seized the standard from his hand; but now the Frenchmen close,  
And that stout soldier, all alone, fights with a hundred foes!  
They cut and cursed,—a dozen swords were whistling round his head;  
He could not guard on every side,—from fifty wounds he bled.  
His saber crashed through helm and blade, as though it were a mace;  
He cut their steel cuirasses and he slashed them o'er the face.  
One tall dragoon closed on him, but he wheeled his horse around,  
And cloven through the helmet went the trooper to the ground.  
But his saber blade was broken by the fury of the blow,  
And he hurled the useless, bloody hilt against the nearest foe;

Then furled the colors round the pole, and, like a leveled lance,  
He charged with that red standard through the bravest troops of France!  
His horse, as lion-hearted, scarcely needed to be urged,  
And steed and rider bit the dust before him as he charged.  
Straight on he rode, and down they went, till he had cleared the ranks,  
Then once again he loosed the rein and struck his horse's flanks.  
A cheer broke from the French dragoons,—a loud, admiring shout!—  
As off he rode, and o'er him shook the tattered colors out.  
Still might they ride him down: they scorned to fire or to pursue,—  
Brave hearts! they cheered him to our lines,—their army cheering, too!  
And we—what did we do? you ask. Well, boy, we did not cheer,  
Nor not one sound of welcome reached our hero comrade's ear;  
But, as he rode along the ranks, each soldier's head was bare,—  
Our hearts were far too full for cheers,—we welcomed him with prayer.  
Ah, boy, we loved that dear old flag!—ay, loved it so, we cried  
Like children, as we saw it wave in all its tattered pride!  
No, boy, no cheers to greet him, though he played a noble part,—  
We only prayed 'God bless him!' but that prayer came from the heart.  
He knew we loved him for it,—he could see it in our tears,—  
And such silent earnest love as that is better, boy, than cheers.  
Next day we fought the Frenchman, and we drove him back, of course,  
Though we lost some goodly soldiers, and old Picton lost a horse.  
But there I've said enough: your mother's warning finger shook,—  
Mind, never be a soldier, boy!—now let me have a smoke.'

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Under The River

CLEAR and bright, from the snowy height,  
The joyous stream to the plain descended:  
Rich sands of gold were washed and rolled  
To the turbid marsh where its pure life ended.

From stainless snow to the moor below  
The heart like the brook has a waning mission  
The buried dream in life's sluggish stream  
Is the golden sand of our young ambition.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Under The Surface

AY, smile as you will, with your saintly face!  
But I know the line  
Of your guard is as weak as a maze of lace:  
You may give no sign—  
And the devil is never far to seek,  
And a rotten peach has a lovely cheek.

As they come in the stream, I say to you:  
The lives we jostle are none of them true.  
Who seeks with a lamp and glass may find  
A nature of honor from core to rind;  
But woe to the heart that is formed so true:  
It may not reck, and it still must rue  
The perjured lip and the bleeding vow.  
God keep it blind to the things we know—  
To the ghastly scars for the leech's eyes  
And the occult lore of the worldly wise.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Unspoken Words

THE kindly words that rise within the heart,  
And thrill it with their sympathetic tone,  
But die ere spoken, fail to play their part,  
And claim a merit that is not their own.  
The kindly word unspoken is a sin,—  
A sin that wraps itself in purest guise,  
And tells the heart that, doubting, looks within,  
That not in speech, but thought, the virtue lies.

But 'tis not so: another heart may thirst  
For that kind word, as Hagar in the wild—  
Poor banished Hagar!—prayed a well might burst  
From out the sand to save her parching child.  
And loving eyes that cannot see the mind  
Will watch the expected movement of the lip:  
Ah! can ye let its cutting silence wind  
Around that heart, and scathe it like a whip?

Unspoken words, like treasures in the mine,  
Are valueless until we give them birth:  
Like unfound gold their hidden beauties shine,  
Which God has made to bless and gild the earth.  
How sad 'twould be to see a master's hand  
Strike glorious notes upon a voiceless lute!  
But oh! what pain when, at God's own command,  
A heart-string thrills with kindness, but is mute!

Then hide it not, the music of the soul.  
Dear sympathy, expressed with kindly voice,  
But let it like a shining river roll  
To deserts dry,—to hearts that would rejoice.  
Oh! let the symphony of kindly words  
Sound for the poor, the friendless, and the weak;  
And he will bless you,—he who struck these chords  
Will strike another when in turn you seek.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Vignettes

"AND Smith has made money?"

'O, no; that's a myth:

Smith never made money

But money made Smith!

---

A sculptor is Deming—a great man, too;  
But the chisel of fancy the hand outstrips;  
While he talks of the wonder he's going to do  
All the work of his fingers leaks out at his lips!

---

'A scholar, sir! To Brown six tongues are known!  
(The Blockhead! never spoke one thought his own!)

---

Johnson jingled his silver—though he never had much to purloin;  
But Jackson jingled his intellect—O, give us Johnson's coin!

---

At school a blockhead—sullen, wordless, dull;  
His size well known to even his smallest mate;  
Grown up, men say: ' How silent! He is full  
Of will and wisdom! ' Truly mud is great!

An honest man! Jones never broke the law.  
The wretch behind the bars he scorned with pride.  
But these same bars on every side he saw:  
Jones lived in prison—on the other side.

---

A hideous fungus in the wine-vault grows,  
Liver-like, loathsome, shaking on its stalk:  
Above the wine-vault, too (to him who knows),  
The cursed mushroom lives and walks and talks.

John Boyle O'Reilly



# Waiting

HE is coming! he is coming! in my throbbing breast I feel it;  
There is music in my blood, and it whispers all day long,  
That my love unknown comes toward me! Ah, my heart, he need not steal it,  
For I cannot hide the secret that it murmurs in its song!

O the sweet bursting flowers! how they open, never blushing,  
Laying bare their fragrant bosoms to the kisses of the sun!  
And the birds—I thought 'twas poets only read their tender gushing,  
But I hear their pleading stories, and I know them every one.

'He is coming!' says my heart; I may raise my eyes and greet him;  
I may meet him any moment—shall I know him when I see?  
And my heart laughs back the answer—I can tell him when I meet him,  
For our eyes will kiss and mingle ere he speaks a word to me.

O, I'm longing for his coming—in the dark my arms outreaching;  
To hasten you, my love, see, I lay my bosom bare!  
Ah, the night-wind! I shudder, and my hands are raised beseeching—  
It wailed so light a death-sigh that passed me in the air!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Wendell Phillips

WHAT shall we mourn? For the prostrate tree that sheltered the young green wood?

For the fallen cliff that fronted the sea, and guarded the fields from the flood?  
For the eagle that died in the tempest, afar from its eyrie's brood?

Nay, not for these shall we weep; for the silver cord must be worn,  
And the golden fillet shrink back at last, and the dust to its earth return;  
And tears are never for those who die with their face to the duty done;  
But we mourn for the fledglings left on the waste, and the fields where the wild waves run.

From the midst of the flock he defended, the brave one has gone to his rest;  
And the tears of the poor he befriended their wealth of affliction attest.  
From the midst of the people is stricken a symbol they daily saw,  
Set over against the law books, of a Higher than Human Law;  
For his life was a ceaseless protest, and his voice was a prophet's cry  
To be true to the Truth and faithful, though the world were arrayed for the Lie.  
From the hearing of those who hated, a threatening voice has past;  
But the lives of those who believe and die are not blown like a leaf on the blast.  
A sower of infinite seed was he, a woodman that hewed toward the light,  
Who dared to be traitor to Union when Union was traitor to Right!

' Fanatic! ' the insects hissed, till he taught them to understand  
That the highest crime may be written in the highest law of the land.  
'Disturber' and 'Dreamer' the Philistines cried when he preached an ideal creed,  
Till they learned that the men who have changed the world with the world have disagreed;  
That the remnant is right, when the masses are led like sheep to the pen;  
For the instinct of equity slumbers till roused by instinctive men.

It is not enough to win rights from a king and write them down in a book.  
New men, new lights; and the fathers' code the sons may never brook.  
What is liberty now were license then: their freedom oar yoke would be;  
And each new decade must have new men to determine its liberty.  
Mankind is a marching army, with a broadening front the while:  
Shall it crowd its bulk on the farm-paths, or clear to the outward file?  
Its pioneers are the dreamers who fear neither tongue nor pen  
Of the human spiders whose silk is wove from the lives of toiling men.

Come, brothers, here to the burial! But weep not, rather rejoice,  
For his fearless life and his fearless death; for his true, unequalled voice,  
Like a silver trumpet sounding the note of human right;  
For his brave heart always ready to enter the weak one's fight;  
For his soul unmoved by the mob's wild shout or the social sneer's disgrace;  
For his freeborn spirit that drew no line between class or creed or race.

Come, workers; here was a teacher, and the lesson he taught was good:  
There are no classes or races, but one human brotherhood;  
There are no creeds to be outlawed, no colors of skin debarred;  
Mankind is one in its rights and wrongs—one right, one hope, one guard.  
By his life he taught, by his death we learn the great reformer's creed:  
The right to be free, and the hope to be just, and the guard against selfish greed.

And richest of all are the unseen wreaths on his coffin-lid laid down  
By the toil-stained hands of workmen—their sob, their kiss, and their crown

John Boyle O'Reilly

## Western Australia

O Beauteous Southland! Land of yellow air  
That hangeth o've thee slumbering, and doth hold  
The moveless foliage of thy valleys fair,  
And wooded hills, like aureole of gold.

Oh thou, discovered ere the fitting time,  
Ere Nature in completion turned thee forth!  
Ere aught was finished but thy peerless clime,  
Thy virgin breath allured the amorous North.

O Land, God made thee wondrous to the eye!  
But His sweet singers thou hast never heard;  
He left thee, meaning to come bye-and-bye,  
And give rich voice to every bright-winged bird.

He painted with fresh hues thy myriad flowers,  
But left them scentless; ah! their woeful dole,  
Like sad reproach of their creator's powers,  
To make so sweet fair bodies, void of soul.

He gave thee trees of odorous precious wood;  
But, midst them all, bloomed not one tree of fruit.  
He looked, but said not that His work was good,  
When leaving thee all perfumeless and mute.

He blessed thy flowers with honey; every bell  
Looks earthward, sunward, with a yearning wist,  
But no bee-lover ever notes the swell  
Of hearts, like lips, a-hungering to be kist.

O Strange Land, thou art virgin! Thou art more  
Than fig-tree barren! Would that I could paint  
For other's eyes the glory of the shore  
Where last I saw thee; but the senses faint.

In soft delicious dreaming when they drain  
Thy wine of colour. Virgin fair thou art.  
All sweetly fruitful, waiting with soft pain  
The spouse that comes to wake thy sleeping heart.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# What Is Good

"What is the real good?"  
I asked in musing mood.

Order, said the law court;  
Knowledge, said the school;  
Truth, said the wise man;  
Pleasure, said the fool;  
Love, said the maiden;  
Beauty, said the page;  
Freedom, said the dreamer;  
Home, said the sage;  
Fame, said the soldier;  
Equity, the seer;—

Spake my heart full sadly:  
'The answer is not here.'

Then within my bosom  
Softly this I heard:  
'Each heart holds the secret:  
Kindness is the word.'

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Wheat Grains

AS grains from chaff, I sift these worldly rules,  
Kernels of wisdom, from the husks of schools:

I.

Benevolence befits the wisest mind;  
But he who has not studied to be kind,  
Who grants for asking, gives without a rule,  
Hurts whom he helps, and proves himself a fool.

II.

The wise man is sincere: but he who tries  
To be sincere, hap-hazard, is not wise.

III.

Knowledge is gold to him who can discern  
That he who loves to know, must love to learn.

IV.

Straightforward speech is very certain good;  
But he who has not learned its rule is rude.

V.

Boldness and firmness, these are virtues each,  
Noble in action, excellent in speech.  
But who is bold, without considerate skill,  
Rashly rebels, and has no law but will;  
While he called firm, illiterate and crass,  
With mulish stubbornness obstructs the pass.

VI.

The mean of soul are sure their faults to gloss,  
And find a secret gain in others' loss.

VII.

Applause the bold man wins, respect the grave;  
Some, only being not modest, think they're brave.

VIII.

The petty wrong-doer may escape unseen;  
But what from sight the moon eclipsed shall screen?  
Superior minds must err in sight of men,  
Their eclipse o'er, they rule the world again.

IX.

Temptation waits for all, and ills will come;  
But some go out and ask the devil home.

X.

'I love God,' said the saint. God spake above:  
'Who loveth me must love those whom I love.'  
'I scourge myself,' the hermit cried. God spake:  
'Kindness is prayer; but not a self-made ache.'

John Boyle O'Reilly



# Withered Snowdrops

THEY came in the early spring-days,  
With the first refreshing showers  
And I watched the growing beauty  
Of the little drooping flowers.

They had no bright hues to charm me,  
No gay painting to allure;  
But they made me think of angels,  
They were all so white and pure.

In the early morns I saw them,  
Dew-drops clinging to each bell.  
And the first glad sunbeam hasting  
Just to kiss them ere they fell.

Daily grew their spotless beauty;  
But I feared when chill winds blew  
They were all too frail and tender,—  
And alas! my fears were true.

One glad morn I went to see them  
While the bright drops gemmed their snow,  
And one angel flower was withered,  
Its fair petals drooping low.

Its white sister's tears fell on it,  
And the sunbeam sadly shone:  
For its innocence was withered,  
And its purity was gone.

Still I left it there: I could not  
Tear it rudely from its place;  
It might rise again, and summer  
Might restore its vanished grace.

But my hopes grew weaker, weaker,  
And my heart with grief was pained  
When I knew it must be severed  
From the innocence it stained.

I must take it from the pure ones:  
Henceforth they must live apart.  
But I could not cut my flow'ret—  
My lost angel—from my heart.

Oft I think of that dead snowdrop,  
Think with sorrow, when I meet,  
Day by day. the poor lost flowers,—  
Sullied snowdrops of the street.

They were pure once, loved and loving.  
And there still lives good within.  
Ah! speak gently to them: harsh words  
Will not lead them from their sin.

They are not like withered flowers  
That can never bloom again:  
They can rise, bright angel snowdrops,  
Purified from every stain.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Written Under A Portrait Of Keats

A GOD-LIKE face, with human love and will  
And tender fancy traced in every line:  
A god-like face, but oh, how human still!  
Dear Keats, who love the gods their love is thine.

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Yes?

THE words of the lips are double or single,  
True or false, as we say or sing:  
But the words of the eyes that mix and mingle  
Are always saying the same old thing!

John Boyle O'Reilly

# Yesterday And Tomorrow

JOYS have three stages, Hoping, Having, and Had:  
The hands of Hope are empty, and the heart of Having is sad;  
For the joy we take, in the taking dies; and the joy we Had is its ghost.  
Now, which is the better—the joy unknown or the joy we have clasped and lost?

John Boyle O'Reilly