

The Rockwood Review.

KHARTOUM.

Between me and the shimmering hills,
Between me and the nearer plain
Some haud unseen shakes out and fills
The gossamer curtain of the rain.
The slant lines weave a liquid woof
Across aerial wefts of rags
Sloped tent-wise, like a Moorish roof,
And swaying as a fountain swags.
Wind-blown among its towers and trees
Where all day long the sunshine lies,
In those warm lands beyond the seas
Whither my frost-clipt fancy flies.
Pale through the silver-tinted mist
The autumn landscape colours shine
In sapphire and in amethyst,
In opal and clear hyaline.
Yet looking forth I but behold
The desert stretching many a mile,—
The Arab and his camel-fold,
In rainless valleys of the Nile.
Under the Sphynx's level lids,
O'er arid plain, through rocky gorge,
Once more beneath the pyramids
Advance the standards of St. George.
Once more the ancient faith-cry
"St. George and merrie England" stirs
The vault of the Egyptian sky,—
The dust of her dead Emperors.
O gallant Cheifstain brave and bold,
The flower of Christian chivalry,—
Look from thy fastness, and behold
The price thy England pays for thee!
We weep for him of Khiva slain,
With Albion in her sea-girt isle,
And Egypt gives us not again
All our young voyageurs of her Nile:—
But thou, caged eagle! at thy gate
The traitor Sheiks betray thy faith,
And thy brave comrades come too late
For aught but to avenge thy death.
Land of dead glories,—meeting-place
Of Christian faith surviving loss,
And the false prophet and his race,
The crescent and the holy cross:
It must be that the Cross shall win.
That flag, to every wind unfurled,
Shall gather from the nations in
The hope and blossom of the world.
And English hands plant here again,
Where history and mankind began,
The seed of that divinest grain
Whose noblest fruit is nobler man.
Rain, winter rain!—lower winter skies!
To-day ye wrap the world in gloom
For our dead hero where he lies
Voiceless and slain in fallen Khartoum.

K. S. McL.

This poem was written in 1885, within a few days after the news came of the death of the heroic General Gordon in Egypt.