

LAYS AND LEGENDS

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Lays and Legends by Alfred Charles Jewitt

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ALFRED CHARLES JEWITT

**LAYS AND
LEGENDS**

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BY

ALFRED CHARLES JEWITT.

John's Father



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THE MOUNTAIN CAIRN.

IN the soft silence of a summer eve
I stood alone upon the mountain's brow,
And gazed upon the scene that round me lay.
The setting sun lit up the western sky,
And in a garb of golden glory shone
The mighty hills. Before my vision lay
Moorland and meadow, woods and glittering lakes,
And fertile valleys, that stretched far away
To where on the horizon shone the sea.
Above, the evening sky beamed calm and clear,
And the light mountain breeze that fanned my cheek,
Whispered soft thoughts of peace and joy and rest.
Beside me, on the hill-top where I stood,
There rose a rugged pile of rough rude stones,
Placed thither by the hands of those who climbed,
From time to time, the mountain's massive side,
And gained his hoary summit. As I looked
Upon these records of the vanished hours,

I thought how different had been the hearts
Of those who placed them. With what varying eyes
Each traveller had looked upon the scene
That lay beneath. The young man, flushed with hope ;
The aged sage fast passing from the world ;
The rich, the poor, the happy and the sad,
The great ones of the land, the peasant boy,
Perchance had each one added to the pile
Where now I stood. Then stooping to the ground,
I raised a stone that lay beside my feet,
And laid my offering upon the cairn.

So he who fain would rise from out the vale,
To the fair heights of fancy and of song,
Must tread the paths, and stand upon the ground
Trodden by many varying feet before—
The mighty, who have spoken to the earth
In glorious language ; and the weakly ones,
Who, with great hearts, have found their faltering tongues
Too feeble to give utterance to their thoughts.
Yet need he fear not. Every eye that seeks
May find new beauty in the scene ; to him
Who listens to the music, on the breeze
Come voices ever old yet ever new ;

As the rough stones that made the cairn had passed
Through countless years midst fire, storm, and flood,
And taken many forms, till in the heap
No two were found alike ; so is the thought,
Fashioned by joy and sorrow, calm and storm ;
For God hath never made two souls alike
In everything. Therefore the humble bard,
Who loves alike the sunshine and the storm,
The shady valley and the breezy hill,
May still find subject for his lowly song,
And though with faltering steps, approach the cairn
Of life, nor fear to leave his offering there.

