

Savannah on the morning of the 11th January 1820

The noise of revel was hushed – and midnight profound
Had spread its black mantle on all things around.
No sound broke the silence, save the westerly breeze,
As it swept thro' the streets or sigh'd through the trees.

The hopes, and the sorrows and the labours of day,
In that sweet hour of quick, had all pass'd away
Save where Fancy, in dreams and the visions of night
Pictur'd prospects and hopes, which the morrow would blight.

How many on that night, had retired to rest
With wealth in abundance, and with happiness blest,
Who never again, after the coming tomorrow,
Would lie down to sleep, save in want and in sorrow.

For the word had been laid and the pride of our Land,
Was doom'd to destruction, by Almighty command,
And Piety and Mercy when that mandate was given,
Fled in trembling away – and flew back to Heaven.

At that awful command rush'd the winds thro' the sky.
The red torch was appli'd and the flames rose on high,
And flashing abroad, with a wild lurid glare,
Roll'd in volumes of crimson on the dark troubled air.

The quick roll of the drum, and the trumpets shrill wail,
Were mingled together with the noise of the gale,
And heavy and sad, fell the deep tones of the bell
As it rung out at midnight, that fair city's knell.

The strength of that flame, man had no power to stay,
As urg'd by the whirlwind, it rush'd on its prey,
And the labours of genius, and the structures of taste,
Were crumbled to ashes, in its wide spreading waste.

But one cheering image, in the dark southern sky,
As a craft from heaven, mildly greeted the eye;
Like Devotion it seem'd as its beautiful form,
Reflected the fire, and calmly beam'd in the storm. *

Amid that dread scene of despair and dismay,
A light broke from the East like the first smile of day;
And the moon slowly rose, o'er the horrors of night,
Like the rainbow of promise, to the sufferers sight. x

Her face was serene, as she slightly mov'd
O'er the wreck of our hopes, and of all that we lov'd,
And she shone in her course, thro' that wild troubl'd sky,
Like the ray of the light house to the mariner's eye.

That moon still moves on and that steeple still streams
With the light of that moon, as it throws back her beams;
But that night and its horrors have long pass'd away,
And that city again is the home of the gay –

* The steeple of the New Presbyterian Church, which had the appearance of a tall column of silver, as the fire reflected on its white surface.

x The moon rose bright and clean about four o'clock in the morning.