



The Green Leaf and the Gray.

POEMS

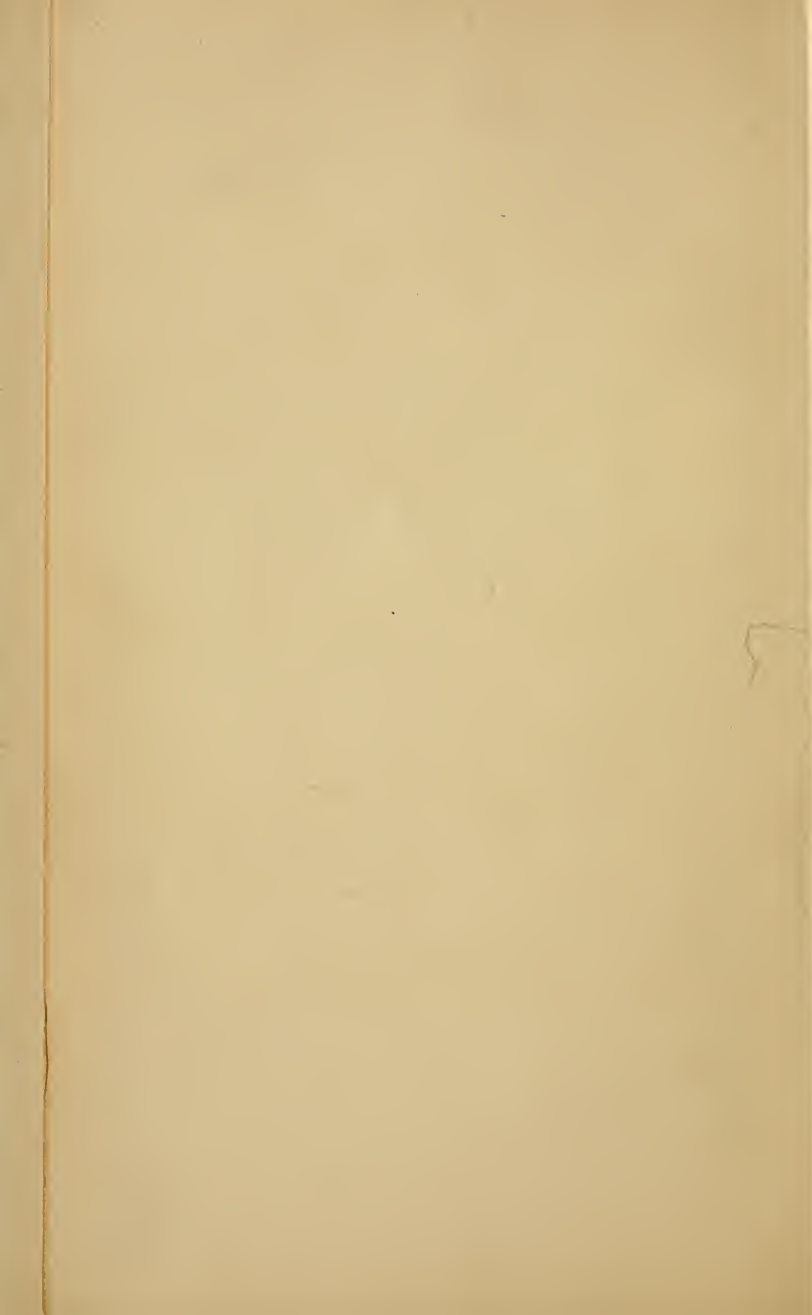
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BY

J. P. IRVINE.
KIRKWOOD, ILLS.

MANUFACTURED BY W. B. CONKEY CO., CHICAGO.

TO

HENRY W. ALLEN

OF SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.,

THE BEST OF FRIENDS AND COMPANIONS,
I DEDICATE THIS VOLUME.

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PRELUDE.

I.

I
IN the spring when leaves are green,
And the bud unfolds and blushes,
And I from my window lean
Out into the blue serene,
List'ning to a pair of thrushes,
Pouring forth their witching strains,
Sweet as tingling silver chains
At the breaking of the morning,—
I forget the restless night ;
And, half tipsy with delight,
Linger long and turn again,
Wistful, just to catch a note,

But I lack the sylvan tongue,
Far too fine for words, and hung
Tuneful in a golden throat:—
Still, it is not all in vain—
All for naught my bosom swells ;
And within me all the bells
Of rapture take the time and swing,
Till I cannot choose but sing ;
And that sweeter strains, I know,
Tinkling through my numbers run,
And from sun-lit zephyrs spun
Brighter threads of color glow:—
And, I may have caught, perchance,
From the rhythm of the dance
Of airy dapples on the grass
A lighter measure ; still, the voice
Is not the thrushes'—not, alas,

The hymn that makes the vale rejoice ;
But, when leaves are green in spring,
And delight is on the wing,
Somehow, one is prone to sing.

Be it so, will any hear—
Any pause upon their way,
Turning an arrested ear ?
Is there aught of love and cheer
In the green leaf of my lay ?
If so, in the singer's throng
There will still be room for me ;
Rhyme has run its way too long,
Fond hearts never tire of song
Nor the world of poesy.

II.

In the fall when leaves are gray,
Winds are lain, and vales and hollows
Flanked with hills in blue array,
Seem to drift in dreams away,
And the barns are mute from swallows,—
Distance mellows, and you hear
Through the drowsy atmosphere,
Sounds as soft as murmurs are—
As of waters falling far
In the lonely mountain glen,
And at times, the pheasant's drum
Rolling muffled, once, and then
All the woods around are dumb.
Howe'er, when the sun is low,
And the shadows lengthen tall
In the evening of the year,

And the gray leaves turning sere
From the boughs begin to fall;—
Steals a voice unto my ear,
Oft repeating one low strain,
Subtly plaintive ; and although,
Just a voice and nothing more—
Just a still and small refrain,
Without words, that one may hear
All the day long in the rain,—
Somehow, it becomes the key
That awakens memory,
Till she joins and sings of yore—
Sings so of the long ago—
Chords responding heart to heart,
Till my themes are but a part
And an echo ; and if tears
'Twixt my lines have left a trace,

Eyes were wet in other years
For a loved one's absent face ;
For the playthings left in place
Of a darling gone its way—
Flow'ret of a summer's day;
For a sash hung in the hall—
Dim with dust of twenty years—
Yet the rent made by the ball
Through the darker stain appears.
Thus it is, whate'er is mine,
Oh, my friend, I know is thine;
Fate is common, though unseen,
Walk we all the self-same way ;
In the spring the leaves are green,
In the fall they're just as gray.

Yet, will any cease their quest,
Turn and listen from their road?
As the dove a coveret nest,
In some warmly welcome breast,
Will my gray leaf find abode?
If so, in the singers' throng
There will still be room for me ;
Rhyme has run its way too long,
Fond hearts never tire of song,
Nor the world of poesy.

AT THE PASTURE BARS.

RETURNING lonely from the field,
She met me at the pasture bars ;
The moon was like a golden shield,
The firmament was lit with stars.

As morning dawn her face was mild,
As evening, so her limped eyes ·
God never gave a sweeter child
For weary man to idolize.

So winsome seemed her artless mirth,
Her soft caress and ardent kiss;
I thought of all delights of earth
The angels sure will covet this.

I know they mean to do no ill,
 But whom they love they lure away ;
Good angels, love her as ye will.
 But leave her with me while I stay.—

Just as she is, for I would set
 The hand of time behind an hour,
If that would stay a little yet
 The bud from blowing to the flower.

But when at length we homeward went,
 The fragrant azure shone so clear,
The great familiar firmament,
 I thought, had never seemed so near.

So near, the moon above the trees
 An airy globe of silver swung ;
And in the dewy tops of these
 The stars in mellow clusters hung.

So near, that I could scarce forego
 The thought that one who longing waits,
Might hear them singing sweet and low,
 Of love beyond the golden gates.

A SHINING ONE.

STAY, oh stay, sweet dove of heaven,
Yet a little, let me be
At thy feet a yearning suppliant,
Let me kneel and question thee:
For I know thou art enraptured
By the glory of thine eyes,
And the whiteness of thy raiment,
Thou art here from Paradise.

Hast thou seen the daintiest angel
In all heaven? Is she fair?
Has she grown in radiant beauty,
Are her foot-falls light as air?

Did she smiling run to meet thee,
 Were her kisses sweet and bland?
Through the open gates of jasper
 Did she lead thee by the hand?

Has the flash of time between us
 Quickened darkness? does she know
Of the cruel grief that smote us
 When our hope was changed to woe?
Is it true that the Immortal
 Is unshadowed by the Past,
That the burthen of remembrance
 At the door of Death is cast?

There was one of twenty summers—
 More than twenty years ago—
In the vanguard of the battle,
 Fell with face unto the foe;

He was truthful, he was tuneful,
And he wore the blush of spring ;
In his sanctified perfection
I should love to hear him sing.

Is the rapture born of heaven
So complete, there's naught remains
Of the earth-life's bitter sweetness,
Of its pleasures or its pains ?
Are you touched with our emotions ?
Are the dear old voices dumb ?
Do you ever long to meet us ?
Would you love to have us come ?

Draw near me now, make answer ;
Let me touch thee, feel thy breath ;
Reach thy hand and I will clasp it
Half across the dark of death :

Just a moment, and no longer,
 Would I lure thee, if I could,
Though we grieved so when you left us
 And put on your angel-hood.

'Tis enough that I have seen thee,
 Gentle spirit, heavenly dove ;
And I know thy silent presence
 Is to tell me of thy love:
Yet I would not have thee linger;
 Stay no longer, rise and go,
Lest a touch of earth should tarnish
 Thy unsullied wings of snow.

THE BELLS OF KIRKWOOD.

IT is eve, and the coming and going
Of cares, since the gray of the morn
Are at rest, and a harmony flowing
From the village comes over the corn ;

As a song o'er the sea when the breakers
Are acalm from their turbulent swells,
Soft winged o'er the manifold acres
Flows the sound of the beautiful bells.

And behold, as I list, my behavior
Is softened, as come unto me
Sweet thoughts of an infinite Savior,
On eternity's deep Galilee.—

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Of the evening my lifetime is bringing,
 With a calm that shall woo and enfold
As a garment of peace, of the ringing
 Of bells in the city of gold.

FEVER.

STAY near me, sweetheart, clasp, caress
My hand thy soft white palms between,
Stay all the night, that I may lean
On thee my whole weight's weariness.

Fold, fold me close unto thy breast,
I am *so* tired; sing sweet and low
Your love-songs of the long-ago;
O sing away the night's unrest.

Sing soft, and ope the window full
On yon great woodland, white and still,
In pallid moonlight on the hill,—
It is so deep and dim and cool.

But God is good, my dear, and when,
 Across the dewy fields of corn
 Shall blow the healings of the morn,
I shall not be so weary then.

THE LIGHTNING EXPRESS.

I.

SWIFT as the wind's untrammelled
speed,

A train of chariots, all a length
Of splendor rolls behind a steed
With loins of iron and the strength
A legion horses; and as breaks
The noise of trampling hoofs, and shakes
The solid earth, he thunders past,
Outpouring on the riven blast
His notes of warning, shrill and loud,
Through vapors rolling cloud on cloud,
In purple-bordered volumes ; yea,
In storm and darkness, night and day,
Through mountain gorge or level way,

With tightening rein and might unspent,
And head erect in scorn of space,
Holds, neck-and-neck, with time a race,
Flame-girt across a continent.

II.

Think not of danger, every wheel
Of all that clank and roll below,
Rang singing answers, steel for steel,
Beneath the hammer's testing blow:
And what, though fields go swirling
round,
And backward swims the mazy ground,
So swift the herds seem standing still—
As scared they dash from hill to hill;
And though the brakes may grind to fire,
The gravel as they grip the tire,

And holding, strike a startling vein
Of tremor through the surging train,
The hand of him who guides the rein,
Is all controlling and intent:
Fear not, although the race you ride
Is on the whirlwind, side by side
With time across a continent.

TWO KIDS.

I KNOW of a home in the village near,
Where two little children are treas-
ured dear.

A sweet little girl who betrays her grace
In the delicate lines of a Raphael face ;

And a rogue of a boy, who can barely
walk

By pushing a chair, and they say he can
talk.

Set square on his feet and firm at the
knees,

He stands like a sturdy young Hercules!

God grant that he grow to manly estate,
And the path he may climb be narrow
and straight.

But the girl is a daisy—a mischiev'us
lass,

Who tosses me kisses whenever I pass,—

Tosses them laughing, and standing alert,
Tempts me to chase her—the gay little
flirt;

Catch a weasel asleep—why, she flashes
away

If I move but a hand, like a mirrored
ray.

And wouldn't I scamper, if I were she,
From a great, big bearded fellow like me !

God grant that howe'er in that fullness
of time.

She bloom into womanhood's beautiful
prime.

And yet, little friends, I utter my prayer
With a falt'ring regret for the ills you
must bear.

For the loss of the sweetness of innocent
trust,

For the truth without guile and the love
without lust;

For the laughter that ripples and runs
and is glad,

In exchange for the smile from a heart
that is sad.

But pardon, sweet children, I fear I do
wrong,

For the sigh that I drop with the notes
of my song.

Play on and laugh loud, we rejoice in
the sound;

You're the gayest young kids in the neigh-
borhood round.

REST.

DEEP broods the night on land and
 sea,

As bent and lame I homeward creep,
And fondly lay me down to sleep,
Through all the night-of-years to be.

It is the sleep that lasts for aye,
 The balm that heals the hurts of all:
My heavy eye-lids droop and fall,
And all my being swoons away.

O friend, come grant me one request,
 Make wide the confines of my tomb,
I am so weary, give me room
To lie full length in blissful rest. —

Full length, as on a folded fleece
 Around by curtained darkness hung,
 Till healed forever and made young
For that new world where all is peace.

THANKSGIVING.

I.

HE is of all the gracious Lord,
Before His throne we bend the knee
And lift our voice in grand accord,
As swells an anthem of the sea:
We praise Him for His mercies done,
The crystal fountain from the springs,
The life reviving, shining sun,
The winds with healing on their wings.

II.

Our cup is full: a thousand scents
From hampered garners fill the land;
Like countless towns of golden tents
The stacks of wheat in clusters stand;

The meadows glow with aftermath,
 In heaps the gathered apples shine,
And lowing homeward down the path
 With burdened udders file the kine.

III.

Thus unto Him, our gracious king,
 With banners of our faith unfurled,
Ten thousand times ten thousand sing
 The fullness of a gladdened world;
For Him our souls in fervor burn,
 Our life, our love and all are His,
At best, alas, a poor return,
 So boundless His abundance is.

MY LITTLE GIRL UNDER THE SNOW.

I AM standing alone by the window
Looking out on the infinite gray,
As it deepens and darkens to silence
At the close of a desolate day:
There's a lull in the sleeting and raining,
And now in the stillness I know —
As the flakes feather aimlessly down-
ward —
That all the night long it will snow.

And lo, as it falls in the valley,
In the deep, still woods and the sea,
There's a fall, as of flakes, in the dark-
ness
Of the life that God gave unto me;

For the clouds have been heavy and rainy,
But now there's a lull, and I know
That my sorrow is soft'ning to longing
For my little girl under the snow.—

This night, for my poor little darling,
In her little grave under the leaves,
Only dressed in a shroud of Swiss-muslin,
Cut low at the neck and the sleeves;
For she died when the manifold lilies
Were a-bloom in the garden below,
But the meek little face in the coffin
Was as mute and as pure as the snow.

And now, I remember, while thinking,
How a year ago — this very night,
That she and I, here by the window,
Stood watching the snow-birds alight;

And coaxingly calling she fed them
 With little white pellets of dough,
But alas, did I think that my birdie
 Would sleep to-night under the snow.

But why should I weary with longing,
 When to cease, if for e'en but a day
Or a night, would be proof of forgetting;
 Ah, sorrow, stay with me, I pray;
Stay with me, that I may be humble
 And patient in bearing the loss
Of the dear little idol that keeps me,
 So near to the foot of the cross.

THE JUDGMENT MORNING.

I.

WHO may reckon of the coming
Of the solemn Judgment Day,
When the sea shall roll no longer
And the earth shall melt away?
But we know the spinning planets
Through their wonted measures run,
Just as on the natal morning
When elanced around the sun;
And when we have been forgotten
And the things we know are gone,
Through a hundred future ages
They will still roll on and on;

Till at last shall come an evening—

 Just as other evenings come—

But a spell of deeper silence

 Shall arrest the busy hum ;

And the sun, before his setting,

 Pause and turn a ling'ring view,

Fondly backward, as if bidding

 Earth and time a last adieu ;

And at midnight all the army,

 Of the stars in bright array,

With the moon adown the heavens,

 Will forever go their way ;

And I fancy all the living

 Will in heavy sleep be lain

And a hush of awful stillness

 Till the coming dawn shall reign.

II.

'Twill be startling, in a moment,
In the twinkling of an eye,
Swift and loud a herald-trumpet sound
Shall break athwart the sky,
And a host of shouting angels
Shall on gleaming wings descend,
White and vivid as the lightnings,
When in wrath they strike and rend.
'Twill be such a sound as never
Echoed since creation's birth,
'Twill reverberate throughout the length
And breadth and height of earth,
And shall quicken and awaken
All the dead that lie beneath,
Who shall rise, as He of old arose
Triumphant over Death.

Oh, my fellow men—my brothers,
 Count the sands upon the main,
Count the waves that break between them,
 Tell the drops of summer rain —
But a host no man can number,
 Far and wide on every hand,
With the grave's dust shaken from them
 Shall the risen myriads stand.
There they'll be in countless numbers
 From the mighty centuries past
Though their dust a thousand summers
 May have winnowed to the blast:
They shall rise from arid deserts,
 From the everglades and woods,
From prairies vast and lonely
 And from mountain solitudes:

There will be no sea so fathomless,
Nor wide nor tempest toss'd
But shall cease its restless roaring
And give up the loved and lost.

III.

Meetings, aye, I know there will be,
Though mayhap you have lain alone
In the potter's field a stranger,
You will stand amid your own;
How within his arms a daughter
Shall a yearning father press,
How a mother in her rapture
Will a tender child caress.
It may be the blue-eyed darling
Who was lost and never found,

It may be the little truant
 Who went swimming and was drowned;
And of mine, a precious idol
 Who, when taken, broke my heart,
Yet I know that I shall meet her
 Though a thousand miles apart;
It must just be as I left her
 In her old-time childish grace,
Ere the heavenly radiance touch her
 I must look into her face:
Yes, it must just be as we left them —
 Ere the death damp on them lay —
For the grave's sweet Balm of Gilead
 Shall have healed their hurts away:
Yes, it must be that we shall greet them —
 As of yore in love again —

Elsewise, heav'n would not be heaven
And the hopes of earth be vain:
That the old love in its fondness
Still will linger, is not strange;
It may be the new is stronger,
But the old will never change,
Till transfigured with the dawning
Of the new, we shall arise
To the home of many mansions
In the mount of Paradise.

THE MAYFLOWER.

DEC. 11, 1620.

I SEE her on yon boundless world —
Gray-winged and tempest tossed,
The foam-plumed breakers beating in
And thund'ring on the coast;
The Indian yells, the eagle screams
And breaks the wild repose,
A light is on the wilderness,
'Twill blossom like a rose !

An hardy handful land ashore —
An hundred, age and youth —
A band of Christian Alchemists
To test the gold of truth; —

The vanguard of a mighty host
The coming years should bring,
Who should kneel before no master
Save to God, their sovereign King!

MY TWO WHITE DOVES.

SOMEWHERE between the great extremes

Of mortal life, to-day I stand,
And muse and wonder — as in dreams —
A white dove clinging to my hand,—

A wee white dove with azure eyes,
Yet still, I wonder through my tears,
How far it is to Paradise, —
I know the past is forty years.

For lo, in Paradise have I
Another dainty dove like this,
Who some day in the by-and-by
Will greet me with a seraph's kiss.

How far the great Beyond may be,
I know not, there's no hint nor sign;
Will I first 'tempt it, or will she,
This wee white, nestling dove of mine?

If first for me the still, small voice
Of death should call, I'll humbly go;
Between my doves I make no choice
For Oh, my God, I love them so!

But fleet the years that roll on earth,
A little while and she will come,
And she who gave my white doves birth,
Till all the loved are safe at home.

FOR THE BACK OF A PHOTOGRAPH.

THE brush may err but not the art
That paints with sunbeams; here
you trace

The very thoughts upon your face,
So clearly cut in every part

And well defined in every grace
The subtlest feature, unconcealed,
Your living presence stands revealed.

TWO TOWNS.

MY cottage crowns a knoll of land,
And peering upward through the
green

Of maple boughs — on either hand
Its dormer-windows may be seen.

And there it is when looking down,
The season long in sun or rain,
You see a thrifty neighbor town
At either ending of the lane.—

A narrow lane and travel worn,
From lagging wheels and feet that tread
A-weary with the burdens borne
Between the living and the dead.

Though scarce a furlong either way,
 In one I hear the robins sing,
And in the other all the day
 The smitten anvil's measured ring, —

All day I hear the champ of drills,
 The roll of trains and engine-booms;
The low, incessant grind of mills,
 The muffled pounding of the looms.

Meet whom ye will, there's none but seems
 Pursuing some elusive quest, —
Two fretful, counter-passing streams
 That never know a moment's rest.

The streets may climb the rugged hill,
 Or straggle outward to the plain,

But wind and wind the way they will
They lead at last unto the lane, —

The narrow way we all must pass —
How soon or late there's none may
know,
Our quiet homes beneath the grass
Are always ready when we go.

A PSALM OF TRUST.

BE near me when I die and lean,
Your head above my bosom low,
Remembering dear, the long ago
And all the golden years between.

For arm and arm through cloud and sun,
As lovers long, we hither came, —
In life and death we are the same,
And humbly pray His will be done.

For well we know his mercies are
As sweet and all-abundant now,
As when at first we made the vow
To trust Him truly, near or far.

Nor would we change our destiny,
Nay, even though we had the power:
Our parting will be scarce an hour
Compared with all the years to be—

But scarce an hour, then why forlorn,
'Twill be as though my way I took
At night across a silent brook,
And you came over in the morn.

MYRRH AND FRANKINCENSE.

DEC. 25.

THERE'S morn in the land when,
 from lake unto lake,
And from ocean to ocean, the people
 awake
To the pealing of bells, and the hills all
 ashake
From the shots of great cannon: 'Tis
 Columbia's voice
To come forth and lift banners, beat
 drums and rejoice
In a heritage dear to the sons of the free.

And again, there's a day when, on
 suppliant knee

Bowing low, we give thanks, and arising,
outpour
Sweet hymns and grand anthems for a
bountiful store
Of the cluster and sheaf, for the herds on
the plain,
For the dews and the balms, and the sun
and the rain.

But the day when all peoples in all
of earth's climes
In glad exultation sing psalms and ring
chimes,
Wreath their homes in green holly, give
gifts and make mirth,
Is the glorified one of our Lord's lowly
birth,—

The day that brought peace and good will
unto earth,—
Brought peace and glad tidings song-
winged, and a light
To relume the deep darkness of Error's
long night,—
Brought healings for anguish, and a
balm for all woes,
From a fountain so brimm'd with sweet
love it o'erflows
In a hundred full streams.

Oh, then let us pray,
Giving thanks, let us sing, let us dance,
blessed day!
Let us meet and clasp hands and rejoice
that we live,

And if aught have estranged us, forget
and forgive,
And our gifts, let them come from the
heart's proffered store;
Let us go through the land and unlatch
every door
To the huts and the hovels where dull
squalor pines,
And where Want never laughs and the
sun never shines;
Let us clime to lone attics, go down to
low dives
And the dark slums of death in the tene-
ment hives,
So dark that one needs light his way
through the halls,

There is slime on the floors and mildew
on the walls;

There are women so haggard and with
faces so gray

One fears to gaze on them, and in pain
turns away.

There are mothers with infants that hang
uncaressed

Like limp and forgotten wet rags on the
breast;

An e'en the half-grown are so shrunk
and so lean,

And with hands so like claws, they look
old and unclean!

But enough, they are legion — these
hungry and gaunt

Hapless wretches in tatters — these children
 of want
And of vice and distress — 'tis enough,
 let us go
And relight with our smiles their dark
 hour, and bestow
The white loaf and rich cluster, place
 beneath the sick head,
With a touch, the soft pillow, and ease
 the straw bed;
Stir aglow the dead embers, bar out the
 sharp cold,
And enwrap the frail forms of the help-
 less and old,—
If for e'en but a day, that they may not
 forget

There are hearts that still beat with warm
charity yet,—

Just to ease but one moment the chasten-
ing rod,

Just a taste of the sweets of the goodness
of God.

O, thus it is well we're akin unto all,
And alert to respond to distress at her call;
And well we are touched with the grace
that is kind,

For there so many lame and there so
many blind,

There are so many waifs, little-bodied
and thin,

Standing out in the cold, looking wist-
fully in;

Aye, so many wee forms that are naked
and chilled,
So many wee stockings that are hung
and unfilled:
There are so many wives waiting late in
dull homes
For a step that is weak and outworn
when it comes:
And there so many friendless and lone
in the land
Who but want a kind word or the clasp
of a hand.

O, it's easy to bind the bruis'd reed,
and to bow,
Pressing soft the cool palm on the pain-
smitten brow;

And it costs but a farthing to pause and
to feed

The poor, little, starved mouths that are
gaping in need;

And still less to take hold an unsteady
man's arm —

Though mayhap he's been drinking,
'twill do you no harm,

So it's easy to help, and withal, we are
told

That the blessings, rained down in re-
ward, are ten-fold;

And thus it is well we are touched with
a chord

Of the love reaching forth from the heart
of our Lord.

AT NEW YEAR'S DAWN.

AT New Year's dawn a poet wove
A tinkling rhyme in divers keys:
Behind him lay the darkened hills,
Beyond him rolled the purple seas.

And time is young and time is old
He made the glad and sad refrain,
Sweet mingling each with each as fall
The glinting sunbeams and the rain.

And time is young and time is old,
And nimble feet aweary grow,
As round and round the seasons roll
The woodbine and the cypress blow.

Aye, time is young and time is old,
 With Him who marks our joys and tears,
A thousand years is but a day,
 A fleeting day a thousand years.

IN THE COUNTRY.



SUMMER DROUGHT.

WHEN winter came the land was
lean and sere:

There fell no snow, and oft from wild
and field

In famished tameness came the drooping
deer,

And licked the waste about the troughs
congealed.

And though at spring we plowed and
proffered seed,

It lay ungermed, a pillage for the birds:
And unto one low dam, in urgent need,
We daily drove the suppliant, lowing
herds.

But now the fields to barren waste have
run,
The dam a pool of oozing greenery
lies,
Where knots of gnats hang reeling in
the sun
Till early dusk, when tilt the dragon-
flies.

All night the craw-fish deepens out her
wells,
As shows the clay that freshly curbs
them round;
And many a random upheaved tunnel
tells
Where ran the mole across the fallow
ground.

But ah! the stone-dumb dullness of the
dawn,

When e'en the cocks too listless are to
crow,

And lies the world as from all life with-
drawn,

Unheeding and outworn and swooning
low!

There is no dew on any greenness shed,
The hard-baked earth is cracked across
the walks;

The very burrs in stunted clumps are
dead

And mullen leaves drop withered
from the stalks.

Yet, ere the noon, as brass the heaven
 turns,
 The cruel sun smites with unerring
 aim,
The sight and touch of all things blinds
 and burns,
 And bare, hot hills seem shimmering
 into flame !

On either side the shoe-deep dusted lane
 The meager wisps of fennel scorch to
 wire ;
Slow lags a team that drags an empty
 wain,
 And, creaking dry, a wheel runs off its
 tire.

No flock upon the naked pasture feeds,
The sheep with prone heads huddle
near the fence;

A gust runs crackling through the brittle
weeds,

And then the heat still waxes more in-
tense.

On outspread wings a hawk, far poised
on high,

Quick swooping screams, and then is
heard no more:

The strident shrilling of a locust nigh

Breaks forth, and dies in silence as
before.

No transient cloud o'erskims with flakes
of shade

The landscape hazed in dizzy gleams
of heat;

A dove's wing glances like a parried
blade,

And western walls the beams in tor-
rents beat.

So burning low, and lower still the sun,
In fierce white fervor, sinks anon from
sight,

And so the dread, despairing day is done,
And dumbly broods again the haggard
night.

A JUNE MORNING.

AYE, sing I must, ecstatic June,
Such morns the charms of Eden
bring,
Untouched the bells of rapture swing
And all my being breaks in tune.

As well restrain the roundelay
Of yonder golden-throated thrush,
Keep still the wren, or seek to hush
The hymning waters on their way.

I know the world is tired of rhyme,
But melody is ever new
When heard amid the plashing dew—
The subtle scent of mountain thyme.

Ah me, I fear a breeze may blow,
Or cloud may cast a passing screen;
O winsome morn of bloom and green,
I would that thou might'st never go.

BEFORE THE RAIN.

WHEN yestermorn upon my early
route

To fetch the cows—far up the hollows
found,

I knew 'twould rain; a myriad frogs were
out

And all the marsh a sheet of crackling
sound.

The sky was naught but one blank waste
of gray,

The rank skunk-cabbage clumps were
dull'd to blurs,

And on the knolls, a furlong's length
away,

A gorge of gloom arose the silent firs.

Dim lines of moisture all the night had
 crept

 Out-wid'ning from the edgings of low
 sloughs,*

And wheresoe'er a passing hoof had stept
 There lay a seeping puddle of dark
 ooze.

The clumsy cows grazed lagging as they
 went,

 The bell, trailed muffled, struck a
 dull refrain,

And ere we knew, the misty world was
 blent

 In one dark lowering raiment of gray
 rain.

* I give this word the western pronunciation.

A SULTRY NIGHT.

THE night swooned in a sultry lull,
And as we drowsed around the
doors,

We heard away across the moors,
A lonesome dog bark faint and dull.

Then all was dumb: bats swirled about,
Glimpsed through the dusk; mosquitoes
bit—

The smudge of chips against them lit
Flamed wanly once and flickered out.

Above the aspen tops entwined
The vapory moon hung half concealed;

The flame-lit cloud at times revealed
The darker borders of the world.

Retiring then we slept till morn—
It thundered deep—the curtain stirred,
The big drops fell, and then we heard
The deluge breaking on the corn.

INDIAN SUMMER.

AT last the toil encumbered days are
over,

And airs of noon are mellow as the
morn;

The blooms are brown upon the seeding
clover,

And brown the silks that plume the
ripening corn.

All sounds are hushed of reaping and of
mowing;

The winds are low; the waters lie un-
curled;

Nor thistle-down nor gossamer is flowing,
So lull'd in languid indolence the
world.

And mute the farms along the purple
valley,

The full barns muffled to the beams
with sheaves;

You hear no more the noisy rout and
rally

Amongst the tenant-masons of the
eaves.

A single quail, upstarting from the
stubble,

Darts whirring past and quick alight-
ing down

Is lost, as breaks and disappears a bubble,
Amid the covert of the leafy brown.

The upland glades are flecked afar in
dapples

By flocks of lambs a-gambol from the
fold;

The orchards bend beneath the weight of
apples,

And groves are bright in crimson and
in gold.

But hark ! I hear the pheasant's muffled
drumming,

The water murmur from a distant dell;
A drowsy bee in mazy tangles humming;
The far, faint tinkling tenor of a bell.

And now from yonder beech trunk sheer
and sterile,

The rat-tat-tat of the wood-pecker's
bill;

The sharp staccato barking of a squirrel,
A dropping nut, and all again is still.

A WINTER MORNING.

STILL LIFE.

YOU have seen a winter morning,
The horizon dull and low,
When the earth and all belonging
Lay a level waste of snow.
In the drear and empty distance
There was naught of all we knew,
Save the gaunt and naked poplars
To arrest the wand'ring view.
It was as a stretch of desert
With no sign of life thereon—
The familiar hills and hollows
And the fields and fences gone;
Every road and lane and by-way,
Far and near were blotted out,

Hushed the sound of bells and silent
 Were the huntsman's gun and shout;
E'en the axes of the choppers
 Were unheard amid the wood,
And in drifts the horse of iron,
 With his train imprisoned stood.
Save but once across the heavens,
 When there flew a single crow,
Not a motion broke the blankness
 Of the muffled world of snow.

AN APRIL MORNING.

I HAVE seen an April morning
When the ling'ring winds were lain,
And the day arose triumphant
From a sun-lit gush of rain !

When the uplands and the lowlands,
And the woodlands far and wide,
From the bonds of icy fetters
Were unloosed and glorified.

Wheresoe'er the eye would wander
There was naught but what was fair ;
There was scent of balm and balsam
In the clear, refreshing air.

There were rivulets of silver
 In the valleys; there were gleams
Through the soft empurpled distance
 From the dash of mountain streams.

I could hear the new wine beading
 In the saplings, and I knew
There was jubilee in elf-land,
 From the horns the fairies blew.

Every germ with life was quick'ning
 Into green above the mold,
Every bud a leaf and blossom
 Was beginning to unfold.

There was promise in the furrow,
 In the hatching of the brood,

In the heifer growing clumsy
From approaching motherhood.

E'en the old were feeling younger
With a brighter hope in view,
As the happy-hearted robin
Sang the song forever new.

Just as when it broke in concert
With the brooklet as it purled
Through the dewy blooms of Eden
On the morning of the world.

AN AUGUST AFTERNOON.

ON THE FARM.

I N stifling mows the men became oppressed,

And hastened forth hard breathing
and o'rcome;

The hatching hen stood panting in her
nest,

The sick earth swooned in languor and
was dumb.

The dust-dull'd crickets lay in heedless
ease

Of trampling hoofs along the beaten
drives,

And from the fields the home-returning
bees,

Limp wing'd and tired, lit short before
their hives.

The drooping dog moped aimlessly
around;

Lop'd down, got up, snapt at the
gnats; in pits

Knee deep, the tethered horses stamped
the ground,

And switched at bot-flies dabbing yel-
low nits.

With heads held prone the sheep in hud-
dles stood

Through fear of gads—the lambs, too,
ceased to romp;

The cows were wise to seek the covert
 wood,
Or belly deep stand hidden in the
 swamp.

So dragged the day, but when the dusk
 grew deep
 The stagnant heat increased; we lit
 no light,
But sat out-doors, too faint and sick for
 sleep;
Such was the stupor of that August
 night.

BEFORE HARVEST.

ON my good steed, at early morn,
Along the green-walled lanes I ride,
The land is dark on either side
With fields of deep, abundant corn.

From end to end the plowman wades
Breast high between the mile-long
rows,
As through the sea, behind him flows
A flashing wake of two-edged blades.

And still beyond the darker range
A fairer sight mine eyes behold,
From lighter green to glimpsing gold,
The heaving wheat begins to change.

And farther on, where lands are low,
 The timothy is all amidst
 Of airy bloom in amethyst ;
The amplest mows will overflow.

NOVEMBER.

QUATRAINS.

I.

THE longer days no more appear,
The shorter fly on quicker wings,
Night cometh, and the poet sings,
It is the evening of the year.

Sings of the sundown, with a sigh
Of pity for the tender call
Of yonder quail—the last of all
The scattered covey left to cry.

Sings, as abroad the waning light,
 The shadows into darkness creep,
 As from the uplands troop the sheep
To safer folds against the night.

Sings, as the cows come lowing near,
 The sweet bell tinkling down the path;
 The frost has nipped the aftermath,
It is the evening of the year.

II.

November is not all a shrew,
 She hath her noons of mellow airs,
 Her limpid mornings; and she wears
Of all the months the deepest blue.

So calmly deep, a leaflet caught
Hangs dead, but loosened round and
 round,
 Floats slowly eddying to the ground,
As noiseless as unspoken thought.

The halos, too, belong to her
 Of glittering sunsets, clear and keen;
 The fields aflowing far between
With film of silvery gossamer.

The gold-touch'd purpling hills, the hush,
 The hazel thicket and the glow
 Of scarlet sumac, deep'ning so,
I think me of the burning bush!

III.

The farmers haul their grain to town
 In jolting wagons—driving slow
 They talk of prices—say they're low,
When every tree has shaken down

Its mellow fruit in sixty fold,
 And every acre of their fields
 Where sickles clicked, have proffered
 yields

The thrashing engines beat to gold.

Yet, still they talk, as loads appear
 So great, their teams can hardly pull;
 To-day I counted, plump and full,
A thousand kernels to the ear!

A thousand kernels! why not lift
A song of trust and triumph then,
Hast thou not reap'd—my fellow-men,
As thou hast sown—in peace and thrift?

IV.

The season hath her churlish moods,
But yesterday the air was bland,
A hazy languor wrapt the land,
A purple raiment veiled the woods.

But in the night an eastern gale,
With freezing rain, arose and beat
The roofs and window panes with sleet,
Till all the world was clad in mail.—

So glassylike, at morn I found
 If one but touch'd a twig, its case
 Of ice fell shelling, like a vase
Of fragile crystal, to the ground.

There came a snapping from the stalks
 Where cattle fed; if there but hopped
 A blue-jay in the pines, there dropped
A shower of needles to the walks.

V.

The fields are naked, and the wood
 The burthen of the leaf has cast ;
 The low-hung sky is but a vast
Expanse of bleak infinitude.

The trail of smoke the engine made,
Hard panting past, an hour ago,
Unbroken still and hanging low
Along the length of heavy grade;—

The dullness brooding as a pall,
Alike at morning and at noon,
The wan-like rim that girts the moon
From night to night, betoken fall.

There'll be a snow, the farmer says ;
Uptaking reins, and pulling down
His muffled cap, drives out of town
Fast homeward by the nearest ways.

VI.

The dark, wet earth begins to freeze,
 That now the fog so long adrip
 From every eave and pendant tip,
Is clearing in the nipping breeze.

The roads are griped, as in a vise,
 The hoof-prints lipping to the brim,
 Like swollen pools, from rim to rim,
Are shot with javelins of ice;—

That closing fast will prove to be
 Deceptive pits that split and break,
 At every step the horses take,
Up-spurting mire unto the knee.

The load at best is hard to pull,
Say naught when lab'ring up the steep
The clogged wheels drag half-axle
deep!
Nay, spare the lash, be merciful.

WAR ECHOES.

*Though o'er them rolls the restless main,
And lichens lace their tombs in green,
And though we call the roll in vain
Across the years that crowd between,*

*Immortal memory, strong and true,
Will keep their deeds, and as the sun
In golden lustre lights the blue,
So shine will they till earth is done.*

THE DRUMS.

O WITH pomp of plumes and banners,
Ye may blow your cornets sweet,
But the airs that moved a nation
Were the tunes the drummers beat.

You remember how they thrilled us,
As we heard in other years,
When Rebellion smote the Union,
And she called her volunteers?

How "The Gates of Edinboro,"
For the feet a rhythm played,
And "The Girl I Left Behind Me"
In the heart a swelling made?

How the smith with lifted hammer
 Heard a moment, caught the time
Struck his anvil into chorus,
 As a ringer rings a chime?

How the mower paused and pondered—
 He so young and leal and lithe—
As he tapped a martial ditty,
 With his whetstone on the scythe?

And the mason scarce had caught them,
 From the keystone on the arch,
Ere he dropped his line and plummet,
 And took up his line of march.

Not a loyal ear but hearkened,
 Not a soul afraid to dare;

There were pale lads from the counters,
Brave hearts from everywhere.

There were choppers from the timber,
Leaving half unhewn the sill;

There were plowmen from the furrow,
There were grinders from the mill.

There were fathers, poor and needy,
Brought the help of their old age ;

There were sweethearts bade their lovers
Write their names on glory's page.

And among them all a widow

With her eldest and her stay,

How she kissed him as she bless'd him;

And with wet eyes went her way?

Till at length the full battalions
 Stood aligned in shining blue,
When the "forward march" was spoken
 And the fifes struck up anew
With "The Girl I Left Behind Me"—
 And as when the tempest comes—
With rattling hail and thunder-booms
 In broke the doubling drums.
Every footfall caught the rhythm,
 Every heart in valor beat,
As the column swept unbroken
 Like a flood-tide through the street,—
Swept unbroken and beyond us,
 With the drums still throbbing far,
For the harvest must be gathered
 In the scarlet fields of war.

MAY THIRTIETH.

I.

O COMRADES, though in thick'ning
green,
Your lowly graves the grasses screen ;
And years are long since last we met,
With all the change that years beget,
There's naught of life or time between
To woo away remembrance yet;
Nor naught that is, nor is to be
Hereafter, shall your valor stain;
For all abundant as the sea,
And steadfast as her broad domain,
So is the Nation's love for thee.

II.

And lo! upon this hallowed day—
 The sweetest e'er to sorrow born—
We seem to wake afar away,
 As oft we woke at early morn
In other years, again to hear
The gath'ring sounds of battle near;
 The stormy drum's redoubling beat,
The bugle's swift, defiant peal;
 The sharp commands, the hurrying
 feet
Of must'ring squadrons, as they wheel
 And league themselves in grim array,
 To storm the valiant hosts of gray!
The word to charge, that breaks the pause
Of dread suspense, the wild huzzahs,

As forth the phalanx springs and runs
Full front upon the flaming guns!
As when against a headland steep
A billow strikes and strews the deep
With warring breakers, even so,
The column breaks against the foe,
When man and man in all the heat
And might of fiery fervor meet,
And hand to hand with naked blade
And bayonet, fight undismayed,
The weaker yielding only when
Have fallen half their valiant men;
Their cannon gone, their colors lost,
They smite for every inch they yield,
Until, alas! at fearful cost
The stronger win the sanguine field.

III.

And so a grateful people come,
With martial step to fife and drum,
 And cornets sounding silver strains,
 Along a thousand crowded lanes ;
We come when spring in fullness
 breathes
 The wooing airs of summer's dawn ;
With plumes of fir and cedar wreaths
 Dark green, that smell like Lebanon ;
We come with roses and the bells
Of lilies and with asphodels,
 And flower-de-luce in beauty blown,
And violets so frail and dear,
That each beseems a blossomed tear
 That God had cherished for His own.

We bring them fresh of tint and hue,
And all aglint with sun-lit dew
And lay them in their sweet perfume
With tender touch on every tomb ;
And in lagoons and water-ways,
In lakes and harbors and in bays,—
From every fortress on the steep,
And stately ship where cannon frown
We let a fragrant garland down
For all who slumber in the deep.

Sleep, comrade, sleep, on sea or land,
There's not a palm-full of your clay,
So hidden, but a blossomed spray
Is drop't by some remembering hand.

For thee the healing rains of spring
Fall earlier that the grass may grow ;

The flowers in daintier fullness blow,
The robin redbreasts sweeter sing.

For thee we lift the granite high,
 The graven urns of marble set ;
 Their silver lutes the poets fret
To dulcet strains that never die,

Sleep, comrade, sleep, there lurk about
 No ambush'd foe to fear or shun,
 The Blue and Gray are one-and-one,
And all the fires of camp are out,

Sleep, comrade, sleep, nor dream again
 The vague uneasy dreams of life,
 Sleep all forgetful of the strife
The sleep that lulls away your pain.

Sleep, comrade, sleep and dream of bliss,
The night of death is calm and deep,
The war is over, sleep the sleep
That wakes no more to weariness.

Sleep, comrade, sleep in earth's green
breast,
There's none to trouble, fear no ill,
The night of death is sweet and still,
Sleep on in the eternal rest.

THE HALT.

THE day was lost, and we were sent
In haste to guard the baggage
train,
And all the night through gloom and
rain
Across a land of ruin went.

But halting once, and only then
We turned aside to let the corps
Of ambulances pass before,
That hauled a thousand wounded men !

And leaning, drowsy and oppressed,
Upon my gun I wondered where
The comrade was I helped to bear,
Slow rearward, wounded in the breast.

When lo ! I heard a fainting cry—
As wheels drew near and stopped
aside :

“The man in here with me has died,
Oh, lift him out, or I shall die !”

“All right,” the one-armed driver said,
“The horse can hardly pull the load,
We leave them all along the road,
It does no good to haul the dead !”

And so we turned by lantern light
And laid him in a gloom of pines,
When came an order down the lines,
“Push on, and halt no more to-night !”

FRANKLIN, TENN.

NOVEMBER 30, 1864.

HARD pressed, we fell back upon
Franklin, called a halt
And broke ground in hot haste, to with-
stand the assault
That we knew would be swift as a whirl-
wind, and fought
Without quarter.

Howe'er, we were vet'rans,
and wrought
As for life; fences were leveled, bridges
seized, aids
Sent with sharp orders, trains hurried
forward, brigades

Double-quick'd to the trenches where
batteries were set

With the guns loaded plumb to the muz-
zles, and yet,

Not a moment too soon !

For the foe had been massed
And were dark'ning the hills, and al-
though we had passed

Through a hundred encounters, a hush
as profound

As the silence of death brooded ominously
'round,

As we stood in amaze and beheld the
dark sweep

Of battalions, interleagued to battalions
—six deep—

Aye, the whole rebel army, pouring
 forth from the wood,
Forty thousand, in battle array under
 Hood,
Forty thousand, a gray and grim steel-
 fronted host
Sweeping forward, as dark waters sweep
 to the coast
Ere dashed into breakers, until they, with
 a shout,
Like the noise of the sea in its fury, broke
 out
And leaped forward !
And yet, there we stood helpless, nor
 dared fire a shot :
Two brigades by a blunder misplaced had
 been caught

Right between the two fronts, nor were
cleared from the way

Till hundreds fell captive, and the onset-
ting fray

Struck the works by the pike and poured
through, when Opedyck

Caught a glance of the route, and flash-
ing his blade

From the scabbard, called out to as game
a brigade

As ever faced bullets, "Up and at them,
my men !"

When the lightnings leaped forth, and it
thundered, and then

To the bayonets bent, right forward we
broke

Why repeat? You have read of the deeds
of that day
In the records of valor; how we held them
at bay,
As the sea-walls the breakers; of how
they were led
Till the sweeps of their charges were
strewn with the dead;
Of the fronting platoons that were mown
from their feet,
Of the gaps that were filled with no
thought of retreat
Until corps after corps were bereft of the
pride
Of their heroes: of how they were shot
from astride

'The embankments, cut down in the
breach, in their raids
On the colors, 'round the guns, till their
scattered brigades
Could be rallied no longer, and stricken
and sore,
With their captains unhorsed and their
swiftest no more,
Their banners in tatters, their standards
in two,
Aye, whipped but not conquered, at last
they withdrew,
And the slain of the Gray and the slain
of the Blue,
Were as one as they lay under night's
heavy pall
With the flag of the Union afloat over all.

THE FOND HEART'S BENEDICTION.

DECORATION DAY.

A GAIN we file into the camp
Wherein they bivouacked last
And as we call the roll they file
In solemn silence past.

We come with songs in minor keys,
We come with eye-lids wet,
We come with lilies of the vale
We bring the violet;

We come with wreaths of Sharon's rose,
With fragrant heliotrope;
We come with steadfast, loyal hearts,
With golden-anchored hope;

We come with snow-flakes in our beards,
 With winter in our hair,
Yet still the flag in hallowed trust
 With valiant hands we bear.

And when we're gone our sons and theirs,
 Heroic, strong and proud,
Will in the vanguard step
 And lift it flowing to the cloud.

We come with those we left as babes—
 Fair women now are they—
Who wove the dewy garlands lain
 Upon your graves to-day.

We come with fathers, hoar and frail,
 With mothers, bent and low,
And little children in whose hands
 The blue-bells overflow.

Aye, old and young, in sun and shade,
From sea to sea we come;
The plow stands idle in the field,
The doors are shut at home.

We come from hamlets and from towns,
In hosts along the lanes;
From factories in great cities
Where a Sabbath's stillness reigns.

We come in summer's rosy dawn,
The green woods dark'ning near,
When orchards drop their bloom and
round
The young fruit into sphere.

We come when bees are on the wing,
In airy halcyon hours;

We come with faith, and love as sweet
 And tender as the flowers;

When oriole and bobolink •
 From every mound and tree,
And robin-redbreast flute their notes
 In dulcet melody.

We come rejoicing and in tears,
 In fondness and in trust,
We kneel above their hallowed mounds
 And kiss the very dust.

And so we give to them the best
 We have in heart and words,
And leave them sleeping sweetly
 With the blossoms and the birds.

ON OCCASION.

A GOLDEN WEDDING.

TO-NIGHT we turn and feign would
call

To mind the smiles and tears
That flecked with dappled light and
shade

A life of fifty years—
A wedded life of willing hands
That drudged from sun to sun,
And each succeeding morn anew
Took up the work undone.

'Twas plow and plant and gather in,
Again to plow and sow;
The threaded shuttle through the loom
Went ever to and fro ;

It was a constant treadmill tramp—
 Around and still around;
And though the mill forever went,
 The grist was never ground.

But this were well, for, as the times
 And seasons kept their speed,
Came restless little feet to shoe,
 And little mouths to feed—
Mouths craving bread, and busy hands
 In every mischief thrust;
They made the usual pies of mud
 And pattered in the dust.

To fall and stub the bootless toes
 Was ever boyhood's fate,
And fingers just as sure were pinched
 While swinging on the gate;

The smoothly polished cellar-door
Was proof beyond a doubt
Of how the pants were worn in holes
Below the roundabout.

Yet there was mother, deft and quick
To knit and darn and mend;
She soothed the ache and bound the
bruise—

Her love was without end.
With constant care her faithful eye
Was never turned away
From watching o'er the truant feet
So prone to run astray.

The first one born was little Jim—
A most a precious chick;

The classic precinct of his birth
 Was down on "Shaver's Crick."
At times across his back and legs—
 To cure the itch of sin—
Was lain the rod's corrective salt—
 They must have rubbed it in!

But as he grew he often caught
 A glimpse of sunny gleams,
And heard the pulsing silver sounds
 Within the land of dreams;
And in the night, when all was still,
 Lay musing late and long,
Until he caught the magic spell
 And wove them into song.

The next on deck was wayward Bob,
 The drollest of the crew.

How often! oh, how often

Has he pinched us black and blue!
He went in manhood to the war,
And fought as he had pinched,
And when a bullet pierced his thigh
He swore but never flinched.

And then poor John in order came,
Kindhearted, dashing, free;
I never knew of one so full
Of sanguine hope as he—
A hope that turned aside and smiled
At grim misfortune's frown,
Until, alas! in dark eclipse
His noon-day sun went down.

And there was David, who, when grown,
In manly beauty stood—

A type of rounded strength, as stands

 A young oak in the wood.

His heart was glad, and when the drums

 Were beating far and wide,

He marched—a soldier—to the front

 And, fighting, fell and died.

The next was Edwin, who from birth

 Walked in his Maker's ways,

And kept in simple, faithful trust

 His precepts all his days;

And when at length a dread disease

 Its fatal course began,

He met it—dying as he lived—

 At peace with God and man.

Then Bell in turn—a laughing lass—

 One summer's day was born.

The light that lit her nature seemed

A reflex of the morn.

Consumption! dread destroyer!

Thou hast claimed her for thine own.

White souls there are; a whiter one

Than hers I've never known.

Then on one snowy New Year's eve

In came a gift from heaven;

'Twas little, brown-eyed Sara-Jane,

The best of all the seven.

A faithful daughter she has been,

A sister true and sweet;

Her feet were swift to run, her heart

In loyal kindness beat.

In mother's stead she sewed and baked,

And scoured and cleansed the cup;

In sickness bathed the fevered brow
 The faint head lifted up.
And still she's here to-night to share
 The burthens yet unborne—
The strength and stay of these old forms
 So weary and outworn.

So weary with the dizzy whirl
 The turmoil and the strife,
The aches, the longings and the cares
 Of this uneasy life;
So weary trudging up the hill,
 So weary plodding down,
So broken underneath the cross.
 So anxious for the crown.

Ah, well! we know the crown's in store;
 The rugged path you trod.

And, oh! it must be beautiful—

The city of our God.

Has life not sweets to lure you still?

The loved ones power to bless?

Long as we may for heavenly halls,

We love not earth the less.

Oh, then, dear heaven! hold not thy
charms,

And let the sun benign

In Indian summer loveliness

Upon them softly shine;

Stay winter's coming, and when come

Keep back the fall of snow.

We'll love and bless them while they
stay,

And bless them when they go.

AN EASY CHAIR.

FOR DR. A. W. ARMSTRONG.

I.

DOCTOR, take this easy chair;
Soft its cushion as a fleece;
For an hour forget thy care,
For an hour thy labor cease.
Let the sun of heaven shine
Still in love on thee and thine,
Staying long his going down,
Is the fond and fervent prayer
Of every heart that beats in town.

II.

Thou art worthy, and hast been
To thy stricken fellow-men
Faithful all thy lengthened years—
Faithful to them in their tears
And unto the bed of pain
Thou wert never called in vain;
 Never was the day too warm,
Nor the night too dark with rain,
 Nor too wild the winter's storm,
Nor too deep the drifted snow,
But that thou didst willing go;
Never patient yet so poor
But was welcome at thy door.

III.

Often have you been the stay
Of our dear ones as they lay

Struggling in the mortal throes—
Which alone a mother knows—
 In the trying hour of birth;
Heard the first awak'ning cry
 Of our children, new to earth.
You have seen them bright of eye,
Seen them at their nimble play,
Seen them grow and go their way,
 Seen them fade and droop and die;
Cheered us all when faint and low;
Laid your hand on wrist and brow;
Timed the life-tide's ebb and flow,
Cooled the fever of the brain
With draughts of healing, as the rain,
Show'ring, woos the arid plain
Back to living green again.

IV.

Eighty years are thine, and, though
White thy head is as the snow,
 And the days since first we met
Lengthened to the long ago,
 Thou art true to duty yet,
Just as if you were not old;—
True to Him who guides the way
And shall call thee to the fold
Ere long when thy work is done
Peaceful at the set of sun.

V.

Howsoe'er, sit down and rest;
 Soft the chair is as a fleece;
 Set thee down and rest in peace,
Golden is the languid west;

Indian summer round thee shine,
Health and wealth to thee and thine.

Sit thee down and rest in ease;

 Let thy dreams be dreams of bliss;
Little children climb thy knees,

 Archly giving kiss for kiss.
Doctor, thou art truly blessed!

Take the chair, sit down and rest.

JO LEEPER.

FORTY years ago, or nigh,
Barefoot boys were Jo and I.
I a child and he a child,
Here, when all the grove was wild;
Played together every day—
In the straw rick, in the hay;
Hunted birds' eggs, went to school,
And a-swimming in the cool,
Deep, delicious willow pool,—
Now dried up, with just the stumps
To show where grew the willow clumps.
There's change! The creek sinks in its
bed;
I am tired and Jo is dead.

He so lithe and fleet and strong,
Built, we thought, for living long.
Better boy was never known,
Nor a better man when grown;
Kindly-hearted, boy-like still,
Thought no evil, spake no ill,
Peaceable—he knew no strife,
Even-tempered all his life.
Loved to romp and laugh and joke,
Uncomplaining took the yoke
When others fainted. Noble heart!
Well he filled a brother's part.
Lay him gently down to rest;
He deserves it; God knows best.

FROM THE ALBUM

OF MISS INA ALLEN.

MY friend! your life is in the May,
The wine of spring is in your
veins;

And like this virgin page, I pray,
It e'er may be as free from stains.

Ah, me! but May is fleet of wing;
She is too sweet to go so soon,—
We hardly hear the robins sing
Before she hies away to June.

Though June is dear, we sigh withal
Amid her lavish sweets to know
That summer nimbly seeks the fall;
Then comes the winter with its snow.

Still, when the winter of your years
 Shall come, 'twill sweeter be than
 spring;
'Tis peaceful age alone that hears
 From earth the bells of heaven ring.

FROM THE ALBUM

OF MISS LIBBIE HAMSHIRE.

MY dear young friend! your life is
sweet,

Your virtue spotless as the snow;

Your hands are deft, and swift your feet;

I wish that God would keep you so.

Howe'er, we may not bind the years,

Nor from our course the shadows bar,

But Age forgets his pains and tears

When hope becomes the guiding star.

And as it shown in times of old,

And led the shepherds glad and wise,

For you it streams a rain of gold

Across the hills of Paradise.

And—trust me, friend—I wish that you
 With willing feet may hither tend,
And keep as they the star in view
 Till Jesus meets you at the end.

JOSIE.

AH, Josie! We're weary with sighing
O'er the thought that you'll come
nevermore,

But rejoice that the sweetness of dying
Was a balm for the suff'ring you bore.
For we knew by the saintly behavior,
When approaching the dark river's
strand,
And in the light in your face, that the
Saviour
Was holding your poor little hand.

It is rapture to know you're together,
That you'll never grow weary again

In the airs of that beautiful weather

 That woo away sickness and pain.

Yet, withal, it is human to weep you,

 And to see you, oh, what would we
 give!

But, my dear little girl, we will keep you

 In memory as long as we live.

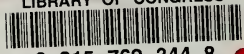
TOSSINGS.

NOT a wink all night. Toss? I
should say so!
Turned fifty times, more or less;
counted sheep—
A great flock disappearing, leap by
leap,
Over a fence into dreamland; watch'd
th' flow
Of dim waters; thought myself in a show
Riding the merry-go-round with a
sweep
And swirl that made me dizzy; still no
sleep.
Then I fell to thinking whether or no

There were crumbs in the bed, laughed,
 blamed the seams
In the sheets; got up and turned them,
 unfast
The blinds; again lay down, longing
 for dreams
And sweet slumber that came not. till
 at last,
Just as across the hills the daybreak crept
And the redbreasts sang of morning, I
 slept.



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