

THE
SCHOOL OF THE MASTER,

JOHNSTON.



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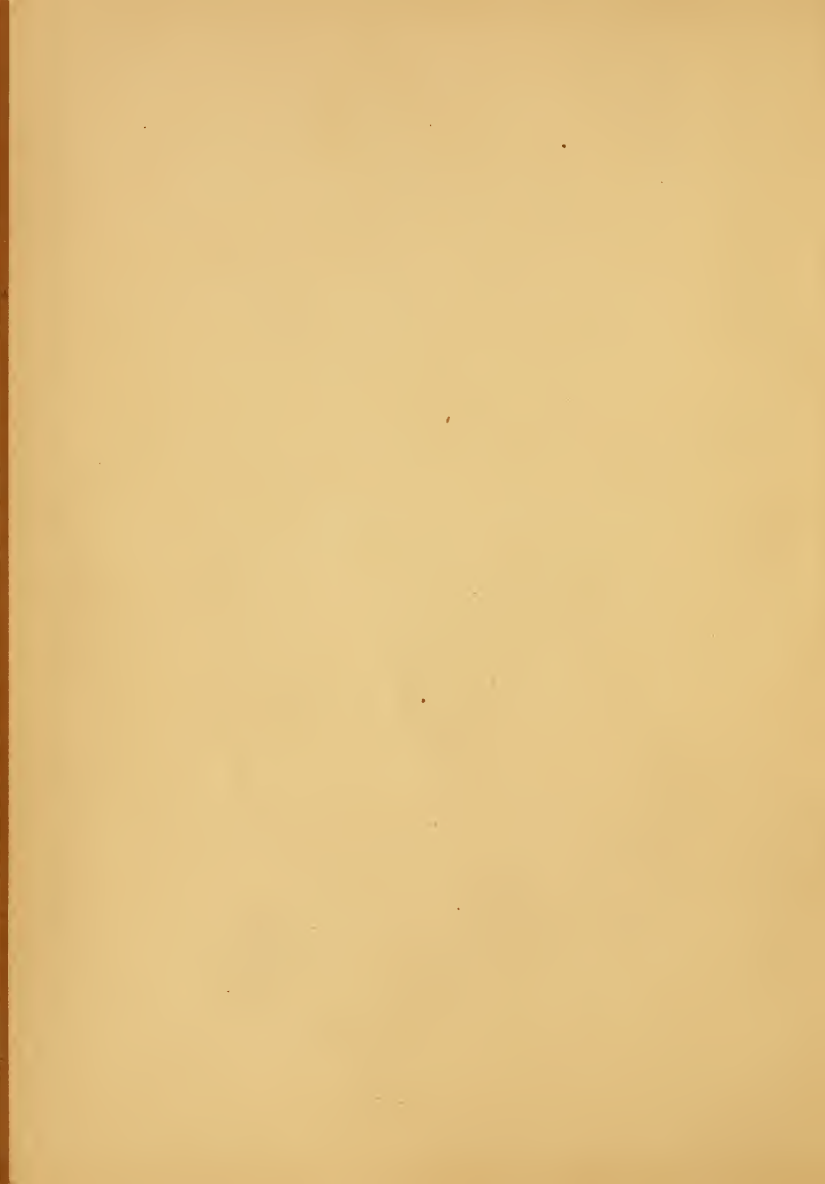
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THE
SCHOOL OF THE MASTER,
AND
OTHER RELIGIOUS VERSES.

BY
JULIA H. *Harriette* JOHNSTON.



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INSCRIBED
TO MY MOTHER.



THE SCHOOL OF THE MASTER,

AND OTHER

RELIGIOUS VERSES.

THE SCHOOL OF THE MASTER.

I AM one of the lowliest learners,
Content in my corner to stay,
Yet I learn of a wonderful Teacher,
Who sets me a lesson each day.
There are clever and talented scholars,
Whose portions assigned are so grand
I but listen and watch from a distance,
For near them I never could stand ;
Yet here in the School of the Master
All fitted and furnished, I see
A place for the lowliest learner,
And so there's a corner for me.

The Teacher provideth a text-book
For all who are willing to learn ;
Ability too, He will furnish,
The lessons of truth to discern.
And *my* book is the life all about me,
So simple, yet busy and sweet,

Though homely and quiet, 'tis truly
Not less with an int'rest replete.
As the life does not open out grandly,
Nor reach an expansion sublime,
So, the lessons I learn must be lowly,
And given "just one at a time."

The writing is fine on some pages,
And then I bend low o'er the book,
The "notes" and the faint underlining
Distinctly I see when I look.
Many lessons of wisdom are oral,
The voice of the Master I hear,
Then I grow very quiet and hearken,
And wait for His word of good cheer.
Oh, life hath a marvelous meaning,
If we but interpret it right,
Each day is inscribed with a lesson,
So let us hold up to the light
Each one of the close-written pages,
Till all is quite clear to our sight.

Not one of the marvels of Nature,
Albeit in silence 'tis wrought,
Not one of life's smallest conditions,
That is not instinct with a thought.
My duty and joy is to find it,
Though hidden in housewifely toils,
To search for it, inside and outside,
Till I can return with the spoils.

A gain, beyond all common measure,
Is ever a lesson discerned ;
But precious and priceless the treasure
Of heart-lessons faithfully learned.

I have partly learned some of my lessons,
Some others but dimly I see ;
I was ever, I think, a slow learner :
My Teacher is patient with me ;
So patient and tender and loving,
So gentle and kindly His rule,
I care not how simple my lessons,
If they are but taught in His school ;
Articulate then, in the breezes,
Or written in forest and field,
In homeliest details of living
The lessons of truth are revealed ;
As fast as I see them and learn them,
Their sweetness and comfort they yield.

LISTENING.

THE ceaseless song that Nature sings,
The curious speech of voiceless things,
The echo that through silence rings,
The rustle of Thought's unseen wings,
The lesson and the joy each brings,
We hear not, till we listen.

So low and soft the cadence falls,
So tender, and so faint its calls,
Some sound of earth the note forestalls,
Some earthworn bond the sense enthralls,
Or, shut within earth-built walls,
We do forget to listen.

The song goes on : we do not heed ;
Sweet Nature rings her happy rede,
And leaf and flower together plead
In blent notes, musical indeed,
To teach a lesson that we need,
If we would only listen.

But all these tones are whispers low ;
Earth's clamor sounds above them so,
Their melody we may not know,
Nor catch their meaning as they go,
Nor dream whereto their good may grow,
Unless we wait and listen.

But if we listen—ah, how sweet
The tones that wait the heart to greet,—
A tuneful harmony complete.
Before it, thoughts and sounds retreat
That are not for the chiming meet,
 To which we bend to listen.

How oft the sweet unspoken word
Of voiceless things my heart has heard,
And by the message has been stirred
As by a priceless boon conferred,
Some heaven-comfort ministered—
 Because I love to listen.

THE LESSON OF THE FERNS.

In a sheltered piece of woodland,
All the ferns had gone to sleep
In the Fall, the years' long twilight,
Ere its Winter darkness deep.

To the trees' leaf-laden branches,
Came the Summer's fond farewell ;
Straightway, in their heavy sorrow,
Their rent garments from them fell.

Where the lowly ferns were resting,
All the ground was thickly strown ;
Drifts of dead leaves heaped above them,
Left their sleeping place unknown.

But there came the time for waking,
In the morning of the year.
Sun and rain the message taking,
Made the little fern-leaves hear.

Bravely, then, they struggled upward,
Using all their slender might ;
Through the weighty dead-leaves' cover,
Eagerly they sought the light.

Soon, above the leaves unsightly
Waved the dainty plumes of green,
With their tender beauty gracing
All that seemed so poor and mean.

There, a friend, in searching, found them,
Wondered at their growing so ;
Pushed away the leaves about them,
Marked their tall white stems below.

Very tall they were, and slender,
Crooked, too, and strangely bent,
Showing, in their brave up-springing,
How their strength was largely spent.

But all *this* was under cover,
None could tell from what *appeared*,
Through what pressing weight and darkness
These frail stems their crown had reared.

And a searching glance discovered
That the ferns which grew with ease,
In the wind-swept grass, unhindered,
Were not half so fine as these.

On the life that struggles upward
Heaps of fallen leaves may lie ;
But there comes, with urgent message,
Strength to lift it toward the sky.

Though the stem may bend and whiten
In dark passage toward the sun,
Those who see the after-beauty
Will not count it dearly won.

And, moreover, some sweet singer
Utters it beyond dispute :
"Many Springs hath Life's fair flower,
And leaves fallen, feed its root."

A TWILIGHT SONG.

It is evening-time, and the sunset light
Like a good-night smile is glowing,
And after the day that was warm and bright
The evening wind is blowing.

Over the meadow and new-plowed field,
There resteth a brooding quiet ;
The note of the air is not revealed
Though the Summer breeze runs riot.

But away in the woods the forest leaves
Are waiting in winsome flutter ;
Each listening leaf from the wind receives
A thought which it hastens to utter.

And what sped over the low fields dumb,
In the tender sunset glory,
In eloquent speech now seems to come—
The leaves interpret the story.

The patient trees that so long have stood
In their first appointed places ;
Do they ever murmur, and wish they *could*
Have wider and varying spaces ?

Ah, no. They are growing in sweet content,
Their branches and green leaves bearing,
Lifting them skyward, that nothing prevent
The message that waits for declaring.

So what if our life in the narrowest place
Seem rooted and slowly growing !
Above and around in limitless space,
The breezes of Heaven are blowing.

No need to wish, with a vague unrest,
For change and a varied living ;
What *comes* from Above, will make us blest,
And furnish most for our giving.

And as birds will build in a staunch old tree
That is fixed and removeth never ;
Some nestling joys in our life may be
If it bide in its place forever.

MORNING-GLORIES.

FAIR flowers that grace the early day,
And close before the noontide glare,
Your cloud-like tints and fleeting bloom
Are mated with the name you wear.

Your rose and purple, white and blue
Are morning colors, rich and rare ;
Before the Sun these glories fly—
You fold and fade, as bright and fair.

'Tis meet, indeed, that Morning-time
Should wear some glories all its own ;
The Noon is bright with fuller light,
But tender, dainty hues are flown.

These early graceful blossoms, then,
Are symbols—may we not assume ?—
Of life's blithe morning, fresh and cool,
When radiant hopes are all abloom.

The hastening Sun dispels the tints
Of Morning in the glow of day,
And light is brighter, yet no gleams
Of prismatic glory round us play.

No folded Morning-glory bud
Blooms, closes fast, then blooms again ;
Once shaken out, the colors fade,
The beauty's gone for aye—but then

New buds will open to the day
When next the early morn awakes ;
So, though some bright things pass away,
My heart some hopeful comfort takes.

Our "life hath many mornings," so
Hath said some rarely gifted one ;
And Morning-glory buds will bloom
With every Summer morning sun.

"HANOVER JUNCTION."

A CERTAIN wayside waiting-place,
A small, uncomely station,
Detains the traveler for a space,
Despite his inclination.
Trains never make connection there,
Whatever their direction ;
The passenger as well may spare
All useless interjection.

I lately tarried at this spot,
One lovely summer morning ;
The waiting-room was close and hot,
And bare of all adorning ;
But on the wide, old-fashioned porch,
'Twas more delightful staying,
Close shaded from the heat and scorch,
Where breezes cool were playing.

And seated there, my wondering gaze
Roved o'er the scene out-lying,
Around, outside my waiting-place
Abundant beauty spying.
How well it was I came outside
To see what lay about me,
Else I had been this scene denied,
Though it were fair without me.

Green-rounded hills, like friendly eaves,
Above this nest projected,
And massive trees, with clustered leaves,
The little spot protected.
A stream, from some far fountain-head,
A merry, dashing rebel,
With reckless hurry onward sped,
And laughed at every pebble.

A tree, with draperies of green,
Just in the water trailing,
Bent o'er to see itself, I ween,
The truant brooklet hailing.
The Sun, upon its throbbing breast
His gleaming lances shivered,
The stream, an added charm confessed,
With sparkles flashed and quivered.

The tall grass in a narrow field
Beneath the scythe was falling ;
A scythe, Old Time himself might wield,
"Old Times," indeed, recalling.
The "world of progress," it would seem,
Lies far from this quaint station—
The Railway near, dispels the dream,
There's close communication.

No wondrous picture, this that met
My quiet observation,
Like those the future showed me, yet
'Twas but a wayside station.

And then, before my train appeared,
Beside me, as I waited,
I found a friend ; my heart was cheered,
I went my way elated.

In busy life, no doubt there be
Full many waiting-places
Where we must patient " bide a wee "—
Our Lord decrees the spaces.
We can not hasten, let us wait
In patience, but not blindly,
See what the hour may consecrate
With influence glad and kindly.

These waiting times are not without
A certain compensation ;
The glory lying round about
Hath varied revelation.
Some lesson may, perhaps, find speech,
A Friend be at the station
Who will go with us, till we reach
Our final destination.

1876.

THE FRINGE OF FERNS ABOVE THE
SPRING.

CLOSE, sheltered in a rocky cell,
A cool spring lay in hiding;
Through Winter's cold, and Summer heat,
Its waters were abiding.

Near by, the old-time spring-house stood
With obvious intention;
The careful housewife's treasures there,
Imagined, need no mention.

The homely duties of the spring
Were large, but did not vary;
For table use the water served,
And purpose of the dairy.

Content within its hollow cup,
Its bounty overflowing,
Small thought or care its place had won,
But for its full bestowing.

Yet lo! upon its stony rim,
A fringe of graceful beauty;
For dainty ferns hung o'er the brim—
Fair crown for lowly duty.

While simply giving of its store,
For needs of daily living,
The water fed the slender roots
That grew to bless the giving.

The unsought grace and loveliness
Attend the useful doing;
So lowly lives are crowned and blessed
While homely work pursuing.

Not less the wholesome, cool supply
Because of this adorning;
Not less the beauty of the ferns
No useful feature scorning.

Quaint goblet of unfailing cheer,
In your enclosure olden,
For cooling draught, and lesson sweet
I am to you beholden.

In truth, your rocky hollow rude,
With fringe of ferns above it,
Portrays in sweet similitude
The gracious life I covet.

CONSECRATION.

A FIELD of ripening grain—a sultry day.
 No pulse astir among the trees,
 No freshening breath of Summer breeze,
In its own sweet and winsome way, to toss and play
 With leaves and flowers that lie at ease.

The morning passes, and the noontide wanes.
 All Nature seems to lie asleep.
 The Summer sun, in westward sweep,
Stirs not the quietude that reigns, until he stains
 The evening sky with colors deep.

But now those slender stalks begin to sway.
 The full heads bend, while here and there,
 Where trees their leafy drapery wear,
A fluttering spirit seems to play with their array,
 And viewless wings sweep everywhere.

A sudden breeze is blowing toward the West.
 Upon its coming consequent,
 The blades of grain are lowly bent,
And each one at the same behest, bows with the rest
 As listening for some message sent.

Ah, learn the parable of the unconscious field.
 The separate duties in earth's strife,
 The joys and cares with which 'tis rife,
The interest with each day revealed, should each one
 yield,
Unto the Spirit's breath of life.

Where'er it listeth, blows the Summer breeze.
Yet every leaf betrays its course
By yielding to the unseen force
That sways and sweeps with gentle ease, where it
doth please,
Though none may find the secret source.

So be it with every deed that fills a day.
The "little things," we *call* them so,
By their unbroken line may show
Whence the good Spirit took His way, that all may
say,
"*That* life is turned toward Heaven we know."

THE TWO ROOMS.

OUT of the heated, stifling place where work is done
Opens a quiet room ;
The close-drawn window-shade excludes the Sum-
mer sun,
The darkness is not gloom,
But softened, brooding light, so sweet to tired eyes,
And cool is all the air,
Such charm of restfulness upon the stillness lies,
'Twere sweet to linger there.

But hurrying morning-work demands my thought
That may not there be done,
Not just what I would like to do, but what I ought,
Before the rest is won.
In the hot room, with means at hand, and glaring
light,
Must lowly work be wrought.
Housewifely toils imperative, I may not slight,
Though irksome in my thought.

I may not wholly leave my work just yet, nor pause,
But, on my cares intent,
Some errand for supplies in the cool room the
cause,
My busy feet are sent
Through the dividing door. Ah, what a difference
here
The atmosphere betrays ;

On my hot cheek, with instant ministry of cheer
A breath of coolness plays.

How welcome is it, this rare change, and what relief
The moment of it brings,
And what new strength comes through the respite
brief,

For other, harder things.
And then, this hush of coolness lies so very near—
The wall must intervene,
But close the two rooms lie, places for work and
cheer,
And there's a door between.

And sometimes, too, by nearer, quicker way to me
A breath of comfort steals.
At intervals, through opened window, swift and free,
The wind its thought reveals,
And hint of coolness, though the hot earth pant, its
touch
A soothing fond caress,
Sent when the fret and fume of vexing things are
such
I most the visit bless.

And so, I think, in all our toilful, lowly life,
God keeps a room close by,
Where, next to all earth's turmoil and its strife,
A prayerful hush doth lie.
Not all our work is found within these closet-doors
That fills another space ;

But there the Lord our wasted, waning strength re-
stores

With His refreshing grace.

Yet even here the kind provision does not cease,—

Through windows open wide

Sweet breaths of Heaven bring messages of peace,

And work is glorified.

THE CORONATION.

In October.

THE sunset of Seasons, the twilight of Time,
Its Western-dyed hues is displaying ;
The whispering echoes of eventide chime—
“ Good-night,” they are tenderly saying.

Such mists of imperial crimson and gold,
Abroad in the woodland are showing ;
Some low-trailing cloud must have caught there
its fold,
Thus forced to a gracious bestowing.

Are these the appointments of death and decay ?
Are these the Earth's tokens of sadness ?
Nay, seemeth not all this triumphal array
The sign and the signal of gladness ?

The vehement stir of expectant young Spring,
No longer the quick air is thrilling,
The grace of a dearer and lovelier thing,
The pulse of the daytimes is stilling.

With toil and its recompense well satisfied,
In the hour of her high exultation ;
The promise of Spring-time in full, verified,
Earth waiteth her grand Coronation.

The glorious Sun, through the mystical veil,
The tremulous air interposes,
Beams forth from the Heavens a gracious "All
hail,"
As the Morning the pageant discloses.

Yea, seemeth it not as if all his fair beams
Through Spring and through Summer-time
treasured,
Were at length given back in these prismatic
gleams
With beauty and glory unmeasured?

'Tis a beautiful parable, sweet and sublime,
May we find the glad interpretation
When our life slips away into ripe Autumn-time,
And its close be its grand Coronation.

THE FROST ON THE MAY-WEED.

A BIT of a weed, very ugly indeed,
Had someway survived Winter weather,
For the season so mild had almost beguiled
Jack Frost from his work altogether.

It quietly crept by a pavement unkept,
Despised and down-trodden it flourished,
For the bounteous Earth, having given it birth,
The plant unattractive yet nourished.

But once in the night, all silent and white
The frost with its rime overlaid it ;
Chill fingers of frost, each living leaf crossed,
The Sun of the Morning displayed it.

Night mists were revealed into crystals congealed,
The touch of apparent disaster,
A loveliness new o'er its homeliness threw.
There's a lesson hid here by the Master.

THE SONG OF HOPE.

THERE'S a song athrob in the mystical air,
It holdeth its tremulous cadence there,
The morning lifteth the note aloft,
The evening wind is its echo soft.

The birds blithely sing it,
And memory-bells ring it,

The hours all chime it in musical rhyme,
The thrill of its measure is rapturous pleasure,

Hark the tuneful chime !

'Tis the Song of Hope, of expectant joy,
Its jubilant utterance naught can destroy ;
Now the undertone may be faintly heard,
Now the strain swells clear as the song of a bird.

In the hush of the Winter-silence deep,
When the earth seems lying asleep, asleep,
In a death-like sleep, with a shroud of snow,
And the wind, like a dirge, wails faint and low,

Beneath its low sobbing
A joy-note is throbbing,

The quick heart will hear it. O hark ! it is there
Its promise of gladness dispels Winter sadness,

Lifts the present care.

'Tis the Song of Hope, of expectant joy,
Its jubilant utterance naught can destroy ;
Now the notes swell clear in exultant strain,
Now the echo comes like a low refrain.

'Mid the buds of Spring and the Summer bloom,
In the Autumn glory and Winter gloom,
With promise of fruitage and ripeness at last,
And of bloom again when the Harvest is past,
 This song is still ringing,
 Its cheery notes bringing
New gladness each day-time, and joy for the night,
Our hearts must receive it, we fondly believe it,
 Doubt and fear take flight.
'Tis the Song of Hope, of expectant joy,
Its jubilant utterance naught can destroy ;
Through days and seasons the glad notes chime,
Till the echo dies on the Shores of Time.

MY GARDEN-PLOT.

I MURMUR at my garden-plot,
I do not like its limit ;
I chafe within this narrow spot,
How shall I keep and trim it ?
I can not think 'twas meant for me,
I seem so little fitted
To make it what it ought to be—
Why was the care committed ?

'Tis not, *I* think, in choicest place,
How strangely it is ordered !
Yonder's a bed abloom with grace,
With wondrous beauty bordered.
How inconvenient *my* small lot,
What striking contrasts bound it ;
While those who seek the lovelier spot
Must always go around it.

There is no way to go across,
Through border set so thickly,
And time and pains are counted loss,
To pass around it quickly ;
And then, I sit and droop my head,
The slow pain sadly growing,
'Tis *in the way*—my lowly bed—
I'm sure I can't help knowing.

No blossoms fair my bed displays
 Though some few plants are budding,
The sparks of brightness, bits of rays
 The wide-spread greenness studding.
I can not bring them into bloom,
 Yet how I long for labor ;
And could I but have larger room
 How I could help my neighbor !

No marvel that the unused strength
 That longs for occupation
Should wear and chafe within at length,
 And stir some desperation.
Scarce knowing what to do *within*—
 Outside desires denied me,
My heart must some sure comfort win,
 Or grief will sore betide me.

I'll ask the Gardener. Surely He
 Who planned each bed and border,
A reason wise will give to me
 For all this curious order.
And yet, perhaps, I should not ask,
 May be He will not hear me ;
He *gave* " Directions " for my task,
 And " Promises," to cheer me.

Then let me take my ordered place
 And work a little longer ;
My full directions newly trace
 While hope and trust grow stronger.

Patience may grow in any soil,
'Tis in the Gardener's giving ;
On this I'll spend contented toil—
Its bloom will bless my living.

GIVING AND RECEIVING.

It is John, the Beloved Disciple,
Who gives us the record so sweet
Of Mary, who brought the rich ointment
And poured it on Jesus' dear feet.
'Tis a tender and beautiful story
Of love for the Master and Lord,
For she lavished her costliest treasure,
With never a thought of reward.
She knew not in lasting remembrance
Her name the far future should hold ;
She thought not in gracious memorial
The tale of her love should be told.

But e'en as she stood by the Master,
And none but He thought upon her,
The fumes of her odorous ointment
Pervaded the house where they were.
The offering she made unto Jesus,
But all of the guests in the room,
Were told of the honor she paid Him
By that exquisite breath of perfume.
And Mary, in tenderness bending,
Some service, her sole loving care,
In wiping the feet of the Saviour,
Bore the odor away in her hair.

O beautiful type of good-doing,
Sweet symbol of what they may win

Who give their hearts' choicest and dearest,
Thinking *only* of *Jesus* therein.
The fragrance of offerings so precious
Shall be known in the spice-laden air ;
And the head shall with oil be anointed,
Though that were no part of the care.

THEY DO NOT KNOW.

OUR surface-life we largely share
With those to whom we kinship bear,
And name the same we also wear,
 And yet—it may be so.
The inner circle of our life,
That which is most with feeling rife,
The hidden fields of daily strife,
 The nearest may not know.

We strive to make a living creed,
To make our lives for Jesus plead,
Yet oft we faint and fail indeed,
 This needs no light to show.
And then, we lay it sore to heart,
In bitter silence bear the smart
Of wounds we make—the larger part—
 But others do not know.

The faltering step, the work undone,
The broken vow, the wrong begun,
The strife so long, ere victory's won,
 The progress small and slow,
These soon are known; but who may tell
How long we struggled ere we fell,
Nor what the thoughts our bosoms swell,
 O'er all that grieves us so!

And those, so dear, whose life's full tide
With ours flows ever side by side,
Our love, our hope, our joy and pride,
 If they could only know
The yearning tenderness we feel,
The anxious longing for their weal,
But which our lips can ne'er reveal,
 It seems to choke us so.

Somehow we are too strangely shy
To utter what for speech will cry,
Although the utterance we deny.
 So others can not know
How oft the ache and pain grow keen,
Because no speech can intervene
The *real*, and the *supposed*, between,
 And reconcile them so.

So oft we are misunderstood,
In much, where we desire but good,
Because we can not, if we would,
 The hidden fountains show.
With spell of silence they are sealed,
Their secrets can not be revealed,
Nor full interpretation yield,
 And none may hope to know.

But all the vexing things of life,
The hindrances in all the strife,
The hidden thoughts with which 'tis rife,
 And all that grieves us so ;

The longing, and the love untold,
Which none may in our *lives* behold,
By which our *hearts* are yet controlled,
All this our Lord doth know.

FOR THEE, DEAR LORD, FOR THEE.

I COULD not bear this weight of pain,
This weariness could not sustain,
I think, for any earthly friend,
My strength would falter ere the end.
But all that Thou dost on me lay,
Though heavier grow the load each day,
I bear, though Thou couldst set me free,
For Thee, dear Lord, for Thee.

Through lengthened days and weary nights,
Denied my buoyant health's delights,
From all that once my time employed,
Dear occupations, so enjoyed,
I loosen now my eager hold,
My tired hands in patience fold
(Not knowing why it thus must be),
For Thee, dear Lord, for Thee.

I know my suffering bears Thy seal ;
'Tis not, I think, the *rod* I feel ;
Thou art so *near*, I understand
And feel it is Thy chastening Hand.
The test of love and faith I own,
The Hand that smites is dearer grown,
So strong to help, so quick to heal.
No marvel that each hour I feel—
'Tis sweet to *bear*, Thou helping me,
For Thee, dear Lord, for Thee.

There is no pain, no anguished smart
Of throbbing brain, or aching heart,
No burden great, no anxious care,
But Thou, dear Lord, for me didst bear.
For "He *hath* borne our griefs," 'tis said—
Hath carried all our sorrows dread.
My sins He bore upon the tree,
For me, my Lord, for me.

Then welcome be what Christ may send,
My will to His I gladly bend ;
E'en crown of sorrows let me take
And meekly wear it for His sake.
Though cherished plans be laid aside,
My heart's desires be long denied,
I bear what *Thou* dost lay on me,
For Thee, dear Lord, for Thee.

HE KNEW BEFORE.

AH, surely Christ our Lord doth know
Each point of pain that wounds you so ;
He *knew* how sharp and sore the stroke
Before the storm of sorrow broke.
He knew how you had learned to lean
On the strong stay that came between
You, and your care and want, alway,
And yet the word He would not say
Which would have spared your heart this pain
For which all medicine seems vain.

When earthly friends by deed or word,
Or aught withheld we wish conferred,
Vex us, and grieve us deep and sore,
How oft they tell us o'er and o'er :
“ It was not *meant* to hurt you so ;
It grieves *us*, that we did not know,
That there a quivering nerve was bare,
Which should have been our thought to spare.
Forgive us : if we had but *known*,
We had more thoughtful kindness shown.”

But “ Jesus knew,” when His command
Withdrew the strong staff from your hand,
How bruised and helpless you would fall
Upon His arm, that carries all,
And yet, the anguish would not spare
Because, so Infinite His care,

Passing beyond your vision low,
He knew it would be better so.
Knowing whereto this grief would grow,
He gave it you—"He loved you so."

And now, the wise, far-sighted gaze,
That saw before *these* weary days,
Sees just how many day-times lie
Between you and the Rest on high ;
And when your faltering feet might fail
Through grief-worn strength and powers frail ;
But He has made it quite secure,
That "to the end" you shall endure.
His arms about you, you shall know,
His strength is yours, "He loves you so."

So, Time's soft utterance soon may tell,
How, on the spot where first you fell,
White flowers have sprung, of beauty rare,
While healing herbs make sweet the air,
And when, each year, you pass that way
Upon the Anniversary-day,
Leaning on your Beloved's arm,
Secure from all o'ertaking harm,
Your grief-schooled heart will whisper low,
"He knew before—He loved me so."

THE BABY-FINGERS ON THE KEYS.

SNOWY little fingers
Beat upon the keys,
Baby-boy is playing
All himself to please ;
Chubby hands outspreading,
Gleefully he pounds,
Knowing not the torture
Of unmatching sounds.
What a cruel jangle
Jars upon our nerves,
Not a rule of harmony
Baby dear observes.
How should he discover
Discord in the chime ?
Mamma cries, " My darling,
One note at a time."
Guiding one wee finger
O'er the ivory keys,
Soon she checks the discord
That did so displease.

We are little children
In the Master's sight,
Ingorant of " Harmony,"
Knowing not aright
How to bring His dealings
Into one true chord.

Let us cease our striving,
Leaving to the Lord
All the combinations
Difficult and grand,
Take the simple melody
We can understand.
We'll not strike together
Tones that do not chime,
We will touch but humbly
"One note at a time."
Providence and doctrine,
Mysteries of life,
Blessings and bestowals,
Seemingly at strife.
We can never blend them,
'Tis not ours to try;
We shall hear the symphony
Yonder, by and by.

FRINGES.

“Thou shalt make thee fringes . . . upon thy vesture.”*

NOT meaningless that ancient word, to Israel's
chosen race,
That bade them border all their robes with orna-
ments of grace,
And ordered every garment's hem adorned with
riband blue,
To interlace its broideries with Heaven's own
perfect hue.

No manacle upon the hand, no hempen girdle
rude,
Betokened forced obedience, degrading servitude;
But garniture of rare device instead, was made to
serve
As the remembrancer of law, lest love and memory
swerve.

And by the token that secured his loyalty and love,
Each reverent Jew was known as one who served
the Lord above.
What wealth of meaning here for us, what lesson
rich and new,
For we have need of broideries upon our raiment
too.

* Deut. xxii. 12 ; Num. xv. 38, 39.

“Fringe—an ornament resembling a flower, added to the bottom of the skirts of the outer garment, and tied together, on each division of it, by a riband of blue.”

Yea, it sufficeth not, indeed, that every day-time
we
Should wrap our lives alone in robes of strict
integrity ;
If bare of all adorning grace, how shall our neigh-
bors know
The pattern of that "Seamless Dress" that once
was seen below ?

Then let the small, sweet courtesies the law of
love decrees,
The delicate amenities that so refine and please,
With gracious deeds, and thoughtful cares, em-
broider all our lives,
That all may know, how in our day, the elder
grace survives,
And see in this reminding trace of Pattern so
Divine,
"The beauty of the Lord our God" in all His chil-
dren shine.

MARGINAL READINGS.

Birthday Verses.

I WISH I could bring you a present to-day,
Dear friend of my life and my love ;
If only my heart had its coveted way,
'Twould enrich you all others above.

And yet, if I measured in silver and gold
The wealth of affection I bear,
Would not there be lurking a trouble untold
In the multiplied duties and care ?

And I can't, if I would, so we'll let it go by,
I have found out a text* I like well ;
The meaning not all on the surface doth lie
Which the marginal reading doth tell.

I have marked it, you see, where "defense" mean-
eth "gold,"
And the "silver" is "silver of strength."
What marvels of beauty and richness unfold,
As the words take this meaning at length.

That gold and that silver already are yours,
I ask but their constant increase ;
And "He that is faithful," "abundance" secures,
His love and His gifts never cease.

* Job xxii. 25.

Then what could I offer, so rich as you are,
So lavish in all you bestow?
Your fortune is better, and larger by far,
Than any that comes from below.

I bethink me again, it were wiser to look
At the marginal readings alway,
In the puzzles of life, and the words of the Book,
For of both we've a portion each day.

HIS QUIET.

“ When He giveth quietness,
Who then can make trouble ? ”

WHO can make trouble when God giveth quietness ?

Surely not man, who is finite and frail.

What can man do, that o'er God-given restfulness,

Ever one moment can truly prevail ?

What can avail all the world's warring elements,

Seemingly fierce, yet Divinely controlled ?

Billows may break round the ship at safe anchorage,

Danger there is none—the cable will hold.

When He so wills it, the storm-winds tempestuous

Hush their loud voices and instantly cease ;

Wild waves are subject to Power omnipotent,

Waters grow quiet when Jesus says “ Peace.”

But, if He utters no potent commandment,

Bids not the boisterous deep to be still ;

Nevertheless, to the storm-beaten mariner,

He can give quietness—aye, and He will.

Then what can ruffle the Heaven-sent confidence—

What can disturb the deep peace of the soul ;

O'er the still depths, where the storm can not pene-
trate,

Tempest-wrought surface-waves harmlessly roll.

Ours through all life be this God-given “ quietness ; ”

Ours be the peace that is priceless and sweet ;

Ours this bestowal, exceeding in preciousness

All that the world could lay down at our feet.

FALLEN ASLEEP SO SOON.

FALLEN asleep so soon !
We thought the child belovèd would wait,
Perhaps till the quiet evening late ;
We pictured a long, long wakeful day,
We were not ready " Good-night " to say—
 Fallen asleep so soon !

'Tis well when baby sleeps.
The winsome glee of a child awake,
Gladness and joy in the house may make ;
But ever the slumber-hour is best
For the child in waking hours caressed :
 'Tis well when baby sleeps.

Mother would have him sleep.
Her *love* is stronger than joy and pride,
'Twill bravely bear its desire denied,
Its fullness even, is wisely controlled—
In her arms, that closely and fondly hold,
 Mother would have him sleep.

But God hath given the sleep.
Not mother's voice was his lullaby,
Soothing his fears, and hushing his cry,
But surely the Love was none the less.
The Father's Love, with His power to bless,
 Hath hushed the baby to sleep.

Therefore it must be well.
He waiteth not for the hour to chime,
Which *we* might set as the wisest time ;
He, who account of the *need* doth keep,
Knoweth and setteth the time for sleep :
Therefore it must be well.

Well with mother and child.
The same Strong Arm which the child enfolds,
With tender compassion the mother holds.
She hath given the Father her child to keep ;
The Lord hath given the little one sleep.
Well with mother and child.

WHO TOUCHED MY CLOTHES?

MARK v. 30.

“WHO touched my clothes?” E’en as He spoke,
The Saviour knew from whence
The hand upon His garment’s hem
That drew the virtue thence.
The puzzled twelve beheld the press,
Nor wondered one should touch ;
Yet thought not that so slight a thing
Could bring about so much.

But afterward, when Peter went
In Jesus’ name to teach,
His very shadow healed the sick
They laid within its reach.
And from the body of St. Paul,
Were aprons, ’kerchiefs, brought ;
And through them, on the sick and crazed
Were deeds of healing wrought.

Such gift of miracle as this,
Such wondrous power to bless
Is now withdrawn, yet still we see,
The crowds that throng and press.
“Who touched My clothes?” we can not tell,
So many come and go ;
The unconscious dress has many a touch,
Whereof we never know.

But can we not be so like Christ,
So busy for His sake,
So sensitive to mute appeals,
Which passers-by may make,
That they who touch us here and there,
In all the great world's press,
Shall in the slightest contact, still
A virtue strange confess ?

RE-FASHIONED.

ALL the morning my hands have been busy,
The work was but simple, 'tis true,
A garment unworn, but old-fashioned,
Had need to be fashioned anew.
Ere aught could be done in the making,
The dress must be taken apart—
But why was my hand so reluctant ?
Regretful and tender my heart ?

'Twas nothing a careless on-looker
Could guess, or could well understand ;
But I saw, in those closely-set stitches
The trace of a dear vanished hand.
Deft fingers that handled the needle,
Which unto this work was addressed,
For years have been peacefully folded,
And crossed on a bosom at rest.

'Twas not that the work was done wrongly,
'Twas not that I loved her the less,
That I carefully ripped out the stitches
The dear one had set in the dress.
Its purpose aforesaid was answered,
It now must be altered, re-made ;
But oh, with what tender regretting
My fingers the duty essayed.

Then I thought of the lives that we fashion,
With anxious and painstaking care,
Yet unto the Heavenly Pattern
How little resemblance they bear.
They are not like the Robe that was seamless,
And some of the seams, well I know,
Must be all taken out by the Master
When this life is finished below.

For much that we here put together,
Is joined in a manner so strange,
'Twill not answer at all over yonder—
And yet I feel sure in the change,
In all of the needful undoing,
The Infinite Fatherly Heart
Will tenderly yearn o'er the children
Whose work He must needs take apart.
And out of the very same fabric
(The earth-life of love is not vain),
He will fashion a wonderful beauty
Whose glory unchanged will remain.

WHY REASON YE?

MATT. xvi. 8, 9.

“ WHY reason ye among yourselves
 Because ye brought no bread ? ”
 Thus to the twelve, in their dismay,
 The Lord and Master said.

O wherefore, ye of little faith,
 Do ye not understand,
 Neither remember how ye fed
 Those thousands from my hand ?

Forgetful ones ! Distrustful ones !
 Straightway they yield to dread,
 (Although the Master is so near),
 Because *they* brought no bread.

So, when emergencies arise,
 When souls must needs be fed,
 Not all prepared, we are perplexed
 Because we have no bread.

Can we for starving souls supply
 The life-sustaining bread ?
 Nay, we must show our empty hands
 And lead to Christ instead.

If we have bread, like “ the young lad ”
 That brought his offering small,

The Lord must bless and break it first
That it may serve for all.

If, in some great and sudden need,
Such as we often dread,
We are unready, Christ is near,
We shall not want for bread.

"I LAID ME DOWN AND SLEPT"

"I LAID me down and slept."

Night's heavy curtain, shadow-wrought,
And here and there with star-beams caught,
Shut out the light and glare of day ;
The time for work had slipped away,
I laid me down and slept,
The Lord my pillow kept.

Night brought a welcome rest.
Day had been full of toil and care,
Nor thought nor time for rest could spare ;
But wholesome weariness it brought,
For grief and pain had added naught.
My head the pillow pressed,
Night *brought* the welcome rest.

Do all thus quickly sleep ?
Alas, for those who wakeful lie,
While sorrow-laden hours go by,
From couch of pain, Time's passing trace,
Or hold thereby the watcher's place,
While slow night-shadows creep,
And I lie fast asleep.

Thanks, Lord, for quiet sleep.
My pulses thrill with morning-life ;
I am new-fitted for the strife,

And hail the daybreak with delight,
After the sweet untroubled night.

I might have waked to weep,
Thanks, Lord, for quiet sleep.

I laid me down in peace.
When daylight came, and darkness waned,
I waked, because the Lord sustained.
I will both lay me down and sleep,
The Lord His tireless watch will keep.
His Word makes troubles cease,
I lay me down in peace.

AFTER TWO YEARS.

IN the track of a year was a sorrow sown ;
O'er the place of its planting, my heart made moan.

The plowshare's furrows were rugged and deep ;
'Twas a cloudy day, and I could but weep.

But safely the sorrow was hidden that day,
The seed was deep-sown, and I turned me away.

Still on through the path of the day-times I trod,
I could only look tearfully up to my God.

My heart was sore broken with thought of that day,
When my joy, with my sorrow, was hidden away.

In the round of the year I came back to the place
Where the grief of a year had before found a space.

My eyes filled with tears, as I bent down to see
What growth there had been, if some growth there
might be.

Lo ! there in the place where my sorrow was sown,
A marvel of beauty and freshness had grown.

The sorrow had blossomed. How fair was the
bloom ;
White flowers of peace filled the air with perfume.

Then I covered my face, but my heart whispered
low,

My thanks to the Master who thus made me know
That He could make beauty from sorrow to grow.

Again, in the "turn of the year" I came back
To the place I had marked in the wearisome track.

Lo! the blossoms so white, and so fragrant before,
Had fallen to earth, but the fair branches bore
Such fruit as might sweeten a life evermore.

Then I lifted my face to the radiant skies,
And uttered my thanks in my grateful surprise.

But, after a moment, my wonder was mute,
I remembered a *promise* of "peaceable fruit."

JEHOVAH-SHALOM.*

(“ The Lord send peace.”)

BIRTHDAY VERSES.

THE swift years multiply, but from life's cares
Bring no release.

Into the midst of hastening days, I pray
“ The Lord send peace.”

When life comes near its close, we think, perhaps,
The strife may cease ;
I would foredate the far-off even-tide—
“ The Lord send peace.”

Beyond the sunset, in the Morning Land,
Joy shall increase ;
This side the border falls the fervent prayer—
“ The Lord send peace.”

A mid-week Sabbath may this be to you,
A day of rest ;
A day, which in His tender, boundless love,
The Lord hath blessed.

“ My peace I give to you,”—’tis Jesus' voice ;
Hearken, receive ;
“ In Me ye may have peace,” another word—
Let us believe.

* Judges vi. 24.

Be this the benediction on each day,
Till day-times cease ;
And in the evening-time, as well, dear heart,
“ The Lord send peace.”

JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH.*

("The Lord is there.")

FOR THE NEW YEAR.

LET us look into the Past to-day
 Is it not like a city fair?
 Its towers, and walls, and streets, and gates
 A familiar appearance bear;
 For a little while the backward glance
 Would lovingly linger there.

'Tis peopled all with shadowy forms,
 Memory's robing they wear;
 There's a silence lying on all around,
 A hush in the very air;
 Yet a Sacred Presence glorifies all—
 We whisper—"The Lord is there."

"The Lord is there," for we see His plan
 All gracious beyond compare;
 We knew not once, but to-day we know
 That wisdom, and love, and care,
 Laid the foundations, and reared the walls,
 And fashioned our dwelling there.

There's a narrow street (shall we call it
 "Straight"?)
 Running through pitfall and snare;

* Ezekiel xlvi. 35.

Therein we may trace where our faltering
 feet
 Were guided all unaware ;
 " Kept from falling " by Power not ours—
 Ah, surely " The Lord is there."

There's a " Gate of Praise," and a " House of
 Bread,"
 There, too, is a " House of Prayer ;"
 Ah, me ! there's a chamber of grief and gloom,
 Thank God, 'tis not of despair ;
 For, looking back to the darkened place—
 Lo ! a light, for " The Lord is there."

Now, standing here, on this eminent height,
 The Past and the Future share,
 Thought and Interest, Memory and Hope,
 Each have a portion to spare,
 But, looking forward, the Eye of Faith
 Discovers " The Lord is there."

And far above is a City of gold ;
 Oh ! it is marvelous fair,
 Glorious beyond all our language has told,
 Royal, with beauty most rare.
 But the " excellent glory"—the chief is this :
 It is written, " The Lord is there !"

MIZPAH.*

"THE LORD."

THE Lord himself, for He alone
 Can bridge the space between ;
 The Lord keep watch, the Infinite,
 All-seeing, though unseen.

"WATCH."

The dear Lord "watch" between us two,
 Keep guard with loving care,
 Bend o'er us both His sleepless eye,
 And hearken to our prayer.

"BETWEEN ME AND THEE."

The Lord between us, keep His watch ;
 Though worlds in boundless space
 Require His hand and claim His eye,
 Still may *we* see His face.
 And, looking upward to our God,
 Both thou and I may see
 The love, and light, and grace, and care
 That lie 'twixt thee and me.

"WHEN WE ARE ABSENT ONE FROM ANOTHER."

"When we are absent!" Ah, sweet friend,
 The words are thrilled with pain ;

* Genesis xxxi. 49.

And yet our watching Lord and King
Will faithfully maintain
His guardianship. His thoughts of love
That cross to thee and me,
Make all the space both warm and full,
With blessings rich and free.

“Mizpah!” This cheering Beacon stands;
This royal Watch-tower see.
The Lord himself *will* keep His watch,
Dear heart, 'twixt thee and me.

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