

To the Rev. G. W. G. Groot D.D. | FU
with his kind regards.

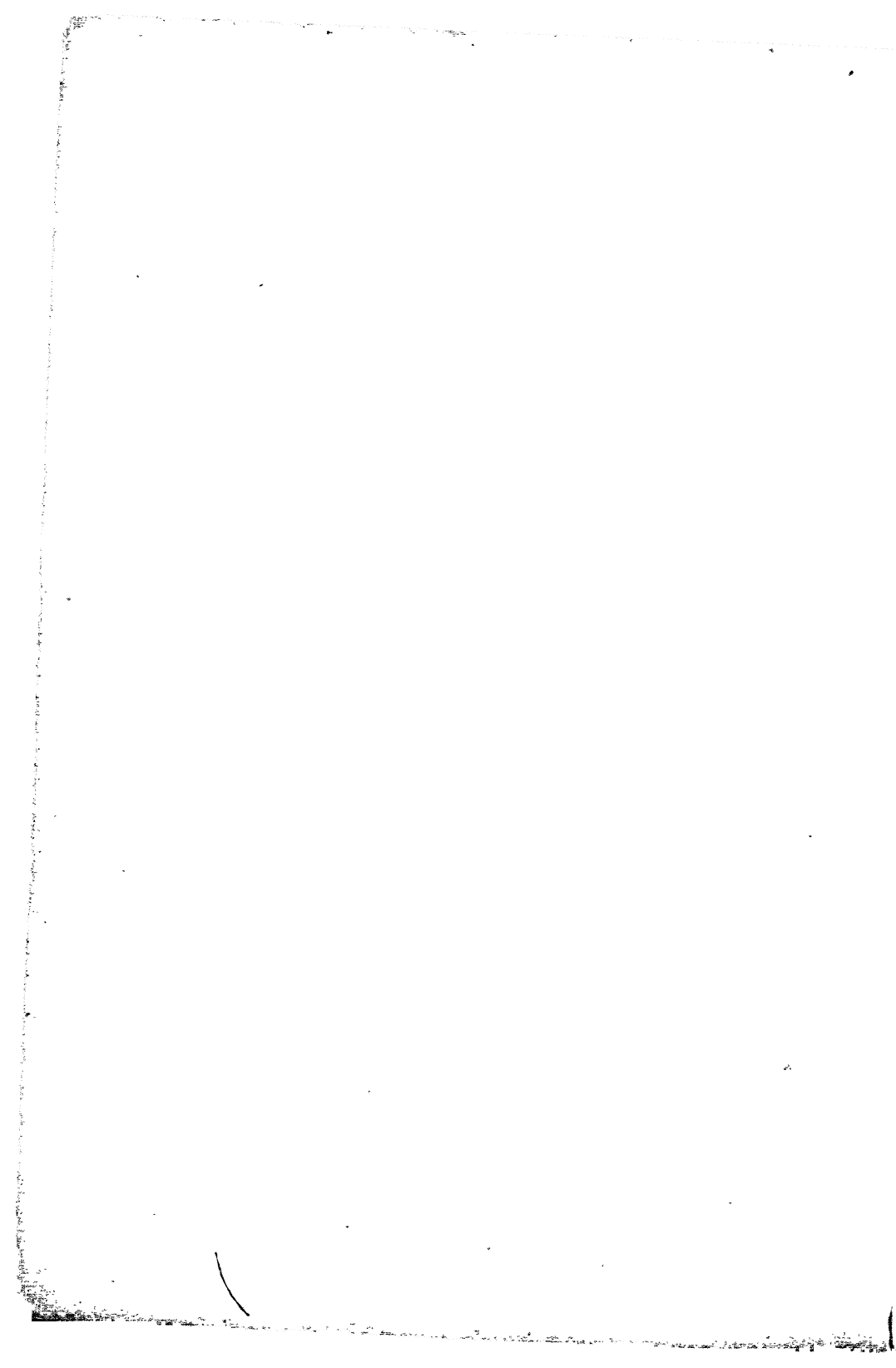
SIR JOHN FRANKLIN:

A Prize Poem.

Trinity College.—Michaelmas Term, 1861.

Printed by the Students.

TORONTO:
LOVELL & GIBSON, YONGE STREET.
1862.



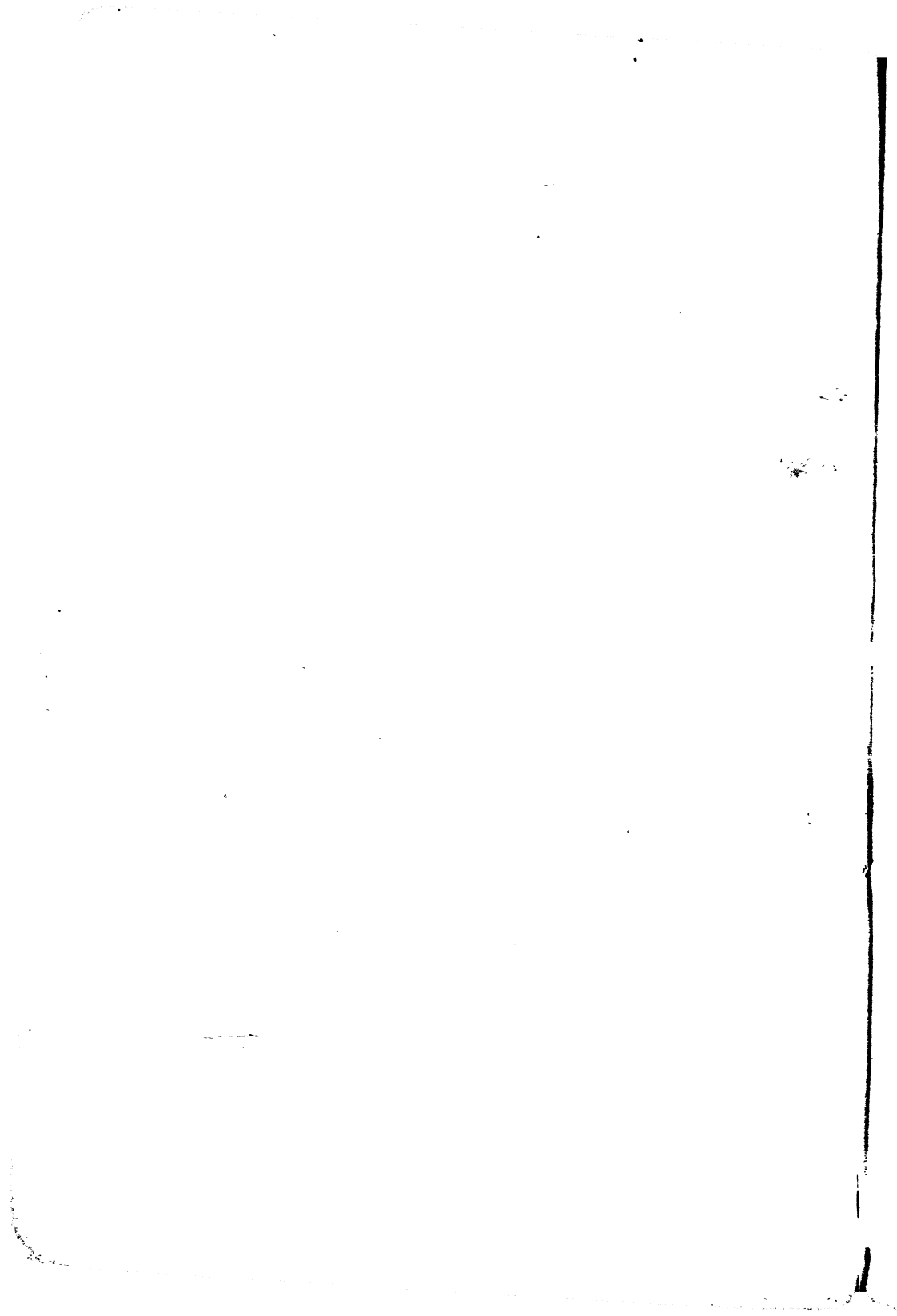
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SIR JOHN FRANKLIN.

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" *Veritas quasi rosa resplendet.*"  
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FAIR Morn comes smiling through the eastern view,
Crownèd with rose-wreaths, rich with crystal dew,
Scattering with wanton, graceful hand, the flowers
O'er lightsome clouds, in crimson, scented showers.
Silence, serene and sweet, enwraps the world,
The chaste, pure perfume round those rose-clouds furled :
No sound is heard, except the rippling deep,
That seems the breathing of the sea in sleep,
So soft it murmurs, hardly heard at all,
As on the sandy shore the wavelets fall.
The glow of gladness, ^{warm} ~~warm~~ by orient skies,
Reflected on the face of ocean lies,
Till sea and sky seem merged in molten light,
And every wave is crested golden bright.
Up, from the lambent main, three vessels loom,
With large black hulls, white tapering mast and boom,
And every rope ^{is} ~~is~~ tinged with purple glow.
The sun ascends ; fresh morning breezes blow ;
Up wells the tide ; up flies bright Freedom's flag ;
The morning gun booms from th' embattled crag ;

Slowly the anchors, creaking harsh, are weighed,
Slowly the masts in snowy sails arrayed,
Slowly the vessels swing before the wind,
While hopeful farewell looks are thrown behind.
How little deem those hearts, that nevermore
Their eyes will meet their homes, and Britain's shore!
How little reck they that that look'd farewell
Is their last glance towards all they love so well!
Against the ploughing prow the foam leaps high;
Free towards the Frozen Sea the pennons fly;
The sea-dog swells, a growling, foaming pack,
Pursue the hunted ships, and course their track;
With tireless strength, they run an endless race,
Never fall back, yet ne'er complete the chase.

A month has passed since Orkney's headlands sank
Beneath the blue horizon's misty bank,
And, now, the dreary Arctic scenes they know,
The icy cliff, the hushed expanse of snow.
Unbroken silence, solitude sublime,
Sit on the throne-like bergs, and rule that clime.
A parting cheer is given, and one prow turns
Back to the South, and the chill Arctic spurns,
While o'er the heaven of each manly mind,
The shadow of farewell, sad, soft, and kind
Is shed; as when the setting sun from sight
Withdraws, eve's tremulous, shrinking, mellow light
Suffuses all the sky; prelude of night.

And now they sail upon their frozen way,
With stern and stubborn ice disputing sway ;
Now, gliding swiftly through an open track ;
And now, surrounded by the closing pack ;
And now, becalmed, the listless flags aloft
Are touched, but stirred not by the breezelet soft.
The mirror sea holds to its heaving breast
The snowy clouds, the ice-berg's snowy crest.

At even, standing on the poop alone,
Self-communing in low, sad, monotone,
Is Franklin ; wrapped in meditation deep,
And memories old, as with eve's shadows creep
Over the soul, when eve is calm and grand.
And as he gazes on that icy land,
Over his heart warm memories still troop,
Of earlier days, as when at eve doth droop
The setting sun, yet through the little rift
Of sky, stray wandering sunbeams lightly drift,
And throw their brightness on the sky of morn,
That long had gathered gloom, and shadows born
Of Time. He longs for love in fulness found
In her who every fragrance shed around
His heart, as o'er the budding earth at night,
The clear May moon drops soft and loving light.
And strong resolves his mission to fulfil,
And strong presentiments of good, yet ill,
Flash o'er his mind, as o'er the billowy deep,

The shadowing blasts of heaven gently sweep,
 Checkering the main with streaks of dark and light.
 And then with stealthy step, the silent Night
 Creeps strangely round the scene, and everywhere
 Its sad mysterious presence in the air
 Is felt. The vessels slowly onward drift
 Amid the snowy moonlit bergs, that lift
 Their cloudlike heads above the glassy stream,
 Till either ships or ice-bergs they might seem.

Three times, with summer, thus the earth has smiled
 In garniture of green, since, hope-beguiled,
 The bold explorers pierced the Arctic maze ;
 And now those hearts wherein there ever plays
 Warm thoughtfulness about the absent ones ;—
 As in the bosom of a rill the sun's
 Light gleams,—with hope's sweet gladness grow full bright,
 And heavy steps, that waited, grow full light,
 And all are trustful, though some dread the while.
 Then summer's grain grows ripe, but not the fruit
 Of expectation, that had taken root
 In loving hearts,—nipped by untimely frost,
 Their bud of Hope shall bloom not,—ever lost.
 Then Autumn passes ; Winter comes and frowns,
 And every blast seems with its wailing sounds
 To mock, and makes them shudder at its blast,
 To think that those they loved, adrift were cast,
 To starve and die, or cold and colder grow,

And freeze, and lie down dying in the snow,
Thinking of God, and warmth, and home, and love.
But, when the Spring descended from above,
To loose the bonds that bound the wintry sea,
To melt its crystal prison gates, and free
Its prisoners, hastily, anxious parties sailed,
To rescue, whom to welcome they had failed,
Wafted by prayers that they would all be back
Before next Winter. Summer skies grow black,
And turn to Winter's, but they still come not,
And Summer comes again, but they come not,
Nor any word of comfort do they hear ;
But late in Autumn, weary ships appear
From fruitless search, and tell a tale of woes
And disappointments. Winter slowly goes,
And speeds at Spring a large exploring fleet,
The offering with which the people meet
Their generous duty. Ere the Fall, a trace
Kindles their hope, to put it out. The place
Where they had wintered years before is seen,
Yet, they know only that they there had been,
Nor whither they had after gone they learn,
But only, gently wrapped in snow, discern
Three sailor's graves. As 'gainst a ship's side leap
To climb it, welling waves, and upward sweep,
And then, thrown down, and broken, flatly fall ;
So, eagerly the swelling hearts of all
Were lifted high, to be the more cast down.

At last, when lingering hope had almost grown
 To be no hope ; when but a little rift
 Of blue was left, a gloomy cloud did drift
 And 'shut it up. Among the Esquimaux,
 Relics are found which with sad clearness shew,
 A knowledge of a fate of fearful woe ;—
 Some white men had been seen, worn out, forlorn,
 Going to the South, some years before, one morn
 In the seal moon. They all were thin and wan,
 And brightly in their staring eyes, there shone
 The fires of hungry famine. Ere the fall,
 They found their wasted, frozen bodies, all,
 Scattered about the mainland's bare, bleak shore.
 A few were buried on an isle ; the more
 Still lay where they had fallen down to die.

Years pass, and still with faithful purpose high,
 The mourning wife refuses to believe
 That he, for whom as dead, all others grieve,
 Is dead. Why should he die ? Not all the crew
 Was seen ; they had divided ; still a few,
 With him their chief, might lingeringly drag out
 A sad existence, wandering about,
 'Mid woe and famine. Every morn they rise,
 And gaze, and gaze, with eager scanning eyes,
 All o'er the bleak horizon's blank expanse.
 Again, at eve, a sad disheartened glance
 Is thrown around ; and still no aid they see ;

Till scarce they hope that aid will ever free
Them from their dreary prison's marble halls ;
As snow flakes grow, despair upon them falls.
Her faith, her love, cause years of vain essay,
And then disheartening, anxious doubt gives way,
And sadder certainty ascends the throne,
Enforcing all stern sorrow's sway to own.
Near the reported scene of ending woe,
A skeleton, from out the drifted snow
Protrudes, arresting on their startled way,
A sledging party. On his face he lay,
Beside a ridge, which doubtless, he had tried
For smoother walking ; but he fell and died,
Worn out, where he had fallen, while he gazed,
With agonized eyes, till death them glazed,
Upon his anguish-burdened comrades, who,
Slowly receding from his fading view,
Knew not that he had fallen down to die ;
Heard not his faint, few, groans, despairing cry,
But feebly tottered on their fearful way,
And as they tottered fell themselves away.
And, further back a record soon was found,
Telling how hope in every heart did bound
Of quick success : a second winter o'er ;
A party had just left the ships to explore,
And place the record in a cairn. Alas !
By every falling sand within Time's glass,
Is wrought some change, whether for seeming good,

Or seeming ill. A year flew by, and stood
Before the cairn, a man with stern, sad face,
Writing dark words that all old hopes efface
From off the mournful leaf—Franklin was dead.
The Reaper Death had plucked his ripened head
Some months before. The ships were cast away,
Beleaguered by the hostile ice where they
Two years before were wintered. Hungry Death
Had breathed on many with his fatal breath,
And they had paled and died. And now the man
Who wrote was leading, as the only plan
Of safety, starving crews o'er barren snow,
Towards the South. Alas! How could they know!
How could they tell that as they strove to fly
Their doom, they would but starve, and freeze, and die!
That hunger through their wildly staring eye,
As through the window of his house would glare;
That gloom would thicken in the lonely air;
That they would fail and faint, and each chill morn
Find them more feeble, weary and forlorn!
That night the friendly would but veil in vain
Their sorrows and their fears, to flare again,
More fiercely for their rest; that they would wake,
But to renew their pain, while slowly break
Their hopes, their hearts; and as they toiled along,
Feebler the weak would grow, and weak the strong,
Falling to rise not, one by one, to die;
In faith, yet anguish, breathe their dying sigh!

Sad was their fate, yet noble was their end.
 Their British heart and British faith did bend
 Not from the mark for which they aimed their lives,
 Till they had gained their aim ; and still survives
 In every generous breast, where pity burns,
 And praise for valour high, a power that turns
 All joy to sorrow, laughing hearts to sad,^l
 If mentioned are their names ; as, on a glad
 Bright day of summer, if the wind but blow
 A sudden cloud, the joyful earth doth grow
 Black and o'ercast. With fearful gloomy death
 They bought their purposed end ; their dying breath
 They gave for Britain, and their fellowmen.
 Honour the brave ! Deep in our bosoms, then,
 Let honour flourish for those men who feared
 Not Death when Duty bade them on ! Revered
 Forever be their memories. A Hand
 That rules in love, though darkly, did command
 That their reward should be not here, and they,
 With faithful hearts, were well pleased to obey.

With painful steps, and slow, we must achieve
 Our lives ; What though the pain of struggle grieve
 Our weary souls ? Yet we must struggle on,
 And rest no rest, until our work be done.
 And, though, when we have done our work of life,
 With faith, and earnestness, and constant strife,
 Our sky be darkened with thick clouds, at eve,

That but a little ray of light do leave,—
Perhaps mere airy hope ; Faith's ladder we
Must make it, that we climb until we see
The stars of love,—let us with patient heart,
Be calm, and brave, and true, and do our part
With uncomplaining trust, and be assured
That he, who to the end hath toil endured,
Will yet have peace, and rest, and joy, where clouds
Are not, where nought the Glorious Dayspring shrouds.

