

**Classic Poetry Series**

**Middleton  
- poems -**

**Publication Date:**

2012

**Publisher:**

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

## Middleton(3 November 1872 - 27 May 1960)

Jesse Edgar Middleton was a Canadian poet and songwriter, best known for writing the English lyrics to the "Huron Carol."

<b>Life</b>

He was born in Pilkington, Ontario, the son of Margaret Agar and Rev. Eli Middleton, a Methodist minister. He attended Dutton High School and Strathroy Collegiate. He then taught school for three years, and then became a proofreader in Cleveland, Ohio for three years. In 1899 he married Bessie A. Jackson, who bore him one son. He became music critic for the Mail and Empire, and in 1904 joined The News, where he wrote a column, "On the Side." He led the choir at Centennial Methodist Church, and sang in Toronto's Mendelssohn Choir.

He translated the "Huron Carol" (originally written in the Wendot language by Jean de Brebeu circa 1643) in 1926.

# Hell's Half Acre

Six years of life in the reek of things  
Where love is a fay unknown;  
A wolfish boy on the crowded street  
Who stoops for the cruel stone;  
No laughter-light in his infant eyes,  
No joy and no baby shame.  
'Tis Hell's Half Acre has made him thus  
And we are the ones to blame.

Oh, look you well at the rosy lad  
Who sits on your knee to-night,  
His arms entwining about your neck,  
His big round eyes alight.  
Oh, list you well to his silver laugh  
Which echoes on Heaven's street,  
Till the angels smile as they pause to hear  
The sound so glad and sweet.

Your boy is filled with the joy of love;  
He knows your protecting hand.  
It keeps him out of the Lake of Lies  
'Mid the hills of Hopeless Land.  
And yet his brother, a child of woe,  
Is living in black despair  
In Hell's Half Acre, and you and I  
Are willing to leave him there.

God help the child of a devil's home  
With his broken-hearted sigh.  
He cringes low in his filthy rags,  
A curse for his lullaby.  
Six years of life in the reek of things  
Where God is an empty name.  
'Tis Hell's Half Acre, beside our doors,  
And we are the ones to blame.

Middleton

# Off Heligoland

Ghostly ships in a ghostly sea,–  
Here's to Drake in the Spanish main!–  
Hark to the turbines, running free,  
Oil-cups full and the orders plain.  
Plunging into the misty night,  
Surging into the rolling brine,  
Never a word, and never a light,–  
This for England, that love of mine!

Look! a gleam on the starboard bow,  
Here's to the Fighting Temeraire!–  
Quartermaster, be ready now,  
Two points over, and keep her there.  
Ghostly ships–let the foemen grieve.  
Yon's the Admiral, tight and trim,  
And one more–with an empty sleeve–  
Standing a little aft of him!

Slender, young, in a coat of blue,–  
Here's to the Agamemnon's pride!–  
Out of the mists that long he knew,  
Out of the Victory, where he died,  
Here, to the battle-front he came.  
See, he smiles in his gallant way!  
Ghostly ships in a ghostly game,  
Roaring guns on a ghostly day!

There in his white silk smalls he stands,–  
Here's to Nelson, with three times three!–

Coming out of the misty lands  
Far, far over the misty sea.  
Now the Foe is a crippled wreck,  
Limping out of the deadly fight.  
Smiling yond, on the quarterdeck  
Stands the Spirit, all silver-bright.

Middleton

# Peace And War

A pleasant river, clear and blue,

Went singing to the sea.

The sunbeam joined them hand in hand

To dance the melody.

The courtly rushes bowed their heads

As nobles to the Queen,

And saw, reflected in the wave,

Their coats of Lincoln green.

God made such horrors? Count that word a lie.

God made the pleasant river, clear and blue,

Peace is His handiwork, and love, and joy,

While man makes sewers and artillery,

Grim bayonets, and howitzers and shell,

The battle-squadron surging through the tides,

Ten thousand hecatombs of reeking red

And all the vile magnificence of War.

Middleton

# The Colonial

I never saw the cliffs of snow,  
The Channel billows tipped with cream,  
The swirling tides which ebb and flow  
About the Island of my dream.  
I never saw the English downs  
Upon an April day,  
The quiet old Cathedral towns,  
The hedgerows white with may.  
And still the name of England  
Which faithless tyrants scorn  
Can thrill my soul. It is to me  
A very bugle-horn.

A thousand leagues from Albion's shore  
In newer lands I saw the light,  
I never heard the cannon's roar,  
Nor saw a mark of Britain's might,  
Save that my people lived in peace  
And blessed the harvest sun,  
And thought that tyranny would cease,  
And battle-days be done.  
And still the flag of England  
Was rippling in the breeze  
And twice two hundred ships of war  
Were surging through the seas.

I heard Polonius declaim  
About the new, the golden age,  
When Force was but the mark of shame,  
When men would curb their hellish rage.  
'Beat out your swords to pruning hooks,'  
He shouted to the throng,  
But I—I read my History-books  
And wondered at the song.  
For it was glorious England,  
The guardian of the free,  
Who loosed those foolish tongues—but kept  
Her cruisers on the sea.

And liberty was ours to love,  
To raise a brood of lusty sons,

To worship Him who reigns above,  
And ah!—we never saw the guns,  
The search-lights sweeping o'er the sky  
The seamen stern and bold,  
Our only thought, to live and die,  
And comb the earth for gold.  
But it was glorious England  
Who scanned the threatening morn,  
And ah, the very name of her  
Is like a bugle-horn!

Middleton