

**THE PROUD LADYE:
AND OTHER POEMS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649502189

The Proud Ladye: And Other Poems by Spencer Wallace Cone

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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SPENCER WALLACE CONE

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BY SPENCER WALLACE CONE.

New-York :

PUBLISHED BY WILEY & PUTNAM,
No. 103 Broadway;

AND

H. & S. RAYNOR, 76 Bowery.

John Gray, Printer.

1840.

THERE is an old adage, almost as old as the "time of good neighbours,"—that "good wine needs no bush;" grant this, and it follows that new attempts in poetry *do need* at least a slight apology upon their introduction to such dainty times as ours; and he who will not be at some pains to frame one "passing humble," must indeed be very blind to the faults of those dearest of all relatives, *the children of the brain*. Therefore, as far as this little volume may travel, and to whomsoever it may come begging a kindly look and friendly hand, let me say, that the several pieces composing it were not written either with the idea of striking out from the flint of this world brighter scintillations with the steel of poesy than others do, or of surpassing the ages that are gone by: but simply, because it was easier to write than to abstain. Of their worth, my readers must be the judges.

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THE PROUD LADYE.

I.

THE sun sank slow, and its last fair ray
Lingered on tower and turret gray ;
Flinging wide o'er the time-stain'd wall,
That oft to the battle tramp's piercing call,
When pennons were glancing beneath it bright,
And spears were in rest for the coming fight,
Had shook with the shouts that dared the strife,
As if each stone were a thing of life,—
A sad sweet light, like an infant's smile,
Undimmed by a thought of sin or guile,
That quietly rests on some aged face,
Where crime has dug deep its furrowed trace ;
Where passion and anguish past still lie
In the transient gleam of the sunken eye,
And the soul of youth's strife at times will speak
In the angry flush of the wrinkled cheek.

So looks the sun on that castle wall,
Ere the owl hoots loud, and the night-dews fall.

II.

But slower and sadder the sun-beams died
 From the waving wood and the upland wide,
 Gilding the tops of the yellow grain,
 And spanning the brook with a golden chain;
 Peeping sly in the buttercup's cell,
 And kissing the flower they love so well;
 Pausing, dancing, and lingering still
 On laughing water, and swelling hill,
 Where the nymphs sport free, and the dryads roam,
 And the spirit of beauty makes her home;
 And loveliness, cradled in flowers deep,
 By the soft night wind is rocked to sleep,
 Full loth to leave to sad dull-eyed night
 Hill, valley, and plain, so passing bright.

III.

1

Lay him upon no bier,
 But on his knightly shield;
 The warrior's corpse uprear,
 And bear him from the field.
 Spread o'er his rigid form
 The banner of his pride,
 And let him meet the conqueror worm,
 With his good sword by his side.

2

To the dark grave we go,
 Bearing the proud and great,
 Where quick decay will know
 Nor title nor estate.

.. : : : :

Pour forth the solemn strain,
 Wail for the mighty dead ;
 For dust hath come to dust again,
 And the warrior's spirit fled.

IV.

Slowly they bear him, with the dirge of wo,
 To life's last inn—the grave. Now back they go
 Through the long, solemn aisles—and silent all ;
 No word, no echo, save the measured fall
 Of many feet.

A hundred torches shone,
 With a red blaze, on roof and buttress stone,
 And faces blanched with sorrow, or the fear
 That shakes some natures when the dead are near.
 An instant—all is hushed—the crowd are gone ;
 The dead rest with their kindred dead—alone.

He'll see no more the serried lances gleam,
 He'll drink no more of battle's fiery stream ;
 Death met the chief 'mid life's embattled host,
 And they all failed him.—his last field is lost.
 Sir Hugo sleeps ;—shield, spear, and banner brave,
 Lie 'neath the conq'ror's foot—the monarch of the grave.

V.

Is she the last ?

Aye ! of that warrior race
 The last. Brave knight and haughty chief are gone ;
 And she, a woman, in her sire's great place,
 O'erways her vassals, guideless, and alone.

Bold knight and chief are gone : in the old hall
 Bright swords are rusting, mighty bows unstrung,
 Strong armour hangs all useless on the wall,
 And hard won trophies, quite neglected hung,
 Lie heaped together ; idly flapping hang
 Above them all the knightly banners' fold,
 That there, where loudest pealed the trumpet's clang,
 Where fiercest on the battle's surges rolled,
 Where the tall plumes like billows rose and fell,
 As red Bellona trod along the line,
 When all went down, flew o'er them broad and well,
 The star of hope, proud victory's surest sign.
 All idly now it hangs ;—the cold night air,
 Stealing through cracks and crannies of the hall,
 Perchance upon its wing will upward bear
 An instant, but no more ;—anon 'twill fall,
 And lowly droop again, like that sad tree,
 Lone silent sentinel by many graves,
 That o'er the forms love ne'er again may see,
 Its long thin arms in restless sorrow waves :—
 So, as it mourned for the proud days gone by,
 When o'er the stricken field it shone afar,
 The banner clasped the wind, and seemed to sigh,
 Then drooped in silence o'er the spoils of war.

VI.

And she, the last of her princely house,
 Led she a lonely life ;
 Or took to her side a noble spouse,
 And vowed her a loving wife ?
 A gay, but a lonely life she led,
 In court, in bower, and hall,