

**VARIOUS**

BALLADS OF  
BRAVERY

**Various**  
**Ballads of Bravery**

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*Ballads of Bravery:*

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# Various Ballads of Bravery

## “Curfew must not ring To-night.”

ENGLAND'S sun, bright setting o'er the hills so far away,  
Filled the land with misty beauty at the close of one sad day;  
And the last rays kissed the forehead of a man and maiden  
fair, —

He with step so slow and weary; she with sunny, floating hair;  
He with bowed head, sad and thoughtful; she, with lips so  
cold and white,

Struggled to keep back the murmur, “Curfew must not ring  
to-night.”

“Sexton,” Bessie's white lips faltered, pointing to the prison  
old,

With its walls so tall and gloomy, walls so dark and damp  
and cold, —

“I've a lover in that prison, doomed this very night to die  
At the ringing of the curfew; and no earthly help is nigh.  
Cromwell will not come till sunset,” and her face grew  
strangely white,

As she spoke in husky whispers, “Curfew must not ring to-  
night.”

“Bessie,” calmly spoke the sexton (every word pierced her young heart

Like a thousand gleaming arrows, like a deadly poisoned dart),

“Long, long years I’ve rung the curfew from that gloomy, shadowed tower;

Every evening, just at sunset, it has told the twilight hour.

I have done my duty ever, tried to do it just and right:

Now I’m old, I will not miss it. Girl, the curfew rings to-night!”

Wild her eyes and pale her features, stern and white her thoughtful brow;

And within her heart’s deep centre Bessie made a solemn vow.

She had listened while the judges read, without a tear or sigh,

—

“At the ringing of the curfew Basil Underwood *must die.*”

And her breath came fast and faster, and her eyes grew large and bright;

One low murmur, scarcely spoken, “Curfew *must not* ring to-night!”

She with light step bounded forward, sprang within the old church-door,

Left the old man coming slowly, paths he’d trod so oft before.

Not one moment paused the maiden, but, with cheek and brow aglow,

Staggered up the gloomy tower, where the bell swung to and fro;

Then she climbed the slimy ladder, dark, without one ray of light,

Upward still, her pale lips saying, “Curfew *shall not* ring to-night!”

She has reached the topmost ladder; o’er her hangs the great, dark bell,

And the awful gloom beneath her, like the pathway down to hell.

See! the ponderous tongue is swinging; ’tis the hour of curfew now,

And the sight has chilled her bosom, stopped her breath, and paled her brow.

Shall she let it ring? No, never! Her eyes flash with sudden light,

As she springs, and grasps it firmly: “Curfew *shall not* ring to-night!”

Out she swung, – far out. The city seemed a tiny speck below,  
—

There ’twixt heaven and earth suspended, as the bell swung to and fro;

And the half-deaf sexton ringing (years he had not heard the bell),

And he thought the twilight curfew rang young Basil’s funeral knell.

Still the maiden, clinging firmly, cheek and brow so pale and

white,

Stilled her frightened heart's wild beating: "*Curfew shall not ring to-night!*"

It was o'er, the bell ceased swaying; and the maiden stepped  
once more

Firmly on the damp old ladder, where, for hundred years  
before,

Human foot had not been planted; and what she this night  
had done

Should be told long ages after. As the rays of setting sun  
Light the sky with mellow beauty, aged sires, with heads of  
white,

Tell the children why the curfew did not ring that one sad  
night.

O'er the distant hills came Cromwell. Bessie saw him; and  
her brow,

Lately white with sickening horror, glows with sudden beauty  
now.

At his feet she told her story, showed her hands, all bruised  
and torn;

And her sweet young face, so haggard, with a look so sad and  
worn,

Touched his heart with sudden pity, lit his eyes with misty  
light.

"Go! your lover lives," cried Cromwell. "*Curfew shall not ring to-night!*"

# The Glove and the Lions

KING FRANCIS was a hearty king and loved a royal sport,  
And one day, as his lions fought, sat looking on the court.  
The nobles filled the benches, with the ladies in their pride,  
And 'mongst them sat the Count de Lorge, with one for whom  
he sighed.

And truly 'twas a gallant thing to see that crowning show, —  
Valor and love, and a king above, and the royal beasts below.  
Ramped and roared the lions, with horrid laughing jaws;  
They bit, they glared, gave blows like beams, a wind went  
with their paws;

With wallowing might and stifled roar they rolled on one  
another,

Till all the pit with sand and mane was in a thunderous  
smother;

The bloody foam above the bars came whizzing through the  
air.

Said Francis then, "Faith, gentlemen, we're better here than  
there."

De Lorge's love o'erheard the king, — a beauteous, lively  
dame,

With smiling lips and sharp bright eyes, which always seemed  
the same;

She thought, "The count, my lover, is brave as brave can be,

He surely would do wondrous things to show his love of me.  
King, ladies, lovers, all look on; the occasion is divine;  
I'll drop my glove to prove his love. Great glory will be mine!"  
She dropped her glove to prove his love, then looked on him  
and smiled;

He bowed, and in a moment leaped among the lions wild.  
The leap was quick, return was quick, he has regained his  
place;

Then threw the glove, but not with love, right in the lady's  
face.

"By Heaven!" said Francis, "rightly done!" rising from where  
he sat.

"No love," quoth he, "but vanity, sets love a task like that."

# A Young Hero

ON Labrador, like coils of flame  
That clasp the walls of blazing town,  
The long, resistless billows came,  
And swept the craggy headlands down;  
Till ploughing in strong agonies  
Their furrows deep into the land,  
They carried rocks, and bars of sand  
Past farthest margin of old seas,  
And in their giant fury bore  
Full thirty crowded craft ashore.  
That night they pushed the darkness through,  
O'er rocks where slippery lichens grew,  
And swamps of slime and melted snow,  
And torrents filled to overflow,  
Through pathless wilds, in showers and wind,  
Where woe to him who lags behind!  
Where children slipped in ooze, and lay  
Half frozen, buried half in clay;  
Young mothers, with their babes at breast,  
In chilly stupor dropped to rest.

A sailor lad of years fourteen  
Had chanced, as by the waters thrown,  
On four that made sad cry and moan

For parents they had lost between  
The wreck and shore, or haply missed.  
Cheerly and kind their cheeks he kissed,  
And folded each in other's arm.  
Upon a sloping mound of moss  
He dragged a heavy sail across,  
Close-pinned with bowlders, rough yet warm;  
And packing it with mosses tight,  
Kept steadfast watch the livelong night,  
Nor dared depart, lest e'er again  
Was found this treasure he had hid,  
Some sudden treacherous gust had slid  
Beneath that rugged counterpane.  
He knew not name or face of one.  
He saved them. It was nobly done.

Day dawned at last. The storm had lulled;  
And these were happy, sleeping yet.  
A few fresh hands of moss he pulled,  
Then traced with trembling steps the track  
Of many footprints deeply set;  
And pressing forward, early met  
These children's parents hasting back,  
And filled their hearts with boundless joy,  
As with blanched lips and chattering teeth  
He told them of his night's employ;  
Feigned, too, he was not much distressed,  
Although his dying heart, beneath  
His icy-frozen shirt and vest,

Beat faint. They went; and o'er his eyes  
A gathering film beclouded light;  
And music murmured in his brain,  
Such respite sang from toil and strain  
That all his senses, wearied quite,  
Were lapped to slumber, lulling pain;  
Whilst soothing visions seemed to rise,  
That brought him scenes of other times,  
With cherub faces, beaming bright,  
Of many children, and the rhymes  
His mother taught him on her knee,  
In happy days of infancy.  
Then gentlest forms, with rustling wings,  
Were wafting him a world of ease  
Beneath those downy canopies,  
Wherewith they shut out angry skies;  
And they with winning beckonings —  
Who looked so sweet and saintly wise —  
His buoyant spirit drew afar  
From creaking timbers, shivering sails,  
And ships that strain in autumn gales,  
And snow-mixed rains, and sleeting hails,  
And wind and waves at endless war.  
Oh! who will e'er forget the day,  
The bitter tears, the voiceless prayer,  
The thoughts of grief we could not say,  
The shallow graves within the bay,  
The fifteen dear ones buried there,

The grown, the young, who, side by side,  
Without or coffin, shroud, or priest,  
Were laid; and him we mourned not least, —  
The boy that had so bravely died!

# The Beggar Maid

HER arms across her breast she laid;  
She was more fair than words can say;  
Barefooted came the beggar maid  
Before the king Cophetua.  
In robe and crown the king stepped down  
To meet and greet her on her way.  
“It is no wonder,” said the lords,  
“She is more beautiful than day.”

As shines the moon in clouded skies,  
She in her poor attire was seen;  
One praised her ankles, one her eyes,  
One her dark hair and lovesome mien.  
So sweet a face, such angel grace,  
In all that land had never been;  
Cophetua sware a royal oath, —  
“This beggar maid shall be my queen.”

# Bunker Hill

NOT yet, not yet! Steady, steady!”  
On came the foe in even line,  
Nearer and nearer to thrice paces nine.  
We looked into their eyes. “Ready!”  
A sheet of flame, a roll of death!  
They fell by scores: we held our breath.  
Then nearer still they came.  
Another sheet of flame,  
And brave men fled who never fled before.  
Immortal fight!  
Foreshadowing flight  
Back to the astounded shore.

Quickly they rallied, re-enforced,  
’Mid louder roar of ships’ artillery,  
And bursting bombs and whistling musketry,  
And shouts and groans anear, afar,  
All the new din of dreadful war.  
Through their broad bosoms calmly coursed  
The blood of those stout farmers, aiming  
For freedom, manhood’s birthright claiming.  
Onward once more they came.  
Another sheet of deathful flame!  
Another and another still!

They broke, they fled,  
Again they sped  
Down the green, bloody hill.

Howe, Burgoyne, Clinton, Gage,  
Stormed with commanders' rage.  
Into each emptied barge  
They crowd fresh men for a new charge  
Up that great hill.  
Again their gallant blood we spill.  
That volley was the last:  
Our powder failed.  
On three sides fast  
The foe pressed in, nor quailed  
A man. Their barrels empty, with musket-stocks  
They fought, and gave death-dealing knocks,  
Till Prescott ordered the retreat.  
Then Warren fell; and through a leaden sleet  
From Bunker Hill and Breed,  
Stark, Putnam, Pomeroy, Knowlton, Read,  
Led off the remnant of those heroes true,  
The foe too weakened to pursue.  
The ground they gained; but we  
The victory.

The tidings of that chosen band  
Flowed in a wave of power  
Over the shaken, anxious land,  
To men, to man, a sudden dower.

History took a fresh, higher start  
From that stanch, beaming hour;  
And when the speeding messenger, that bare  
The news that strengthened every heart,  
Met near the Delaware  
The leader, who had just been named,  
Who was to be so famed,  
The steadfast, earnest Washington,  
With hands uplifted, cries,  
His great soul flashing to his eyes,  
“Our liberties are safe! The cause is won!”  
A thankful look he cast to heaven, and then  
His steed he spurred, in haste to lead such noble men.

# Fastening the Buckle

STAND still, my steed, though the foe is near,  
And sharp the rattle of hoofs on the hill.  
And see! there's the glitter of many a spear,  
And a wrathful shout that bodes us ill.  
Stand still! Our way is weary and long,  
And muscle and foot are put to the test.  
Buckle and girth must be tightened and strong;  
And rider and horse are far from rest.

A moment more, and then we'll skim  
Like a driving cloud o'er hill and plain;  
The vision of horseman will slowly dim,  
And pursuer seek the pursued in vain.  
Ha! stirrup is strong and girth is tight!  
One bound to the saddle, and off we go.  
I count their spears as they glisten bright  
In the ruddy beams of the sunset glow.

'Tis life or death; but we're fresh and strong,  
And buckle and girth are fastened tight.  
The race is hard and the way is long,  
But we'll win as twilight fades into night.  
Hurrah for rider and horse to-day,  
For buckle and saddle fastened tight!

We'll win! we're gaining! They drop away!  
Our haven of rest is full in sight.

# Hervé Riel

ON the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen hundred ninety-two,  
Did the English fight the French, – woe to France!  
And the thirty-first of May, helter-skelter through the blue,  
Like a crowd of frightened porpoises a shoal of sharks pursue,  
Came crowding ship on ship to St. Malo on the Rance,  
With the English fleet in view.  
'Twas the squadron that escaped, with the victor in full chase,  
First and foremost of the drove, in his great ship, Damfreville.  
Close on him fled, great and small,  
Twenty-two good ships in all;  
And they signalled to the place,  
“Help the winners of a race!  
Get us guidance, give us harbor, take us quick, – or, quicker  
still,  
Here’s the English can and will!”

Then the pilots of the place put out brisk and leaped on board.  
“Why, what hope or chance have ships like these to pass?”  
laughed they.  
“Rocks to starboard, rocks to port, all the passage scarred  
and scored,  
Shall the Formidable here, with her twelve and eighty guns,  
Think to make the river-mouth by the single narrow way,  
Trust to enter where ’tis ticklish for a craft of twenty tons,

And with flow at full beside?  
Now 'tis slackest ebb of tide.  
Reach the mooring? Rather say,  
While rock stands or water runs,  
Not a ship will leave the bay!"

Then was called a council straight;  
Brief and bitter the debate:

"Here's the English at our heels; would you have them take  
in tow

All that's left us of the fleet, linked together stern and bow,  
For a prize to Plymouth Sound?

Better run the ships aground!"

(Ended Damfreville his speech.)

"Not a minute more to wait!

Let the captains all and each

Shove ashore, then blow up, burn the vessels on the beach!

France must undergo her fate."

"Give the word!" But no such word

Was ever spoke or heard;

For up stood, for out stepped, for in struck amid all these,

A captain? A lieutenant? A mate, – first, second, third?

No such man of mark, and meet

With his betters to compete,

But a simple Breton sailor, pressed by Tourville for the fleet,

—

A poor coasting-pilot he, Hervé Riel, the Croisickese.

And “What mockery or malice have we here?” cries Hervé Riel.

“Are you mad, you Malouins? Are you cowards, fools, or rogues?

Talk to me of rocks and shoals, me who took the soundings, tell

On my fingers every bank, every shallow, every swell

’Twixt the offing here and Greve, where the river disembogues?

Are you bought by English gold? Is it love the lying’s for?

Morn and eve, night and day,

Have I piloted your bay,

Entered free and anchored fast at the foot of Solidor.

Burn the fleet, and ruin France? That were worse than fifty Hogues!

Sirs, they know I speak the truth! Sirs, believe me, there’s a way!

Only let me lead the line,

Have the biggest ship to steer,

Get this Formidable clear,

Make the others follow mine,

And I lead them most and least by a passage I know well,

Right to Solidor, past Greve,

And there lay them safe and sound;

And if one ship misbehave,

Keel so much as grate the ground, —

Why, I’ve nothing but my life; here’s my head!” cries Hervé Riel.

Not a minute more to wait.

“Steer us in, then, small and great!

Take the helm, lead the line, save the squadron!” cried its chief.

“Captains, give the sailor place!”

He is admiral, in brief.

Still the north-wind, by God’s grace.

See the noble fellow’s face

As the big ship, with a bound,

Clears the entry like a hound,

Keeps the passage as its inch of way were the wide seas profound!

See, safe through shoal and rock,

How they follow in a flock.

Not a ship that misbehaves, not a keel that grates the ground,

Not a spar that comes to grief!

The peril, see, is past,

All are harbored to the last;

And just as Hervé Riel halloos, “Anchor!” – sure as fate,

Up the English come, too late.

So the storm subsides to calm;

They see the green trees wave

On the heights o’erlooking Greve.

Hearts that bled are stanch’d with balm.

“Just our rapture to enhance,

Let the English rake the bay,

Gnash their teeth and glare askance

As they cannonade away!

'Neath rampired Solidor pleasant riding on the Rance!"  
How hope succeeds despair on each captain's countenance!  
Out burst all with one accord,  
"This is Paradise for Hell!  
Let France, let France's king,  
Thank the man that did the thing!"  
What a shout, and all one word,  
"Hervé Riel!"  
As he stepped in front once more,  
Not a symptom of surprise  
In the frank blue Breton eyes,  
Just the same man as before.

Then said Damfreville, "My friend,  
I must speak out at the end,  
Though I find the speaking hard:  
Praise is deeper than the lips.  
You have saved the king his ships,  
You must name your own reward.  
Faith, our sun was near eclipse!  
Demand whate'er you will,  
France remains your debtor still.  
Ask to heart's content, and have, or my name's not  
Damfreville."  
Then a beam of fun outbroke  
On the bearded mouth that spoke,  
As the honest heart laughed through  
Those frank eyes of Breton blue:  
"Since I needs must say my say,

Since on board the duty's done,  
And from Malo Roads to Croisic Point, what is it but a run?  
Since 'tis ask and have I may,  
Since the others go ashore, —  
Come, a good whole holiday!  
Leave to go and see my wife, whom I call the Belle Aurore!”  
That he asked, and that he got, – nothing more.

Name and deed alike are lost;  
Not a pillar nor a post  
In his Croisic keeps alive the feat as it befell;  
Not a head in white and black  
On a single fishing-smack  
In memory of the man but for whom had gone to rack  
All that France saved from the fight whence England bore  
the bell.  
Go to Paris; rank on rank  
Search the heroes flung pell-mell  
On the Louvre, face and flank,  
You shall look long enough ere you come to Hervé Riel.  
So, for better and for worse,  
Hervé Riel, accept my verse!  
In my verse, Hervé Riel, do thou once more  
Save the squadron, honor France, love thy wife, the Belle  
Aurore!

# The Battle of Lexington

The circling century has brought  
THE day on which our fathers fought  
For liberty of deed and thought,  
One hundred years ago!  
We crown the day with radiant green,  
And buds of hope to bloom between,  
And stars undimmed, whose heavenly sheen  
Lights all the world below.

At break of day again we hear  
The ringing words of Paul Revere,  
And beat of drum and bugle near,  
And shots that shake the throne  
Of tyranny, across the sea,  
And wake the sons of Liberty  
To strike for freedom and be free: —  
*Our* king is God alone!

“Load well with powder and with ball,  
Stand firmly, like a living wall;  
But fire not till the foe shall call  
A shot from every one,”  
Said Parker to his gallant men.  
Then Pitcairn dashed across the plain,

Discharged an angry threat, and then  
The world heard Lexington!

Militia and brave minute-men  
Stood side by side upon the plain,  
Unsheltered in the storm of rain,  
Of fire, and leaden sleet;  
But through the gray smoke and the flame,  
Star crowned, a white-winged angel came,  
To bear aloft the souls of flame  
From war's red winding-sheet!

Hancock and Adams glory won  
With yeomen whose best work was done  
At Concord and at Lexington,  
When first they struck the blow.  
Long may their children's children bear  
Upon wide shoulders, fit to wear,  
The mantles that fell through the air  
One hundred years ago!

# The Brave at Home

THE maid who binds her warrior's sash,  
With smile that well her pain dissembles,  
The while beneath her drooping lash  
One starry tear-drop hangs and trembles,  
Though heaven alone records the tear,  
And fame shall never know the story,  
Her heart has shed a drop as dear  
As e'er bedewed the field of glory.

The wife who girds her husband's sword,  
'Mid little ones who weep or wonder,  
And bravely speaks the cheering word,  
What though her heart be rent asunder,  
Doomed nightly in her dreams to hear  
The bolts of death around him rattle,  
Hath shed as sacred blood as e'er  
Was poured upon a field of battle!

The mother who conceals her grief,  
While to her breast her son she presses,  
Then breathes a few brave words and brief,  
Kissing the patriot brow she blesses,  
With no one but her secret God  
To know the pain that weighs upon her,

Sheds holy blood as e'er the sod  
Received on Freedom's field of honor!

## **Kane: died February 16, 1857**

ALOFT upon an old basaltic crag,  
Which, scalped by keen winds that defend the Pole,  
Gazes with dead face on the seas that roll  
Around the secret of the mystic zone,  
A mighty nation's star-bespangled flag  
Flutters alone;  
And underneath, upon the lifeless front  
Of that drear cliff, a simple name is traced, —  
Fit type of him who, famishing and gaunt,  
But with a rocky purpose in his soul,  
Breasted the gathering snows,

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