

## **SELECTED POEMS OF RICHARD MORSE, OF YORKLEY, FOREST OF DEAN (1811 – 1875)**

### **FROM LAYS OF THE FOREST AND OTHER POEMS**

*“A self taught Forest Youth”*

These poems were published in 1840 and were later revised by Francis Lye. The only known copy of this poetry is in Gloucester Library and in a very frail condition. A photocopy of the poems were sent to me by another of the Morse descendants in Australia, of which I have selected a few that are related particularly to the Forest. Richard was born in Yorkley but spent much of his life in Bristol. (Richard was my cousin, three times removed).

Janet Rigby

### **YORKLEY CITY**

#### **IN THE FOREST OF DEAN**

This city, never found in maps  
Nor e'en describ'd in gazetteer.  
Is quite as singular, perhaps,  
As any city, far or near

'Tis located on a rising ground,  
Its towers extensive view command,  
Delightful is the country round,  
And then the streets, how truly grand.

Just in its centre is a square  
Such squares are very seldom seen;  
It has of length a treble share,  
And used to be a bowling-green.

The government is vested in  
Nobody, I aver to you;  
No major's grace is there to win,  
Nor rebel fury to subdue.

Do not think this an empty strain,  
No, nor a madman's random fable;  
I say it only does contain,  
In all, three houses and a stable.

The city answering this description,  
At Yorkley you may always find;  
It is a city by prescription,  
Which leaves all other law behind.

## ON A VIEW OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCH

### PARK-END

When rushing on amid the awful gloom,  
White darkness and despair sit brooding round,  
The unguided vessel goes to meet its doom,  
In a bright beacon, by the sailors found,  
May warn them from a yawning, watery tomb,  
And mark the wished-for place to where the ship was bound.

Just so that sacred edifice appear'd,  
(Amid the gloom of ignorance and crime,)   
That by thy genius, generous Poole,\* was rear'd;  
Where, taught by thee, the sacred truths sublime,  
Unknown before, are now believed, revered;  
And there thy fame shall last unto the end of timer!

\*The Rev. H. Poole, the founder, and the zealous, indefatigable and successful minister of the above church

### LINES

*Written at the Grave of two Children, in Parkend Churchyard, at whose Funeral the Writer assisted.*

Could love, could parents' care have stayed  
Thy hand, Inevitable Death!  
The infants that we here have laid,  
Had not so soon resigned their breath:  
But God, by whom their lives were given.  
Knew when their earthly race was run;  
And, ere their hearts with guilt were riven.  
Hath taken them:-Hill will be done!

## TO A PRIMROSE

*Found in a natural Arbour among the large Oaks in the Forest.*

Pretty little lonely flower,  
How I love thy modest blow;  
Ever grace this little bower,  
Here in safety ever grow.

And, if tempted by ambition  
E'er to leave my humble cot,  
May I learn from thee submission,  
So be happy with my lot.

For while storms spread desolation  
'Mong the lofty trees around,  
In thy lowly situation  
Peace and safety may be found.

So, when states and empires shaking,  
Bid the rich and great beware,  
I, comparatively speaking,  
Am secure from strife and care

Though the wint'ry blast should wither  
Thy pale blow-thy leaves decay.  
Gales, the first that spring sends hither,  
Thy perfume shall bear away.

And, like thee, I too shall perish,  
When my life's brief summer's o'er;  
But there is a hope I cherish,  
To be blest for evermore.

Winter past, so drear and hoary,  
Thou again will spring and bloom;  
So I hope to rise in glory  
From the darkness of the tomb.

## THE FORESTERS' SONG

Though the tempest should howl, and the winds loudly blow,  
Driving o'er the wide waste the thick-falling snow,  
We could bare our hard bosoms their fury to brave,  
While the hearts that beat in them no power can enslave.

Yet the soft voice of pity, of friendship, and love,  
Can e'er penetrate through, and their kindness can prove:  
There's a tear for the first – for the others a heart  
Ever open, and free from deception and art.

But, oppressors and tyrants, to you we are  
Your designs and your measures we swear to oppose;  
Should you think to enslave us, go to, then, and try,  
A true forester knows how to conquer or die.

And with hearts as our dear native woods staunch and free,  
Ever loyal and ready will foresters be,  
To contend for their Queen, and their country, and laws,  
And to punish the wretch that deserts freedom's cause.

When the throne was endanger'd by traits, who aim'd  
A deep blow at the rights that our fore-fathers claim'd,  
To oppose them the Foresters sent a brave band,  
Determined the rebels' approach to withstand.

Round the banner of Berkeley our fathers then rang'd\*  
And their motto was "Liberty:"- we are unchang'd;  
Still shall "Berkeley and Freedom," to Foresters dear,  
Be our stand, ne'er deserted thro' bribery or fear.

Never shall it be said, that a Forester flies  
From his post, and deserts his friends and allies;  
No; a recreant Forester ne'er shall be seen,  
While our oak trees shall grow, and our holly keep green.

*\*When the great rebellion broke out in Scotland, the Foresters crossed the Severn, to join Earl Berkeley's volunteers, in such numbers as to acquire the appellation of "Berkeley's ducks".*

## ON THE DEATH OF A SISTER

*Which took place in America, in June 1834, in the flower of her age, after suffering distress of mind, as well as the pains of a lingering disease.*

Farewell, dear Eliza, ! how bitter the portion  
You drank to the dregs on Columbia's shore!  
How heaved your fond breast with heart-rending emotion,  
When thinking of those you would never see more!

No mother was with you to share all your trouble;  
Nor sister to soften with sympathy's tear;  
The pangs of disease were thus render's full double,  
And heavily pass'd every week, month, and year.

Kind friends may have show'd your attention and care;  
Perhaps you had some who were bland and kind-hearted,  
Who pitied the deep woe which they could not share,  
And watch'd o'er your fate till your spirit departed.

But what was the care of a kind-hearted stranger,  
Though given to you in a large splendid dome,  
When griev'd in your soul-when your life was in danger-  
Compar'd with the care of a mother at home

Oh! What were the best and the kindest attentions  
You could in a far distant country receive,  
When dash'd with the saddening and deep apprehensions,  
That you in that country would soon find a grave.