



AN ELEGY OF OLD TOWN

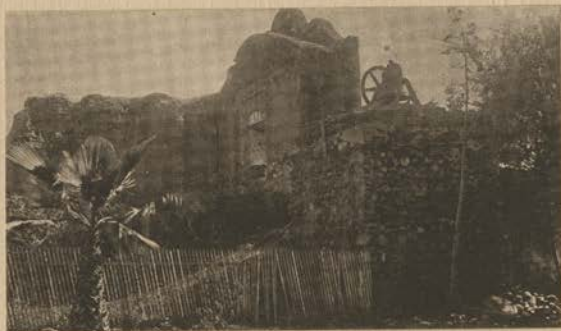
(San Diego, California)



Soft night; so tranquil is the earth and sky;
The encircling hills in light and shadow lie.
The quiet moon floats o'er the mirror sea.
The village lights are dimming one by one
And leave my world to dreamy reverie.

Upon these hillsides truth and romance meet.
Fantastic shadows pass me at their feet.
And thought here with emotion riots free;
Knits tapestries of pictures dark or bright,
As history's figures flit through memory.

In sheen and glitter of his armor clad,
With pomp and circumstance of war gone mad,
With beat of drum the Peace of God to mar,
To plant usurping standard in the sand,
Comes gay, marauding Militar.



Or milder music swells on passing breeze,
Its lilting cadenced by the swaying trees,
In rhythmic time to measured dip of oar,
His light barge skirting close the pebbled shore,
Comes brightly-turbaned troubadour.

At signal from her pirate-lover's ship,
To keep her secret tryst in sea-wrought crypt,
An Indian maid from reed-built bower,
O'er tide-washed flights of sandy stair,
Comes stealing at this lonely hour.

But more another spirit yet my memory thrills,
Of those who peopled once these sun-burned hills.
I linger near his cross and share his pain,
The glory of this goodly earth to lose—
Oh penance harsh—a heaven to gain.



A hooded monk with crucifix and beads.
No 'frighting host of warriors bold he leads.
But stealing lone from tule-thatched village nigh,
He trudging climbs and chants his litanies,
Imploring heaven these may not die.

This, Serra, was thy Mount of Calvary,
And up its steep, wearing God's livery,
Bearing thy cross of mortal pain and mental agony,
With cold, unsandaled, bleeding feet,
Thou entered thy Gethsemane.

At morning grey I see a ship to anchor swing,
And furl her sail, like tired bird her wing.
A boat is lowered from the galleon's rail
And to the haven draweth in
With shout and answering hail.



God's benison and answer to thy plea,
When none would watch an hour with thee.
Here's succor for a starving, faithless band.
Here's news of home and friends—in troth
The outreach of an Almighty hand.

'Tis such high faith as thine that saves the day,
When lesser souls have ceased to watch or pray,
Sees through the night by faith's unclouded ray
And lifts us to the mountain heights
Where God's lights play.

And bowing, 'neath this ancient-planted palm
And olive trees that breathe devotion's calm,
Here, by this mountain-mirroring bay,
Whose floor tonight soft moonlight fills—
Here "Let us pray!"

Geo. Whiteley Taylor

