

**THE BALLAD OF BABE  
CHRISTABEL: WITH  
OTHER LYRICAL POEMS**

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The ballad of Babe Christabel: with other lyrical poems by Gerald Massey

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**GERALD MASSEY**

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## OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

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### *From the Times.*

MAY the summer morning be fair as the spring dawn is bright! We consider these verses, the circumstances of their birth and education being remembered, to be most remarkable and interesting. The love-poems, in particular, are unusually sweet and elegant.

But the poem that calls for our warmest praise, is the one which gives its name to the volume, and opens it, "The Ballad of Babe Christabel." It is the story, as the title implies, of an infant taken away in the bloom of childhood. The rhythm and the treatment seem to have been suggested by the "In Memoriam" of Mr. Tennyson, of whose rich pencil we are frequently reminded. But the copy is done with spirit. Here and there an affected expression injures the thought, but the merit of the writing is unquestionable. The end of this "thing" ought to be better than the "beginning." The Muse will be true to her votary, if he be true to himself. We rejoice to find the author not overblown by that gust of panegyric, which friends, more zealous than skilful, have been pouring on his sails. "Some of the critics," he writes, "have called me a 'poet;' but that word is much too lightly spoken, much too freely bandied about. I know what a poet is too well to fancy that I am one yet. I have only entered the lists, and inscribed my name; the race has yet to be run." These are brave words on the lips of a young man. If the race be run in this temper of humbleness and faith, the victory will be won, and the conqueror be crowned.

### *From the Athenæum.*

THE name of Mr. Gerald Massey will be new, we think, to many of our readers. The poet has been singing, like a bird in the night, with but few listeners to his strain, and these few of a class not always boasting of cultivated ears. He is a workman, and he writes to his class. His notes have been uttered on the confines of literature: no doubt they have sometimes made eloquent music, as hughes do in far-off mountain wilds, but their echoes have hitherto died in the obscure corners where they first arose. At length the songster has been able to collect his scattered melodies, and bring them home to



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other readers in the pregnant and interesting little volume now before us. It is low in price—slight in appearance. Let not the reader pass it by on that account. The syster is not over fair to look upon; yet may it contain the pearl of price.

We have read these lyrics of love and these lays of freedom with the deepest interest. We would introduce the author to our readers as a young poet—and as something more. As an artist he is not to be despised. The faculty divine is there. In him we have a genuine songster; a man whose ear—though not yet tuned to the complete and glorious harmonies of our English tongue—is sensitive to rhythm, whose pulse and brain throb musically, whose imagination throws out images in sonorous words, each full and fitting to the other perfectly, so that sound and image seem identical. His catalogue of faults is large and various, yet, with all, he has the true faculty of creative life. The author of such lines—the producer of such images as these—is certainly a poet.....Here we have illustrations won from Nature,—images which are sound, beautiful, and fresh. We could easily multiply such extracts, were they needed; but we have quoted quite enough to indicate the presence, in our new workman-poet, of that fecund and creative quality of imagination, without which art is barren, and labour lost.....Our workman-poet has become a teacher to his class. He speaks to them in passion,—counsels, exhorts, inspires them with his own vehement and vigorous spirit. Of the power of his appeal to their human sympathy all readers can now judge; of its success we have no doubt.....The appeal is not, however, at all times in the form of invective. Hence, there is always light on his path—lucid light it may be now and then—but, always light.....It would seem as if the poetic passion—the love of Beauty—the humanizing influence of the elder poetry—had kept our minstrel right. If Society had been neglectful, Nature had been bountiful. The harsh tone is nearly always softened by a gentler note in its immediate neighbourhood. If there be much of hate in this gathering of strong lines, there is yet more of love. Few poems in our recent outgrowth of poetic literature are finer than some of these love-verses.....We have quoted enough to show that here is another poet,—and one whose story and position as a teacher and preacher clothe him with unusual interest.

*Walter Savage Landor, in the Morning Advertiser.*

I PROPOSE to review the works of no ordinary poet,—Gerald Massey. It appears that his station in life is obscure, and his fortunes far from prosperous. Such, also, was the condition of Keats, to whom he bears, in many features of his genius, a marvellous rescm-

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blance. Keats has found patrons now he is in his grave: may Massey find them on this side of it! I have not the honour (for honour I should think it) to know him personally; therefore, if I should err in my judgment of his merits, the cause of my blindness will not be attributed to an over-heated partiality. Here are two stanzas of exquisite and almost unrivalled beauty.....There are thoughts and expressions here, and in many other places, which remind us of Shakespeare in the best of his sonnets. In these there is nothing comparable to the four lines here below.....I am thought to be more addicted to the ancients than to the moderns—wrongfully; for I never, since I was able to compare, preferred the best of them to Shakespeare and Milton. And at the present time I am trying to recollect any ode, Latin or Greek, more graceful than one in p. 24.....There is something oriental in these ideas; something of Hafiz, but chastened and controlled. In many pieces the flowers are crowded, and pressed together, and overlung, and almost overthrow, the vase containing them. In the lines on Hood—how august an exordium! and how rich and radiant the exhibition of Hood's wit! In the first thirty-seven pages there are all these passages, and many more, perhaps, of equal beauty. Here is such poetry as the generous Laureate will read with approbation; such poetry as Jeffrey would have tossed aside with derision, and as Gifford would have torn to pieces with despair. Can any thing more or better be said for it?

*From the Morning Post.*

THE poems of Mr. Gerald Massey have great and distinctive merits. They display taste, imagination, and sensibility; and are eminent, in a high degree, for energy of thought, and boldness of imagery. He is a striking illustration of the *nascitur non fit* principle in poetry. He now comes before the world with a duodecimo, of which Mr. Savage Lauder confidently predicates that it contains "a larger quantity of good poetry, than three-score ostentatious volumes by eminent hands." Mr. Massey is, undoubtedly, a man of genius; and, if he fail to accomplish great things hereafter, he certainly cannot plead Benedict's excuse of not having been born under a "rhyming planet." He is still very young; and, if he will be natural, and not put his muse in a pair of stays, we will hope a glorious future for him.

*From the New Quarterly Review.*

GERALD MASSEY is now an established Poet of the People; and, strange to say, the people's poets have a great deal more poetry in them than those who find favour in the drawing-room.

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### *From Tail's Magazine.*

GOD has given him genius united with a moral courage not to be cowed. He sings heart-stirring and melodious songs—songs of Liberty and of Love, and of man's inalienable rights. Poetry it is, coming warmly from the heart, and appealing as warmly to the heart of the reader. He is like a wanton child in a rich museum, grasping and scattering right and left brilliant and glorious things. He mingles sad truths with his poetic fancies.

### *From the Critic.*

OUR good and promising young poets are now very numerous. But there are some three or four on whom public expectation is fixed with peculiar intensity.... And now, like "another morn upon midnoon," fresh, dewy, full of birds, breezes, and blowing health, has the genius of Gerald Massey burst upon the admiring and rejoicing world. Probably since Burns there has been no such instance of a strong untaught poet rising up from the ranks by a few strides, grasping eminence by the very mane, and vaulting into a seat so commanding, with such ease and perfect mastery.

### *From Chambers's Journal.*

If the extracts we have already given do not suffice to show the promise with which Gerald Massey's little volume abounds, we must plead guilty to a misapprehension of what constitutes poetry of a high order; lacking, to a considerable degree, the artistic element, it is true, but full of originality and freshness of feeling. It only remains for us to notice the principal poem, "The Ballad of Babe Christabel," into which, as it seems to us, the poet has poured the whole wealth of his fancy, and in some parts of which he has been more successful than in any of his other productions. Pathos, often of the deepest and tenderest kind, is its chief characteristic; but, in the evolution of the story,—if we can apply that term to the mere expression of the feelings awakened by the birth and death of a little child,—fancy is manifested in great exuberance. Nor are there wanting occasional glimpses into the secret springs of sorrow, which evince a still higher quality.

### *From Eliza Cook's Journal.*

He unquestionably possesses the integral qualities of the real poet, and has that within him which defies all petty carping, and which ought to give him position and fame.



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### *From the Nonconformist.*

WE might go much further in quotation from these poems, with delight both to ourselves and our readers. We might also turn to others wholly different in character,—the “fiery-tongued” political verses, or the noble lines to Thomas Hood, or the more cheerful and hopeful “Worship of Beauty,” “It will End in the Right,” and “No Dearth of Kindness,”—and every where we should find pleasant proof that Gerald Massey is a poet of fine imagination and deep feeling, who may be expected, as he gathers materials for poetry in deeper thought and wider experience, to do something more and better than these ballads and lyrics.

### *From the Britannia.*

A VERY remarkable volume. He is a poet,—a true poet, rich in idea, imagery, and originality. We cannot too heartily recommend this little collection of poems to our readers, feeling sure that they will sympathize with all that is noble and good in the productions of this poet of the people.

### *From the Lady's Newspaper.*

IT does one good to read such lines as these; and there are many such in the volume. There can be no doubt that the author of these poems is a true poet, with sensitiveness enough, imagination enough, and heart enough. He starts, too, from the right point, from his own observations and his own feelings. He loves sunny days and starry nights; he has a warm and overflowing heart, and trusts its instincts; and a richness and force of expression which arrests our sympathies.

### *From the London Quarterly Review.*

THE poetry of Gerald Massey is all instinct with individual power; and much of it is strongly tinged with popular and current tendencies. His love-poetry is very pure and sweet, and frequently rivals the most genuine strains of Burns. But this “poet of the people” evinces a degree of culture, both of the imagination and expression, perhaps never equally exhibited by one so recently emerging from his bitter lot. The Ballad which gives title to this volume, is a tissue of poetic beauties, of which the Laureate himself might be proud; it is at once so elaborate and so simple. We make room for a few verses of this charming poem.

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### *From the Sunday Times.*

WE question if there is any poet of his class who can compete with Gerald Massey. He has already put forth lyrics which far excel the effusions of many cultivated minds in their poetic prime. The volume is full of passages of beauty, tenderness, power, fire, and energy. "The Ballad of Babe Christabel" is tenderly told. The Song, "All glorious as a Rainbow's Birth," reminds us of the best of Burns' love-lyrics.

### *From the Church and State Gazette.*

HEARTILY do we congratulate the age that sees the advent of such a poet as the author of "Babe Christabel;" and earnestly do we hope that his lyre may henceforth be devoted only to songs such as may stir the hearts of all, and arouse the fierce passions of none; for he is essentially and nobly gifted to be the poet of the affections. His poems devoted to the subject of pure and all-refining love are splendid tributes to the virtues, the truth, and the heroism of woman.

### *From the Atlas.*

THE author has many of the qualities of the true poet,—imagination, passion, and tenderness. We hope this will prove a distinguished success as a "Poet of the Pear."

### *From the Dispatch.*

GERALD MASSEY is working his way up to fame and honour. Many of these poems are lovely,—replete with voluptuous beauty.

### *From Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper.*

WE heartily welcome this little book,—a book that is a part of "the red-leaved tablet of the heart" of a true man. Gerald Massey is a born poet. The divine spirit is with him. And we earnestly hope, alike for his class as for himself, that a great future is destined for the poet. "Babe Christabel" is wholly a "thing of beauty," steeped and glowing in the spirit and with the hues of poetry,—tender, delicate, and touchingly eloquent.

POEMS.