

Charles Mackay (1814-89)

2 *Tubal Cain*

Old Tubal Cain was a man of might
In the days when Earth was young;
By the fierce red light of his furnace bright
The strokes of his hammer rung;
And he lifted high his brawny hand 5
On the iron glowing clear,
Till the sparks rushed out in scarlet showers,
As he fashioned the sword and spear.
And he sang "Hurra for the handiwork!
Hurra for the spear and sword! 10
Hurra for the hand that shall wield them well,
For he shall be king and lord!"

To Tubal Cain came many a one,
As he wrought by his roaring fire;
And each one prayed for a strong steel blade, 15
As the crown of his desire:
And he made them weapons sharp and strong,
Till they shouted loud for glee,
And gave him gifts of pearl and gold,
And spoils of the forest free; 20
And they sang, "Hurra for Tubal Cain,
Who hath given us strength anew!
Hurra for the smith, hurra for the fire,
And hurra for the metal true!"

But a sudden change came o'er his heart 25
Ere the setting of the sun,
And Tubal Cain was filled with pain
For the evil he had done;
He saw that men, with rage and hate,
Made war upon their kind, 30
That the land was red with the blood they shed,
In their lust for carnage blind.
And he said, "Alas! that ever I made,

Or that skill of mine should plan,
The spear and the sword for men whose joy 35
Is to slay their fellow-man.”

And for many a day old Tubal Cain
Sat brooding o'er his woe;
And his hand forbore to smite the ore,
And his furnace smouldered low. 40
But he rose at last with a cheerful face,
And a bright courageous eye,
And bared his strong right arm for work,
While the quick flames mounted high;
And he sang, “Hurra for my handicraft!” 45
And the red sparks lit the air;
“Not alone for the blade was the bright steel made;”
And he fashioned the first ploughshare.

And men, taught wisdom from the past,
In friendship joined their hands; 50
Hung the sword in the hall, the spear on the wall,
And ploughed the willing lands;
And sang, “Hurra for Tubal Cain!
Our staunch good friend is he:
And for the ploughshare and the plough 55
To him our praise shall be;
But while oppression lifts its head,
Or a tyrant would be lord,
Though we may thank him for the plough,
We'll not forget the sword!” 60

(From G. B. Smith, ed. *Illustrated British Ballads, Old and New*. Vol. 2. London, 1881)