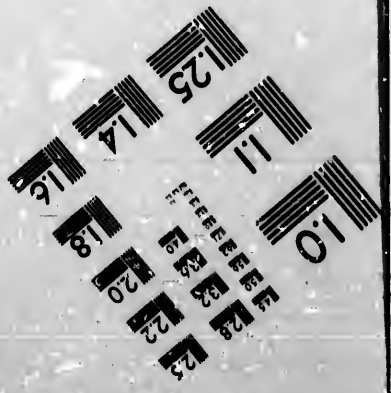
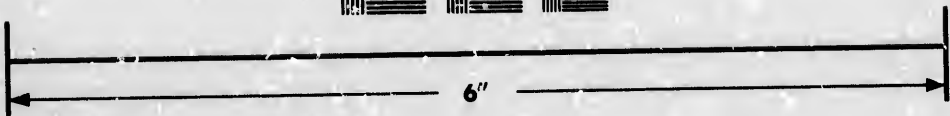
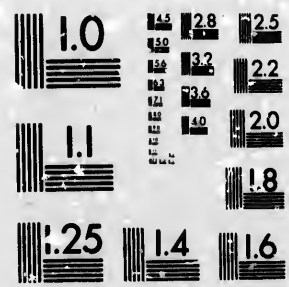


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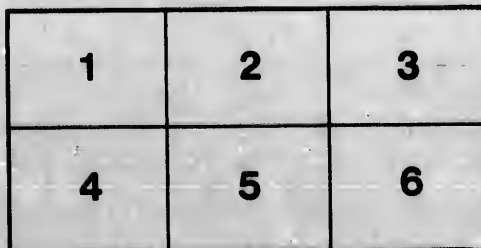
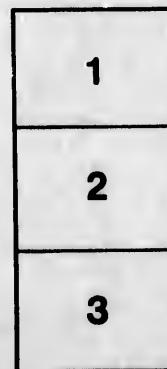
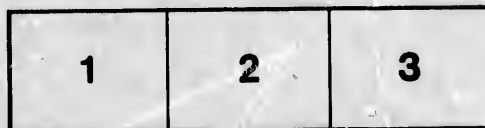
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A Poetical Romance,



FATHER AMBROSE

..... BY

WILLIAM McDONNELL,

AUTHOR OF _____

"Our Strange Guest," "Manita," etc.



LINDSAY:

—1898.—



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"FATHER AMBROSE."

A POETICAL ROMANCE

By WM. McDONELL, Author of "Our Strange Guest," "Manita," etc.

The lights were out, the mass was
said,
With last prayers for the faithful
dead,

The altar was almost in gloom,
The Abbey silent as a tomb,
A lone lamp cast a feeble ray
Where penitents were wont to pray,
Tall clustered columns stood around,
Like guardians watching holy ground;
Above on each there seemed to frown
A mitred image looking down.
And monks in niches stood on high—
With eyes upturned towards the sky;
And nuns with hands crossed o'er each
breast

Anticipating heavenly rest;
And pictures of the saints stood where
Oft contrite sinners knelt in prayer,
Invoking them to intercede
And still for Adam's children plead.
High o'er the altar could be seen
The virgin's image most serene,
And in her arms the Sacred Child
With features exquisitely mild,
And high o'er all, the Cross stood
spread,

The Saviour hanging on it dead;
Yet on His pallid face a ray
Came floating from the fading day
As if it there must ever stay,
Though dimness might be spread
around

That halo o'er His head was found—
In glorious sunlight He was crowned.
And though His Spirit took its flight
That radiance meant—"I am the
light,

I am the Sun o'er worlds to shine,
I am the way, the Truth divine,
Pardon through Me must be besought,
By Me Salvation can be brought"—
This is what the faithful taught.

'Twas evening now, the ruddy sun
Burnished the windows one by one,
And as that orb's declining ray
Within the Abbey found its way,

The altar seemed a blaze of light
Which faded slowly ere 'twas night.
And after that the moon 'twould
speak

Would peer in with its gentle beam.
When neither sun nor moon was near
Light would flash from some starry
sphere.

E'en should black clouds make dark
the night

The little lamp still gave its light,
As if 'twere meant that there should
be

Rays round the Cross which all might
see—
Celestial light eternally.

How still the place! No whispered
vow,
Or muttered prayer could be heard
now,

There in the silent sanctuary
Was seen no ardent devotee,
Nor near each dim confessional
None knelt who wished their sins to
tell;

Nor ling'ring in each silent aisle
No one absolved was seen to smile;
Nor chosen one with placid face
Staid ling'ring in the holy place;
No mourner sighing for relief,
No widow pouring out her grief
With hungry orphan by her side,
Who once had been a father's pride;
No sad one loaded down with care
Was heard to ask for pity there;
The sorrowful and the oppressed
Came not to beg for peace or rest;
Where crowds of worshippers had been
No saint or sinner could be seen.
'Twas strange the temple now should
be

Deserted by humanity;
The living seemed to shun the place
Expecting spirits to retrace
Their steps again to mother earth
Where sin and shame had first their
birth

And bow before the altar here
To drop a penitential tear,
As if some souls long passed away
Must here return to weep and pray,
And do the penance left undone
Before full pardon had been won.
And the lone church was like the home
To which some penitents would come
To cast away all trace of pride
Ere they could meet the sanctified.

Now while the silence was profound—
From far or near there came no
sound—

The lonely temple seemed the gate
At which the fallen would await
Their permit to a brighter state.
And one might fancy that there stood
Before the place a multitude
Of spirits waiting to be blest
Ere they could enter heavenly rest,
And near the Cross once more to bow
To take a saint's eternal vow.

Just then a moonbeam stole inside,
As if a herald from above
Had come to ope the portals wide,
Urged onward by celestial love.
And then there came a fragrant
breeze,
As if from angels in their flight,
Down among roses, flowers and trees,
To banish ev'ry shade of night;
For quick a flood of moonlight came,
Like rays from Cherubs' glitt'ring
wings,
Or of the soft and subdued flame
That rosy Dawn so gently brings,
Or the mild light of parting day
Which linger's with the sun's last ray
Then soon the echo of a strain
Of heavenly music from afar,
Or concord from some distant star,
Was heard like a melodious rain—
The voice of clouds which had been
near

The precincts of some globe of bliss,
Grand harmony which all could hear—
Not discord from a world like this.
If ever music touched the heart,
Or gave the eye a tender tear,
'Twas now it did its gentlest part
Soothing the soul from ev'ry fear.
The strain kept on, and nearer yet
Mingled with it was heard a voice
With silvery tone none could forget,
One which would lull though not re-
joice.

At times the voice would seem quite
nigh,

And there was sadness in each tone
At other times 'twas as the sigh
Of one forsaken and alone,
Was it some spirit who had left
For joys of earth its native skies,
Then feeling as of bliss bereft
Back to its airy mansion flies.

But hark! The sounds are nearer still
An organ's pleading now is felt,
Its long low tones the bare aisles fill,
Its softer notes the heart would
melt.

Then loud but sad, then low again,
Then tremulous, and then in sobs.
The organ, like a thing in pain,
Gives minor music in its throbs;
Again its voice comes soft and low,
And list'ning ones might think
'twould tell—

More than a mortal wished to know.
At last came mingled with the strain
Words which an angel might express
Declaring worldly pleasures vain,
While giving friends a last caress.
The words were these—they softly fell
As bidding all a last farewell

"O earth on which my heart was set,
I'm urged thy splendours to forget,
And hopes which made thee look so
bright,
And prospects which should meet no
blight—

These, now, alas, seem lost in night,
As fair things soon must pass away,
Like fading light of waning day.
"Farewell great world, adieu to one
With whom 'twas bliss to be alone,
Those who had once stood by my side
Now say I am the Churches' bride,
And must in sisterhood abide,
If this is still to be my fate,
For Death I gladly shall await."

Those words so simple told a tale,
How human feeling has the power,
O'er human hearts still to prevail,
In light or shade from hour to hour.
And pious vows may often seem
But compacts of a transient dream,
To those who feel they are too strict
And with their happiness conflict.
The song was not a holy hymn
Though sung in church by one alone—
A chant by one whose hopes were dim
Whose voice had sadness in each tone.

The organ ceased, and then a sigh,
A long breath from a bursting heart,

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Just like a with'ring blast flew by,
Or rushing of a fatal dart.
As silence came again, there stood
A female form in garb of gloom,
Looking down on the solitude
Like one who gazes at a tomb
Which hides forever from the view
All that the heart could truly love,
Around which tend'rest feelings grew
And all for which affection strove.
She stood awhile and then bent down
Perhaps to weep, or plead, or pray,
That soon might come a martyr's
crown,
And all her sorrow pass away.

Some only will rejoice and sing
When skies are bright and hearts are
glad,
While some, in their last suffering,
Sing dirge-like strains, soft, low, and
sad,

As certain birds that ever sigh
Their sweetest notes just ere they die;
'Twas thus with her who just had
sung,
She willingly would yield her breath
And let the music of her tongue
Sound like a last prayer before death.
Her life was lonely, she would leave
Hope, love and joy, all else behind
Yet oft like others she would grieve
To shun bright rays though they
might blind.

A sister of the church had won
From her consent to make a vow
To aid the Faith and be a nun,
Therefore to destiny must bow.
She thoughtlessly the promise made
And Nature's impulses betrayed,
For she had loved, that love ne'er
ceased—

Her heart was fondly still the same,
The one she loved became a Priest
Rather than have her suffer shame
By broken vow, or public blame.
So now it was that here by night,
While others slept, she came alone—
The organ was her great delight—
Rehearsing as it were each tone
She might sing near the heavenly
throne.

And those who chanced to hear the
strain

Might think that some departing soul
Appealed once more to heaven again
To be restored and be made whole,
And tendencies to sin control.

The midnight came, that lonely hour
When some say spirits have the power
Again to visit this sad earth
And see the places of their birth,
And watch the kindred or the foes
They loved or scorned ere last repose,
And think of frailties or misdeeds,
Or cruelties from clash of creeds;
Of hate, or anger which arise
From seeing not with others' eyes;
Or they may stand by their own
tomb

Where grass is green or wild flow'rs
bloom,
Beneath which their worn bodies rest
After this earth-life's stormy test;
Perhaps to think how vain that life
With all its struggles, care and strife;
Like those who oft return to see
The spots still dear to memory.

But who are these at this late time
That here before the altar stand?
The bells have struck the midnight
chime

As if to call some angel band
To witness a religious act,
Some ceremony strict and pure,
Showing the Church knows ev'ry fact
To prove its teaching shall endure,
Keeping each sacred truth secure.
Two priests are kneeling side by side,
They seem engaged in solemn prayer,
They may be asking that a guide
Shall keep them under heavenly care
While they for a blest home prepare—
The promised mansion bright and fair.
Then one arose, his hair was white,
His age was over four score years,
The other boyish, fair and slight,
With calm eyes, now suffused with
tears,

The older priest was called "The
Dean,"

His lengthened days might soon
bring rest,
For life's viscissitudes had been
To him, like others, a sad test;
For wav'ring faith, and dark'ning
doubt,

And human hopes, and mental pride
Conflicted oft with thoughts devout,
Like tempters standing at his side.
He spoke and said, "O Child, O Son—
But pastor now to guide a flock—
A Priest!—to-day you were made
one,

At which Irreverence might mock;
To call you 'Father,' some 'twill shock
To think that one in years so young

Should be endowed with gifts to teach
 And have an apostolic tongue
 With power to pardon and to preach,
 And tell your seniors how to pray,
 And lead them on the heavenly way.
 I heard your ordination vow
 And all the prayers for you then said
 And saw the congregation bow
 When hands were laid upon your
 head,
 And when the Bishop said, "Go out
 And teach the truth in ev'ry land."
 One then might fancy saints would
 shout
 At the episcopal command.
 Oh, dreary is the road you take,
 I've passed along it many a year,
 All worldly pleasures you forsake,
 For though attractive they appear
 Most find them but a glist'ning tear.

He paused, and then the young priest
 sighed,
 Sighed as if with a bursting heart,
 To forfeit life with all its pride
 This was to be his future part
 Like one who stands mid garden
 flow'rs
 Breathing their fragrance pure and
 chaste,
 But doomed to spend his future hours
 Within some solitary waste.
 He felt how sad would be the
 change—
 A feeling which had come too late—
 He stood in gloom, how cold and
 strange,
 Surprised to think this was his fate.

The Dean once more the youth ad-
 dressed,
 "I have a burden on my soul
 To you alone 'twill be confessed
 To you, as priest, I'll tell the whole.
 As yet no penitent you've heard
 Nor listened to a sinner's tale,
 Now, as a pastor, be prepared
 To hear the sin of one so frail;
 For though I am a priest and dean—
 In Holy Orders I rank high—
 I feel that I am still unclean
 And must have pardon ere I die.
 Soon, soon my fleeting life shall close,
 I wish to find a calm repose,
 And wish to have a conscience clear
 Ere from this life I disappear.
 Oft I've confessed but ne'er revealed
 One sin, alas, one blighting blot,
 A fault which I have long concealed

A frailty, an accusing spot
 Which I have never yet forgot—
 But ere I enter the dark grave
 Full absolution I shall crave."

He bent his head and said a prayer,
 And his confessor did the same,
 Both for confession did prepare—
 Young Father Gabriel blushed with
 shame
 To see the old Dean to him kneel
 In penitential attitude,
 And hear what he would now reveal,
 Seeking through him beatitude—
 For though long thought a bright
 church meteor,
 The Dean said humbly the Confiteor.

"O reverend pastor, as you know,
 They call me Father Ambrose here,
 On all my blessing I bestow,
 And gladly wipe away each tear,
 And wish the world had more of bliss
 Than man has ever found in this.
 When I was in my youthful prime
 I scarce gave heed to passing time,
 But lived as if each coming day
 More beautiful would fade away,
 That every hour I had to spend
 Would bring fresh pleasures without
 end.

Moments came bursting up like flow'rs
 That formed the canopy of bow'rs
 Near which I would delight to stray,
 Singing some cheerful roundelay;
 Life seemed a garden of delight—
 Roses by day, and stars by night.
 With soft low winds and fragrant air,
 And blushing beauty everywhere;
 And trees and hills, and murmuring
 streams.

Kissed by sun's rays, and mild moon-
 beams,
 Led me to think that earth was all
 That man a paradise might call.
 Indeed 'twas so like heaven to me,
 No heaven I thought could fairer be,
 Nor would I care for one more bright
 Or beautiful to mortal sight.
 Of angels I'd been often told
 Who could their glittering wings un-
 fold,
 And from aerial heights descend
 To be man's gentle guide and friend;
 To warn of evil in the way,
 And be a guardian night and day.
 Oh how I wished that one of these
 Would steal near me from 'mong the
 trees,

Alighting in the pleasant grove
Where oftentimes I loved to rove,
And fancy some bright creature nigh,
Whose smile could chase away a sigh
Ere homeward to the skies 'twould fly.
One day—that day I'll ne'er forget—
I thought I had an angel met.
I was alone and in a bow'r
Where oft I sat at sunset hour,
Thinking, as I had times before,
Of what my future had in store,
And as upon such thoughts I dwelt
A lovely creature outside knelt
To pluck a rose—then in her hair
She placed it with a modest air,
As if it might with her compare.
Like passing radiance she came near,
Which caused a momentary fear,
Lest she should see me and take flight,
Leaving the day almost like night,
But soon I saw she had no wings—
She sung—the sound came as if strings
Of harp were struck at distance far,
Faint as an echo from some star.
Or like the music, it is said,
Cherubs oft make as day has fled,
Ready to greet the rising ray
Of gentle Luna on her way.
Her head was splendid, and her eyes
Blue as the clear celestial skies;
Her face and form were wondrous fair,
Like sunbeams hung her auburn hair;
Her look and smile were so serene
Just as if she were Beauty's queen;
She scarcely looked a thing of earth—
More like, perhaps, of heavenly birth,
This was at first my transient thought
Which wond'ring fancy quickly
brought.
How foolish now the impulse seems,
And how extravagant the dreams
Which led me then to think that she
Was more than mortal e're could be—
This at the time I did believe—
My senses scarcely could deceive.
She seemed so beautiful and bright,
And radiant as if formed by light,
Who if not quite an angel, all,
Was one of those who ne'er could fall.
E'en of the kind, saints might assert,
More fit for heaven than for earth—
She passed—I could not stay behind,
To other objects I was blind.
So sudden was her image pressed
Upon my heart, I could not rest,
That when she moved from out my
sight
'Twould bring deep gloom, the flowers
might blight,
And the fair bower I oft would seek

Might look, when she was gone, so
bleak.

* * * * *
Such were my feelings as I left
To follow her—almost bereft
Of prudent thought—at last she stop-
ped

In a fair garden and she dropped
Her kerchief as she went along—
Then, with a sudden impulse strong,
I quickly snatched it from the ground
And hurried to her with a bound,
And Oh, what bliss, when at her side
I offered it with happy pride.
She took it as if 'twere a gift,
Her eyes to mine she scarce did lift
But smiled and thanked me with such
grace

And blushed while I gazed at her
face.

If then from heaven an angel came,
And called me fondly by my name,
To have me look away from her,
I could not from her presence stir.
Ah me, I scarcely know the way
I spent an hour with her that day—
Moments like sparks from the sun's
ray—

Nor can I yet remember how
I spoke to give my parting bow.
I left as if I had left light
To meet the gloom of sudden night."

We parted but to meet again,
To keep from her I tried in vain.
She chided not, but ever grew
More pleased at ev'ry interview.
I met her day by day for weeks—
(When true love comes it ever speaks)
We to each other vows did plight,
To be kept till eternal night.
I was a student, this she knew,—
My mother had the church in view.
She prayed for me and never ceased
To dedicate me as a priest;
I, as her first born child, must be
Her free gift to the Trinity.
She was an ardent devotee,
For altar service therefore trained,
All priestly duties were explained,
Still these gave me the least concern,
I was quite willing all to learn,
Nor thought that they would interfere
With joys that make one happy here.
To make my parent more content
Most cheerfully I underwent
Whatever courses were thought best,
To fast, or pray, or work, or rest;
Each ceremonial was to me
Nought but a quaint formality.

I heard of martyrs and of saints,
Of heresy and its foul taints,
Of Pope, and Church, being so supreme
Other's pretensions but a dream;
Yet trifling all these things did seem.
In truth I gave no serious thought
As to what priesthood meant or
brought,

I was quite willing just to be
Whate'er my mother chose for me,
Alas, reserving ne'er to part
With her who held my soul and heart
Though she was of another creed
She trusted me in word and deed.
For her, 'gainst all I would have striv-

en.
For her I'd forfeit earth or heaven;
For her I'd leave all else beside—
Ella was pledged to be my bride.

O, what blest dreams I had that time,
My future looked almost sublime.
With every hour fresh beauty came—
Moments like sparks of heavenly flame.
Rainbows by day, moonbeams by
night,

Bright hours felicitous in flight.
Where'er I went the skies were blue,
Like Ella's eyes, so soft and true,
The world seemed fair and without
guile

Like flow'rs, or more like Ella's smile,
And music bade my heart rejoice,
As Ella's song, or Ella's voice,
Oft as we wandered side by side
I felt the ecstasy of pride,
The beauteous earth was then to me
A region of felicity;
The air she breathed could me entice—
Fragrant like that of Paradise.

Yet strange, dear Ella never knew
My mother's wish nor her intent—
That priesthood was for me in view,
Or for that purpose months were
spent.

Of this to Ella I ne'er spoke,
In me she had such boundless trust,
That not a doubtful thought awoke
To fancy I could be unjust.
And, still more strange, I felt quite
free,

While thus being for the altar trained,
Never to dream celibacy
Could my intention have restrained.
I strove to think 'twas a mere vow
Which might be kept or cast aside—
A dispensation might allow
A priest to live with his own bride—
For priests lived so in former days

Without reproach for wicked ways.
No matter still, but come what may,
I was determined that my life
Should be lit by one blessed ray .
To shine when Ella was my wife.
Infatuated I might be,
But my resolve must promptly tell
That in a bond of purity
With one fair angel I must dwell.
Time quickly passed, alas, how quick,
My ordination day drew near,
With thoughts of that my heart grew
sick,

Of that bleak rite I had a fear.
At times I seemed like one amazed—
Days of unrest, night without sleep,
Brooding and doubting like one crazed
Ready to plead, or pray, or weep,
Like some poor bird ascending high.
While lurking storms were in the air
I looked up at the distant sky
But saw black clouds were gathering
there.

I must act soon, nor longer wait,
Not mine alone, but Ella's fate,
Depended on my prompt resolve
That ought our compact should dis-

solve—
What happiness it might involve.
Now to succeed I must defy
All plans and on myself rely,
By list'ning to each sage advice
I'd lose all chance of paradise,
Nor ever enter that retreat
Where only kindred spirits meet.

To choose the church, with rays so
bright,
I'd lose the star that gladdened
night;

That star of Hope to me so dear—
What gloom if it should disappear
Why banish from Life's clouded way
The light that cheered by night or
day—

For Ella's love was that blest ray.
One placid eve—'twas some saints'
feast,

Many from work and labor ceased,
We met and visited the bow'r
Where we had oft a pleasant hour,
There we agreed next day to be
United—but most privately,
A rev'rend Protestant would do
To keep this from my parents' view—
I dreaded to be called "untrue,"
I gave her reasons this to show
That but few trusted friends should
know

That we had married—had I said

My mother would not have me wed;
Or that the Church might interfere,
Ella perhaps might have a fear
That there was some mysterious bar
Conjugal happiness to mar.
Yet if a doubt she chanced to raise
I'd laugh, and only gain her praise.
However, she did not object,
Nor for a moment once suspect
That I could any way deceive
Or say what she could not believe.
She felt assured that I was free
With her forever more to be.

The next day came—what bliss or woe
It brought, a few words more will
show,

We married, and, oh halyon hours,
Oh days of sunshine and of flow'rs!
No happier time was ever spent
By man beneath God's firmament—
To purchase heaven or paradise
Were cheaply bought at such a price.
If ever angel came to dwell
With erring man I felt the spell
Which Ella cast around my life
Since I could claim her as my wife.
The earth seemed changed and all was
now,

Beauteous as ever met my view.
Days, each a new star in life's sky,
Dawned as if ne'er to fade or die.
Hours came like flashes from the wings
Of Love in its bright wanderings.
At morn, or noon, or eve, or night
Some fresh joy came, some new de-
light.

My trusting mother still believed
I in the seminary lived
In preparations I must make
Ere I ecclesial vow should take,
Yet still, unknown to her, I dwelt
With Ella in most blest content,
Nor did the future bear in sight
A cloud to shadow my delight.
'Twas mostly sunshine round our way,
Moonbeams by night with starry ray,
If rain, then soon would come in view
Some rainbow with each beauteous
hue,
We seemed to live like garden flow'rs
Happy 'neath sunlight or 'neath
show'rs.

A few months passed, then shadows
came,
I felt like one condemned to shame,
I trembled as the day drew near
When as a priest I should appear,
Oh, what a shock 'twould be to her—

Ella a startled sufferer—
Doomed by my act to lead a life
Not as a widow or a wife,
But one forsaken without cause,
Divorced as by the Church's laws,
The part I acted seemed insane,
I looked for hope, but looked in vain,
While she—deserted—what a fate
And what remorse must me await.
I might escape—then why not flee
And rush from such a destiny.
But I felt sure as I drew breath
To flee would cause my mother's death.
Take either course, choose which I
may,

Disaster lurked around my way;
The flower I loved, when that storm
spread,
Must fade and droop its beauteous head,
Poor Ella, constant to the last,
Would shrink and wither in the blast.

My mother pressed—I must away,
For close was now the fateful day
When in the church I must appear
And leave the one to me so dear.
I made excuse, bade her adieu—
She knew not what I had in view.
I told her I might soon return,
That she should not my absence mourn,
She wept, and when I saw her tears,
Then came despondency and fears.
I felt like one who leaves the light
To be engulfed in sullen night.
And, oh, what agony to part
With her who had my soul and heart,
My hopes of happiness seemed fled,
As if she lay before me dead.
I was ordained, and then I stood
In church among the multitude,
Ere hands were laid upon my head
My priestly vows I sadly said,
I wore the vestments like a pall,
And trembled fearing I should fall.
The organ sent a mournful sound,
While muffled prayers were heard
around,

And my chilled heart felt as if dead—
I scarcely heard the words then said,
The lights, the sunshine, and the glare,
Seemed like accusing spirits there,
When all was o'er, and I a priest,
I felt that I 'mong all was least,
The least in manhood, least in power,
Else why have brought this evil hour,
Else why have blighted one pure life
And bring such hopeless care and
strife.

'Twas then I wished that friendly
Death

Would still my pulse and stop my
breath.

I stood again, looked as if dazed
Uncertain where I was—amazed.
I heard the sounding bells outside,
Which many listened to with pride,
And heard, 'Dominus vobis cum'—
My tongue was parched, and I was
dumb,

I could not to these words respond,
My mind was far from there—beyond
The church and dedicating scene,
But in that bower where oft I'd been
With her—Alas, she was not there,
And then my eyes closed in despair,
I cried with feeling ominous
'Oh Miserere mei Deus.'

Then came my mother with delight,
She kissed me, but I lost my sight,
I fell and fainted in her arms
Nor heard aught of the quick alarms.
The bishop and the priests felt dread
That my frail spirit must have fled.
To the Sacristy I was borne,
And of my alb and vestments horn,
I soon revived—How like a dream
My ordination act did seem,
The clergy in resplendent guise
Like apparitions met my eyes
Was I in heaven?—But where was
she,

My angel, my divinity?
Were I in Eden—she not there
I'd leave to seek for her elsewhere,
With my dim sense I would have
striv'n
To say that where she dwelt was
heav'n.

Then after this I pensive lay
In feverish stupor day by day,
While oft awake by lonely night,
Longing for her to greet my sight,
I felt bowed by oppressive thought
That I such sorrow should have
brought,

As if it wantonly I sought
My mother, aided by a nun,
My injured health back slowly won.
Oft, while recover'g, sat outside
Feeling remorse—not priestly pride,
And thinking sadly now of all
That to dear Ella might befall;
Thinking how I might extricate
That loved one from a hapless fate.
As thus I thought, one day there
came

A messenger—I knew her name.
She placed a letter in my hand,

And left ere I could words command.
'Twas Ella's writing—then a chill
Came quick before I had the will
To read a line of what she sent
For I felt humbled, penitent—
And would have years in penance
spent,

Some one at my ordination
Wrote and gave her a relation
Of all that in the church took place
When I my pledges did efface,
How, with affected pious look,
I made the vow, and kissed the book,
And swore I ever would obey
My priestly rulers ev'ry way.
Of how I left a faithful spouse,
And gave the church most sacred vows,
Resigning her to take a place
'Mong priests dispensing heav'nly
grace.

I paused and at the letter gazed
Like one in doubt—almost amazed;
With trembling hand at last I broke
The seal, and to my state awoke—
A blow came like a mortal stroke.
I broke the seal and sadly read
Words, like words coming from the
dead,
Just written ere the spirit fled.
A few short verses, each a spell,
As if each struck a parting knell,
Like some deep solemn sounding bell,
Sounding a long, a last farewell.

"'Tis close of day, alone I stand,
Looking at cliffs and mountains grand,
And gazing out upon the sea,
Which seems so like eternity;
And in the distance I espy
A faint star glim'ring in the sky
I gaze alone—thou art not nigh.

"Alone I am—but where art thou
Who won my heart by many a vow,
For oft as thou wert by my side
I looked on thee as my heart's pride,
Where art thou now?—Alas I see
Thou'rt minist'ring Faith's mystery
Forgetful of thy faith to me.

'I shall not stay thy course—remain,
Breathe prayers—oft thou wilt pray
in vain,
If thou canst worship at a shrine
Which is not human, though divine,
I still must act a human part,
For I have but a woman's heart—
Oh that thine were its counterpart!

"Fade day, fade light, fade my dull
sense,
Shadows may bring me recompense.
I would forget and welcome gloom,
Even suggestive of the tomb,
While thou art in the midst of light
My wearied spirit may take flight—
It will—'arewell, a last good night."

And this was all—O God what woe!
Each word I read seemed like a blow,
One which I felt I had deserved—
No fiend could have been better served.
I tried to rush out from the place
My wronged, my patient wife to trace,
Alas, I scarce could move—I knelt,
Vowed yet to find out where she dwelt,
Nor church, nor Pope, should hinder
me,

On my head be the infamy,
My heart 'gainst discipline was steeled,
To no authority I'd yield.
I could not blame the church, 'twas I
Who law and rule first did defy.
With madden'd brain I almost cursed,
And priestly bonds I would have burst
To join the one I loved the most,
I sought for her—'twas labor lost,
No trace of her could then be found,
Though search was made far, far,
around,

Yet oft I meet her in my dreams,
But then so spirit-like she seems
That near her I cannot approach,
Timid lest she should me reproach,
Yet that dear spirit seems to live,
And smiles as if she could forgive
For once I thought I heard her sing
A soft chide at my wandering—
A tender, touching reprimand.
O blessed shade! could we but meet
I'd bow and worship at thy feet,
I still have hope when this life's o'er
To meet her and part no more.

Ah, many years have passed away
Since that sad hour, that fatal day,
When Ella, shedding tender tears,
Sighed with premonitory fears;
For even then I scarce could think
Of our last parting 'twas the brink,
And that I ne'er again should see
That angel form so dear to me.

She, left alone, used no device
Back from the church me to entice,
But made a grand self-sacrifice.
Embarrass me she would not do,
But I was let my course pursue,
"With sorrow deep I now confess

How could I rest? Nor night nor day,
That course brought me no happiness,
From out my mind was she away,
Her image in my heart shall rest
Till Death its latest pulse shall test.

"Time has sped on, of late I heard
News of the lost one which I feared
For many years, almost alone,
'Mong strangers she lived little known,
She had not wealth, but yet was free—
From want by fair economy.
She had a daughter—her delight,
(May she still live to glad my sight,)
She trained her, as a mother should,
And did for her all that she could—
A comfort in their solitude.
Yet Ella's life was one of grief,
Her earthly happiness was brief—
A clouded mind brought her relief,
When once her sturdy reason fled
She spoke of me as one long dead,
As if my life was all that made
Life dear to her I had betrayed.
And spoke of me in tend'rst strain
How I had never caused her pain
But was in heav'n, where I should be
Awaiting her roost anxiously.
At times she restless soon became
And pleadingly would call my name,
And beg that I, at evening hour,
Would meet her in that favorite bow'r
Where oft we met in days long past,
In bliss too exquisite to last.

Sad soul, she mov'd from place to
place,
Wand'ring at times with pleading face,
Struggling with memory to trace
Some vision of her early years,
Then failing, she would burst in tears,
Her daughter Agnes, fondly true,
Did for her all a child could do,
Yet still 'twas on her stricken mind
That somewhere onward she could
find
Me, who had brought her to that
stead—
One who had doomed her such a fate.
She further to a convent went
And time in search of me she spent,
Wearied at last her search must
cease—
Her mind got clear ere her release,
She named my name before decease,
Then in that convent died in peace.

"O God, if on her distant grave
I could but kneel and pardon crave,
And ease my mind of doubt and fears,

By dropping penitential tears
Upon her sacred place of rest
I'd wander far to give this test
Which struck her like a javelin,
O Ella, in thy blest retreat
May we at last together meet!

"Her bereaved child alone was left.
But not of sympathy bereft.
The gentle nuns the orphan took
And shielded Agnes thus forsook,
They soothed her grief, and gave her
hope,
Nor let her sorrow have full scope:
And taught and trained her as they
could,
Most suitably for womanhood.
Then after this, in course of time,
Impressed her with their faith sub-
lime,

Induced to join their sisterhood,
She did so out of gratitude;
And I've been told that to this day
She is inclined with them to stay
In that lone convent far away;
For she long heard that I was dead.
And masses for my soul were said.
Her prayers for me have never ceased—
She never knew I was a priest,
She might come here my grave to
seek—

Of that I scarcely need to speak,
But should I find her dwelling
place
She'll get a father's fond embrace;
Oh, may I live that day to see,
Then from this world I'd gladly flee..

"After I left my stricken wife,
She moved afar to cause no strife,
When I no trace of her could find.
Being most unhappy in my mind,
I was removed from my first charge
And sent ambassador at large,
To greet her soon I shall prepare,
This was my wish, and, by command,
I lived in many a foreign land,
Doing such duties as I could
In cities or in solitudes.
And only lately I've returned
(To meet my child my heart has
burned),

For God I think will grant my prayer.
To greet her soon I shall prepare
Soon as I clasp her to my breast
I'd leave for my eternal rest,
Nor wish to stay a moment more,
As my afflictions have been sore,
Gladly I'd seek that last repose,
"To be released from human woes."

This is the sin I would confess.
O rev'rend priest, absolve and bless.

The young priest mused and thought
awhile,
Then gently, with a pitying smile
Said, "Father, you've had sorrow
deep,

And for your failings I could weep.
Your case is rare and deeply sad,
Of your repentance heav'n is glad.
God, who is ever true and just,
Will give you pardon—and I must.
Hard has been your retribution,
Now I give you absolution,
Fervent, and then, with hands out-
spread,

"Signo te signo crucis," said,
And words to cheer the penitent—
All that full absolution meant—
The time by 'oth was wisely spent,
Still Father Ambrose knelt and wept,
Thinking of that sin so long kept,
Thinking of how, for long, long years
That sin had brought him grief and
tears;

That though the church might grief
assuage,
That sin still stood on mem'ry's page.
Repentance has its power to bless,
But never brings forgetfulness,
The arrow which once pierced a heart,
Though broken now, still caused a
smart,

While crime may seek oblivion's wave,
Wrong is but hidden in the grave."

'Twas late, the priests rose to retire,
Each leaving with a strong desire
That all should feel the church's power
When prostrate in the dying hour,
And prayed the saints to intercede
For erring man in the hour of need,
Oft it is said, and some believe,
Spirits for wicked kindred grieve,
While others say, they know full well,
The saved rejoice o'er those in Hell,
Yet many, shocked by such a thought,
Say Purgatory is the lot
Of those not in a state of grace,
Who die ere penance can efface
The venial sins which brought disgrace,
To God all sins must be alike,
There souls for periods may remain
Till they are cleans'd from ev'ry stain
And cancelled truly every sin,
Ere they can heav'nly life begin.
Yet some philosophers assert

That all such thoughts have had their
birth,
In minds of egoistic men—
Deluded visionaries when
Claiming inspired tongue or pen,
That their presumption is supreme,
And immortality a dream.
Some say such dreams bring more de-
light

Than thoughts of an eternal night
For those who toil with care intense,
In hopes of future recompense, c
Struggling in faith, when life is o'er,
To live where they may weep no more.

But list! There comes a heav'nly
strain—

The organ's tones soft, low and sweet,
Like angel's whispers heard again,
As if they would sad mortals greet,
And then a voice distinct and clear
In touching sympathetic strain,
As one to bring prophetic cheer,
Made "Sursum corda," its refrain.

"Lift up yours hearts and seek a home,
Where sorrow clouds not day by day,
Where disappointments never come,
Nor happiness e'er fades away.
Come where the weary are at rest,
And troubles to the humble cease;
Come where no creature is oppressed,
And all from care shall find release;
Lift up your hearts and there find
peace,
Peace, peace, sweet, peace, eternal
peace."

With glad ear Father Ambrose heard,
The words of that soft, soothing song,
As if they were for him prepared
To tell his stay should not be long.
Then overcome, he prayed and wept,
And thought of her lonely grave ~~where~~
Was among strangers where she
slept,

Where drooping willows o'er her wave,
Oft touching were the sighs they give.
While thus he thought, there came in
view

A nun, she knelt close by his side—
'Twas she who from the organ drew
The strains which filled the temple
wide,

Though late the hour, she now was
seen

Gazing upon the Dean's pale face,
While with her veil she tried to screen
Her features in that holy place.
The two priests saw her with surprise

Just like an apparition there,
As if one came each to advise
And for a better world prepare.
At last she spoke, and with bowed head
Addressed the venerable Dean,

"O rever'nd Father, oft 'tis said
That dreams are sent, and often mean,
To bear a message from the dead.
A vivid dream I've lately had,
Though not the first, yet one most
sad,

And from its tendency infer
You can be its interpreter,"
Then, with a lovely voice and sigh
Said, "Years ago my parents died—
My mother—tender was the tie;
In her I took the fondest pride,
If ever saint was on this earth,
And patient suffering the proof,
She might be called a saint from birth,
Her sorrow came for my behoof;
She died far from her native place,
Beneath a convent's sacred roof.
I never saw my father's face,
We thought him dead—the nuns most
kind,

Cared for me, and their love I won,
No orphan better friends could find.
Time fled, and I became a nun—
Soon to regret what I had done,
The reason I need not explain,
'Tis one that ever may give pain.
Then came these dreams, and I was
told

I should come here to this strange fold,
To meet with you, as you could tell
All of my father, you knew well.
If aught of him you can relate,
Oh tell me of his state—or fate,
To see you, and then—soon away."

Having thus spoke, she raised her
veil,

The priests then started with sur-
prise,
Emotion they could not conceal,
The Dean exclaimed—"There's Ella's
eyes!

Great God, her face and form I see!
'Tis her child Agnes—come embrace,
I am thy father, come to me,
Your mother in yourself I trace,
Revealed is now the mystery."

The trembling Dean thought first with
fear,

As he looked on the black-draped form,
That his departed wife was near,
The likeness was so strong and clear—
Her perfect self with feelings warm,

Then he excited grasped her hand,
And kissed her cheeks ere she could
move,

With impulse he could not command,
Urged on by strong paternal love,
And tenderest ties close interwove,
The young priest now gazed just like
one

Who meeting thus with her once loved,
Found that his heart was not a stone,
For its fast beating pulses proved
The tender passion was not gone,
Though uselessly that passion moved,
Agnes embarrassed vainly tried
To seem indifferent at the time,
And curb the sense of maiden pride,
She had once had felt in other days,
When, with a love almost sublime,
She sought to win the smile and praise,
Of him she here now recognized
In priestly garb, as if disguised,
She felt how fatal was the vow,
Which held him bound as she was
now—

A bond to which they both must bow;
Some moments passed, a mutter'd
prayer

Was heard, the old priest bent his
head,
And with closed eyes seemed to pre-
pare

To meet a dear beloved one dead,
He spoke a name—"O Ella be
With me once more in this last hour,"

He smiled as if felicity
Came to him with oblivious power,
Patiently waiting his release.
He bowed and smiled as if at peace,
Just then the Dean relaxed his hold
Of Agnes' hand, and backward fell,
She screamed, she saw his look grow
cold,
With death-like symptoms she knew
well,

Her father's spirit passed away,
As deep tolled the cathedral bell.
Just at the dawning of the day;
Those praying heard the solemn knell;
But why it then tolled none could tell.

There is a resting place afar,
Where oft is seen by solemn night,
The rays of the fair evening star,
Mingled with moonbeams softly bright
Shining upon a lonely tomb,
Beneath which two sleep side by side,
By day sweet flow'rs around it bloom,
And many pilgrims seek that spot
Where Father Ambrose rests in
peace,

And pray that it may be their lot,
As years pass on, and cares increase,
Like him to have their troubles cease,
Still oft is seen with brow of care
Poor Agnes by that grave in prayer;
And roses oft are scattered round
On Father Gabriel's holy ground.



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