

Richard Garnett (1835-1906)

1 *The Highwayman's Ghost*

Twelve o'clock — a misty night —
Glimpsing hints of buried light —
Six years strung in an iron chain —
Time I stood on the ground again!

So — by your leave! Slip, easy enough, 5
Withered wrists from the rusty cuff.
The old chain rattles, the old wood groans,
O the clatter of clacking bones!

Here I am, uncoated, unhatted,
Shirt all mildewed, hair all matted, 10
Sockets that each have royally
Fed the crow with a precious eye.

O for slashing Bess the brown!
Where, old lass, have they earthed thee down?
Sobb'st beneath a carrier's thong? 15
Strain'st a coalman's cart along?

Shame to foot it! — must be so.
See, the mists are smitten below;
Over the moorland, wide away,
Moonshine pours her watery day. 20

There the long white-dusted track,
There a crawling speck of black.
The Northern mail, ha, ha! and he
There on the box is Anthony.

Coachman I scared him from brown to grey, 25
Witness he lied my blood away.
Haste, Fred! haste, boy! never fail!
Now or never! catch the mail!

The horses plunge, and sweating stop.
Dead falls Tony, neck and crop. 30
Nay, good guard, small profit thus,
Shooting ghosts with a blunderbuss!

Crash wheel! coach over! How it rains
Hampers, ladies, wigs, and canes!
O the spoil! to sack it and lock it! 35
But, woe is me, I have never a pocket!

(From *Poems*. London, 1893)