

**LAYS AND LEGENDS;
OR, BALLADS OF THE
NEW WORLD**

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Lays and Legends; Or, Ballads of the New World by G. W. Thornbury

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G. W. THORNBURY

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Days and Legends

OR

BALLADS OF THE NEW WORLD.

The wates through which my weary steps I gupde
En this delightful land of faery,
Are so exceeding spacious and wyde,
And sprinkled with such sweet variety
Of all that pleasant is to eare or eye,
That I nigh ravisht with rare thoughts delight,
My tedious travell do forget thereby,
And when I gin to feel decay of might,
It strength to me supplies, and chears my dulled spright.

SPENCER'S *Faerie Queene*, Book VI.—SIR CALEDON.

Lays and Legends

OR

BALLADS OF THE NEW WORLD.

BY

G. W. THORNBURY.

LONDON

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.

1851.

TO

WASHINGTON IRVING,

ONE OF THE MOST DISTINGUISHED WRITERS OF THAT
NEW WORLD

IN WHICH THE SCENE OF THESE POEMS IS PLACED,

THIS LITTLE VOLUME

Is Inscribed,

BY AN ENGLISH ADMIRER OF THE SIMPLE PATHOS
AND DELICATE BEAUTY

WHICH SO PECULIARLY DISTINGUISH HIS WORKS.

another heresy, equally an error perhaps, but as wide apart as the Gnostick from the Epicurean. A great object irretrievably lost is indeed misery—utter misery; the utterest darkness of despair. But repulse is not a rout; and a bad book I may replace by a better.

But one merit I claim; and that is, of being (poetically at least) the first opener of the entrenchment—the first digger in this mental California.

But one word with ye, *Critical Reader*, before we part, perhaps—though let us hope not—for ever. I pray ye, good masters, worthy sirs, lords and ladies, true men and knaves, squires of low degree, or men of no degree at all, take good heed of what Milton, the blind old man of Lud's great town (one before whom I veil my face), said to ye:—" *Unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book; who kills a man, kills a reasonable creature—God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, the image of God, as it were, in the eye. . . . We should be wary, therefore, how we spill that second life of man preserved and stored up in books.*"

What great words are these, my fellows! and forget not how he goeth on to call books "not absolutely dead things, since they do contain a progeny of life within them;" "nay, they preserve, as in a vial, the purest intellect, and efficacy of that living intellect that bred them."

And what, prithee, think you be denominated the sin whereof ye are so often foully guilty, and which Draco, we are informed, punished with decapitation!—too good a punishment for ye cavilling race of unbelievers—the loss of an empty head for the destruction of the produce of another's brains. He calls it, forsooth—marry come up, who has a better right—a homicide, a martyrdom; and in cases where a whole impression of young innocents, swaddled in white, are left on the bookseller's shelves! a foul sin of a deeper dye—"the slaying of an elemental life," "the striking out of the ethereal and fifth essence," the destruction "of an immortality rather than a life."

Think of this, ye snarlers, and be wise; and when you next slay, like sons of Cain, a bantling of the meanest brain, remunerate the unhappy wight, even if he be a black, by paying his publisher, and repaying his expenses for paper, pens, ink, and the midnight oil, or beware of my vengeance; for, by the nine gods, I swear it—let Pluto record it in his ledger—the next time I meet you, whether in public or private, lane or street, highway or byway, or any other way, I will then and there seize you, as a condor would a chicken, and, grasping you incontinently in the place aforesaid, I will brand with a hot steel pen, upon your narrow forehead, the letter *C*, which the world knows stands for

critic, craven, coward, cuckold, and a thousand other distasteful names.

Farewell, dear reader. We shall travel together for a short stage or two, and then?—why, if you remember me as a pleasant, merry companion, my vocation is done.

I trust that thou wilt at least say of me what bald Cæsar said of the noble Brutus when still adolescent:—

“I know not well what this young man wishes, but what he does wish, he wishes VEHEMENTLY.”—VALE.

The curtain falls.