

(For the News.)

## DAN DARBY.

How oft I think of childhood days,  
And tricks we used to play  
Upon each other when at school,  
To pass the time away.—*Irish Ballad.*

O life! thou art a galling load,  
Along a rough and weary road,  
To wretches such as I!

Lord, man! our gentry care as little  
For delvers, ditchers an' sic cattle;  
They gang as saucy by poor folk,  
As I wud by a stinking brook.—*Burra.*

## CANTO I.

## I.

Who were my parents, matters not to know,  
Yet if you will, inhabitants of earth;  
Suffice it, that in ages long ago  
Their grand—my grand—sires were of high  
birth,  
And knew of all the luxury and mirth  
Of life, as well as of its wars and woes:  
In revelry anon, anon in death,  
As fluctuating fortune fell or rose.—  
Now hand in hand with friends, now hit to hit with  
foes.

## II.

This was in Erin; there in olden time  
Held chiefs and clans dominion by the sword;  
But foreign perils, treacheries and crimes  
The sway of native chiefs could ill afford.  
They worked, and lorded every rightful lord,  
A nation's greatness trampled in the dust,  
Made freemen slaves, and left on dark record  
The ravished maiden's shame, the murderer's lust,  
The patriot's blood, or doom in chains for life to  
rust.

## III.

So fell my sires of old, but not in vain,  
They left a name and fame which will not die,  
But will as long as Erin self remain.  
And in her Annals rank among worthies high—  
But I, O God help me! from my theme I fly:  
My purpose was, and is, my own sad fate  
And life to paint as well's I can, and try  
To single out what I distrust or hate,  
Be it person, place or thing, poor, rich, in church or  
state.

## IV.

To say I am the friend of all mankind,  
And mankind in general, and the foe  
Of tyrants, willing slaves and such as grind  
Poor wights, and make this life a life of wee,  
To say my country is where'er I go,  
No matter what its government or laws,  
To say, 'tho' I am land my soul's aglow,  
And tho' I found no sound but sons' applause,  
I am no partial whelp,—mine is all mankind's cause.

## V.

To say I am of ancient Irish blood,  
And that that blood to me as life is dear,  
To say in Erin I was born, and would  
Resign my breath, could it but wipe a tear  
From Erin's eye, to say that I this year  
Am twenty-one, and therefore am a man,  
Will be enough to introduce me here  
To the kind reader who my page may scan.  
Impartial as I write, to country, creed or clan.

## VI.

My early days—a listless time I ween—  
Were spent in a diversity of ways:—  
First, in the mud, on fairs, I crawled between  
The byre and farm-house, and was lured by lays  
Of milkmaids, sung to some fond lovers' praise,  
While the white milk was frothing in the pail,  
And splashing round with that peculiar haze  
So rich, so mild, so pleasant to inhale:  
Like breath of Eastern dawn in Beldameer's green  
vale.

## VII.

I ran and played as children play,  
Did as much mischief as a child could do:  
Now had on fire a cock of straw or hay,  
Now, I broke old cranney's pipe in two;  
Or with a pin or spike or knife pierced through  
The flesh of some poor animal or child.  
I cared not which, small matter what or who,  
I pinched or punctured,—I was young and wild,  
And knew not what I did, but at my gambols smiled.

## VIII.

I was a plague on glass and Chinaware  
And sundry things too long, too dull to name.  
I was a torment on young ladies' hair,  
And in bad mood would pull the head of dame:  
"The wicked brat!" they called me,—by the same  
Well I remember how the wicked brat,  
Out with a more than a merit share of blame,  
Perchance for ear of dog or tail of cat,  
Was floozed and whipped and scourged and beaten,  
and all that.

## IX.

There was no doubt I was a funny child,  
(In sooth, I never lacked a source of fun.)  
As ever cried or laughed or sighed or smiled  
Or lived or breathed underneath the sun.  
But this nought a child can do I have not done—  
That this is nonsense,—wherefore do I dwell  
On childhood days, on hours that long have run?  
It is because to me a tale they tell  
Of man and of the world,—Sweet Childhood, fare thee  
well!

## X.

The child, they say, is father to the man;  
He is, and I say, father to the boy—  
Boyhood! Oh merry season of short span,  
Dear, reckless state of pastime and of joy,  
How fleeting art thou!—how thou dost destroy  
Our being by consigning us to age.  
And thought, and toil, and trouble, that annoy  
And torture thro' life's dreary pilgrimage  
Our captive souls, until they fly thy carnal cage!

## XI.

Again to be a boy, who would not wish?  
Thus sang some bard whose name I now forget:  
My brain is not quite clear,—'tis like a dish  
Of thousand things promiscuously set:  
Therefore, if I should quote, which I may yet,  
I am as likely to be wrong as right,  
And beg the patient reader will not fret  
At blunders which may sour or shock his sight,  
Nor think that I have lost already mem'ry's light.

## XII.

I have not; and the bard hath warbled well,  
And true to nature, and I feel as he  
Felt, and thus I could forever dwell  
On dreams of boyhood, and those dreams to me

Bring recollections, thoughts of things that be  
Woven in our nature, not, as some suppose,  
Received from or by means,—I flee  
Backward to pluck the Shamrock and the Rose,  
To chase the bounding ball, to charge, to press and  
close.

## XIII.

Around my youthful, sprightly, mimic foes,  
Who stand in ready file for amusement:  
Little we know of how the world goes,  
Save that we feel we're something of and in't.  
Yet do we deem we are for pleasure meant,  
And pleasure follow, till we tire us down  
With our own wantonness. By strange intent  
Or accident there be, perchance, to crown  
The sports, some bloodshot eyes or black ones.—  
There's a clown

## XIV.

Upon the dancing ground, and round him sit  
A rustic audience, not o'er much refined  
In modern finery, learning and false wit:  
Plain youths and maids; more noble, pure of mind,  
More worthy of themselves and of their kind,  
Than the unworthy things where now I tread—  
Earth's refuse,—dwellers in the land of wind  
And rain and snow; beaux of Saturnian head,  
And belles,—unsightly shows of pride and paint! I  
said.

## XV.

—What said I? I remember not—who does?  
'Tis fancy all,—mere thoughts of what has been,  
Yet be it so. The merry laughter goes  
Around among the rustics on the green,  
As the not comic maids wit and spleen  
And love and anger, eloquence and song,  
Or casts his glances at some fair colleen,  
Whose large, bright eyes grow shy and look among  
Her cloak's or kirtle's folds to 'scape a light so  
strong.

## XVI.

The burlesque is ended, and the dance  
Commences, and the nimble toe and heel  
Of youth and maid beat time, retreat, advance  
To the bold notes of Ireland's native Reel:  
See how they trip it,—round and round they wheel,  
"Heath to yer sows, my sons!" some grand dam  
cries,  
"Brave hearts, bold hearts, free hearts, young Hearts  
of Steel!"  
To it! some bent and rusty sire replies,  
And waves his stick in air as warring with the skies.

## XVII.

These were but hours of pleasure which, of course,  
Came between hours of work and business, which  
Had in themselves a certain moral force,—  
An equalizing power of poor and rich.  
The dancing maids could only spin and stitch,  
And make the fabric which gay gaudies buy:  
The lively youths could also raise the ditch,  
Mow, guide the plough, the swamp or marsh drain  
dry:  
There are no youths more brave,—no maids of  
brighter eye.

## XVIII.

I had to work, and did in my young days  
More work than serves a stripling's health to do:  
In fact, rough toil too early elapsed my ways,  
And clogs me still, and will my whole life through.  
If I not burst the monster's head in two,  
Spurn my place among the mental crowd,  
Bid to servility a long adieu,  
And lie me to where cringing knee ne'er bowed,  
And think me portion of the lightning and the cloud.

## XIX.

These are wild words,—It can't be helped,—I must  
Needs take from past to present times a flight  
To vent feelings, but no more I trust:  
They drive my verse out of its measure quite.  
Could I with regularity indite  
And give my thoughts in proper place and time,  
In well-considered words, and in clear light,  
How much more free, more graceful were my  
rhyme!

## XX.

Not thus should it drag on,—A snail in its own slime.  
But, I cannot make method nor arrange  
Things as they should be; and so am content  
With my dull lay such as it is. No change,  
The sages say, lends, will lend, or has lent  
A force to Nature or to what she meant:  
Nature has been, and will be till the Power  
Which gave withdraws her essence. I am bent  
On following her the way she leads, nor tower  
Aloft with gilded crest one artificial hour.

## XXI.

This is my nature, and to it I cling:  
I'll have my views, have others what they will,  
Of life and men, myself and everything,  
And as they strike my mind, so shall they fill  
My page. I'll be my own sole centre still,  
Condemn who choose, applaud who who think fit:  
What reck it me if foolish, good or ill  
You deem me? If a stolid ass or wit  
Should damn or bless my name, what of it?—Not a  
whit.

## XXII.

It was thought prudent I should go to school  
When I became of understanding age,  
That is at ten,—In Ireland, as a rule,  
Children too young and raw do not engage  
In study, for it brings an after race,  
A chronic (so the dear mammae believe)  
Derangement, which no magic can assuage,  
Or spell dispel until life's darkening eve  
Calms down the troubled head,—death's arms the  
wretch receive.

## XXIII.

This in itself should be a guarantee  
That, as in body, I am sound in mind.  
If any doubting Thomases there be:  
If I should have an epithet unkind  
From, or be to dull dullness consigned  
By the politeness of some fair sea-trool,  
Half on her stretch on easy seat reclined,  
I beg to say, remember Ireland's rule,—  
I was full ten years grown ere first I went to school.

## XXIV.

My progress was at any time not much  
In the abstruse definitions of books:  
I was both farm and school boy,—being such,  
Small wonder I found hard to make pot-hooks.  
Figures and letters, strokes and legs and o'clocks  
Bored me, wherefore marvel if I did  
Contrive at times, by gestures and odd looks,  
To make a little fun,—what if I did  
Some other poor gorseon or girl beneath the lid

## XXV.

Of master's desk, or burned his rules and rods,  
Listened to what he said with seeming zeal,  
But when he saw not intincked all his nods  
And wished his cruelty little weal.  
I could—who could not?—reading glances steal  
At master's sleepy morning face,  
Which used with nice exactitude reveal  
His temper for the coming day, and place  
Me on my guard to act with good or evil grace.

## XXVI.

Much did I love Cayenne pepper as perfume:  
'Tis a sweet incense no one can deny,  
But its effect partakes somewhat of gloom—  
A sort of tendency to grin and cry:  
Oft have I witnessed weeping every eye  
At school, and oft the master's nose upturned  
Sniffing to see whence came the steam; and why  
This fiery fragrance? What! thus rules are  
spurred?

## XXVII.

'Twas in my time compulsory to bring  
Each morn in Winter, two substantial and  
Well-dried sods of the old year's turf—a thing  
I did abhor and could not understand  
The justice of, when I made no demand  
On having fire at school: so I bethought  
Me of a most praiseworthy, slight-of-hand  
Invention which I kept dark and said nought,  
But put it into force, and this is how it wrought:—

## XXVIII.

I hollowed out two sods and put a charge  
Of blasting powder thorough-packed in each:  
The quantity of course was not o'erlarge,  
I did not mean it to effect a breach  
In the old walls,—I only meant to teach  
Explosion on a small and homely scale,  
To make—What I've said that part of speech?—  
An exclamation: Master, hail all hail!  
Long last the Irish boys! hurrah for Chan-na-ghael!

## XXIX.

My worthy master sat before the fire,  
The girls' class sat round him in a row:  
Their fine, white legs (white legs I much admire)  
Were at full length, because they sate them low:  
I saw each shin and meely turned toe  
And ankle, but respective distance kept.  
I grieved the fair ones should fare ill, when—Ho!  
A blast!—the fire in all directions leapt,  
Upset the master, scorched the beauteous legs, and  
swept

## XXX.

The school into confusion such as took  
Two days to re-arrange things, which when done,  
We had a learned lecture showing by luck  
It was we were not to the heavens spun.  
"Shun," said the master, "on your lives, boys, shun  
Vet turf on fire,—take turf not by its crust:  
Select your sods most carefully, bring none  
In which there's vapour, gas or red-hot rust:  
Bless God we were not blown to undivided dust!"

## XXXI.

Here was a glorious theory.—But enough!  
That's what I've said?—The thirty-first, my tale  
Drags to unwieldy length, this school-boy stuff  
Slips thro' my head as thro' a stork's snail:  
I catch and will withhold it. What a gale,  
A passion-storm 'twould raise if master heard  
Read it! 'twould make his heart and heart strings  
ail  
With indignation, or, what is as bad,  
'Twould make his cranium ache and drive old  
Philomath mad.

## XXXII.

Did I not know how serious is to be  
What is not writ, I might go on and puff  
My rhyme with mirth and rollicky and glee  
And school and schoolboys, 'backey, beer and snuff.  
Besides, I have some fears of being thought rough:  
Which I am not, was never, and they lie  
Who say so,—I but simply played the chuff  
During the few half-reckless hours which I  
Have had in my sad life. Yet why sad call it?—  
Why?

## XXXIII.

Wait, and anon I'll tell thee 'tis too soon,  
Yet not too soon, but still 'tis well to wait  
A wee' in all things, even when to the moon  
We dream to fly at night when rather late  
We find ourselves outside the garden gate.  
With eye and ear avigil, when the key  
Is turned by Jessie, Mary, Jane or Kate,  
And a soft whisper breathes, "Come on, love,  
flee!"  
Yes, even then 'tis well to think and wait a wee.

## XXXIV.

But thought or forethought in the present song  
Is wanting, or dispensed with, if you please,  
So is delay; then let it jog along  
In its own freedom, artless and at ease.  
It is not meant to torment or to tease  
Any one person, or to give offence  
At large,—its purpose being, by degrees,  
In simple words, plain talk and common sense,  
To show the how, the why, the wherefore and the  
whence

## XXXV.

I am the wretched mortal that I am.  
Of this in time hereafter—I became  
As calm and meek and quiet as a lamb.  
And in good seriousness began to blame  
Myself, and to my feelings whisper, shame  
On me for all those golden hours of time  
Misspent, or not spent well, which is the same:  
How sad, methought, if to some distant clime  
My lot should lead me yet, to be in manhood's prime

## XXXVI.

A booby! This reflection was too much  
To be withstood by me; and so it fired  
My faculties (tway, start not) at first touch.  
And at that touch my follies all expired.  
Books which before I hated I admired,  
Study henceforward was even unto me  
As the "descended" is to Miss when tired  
Of angling for him who may hers not be,  
She offers, he accepts grace, favor, compromise.

## XXXVII.

Now was a period ne'er to be forgot:  
I knew not how. I found myself within  
Collegiate walls, where students and what not  
Kept up a nearly never-ceasing din:  
Like to the noise of distant roaring linn,  
And most unlike the sound of human throats,  
Yet was it music, Toby said, wherein  
(Good faith, thought I, old doctor dreams or dotes)  
Were jarred and blended all the most harmonious  
notes.

## XXXVIII.

I saw the world before me, and I saw  
Objects and ends in their true colors shine:  
I started, shuddered, and I gazed with awe—  
No one fixed end, no goal I could call mine:  
To what attained I?—what was my design?  
What could I do, and do the most, I could?  
Nothing, and why? for each, ye gods, tenient!  
Was wanting, and assist none was who would:  
How, therefore, end or aim or hope could I make  
good!

## XXXIX.

Yet did I not despair: I had a soul,  
And have, which was not, cannot be subdued,  
Which will not bend beneath misfortune's whole  
Weight, which will stand the shock, however rude,  
Of purpose crossed, hope blasted, life pursued  
By discontent still urging on—on!  
What if I'm cast amongst the lowly brood  
Of low things of which I am not one,  
Shall my bold spirit yield?—Despondency begone!

## XL.

I stood within these walls where for the first  
Time in my life I saw the many ways  
In which men differ, here it was I nursed  
That sour dislike to persons who by praise,  
Or compliment, or flattery, nowadays,  
Are movable; here was it that I felt  
I was not just exactly what obays  
The world—a form of common clay—there dwelt,  
And dwells within me still, that which has never  
kneelt.

## XLI.

And will not kneel to lick the paws of pride,  
Of monster pride begot of wealth, begot  
Of dirt and nothingness. Away and hide  
Yourself, you bulky creatures, ere you rot!  
Think you that I adore you? I do not,  
Far be it from me,—no, nor even respect:  
Your name to me is wormwood, fays bot,  
I am your foe—your friend-ship I reject—  
And as your foe my task I never will neglect:—

## XLII.

Down with the great, O Lord, by all means down!  
Down with the proud the lowest of the low!  
Down with corruption! down with those who frown  
On underlings!—Ye heavens! woe their woe  
Who with an air of hatred by us go.  
Regarding us as less than rotten dogs:—  
Up brother wretches! say why crouch you so?  
Are ye on earth dead, soulless, lifeless dogs,  
Gorillas, apes or toads or large reptilian frogs?

## XLIII.

Dash to the obedience when it lowers:  
You to a rank below the unthinking brute;  
Was it for this you left your native shore—  
Was it to cinge with awe and terror mate  
Before a nameless set? Up, slaves, and tot!  
Fear not to speak,—be forward, free and bold:  
Strike—life or death—subordination's root.  
Assert your rights like men, and be not sold  
Into lifelong contempt for paitry gain of gold.

## XLIV.

Better by far to never have been born  
Than born to live a life as I do now:  
A life of gall, hate, bitterness and scorn.  
Rancour and wretchedness—How long wilt Thou,  
O Mighty Majesty! be pleased to allow  
To bind my spirit this tormented clay?  
Thy will be done,—'Tis written on my brow—  
Earth is my purgatory, of bliss no ray  
Shall light my path until the close of life's dark day.

## XLV.

What pity 'tis I have not some command  
Over whatever impulse 'tis that sends  
My thoughts confused,—what pity that my hand  
Obays the impulse! At my fingers' ends  
I have an itch which irritates, or teases,  
If I not scratch, irritable to be,  
Saving your presence; then, my honest friends,  
You are in justice bound to pardon me  
For this my regular irregularity.

## XLVI.

I am—good faith I am a pretty boy.  
A soft and tender soul Lord knows I am,  
A sweet young fellow, an angelic toy,  
I swear it by the queen of hearts or pam.  
Did I not tell you I was like a lamb?  
I think I did—but whether I did or not,  
You are to know that I would not say "damp"  
Or any curse if I were to be shot.  
Nor would I tell a lie if you killed me on the spot.

## XLVII.

Don't you think I who am all this and more  
Am to be pitied when I tell you I  
For want of funds, outside the outmost door  
Saw myself ere a twelve-month had gone by  
In this elysium?—The dark blue sky,  
The water's sowl, the hardy, bracing breeze,  
The dreariness around me, the shrill cry  
Of birds, the flowerless, grassless, herbless leas,  
Afflicted me and chilled and left me none at ease.

## XLVIII.

Loose on the world, at large without a home,  
Without a prospect, with a pretty fair  
Knowledge of men and business, than to roam  
Abroad and seek my fortune what was there  
Other for me? there was nought but despair,  
Of which I was incapable, I took  
The notion in my head, at least to dare  
Upon a more extensive scale to look  
On manners and on men; and as I cannot brook

## XLIX.

Procrastination when I once resolve  
To act, I acted little deeming that  
I flew from misery but to involve  
Myself to torment, wretchedness, or what  
You wish to call it—that which waits on Pat  
In lands afar; that which we deem the curse  
Of all misfortunes,—life which coat or hat  
Affordeth not; hard work, lean diet, slack purse,  
Contempt and degradation which than death is  
worse.

## L.

Bright were my dreams, as merrily and free  
The exile ship shot out upon the main,  
Of the half-Eden land beyond the sea.  
The home of Freedom where but Freedom reign.—  
Alas! that after pleasure should come pain  
As after sunshine showers—once more alas!  
That sunnier hopes should also be most vain  
That hypocrites for semi-saints should pass,  
That lying tongues should pierce thro' walls of steel  
and brass!

"DUNNOY."

Montreal, Dec. 7th, 1883.