

W. H. I.





WHITTIER



POEMS
OF
NATURE

ILLUSTRATED BY

ELBRIDGE KINGSLEY





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POEMS OF NATURE

BY

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

Illustrated from Nature

BY

ELBRIDGE KINGSLEY



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*The dreariest spot in all the land
 To Death they set apart;
 With scanty grace from Nature's hand,
 And none from that of Art.*

*A winding wall of mossy stone,
 Frost-flung and broken, lies
 A lonesome acre thinly grown
 With grass and wandering vines.*

THE OLD BURYING-GROUND.

A view taken from the burial-ground of Old Hadley, in the valley of the Connecticut.

The Gateway to the White Mountains.

*And northward, leaving at my back
The warm vale of the Merrimac,
I go to meet the winds of morn,
Blown down the hill-gaps, mountain-born,
Breathe scent of pines, and satisfy
The hunger of a lowland eye.*

A SUMMER PILGRIMAGE.



POEMS OF NATURE.



A SUMMER PILGRIMAGE.

To kneel before some saintly shrine,
To breathe the health of airs divine,
Or bathe where sacred rivers flow,
The cowed and turbaned pilgrims go.
I too, a palmer, take, as they
With staff and scallop-shell, my way
To feel, from burdening cares and ills,
The strong uplifting of the hills.

The years are many since, at first,
For dreamed-of wonders all athirst,
I saw on Winnepesaukee fall
The shadow of the mountain wall.
Ah! where are they who sailed with me
The beautiful island-studded sea!
And am I he whose keen surprise
Flashed out from such unclouded eyes?

Still, when the sun of summer burns,
My longing for the hills returns;

And northward, leaving at my back
The warm vale of the Merrimac,
I go to meet the winds of morn,
Blown down the hill-gaps, mountain-born,
Breathe scent of pines, and satisfy
The hunger of a lowland eye.

Again I see the day decline
Along a ridged horizon line;
Touching the hill-tops as a nun
Her beaded rosary, sinks the sun.
One lake lies golden, which shall soon
Be silver in the rising moon;
And one, the crimson of the skies
And mountain purple multiplies.

With the untroubled quiet blends
The distance-softened voice of friends;
The girl's light laugh no discord brings
To the low song the pine-tree sings;
And, not unwelcome, comes the hail
Of boyhood from his nearing sail.
The human presence breaks no spell,
And sunset still is miracle!

Calm as the hour, methinks I feel
A sense of worship o'er me steal;
Not that of satyr-charming Pan,
No cult of Nature shaming man,

Not Beauty's self, but that which lives
And shines through all the veils it weaves, —
Soul of the mountain, lake, and wood,
Their witness to the Eternal Good!

And if, by fond illusion, here
The earth to heaven seems drawing near,
And yon outlying range invites
To other and serener heights,
Scarce hid behind its topmost swell,
The shining Mounts Delectable!
A dream may hint of truth no less
Than the sharp light of wakefulness.

As through her veil of incense smoke
Of old the spell-rapt priestess spoke,
More than her heathen oracle,
May not this trance of sunset tell
That Nature's forms of loveliness
Their heavenly archetypes confess,
Fashioned like Israel's ark alone
From patterns in the Mount made known?

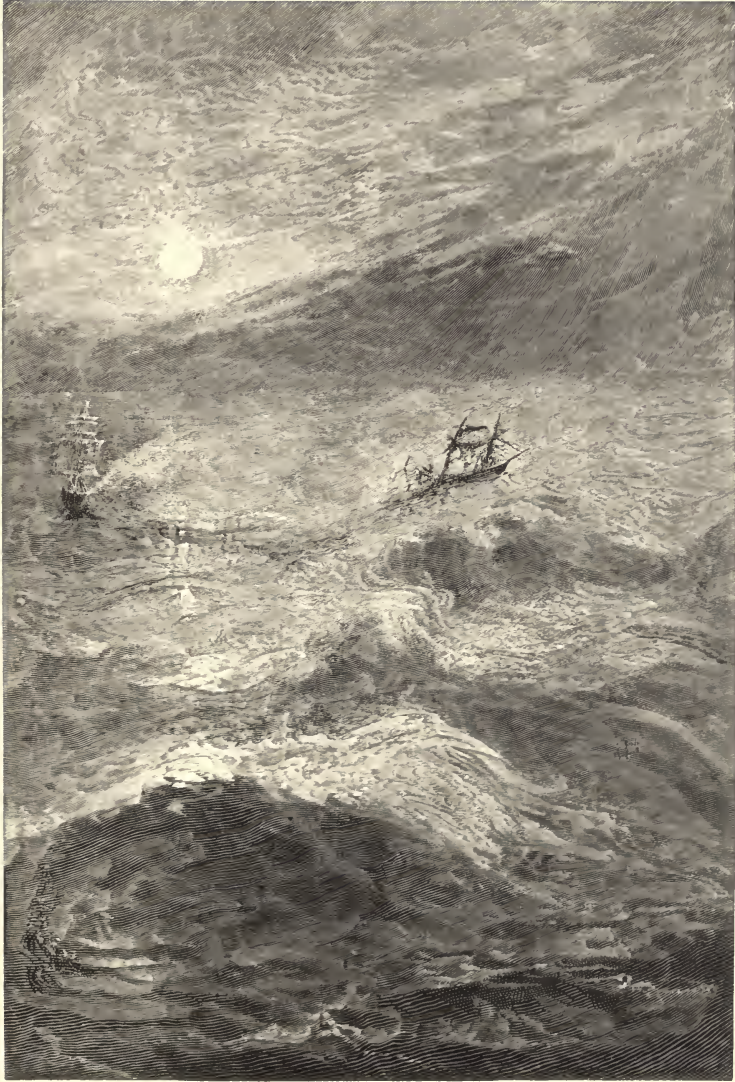
A holier beauty overbroods
These fair and faint similitudes;
Yet not unblest is he who sees
Shadows of God's realities,
And knows beyond this masquerade
Of shape and color, light and shade,

And dawn and set, and wax and wane,
Eternal verities remain.

O gems of sapphire, granite set!
O hills that charmed horizons fret!
I know how fair your morns can break,
In rosy light on isle and lake;
How over wooded slopes can run
The noonday play of cloud and sun,
And evening droop her oriflamme
Of gold and red in still Asquam.

The summer moons may round again,
And careless feet these hills profane;
These sunsets waste on vacant eyes
The lavish splendor of the skies;
Fashion and folly, misplaced here,
Sigh for their natural atmosphere,
And traveled pride the outlook scorn
Of lesser heights than Matterhorn:

But let me dream that hill and sky
Of unseen beauty prophesy;
And in these tinted lakes behold
The trailing of the raiment fold
Of that which, still eluding gaze,
Allures to upward-tending ways,
Whose footprints make, wherever found,
Our common earth a holy ground.



THE THREE BELLS.

BENEATH the low-hung night cloud
That raked her splintering mast
The good ship settled slowly,
The cruel leak gained fast.

Over the awful ocean
Her signal guns pealed out.
Dear God! was that thy answer
From the horror round about?

A voice came down the wild wind,
“Ho! ship ahoy!” its cry:
“Our stout Three Bells of Glasgow
Shall lay till daylight by!”

Hour after hour crept slowly,
Yet on the heaving swells
Tossed up and down the ship-lights,
The lights of the Three Bells!

And ship to ship made signals,
Man answered back to man,
While oft, to cheer and hearten,
The Three Bells nearer ran;

And the captain from her taffrail
Sent down his hopeful cry.
“Take heart! Hold on!” he shouted,
“The Three Bells shall lay by!”

All night across the waters
The tossing lights shone clear;
All night from reeling taffrail
The Three Bells sent her cheer.

And when the dreary watches
Of storm and darkness passed,
Just as the wreck lurched under,
All souls were saved at last.

Sail on, Three Bells, forever,
In grateful memory sail!
Ring on, Three Bells of rescue,
Above the wave and gale!

Type of the Love eternal,
Repeat the Master's cry,
As tossing through our darkness
The lights of God draw nigh!

Mount Chocorua.

*The river hemmed with leaning trees
Wound through its meadows green ;
A low, blue line of mountains showed
The open pines between.*

*One sharp, tall peak above them all
Clear into sunlight sprang :
I saw the river of my dreams,
The mountains that I sang !*

A MYSTERY.



A MYSTERY.

THE river hemmed with leaning trees
Wound through its meadows green;
A low, blue line of mountains showed
The open pines between.

One sharp, tall peak above them all
Clear into sunlight sprang:
I saw the river of my dreams,
The mountains that I sang!

No clew of memory led me on,
But well the ways I knew;
A feeling of familiar things
With every footstep grew.

Not otherwise above its crag
Could lean the blasted pine;
Not otherwise the maple hold
Aloft its red ensign.

So up the long and shorn foot-hills
The mountain road should creep;
So, green and low, the meadow fold
Its red-haired kine asleep.

The river wound as it should wind ;
Their place the mountains took ;
The white torn fringes of their clouds
Wore no unwonted look.

Yet ne'er before that river's rim
Was pressed by feet of mine,
Never before mine eyes had crossed
That broken mountain line.

A presence, strange at once and known,
Walked with me as my guide ;
The skirts of some forgotten life
Trailed noiseless at my side.

Was it a dim-remembered dream ?
Or glimpse through æons old ?
The secret which the mountains kept
The river never told.

But from the vision ere it passed
A tender hope I drew,
And, pleasant as a dawn of spring,
The thought within me grew,

That love would temper every change,
And soften all surprise,
And, misty with the dreams of earth,
The hills of Heaven arise.



STORM ON LAKE ASQUAM.

A CLOUD, like that the old-time Hebrew saw
On Carmel prophesying rain, began
To lift itself o'er wooded Cardigan,
Growing and blackening. Suddenly a flaw

Of chill wind menaced; then a strong blast beat
Down the long valley's murmuring pines, and woke
The noon-dream of the sleeping lake, and broke
Its smooth steel mirror at the mountains' feet.

Thunderous and vast, a fire-veined darkness swept
Over the rough pine-bearded Asquam range;
A wraith of tempest, wonderful and strange,
From peak to peak the cloudy giant stepped.

One moment, as if challenging the storm,
Chocorua's tall, defiant sentinel
Looked from his watch-tower; then the shadow
fell,
And the wild rain-drift blotted out his form.

And over all the still unhidden sun,
Weaving its light through slant-blown veils of
rain,

Smiled on the trouble, as hope smiles on pain ;
And, when the tumult and the strife were done,

With one foot on the lake and one on land,
Framing within his crescent's tinted streak
A far-off picture of the Melvin peak,
Spent broken clouds the rainbow's angel spanned.

Evening by the Lakeside.

*Yon mountain's side is black with night,
While, broad-orbed, o'er its gleaming crown
The moon, slow rounding into sight,
On the hushed inland sea looks down.*

*How start to light the clustering isles,
Each silver-hemmed! How sharply show
The shadows of their rocky piles,
And tree-tops on the wave below!*

SUMMER BY THE LAKESIDE.



SUMMER BY THE LAKESIDE.

I. NOON.

WHITE clouds, whose shadows haunt the deep,
Light mists, whose soft embraces keep
The sunshine on the hills asleep!

O isles of calm! — O dark, still wood!
And stiller skies that overbrood
Your rest with deeper quietude!

O shapes and hues, dim beckoning, through
Yon mountain gaps, my longing view
Beyond the purple and the blue,

To stiller sea and greener land,
And softer lights and airs more bland,
And skies, — the hollow of God's hand!

Transfused through you, O mountain friends!
With mine your solemn spirit blends,
And life no more hath separate ends.

I read each misty mountain sign,
I know the voice of wave and pine,
And I am yours, and ye are mine.

Life's burdens fall, its discords cease,
I lapse into the glad release
Of Nature's own exceeding peace.

O, welcome calm of heart and mind!
As falls yon fir-tree's loosened rind
To leave a tenderer growth behind,

So fall the weary years away;
A child again, my head I lay
Upon the lap of this sweet day.

This western wind hath Lethean powers,
Yon noonday cloud nepenthe showers,
The lake is white with lotus-flowers!

Even Duty's voice is faint and low,
And slumberous Conscience, waking slow,
Forgets her blotted scroll to show.

The Shadow which pursues us all,
Whose ever-nearing steps appall,
Whose voice we hear behind us call, —

That Shadow blends with mountain gray,
It speaks but what the light waves say, —
Death walks apart from Fear to-day!

Rocked on her breast, these pines and I
Alike on Nature's love rely;
And equal seems to live or die.

Assured that He whose presence fills
With light the spaces of these hills
No evil to his creatures wills,

The simple faith remains, that He
Will do, whatever that may be,
The best alike for man and tree.

What mosses over one shall grow,
What light and life the other know,
Unanxious, leaving Him to show.

II. EVENING.

Yon mountain's side is black with night,
While, broad-orbed, o'er its gleaming crown
The moon, slow-rounding into sight,
On the hushed inland sea looks down.

How start to light the clustering isles,
Each silver-hemmed! How sharply show
The shadows of their rocky piles,
And tree-tops on the wave below!

How far and strange the mountains seem,
Dim-looming through the pale, still light!
The vague, vast grouping of a dream,
They stretch into the solemn night.

Beneath, lake, wood, and peopled vale,
Hushed by that presence grand and grave,

Are silent, save the cricket's wail,
And low response of leaf and wave.

Fair scenes! whereto the Day and Night
Make rival love, I leave ye soon,
What time before the eastern light
The pale ghost of the setting moon

Shall hide behind yon rocky spines,
And the young archer, Morn, shall break
His arrows on the mountain pines,
And, golden-sandalled, walk the lake!

Farewell! around this smiling bay
Gay-hearted Health, and Life in bloom,
With lighter steps than mine, may stray
In radiant summers yet to come.

But none shall more regretful leave
These waters and these hills than I:
Or, distant, fonder dream how e'er
Or dawn is painting wave and sky;

How rising moons shine sad and mild
On wooded isle and silvering bay;
Or setting suns beyond the piled
And purple mountains lead the day;

Nor laughing girl, nor bearding boy,
Nor full-pulsed manhood, lingering here,

Shall add, to life's abounding joy,
The charmed repose to suffering dear.

Still waits kind Nature to impart
Her choicest gifts to such as gain
An entrance to her loving heart
Through the sharp discipline of pain.

Forever from the Hand that takes
One blessing from us others fall;
And, soon or late, our Father makes
His perfect recompense to all!

O, watched by Silence and the Night,
And folded in the strong embrace
Of the great mountains, with the light
Of the sweet heavens upon thy face,

Lake of the Northland! keep thy dower
Of beauty still, and while above
Thy solemn mountains speak of power,
Be thou the mirror of God's love.

A Winter Storm.

*Here, while the loom of Winter weaves
The shroud of flowers and fountains,
I think of thee, and summer eves
Among the Northern mountains.*

A MEMORY.



A MEMORY.

HERE, while the loom of Winter weaves
The shroud of flowers and fountains,
I think of thee, and summer eves
Among the Northern mountains.

When thunder tolled the twilight's close,
And winds the lake were rude on,
And thou wert singing, *Ca' the Yowes*,
The bonny yowes of Cluden!

When, close and closer, hushing breath,
Our circle narrowed round thee,
And smiles and tears made up the wreath
Wherewith our silence crowned thee;

And, strangers all, we felt the ties
Of sisters and of brothers;
Ah! whose of all those kindly eyes
Now smile upon another's?

The sport of Time, who still apart
The waifs of life is flinging;
Oh, nevermore shall heart to heart
Draw nearer for that singing!

Yet when the panes are frosty-starred,
And twilight's fire is gleaming,
I hear the songs of Scotland's bard
Sound softly through my dreaming!

A song that lends to winter snows
The glow of summer weather, —
Again I hear thee ca' the yowes
To Cluden's hills of heather!

The Decoy Beacon.

From amongst the shadows, the hand of fate,
Lifting the veil of the life of man,
And the hand that would lead him to light,
And that still, in the shadows, and still,
Gave the light to the weary man,
She turned the hand of the Father,
The Father.

THE PALATINE.

LEAGUES north, as fly the gull and auk,
Point Judith watches with eye of hawk ;
Leagues south, thy beacon flames, Montauk !

Lonely and wind-shorn, wood-forsaken,
With never a tree for Spring to waken,
For tryst of lovers or farewells taken,

Circled by waters that never freeze,
Beaten by billow and swept by breeze,
Lieth the island of Manisees,

Set at the mouth of the Sound to hold
The coast lights up on its turret old,
Yellow with moss and sea-fog mould.

Dreary the land when gust and sleet
At its doors and windows howl and beat,
And Winter laughs at its fires of peat !

But in summer time, when pool and pond,
Held in the laps of valleys fond,
Are blue as the glimpses of sea beyond ;

When the hills are sweet with the brier-rose,
And, hid in the warm, soft dells, unclose
Flowers the mainland rarely knows ;

When boats to their morning fishing go,
And, held to the wind and slanting low,
Whitening and darkening the small sails show,—

Then is that lonely island fair ;
And the pale health-seeker findeth there
The wine of life in its pleasant air.

No greener valleys the sun invite ;
On smoother beaches no sea-birds light ;
No blue waves shatter to foam more white !

There, circling over their narrow range,
Quaint tradition and legend strange
Live on unchallenged, and know no change.

Old wives spinning their webs of tow,
Or rocking weirdly to and fro
In and out of the peat's dull glow ;

And old men mending their nets of twine,
Talk together of dream and sign,
Talk of the lost ship *Palatine*, —

The ship that a hundred years before,
Freighted deep with its goodly store,
In the gales of the equinox went ashore.

The eager islanders one by one
Counted the shots of her signal gun,
And heard the crash when she drove right on!

Into the teeth of death she sped:
(May God forgive the hands that fed
The false lights over the rocky Head!)

O men and brothers! what sights were there!
White, upturned faces, hands stretched in prayer!
Where waves had pity, could ye not spare?

Down swooped the wreckers, like birds of prey,
Tearing the heart of the ship away,
And the dead had never a word to say.

And then, with ghastly shimmer and shine,
Over the rocks and the seething brine,
They burned the wreck of the *Palatine*.

In their cruel hearts, as they homeward sped,
"The sea and the rocks are dumb," they said;
"There'll be no reckoning with the dead."

But the year went round, and when once more
Along their foam-white curves of shore
They heard the line-storm rave and roar,

Behold! again, with shimmer and shine,
Over the rocks and the seething brine,
The flaming wreck of the *Palatine*!



So, haply in fitter words than these,
Mending their nets on their patient knees,
They tell the legend of Manisees.

Nor looks nor tones a doubt betray;
“It is known to us all,” they quietly say;
“We too have seen it in our day.”

Is there, then, no death for a word once spoken?
Was never a deed but left its token
Written on tables never broken?

Do the elements subtle reflections give?
Do pictures of all the ages live
On Nature's infinite negative,

Which, half in sport, in malice half,
She shows at times, with shudder or laugh,
Phantom and shadow in photograph?

For still, on many a moonless night,
From Kingston Head and from Montauk Light
The spectre kindles and burns in sight.

Now low and dim, now clear and higher,
Leaps up the terrible Ghost of Fire, —
Then, slowly sinking, the flames expire.

And the wise Sound skippers, though skies be fine,
Reef their sails when they see the sign
Of the blazing wreck of the Palatine!



MOUNTAIN PICTURES.

I.

FRANCONIA FROM THE PEMIGEWASSET.

ONCE more, O Mountains of the North, unveil
Your brows, and lay your cloudy mantles by!
And once more, ere the eyes that seek ye fail,
Uplift against the blue walls of the sky
Your mighty shapes, and let the sunshine weave
Its golden network in your belting woods,
Smile down in rainbows from your falling floods,
And on your kingly brows at morn and eve
Set crowns of fire! So shall my soul receive
Haply the secret of your calm and strength,
Your unforgotten beauty interfuse
My common life, your glorious shapes and hues
And sun-dropped splendors at my bidding come,
Loom vast through dreams, and stretch in billowy
length
From the sea-level of my lowland home!

They rise before me! Last night's thunder-gust
Roared not in vain; for where its lightnings thrust
Their tongues of fire, the great peaks seem so near,
Burned clean of mist, so starkly bold and clear,
I almost pause the wind in the pines to hear,

The loose rock's fall, the steps of browsing deer.
The clouds that shattered on yon slide-worn walls,
And splintered on the rocks their spears of rain,
Have set in play a thousand waterfalls,
Making the dusk and silence of the woods
Glad with the laughter of the chasing floods,
And luminous with blown spray and silver gleams,
While, in the vales below, the dry-lipped streams
Sing to the freshened meadow-lands again.
So, let me hope, the battle-storm that beats
The land with hail and fire may pass away
With its spent thunders at the break of day,
Like last night's clouds, and leave, as it retreats,
A greener earth and fairer sky behind,
Blown crystal-clear by Freedom's Northern wind!

II.

MONADNOCK FROM WACHUSET.

I WOULD I were a painter, for the sake
Of a sweet picture, and of her who led,
A fitting guide, with reverential tread,
Into that mountain mystery. First, a lake
Tinted with sunset; next, the wavy lines
Of far receding hills; and yet more far,
Monadnock lifting from his night of pines
His rosy forehead to the evening star.
Beside us, purple-zoned Wachuset laid
His head against the West, whose warm light made
His aureole; and o'er him, sharp and clear,

Like a shaft of lightning in mid-launching stayed,
A single level cloud-line, shone upon
By the fierce glances of the sunken sun,
Menaced the darkness with its golden spear!

So twilight deepened round us. Still and black
The great woods climbed the mountain at our back;
And on their skirts, where yet the lingering day
On the shorn greenness of the clearing lay,

The brown old farmhouse like a bird's-nest hung.
With home-life sounds the desert air was stirred:
The bleat of sheep along the hill we heard,
The bucket plashing in the cool, sweet well,
The pasture-bars that clattered as they fell;
Dogs barked, fowls fluttered, cattle lowed; the gate
Of the barn-yard creaked beneath the merry weight
Of sun-brown children, listening, while they swung,
The welcome sound of supper-call to hear;
And down the shadowy lane, in tinklings clear,
The pastoral curfew of the cow-bell rung.
Thus soothed and pleased, our backward path we took,
Praising the farmer's home. He only spake,
Looking into the sunset o'er the lake,

Like one to whom the far-off is most near:
"Yes, most folks think it has a pleasant look;
I love it for my good old mother's sake,
Who lived and died here in the peace of God!"
The lesson of his words we pondered o'er,
As silently we turned the eastern flank

Of the mountain, where its shadow deepest sank,
Doubling the night along our rugged road :

We felt that man was more than his abode, —

The inward life than Nature's raiment more ;
And the warm sky, the sundown-tinted hill,

The forest and the lake, seemed dwarfed and dim
Before the saintly soul, whose human will

Meekly in the Eternal footsteps trod,
Making her homely toil and household ways
An earthly echo of the song of praise

Swelling from angel lips and harps of seraphim.



A SEA DREAM.

WE saw the slow tides go and come,
The curving surf-lines lightly drawn,
The gray rocks touched with tender bloom
Beneath the fresh-blown rose of dawn.

We saw in richer sunsets lost
The sombre pomp of showery noons;
And signalled spectral sails that crossed
The weird, low light of rising moons.

On stormy eves from cliff and head
We saw the white spray tossed and spurned;
While over all, in gold and red,
Its face of fire the lighthouse turned.

The rail-car brought its daily crowds,
Half curious, half indifferent,
Like passing sails or floating clouds,
We saw them as they came and went.

But, one calm morning, as we lay
And watched the mirage-lifted wall
Of coast, across the dreamy bay,
And heard afar the curlew call,

And nearer voices, wild or tame,
Of airy flock and childish throng,
Up from the water's edge there came
Faint snatches of familiar song.

Careless we heard the singer's choice
Of old and common airs; at last
The tender pathos of his voice
In one low chanson held us fast.

A song that mingled joy and pain,
And memories old and sadly sweet;
While, timing to its minor strain,
The waves in lapsing cadence beat.

The waves are glad in breeze and sun;
The rocks are fringed with foam;
I walk once more a haunted shore,
A stranger, yet at home, —
A land of dreams I roam.

Is this the wind, the soft sea-wind,
That stirred thy locks of brown?
Are these the rocks whose mosses knew
The trail of thy light gown,
Where boy and girl sat down?

I see the gray fort's broken wall,
The boats that rock below ;
And, out at sea, the passing sails
We saw so long ago
Rose-red in morning's glow.

The freshness of the early time
On every breeze is blown ;
As glad the sea, as blue the sky, —
The change is ours alone ;
The saddest is my own.

A stranger now, a world-worn man,
Is he who bears my name ;
But thou, methinks, whose mortal life
Immortal youth became,
Art evermore the same.

Thou art not here, thou art not there,
Thy place I cannot see ;
I only know that where thou art
The blessed angels be,
And heaven is glad for thee.

Forgive me if the evil years
Have left on me their sign ;
Wash out, O soul so beautiful,
The many stains of mine
In tears of love divine !

I could not look on thee and live,
If thou wert by my side ;
The vision of a shining one,
The white and heavenly bride,
Is well to me denied.

But turn to me thy dear girl-face
Without the angel's crown,
The wedded roses of thy lips,
Thy loose hair rippling down
In waves of golden brown.

Look forth once more through space and time,
And let thy sweet shade fall
In tenderest grace of soul and form
On memory's frescoed wall.
A shadow, and yet all !

Draw near, more near, forever dear !
Where'er I rest or roam,
Or in the city's crowded streets,
Or by the blown sea foam,
The thought of thee is home !

At breakfast hour the singer read
The city news, with comment wise,
Like one who felt the pulse of trade
Beneath his finger fall and rise.

His look, his air, his curt speech, told
The man of action, not of books,
To whom the corners made in gold
And stocks were more than seaside nooks.

Of life beneath the life confessed
His song had hinted unawares ;
Of flowers in traffic's ledgers pressed,
Of human hearts in bulls and bears.

But eyes in vain were turned to watch
That face so hard and shrewd and strong ;
And ears in vain grew sharp to catch
The meaning of that morning song.

In vain some sweet-voiced querist sought
To sound him, leaving as she came ;
Her baited album only caught
A common, unromantic name.

No word betrayed the mystery fine
That trembled on the singer's tongue ;
He came and went, and left no sign
Behind him, save the song he sung.



THE LAKE-SIDE.

THE shadows round the inland sea
Are deepening into night ;
Slow up the slopes of Ossipee
They chase the lessening light.
Tired of the long day's blinding heat,
I rest my languid eye,
Lake of the Hills ! where, cool and sweet,
Thy sunset waters lie !

Along the sky, in wavy lines,
O'er isle and reach and bay,
Green-belted with eternal pines,
The mountains stretch away.
Below, the maple masses sleep
Where shore with water blends,
While midway on the tranquil deep
The evening light descends.

So seemed it when yon hill's red crown,
Of old, the Indian trod,
And, through the sunset air, looked down
Upon the Smile of God.
To him of light and shade the laws
No forest sceptic taught ;

Their living and eternal Cause
His truer instinct sought.

He saw these mountains in the light
Which now across them shines ;
This lake, in summer sunset bright,
Walled round with sombering pines.
God near him seemed ; from earth and skies
His loving voice he heard,
As, face to face, in Paradise,
Man stood before the Lord.

Thanks, O our Father ! that, like him, .
Thy tender love I see,
In radiant hill and woodland dim,
And tinted sunset sea.
For not in mockery dost thou fill
Our earth with light and grace ;
Thou hid'st no dark and cruel will
Behind thy smiling face !



JUNE ON THE MERRIMAC.

O DWELLERS in the stately towns,
What come ye out to see?
This common earth, this common sky,
This water flowing free?

As gayly as these kalmia flowers
Your dooryard blossoms spring;
As sweetly as these wild-wood birds
Your caged minstrels sing.

You find but common bloom and green,
The rippling river's rune,
The beauty which is everywhere
Beneath the skies of June;

The Hawkswood oaks, the storm-torn plumes
Of old pine-forest kings,
Beneath whose century-woven shade
Deer Island's mistress sings.

And here are pictured Artichoke,
And Curson's bowery mill;
And Pleasant Valley smiles between
The river and the hill.

You know full well these banks of bloom,
The upland's wavy line,
And how the sunshine tips with fire
The needles of the pine.

Yet, like some old remembered psalm,
Or sweet, familiar face,
Not less because of commonness
You love the day and place.

And not in vain in this soft air
Shall hard-strung nerves relax,
Not all in vain the o'erworn brain
Forego its daily tax.

The lust of power, the greed of gain,
Have all the year their own ;
The haunting demons well may let
Our one bright day alone.

Unheeded let the newsboy call,
Aside the ledgers lay ;
The world will keep its treadmill step
Though we fall out to-day.

The truants of life's weary school,
Without excuse from thrift,
We change for once the gains of toil
For God's unpurchased gift.

From ceiled rooms, from silent books,
From crowded car and town,
Dear Mother Earth, upon thy lap
We lay our tired heads down.

Cool, summer wind, our heated brows ;
Blue river, through the green
Of clustering pines, refresh the eyes
Which all too much have seen.

For us these pleasant woodland ways
Are thronged with memories old ;
Have felt the grasp of friendly hands,
And heard love's story told.

A sacred presence overbroods
The earth whereon we meet ;
These winding forest-paths are trod
By more than mortal feet :

Old friends called from us by the voice
Which they alone could hear,
From mystery to mystery,
From life to life, draw near.

More closely for the sake of them
Each other's hands we press ;
Our voices take from them a tone
Of deeper tenderness.

Our joy is theirs, their trust is ours,
Alike below, above,
Or here or there, about us fold
The arms of one great love!

We ask to-day no countersign,
No party names we own;
Unlabelled, individual,
We bring ourselves alone.

What cares the unconventioned wood
For passwords of the town?
The sound of fashion's shibboleth
The laughing waters drown.

Here cant forgets his dreary tone,
And care his face forlorn;
The liberal air and sunshine laugh
The bigot's zeal to scorn.

From manhood's weary shoulder falls
His load of selfish cares;
And woman takes her rights, as flowers
And brooks and birds take theirs.

The license of the happy woods,
The brook's release are ours;
The freedom of the unshamed wind
Among the glad-eyed flowers.



Yet here no evil thought finds place,
Nor foot profane comes in ;
Our grove, like that of Samothrace,
Is set apart from sin.

We walk on holy ground ; above
A sky more holy smiles ;
The chant of the Beatitudes
Swells down these leafy aisles.

Thanks to the gracious Providence
That brings us here once more ;
For memories of the good behind,
And hopes of good before !

And if, unknown to us, sweet days
Of June like this must come,
Unseen of us, these laurels clothe
The river-banks with bloom ;

And these green paths must soon be trod
By other feet than ours,
Full long may annual pilgrims come
To keep the Feast of Flowers ;

The matron be a girl once more,
The bearded man a boy,
And we, in heaven's eternal June,
Be glad for earthly joy !

THE LAST WALK IN AUTUMN.

I.

O'ER the bare woods, whose outstretched hands
Plead with the leaden heavens in vain,
I see, beyond the valley lands,
The sea's long level dim with rain.
Around me all things, stark and dumb,
Seem praying for the snows to come,
And for the summer bloom and greenness gone,
With winter's sunset lights and dazzling morn atone.

II.

Along the river's summer walk,
The withered tufts of asters nod ;
And trembles on its arid stalk
The hoar plume of the golden-rod.
And on a ground of sombre fir,
And azure-studded juniper,
The silver birch its buds of purple shows,
And scarlet berries tell where bloomed the sweet wild-
rose !

III.

With mingled sound of horns and bells,
A far-heard clang, the wild geese fly,
Storm-sent from Arctic moors and fells,
Like a great arrow through the sky,



Two dusky lines converged in one,
Chasing the southward-flying sun ;
While the brave snowbird and the hardy jay
Call to them from the pines, as if to bid them stay.

IV.

I passed this way a year ago :
The wind blew south ; the noon of day
Was warm as June's ; and save that snow
Flecked the low mountains far away,
And that the vernal-seeming breeze
Mocked faded grass and leafless trees,
I might have dreamed of summer as I lay,
Watching the fallen leaves with the soft wind at play.

V.

Since then, the winter blasts have piled
The white pagodas of the snow
On these rough slopes, and, strong and wild,
Yon river, in its overflow
Of spring-time rain and sun, set free,
Crashed with its ices to the sea ;
And over these gray fields, then green and gold,
The summer corn has waved, the thunder's organ
rolled.

VI.

Rich gift of God ! A year of time !
What pomp of rise and shut of day,
What hues wherewith our Northern clime
Makes autumn's dropping woodlands gay,

What airs outblown from ferny dells,
And clover-bloom and sweetbrier smells,
What songs of brooks and birds, what fruits and
flowers,
Green woods and moonlit snows, have in its round
been ours!

VII.

I know not how, in other lands,
The changing seasons come and go ;
What splendors fall on Syrian sands,
What purple lights on Alpine snow !
Nor how the pomp of sunrise waits
On Venice at her watery gates ;
A dream alone to me is Arno's vale,
And the Alhambra's halls are but a traveller's tale.

VIII.

Yet, on life's current, he who drifts
Is one with him who rows or sails ;
And he who wanders widest lifts
No more of beauty's jealous veils
Than he who from his doorway sees
The miracle of flowers and trees,
Feels the warm Orient in the noonday air,
And from cloud minarets hears the sunset call to
prayer !

IX.

The eye may well be glad, that looks
Where Pharpar's fountains rise and fall ;

But he who sees his native brooks
Laugh in the sun, has seen them all.
The marble palaces of Ind
Rise round him in the snow and wind ;
From his lone sweetbrier Persian Hafiz smiles,
And Rome's cathedral awe is in his woodland aisles,

x.

And thus it is my fancy blends
The near at hand and far and rare ;
And while the same horizon bends
Above the silver-sprinkled hair
Which flashed the light of morning skies
On childhood's wonder-lifted eyes,
Within its round of sea and sky and field,
Earth wheels with all her zones, the Kosmos stands
revealed.

xi.

And thus the sick man on his bed,
The toiler to his task-work bound,
Behold their prison-walls outspread,
Their clipped horizon widen round !
While freedom-giving fancy waits,
Like Peter's angel at the gates ;
The power is theirs to baffle care and pain,
To bring the lost world back, and make it theirs again !

xii.

What lack of goodly company,
When masters of the ancient lyre

Obey my call, and trace for me
Their words of mingled tears and fire!
I talk with Bacon, grave and wise,
I read the world with Pascal's eyes;
And priest and sage, with solemn brows austere,
And poets, garland-bound, the Lords of Thought,
draw near.

XIII.

Methinks, O friend, I hear thee say,
"In vain the human heart we mock;
Bring living guests who love the day,
Not ghosts who fly at crow or cock!
The herbs we share with flesh and blood,
Are better than ambrosial food,
With laurelled shades." I grant it, nothing loath,
But doubly blest is he who can partake of both.

XIV.

He who might Plato's banquet grace,
Have I not seen before me sit,
And watched his puritanic face,
With more than Eastern wisdom lit?
Shrewd mystic! who, upon the back
Of his Poor Richard's Almanack,
Writing the Sufi's song, the Gentoo's dream,
Links Menu's age of thought to Fulton's age of
steam!

xv.

Here, too, of answering love secure,
Have I not welcomed to my hearth
The gentle pilgrim troubadour,
Whose songs have girdled half the earth;
Whose pages, like the magic mat
Whereon the Eastern lover sat,
Have borne me over Rhine-land's purple vines,
And Nubia's tawny sands, and Phrygia's mountain
pines!

xvi.

And he who to the lettered wealth
Of ages adds the lore unpriced,
The wisdom and the moral health,
The ethics of the school of Christ;
The statesman to his holy trust,
As the Athenian archon, just,
Struck down, exiled like him for truth alone,
Has he not graced my home with beauty all his own?

xvii.

What greetings smile, what farewells wave,
What loved ones enter and depart!
The good, the beautiful, the brave,
The Heaven-lent treasures of the heart!
How conscious seems the frozen sod
And beechen slope whereon they trod!

The oak-leaves rustle, and the dry grass bends
Beneath the shadowy feet of lost or absent friends.

XVIII.

Then ask not why to these bleak hills
I cling, as clings the tufted moss,
To bear the winter's lingering chills,
The mocking spring's perpetual loss.
I dream of lands where summer smiles,
And soft winds blow from spicy isles,
But scarce would Ceylon's breath of flowers be sweet,
Could I not feel thy soil, New England, at my feet!

XIX.

At times I long for gentler skies,
And bathe in dreams of softer air,
But homesick tears would fill the eyes
That saw the Cross without the Bear.
The pine must whisper to the palm,
The north-wind break the tropic calm;
And with the dreamy languor of the Line,
The North's keen virtue blend, and strength to
beauty join.

XX.

Better to stem with heart and hand
The roaring tide of life, than lie
Unmindful, on its flowery strand,
Of God's occasions drifting by!

Better with naked nerve to bear
The needles of this goading air,
Than, in the lap of sensual ease, forego
The godlike power to do, the godlike aim to know.

XXI.

Home of my heart! to me more fair
Than gay Versailles or Windsor's halls,
The painted, shingly town-house where
The freeman's vote for Freedom falls!
The simple roof where prayer is made,
Than Gothic groin and colonnade;
The living temple of the heart of man,
Than Rome's sky-mocking vault, or many-spired
Milan!

XXII.

More dear thy equal village schools,
Where rich and poor the Bible read,
Than classic halls where Priestcraft rules,
And Learning wears the chains of Creed;
Thy glad Thanksgiving gathering in
The scattered sheaves of home and kin,
Than the mad license following Lenten pains,
Or holidays of slaves who laugh and dance in chains.

XXIII.

And sweet homes nestle in these dales,
And perch along these wooded swells;

And, blest beyond Arcadian vales,
They hear the sound of Sabbath bells!
Here dwells no perfect man sublime,
Nor woman winged before her time,
But with the faults and follies of the race,
Old home-bred virtues hold their not unhonored place.

XXIV.

Here manhood struggles for the sake
Of mother, sister, daughter, wife,
The graces and the loves which make
The music of the march of life;
And woman, in her daily round
Of duty, walks on holy ground.
No unpaid menial tills the soil, nor here
Is the bad lesson learned at human rights to sneer.

XXV.

Then let the icy north-wind blow
The trumpets of the coming storm,
To arrowy sleet and blinding snow
Yon slanting lines of rain transform.
Young hearts shall hail the drifted cold,
As gayly as I did of old;
And I, who watch them through the frosty pane,
Unenvious, live in them my boyhood o'er again.

XXVI.

And I will trust that He who heeds
The life that hides in mead and wold,

Who hangs yon alder's crimson beads,
And stains these mosses green and gold,
Will still, as He hath done, incline
His gracious care to me and mine;
Grant what we ask aright, from wrong debar,
And, as the earth grows dark, make brighter every star!

XXVII.

I have not seen, I may not see,
My hopes for man take form in fact,
But God will give the victory
In due time; in that faith I act.
And he who sees the future sure,
The baffling present may endure,
And bless, meanwhile, the unseen Hand that leads
The heart's desires beyond the halting step of deeds.

XXVIII.

And thou, my song, I send thee forth,
Where harsher songs of mine have flown;
Go, find a place at home and hearth
Where'er thy singer's name is known;
Revive for him the kindly thought
Of friends; and they who love him not,
Touched by some strain of thine, perchance may take
The hand he proffers all, and thank him for thy
sake.



THE OLD BURYING-GROUND.

OUR vales are sweet with fern and rose,
Our hills are maple-crowned ;
But not from them our fathers chose
The village burying-ground.

The dreariest spot in all the land
To Death they set apart ;
With scanty grace from Nature's hand,
And none from that of Art.

A winding wall of mossy stone,
Frost-flung and broken, lines
A lonesome acre thinly grown
With grass and wandering vines.

Without the wall a birch-tree shows
Its drooped and tasselled head ;
Within, a stag-horned sumach grows,
Fern-leafed, with spikes of red.

There, sheep that graze the neighboring plain
Like white ghosts come and go ;
The farmhorse drags his fetlock chain,
The cowbell tinkles slow.

Low moans the river from its bed,
The distant pines reply ;
Like mourners shrinking from the dead,
They stand apart and sigh.

Unshaded smites the summer sun,
Unchecked the winter blast ;
The school-girl learns the place to shun,
With glances backward cast.

For thus our fathers testified, —
That he might read who ran, —
The emptiness of human pride,
The nothingness of man.

They dared not plant the grave with flowers,
Nor dress the funeral sod,
Where, with a love as deep as ours,
They left their dead with God.

The hard and thorny path they kept
From beauty turned aside ;
Nor missed they over those who slept
The grace to life denied.

Yet still the wilding flowers would blow,
The golden leaves would fall,
The seasons come, the seasons go,
And God be good to all.

Above the graves the blackberry hung
In bloom and green its wreath,
And harebells swung as if they rung
The chimes of peace beneath.

The beauty Nature loves to share,
The gifts she hath for all,—
The common light, the common air,—
O'ercrept the graveyard's wall.

It knew the glow of eventide,
The sunrise and the noon,
And, glorified and sanctified,
It slept beneath the moon.

With flowers or snowflakes for its sod,
Around the seasons ran,
And evermore the love of God
Rebuked the fear of man.

We dwell with fears on either hand,
Within a daily strife,
And spectral problems waiting stand
Before the gates of life.

The doubts we vainly seek to solve,
The truths we know are one ;
The known and nameless stars revolve
Around the Central Sun.

And if we reap as we have sown,
And take the dole we deal,
The law of pain is love alone, —
The wounding is to heal.

Unharm'd from change to change we glide,
We fall as in our dreams ;
The far-off terror at our side
A smiling angel seems.

Secure on God's all-tender heart
Alike rest great and small ;
Why fear to lose our little part,
When He is pledged for all ?

O fearful heart and troubled brain !
Take hope and strength from this, —
That Nature never hints in vain,
Nor prophecies amiss.

Her wild birds sing the same sweet stave,
Her lights and airs are given
Alike to playground and the grave ;
And over both is Heaven.

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