

Hid Treasure
(The Labours of a Deacon)

Canto I

“Alas! The turmoil’s of the poor,
“The friction of the labouring oar,
“The various projects which they try,
“The multiform pursuits they ply,
“The longings and the strivings vain,
“For what they never may obtain;
“The wreck of fondly cherished dreams,
“The blight of long projected schemes,
“These and a thousand evils more
“Ever attend the luckless poor!”

Thus spake the Deacon F__ of whom,
Much has been said and I presume.
Much may be said, but let it be,
Alike indifferent to me,
Whatever said; I do but tell
What haps that worthy man befell,
When he, by strong temptation tried,
To lucre’s service turned aside.
Allured by Demas to the mine,
Good Christian saw and did decline.

But Elder D__ with open ear,
Was listening to his sage compeer,
And thus replied, “Deacon I own,
“The truthful picture you have shown,
“Too well portrays the patient poor,
“Born but to suffer and endure:
“So doth mysterious Providence
“Unequally its gifts dispense,
“And worthy men like you and I,
“May plod in homespun till we die,

“While dolts and worthless knaves full oft,
“Are clad in silks and raiment soft.
“Yet conscious of superior worth,
“Despising accident of birth,
“May we not mount on genius’ wings,
“And soar above these vulgar things,
“Enjoying in the realms of thought,

“A bliss which is not sold or bought,
“And feed on that intellectual sweet
“The manna which the Angels eat.”

Quoth Deacon F__ “I do not care,
“To taste such unsubstantial fare.
“I’d rather stick by pan and pot,
“Ethereal banquets, fatten not.
“Give me the choice of wealth or fame,
“An ample purse, or noble name,
“One to accept and one refuse,
“And fame is not the one I’d choose.
“Once on a time I did despise,
“Wealth and its purchased vanities
“But since a Deacon I became,
“I do confess it, to my shame,
“That selfish aim and carking care,
“Crept in my bosom unaware,
“And through that aperture of sin,
“A relish for the world got in;
“For thus alas a mortal leaven,
“Cleaves to us to the gates of heaven.
“Now, while the world’s fair gifts I use,
“I neither covet nor abuse,
“While good and ill, to sheen or guide,
“Like beacon’s stand on either side.
“As wary seaman trim the sail
“When variable winds prevail,
“Make taut the brace or halliards slack,
“Instant prepared to stand or tack,
“Such pendent tenor I pursue,
“And keep both worlds alike, in view,
“Serve both in turn, and, nothing loath,
“Secure an interest thus in both.
“Once there did live a sage who knew
“Lever more strong than wedge or screw,
“Which if a fulcrum had been found,
“Had power to move the solid ground.
“That fulcrum gold has since supplied,
“And moves the world from side to side.
“Oh gold! what potent powers are thine,
“Thou demigod, almost divine!
“Thou arbiter of destiny!
“E’en vice itself, when touched by thee
“Respectability itself obtains,
“And half a moral status gains.

“Pursing thee, alike we brave
“All dangers both of land and wave;
“Possessing thee we fear no more,
“The evils that afflict the poor.
“Now Worthy Elder lend an ear
“Attentive to the words you hear,
“While I a ready scheme unfold,
“By which we may obtain the gold.
“’Tis not in regions far away,
“But at our own fair Chester Bay
“Whose lovely, oak clad isles are seen
“Embosomed in the bright marine,
“Where once that terror of the flood,
“The famous ocean Robin Hood,
“Of song and tale—hold Captain Kidd,
“In those fair isles his treasure’s hid.
“Small marvel that the corsair there,
“Dropped anchor without let or fear.
“In the calm shelter of a spot,
“By all the busy world forgot,
“And in its still and tranquil shade,
“Prepared again for future raid,
“To pounce with eagle eye anon,
“On freighted bark and galleon,
“And in the dells of yon fair isle
“Secrete his ill-got wealth the while.
“The spot is still remembered well,
“Where, as our old traditions tell,
“His hoard lies buried far below,
“Where stately oaks their branches throw,
“For centuries now have passed away
“Since his tall ships rode in the bay.
“A brooklet wandering to the sea,
“There forms a narrow estuary,
“Upon whose wave capt, shingly shore,
“—The pirates’ rendezvous of yore;
“There was of old a curious mound,
“And excavations in the ground,
“Which the abrading torrent’s flow,
“Has smoothed and levelled long ago.
“However e’en now the spot is known
“By dim inscriptions on a stone,
“Which many an anxious passer-by,
“Has gazed upon with searching eye,
“Intent the mystic words to read,
“That might to fame and fortune lead,

“But which a mystery do remain,
“Alike to savant and to swain.
“Now exercise of common sense
“Points to the fact, by inference,
“Nor needs the tongue of sage or seer,
“To tell that gold is buried there.
“I briefly now propose that we
“Do form a joint stock company,
“And so secure the golden prize,
“Which in our reach most surely lies.
“Labour and skill we shall require,
“To raise this treasure from the mire;
“A dam against the flowing tide,
“And pumping power must be supplied.
“The needful gear we must obtain,
“Tackle and windlass, winch and chain,
“With strong iron buckets too, to lift
“The accumulated sand and drift.
“Right means directed to the end,
“In a short time, we may depend.
“If patiently we work it out
“Will make us rich beyond a doubt,
“And recompense our toils and woes
“With years of leisure and repose.”

Quoth Elder D__ “A golden prize
“Easy to win, as you surmise,
“Others would not have left for us,
“Unless they were incredulous.
“I must confess, to me it seems,
“Like fancy’s pictures nought in dreams.”

“If weak in faith” the Deacon said,
“We cause the failure that we dread,
“And none but cowards hesitate,
“When the prospective gains are great.
“A fortune easily acquired,
“Is surely much to be desired.
“A rich bequest or lottery prize,
“The winner sees with glad surprise.
“Who that hath wrought in golden mine,
“And seen the glittering treasure shine,
“In its old matrix pure and bright,
“But in his heart hath felt delight.
“It may be that no sordid care,
“Had ever found a lodging there;

“It may be that he with lavish hand
“Would scatter wealth throughout the land;
“Or guard it with a miser’s grip,
“From his tight grasp no more to slip;
“To each the moment of success,
“Brings a like need of happiness,
“When all the schemes, by hope devised,
“Seem, in one moment realized.
“But, to conclude all argument,
“Without delay, ’tis my intent
“To offer the required stock,
“To organize—and not to talk.”

Then with an air of business he,
Waved an adieu to Elder D__
And hid away to straight prepare
And open, lists of stock and share.

’Tis proper that I now relate,
How fared the Deacon’s plans, and state
His scheme became so popular,
First offered shares were sold at par,
And up their soaring value went,
Each day increasing ten per cent,
Till all the proffered stock was bought,
And more to purchase yet, was sought.
When all arrangements were complete
It was agreed next morn to meet,
And all retired it dream that night
Of old doubloons and ducats bright.