

Ode for the Tercentenary Festival of Dublin University

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Music by Sir Robert Prescott Stewart

I.1

THE hallowed Light the Druid bore
Through darkness to our lonely Isle.
Locked in his heart his cryptic lore
Beneath the ruined altar-pile
Was quenched in dust. 'Mid Uladh's hills
A clearer ray the Herdsman-Slave
Allured, as by the limpid rills
He mused above the Pagan's grave,
Or, standing on the mountain-scaur,
Beheld the Angel of his Dream
Through sunlit flying storms afar
Fade into heaven, a phantom gleam.
His holier fire with sleepless hand,
By shadowed lake, in sheltering woods,
The Saints, while blood embathed their land,
Preserved amid its solitudes;
Or often from their silence rose,
And, strong in selfless ardour, sought
The Saxon heaths, the Alpine snows,
To preach the gentle rede the Celtic Herdsman taught.

I.2

The rugged Chief in richer cell
The cresset hung by field or foam,
Where hermit pure in peace might dwell,
The exiled sage forget his home.
On islets of the inland seas,
On stormy cape, in valley lone,
Or folded deep in verdant leas,
The scattered haunts of Learning shone.
But ev'n the Norman's victor-palm,
By carven arch or soaring spire,
Could ill secure the cloistral calm,
And feebly guard the living fire.
What larger flame De Bicknor fed
The Royal Edwards fanned in vain.
The lamp in Drogheda's dimness dead
Not Sidney's touch revived again.
And nowhere towered the sovran shrine,
The central altar's temple wide,
Till Loftus waved a wand divine,
And here by Edar's Firth it rose in radiant pride.

I.3

In the Earth's exultant hour,
When the age-long twilight, shifting,
Showed, beneath its fringes lifting,
Rosy seas and realms of endless flower;
When high on new-found isle or continent
The roving seaman-warrior travel-spent
First the cross of Europe planted;
When in rapt expectancy
Men amid a world enchanted
Seemed to wander fancy-free, —
Along our life's horizon-bound
So bright a promise broke from underground;
In that delicious dawn
Here to her lasting home was Wisdom drawn,

Here her island-shrine was wrought,
Whence evermore, with armed Night contending, —
In act, in labouring thought
One brilliance, — we our toil with hers unending
Might mingle; with her calm advance,
The conquests of her widening reign,
Her heavenward aims and ceaseless operance,
We too might drink the hope and reap the gain;
Might feel the vast elation, share
The peril of her conflict and the care,
The triumph and the dole,
All that doth exalt the human soul;
Arrayed in Learning's panoply,
Refreshed from Truth's pellucid springs,
Beneath her wide imperial wings
Might prosper with her boundless destiny,
Life and heavenly Freedom bearing
Where her might and dauntless daring
Strike the heart of Tyranny tame,
Or over Crossness steals the glamour of her name.

II.1

He who with heart unmoved can tread
The peaceful Squares, the pictured Halls,
Where first within his soul was shed
The Light that heals where'er it falls,
Where first he felt the sacred glow
Of young ambition fire his breast,
And watched a broadening Future grow
More gorgeous than the burning west —
The vision (ah, too soon to fade!)
Of splendours, — honour, virtue, truth, —
That o'er his life its magic laid,
And godlike purpose waked in youth;
He who with languid pulse can view
The scenes where first he quaffed the springs
Of Hope and Knowledge, whence he drew
The strength to soar with fearless wings,
Is void as night, is cold as clay,
Is dead in spirit, shrunk and sear.
Hail, hail, ye walls and portals grey
With holiest memories wound, — we love you and revere!

II.2

Behold, the men are with us still
Who here have reaped immortal fame;
Their words, their varying fancies, thrill
Our hearts, their deeds our zeal inflame.
Yes, Ussher's voice is in our ear,
It whispers from our waving trees;
And hark! blithe Congreve's laughter clear
Is mingling with our harmonies;
And Farquhar's jests around us fly,
Mementos of a merrier time;
And Swift is near, with piercing eye
And mouth of gall, who stung with rhyme
And crushed with iron clubs of prose;
And Berkeley, with his angel brow;
And Burke, who high as eagle rose;
And gentlest Goldsmith, jovial now
As when he lipped his flute in France;
And he who sang of Erin's wrong
In lays that listening Time entrance —
Poet, priest, warrior, wit, smile on our jubilant throng.

II.3

Mother, since the lion-Queen
Set thy name in jewelled story,
How the beam of Learning's glory
Still has rested on our Island green, —
O, fair as are the ruddy morns that rise
O'er her wild hills and flush her stormy skies!
How thy sons, thy faiths upholding,
Victors, firm in peace or strife,
Toil, thy gifts of Truth unfolding,
Weave the web of human life!
Here in these shades, with straining sight
Through many a fretful day and weary night
Bent o'er the baffling page,
How have they won the wealth of seer and sage

Wrung from gloom with Titan-power,
Thou to the labouring mind thy lustres lending,
Till, armed with all thy dower,
From the lone chamber to the loud world wending,
They've ploughed the homely field and sown
The seed that bears a deathless grain;
Afar o'er belts of blustering ocean blown,
In lands of scathing sun and ruthless rain,
Have held the dusky hordes at bay,
And tempered empire with a softer ray;
Or, strong in battle, borne
Britain's streaming banner pierced and torn
But trampled not by any foe;
Or, dauntless in a direr war,
Have wrested spoil from earth and star;
Till now, three centuries passed of joy and woe,
We, our hope and youth renewing,
Here, the votive chaplet strewing,
At thy feet our homage lay,
Beneath a later Queen of happier, milder sway!

III. 1

Guardian of Light, with pomp to day
We celebrate thy splendour's birth .
Lo, doomed in distant paths to stray,
And whirled about the chequered earth,
Back to thy peaceful fane we wend,
We bear thee gifts of love and praise,
Beneath thy sovran brows we bend,
And high our echoing anthems raise.
From east and west, where'er the fire
Of Science, fenced by faithful hands,
Abides, and hearts of men aspire,
We greet the learned of other lands
Who seek across the alien seas
Our Island bright'ning 'mid her showers,
And come to spread before thy knees
Their garlands intertwined with ours;
While, close with these, a blithsome crowd,
Thy young-eyed votaries move along,
Breathe on the wind their raptures loud
And mix their strains of joy with Age's sombrer song.

III.2

Aurora of the conquering Sun
Of Knowledge, scarer of the Night,
How nobly has thy race been run,
How fair the pageant of thy flight!
From every cloudy trammel freed,
With dreams of boundless venture fraught,
Billowing the shadows in thy speed,
Thou risest, robed in gleaming Thought.
The steeds of empyrean strain
The wafture of thy hand obey,
As, scattering fire from hoof and mane,
They flash o'er peak and field and spray.
Thick as the northern meteors sweep
Adown the clear autumnal skies,
Through airy dews o'er plain and steep
Thy florets fall in rainbow-dyes,
And where they rest take root and spread.
Till all the barren ways are sweet,
And all the desert-breezes shed
Their honeyed blossom-breath around the wanderer's feet.

III.3

Ever young and strong to dare,
Darkness to thy will subduing,
Thou, thy lustrous path pursuing,
Onward movest, girt with all things rare —
Radiant in victory, from thine orient gate
Issuing with front to heaven and heart elate,
And in gorgeous triumph guiding
Through the deeps, a lucid throng,
Round the car Phoebrean gliding,
Forms ethereal. Art; and Song;
And mild Religion hand-in-hand
With fearless Reason, — loveliest of the band;
And, linked in circling train.
She who delights to roam the starry main,
Breaks the flesh's narrowing bond,
And tracks the whirling suns amid their courses;
And She with potent wand
Who tames to kindlier use Earth's deathful forces;

And She who cleaves the crust and solves
The secrets shut from mortal view;
And the witch Maid whose magic hand evolves
From Nature's essence nature ever new;
And that all-gentle Ministress
Who wars on pain and waits on weariness;
And She whose wreathen shell
Rings of Latian lawn or Dorian dell;
And the strong Spirit whose subtle skill
Controls the might of storms and takes
The lightning prisoner, or breaks
The cliff, or spans the flood, or moves the hill, —
Where the effulgent wheels are glancing,
O'er the shrunken mists advancing,
Follow in thy kindling way
Thee heavenward heralding the clear-eyed golden Day.

IV.1

Our triumph is the victory
Of Thought, the Mind's high festival.
Ah, cold and bleak at times will be
The mists of Doubt that round us fall;
And keen the wounds of him who wars
With Ignorance, the eyeless foe
That balks us with his girdling bars.
Our task is great, our labour slow;
And Truth is oft a maddening gleam
That mocks the eye in mazy flight;
And where the rays of promise teem
Earth's Shadow moves across their light.
The ways are rough, the night is near,
The winds are loud in field and sky;
And Death awaits with levelled spear;
And wrecks of lives around us lie;
But blue-eyed Hope with bosom warm
Beside us stands serenely fair,
Lifts to the hills her snowy arm,
And bids us upward scale and still the Vast to dare.

IV.2

Yes, frail of hand and faint of eye,
Our lives the glimmer of a wing
That glistens in the summer sky,
Shines and is gone, — in vain we cling
To Time, in vain we grasp the veil
That hides the mystic Source of All.
We strive; the founts of being fail;
The terrors of the Deeps appal;
Amid the dim uncertain shows
And symbols of the things that are
We falter; blinding vapour grows
About our paths; the pilot-star
Of Faith is folded from our sight.
Yet, still be ours the purpose pure,
For us to seek the larger Light,
To cope with darkness and endure.
Arise, and following Her, whose face
Is radiant with the roseate day,
Explore the trackless realms of Space;
Hark to her rallying-cry, and fearlessly obey.

IV.3

Forward! Let the venturous Mind,
Still its spectral foes assailing,
Ridge on ridge of danger scaling,
Front its battle! What though, faint and blind,
We stumble through the stifling wilderness,
Though failure chill our hearts, though griefs oppress,
Rich hath been the Spirit's treasure
Won by those whose story told
Makes the music of our pleasure
Ring through these cloisters old.
Shall we not fight as they have fought
And work as they with tireless brain have wrought?
O, follow still the fleet
Faint glint of Truth where'er it leads your feet;

Gather in with reverent toil
The sheaves of Knowledge wheresoever scattered
O'er whatsoever soil;
And dare the loneliest peak with tempest shattered
For any gladdening glimpse it yields
Of any unknown gulf or shore;
Purge the fair world of Ill through all its fields;
Uplift the Race in wisdom more and more;
With breast undaunted boldly range
The ever-widening ways of ceaseless Change;
Thwart not the powers that roll
Freedom's chariot thundering to the goal;
Nor fly the Spirit's pain; nor crave
The crutch of creeds foredone; nor fear
The New upon the Old to rear;
But Nature's nobler life from bondage save;
Till, to flawless beauty moulded,
All her wealth of good unfolded
'Mid the beams of Liberty,
Earth into Eden break and bloom from sea to sea!