

## ORKNEY.

THE parting beam of autumn smiles  
 A farewell o'er these lonely isles ;  
 Capped with its fire, the mountains soar  
 Like lighted beacons on the shore,  
 While far beneath, in depth profound,  
 The tides roll through each darksome sound—  
 Those passes where the troubled sea  
 Hurries with roar and revelry ;  
 Where waves dash on in headlong haste,  
 By a wide world of waters prest.  
 Here ruined hall and nodding tower  
 Hint darkly at departed power,  
 Their domeless walls, time-worn and gray,  
 Give dimly back the evening ray,  
 Like gleams from days long past away.

Saint Magnus ! pile of ages fled,  
 Thou temple of the quick and dead !  
 While they who raised thy form sublime  
 Have faded from the things of time ;  
 While hands that reared, and heads that planned,  
 Have passed into the silent land,  
 Still hath thy mighty fabric stood  
 'Mid sweeping blast and sheeted flood.  
 Above thy tower and turrets tall  
 The thunder-cloud hath spread its pall,.....  
 And muttered o'er thine airy height  
 Its bursting accents to the night :  
 Though oft the wild and wintry storm  
 Hath reeled around thy towering form,  
 The mighty pile still proudly rears  
 Its head above the wreck of years.

As through thy pillared aisles I tread,  
Where rest the gone forgotten dead,  
Each step a mournful echo calls  
To wander through the dreary walls ;  
The sullen sounds they backward throw,  
Which falter into whispers low.  
Each tombstone's frail and crumbling frame  
Preserves not e'en an airy name ;  
The lines by Friendship's fingers traced,  
Now touched by Time's, are half effaced ;  
The few faint letters lingering still  
Are all the dead man's chronicle.

How often have the guests who ranged  
Thy sacred labyrinths been changed !  
Of crowds, who sang their anthems here,  
How still each tongue—how deaf each ear !.....

But thou like them must pass away  
Beneath the hand of pale decay ;  
Even now thy towering turrets feel  
The weight of ages o'er them steal ;  
Thy summit in its airy waste  
Rocks to the rude and rushing blast ;  
When years that wander o'er thee call  
Thy time-struck fabric to its fall,  
Thy mouldering columns lone and gray  
Shall shelter then the bird of prey ;  
Each worshipless recess shall be  
Place for their frightful revelry ;  
The raven's hoarse and funeral note  
Shall o'er sepulchral ruins float.....

Still doth the ruined palace stand,  
A crumbling relic in the land—

Tenantless fabric, huge and high,  
 And proud in ruined majesty ;  
 The verdant ivy robes thy wall,  
 Weeds are the dwellers in thy hall,  
 And in the wind the tufted grass  
 Waves o'er thy dim and mouldering mass,  
 And freshly each returning spring  
 Blooms o'er thy mortal withering.  
 On darkening piles, and waning wrecks,  
     A gay green garment oft is spread ;  
 For ruin, as in mockery, decks  
     The faded victims she hath made.

With time and tempest thou art bent,  
 A drear, neglected monument,  
 Lorn as some frail and aged one  
 Who lives when all his friends are gone !—  
 Where is thy voice of music ?—where  
 The strains that hushed the midnight air,  
 When Beauty woke her witching song,  
 And spellbound held the festive throng ?—  
 A narrow and a nameless grave  
 Hath closed upon the fair and brave,  
 And all around is deadly still,  
 Save when, from some high pinnacle,  
 The raven's croak, or owlet's wail,  
 Blends with the sighing of the gale.....

The hoary rocks, of giant size,  
 That o'er the land in circles rise,  
 Of which tradition may not tell,  
 Fit circles for the wizard's spell,  
 Seen far amidst the scowling storm,  
 Seem each a tall and phantom form,

As hurrying vapours o'er them flee,  
Frowning in grim society,  
While like a dread voice from the past  
Around them mourns the autumnal blast.....

Yet not the works of man alone,  
Though hallowed by long ages gone,  
Charm us away in musing mood ;  
Bear witness each grim solitude,  
'Mid Hoy's high shadowy mountain walls  
Where mournfully the twilight falls :  
There bosomed in a deep recess  
Sleeps a dim vale of loneliness,  
The circling hills, all bleak and wild,  
Are o'er its slumbers darkly piled,  
Save on one side, where far below  
The everlasting waters flow,  
And round the precipices vast  
Dance to the music of the blast.....

There rocks of ages sternly throw  
Their shadows o'er a world below,  
And fierce and fast each dark-brown flood  
Careering comes in maddening mood :  
O'er the sheer cliffs the waters flash,  
And down in whitest columns dash,  
Till, far away, we scarce can hear  
Their dying falls and murmurs drear,  
As, bursting o'er the dizzy verge,  
They melt into the boiling surge.

Here, when, perchance, the voice of men  
Is heard within the fairy glen,  
Deep muttering echoes start around,  
And rocks of gloom fling back the sound,

While from their fragments, rent and riven,  
A thousand airy dwellers driven,  
Send forth a wild and dreary scream,  
Like such as breaks a fearful dream  
When Conscience to the sleeper's gaze  
Holds up the view of other days.....

When, by Night's mantle hooded o'er,  
The heaving hills are seen no more,  
Oft blended with the torrent's dash  
Are heard the thunder's startling crash,  
And burst of billows on the shore,  
Like cannon's deep and distant roar,  
By echoes answered loud and fast,  
That gallop on the midnight blast,  
As if the Spirit of the vale  
Heard in his cave the stormy wail,  
And to the tempest rolling by  
Shrieked loud his frightful mockery.....

Where cairns of slumbering chiefs are piled,  
And frown above the waters wild,  
Rear their hoar heads, forlorn and dim,  
Upon the ocean's lonely brim,  
There the fierce storm and maddening surge  
Howl loud and long the warrior's dirge,  
And blended there together rave  
Through many a deep and dreary cave,  
And waken from their sullen lair  
Sea-monsters, darkly slumbering there.

Seen from those death-towers of the flood,  
The ocean's mighty solitude  
Widens through boundless space around,  
Vast, melancholy, lone, profound ;

So vast that thought with weary wing  
Droops o'er its distant wandering,  
And, left behind, again returns  
To muse upon the mouldering urns.....

As the rude brush of evening's wind  
Leaves not a lingering trace behind  
Of landscapes living in the stream,  
Like the dim scenery of a dream  
Called up by Fancy's wizard wand,  
When Sense is sealed by Slumber's hand ;  
So Time's drear blast hath swept along  
Alike from record and from song  
Their very names, who now lie hid  
Beneath each dusky pyramid ;  
And all that hint of them are graves  
Where the green flag of ruin waves,  
Or crumbling remnant of the past  
That ivy shelters from the blast,  
And clings to still when others flee,  
Like true love in adversity.

On Noltland's solitary pile  
The last blush of the dying day  
Plays like a melancholy smile  
And hectic glow on pale decay.....  
The moss of years is on the wall,  
And fitfully the night-winds start  
Through Bothwell's roofless ruined hall,  
Like sobs of sorrow from the heart ;  
Upon each floor of cold, damp sod  
The clustering weeds like hearse-plumes nod ;  
Through chambers desolate and green  
Hoots the gray owl at evening's close.

Meant for far other guests, I ween—

Where wave-worn Beauty might repose,  
And find that bliss in Love's caress  
Which hallows scenes of loneliness.

See Hoy's Old Man, whose summit bare  
Pierces the dark-blue fields of air,  
Based in the sea, his fearful form  
Glooms like the spirit of the storm,  
An ocean Babel, rent and worn  
By time and tide—all wild and lorn—  
A giant that hath warred with heaven,  
Whose ruined scalp seems thunder-riven,  
Whose form the misty spray doth shroud,  
Whose head the dark and hovering cloud,  
Around his dread and lowering mass,  
In sailing swarms the sea-fowl pass,  
But when the night-cloud o'er the sea  
Hangs like a sable canopy,  
And when the flying storm doth scourge  
Around his base the rushing surge,  
Swift to his airy clefts they soar,  
And sleep amidst the tempest's roar,  
Or with its howling round his peak  
Mingle their drear and dreamy shriek.

The dying day has had its rest  
Upon the mountain's lofty crest;  
Now, o'er the ocean it has fled,  
And to the past is gathered;  
From stunted shrubs of foliage bared  
The farewell melodies are heard;  
The twilight spreads a duskier veil  
Upon the deep and lonely dale,  
And, moaning to the evening star,  
The mountain stream is heard afar.

The twilight fades and night again  
Claims from our time her portioned reign ;  
Earth sets, and leaves us to admire  
Yon vaulted canopy of fire,  
Those burning glories of the sky,  
Those "sparks of immortality,"  
Which shed from high their living light,  
And blaze through the blue depths of night.....

At such an hour, should music stray  
Soft from some isle, far, far away,  
It seems to charm to silent sleep  
The murmurs of the mighty deep ;  
The torrent, as it speeds along,  
Stills its dark waters to the song,  
And the full bosom feels relief,  
Soothed by the mystic "joy of grief ;"  
Upon the heart-chords stealing slow,  
It hallows every cherished woe,  
And wakes sensations in the mind,  
Wild, beautiful, and undefined,  
As tones that harp-strings give the wind.

Oh ! at such soul-inspiring strain  
The wondrous links of memory's chain,  
Though scattered far, unite again,  
And Time and Distance strive in vain.  
Again Youth's fairy visions pass  
In morning glow o'er Memory's glass,  
At every magic melting fall  
They come like echoes to their call,  
And with the dreams of vanished years  
Steal forth again our smiles and tears.