

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **James Clerk Maxwell**

**- poems -**

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## A Problem in Dynamics

An inextensible heavy chain  
Lies on a smooth horizontal plane,  
An impulsive force is applied at A,  
Required the initial motion of K.

Let  $ds$  be the infinitesimal link,  
Of which for the present we've only to think;  
Let  $T$  be the tension, and  $T + dT$   
The same for the end that is nearest to B.  
Let  $a$  be put, by a common convention,  
For the angle at  $M$  'twixt  $OX$  and the tension;  
Let  $V_t$  and  $V_n$  be  $ds$ 's velocities,  
Of which  $V_t$  along and  $V_n$  across it is;  
Then  $V_n/V_t$  the tangent will equal,  
Of the angle of starting worked out in the sequel.

In working the problem the first thing of course is  
To equate the impressed and effectual forces.  
K is tugged by two tensions, whose difference  $dT$   
Must equal the element's mass into  $V_t$ .  
 $V_n$  must be due to the force perpendicular  
To  $ds$ 's direction, which shows the particular  
Advantage of using  $da$  to serve at your  
Pleasure to estimate  $ds$ 's curvature.  
For  $V_n$  into mass of a unit of chain  
Must equal the curvature into the strain.

Thus managing cause and effect to discriminate,  
The student must fruitlessly try to eliminate,  
And painfully learn, that in order to do it, he  
Must find the Equation of Continuity.  
The reason is this, that the tough little element,  
Which the force of impulsion to beat to a jelly meant,  
Was endowed with a property incomprehensible,  
And was "given," in the language of Shop, "inexten-sible."  
It therefore with such pertinacity odd defied  
The force which the length of the chain should have modified,  
That its stubborn example may possibly yet recall  
These overgrown rhymes to their prosody metrical.  
The condition is got by resolving again,  
According to axes assumed in the plane.  
If then you reduce to the tangent and normal,  
You will find the equation more neat tho' less formal.  
The condition thus found after these preparations,  
When duly combined with the former equations,  
Will give you another, in which differentials  
(When the chain forms a circle), become in essentials  
No harder than those that we easily solve  
In the time a  $T$  totum would take to revolve.

Now joyfully leaving  $ds$  to itself, a-  
Ttend to the values of  $T$  and of  $a$ .

The chain undergoes a distorting convulsion,  
Produced first at A by the force of impulsion.  
In magnitude R, in direction tangential,  
Equating this R to the form exponential,  
Obtained for the tension when a is zero,  
It will measure the tug, such a tug as the "hero  
Plume-waving" experienced, tied to the chariot.  
But when dragged by the heels his grim head could not carry aught,  
So give a its due at the end of the chain,  
And the tension ought there to be zero again.  
From these two conditions we get three equations,  
Which serve to determine the proper relations  
Between the first impulse and each coefficient  
In the form for the tension, and this is sufficient  
To work out the problem, and then, if you choose,  
You may turn it and twist it the Dons to amuse.

James Clerk Maxwell

## A Student's Evening Hymn

I.

Now no more the slanting rays  
With the mountain summits dally,  
Now no more in crimson blaze  
Evening's fleecy cloudless rally,  
Soon shall Night front off the valley  
Sweep that bright yet earthly haze,  
And the stars most musically  
Move in endless rounds of praise.

II.

While the world is growing dim,  
And the Sun is slow descending  
Past the far horizon's rim,  
Earth's low sky to heaven extending,  
Let my feeble earth-notes, blending  
With the songs of cherubim,  
Through the same expanse ascending,  
Thus renew my evening hymn.

III.

Thou that fill'st our waiting eyes  
With the food of contemplation,  
Setting in thy darkened skies  
Signs of infinite creation,  
Grant to nightly meditation  
What the toilsome day denies—  
Teach me in this earthly station  
Heavenly Truth to realise.

IV.

Give me wisdom so to use  
These brief hours of thoughtful leisure,  
That I may no instant lose  
In mere meditative pleasure,  
But with strictest justice measure  
All the ends my life pursues,  
Lies to crush and truths to treasure,  
Wrong to shun and Right to choose.

V.

Then, when unexpected Sleep,  
O'er my long-closed eyelids stealing,

Opens up that lower deep  
Where Existence has no feeling,  
May sweet Calm, my languor healing,  
Lend note strength at dawn to reap  
All that Shadows, world-concealing,  
For the bold enquirer keep.

VI.

Through the creatures Thou hast made  
Show the brightness of Thy glory,  
Be eternal Truth displayed  
In their substance transitory,  
Till green Earth and Ocean hoary,  
Massy rock and tender blade  
Tell the same unending story—  
"We are Truth in Form arrayed."

VII.

When to study I retire,  
And from books of ancient sages  
Glean fresh sparks of buried fire  
Lurking in their ample pages—  
While the task my mind engages  
Let old words new truths inspire—  
Truths that to all after-ages  
Prompt the Thoughts that never tire.

VIII.

Yet if, led by shadows fair  
I have uttered words of folly,  
Let the kind absorbing air  
Stifle every sound unholy.  
So when Saints with Angels lowly  
Join in heaven's unceasing prayer,  
Mine as certainly, though slowly,  
May ascend and mingle there.

IX.

Teach me so Thy works to read  
That my faith,—new strength accruing,—  
May from world to world proceed,  
Wisdom's fruitful search pursuing;  
Till, thy truth my mind imbuing,  
I proclaim the Eternal Creed,

Oft the glorious theme renewing  
God our Lord is God indeed.

X.

Give me love aright to trace  
Thine to everything created,  
Preaching to a ransomed race  
By Thy mercy renovated,  
Till with all thy fulness sated  
I behold thee face to face  
And with Ardour unabated  
Sing the glories of thy grace.

James Clerk Maxwell

## **A Vision of a Wrangler, of a University, of Pedantry, and of Philosophy**

Deep St. Mary's bell had sounded,  
And the twelve notes gently rounded  
Endless chimneys that surrounded  
My abode in Trinity.  
(Letter G, Old Court, South Attics),  
I shut up my mathematics,  
That confounded hydrostatics --  
Sink it in the deepest sea!

In the grate the flickering embers  
Served to show how dull November's  
Fogs had stamped my torpid members,  
Like a plucked and skinny goose.  
And as I prepared for bed, I  
Asked myself with voice unsteady,  
If of all the stuff I read, I  
Ever made the slightest use.

Late to bed and early rising,  
Ever luxury despising,  
Ever training, never "sizing,"  
I have suffered with the rest.  
Yellow cheek and forehead ruddy,  
Memory confused and muddy,  
These are the effects of study  
Of a subject so unblest.

Look beyond, and see the wrangler,  
Now become a College dangler,  
Court some spiritual angler,  
Nibbling at his golden bait.  
Hear him silence restive Reason,  
Her advice is out of season,  
While her lord is plotting treason  
Gainst himself, and Church or State.

See him next with place and pension,  
And the very best intention  
Of upholding that Convention  
Under which his fortunes rose.  
Every scruple is rejected,  
With his cherished schemes connected,  
"Higher Powers may be neglected --  
His result no further goes."

Much he lauds the education  
Which has raised to lofty station,  
Men, whose powers of calculation  
Calculation's self defied.  
How the learned fool would wonder  
Were he now to see his blunder,  
When he put his reason under

The control of worldly Pride.

Thus I muttered, very seedy,  
Husky was my throat, and reedy;  
And no wonder, for indeed I  
Now had caught a dreadful cold.  
Thickest fog had settled slowly  
Round the candle, burning lowly,  
Round the fire, where melancholy  
Traced retreating hills of gold.

Still those papers lay before me --  
Problems made express to bore me,  
When a silent change came o'er me,  
In my hard uneasy chair.  
Fire and fog, and candle faded,  
Spectral forms the room invaded,  
Little creatures, that paraded  
On the problems lying there.

Fathers there, of every college,  
Led the glorious ranks of knowledge,  
Men, whose virtues all acknowledge  
Levied the proctorial fines;  
There the modest Moderators,  
Set apart as arbitrators  
'Twixt contending calculators,  
Scrutinised the trembling lines.

All the costly apparatus,  
That is meant to elevate us  
To the intellectual status  
Necessary for degrees --  
College tutors -- private coaches --  
Line the Senate-house approaches.  
If our Alma Mater dote, she's  
Taken care of well by these.

Much I doubted if the vision  
Were the simple repetition  
Of the statements of Commission,  
Strangely jumbled, oddly placed.  
When an awful form ascended,  
And with cruel words defended  
Those abuses that offended  
My unsanctioned private taste.

Angular in form and feature,  
Unlike any earthly creature,  
She had properties to meet your  
Eye whatever you might view.  
Hair of pens and skin of paper;

Breath, not breath but chemic vapour;  
Dress, -- such dress as College Draper  
Fashions with precision due.

Eyes of glass, with optic axes  
Twisting rays of light as flax is  
Twisted, while the Parallax is  
Made to show the real size.  
Primary and secondary  
Focal lines in planes contrary,  
Sum up all that's known to vary  
In those dull, unmeaning eyes.

Such the eyes, through which all Nature  
Seems reduced to meaner stature.  
If you had them you would hate your  
Symbolising sense of sight.  
Seeing planets in their courses  
Thick beset with arrowy "forces,"  
While the common eye no more sees  
Than their mild and quiet light.

"Son," she said (what could be queerer  
Than thus tête-à-tête to hear her  
Talk, in tones approaching nearer  
To a saw's than aught beside?  
For the voice the spectre spoke in  
Might be known by many a token  
To proceed from metal, broken  
When acoustic tricks were tried.

Little pleased to hear the Siren  
"Own" me thus with voice of iron,  
I had thoughts of just retiring  
From a mother such a fright).  
"No," she said, "the time is pressing,  
So before I give my blessing,  
I'll excuse you from confessing  
What you thought of me to-night.

"Powers!" she cried, with hoarse devotion,  
"Give my son the clearest notion  
How to compass sure promotion,  
And take care of Number One.  
Let his college course be pleasant,  
Let him ever, as at present,  
Seem to have read what he hasn't,  
And to do what can't be done.

Of the Philosophic Spirit  
Richly may my son inherit;  
As for Poetry, inter it

With the myths of other days.  
Cut the thing entirely, lest yon  
College Don should put the question,  
Why not stick to what you're best on?  
Mathematics always pays."

As the Hag was thus proceeding  
To prescribe my course of reading,  
And as I was faintly pleading,  
Hardly knowing what to say,  
Suddenly, my head inclining  
I beheld a light form shining;  
And the withered beldam, whining,  
Saw the same and slunk away.

Then the vision, growing brighter,  
Seemed to make my garret lighter;  
As when noisome fogs of night are  
Scattered by the rising sun.  
Nearer still it grew and nearer,  
Till my straining eyes caught clearer  
Glimpses of a being dearer,  
Dearer still than Number One.

In that well-remembered Vision  
I was led to the decision  
Still to hold in calm derision  
Pedantry, however draped;  
Since that artificial spectre  
Proved a paltry sub-collector,  
And had nothing to connect her  
With the being whom she aped.

I could never finish telling  
You of her that has her dwelling  
Where those springs of truth are welling,  
Whence all streams of beauty run.  
She has taught me that creation  
Bears the test of calculation,  
But that Man forgets his station  
If he stops when that is done.

Is our algebra the measure  
Of that unexhausted treasure  
That affords the purest pleasure,  
Ever found when it is sought?  
Let us rather, realising  
The conclusions thence arising  
Nature more than symbols prizing,  
Learn to worship as we ought.

Worship? Yes, what worship better

Than when free'd from every fetter  
That the uninforming letter  
Rivets on the tortured mind,  
Man, with silent admiration  
Sees the glories of Creation,  
And, in holy contemplation,  
Leaves the learned crowd behind!

James Clerk Maxwell

## An Onset

Hallo ye, my fellows! arise and advance,  
See the white-crested waves how they stamp and they dance!  
High over the reef there in anger and might,  
So wildly we dance to the bloody red fight.  
Than gather, now gather, come gather ye all,  
Each thing that hath legs and arms, come to our call;  
Like reeds on the moor when the whirlwinds vie  
Our lances and war-axes darken the sky;  
Sharp, sharp, as the tooth of the sea-hound and shark,  
They'll tear ye, they'll split ye, fly lance to the mark,  
Home, home to the heart, and thou battle-axe grim,  
Split, splintring and shivering through brain-pan and limb;  
To-day we ask vengeance, to-day we ask blood,  
We ask it; we're coming to make our words good;  
The storm flinches not tho' the woods choke its path,  
We ask it; we're coming, beware of our wrath.  
At home wives and children a hearth for us lay,  
A savoury flesh-feast awaits us to-day;  
Behind yonder mountains e'en now the smoke streams,  
And the blaze of the bush fire crackles and gleams.  
Long, long have we hungered and thirsted for you,  
At home the dogs bark round the clean table too,  
Loud shouting we'll eat you to-night every one,  
Devour you clean to the white sinewy bone.  
Rush, rush ye my fellows, rush on them like hail,  
Soon, soon shall their roasting your nostrils regale,  
The fire is flaring, the oven's a glow,  
Heave to now hew thro' now, Holloa, Hollo.

James Clerk Maxwell

## Answer to Tait

The mounted disk of ebonite  
Has whirled before, nor whirled in vain;  
Rowland of Troy, that doughty knight,  
Convection currents did obtain  
In such a disk, of power to wheedle,  
From its loved North the subtle needle.

'Twas when Sir Rowland, as a stage  
From Troy to Baltimore, took rest  
In Berlin, there old Archimage,  
Armed him to follow up this quest;  
Right glad to find himself possessor  
Of the irrepressible Professor.

But wouldst thou twirl that disk once more,  
Then follow in Childe Rowland's train,  
To where in busy Baltimore  
He brews the bantlings of his brain;  
As he may do who still prefers  
One Rowland to two Olivers.

But Rowland,—no, nor Oliver,—  
Could get electromotive force,  
Which fact and reason both aver,  
Has change of some kind as its source,  
Out of a disk in swift rotation  
Without the least acceleration.

But with your splendid roundabout  
Of mighty power, new-hung and greasy,  
With galvanometer so stout,  
A new research would be as easy;  
A test which might perchance disclose,  
Which way the electric current flows.

Take then a coil of copper pure,  
And fix it on your whirling table;  
Place the electrodes firm and sure  
As near the axis as you're able,  
And soon you'll learn the way to work it,  
With galvanometer in circuit.

Not while the coil in spinning sleeps,  
On her smooth axle swift and steady;  
But when against the stops she sweeps,  
To watch the light-spot then be ready,  
That you may learn from its deflexion  
The electric current's true direction.

It may be that it does not move,  
Or moves but for some other reason;  
Then let it be your boast to prove

(Though some may think it out of season,  
And worthy of a fossil Druid),  
That there is no Electric Fluid.

James Clerk Maxwell

## British Association, Notes of the President's Address

In the very beginnings of science, the parsons, who managed things then,  
Being handy with hammer and chisel, made gods in the likeness of men;  
Till Commerce arose, and at length some men of exceptional power  
Supplanted both demons and gods by the atoms, which last to this hour.  
Yet they did not abolish the gods, but they sent them well out of the way,  
With the rarest of nectar to drink, and blue fields of nothing to sway.  
From nothing comes nothing, they told us, nought happens by chance, but by fate;  
There is nothing but atoms and void, all else is mere whims out of date!  
Then why should a man curry favour with beings who can-not exist,  
To compass some petty promotion in nebulous kingdoms of mist?  
But not by the rays of the sun, nor the glittering shafts of the day,  
Must the fear of the gods be dispelled, but by words, and their wonderful play.  
So treading a path all untrod, the poet-philosopher sings  
Of the seeds of the mighty world—the first-beginnings of things;  
How freely he scatters his atoms before the beginning of years;  
How he clothes them with force as a garment, those small incompressible spheres!  
Nor yet does he leave them hard-hearted—he dowers them with love and with hate,  
Like spherical small British Asses in infinitesimal state;  
Till just as that living Plato, whom foreigners nickname Plateau,  
Drops oil in his whisky-and-water (for foreigners sweeten it so),  
Each drop keeps apart from the other, enclosed in a flexible skin,  
Till touched by the gentle emotion evolved by the prick of a pin:  
Thus in atoms a simple collision excites a sensational thrill,  
Evolved through all sorts of emotion, as sense, understanding, and will;  
(For by laying their heads all together, the atoms, as coun-cillors do,  
May combine to express an opinion to every one of them new).  
There is nobody here, I should say, has felt true indignation at all,  
Till an indignation meeting is held in the Ulster Hall;  
Then gathers the wave of emotion, then noble feelings arise,  
Till you all pass a resolution which takes every man by surprise.  
Thus the pure elementary atom, the unit of mass and of thought,  
By force of mere juxtaposition to life and sensation is brought;  
So, down through untold generations, transmission of struc-tureless germs  
Enables our race to inherit the thoughts of beasts, fishes, and worms.  
We honour our fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grand-mothers too;  
But how shall we honour the vista of ancestors now in our view?  
First, then, let us honour the atom, so lively, so wise, and so small;  
The atomists next let us praise, Epicurus, Lucretius, and all;  
Let us damn with faint praise Bishop Butler, in whom many atoms combined  
To form that remarkable structure, it pleased him to call—his mind.  
Last, praise we the noble body to which, for the time, we belong,  
Ere yet the swift whirl of the atoms has hurried us, ruth-less, along,  
The British Association—like Leviathan worshipped by Hobbes,  
The incarnation of wisdom, built up of our witless nobs,  
Which will carry on endless discussions, when I, and prob-ably you,  
Have melted in infinite azure—in English, till all is blue.

James Clerk Maxwell

## **Cats Cradle Song, by a Babe in Knots**

Peter the Repeater,  
Platted round a platter  
Slips of slivered paper,  
Basting them with batter.

Flype 'em, slit 'em, twist 'em,  
Lop-looped laps of paper;  
Setting out the system  
By the bones of Neper.

Clear your coil of kinkings  
Into perfect plaiting,  
Locking loops and linkings  
Interpenetrating.

Why should a man benighted,  
Beduped, befooled, besotted,  
Call knotful knittings plighted,  
Not knotty but beknotted?

It's monstrous, horrid, shocking,  
Beyond the power of thinking,  
Not to know, interlocking  
Is no mere form of linking.

But little Jacky Horner  
Will teach you what is proper,  
So pitch him, in his corner,  
Your silver and your copper.

James Clerk Maxwell

## Horace, Seventh Epode

Whither, whither, reckless Romans,  
Are you rushing, sword in hand?  
Has not yet the blood of brothers,  
Fully stained the sea and land?

Not that raging conflagration  
Should o'er fallen Carthage play;  
Not that the unconquered Briton  
Should descend the sacred way.

"Rome," exclaims the joyful Parthian,  
"Ruin for herself prepares;  
Wolves with wolves are never savage,  
Lion lion never tears."

Is this fury? is it madness?  
Speedy answer I demand;  
Foolish, blinded, guilty Romans,  
Silent, stupefied you stand. [590]

Thus 'tis fated, blood of brothers  
Must atone for brothers' guilt,  
Since the blood of injured Remus  
Romulus in anger spilt.

James Clerk Maxwell

**In Memory of Edward Wilson, Who Repented of What Was in His Mind to Write after Section**

*Rigid Body (sings).*

Gin a body meet a body  
Flyin' through the air,  
Gin a body hit a body,  
Will it fly? and where?  
Ilka impact has its measure,  
Ne'er a ane hae I,  
Yet a' the lads they measure me,  
Or, at least, they try.

Gin a body meet a body  
Altogether free,  
How they travel afterwards  
We do not always see.  
Ilka problem has its method  
By analytics high;  
For me, I ken na ane o' them,  
But what the waur am I?

James Clerk Maxwell

## **I've Heard the Rushing**

I've heard the rushing of mountain torrents, gushing  
Down through the rocks, in a cataract of spray,  
Onward to the ocean;  
Swift seemed their motion,  
Till, lost in the desert, they dwindled away.

I've learnt the story of all human glory,  
I've felt high resolves growing weaker every day,  
Till cares, springing round me,  
With creeping tendrils bound me,  
And all I once hoped for was wearing fast away.

I've seen the river rolling on for ever,  
Silent and strong, without tumult or display.  
In the desert arid,  
Its waters never tarried,  
Till far out at sea we still found them on their way.

Now no more weary we faint in deserts dreary,  
Toiling alone till the closing of the day;  
All now is righted,  
Our souls flow on united,  
Till the years and their sorrows have all died away.

James Clerk Maxwell

## Lectures to Women on Physical Science

### I.

*PLACE.* -- A small alcove with dark curtains.  
The class consists of one member.  
*SUBJECT.* -- Thomson's Mirror Galvanometer.

The lamp-light falls on blackened walls,  
And streams through narrow perforations,  
The long beam trails o'er pasteboard scales,  
With slow-decaying oscillations.  
Flow, current, flow, set the quick light-spot flying,  
Flow current, answer light-spot, flashing, quivering, dying,

O look! how queer! how thin and clear,  
And thinner, clearer, sharper growing  
The gliding fire! with central wire,  
The fine degrees distinctly showing.  
Swing, magnet, swing, advancing and receding,  
Swing magnet! Answer dearest, What's your final reading?

O love! you fail to read the scale  
Correct to tenths of a division.  
To mirror heaven those eyes were given,  
And not for methods of precision.  
Break contact, break, set the free light-spot flying;  
Break contact, rest thee, magnet, swinging, creeping, dying.

### II.

*Professor Chrschtschonovitsch, Ph.D., "On the C. G. S. system of Units."*  
Remarks submitted to the Lecturer by a student.

Prim Doctor of Philosophy  
Front academic Heidelberg!  
Your sum of vital energy  
Is not the millionth of an erg.  
Your liveliest motion might be reckoned  
At one-tenth metre in a second.  
"The air," you said, in language fine,  
Which scientific thought expresses,  
"The air -- which with a megadyne,  
On each square centimetre presses --  
The air, and I may add the ocean,  
Are nought but molecules in motion."

Atoms, you told me, were discrete,  
Than you they could not be discreter,  
Who know how many Millions meet  
Within a cubic millimetre.

They clash together as they fly,  
But you! -- you cannot tell me why.

And when in tuning my guitar  
The interval would not come right,  
"This string," you said, "is strained too far,  
'Tis forty dynes, at least too tight!"  
And then you told me, as I sang,  
What overtones were in my clang.

You gabbled on, but every phrase  
Was stiff with scientific shoddy,  
The only song you deigned to praise  
Was "Gin a body meet a body,"  
"And even there," you said, "collision  
Was not described with due precision."

"In the invariable plane,"  
You told me, "lay the impulsive couple."  
You seized my hand -- you gave me pain,  
By torsion of a wrist so supple;  
You told me what that wrench would do, --  
"Twould set me twisting round a screw."

Were every hair of every tress  
(Which you, no doubt, imagine mine),  
Drawn towards you with its breaking stress --  
A stress, say, of a megadyne,  
That tension I would sooner suffer  
Than meet again with such a duffer!

James Clerk Maxwell

## Lines written under the Conviction That It Is Not Wise to Read Mathematics in November after One's F

In the sad November time,  
When the leaf has left the lime,  
And the Cam, with sludge and slime,  
Plasters his ugly channel,  
While, with sober step and slow,  
Round about the marshes low,  
Stiffening students stumping go  
Shivering through their flannel.

Then to me in doleful mood  
Rises up a question rude,  
Asking what sufficient good  
Comes of this mode of living?  
Moping on from day to day,  
Grinding up what will not "pay,"  
Till the jaded brain gives way  
Under its own misgiving.

Why should wretched Man employ  
Years which Nature meant for joy,  
Striving vainly to destroy  
Freedom of thought and feeling?  
Still the injured powers remain  
Endless stores of hopeless pain,  
When at last the vanquished brain  
Languishes past all healing.

Where is then his wealth of mind --  
All the schemes that Hope designed?  
Gone, like spring, to leave behind  
Indolent melancholy.  
Thus he ends his helpless days,  
Vex't with thoughts of former praise --  
Tell me, how are Wisdom's ways  
Better than senseless Folly?

Happier those whom trifles please,  
Dreaming out a life of ease,  
Sinking by unfelt degrees  
Into annihilation.  
Or the slave, to labour born,  
Headless of the freeman's scorn,  
Destined to be slowly worn  
Down to the brute creation.

Thus a tempting spirit spoke,  
As from troubled sleep I woke  
To a morning thick with smoke,  
Sunless and damp and chilly.  
Then to sleep I turned once more,  
Eyes inflamed and windpipe sore,  
Dreaming dreams I dreamt before,

Only not quite so silly.

In my dream methought I strayed  
Where a learned-looking maid  
Stores of flimsy goods displayed,  
Articles not worth wearing.  
"These," she said, with solemn air,  
"Are the robes that sages wear,  
Warranted, when kept with care,  
Never to need repairing."

Then unnumbered witlings, caught  
By her wiles, the trappings bought,  
And by labour, not by thought,  
Honour and fame were earning.  
While the men of wiser mind  
Passed for blind among the blind;  
Pedants left them far behind  
In the career of learning.

"Those that fix their eager eyes  
Ever on the nearest prize  
Well may venture to despise  
Loftier aspirations.  
Pedantry is in demand!  
Buy it up at second-hand,  
Seek no more to understand  
Profitless speculations."

Thus the gaudy gowns were sold,  
Cast off sloughs of pedants old;  
Proudly marched the students bold  
Through the domain of error,  
Till their trappings, false though fair,  
Mouldered off and left them bare,  
Clustering close in blank despair,  
Nakedness, cold, and terror.

Then, I said, "These haughty Schools  
Boast that by their formal rules  
They produce more learned fools  
Than could be well expected.  
Learned fools they are indeed,  
Learned in the books they read;  
Fools whene'er they come to need  
Wisdom, too long neglected.

"Oh! that men indeed were wise,  
And would raise their purblind eyes  
To the opening mysteries  
Scattered around them ever.  
Truth should spring from sterile ground,

Beauty beam from all around,  
Right should then at last be found  
Joining what none may sever."

James Clerk Maxwell

## **Lines written under the Conviction That It Is Not Wise to Read Mathematics in November after One's Fire Is Out**

In the sad November time,  
When the leaf has left the lime,  
And the Cam, with sludge and slime,  
Plasters his ugly channel,  
While, with sober step and slow,  
Round about the marshes low,  
Stiffening students stumping go  
Shivering through their flannel.

Then to me in doleful mood  
Rises up a question rude,  
Asking what sufficient good  
Comes of this mode of living?  
Moping on from day to day,  
Grinding up what will not "pay,"  
Till the jaded brain gives way  
Under its own misgiving.

Why should wretched Man employ  
Years which Nature meant for joy,  
Striving vainly to destroy  
Freedom of thought and feeling?  
Still the injured powers remain  
Endless stores of hopeless pain,  
When at last the vanquished brain  
Languishes past all healing.

Where is then his wealth of mind --  
All the schemes that Hope designed?  
Gone, like spring, to leave behind  
Indolent melancholy.  
Thus he ends his helpless days,  
Vex't with thoughts of former praise --  
Tell me, how are Wisdom's ways  
Better than senseless Folly?

Happier those whom trifles please,  
Dreaming out a life of ease,  
Sinking by unfelt degrees  
Into annihilation.  
Or the slave, to labour born,  
Heedless of the freeman's scorn,  
Destined to be slowly worn  
Down to the brute creation.

Thus a tempting spirit spoke,  
As from troubled sleep I woke  
To a morning thick with smoke,  
Sunless and damp and chilly.  
Then to sleep I turned once more,  
Eyes inflamed and windpipe sore,  
Dreaming dreams I dreamt before,

Only not quite so silly.

In my dream methought I strayed  
Where a learned-looking maid  
Stores of flimsy goods displayed,  
Articles not worth wearing.  
"These," she said, with solemn air,  
"Are the robes that sages wear,  
Warranted, when kept with care,  
Never to need repairing."

Then unnumbered wittings, caught  
By her wiles, the trappings bought,  
And by labour, not by thought,  
Honour and fame were earning.  
While the men of wiser mind  
Passed for blind among the blind;  
Pedants left them far behind  
In the career of learning.

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James Clerk Maxwell

## Molecular Evolution

At quite uncertain times and places,  
The atoms left their heavenly path,  
And by fortuitous embraces,  
Engendered all that being hath.  
And though they seem to cling together,  
And form "associations" here,  
Yet, soon or late, they burst their tether,  
And through the depths of space career.

So we who sat, oppressed with science,  
As British asses, wise and grave,  
Are now transformed to wild Red Lions,  
As round our prey we ramp and rave.  
Thus, by a swift metamorphosis,  
Wisdom turns wit, and science joke,  
Nonsense is incense to our noses,  
For when Red Lions speak, they smoke.

Hail, Nonsense! dry nurse of Red Lions,  
From thee the wise their wisdom learn,  
From thee they cull those truths of science,  
Which into thee again they turn.  
What combinations of ideas,  
Nonsense alone can wisely form!  
What sage has half the power that she has,  
To take the towers of Truth by storm?

Yield, then, ye rules of rigid reason!  
Dissolve, thou too, too solid sense!  
Melt into nonsense for a season,  
Then in some nobler form condense.  
Soon, all too soon, the chilly morning,  
This flow of soul will crystallize,  
Then those who Nonsense now are scorning,  
May learn, too late, where wisdom lies.

James Clerk Maxwell

## Nathalocus

I.

Bleak was the pathway and barren the mountain,  
As the traveller passed on his wearisome way,  
Sealed by the frost was each murmuring fountain,  
And the sun shone through mist with a blood-coloured ray.  
But neither the road nor the danger together,  
Could alter his purpose, nor yet the rough weather;  
So on went the wayfarer through the thick heather,  
Till he came to the cave where the dread witches stay.

II.

Hewn from the rock was that cavern so dreary,  
And the entrance by bushes was hid from the sight,  
But he found his way in, and with travelling weary,  
With joy he beheld in the darkness a light.  
And in a recess of that wonderful dwelling,  
He heard the strange song of the witch wildly swelling,  
In magical numbers unceasingly telling  
The fortunes of kingdoms, the issue of fight.

III.

Up rose the witch as the traveller entered,  
"Welcome," she said, "and what news from the king;  
And why to inquire of me thus has he ventured,  
When he knows that the answer destruction will bring?  
Sit here and attend." Then her pale visage turning  
To where the dim lamp in the darkness was burning,  
She took up a book of her magical learning,  
And prepared in prophetic numbers to sing.

IV.

Now she is seated, the curtain is o'er her,  
The god is upon her; attend then and hear!  
The vapour is rising in volumes before her,  
And forms of the future in darkness appear.  
Hark, now the god inspiration is bringing,  
'Tis not her voice through the cavern is ringing;  
No, for the song her familiar is singing,  
And these were the words of the maddening seer.

V.

"Slave of the monarch, return to thy master,  
Whisper these words in Nathalocus' ear;

Tell him, from me, that Old Time can fly faster  
Than he is aware, for his death hour is near;  
Tell him his fate with the mystery due it,  
But let him not know of the hand that shall do it;"  
"Tell me, vile witch, or I swear thou shalt rue it!"  
"Thou art the murderer," answered the seer.

VI.

"Am I a dog that I'd do such an action!"  
Answered the chief as in anger he rose,  
"Would I, ungrateful, be head of a faction,  
And call myself one of Nathalocus' foes?"  
"No more," said the witch, "the enchantment is ended,  
I brave not the wrath of the demon offended,  
Whatever thy fate, 'tis not now to be mended."  
So the stranger returned through the thick-driving snows.

VII.

High from his eyrie the eagle was screaming,  
Pale sheeted spectres stalked over the heath;  
Bright in his mind's eye a dagger was gleaming,  
Waiting the moment to spring from its sheath.  
Hoarse croaked the raven that eastward was flying;  
Well did he know of the king that was dying;  
Down in the river the Kelpie was sighing,  
Mourning the king in the water beneath.

VIII.

His mind was confused with this terrible warning,  
Horrible spectres were with him by night;  
Still in his sorrow he wished for the morning,  
Cursing the day when he first saw the light.  
He said in his raving, "The day that she bore me,  
Would that my mother in pieces had tore me;  
See there is Nathalocus' body before me;  
Hence, ye vain shadows, depart from my sight!"

IX.

And when from the palace the king sent to meet him,  
To ask what response from the witch he might bear;  
When the messenger thought that the stranger would greet him,  
He answered by nought but a meaningless stare.  
On his face was a smile, but it was not of gladness,  
For all was within inconsolable sadness.

And aye in his eye was the fixt glare of madness,—  
"In the king's private chamber, I'll answer him there."

X.

"Tell me, my sovereign, have I been unruly;  
Have I been ever found out of my place;  
Have not I followed thee faithfully, truly,  
Though danger and death stared me full in the face?  
Have I been seen from the enemy flying,  
Have I been wanting in danger most trying?  
Oh, if I have, judge me worthy of dying,  
Let me be covered with shame and disgrace!

XI.

"Couldst thou imagine that I should betray thee,  
I whom thy bounty with friendship has blessed?  
But the witch gave for answer that my hand should slay thee,  
'Tis this that for long has deprived me of rest,  
Ever since then have my slumbers been broken,  
But true are the words that the prophet has spoken,  
Nathalocus, now receive this as a token,"  
So saying the dagger he plunged in his breast.

James Clerk Maxwell

## **Ninth Ode of the Third Book of Horace**

Horace.

While I was your beloved one,  
And while no other youth threw his fond arms around  
Your white neck so easily,  
Than the King of the world I was far happier.

Lydia..

While you loved not another one,  
While you did not prefer Chloë to Lydia,  
I then thought myself happier  
Than the mother of Rome, great Rhea Silvia.

Horace..

Thracian Chloë now governs me,  
She can merrily sing, playing the cithara;  
I'd not scruple to die for her,  
If the Implacable spared Chloë, the auburn haired.

Lydia.

I now love and am loved again,  
By my Calais, son of the old Ornytus;  
Twice I'd die for him willingly,  
If the terrible fates spared but my Calais.

Horace.

What if love should return again,  
And unite us by ties more indissoluble?  
What if Chloë were cast away,  
And the long-closed door open to Lydia?

Lydia.

My love's brighter than any star;  
You, too, lighter than cork, tossed on the waves of the Hadriatic so terrible;  
Still I'd live but with thee, and I could die with thee.

James Clerk Maxwell

## Numa Pompilius

O well is thee! King Numa,  
Within thy secret cave,  
Where thy bones are ever moistened  
By sad Egeria's wave;  
None now have power to pilfer  
The treasure of thy tomb,  
And reveal the institutions  
And secret Rites of Rome.  
O blessed be the Senate  
That stowed those books away,  
Curst be the attempt of Niebuhr  
To drag them into day;  
Light be the pressure, Numa,  
Around thy watery bed,  
May no perplexing problems  
Infest thy kingly head!  
As thus I blessed King Numa  
And struggled hard with sleep,  
I felt unwonted chillness  
O'er all my members creep;  
Before mine eyes in fragments  
The fireplace seemed to roll,  
The chillness left my body  
And slid into my soul.  
Deep in Egeria's grotto  
I saw the darksome well;  
I slowly sunk to Numa,  
But why I cannot tell.

"What! Livest thou still, old Sabine,  
With thy mysterious wife?"  
"Yes, here beneath the surface,  
We lead a torpid life.  
But little think the Critics  
Who nullify old Rome,  
That in these benumbing waters  
I always lived at home.  
Never was I a Sabine,  
Or lived like men above;  
No mortal wight was Numa,  
Who quelled the fear of Jove.  
Before my day the Romans  
Served gods of wood and stone,  
But what each man had fashioned  
That worshipped he alone;  
With care he saved the silver,  
With pains the mould designed,  
He loved and feared the offspring  
Of his pocket and his mind.  
To him he went for counsel  
And then to Common Sense;  
When both of these had failed him

He took to tossing pence;  
But I forbade all tossing,  
Made men enquire of beasts,  
Pulled down all private idols  
And set up public priests.  
Birds, too,' said I, 'are holy,  
They show us things to come,  
They have more subtle spirits  
Than wooden idols dumb.  
No longer burn your incense  
Before your private shrine,  
My Vestals are most careful  
To feed the flame divine;  
Dismiss all fear of idols,  
Of demons, and of gods,  
My Augurs will protect you  
With their long crooked rods.  
(With such the careful shepherd  
Drags lambs from ditches deep;  
With such he points to heaven  
When they are fast asleep.)  
O, trust me, those same Augurs  
Know more about the stars  
Than you whose only business  
Is everlasting wars.  
How can you be religious,  
How can they work for bread?  
You sinners must be shriven,  
My Augurs must be fed.  
You know dividing labour  
To nations riches brings,  
So let my Augurs thrive you  
While you mind earthly things.  
Your case I've set before you,  
You see the thing to do,  
If you fork out the needful,  
They do your job for you.'  
With this and other speeches  
I brought the people round,  
Till not a single Roman  
In Jove's house can be found.  
For well he knows each evening  
When bells in steeples toll,  
'Tis a sign that well-paid Augurs  
Are helping on his soul.  
'Twas this that kept 'em quiet  
Through all my fabled reign,  
Till quarrelsome young Tullus  
Brought battles back again.  
Thus my cold-blooded doctrines  
The fear of Jove could quell,  
Wonder not then to find me

Alive here in a well."

James Clerk Maxwell

## On St. David's Day

<i>To Mrs. E.C. Morrieson</i>

'Twas not chance but deep design,  
Tho' of whom I can't divine  
Made the courtly Valentine  
(Corpulent saint and bishop)  
Such a time with Bob to stay:--  
Let me now in bardish way  
On your own St. David's day  
Toss you a simple dish up.

'Tis a tale we learnt at school,—  
Oft we broke domestic rule,  
Standing till our brows were cool  
In the forbidden lobby.  
There we talked and there we laughed,  
Till the townsfolk thought us daft,  
What of that? a thorough draft  
Was and is still my hobby.

To my tale: In ancient days,  
Ere men left the good old ways,  
Lived a lady whose just praise  
Passes all fancied glory.  
Rich was she in field and store,  
Richer in the sons she bore,  
How could she be honoured more?  
Listen and hear the story.

On a high and festive day  
When the chariots bright and gay  
To the temple far away  
Passed in majestic order,—  
When the hour was nigh at hand,  
She who should have led the band  
Found no oxen at command,  
Searching through all her border

Then her two sons brave and strong  
Gut their limbs with band and thong,  
And before the wondering throng  
Drew their exulting mother.  
Swift and steady, on they came;  
At the temple loud acclaim  
Greeted that illustrious dame,  
Blest above every other.

Then, while triumph filled her breast,  
Loud she prayed above the rest,  
Give my sons whatever best  
Man may receive from heavens.

To the shrine the brothers stept,  
Low they bowed, they sunk, they slept,  
Stillness o'er their brave limbs crept:—  
Rest was the guerdon given.

Such the simple story told,  
By a sage renowned of old,  
To a king whose fabled gold  
Could not procure him learning.  
Heathen was the sage indeed,  
Yet his tale we gladly read,  
Thro' his dark and doubtful creed  
Glimpses of Truth discerning.

Now no more the altar's blaze  
Glares athwart our worldly haze,  
Warning men how evil ways  
Lead to just tribulation.  
Now no more the temple stands,  
Pointing out to godless lands  
That which is not made with hands,  
Even the whole Creation.

Ask no more, then, "what is best,  
How shall those you love be blest,"  
Ask at once, eternal Rest,  
Peace and assurance giving.  
Rest of Life and not of death,  
Rest in Love and Hope and Faith,  
Till the God who gives their breath  
Calls them to rest from living.

James Clerk Maxwell

## Professor Tait, Loquitur

Will mounted ebonite disk  
On smooth unyielding bearing,,  
When turned about with notion brisk  
(Nor excitation sparing),  
Affect the primitive repose,  
Of + and — in a wire,  
So that while either downward flows,  
The other upwards shall aspire?  
Describe the form and size of coil,  
And other things that we may need,  
Think not about increase of toil  
Involved in work at double speed.  
I can no more, my pen is bad,  
It catches in the roughened page—  
But answer us and make us glad,  
THOU ANTI-DISTANCE-ACTION SAGE!  
Yet have I still a thousand things to say  
But work of other kinds is pressing—  
So your petitioner will ever pray  
That your defence be triple messing.

James Clerk Maxwell

## Recollections of a Dreamland

Rouse ye! torpid daylight-dreamers, cast your carking cares away!  
As calm air to troubled water, so my night is to your day;  
All the dreary day you labour, groping after common sense,  
And your eyes ye will not open on the night's magnificence.  
Ye would scow were I to tell you how a guiding radiance gleams  
On the outer world of action from my inner world of dreams.

When, with mind released from study, late I lay note down to sleep,  
From the midst of facts and figures, into boundless space I leap;  
For the inner world grows wider as the outer disappears,  
And the soul, retiring inward, finds itself beyond the spheres.  
Then, to this unbroken sameness, some fantastic dream succeeds,  
Vague emotions rise and ripen into thoughts and words and deeds.  
Old impressions, long forgotten, range themselves in Time and Space,  
Till I recollect the features of some once familiar place.  
Then from valley into valley in my dreaming course I roam,  
Till the wanderings of my fancy end, where they began, at home.  
Calm it lies in morning twilight, while each streamlet far and wide  
Still retains its hazy mantle, borrowed from the mountain's side;  
Every knoll is now an island every wooded bank a shore,  
To the lake of quiet vapour that has spread the valley o'er.  
Sheep are couched on every hillock, waiting till the morning dawns,  
Hares are on their early rambles, limping o'er the dewy lawns.  
All within the house is silent, darkened all the chambers seem,  
As with noiseless step I enter, gliding onwards in my dream.

What! has Time run out his cycle, do the years return again?  
Are there treasure-caves in Dreamland where departed days remain?  
I have leapt the bars of distance—left the life that late I led—  
I remember years and labours as a tale that I have read;  
Yet my heart is hot within me, for I feel the gentle power  
Of the spirits that still love me, waiting for this sacred hour.  
Yes,—I know the forms that meet me are but phantoms of the brain,  
For they walk in mortal bodies, and they have not ceased from pain.  
Oh! those signs of human weakness, left behind for ever now,  
Dearer far to me than glories round a fancied seraph's brow.  
Oh! the old familiar voices ! Oh! the patient waiting eyes!  
Let me live with them in dreamland, while the world in slumber lies!  
For by bonds of sacred honour will they guard my soul in sleep  
From the spells of aimless fancies, that around my senses creep.  
They will link the past and present into one continuous life,  
While I feel their hope, their patience, nerve me for the daily strife.  
For it is not all a fancy that our lives and theirs are one,  
And we know that all we see is but an endless work begun.  
Part is left in Nature's keeping, part is entered into rest,  
Part remains to grow and ripen, hidden in some living breast.  
What is ours we know not, either when we wake or when we sleep,  
But we know that Love and Honour, day and night, are ours to keep.  
What though Dreams be wandering fancies, by some lawless force entwined,  
Empty bubbles, floating upwards through the current of the mind?  
There are powers and thoughts within us, that we know not, till they rise  
Through the stream of conscious action from where Self in secret lies.

But when Will and Sense are silent, by the thoughts that come and go,  
We may trace the rocks and eddies in the hidden depths below.

Let me dream my dream till morning; let my mind run slow and clear,  
Free from all the world's distraction, feeling that the Dead are near,  
Let me wake, and see my duty lie before me straight and plain.  
Let me rise refreshed, and ready to begin my work again.

James Clerk Maxwell

## Reflex Musings: Reflections from Various Surfaces

In the dense entangled street,  
Where the web of Trade is weaving,  
Forms unknown in crowds I meet  
Much of each and all believing;  
Each his small designs achieving  
Hurries on with restless feet,  
While, through Fancy's power deceiving,  
Self in every form I greet.

Oft in yonder rocky dell  
Neath the birches' shadow seated,  
I have watched the darksome well,  
Where my stooping form, repeated,  
Now advanced and now retreated  
With the spring's alternate swell,  
Till destroyed before completed  
As the big drops grew and fell.

By the hollow mountain-side  
Questions strange I shout for ever,  
While the echoes far and wide  
Seem to mock my vain endeavour;  
Still I shout, for though they never  
Cast my borrowed voice aside,  
Words from empty words they sever—  
Words of Truth from words of Pride.

Yes, the faces in the crowd,  
And the wakened echoes, glancing  
From the mountain, rocky browed,  
And the lights in water dancing—  
Each my wandering sense entrancing,  
Tells me back my thoughts aloud,  
All the joys of Truth enhancing  
Crushing all that makes me proud.

James Clerk Maxwell

## Reply to the Above, by F.W.F.

<i>"Te quoque vatem dicunt pastores."—VIRGIL.</i>

O Maxwell, if by reason's strength  
And studying of Babbage,  
You have transformed yourself at length  
Into a mental cabbage;  
And if I've proved myself a lark  
At morn and blushing even,  
By soaring like a music-spark  
Thro' sapphire fields of Heaven,

Our diverse fates are now reversed  
By strange metempsychosis,  
Into a cabbage I have burst  
And scorn poetic posies;  
But you a lark with twinkling wings  
O'er violet-banks are soaring;  
Your voice the dewy rose-cloud rings  
While Statics me are boring.

Yet cabbage as I will—on earth  
My roots I cannot anchor,  
For at my mathematic birth  
Was also born a canker!  
It soon will gnaw my roots away—  
But when I weigh a choenix  
I'll freely soar to realms of day  
An emerald cabbage-Phoenix.

Then talk not of the Poll to me,  
I hate, detest, and scorn it;  
I am as earnest as a bee,  
But savage as a hornet.  
And if they pluck me I will drown  
Each pedant in a sonnet,  
And of their pluckings make a crown  
With golden plumes upon it.

So if my cabbage growth be slow  
I'll try to be a carrot,  
Or still remain a lark—but know  
I'll not be Poll, or Parrot.  
Then if I fall beneath the mark,  
I'll shout with accent savage,  
"It is a lark to be a lark,  
'Tis green to be a cabbage"

James Clerk Maxwell

## Report on Tait's Lecture on Force

Ye British Asses, who expect to hear  
Ever some new thing,  
I've nothing new to tell, but what, I fear,  
May be a true thing.  
For Taft comes with his plummet and his line,  
Quick to detect your  
Old bosh new dressed in what you call a fine  
Popular lecture.

Whence comes that most peculiar smattering,  
Heard in our section?  
Pure nonsense, to a scientific swing  
Drilled to perfection?  
That small word "Force," they make a barber's block,  
Ready to put on  
Meanings most strange and various, fit to shock  
Pupils of Newton.

Ancient and foreign ignoranee they throw  
Into the bargain;  
The shade of Leitnitz mutters from below  
Horrible jargon.  
The phrases of last century in this  
Linger to play tricks—  
Vis Viva and Vis Mortua and Vis  
Acceleratrix:—

Those long-nabbed words that to our text books still  
Cling by their titles,  
And from them creep, as entozoa will,  
Into our vitals.  
But see! Tait writes in lucid symbols clear  
One small equation;  
And Force becomes of Energy a mere  
Space-variation.

Force, then, is Force, but mark you! not a thing,  
Only a Vector;  
Thy barbèd arrows now have lost their sting,  
Impotent speetre!  
Thy reign, O Force! is over. Now no more  
Heed we thine action;  
Repulsion leaves us where we were before,  
So does attraction.

Both Action and Reaction now are gone.  
Just ere they vanished,  
Stress joined their hands in peace, and made them one;  
Then they were banished.  
The Universe is free frown pole to pole,  
Free front all forces.  
Rejoice I ye stars—like blessed gods ye roll

On in your courses.

No more the arrows of the Wrangler race,  
Piercing shall wound you.  
Forces no more, those symbols of disgrace,  
Dare to surround you:  
But those whose statements baffle all attacks,  
Safe by evasion,—  
Whose definition, like a nose of wax,  
Suit each occasion,—

Whose unreflected rainbow far surpassed  
All our inventions,  
Whose very energy appears at last  
Scant of dimensions:—  
Are these the gods in whom ye put your trust,  
Lordlings and ladies?  
The hidden potency of cosmic dust  
Drives them to Hades.

While you, brave Tait! who know so well the way  
Forces to scatter,  
Calmly await the slow but sure decay,  
Even of Matter.

James Clerk Maxwell

## School Rhymes

O academic muse that hast for long  
Charmed all the world with thy disciples' song,  
As myrtle bushes must give place to trees,  
Our humbler strains can now no longer please.  
Look down for once, inspire me in these lays.  
In lofty verse to sing our Rector's praise.

The mighty wheel of Time to light has rolled  
That golden age by ancient bards foretold.  
Minerva now descends upon our land,  
And scatters knowledge with unsparing hand;  
Long since Ulysses saw the heavenly maid,  
In Mentor's form and Mentor's dress arrayed,  
But now to Cambrian lands the goddess flies,  
And drops in Williams' form from out the skies;  
And as at dawn the brilliant orb of light,  
With his bright beams dispels the gloomy night,  
So sunk in ignorance our land he finds,  
But with his learning drives it from our minds,  
And he, a hero, shall with joyful eyes  
See crowds of heroes all around him rise;  
With great Minerva's wisdom he shall rule  
Those boisterous youths—the rector's class at school,  
And when in the fifth class begins his power,  
And he begins to teach us, from that hour  
Dame Poetry begins to show her face,  
And witty epigrams the plaster grace;  
There growing wild are often to be seen  
The names of boys that Duxes erst have been,  
And at the chimney-piece is seen the same  
All thickly scribbled with the boobie's name.

. . . . .

Ne'er shall the dreadful tawse be heard again,  
The lash resounding, and the cry of pain;  
Carmichael's self will change (O that he would!)  
From the imperative to wishing mood;  
Ye years roll on, and haste the expected time  
When flogging boys shall be accounted crime.

But come, thy real nature let us see,  
No more the rector but the goddess be,  
Come in thy might and shake the deep profound,  
Let the Academy with shouts resound,  
While radiant glory all thy head adorns,  
And slippers on thy feet protect thy corns;  
O may I live so long on earth below,  
That I may learn the things that thou dost know!  
Then will I praise thee in heroic verse  
So good that Linus' will be counted worse;  
The Thracian Orpheus never will compare

With me, nor Dods that got the prize last year.  
But stay, O stay upon this earth a while,  
Even now thou seest the world's approving smile,  
And when thou goest to taste celestial joys,  
Let thy great nephew teach the mourning boys,  
Then mounting to the skies upon the wind,  
Lead captive ignorance in chains behind.

James Clerk Maxwell

## Seventh Ode of the Fourth Book of Horace

All the snows have fled, and grass springs up on the meadows,  
And there are leaves on the trees;  
Earth has changed her looks, and turbulent rivers decreasing,  
Slowly meander along;  
Now, with the naked nymphs and her own twin sisters, Aglaïa  
Gracefully dances in time.  
But the Year, and the Hours which hurry along our existence,  
Solemnly warn us to die.  
Zephyr removes the frost, and Summer, soon destined to perish,  
Treads in the footsteps of Spring,  
After the joyous reign of Autumn, abounding in apples,  
Shivering Winter returns.  
Heavenly waste is repaired by the moon in her quick revolutions  
But when we go to the grave,  
Beside the pious Æneas, and rich old Tullus, and Ancus,  
We are but dust and a shade.  
Who knows if the gods above have determined whether to-morrow  
We shall be living or dead.  
Nothing will come to the greedy hands of your spendthrift successor  
Which you have given away.  
When you are gone to the grave, and Minos, sitting in judgment,  
Utters your terrible doom,  
Neither your rank nor your talents will bring you to life, O Torquatus,  
Nor will affection avail;  
Even the chaste Hippolytus was not released by Diana  
From the infernal abyss,  
Nor could Theseus break from his friend the rewards of presumption  
Which the stern monarch imposed.

James Clerk Maxwell

## **Song of the Cub**

I know not what this may betoken,  
That I feel so wondrous wise;  
My dream of existence is broken  
Since science has opened my eyes.  
At the British Association  
I heard the President's speech,  
And the methods and facts of creation  
Seemed suddenly placed in my reach.

My life's undivided devotion  
To Science I solemnly vowed,  
I'd dredge up the bed of the ocean,  
I'd draw down the spark from the cloud.  
To follow my thoughts as they go on,  
Electrodes I'd place in my brain;  
Nay, I'd swallow a live entozoon,  
New feelings of life to obtain.

O where are those high feasts of Science?  
O where are those words of the wise?  
I hear but the roar of Red Lions,  
I eat what their Jackal supplies.  
I meant to lie so scientific,  
But science seems turned into fun;  
And this, with his roaring terrific,  
That old red lion bath done.

James Clerk Maxwell

## **Song of the Edinburgh Academician**

If ony here has got an ear,  
He'd better tak' a haud o' me,  
Or I'll begin, wi' roarin' din,  
To cheer our old Academy.

Dear old Academy,  
Queer old Academy,  
A merry lot we were, I wot,  
When at the old Academy.

There's some may think me crouse wi' drink,  
And some may think it mad o' me,  
But ither some will gladly come  
And cheer our old Academy.

Some set their hopes on Kings and Popes,  
But, o' the sons of Adam, he  
Was first, without the smallest doubt,  
That built the first Academy.

Let Pedants seek for scraps of Greek,  
Their lingo to Macadamize;  
Gie me the sense, without pretence,  
That comes o' Scots Academies.

Let scholars all, both grit and small,  
Of Learning mourn the sad demise;  
That's as they think, but we will drink  
Good luck to Scots Academies.

James Clerk Maxwell

## Specimen of Translation from the Ajax of Sophocles

O had he first been swept away,  
Through air by wild winds tossed,  
Or sunk from Heaven's ethereal ray,  
To Pluto's dreary coast.  
Who trained the Grecians to the field,  
Taught them the sword, the spear to wield,  
And steeled the gentle mind!  
Hence toil gives birth to toil again,  
Hence carnage stains the ensanguined plain,  
For he destroyed mankind.

Nor the brow with chaplets bound,  
Breathing balmy odours round,  
Nor the social glow of soul,  
Kindling o'er the generous bowl,  
Nor the dulcet strain that rings  
Jocund from the sounding strings,  
Nor endearing love's delight,  
Which with rapture fills the night,  
Me will he permit to prove,  
He, alas! hath murdered love.  
But neglected here I lie,  
Open to the inclement sky;  
And my rough and matted hair  
Drinks the dews of night's moist air,  
Memorials sad of Troy.  
Yet till now, when pale affright  
Rolled her hideous form through night  
Great in arms, thy shield to oppose,  
Ajax at his rampire rose,  
And my terror was no more.  
Now the hero I deplore,  
To the gloomy god consigned,  
Now, what joy can touch the mind?  
O that on the pine-clad brow,  
Darkening o'er the sea below,  
Where the cliffs of Sunium rise,  
Rocky bulwarks to the skies,  
I were placed—with sweet address  
Sacred Athens would I bless,  
And feel a social joy.

James Clerk Maxwell

## The Death of Sir James, Lord of Douglas

*"Men may weill wyt, thouch nane thaim tell,  
How angry for sorow, and how fell,  
Is to tyne sic a Lord as he  
To thaim that war off hys mengye."*

- Barbour's Bruce, B. XX. i. 507.

Where rich Seville's proud turrets rise  
A foreign ship at anchor lies;  
The pennons, floating in the air,  
Proclaim that one of rank is there—  
The Douglas, with a gallant band  
Of warriors, seeks the Holy Land.  
But wherefore now the trumpet's bray,  
The clang of arms and war's array,  
The atabal and martial drum?  
The Moor—the infidel is come;  
And there is Sultan Osmyn—see!  
With all his Paynim chivalry;  
And they have sworn to glut their steel  
With the best blood of fair Castile.  
"And do we here inactive stand?"  
The Douglas cries; "Land! comrades, land!"  
Then for the Christian camp he makes,  
When thus Alphonso silence breaks:  
"What news from Scotland do you bring;  
And where is now your patriot king?"  
"Alas! within this casket lies  
The heart so valiant, good, and wise,  
This to the Holy Land we bear,  
For we have sworn to lay it there.  
But let us forward to the fight,  
And God protect the Christian right!"  
To whom Alphonso—"Scottish lord,  
That now for Spain cost draw that sword,  
The terror of thy English foes,  
When for her freedom Scotland rose;  
With knights like thee and thy brave band  
We'll drive the Moslem from the land."  
The Douglas thus his comrades cheers—  
"Be brave! and as for him that fears,  
Let the base coward turn and fly,  
For we will gain the day, or die.  
Now couch the trusty Scottish spear,  
And think King Robert's heart is here,  
And boldly charge—already, see  
The dogs of Moslems turn and flee."  
At the first onset, with the slain  
Those valiant warriors strew the plain;  
But, hark! the Allah Hu! the foes  
Rally, and hot the combat grows,

For here the Spaniards yield, and there  
The Moors have slain the brave St. Clair.  
Then, midst the thickest of his foes,  
The precious casket Douglas throws—  
"Pass on before us" hear him cry,  
"For I will follow thee, or die."  
He rushes on—but all in vain,  
For thicker comes the arrowy rain;  
And now, by multitudes opprest,  
With many a wound upon his breast,  
Where 'midst the slain the casket lies,  
A noble death the Douglas dies.

James Clerk Maxwell

## The Vampyre

Thair is a knichte rydis through the wood,  
And a doughty knichte is tree,  
And sure hee is on a message sent,  
He rydis see hastilie.  
Hee passit the aik, and hee passit the birk,  
And hee passit monie a tre,  
Bot plesant to him was the saugh sae slim,  
For beneath it hee did see  
The boniest ladye that ever he saw,  
Scho was see schyn and fair.  
And there scho sat, beneath the saugh,  
Kaiming hir gowden hair.  
And then the knichte—"Oh ladye brichte,  
What chance hes brought you here,  
But say the word, and ye schall gang  
Back to your kindred dear."  
Then up and spok the Ladye fair—  
"I have nae friends or kin,  
Bot in a littel boat I live,  
Amidst the waves' loud din."  
Then answered thus the douchty knichte—  
"I'll follow you through all,  
For gin ye bee in a littel boat,  
The world to it seemis small."  
They gaed through the wood, and through the wood  
To the end of the wood they came:  
And when they came to the end of the wood  
They saw the salt sea faem.  
And then they saw the wee, wee boat,  
That daunced on the top of the wave,  
And first got in the ladye fair,  
And then the knichte sae brave;  
They got into the wee, wee boat,  
And rowed wi' a' their micht;  
When the knichte sae brave, he turnit about,  
And lookit at the ladye bricht;  
He lookit at her bonie cheik,  
And hee lookit at hir twa bricht eyne,  
Bot hir rosie cheik growe ghaistly pale,  
And scho seymit as scho deid had been.  
The fause fause knichte growe pale wi frichte,  
And his hair rose up on end,  
For gane-by days cam to his mynde,  
And his former luve he kenned.  
Then spake the ladye,— "Thou, fause knichte,  
Hast done to mee much ill,  
Thou didst forsake me long ago,  
Bot I am constant still;  
For though I ligg in the woods sae cald,  
At rest I canna bee  
Until I sucke the gude lyfe blude  
Of the man that gart me dee."

Hee saw hir lipps were wet wi' blude,  
And hee saw hir lyfelesse eyne,  
And loud hee cry'd, "Get frae my syde,  
Thou vampyr corps uncleane!"  
Bot no, hee is in hir magic boat,  
And on the wyde wyde sea;  
And the vampyr suckis his gude lyfe blude,  
Sho suckis hym till hee dee.  
So now beware, whoe're you are,  
That walkis in this lone wood;  
Beware of that deceitfull spright,  
The ghaist that suckle the blude.

James Clerk Maxwell

## To F.W.F.

Farrar, when o'er Goodwin's page  
Late I found thee poring,  
From the hydrostatic Sage  
Leaky Memory storing,  
Or when groaning yesterday  
Needlessly distracted  
By some bright erratic ray,  
Through a sphere refracted,—

Then the quick words, oft suppressed,  
In my fauces fluttered;  
Thoughts not yet in language drest  
Pleasing to be uttered.  
He that neatly gilds the pill  
Hides the drug but vainly,  
So, in chance-sown words, I will  
Speak the matter plainly.

Men there are, whose patient minds,  
In one object centred,  
Wait, till through their darkened blinds  
Truth has burst and entered.  
Then, that ray so barely caught  
Joyfully absorbing,  
They behold the realms of Thought  
Into Science orbiting.

Thus they wait, and thus they toil,  
Thus they end in knowing,  
Like good seed in kindly soil  
Taking root and growing.  
Men there are whose ambient souls,  
In rapt Intuition,  
Seize Creation as it rolls,  
Whole, without partition.

Not for them the darkened room,  
Lens, and perforation;  
Enemies are they to gloom,  
Foes to Insulation.  
Theirs the light of perfect Day,  
Theirs the sense of Freedom;  
Dungeons, and the tortured ray,  
Serve for those that need 'em.

Song to them of right belongs,  
Eloquently flowing;  
Sweeping down time-honoured wrongs,  
Surging, burning, glowing.  
Songs in which all hearts rejoice,  
Songs of ancient story;  
Songs that fill a People's voice

Marching on to glory.

Thus they live, and thus they love,  
Thus they soar in singing;  
Like glad larks in heaven above,  
Dazzling courses winging.—  
Here, I prithee, turn thy mind  
To a little fable  
Of the fledged and rooted kind,  
Bird and vegetable.

Pensive in his lowly nest  
Once a Lark was lying;  
Often did he heave his breast  
Querulously sighing.  
For he saw with envious eyes,  
Pampered vegetation—  
Cabbages of goodly size,  
Swoll'n with emulation.

Till their self-infolded green  
Tight crammed, wide distended,  
Seemed in sphered pomp to mean  
All that it pretended.  
Long he sought to win their place  
In the Gardener's favour;  
Well he caught the silent grace  
Of a plant's behaviour.

All was useless, he confest,  
Earth for him unsuited;  
Terror seized upon him, lest  
He should there be rooted.  
"Cabbages are cabbages,  
Larks are larks," he muttered;  
Then, light springing in the breeze,  
Through the sky he fluttered.

Farrar, mark my fable well,  
Fling away Ambition;  
By that sin the angels fell  
Into black perdition.  
Cut the Calculus, and stop  
Paths that lead to error;  
Think—below the Junior Op.,  
Gapes the Gulph's grim terror.

Then your Mathematic wings,  
Plucked from off your shoulder,  
Will express what Horace sings  
Of that rash youth, bolder  
Than his waxen wings allowed,

Or his cautious father.  
Fall not thou from out thy cloud  
Algebraic, rather

Try the Poll, for none but fools,—  
Fools, I mean, at College,  
Reach the earth between two stools,  
Triposes of Knowledge.  
Better in poetic rage  
Sing, through heaven soaring,  
Than disfigure Goodwin's page  
By incessant poring.

James Clerk Maxwell

## **To Hermann Stoffkraft, Ph.D., the Hero of a Recent Work Called Paradoxical Philosophy**

*A paradoxical ode, after Shelley.*

### I.

My soul is an entangled knot,  
Upon a liquid vortex wrought  
By Intellect, in the Unseen residing,  
And thine cloth like a convict sit,  
With marlinspike untwisting it,  
Only to find its knottiness abiding;  
Since all the tools for its untying  
In four-dimensioned space are lying  
Wherein thy fancy intersperses  
Long avenues of universes,  
While Klein and Clifford fill the void  
With one finite, unbounded homaloid,  
And think the Infinite is now at last destroyed.

### II.

But when thy Science lifts her pinions  
In Speculation's wild dominions,  
We treasure every dictum thou emittest,  
While down the stream of Evolution  
We drift, expecting no solution  
But that of the survival of the fittest.  
Till, in the twilight of the gods,  
When earth and sun are frozen clods,  
When, all its energy degraded,  
Matter to æther shall have faded;  
We, that is, all the work we've done,  
As waves in æther, shall for ever run  
In ever-widening spheres through heavens beyond the sun.

### III.

Great Principle of all we see,  
Unending Continuity!  
By thee are all our angles sweetly rounded,  
By thee are our misfits adjusted,  
And as I still in thee have trusted,  
So trusting, let me never be confounded!  
Oh never may direct Creation  
Break in upon my contemplation;  
Still may thy causal chain, ascending,  
Appear unbroken and unending,  
While Residents in the Unseen—  
Æons and Emanations—intervene,  
And from my shrinking soul the Unconditioned screen.

James Clerk Maxwell

## To K.M.D.

In the buds, before they burst,  
Leaves and flowers are moulded;  
Closely pressed they lie at first,  
Exquisitely folded.

Though no hope of change they felt,  
Folded hard together,  
Soon their sap begins to melt  
In the warmer weather.

Till, when Life returns with Spring,  
Through them softly stealing,  
All their freshness forth they fling,  
Hidden forms revealing. [606]

Who can fold those flowers again,  
In the way he found them?  
Or those spreading leaves restrain,  
In the buds that bound them?

Trust me, Spring is very near,  
All the buds are swelling;  
All the glory of the year  
In those buds is dwelling.

What the opened buds reveal  
Tells us—Life is flowing;  
What the buds, still shut, conceal,  
We shall end in knowing.

Long I lingered in the bud  
Doubting of the season,  
Winter's cold had chilled my blood—  
I was ripe for treason.

Now no more I doubt or wait,  
All my fears are vanished,  
Summer's coming, dear, though late,  
Fogs and frosts are banished.

James Clerk Maxwell

## To My Wife

Oft in the night, from this lone room  
I long to fly o'er land and sea,  
To pierce the dark, dividing gloom,  
And join myself to thee.

And thou to me wouldst gladly fly,  
I know thee well, my own true wife!  
We feel, that when we live not nigh,  
We lose the crown of life.

Yet soon I hope, at dead of night,  
To meet where all is strange beside,  
And mid the train's resounding flight  
To have thee by my side.

Then shall I feel that thou art near,  
Joined hand to hand and soul to soul;  
Short will that happy night appear,  
As through the dark we roll.

Then shall the secret of the will,  
That dares not enter into bliss;  
That longs for love, yet lingers still,  
Be solved in one long kiss.

I, drinking deep of thy rich love,  
Thou feeling all the strength of mine,  
Our souls will rise in faith above  
The cares which make us pine.

Till I give thee, thou giving me,  
As that which either loves the best,  
To Him that loved us both, that He  
May take us to His rest.

Wandering and weak are all our prayers,  
And fleeting half the gifts we crave;  
Love only, cleansed from sins and cares,  
Shall live beyond the grave.

Strengthen our love, O Lord, that we  
May in Thine own great love believe  
And, opening all our soul to Thee,  
May Thy free gift receive.

All powers of mind, all force of will,  
May lie in dust when we are dead,  
But love is ours, and shall be still,  
When earth and seas are fled.

James Clerk Maxwell

## To the Additional Examiner for 1875

Queen Cram went straying  
Where Tait was swaying,  
In just hands weighing,  
With care immense,  
Dry proofs made pleasant  
By Routh or Besant  
For one who hasn't  
Got too much sense.  
Nor marked how, quicker  
Than mounts the liquor  
In brains made thicker  
By College beer,  
The murderous maiden,  
Mistake, walks laden  
With tips forgotten and slips so queer.

How, like a spider,  
She still spreads wider,  
O'er bookwork, rider,  
And problem too,  
Her flimsy curtain  
Of terms uncertain,  
Till all seems dirt in  
The marker's view.  
For if Cram were not,  
Which markers spare not,  
Wise men would care not  
To pluck too soon,  
Seeing all life's season  
Of budding reason  
Finds good stiff work for a wooden spoon.

As Tait sat joking,  
And marked while smoking,  
Still slyly poking  
Where jests might hit,  
She came, soft-gliding,  
Her false face hiding,  
Rich food providing  
For Tait's sharp wit.  
Through symbols tangled,  
The Wranglers wrangled  
Like sweet bells jangled  
And out of tune.  
For though their music  
Would soon make you sick  
The tides they measure and guide the moon.

Cram found no cover  
Wherein to hover,  
For still above her  
Tait held his pen,

Which, onward creeping,  
Might find her sleeping,  
But left her weeping  
O'er ruined men.  
For, like a blister,  
Mistake, Cram's sister,  
Would wring and twist her  
In awkward ways,  
Till all the knowledge  
Acquired at College  
Had passed from thought(49) in the last six days.

James Clerk Maxwell

## To the Air of Lorelei

I.

Alone on a hillside of heather,  
I lay with dark thoughts in my mind,  
In the midst of the beautiful weather  
I was deaf, I was dumb, I was blind.  
I knew not the glories around me,  
I counted the world as it seems,  
Till a spirit of melody found me,  
And taught me in visions and dreams.

II.

For the sound of a chorus of voices  
Came gathering up from below,  
And I heard how all Nature rejoices,  
And moves with a musical flow.  
O strange! we are lost in delusion,  
Our ways and doings are wrong,  
We are drowning, in wilful confusion,  
The notes of that wonderful song.

III.

But listen, what harmony holy  
Is mingling its notes with our own!  
The discord is vanishing slowly,  
And melts in that dominant tone.  
And they that have heard it can never  
Return to confusion again,  
Their voices are music for ever,  
And join in the mystical strain.

IV.

No mortal can utter the beauty  
That dwells in the song that they sing;  
They move in the pathway of duty,  
They follow the steps of their King.  
I would barter the world and its glory,  
That vision of joy to prolong,  
Or to hear and remember the story  
That lies in the heart of their song.

James Clerk Maxwell

## To the Chief Musician upon Nabra: A Tyndallic Ode

I.

I come from fields of fractured ice,  
Whose wounds are cured by squeezing,  
Melting they cool, but in a trice,  
Get warm again by freezing.  
Here, in the frosty air, the sprays  
With fernlike hoar-frost bristle,  
There, liquid stars their watery rays  
Shoot through the solid crystal.

II.

I come from empyrean fires --  
From microscopic spaces,  
Where molecules with fierce desires,  
Shiver in hot embraces.  
The atoms clash, the spectra flash,  
Projected on the screen,  
The double D, magnesian b,  
And Thallium's living green.

III.

We place our eye where these dark rays  
Unite in this dark focus,  
Right on the source of power we gaze,  
Without a screen to cloak us.  
Then where the eye was placed at first,  
We place a disc of platinum,  
It glows, it puckers! will it burst?  
How ever shall we flatten him!

IV.

This crystal tube the electric ray  
Shows optically clean,  
No dust or haze within, but stay!  
All has not yet been seen.  
What gleams are these of heavenly blue?  
What air-drawn form appearing,  
What mystic fish, that, ghostlike, through  
The empty space is steering?

V.

I light this sympathetic flame,  
My faintest wish that answers,

I sing, it sweetly sings the same,  
It dances with the dancers.  
I shout, I whistle, clap my hands,  
And stamp upon the platform,  
The flame responds to my commands,  
In this form and in that form.

VI.

What means that thrilling, drilling scream,  
Protect me! 'tis the siren:  
Her heart is fire, her breath is steam,  
Her larynx is of iron.  
Sun! dart thy beams! in tepid streams,  
Rise, viewless exhalations!  
And lap me round, that no rude sound  
May max my meditations.

VII.

Here let me pause. -- These transient facts,  
These fugitive impressions,  
Must be transformed by mental acts,  
To permanent possessions.  
Then summon up your grasp of mind,  
Your fancy scientific,  
Till sights and sounds with thought combined,  
Become of truth prolific.

VIII.

Go to! prepare your mental bricks,  
Fetch them from every quarter,  
Firm on the sand your basement fix  
With best sensation mortar.  
The top shall rise to heaven on high --  
Or such an elevation,  
That the swift whirl with which we fly  
Shall conquer gravitation.

James Clerk Maxwell

## To the Committee of the Cayley Portrait Fund

O wretched race of men, to space confined!  
What honour can ye pay to him, whose mind  
To that which lies beyond hath penetrated?  
The symbols he hath formed shall sound his praise,  
And lead him on through unimagined ways  
To conquests new, in worlds not yet created.

First, ye Determinants! in ordered row  
And massive column ranged, before him go,  
To form a phalanx for his safe protection.  
Ye powers of the  $n$ th roots of  $-1$ !  
Around his head in ceaseless cycles run,  
As unembodied spirits of direction.

And you, ye undevelopable scrolls!  
Above the host wave your emblazoned rolls,  
Ruled for the record of his bright inventions.  
Ye Cubic surfaces! by threes and nines  
Draw round his camp your seven-and-twenty lines—  
The seal of Solomon in three dimensions.

March on, symbolic host! with step sublime,  
Up to the flaming bounds of Space and Time!  
There pause, until by Dickenson depicted,  
In two dimensions, we the form may trace  
Of him whose soul, too large for vulgar space,  
In  $n$  dimensions flourished unrestricted.

James Clerk Maxwell

**Torto Volitans Sub Verbere Turbo Quem Pueri Magno In Gyro Vacua Atria  
Circum Intenti Ludo Exercent**

Of pearies and their origin I sing:  
How at the first great Jove the lord of air  
Impelled the planets round the central sun  
Each circling within each, until at last  
The winged Mercury moves in molten fire.  
And which of you, ye heavenly deities,  
That hear the endless music of the spheres,  
Hast given to man the secret of the Top?  
Say, was it thou, O Fun, that dost prefer,  
Before all temples, liberty and play?  
Yes, yes, 'twas only thou, thou from the first  
Wast present when the Roman children came  
To the smooth pavement, where with heavy lash  
They chased the wooden plaything without end. [580]  
But not to tell of these is now my task,  
Nor yet of humming-tops, whose lengthened neck,  
With packthread bound, and handle placed above,  
Amuses little children. Not of these,  
But of the pearie, chief of all his tribe,  
Do I now sing. He with a sudden bound  
From out his station in the player's hand  
Descends like Maia's son, on one foot poised,  
And utters gentle music circling round,  
Till in the centre of the ring it sleeps.  
When lo, as in the bright blue vault of heaven  
A falcon, towering in his pride of place  
Perceives from far a partridge on the wing,  
And stoops to seize him, even so comes down  
Another pearie, and as when the sword  
Of faithful Abdiel struck the apostate's crest  
And "sent him reeling back ten paces huge,"  
So reeled the former pearie, nor can stand  
The latter's iron peg, and more come down;  
Innumerable hosts of pearies, armed  
With dire destructive steel. The players shout;  
It is the shout of battle; the loud cry  
Of victors rushing to the spoil; the wail  
Of ruined boys, their pearie split, and all,  
All lost.  
Thus wags this ever-changing world,  
And we may morals from the pearie draw.

James Clerk Maxwell

## **Tune, Il Segreto per Esser Felice**

I.

There are some folks that say,  
They have found out a way,  
To be healthy and wealthy and wise—  
"Let your thoughts be but few,  
Do as other folk do,  
And never be caught by surprise.  
Let your motto be—Follow the fashion,  
But let other people alone;  
Do not love them, nor hate them, nor care for their fate,  
But keep a look out for your own.  
Then what though the world may run riot,  
Still playing at catch who catch can;  
You may just eat your dinner in quiet,  
And live like a sensible Man."

II.

'Twere a beautiful thing,  
Thus to sit like a king,  
And talk of the world turning round,  
If it were not that we  
Like all things that we see,  
Are standing on moveable ground.  
While we boast of our tranquil enjoyments,  
The means of enjoyment are flown,  
Both our joys and our pains, till there's nothing remains,  
But the tranquil repose of a stone.  
The world may be utterly crazy,  
And life may be labour in vain;  
But I'd rather be silly than lazy,  
And would not quit life for its pain.

III.

In Nature I read  
Quite a different creed,  
There everything lives in the rest;  
Each feels the same force,  
As it moves in its course,  
And all by one blessing are blest.  
The end that we live for is single,  
But we labour not therefore alone,  
For together we feel how by wheel within wheel,  
We are helped by a force not our own  
So we flee not the world and its dangers,  
For He that has made it is wise,  
He knows we are pilgrims and strangers,  
And He will enlighten our eyes.

James Clerk Maxwell

## Valedictory Address to the D--n

John Alexander Frere, John,  
When we were first acquaint,  
You lectured us as Freshmen  
In the holy term of Lent;  
But now you're gettin' bald, John,  
Your end is drawing near,  
And I think we'd better say "Goodbye,  
John Alexander Frere."

John Alexander Frere, John,  
How swiftly Time has flown!  
The weeks that you refused us  
Are now no more your own;  
Tho' Time was in your hand, John,  
You lingered out the year,  
That Grace might more abound unto  
John Alexander Frere.

There's young Monro of Trinity,  
And Hunter bold of Queen's,  
Who spurn the chapel system,  
And "vex the souls of Deans."  
But all their petty squabbles  
More ludicrous appear,  
When we muse on thy departed form,  
John Alexander Frere.

There's many better man, John.  
That scorns the scoffing crew,  
But keeps with fond affection  
The notes he got from you—  
"Why he was out of College,  
Till two o'clock or near,  
The Senior Dean requests to know,  
Yours truly, J. A. Frere."

John Alexander Frere, John,  
I wonder what you mean  
By mixing up your name so  
With me, and with "The Dean."  
Another Don may dean us,  
But ne'er again, we fear,  
Shall we receive such notes as yours,  
John Alexander Frere.

The Lecture Room no more, John,  
Shall hear thy drowsy tone,  
No more shall men in Chapel  
Bow down before thy throne.  
But Shillington with meekness,  
The oracle shall hear,  
That set St. Mary's all to sleep—

John Alexander Frere.

Then once before we part, John,  
Let all be clean forgot,  
Our scandalous inventions,  
[Thy note-lets, prized or not].  
For under all conventions,  
The small man lived sincere,  
The kernel of the Senior Dean,  
John Alexander Frere.

James Clerk Maxwell

## **Valentine by a Telegraph Clerk**

The tendrils of my soul are twined  
With thine, though many a mile apart.  
And thine in close coiled circuits wind  
Around the needle of my heart.

Constant as Daniel, strong as Grove.  
Ebullient throughout its depths like Smee,  
My heart puts forth its tide of love,  
And all its circuits close in thee.

O tell me, when along the line  
From my full heart the message flows,  
What currents are induced in thine?  
One click from thee will end my woes.

Through many a volt the weber flew,  
And clicked this answer back to me;  
I am thy farad staunch and true,  
Charged to a volt with love for thee.

James Clerk Maxwell

## **Why, When Our Sun Shines Clearest**

Why, when our sun shines clearest,  
Why, when our hopes seem nearest,  
Why, when our life feels dearest,  
Rises a secret pain—  
Hope's perfect mirror broken—  
Shadows of things unspoken—  
Why will not some sure token  
Calm us to rest again?

Mixed with all earthly blessing  
Lingers the fear distressing—  
-Conscience within confessing  
Nothing of ours is pure.  
Still must such thoughts upbraid us,  
Seeking our own to aid us;  
God, not ourselves, hath made us;  
Trusting in Him we're sure.

Thus, from our sorrows gleaning  
Thoughts of the world's deep meaning,  
Let us rejoice while leaning  
Firm on our Father's arm.  
Now are we one for ever,  
Joined so that none may sever,  
Souls, so united, never  
Faint through mischance or harm.

James Clerk Maxwell

## Will You Come Along With Me?

I.

Will you come along with me,  
In the fresh spring-tide,  
My comforter to be  
Through the world so wide?  
Will you come and learn the ways  
A student spends his days,  
On the bonny, bonny braes  
Of our ain burnside?

II.

For the lambs will soon be here,  
In the fresh spring-tide;  
As lambs come every year  
On our ain burnside.  
Poor things, they will not stay,  
But we will keep the day  
When first we saw them play  
On our ain burnside.

III.

We will watch the budding trees  
In the fresh spring-tide,  
While the murmurs of the breeze  
Through the branches glide.  
Where the mavis builds her nest,  
And finds both work and rest,  
In the bush she loves the best,  
On our ain burnside.

IV.

And the life we then shall lead  
In the fresh spring-tide,  
Will make thee mine indeed,  
Though the world be wide.  
No stranger's blame or praise  
Shall turn us from the ways  
That brought us happy days  
On our ain burnside.

James Clerk Maxwell