

**MISCELLANEOUS
POEMS, CHIEFLY
SCOTTISH. PP.10-160**

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Miscellaneous Poems, Chiefly Scottish. pp.10-160 by John Laing

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JOHN LAING

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MISCELLANEOUS POEMS,

CHIEFLY SCOTTISH.

BY

JOHN LAING,

TROON.

Those of honour will not grudge
A fellow mortal leave to speak,
Especially when he speaks the truth—
And truth is all that Truth dare seek.

Printed for the Author

BY

CHARLES MURCHLAND,

PUBLISHER,

IRVINE AND TROON.

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P R E F A C E .



ANY ventures have I undertaken in the past without fear or hesitation, but this, to me, the most important venture in my career, is taken with something akin to fear and trembling. Under the impression that the following trifles carried with them sufficient merit to enable me to squeeze myself into the ranks of the minor poets of my beloved country, induced me to flatter my vanity thus far in the publication of the present selected collection of my productions; and now that I have done so, I wait with trembling suspense the verdict of a critical jury, who, I hope, in their summing up, will take a lenient view of my case, from the fact that the enclosed are not the outpourings of one favoured with a University training, or the higher grades of education, and much of the little that I possess was gained in the quiet hours of the evening when the toil and worry of the day was gone. Truth, honesty of purpose, and a sense of justice were my sole guides in directing my pen in that which I have written, much of which was penned in defence of the oppressed against oppression, in the sincere belief and conviction under which I was labouring when the spirit of poesy overtook me. And now, Reader, no further sympathy I crave from you than a fair and impartial perusal, and then the verdict, be what it may, of an unbiassed mind, leaning more to truth and justice than bigotry and prejudice.

To my subscribers I owe a deep debt of gratitude for their support in enabling me to undertake the present venture, which, but for their aid, in all likelihood, a book of poems never would have been forthcoming from the pen of

Yours truly,

JOHN LAING.

December, 1894.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

Likewise for mirth an' honest glee,
 There were nane heartier than he,
 When he, a' life, wad join the spree
 Wi' tale or sang;
 His "Sodger John" aye fain to gie
 Baith loud an' lang.

But he, alas! nae mair ye'll hail,
 To cheer ye thro' this lonely vale,
 Or enliven ye wi' yon auld tale
 About the meal,
 Whilk he aft tauld withooten fail,
 An' cheer'd ye weel.

Ye weel may hing your heids an' moan,
 An' sab an' greet in mournfu' tone,
 Ye'll hear nae mair o' "Sodger John,"
 Or "Erin-go-Braugh;"
 Your noblest singer's but a drone,
 Noo Sam's awa'.

Ye villagers o' Troon may well
 Hing doon your heids an' mourning tell
 Hoo he in life did soum' his bell
 The village round,
 An' wi' stentorian lungs wad yell
 Things lost or found.

Ye'll ne'er again get sic a chiel
 To bell the village hauf sae weel;
 When herrin', mackerel, skate, or eel,
 By fishermen,
 Are caught by tempting bait or creel,
 Hoo will ye ken?

Guid, honest Leghorn, fare-thee-well,
 Till the auld kirk tolls my dying knell;
 If nane thee mourn, I'll mourn mysel',
 In boundless woe,
 An' will to future ages tell
 Thy worth below.

AN ADDRESS TO THE YOUNG.

*Delivered at the Annual Soiree of Troon Parish Church Sabbath School,
February 18th, 1892.*

HEAR SCHOLARS,—I'm here, and ye brawlie ken me,
I'm ane that the maist o' ye ilka day see,
Tho' maybe ye didna expect I wad be
Forrit wi' ithers at this your sursae;
But ye see I was kindly invited to come
Wi' a speech or a sang or some ither hum-drum.
I thoct for a meenit, an' just in a trice,
A something said, John, gie them a' an advice;
Sae I hope you will listen as weel as ye can
To the speech or the sang o' the Minister's man.

In time ye may grow to be women an' men,
An' takin' your places wi' ithers, an' then
Unless ye haud on to richt actions in youth,
Such as honour an' virtue supported by truth,
Ye may find yoursel's aften as naething at best
When your courage and manhood are put to the test.

Remember your teachers, an' Minister too,
An' their labours o' love in attending to you,
In directing ye always the gate ye should gang,
Keepin' aye tae the richt an' far frae the wrang;
An' kind tae yer playmates in ilka day's fun,
Nor wilfully tann'le them down on the grun;
At play an' your gambols, whatever it be,
Play faithfu' an' honest, contented an' free,
Nor scowl an' be vicious as gin ye wad eat
Ilka wee tottie ye meet on the street;
Nor wrangle, nor quarrel, nor threaten wi' blows,
An' that ye'll hit some yin a slap on the nose,
For that's no the way, ony idiot might ken,
That heroes are made oot o' boys when men.
Be kind an' affectionate, aue to anither,
Courageous an' honest when movin' thegither,
An' the worl' some day may hae cause tae rejoice
O' the heroic men that aince were her boys.
But gin ye be selfish, ill-natured and cross,
Ye'll be sifted wi' ithers an' left wi' the dross.

When at jing-ga-ring, buttons, the bat or the ba',
Or American-tag at the rit o' a wa',
Or Mary-ma-tanzie, or kipperdy smash,
Or ringy, or stakey, ne'er threaten ye'll thrash
A playmate because he plays better than you,

For remember that's no' a brave action to do,
 Be manly an' say, " Weel, I'm beat I confess,
 But I'll try an' play better the next time, I guess."
 Nor molest the wee totties that be at the schools,
 By playin' the robber in stealin' their bools,
 For remember a' villains began wi' a lift
 That by some folk wad scarcely be reckoned a theft.

Enter a' games wi' a zeal an' to win,
 But never let temper or malice get in,
 For the cheat an' the coward only hankers to own,
 That by an opponent they were overthrown ;
 An' in their defeat hesitate not to try
 The smoothin' o't owre wi' an evendoun lie,
 An' slander the truth wi' a statement not true,
 What a heroic boy or girl wouldn't do.
 Gin ye wad that the worl' ye move in sud ken
 That ye lived, ape the manners o' heroic men ;
 Be ye nobles an' good, an' wi' evil be shy,
 Nor stoop to the cowardice o' hatchin' a lie,
 For in truth I maun tell ye no brave girl or boy
 Such a base cowardly practice wad ever employ ;
 Nae practice like this can secure a guid friend,
 But sure to bring ruin an' disgrace in the eud.

Test ilka frien' weel, ere ye venture to say
 That those ye confide in will never betray ;
 Human nature at best is weak in the main,
 An' liable to yield under temptation's strain ;
 Aye look upwards an' onwards, an' try to excel
 In guid conduct an' frien'ship, an' a' will go well,
 Then frien's will surroun' ye mair faithful an' true
 Than the cauld go-be-tweens ye hae kent hitherto.
 To follow this maxim oot, practice in youth,
 An' back ilka word that ye utter wi' truth.
 Truth is a beauty nae artist can paint,
 Nor misguided anes ever its brilliancy taint ;
 Emblematic o' heaven, it reigns wi' sic power
 That tyrants and traitors in front of it cower ;
 But true to yoursel's, to your God, and to man,
 Unshaken before it courageous you'll stann'.
 Noo scholars, be carefu', and min' what ye dae—
 Stann' solid by truth, come oot o't what may,
 For truth shall remain ever purely sublime,
 An' triumphantly reign thro' eternity's time,
 An' those wha wad honour it here wi' their heart
 In eternity's joys may there hae a part.

Be kind tae your parents an' teachers as well,
 An' listen tae a' the nice stories they tell ;
 Dinna be thochtless, for min' it gies pain,
 To think a' their teaching on you hae been vain.

Guid boys an' guid lassies are aye easy kent
 By their conduct, an' bad anes are just a torment,
 For the bad anes are ill to themselves and to ithers,
 Unkind to their parents, their sisters and brithers.
 A pest at the schule, an' a trouble at hame,
 Ever ready to quarrel when playin' a game;
 Nae respect for thersel's, far less for anither,
 Disagree wi' their playmates, an' sae wi' their mither.
 When she's dishin' the parritch, the tatties, or kale,
 Their ill-natured spirit is seen without fail;
 Discontented an' thochtless, they yaumer an' growl,
 Owre much or owre little was put in their bowl.
 They're never contented, an' selfishness reigns
 To mar their life's pleasures wi' mony black stains.

The lassies are no' just as bad as the boys,
 Altho' wi' their tongues they can mak' as much noise;
 Their nature's are softer an' kinder awes,
 An' less o' the mischief observed in their e'e:
 It's true, I admit, when pursuin' their games,
 Whiles they loss temper an' cry ither names,
 An' shoot oot the tongue, as I hae seen them dae,
 At the schule when I chanced to be passin' that way.
 Noo sic like behaviour is quite unbecomin'
 To the boy or the man, the girl or the woman;
 An' unless that we check evil deed in oor youth,
 They may work us great mischief when sulder forsooth.

Sae noo, in conclusion, whaurever ye are,
 Look onwards an' upwards, an' truth be your star;
 Straightforward an' steady in ilka just cause,
 Nor stoop to a mean thing to merit applause.
 An' the meanest, contemptible thing ye can do,
 Is slander a fellow wi' statements not true.
 The untruthfu', 'tis known, can dae aught that is mean,
 An' to shelter himsel' he would tarnish a frien';
 Sae I hope that nase here o' the truth will be shy,
 An' say No, when your conscience wad hae ye say Ay.
 Noo scholars, I've finished up my harangue,
 An' judge ye gin it be a speech or a sang.