

Meagher in Clonmel Jail

The following verses were written by Thomas Frances Meagher in Clonmel jail in 1848, while he was a prisoner awaiting trial.

I love, I love these grey old walls!
Although a chilling shadow falls
Along the iron-gated halls,
And; in the silent, narrow cells,
Brooding darkly, ever dwells.

Oh! still I love them - for the hours
Within them spent are set with flow'rs
That blossom, spite of wind and show'rs,
And through that shadow, dull and cold,
Emit their sparks of blue and gold.

Bright flowers of mirth! - that widely spring
From fresh, young hearts, and o'er them fling,
Like Indian birds with sparkling wing,
Seeds of sweetness, grains all glowing,
Sun-gilt leaves, with dew-drops flowing.

And hopes as bright, that softly bleam,
Like stars which o'er the churchyard stream,
A beauty on each faded dream -
Mingly the light they purely shed
With other hopes, whose light was fled.

Fond mem'ries, too, undimmed with sighs,
Whose fragrant sunshine never dies,
Whose summer song-bird never flies -
These, too, are chasing, hour by hour,
The clouds which round this prison low'r.

And thus, from hour to hour, I've grown,
To love these walls, though dark and lone,
And fondly prize each grey old stone
Which flings the shadow, deep and chill,
Across my fettered footsteps still.

Yet, let these mem'ries fall and flow
Within my heart, like waves that glow
Unseen in spangled caves below

The foam which frets, the mists which sweep
The changeful surface of the deep.

Not so the many hopes that bloom
Amid this voiceless waste and gloom,
Strewing my pathway to the tomb,
As though it were a bridal bed,
And not the prison of the dead.

I would those hopes were traced in fire,
Beyond these walls - above that spire -
Amid yon blue and starry choir,
Whose sounds played round us with the streams
Which glitter in the white moon's beams.

I'd twine these hopes above our isle,
Above the rath and ruined pile,
Above each glen and rough defile,
The holy well - the Druid's shrine -
Above them all those hopes I'd twine.

So should I triumph o'er my fate,
And teach this poor desponding State,
In signs of tenderness, not hate,
Still to think of her old story,
Still to hope for future glory.

Within these walls, those hopes have been
The music sweet, the light serene,
Which softly o'er this silent scene
Have like the autumn streamlets flowed,
And like the autumn sunshine glowed.

And thus, from hour to hour, I've grown
To love these walls, though dark and lone,
And fondly prize each grey old stone
That flings the shadow deep and chill,
Across my fettered footsteps still.