

Hours Improved

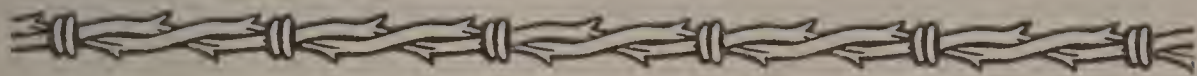
J. D. MERRIMAN



Class _____

Book _____

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Hours Improved

Second Edition, Revised
and Enlarged

P O E M S

By

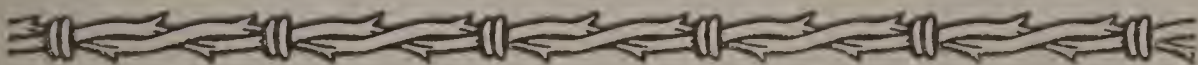
J. D. MERRIMAN



Author's Edition



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Dallas, Texas

These poems are respectfully dedicated to my
Classmates of 1888
and my friends everywhere.

INTRODUCTION

To him who has a thoughtful mind,
For prose and poetry inclined,
We furnish here a modest train
Of thought, profusely from the brain,
And hope that it will call some scene
Of former days to come between
His sorrows and the little time
He takes to read this humble rhyme.
Indeed, the minds of men are made,
The fields of knowledge to invade.
They move in channels much the same
To reach the temples of high fame,
Where countless lights have vainly burned,
While some by greater force were turned
Into those mighty rolling flames,
That brought high honors to their names;
That spread before them far and wide,
Unbounded glory on the tide
Of public trust, and public will,
Where faith and hope are resting still.
Now we, to all the human race,
In every clime and every place
Will give you rest for half an hour,
If you will seek some shady bow'r
With book in hand, bound to peruse

This product of an untrained muse,
It never could in any age
Content the poet or the sage,
To put a padlock on the brain
For they were born to entertain
The old, the young, the rich, the poor,
Relieve distress and evil cure.
If other friends were hard to please,
They pleased themselves with perfect ease.
Then patient reader, leave your care,
And spend what time you have to spare
In full enjoyment of this book,
With happiness in every look.
Our anxious aim is, here, to please
The lover of delightful ease,
And all those souls to reading born,
At joyful eve, or luckless morn,
And those who long for words of love,
Unchanging as the God above.
We importune you one and all,
Let not despair augment the fall,
Of brighter hopes, which buoy you up,
To drink from pleasure's brimming cup.
Just leave the past with all its woes,
Its chilling winds and freezing snows,
And drink the author's great delight,
Which now appears before your sight.

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LIFE

I

Who knows the secret art that gives us life,
Or lets us live through fields of blood and 'strife,
While all around companions faint and fall,
In their assault on time's unbroken wall.
From childhood's cradle where our minds begin
To act in concert with our souls within,
We grow each moment by unchanging laws,
But of our growth no man has found the cause.
We help promote the welfare of the race
Or in its fall must see our own disgrace.
But childhood ends and leaves a stronger growth,
Childhood and youth; we look and smile at both.

II

What fancies tend to drive the youthful brain,
Like untried ships upon a storm-tossed main,
This way and that until the time has come,
For reason in its folds to find a home,
And reason at the judgment door of youth,
Unlocks her treasure with the key of truth,
Since truth should be the watch-word of the young,
A constant guide for every mother's tongue.

III

The duties that surround us year by year,
Will waft our minds into another sphere,
Where youthful idols that were incomplete,
Will bloom in honors rich and full, replete
With fragrance by intelligence unbound,
And left where superstition once was found.

IV

How many days we spend in weary toil!
How oft from patent duties we recoil!
How much, when truth would wound a noble heart,
We long for falsehood to assume her part!
But then we must not let a thought so base
Good precepts from our anxious minds efface.
Indeed we need a brighter, fairer name
To lead us onward to the heights of fame,
Than we can gain by overlooking truth,
In minor actions that abound in youth.

V

Now, let us step into the open air
Of right and scent the fragrance resting there!
On looking forth before our wond'ring eyes,
We see the beauties of existence rise,
And in their splendor there is much to know
Which would alleviate oppressing woe.

VI

Swift moments really constitute a day;
Month after month is moving on its way;
A few short years upon this rolling ball,
Our souls must answer to dame nature's call;
Our frames again must crumble into dust,
Like iron bars that yield to time and rust.

Yet naught is lost whatever be our fate
Let this proud thought our parting souls elate.
Though every atom moving on its way,
May moulder into cold and silent clay,
In countless living forms it may be found
Before old time shall check its useful round.
Then let us strive to do to every man,
That which is good and aid him if we can.

VII

When evil comes with her uncanny hand,
To conquer men and devastate the land,
She touches all and leaves not those alone
In royal purple on a kingdom's throne,
She drags her victims from their high estate,
And brings fell ruin unto small and great.
Those who are poor she makes more wretched still,
All men alike must bend before her will
We hear her knock and in the dead of night
Our fortunes plume their wings and take to flight.
In tongues of flame and wreathes of sable smoke
Misfortune gives to us her deadly stroke,
And leaves us to the rough stern hand of fate,
Whose unrelenting anger we berate.
Yet in our grief we see worse wretches still
Who bow with resignation to the will
Of Him whose hand we see in every shade
That tints the leaves and blossoms He has made.
Then let our hearts be ready when distress
Shall come to us in all her wretchedness,
To lift a hand to stay the grief and pain
Which sin has set on nature's broad domain.

VIII

There's none so poor but that their hands may aid
The fallen wretch whom passion has betrayed
And led into the depths of conscious sin,
Which makes a wreck of what he might have been.
But others who are striving to be true,
Sink lower as misfortune comes anew;
Kind spirits, which the faithlessness of friends
Have led to ruin, to secure their ends,
And as they slowly sink before their eyes,
A mocking laugh engenders dumb surprise.
Such need encouragement to cheer them on,
And fire anew the courage almost gone,
A look, a smile, a word or helping hand
May place their feet upon the solid land.
Would you refuse a look or word of cheer,
Which gives them hope and banishes their fear?
With hope their courage may revive again,
And find new pleasures with their fellow-men.

IX

We wander forth into the open field,
Where every plant has carefully concealed
The germ of life, remote from sight, to build
New structures when this mission is fulfilled.
The morning air that whistles through the trees,
Brings show'rs of leaves that dance upon the breeze.
The sparkling dews that on the grasses lie,
Reflect the flashing beams of early day;
Among the trees are flocks of tiny birds,
The plain is covered with its grazing herds;
The joyous songsters, warble forth their lays,

To smiling nature and to nature's praise;
The cattle on the plain with pleasure feed,
Oblivious to mankind's most daring deed;
All nature smiles to see this sweet content
Upon the earth and in the firmament.

X

Eternal music rolls from sphere to sphere,
And tones of melody acquaint the ear
With ringing phrases of unchanging love,
That rules the universe and worlds above,
While planets, bound in perfect harmony,
Keep pace with Heav'n's surprising minstrelsy,
Which is too grand for man to comprehend
Till death has brought him to a favored end
Of mortal sorrow and of earthly woe—
His born companions here below,
Where grief and pain afflict the living frame,
And men with patience bear the stamp of shame,
Which place upon weak mortal's withered sense
The fear of some eternal recompense,
That they must give for yielding to desire
In which their hopes, their loves, and lives expire.

XI

If I were gifted like the Roman gods,
Or held the magic wands and mystic rods,
That fabled priests and prophets used to hold,
All things I touched would yield a hundred fold,
To bless the faithful hand and thankful heart
That gives to saving grace a better part.
No tale of love where lovers prove untrue,
With scores of trials that their hearts pass through,

Would reach the ear, or show its vicious face
Among the crowds that laugh at foul disgrace,
But I would pause to wave my magic wand,
And peace and happiness should rule the land;
All maids that loved with lovers would be blest;
No jealous fears should e'er disturb their rest;
No hopeful lover would be made to feel
That he had lost an angel like Lucile;
No honest man or maid should ever die
For want of love my magic could supply.
No husbands e'er would turn from faithful wives
To ruin all the sweetness of their lives,
By sipping at the sparkling cup of wine,
In which the frightful serpents of the vine
Are hissing poverty and ills and death
At every expiration of their breath.
No pestilence or dread catastrophe
Should come to men on land or on the sea;
No foul diseases should attack the brain
To ruin hopes to which their hearts attain;
No evil thoughts should dwell in human minds,
And grace would kiss the lips that beauty finds;
All would be sunshine, peace, and love and rest,
And earth would be a dwelling for the blest;
If such a subtle pow'r to me were given
This earth would be to man a matchless heav'n.

XII

We turn once more to earth and look around
To see what beauties on her breast are found.
The little brook that chatters gayly by,
Is kissed by gentle breezes as they fly,

O'er meadows to the fields of ripening grain,
Where they will pause to kiss the stream again.
While gazing thus, with flushed and steaming face
We long to find some cool and grassy place,
Where resting on a soft green mound of earth,
Our thoughts confound the minds that give them
 birth,
As in deep cogitations of the brain,
We visit fields of sadness o'er again;
Then as our hearts, once more with joyous bound,
Leap to the beauty that we see around,
All nature in her sweet tranquility
Brings thoughts of peace and immortality.

XIII

Life is too short to long lie idling here,
Since we must work with heart and soul sincere,
If we would hope to gain a noted place,
Or make a name which time cannot efface,
From tablets that record the deeds of men
Nor perish with the products of the pen.

XIV

The work and pain which strew our rugged path
With bitter thorns, are emblems of the wrath
Of outraged nature, and the lot of man,
And were ordained when first the world began;
At least some men advance this knowing creed
That God has planned and man must do the deed.
If this be true, our own poor wills are bound
By that of God, who foreordained the ground
On which we build our characters.

Have we no plans? Have we no right to choose?
Is God to blame for all that men may lose?
Why is it that our journeys in this life
With unexampled accidents are rife?
On every side misfortunes here abound,
And awful scenes of dire distress are found.

XV

We must be ready when we hear the call
To drive our foemen from the yielding wall.
Let no such doctrine,—product of some fool—
Invade the precincts of a better school.
But drive it out and let the truth prevail;
Stand firm against all foes that may assail,
And when our victory is fairly won,
Will not our labors be but just begun?
Weep not o'er what is past; the future comes
To bring us peace or strange fatality.
Will battles with the endless round of years
Be won more easy by a burst of tears?
Oh no, but tears and sorrows are not vain,
In penitence, to wash away the stain
That sin has stamped upon an erring soul
Which God has taken under His control.

XVI

There is much good in this short life of ours,
If we but strive to gain it, through the pow'rs
That God has given us in thoughts divine,
Repelling wrong to which our hearts incline.
Then cultivate the mind for future gain,
And fit it for an everlasting reign.

XVII

Like waters bursting from an unknown source,
The pow'rs of education lends us force,
To do our work while others faint away
At sight of aught foreboding great delay.
Then let us toil that when we sweetly sleep,
Our race will find a harvest here to reap;
Not one that tortures men with endless pain,
But such as brings the wealth of golden grain.

WHICH WAY

Life starts with zero, right, or left;
Then, each of us must know,
That to be either good or bad
Is just which way we go.

THE INDIAN

This land was the home of the red man,
The red man who roamed in the wood;
His heart was inflamed by fierce passion,
Which sought its destruction in blood.

The pale-face had come to his wigwam;
Had wounded, insulted, and slain;
Had frightened his tribe from the hillside,
And he had opposed him in vain.

That man who has love for his kindred;
That man with a patriot's heart;
That man who has love for his children;
That man who has cunning and art,

Will stand by his rights and defend them,
Whoever may come as his foes,
With hatred, resent all intrusion;
With vengeance destroy as he goes.

His insults will rouse his whole being
When comrades shall fall in the fight,
Destruction shall be a sweet pastime,
The midnight attack, his delight.

If some one more mighty than he is,
Should come to his home to destroy,
What wretch would not seek to defend it,
And slay his oppressors with joy?

How fierce and relentless, his hatred
 Would strike at the heart of his foe;
By ambush and stratagem waiting,
 His vengeance to wreak at a blow.

The red man, with similar vengeance,
 Planned, waited and watched for the white,
And slaughtered his foe in the cornfield,
 Or tortured with savage delight.

He felt no compunction of conscience;
 His hand was defending his home;
He fought for the sake of his children,
 And forests o'er which he might roam.

He tried to preserve from destruction,
 The woods the Great Spirit had made,
Which red men could hunt in forever,
 With no one to break its vast shade.

But over the waves of the ocean
 His enemies came in great crowds;
Their ships were like monster white seabirds,
 With wings made of canvas and shrouds.

They hewed down the forest with axes;
 They frightened the game from the land.
They cheated and wronged and defrauded;
 They slaughtered with merciless hand.

Then how can we blame the poor savage,
Whose love is as strong as our own;
Whose home and whose country's destruction
Had caused him so many a groan?

The white man has roused up his passions,
And trampled his rights in the main;
Insulted his friends and his kinsmen;
His vengeance must wipe out the stain.

O why should he 'scape from his vengeance,
Whose heart he has turned into steel,
By acts of such cruel oppression,
That even a savage should feel.

He rises in anger to smite him,
But weapons and skill are too weak;
The white man has captured his strongholds,
And safety in flight he must seek.

Destruction and death are his portion;
His race is diminishing fast;
A fragment and only a fragment,
Retains its revenge to the last.

The white man increases in numbers,
Is master of land and of sea;
His ships are the servants of commerce;
The red man, what glory has he?

No glory, no home, no enjoyment,
No thought but to brood o'er his wrongs,
Until his existence has sunken,
And died with the last of his songs.

His people, like thousands before them,
Are swept from the face of the earth,
His heritage only a portion,
Of that which was his at his birth.

Farewell to the race of the red man!
Farewell to his forests of game!
Farewell to the smoke of his wigwam!
Farewell to his home and his name!

TO THE SUNSHINE

Beautiful sunshine! Thou paintest the land,
With hand that is skillful,
And mind that is willful,
With eye that is sure,
And soul that is pure;
Rich are the treasures that fall from thy hand.

Over the meadows comes stealing thy light,
Neglecting no duty,
But painting with beauty,
The great and the small,
On which it may fall,
Decking Dame Nature with pencilings bright.

Ease and oppression to thee are the same;
No trouble you borrow; —
No soul-rending sorrow;
No sharp pangs of pain,
To torture the vain.
Painting and painting regardless of fame.

Fall on us gently, O beautiful beam,
Thy brightness gives pleasure,
And like a rich treasure,
We welcome thy light,
Well knowing thy might,
While gliding o'er mountain, meadow and stream

DON'T FEAR A BIG "NO"

A no is a small word, but one that we need,
Yet thoughtlessly spoken by some
Who knows not the evils to which it may lead,
Or ultimate pleasure to come.

In years of my youth, by memory viewed,
I see a sweet girl of my age,
Toward whom I refrained from everything rude,
And tried to appear like a sage.

Her glances induced me to study and learn;
I worked for her love but in vain;
My thoughts and intentions she seemed to discern;
My favors she paid with disdain.

As years passed away and my love grew more warm,
I asked for her company, home,
A thundering "no!" shook my frame like a storm
Shakes the salt sea billows to foam.

Rejected and sullen I passed from her side
To enter new studies with zeal,
Concealing the wound she had given my pride,
Though my love I could not conceal.

A boy I was then; a man I became,
With views of a far higher life;
So thanks to the no that prevented her name
From blending with mine as my wife.

THE DRUMMER'S STORY

The night was wild; the wind was cold,
As o'er our heads the tempest rolled,
And weary men began at last
To seek a shelter from the blast.
I chanced to be awhile delayed,
By rush of business in my trade,
And thus I missed the evening train,
That sped across the grassy plain,
Then turning from the tempest's din
I sought for shelter in an inn.
When shown a room I doffed my clothes,
And quickly sought a night's repose.
The midnight hours were passed in sleep,
And still we lay in slumbers deep,
Until the near approach of dawn,
When blackest darkness had withdrawn.
Then we were 'wakened from our dreams,
By frightful howls and fearful screams
Which seemed to come from far below,
With accents of the deepest woe.
Sometimes, to us, the breeze would waft
A laugh, and 'twas a fiend that laughed.
'Twas followed by a lengthened howl
More heinous than the screeching owl;
And then a long and lusty call
Was answered by a painful squall;
Sometimes the cries seemed choked in blood,
Then rising like a mighty flood,
Assailed our ears and swept before
What little sense we had in store.
So leaping from my downy bed

Into the spacious hall I sped.
Wild eyes appeared on every side,
At sight of which I loudly cried,
“Where are those cries of wild despair?”
A dozen voices answered, “Where?”
But none could tell, as eyes to eyes
Looked forth their horror and surprise.
Then rose a man of giant form,
Whose voice was heard above the storm,
“’Tis surely murder! Come with me
And let us solve this mystery.”
He led us forth. We marched with care
Adown that long and winding stair.
The building shook beneath our tread,
And every heart was filled with dread,
We halted when we reached a door
That opened to the basement floor.
Each face was white with mortal fear,
As thoughts of friends each held most dear,
Came crowding to his anxious mind.
None cared to make another move,
Lest that one step might fatal prove.
But as we halted stern and pale
We heard a most terrific wail.
Again it came both loud and shrill,
Then for a moment all was still,
The whisper flew to all that we
Should make a dash within to see,
What caused those cries of agony.
With loud consent and angry roar
We dashed against the oaken door,
And as it yielded with a crash
We saw,—the cooks preparing hash.—

TO A VIOLET

Poor violet, lift up your head!
Some ruthless foot has turned you down,
Thus all the beauty of fair earth,
Is crushed by Nature's angry frown.

But yesterday your coat of blue
Took its reflection from the sky,
To-day your brilliant hue is gone;
Your beauty only came to die.

Why did you live in colors bright?
What was your mission here on earth?
To fall again and form the soil
Whose richness proves your modest worth.

MY LOVELY ROSE

I came upon a budding rose.
Her beauty filled my soul with joy,
I watched her loveliness unfold
And reveled in her sweet perfume,
I wished to claim her for my own,
But adverse winds swept her away,
And I was left to weep alone.

ODE TO THE RAIN

Thou gentle rain, who moisteneth the earth,
And coaxeth countless flow'rs into birth,
What are thy noble virtues? Who can tell?
Since thou concealeth part within each cell
That renders strong, the mountain's matchless pine,
And starts new shoots upon the climbing vine.
The brooks that sparkle down the mountain side,
Due portions of thy boundless wealth divide
Among the grass and plants and mosses rare,
Which start with eagerness thy gifts to share.
The pansy, rising from her dewy bed,
Supports one drop upon her faultless head,
And from that drop a ray of liquid light
Gleams for a moment on the passing sight.
The shrubs which bloom with rich and varied hue,
Refreshed and brightened by the morning dew,
Require thy aid to paint each transient leaf,
Although its beauty on the earth is brief,
Like joys that fill the throbbing heart to-day,
To-morrow all may fade and pass away.
The cataract that leaps from yonder rock,
And shakes the earth with its tremendous shock,
From thee alone can have that potent source,
Which gives its torrent such unbounded force.

The hill, the rock, the wood and deep ravine,
The flowing brook, that leaps and plays between,
Depend upon the bounty of thy hand,
To scatter beauty o'er a smiling land.
Behold the fruitage of a garden rare,
Supported by thy watchfulness and care.
Thy blessings—gifts of more than mortal hands—
Would change to Eden, all the desert lands.
Each grain of sand that marks a desert shore
Would take its share from thy most fruitful store
And bring to life its portion of a flower
That well might grace the fancy of an hour.
The beasts of prey, that roam the dripping wood,
The giant fish that swim the rolling flood,
The stately eagle, who with watchful eye,
Soars from his ayry in the azure sky,
The creeping insects of the fields below,
Unconscious of the gifts thy hands bestow.
And mankind, still more gifted than them all,
Derive their substance from thy guiltless fall.

TO THE BLUEBONNET

Bluebonnet, Bluebonnet, why so blue?
No other flower compares with you!
And you are numbered by billions, too.

I've seen your children with tears and smiles,
Dance over the pastures for miles and miles,
And thrilled to their welcome, winsome wiles.

Their jewels sparkle at dewy morn,
And great plains gladden when you are born,
Because no rival can twit with scorn.

O, Bluebonnet, you are emblem true,
Hence the Lone Star State adopted you,
And to thy beauty our pledge renew.

I've seen the plover with trilling cry,
Peep from thy blossoms as I passed by,
Nor seemed he to care that man was nigh.

Thy worth enhanced by a forward tip,
And a beauty spot on thy under lip,
Whence roving insects your nectars sip.

No artist can paint thy colors true,
Nor place on his canvas sparkling dew,
Hence words are weak in picturing you.

So I will leave it to eyes alone,
To place thee on thy flowery throne,
Most wonderful queen of flowers known.

MY THREE ELMS

Magnificent Elms in my front yard stand,
In the shade of which a summer day,
I like to sit with my fiddle in hand,
And fiddle and fiddle my time away.

These gigantic trees are younger than I,
For I am near eighty, and old and gray,
But I love to sit in their shade and try
To fiddle, fiddle my time away.

When I am gone I imagine these trees
Will nod to each other and softly say,
In murmuring tones to the passing breeze,
“We wish he were here to fiddle today!”

MY WALNUT TREE

I planted a twig that became a tree,
But winters passed over this tree and me.
Though now we are a thousand miles apart
This stately tree still lives in my heart.
Sixty years later in passing that way,
I sat in its shade one hot summer day.
In passing that way you too may find aid
By cooling your brow in its welcome shade.
And if you pass in the fall of the year
You may gather fruit for your winter cheer.

THE PLAINS

The plains! The plains! The level plains!
That fade in the distance dim.
When the sun comes up with shimmering light
On the far horizon's brim.

How come these plains to be so high,
If once they held the sea?
Perhaps some day wise men may learn
To solve this mystery.

Then come the hills and mesas too;
What made them as they are?
What caused them all to be so high
Above the canyon's scar?

Their tops are level with the plains,
Did rushing currents carve them so?
When seas were running wild?
Did rains and floods sweep soil away?
From where those heaps are piled?

You may not wonder at all this,
But still it's great to know,
How many million years it took
Some force to make them so.

THE YOUNG COW HAND

He loves to ride his well-trained horse,
And lope through scented sage,
But he sees in the slant of the setting sun,
The end of a passing age.

He likes to guard the lowing herd,
To sing, and to have his fun,
For he takes real pleasure in riding the range,
And roping steers on the run.

Farewell! Farewell! he murmurs low,
As he takes his last night ride,
He whispers "Good-bye" to the hollows and hills,
And hies him away to his bride.

PASSING OF THE RANGE

Hardy old cowmen are passing so fast,
We scarcely know where to look for them last.
Oil wells and airdromes and implements strange,
Are taking the place of wide-spreading range.
Picturesque cowboys the plains used to know,
Are riding and roping in mimic show.
Just come to us now in radio words.
Six-shooter cowhands are now seldom seen,
Except in shows on a small silver screen.
The works you have wrought descendents will tell.
Old Timer! Old Timer! Farewell! Farewell!

THE DUST STORM

In afternoon calmness,
 and sun shining bright,
While elongating shadows
 foretell the night,
We see swiftly speeding
 from the far northwest,
An ominous blackness,
 whose meaning is guessed.
To be a fierce sandstorm
 which sweeps from the plain
While birds and beasts frightened,
 seek refuge in vain.
And village folk watch it
 with increasing awe,
And closer together
 in storm-cellars draw.
Then slowly its blackness
 rolls close on the ground,
While timid seek safety
 where cover is found.
The blackness on passing
 is followed by sand
That rises remorseless,
 from freshly plowed land.
Sometimes with such fierceness
 it blusters for days,
Until it leaves sand dunes
 that block the highways.

LINES ON FRIENDSHIP

Fair Friendship deftly claims her own;
For Love a king has left his throne.
Of all good friends we ever knew,
Among the best are just you two.
Then why should I neglect to give
Bouquets in verses while we live?
For bands that hold them seem to be
Strong ties of love 'twixt you and me.
These bonds, indeed, exceed in worth,
The pride and pomp of royal birth,
For love enriches and refines;
Outweighs the wealth of mints and mines.
And life itself is richer too,
Because I find such friends as you.
Happy hours we've spent together,
In both fair and cloudy weather.
We oft review with inward eyes,
And count them all sweet gifts to prize
Above poor jewels of the dust,
Which Time corrodes and Seasons rust.
Where e'er I go: what e'er I do,
I treasure loving thoughts of you;
And when I clasp your loyal hand,
I know that we can understand
Why earthly friendship is so grand.
So now I say, and tell you true,
These lines are written just for you.
May years of health with you abide,
And bring returns of Christmas Tide!

CEDAR HILL

Stand on the crest of Cedar Hill!
Gaze below on the hazy blue!
There spreads the valley peaceful, still,
With wonder thrills enchanting you.
What raised this ridge above the plain,
What ancient stream swept to the main,
Adown this vale a million years
Before the age of man on earth?
Yes, long before the sea gave birth,
To hills and vales and fertile soil
That yields abundance for man's toil.
Some scientist may some day find
That dinosaurs of every kind
Once ruled this land and held their sway
And left their trails in plastic clay.
While teeming millions, great and small
Lie buried in this limestone wall.
Some age-old fossils may be found
To tell the story of the ground
That forms the crest on which you stand,
Raised up by some internal force,
And sweeps for miles across the land
And guides great floods upon their course.
Can you imagine that blue vale
Has been the scene of war and death,
Before which human battles pale
As insignificant as breath
Of man compared to thunder storm.
When lightnings flash and whirlwinds form.

Stand on this hill and look again
At waving fields of golden grain
Surrounding peaceful homes of men,
Who labor for the common good,
And richer joys are coming when
Dame Nature's laws are understood.

WISDOM

There's wealth of wisdom in the world,
But we must search to find it;
And as we gather bit by bit,
Strong bands of gold must bind it.

Such bands, you know, can never rust,
But keep on growing brighter,
Let's bear in mind that wisdom's ways
May make our burdens lighter.

The wise man seeking after truth
And finding it through reason
He wisely places it in store,
To bring it forth in season.

ETERNAL GOD

True God is God; not man-made kind.
Read well His Book and you will find
The Universe obeys His laws;
For God is God; Eternal Cause.
He rules all matter, time and space;
We view His works but not His face;
Those distant nebulae proclaim
His laws are everywhere the same.
All living things absorb His leaven
And where He is, why, that is Heaven.
He reigns in suns and giant stars;
In distant planets; Earth and Mars.
He lives in mountains, vales and hills,
In desert sands and rocks and rills;
In rivers, lakes and rolling seas;
In blades of grass and forest trees
In every atom here or there;
His laws are working everywhere.
He is unchanging; always true,
All around us; in us too;
In body, bone and blood and brain;
And we're in Him, 'tis very plain.
Now if we learn to read aright,
You'll find God rules us day and night.
When God's in Heaven it follows true,
His creatures are in Heaven too.
Ten thousand billion years are naught
When nebulae in space unfurled
As into shape a world is wrought
And planets into space are whirled.
For all obey eternal laws,
Since God is First Unchanging Cause.

Dense vapor turns to cooling rain
That falls, and rising, falls again,
Until it turns from zone to zone
This molten surface into stone,
That heaves and tosses on a sea
Of raging, flaming, liquid fire
The central core of which will be
The center of disasters dire.
In time some rocks are turned to sand
Around this ball fierce whirlwinds sweep
And cause vast seas to flood the land
And form the mighty rolling deep.
Then tiny microbes come to life,
And Earth is made the scene of strife,
As stubborn rocks the waves defy,
Then atoms by the million die.
With ancient life comes early death,
This world is fraught with strife and fear
Before old Adam drew a breath,
Or mother Eve could bring him cheer.
God's in and over all in space
On sun and air and earth and sea;
He's never absent from His place;
Not even now, nor e'er will be.
He's present in the mountains high,
And in the vales that bloom near by;
In rivers, lakes and grains of sand.
Yes, everything on sea or land.
He's in my body, blood and brain.
If this be true the blind can see
This explanation makes it plain,
I'm part of Him; He's all of me!

TRUE

I

He came to school with full intent
His time and talents should be spent
In gleaning from the friendly page
The wisdom of the present age;
But lest his passions should betray
Or lead his eager thoughts away,
He made resolve within his mind,
That he would shun all woman kind.
—A vow most easy to foreswear,
When once acquainted with the fair—
He kept his pledge for many days,
And tried to shun in countless ways,
But two dark eyes look in his own
And these had pow'r enough alone
To win esteem and gain his heart,
Nor could he for a moment part
His thoughts from those bewitching eyes
Whose glance his own had learned to prize.
It seemed to him a hand divine,
Had led him victim to the shrine,
Of one pure soul, upright and true,
When faith, indeed, is kept by few.
An unseen force was in her air,
Which proved her good as she was fair.

II

The summer fled and autumn came,
And still their friendship seemed the same.
One night while seated side by side,
He gently sought her for his bride;
Spoke of his love with manly tone
And asked to claim her as his own.
With most becoming maiden grace,
She stole a glance into his face,
A look that only told too well
The love her tongue refused to tell.

III

They lingered o'er their music long,
But scarcely thought about the song.
They often met as lovers do
And vowed their hearts would e'er be true
And when her lips he fondly pressed
Each claimed to love the other best.
And she would bend her willing ear
To catch the words she loved to hear.

IV

Then came the time for them to part;
He pressed her to his beating heart;
She vowed again to share his life
And be to him a faithful wife.
He went his way into the world,
To battle with the strife that whirled
Along his rough and untrod way,
Which led him on from day to day.
At last his steps were homeward turned,
And in his breast his true love burned
With happy thoughts of her fond face,
Her lovely form, and sweet embrace.

But as he neared the well known gate
A festal board appeared to wait
The coming of a happy bride
With lordly husband at her side,
And as a carriage gayly wheeled
Into the lane, his senses reeled,
For there he saw the lovely form
That ever had the strength to warm
His soul into heroic fire
And seek the fame his hopes inspire.

V

The sight was madness to his brain,
Yet he was forced to look again,
In order to convince his mind,
And shake his faith in woman kind.
With staring eyes he stood and gazed,
Completely startled and amazed,
To think that she could soon forget
The vow she made when last they met.
Then through his frame a deadly chill
Began to creep against his will.

VI

Unasked he came; unseen he fled
To wander where his fancy led,
Since all the sweetness of his life
Were lost when he had lost his wife.
Forlorn he wandered o'er the land,
But gained in wealth on every hand;
And rumor gave him wealth untold
With iron coffers filled with gold.
'Twas then he ceased to idly roam
And bought himself a pleasant home
Where he could think of days gone by
Or live in peace, in quiet die.

VII

One evening as he sat alone,
He bravely stifled every groan,
Although he plainly seemed to know
That she was bound for weal or woe
To that young rival of her choice,
Yet he so longed to hear her voice
And see the face he held so dear,
That in his fancy she was near.

VIII

He rose at once and took the train,
That quickly drew him home again.
He passed along the well known road,
That gave a view of her abode.
The stately trees whose pleasant shade,
A happy trysting place had made,
Invited him to take a seat
Beside a rill, whose music sweet
Awakened thoughts of days long past
Until his tears flowed free at last.
He wept unconscious of a form
That came to calm his passion's storm.
Till both his cheeks were softly pressed
By hands that he had oft caressed,
And on his lips there fell a kiss
That filled his soul with perfect bliss,
Then starting up and glancing round
His sweetheart by his side he found,
And as the evening light grew dim,
He learned that she was true to him.
She whispered as he raised his head:
"It was my sister who was wed."

A BEAUTIFUL PICTURE

In a lovely little cottage
Sits a young and happy wife,
With her darling little baby,
Dearer to her soul than life.

What a thrill of sweet contentment
Comes to every mother's breast,
When she feels the dimpled fingers
Of her baby there at rest.

How she kisses and caresses,
As a mother only can,
Who is dreaming of the future,
When her boy shall be a man.

True and noble in his manhood;
Free from ways of subtle vice;
Free from evils that will ruin
Every soul which they entice.

O the love of such a mother,
Pure and stainless as the boy,
Whom she fondles and caresses,
With a hopeful mother's joy,

Is by far a greater blessing,
Than the wealth of kings can give,
To the heart whose lost affection,
Still permits the man to live.

Could my pen but paint a picture,
That revealed the love and pride
Of a happy wife and mother,
With her baby at her side

I would be by far more famous,
Than a Watteau or a Scott,
Who have drawn, with pen and pencil,
Pictures that reveal them not.

I can see the mother waiting
For the father's eager tread,
As she lays her precious burden,
In the cot beside the bed.

And no sweetheart longs so deeply
For her lover's fond caress,
As this faithful wife and mother
For her husband's happiness.

How her mind is often busy
With the ever pleasant truth,
That her husband is more loving,
Than the lover of her youth.

See him coming! O what pleasure
Thrills each fiber of her frame,
As she springs to meet one darling,
With another darling's name.

Weary with his day of labor,
Eagerly he folds his wife
In the arms of his protection,
That will shield her with his life.

And she twines her arms around him
In her eager love and pride,
While he leads her forward gently,
Happy as a morning bride.

Then he kisses her so fondly,
That her eyes are filled with tears,
And the swelling of her bosom,
Tells how deeply she reveres.

While he calls her names endearing,
He compares her to a dove,
Ever ready to be petted;
Such a life indeed is love!

Who would live alone in sadness?
Who would frustrate nature's plan?
By a life of nameless longing,
With such happiness for man?

UNCLE HIRAM

To The Boy Who Mocked at Him

Come here my boy. What have I done
That you should treat me so?
'Tis true that I am old and weak;
My feet indeed are slow;

My clothes are not the very best;
My eyes are not so good;
I cannot catch and punish you;
I would not if I could.

But does that give you leave, my son,
To scoff and scorn at me?
Ah no, indeed, you are too wise,
To offer such a plea.

Though these gray hairs have crowned my head
I, too, was once a boy,
As blithe and hopeful as you are,
With soul as full of joy.

My limbs were once much like your own,
They led me everywhere;
Into the wood and by the mill,
And up its creaking stair.

But now I walk with this old cane
Which I have used for years;
It is a staff to my poor bones,
A friend who stays my fears.

When I was young and spry like you,
I pitied helpless age;
I lent a hand where e'er I could;
I loved a thoughtful sage;

In search of knowledge we would go
Into the distant wood;
He taught me lessons from the trees,
To make me wise and good.

He taught me to respect the old,
Who soon would fall like leaves,
So that my closing days should be
As rich as golden sheaves.

The people loved my gentleness;
Politeness brought me wealth,
And honors blessed my happy home,
Worth more than worldly pelf.

Here is a book! I give it you;
I wrote it years ago;
It teaches boys far better ways
Than those you seem to know.

You feel ashamed, I see, my lad;
That blush upon your brow
Will do you good in future years,
And it becomes you now.

O don't refuse, but take my gift,
And tell me now I pray,
Why do you vex the old and weak,
Who chance to come this way?

You thought me ignorant and poor!
Then let me say, my son,
Old clothes and age do not reveal
What active brains have done.

UNCLE HIRAM

To the Truant Boy

You'r out of school, I see, my lad!
But let me kindly say
You can't afford to loaf around
While boyhood slips away.

The truant always is despised
By every one in town.
He grows to be a common thief,
A laggard or a clown.

He loafs about the streets and stores,
And hears the vicious tale,
That leads to mischief and debauch,
By means that seldom fail

To blight with ruin, whom they touch,
And leave his soul shipwrecked
Upon the rocks and shoals of time,
With none to give respect.

He learns to smoke and chew and swear
And drink the liquid fire,
That burns all manhood from his soul,
But deepens foul desire.

The prison cell and drunkard's grave
Are open to receive
The erring boy whose thoughtlessness
Makes loving parents grieve.

What do you say? You'r not the one
To bring about such scenes?
Then boy, beware! across the bar
A frightful serpent gleams.

O what a shame to waste your time
In idleness and sin,
When every moment well improved,
The world's applause might win.

Great men are only known as great
Who use their time with care;
By such economy they shun
The tempter's gaudy snare.

These days will build your character
And rule your future life.
The fame you win, the pow'r you gain,
Must be through years of strife.

I like your face for from your eye
There beams a fiery soul
That speaks to me of high resolve,
And will to gain control.

Direct its force upon the good
And you are sure to win,
In every contest for the right,
Against the hosts of sin.

I like that smile and earnest look,
And self-reliant tone;
It shows to me as plain as day,
The fault is not your own.

I think your parents are to blame,
They failed to train you right!
They let you go and come at will
At morning, noon and night.

You ran away from home and school;
From useful book and slate,
And every one around you seemed
To leave you to your fate.

You saw your playmates moving on
To honor and renown,
While you were styled by every one,
"The loafer of the town."

Just stop to think and you will see
That once no doubt you stood
Ahead of those who laugh at you;
At least I know you could,

If you would only turn your mind
To earnest work in school
You soon could be a man of note,
While others play the fool.

THE SEPARATION

Written for the Thalonian Society, June 19, 1888

Read by Paris Ashcraft

Of earthly ties that break the heart
A poet's lines are sure to tell;
In these, we pray, O charming Muse,
That thou wilt give thy potent spell!

O let them tell of noble work
Pursued by all these eager hands
While honors greet their willing souls
And gain the prizes toil demands.

O sing of those whose prudent zeal
Will yield a thousand fold to bless
Their barques upon the sea of life,
And crown the deeds with true success.

What higher sentiments will steal
Into the breasts of gallant men,
When fame is won and thought portrays
The scene enacted here again?

When duty calls us to the field
And praises ring across the land,
How happy each will be to say,
That he was one among this band.

The open halls that ring to-day,
With merry voices full of glee,
Will hear no more their laugh and song,
Nor echo with their melody.

Each tongue that speaks of joy and love,
Will find some hopeful, eager ear,
To catch the trembling words that fall,
From lips that loved ones will revere.

How swift the pleasant days have fled
Though gloomy clouds have heavy hung
Around our lives, which mourning still
With grief and agony are wrung.

What matters where or what we are
If virtue has her highest sway?
We surely need not trembling stand
Upon the mighty judgment day.

But when the book is opened wide
The Master's face will glow to see,
That all his children of the earth
Are blest throughout eternity.

Yet why should we attempt to rend
The veil that screens the future state,
Since earth received the Son of God
To guard our souls from evil fate.

Let joy prevail in every heart,
While peace and rest forever lie
Beyond the glory of fair earth,
Where fame and honor never die.

When leagues of land between us roll;
When foaming billows rise and fall,
Our thoughts will eagerly return,
And happy scenes again recall.

And yet 'tis sad for us to part
From all these friends who are so dear,
And launch into the great unknown,
With such few honors given here.

To-night we meet in active life
While joy and hope are bounding high,
But ere we gather here again
Some friend beneath the sod will lie.

We look around and in each face
The signs of health and pleasure glow;
We wonder when we see you all,
Which one will be the first to go.

We love you all as brothers love,
No enmity is in our hearts;
We love the work that we have done,
Where all have taken noble parts.

We love these halls, for here we met
Those friends whose innocence confessed
The hopes that filled their stainless minds
Ere they had sought eternal rest.

Now they are gone; their precious souls
Have passed beyond the Pearly Gate;
O God! through weary years to come,
Will their fond spirits for us wait?

O yes, indeed, they keep their watch
To greet us at the sacred throne,
And angels look upon their joy,
While here we bow and weep alone.

But bitter tears can ne'er recall
The loved, who filled our lives with zeal,
Yet they will issue unrestrained,
And all our loneliness reveal.

Then let up hope! O God, how long!
Within that realm beyond the sky,
That we shall meet the loved again,
And know how sweet it is to die!

THE CLASS POEM

Delivered by the author at Taylor's University on the evening of his graduation, June 20, 1888

O what is our future,
Dear classmates and friends?
Which way will we travel
On life's rugged road?
What blessings will reach us
While health condescends
To lead us still safely
Where knowledge has flowed.
In England or Scotland,
In France or in Spain,
In Turkey or Russia,
On Africa's strand,
In Norway or Sweden,
On Italy's plain,
Our virtues have influence
Over the land.
On mountain, in valley,
Or on the deep sea,
Among the cold icebergs
That float from the poles,
Or in the warm tropics,
Whose bounty is free,

Where nature in splendor
Her sweetness unrolls,
The spirit of knowledge
Will urge to success

And wonderful visions,
Which calm and delight
The more noble passions
Our hearts may possess,
Will give us forever
Command of the right.

The future will try us
With pleasure and pain
To quicken our pulses,
And cause us to feel

That conscience reproves us
Unless we retain

A bold, buoyant spirit
To fill us with zeal.

Who knows the great gladness
Transition will bring
To soften the trials
That fall at our feet?

Who dreams of sweet measures
The angels will sing

Where joy is eternal
And life is complete?

What matchless enchantment
Our spirits foretell,

When one of our number
Emblazons his name!

What thrilling sensations
Will charm with their spell
When some shall mount higher
The ladder of fame!
When dear ones shall enter
The valley of death,
What sorrow will moisten
Our eyes at their fate!
What sadness will laden
The tremulous breath
To think how we loved
In the year eighty-eight,
When age shall remove us
And beauty decay,
When years into centuries
Ceaselessly roll,
And time seems to usher
A long cloudless day,
When death shall have given
Sweet peace to the soul,
What music will heighten
The exquisite song?
What dirges will laden
The tremulous sigh?
What wizard will tell us,
Among that vast throng,
The paths we must follow;
The deaths we must die?
All calm and all thoughtful
We look at the past,
And plan for the duties

That come in our way;
The veil of the future
Around us is cast,
Concealing the dangers
That mangle and slay;
But faithful crusaders
Through darkness profound,
With science and progress
To hasten the van,
Will lessen the dangers
That gather around,
And weaken forever
The vices of man.

Our virtues are beacons
That light up the sky;
Some blazing out brightly
And casting a glow
Upon the great ocean
Where dangers may lie,
Revealed by the splendors
That over them flow.

But others are hidden
Profusely away
Behind the effulgence
That breaks with the dawn,
Until they assemble
In perfect array,
When Satan surrenders
And Hades is gone,
Our hearts have been heavy
With anguish and woe,
And evils accost us

To blight active life,
 But hoping and trusting
In earnest, we show
 That patience will conquer
The phalanx of strife.
 The tears which have risen
In griefs mournful eyes
 Are jewels that sparkle
With all that is pure,
 Revealing affections
We wish to disguise
 And bearing the burdens
Our hearts would endure.
 Then cherish these treasures
With glowing delight,
 And follow forever
Some laudable theme,
 Defending the helpless
And guarding the right,
 We'll hope for the glory
Of life's golden beam.
 We'll seek for advancement
That labor should bring,
 And eagerly hasten
To orient lands,
 Where nations to follow
Will joyfully sing
 The plaudits that welcome
The works of our hands.
 How much should we value

Distinction and birth?
Since angels are never
Permitted to know
Of praises and honors
That greet us on earth,
Or trials that chasten
Our spirits below.
If they were found mourning
O'er woes that we bear
The portals of Heaven
Would only retain
A throng of sad spirits
That live in despair,
And gladly would hasten
To meet us again.
But hope rises higher
To fill the pained breast
With peace and contentment
Which silently bring,
The comfort that sweetens
The days of our rest
That knowledge is king.
When he shall desert us
Our last failing breath
Will leave the heart pulseless
And cold as stone,
While friendship will mournfully
Gaze upon death,
And those who have loved us
Will sorrow alone.

No fathers or mothers
Or loved ones we see,
For they have all yielded
To nature's last sleep,
While saddest reflections
Of what is to be
May cause each dear classmate
To silently weep.
Together we followed
The loved ones so dear
And laid them forever
Beneath the damp sod.
But why should we grievously
Shed the warm tear,
Since they are surrounded
By blessings from God?
The stars are above us
And still shining bright,
Behind the great vapors
That darken our way,
And all the deep shadows
We see in the night
Will only make welcome
The dawning of day.

FIFTY YEARS LATER

Fifty years is but a span;
Brief the life of any man
Years are zero when they'r past;
Each one shorter than the last.
Zeros numbered in eons
Mount to naught in Friendship's bonds.
Campus grounds on which we played
Into home plats now are made.
Not a vistage now remains
Of the walls where constant pains
By professors one and all
Every evil to forestall
Moulded from our plastic clay
Purer manhood day by day.
Sound their aim to gain the goal
Of improvements for the soul.
It remained for us to try
To improve it by and by.
Now we know that some have won
Honors by great deeds well done.
And we give them mede of praise
As they go their destined ways.
Others just as true may be
Greater than the ones we see.
Some had scarce a chance in life,
But fell victims in the strife,
Others less endowed by far
Go on being what we are.

Just a mote in common place
Near a cipher to our race.
Look at Merlin, Merica,
Carver, Emrick, Dudley, too.
Note what they had will to do!
None perhaps have great renoun,
Gibson, Art and Will, remain!
Neither of them live in vain.

SCHOOL DAY GREETING

*Recited at Columbia City, September 20, 1890
By Miss Kittie Whittenberger*

Our patrons and pupils and teachers to-day
We greet you with joyful acclaim;
Wherever your stations, whatever your plans,
Your presence we value the same.

We work for the public and hope for success;
Your presence increases our zeal,
And may your enjoyment be counted no less,
But equal the pleasure we feel.

This day is a proud one, indeed, for us all,
With ultimate good as its goal,
The spirit of contest that enters the breast
Will cleanse and ennoble the soul.

The prize here won will encourage our youth
To strive for high honors in life,
And those once defeated are better prepared
To enter again in the strife.

For pluck is the mainspring that leads to success
And wins the applause of mankind,
And he who has nearly succeeded does well,
Leaving hosts of companions behind.

The thoughtless and indolent never can win,
They simply remain in the way
To clog the endeavors of more active minds,
Which chafe at their useless delay.

The days that are given us mortals below
Are precious as purified gold;
And moments once wasted can never return
Though we may regret them when old.

How careless we are with our moments of time
Which pass in a flash and are gone
To leave us in recklessness moving about
Till certain success is withdrawn.

How few of our race are successful in life,
While thousands go down at its close
To mingle again with the dust of the spheres,
And rest in unhonored repose.

Those souls which are earnest and willing to do
Have paths of pure beauty to tread.
Their glory shall live for long ages to come
While bliss shall repose with the dead.

Some men are like insects that live but an hour
Yet spend their whole lives in excess;
In useless existence—that torment the true
With vices that all should repress.

But others are stars in the pathway of men
Which guide them to all that is good
They point out the roads that have lead to success
Which more might pursue if they would.

They mould the opinions that rule o'er the state;
They sit as our judges of laws;
They know of the storms and upheavels of earth
And seek to discover their cause.

Great statesmen are with us assembled to-day;
The wise who will rule in the land,
Our duties, as parents and teachers, are plain;
Give training to heart and to hand.

Again we bid welcome to friends of the school;
To those who have answered the call;
The work here begun will yield good results,
Then welcome; thrice welcome to all.

TIME

This song of time, I write in rhyme,
And listen to the ring
Of words that chime, in this sweet clime
Like echoes of the spring.

In joyous tone or muffled moan
They tell the simple tale,
While hearts of stone, without a groan,
Hark to distress' wail.

Some souls unmoved and unproved
Go on their vicious way,
While all around Old Time is found
The monarch of the day.

Go where you will there haunts you still
The phantoms of mankind,
With sudden thrill or fearful chill
You look at what you find.

Here lies the past, unearthed at last
To science of to-day;
Gaunt forms held fast where Time has cast
Them into mire and clay.

Man reads the rocks through earthquake shocks
And sees an ancient thief
That moves and mocks at fortune's locks
Whose barriers are brief.

With rush and roar around the door
He brings a cutting blast,
That has a score of ills in store
As it goes sweeping past.

O'er hill and vale he sets his sail
And far into the sky
Sweeps on though hail and rains assail
As he would pass them by.

Stout ships may sweep across the deep
And anchor in the bay,
But Time will creep,—though waves may sleep,—
To steal their strength away.

No force can hold Old Time so bold
Nor check his onward flight;
No power above, nor force of love
Can keep him in the night.

With limbs unbound he still is found
A thief upon the earth,
Who steals away our friends to-day,
From all their scenes of mirth.

O'er sun and star he leaps afar
And few can find his worth;
Existence proves he lives and moves
But no one knows his birth.

SPRING

When the chilling winds of winter
Have departed from our fields;
When the balmy air of springtime,
With its fragrance o'er us steals,

We can look with veneration,
To the One who rules the air,
While we give our heart's devotion,
For delightful sweetness there.

Let us pause and gaze around us,
On the landscape fresh and green,
While we contemplate the beauty
Of so wonderful a scene.

See that line of gold and shadow,
Speeding swiftly o'er the land!
Look upon the snowy hillside
And the river-banks of sand!

See the snow-flakes quickly melting!
Watch the rivulets run by!
Look upon the changing meadow;
Look into the azure sky,

And we know that spring is coming;
We can feel her gentle breath,
As she comes to waken beauty
From the prison-house of death.

Turn a glance upon yon mountain,
Where that massive heap of snow,
Which was born there in the winter,
Slowly melts beneath the glow,

Of that sweet and glorious sunbeam,
In the softness of whose light,
We can see a thousand wonders
Stealing meekly into sight.

When the crystal snow has vanished
We can see the fresh young grass
Smiling in its grateful gladness
From the meadows as we pass.

We may see the foaming river,
Swollen by the mountain stream,
Rushing on to meet the ocean,
Gleaming in the morning's beam.

Snow has melted from the hillside;
Earth and air are growing warm;
Clouds have vanished from the heavens,
Leaving naught of winter's storm.

How the dew upon the herbage,
Sparkles in the golden light,
Like a million costly brilliants
Smiling at so grand a sight.

Over field and in the forest,
Everywhere a flow'r is found;
Bees are noisy with their humming,
As they go their daily round.

We are pleased with bloom and beauty,
And flowers in our way,
Fill the air with grateful fragrance,
For the pleasant month of May.

In the woods we hear the music
Of the choir that comes with spring,
Halt, and listen to their voices,
While the hills and forests ring!

Here the robin, there the blue-jay,
On the branches swinging high,
Mock the notes of other singers,
As they hear them passing by.

Ah, how well I yet remember,
When the robin sang to me,
Swinging on the topmost branches
While I stood beneath the tree!

Never had I heard such music;
Never had I felt such glee;
Never dreamed of such sweet rapture,
In so plain a melody.

How my features glowed with pleasure
At the cadence of his song,
And the singer in departing
Took my boyish heart along.

That was in my early springtime,
When my heart was young and true
To the love or ardent nature,
Which no wave of sorrow knew.

But the very gayest season
Has some blossoms which must fade
And the brightest of all firesides,
Death is waiting to invade.

He will triumph over sorrow
And by yielding self at last,
We may taste the sweets of heaven
In the mem'ries of the past.

There the years may pass unnoticed;
Joy and peace may strew the way
With new beauties for our spirits,
Where no evils dare to stray.

Thus in clouds of gloomy darkness
Floating in our youthful skies,
We will find a silver lining,
When the mists of ages rise.

Like the clouds that cross the zenith,
They are dark upon the face,
But the other side is brilliant,
With the beauty of God's grace.

O, sad spirit, cease your grieving,
And forgetting toil and pain,
You may see the former sweetness,
Springing into life again.

Cast away your cloak of sorrow,
Cheer your heart with better things,
And your soul may hear in fancy,
Sounds that come from angel's wings.

Then we need not look and wonder
By what strange and magic hand
All these riches of the seasons
Have been scattered o'er the land.

O, forget our bitter sorrows,
Think of happy days to come,
Think of beauties that will greet us
In our bright celestial home.

Did I say 'forget our sorrows?'
Ah, how easy to advise,
Since the soul cannot forget them,
And such mandates will despise.

While we think of those departed
In the very bloom of youth;
Ever joyous and contented;
Ever seeking after truth.

Shall the lives bowed down in sadness
Never rise to sweeter light?
Shall the struggling souls of manhood
Sink into eternal night?

No, indeed! The fields of glory
Yield a broad and open way
To escape from sad dejection,
And returns to life's sweet May.

When our summer times have vanished,
And our autumn lives are o'er;
When the days of winter pass us,
And this clay shall be no more,

Flow'rs will bloom again in fragrance,
To adorn a faithful heart,
And the rich reward for duty
Will perform its sacred part.

When the angels sing their chorus,
And the golden harps shall ring
With the joy of souls immortal.
In that bright and heav'nly spring.

We will live in love forever,
Though our sweetest flow'rs have died,
For they bloom in perfect beauty
On the sweet Elysian side.

SUMMER

Golden Summer! Time of harvest!
Time to gather in the grain!
Who would hesitate to love thee,
Or forget thy blessed reign.

Royal Summer! How your bounty
Spreads fair favors all around,
While the rocks and hills and woodland
With sweet minstrelsy resound.

In the groves the birds are singing;
Insects fill the balmy air;
This, to them, is pleasant pastime,
When the days are bright and fair.

On the clover bees are working,
Seeking riches rare and sweet,
Laying up the best provisions,
In their stores, for men to eat.

Brilliant Sunshine of the Summer!
Thou hast laid thy magic wand,
On the woods and scenes about us,
And rich verdure clothes the land.

See the wheatfields turning yellow,
As they follow nature's plan,
Slowly storing up their treasures,
For the use of toiling man.

See the grasses in the meadows,
On a gladsome summer day,
Bowing as the winds sweep o'er them;
Soon to fall as scented hay.

Noble orchards, heavy laden
With the bounty of their fruit,
Which the farmer watches proudly,
Growing only kinds that suit.

Varied changes of the climate
And the soil in which they grow,
Ever ready for improvement
In the kinds he loves to show.

Summer's riches are a pleasure,
If one pauses for a while
To observe the priceless beauty
That is nurtured by her smile.

Let us wander through the meadow,
To the noisy little brook,
There to find the wealth of Nature,
And to read her like a book.

We can look upon the landscape,
And behold the glowing sun
Rising in his kingly splendor
When the day has just begun.

What a scene of wondrous beauty
Calmly lies exposed to view!
Sloping fields that meet the water
Of a brook that wanders through.

Fields of wheat with tossing billows,
Like the movement of the sea;
Fields of corn with blades that rustle
In the breezes joyously.

Winding through the waving meadows
Brooklets loiter on their way,
As they seek the shaded corn-field,
In the beauty of the day.

From the brooklet, higher, higher,
Rise the fields toward the east,
Till the sun in gorgeous splendor
Gives the world a golden feast.

We can feel the touch immortal,
Moving in the troubled breast;
It arouses strange emotions,
And ambition gives unrest.

How we long to paint the picture,
And imbue it with the skill
That would live for countless ages,
When our frames are cold and still.

We can ponder vital questions,
As we study nature's laws;
Watching for some strange occurrence,
Seeking for its hidden cause.

As we wander to a woodland
That has crowned a modest hill
There to search for priceless treasures
Wrought by Nature's matchless skill,

We may be so wrapt in wonder,
That a storm breaks o'er our heads,
Ere aware that it is coming,
Till its darkness round us spreads.

How the lightnings flash and quiver
As they rend the sturdy oak;
Sending splinters 'cross our pathway;
Blinding us at every stroke.

And the raindrops fall in torrents,
While the driving gusts of wind
Sweep the sheets of water past us
Ere a shelter we can find.

Great trees bend and crash about us;
Giants who have stood for years,
Seem to fall without a struggle;
Filling us with vagrant fears.

Dripping wet we find a shelter
From the rain and howling blast,
There to wait until the fury
Of the storm has slowly passed.

Soon the lowering clouds have broken,
And the sun sends forth his light,
To adorn the earth with splendor,
Pleasing to our mortal sight.

Then we journey slowly homeward,
Thrilled with pleasure at the thought
Of a world so full of wonders,
Which a deity has wrought.

Day by day the sun grows warmer;
Riper grows the golden grain;
All is ready for the master,
To reward his toil again.

Then the farmer reaps the harvest
With a clatter and a din;
Ready by the early sunrise
For his workmen to begin.

When the grass and grains are gathered
From the fields and stored away,
He can rest from weary labor.
Ah, what peace his thoughts convey!

He is rich since he is happy,
And his debts are fairly paid;
He is free and independent,
Save on Nature's matchless aid,

Yes, the summer is most fruitful;
What she gives us is the best;
Better, sweeter to our fancies,
Than the bloom of all the rest.

In the evening as we ponder
On the days that are no more;
Building castles for the future
Which are broken by the score.

We may see the graceful motion
Of the spotted whip-poor-will,
As it flies in early evening,
Open-mouthed to catch its fill;

Opened mouthed to catch the insects
As they float with lazy hum,
Round the mansion's stately chimneys
And the modest cottage lum.

Sitting in the yard to watch them,
With the slow approach of dusk,
Well contented with our labor,
Who would be an awkward lusk?

From the city to the country,
We can go for health and peace,
To enjoy the breath of sunshine,
While her beauties still increase.

We will glorify the Summer,
We will praise her ever more,
For her treasures are the richest,
That the seasons have in store.

AUTUMN

Spring and Summer both are pleasant,
So is Autumn when it comes,
Bringing other kinds of gladness,
To enliven hearts and homes.

Here the ash tree, there the oak tree
Drops a leaf upon the ground,
As the gentle breezes murmur,
With a distant, mournful sound.

We can hear the noisy insects,
As they keep their lowly way,
Ever busy and contented
With their labors for the day.

Living, dying and decaying,
Each one striving for his own;
Rich in undiscovered greatness;
Keys to science yet unknown.

It is wonderful to notice,
How they often gain their ends,
And their chirpings are but signals
To their mates and insect friends.

All things seem to have a language;
From the lowest up to man,
But we do not understand them,
And I fear we never can.

I have listened to the cricket,
 When he sang unto his mate;
Certain accents in his music,
 I could readily translate.

So it is with other creatures;
 Every one asserts some claim,
That it has on Mother Nature,
 When distress afflicts its frame.

Ah, the knowledge that is given,
 As one watches them at play,
Is well worth the little moments,
 Spent in learning what they say.

Autumn seems to be the season,
 When the plants prepare for death;
Shielding offsprings from the Winter,
 When it comes with icy breath.

Birds and squirrels, hurry-skurry,
 Hasten to complete their stores;
Geese and pigeons flying southward,
 Seek for more congenial shores.

When the leaves fall from the branches,
 In their places they leave buds,
Clothed in blankets for protection,
 From the Winter's chilling floods.

It is pleasant in the autumn,
To observe the steady change,
That is stealing over nature,
Clothing earth with vesture strange.

How it transforms field and forest,
From a world of living green,
To a mass of brown and scarlet,
That give beauty to the scene.

All this work is done with neatness,
By a hand that is unseen,
Giving nature more enchantment,
Than appears in living green.

In the woodland, thick with timber,
We can find the giant form
Of some mighty, fallen monarch,
Which was broken by the storm.

There it lies among the lowly,
Slowly going to decay;
Stately even in its downfall;
Crushed and broken in the way.

We will wonder why it flourished;
Why it grew from year to year;
Why decay should overtake it;
Why its form should disappear.

It was noble in its structure;
It was free from blighting sin,
But in perishing as we do,
Naught reveals why it has been.

Thus we ponder on existence,
Its relation to ourselves;
To the flora and the fauna,
Into which our science delves.

All must perish. Dissolution
Comes to claim the living throng,
As we move along life's pathway,
What redeems the world from wrong?

Autumn products have more value,
To the scientific mind,
Than the treasures, Spring and Summer,
In their precincts have confined.

Then are found the rarest species,
Which will rise to bloom once more;
Then we notice what provisions
Nature takes into her store.

To provide against the winter
And be ready once again
When the Spring-time and the Summer
Have renewed their clouds and rain.

Man is growing. Art is growing;
Science guides them on their way;
They must live and die together,
Time allows them no delay.

They may flourish for a season,
With the principle of life,
Urging them to reach distinction,
Through a world of constant strife.

Time adapts them to each other,
Then away their secrets fly;
From the smallest to the greatest,
They have lived and they must die.

We have noticed in the morning,
How the leaves wave stiff and white,
When the moisture from the heavens,
Froze upon them in the night.

Like an old man in his dotage,
Every leaf is touched by death;
Gray and grizzled by its contact,
With the Autumn's icy breath.

O, how wonderful is nature,
And how strange it seems to be,
That a man grows gray, to perish
Like the leaf upon the tree!

What has blest his youth with beauty;
What has given manhood's strength;
What has filled his brow with furrows;
Taking all away at length?

He is like the plants of summer,
Blessed with beauty for a while,
And his harvest time approaches,
With the sweetness of its smile,

To imbue his humble spirit
With the glory of the skies;
Then the autumn frosts assail it,
And it withers, droops and dies.

We have seen the stately corn-stalk,
Grow, and ripen and decay;
Time has chosen thus to warn us,
That our frames will pass away.

Sometimes brightness, sometimes darkness,
Rolls across our earthly plain;
Oft when hope is bounding highest,
Sorrow comes to us again;

Then the sunshine sheds its glory
Over forest stream and field,
And its powerful persuasion
Causes everything to yield,

To the vital touch that brightens
All the beauty we have seen;
Then the forest holds more grandeur
Than appears in changeless green.

Like the swan that sings the sweetest,
Just before its spirit's flight,
Here the hand of Nature's Artist
Seems to take his soul's delight,

In portraying to our fancies,
That which almost takes our breath,
Then it suddenly destroys it,
By the heavy hand of death.

AN AUTUMN DAY

The winds are rushing swift and strong,
To chase the fleecy clouds along,
While tiny raindrops, all around,
Fiercely beat upon the ground.

Our feathered friends make haste in vain
To seek a shelter from the rain.
Turn where they will and fly about
The subtle water finds them out,

And once again into the shower
They search for some secluded bower,
There they may rest and shelter find,
Safe from the rush of stormy wind.

If such a place they gain at last
They rest in safety from the blast,
Their wings they fold, their eyes they close
And settle into calm repose.

The giant trees that toss on high
Their noisy branches to the sky,
Like watchful soldiers, tall and grim,
Are dripping wet in bole and limb.

The wood-mouse leaves his dripping nest,
And creeping forth he goes in quest
Of some dry place among the leaves
Where he is safe as he believes.

The silent hawk with watchful eyes
At length the trembling mouse espies,
And swiftly dashes on his prey,
To gorge himself and fly away.

The squirrel leaps from tree to tree;
Descends their trunks most fearlessly,
And slowly bends his head to drink
A draught from show'r born lakelet's brink,

But at the rustle of a leaf,
He starts, and trembles like a thief;
A moment pauses, then he flies,
While fear dilates his flashing eyes.

With doleful cry the hooting owl
Gives answer to the raccoon's howl,
But keeps his nest till night comes down,
To hide the forest's dusky brown,

And hidden in the fallen grass,
From which it springs forth as you pass,
The timid hare with nimble feet,
Is chased by greyhound strong and fleet.

But quickly through the copse-wood ground,
The hare escapes the eager hound,
Who once defeated in the race,
Turns homeward from his bootless chase.

Then far away among the fog,
The pheasant sits upon his log;
With fanning wing he beats his drum,
To mingle with the raindrops hum.

The patter, patter of the rain,
Calls me to consciousness again;
I wonder how I could forget
My hat and clothes were wringing wet.

Then glancing at the gloomy sky
I see the storm will soon pass by;
And with the moist air in my face,
I homeward wend my listless pace.

At last the raindrops cease to fall
And mist has settled over all,
But soon the mist has cleared away
While in its stead the sunbeams play,

For now the winds their fury o'er
Pursue the fleeing clouds no more,
The clouds, when once their duty's done,
Are swallowed by the thirsty sun.

WINTER

When the oak-trees in the forest
Scatter leaves about the plain,
And the zephyrs in their passage,
 Seek for beauty there in vain,
We must feel a shade of sadness,
 For the beauty that has fled;
For the work that nature wasted,
 In the fields that look so dead.
What was once so rife with beauty
 Now looks cheerless and forlorn,
Since the branches of their verdure,
 By the Autumn, have been shorn.
How the oak-tree's leafless branches
 In the breezes bending low,
Every murmur, sadly murmur,
 As they waver to and fro,
How they grumble at the North-wind,
 Who has robbed them of their joy,
And perverted all their beauty
 To a dull and base alloy.
Keen and cutting it is blowing
 As it comes with rush and roar;
Hoarsely moaning round the gables,
 Creeping in beneath the door.
Hark! with almost human accent,
 Comes a faint and dismal groan,
Filled with deep, soul-stirring pathos,
 Like a soldier's dying moan.
By and by the snow-clouds gather
 See the flakes begin to fall!
Slowly! slowly! Faster! faster!
 Till at last they cover all!

Then the North-wind whispers terror
Of the days that soon will come,
And we see by fancy's painting,
Much distress and horror dumb.
Some are warmly clad for winter;
Others shiver in the blast
Of that unrelenting whirlwind,
As it drives the snow-flakes past.
When the bitterness of winter
Comes upon them unawares,
They are startled by its coming,
And bow down beneath its cares,
True, they might have once provided,
For the winter's howling storm,
When the sun was shining brilliant,
And the days were clear and warm,
But some evil may have fallen
In the moment of success,
Which has led them on to ruin,
Full of want and wretchedness;
Led them on to foul destruction,
While the sun was shining bright;
Plunged them into degradation;
Into darkness black as night.
They have lost the golden splendor,
That gives vigor to one's life;
They can only hasten onward,
And engage in fiercer strife.
All is darkness; all is sadness;
Helplessly they toil along;
Nothing pleasant to sustain them;
Everywhere oppressed with wrong.
Yet the light shines just as brilliant,
When it glances through the cloud,

As it did in summer season,
 When devoid of misty shroud.
But it does not warm the breezes,
 Nor the grasses wake to life,
Ah, its magic pow'r is stolen
 In the ardor of the strife.
With the ever greedy north wind,
 Who is watching on the earth,
For its wealth of golden treasures,
 That will give the flow'rs birth
O, the pain and bitter anguish
 That this theft inflicts on man!
How they wrangle in the bosom
 Like an exile's odious ban!
Yet 'tis well for us to view them
 With composure as they come,
And examine with minuteness,
 Each invader of our home,
Lest by threats of coming evil,
 We should yield our present joy,
For the hope of sweeter pleasure,
 In some vain and useless toy.
As I pause to view the snow-flakes,
 Thoughts come crowding to my mind;
Thoughts of former times and people,
 Which the present leaves behind.
In the ages long departed,
 Writers happily agreed,
To the joys that come with winter,
 Through its rest and revelry.
O, the joyous winter season,
 With its ice and frosty air,
Bringing rest from toils of summer;
 Bringing rest from summer's care.

See the picture of the fire-place,
With the family gathered round,
Happy in their sweet relation,
While with love their hearts abound.
They can demonstrate precisely,
What some poet plainly shows;
That it is a blessed pleasure,
“There to sit and toast; your toes.”
When the evening’s work is finished
And the wood is carried in,
Children gather round the hearth-stone,
Making merry with their din.
When the farmer, from his labor,
Sits him down to rest awhile,
He observes his sporting children
With a broad, congenial smile.
Grown-up sons, and grown-up daughters
Are beside the glowing flame;
Each one striving with the other
To excel in every game.
They are loving-hearted children,
Full of life and living joy,
Happy in their youthful pleasure,
With no sorrow to destroy.
See how calmly they are waiting,
For the time so near at hand,
When their father’s pleasing features
Shall enrich their glowing band.
In his presence they are certain
To enjoy the sweets of home,
And his love destroys all longing
In their youthful hearts to roam.
By his virtues he has bound them
In the faithful cords of love,

And they look upon their father
As a treasure from above.
For he leads them and instructs them;
Guides them past the shoals of wrong;
Helps them with their evening lessons;
Joins them in the joyous song.
Ah, how sweet when such reflections
Come to children far away!
From those scenes that thrill their bosoms
With the love that passed away.
But there is another picture,
Drawn in lines of deepest woe,
Where the low and squalid hovel
Gives protection from the snow.
Want, indeed, has found his kingdom;
Sin and wickedness abound;
Joy and peace have fled forever,
Leaving purity uncrowned.
Ragged offsprings; worse than orphans;
Children of unsightly guile;
Gather near the dying embers,
That will warm them for awhile.
On in wretchedness they struggle,
Through this cold and bitter world,
While despair awaits her coming,
All into her gulf are hurled.
What had life, with degradation
So polluted and profane?
What had it to do with grandeur?
What had it but toil and pain?
Can the worse than beastly human,
Living on in shameful vice,
Giving rein to beastly passions,
Know of love beyond all price?

What a contrast to the portrait
Of the home where virtue dwells;
Where the heart of happy childhood
In its purest rapture swells.
It is nice to paint such portraits,
When the howling winter's storm
Sweeps around the moaning gables,
If the house is snug and warm.
But there is a transformation,
When the painter has to bear
A few drafts of biting north-wind,
As they cut the softer air.
As a cold and weary trav'ler,
With the sharp wind in his face,
He is want to see a shelter
By the mountain's rocky base.
All his dreams of winter's comfort,
All of winter's great delight,
In the blasts that howl around him,
Hield to sleep and fade from sight.
He has fallen by the wayside,
With no friendly hand to save;
In a shroud of icy whiteness,
He has found a nameless grave.
In his cold and senseless bosom,
There is hidden all the woe,
That was straining at his heartstrings,
As he staggered through the snow.
There he rests in that deep slumber,
In which neither smiles nor wrath
Are aroused by rushing whirlwinds,
As they sweep across his path.

Let us leave him in the snow-drift,
Safe from future care or pain;
He has perished on the hillside,
There his corpse may still remain.
There are others in the city,
Who are quaking at the sound
Of the howling storms of winter
When their fury gathers round.
On their hearths there is no fuel,
While the wind howls at the door;
Naught to serve a scant protection,
But the straw upon the floor.
Public friends have overlooked them,
And their purse is friendless too;
Thus the days of bitter coldness,
They are forced to winter through.
But with patience they endure them;
Live and hope for better days;
Look with eagerness for springtime;
Bear with calmness all delays.
Lo! The winter ends in springtime,
When the plants are brought to life;
And the flowers bloom in beauty,
Filling fields with fragrance rife.
Then new forms assume proportions,
When the frosty blasts have fled.
And the lily is awakened,
From reposing on her bed.
Now I thank thee, Mother Nature,
For thy goodness unto me;
I will bless thee for thy favors,
Through a vast eternity.

THE DUTCHMAN AND THE GUN

Some years ago, a German friend,
Was called to help his neighbor butcher;
They took the gun and started out,
The dutchman talking like a Kutscher.

“Gif me dot gun and I vill schlay
Das pig so tet als donneration;
I dells you dot I haf no skill,
But you kan gif die exblanation.

I nefer dry to kill a pig
Mit any such a funny mochine.
You muss be retty ven I shoot
To go ad vonce and schlachten ihn.”

“All right, my friend, I’ll load the gun,
And tell you how to shoot the critter;
Just get up close, and aim it true,
And I am sure that you will hit her.”

But when he loaded up that gun,
He put no bullet in the muzzle;
He wished to give his friend a scare,
And make it more and more a puzzle.

He gave the weapon to his friend,
Who seemed to make a close inspection,
While holding it before his face,
To comprehend this brief instruction:

“Pull back the lock; aim at the pig;
Then try to pull the trigger quickly;
And if you do the business right,
You soon will make him look quite sickly.”

The anxious fellow walked around,
And tried to get a good position;
He seemed to think, success in this,
Would be a splendid acquisition.

He took his stand upon a trough
That lay quite near his thoughtless victim;
Nor did he for a moment guess
How much his trusted friend had tricked him.

He sighted long and carefully,
Then put his finger on the trigger;
Moved by his touch it instantly
Set all to cutting quite a figure.

The musket kicked him off the trough,
For Dave had made the load a crowder;
The pig went “wee!” and started off,
His head severely burnt by powder.

“Come, Charley, you have played your game,
And missed the porker, sure as shooting;
You should have pulled the trigger hard,
And sent the bullet through a scooting.”

“O yah, I see, I miss her all,
Dis time I know not how to take him;
Der trigger look so ferry schmall
I vos afraid dot I would break him.”

UNCLE HIRAM

To The Boy Who Swears

O, what an oath for you to use
 Against your transient soul.
What right have you to curse at that
 Which men cannot control?
A boy should be a gentleman,
 Wherever he is found;
But he is not who uses oaths,
 With such Satanic sound.
The fool who gapes along the street,
 With but an ounce of brain,
Can use an oath with better grace
 Than that which you maintain.
His footsteps have a shiftless tread;
 His eyes a vacant stare;
With scarcely sense enough to walk,
 He knows enough to swear.
What use have oaths among mankind?
 They give our mothers pain.
Do you believe there is no God,
 Whose name you take in vain?
Whence comes the smallest grain of dust
 That flies along the street?
Who made the helpless worm we crush
 Beneath our careless feet?
Who made the earth, the distant sun,
 And all the stars that shine?
What hand could guide them on through space,
 Unless it were Divine?
How big is space? Can mortal tell?
 If, with the speed of light,

We travel for ten billion years,
New stars will greet our sight;
And rushing on ten billion more
The line we make through space
Will be a mite to that beyond,
Whose limits none can trace.
Both time and space are infinite,
We may go on and on,
Until unnumbered ages pass;
The end will never come.
How foolish then for mortal flesh
To curse and swear at fate;
When all he says is vain and weak,
With naught to fear his hate.
What is weak man that he may call
His bitter curses down,
Then sink upon his knees to pray,
If Providence should frown?
His body soon will fall to dust,
And he will be no more;
While time and space unending still,
Are matchless as before.
Don't curse again, don't be a fool;
But stand an upright man;
And happiness will crown your work,
If judgment moulds the plan.
Ten thousand curses right no wrong,
In anger or in fun;
An act committed in this world,
Can never be undone.
Then guard your acts, your looks and speech;
Be kind to all you meet,
And you will find that happiness
Which makes your life complete.

UNCLE HIRAM

To The Boy Who Chews

What stain is that upon your lips?
Come, look into my face,
And tell me how you learned to chew
This vampire of the race.

A curse that robs so many homes
Of certain luxuries;
And clothes so many men in rags,
Their appetites to please.

It costs them twenty cents a week,
Sometimes a great deal more;
And in a year of time it takes
The dollars by the score.

Some men have farms and chew them up,
Or burn them into smoke;
And ruin health and happiness
In bearing such a yoke.

They tease some boy to take a chew,
And laugh at his grimace;
Not dreaming of the filthy foe,
That he is led to face.

No doubt he feels much like a man,
When first he takes the weed,
But after years will bring his curse
On those who sowed the seed.

This appetite will lead to drink,
Then greater dangers come,
For indigence and pain and death
Are in a glass of rum.

That man who tempts a boy in this
May think that he is smart,
But in my mind he seems to be
A model fool at heart.

How queer that men will fill their mouths
With such a nasty juice,
When Nature most indignantly
Objects to such abuse.

My mouth must be the cleanest part
Of my anatomy;
But some do not regard it so,
From aught that I can see.

Then cast the weed away from you,
And keep your person clean;
Let no disgusting stains like this
Be on your lips again.

At man's estate the dearest wish
That comes from native pride,
May be to win some lady fair,
For your own matchless bride;

But who would care to kiss your lips
From which effluvia rise;
That fill her soul with deep disgust
Which she cannot disguise.

UNCLE HIRAM

To The Boy Who Drinks

I wish to speak to you, my boy,
 Upon a certain theme,
Which agitates the public mind,
 And is my private dream.
“How can I save our boys from drink?”
 In this extremity,
I need some youthful feet to run
 My errands readily;
You look like one whom I can trust
 To do some earnest work;
Your face is stamped with honesty;
 No duty you will shirk.
A giant evil in our land
 Is running our boys,
Destroying lives of noble men
 And using them for toys;
That in the tempter’s hands may lure
 More noble souls away
From that true life where virtue reigns,
 The monarch of the day.
Down, down in vice the victims sink,
 Nor often rise again;
Debased and shunned—I say, alas,
 For such misguided men!
Here comes an aged, ruined man,
 With hair as white as snow;
His feeble limbs must seek support;
 His trembling steps are slow;
He reels from side to side, you see!

The serpent in his brain,
Entangles him in subtle coils,
Which he bewails in vain.
He falls upon that ugly stone!
Come, we will help him up!
A broken limb! Poor helpless soul!
Gray victim of the cup!
I know him well, his home is near.
Come, lend a hand, my friend,
To bear this luckless, gray old man,
Where surgeons may attend.
Now, thank you, sir; this boy and I
Were standing in the street
And saw the poor man fall upon
The stone beneath his feet.
He had a fortune left to him;
A fortune for a king;
But craze for drink has brought him low,
As it is sure to bring,
Those who indulge their appetites
In products of the still;
Which rob a man of wealth and health;
Of steadiness and skill.
Last night the rain was falling fast,
The wind with dismal moan,
Was sweeping down the muddy street,
I heard a frightful moan.
A moving object in the mire,
That seemed to be a beast,
Soon took the shape of this old man,
Whose groans at last had ceased.

The sight was pitiful, indeed:
With hair so long and gray,
He seemed a mass of filthiness,
That must have lost its way.
His wealth, his home, his honor gone;
His children in disgrace;
His faithful wife destroyed by shame,
Too deep for her to face.
Such shame was hers as none can feel,
Who have not lived in wealth,
To fall the victims of foul Rum,
Which ruins hope and health.
I saw you take a drink, my boy;
You knew it was amiss;
If you persist in such a course,
At last it leads to this.

THE SOLDIER BOY

'Twas in a fierce fought battle on the lake,
The hero of whose daring deeds I tell,
Was toiling with his honest hands to break
The British pow'r with screaming shot and shell,

Which spread their martial music o'er the wave,
And slew a multitude of foes that broke
The ties of brotherhood to please a knave,
And tried to place on men the tyrant's yoke;

On men whose freedom was their highest thought.
To it they pledged their honors and their lives
With stolid firmness as they bravely fought;
Fathers for homes, their children and their wives.

While war and rapine overflowed the land,
And filled the hearts of our heroic brave
With hate, that they more firmly might withstand
The shock that led to glory or the grave.

This youthful warrior,—who had long before,
Left home, friends and kindred far behind—
With hands and features grim with smoke and gore,
Fought fiercely, and his comprehensive mind

Was busy with the movements of the ships,
Obeying orders that above the sound
Of strife, rose from the captain's manly lips,
And served the ranks of Britians to confound.

They sought to sweep the Union from its base,
Or crush the spirit of our nation's free,
And trail the Stars and Stripes in black disgrace,
Before the king of England's majesty.

Strong in the fight was our young soldier's arm,
For with its strength was freedom's holy cause.
Around his life there seemed to be a charm,—
The wish to win his country's just applause.

The round shot whistled o'er his manly head;
They slaughtered his poor comrades everywhere;
Yet there among the dying and the dead,
He fought without a thought of yielding there.

At last a ball aimed surer than the rest
Struck down his right arm helpless in the fray;
But he declared that he would do his best,
Until they won or death should gain the day.

With one arm hanging useless at his side,
In vain they urged him to desert his post.
On this brave act they looked with native pride;
It made each soldier a revengeful host,

Who knew he battled on the side of right;
And by its aid on that eventful day
Our soldiers came off victors in the fight
And set their ships to anchor in the bay.

As days and weeks and month successive came
To bring such patent evils as abound
In any land where war engenders fame,
And reckless men with hero's wreaths are crowned.

Our soldier's heart grew sick of blood and strife;
Forgot his laurels won upon the lake;
He dreamed what loyal men must all abhor
Since that they loved most dear was held at stake.

He thought with horror where his life might end
With constant watchfulness and ceaseless care;
The countless foes with whom he must contend;
These filled his soul with horror and despair.

While quietly at rest within his tent,
With no one near to cheer his lonely hours,
He had full time to give his fancies vent
And view the schemes his terror overpow'rs.

In thought he saw before him home and friends,
And one sweet face with innocent blue eyes,
Whose lifelong happiness on him depends,
In slumbers of the midnight seem to rise.

It urged him to renounce a soldier's life;
To flee again to friends and arts of peace;
Where he could rest from scenes of bloody strife;
And his grim service as a soldier cease.

The wish to be at home again was strong;
It mastered every other waking thought.
His dreams were far from evil, yet the wrong
Which overcame him set all else at naught.

His mind was active, even as he slept;
E'en in his dreams he longed to meet once more,
The friend and loved whose image he had kept,—
A mother for a hero to adore.

The vision of his saintly mother came;
She beckoned him at once to hasten home;
To leave the field where trumpets sound the fame
Of countless warriors who have met their doom.

In slumbers deep, unconscious of his deed,
He rose and followed where the figure led,
And when he paused it urged him to proceed;
Such was the scene on which his fancy fed.

The wind was rushing through the trees;
The rain was falling with a heavy splash;
The air grew cold and piercing by degree;
The eye was blinded by the lightning's flash.

He passed the sentry on that stormy night;
He sought for shelter from the chilling rain;
Pressed forward till a farm-house was in sight,
Crept to a barn and sank to rest again.

But watchful spies were on his luckless track;
And scarcely had he touched his bed of hay,
When in they marched to take the dreamer back
To where the duties of a soldier lay.

When he awoke imagine his surprise
On looking round at everything so strange;
Not for a moment could his brain surmise
What magic hand had wrought this wondrous
change.

At evening in his tent he lay asleep,
But a deserter now he seemed to be;
His crime would make his loving mother weep,
And blast his fame throughout eternity.

With pain he saw he was no longer free,
And realized what he had done;
He knew that death would be the penalty,
In spite of all the glory he had won.

Then, like a soldier true in battle line,
Resolved to bravely face the coming doom;
Although his flight had been without design
No hand could save him from a coward's tomb.

They led him to the camp. A martial court
In haste condemned him to a traitor's death;
None would believe the truth of his report
Should he proclaim it with his parting breath.

Ah, must he die so young, when health and truth
Were both portrayed upon his brow?
Could nothing rescue this unhappy youth?
Would none the truth of his strange claim allow?

Not one among the warriors in that band
But felt a tremor of remorse and pain,
To think that ne'er again that youthful hands
The right of freemen should maintain.

With nerves unmoved and head erect, he heard
And bore his sentence with becoming grace;
He knew his story sounded most absurd
Though youth and truth was stamped upon his face.

But when the guardsman closed the prison door,
The lock made such a horrid clanging sound,
That shouts of battle or the cannon's roar,
When countless enemies had gathered round,

Ne'er struck such awful terror to his heart;
It crushed the vestige of his last faint hope,
And in the darkness gave him such a start
As he would feel whose trembling soul must cope,

With phantoms of the slow decreasing night.
Weighed down with woe at last he slept,
Nor waked before the gleams of morning light,
Dispersed the darkness that his cell had kept.

“I must have pen and ink, and paper, too;
My friends must know how soon I am to die,
O, honest warden, ever kind and true,
Grant this request, though every other you deny.”

When they were brought, with rapid hand he wrote
A letter to his loving mother, dear
To all the scenes which through his visions float,
Divesting his young mind of all its fear.

“My Mother, kind and dear,” the letter said,
“You surely will not own your luckless boy;
But then remember when your son is dead,
That he declared his innocence with joy.

Yet, through misfortunes of a bitter war,
Which long ago engulfed our native land,
On fields of strife in which I must deplore
The deeds of blood that stained my boyish hand.

I now am sentenced by a martial court,
To die a coward’s death before the blast
Of those unerring rifles whose reports
Have oft aroused my spirit in the past,

And to my heart has sent the crimson tide,
Renewed with native zeal and loyalty;
It filled my soul with thoughts of martial pride,
To fight and humble England's royalty.

But my young heart so yearned for ease and rest,
From these unwonted scenes of blood and strife,
That in a dream the face I loved the best,
Led my poor feet away, and now my life

Must end in sorrow, but no blush of shame
Will stain my brow when comrades lead me forth
To shoot me for a deed in which no blame
Can rob the conscious spirit of its worth.

My willful fancy makes me long once more
To see your face before the bitter end;
Though all is peace on that celestial shore,
I must regret to leave so true a friend.

Tomorrow at the early break of day,
Just as the sunlight paints the eastern sky,
And wraps the fleecy clouds in colors gay,
My loyal comrades lead me forth to die.

If it were on the field I would not care,
But as it is I feel my pulses thrill;
A felon's death seems more than I can bear,
Yet I shall bear it and be loyal still.

Dear Mother, how I love you none can tell,
Yet I must leave you in the world alone;
My Mother's kiss before our long farewell,
And I could die without a groan.

But that sweet kiss I do not hope to gain,
Which grieves me more than my poor pen can tell;
It palsies this poor heart of mine with pain,
But mother, I must say: A long farewell!"

When she received this letter from her boy
The pride and pleasure of her failing years,—
He, who had always filled her heart with joy,
She bowed and shed a pious Mother's tears.

"O, can it be that he must die so young!
This boy whose weal has been my constant care?
Not if the pleading of a Mother's tongue
Can show the depth of anguish and despair.

My son! The staff of my advancing age!
Why should they take my darling's life from me?
It surely cannot be that in their rage,
They would forget he fought for liberty!"

She paused and bowed upon her trembling hands,
While sobs of fearful anguish shook her frame.
The laws of war she well could understand,
But through it all her boy was not to blame.

“The pardon of my son I will receive,
Secure and safe before another day;
I’ll plead with those whose hearts will not believe
A dream has led my soldier boy astray.”

She met the President in half an hour,
And on her knees before him pled her case;
His manly form above her seemed to tower,
While heartfelt sympathy was in his face.

She told her story with a mother’s love;
She showed the lonely life that she must lead,
And lastly in the name of God above,
She prayed him to avert the cruel deed.

“O, give me back my noble boy once more!
Why will you number him among the dead?
O, save him now, and when this cruel war is o’er
Eternal blessings rest upon your head!”

He yielded to her pleadings, for the truth
Was evident in every word she said;
He granted pardon to the hapless youth,
And yet it might not save him from the dead.

The way was rough and distance intervened,
So that with haste she scarcely would have time
To reach the camp before the morning beam
Would flood the earth and sky with light sublime.

A horse and chaise she hastily secured,
And ordered that the beast should not be spared;
The soldier's life alone could be assured,
By having staunchest equipage prepared.

A rugged pass through which they were to go,
Was filled with rocks and led to great delay;
With these removed their progress seemed so slow
That dawn would come and find them far away.

But still they urged their steed to haste along,
In hopes that they would not arrive too late
To check the consummation of a wrong,
And save the soldier from an awful fate.

They hastened down the gloomy mountain road,
Nor did they for a moment pause for breath;
It seemed that evil spirits were abroad,
To reap a harvest fraught with woe and death;

A narrow path led round a rugged hill,
With scarcely room to drive the chaise with care;
The darkness was intense. With all his skill
The driver felt that they must now despair.

With cautious steps he tried to safely guide
The horse and chaise. With lantern in his hand
He moved along the tow'ring mountain side,
To lead them through the pass to safer land.

A spur of rock gave way with noisy clink!
The horse sprang backward in his sudden fright!
The carriage swayed a moment on the brink,
Slipped o'er the steep and dropped into the night!

The day was fast approaching with the sun,
To tinge the landscape with her bars of gold.
And hasty preparations had begun
To drive the spirit from its mortal mould.

They led the victim from his prison cell,
And pity moved the soldiers grim and tall;
The feelings in his breast no tongue can tell,
As deadly silence settled over all.

He stood beside the coffin, bold and calm;
He asked them not to bind his flashing eyes;
Requested them to read a sacred psalm;
When this was done his spirit seemed to rise,

To seek the Throne of God. His face was pale;
His muscles straight and strong and motionless;
He faced the east, nor did his spirit quail
When he beheld the morning's loveliness.

The blush of morn was on the eastern sky,
And beauty seemed to breathe from every bud;
It must be terrible in health to die,
While hope and youth are bounding in the blood.

The faithful soldiers took their chosen stand,
With rifles ready for the deadly shot,
And waited for the captain's clear command,
To give the coward to a traitor's lot.

He raised his hand to give the fatal word,
When far among the crowd two forms appeared,
And in the silence there a voice was heard,
Which floated from the distance loud and clear.

“O, stay your hand before it is too late;
We have secured the pardon of the brave;
That soldier there deserves a better fate,
Than the dishonor of a felon's grave!”

They laid the papers on the coffin lid,
As upward rolled a ringing shout of joy;
And on his breast his Mother's face was hid
To weep with rapture o'er her fearless boy.

A loving kiss upon her tear-stained cheek;
A loving hand on her devoted head;
While standing there so proud and yet so meek,
And he was rescued from the silent dead.

DEATH

A Tribute

In restless boyhood, my desire
Was fame in poetry and song;
I stole away from those at home,
To seek for some secluded place,
Where I might sit and think and write
My little sketches undisturbed.
My pen was busy through the week,
And on the restful Sabbath day,
My boyish friends would gather round
To hear my toilsome product read.
Their kind applause aroused the hope,
That I might win the high esteem
Of other readers, more advanced,
In learning and renown, than these,
When I should come to riper age.
By thus indulging in such dreams,
I fostered that which led to ill,
And left me less than I would wish
Myself to be among mankind.
As years passed by and bitterness
Of strange and tragic kind arose,
To weigh me down and desolate
The castles of my early youth.
My mind conceived the rapturous thought,
That I was born to rise above
The plodding indigence that birth
Bestowed upon my parentage.
A restless soul was in my breast,
Which urged me to attempt the heights

That lead to fame or let men fall,
Down, down into the darkest depths
Of unacknowledged genius.
The world was dreamland; ever strange
Were fields and forests to my sight.
I stood upon a towering peak,
From whose cold summit I could see,
In hazy distance, forest trees
That seemed like slender blades of grass;
And yet I knew that when I stood
Beneath their branches in the shade,
I thought them matchless in their strength,
But distance made them look so weak,
That I no longer wondered how
The whirling storm could lay them low.
I looked, and lo! The morning sun
Arose to send his blessed beams
Into the drops of crystal dew,
That flashed the light into my eyes,
Until the meadows and the woods
Shone like a mass of priceless gems.
The beauty of the scene awoke
Strange feelings in my troubled breast;
And in my heart I recognized
A hand of might was in it all.
Some force gave beauty to the world
And filled the fields with active life;
While man with wisdom hoarded up,
From sages who have passed away
Is powerless to bring to bear,
Upon the smallest product of his mind,
The active principle of life.
He cannot mould that potent force

Into the least of his designs.
His great machines may move with power,
Yet they are dead; no life is there.
The little plant that grows and blooms,
In stagnant pool or garden fair,
Can give existence to its kind;
But his machines cannot; instead,
The offsprings of his toil and pain
Are instruments that take his life;
The pond'rous engine crushes him;
His mills and mines are fraught with death,
While he, creator of their strength,
Is weaker than his creatures are.
Thus from the heights I looked at all
And lived not in the lower world,
But far above surrounding things,
The chief and monarch of my will.
A stranger spirit never lived,
Than this romantic one of mine;
It longed to mount up higher still,
And fretted at this weight of clay,
Which held it to a lower sphere,
And furnished it with scanty food,
To build the structure warily,
In which the soul could store away,
The gems of comprehensive thought
To bring them forth and make secure
That it desired most on earth.
Maturer years did bring a change,
That led my feet to higher paths,
In which I walked where wisdom sat
Enthroned as pilot to the truth.
His short gray beard and beaming eye

Adorned his shapely head so well,
That all who saw could feel his pow'r,
'Twas there I learned how small, indeed,
Were man's most lofty aspirations;
I saw how little he could know
Of what the universe might teach.
While thus I pondered what I heard,
And recognized the magnitude
Of what the world alone contained,
My mind went forth with eagerness
To grasp what little I could find
Of value to my future life.
The halls through which my aimless steps
Were keeping pace with drifting thoughts
Seemed far too narrow for my soul
That longed to take some higher flight.
One morn with heart oppressed with woe,
I wandered forth to view the sweet
Sublimity of earth and sky.
The joyousness of spring had come;
Upon the breeze I recognized
The perfume of her gentle breath,
And looking forth ambition rose,
To long for more than I could hope
This mortal dust would ever be.
I saw some evidence of life,
Made manifest in tiny plants,
That grew along my winding path,
In soil enriched by former growth,
Which died and fell into decay
To furnish growth for other life.
The plant obtains its food supply
By some strange force which breaks the law

That binds the molecules of rock,
And sand, and unseen substances;
Uniting them in symmetry,
To link the fibres of new forms,
Into delightful harmony.
But one and all must share alike
The fate that leads them to the end;
Death here; death there; and everywhere
Deplored by all, yet none could live,
Should other structures cease to die.
Our own existence comes from death;
That which our bodies have assumed
Is made from fragments of the tomb
Where other creatures went to rest.
While musing in this solemn strain
I turned into the Chapel Hall,
Where oft we met to practice songs,
For entertainments of the week.
I took my place among the choir,
With careless mood to join in hymns
That waked no echo in my heart.
While standing there, the open door
Admitted with a band of friends,
A stately lady, young in years,
Whose face was to myself unknown,
And yet familiar to the rest,
Who greeted her with welcome voice;
I saw her glance one moment fall
Upon my face inquiringly,
And then she turned away to meet
A throng who had surrounded her.
She seemed to be a favored guest,
Among the friends who flocked around,

Admired by those who knew her best,
For dignity and cheerfulness.
She joined our choir and raised a voice,
That rang with richest melody,
Which roused new zeal in all who sang,
And put fresh life into the song.
I felt her magic presence, too,
And set to work more eagerly
To learn what my indifference
Had often led me to neglect.
All else gave way to earnestness
In my attempt to master sounds,
That led my unskilled mind astray
Until it lost itself among
The labyrinth of notes and bars.
Then to my aid this lady came,
Without the arrogance that skill
Sometimes assumes when it is called
To help some poor unfortunate
To gather up the fragments that
His ignorance has scattered wide.
If she had been a flippant girl,
And giggled at my awkwardness,
I would have felt such deep disgust
That nothing could have kept me there.
She did not laugh, but with a look
Of deep concern assisted me.
Her words were comprehensive and
Exact; they made the points so clear
I could not fail to understand;
Yet with such skill she managed this
That more of credit fell to me
By far than that which I deserved.

This was her way of giving help,
And I was quick to recognize
Her measure of civility.
This led us to be better friends;
As days passed on we often met
When we were passing to and fro;
Her kindly greeting was returned
With pleasure and a smile of thanks,
Nor was I likely to forget
Her gracious magnanimity.
Some weeks thus passed away, but still
We seemed to be so far apart
Because of native reticence,
That I could scarcely call her friend.
We met sometimes to practice, too,
When labor for the day had ceased,
Between the hours of four and sev'n,
And she was leader of the choir.
It seemed a preconcerted thing
Among the rest, to walk away,
And leave us to converse awhile.
'Twas there I learned the depth of soul
That crowned a noble character,
Her close discernment led to truth,
And I bestowed my high esteem
On her superiority.
We talked of music and we sang,
Because I felt my need of that
Which elevates the soul of man,
And leaves it higher than it was
Before it knew the pow'r of song,
While she was pleased to be my guide;
Most kind yet dignified withal;

A trait I much admired in her.
Although thus often left alone,
I did not dream that it could be
The slightest thought would cross her mind
In which my life had interest.
One day my class-mates stood around
And one approached me with a smile
That seemed to glow with earnestness;
He said: "Dear boy, you must be blind,
Or careless, or indifferent,
That you should idle precious time
Away, when such a prize is near;
She is a jewel, rarely found,
Which we have often tried to win
From that seclusion which she throws
Around her in society,
But she has steadily refused,
And waits for your attending steps
To see her safely through the crowds
That gather in the busy street.
Although her stately modesty
Would not reveal the fact to you,
We know it can be nothing else
That keeps her from society.
She loves to talk and sing with us,
And treats our words with courtesy,
But of us, has no favored one.
Confusion overspreads her face
When moved by impulse we have sought
Her side without encouragement;
For if a thought comes to our minds,
With hopes of her companionship,
She seems to read it in our eyes,

And strives to check the words that rise,
In order to avoid the pain
That her refusals give to us
As well as to her noble self.
But when we speak in spite of this,
She answers with such chosen words
That her dismissals are by far
More sweet, than when consent has come,
From lips less modest than her own.
Thus has she treated everyone,
Who has been bold enough to ask.
You are not bound by other ties,
And since we all have been denied
The pleasure of her company,
You, too, must be as one of us,
Or win the prize that we have lost.”
“My friends, I know not what to say
To such extended speech as this,
For you astonish me so much,
And waken thoughts of what has passed
Between us when we sat alone
And sang until the eve had come;
But no encouragement appeared,
In word or deed, on which to build
Presumption that such high regard
Would be bestowed upon myself.
I do not think that she will pause
To waste a moment’s thought on me;
And I assure you one and all
I did not dream of seeking her
In order to monopolize
Her elevating faculties;
Nor have I noticed that she keeps

Herself aloof from company.
Nay, more, my friends, I am constrained
To think your judgment goes astray.
If she refuses better men,
What hopes have I? Now, rest assured,
That she is true to former ties,
And would not break them for the world.”
“Not so! Not so! Thou infidel!
We all believe that she but waits
The kind attendance of your steps,
Nor will our minds be satisfied
Until, at least, you shall attempt
To prove that this is otherwise.”
“Friend Walter, you have made me feel
That it is sacrilege to speak
Thus openly of ladies’ hearts;
No man could feel with greater pride,
That he was honored by her choice,
If what you say were patent truths;
But now I pray you say no more,
Nor shall I think the less of you
In whom I recognize the germ
Of greatness if you live aright,
And strive to be a noble man.”
This my answer took effect,
And their withdrawal left behind
A hope that what they said was true.
I could recall a thousand things
Which I had passed unnoticed, till
The idle chatter of my friends
Had turned my wakened thoughts to them.
The mobile face and drooping eyes,
And other signs that I was pleased

To think my presence had aroused
To indicate her high esteem.
How much more at his ease one feels
When in the presence of a friend
To whom he gives his high regard
But not supremacy of love,
Than when he rises face to face
With her, to whom affection turns
With that deep current of the soul,
Which urges men to higher life.
His love will oft betray itself
In some unconscious act that tells
More than he cares to have revealed.
In thoughts like these I found such food
As led me more and more to seek
From her some hopeful evidence,
That what I heard contained the truth.
I half believed it, yet I feared
That I might take a hasty step,
And fail and fall in my attempt.
For weeks I fought against the hope
That rose and would not be repressed.
What right had I to seek a bride?
With no employment and no wealth,
Could I expect to win her love
From those who were superior,
In points of talent, wealth and fame?
And yet my spirit urged me on,
In spite of that which seemed to bar
Me from the slightest chance to gain
What others failed to make secure.
Vacation came. The college halls
No longer echoed to the tread

Of many feet, for they had gone,
In haste to their respective homes.
A few lone stragglers, like myself,
Still lingered round the grand old place,
To while away the lonesome days.
The summer season had appeared,
And with it such oppressive heat
As June is almost sure to bring.
With coat removed and windows raised,
To get more coolness from the air,
I sat with book and fan in hand
Reflecting on the strange events
That sometimes bring congenial souls
So near that they can almost feel
The hope their spirits entertain,
But sinks and perishes before
That happy union is complete.
Before me stood the maple grove,
Whose shadows fell upon the lawn,
Where lay the adjuncts of croquet.
A cooling breeze, came from that shade,
And gave such sweetness to the place,
That I was longing for a chance
To exercise my languid limbs
By playing with some skillful hand,
When lo! Beneath their canopy,
As if my thoughts had called them forth,
Two ladies dressed in white appeared,
And what was more to my surprise,
The object of my thoughts was there;
More beautiful than she had seemed
At any time since I had seen
Her first appearance in the school.

The play commenced, but aimlessly,
And once I saw them cast a glance
At me and whisper to themselves
A few decisive sentences,
As in resentment of what seemed
To be my studied selfishness;
And I was pleased to understand
That they had meant it to convey
An invitation to come forth
To join them in their evening sport.
I rose and laid aside my book;
Prepared my toilet and went down
To while away an hour or two.
They greeted me most cordially,
For time passed slowly to themselves,
And they were glad of any change.
The game began. So skillfully
I managed it, my friend would win
Without betraying my design.
She seemed so graceful in the art,
As triumph glowed upon her face,
That I was more and more inclined
To act upon my late advice,
And try to win her for my own.
The summer evening settled down
With more of comfort in the air,
Than June is sometimes wont to bring,
And when we ceased to play, her friend
Excused herself and left us there.
Our conversation turned to books,
To music, and artistic skill.
'Twas then I learned that she would play
On Tuesday evening at a church

Quite distant from the College Hall,
And then I offered my escort,
Which she accepted graciously.
And thus our happiness began!
The Fall and Winter came and fled.
And while they passed I learned to love,
With such devotion as few souls
On earth are destined to enjoy.
It seemed to me that she returned
My favors, but uncertainty
Restrained the words I longed to speak.
The time for parting came at last,
And then I told her of my love;
How it had grown by slow degrees,
Until at last it mastered me,
And I no longer could refrain
From asking her to be my wife.
She answered a few precious words
That I have treasured through these years,
But she requested time to think
Before her answer would be given;
'Till Christmas time, almost a year,
And then if we were true at heart
She would reply to my request.
We parted, and my secret joy
Made everything more beautiful.
The time passed by and Christmas eve
Did bring the answer I desired
And which I felt and knew would come.
My college days were not complete,
But June would see me through at last;
And that should be our wedding day,
On which I left those stately halls,
To battle with a stubborn world.

I did not see her frequently,
For she no longer studied there,
But was employed in that great work
Of training younger minds the way
To live and move in higher life.
One Friday evening, bright and clear,
When she had finished all her work,
She came to visit with a friend,
Whose kindness she had often praised,
When we would talk of happy days.
I met her there, and there I learned
That she had chosen me that morn,
When first she entered Chapel Hall,
To be her lifelong champion,
Provided that I proved to be
A worthy object of esteem.
The more she met and talked with me
The greater seemed to grow her love.
This led me fully to discuss
The meager plans that we had made
For our approaching wedding day.
No man could be more highly blessed
With happiness than I was then;
For as we parted at the gate,
She put her arms around my neck,
And fondly pressed her first sweet kiss
Upon my lips and said "Good Bye."
A week passed by and as I stood
Beside a feeble classmate's bed,
I knew that soon his eyes would close
Forever on this busy world,
And then I wondered if his heart
Had ever felt such love as mine.

He died, and we were called to see
His manly form laid in the tomb.
Our sorrows could not be repressed
For he was best beloved of all
The band that gathered in those halls.
On Wednesday I returned in time
To look upon another face,
Which long acquaintance had made dear,
Before the grave forever closed
Above that manly countenance,
And as I gazed again I asked
If he had been so blessed as I;
And wondered how her heart must ache
Whose love had been his sweetest dream.
O God, it must be hard to die
With happiness like mine in view!
Next day at noon I hasten up
To write a letter to my love,
And as I swiftly passed along
The open hall to reach my room,
I heard a voice that called me back;
I turned and saw approaching me
Her cousin Howard, tall and strong,
Whose hand I grasped with pleasant words,
And asked what news he brought from home;
He seemed afraid to speak to me!
"Have you bad news?" I cried in haste;
"The worst news possible for you,"
He said and turned his face away:
"My Cousin has been burned to death!"
"Great God!"

* * * * *

I scarcely know what happened next;

I did not ask where, when or how,
But sought my room and cast myself
Upon my bed in agony,
And afterward I learned the truth.
On Wednesday at the hour of three,
While I was bending o'er the grave
Of one poor mortal, I had lost
The dearest being earth could hold,
For one who loved as I had loved.
What awful bitterness was in my heart!
Since she was gone; beloved friend!
Forever gone from mortal sight!
And I will see her form no more
With all its grace and loveliness,
Among the hosts that move along
The paths my weary feet must tread.
I cannot see her move about
The places that we knew so well;
Where her sweet presence calmed my soul,
And led my mind to higher thoughts
Than those that savored of the world.
Her youthful heart was true as steel,
And it still seems so very strange
That she, whose days of usefulness
Gave promise to such noble work,
Should perish by the flames that warmed
The blood which flowed along her veins.
Now as I walk where once we strolled,
Each pleasing each by some new thought,
That moved our minds to lofty flights,
And made us more than common mould.
By these my hands are taught to write
This tribute to her memory;

Well knowing that the hours employed
In such portrayal of the past
Will not be spent in idleness.
Nor can the reader of these lines
Bring much of censure up to bear
Against the weight of pain, which I
Am left to carry through the world.
My troubled heart beats fearfully,
When countless scenes of joy and mirth,
Where she has reigned the happy queen,
Come to my soul in its despair.
So young and full of gracious ways!
So versed in letters and in art!
So skillful in so many ways!
My nerves are shaken by her fall.
As adoration fills my breast,
And love is strengthened by each tear,
I see the books her hands prepared!
I see the landscape they portrayed!
I see her skill a hundred fold,
Beyond my living idol's self,
And love her in the narrow grave,
More than my soul had ever dreamed.
How could she leave me here alone,
When youth was bounding in her blood,
To give her all her soul could wish;
To make complete her joys on earth?
Alas! Her form is laid away,
In chilling darkness of the grave.
Her spirit guides my wand'ring feet;
Its presence seems to touch my heart,
And point ambition to its goal;
Sweet thoughts of her unchanging love,

Direct the tenor of my way,
And shut the passions of my mind
In this frail form of living clay.
Ah, what am I, since she is gone?
I do not hope to meet again
A form as matchless as her own!
Or hear a voice that thrills my pulse
With such devotion as I gave
To all her noble qualities.
Now, naught remains but Memory.
How sweet that is; how bitter too,
Since it reveals my hopelessness.
Of what avail are my sweet thoughts,
Since they are hidden in the mind,
And only end in wretchedness?
Her image, there upon the wall,
Looks down in pity on my woe;
A shade of sadness fills her eye.
How often have I marked that look,
When she was walking at my side;
Her face appeared to be so sad
That it, indeed, foretold her fate.
Oft in my letters I have said
That some calamity would come
To rob us of each other's love,
How much her life was like a flow'r,
Which blooms in fragrance for a while,
Then falls again to Mother Earth,
To bring new beauties from the soil.
When meditations came, no doubt,
To raise her spirit into bliss,
The fiendish flames encircled her,
And caught her reason in their flash,

While Fear supplied her with its wings,
To fly to an untimely death.
Her fright was such, that by the way,
She could not see the element
That would have saved her from the fiend.
The ready stream was at her feet,
But could not give one drop to quench
The flames that lapped life's blood up.
One thought of it and she would still
Be numbered with her friends on earth.
O, God, hadst Thou inspired that thought,
My future life would be one day
Of boundless thankfulness to Thee!
Why do I rail at God's neglect,
And thus forget His constant love?
With all the mercies that come forth,
From that unfailing source of power.
Yet can I keep from feeling pain,
When I recall the happy scenes
Which led me to such unselfish love
As falls to few men here below—
The love that angels give to men?
My woe breaks forth with greater force,
Since Death has claimed her for his own.
Her earthly pleasures and her pains,
Were passports to the joys of Heav'n;
And yet her death, without a word
To show that she had thoughts of me,
Is terrible to contemplate.
I, who had planned a sweet surprise,
To make her fond heart leap for joy.
I thought of her and wrote to her,
But when I penned those lines of love
Her patient soul had passed away.

My heart was beating at the thought
That she was happy and content;
No shadow of her doleful fate
Disturbed my peaceful rest that night,
But sweetest slumbers touched my brow
And visions of her lovely face
Made glad my heart with happiness,
While Death had touched her with his hand.
O Soul, how could you sleep so sound!
How could your fancy yield such joy,
When she was in the shroud of Death!
But thus it is, unconsciously
We sleep and dream while evils come
To other hearts as good as ours;
And grief and pain assail mankind
In countless forms and rise supreme,
Above our weak attempts to stay
The tide of man's fatality,
Which leads us to the mouldy tomb
Where all the mortal part of man
Decays and passes back to dust.
Thus Death, with pinions poised above,
Is ever ready to swoop down
Upon our unsuspecting heads,
Or take away our dearest friends
By means that are too horrible
For finite minds to comprehend.
I sometimes wonder why it is,
That some are blessed with happiness
From silken cradles to dark graves,
And nothing came into their lives
To mar its pleasure or give pain,
While others meet, at every step,

Some horror that brings misery,
And woe and hopelessness to crush
The joys which make this life sublime.
The innocent do not escape,
But often are compelled to bear
The consequence of others' faults.
If only those who were to blame
Would suffer for their carelessness,
Perhaps the world would see a change,
And reckless men would soon be scarce
Is it not strange that men will dare
The toils of Death, and when one falls,
Another springs to take his place,
Each feeling confident that he
Will win, though others may have failed?
We walk along and at each step
We crush the life from some frail thing;
While we, in turn, are set upon
By Nature in a thousand forms,
To fall as victims of her might.
Machines unnumbered, break the ties
That bind the spirit to the flesh,
And set it free; nor is this all,
The storms and passions of mankind
Are far more ruinous than these,
And bring destruction to more lives
Than all the other forces joined.
Death is the wages of man's sin!
And Sin is awful to behold!
Each day records his horrid deeds;
Each night is witness to his crimes.
Where will it end? What will befall
Poor man in ages yet to come?

Is crime decreasing in our land,
And will the race at last be saved
From all the horrors Death can bring?
We cannot shun him when he comes,
Whatever be his dreadful form;
Though he may come in flames and smoke,
Or in the whirlwind's dreadful roar;
Though he may strike us in the midst
Of joy, when life is in its prime;
Or steal upon us in old age,
When Slumber wraps his chains
Around us in our downy beds.
What Death can be so horrible,
As that which strikes us suddenly,
When Youth and health have laid their schemes
For years of pleasure unalloyed?
Thus had I planned my future life,
With her whose innocence deserved
To sink into that calm repose,
Which angels bring, instead of Death
That brings such horror and such pain,
As my beloved endured.
What thoughts came rushing through her mind
To touch with woe unspeakable,
The tender cords of her sweet youth?
I cannot guess, nor none can know,
Until that happy time shall come,
When minds shall be like open books,
Which we can read without the screen
That life has thrown between us here.
I never shall forget my love!
O God! I feel like cursing Thee
In my despair. How desolate

My aching heart henceforth will be;
How can I bow and worship Thee,
Since Thou did not stretch forth Thy hand
To save her from such cruel death.
No, I'll not curse Thee, whom she loved;
To whom she prayed with fervency.
But I will think sweet thoughts of her,
A peerless gem of womanhood;
Pure as the morning dew that falls
Upon the flow'rs o'er her grave.
She sleeps beneath that little mound
Where naught can raise her from her rest,
Or call her to the world again.
How shall I live without the dream
That held my soul to Mother Earth,
Since half my spirit fled with hers,
Into that home of perfect bliss,
Where death and partings are no more.
Her fate was terrible, indeed!
I pray none else may suffer so!
There is a death so calm and sweet,
And peaceful when it comes to us,
That it is welcome to our arms.
No wasting forms; no long suspense;
But calmly we may pass away,
To join with those who went before,
And wait for us with outstretched arms;
Then we can say with thankful hearts:
"Farewell to Earth! Farewell to pain!
And welcome to the joys of Heaven!"

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