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That woman used to rouse the girl in winter dark and deep:
In pitcher cracked, or leaky pail, to bring them water back
From the stream, whence the wild dwarf-river rolls on its haunted
track.

Black was the night; across the ford of that enchanted flood,
The horse-hoofs of a knight from Nantes tramped the stream to
mud.
'Hail, fair one! art thou yet betrothed?'—a childish thing, and
shy.
(Those were her very words to us.) 'I cannot tell,' said I.
'Nay, sweet one, art thou yet betrothed?' Hide not the truth, I
pray.
'Nay, by your leave, fair sir, not yet have I been given away.'
'Take then this ring of gold, and tell thy father's wife that thou
'To wed a knight who comes from Nantes hast pledged thy maiden
vow.
'There mighty hath the battle been, there his young squire hath
died.
'He, too, is sorely wounded by a sword stroke in the side;
'Still in three weeks and three days more, the wound will healed
be.
'And to the castle he will ride lightly, for love of thee.'
Straight to the house she ran—meanwhile she looked upon the
stone;
That signet-ring, she knows it is her foster brother's own.
One week went by, two weeks went by, three weeks went by,
slack!
And still no brave young knight from Nantes comes lightly riding
back.
Her father's wife said, 'In my heart I've toiled and thought for
thee;
'A fitting bridegroom I have found, and married shalt thou be.'
'By your good leave, fair mother mine, no husband will I take,
'Save my own foster brother dear, who cometh for my sake.
'He gave me a gold ring to wear upon my wedding-day;
And soon will come delightedly to carry me away.
'Silence about thy wedding-day, and thy gold ring so fine,
Or I will teach thee how to talk—ay; with this staff of mine.
It is with Jolig Allosok that ye to church must go—
Jolig, our stable varlet young, whether you choose or no.'
'With Jolig?—I shall die of grief!—oh, horrible!—my own
Dear little mother, how couldst thou thus leave me here alone?
'Off to the courtyard, and weep there. Go hence, and weep your
fill.
In three days you his bride shall be—his bride, post as you will.
About that time the sexton old went round the country side,
Ringing his peal of death to tell of some one who had died.
'Pray for the soul that was but now a noble and a knight,
While, shring life, with stainless heart, stood up for truth and
right.
Whilst mighty battle beyond Nantes was raging wild and wide,
His death-wound from a sword-stroke came—a sword-stroke in
the side.
When sets to-morrow's sun, they will to watch his corpse begin;
Then from the white church bear him down, to rest his grave
within.
'You're early back.' 'In truth, am I, for I could bear no more:
Not that the feast is ended yet, not that the night is over;
But to behold that cowardly host confronting them in hall
Fill me with rage and pity, which I could not check at all.
Around that hapless maid I burn, whose salt tears never ceased,
There sat no guest who did not weep—not even our aged priest.
This morn'g in the parish church wept old and young; no eye,
Saying her stepmother's alone, at the sad sight kept dry.
The more the ministers, coming home, their joy-bells clashed and
swung.
The more they tried to soothe her grief, the more her heart was
wroth.
At supper-time, poor child, when she to the high place was led,
No drop of water could she drink, nor touch a crumb of bread.
They would have then undressed her straight, in bridal bed to
lay;
She tore her marriage girdle off, and tossed her ring away.
Forth from the house she rushed again, with loosely floating hair,
And now is hiding nigh at hand, no mortal knoweth where.
All lights were out within the tower, all slept in silence there.
Not that the feast is ended yet, not that the night is over;
'Who's there?' ' 'Tis I, my Nola sweet, your foster brother true.'
'You, brother of my heart?—Oh joy! Can it indeed be you?'
Straight leapt she on the milk-white steed, the steed her brother
knew,
Close clung her slight arms from behind, as on the charger strode.
'How fast we go! we've ridden, love, a hundred leagues, I trow.
I feel so lumpy with this, ne'er have I been blast as now.
But is thy mother's house far off?—would it were there at last.'
'Ayon! ayon!—only do thou, sweet sister, hold me fast.'
As on they rode, the owl in front, flut' heading down the glade,
The wild beaute of the wood dashed off, scared at the sound they
made.
'How little thy steed! thy coat of mail, how richly doth it shine!
How thin art grown since last we met, dear foster brother mine!
How fair thou art to look on! Still, is dear home distant? Say.'
'Ere long we shall be there, do thou but hold me firm alway.'
'Thy heart is ice, thy hair like damp—hand, heart, are tee alike.
Thou'rt cold, I fear, for from thy heart the death-chills on me
strike.'
'Still hold thee fast, my sister sweet; we now are close at hand.
Dost thou not hear the ringing tones of our little wedding band?'
He scarce had spoken, when at that heaving course was stayed.
The proud steed shivered where he stood, then mightily he
reighed.
They found themselves within an idle; there folks were dancing
gay.
There, hand in hand, fair maids and youths whirled round in
lumpy play.
There bright-lit trees grew all around, which golden fruitage
bore;
Behind glowed sunrise on the hills—it rose to set no more.
Down from those peaks a fountain poured its bright stream through
the plain.
All souls that of that water drink, come back to life again.
There Nola's mother smiled once more, both sisters at her side,
There pleasure never failed, and song to shouts of joy replied.
When next on earth day dawned, young maids, arrayed in robes
of gloom,
Bore little Nola's spotless form from the white church to the
tomb.

Literature.

THE RETURN OF THE GUARDS AND OTHER POEMS. By Sir FRANCIS HASTINGS DOYLE. London: Macmillan.

SIR FRANCIS is a candidate for the Professorship of Poetry at Oxford, which, in ordinary course, will shortly be vacated by Mr Matthew Arnold. Sir Francis's name is not very familiar to our youth; but a quarter of a century ago he published a volume of fair verses, which attracted some notice at the time. There were few things perhaps of great merit; but there was one poem distinguished by a charming sweetness and delicacy of sentiment and expression. This poem, which we hope is destined to live in our poetry, is also given in the present edition. It reproduces in poetic form a beautiful story in Burton's 'Anatomy of Melancholy,' wherein a young lady, whose mother had died early, sees a vision of her departed parent. The young girl has been placed in the room where her mother died; her nurse has left her for the night; and all was quiet:

LADY AGNES.

The silver lamp was quenched in gloom,
The prayer was duly said,
And the dim quiet of the room
Closed o'er her graceful head.
Beautiful Agnes! may she sleep
Until the golden day,
Beneath an angel's wing, to keep
All evil things away.
But soft—the wakes, as if in fear:
What slight sounds invade
The wavering eye—or dreaming ear,
To make her thus afraid?
The nurse was summoned to her side.
'Is thou my darling ill?'
'No, but the lamp, dear nurse,' she cried:
'You left it burning still.'
'Nay, look, my love, no lamp is near.
The room was black as night;
This taper I have carried here—
There is no other light.'
'Have I then roused you up in vain?
I must have dreamt,' she said;
And on the silken couch again
Down dropp'd her flower-like head.
But, on the closing of the door,
Again the room was bright;
Or cornice, curtain, ceiling, floor,
Fluttered that wondrous light.
High o'er her pillow, she beheld
A glory glim'ring roundly
From which, as from a fountain, welled
Floods of innocuous fire.
And in the middle of the light
A winged woman there,
With hazel eyes, and raiment white,
And waving aureole hair.
Upon the silent girl below
Her looks of beauty fell,
Speaking of peace earth cannot know,
And love ineffable.
And Agnes gazed a little while,
Then prayed for strength and grace,
Till both came issuing from the smile
Upon that woman's face.
Whether in words, to human sense,
The spirit found its way,
Or by some mystic influence,
The maiden could not say.
But words, or thoughts, an angel away
Lived on her heart like calm,
So that her senses, as she lay,
Were steeped in wondrous calm.
And thus, a heaven-sent messenger,
Upon her human child,
Scarcely more beautiful than her,
The spirit-mother smiled.
Mother and daughter felt through death
Their hearts grow one in love;
Delicious human tears beneath,
The scrup smiles above.
And then the Aspect told the maid,
By word or look, or sign,
That she must pass from earthly shade
Into a light divine.
That it had pleased the Lord to give
Them both a precious boon,
And that her child should come to live
With her to-morrow noon.
When this was said, the air grew dim,
And Agnes felt her brain
Down a bright stream of vision swim,
To slumberous depths again.
Oh! there was trouble in the hall
When Agnes told her tale,
A shadow of strange fear on all—
She only did not quail.
She only said 'This wondrous show,
Though true and clear it seem,
By my own reason taught, I know,
May only be a dream.'
'And if a dream it be, why soon
The cloud it leaves is gone,
But if a spirit—then at noon,
God's holy will be done.'
Then grave physicians came, to try
If fever lurked within
The splendours of the hazel eye,
Or the translucent skin.
But nothing they could find, to show
One trace of feverish heat;
As soft and calm as falling snow,
Her maiden pulses beat.
'Cool is her blood,' they said, 'survive
The peaceful nerves of brain;
Our skill is idle—and with Heaven
The issue must remain.
'Let her go forth to usual things,
The tasks of every day,
Until this dream, which round her clings,
Dies silently away.'
Pensively then the maiden's eye
Turned to the climbing sun;
But ever, as the hour went by,
Its usual task was done.
Until that sun had ceased to climb
The fatigues mid-heaven,
And noon was drawing near, the time
To holy music given.
Her minstrel did not come; and tired
With waiting on so long,
She sat her down, like one inspired,
And poured her soul in song.
'Christe, miserere meum,
Pater, Mater, Iudex,
Miserere, agne dei,
Per eternum crucem.'
The Minstrel standing in alone,
Stood tranced beside the door;
'For sounds came forth,' he said, 'unknown,
'Except in Heaven, before.'
And often he was wont to say,
And to that faith did cling,
That He, who listened on that day,
Had heard an angel sing.
At once the song stops hurriedly,
As if without her will,
Through floods of voiceless melody,
Seem edifying round her still.
Gently then the maiden bent
Over her throbbing lute,
As if to sweep the strings she meant,
But still those strings were mute.
The dial points to noon—and hark!
The old clock shakes its tower;
Yet strange to say, she did not mark
The coming of that hour.
A sunbeam touched her placid brow,
If earthly beam it were,
And tinted with a golden glow
Her trembling tresses hair.
She stirred not—and it seemed to lie
A glory on her head;
But when that splendour had passed by,
They found—that she was dead!

Sir Francis furnishes some translations of Breton Ballads, marked by great vigour and dramatic power. The rendering is exceedingly real and spirited. We give one of these. In some of its features, particularly the death-ride, this poem greatly resembles Burger's *Widhelm and Leonore*, which readers will remember so warmly charmed our own Scott, and, in fact, may be said to have evoked within him the poetic faculty. The Breton ballad Sir Francis believes to be an earlier form of the story. Those familiar with the German version will be glad to have an opportunity of comparing with it the Breton ballad, and those to whom the subject is altogether new will enjoy the weird beauty and the pre-Raphaelite fidelity of the story:—

THE FOSTER BROTHER.

No fairer maid throughout the land than Gwennolack was seen.
The daughter of a noble house, a maiden of eighteen.
Dead the old lord her father, dead two sisters, and her mother.
Her father's wife was left; but of her own blood breathed no
other.
'Twas sad by that manorial hall, at the threshold of its door,
To see that young and gentle girl still weeping—weeping sore:
Her eyes look sea-ward for the ship of her foster brother dear.
Her life's one solace, waited for in hope this many a year.
Her eyes look sea-ward for the ship of that foster brother dear;
Six times hath opened since he went, six times hath closed, the
year.
'Out of my path!' (the harsh one cried,) 'drive home at once the
kine;
' 'Tis not to sit before me there I give thee food of mine.'
Two hours—three hours—ere dawn, the fires to light, the house to
sweep,

'You're early back.' 'In truth, am I, for I could bear no more:
Not that the feast is ended yet, not that the night is over;
But to behold that cowardly host confronting them in hall
Fill me with rage and pity, which I could not check at all.
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