

**'A WREATH OF RUE',  
FOR LENT: AND THE  
SACRED LAKE**

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'A wreath of rue', for Lent: and The sacred lake by A. Mountain

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**A. MOUNTAIN**

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*Colby & Isabella*

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"A Wreath of Rue,"

FOR LENT;

AND

THE SACRED LAKE.

BY A. MOUNTAIN,

AUTHOR OF

"ST. HELIER," "OLD SARUM," "STONEHENGE," AND OTHER POEMS.

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1873.

"A WREATH OF RUE,"  
FOR LENT.

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*For Ash Wednesday.*

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**NINEVER.**

THE REPENTANCE OF FEAR.

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An ancient city\* once, with all its towers,  
Its domes, its turrets, bath'd in golden hours,  
Lay basking on the plain :  
From balcony and window went a voice  
Of music sweet, and cry—" Rejoice, rejoice,  
And dance and feast, and feast and dance again."

In luxury and pomp, and love and flowers,  
In garlands, garments gay, and perfum'd showers,  
Each day and night did wane ;  
And still, with wine and song, and dulcet noise,  
Did sackbut, harp and lute exhort—" Rejoice,  
And feast and dance, and dance and feast again."

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\* *Jonah, chap. iii.*

But, hark! a voice above the revels ringing,  
Like bells at midnight by an earthquake swinging—

    "Destruction comes! repent!

Yet forty days, this place shall be o'erthrown,  
Fire and whirlwind rend it stone from stone;  
    Madmen, repent—repent!"

And thro' the festive streets a being spectral,  
Like one by fiends pursu'd, with voice sepulchral,  
    Who ran and cried—"Repent!  
From Hell's red depths, beneath the ocean's gloom,  
Where death's black weeds enwrap'd me for my doom,\*  
    Back to the world I'm sent,

To summon you, when forty days expire,  
To shoreless seas of brimstone and of fire;  
    Repent!—repent!—repent!"

With haggard face, and eyes dilated, staring,  
Gigantic form, and wan, with wild locks glaring—  
He paus'd not, turn'd not, like a meteor flying,  
Till in the distance, as the spent storm dying,  
    Was heard—"Repent! repent!"

Then ceas'd the music, harp, and dulcimer;  
And dancing feet no longer gleaming were!  
    All lips turn'd pale;  
Goblets o'erthrown; silent the riot rout;  
The idol's song, the wine-inspired shout,  
    Chang'd to one wail:

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\* "The weeds were wrapped about my head."—Jonah, ii, 5.

Till rose the King, with love kiss'd garland crown'd,  
Snapp'd ev'ry jewel'd knot, and cast it on the ground :

    "One hope—to prayer, to prayer !

The God of Heaven may yet withstay his hand,  
If humble, fasting, weeping, all the land  
    Cry mightily to spare."

\* \* \* \* \*

Yes! God beheld repentant man with pity ;  
A day of grace He gave that humbl'd city,—  
    A mis-spent day of grace.

Ah, Nineveh ! amid thy ruins lone,  
Sits desolation on thy threshold stone,  
    And stares into thy face.

Amid thy cedar courts are wild beasts lying,  
And on thy broken walls the dry grass sighing  
    To days gone by :

While in thy lintels, whence sweet lutes did swell,  
Now cormorants lodge and shriek, and bitterns dwell,  
    With their discordant cry.

\* \* \* \* \*

Oh, let us read the past with introspection,  
As illustrating the divine reflection

    In warning given—

That they who slight the Prophets and the law,  
Would not repent although the dead they saw  
    Beckon to Heaven.



6            *"A Wreath of Rue," for Lent.*

And in these forty days "bemoaning wholly,  
With all contrition, and with meekness" lowly,  
    Our sinfulness of yore :  
So shall be thus "the day of vengeance wrathful,  
And solemn voice of most just judgment" awful,  
    Averted from our shore.



For the First Week in Lent.

ESAU.

THE REPENTANCE OF REGRET.

"Hast thou but one blessing, my Father? And he lifted up his voice and wept."—Gen. xvii. 38.

"He found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."—Heb. xii. 17.

"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."—St. Luke, xv. 10.

The eastern moon rose broad and red  
Against the western sun ;  
The fring'd palm higher rais'd its head ;  
The day's fierce reign was done :

The Patriarch's tents, in eve's last light,  
Their long dark shadows threw ;  
While dim, and far, and lost in night,  
The sands drank in the dew.

A vaguely solemn, silent scene  
Round Sheba's valley slept,  
When, from the tent's dim folds between,  
A voice of one who wept.

*"A Wreath of Rue," for Lent.*

The cry throughout the valley pass'd—  
    Contrition and despair—  
"One blessing, Father, all thou hast !  
    Bless me, e'en me, thine heir."

The palm trees wav'd, the moon rose high,  
    The misty desert spread :  
How could be check'd, by mortal's cry,  
    Nature's majestic tread ?

The night absorb'd the transient sound ;  
    No rock gave back a sigh :  
All unresponsive was around,  
    To frail man's agony.

Oh, Nature ! cruel to thy child ;  
    How many a bitter pain,  
Since that lone cry upon the wild,  
    Hath sought thy breast in vain ?

One blessing only, Mother Earth !  
    Can no hot tears efface ?  
Is all remorse but nothing worth  
    Past errors to retrace ?

No ! Nature's laws cannot reverse,  
    For man's inconstant mind ;  
And one must reap the whirlwind's curse,  
    If he have sown the wind.