

How Key's

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Poetry.

"THE EIGHTEENTH OF NOV., 1852"

The following magnificent lines on the Burial of the Great Duke, was written by Lord Ellesmere. His own preface sufficiently explains the object of the Poem, and explanatory notes.

PREFACE.

A very limited circulation of the following lines in an incomplete shape has enabled me to ascertain that some notes are necessary in explanation of allusions more intelligible to members of the United Service Club than to unprofessional readers. To the former such explanatory matter would doubtless be superfluous; but if my imperfect tribute of respect, and gratitude and sorrow, should find any readers patient to the end, it will appear that I have appealed to recollections which are the property, not of military men alone, but of that larger audience which lined the streets of London on the memorable Eighteenth of November, and which represented so faithfully the intelligence and the good feeling of a great nation.—My own position as one of that crowd of spectators, has suggested and dictated my treatment of the subject. I was not able to assist at the last, perhaps the most impressive, scene of that day, and what I did not witness I have not attempted to describe. I have reason to believe that the passage more especially alluding to the loss we have suffered, which begins—"It is that while all these" &c., has found more favour than I had dared to expect among those whose indulgence I must covet—the personal friends of the great deceased. It is, under this conviction, but fair to acknowledge that the idea which pervades the passage was suggested by the picture by Mr. Glutz, now in the process of engraving, which he has appropriately named "The last day of duty."

That Almer's tower resounds no more the Sentry's measured tread;
Forth from her silent courts have fled the guardians of the dead:
From that grey keep, from Chelsea's hall, the torch-lit hearse hath past,
And England paid its honor'd freight each tribute but the last.
In columns ranged, foot, horse, and gans have met in woe'd array,
As soldiers meet ere night departs when battle comes with day;
The shadowy masses cluster round their banners, as they stood
Upon that famous morn in June in front of Soignies' wood:
And fancy might conceive them now to wait the bugle call
Would bid them scatter right and left to man the Yeoman's wall.
But not to-day these ranks have risen as when they hail'd that morn.
Upstarting from their dunn repose on couch of trampled corn,
The fire of battle in every glance, and pride on every brow;
High hope in every lustrous eye—where is that lustro now?
By manly grief that light is dimmed—Go seek from file to file,
And seek in vain one glance of mirth, one face that wears a smile.
Is it that now before them rides no leader of renown,
Witness and sharer of that fight which struck the usurper down?
No chief who since on distant fields has given reply to those

Who deemed the edge of England's sword was blunted by repose,
Whose guidance in her sternest need their country learned to prize,
Rough with the scars of Eastern fields, or burnt by Indian skies?
No! From the roll-call of the brave tho' many a name be miss'd,
Struck by the ruthless hand of death from that resplendent list,
Tho' Murray, Cole, and Lynedoch sleep in honour'd graves, (a) tho' Hill,
Gentle and brave, survives no more his Sabine farm to till. (b)
Yet read the scroll—There linger yet survivors to reply,
Names that are household words to those whose trade it is to die. (c)
And let the first be his who long on victory's track of light
Rode nearest to the chief of chiefs in council and in fight;
From Lisbon to Toulouse that proud companionship maintain'd,
Tho' every conflict scatheless pass'd, until the last was gain'd:
Then sunk to earth with shattered arm, as tho' its labours done,
That Chief could need its aid no more, for Waterloo was won;
But, not to lie by Gordon, doon'd, (d) or share Delancy's grave,
Has lived, and lives in peace to serve the land he fought to save:
Tho' time and death have scored the page with many a stroke severe.
The roll-call is not read in vain when Fitzroy answers "Here." (e)
He too, is there, whose veteran hand so gently rules the rein
It slacken'd to the trumpet's charge on many a battle plain:—
Our Murat, (f) when the moment came to test the blood and breed,
Which gave their force to England's arm, their fire to England's steel;
With him who led by Pakenham's flank when brave LeMarchant died. (g)
The thundering charge, who stormed the wall which Lake's assault defied:
With him who scaled the Kyber cliff and set the prisoner free, (h)
And, elder of his fighting tribe, the man of Meane, (i)
He, too, the Kaffir's gorge and dread, whose deeds in blood and knell
By many an out-post fire are told, the chief of Aliwal: (j)
With him who fell'd with blow on blow, to raise their cres's no more, (k)
The Hydra tribe that Runjeet rear'd, the traitors of Lahore.
Nor fails that chief whose words of fire, when England's blood for Spain (l)
Too freely flow'd, redeemed the fight on Albuera's plain;
Who wept o'er gallant Moore's remains such tears as soldiers shed
When battle's pause a moment gives to count and mourn the dead;
Whose empty sleeve of Ligny tells, where fortune's star awhile
On Prussia's stubborn ranks grew dim and seem'd on France to smile.
And memory turns to other scenes, and horrors scarcely known
To Europe's fields of temper'd strife, when after years had flown,
The balanced conflict of Moodkec, that ere of gloom and woe.
The night watch on the doubtful field, 'mid slaughter'd friend and foe;
And how the triumph of the moro still left fresh fields to win,
Till England's banner wared at last Sobraon's lines within.

On battle morn, or fatal day the ranks might well be glad
When Hardinge rides along the line—to-day those ranks are sad.
It is that while all these and more have answered to the call,
No voice again shall answer to the greatest name of all.
It is that we shall see no more on yonder esplanade
That well-known form emerging from the vaulted portal's shade;
That we shall miss from where we stand at many an evening's close
That sight which told of duty done, and toil's well earned repose:
Pursued by murmur'd blessings, as he pass'd upon his way.
While lovers broke their converse off, and children left their play;
And child or man who cross'd his path was proud at eye to tell,
"We met him on his homeward ride. The Duke was looking well.
We pass'd him close, we saw him near, and we were seen by him,
Our hats were off, he touched his own, one finger to the brim."
That sight the loiterer's pace could mend, from care worn brows erased
The lines of thought, and busy men grew idlers while they gaz'd.
Oh! throng'd in England's heart of hearts what need to man allow'd,
Could watch that homage paid to thee, the reverence of the crowd?
Oh! weigh'd with this, how light the gifts by thankful Sovereigns shower'd
For thrones upheld, and right maintained, and lawless wrong o'erpower'd.
The pictured clay from Sovres mould, or stamp'd by Saxon skill, (a)
And ores, by Lisbon craftsmen wrought, from mines of far Brazil,
Broad lands on which thro' burning tears an exiled King look'd down, (b)
Where silver Darro winds beneath Grenada's mural crown.
The Batois eight of high command, which tell, with gens inland,
What hosts from Europe's rescued realms their bearer's rule obey'd.
Swaroff's cross, (c) and Churchill's George, (d) the fleece which once of old (e)
Upon Imperial Charles's breast display'd its pendant gold,
Well won, well worn, yet still they came unheeded, scarce desired;
Above them all shone Duty's star by which thy soul was fir'd.
High prizes such as few can reach, but fewer soar above,
Thy single aim was England's weal, thy guard-on, England's love!
Even now, while all around to swell the funeral pomp combines,
While one deep sorrow thrills along a gazing nation's lines,
Not by that steed unshared who seems with filtering hoof the sand
To print, and chafing as he steps, to miss his master's hand;
While trumpet wail and chaunted dirge and tolling Minster bell,
And lower'd flag on mast and tower their mournful message tell;
While thunders from the war-ship's side and booming rampart gun
Proclaim our Israel's light is quencl'd, our Hero's course is run:
In rustic homes and crowded towns, in lonely slugs at sea,
While listeners hold their breath to count those sounds, fourscore and three!