

## THE BELFRY OF BRUGES CARILLON

In the ancient town of Bruges,  
In the quaint old Flemish city,  
As the evening shades descended,  
Low and loud and sweetly blended,  
Low at times and loud at times,  
And changing like a poet's rhymes,  
Rang the beautiful wild chimes  
From the Belfry in the market  
Of the ancient town of Bruges.

Then, with deep sonorous clangor  
Calmly answering their sweet anger,  
When the wrangling bells had ended,  
Slowly struck the clock eleven,  
And, from out the silent heaven,  
Silence on the town descended.  
Silence, silence everywhere,  
On the earth and in the air,  
Save that footsteps here and there  
Of some burgher home returning,  
By the street lamps faintly burning,  
For a moment woke the echoes  
Of the ancient town of Bruges.

But amid my broken slumbers  
Still I heard those magic numbers,  
As they loud proclaimed the flight  
And stolen marches of the night;  
Till their chimes in sweet collision  
Mingled with each wandering vision,  
Mingled with the fortune-telling  
Gypsy-bands of dreams and fancies,  
Which amid the waste expanses  
Of the silent land of trances  
Have their solitary dwelling;  
All else seemed asleep in Bruges,  
In the quaint old Flemish city.

And I thought how like these chimes  
Are the poet's airy rhymes,  
All his rhymes and roundelays,  
His conceits, and songs, and ditties,  
From the belfry of his brain,

Scattered downward, though in vain,  
On the roofs and stones of cities!  
For by night the drowsy ear  
Under its curtains cannot hear,  
And by day men go their ways,  
Hearing the music as they pass,  
But deeming it no more, alas!  
Than the hollow sound of brass.

Yet perchance a sleepless wight,  
Lodging at some humble inn  
In the narrow lanes of life,  
When the dusk and hush of night  
Shut out the incessant din  
Of daylight and its toil and strife,  
May listen with a calm delight  
To the poet's melodies,  
Till he hears, or dreams he hears,  
Intermingled with the song,  
Thoughts that he has cherished long;  
Hears amid the chime and singing  
The bells of his own village ringing,  
And wakes, and finds his slumberous eyes  
Wet with most delicious tears.

Thus dreamed I, as by night I lay  
In Bruges, at the Fleur-de-Ble,  
Listening with a wild delight  
To the chimes that, through the night  
Bang their changes from the Belfry  
Of that quaint old Flemish city.

## THE BELFRY OF BRUGES

In the market-place of Bruges stands the belfry old and brown;  
Thrice consumed and thrice rebuilt, still it watches o'er the town.

As the summer morn was breaking, on that lofty tower I stood,  
And the world threw off the darkness, like the weeds of widowhood.

Thick with towns and hamlets studded, and with streams and vapors gray,  
Like a shield embossed with silver, round and vast the landscape lay.

At my feet the city slumbered. From its chimneys, here and there,  
Wreaths of snow-white smoke, ascending, vanished, ghost-like, into air.

Not a sound rose from the city at that early morning hour,  
But I heard a heart of iron beating in the ancient tower.

From their nests beneath the rafters sang the swallows wild and high;  
And the world, beneath me sleeping, seemed more distant than the sky.

Then most musical and solemn, bringing back the olden times,  
With their strange, unearthly changes rang the melancholy chimes,

Like the psalms from some old cloister, when the nuns sing in the choir;  
And the great bell tolled among them, like the chanting of a friar.

Visions of the days departed, shadowy phantoms filled my brain;  
They who live in history only seemed to walk the earth again;

All the Foresters of Flanders,--mighty Baldwin Bras de Fer,  
Lyderick du Bucq and Cressy Philip, Guy de Dampierre.

I beheld the pageants splendid that adorned those days of old;  
Stately dames, like queens attended, knights who bore the Fleece of Gold

Lombard and Venetian merchants with deep-laden argosies;  
Ministers from twenty nations; more than royal pomp and ease.

I beheld proud Maximilian, kneeling humbly on the ground;  
I beheld the gentle Mary, hunting with her hawk and hound;

And her lighted bridal-chamber, where a duke slept with the queen,  
And the armed guard around them, and the sword unsheathed between.

I beheld the Flemish weavers, with Namur and Juliers bold,

Marching homeward from the bloody battle of the Spurs of Gold;

Saw the light at Minnewater, saw the White Hoods moving west,  
Saw great Artevelde victorious scale the Golden Dragon's nest.

And again the whiskered Spaniard all the land with terror smote;  
And again the wild alarum sounded from the tocsin's throat;

Till the bell of Ghent responded o'er lagoon and dike of sand,  
"I am Roland! I am Roland! there is victory in the land!"

Then the sound of drums aroused me. The awakened city's roar  
Chased the phantoms I had summoned back into their graves once more.

Hours had passed away like minutes; and, before I was aware,  
Lo! the shadow of the belfry crossed the sun-illuminated square.