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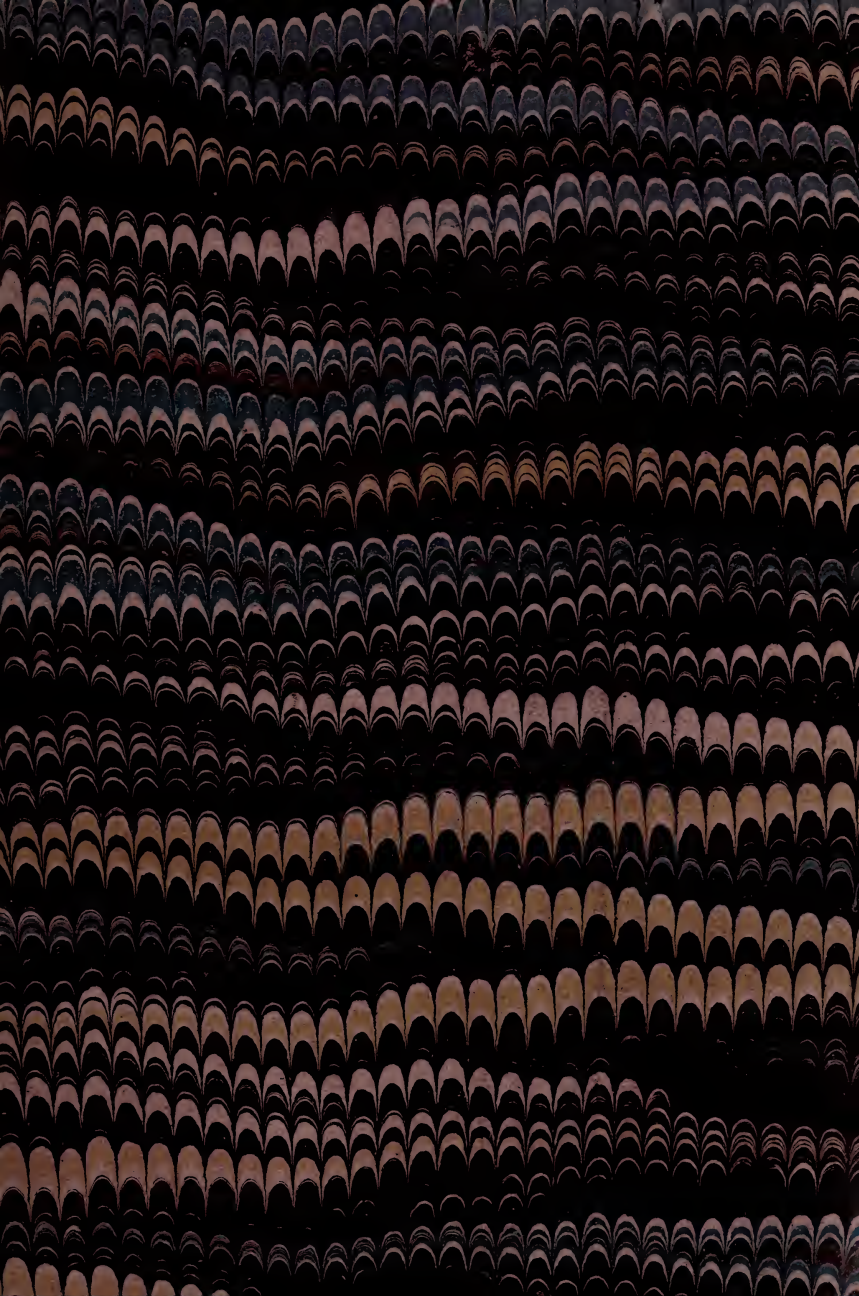


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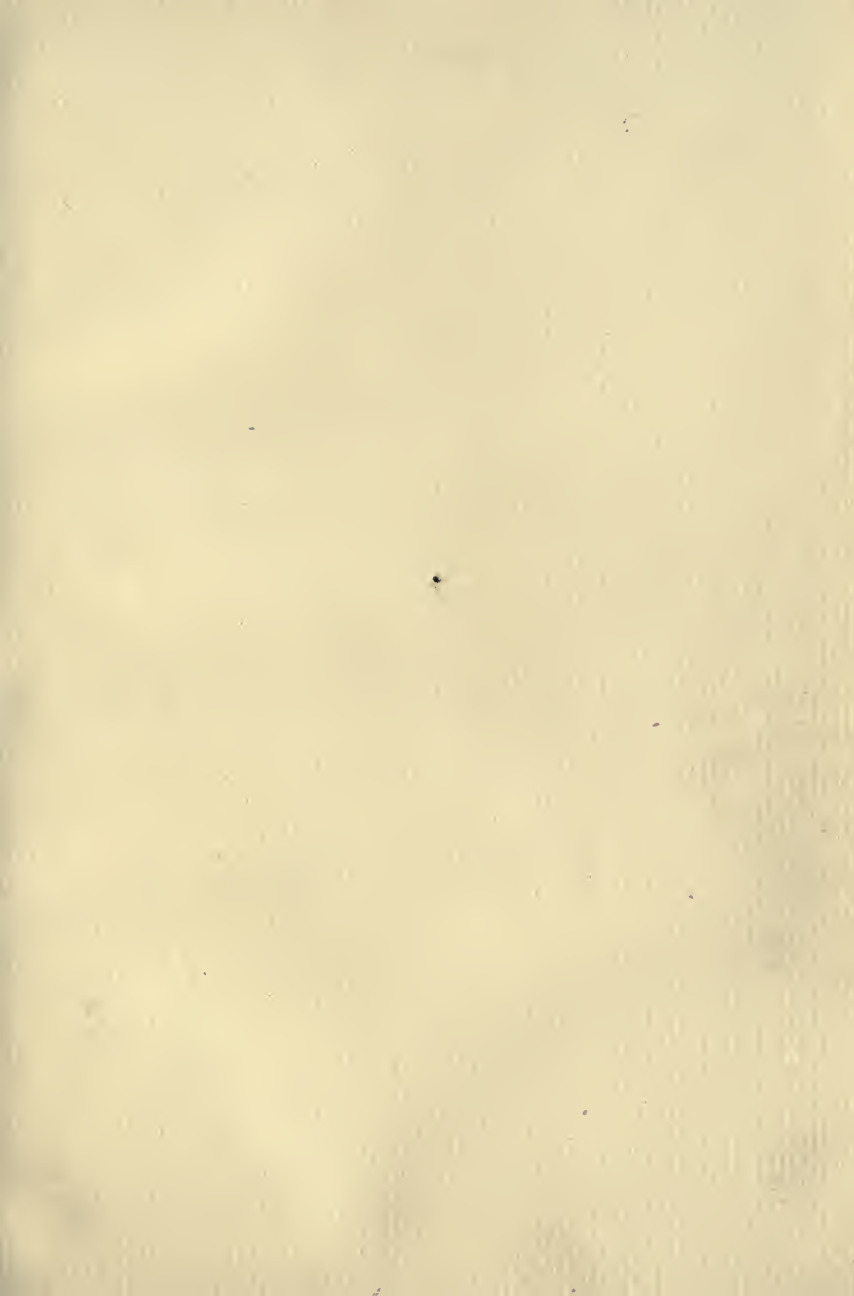


Serge William
Thomson

Chicago Press 1888



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[Thomson, George William]

VERSES FROM JAPAN.



LONDON: MDCCCLXXVIII.

VERSES FROM JAMES

LOAN STACK

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LONDON: MESSRS. G. & J. B. BAKER

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
 MMÉ and Genjiro, a Leap Year Legend of Japan	7
Lament of the Princess of Mikawa on the Death of her Husband	16
Lament of the Prince of Choshiu on the Death of his Wife	20
Fumifera Japonica	23
The Lady and the Flower	26
The Wife's Appeal	29
The Wife's Triumph	32
The Fading Flower	35
The Swan	38
The Rose and the Rain	40
The Butterfly	42

	PAGE
A Fan Song	44
Song: My Love is like a Rock	45
Song: The Woods are Green in Summer Time	47
A Thought for a Famous Friend	49
The Best Physician	51
Song: When Fast I Flew to My Sweet Love .	53
The Dream	54
The Last Words of Misawa Menjiro	57
The Morning Moon	58





OMMÉ AND GENJIRO,

A LEAP YEAR LEGEND OF JAPAN.

IN the land of Yamashiro,
In the sweet and sunny
fouth,
Singers love this touching story,
Passing it from mouth to mouth.

Youths and maidens lean to listen,
Passion's fiery thrill they know,
And in aged breasts it wakens
Tender thoughts of long ago.

8 *Ommé and Genjiro.*

Once upon a time a noble,
 Travelling from the city's din
With a crowd of careless servants,
 Rested at a village inn.

Sojourn'd there a wicked warrior,
 Whose fierce face with hot blood shone :
Strange, each bore the name far famous,
 Oba Gendazaemon.

In the morning, when the sunrise
 Bathed in light the land and sea,
Rose the noble from his pillow—
 Rode unarm'd across the sea.

And behind him his retainers
 Many a costly burden bore,
When upon them surged that other,
 Like a wild wave on the shore.

Filch'd had they his choicest armour ;
Surely simplest child might con :
On the box-plate blazed in splendour,
"Oba Gendazaemon."

Not one moment would he listen ;
Shook his frame with pent-up ire :
"Such mistakes," he screamed in fury,
"I remit with sword and fire."

Fierce and fast like Noto's tempests
Burst his blows upon the train ;
Turn'd the noble at the clamour,
First he fell among the slain.

Dire as earthquake came the tidings
To his waiting wife and son :
Dead! with Hope's gay buds still breaking,
Dead! with half his triumphs won.

Day and night on fleetest courfers,
Like the winds that hilltops blow,
Through the stream, and o'er the moun-
tain,
Swiftly rode young Genjiro,

Till he came to where his father
Lay in hovel dark and dead ;
Nerveless lay the limbs of iron,
Dreamless lay the kingly head.

Stung with fury vow'd the stripling
O'er the land from south to north,
He would track the base affassin
And his dastard soul drive forth.

And, that he might wander freely,
Donn'd the boy a beggar's dress ;
But its coarseness could not fully
His surpassing comeliness.

Tall he was, and straight as arrow,
Fair his cheek, and forehead high ;
Kisso's eagles could not equal
The proud glance that fill'd his eye.

From the first faint streaks of dawning
Scann'd he close the gaudy throng
That to Kanongfama's temple
Swept in crowds the whole day long.

Here the merchant sleek and smiling,
There the noble proud and grave,
Here a group of laughing ladies,
Like a foam-topp'd, sunlit wave.

But the dark-brow'd, red-cheek'd visage,
With its black eye flashing fire,
Never down the temple's alley
Came to vengeance deep and dire.

One chill morn a maiden wealthy,
Breathing prayer the temple fought ;
From her *kango's* dainty cushions
Peep'd her sweet face full of thought.

Clad in rags the fair boy beggar
Braved the weather wild and wet ;
Silver cast the kindly maiden,
And their eyes one moment met.

Rude disguise could never cover
That lithe frame and beauteous face,
That brave eye and thoughtful forehead,
That unconscious, conquering grace.

Daily to the idol's temple
Passes Yamashiro's Pearl,
And her parents fondly fancy
Ommé grows a pious girl.

But when clouds of cherry blossom
Snow'd the stony path to prayer,
Glanced she at the well-known corner ;
Ah ! her darling was not there.

Never more to see the glory
Of his beauty, near or far ;
She was like a skiff on ocean,
Searching for lost guiding star.

Sad she grew, the warm glow faded
From her rosy, rounded cheek ;
Head on hand she lay and languish'd,
Like a lily, white and weak.

Leaden-hearted lived her parents,
While they watch'd her pale and pine :
Deep the heart of love-sick maiden,
Deep as Sado's golden mine,

But one evening, when Death's shadows
Seem'd the summer fields to fold,
To her mother faintly faltering
She her long-kept secret told.

Through her tears and smiles she whif-
per'd
She could bear no other fate
Than to wed her heaven-sent idol,
That bright beggar at the gate.

O'er the land they fought and found him :
He had clos'd his cruel quest,
For his fiery foe had fallen
In the dark lands of the west.

He had loved the winsome maiden
From that first sweet smiling start :
Linger'd in his ear her accents,
And her image in his heart.

All the joys that life can lavish,
When the soul is fresh and fair,
Through their softly-gliding summers
Shed their sweetness on the pair.

Thus they tell the pleasant story,
As the seasons come and go,
Of the love of gentle Ommé
And the high-soul'd Genjiro.

From the cottage to the palace,
From the cradle to the pall,
In all ages, in all countries,
Love is ever lord of all.





LAMENT OF THE PRINCESS
OF MIKAWA

ON THE DEATH OF HER HUSBAND.

WANES the white moon, but not
the bursting heart
That brighter grows, and fuller
of its woe.

Time cannot lessen sorrow such as mine.
The spring flowers blossom and the evening air
Is warm and fragrant, while with honied
throats
The orioles, from a maze of cherry
boughs,

Lament of the Princess of Mikawa. 17

Sing all the sweet love-secrets of their
 nests.

But oh! for autumn with her withering
 woods,

And skies that shed a thousand streaming
 tears!

The world's best jewel sank in death's
 dark stream,

And I, an empty bubble on the wave,
Live in the sunshine, while its light is
 gone.

They laid his body in the gloomy grave:
He went before me down the dreadful
 way

That all men travel, shuddering and alone.
Soon I shall follow, for the days fly fast:
Then, oh, my darling! through the mists
 of time

I see our souls together, soaring high,
Like eagles breasting the blue waves of
 heaven,
Rejoicing in the sunshine, far beyond
The whirring arrows of the hunter Death,
And all the many miseries of the world.

Now comes the quiet majesty of night,
With sleep's fair frost to hush life's bab-
 bling streams.

Husbands and wives lie down in blissful
 rest :

Like golden lilies dreaming in the sun,
Fond women slumber in the arms of
 those

Whose love lies round them, as the sap-
 phire sea

Circles the fragrance of an isle of flowers.
Dust is your bed, beloved ; mine is pain :

Princess of Mikawa. 19

White are these cheeks where once the
roses blew,
Cold is this breast that once was fill'd
with fire,
For, till death comes, my own sweet love
is dead.





LAMENT OF THE PRINCE OF
CHOSHIU

ON THE DEATH OF HIS WIFE.

WAKING at midnight when the
world is still,
Alone I seem to drift upon a
tide

Of dreary waters, while the dying moon
Sinks slowly, gathering all her tender rays
And leaving the dark-visaged night for-
lorn.

Moans the wild wind: the air is fill'd
with frost:
My eyes are dull, but solitude and cold,

Lament of the Prince of Choshiu. 21

Like cruel-throated watch-dogs, scare
away

The timid traveller, Sleep.

I cannot rest :

A dear face shines upon me like a star

Through death and darkness. Poor, sweet,
lonely love !

Oh ! I would be the stone upon her grave,
Or the least flower that blossoms on her
dust,

But for the blessed hope that I shall meet
My darling somewhere in the silent land.
The rock of death divides the rushing
wave,

But the twin streams shall surely meet
again.

Through the dim world the village temple
bell

22 *Lament of the Prince of Choshiu.*

Touches my ears, and every solemn sound
Repeats her name whose penfive thoughts
were prayer.

My arms are empty, but my heart is full,
And shall be full of her for evermore.





FUMIFERA JAPONICA.

LIKE butterfly in sunbeam gay,
Or precious gem of dazzling ray,
Ohana is the brightest fay—

The sweetest flower in Yedo;
Almost as fair she is as those,
With eyes of blue and cheeks of rose,
Who dance till happy daylight goes
On daisied English meadow.

Her eyes—dark wells of passion deep
Whene'er her soul is stirr'd—now sleep
In sunshine, and her fancies leap
Like wavelets soft and stilly;
Her hair is bound with skill and grace;
Upon her laughing lips a trace

Of saffron flower is seen : her face
Is powder'd like the lily.

As many-colour'd is her dress
As that entrancing loveliness
Which spans the rain-swept sky to bless
The earth—a gladsome duty ;
With *samisen* upon her knees,
And gaudy fan to coax the breeze,
She sits beneath embowering trees—
A little Eastern beauty.

But, smiling, from her sleeve she takes
A tiny pipe, and gently breaks
The *kokubu's* beloved flakes,
And lights a morsel gaily ;
A whiff or two—the joy is done,
But scarcely ere again begun.
She smokes, I trow, if she smokes one,
Of pipes a hundred daily.

Alas! they cast a shade on this—
The purest pearl of earthly bliss—
The swift and sweet delicious kifs

 Young lips soon learn the knack o':
I would not wed an angel bright,
With wings that fluttered soft and white,
And eyes that swam in liquid light,
 If she could smoke tobacco.

Then puff away all undismay'd,—
In curling clouds your graces fade ;
No fervour shall your peace invade ;

 O exquisite Ohana !
But on my knees I'd pray and pine,
In passion's agonies divine,
If only, sweet, you would resign
 That vile *Nicotiana*.





THE LADY AND THE
FLOWER.

THERE was a sweet flower, red
and white,
That fill'd the gazer with de-
light.

Dropp'd in soft showers the summer rain;
Joy bounded through each teeming vein.
Shone the glad sun, and round it roll'd
His quickening heat in waves of gold.
A lady from her chamber came,
And watch'd its bells in beauty flame.
Each jewell'd branch she closely scann'd :
Then, with the brightest in her hand,

The Lady and the Flower. 27

Across the grass she gaily sped,
And, smiling, to herself she said,
“Of flowers that bloom, or birds that
fly,

Not one is half so bright as I.”

So, from the sun to grateful gloom,

She pass'd into her fragrant room,

Took down the mirror from its place,

And gazed on her own lovely face.

Close to her cheek then held the flower,

Still sparkling with a silver shower,

And softly murmur'd, “Eyes that shine

“Like crystals—rosy lips are mine.

“The foolish flower can never vie

“With this fair face—so sweet and shy.”

Her husband view'd the pretty scene—

The blossom in its robe of green—

The smiling girl in silken dress

Rejoicing in her loveliness,

And felt the thrill to monarchs known,
The darling vision was his own.
Hearing his merry laugh she turn'd,
And ask'd with blush that brightly burn'd,
"Which is more beautiful?" a smile
Rippling around her lips the while.
A roguish light was in his eye,
And jestingly he made reply,
To draw into some sunny strife
His dear, vain, jealous little wife.
"The flower a thousand times," he cried,
"Ah, would that it could be my bride,
"Fair as an angel from above;
"My soul is one wild sea of love!"
An angry flush swept o'er her brow:
"What think you of your beauty now?"
She said: then dropp'd the blossoms
 sweet,
And crush'd them with her dainty feet.



THE WIFE'S APPEAL.

SINCE honest love lies dead
within your eyes,
And pity speaks not in a single
tone,
And no fond thought makes kind your
cruel touch,
Take a sharp sword and slay me. I must
die.
Ah! once my heart was like the rounded
moon,
Reflected in still waters; now it breaks,
Toss'd by the whirling eddies of despair.
Sweet were the days of youth, and sweeter
yet

The golden summers when your love was
strong,
Before Omatsu blossom'd into flower.
But when that brightness came, I saw
your soul
Bend like a slender branch beneath the
bird
That, flush'd with spring and weary of far
flight,
Sinks, soft as snowflake, on the rosy
world.
Dreams the fair dove among the quiet
trees,
Or speeds in sunny splendour o'er the
fields:
What life more free and full of pleasant
things?
I am a foolish bird whose mossy nest
Is burn'd to ashes, and with wounded wing

The Wife's Appeal. 31

I flit through flaming woods in pain and
fear.

Is there a shelter in the withering world ?
Where shall I go ? What friend can com-
fort me ?

O husband, love or kill me where I lie.





THE WIFE'S TRIUMPH.

(THE HUSBAND SPEAKS.)

FIERCER within my breast the
battle grew :
Now sweet Omatsu, gem of
brightest ray,
Would lead me captive with a winning
word ;
Then your fond looks would fill my heart
with pain,
And your sad face brings sorrow to my
dreams.
But, as the moon's reflection on the
sea

Still keeps its place though mounting
billows roll,

Your steadfast purpose lasted through the
storm,

And I am drawn again to purer ways.

Stands a proud rock above a patient
stream

That wanders wimpling through pine-
scented glades

From fairy fountain on the purple hills.

No arrow shot from strongest archer's bow
Can pierce the cruel stone. With angry
frown

He scorns the courting water of the
stream,

And casts a careless glance upon her
smiles.

But undismay'd the gentle current flows,
Lifting her loving arms in close embrace,

34 *The Wife's Triumph.*

And making summer sweeter with her
 song :
Till, inch by inch, the hard rock melts
 away ;
The glad stream rushes through his
 inmost heart,
And laughs and claps her tiny hands for
 joy.
Henceforward, Oh ! my darling ! there
 shall be
Unclouded skies and love that cannot
 change.





THE FADING FLOWER.



WANDER'D where the sweetness of summer made completeness,

And all the woods were blushing with the fiery glow of flowers,
When softest winds were blowing, and songful streams were flowing,
And sped, alas! too swiftly the honey-laden hours.

I found amid the splendour a little bud so tender,

36 *The Fading Flower.*

I trembled with a thrill of joy I ne'er
 had known before ;
Like one in a sad story who turns a page
 of glory,
Or shipwreck'd sailor nearing a smooth
 palm-planted shore.

With pride beyond all telling I bore it to
 my dwelling,
And placed it where it shone like star
 in night's engulfing gloom,
And there through years of gladness, or
 weariness and sadness,
It fill'd with Heaven's own lustre the
 lonely little room.

Now, though its leaves grow crisper and
 cruel voices whisper,
The flower has lost its beauty and
 groweth dim and old,

The Fading Flower. 37

To me it beams as brightly as if it
quiver'd lightly
In morning's dewy freshness, when
distant hills are gold.





THE SWAN.

ALL in a soft and silent dream
A bright bird, on a dimpling
stream,

Floated through sheen and shade :
The blue wave from her snowy breast
Fell swiftly, though, with wings at rest,
She scarce an effort made.

To me she seem'd to glide along
As easily as childhood's song
When summer skies are fair ;
For who could see the busy feet
That 'neath the flowing waters beat
With endless toil and care ?

Somehow I mused on lofty life
That show'd no trace of storm or strife,
 But swept serenely on,
Harmonious as the laws that guide
The throbbing star, the swelling tide,
 While sunlight round it shone.

But none can tell the anxious thought
By which *that* stately course was wrought
 Between its banks of flowers ;
The sleepless watch, the secret pain
That almost left the spirit slain,
 The weary working hours.





THE ROSE AND THE RAIN.



ROSEBUD in a garden gay
Hid all its sweetness from the
day :

Its crimson leaves were folded fast,
Though sunbeams softly o'er it cast
Their golden glory, and the breeze
Sang of a thousand sighs that please.
But rippling rain at length apart
Drew the green vestures from its heart,
And left it smiling in the sun,
To life, and love, and beauty won.

Trembled the trees, the wind wax'd high,
Swept a fierce storm across the sky,

The Rose and the Rain. 41

The lightning like a sword-blade gleam'd,
From the black clouds a torrent stream'd,
And soon the radiant leaves empearl'd
Were scatter'd o'er the weeping world.

True love is like a silver shower,
That fills with light the summer hour ;
But passion like a tempest sweeps
All loveliness to darksome deeps.
Bright heart of boyhood, ponder long
The meaning of the simple song !





THE BUTTERFLY.



KNOW a fair lady whose face
is a treasure
That dazzles the eyes of all
men with its ray,
But dreaming of naught but the passing
day's pleasure,
She lives like a butterfly golden and
gay.

In summer's full glory, when south winds
are fighting,
And earth's slowest pulses with sweet
passion start,
Amid the vast joy, in soft ecstasies dying,

It chooses a blossom and clings to its
heart.

But when tempests gather and dim the
blue morning,

And mist-cover'd mountains frown
over the plain,

It leaves the poor plant its bright hues
were adorning,

And speeds with swift wing from the
wrath of the rain.

Ah! light is the love that grows chill in
dark weather ;

It sings in the sunshine, but pines in
the shade ;

Unless we can wander with brave hearts
together,

Go, find a new lover, my beautiful
maid !



A FAN SONG.

LITTLE fan, does never anger
Stir your heart when all things
lie

Steep'd in deep delicious languor,
'Neath the sunny summer sky?

Sleep the billows on the ocean ;
O'er the fields no breezes stray :
You alone with busy motion
Toil through all the drowsy day.





SONG.



MY love is like a rock
Where birds of white wing
fly,
Which billows overleap,
And fun can never dry.

My fondest fancies spring
Around him every hour,
Bound breaking at his feet,
And o'er his brightness tower.

The gazer on the land
Looks long across the wave ;

He fees a ridge of snow
Where waters roll and rave.

The rock—it lieth low
Beneath the tumbling fea ;
My darling's steadfast soul
Is known to none but me.





SONG.

THE woods are green in summer-
time
And bright with blossoms gay :
The murmur of the happy leaves
Sounds all the golden day.

But here a tree, by lightning struck,
Is black, and bent, and bare.
It lifts its arms like phantom fell,
And dims the sunny air.

A bird that built its dainty nest
'Mong branches blossom'd o'er,

Still sings upon the wither'd bough
As blithely as before.

O fond and faithful as the bird
That haunts the leafless tree,
Though darkest clouds of sorrow came,
My sweet love stay'd with me!





A THOUGHT FOR A FAMOUS
FRIEND,

ABOUT TO TRAVEL NORTH IN WINTER.

CLOUDS in sorrow come to-
gether ;
Wild and wet the winter
weather ;

Dark night shrouds the day with woe :
Cold and bleak the winds are blowing
Flocks of birds wing-weary going
South to where the sunbeams glow.
When the blinding snow falls thickly,
And your soul grows faint and sickly,

50 *A Thought for a Famous Friend.*

While your flow limbs ache and smart—
Though the sport of chill December,
Over all the land, remember,
You lie warm in every heart.





THE BEST PHYSICIAN.

WHEN I am sick,
O send for him
Who sooner cures
Than doctors grim !

His presence bright,
His laughing eye,
Would make the god
Of illness fly.

I hear his step ;
He is so dear,

The Best Physician.

All pain forgot,
My brain grows clear.

Glad thoughts spring up
Too sweet to tell ;
He takes my hand,
And—I am well.





SONG.

WHEN fast I flew to my sweet
love,
A thousand miles seem'd one,
Though stormy skies made night above,
Within me shone the sun.

What matter if the way were wild,
And white the cold sea's crest,
If I might reach, where summer smiled,
The haven of her breast.

But now that far from her I go,
Light of my lonely dreams ;
Since every step is sad and slow,
One mile a thousand seems !



THE DREAM.



WAITED for my darling all
through the summer noon ;
The crimson flame of sunset
came, and then the silver moon ;
And hearing not in silence deep a bird or
blossom stir,
I laid me down and slumber'd, that I might
dream of her.

In sweet and simple beauty, with blush the
breezes gave,
As lithe as willow bending beside the
wimpling wave,

She rises 'mid sleep's darkness, like star
through mist that shines,
Or fairy flower in branching bower among
the forest pines.

The Spring is laughing from her lip, the
Summer warms her breast,
Upon her head the darkling skies of cloudy
Autumn rest,
While Winter takes her tiny hand and
covers it with snow:
Yet warm and soft its tender touch! My
happy pulses glow!

Alas! the joy is fading, the lovely face
grows dim,
The vision bright, the rosy light, in min-
gling shadows swim.

But o'er me bend delicious smiles, and
eyes with love that beam :
Her own bright self has broken her image
in the dream !





THE LAST WORDS OF
MISAWA MENJIRO.

BE brave and faithful in your way:
Whatever foolish men may say,
Heaven sends to every earnest
soul

A light to lead it to its goal.
As beyond sight or scent of shore,
Bewilder'd by the breakers hoar,
The sailor never wants a guide
Upon the ocean wild and wide ;
By day the cranes in steady flight,
By night the North star's lovely light.

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