



THE EMPTY HOMESTEAD

It was once a happy place to be;
 It had a smile in every room-
 But now it stands, haunting, deserted,
 Radiating gloom.

It once had children run its halls
 And climb the oaks outside,
 And then take refuge in the round tower
 When the lonely grey clouds cried.

But seldom did the tears appear;
 The days were mostly fine,
 Purged by showers now and then,
 And then the sun would shine.

There were parties loud with laughter-
 They sang into the dawn...
 Then came that fearful, fateful night
 When companionship was gone.

It was an autumn years ago,
 When the barren trees did moan,
 And every footstep in the night
 Clattered on cobblestone.

The homestead, though, was warm that night
 From the family's friendly talk-
 Then crept the dreaded stranger
 Cold upon the walk.

A volley rang - the shots were sure,
 Where the bullets hit they shattered,
 Then the quickly running demon
 Into the darkness clattered.

All that happened in the house that night,
 No one really knows,
 But there are skeletons in the round tower...
 Or so the story goes.

Sealed within a hidden door,
 They've been there since that night,
 Doomed forever to the tower-tomb,
 With its shutters closed to the light.

No more do voices fill the halls -
 A deadly silence waits
 Any who'll tread the cobblestones
 And risk the wrought-iron gates.

Every autumn the old oaks creak
 For want of children's play,
 And never more the petals spring
 From the grey, dry clay.

But sometimes at the Martinmas,
 One will hear laughter and talk,
 That suddenly stops when footsteps
 Are heard upon the walk.

Valerie Moore