

POEMS
BY
MINOT J. SAVAGE



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POEMS

BY

MINOT J. SAVAGE

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BOSTON

GEO. H. ELLIS, 141 FRANKLIN STREET

1882

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By GEORGE H. ELLIS

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Dedicated

To one whose loving eye divines
Rare meanings writ between the lines,
And on whose ear oft falls a tone
Caught by the listening heart alone.
But shall I to the world disclose
The name? Enough to say,— *she knows.*

I CLAIM no place among the great :
Shakspeare and Goethe rise
Like mountains keeping their high state,—
At home in far-off skies.
Meantime, the valleys at their feet
The brooklets murmur through,
With restful voices low and sweet :
So would I speak to you.

The lark soars in the morning sky,
While wondering listeners wait
To hear his lessening music die
Throbbing at heaven's gate.
Meanwhile, the robin at your door
Pours out his gladness too :
He gives his best ; who giveth more ?
And thus I give to you.

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PASSING along life's dusty road,
To rest a weary hour,
I've loved to pause, and turn aside
To pluck some simple flower.

It may be weeds I've gathered too;
But even a weed may be
As fragrant as the fairest flower
With some sweet memory.

But, if my flowers and grasses have
No beauty to your eye,
Think they may speak to other hearts,
And gently pass them by.



NATURE

NEVER WEARY

(The Sea)

LIFT thy white hands with welcome,
And clap them on the shore,
O thou, the never weary,
The young forevermore !

No lover loves his mistress
As I do love the sea,
Or hastes with such swift passion
As I do haste to thee.

Through all the year's long labor
I hear thee calling still :
As thou the moon obeyest,
I bow me to thy will.

My heart bends toward thee ever,
Acknowledging thy sway,
And echoes all thy moaning
To be so far away.

Men call thee false and fickle,
The all-devouring sea ;
And shudder at thy caverns
With their dread mystery.

But thou to me art ever
The faithful and the fond,
Disclosing half thy beauty,
But hinting more beyond.

Thine infinite suggestion
Still lures me to thy side ;
Thy quiet murmur soothes me ;
I like thy stormy pride.

I like thee with thy frowning,
When on the shingly keys
Thy mighty hands are beating
The tempest's harmonies.

I like thee in thy slumber,
When heaves thy curving breast,
While thou dost breathe as gently
As babe when rocked to rest.

I choose thee for my mistress,
And yield thee all thy will ;
Be gentle or be wrathful,
But I will love thee still.

Oh, when I am weary
Of all my little strife,
Thou tellest me a story
Of tireless, endless life.

Far back in primal æons
Thou laughedst as to-day ;
And all the slow-paced ages
Smiled at thy youthful play.

Forever young thou seemest,
Thine eye undimmed by tears,
Thy green locks free and flowing
As in the earliest years.

I stretch my hands out to thee,
I lie upon thy breast,
And with thy tireless motion
Thou rockest me to rest.

My little life so weary
Thy croon and thy caress
Soothe with the eternal whisper
That knows no weariness.

To me, my brain exhausted,
My energy grown dull,
Thy tide proclaims this gospel,—
God's cup is always full.

THE SONG OF THE PINES

I LEFT my study, dropped my books,
And, turning from the town,
Bethought me of the quiet nooks
Deep hid in forests brown.

I came to where the old pines stood,
And needle carpets spread :
The sun's gold trickled through the wood,
The winds soughed overhead.

I laid me down in restful peace,
And watched the swaying boughs,
While thought, rejoiced at her release,
Went wandering in drowse.

And as, half-dreaming in my place,
Beneath the trees I lay,
The flecks of sunshine on my face,
The tired world far away,

My thinking seemed to melt and flow
As grapes melt into wines,
Into a song-stream sweet and low,—
The winds among the pines.

They sung — my thoughts — the story o'er
Of how, since time began,
Life started on the ocean floor
And climbed up into man.

And then more strange the chanting grew ;
It swelled so glad and free
While rose the coming years to view
And all the fair to-be.

I listened till my heart beat high
To haste the laggard years !
And, when I roused me with a sigh,
My lids were wet with tears.

I kept but snatches of my dream,—
Oh, would the whole might stay !
It dwindled like a mountain stream
The Summer dries away.

But, as I mused the vision o'er,
A peace was in my breast,
As when Night folds her starry door
And soothes the flowers to rest.

For still my glimmering dream-glow makes
My hope's high hill-tops bright,
Like the faint streak the morning wakes,
When wanes the summer night.

For man's deep midnight now is past ;
 And, though the shadows lie
 Still in the valleys, now at last
 Dawn's in the eastern sky.

NATURE AND MAN

AS sleeps the Æolian harp, but wakes
 Touched by the fingers of the wind,
 So nature her weird music makes
 Only as breathed on by the mind.

The artist fingers of the sea
 Beat out their music on the shore, —
 A pensive, far-off melody, —
 Or smite the keys with crash and roar.

But pensive sigh and thunder deep
 Are in the ears that hear alone :
 They absent, sound falls off asleep,
 And voiceless Motion has no tone.

The rose-tint, or the colors fair
 Of rainbow, or the surf's white gleam,
 If no eye sees, are less than air,
 The viewless fancies of a dream.

'Tis this strange consciousness that hears ;
 'Tis this, and this alone, that sees.
Man is an organ : eyes and ears,
 On which the world plays, are his keys.

The music is not in the touch
 Whose fingers run the key-board o'er
This only motion, such or such,—
 Motion alone, and nothing more.

If no ear hears, the motion's all :
 The endless motion still may play,
But sounds must into silence fall
 When those who listen go away.

Bend low before the mystery !
 Man's world lives only in man's thought :
The wondrous things we hear and see
 Are in his loom of fancy wrought.

Does naught exist, then, save the mind ?
 Nay, not that only. Some grand Power
Doth endless links of life unwind,
 Creating all things every hour.

While, in the mind's alembic, these —
 Motions of earth and sea and air,—
Are changed to finest harmonies,
 Or clothed in forms of beauty rare.

THE SEA'S SECRET

I SAT on the beach at twilight,
And watched the rising moon,
While on my ear the wavelets
Beat out their soothing croon.

The town-life, with its worry,
Had faded to a dream :
Life's toil had turned to fancy,
And fancies real did seem.

And so I watched the wavelets
Fall at my feet in play,
And let my dream-wings flutter
Through dreamlands far away.

The curling foam-flakes whispered
How, tossing round the world,
They'd kissed a tropic island,
As past it they were whirled.

It was so fair, they told me,
That, though they could not stay,
None might forget the vision ;
It haunted them away.

“It is,” they said, “this longing,
That ne'er outworn may be,
That makes us moan forever
The secret of the sea.”

“What is this secret? Tell me.”
The murmurous answer fell:—
“We've sought for one to listen,
That we the tale might tell.

“But none could understand us,
So evermore in vain
We sob in plaintive music
That no man can explain.”

The while I sat and listened,
The ripple on the beach
Of white waves in the moonshine
Became a silvery speech.

“That island of our vision
We saw so far away,
We hoped that men might find it
Some fair and happy day.

“For we have heard men's sighing,
And we have seen their tears,
While up the weary ages
They've toiled along the years.

“So when upon the ocean
They launched their ships at last,
We whispered, ‘We will lead them
Where sorrow shall be past.’

“For we had seen the island
Uplift its palms in air,
And known it for that Eden
Where never comes despair.

“So round their ships we rippled,
And chased the winds at play,
Still hoping we might bring them
To that land far away.

“But ever are we baffled :
By adverse currents whirled,
To other oceans drifting,
Or on the breakers hurled,

“We see the vain endeavor,
We hear the hopeless cry,
While still through fruitless labors
They seek, find not, and die.

“And yet each wave that shoreward
Comes rippling up the bay
Has seen the vision splendid,—
That island far away.

“ But still, with all our longing
That men this rest may gain,
Fate laughs at all our labor ;
And ‘ *false, devouring main* ’

“ Men call us, while so gladly
We would a pathway be
To lead them to this peaceful,
Fair island of the sea.

“ But, ’stead of this, forever
Where priceless treasures sleep,
Fate whelms both ship and sailor
Beneath the moaning deep.

“ This is the sea’s sad secret,—
That, do whate’er we may,
The goal of our endeavor
Still lies so far away.

“ ’Tis this, if men but knew it,
That makes the sea’s low moan,
In hours of weary longing,
So answer to their own.

“ One age-long, endless struggle,
The unattained to gain,
The ever onward reaching,
And reaching still in vain,—

“This is the heart’s sad secret,
Wherever men may be ;
And this — the heart’s deep echo,—
The secret of the sea.”

THE CAT-BIRD

THROUGH the night and through the day
Runs a babbling brook away,
'Neath the hill and to the river
Through the pasture, on forever.
Shadowy playmates still I see,
Rivalling the brooklet’s glee ;
And the cat-bird’s voice I hear,
That so piqued my childhood’s ear.
Saucy, mocking cat-bird
On the alder spray,
Even now I hear thee,
Though so far away.

Thou incarnate, wicked joy,
How I watched thee as a boy,—
Mocking with thy saucy call
Robin, jay, kingfisher, all,—
Picking up the varied notes
As they fell from feathery throats,

Screeching as in demon glee
Our astonishment to see!
 Ashen-coated cat-bird
 On the alder spray,
Mocking all thy fellows
 Through the live-long day.

Thou highwayman of the wood,
Our New England Robin Hood,
Eating eggs thou did'st not lay,
Making other nests thy prey,
How with childish wrath we heard
Tales of thee, thou wicked bird,—
Of feathered maidens in distress,—
Longing still to make redress!
 But thou, saucy cat-bird
 On the alder spray,
All our maledictions
 Mocked and jeered away!

Oft amid the leaves descried,
With thy pert head cocked one side,
Oddly jerking thy long tail,
How I've heard thee jeer and rail,
Scolding on through all the weathers,
Like a Carlyle dressed in feathers:

NOTE TO THIRD STANZA.—This stanza is intended to set forth the popular traditions as to the cat-bird's character. The author—as one of his lovers—is inclined to think all such slanderous rumors unfounded.

Then, to mock the mockery,
Thou wouldst bubble o'er in glee.
 O thou cynic cat-bird,
 Mimicking mankind,
All our whims and fancies
 Laughing down the wind !

Tragic, comic actor thou,
For thy stage an alder bough ;
Now, some borrowed joyous note
Pouring from thy feigning throat ;
Now, from wailing puss in sorrow,
Her alarm cry thou dost borrow ;
Till, to us bewildered, seems
Each but fancies of our dreams.
 Mimic actor, cat-bird,
 Thus thy betters do,
Till 'tween good and evil
 Nothing seemeth true.

Cat-bird, but I love thee still,
By the brook-side, 'neath the hill,
Laughing, mocking in the trees,
Feathered Mephistopheles ;
Playing out thy varied part,
Mirroring the human heart ;
Fretting, scolding, scornful, then
Bursting out in joy again !

Good and evil cat-bird
On the alder spray,
Like thy contradictions
Run our lives away.

THE KENNEBEC

'TIS now the redd'ning sun goes down,
And slants his beams across,
Through autumn woods, past shadows brown,
O'er many a mound of moss.

And settles down a brooding still
Upon the evening gray ;
While east, the moon, above the hill,
Climbs up her starry way.

Between its banks, in shadowy sheen,
My river runneth by :
Broad sweeps it past the meadows green,
Itself blue, like the sky.

Now on its bosom all at rest
I push my boat from shore.
This night, I'll float upon thy breast
Or plash the dripping oar.

The wavelets dance around my prow,
And laugh in moonshine bright :
List to their tiny music now
Rise on the glimmering night !

See where the shadows, falling down
This side the rising moon,
Outline the ragged bluff so brown :
They'll all flee shoreward soon.

Meanwhile, here in the shadow dim,
Where looms the hill-top high,
I watch the branch-torn, ragged rim
Cut sharp against the sky.

There, just below, a shadowy band,
The bridge hangs o'er the flood,
By which two villages clasp hand
In loving brotherhood.

Beyond the bridge,— I know it well,—
The church which elms embower ;
And now rings out the evening bell
Upon this perfect hour.

Sweet village ! Thou to me dost seem
A picture free from care :
Thou art a lovely country dream,
And, like a dream, most fair.

Sweet river ! While the city's din
Goes up with ceaseless roar,
I wander back to what has been,
And sit upon thy shore.

Again, my boat's side leaning o'er,
I muse and dream, and see,
Through childhood's wondering eyes once more,
The things that were to be.

THE STORM

THE sky is a sieve that the rough wind shakes ;
And far and wide o'er the frozen earth
Flutter and fall the flour-white flakes,
Like ashes strewn on the wintry hearth.

The air is thick with the blinding fall ;
The trees are ghosts in the twilight gloom ;
Night slowly lowers her mournful pall
O'er the shrouded earth in her sky-domed tomb.

The forests moan to the shivering air,
While the hoarse winds call from the icy rock
That rears its gray front, bleak and bare,
To shatter the ravening waves' wild shock.

Oh, pity the sailor's fate to-night !

For bitter and keen is the north wind's breath ;
And the dun storm quenches the beacon light,
Now false to its warning of wreck and death.

As a frightened bird flees the hawk's career,
The lost bark flies o'er the reeling wave :
Their hearts stand still in their breasts for fear,
And their eyes strain out on a gaping grave.

A shivering shock, and a piercing yell !
A rush of waters, a sidelong heel !
The gun's dull boom her last farewell,—
And the waves surge over her, deck and keel !

Oh, pity the sailor's fate to-night !
And pity the homes that wait in vain !
The pitiless sun, in the morrow's light,
Will laugh, as of old, with the waves again.

THE DREAM OF THE BROOK

A BROOK slept through an afternoon,
And as it slept it dreamed the while ;
It talked in sleep with childlike croon,
And rippled in a sunny smile.

It dreamed of children that had played
Along its banks as on it ran :
Then fixed its thought on one that strayed,
More fair than all,—the little man !

On one that strayed ; and then the gleam
Of sunshine changed to shade profound :
While sadly moaned the sleeping stream,—
It dreamed the little lad was drowned.

THE LEAF

French of Arnault

FROM off thy frail stem broke,
Poor, withered leaf, and dead,
Where goest thou ?

It said :

I know not. From the oak,
My sole support, the storm
Has torn my frost-browned form.
Since then, by fickle wind,
Zephyr or Aquilon,
From forest to the plain,
To vale from mountain-top,
I'm hurried, driven on.
My path I never mind :
Where'er the breezes blow,
On land or on the main,
I go, nor care to stop.
I go where all things go,—
Where goes the beauteous rose,
Where the poet's laurel goes.

ONLY A LEAF

IT was only a little leaf,
That hung for a while on its bough :
It danced and fluttered ; but life was brief,
And its place is vacant now.

It was only a little leaf
Did it pay to live at all ?
The sun smiled on it, the cold rains came,
And then it was doomed to fall.

It was only a little leaf ;
But on it did shine the sun,
The winds did caress it, the birds did sing,
And it lived till its work was done.

It was only a little leaf,
But it took its gladsome part
In the great earth's life ; and, at the last,
Earth clasped it to her heart.

A MOONLIGHT NIGHT IN SAN MATEO

THOU'RT very lovely, when as now, O Night,
The brilliant blue of heaven looks adown,
One broad expanse of brightness ; and the brown
Old mountains robe themselves in soft moonlight !
My study window looks out on a sight
Of rarest beauty. See, the moon has thrown
From shore to shore, across the waters, prone
Over St. Francis Bay, of broad beams bright,

A massy bridge of silver ! Pitying Moon,
Dost thou see where, three thousand miles away,
Lone, in their lonely house, my loved ones sleep,
And dream perchance of one returning soon ;
While, on the hill-top near, thy tender ray
Falls on two graves o'er which the night dews
weep ?

EVENING

AFTER the noisy day, with rush and roar,
Has all the chambers of the soul possest,
Its holy nooks disturbed with rout unblest,
How sweet the lengthening shadows on the floor,
As soft the old nurse, Night, shuts to the door,
Draws down the star-pinned curtains of the west,
Hushes the birds and all the flowers to rest,
Puts out the lights, and brings us peace once more.

Then we, our heads in our earth-cradle laid,
Trust all to her strong arms and watchful care,
While suns and planets rock us in our sleep.
We drift into the dark all unafraid,
For all the eternal forces are aware
That 'tis the Universe's child they keep.

THE SUBLIME

DWELLS the sublime but on some mountain-
height,
Where, standing lone, near neighbor to the sky,
One looks sheer down the steep immensity
Where breaks a soundless torrent on his sight?
Come with me when a million stars are bright;
Stand on a plain where neither hill nor tree
Breaks the wide level far as eye can see,
And feel the earth sweep onward through the night!

Behind, the low, flat reaches of the sand;
Before, the measureless, wide-heaving sea;
Far out, one lone ship, with its human life:
Then, while the rhythmic beat upon the strand
But makes the silence awful, tell to me
What cares the Universe for all our strife!



LIFE

LIFE'S WONDER

'TIS "vanity of vanities" : thus said
The Preacher, in the ages long since dead.

And "vanity of vanities," the cry
Rings on the air of every century.

The worldling, pleasure-worn, toil-wearied, asks,
"Is life worth living," with its weary tasks?

Religion, with her faithless moan, appears,
And says, The world is but "a vale of tears."

"O fools and blind!" the wonder-feast to spite,
Whose own wild folly's dulled your appetite!

A blind man through a wondrous picture hall
Went muttering about each "empty wall."

A deaf man, when a symphony was sung,
Much marvelled at each mute and voiceless tongue.

And one, whose sense of smell was lost, deplored
Their folly who the odorous rose adored.

And one, heart-shrivelled by his heartless loves,
Mocked at young lovers and at cooing doves.

And one, who talked of solid facts, oft smiled
At those by poetry and art beguiled.

“O fools and blind!” The farmer wonders why
The scholar studies, with admiring eye,

The tiny scratches on the boulder’s top,
Whose huge obstruction only hurts his crop.

Meanwhile, the scholar in the boulder sees
The wondrous story of lost centuries.

The stolid Arab, under desert skies,
Sees where afar the Pyramids arise ;

But on their rocky, weather-beaten page,
Reads not the strange tale of a buried age.

The peasant by the Swiss lakes sees not there
The pile-raised village lift itself in air.

And bones and arrow-heads are rubbish all
To him who hears no far-off ages call,

From out the silence of the past, to say,
“We were the fathers of your glad to-day.”

Oh, wonder of the world, whose surface bright
Fills wide-eyed childhood with a fresh delight!

Beneath the surface, to exploring eyes,
Deep yawns to deep, and heights on heights arise.

Each grass-blade and each gaseous atom holds
An infinite mystery, that his thought unfolds

Who knows each molecule the kinsman is
Of every star-ray piercing the abyss.

And not one lowly blossom in the vale
But to the instructed ear can tell a tale,

Whose opening chapter was the eternal past,
And is not done while endless ages last.

Short is his fathom-line who thinks he sounds —
And finds it shallow — being's dread profounds.

The emptiness is in the pool that lies
Too shoal to hold the stars and boundless skies.

Oh, when I look upon the laughing face
Of children, or on woman's gentle grace ;

Or when I grasp a true friend by the hand,
And feel a bond I partly understand ;

When mountains thrill me, or when by the sea
The plaintive waves rehearse their mystery

Or when I watch the moon with strange delight,
'Treading her pathway 'mid the stars at night ;

Or when the one I love, with kisses prest,
I clasp with bliss unspoken to my breast,—

So strange, so deep, so wondrous life appears,
I have no words, but only happy tears !

I cannot think it all shall end in naught ;
That the abyss shall be the grave of thought ;

That e'er oblivion's shoreless sea shall roll
O'er love and wonder and the lifeless soul.

But, e'en though this the end, I cannot say
I'm sorry that I saw the light of day.

So wondrous seems this life I live to me,
Whate'er the end, *to-day I hear and see!*

To-day I think and hope! and so for this —
If it must be — for just so much of bliss,—

Bliss threaded through with pain,— I bless the Power
'That holds me up to gaze one wondrous hour !

THE WEED-GROWN PATH

BETWEEN two hearts a pathway led,
Oft trod in joyous days ;
And, many a time, they each one said,
“ So shall it be always ! ”

The morning hours went singing by,
And eve, with sunset's gold ;
While every joy or hope or sigh
Each to the other told.

So near, that snatches of a song
Each from the other heard ,
And subtle thoughts the whole day long
Passed swiftly without word.

So smooth the pathway grew at last
That one would swear the day
Could never come when no more passed
Such loving feet that way.

.
A whisper of suspicion blew,
One day, none knew from where ;
And each one close the casement drew :
A chill was in the air.

And now the path with weeds is grown,
The singing birds are fled :
In each house sitteth one alone ;
The happy past is dead.

OUTER AND INNER

I MAY not saunter in the sun
As when the days were long,
While Summer's thousand voices run
Through all the scale of song.

I may not lounge upon the bank
Where smooth the brook gleams by,
And gaze down where the sunlight sank
As deep as is the sky.

I may not whisper with the breeze
Upon the lush, sweet grass,
And, dreaming, watch the shadowy trees
Backward and forward pass.

I may not build upon the clouds
Grenada castles fair,
Where bright-haired visions troop in crowds
As high and pure as air.

I may not wander in the woods
And smell the fragrant gums,
Where naught of weary life intrudes,
And only healing comes.

For Winter, cheerless Winter, reigns !
The conquered Summer dies.
Her victor lords it o'er the plains,
And sweeps the dreary skies.

But, driven thus within my door,
I find a world as fair,
In which dwell all the gone-before,—
The wise, the good, the rare.

Suns of a thousand summers past
Shine on me from my grate,—
A light from out the æons vast
That antedate all date.

And all the singers of all lands,
In type's strange magic kept,
Wake their sweet songs at my commands,
Where in the leaves they've slept.

And, while I dream above the page,
Summer is in the sky ;
I watch the July lightnings rage,
Or hear some brook purl by.

I feel the soft grass 'neath my feet,
The tree-boughs sway o'erhead,
The air is with June fragrance sweet,
And all the storms are fled.

I build grand castles in the air,
And in their portals stand
Sweet visions of good women rare,
And men of every land.

I talk familiar with the great,
I worship with the good ;
Their true words still reverberate,
And thrill to loftiest mood.

And, going inward, deeper still,
And climbing up as high,
By hidden stairs I rise, until
I gaze out on the sky.

For there are windows of the soul ;
And, listening at these,
I hear the mighty ages roll
That make the eternities.

And, up through mists of blinding light,
A way no man hath trod,
I dare to look, till on my sight
There dawns the face of God.

And so I bless the winter winds
That shut the *outer* door ;
For who the *inner* vision finds
Knows he was blind before.

HIDDEN SPRINGS

UP on the hillside, far away,
There is a hidden spring
That never sees the light of day,
And where no bird doth sing.

It darkly wells, 'mid rocks and moss,
Lost in the thicket deep ;
Above it, trailing creepers toss,
And dripping dew-drops weep.

But, down below, its waters run
To feed the roots of flowers ;
Where bright birds glitter in the sun,
And sing through happy hours.

It makes a brook where children play ;
It clothes the fields in grasses ;
Its path is beauty all the way,
As down the vale it passes.

The mill-wheels hum along its side ;
It builds the busy town ;
And deeply, in its glassy tide,
The sweet stars look adown.

How many noblest deeds of men
Flow from the hidden springs,
Shut all away from human ken,
And kept as sacred things,—

The grief-fed springs within the heart,
All clouded o'er with doubt,
Where death our treasures smote apart,
And healing tears gushed out !

The graves of loved ones far away,
Up the dim track of years,
Still nerve the purpose of to-day
To rise above our fears.

Oh ! many a tender word is said,
And gentle deed is wrought,
In memory of the cherished dead
That live still in our thought.

The orphans, that the mother love
Of childless mothers saves,
May thank the grief that bends above
The newly sodded graves.

And many a man, whose noble fight
For truth has lifted men,
Knows some dead loved one's deathless might
His motive power has been.

O tear-fed, hidden springs that well
Up from the heart's great deep,
The world its debt can never tell
To those that work and weep,—

That work out in the open day,
That weep when none are nigh,
And only by sweet deeds betray
The heart's sad mystery.



DOUBT

'TIS nature's law : that, once at rest,
The boulder should forever lie
Unmoved beneath the placid sky,
Asleep upon earth's quiet breast ;

That, once in motion, worlds shall sweep
Forever on their destined way ;
That, through the night and through the day,
Unswerved their pathways they should keep.

And so the mind of man would cling
Forever to its old-time faith,
Whatever word the new age saith,
Whatever light the new suns bring.

Unquiet are the waves of doubt
That toss forever round the world,
On which our restless ships are whirled
As tides flow in and tides flow out.

But, rotting on the oozy strands,
Our ships would crumble and decay,
Did not the waves about them play,
And sweep them off to other lands.

MOTHERHOOD

O SWEET, delicious motherhood !
I, even I, am part —
I feel it next my heart —
Of that strange power that worlds did brood,
In which all life doth start.

It is the mighty God, I know,
Who thrills my being through,—
He lives in star and dew —
And, as June roses bud and blow,
So bids me blossom too.

Within my soul the sacred root
Of this new life runs down,—
Sweet love the seed hath sown —
Thence upward grows and comes to fruit,
And all my life doth crown.

I am become creator then :
God's secret I can guess,—
O wondrous happiness !—
I stand, the mother proud of men,
That strong sons love and bless.

Close at the universe's core,
 And out through all its range,—
 It rules life, death, and change —
'This secret lives forevermore,
 Sacred, divine, and strange.

The soul that doth this burden miss,
 Unlinked in being's chain,
 It seeks a fancy vain —
Shirking God's care, life's keenest bliss
 Loses, nor finds again.

The cradle is God's purest shrine :
 At this fair fount of life,—
 Hush here, O world, your strife ! —
Bow with veiled eyes, and call divine
 The mother crowned as wife.



ONE LEFT

THE one babe lost is the one babe left ;
The others are grown and gone away.
So cruel it seemed when first bereft,
Yet the lost is the only one left to-day !

I watched them grow out of my longing arms,
While each in turn lost the baby face :
The years fled away with those winsome charms,
And manhood and womanhood took their place.

And now they've made them homes of their own,
While I by the fireside rock and dream :
And, oh, I should be so all alone,
Did not the past like the present seem !

But, while I am rocking, my babe again,
That I lost, far off in the dimming years,
I clasp with the joy that is kin to pain,
And water my dusty heart with tears.

THE EMPEROR'S HAND

THAT hand, that with its shaping force
Had moulded empires at its will,
Or stayed at flood the people's course,
Or tempests hushed with, "Peace, be still";

That hand that over Lodi's bridge
Cleft through the leaden storm a path,
And on the Alpine summit's ridge
Defied the eternal ice king's wrath,—

That hand now pats his horse's mane
As on he rideth through the town :
The people's shout breaks out again,
But at his horse he looketh down.

So sometimes does a tempest hush,
When it has had its stormy hour,
To whisper with a wayside bush
Or lovingly caress a flower.

That hand, that shook a continent,
That Europe bent beneath its sway,
In lone St. Helen's discontent
It wiped an Emperor's tear away.



M. J. Savagys

THE POETS

O POETS, seated on Parnassus' height,
Or ranged in groups upon its sides! I hear
Your deathless songs hummed low, or ringing clear
To drown the world's noise in your sweet delight.
And glad am I to keep you still in sight,
Though to your high seats I may not come near.
For, as the stars do make the heavens dear,
While we on earth walk through the dreary night ;

So dost thou shine upon us, and send down
The music of thy rhythmic motions sweet
To make us know that harmony still reigns.
Could I but trust thou wouldst not on me frown,
I'd climb up to the footstool of thy seat,
And with my pipe re-echo thy glad strains.

A BLOCK OF MARBLE

WHITE possibility ! Before thee now,
 With chisel and with mallet in my hand,
 A musing artist, hesitant I stand,
And wonder with what shape I'll thee endow,—
A grand Athene, with majestic brow ;
 A raging Fury, with her flaming brand ;
 Diana, leading on her huntress band ;
Or sea-nymph sporting round some rippling prow ?

Or shall I carve out Aphrodite fair,
 Who melteth with her eyes the hearts of men ?
 Or, better yet, I'll make a Victory,
Whose upward look shall rouse men from despair,
 Discouraged souls thrill with new hope again,
 And give them strength to breathe a nobler air.

UNKNOWN HEROES

L IKE to sweet perfume, that on all the air
Is blown on every breeze, and greets the
sense

Of every passer, without recompense,
While yet the flowers are hid, none knoweth
where,—

Though right well knowing they are fresh and
rare,—

Because some high wall doth their beauty fence
From off the world's highway, in thickets dense,
That seek to cover what the winds declare,—

So is the atmosphere we breathe to-day,

Of liberty and goodness, filled with life

For common lungs to drink,—they know not
why,—

Because of unknown heroes, who alway,

Although unseen, stand firm in noble strife,

And know, for truth, both how to live and die.

DECORATING THE SOLDIERS' GRAVES

A SILENT bivouac of the dead, we say,
While on the low green tents we lay our flowers,
And with soft tread we take our reverent way
Past where each seems to sleep away the hours.

A silent bivouac? Nay, they sleep not here:
They have passed on; and, gleaming bright ahead,
Their camp-fires on yon heights of truth appear,
Lighting the way that coming feet shall tread.

Their shot-torn flags still wave upon the air,
There where some new heroic deed is done;
And, echoing loud, their shout still ringeth where
Some new field waits, by brave hearts to be won.

The brave die never, though they sleep in dust:
Their courage nerves a thousand living men,
Who seize and carry on the sacred trust,
And win their noble victories o'er again.

Their graves are cradles of the purpose high
That led them on the weary march, and through
The battles where the dying do not die,
But live forever in the deeds they do.

And from these cradles rise the coming years,—
The dead souls resurrected,—still to keep
The memory of those times of blood and tears,
And carry on the work of those who sleep.

And thus the silent bivouac of the dead
Finds voice, and thrills with throbbing life to-day;
And we, who softly by their green tents tread,
Will hear and heed the noble words they say.

THE TWO CONFLICTS: 1864

NOT only those who've given their homes for
camps;

Who stand the lonely guard through weary nights;
Who boldly dare disease in noisome damp,
That o'er their graves may flourish human rights;

Not those alone who bear our war-torn flag
Through dead-strewn trenches, deep with bloody
mire,
Or toil on marches, where the stoutest lag,
With souls that stay not, though the body tire,—

Not these alone our heroes : there are those,
Not forward in the front of fierce affray,
Where bayonets to bayonets oppose
The naked horrors of Death's carnage day ;

But, though Fame trumpet not their valorous deeds,
They fight as hard-won battles as the best ;
There is no shout of onset ; no one heeds
This silent conflict in the humble breast.

Weeping and waiting, tender hearts to-day
Taste all the bitterness of lonely woe.
When Freedom leads for country, who shall say
Whether is harder, or to stay or go ?

Not all the martyrs are of camp and field :
Home knows as noble deeds of sacrifice
As War's red tomes of bloody records yield.
From the pure altar of the heart may rise,

Better than smoke from e'en Right's reeking sword,
The smoke of hopes that Duty offers up,
While the libation of her life is poured,
And stricken hands hold but an empty cup.

'Tis often harder far to *bear* than fight :
'Tis hard to crush down feelings that will press
Hot tears from eyes blind with grief's sudden night,
To cloak the anguished heart with cheerfulness.

Battles are fought by firesides, where grim want
Is braved and bearded by weak woman's hand,
That sons and husbands, fired by traitor taunt,
May hurl fell treason from a rescued land.

The double fight is waging; and to Him
Who seeth all things with an equal eye —
Though one nor death-smoke nor the dust-cloud
dim —
Who'll say which turns a nation's destiny?

All honor to the brave who fight or fall!
Their work shall live, their names shall perish not.
Greet the returned; strew flowers on death's sad
pall;
But let not our home army be forgot.



LONELINESS OF TRUTH-SEEKING

'T WAS ever so, that he who dared
To sail upon a sea unknown
Must go upon a voyage unshared,
And brave its perils all alone.

He who from Palos, toward the west,
Sought for a new world o'er the sea,
Sailed forth distrusted and unblest,
While e'en his ship hatched mutiny.

And he who, not content to sit
And dream of far-off shores of truth,
Watching the sea-bird fancies flit
And wavelets creep through all his youth,

Must sail unblest of those behind,
And bear e'en love's reproaching tone :
Only the guiding God is kind
To him who dares to sail alone.

IN BUD

I HOLD in my hand an oak as great
As storm ever wrenched at or chopper fell ;
Gnarled trunk, wide bough, and leafy freight
All closely packed in an acorn-shell.

My fingers clasp a harvest sheaf,
With heavy gold head and twisted zone ;
In these kernels bare I see the leaf
And bending stalks of grain full grown.

I look out where the drifted snow
Lies cold and glist'ning 'neath the moon,
And know there sleeps, the crust below,
The blossom-browed, green-slippered June.

In yon dry pear-branch, stiff and cold,
A bud lies hid away from sight,
That 'neath the Spring's kiss shall unfold
Dawn-tinted blossoms, streaked with light.

The boughs that writhe in the sighing storm,
'Neath frowning skies and pelting sleet,
Shall droop with sunny burdens warm,
When long days with soft breezes meet.

I hold a home upon my knee,—
 A laughing child with sunny eyes :
She grows a maiden fair to see ;
 And then a chastened matron wise.

A prince goes limping past my door,
 But find him no keen critic can ;
The neighbors call him old and poor ;
 But he's God's courtier, rough old man.

From out a life of work and care,
 Of crosses heavy and burdens sore,
A soul may bloom to beauty rare
 That shall not fade forevermore.



FATHER : 1864

HE sits by the table, leaning
His head on his weary hand :
His eye has that gaze of meaning
That looks on a far-off land.

Brown locks with threads of silver,
A wrinkled brow of care,
A worn-out, age-bowed figure,
He sits in his old arm-chair.

In his toil-hard hand a letter
He held, and *seemed* to see ;
But he saw not what he looked at,
As he nodded musingly.

For, as he gazed, a picture
Of the years to come passed by ;
And the white envelope faded
From his future-reading eye.

But the letter and its meaning
Had conjured up his dream :
He saw a joyous wedding
Flit past with shadowy gleam.

But close behind the pageant
A cloud came, murk and dim,
Till, shutting out the sunlight,
It settled over him.

With darker edges brooding,
It closed around the home,
Where never more the children
At restful evening come.

Two will return, no, never !
His listening ear no more
Shall hear their echoing footfall
Sound through the open door.

And now the others leave him,
While turns his hair to gray,
And near the long hill's bottom
He takes his lonely way.

Roused now, through rooms forsaken
He walks with heavy sighs ;
And, looking at the letter,
The tears are in his eyes.

He feels his dream a true one :
His last boy's wedding-day
Is settled by the promise
This letter bears away.

A FANCY

I THOUGHT I was alone in some deep wood
Where matted branches, tangled o'er my head,
Shut out the day; and endless Night instead,
With wide, black wings, did ever o'er me brood
With her perpetual shadow. And a flood,
As if the hanging heavens were rent and bled,
Deep as sad Acheron, river of the dead,
Rushed by forever in a voiceless mood.

No sound e'er broke the stillness deep, unless
Some spirit lost awoke, and with his scream
Startled an echo, drearier, more lone
Than when dead silence held the wilderness.
Here did I dwell as in a waking dream
Until the years had into ages grown.

GOD MADE OUR LIVES TO BE A SONG

GOD made our lives to be a song
Sweet as the music of the spheres,
That still their harmonies prolong
For him who rightly hears.

The heavens and the earth do play
Upon us, if we be in tune :
Winter shouts hoarse his roundelay,
And tender sweet pipes June.

But oftentimes the songs are pain,
And discord mars our harmonies :
Our strings are snapped by selfish strain,
And harsh hands break our keys.

But God *meant* music ; and we may,
If we will keep our lives in tune,
Hear the whole year sing roundelay,
December answering June.

God ever at his keyboard plays,—
Harmonics, right ; and discords, wrong :
“ He that hath ears,” and who obeys,
May hear the mystic song.

ONE LAW

COME with me to this mountain!" cries the priest.
"Here God abides; and this is his High Place.
None from this sacred duty is released;
No other way canst thou gain heavenly grace.

"Here is God's altar; here doth incense rise;
Here prayers avail to turn away his wrath.
In vain thou seekest what proud worldlings prize:
This way is heaven; there is no other path."

"Vain are all churches!" cries the moralist;
"Thy prayers and incense fade in empty skies.
Religions are but phantoms of the mist,
That morning scatters when the sun doth rise.

"Thy duty is on earth. Seek thou and find
The laws that bind thee to thy fellow-men.
The Eden-dreams of early humankind
Thou mayst make facts in earthly cities then."

Thus through the world's long ages
The battle-cries have sounded,
How lived and wrote the sages,
How sophists truth confounded.

Here priests their worship chanted ;
 Here hermits prayed and fasted ;
 Here some brave man, undaunted,
 Did deeds that still have lasted.
 Till now the world has waited,
 With longing and strong crying,
 Until the separated
 Should find their unifying.
 For He must be *one* power
 Who rules both earth and heaven ;
 And one law to the lower
 And to the high is given.
 There rings down from the highest,
 And up from earth's deep places,
 One voice that back repliest
 To the asking of all races : —

“ Hear me, O jarring peoples ! I am one,
 In deep abysses or in heavens high :
 One law swings the long circuit of the sun,
 And by one law the new-fledged birdlings fly.

“ Religion binds thee to my law divine,
 And this law binds thee to thy fellow-man.
 'Tis *one law in the market, at the shrine :*
 Earth, heaven,— see ! they're built upon one plan.”

NONE LIVETH TO HIMSELF

SAY not, "It matters not to me :
My brother's weal is *his* behoof!"
For, in this wondrous human web,
If your life's warp, his life is woof.
Woven all together are the threads,
And you and he are in one loom :
For good or ill, for glad or sad,
Your lives must share one common doom.

Then let the daily shuttle glide,
Wound full with threads of kindly care,
That life's increasing length may be
Not only strongly wrought, but fair.
So, from the stuff of each new day,
The loving hand of Time shall make
Garments of joy and peace for all ;
And human hearts shall cease to ache.

THE SHADOW

I N a bleak land and desolate,
Beyond the earth somewhere,
Went wandering through death's dark gate
A soul into the air.

And still, as on and on it fled,
A wild, waste region through,
Behind there fell the steady tread
Of one that did pursue.

At last he paused, and looked aback ;
And then he was aware
A hideous wretch stood in his track,
Deformed, and cowering there.

"And who art thou," he shrieked in fright,
"That dost my steps pursue ?
Go, hide thy shapeless shape from sight,
Nor thus pollute my view !"

The foul form answered him : "Always
Along thy path I flee.
*I'm thine own actions. Night and day
Still must I follow thee !*"

ON A POETESS PUBLISHING LATE IN
LIFE

MOST birds sing in the morning. Freshest
flowers
Are piled in the lap of May or summer June ;
But thou, sweet warbler, in the afternoon
Hast waked a song amid the silent bowers
That long shall echo. Never Dryad powers
Bound on the brows of spring a wreath so fair
As that thou weavest in the fading hair
Of autumn. Thou art songstress of the hours

When we would talk with nature, and would hear
The whispers that the world's loud voices drown.
Let this not be thy last sweet song ; for then
The skies would weep with rain ; in silence drear,
The birds would wait a song that hushed their own ;
And sing no more until it came again.

PURSUIT

MY boyhood chased the butterfly,
Or, when the shower was gone,
Sought treasures at the rainbow's end,
That lured me, wandering on.
I caught nor bow nor butterfly,
Though eagerly I ran ;
But in the chase *I found myself,*
And grew to be a man.

In later years I've chased the good,
The beautiful, and true :
Mirage-like forms which take not shape,
They flit as I pursue.
But, while the endless chase I run,
I grow in life divine :
I miss the ideals that I seek,
But *God himself is mine.*

YOUNG AND OLD

HE sits and dreams a brave dream of To Be :
And, while he dreams, hopes are realities,
And the fresh glory of the eastern skies
Holds not a cloud that his glad eye can see.
While, in his gorgeous vision, fame and gold
And love, and houses in broad acres, where
Is all can make life glorious and fair
To him, whose days are young, its meanings not yet
told.

He sits with backward look at what has been ;
But little of his dreams, for they are fled.
The winds sigh over withered hopes, now dead,
Like fallen leaves that in the spring were green.
The fame and gold,—oh, yes, he has them now,
And houses and broad acres ; but all this,
How gladly would he give them for one kiss,
Could lips, now cold, but press it on his brow !

THE COMING SHIP

I KNOW it is coming, my absent ship,
Out somewhere over the seas unknown,
Though it wander afar where the oceans dip
Below the round world's edge sloping down.

I have never seen it except in dreams,
Or, like a mirage, in the misty air ;
And yet it is coming, and often it seems
To be rounding the point over there.

It is loaded down to the water's edge
With all that the heart of man desires,—
Rich robes and fine gold in many a wedge,
And jewels that flash with their hidden fires.

It is freighted with all I have ever sought :
With the hopes that eluded my eager hand ;
The deeds I have dreamed, but never wrought ;
The perfect poems my thought has planned.

And there on the deck, looking out o'er the main,
Are the forms of the lost ones who went away :
I wait on the cliffs till I see them again,
And count all the days of my weary delay.

And sometimes I fear they will never come back ;
For, when the wind rises and all the waves roar,
I fancy them driven in pitiless wrack,
And torn on the rocks of some desolate shore.

But, when the storm lulls, I see it anew,
Each spar standing out against a clear sky,
Her prow pointing homeward, her compass still true,
And cleaving the waves as she tosses them by.

And so I wait on, day in and day out,
Till I look on my home-coming, beautiful barge,
Gold-rigged in the sun, with song and with shout,
Glide up with wide wings to the sandy marge.



IN COMMON THINGS

SEEK not afar for beauty. Lo ! it glows
In dew-wet grasses all about thy feet ;
In birds, in sunshine, childish faces sweet,
In stars, and mountain summits topped with snows.

Go not abroad for happiness. For see !
It is a flower that blossoms by thy door.
Bring love and justice home ; and then, no more,
Thou'lt wonder in what dwelling joy may be.

Dream not of noble service elsewhere wrought :
The simple duty that awaits thy hand
Is God's voice uttering a divine command ;
Life's common deeds build all that saints have thought.

In wonder-workings, or some bush aflame,
Men look for God, and fancy him concealed.
But in earth's common things he stands revealed ;
While grass and flowers and stars spell out his name.

The paradise men seek, the city bright
That gleams beyond the stars for longing eyes,
Is only human goodness in the skies.
Earth's deeds, well done, glow into heavenly light.

TO F. J. S.

THE flowers you sent were very fair,
The spring's breath made their perfume sweet ;
But with them came a gift more rare
Than any that the senses greet.

You thought you only put in flowers ;
But you gave more than box could hold,—
Cheer for the oft-times weary hours,
And sympathy more rare than gold.

I speak my heart out in the crowd,
Seeking to utter Truth's sweet will ;
But oft the words seem lost, as loud
Swells the world's Babel-jargon still.

But when a voice comes back to me,—
“One listened and was helped,”—I say,
“God did speak through me then ; and he
Has not cast all my work away.”

GERTRUDE. 1868

(Born Grass Valley, Cal., Aug. 15, 1866)

I T was on an August morning,
And the index pointed seven,
When, the bare, gray sky adorning,
Rose the red sun up the heaven,—
Rose up o'er the wooded mountains,
Glowing, through the dark pine branches,
On the streamlets and the rills
Wandering from their limpid fountains,
Soiled by man's use, till the hills
Had hardly known them at the mills,
Or as they gurgled o'er the ranches.

All the birds knew it was song-time,
And their little throats this long time,
With no single note of sadness,
Had been quivering with gladness.

All the trees knew it was dawning ;
And, beneath their sky-wide awning,
Every one among their number
Stood up fresh and glad from slumber.

Lavish summer in the vales !
Lavish summer on the hills !
Yet the cool air whispered tales
Of snow-topped peaks and snow-fed rills.
California's balm was round us ;
Wild Sierra's foothills bound us.
In the cottage vine-embowered,
In the cottage fruit-tree hidden,
Came the morning, weary-houred,
Long requested, long forbidden.

Then it was when that high Heaven,
Which to us our love had given,
Which through years, through any weather,
Our blind hearts had drawn together,
Sent from out the blue a spirit,
Our two lives and love t' inherit.

Fairer to us than an angel
Came she with her new evangel ;
Opening to our comprehension
Love beyond all former mention ;
Making holier what was holy,
Dignifying what was lowly ;
Teaching us, with sweet revealing,
What might be creative feeling ;
Thus that higher love explaining,
Ever hard to man's attaining.

Eyes has she that ripple laughter,
Her own mother's copied after ;
Brown and deep and full of dreaming
When in silent thought she's seeming.
She has curling hair that's flaxen,
Dimpled face all round and waxen,
Only with no lifeless whiteness,—
Like a lily in its lightness ;
Whiter that blue veins look through it,
And the red blood rushes to it.

Cupid's bow her lips informed,
Made red with throbbing life heart-warmed.
And their soft prattle's senseless words
Are cheerier than brooks or birds.
And, then, the patter of her feet,—
Earth has no music half so sweet !
How desolate my study door,
If they came tottering there no more !

Through one year and half a second
Life thy trusting feet has beckoned.
Each new day some deeper seeming
Flits across thy face like dreaming ;
And thy prattle grows to talking,
As thy totter does to walking.
Ever some new trick or notion
Keeps thy little life all motion,—

Testing new-discovered powers,
Presents of the passing hours.
All our big hearts thou art moving
With thy small, fond ways of loving,
Till we clasp thee with emotions,
So surpassing all the notions
Of thy little head so wise,
Thou starest at us in surprise.
Then, we look on through the years,
Bright with smiles or dim with tears,
Wondering if those years are bringing
Gifts of sighing or of singing.

But our serious meditation
Soon gives way to consternation ;
For, while far our thoughts are straying,
Thou some new-found prank art playing.
Clutching at the table-cover,
All the glass goes toppling over ;
And, as fly the scattered pieces,
Thy triumphant crow increases :
Clap thy little hands, and after
All the ruin goes thy laughter.
Baby, wilt thou hearts be breaking
In the after years, and making
Thy then new-found power to blight
Theme for triumph and delight ?

What thy future is to be
We may not, and we would not, see.
Born within the Golden State,
Thou, out through the Golden Gate,
Through the Indian summer drifting
Toward the southern sun-lands, lifting,
(As in vision beatific,)
O'er the glassy-smooth Pacific,
Mountain vast or palm-tree vale,
Didst thy first life-voyage sail.

So, as thy first voyage begun,
Sail thou on toward the sun!
Gentlest breezes, round thee blowing,
Speed thee to some fair clime going!
Clouds and storms affright thee never,
But blue skies be o'er thee ever!
Till, when all the sea is past,
Some fair port thou make at last!

ST. CHRISTOFER

I N the Monkish legends hoary
Is there many a wondrous story
Of the saints of elder time.

In some still hour of reflection
Come they like a recollection
Of some half-forgotten rhyme.

Though by wiser times forbidden
Sober credence, in them hidden
Many a noble lesson lies.

One of these my mind has haunted,
And my thoughts, unbidden, chanted
While half-slumber held my eyes.

In the days long since departed
Lived a giant, noble-hearted,
Who "The Greatest" king did seek.

Noticed he one day how faster
Came the breath of his proud master,
And the color left his cheek,

When the Devil's name was spoken.
Knew he then by this dread token
 There was one his King did fear.

Sought he then until he found him,
And to his dread service bound him,
 Following him for many a year.

One day, in the stormy weather,
Marched they o'er the blackened heather,
 When the infernal host aside

Sudden turned, confused and flurried,
And their trembling ranks they hurried
 On a détour far and wide.

Then, the giant stood and pondered
On his great King's fear, and wondered
 Much when he the reason guessed.

Standing where the highways parted,
'Twas a cross at which they started,
 And a greater King confessed.

Then, the wide world over, seeking
This new Lord, he wandered, speaking
 To each traveller he met.

Till one evening, dark and dreary,
To a hermit's hut, all weary,
 Came he when the sun was set.

Him he questioned: "Woe betide me!
Vainly seek I one to guide me
 To the Christ King's palace high.

"For I seek to serve the greatest;
And the king I followed latest
 Feared to pass his standard by."

Answered then the hermit hoary:
"He thou seekest reigns in glory
 Far beyond those stars of night.

"But they serve him best who meekly
Bear the burden of the weakly,
 Fight the wrong, and help the right.

"Would you win and wear his guerdon,
Bend your strength beneath the burden
 Which the Christ's poor crushes down.

"From his throne in heaven bending,
He will watch you, and, descending,
 One day will your labor crown."

Sought he then some service holy,
Where he might assist the lowly,
 And for timid ones be bold.

All his strength he consecrated
To the work, and thus he waited
 For the day the hermit told.

By a rapid, bridgeless river,
Tracherous-bottomed, rushing ever
 'Cross the pilgrims' Romeward way,

Massive-shouldered, danger-scorning,
On the shore sat night and morning
 Strong Oferos day by day.

On a piteous night and dreary,
When the wind seemed never weary
 Chasing the storm-driven cloud,

In a lull, above the sighing
Of the chafing tree-boughs, crying
 Rose a child-voice, wailing loud;

Begged him, for Christ's love, a stranger
To befriend, and through the danger
 Bear him 'cross the turbid flood.

Rose he then where he was sleeping,
When he heard the child-voice weeping,
 Peering through the dripping wood.

- For, thought he, "My vow is taken,
If I sleep or if I waken,
 Ne'er to let one ask in vain."

Though the storm and night were blinding,
Sought he then the child, and, finding,
 Gently soothed his grief and pain.

Danger only made him bolder ;
While the child upon his shoulder
 Scarce a feather's weight did seem.

His strong staff in one hand grasping,
Closer still the fair child clasping,
 Strode he down into the stream.

Then, the night grew darker, moaning
For the lost stars, while the groaning
 Tree-tops wrestled with the blast.

And, when in the middle river,
Thought Oferos he had never
 Through such raging current passed.

Then,— a miracle, a wonder !
Scarcely could he stagger under
 The strange weight that now he bore.

Heavier grew the child, still crushing
Down his giant strength, while rushing
 Wilder yet the waters roar.

Wondering much the child concerning,
But unfaltering, never turning,
 Straight he crossed the angry ford.

When, behold, no child forsaken,
But he sees, as one new waken,
 Stand before him Christ the Lord.

Round his head a radiance bright'ning
Lit the dark and paled the lightning,
 While the abashed storm fled away.

Then, the radiant east adorning,
Laughed through rainy tears the morning,
 And uprose the gladsome day.

Hushed was all the air and holy,
While the giant, bending lowly,
 Knelt before his great King's feet.

Gently spake He : “ Blest forever
Be thy deeds and thine endeavor,—
Both for holy sainthood meet !

“ Thou *Oferos*, mighty bearer,
Hast been called : henceforth, a fairer,
Grander title thine shall be.

“ *Christoferos*, down the ages,
Men shall call thee, while there rages
Storm in sky or flood to sea ;

“ For the Christ-child thou hast carried,
While the torrent never tarried,
And the storm was in the sky.

“ Plant thy staff for sign, and growing
It shall be a tree, while flowing,
Like the years, the stream goes by.

“ For heaven knows no higher beauty
Than the doing one’s plain duty
For the love of man alone.

“ And ‘ The Greatest ’ thou art serving
When thou seekest, all unswerving,
Each man’s welfare as thine own.”

As the years went by, and ever
Rushed adown the turbid river,
 Watched the old saint on the shore ;

Learning that the lordliest doing
Is in day by day pursuing
 One's next duty evermore.





LOVE

DANTE'S PRAISE OF BEATRICE

SUCH gentle awe is in her winsome ways
That, when she greeteth others on the street,
The glibbest tongue in silence long delays,
Nor dare bold eyes her star-like gaze to meet.

Though praises follow her where'er she goes,
Yet with humility she's ever dressed :
She seems from heaven come, so to disclose
The gracious bearing of the immortal blest.

To gaze upon her beauty is to know
The purest sentiment of reverent love ;
While he to whom some favor she doth show
May taste before the joys of heaven above.

Upon her curved and gracious lips there dwells
Soft utterance that speaketh of the sky ;
And in her eye a sweetness that compels
The heart to breathe its life out in a sigh.

MY RIVER

A Picture

RIVER, flowing through the past,
Seeming, to my childish eye,
Cutting through the mountains vast
Thy bright pathway from the sky ;

River, flowing through my youth,
Glassing in thy sunny tide
Forms whose memory mocks the truth
That 'twas years ago they died ;

River, flowing in the sun,
Ere as yet, far down thy way,
Vexing mills and laden ships
Give thee toil instead of play ;

River, 'tis a picture fair
Of an evening hour I see : —
Rings the village church bell there,
While we float all silently

In our dory,— she and I,—
Float through twilight toward the town,
'Neath the bridge's arches high,
While the first faint stars look down.

O'er the boat's side as we lean,
In the watery mirror clear
She looks up as I look down,
And her eye-lash holds a tear.

Jewelled answer to my quest !
Lives forever that fair dream ;
For I caught her to my breast,
And the tear fell in the stream.

DISENCHANTED

A'T first I thought her like a star,—
Too far above me and too bright
Save to be revered from afar,—
A worship, not a heart's delight.

She was an angel, flitting fair
Through ranges of ideal life
So high above earth's common air
I dared not think of her as wife.

She was a rose superb that grew,
Shut in by walls so thick and high
No man its dainty heart might view :
It opened only to the sky.

But, now, she sits here by my side,
Star, angel, rose no more ; but still,
Though disenchanting I, my bride
Does more than all my dreams fulfil.

LOVE'S GARDEN

THERE once was a garden with lofty walls,
With trees and flowers and waters fair.
Bright insects hummed ; and the soft love-calls
Of rare-hued birds on the drowsy air

At morning and evening were heard. And here
It always was summer. There seemed to be
A balm in the air, and a sky as clear
As bends o'er the lakes of Italy.

It was in an enchanted land ; for not
On the earth has a garden like this e'er been :
The dreamer alone has seen the spot,
Or ever an entrance to such might win.

Within this garden a woman dwelt,
Ringed round by the walls as the years went by :
And the hours as they passed her so lovingly dealt
They but ripened the beauty that could not die.

The subtle grace of the lissome trees
Sways in her form and each perfect limb ;
And the deepest sky in the pools she sees
Gleams from her eye o'er the long-lashed brim.

The rippling waters and sougning winds
But echo her laughter or wistful sighs.
Each day is happy, except as she finds
A wondering, half-felt longing arise ; —

A longing for what she knows not. But he,
Who wanders and waits outside, dares hope
His whisper might tell her, if it could be
That some day the strong-barred gate might ope.

But high is the wall, and the gates shut fast,—
Strong walls of old custom, and gates of law ;
And his heart still aches as the days go past,
And no hand the fastening bolts undraw.

LETHE

LET me the cup of Lethe drink
As I to underworlds pass down.
If I must live, I would not think,
But that one memory would drown.

Better than all if I might sleep,
And be no more in all the years :
The cup of life I would not keep,
Since ever it has brimmed with tears.

But since that may not be, at least
Let me forget that dreadful day
When in my heaven of hope there ceased
My one star's brightly shining ray.

It rose upon me in my night
With such a joyous, hopeful gleam
That, so it still continued bright,
I cared not what else proved a dream.

A little while it gleamed and shone
And filled me with its dear delight :
Then, on a sudden, it was gone,
And I walked on in rayless night.

A traveller, coming from afar,
Told me a tale of how he'd seen,
Guiding another life, the star
That once my cynosure had been.

My brain is maddened at the thought !
And, since it is no longer mine,
Its beauty must be worse than naught,
However sweetly it may shine !

No other now can glad mine eye :
My heart has room for only this.
And since the longing may not die,
And life holds now no more of bliss,

Let me at least forget ; and so,
No longer torn with useless strife,
Let me through all the future go
As one who had no former life !

LEANDER TO HERO

WHAT, Hero, is this madness of the brain,
That, at the melting of a woman's eye,
Will count it even heaven for love to die,
And even grudge the losing of a pain,
If through all toil or sorrow it may gain
The flitting smile whose light is ecstasy?
'Tis sure this thread, of all life's mystery,
That to unravel we must seek in vain!

For this our very lives we fling away;
And if, one hour, upon the favored breast
Our head caressed may lie, we care not then,
In that Elysium, what the world may say;
Our one regret that, for such fevered rest,
We have not other lives to lose again.

TO E.—IN ABSENCE

A CLOUD passed over the sun to-day :
It shadowed the windows of the town,
And darkened the fields that stretch away
To the edge of the forest brown.

A cloud passed over my life to-day :
Its gloomy shadow hung wide and dense ;
It came, an unbidden guest, to stay,
I can tell no one why nor whence.

O sun of my life, my light, appear,
And scatter the life-darkening clouds above !
No shadow can stay when thy face is near,
Smiling down from its heaven of love.

TO E.

A TREE thou art, of foliage fair ;—
A palm of graceful mould !
No other clime a growth so rare
As this did ever hold.

A flower thou art, with downcast look :
Nay, thou'rt a bud half-blown !
Sweet dost thou make thy wayside nook !
I'd cull thee for my own.

A maid art thou in whom is all
Rare beauty of flower or tree.
Thine eyes' deep heaven no shadows pall :
Thy cheeks blush roses be.

My love art thou ! on earth, I ween,
Though sought I everywhere,
No second were found to my heart's queen,
No one so passing fair.

THE UNIVERSE LOST FOR LOVE

“ I WOULD not care for fame,
If, as the years went by,
That light might burn the same
That now flames in thine eye.
From all the glory for which great ones care
Thou couldst entice me with a single hair.

“ I would not care for truth,
If thou wouldst but be true ;
One certainty,— thy youth,
Thy beauty ever new,—
To make me this the only truth declare,
Thou couldst entice me with a single hair.

“ I would not care for good,
If I thy smile might see.
No man hath understood
How mighty love can be,
Unless he's felt the power of one so fair
She could entice him with a single hair.

“ I would not care for heaven,
 If I the years could stay,
 And here at twenty-seven
 Hold thee as mine always,—
 Though stood I at the gates, from even there
 Thou couldst entice me with a single hair.”

O mighty love, that so
 Canst fling a world aside,
 When thou art wise to know
 That Truth's the fairest bride,
 Thou wilt her grace the only grace declare,
 And let her lead thee by a single hair.

LOVE IS IMMORTALITY

WHEN in thy folding arms I lie,
 My head upon thy faithful breast,
 I doubt not immortality,
 But *know* I am forever blest.

Time then exists no more for me,
 Nor measure years the orbs above:
I'm living in eternity,—
 The deathless bliss of deathless love.

ABELARD TO HELOISE

WHEN on your lap my head is laid,
 And o'er me droop your lashes down,
While kiss with kiss is oft repaid,
 And I look in your eyes so brown,
I have no doubt that heaven then,
With all its bliss, was made for men.

For heaven dwelleth in the charms
 That hold me captive by thy side.
If only always in thine arms
 With joys like these I might abide,
I'd care not who above might go,
I'd choose thy love, and stay below.

THE HAND

A Lover's Fancy

THAT hand that any sculptor
Would for a model take,
If he a fingered Juno
Should e'er set out to make ;

That hand whose simplest gesture
Might bend the hearts of men,
Drive to despair a lover,
Or thrill with life again ;

That hand that, were she royal,
Might grandest sceptre hold,
And that to touch or kiss it
Were worth a kingdom's gold,—

That hand, with soft caressing,
Now lies on pussy's head.
Oh, would that puss were human,
And I were puss instead !

FATE

I LOVED, and sought the wide earth o'er,
But only met a face of hate.
I saw ships sailing from the shore,
While she I sought forevermore
Looked o'er the side. I came too late.

Two on two continents apart,
With no thought of each other, dwelt.
O'er oceans, with unconscious art
Led on, heart answered unto heart,
Till at her happy feet he knelt.

Though years are long and worlds are wide,
Though long I wait or wander lone,
The universe is on his side
Who, patient, knows his time to 'bide ;
And Fate shall give me yet my own.

WILL LOVE DESCEND

A HEAVEN-BORN goddess is sweet love :
Will she descend to common cares,
And breathe our dusty, earthly airs
In narrow paths, nor pine to rove ?

She'll want soft carpets for her feet ;
She'll want rich jewels in her hair,
From out her windows landscapes rare,
And in must float all perfumes sweet.

She'd weary of a petty round
Of household tasks that every day
Fritter and fret the life away,—
Though husband worshipped, children crowned.

Yes, heart that thought the heavens to scale,
And pluck a star from her bright zone,
Stars are too high to call thine own :
Go seek a rushlight in the vale.

THE CRIME AGAINST LOVE

LOVE was a judge, and he held a court
With the culprit in the box.
He had flung him into his jail,— Despair,—
Close under double locks.

The crier cried, and the court began.

The attorney rose and said,
“The prisoner at the bar, my lord,
We charge, as shall be read.”

And he read a long indictment through,
That charged contempt of love.
“He has spoken slightly of you,
As I’ll proceed to prove.

“He has said, ‘I’ll travel other lands ;
I’ll wed my books and lore :
Divine philosophy alone
Shall my fond heart adore.

“Love is the passion of weak minds :
I will not be its slave.
Love is a blindness of the eyes,
And it is reason’s grave.’ ”

The indictment through, the attorney said,
“My lord,—whom Heaven defend! —
If words like these unpunished go,
Your kingdom’s at an end.”

“Speak, prisoner!” then the stern judge cried,
“If you have aught to say.”
“I did not know you, mighty Love ·
I therefore pardon pray,—

“If ignorance may be excuse.”
“Then hear me,” Love replied.
“Go seek the loveliest one you know,
And by her word abide.

“If *she* forgives you, then will I :
You have six months’ release.”
And now he wanders up and down,
And nowhere findeth peace.

He’s seen the loveliest ; but in vain !
He cannot bring his heart
To risk the trial, lest he die
If she should say, “Depart !”

WHAT SHALL WE DO

WHAT shall one do with a hopeless love ?
If he bury it in his heart,
Too strong for its prison it will prove,
And burst its walls apart.

If he bury it in the sea, 'twill arise
When the evening love-star gleams,
And, mocking him with its deathless eyes,
Will haunt him in his dreams.

If he bury himself in his books, and seek
To hide him from its sight,
'Twill laugh at his Hebrew and his Greek,
And mock him as in spite.

If he do not seek its face to flee,
And yet no hope is given,
'Twill make of life a misery,
And carry hell to heaven.

THE QUESTION

O H, tell me how to woo and win,"
The shepherd sang. The echoes flew
Adown the vale, now loud, now thin,
And answered only, "*Win and woo.*"

"But I am not a shepherd lad,
So tell me, Echo sweet," said I.
"How shall my heart's long wish be had?"
"Had — wish you had!" was its reply.

"No common word can make her mine;
No common love do I adore:
Toward me does *her* heart incline?"
But Echo would reply no more.

THE SHADOW ON THE BEACH

I SEE it in the twilight
Still moving to and fro,
A shadow tall and stately,
With graceful step and slow.

I see it in the moonshine ;
And then its texture bright
Seems woven of the glimmer
That makes the summer night.

I see it when, low trailing,
The fog shuts out the bay,
And in the lighthouse flickers
The ghost-lamp far away.

I see it, tall and graceful,
Glide o'er the hard beach sand,
While, with their wistful sweetness,
Her eyes turn where I stand.

Her lips move as in speaking,
But yet no sound is heard ;
And, though I long to answer,
My pulse alone is stirred,

I know it is not dreaming,
And yet she is not there,
Though back and forth it paces,
The shadow sweet and fair.

And that it is a shadow
But makes the heart beat more,
As well I know her footstep
Leaves no print on the shore.

When now she stops before me,
The buried years arise,
And all the past is looking
From out the sad, sweet eyes.

Ah, would it were no shadow!
Then might I take her hand,
And tell her all my story,
And she would understand.

But, now, alas! where is she?
I walk beside the main,
And she walks ever by me,—
A shadow of the brain.



PROBLEMS

WHERE IS GOD

OH, where is the sea?" the fishes cried,
As they swam the crystal clearness through.
"We've heard from of old of the ocean's tide,
And we long to look on the waters blue.
The wise ones speak of the infinite sea:
Oh, who can tell us if such there be!"

The lark flew up in the morning bright,
And sung and balanced on sunny wings;
And this was its song: "I see the light,
I look o'er a world of beautiful things;
But, flying and singing everywhere,
In vain I have searched to find the air."

THE AGE'S UNREST

TIME was when rung cathedral bells
O'er all the quiet lands ;
And awe-hushed multitudes received
God's life at priestly hands.

Man questioned not the churches' word,
Nor dared the churches' bann,
But like a brook within its banks
His aspirations ran.

But brooks in mountains take their rise ;
And mountains from the sky
Their pouring floods receive, that all
Man's barriers defy.

New floods of light and truth and life
Broke on the hills one day,
And, pouring downward to the plain,
Swept all the banks away.

The flood rose over all the earth ;
And the cathedral bell
Rung wild alarm until its walls
In one vast ruin fell.

The flood rose over all the earth ;
It rose o'er hill-tops high,
And lifted its exultant hands
To greet the startled sky.

This flood of questioning swept on ;
It tested all the creeds ;
And naught escaped but truth and love
And human-helping deeds.

In their new liberty men asked
The stars their secret old
And how the days of spring produce
The harvest-heads of gold ;

And how life came upon the earth ;
What distant ages wrought ;
And how is born within the brain
The mystery of thought.

And then they questioned poverty,
Man's sorrow and man's sin ;
And through what chemic compound rare
Life's secret they might win.

The stars their secret still withhold ;
The brain thought's mystery hides ;
And wrong and poverty remain,
And sorrow still abides.

Then was it better when the bell
 Rocked the cathedral tower,
And awe-hushed multitudes knelt down
 Beneath the priesthood's power?

Is life now happier than of yore,
 Since in its feverish quest
It's lost its old-time peace, and found
 Not yet abiding rest?

Nay, if man be indeed a child
 Of the eternal life,
Better than, pillowed on a lie,
 Must be an endless strife.

For, in the eternal search for truth,
 His growing powers are taught
To nerve their sinews till they're strong
 To scale the heights of thought.

To sleep with perfect truth itself
 For pillow 'neath his head,
'This is his birthright to forego,
 And live as he were dead.

But in pursuit of truth and God,
 Up height on height of time,
Through godlike growth he vindicates
 His godlike birth sublime.

And none but he that's infidel
May doubt that truth, some day,
Will give man back a fairer earth
Than that she swept away.

WHAT DOES IT BRING

A SHIP comes up from under the world.
“What do you bring, O ship?” he cried.
The answer came: “’Neath flag unfurled,
Laughter and song, and — a fair dead bride.

“I bring fool's jests, and — a heart's deep woe ;
News of a friend, and — a word of despair ;
I bring bright hopes from the world below,
And a soul storm-tossed and worn with care.

“I bring a child whose mother is dead ;
I bring a man deserting his wife,—
Light and shadow, and poison and bread,
The tragical comedy of life.

“Perhaps I bring a gift for you ;
But do not covet it, do not shrink :
You know not whether 'tis false or true,
Or better or worse than you can think.”

THE HOUSE OF THE SOUL

MY soul still sitteth her room within ;
She goeth not out of her door :
But she longs forever to know the world
As it passes her house before.

She may not go out. The universe knocks,
And throngs all her anterooms fill ;
But the Senses Five stand ever on guard,
Admitting but whom they will.

The ear leads in the wonderful sounds
That wander her echo hall,—
The thunder, the bird-song, the wild surf-beat,
And the voices of love that call.

The eye leads in the colors that glow
In the rainbow and sunset sky ;
The apple-blooms and the tinting of cheeks,
And love-looks that never die.

And the touch and taste and smell, each one
Seeks out the guests that it knows ;
But only now and then one of the throng
To the high, inner chamber goes.

And so my soul sitteth her house within,
While the universe passes without;
Of the thronging shapes she catches a glimpse,
Or hears a far-echoing shout.

She waits and listens, and ever she longs
To see all things real, as they are;
But the doors of her house are thick and strong,
And fastened with life's firm bar.

She knows there are voices she never hears,
And colors she never sees;
She knows that the world has numberless doors
Of which she has not the keys.

She fears she knows nothing *as it is*,
But shadows and echoes only;
So up and down through her rooms she goes,
Wistfully longing and lonely.

And she cries: "Shall I never know the world
That passes so near to my door?
Shall I never find out the things to be,
Or the things that were of yore?"

"Shall I never thrust back the wards that lock
The innermost heart of things?
Shall I never break down my narrow walls
Or expand my prisoned wings?"

“ Perhaps — who knows? — I may fly one day,
And, alight on some fairer star,
Where shadows are only mists of the past
I may see things as they are.”

THE ANCIENT

WITH the ancient dwelleth wisdom,”
So the proverb long has run ;
But where is it dwells the ancient,—
In what clime, beneath what sun ?

Looking for the temple hoary,
Down the ages past men go,—
Listening for the far-off whisper,
Thus the sacred lore to know.

But from out the early twilight
Of the earth's primeval time,
Wrecks of kingdoms and religions,
Lisping love and stammering rhyme,

Speaks no orb'd and finished wisdom ;
From the sky no final word :
Tongues confused and fragments muttered ;
Only childish voices heard.

But down from the heavens falling,
On the fresh winds whispering clear,
Comes a voice that earnest crieth,
“ ‘He that hath ears, let him hear !’

“ Lo, ye seek in vain that follow
Back the path the past hath trod :
Stand upon thy feet and listen
What to-day commandeth God.

“ Seek ye wisdom in the cradle ?
Know ye not the earth’s young morn
Bent above the primal jungle,
Where, in twilight, man was born ?

“ Childish wonder, childish questions,
Childish guesses after truth,
Fickle gods and freakish nature,—
These the fancies of his youth.

“ Only now at last he standeth
On the border of his prime,
Looking up the ages leading
To the far-off heights of time.

“ For old age, you’ve taken childhood ;
Childhood’s lisping counted wise ;
Babblings of the cradle reckoned
Wisdom flowing from the skies.

“ Would you hear earth’s grown-up wisdom ?
From the cradle turn away ;
Put the past behind ; look forward ;
Ask th’ opinion of to-day.

“ Now, of all times, is the eldest :
This hour in her hand doth hold
Garnered fruit of all the ages,
All their sifted grains of gold.

“ ‘ With the ancient dwelleth wisdom’ :
Seek then where the ancient dwells.
Hear To-day ; and, bending forward,
Catch the truth To-morrow tells.

“ For each round upon Time’s ladder,
Sloping upward toward the light,
Brings thee nearer to the temple
Wherein dwells th’ eternal Right.”

MY BIRTH

I HAD my birth where stars were born,
In the dim æons of the past :
My cradle cosmic forces rocked,
And to my first was linked my last.

Through boundless space the shuttle flew,
To weave the warp and woof of fate :
In my begetting were conjoined
The infinitely small and great.

The outmost star on being's rim,
The tiniest sand-grain of the earth,
The farthest thrill and nearest stir
Were not indifferent to my birth.

And when at last the earth swung free,
A little planet by the moon,
For me the continent arose,
For me the ocean roared its tune ;

For me the forests grew ; for me
Th' electric force ran to and fro ;
For me tribes wandered o'er the earth,
Kingdoms arose, and cities grew ;

For me religions waxed and waned ;
For me the ages garnered store ;
For me ships traversed every sea ;
For me the wise ones learned their lore ;

For me, through fire and blood and tears,
Man struggled onward up the height,
On which, at last, from heaven falls
An ever clearer, broader light.

The child of all the ages, I,
Nursed on th' exhaustless breasts of time ;
By heroes thrilled, by sages taught,
Sung to by bards of every clime.

Quintessence of the universe,
Distilled at last from God's own heart,
In me centred now abides
Of all that is the subtlest part.

The product of the ages past,
Heir of the future then, am I :
So much am I divine that God
Cannot afford to let me die.

If I should ever cease to be,
The farthest star its mate would miss,
And, looking after me, would fall
Down headlong darkening to th' abyss.

For, if aught real that is could cease,
If the All-Father ever nods,
That day across the heavens would fall
Ragnarok, twilight of the gods.

THE FORBIDDEN SONG

'TIS said, in old Granada,
Then held in captive bands,
Enslaved in their own city,
Held down by foreign hands,

When once, in accents plaintive,
The old songs rose in air,
The people from their houses
Rushed out in mad despair.

The songs brought back the freedom
Once theirs in days of yore,—
A freedom only sleeping,
Though now enjoyed no more.

Then passed a law these tyrants,
Who feared a singer's breath,
That none might sing forever
That song, on pain of death.

So human souls, fast fettered
By custom old and creed,
Are only drugged and sleeping,
And waiting to be freed ;

And, when the song of freedom
Some bold voice grandly sings,
They feel within them stirring
Their long unuséd wings.

A far-off recollection
Of birth-rights lost arise,
Of that diviner sonship
Which links them with the skies.

So, lest the priesthood totter,
And souls their freedom gain,
This song divine's forbidden,
On threat of endless pain.

THE PEOPLE

O H, placable and patient race,
Thy burden bearing through the years,
How often marred with grief thy face,
How oft thine eyes are dim with tears!

How patient art thou with thy gods,
Still framing for them some excuse,
Bending thy back beneath their rods,
And turning pain to noble use!

How patient art thou with thy kings
That rob, and fatten on thy spoils!
While each new year new burden brings,
To bind thee to thy weary toils.

Be patient still, and labor on!
Thy waiting is not all in vain;
For, see! long hours of dark are gone,
And, east, the night begins to wane.

Science, man's mighty friend, has bound
Nature's trained forces, foes no more:
They stamp their hoofs, and at the sound
Flies open every once barred door.

And through these doors man shall advance,
And find free course o'er all the earth ;
No more the slave of circumstance,
But rising to his kingly worth.

He claims his birthright now, and reigns :
The Titans that o'er chaos ruled,—
Lightning and steam,— with giant pains,
Now run his errands, trained and schooled.

O People, once a mass, held down,
The plaything of the priest and king,
You yet shall come into your own,
And to you earth her tribute bring.

Dethroned, the gods of wrong and hate ;
Dethroned, the old-time kingly power ;
Dethroned, the priesthood's selfish state :
Reason enthroned, then comes your hour !

The spelling-book shall be the key
To thrust back in the lock of fate
The musty bolts of destiny,
And bid you enter now, though late.

But, on God's dial-plate of time,
'Tis never late for him who stands
Self-centred in a trust sublime,
With mastered force and thinking hands.

The world then all before you lies :
The stars fight for you ; and there waits
A future where bold enterprise
Flings open wide the long-shut gates.

DEAD GODS

THAT man may live, the gods must die :
Past crumbling altar, vacant throne,
Man marches on to make his own
The vantage heights of destiny.

But, with a pang, we leave the shrine
Where bent our father's knees in prayer :
The shadowy gods still linger there,
And haunt the spot with forms divine.

But ever on the thoughtful ear
The same voice that the fathers led
Imperious calls, "Why 'mongst the dead
Seek ye the living? up, and hear !

" Foolish and blind ! art not aware
That idols may be carved in thought ?
Not all are by the graver wrought ;
But most, of fancies light as air.

- “Of Him who is the Infinite
Man’s mind can but an image frame ;
And by whatever sacred name
You call the image, still new light
- “Shed on the world, or on the mind,
Forever antiquates the old.
If ever larger life unfold,
The childish must be left behind.
- “Dead gods are but dead fancies then,—
Ideals of a larger truth
Than earth had brain-room for in youth,—
That cannot feed the coming men.
- “Up then, and on ! the past is past,
And it was well ; but now arise
New visions of the earth and skies,—
A universe so grand and vast
- “Old gods, old systems, and old creeds
Seem but as playhouse schemes and ways,
Such as amused his childhood days,
To one now ripe for manly deeds.
- “The gods are dead ! but God abides !
And man and his high hopes are here !
Cringe to the ghosts no more in fear ;
But ’twween the ghosts and God choose sides !”

AT SEA

I'VE waked up on mid-ocean, but to find
My ship far out from that mysterious port
Where anchor first was weighed. I look behind,
Along my white track that fades into blue,
And see the round rim of the swinging world
Closed in by far-off skies that seem to melt,
Blue kissing blue, into their counterpart,—
The all-encircling sea. I know not now
In what strange land my being had its birth ;
What forests fell to build my wondrous ship ;
What skilled hands fashioned it ; adown what ways,
And by what shouts accompanied, it leapt
To join the element for which it yearned.
I lean across the rail, and call to those —
My voyage companions — that along with me
Sail on the same strange journey, but in vain.
They but repeat my question, and beseech,
If I remember aught, to tell them whence,
And by what impulse urged, we started out
To go — none knoweth whither.

For we turn,
And looking onward o'er the untried sea,
With equal wonder in our eyes, we strain

To gain some glimpse of countries still before.
Toward what port drives on the unseen power
Whose hand is on the wheel no man can tell.
Strange lands fall off — as we pursue our way —
To right and left, and sink behind the sea.
New constellations glitter in the skies,
Strange skies to us, in turn outsailed for new :
And still right on, toward what lands we dream,
But only dream, since never man may know.

But yet I tremble not ; or, if I do,
'Tis only with some fresh expectance keen
Of what shall next befall. For wonder strange
Doth swallow up all fear, and bids me wait,
On tiptoe with on-looking eyes, to see
What new mirage shall tremble on the air,
Or what new land shall rise above the main.

The whence, the whither, I may answer not ;
But, ne'ertheless, the present hour is mine.
I will not fling away this grand to-day,
Because the wondrous, circling infinite
Doth swallow up beginning both and end.
I feel, I see, I hear, I think ; and this,
The grand fact of existence, is so strange,
No other marvel can appall me now.
I face the infinite, and feel the thrill

That tells me with its nature I am kin.
The waters answer to me, and the skies
Bend loving down to kiss me with their winds ;
And the great stars, that, when the sun is gone,
Gleam out of silent spaces, lift me up
And tell me that I sail the same grand blue
Through which they range the orbit of their life.
And when the mighty sun broods his red wings
Above the broad expanse of gleaming sea,
And gives me back the island's darkness stole,
I shout with life exultant ; then sit still
To drink in all the beauty of the world,
Until the joy brims o'er my eyes in tears.
The happy lands, the trees, the birds, the brooks
Down dancing with their caps white-plumed with
 spray ;
The mountains that will climb the heavens to catch
The coming dawn, or kiss the evening star ;
The moon that loves her shadow in the sea,—
All these, the unsolved mystery of the world,
So fill the hours with thought, so thrill my soul
With hints of that almighty power that hides
Behind this scenic majesty, that oft
I half-desire to wake — if dream this be,
And death be waking — that with open eyes
I may discern the strange reality.
So wondrous is this ocean that I sail ;

So wondrous is the ship, and all the scene
Of sky and landscape ; so more strange than all
This seeing, feeling of the enigma, self,—
I cannot doubt that there, behind the scenes,
Some master-player sits, who knows the end,
And knows it worthy of this grand display.

So I will wait, and look, and take delight
In all the passing pageant ; and at last,
When falls the curtain, it shall be upon
A *denouement* to solve the mystery,
And make me glad that I played out my part.

THE VILLAGE “INFIDEL”

THEY knew not what to do with him.
If all the creeds were true,
He should have been, in all the town,
The worst man any knew.

He only smiled at Adam's sin,
And said he'd ne'er consent
That one he never voted for
His soul should represent.

And though he should have been depraved
To help their logic out,
His life was blameless found, in spite
Of all his dreadful doubt.

They tried to make him penitent ;
But he would only say,
"I seek to help my fellow-men,
And do my best each day."

And, when they of atonement spoke,
He said, "I cannot see
How punishing another makes
A better man of me."

And, when his reason they decried,
He said, "Although my eyes
Sometimes deceive, to put them out
Seems to me hardly wise."

And when at last, all patience gone,
They said he'd go to hell,
He said, "Where sense and duty lead,
The end must sure be well.

"Tradition may be false or true,
But God is living still ;
And in the laws of earth and man
He writeth down his will.

“And, as I read, He bids me seek
These laws and them obey.
Thus where I see his footsteps lead
I follow as I may.

“If I can build God’s kingdom here,
His reign of love and light,
I fear not what the future holds,
But know ’twill all be right.”

They knew not what to do with him ;
For all the children ran
To meet him as he walked the street,
And bless the kindly man.

The sick, the poor, revered his name,
And learned the hand to bless
Which ever was wide open held
To scatter happiness.

And one, more bold than others, said,
“If he’s not Christian, then
He’s surely something quite as good
Who loves his fellow-men.”

THE POET'S ART

“THE poetry is in the thought :
 He's rich who owns a golden store,
Or if to beauteous forms 'tis wrought,
 Or if it be but native ore.”

So says one critic ; but replies
 Another, “ Poetry's an art :
From nature how can art arise,
 In which the maker plays no part ?

“ For *poet's* but another name
 For one who *makes* ; and all must own
That naught to be true art can claim,
 That nature ever makes alone.

“ A man with nature must combine :
 Not thought alone, but form must be
Wrought perfect in its every line
 To make the art of poetry.

“ How is it in the painter's art ?
 Is aiming at a grand design
True painting, though the hand impart
 Defective color, crude outline ?

“ In sculpture, is it deemed enough
To hold a grand thought in the brain,
Or must the marble’s plastic stuff
Through perfect form the thought make plain ?

“ Is music only noble sounds ?
Or, ranging on through every key,
Must some fine scheme, with notes and bounds,
Shape all to some grand harmony ?

“ So poetry’s not only thought ;
But thought by fancy’s fires made warm ;
Then by some master workman wrought
To perfect beauty’s perfect form.”

THE OLD PROBLEM

SHE had just one wee bird in her nest,
And she loved it. oh, so dear !
She cooed o’er it, sang to it, brooded its rest,
And kept it from shadow of fear.

I saw the nest empty : the mother apart
Sat silent, with never a song.
The earth’s oldest problem oppressed her dumb heart,
Accusing the world of its wrong.

LAUGHTER AND DEATH

'TIS man alone, the plaything of his fears,
Blown by the winds of fickle fate forever,
Whose mocking destiny all high endeavor
Turns but to nothing through the fruitless years ;
'Tis man, whose path is blinded by his tears,
Who seeketh always, and who findeth never,
And who from all he loves sad death will sever ;
'Tis he upon whose lips the smile appears ;

'Tis he alone who laughs who also cries,—
Laughs in the face of fate and grief and death !
“Read me the strange enigma!” thus I crave.
Why, but because he knows the appearance lies,
And storms of evil rage with futile breath?
The smile is sunshine from beyond the grave.

IF A SHIP, A SEA

I WILL believe but what I see :
The ocean is a myth," he cried.
"I've looked on hills and vales and plains,
But never o'er the rushing tide."

He came where, by a river's bank,
Men built a structure strange and high,
With hollow sides and anchors huge,
And masts that lifted to the sky.

And, while he laughed these men to scorn.
The winds blew fresh far out to sea,
While tides flowed in and tides flowed out,
And ships went sailing glad and free.

The Master-builder of the world,
Here, on the narrow ways of time,
Rears souls so grand their range must be
'Neath wider skies in some far clime.

TO-MORROW

MY head aches! Tired of thinking,
One forward glimpse I'd borrow.
Dark chains of thought I'm linking,—
Will they be bright to-morrow?

My heart aches! I am weary
Of my unrest and sorrow.
To-day is dark and dreary,—
Will it be bright to-morrow?

That golden time! who's found it,
That ever-sought to-morrow?
Cluster all hopes around it,
Without one touch of sorrow.

Vain fancy! Sing thy sonnet,
And days from dreamland borrow:
But sun ne'er shone upon it,—
There *never was* to-morrow!

A CHRISTMAS THOUGHT

THE children are a prophecy
Of what shall one day be,
When we a fairer land have gained
Beyond to-day's rough sea.

We weary, tugging at the oars :
Our hearts grow sick and faint :
Their younger arms the ship shall guide,
Their shouts drown our complaint.

We sigh, "The land is far away,"
And give the struggle o'er :
They'll bring the vessel into port,
And leap upon the shore.

The Christmas hope to us is dim,
And God seems far away :
Our children's songs shall usher in
The endless Christmas day.

“DO MEN GATHER FIGS FROM
THISTLES?”

O CHRIST in heaven, if thou leanest o'er
The battlements and lookest down below,
And seest the men who claim to love thee so,
Is not thy gentle soul with pity sore?
Thy Church banns honest thought; and evermore
Goes up, through firm white lips, a cry of woe
From true men, cursed because they seek to know,
And dare to knock at Truth's unopened door.

“Dare not to question what the past has said!”
So cry the priests: “Say you accept the creeds,
Though honest thought cry shame! Then lofty
place
And honor! Else, name-slandered, e'en thy bread
Shall fail!” So, from thine altar, o'er his beads,
Looks out Hypocrisy with leering face.

INFIDELITY

WHO is the infidel, but he who fears
To face the utmost truth, whate'er it be?
Dreads God the light? and is his majesty
A shadow that in sunshine disappears?
Or leads he on the swift-ascending years
Into a light where men may plainer see?
He trusts him best, to whom the mystery
Hides nothing dangerous; who ever hears,

With faith unshaken, his new-uttered voice,
And knows it cannot contradict the truth
It in the old time spoke. Whate'er it saith,
He fears not then, but bids his heart rejoice,
In old age trustful as he was in youth.
This only, though called infidel, is faith.

CALIBAN

SINCE man with his own heart must feel,
With his own eyes must see,
He makes the world in which he dwells
Or good or bad to be.

From his own substance, he secretes
His own enclosing shell,
And shapes the voices from without
That must life's meanings tell.

And, if the wondrous world is small
And mean to Caliban,
We only need to turn and ask,
What is it to a man?



PERSONS

JAMES A. GARFIELD

(Sept. 27, 1881)

WITH finger on lip and breath bated,
With an eager and sad desire,
The world stood hushed, as it waited
For the click of the fateful wire.

“*Better*,” and civilization
Breathed freer and hoped again.
“*Worse*,” and through every nation
Went throbbing a thrill of pain.

A cry at midnight and, listening,
“*Dead!*” tolled out the bells of despair;
And millions of eyelids were glistening
As sobbed the sad tones on the air.

But who is he toward whom all eyes are turning?
And who is he for whom all hearts are yearning?

What is the threat at which earth holds its breath
While one lone man a duel fights with death?

No thrones are hanging in suspense,
No kingdoms totter to their fall ;
Peace, with her gentle influence,
Is hovering over all.

'Tis just one man at Elberon
Who waiteth day by day,
Whose patience all our hearts has won
As ebbs his life away.

His birthday waked no cannon-boom ;
No purple round him hung :
A backwoods cabin gave him room,
And storms his welcome sung.

He seized the sceptre of that king
Who treads a freehold sod ;
He wore upon his brow that ring
That crowns a son of God.

By his own might he built a throne,
With no unhuman arts,
And by his manhood reigned alone
O'er fifty million hearts.

Thus is humanity's long dream,
 Its highest, holiest hope, begun
 To harden into fact, and gleam
 A city 'neath the sun,—

A city, not like that which came
 In old-time vision from the skies,
 But wrought by man through blood and flame,
 From solid earth to rise,—

Man's city: the ideal reign
 Where every human right hath place ;
 Where blood, nor birth, nor priest again
 Shall bind the weary race ;

In which no king but man shall be !

'Twas this that thrilled with loving pain
 The heart of all the earth, as he
 Died by the sobbing main.

For, mightiest ruler of the earth,
 He was the mightiest, not because
 Of priestly touch, or blood, or birth,
 But by a people's laws.

O Garfield ! brave and patient soul !
 Long as the tireless tides shall roll
 About the *Long Branch* beaches, where
 Thy life went out upon the air,

So long thy land, from sea to sea,
Will hold thy manhood's legacy.

There *were* two parties : there were those,
In thine own party, called thy foes :
There *was* a North, there *was* a South,
Ere blazed the assassin's pistol mouth.

But, lo ! thy bed became a throne ;
And, as the hours went by, at length
The weakness of thine arm alone
Grew mightier than thy strongest strength.

No petulant murmur, no vexed cry
Of balked ambitions, but a high,
Grand patience ! And thy whisper blent
In one heart all the continent.
To-day there are no factions left,
But *one America* bereft.

O Garfield ! fortunate in death wast thou,
Though at the opening of a grand career !
Thou wast a meteor flashing on the brow
Of skies political where oft appear

And disappear so many stars of promise. Then,
While all men watched thy high course, wondering
If thou wouldst upward sweep or fall again,
Thee from thine orbit mad hands thought to fling ;

And, lo! the meteor, with its fitful light,
All on a sudden stood and was a star,—
A radiance fixed, to glorify the night
There where the world's proud constellations are.

VANINI

1609

SO late, Vanini, and so near the age
We dare to boast from superstition free!
We might forget such things could ever be,
And blot them out of history's bloody page,
Were not the fangs shown now in impotent rage
That in thy flesh were set so fatally!
They did thy tongue tear out; and, binding thee
Amid the faggots, paid thee fiery wage,
Because thou daredst assert a nobler God
Than that fierce Moloch that, in Christ's dear
name,
They set up as thy judge to punish thee.
The same truth that thou saw'st became a rod
To beat to dust their idol; and the flame
That burnt thee burnt man's bonds and set
him free.

GALILEO

YES, Galileo, yes, "the world does move!"
When, on thy knees, in Europe's twilight hour,
Thou bendedst 'neath the priesthood's iron power,
Who dreamed that force thy truth untruth could
prove,—

E'en then, swift onward in its viewless groove
Of air, the old earth sped through shine and shower;
Until, long hid, thy seed burst into flower,
And sprang up glad to greet the heavens above.

And swifter yet, since that disgraceful day,
The world of thought has swept its orbit through,
Till brighter skies look down on freer lands.
The shackles of the brain now rust away;
The Inquisition fades from human view,
And in its place the Observatory stands.

MAGELLAN

(God's shadow and man's authority)

O GRAND Magellan, fixing thy firm gaze
Upon God's shadow in the upper sky,
While Churchmen call thy faith impiety,
And hurl their curse along the ocean ways
Thy keel is cutting toward the west, where blaze
New constellations over unknown seas, and lie
Worlds undiscovered in a mystery
Unlifted, though the ages pass like days !

“The world is flat, for so the Scriptures read !”
“Nay !” cries the hero. “In the moon's eclipse,
The earth's round shadow on its face I see !
I read God's works, which are his book indeed,
And trust the hint that falleth from his lips
More than all man's infallibility.”

KEPLER

I F God himself six thousand years could wait
Till I was born to comprehend the scheme
Of his wide-ranging worlds, I must not deem,
Though long delayed, the recognition late
Which comes to me, the seer. Slow-footed fate
Is not quite moveless ; and the age-long dream
Of night and darkness now the first faint gleam
Of morning pierces. On the dial-plate

The sun moves his bright finger ; and at last
The stars, long playing on the brain of man,
Have set his thoughts in motion, to keep time
With their majestic dance across the vast
Blue floor of heaven, threading out the plan
Of God's eternal symphony sublime.

DARWIN

O GOD, thy "Holy Church infallible"
Did place thee on the "Index," in the name
Of thy son Kepler, who with single aim
Sought out thy starry steps, and dared to tell
Thy secret, that the world had failed to spell
For ages. And now, once again, the shame
Of thy true prophet, banned with evil fame,
The chorus of the Church's curse doth swell.

But, as did Kepler, so hath Darwin done !
With childlike seeking, he found out the way
Where God's mysterious feet had trod before,
And humbly followed. Planet thus and sun
Hold one's high fame in keeping ; and for aye
Men's loving lips will tell the other o'er.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

BESIDE the ocean, wandering on the shore,
I seek no measure of the infinite sea ;
Beneath the solemn stars that speak to me,
I may not care to reason out their lore ;
Among the mountains, whose bright summits o'er
The flush of morning brightens, there may be
Only a sense of might and majesty ;
And yet a thrill of infinite life they pour

Through all my being, and uplift me high
Above my little self and weary days.
So, in thy presence, Emerson, I hear
A sea-voice sounding 'neath a boundless sky,
While mountainous thoughts tower o'er life's com-
mon ways,
And in thy sky the stars of truth appear.

THE PEOPLE'S POET

(Longfellow)

BESIDE the farm-house, where the weary days
Stoop 'neath their burden in the summer sun,
Beneath the trees there does a brooklet run,
Now still, now babbling over stony ways.
It is so clear at noon the high sun's rays
Glint all the pebbly bottom ; but when done
The tired day, and evening rest is won,
The quiet twilight through the farmer stays

Upon the cooling bank, while round his knee
The children frolic, and the placid brook
Croons, rests, and lifts his weary heart on high.
For, while the children love the brook to see,
To him its shadows are a wondrous book,
Whose words are stars reflected from the sky.

R. W. S.

DEAR brother,— for I hold thee living still,
Where'er thou art amid the radiant spheres,—
Standing upon the threshold of thy years,
Thou didst my noblest dream of man fulfil.
A passion for all good; a scorn of ill;
A beauty perfect as the Belvidere's;
A heart as tender as a woman's tears;
And all subordinate to a resolute will.

Such is the dream of thee I still hold dear:
Such do I think thee now, though long unseen.
Hast thou forgotten since thou'rt gone away?
Or may I still believe that thou art near,
Clasp hands across the years that lie between,
And hold the past a living thing to-day?

OF R. W. S. EARLY DEAD

(Aged 23)

HE spoke no word the world shall hear,
And now he early sleeps,
While o'er him watch his pine-trees dear,
That sigh while evening weeps.

Yet was he poet, grander far
Than many a one whose name
Shines from its eminence, a star,
Whose lustre is called fame.

For his soul was a mirror, bright
As any placid lake,
Wherein all fair things take delight
Their images to make.

His heart was full of budding thought
That rarely bloomed in speech ;
And rich dreams his fine fancy wrought,
That words could never reach.

The evening landscape was to him
More than the earth and sky ;
He saw its mystic meanings dim,
And read its poetry.

There was between his soul and all
Of true, and good, and fair,
A sympathy that heard their call,
And spelled their lessons rare.

The language of the storm that roared,
And swept the northern plain,
Or breeze, whose gentle voice was lowered
To concord with the rain,—

Both were to him a speechless joy,
That melted into tears ;
A pleasure time could not destroy,
Worn deeper by the years.

Long hours he lay upon the leaves
Where branched the trees o'erhead,
Binding his musings into sheaves,
By memory garneréd.

The flecking sunshine patched the ground,
The wind soughed through the pine,
Until, lapped in the swathing sound,
He walked in dreams divine.

No book shall bear his name adown,
To bless the world to be ;
But in some fair land he is known,
A prince of minstrelsy.

For many a tongue that here was tied
Finds sweetest utterance there ;
And thoughts that here unspoken died
Bloom in that sunnier air.





POT-POURRI

LABOR *vs.* CAPITAL

THE Water Corporation charged
Too high a price, the people said ;
So they the reservoir destroyed,
And cut the pipes the houses fed.

But, when their passion cooled, they saw
That it might not be always best
T' abolish all the capital
To lower the rate of interest.

ALL THINGS NEW

KOPERNIK'S thought a new world made,
Though Ptolemy's stars still shone.
New eyes a new religion gave,
Yet not a truth was gone.

HEADS AND HANDS

A RICH man in his parlor sat,
And talked about the labor "strike";
And, in his easy, careless chat,
Said "Let them grumble, Tom and Mike:
We've got them 'on the hip'; and they
May please themselves,—or go, or stay."

But when the panic came at last,
And all the wheels of trade stood still,
He found all life an engine vast
In which each cog its place must fill.
'Twas then he came to understand
The head was weak without the hand.

BOOK COMPASSION

A LADY wept o'er "Little Nell,"
As Dickens told her sorrows o'er.
Just then, her servant came to tell
A ragged child was at the door.
She looked up, brushed her tears aside,
And, "Can't be bothered!" she replied.

MAN'S ALLY

WHO lifts a sail invites the sun
To take his little craft in hand ;
And, when his voyage is o'er, may know
The universe brought him to land.
Who sets his foot in law's firm track
The whole great world is at his back.

EGOTISM

SAID he, "I'll follow my own way :
My whims shall be my laws and guides."
But he forgot the universe
On every question taketh sides.

And, when the mighty engine hurled
His broken fortunes from the rail,
He found one will against God's world
Sure but of one thing,— *it must fail.*

DEBT TO THE PAST

I SEE so far because I stand
 Upon the shoulders of the Past.
 Balboa first Pacific scanned,
 Because he first, of all his band,
 Dared climb the peak that could command
 That view of ocean vast.

A LEGAL MAXIM

A SHIRT-SLEEVED mechanic once uttered the
 saw,—
 Just out of the court, it was dropped on the street,
 When from a rich man he had suffered defeat,—
 “ *He that has the most money can get the most law !* ”

JUSTICE PEEPING

IT was found that the statue of Justice one day
 Had pushed up the bandage from over one eye.
 What for? To keep watch of the lawyers, some say ;
 But some, that she might the poor clients descry.

THE VIRTUES OF "FIAT"

HOW many legs," a wag once said,
"Would my dog have, if you should call
His tail a leg? Now add them up ;
How many would he have in all ?"

"Why, five of course," the man replied :
The wag laughed loud, "Why, don't you know
That, though you *call* a tail a leg,
The *calling* wouldn't make it so ?"

A joke our man could never see ;
And, when he was to Congress sent,
He soon devised a mighty scheme
That should enrich the continent.

He said, "If eighty-seven cents
Were *called* a hundred ; and, if we
Should *say* that paper's good as gold,
Why, then, how rich the country'd be !"

Then all the statesmen took it up,
Astonished at the wisdom rare !
They *voted* rascals honest men,
And all the ugly women fair.

MONOPOLISTS

'T WAS a reformer, wild of eye,
Who shrieked, "Down with monopoly!"

"The vampires, Gould and Vanderbilt,
Have all the people's life-blood spilt!"

Said then a quiet-looking man,
"Suppose they use up all they can,—

"Eat up, wear out, and give away,
Or waste on personal display:

"'Tis then but little of the whole
They spend, of all which they control.

"The rest, nine-tenths at least, they must
But for the public hold in trust.

"To serve mankind they must consent,
Or go without their six per cent.

"The railroads, telegraphs, and all
Must serve the public, or they fall.

“So, whether men be bad or good,
They cannot help it, if they would.

“To keep their money and to earn,
The public wheels their wealth must turn.

“If any man serve but himself
And seek to multiply his pelf,

“That he in this should e’er succeed,
He must supply some human need.

“’Tis thus we’re linked together all,
And all must stand or all must fall.

“A miser hoards; but just to find
He’s built a cistern for mankind.”

A ROSE

’TIS the rose’s own beauty that makes it a rose,
Not the rich one who owns it, nor pot where
it grows.

If odor and tinting be missing, who cares
What garden it cumpers or what name it wears?

A RICH MAN

A HUGE pile of wealth,
And a mansion that's fine ;
But gone is his health,
And his dreamings divine

Are far back in youth.
He has given away
His faith in man's truth ;
And, for many a day,

His power to feel
Earth's wonder and glory,
And what they reveal,
Has become an old story.

For money, he's sold
Both his heart and his brain :
Is it strange a small part
Of the *man* should remain ?

POLITICS

WE'VE grabbed at the money,
 And fought for the places ;
'Gainst the work of reformers,
 We've set our firm faces.

We've helped our friends always,
 At duty we've scouted ;
The gullible voters
 We never have doubted.

So now in fine harbors
 Of profit we're resting,
While the poor fools of duty
 The ebb tide are breasting.

The moral is welcome
 To whoe'er will use it :
If voters don't like it,
 Then they must not choose it.

A QUERY

A "LOVE of a bonnet" and elegant gloves,
And such a dear, sweet, pretty shawl !
They chatter and whisper and flutter in droves ;
But how many *women* in all ?

" MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER "

FROM slums, where foul diseases hide,
The free winds travel far and wide.

The rich man living on the square
Throws wide his windows for the air.

His petted child, with every breath,
Drinks in the viewless seeds of death.

The rich man, bowed down by his woe,
Wonders why God should send the blow.

The parson wonders too, and prays,
And talks of " God's mysterious ways."

But know, O man of high estate,
You're bound up with the poor man's fate.

The winds that enter at your door
Have crept across his attic floor.

If you would have “all well” with you,
Then must you seek his welfare too.

If even selfishness were wise,
It would no other life despise.

“AS DOVES TO THEIR WINDOWS”

(Calculated for the Latitude of San Francisco)

'TIS said the Chinamen at last
Are turning Christian. If it's true,
Their meek, submissive days are past,
And “Hoodlums” yet may get their due.

For, if our virtues they embrace,
And our sweet gospel come to know,
Brickbats will prove their Christian grace,
And broken heads their virtue show.

COMPENSATION

I HEARD a voice complaining,
“ Man is to sorrow born :
No rose in any garden
But hides a piercing thorn ! ”

Then one bowed down by sorrow,
And bruised by fortune's blows,
Through tears made answer smiling,
“ *No thorn but has its rose !* ”

F. J. S.

I SOUGHT the year all through,
From June clear round to May,
To find some flower fair,
That would not fade away.

None was in all the fields ;
But there's a sheltered spot
Within the loving heart
Where blooms *Forget-me-not*.

HAWK & CO.

JUST after his savory dinner one day,
A prosperous hawk flew over the wood :
There clung to his claws, as he floated away,
A sparrow's remains of feathers and blood.

A merchant, out hunting, observed his career,—
A prosperous merchant as any in town :
He saw all the little birds crouching in fear,
And on his brow gathered an ominous frown.

He lifted his gun with carefullest aim,
And said : " My fine fellow, your play's at an end.
The gods still are just : it's your turn to be game,
Who eat up the weak and the mighty befriend."

But, when the gun missed, the hawk took his turn.
Said he, " Mr. Merchant, I've something to say :
I gobble up only what beak and claws earn ;
And that is what you fellows do every day."

The merchant reflected, and said : " I am wrong :
We'll make a new partnership here, you and I.
The small birds shall flutter when we come along ;
Or, when they are caught, the feathers shall fly."

And so it fell out that the hawk had a nest
 In which he grew saucier every day ;
 And the parson remarked how " Providence blessed
 The merchant's grand mansion out on the Back
 Bay."

And over his counting-room door, in a frame,
 The merchant had posted, where all men might see,
 This motto in gilt, just under his name,—
 "*Honesty's ever the best policy.*"

HEART AND BRAIN

"**T**HE truest wisdom's ever of the heart :
 The generous impulse finds the way all plain."
 Then life mistook in wasting such rare art
 Through age-long building of the wondrous brain.

SCHOPENHAUER

"**T**HIS world's the worst conceivable!" he said.
 But, O philosopher, pray tell me where
 You found your plummet,—good,—the measuring
 lead
 With which you sound the depths of your despair ?

CHRISTIAN CHARITY FOR THE JEW

A CHRISTIAN sailor beat a Jew ;
And, while he pommelled him, he cried :
“ I’ll pound your body black and blue,
For our dear Lord you crucified ! ”

But, when the Jew recovered breath,
Said he, “ My friend, do you not know
That Jesus Christ was put to death
Some eighteen hundred years ago ? ”

The Christian dealt another blow,
And answered with a wrathful shriek,
“ I care not how long ’twas ago :
I only heard of it last week ! ”

In this fine mirror is displayed
The Christian charity of ages ;
For such a picture is portrayed
Too oft on history’s bloody pages.

CIVIL SERVICE REFORM

(More Truth than Poetry)

WE send a man to Congress ;
 And, plain as words can say,
 We tell him, " Serve the party :
 Get John and Mick a clerkship,
 Raise money for elections,
 Serve all things *but* the country,
 And you'll in Congress *stay*."

" But if," our deeds are saying,—
 And is it strange men hear ?—
 " You're faithful to your duty,
 If you neglect the party,
 If you your country care for,
 And try to be a *statesman*,
 You'll *stay at home* next year."

'Tis this that needs reforming !
 Let old experience speak :
 If you would have men faithful,
 It's hardly safe to pay them

With bribes for your betrayal.
 They your example follow,
 When interest they seek.

Put not plain human nature
 To too severe a test.
 You all are daily seeking
 For profit and for honor.
 A virtue that you scout at
 Demand not of your neighbor,—
Make duty interest.

CREEDS

“ I HAVE no creed : I seek but to be good.
 Fools only o'er opinions are at strife :
 The problem of the things not understood
 Is solved by him who leads a noble life.”

Granted, O wise one ! but now tell me how
 The sailor finds the right way o'er the sea
 Till compass teaches where to point the prow,
 And in his chart he reads his theory ?

THE KING AND THE JACKASS

(A Story with an Application)

I N the good old times, as most men view it,—
Though I could ne'er see how they do it,—
When Wisdom begged at Riches' gate,
And hardly then got what she ate,
A certain king kept at his court
A philosopher to aid his sport,
And, when he would a hunting go,
To tell him if 'twould rain or no.

One day, with promise of fine weather,
The king and courtiers ride together,
With knights and ladies,— a gay band,—
And each with hooded hawk on hand.
By chance, they meet a country John
Riding a dappled ass upon,
Who warned them by his donkey's ears
'Twas going to rain ; but the ready jeers
Of th' eager hunters cried him down,—
A sage is wiser than a clown !
But they had hardly reached the wood
When all were drenched by the pouring flood.

The king rode back with wrathful look,
Till he the countryman o'ertook ;
And, learning the wisdom of the ass
Whose ears foretold what came to pass,
Turned the philosopher out in disgrace,
And put th' intellectual ass in his place.

Moral

Oh, could he have known the fruits of his deed,
Of so rash an act he'd have taken more heed !
The result of his making high places a scoff is —
Every ass in creation is seeking for office.

A TRUE TALE FROM ITALY

HE asked a priest, “ Do you believe all true
You teach the people ? ” “ Oh, dear, no ! ” said he :
“ But then 'twould never do to speak, you see ;
For, though we don't believe, the people do ! ”

He asked one of these people what he thought :
“ Do you believe all priests say, to the letter ? ”
“ Oh, no ! we are not fools ; and we know better.
The priests believe, for that is all they're taught ! ”

WOMAN'S TEARS

JUSTICE, they say, is always blind.
That may be, but she hears ;
For ever are her scales inclined
By woman's sighs and tears.

A woman's always in the wrong
Until she cries ; and then
The weakest cause is straightway strong,
And there's no hope for men.

WOMAN'S POWER

I

MEN say of women what they like,
And talk like victors grand ;
But see them bend and sue for peace,
When woman waves her hand !

II

No peasant howe'er lowly,
No monarch howe'er high,
But he has bowed at woman's foot
To hear his destiny.

WISDOM AND BEAUTY

THESE sweet-lipped women rule the world :
For, howe'er men may teach,
Their beauty thrills a million souls
Man's wisdom cannot reach.

WRECKED

THE sailor looked upon her lips
And rows of teeth half-hid inside.
“ A sailor's fate, though stanch his ships,—
Wrecked on the *coral reefs* !” he cried.

MAN'S CRITIC

HOWEVER wise a man may be,
So long as he is only human,
He may not trust his destiny
Till criticised by some true woman.

LOVE'S DREAM

A FAIR, sweet face in a bonnet,
An eye-glance that like a star gleams,—
And straight sing our fancies a sonnet
That builds up a palace of dreams.

CONQUERING THE CONQUEROR

MAN put the world he conquered 'neath his feet,
Then, as a slave, before a woman knelt :
Nor was the joy of conquest half so sweet
As that which from her tyranny he felt.

MRS. POYSER ON WOMEN

THE women all are witless !” thus he cried :
“ I've said it often, and I say 't again.”
“ I'm quite of your opinion,” she replied :
“ The Almighty made 'em fools *to match the men.*”

ÆSTHETIC PIETY

A FAIR young lady was in deep distress.
I sought the cause. Said she, while tears did
roll,
“I cannot go to church : shall lose my soul :
For see ! my prayer-book doesn't match my dress !”

THE PARROT CREED

THERE was a parrot that had learned to speak
The language of a tribe that ceased to be ;
And thus the parrot's words became “all Greek”
To those who heard ; but ne'ertheless did he

Still chatter on with zeal that did not wane.

Who'd keep him now ? At last, it was agreed
A wealthy church — smile not, O ye profane —
Should buy him to repeat for them the creed.

PROVIDENCE

'TIS Providence that took the child away :
You must submit in patience to his laws."
Rather is this the thing that you should say,—
“Rise up ; learn better, and remove the cause !”

Insult not Providence, nor God accuse
For ignorance and carelessness your own
If you t' ignore life's fair conditions choose,
Bring no complaint before the all-loving throne.

Your self-indulgence and your idleness,
Your own neglect the laws of health t' obey,—
These are the seed of your life-long distress,
And these the fountain of your tears to-day.

Not always : for some other may have sown
This seed whose bitter fruit grew while you slept ;
But God is just ; and, at the last, your own —
Only what you have planted — shall be reapt.

FORTUNE

A FAIR and stately china vase,
With choicest flowers fragrant,
Sneered at an earthen jar, as base,
Declaring it a vagrant.

The jar, with modest mien, replied,
"The virtue thou art rich in
Might suffer, spite of parlor pride,
Wert thou but in the kitchen."

DEATH WIPES THE SLATE

NIL de mortuis nisi bonum."
While such saws keep their station,
A fig for sins! who would bemoan 'em?
They hurt no reputation.



TIMES

IT SHALL BE

Christmas, 1875.

IT was a glorious dream men had,
That God should come to earth some day,
And, re-creating all things new,
Should sweep the evil past away.

And beauteous they shaped their dream,—
The angel heralds in the sky,
The wondering shepherds, and the star
To lead them where the babe should lie.

The past was darkness. The old earth
Had travailed long in tears and pain ;
But, *when He comes*, the light shall break,
And heaven shall dwell on earth again.

The world, so long accurst, shall bloom
A garden fair as paradise ;
Thistles and thorns shall disappear,
And only wholesome plants arise.

The shivering figures of the poor
Shall crouch in cold and want no more ;
Plenty shall smile on every home,
And joy look out at every door.

Fierce enmity and strife shall die,
The old-time curse of war shall cease,
The struggles of mankind shall be
The helpful rivalries of peace.

The age-long achings of the heart,
The scalding tears that blind the eye,
The blighted hopes, the boding fears,—
All sorrows shall be then passed by ;

For death itself, the cruellest
Of all the ills that curse the race,
Shall be abolished, and sweet life,
The life immortal, take its place.

This was the dream, a vision sweet,
That lured the childhood of the earth,
As, toiling up the centuries,
It waited for the wondrous birth.

And as each morning's vision fled,
Still fading into common day,
Footsore and weeping, on they went,
Still looking for it far away.

And it shall be. It may not come
As pointed by the Bethlehem star,
Nor as the thought of any seer
Has shaped the vision seen afar.

But God, who hides the mighty oak
Close wrapped in tiny acorn-shell,
While the slow process of the suns
Unfolds the seed, and does it well,—

He holds, deep hidden in the heart
Of the unfolding universe,
A blessing that no stress of doubt
Shall e'er persuade us is a curse.

Let clouds of sorrow shade the seed,
Let it be watered long by tears,
Let rough winds rock it to and fro,
Let fall the dead leaves through the years ;

Still God is in it, and it grows.

Some day, beneath a fairer sky,
“New earth” shall greet “new heavens,” and make
A new home for humanity.

Earth shall be fair as Eden lost,
Each night shall chase a gladder day,
Joy shall drive sorrow from the earth,
And evil *shall* have passed away.

This is the Christmas hope, howe'er
Men try to shape the dream they see,
Whether, as Grecian golden age
Or kingdom new in Galilee.

If we would have the vision true,
We must not rest in dreams ; for, when
We all are Christlike, then will come
The "peace on earth, good-will to men."

THE GATE OF THE NEW YEAR, 1876

A Vision

I N wondering dream, before my face
I saw a massive wall arise,
As old as time, as wide as space,
And high as are the star-strewn skies.

And while I marvelled what it meant,
And what lay on the other side,
I saw an age-worn arch that bent
Above a gateway opened wide.

And on the arch's front I read,
" *Each traveller who enters here
Finds what he pleases, stones or bread :
I am the gateway of the year.*"

An ancient man drew near me then,
And said : " Look through, and think and choose.
The past is past ; but once again
You may accept or may refuse.

" Before you shall in vision pass
The new year's possibilities :
And you shall see as in a glass
The shapes of good and ill arise."

I looked ; and, lo ! a battle-field
And burning homes and death and tears ;
And all for glory that might yield
One man a throne above his peers.

This passed, and in its place there rushed
A motley, pleasure-seeking throng.
For passion's fruits they grasped and pushed,
Or filled the scene with dance and song.

And, next, a market-place upsprung,
And each man with his fellow strove
To gain and keep, with fist and tongue,
As if he'd never heard of love.

A change, and now a house appeared
In which peace dwelt, and every joy ;
Duty and love together reared
A home all gold, with no alloy.

And, next, a poor, bare room, wherein
One sick I saw, and groans I heard ;
But to the place of rags and sin
One came with cheer, and ministered.

This faded ; and a childish group
Of squalid ignorance was seen,
And with them one who seemed to stoop
To teach them, and to make them clean.

And here was one who made a place
For selfish pleasure and delight :
And there was one who sought to trace
God's pathway of the true and right.

And, while I wondered and stood still,
The ancient man approached again,
And said : " O son, choose which you will,
To help or hurt your fellow-men.

"Fame, pleasure, money,— all are there ;
And there, too, love and duty. Wait
Until their claims you can compare
Here at the threshold of the gate.

"And then, with firm foot and brave heart,
Fear not to enter the unknown ;
For he who chose the nobler part
Ne'er entered on his task alone."

I said, "*I'll follow duty*"; and the word
Was hardly uttered in the air
When music everywhere I heard,
And beauty I saw everywhere.

And so I entered on the year.
And, though not always understood,
Both cloud and sunshine, hope and fear,
Were bidden to work all for good.

WHEN WILL HE COME

Christmas, 1877

WHEN will he come?
The ancient Hindu races say
That, when the nation falls away,
Help will shine out like a star;
That when some giant, demon, devil,
The people overwhelms in evil,
Then comes Vishnu's Avatar.
Nine times already has he come to earth.
Ten times,— and then the perfect world has birth.

When will he come ?

A captive nation dwells upon
The river-banks of Babylon.

What is the word they speak ?

The prophet's eye looks down the years,
And kindles as the sight appears,—

“Messiah! him ye seek.

Lo, the Lord's anointed comes! and then
Shall dwell the heavenly kingdom among men.”

When will he come ?

The Christian answers: “Long ago
The king was born in manger low.

Him wicked men have slain.

And now we wait with longing eye,
And fix our look upon the sky;

For he will come again.

We pray and watch since he has gone away;
For, when he comes, he'll bring the perfect day.”

When will he come ?

This is the old world's weary cry.
Is man forgotten in the sky?

How long, O Lord, how long!

Hunger, disease, and tears and pain

We plead against, and plead in vain,—

The weak against the strong.

The fathers wait and hope, then fall asleep;
And still its death-strewn way the world doth keep.

When will he come ?
Say not that he will never come ;
Say not the piteous heavens are dumb.
Deaf have ye been and blind.
He will *not* come through opening sky ;
Ye shall not hear a victor's cry,
Nor chariot on the wind.
From mythic dreams and idle visions wake !
Your fancies falsify the word God spake.

When will he come ?
"Lo, here ! Lo, there !" the foolish shout,
And think that God will come *without*.
But ever has it been,
In spite of fabled tales that tell
Of magic and of miracle,
That he has come *within*.
Only through man, and man alone,
Does God build up his righteous throne.

When will he come ?
In times and places manifold,
He has been coming from of old,—
God in the leading men.
When man broke loose from bestial bands,
First stood upright and used his hands,
The heavenly light broke then.
When fire was kindled first upon the earth,
Then God in man knew still a higher birth.

When will he come ?
When iron first was hammered out ;
When far shores heard the seaman's shout ;
 When letters first were known ;
When separate tribes to nations grew ;
When men their brotherhood first knew ;
 When law first reached the throne :
Each separate upward step that man has trod
Has been a coming of the living God.

When will he come ?
While you are looking far away,
His tireless feet are nigh to-day.
 Each true word is his voice.
All honest work, all noble trust,
Each deed that lifts man from the dust,
 Each pure and manly choice,
Each upward stair man's toil-worn feet do climb,
Is just another birth of God sublime.

When will he come ?
He'll come to-morrow, if you will ;
But cease your idle sitting still.
 Yes, he will come to-day.
He will not come in clouds, but through
Your doing all that you can do
 To help the right always.
Do honest work, and to the truth be true,
And God already has appeared in you.

FACING THE UNKNOWN

New Year, 1877

O NEW YEAR, New Year, tell me true,
What wilt thou bring to me,—
Bring to me out of the heavens blue,
Where thy bright home must be?

Thou comest, godlike, in a cloud :
I cannot see thy form ;
Is't sunshine that the mists enshroud,
Or lurketh there a storm ?

I stretch my hands out unto thee ;
Oh, speak to me and say !
I'd know what things shall come to me
Along this untrod way.

The old year gave me buds to hold ;
And while I tended them,
And watched to see the flowers unfold,
They faded on the stem.

She whispered promises so fair
They drove away all fears ;
But clouds drank up the sunny air,
And dripped in rainy tears.

She took me up on vision heights,
And showed a prospect sweet ;
But I have stumbled through the nights
With weary, bleeding feet.

So tell me, New Year, what's to be
Upon each new to-morrow.
Shall my bright hopes abide with me,
Or change to shapes of sorrow ?

A low-voiced wind came whispering
From out the mystery :
" I am the New Year, and I bring
That which is given to me.

" Thou livest not alone for joy,
Or but to gather flowers.
Lament not, then, what storms destroy,
Nor chide the dark-winged hours.

" Through cloud and sun and dripping rain
The Year her garment weaves,
And clothes the earth with golden grain
And decks with autumn leaves.

" And all the mingled days conspire
To make her work complete.
Even discords tremble on her lyre
To make the song more sweet.

“Not what thou hast, but what thou art,
And what thou yet shalt be :
Each year is but a verse, a part
Of life’s full poesy.

“The minor mingles with the gay ;
And, when the song is done,
Thou’lt see how each its part did play
To make the poem one.

“Then ask not what’s ahead of thee,
Each day thy part fulfil ;
Be sure that thy life’s mystery
Obeys a higher will.

“’Tis love that in the darkness leads ;
My face thou may’st not see ;
It is enough for all thy needs
That thou do follow me.”

THE UNDISCOVERED

New Year, 1878

A CROSS the bare fields, through the night,
On cold winds desolately sighing,
From the far east where stars are bright,
To be revealed with morning's light,
The young New Year comes flying.
New Year, by darkness hovered,
What new songs will you sing me?
What new gifts will you bring me
From out the undiscovered?

Rare things the Old Year took away
To hold forever in his keeping :
Hopes that I thought would bloom some day ;
Children that round my knees did play ;
In his cold arms they now are sleeping.
New Year, by darkness hovered,
Can you bring back to me
Those hopes, that childish glee,
From out the undiscovered?

I had a heart all innocent ;
 The robes I wore were clean and white ;
But now my robe is soiled and rent ;
My heart is sad, while I lament
 The chosen wrong, the slighted right.
 New Year, by darkness hovered,
 The lost peace I deplore
 Can you bring back once more
 From out the undiscovered ?

The Old Year's skies were very fair ;
 Its flowers and grasses fresh and sweet ;
Its summer clouds, its sunsets rare,
Its song-birds carolling in air,
 Its children shouting round my feet,—
 New Year, by darkness hovered,
 In the new dawns that rise,
 Will you bring fairer skies
 From out the undiscovered ?

The Old Year gave me books, and "thought
 That wanders through eternity" ;
It gave me human love, that brought
A message straight from God, and taught
 My soul what heaven itself might be.
 New Year, by darkness hovered,
 A truer love, I know,
 You have not to bestow
 In all the undiscovered.

I'm glad your face I cannot see ;
I bid you welcome without fear ;
Whate'er your secret gift may be,
My Father's hand hath sent it me :
I take it, be it smile or tear.
New Year, by darkness hovered,
I would not, if I might,
Know what you hide from sight
There in the undiscovered.

THE CHRISTMAS HOPE

1880

A LITTLE babe came to its mother's arms,
And, stretching out dainty and dimpled palms,
Bestowed upon her woman's proudest honor,—
The halo of sweet motherhood's Madonna.
For each new baby born is God's own child,
As much as he on Mary's lap who smiled.

What was it he in tiny hands did bring,
To prove that he from God's own skies did spring?
He brought down to his mother's heart again
That hope that never yet was far from men,—
The Christmas hope, that through the ages long
Leads on the nations with its luring song.

She crooned above his cradle ; and always
She dreamed, as mothers do dream every day.
In dream, she saw him grow to man's estate,
Her heart with all a mother's pride elate.
He shone, a day-star, in his noble youth
To light mankind along the path of truth.
He was a leader ; and, with life athrill,
His followers he inspired with resolute will ;
Infected all with voice and kindling eye
With his high purpose both to live and die.
He was both light and life ; and then above
Both light and life there gleamed a wondrous love,
That in the worthless outcast still could see
What was not yet,—the man that was to be.

Thus dreamed the mother while her baby slept ;
And, just for very joy, some tears she wept.
Her son, God's son, should a Messiah be,
And help to set the groaning nations free !
So every mother dreams above her boy,
Her good-will glowing in her mother's joy.

But dreams will fade. I saw this mother soon
No longer o'er the swaying cradle croon ;
But, with heart-break and raining eyes, she bowed
Above an empty crib and sobbed aloud.
The light, the life, the love, had faded quite,
Like the aurora of a winter's night.

Or, harder yet than death, to man's estate
He came at last, but neither good nor great.
Or yet again, what happens every day,
The mother's dream divine did fade away.
Her boy, grown man, lived out his common days,
And helped, a little, human life to raise.
The world was better that he lived and died,
Though he fulfilled not what was prophesied.

But hopes like these, what if they often are
Like the blank heaven, from which has fallen a star ?
Still are they not the stars that lead the way
On toward the sunrise of the better day ?
These hopes and dreams of nobler things to be,
Though for long centuries we do not see
The dream turned into fact, they lure us still
Toward the kingdom of divine Good-will.
And each illusion lost but goads us on :
Some glad day yet the kingdom shall be won !

In old crusading days, a childhood band
Rushed blindly on to seek the Sacred Land,
And wrest from grasp of pagan infidel
The tomb of Christ. 'Tis said that it befell,
Whenever some new town arose in sight,
They cried out, eager in their glad delight,—
'Trusting no more of toil remained for them,—
'Now are we there ? *Is this Jerusalem ?*'

But, like a fire besieged by wind and rain,
Though almost quenched, their courage flamed again.
Still on they marched; and every distant spire
Kindled fresh hope, and fed their strong desire.
And, though the city yet was far away,
Each new town lured them onward day by day.

This is the Christmas hope. A son is born,
Who, like a star upon the front of morn,
Is herald of the day that is divine,—
'The day that with the Perfect Light shall shine.
But still Messiah dies, and hope delays;
Still mankind stumbles over darksome ways.
Disease and sorrow and despair abide,
As though no Son of God had lived or died.
The way is weary; and the city bright
We seek so long is still beyond our sight.
Once more, the Christmas bells ring on the air,
And with their music drive away despair.
The hope-crowned Christ-child ever comes anew;
One day, the mother's dream shall all come true.
New heavens, new earth! Although they long delay,
'Tis God who lures us on, and leads the way.
And each illusion, like a veil withdrawn,
Fades like a cloud but to reveal the dawn.
A morn shall surely come when Christmas bells
shall ring,
Proclaiming evil dead, and man the glad earth's king.

CONTRASTED GREETINGS

NEW YEAR'S, 1880

(A lonely life speaks)

I WANT no New Year, for I face
Each coming day with dread :
The dear old lost years have my heart ;
Oh, give me back my dead !

I see them in the sunny time
Of summers long ago,
Ere on my brow the wrinkles came,
Or on my head the snow.

I shouted " Happy New Year " once,
The merriest of the gay,
And strained my eager eyes to see
Along life's forward way.

For song and flowers and love led on
A path that seemed forever,
And joy and triumph promised then
To crown my least endeavor.

But as I went on, one by one
Flowers withered, songs grew still ;
Loved ones sank down and slept, and none
Their places came to fill.

No new years then for me ! I'd give
For one dear year that's past
All that the future promises,
On to the very last.

(*Another speaks*)

A Happy New Year? Yes, 'tis still
A happy time to me,
Though morning's light is far behind,
And evening's star I see.

I sit here in my easy chair
And dream the old days over,
My childhood where the robins sang
Above the fields of clover.

'Twas long ago ; and on my brow
My hair is getting thin,
Am I the happy girl that once
A lover came to win ?

Did children come, and round my feet
Prattle and coo and play ?
I see their winsome faces yet
As if 'twere yesterday.

He went ; and they,—some slept, and some
Have built nests of their own.
They loved me ; and 'tis not their fault
If Grandma's here alone.

The past was full of good : no power
Can take that past away :
I keep its dear ones in my heart ;
They smile on me to-day.

(Time speaks)

A power not myself compels
My tireless, age-long flight :
I brush the morning with my wings ;
I plunge into the night.

Forever and forevermore,
I hasten on my way ;
And unto me a thousand years
Are but as yesterday.

I am the maker of all things,
I their destroyer too ;
And ever from the crumbled old
I build me something new.

I watch the buds burst forth in spring,
I see the brown leaves fall ;
And, 'neath the shelter of my wings,
I love and keep them all.

I sorrow for the griefs of men,
Their care and toil and tears ;
And, if I could, would fain hold back
The onrush of the years.

But nothing precious shall be lost,
I cast no good away,
I only hide it for a while,
To be revealed some day.

(The voice of Faith)

I am the whisper in men's hearts
Of better things to be,
The eye that through the winter's storm
The bloom of June can see.

I read the record of the past ;
I study long gone years,
And see how all the old of good
Was watered with salt tears.

I see how always from decay
Some grander good has sprung,
How over fields of sore defeat
Have shouts of triumph rung.

In every clod, I see a power
That struggles toward the light ;
And over every prostrate Wrong
Springs up the giant Right.

From all the past, I gather strength
To face the coming day.

I see not, yet I know the good
Shall triumph and make way.

“A Happy New Year! then,” cries Faith.
The good time comes apace.

Though tarrying long, the perfect day
Shall dawn for all the race.

EASTER BELLS

1880

RING, Easter bells, from earth to heaven!
Ring down from heaven to earth!
The brightest hopes of human hearts
Now celebrate their birth!

Ring, Easter bells, from golden throats!
Ring all your meanings out!
Roll through the sky your liquid notes,
And sweep away our doubt.

I hear them from that far-off dawn
Where man lay crouched in night:
They rung the hated darkness out,
And hailed the rising *Light!*

I hear them from the shivering caves,
Where, fleeing from the cold,
Men longed and waited for the sun
To light his fires of gold.

I hear them ring from hill to hill,
And through each valley wide,
As from the south the conquering spring
Buds forth on every side.

They ring, these gladsome Easter bells,
In green leaf, in bright flower ;
They toll the knell of winter's death ;
They chant life's conquering power.

I hear them by the sacred graves
Where weep the dews of even ;
From skies that overarch the soul,
They ring down hopes of heaven.

I hear them from Judea's hills :
The grave had been a prison ;
But hope took on an angel form
And shouted, " Christ has risen ! "

No longer now the dead go down
To sheol, hades, sleep :
They live and think, and for us still
Their old-time love they keep.

These Easter bells, the bells of hope,
 Though age-long wrongs endure,
I hear them ring a coming time
 Of gladness for the poor.

Above the wail of sin and crime,
 The discord harsh of wrong,
I hear the babel cries attuned
 To joyous tones of song.

Of ugliness transformed ; of hate
 Changed into love ; of doubt
Flowering in faith ; of old decay
 In progress blooming out ;

Of every evil trampled down,—
 Of these the chorus swells !
“God’s kingdom comes, and this is man’s.”
 Ring out the Easter bells !

“Light, life, and joy ! Light, life, and joy !
 They’ll conquer at the last.
They’ll conquer, conquer,—light, life, joy !”
 Each bell-tongue echoes fast.

“God lives ! truth lives ! love lives ! lives ! lives !”
 This message each tongue tells.
“Work, then, O man ! and thou shalt sing !”
 Ring out the Easter bells.

THEN ONLY?

1881

WAS it only in Judea,
Eighteen hundred years ago,
That the lord of earth and heaven
Came to visit men below?

True, he came then in a manhood
That was blessed, sweet, and strong,
Teaching broader views of goodness
And a deeper scorn of wrong.

But to say that *once* and *only*
Came he, and in magic wise,
Is to slight *th' eternal advent*,
Never hid from holy eyes.

Not alone in that one cradle
In the far-off Nazareth!
God speaks straight to every mother
Through the baby's lisping breath.

Calling *one birth only* sinless
Casts on motherhood a scorn:
Holy are the thousand chambers
Where the infant "Christs" are born.

Not alone in one grand era
Does the "Blessed One" come near :
From the first day till the last one,
He *is coming* every year.

In the "mystery of matter,"
Through the ages long at strife,
God was in what men *call* lifeless,
Struggling upward into life.

Up the dateless ages lifting,
From the lowest crawling worm
On through reptile, fish, and mammal,
Blossomed he from form to form.

Till at length out through the brutal,
Like a sunrise through a cloud,
Waking, wondering, gleamed the *human*,
And a *voice* spoke up aloud.

God came then in wondrous fashion,
When his great man-child had birth ;
When, erect, he faced the heavens,
And stood conscious on the earth.

Every age since then was Advent.
Came he all the æons through,
As man learned the art of *thinking*,
And achieved the power to *do*.

Yes, he came through hidden pathways,
As the life comes in the spring,—
Underground in silent working
Till the time for blossoming.

When man tamed the stubborn iron,
And to flexile uses wrought ;
And phonetic signs invented
To become the wings of thought,—

Then in truth God came and whispered,
“ Be thou free and mighty now !
Rule the earth with iron sceptre,
All its powers to thee shall bow !

“ Armed with letters, go thou forward ;
To all doors, thou hast the key ;
Naught on earth and naught in heaven
But shall open unto thee ! ”

Thus, God cometh up the ages,—
Hear on battle-fields his call !
At the sound, old systems tremble,
Brain-bonds snap, and shackles fall.

Through the rising of the peoples,
By the ships whose hearts are fires,
On the trains through tunnelled mountains,
By the lightning-throbbing wires,

Through the patient toil of science,
Through the fairy grace of art,
Through the broader range of thinking,
Through new tenderness of heart,

Evermore is godhood coming,—
Godhood robed in human guise,
Hidden from the backward looking,
But revealed unto the wise.

No more then on human nature,
No more on God's glad, green earth,
Dare to cast contempt! Remember
Here God's kingdom has its birth.

Look not to the distant heavens,
Nor to east nor west; for, lo!
God is 'neath thy feet, and cometh,
Like all fair growths, from below.

In the beating of thy pulses,
In the throbbing of thy brain,
In the air and sunshine round thee,
See, he comes, and comes again!

In the grand ideal that leads thee,
In fair hopes that gleam and flee,
In the ever-sought to-morrow,
Forward still he beckons thee!

When disease and want and sorrow
Are beneath thy gladsome feet,
When are broken all earth's shackles,
When as one all nations meet,

When the wide earth is a garden,
When love driveth out all hate,
When earth's once terrific forces
Like trained servants on thee wait,—

Then the God who through the ages
Did thy toilsome progress lead,
He who was and is and shall be,
Will have come in very deed!





SORROW AND HOPE

LIGHT ON THE CLOUD

THERE'S never an always cloudless sky,
There's never a vale so fair
But over it sometimes shadows lie
In a chill and songless air.

But never a cloud o'erhung the day,
And flung its shadows down,
But on its heaven-side gleamed some ray,
Forming a sunshine crown.

It is dark on only the downward side :
Though rage the tempest loud,
And scatter its terrors far and wide,
There's light *upon* the cloud.

And often, when it traileth low,
Shutting the landscape out,
And only the chilly east winds blow
From the foggy seas of doubt,

•

There'll come a time, near the setting sun,
When the joys of life seem few,
A rift will break in the evening dun,
And the golden light stream through.

And the soul a glorious bridge will make
Out of the golden bars,
And all its priceless treasures take
Where shine the eternal stars.

MYSTERY

O H, why are darkness and thick cloud
Wrapped close forever round the throne of
God?

Why is our pathway still in mystery trod?
None answers, though we call aloud.

The seedlet of the rose
While still beneath the ground,
Think you it ever knows
The mystery profound
Of its own power of birth and bloom,
Until it springs above its tomb?

The caterpillar crawls
Its mean life in the dust,
Or hangs upon the walls,
A dead aurelian crust.
Think you the larva ever knew
Its gold-winged flight before it flew?

When from the port of Spain
Columbus sailed away,
And down the sinking main
Moved toward the setting day,
Could any words have made him see
The new worlds that were yet to be?

The boy with laugh and play
Fills out his little plan,
Still lisping, day by day,
Of how he'll be a man ;
But can you to his childish brain
Make aught of coming manhood plain?

Let heaven be just above us,
Let God be e'er so high,
Yet, howsoe'er he love us,
And howe'er much we cry,
There is no speech that can make clear
The thing that "doth not yet appear."

'Tis not that God loves mystery :
The things beyond us we can never know
Until up to their lofty height we grow,
And finite grasps infinity.

THE PESCADERO PEBBLES

WHERE slopes the beach to the setting sun,
On the Pescadero shore,
Forever and ever the restless surf
Rolls up with its sullen roar.

And grasping the pebbles in white hands,
And chafing them together,
And grinding them against the cliffs
In stormy and sunny weather,

It gives them never any rest :
All day, all night, the pain
Of their long agony sobs on,
Sinks, and then swells again.

And tourists come from every clime
To search with eager care
For those whose rest has been the least ;
For such have grown most fair.

But yonder, round a point of rock,
In a quiet, sheltered cove,
Where storm ne'er breaks and sea ne'er comes,
The tourists never rove.

The pebbles lie 'neath the sunny sky
In quiet evermore :
In dreams of everlasting peace,
They sleep upon the shore,

But ugly, rough, and jagged still,
They lie through idle years ;
For they miss the beat of angry storms
And the surf that drips in tears.

The hard turmoil of the pitiless sea
Turns the pebble to beauteous gem.
They who escape the agony
Miss sorrow's diadem.

LIFE IN DEATH

NEW being is from being ceased ;
No life is but by death ;
Something's expiring everywhere
To give some other breath.

There's not a flower that glads the spring
But blooms upon the grave
Of its dead parent seed, o'er which
Its forms of beauty wave.

The oak that, like an ancient tower,
Stands massive on the heath,
Looks out upon a living world,
But strikes its roots in death.

The cattle on a thousand hills
Clip the sweet herbs that grow
Rank from the soil enriched by herds
Sleeping long years below.

To-day is but a structure built
Upon dead yesterday ;
And Progress hews her temple-stones
From wrecks of old decay.

Then mourn not death : 'tis but a stair
Built with divinest art,
Up which the deathless footsteps climb
Of loved ones who depart.

THE DEAD ACORN

I WALKED in the field one autumn day,
And came where an oak-tree stood
And talked with the winds of an elder day,
And of nature's brotherhood.

I sat me down by its ancient bole,
And mused till, in half-dream,
The real seemed fancy to my soul,
And fancies real did seem.

I noted where an acorn lay :
The flecked sunbeams fell through,
And the rain dripped on it day by day
The warm, long summer through.

The leaves and dust half-covered o'er
The burst and blackened shell :
I thought, " The dead arise no more :
They perish where they fell."

A gust then shook the leafy top
Of the tree above my head,
And a shower of acorns fair did drop
Where the brother mast lay dead.

And I heard a whisper as if they spoke,—
Or was it the west wind's sigh?—
“O acorn child of the long-lived oak!
'Tis pity that you should die.

“The beauty of your fair round form
Is broken and blackened now:
No more you'll dare the joy of the storm,
Nor swing on your sunlit bough.

“Oh, might one forever an acorn stay
In the beauty of smooth, round shell,
And rock in the sunshine every day,
The universe were well!”

While thus the souging voice wailed by
With a moan as of falling tears,
The dead climbed up in the sunlit sky
To a life of a hundred years.

GOING TO SLEEP

AFTER the day's long playing,
Tired as tired can be,
My baby girl comes saying,
"Papa, will you rock me?"

The busy works of daytime
Allure her now no more ;
The books and toys of playtime
Are scattered round the floor.

Off now with shoe and stocking,
Off with the crumpled dress :
She's ready now for rocking,
For crooning and caress.

And slowly sinking, sinking,
The night comes down the skies ;
While drooping, opening, winking,
Sleep settles on her eyes.

She does not fear the sleeping :
Out o'er the sea of dark,
Close held in papa's keeping,
She drifts in her frail bark.

No matter for the morrow,
Enough that papa knows ;
With smile undimmed by sorrow,
Out in the dark she goes.

So should it be with dying :
Drop earthly cares and fears ;
In Father's arms you're lying ;
Look up with smiles, not tears.

You know not of the waking ?
Be not with fear beguiled ;
For, when the morning's breaking,
He'll not forget his child.



LIFE FROM DEATH

HAD one ne'er seen the miracle
Of May-time from December born,
Who would have dared the tale to tell
That 'neath ice-ridges slept the corn?

White death lies deep upon the hills,
And moanings through the tree-tops go;
The exulting wind, with breath that chills,
Shouts triumph to the unresting snow.

My study window shows me where
On hard-fought fields the summer died:
Its banners now are stripped and bare
Of even autumn's fading pride.

Yet, on the gust that surges by,
I read a pictured promise: soon
The storm of earth and frown of sky
Will melt into luxuriant June.

AT TWILIGHT TIME

AT twilight time,
The musing hour,
When the past relives,
And we feel the power
Of the subtle spell that awhile calls back
The treasures we've lost along life's track,—

We sit and dream,
Till the present falls
In the shadow that rises
And sinks on the walls ;
And the old time only is living and true,
And dreams are the things that now we do.

Then on the stairs
Is the patter and fall
Of the little feet
That ran through the hall ;
We hear the old shout of frolic and glee,
And again the lost darling is on our knee.

The little shoes,
The doll, the cart,
The half-worn frock,—
Oh, who would part
With these treasured trifles that hold the key
To the sacred chamber of memory!

The tears may fall,
The heart may swell ;
The loss is bitter ;
Yet who can tell,
From a mother's love, what treasure vast
Could buy these waifs of a shipwrecked past?

Our human love
Is but a ray :
In God's great heart
Is full-orbed day.
If the toys of our children we cherish and bless,
Is God's love for his little ones smaller or less?

THE FINISHED LIFE

THERE'S a beauty in the spring-time
With its fresh grass and its flowers,
With the song-birds in the branches
And the children's happy hours.

But there's no less of beauty
When the leaves turn gold and brown
In the short'ning days of autumn,
When far south the birds have flown.

If the rough hand of the tempest
Tear away the fresh young leaves,
Over youthful vigor wasted,
Who can wonder if one grieves?

But when off the autumn branches
Drop the brown leaves one by one,
Seems it then as fair and fitting
As the setting of the sun.

Here the old man by the fireside
Backward looks through tender tears:
And he says, "With wife and children
Trod I long and happy years."

As he sitteth by the window
Looking o'er the city ways,
Whispers he, " Success and honor
Have been mine in gone by days.

" I have seen the world's fair beauty ;
I have tasted all its sweet ;
Now, when past my two and three score,
Life is finished and complete.

" And the face of her who loved me
Beckons to me far away ;
I have wrought the work God gave me,
Wherefore should I longer stay ? "

Who then, friends, would wish to keep him ?
Sound no sad, funereal knell :
Of his life say, It was blessed !
Of his death say, It is well !

BETTER OFF

H E'S better off." With words like these
Kind friends their comfort try to speak.
None doubts it of a man like him ;
Yet far off sound the words, and weak.

The heart that loves is not content,
However well the loved one be,
To have him happy far away,
But cries, " I want him still *with me!*"

That other country may be fair,
Brighter than aught the earth has shown,
But better any place with him
Than to be left here all alone.

Thus pleads the heart that God has made,—
He cannot blame what he has given,—
For heaven without love could not be,
And, having love, the earth is heaven.

The folded hands, the closing eyes,
The yielding up of failing breath,—
These not the worst : to tear apart
Two hearts that truly love *is death.*

Since love is all the joy of life,
In earth below or heaven above,
Somewhere, we cannot help but trust,
God keeps for us the ones we love.

Like ships the storms drive far apart
Wide o'er the sea 'neath cloud and sun,
We'll still sail for the self-same port,
And meet there when the voyage is done.

And as we tell the story o'er,
How we were driven by the blast,
More sweet will be those sunny hours
By contrast with the sorrows past.



THE DEAD ONE'S MESSAGE

COULD now the silence of these lips
Wake into speech once more to-day
With their sweet tones of old-time love,
What last words, think you, would they say ?

“ Weep for me tenderly : for I,
Were you here lying in my place,
Would press my warm lips on your brow,
And rain the hot tears on your face.

“ For is it not death's sting to know
That, howe'er happy, still apart
Our pathways lead us, while the old,
Strong love still yearns within the heart ?

“ And when this body's laid away,
I'd have you my low earth-bed make
All fresh with grass, and sweet with flowers,
And sacred for the old time's sake.

“ But then, sweet friends, look up and on !
Let sunshine all the clouds break through.
And do not for my sake forget
What *for the living* you should do !

“ Let not the shadow of my loss
Darken the path the living tread ;
But let the memories of my past
Still cheer and help, though I am dead.

“ These ears can hear your words no more,
However fondly you may speak ;
For my sake then, with words of love,
The living cheer, and help the weak.

“ My heart, now still, no longer aches :
But hapless thousands watch and wake
Through weary nights and hopeless days ;
Help them before their sad hearts break !

“ Your willing hands for me have wrought ;
But now I need your help no more.
The service you would render me
Give those who suffer at your door.

“ Cherish my memory in your heart !
But, lest it grow a selfish thing,
Make channels for a thousand streams,
Of which my love shall be the spring.

“ So from the grave I still may speak ;
Still help the sorrowing world to bless ;
Still live, though dead, and swell the tide
Of human love and happiness.”

WHICH IS BETTER

FROM out of the mystery cometh to earth
A new child of God through the gateway of birth.

Out into the mystery that lies beyond breath
Goes a new child of God through the gateway of death.

We smile at the birth, at the death toll the bell ;
Yet which is the better, who is there can tell ?

How oft is the birth to a life full of tears,—
To a path that is rough and o'erclouded by fears !

How often, heart-hungry for love unreturned,
We see the bliss vanish for which we have yearned !

How often the structures we reared with delight,
Our houses of joy, crumble down in a night.

A live sorrow often is harder, we say,
Than the parting from those who are taken away ;

And we sigh for the peace of an undisturbed sleep
Where hearts are not broken, and eyes do not weep.

Our birth is a coming—so wise men have said—
From some other land, where they count us as dead.

For if it be true we existed before,
To the old home we died, as we came to this shore.

Did they mourn our departure there, as we to-day
Lament for our dear ones when they go away?

Who knows then that what we call death may not be
But another new birth, through whose gateway we

Take one more step upward, as ever the bars
Of life's mystic ladder o'ertop the high stars?

Birth and death may be one then : the different view,
Or coming or going, makes us think them two.

And, since life reaches upward and on through all
time,
Each death may be birth into some fairer clime.

Since birth and death both then are mysteries deep,
And whether they're waking or going to sleep

We know not ; and whether 'tis better to stay,
Or whether 'tis best to be going away,

Let us trust and be patient : for sure He must know,
From whose Life we come, to whose Life we go.

Birth, death,— which is better no mortal can tell :
Believe that they *both* then in His hands are well.

A LESSON OF TRUST

A BUD of life just opening
Its petals fresh and fair,
But now frost-nipped and withered
In spite of all my care !

Both day and night I watched it ;
'Twas never out of sight :
Glad tears I gave for dew-drops,
And love for sunshine bright.

And yet it needs must wither !
O Father, tell me why,
Of all in earth's wide garden,
My tiny flower must die !

A thousand happy mothers
Their little ones still hold,
While I for mine must hunger
With yearnings all untold.

In other homes, child voices
Laugh out their happy glee ;
But all their winsome prattle
Seems mockery now to me !

For my child's voice is silent ;
And no one tells me why,
Of all glad mothers' children,
My precious child must die !

Then came from out the silence —
As though some heart above
Was melted into pity —
These tender words of love :

“ O mother, in your sorrow,
O father, in your grief,
Can you not trust a little,
And, trusting, find relief?

“ I lead you in the darkness
A way you may not tell ;
And, if I would, I cannot
The mystery dispel.

“ Can you, with all your trying,
To childish thought make plain
The wisdom of your training,
The school-day toil and pain ?

“ However plain the language,
It falls on childish ears :
They cannot spell its meaning
With eyes all dim with tears.

“ The boy cannot know manhood ;
The coming years must teach
How childhood's trust and trouble
Toward grander issues reach.

“ Till you can read the future,
How can you know to-day ?
’Tis ever by the ending
That you must judge the way.

“ To your own little children,
Who, fearful, clasp your hand,
You say, ‘ Fear not, but trust me :
Some day, you'll understand.’

“ Learn thus your own good lesson :
Be patient ; and one day,
From some height looking backward,
You'll see your earthly way ;

“ And then your grown-up childhood
You'll know as school-day hours ;
And all your tears as dew-drops
That helped life's opening flowers.

“ Trust, then, while through the darkness
I lead you by the hand.
The end that's now beyond you
Some day, you'll understand.”

THE DEAD HOME

THE heart of home is still :
The house stands on the street,
Nor tells the passers-by
Its heart has ceased to beat.

And yet within how changed !
The rooms look as of old :
Across the carpets fair
The sunlight pours its gold.

The tables and the books,
The stairways and the hall,
Seem as before : still hang
The pictures on the wall.

The little ones, too young
To know what it may mean,
Their wondering questions ask,
With tears and smiles between.

The body of the home
Stands still upon the street ;
But yet how changed within,—
Its heart has ceased to beat !

The mother was the heart,—
The mother and the wife :
Her smile was all its light,
Her movement all its life.

Now that she smiles no more,
And does not lift her head,
The *house* may still remain,
But, oh, the *home* is dead !

The lonely husband broods
Upon the years gone by,—
The kindness on her lips,
The love-light in her eye.

And then he looks before,
And shrinks to meet the days,
When, sitting all alone,
He'll miss her quiet ways.

His heart is sore to think
That time may e'en erase
From her own children's hearts
The memory of her face.

For now their wondering looks
Beseech the reason why
Their mother lies so still,
And why those round her cry.

O house upon the street,
What comfort can be said
To him who weeps within?
The heart of home is dead!

But this: You must be brave
The little ones to bless
With all your manhood's strength,
And all her tenderness.

'Tis double duty now:
If she could speak, she'd say,
"Let not the ones we loved—
Now I have gone away—

"Be poor in love or care:
Be mother in my place;
And let them not forget
Their absent mother's face.

"Some day,— who knows! — perchance,
Where friends can ne'er forget,
They'll clasp me in their arms,
And call me mother yet."

THE HEART'S SPRING-TIME

THE earth lay shrouded white in snow ;
With low, sad voice, the winds wailed by ;
While, as in hopeless prayer, the trees
Their gaunt arms lifted to the sky.

Winter was king ; and icy Death,
His favorite, stretched his sceptre forth,
And held all fair things, leaf and flower,
Prisoned in dungeons of the north.

All nature was in chains : the brooks
Crept ice-bound on their sluggish way ;
The sun shone feebly, and the night
Soon blotted out the cheerless day.

Then from the south the glad spring came,
And breathed through all the chilly air,
And wheresoe'er her warm feet trod
Sprang life and beauty everywhere.

The earth flung off her shroud : the winds
Their wailing ceased, and stooped to tell
The grasses and the flowers 'twas time
For roots to start and buds to swell.

The trees' long prayer was answered now :
The heavens once again were kind ;
And, thrilled through every bough, they flung
Their leafy banners to the wind.

The fields and meadows all put on
Their spangled dress of grass and flowers ;
Brooks babbled, and ecstatic birds
Made shake with joy their leafy towers.

Such is young *Nature's Easter Day!*
But tell me, then, Has *man* no part
In life's long triumph over death ?
Is there no Easter of the heart ?

Our loved ones, shrouded white, have lain
Beneath the snow these many years :
The sad-voiced winds above them go,
And on their graves drip rainy tears.

Their shadowy memories visit us,—
For dreams at least can leave that shore,—
Mother's gray hairs and gentle eyes,
As light she steps across the floor ;

Or comes the brother of our youth,
Making the far-off years draw nigh ;
The wife, long lost, our fadeless dream,
The same old love-look in her eye ;

The laughing child, whose sunny hair,
Was so entangled in our heart
It bleeds afresh when we recall
The hour that tore our lives apart.

'Tis winter in our lives! Snows fall,
Chill, dreary skies are overhead;
The fresh leaves of our youth are gone,
The flowers of our hope are dead.

Is there no Easter of the heart?
Will our lives bud again no more?
Will they no more return,— the birds
Whose music made us glad before?

Nay, listen! in my heart I hear
The whisper of another spring:
The winds blow warm from sunny lands,
Leaves burst and buds are blossoming.

I catch the fragrance of a clime
Where summer blooms the whole round year,
Where every sound melts into song
And comes as music to my ear.

The lost ones hidden by the snow,
With faces white and still and cold,
Beneath those soft skies wake again
To live and love us as of old.

Mother and brother, wife and child,—
They keep the same remembered faces ;
Only tear-stains and lines of care
With deathless youth can find no places.

And, best of all, it looks like home,
No strange land trod by alien feet,—
Familiar as our childhood haunts,
Clothed all in mellow sunlight sweet.

The heart's long prayer is answered thus :
The dead through no far countries roam,
As babes born into waiting arms,
They die into some higher home.

And, 'neath the sunshine of this hope,
My life, where joy had ceased to sing,
Where dead flowers mocked the withered leaves,
Now buds and blossoms like the spring.

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