

ODE TO LYDIA

Aboard S.S. Lahn, November 5, 1889, from Miss Kellner's notes: "Miss Morris received a poem in blank verse from Rev. Dr. Makay [sic] as a mark of his admiration for her. She asked him to read it aloud at the dinner table so that we might all enjoy it. It is a vigorous, [brilliant][sic] humorous, pathetic, enthusiastic, fervid and passionate affair, which was cheered and enlivened by every one of us with frequent and vehement plaudits, merry laughs, a vote of thanks, and the opinion that the 'composer' has truly distinguished himself! And here is the poem:"



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To Miss Morris

Fair Friend, thou hast invited me to write
Some verses ere we part. A week ago
We met as strangers. When we leave the "Lahn"
To-morrow, we shall be – say, shall we not
Be old acquaintances? – Each others' thoughts,
And words, and tones, and smiles, and laughs, and jests
Familiar grown, as if we had been born
And bred beneath one roof – tree. Absence now
Can only separate our outward selves.
Thy bright ideal presence still will be
To us a pleasing memory. Thine eyes
And wit will sparkle in our dreams, methinks,
As the stars sparkle on the moonlit sea.
Through which our gallant ship now plows her way
Towards old England. Sympathy will tell
Our hearts when thou art sad. The wires unseen,
That link congenial souls, will bring us news
Of all the gladness, which around the world
Thy pilgrim steps shall greet far distant shores.
The merry social time we five have had
In the snug alcove of this German Lloyd
Can never be forgotten while we breathe,
No matter what or were our lot may be.
The soft eyed German's image will suggest

The luckless lady from the Niger's stream –
The inside passenger – the tigers [sic] smile,
And other flights of fancy near the moon,
Her heart's delight, where dwells her favorite moon. –

The brother, dignified and grave, yet gay,
Will be associated in our minds
With tenderness fraternal, loving, true.

The Cameron Highlander will bring up thoughts
Of promenades, Catastrophes on deck,
Old Rye and Lager, fragrant weeds and wine.
In him deep voice "the war-note of Lochoil"
Revives old legends of Entwooden [Morr]
Near my ancestral home, when many a time
And oft in boyhood's days I visited
The dark green [moords] 'neath which the clansmen sheep[sleep];
The bloodstained purple heather blooming feet
Above the honored dead. Time fails me now
And spare. Thy mistrel [minstrel] must not here transgress
The limits of thy patience. Pardon me
If, in conclusion, I dare bring a charge,
A serious charge against thee. Answer it.
Hearts have been stolen, I can testify,
Two at least. How many more, who knows?
Dost thou? The tuneful Wissahickon groves
Perhaps can tell; where lovelorn sighs among

The scarlet, blushing, ripe, autumnal leaves,
That glorify the forest, shake the trees,
And make the wood-nymphs wonder. Now confess
Is restitution possible? Thou – hast
But one heart, though a large one. Heart for heart,
That cannot be since many have been stolen.
“Are honest man [men] the noblest work of God”
An honest woman must do all she can
To make the just amends for stealing hearts,
Or breaking them. Thou’lt leave the ship, I fear,
In helpless debts. Thou never can’t repay
The loss thy victims have sustained. Alas!
How many, too, in Philadelphia
Have aching voids or broken hearts, down there
Where citizens notionally have need
To mend their ways, it is for them to say.
To me, now ready duly to receive
Humble confession, and absolve, if thou
Repent, and promise to reform. Ah, this
So difficult, my child, to one so long
Accustomed to such felony as thou
Art charged with. We will pray for thee, I hope
For reformation, and be glad to learn
That in thy wandrings round this naughty world
Thou hast made full amends, at least to him,

Who suffered most.

Good bye! Attractive friend!

Good angels guard and bring thee safely home,

A radiant bride! Thy conquest at an end: --

The Maharajah and Miss Kellner one,

And "brother Jack" rejoining in his strength: --

The fairest flower, the pride of all Japan

Leaning upon his arm!

Then indeed,

All will be merry as a marriage-bell;

The Wissahickon welcoming with songs,

The forest with its many tinted trees,

The wanderer's [wanderers'] return. So may it be!

Amen.

J. Aberigh Mackay,

Of Aberigh Mackay. –

{Miss Kellner's comment: This is the gushing style in which the old gentleman usually flourishes [flourishes], but he is a kind, jolly, clever, and very warm heart, [but?] all soul. May all his good wishes be fulfilled, and in return I hope that his own heart has received its last blow in S.S. Lahn. – And pleasant memories will gather around this poem, as in after years the occasion and all incidents will be recalled. --