

**MURIEL: THE
FOUNDLING AND OTHER
ORIGINAL POEMS**

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Muriel: The Foundling and Other Original Poems by Andrew Ramsay

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ANDREW RAMSAY

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“With harvest home this hall was often lighted,
Dancing and music; and the ample board
Made Autumn cheerful; travellers benighted
Found welcome here and went away restored.

Now mournful winds among abandoned chambers
Resound the anthem of departed days,
Whose nights have come like soot upon the embers
By the old hearth which nevermore shall blaze.”

“*THE HAUNTED HOUSE.*”—Pages 51 and 52.

MURIEL,

THE FOUNDLING,

And Other Original Poems.

BY

ANDREW RAMSAY,

AUTHOR OF "ONE QUIET DAY," "CHRONICLES OF A CANADIAN
FAMILY," "THE LYRE," ETC.

"IN ALL LABOR THERE IS PROFIT."—PROVERB.



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1886.



DEDICATION.

The man of science sees no cause or ending ;
The poet hears a song above his theme ;
The artist fails before a rainbow's blending ;
The builder knows his unsubstantial beam.
Did ever any poet sing so purely
As to be pleased with all that he has done !
Perhaps the grandest genius rests but poorly
Unless a greater prize than praise is won.
Perchance he feels when looking on past labor
As those who fondle roses feel the thorn ;
For self-compunction is a two-edged sabre,
And good untold is grievous to be borne.
To exorcise this demon of depression
Song sometimes contributes ; but, O the void
The voicelessness of genius ! still, perfection
Elsewhere may find its harp and be enjoyed.

Call to arms' Bks by S. March, 1923

NY 51



"A strange bird sang, of mournful tone,
As if for Spring forever past."

"MURIEL."—Page 34.

J A V N



MANY misgivings beset the issue of a book of poetry, such as a diver feels when about to plunge in cold water. There is a time when the ocean tide is still, and that time seems more fateful than when the waters are "dark-heaving." It is a characteristic of imagination to dread its foes more than to fear them; for the lily has fewer enemies when it is in the bud than after its unfolding, especially if it happens to be a flower of the wilderness. So with these poems. They were brought up by the meadows, as it were, and nurtured in deep forests. They had not the advantage of a collegiate paternity. The day however has departed when sympathy could have been elicited in favor of ignorance; yet ignorance remains, like lees in a wine press. Pitted against those alien conditions, is something in the soul which must be uttered. And if it does not obtain vent by the pen, or pencil, the poetic spirit will revenge itself on its possessor by using the two edged sword of contrition. "Nature will be reported;" says Emerson, "all things are engaged in writing their history. The planets go attended by their shadow. The rolling

rock leaves its furrow on the mountain, the river its channel in the soil, the animal its bones in the stratum, the fern its modest epitaph in coal. In man memory is a looking-glass, which, having received images of surrounding objects, is troubled with life, and disposes of them in a new order. He loves to communicate, and that which is for him to say lies, like a load, on his heart till it be delivered." The above sentiment, which should be better known by those who ignore the bardic province as being infested with aliens, has been still better expressed by Charles G. D. Roberts, in the ballad of a Poet's Thought,

" Then grieving he fled from that quiet spot,
To where men work and are weary and weep;
For he said—" the wealth for which I wrought
Is sweet to win but bitter to keep."

From a utilitarian's standpoint the writing of poetry is an insane proceeding. As soon as a poet "opens an account with eternity" he is ostracized; envy, which is somewhat of a negative respect, may have its influence in his alienation. Certainly a poet's banishment from his brothers is not with his consent, for in all ages the minstrels have been glad to serve, first in battles for their native land, and foremost to welcome peace; but society deprecates his business ability as being below that of average men. Feeling this low estimate, and there are always numerous confirmations of adverse opinion—for doubt justifies itself as frequently as faith—he is driven forth like Ishmael, as it were, to occupy the disadvantageous position wherein

prejudicial opinions place him. This is more patent if the poet has not wealth wherewith to buy good will. Such a condition obtains in lands where poetry is best appreciated ; but his bardship's mischances are trebled in a new country. It is doubtful if even Burns could have obtained a hearing in Canada, now, equal to the reception which Scotland accorded him while he lived. Ah, well, as long as rainbows are not in the market, and no tax on sunbeams, or tollbars before the moon, poetry shall be received. As for the charge of lugubriousness which is sometimes preferred against the earlier productions of almost all poets, it is not a sin ; it is only the excess of glory obscured ; for the young bard feels " the burden and the mystery of all this unintelligible world " In a wilderness, alone, tho' among many, who are better ; with hereditary endowments of depression, and an innate foreboding of a future at war with his inclinations, such circumstances leave, especially on an impressible being, a pensiveness which is not devoid of power. The vast contrast between the dull level lands of adversity and the city of perfection on the Beulah hill of his longing, to which he looks with eyes purged by the " rufhrasy and rue " of adversity, throws a shade on the soul in proportion to its height, and sheds o'er imagination a dark glow, like a volcano's glare in Paradise. The contrast between the celestial spheres and the misrule of this world would blast an angel were he to visit us. Why poets, who are frequently so sensitive that they can feel the edge of a shadow, and who know themselves inferior in unearthliness to none of the minions