

**Hid Treasure**  
**(The Labours of a Deacon)**

Canto II

Aurora streaks the eastern sky,  
The star of morn is blazing high,  
The air is vocal with the notes,  
Of music from a thousand throats,  
That carol to the rising day  
On branch and bough, on leaf and spray.  
O fair and joyous morn! in thee  
An emblem of our lives we see;  
When all is fresh and bright and new,  
And sweetly bursting on the view,  
Hope darting forth a gilded ray  
Gives promise of a cloudless day.  
Too soon alas shall mists arise  
To mar the brightness of our skies.  
While cold and blighting storms descend,  
And gales blow hard or lightning rend.  
But this is not the place or time,  
For me to aim at the sublime.  
Since I perceive how very near,  
Does the ridiculous appear,  
One theme shall occupy my pen,  
With some digressions now and then.

Already gathered on the strand,  
The Deacon and his party stand,  
With willing hands and eager eyes  
Impatient for the enterprise.  
Such willing thrift we well might guess,  
An augury of great success,  
Judged by that rule we oft have heard,  
The fortunes of the early bird.  
Shall poet sing or critic hear,  
The labours of the engineer?  
The muses are too frail to bear,  
The irksome weight of rule and square;  
Hammer and axe and plummet line,  
Are uncongenial to the nine.  
To solid things they much prefer,  
The light works of the gossamer,  
And from their airy dwellings smile,

At ponderous arch and massive pile.  
Then how shall I invoke their aid,  
To tell how coffer-dam's are made,  
Or how offend the tuneful ear,  
With song of pumps and winding gear?  
What tho' to measure, tune or time,  
I may not well dispose my rhyme,  
Yet these are themes I must disclose,  
E'en tho' I should descend to prose.

As the skilled master seals his ship  
Air tight and staunch, upon the slip,  
Ere on her voyage she is sent  
To buffet with her element;  
So, with due skill and caution they  
Down on the beach strong timbers lay,  
With planks well fitted side by side,  
A barrier to the coming tide.  
And then with pick and spade in hand,  
They shovel and up-heave the sand,  
And soon impelled by force a main,  
The pumps revolve and winches strain.  
Apart in close colloquial mood,  
The Deacon and the elder stood,  
Discoursing of contingencies  
That in the future might arise.

Quoth Elder D\_\_ "Such wicked gain  
"Conscience forbids us to obtain,  
"Since by participating, we  
"Share and condone the piracy;  
"I see no difference in brief,  
"Between the receiver and the thief.  
"The turpitude and moral breach,  
"With equal force applies to each.  
"The spoils of rapine and of wrong,  
"Wrenched from the feeble by the strong,  
"Was doubtless hid with incantation  
"And charm and wicked conjuration  
"Which none but priest may e'er undo,  
"What tho' it glittered in the view.  
"Mysterious hands would snatch away,  
"And to some secret spot convey,  
"The treasure trove, e'en as our hands  
"Were stretched to glean it from the sands,  
"Since none could touch it while the charm

“Were un-dissolved except with harm.  
“I therefore Deacon do advise  
“To have the proper exorcise.  
“I pray you let a priest be got  
“And lay the demon on the spot,  
“An English or a Rowish priest,  
“Which e’er you think will do the best.  
“Though I detest the Vatican,  
“And don’t admire the Anglican,  
“Because the latter, as I view it,  
“Does not possess the power to do it,  
“Since they did at the Reformation,  
“Renounce such claims on that occasion,  
“Though some assert it and would fain,  
“Take up the ancient role again,  
“And ape old mother church so well,  
“That Jack from Jill ’twere hand to tell.  
“Who ever does the spirit lay,  
“We’ll bind to take joint stock in pay.  
“And if he fails, why, you’ll allow,  
“We’ll be no more poorer off than now.”

Quoth Deacon F\_\_ “In every age  
“When priest and layman did engage,  
“In joint concerns, to say the least,  
“The clerk has always fared the best.  
“The ancient priests, by right divine,  
“Claimed the best cut on rump and chine,  
“But modern orders clerical,  
“By the same token claim it all.  
“Now if a priest can break a spell,  
“May not a deacon do as well?  
“Let’s have the physical prepared for,  
“And leave the mystical uncared for.  
“I therefore elder deem it well,  
“We should appoint a sentinel,  
“To guard us safe from all surprise  
“When darkness shall o’er spread the skies,  
“Lest haply vile marauders might  
“Molest us in the hours of night.”

“Forewarned, forearmed” said Elder D\_\_  
“Is prudence in the first degree  
“And verifies the argument  
“Better than cure ’tis to prevent.”

Then from his band the Deacon chose,  
His bravest man, as I suppose;  
A sturdy might robust and tall  
Towering above his peers like Saul.  
Him with due powers he did invest  
And thus the sentinel he addressed:

“This night we do assigned to you  
“A post of trust and danger too  
“To guard us safely from alarm  
“And herald all approaching harm.  
“Take thou this sword my father wore  
“When he a proud commission bore,  
“In our militia’s valiant band,  
“That wall of fire which guards our land.  
“What though it never yet drank blood,  
“Its appetite is doubtless good.  
“’Tis scarce a fault in sword or lance,  
“That haply never had a chance;  
“He never did in any case,  
“The honour of our arms disgrace,  
“And like him, well I trust that you  
“Will safely guard its honour too.  
“If an intruder venture near,  
“Challenge his purpose, then and there,  
“Bid him the password to repeat,  
“Or instantly beat his retreat;  
“Should he the ready signal give,  
“He is a friend, and let him live.  
“If he presume to disobey,  
“At duty’s call, arise and slay,  
“That the example may prevent,  
“All others on like mischief bent.”

Then from its leathern case he drew  
A weapon, terrible to view.  
A ponderous and brass hilted glaive  
Befitting warrior strong and brave,  
And venerable with the rust  
That did its ancient edge encrust.  
Perhaps, a true Damascus blade,  
It certainly might have been made  
In that old city of the East,  
In time of Tamerlaine at least.  
This—and a sash of faded red  
With tassels wrought of golden thread—  
Safe in the hero’s hands he placed  
And bound the sash around his waist.

Then did the Deacon lead the way,  
Down to an inlet of the bay,  
Which washed a beach of yellow sand  
Where at all times a boat might land.  
A pathway fringed with sombre pine  
Led upwards, through a steep ravine,  
With craggy sides, while overhead  
Great gnarled oak their branches spread  
And formed a thick impervious shade,  
Fit for defence or ambuscade.  
There one brave man by night or day,  
Could safely hold a score at bay;  
And in that strategic place,  
Divided by a little space,  
From his brave comrades; danger nigh,  
They easily could hear his cry;  
There at his post, secure and well  
Leave we awhile the sentinel.

Ceaseless, the work went bravely on,  
Day sped to noon, to eve anon,  
And soon the veil of darkness fell  
O'er hill and dale, o'er moor and dell,  
While still with fresh relay and shift  
They dig and delve, they pump and lift.  
When hope gives energy to will,  
What tasks can labour then fulfill;  
Such latent force she does bestow,  
That pigmies into giants grow.