

**GERALDINE, A SEQUEL TO
COLERIDGE'S CHRISTABEL:
WITH OTHER POEMS**

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M. F. Tupper

BY
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P R E F A C E ,

INCLUDING A SKETCH OF CHRISTABEL.

THE *Christabel* of Coleridge is a poem of which it is almost impossible to give shortly a fair and perfect abstract. Every word tells; every line is a picture: simple, beautiful, and imaginative, it retains its hold upon the mind by so many delicate feelers and touching points, that to outline harshly the main branches of the tree, would seem to be doing the injustice of neglect to the elegance of its foliage, and the microscopic perfection of every single leaf. Those who now read it for the first time, will scarcely be disposed to assent to so much praise; but the man to whom it is familiar, will remember how it has grown to his own liking, how much of melody, depth, nature, and invention, he has found from time to time hiding in some simple phrase, or unobtrusive epithet. Most gladly, therefore, do I refer my

readers to the *Christabel* itself, however it may tell to the disadvantage of *Geraldine*: at the same time, inasmuch as there may be many to whom the sequel will be obscure, from having had no opportunity of perusing the prior poem, I trust I shall be pardoned, if, in consulting the interest of some of my readers, I mar the fair memory of *Christabel* by a sketch so imperfect, as only to serve the purpose of explaining myself.

The heroine of Coleridge is a 'blue eyed' girl, 'O call her fair, not pale;' and is introduced as 'praying in the midnight wood,' 'beneath the huge oak-tree,' 'for the weal of her lover that's far away.' While thus engaged, she is startled by 'moanings,' and on the 'other side of the oak,' finds 'a damsel bright' 'in sore distress' and 'weariness;' in fact, the dark-eyed *Geraldine*, whose sudden appearance is by herself very suspiciously explained. *Christabel*, 'comforting' her, takes her home to *Langdale-Hall*, the castle of *Sir Leoline*, where the howl of 'the mastiff bitch' seems to bode evil, and some wild expressions addressed by *Geraldine* to *Christabel's* 'guardian spirit,' her dead mother, (who had 'said that she should hear the castle-bell strike twelve upon her [daughter's] wedding day,') gives the first clue to the wicked and supernatural character of *Geraldine*. The maidens now retiring to rest together, the beautiful stranger's 'bosom and half her side,'—'old' 'and cold,' suggest vague

alarms, and 'for an hour' Christabel in 'her arms' is 'dreaming fearfully,'—from which state of terror she is delivered by her guardian mother.

The second part opens with the introduction of Geraldine to Sir Leoline, who recognizes in 'the lofty lady,' the daughter of his once 'friend in youth' 'Roland de Vaux, of Tryermaine,' who had parted from Sir Leoline many years ago 'in disdain and insult.' At her tale, (which I am pleased to consider a fabrication, as also the likeness to Roland's daughter to be a piece of witchcraft,) the Baron is highly indignant, and vows to avenge 'the child of his friend.' Meanwhile, poor Christabel is under a mysterious spell, subjected to 'perplexity of mind,' 'a vision of fear,' and 'snake-like looks' of the rival beauty; albeit 'comforted' by a 'vision blest.' Sir Leoline, glad of the opportunity of a reconciliation to his long-lost friend, sends 'Bracy the bard,' with 'harp' and 'solemn vest,' by 'Irt-(ling) flood,' &c., to Roland's border castle, commissioning him to 'greet Lord Roland,' acquaint him that 'his daughter is safe in Langdale-Hall,' and bidding him 'come' with 'all his numerous array' to meet Sir Leoline 'with his own numerous array' on 'panting palfreys,' and to be friends once more. 'Bard Bracy' hesitates, on account of having dreamt that Christabel—'the dove'—had 'a green snake' 'coiled around its wings and neck,' 'underneath the old tree;' and

having 'vowed' 'with music strong and saintly song,' to exorcise the forest. The Baron interprets it as of 'Lord Roland's beauteous dove,' and when Christabel, who had ever and anon been tortured by 'looks askance' of 'dull and treacherous hate,' entreats him by her 'mother's soul to send away that woman,' he, accounting 'his child' jealous of the radiant stranger, and no doubt alienated by black arts from his daughter, as the lover is afterwards, seems full of wrath, and 'in tones abrupt, austere,' sends the reluctant Bracy on his mission.

Thus far Christabel: for the 'Conclusion to part the second,' however beautiful in itself, is clearly out of place, unless it was intended as a mystification.

And now, on my own portion, I may be permitted to make a few remarks. My excuse for continuing the fragment at all, will be found in Coleridge's own words to the preface of the 1816 pamphlet edition, where he says, 'I trust that I shall be able to embody in verse the three parts yet to come, in the course of the present year:' a half-promise, which, I need scarcely observe, has never been redeemed.

In the following attempt I may be censured for rashness, or commended for courage: of course, I am fully aware that to take up the pen where COLERIDGE has laid it down, and that in the wildest and most original of his poems, is a most

difficult, nay, dangerous proceeding; but, upon these very characteristics of difficulty and danger I humbly rely; trusting that, in all proper consideration for the boldness of the experiment, if I be adjudged to fail, the fall of Icarus may be broken, if I be accounted to succeed, the flight of Dædalus may apologize for his presumption.

I deem it due to myself to add what I trust will not be turned against me; viz. that, if not written literally *currente calamo*, GERALDINE has been the pleasant labour of but very few days: also, that until I had just completed it, I did not know of the existence of the proposed solution of Christabel in a recent life of Coleridge, and at that period saw no reason to make any change in mine: and finally, that I should wish to be judged by the whole volume, and not by GERALDINE alone.

M. F. T.

