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SELECTIONS FROM  
 ADELAIDE A. PROCTER

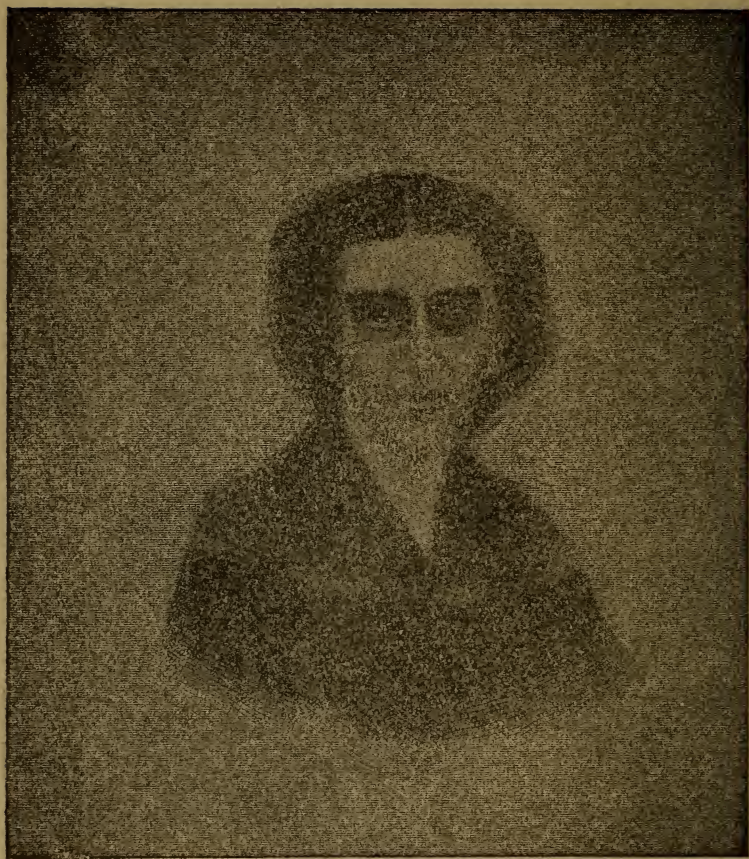
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ADELAIDE A. PROCTER

The Lakeside Series of English Readings

SELECTIONS

FROM THE WRITINGS OF

ADELAIDE A. PROCTER

11

WITH NOTES AND QUESTIONS



CHICAGO

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## PREFACE

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It is a generally admitted fact that intellectual and moral culture, exclusive of the religious sentiment, is a failure. It is equally true that the world is now turning to the Catholic Church as to its bulwark against "the fierce on-coming and all-levelling powers of universal destruction," therefore it becomes more and more imperative to muster the forces that society expects to find in the body to whose guardianship the faith has been confided.

Catholic educators have the responsibility. Their best weapon is literature. Though Catholic authors are not given the highest places in literary honors, they should not be denied worthy consideration. They give soulful expression to the true and the beautiful, and by these the mind is captivated and the heart won. Other purpose than this, literature has none.

To render this agency for ennobling thought more effectual by familiarizing young minds with pure and beautiful imagery, these studies have been prepared; and a brief and simple form has been adopted that the wants of our Catholic preparatory schools may be supplied. Drawn from Catholic sources, the selections are pregnant with those supernatural motives that faith inspires,—motives discovering the joy in righteousness and unselfish aims, and realizing the Christian's obligation and destiny, as learned from the first page of the Catechism—"Man was created to reverence, adore, love, and serve God in this world and thus be happy with Him forever in the next."

If their message be thus understood, the poet's art will have its recompense, the compiler's work its bountiful reward.

THE COMPILER





# INTRODUCTION

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ADELAIDE A. PROCTER

(1825-1864)

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The many messages of love and duty given to the English speaking world through the pen of Adelaide A. Procter were collected into one volume and published in the year 1858. It speaks highly for these poems that the introduction was written by Charles Dickens, an intimate friend of the poet's father Bryan Waller Procter, (Barry Cornwall), well known in literary and

**Life** social circles. Miss Procter's poems received Dickens's unbiased appreciation as all her communication with him, as a writer, was carried on by letter under the assumed name of Miss Mary Berwick.

From his introduction we take this short sketch of her life.

"Miss Procter was born in Bedford Square, London, the 30th of October, 1825. Her love of poetry was conspicuous at a very early age, a tiny

album made of small note paper, into which her favorite passages were copied for her by her mother's hand before she herself could write, she carried about as another little girl would carry a doll. She soon displayed remarkable memory and great quickness of apprehension. As soon as she had completely vanquished the difficulties of any one branch of study she passed to another. It was not at all suspected in her family that she had any gift of authorship. Her father had no idea of her having ever attempted to turn a rhyme, until her first little poem saw the light in print."

She became a Catholic in 1851. Many of her poems portray the anxious desires of a soul seeking rest in the peace of God. When she had become famous, and opportunities were opening on every side, her health began to fail, and in 1862 she was seized by the malady which brought her short life to a close, Feb. 2, 1864.

In 1858, Miss Procter's "Legends and Lyrics," in two series, and "A Chaplet of Verses," numbering about one hundred and seventy poems were published. Of these "A Lost Chord" is, perhaps, the best known, although the verses, "A Doubting Heart," have great merit and there is fine word-painting in "A Tomb in Ghent." Her

short poems, "One by One," "Our Titles," "The Tyrant and the Captive," and "The Angel's Story" are familiar to many. "The

**Works** Legend of Provence" and "The Sailor Boy" are her longest poems, both of them characteristic and worthy.

"There are two theories regarding poetry. One of these theories is that genius is rare, recondite, unusual; that its creations are, by the very nature of things, little likely to be appreciated. Another theory says genius is that which possesses the faculty of incarnating universal affections in a type readily and instinctively appropriated by the imagination. The poems we are now considering [Miss Procter's] which have won general admiration wherever they are known, belong to the latter class. Their simple, delicate beauty appeals alike to men and women, and to the soul of the young child; their transparent clearness is that of an unusually lucid intellect; their profoundness is only that of a believing heart. They are popular

**Criticisms** because they are instinct with dainty feminine genius, and reach the hearts of others with the sure, precise touch of slender fingers awakening the silver chords of a harp."—*Catholic World*, March, 1866.

Of Miss Procter, Charles Dickens wrote: "In the the spring of 1853 I observed a short poem among the proffered contributions, very different, as I thought, from the shoal of verse perpetually setting through the office, and possessing much more merit." Genius recognized genius.

"'A Lost Chord'" is one of the most characteristic of Miss Procter's poems; she need have written but these few lines to claim her place among the true poets, for in this sweet song we find the distinguishing mark of every poetical soul—an exquisite perception of beauty and the sense of completeness which every true lover of the beautiful feels. There is a strong resemblance between Mrs. Hemans and Miss Procter, but Miss Procter's poems have a force and vigor that Mrs. Hemans's have not. Miss Procter has strength in sweetness."—*Champlain Educator*.

"Her [Miss Procter's] works will not suffer by comparison with E. B. Browning, or those of any other woman singer in the English language."—*Dictionary of Catholic Authors*.

## A LOST CHORD

"A Lost Chord" is a lyric, belonging to the class called reflective. It reveals the finite seeking the Infinite, the restless soul yearning for repose in the one source of true peace. Miss Procter has written many poems of the same tenor,— "Per Lucem ad Pacem," "A Shadow," "Phantoms and the Golden Gate," "Golden Days," and others. Their sentiment forcibly

**Class** reminds one of the saying of the great St. Augustine, "For Thyself, O God, Thou hast made us, and our hearts will be restless till they rest in Thee." Those who read Miss Procter's poems should not suppose from their tone that her mind was of a gloomy or despondent cast. She was exceedingly humorous, and appreciated this quality in others, as may be seen from the letters she wrote to her family from Turin while visiting that city in 1853.

Miss Procter's poems exemplify the mission of woman, namely, to make the world better, to realize the true, and to beautify the good. The

particular purpose of this poem, "A Lost Chord,"  
is to strengthen our hope in the

**Style** expectation of Eternal Peace. The  
style is simple. The emotion de-  
scribed is expressed with a pleasing naturalness  
and originality in polished and harmonious diction.

The poem contains seven four-line stanzas, with  
trimeter, hypermeter and trimeter

**Verse** verses alternating. The meter is  
mixed iambic.

A LOST CHORD

---

Seated one day at the organ,  
I was weary and ill at ease,  
And my fingers wandered idly  
Over the noisy keys.

5 I do not know what I was playing,  
Or what I was dreaming then;  
But I struck one chord of music,  
Like the sound of a great Amen.

It flooded the crimson twilight,  
10 Like the close of an Angel's Psalm,  
And it lay on my fevered spirit  
With a touch of infinite calm.

It quieted pain and sorrow,  
Like love overcoming strife;  
15 It seemed the harmonious echo  
From our discordant life.

It linked all perplexéd meanings  
Into one perfect peace,  
And trembled away into silence,  
20 As if it were loth to cease.

I have sought, but I seek it vainly,  
That one lost chord divine,  
Which came from the soul of the Organ,  
And entered into mine.

25 It may be that Death's bright angel  
Will speak in that chord again;  
It may be that only in Heaven  
I shall hear that grand Amen.



## INCOMPLETENESS

“Incompleteness” is one of Miss Procter’s “beautiful lyrics, full of the melody of rhythm, and having its source in the fine instinct of the poet’s ear.” In this poem, with the far-reaching genius of the philosopher, she has grasped with power and handled with skill the idea of the finite reaching its perfection in the fulfilment of its prototype in the Divine Mind.

**Classification** As the smoothness of the diction attracts the ear, the truth and beauty of the thought captivate the heart, and this poem, like many of her other verses, “is destined to float on the surface of English literature with the same secure buoyancy as Herrick’s Daffodils.”

The poet’s lesson bears a message to every reflecting mind. The changes of the world of sense and soul, both are but the development of the power inherent in every phase of creation for a

“fuller, higher beauty than its own.” The Divine Master made a formal statement of **The Lesson** this evident truth in those impressive words, “Unless the grain falling into the ground die, it of itself remaineth alone.”

The purpose then of the poet is to show the onward and upward working of all nature that “leads to further sweetness.” The keynote of the poem lies in the lines:—

“Learn the mystery of Progression duly:  
Do not call each glorious change, Decay;  
But know we only hold our treasures truly,  
When it seems as if they passed away.”

The rich undercurrent of thought in these stanzas brings us in touch with the realities of life. We feel, instinctively, the truth of the lesson there conveyed in a clear, strong, and graceful style. It is one of those poems having “that **Style** short felicity of expression and that perfect finish in their parts, that cause such poems to abide in the memory.” From beneath the verdure of Spring we anticipate with the poet the bright Summer’s gorgeous flowers; or, in fancy we follow the falling blossom’s fair promise of ripening fruit that Autumn’s hand will yield. Again the poet leads us to the threshold of

day to watch the fair dawn develop into glorious sunlight, or in the dim twilight to witness the gathering gloom evolve into starry night. Higher still ascends our poet in the chain of Incompleteness when she notes the mysterious contrast between smile and frown, sorrow and joy in the progress of human life. Then soaring aloft to the source of the Infinite she links the human with the divine, where alone is found completeness.

Incompleteness contains seven four line stanzas of mixed trochaic pentameter, rhyming alternately. The irregularities that occur do not detract from the music of the verse.

**Structure  
of Verse**

## INCOMPLETENESS

Nothing resting in its own completeness  
 Can have worth or beauty; but alone  
 Because it leads and tends to further sweetness,  
 Fuller, higher, deeper than its own

- 5 Spring's real glory dwells not in the meaning,  
 Gracious though it be, of her blue hours;  
 But is hidden in her tender leaning  
 To the Summer's richer wealth of flowers.

- Dawn is fair, because the mists fade slowly'  
 10 Into day, which floods the world with light;  
 Twilight's mystery is so sweet and holy  
 Just because it ends in starry Night.

- Childhood's smiles unconscious graces borrow  
 From Strife, that in a far-off future lies;  
 15 And angel glances (veiled now by Life's sorrow)  
 Draw our hearts to some belovéd eyes.

- Life is only bright when it proceedeth  
 Towards a truer, deeper Life above;  
 Human Love is sweetest when it leadeth  
 20 To a more divine and perfect Love.

Learn the mystery of Progression duly;  
Do not call each glorious change, Decay;  
But know we only hold our treasures truly,  
When it seems as if they passed away.

- 25 Nor dare to blame God's gifts for incompleteness;  
In that want their beauty lies; they roll  
Towards some infinite depth of love and sweetness,  
Bearing onward man's reluctant soul.

## THE ANGEL'S STORY

---

[“The Angel’s Story” is a beautiful narrative of heaven-rewarded charity. The poor little urchin to whom a child of luxury had in pity given a bunch of “reddest roses,” perished with the fading blossoms. Afterwards, he came as the “radiant angel” to visit his dying benefactor, and in gratitude bore him to heaven.]

Through the blue and frosty heavens  
 Christmas stars were shining bright;  
 Glistening lamps throughout the City  
 Almost matched their gleaming light;  
 While the winter snow was lying,  
 And the winter winds were sighing,  
 Long ago, one Christmas night.

\* \* \* \* \*

Yet one house was dim and darkened;  
 Gloom, and sickness, and despair,  
 Dwelling in the gilded chambers,  
 Creeping up the marble stair,  
 Even stilled the voice of mourning—  
 For a child lay dying there.

\* \* \* \* \*

The skill of that mighty City  
To save one little life was vain,—  
One little thread from being broken,  
One fatal word from being spoken;  
Nay, his very mother's pain,  
And the mighty love within her,  
Could not give him health again.

\* \* \* \* \*

Suddenly an unseen Presence  
Checked those constant moaning cries,  
Stilled the little heart's quick fluttering,  
Raised those blue and wondering eyes.  
Fixed on some mysterious vision,  
With a startled sweet surprise.

For a radiant angel hovered,  
Smiling o'er the little bed;  
White his raiment; from his shoulders  
Snowy dove-like pinions spread,  
And a starlike light was shining  
In a Glory round his head.

While with tender love, the angel,  
Leaning o'er the little nest,  
In his arms the sick child folding,  
Laid him gently on his breast,  
Sobs and wailings told the mother  
That her darling was at rest.

So the angel, slowly rising,  
    Spread his wings and through the air  
Bore the child, and, while he held him  
    To his heart with loving care  
Placed a branch of crimson roses  
    Tenderly beside him there.

While the child, thus clinging, floated  
    Towards the mansions of the Blest,  
Gazing from his shining guardian  
    To the flowers upon his breast,  
Thus the angel spake, still smiling  
    On the little heavenly guest.

“Know, dear little one, that Heaven  
    Does no earthly thing disdain,  
Man’s poor joys find there an echo  
    Just as surely as his pain;  
Love, on earth so feebly striving,  
    Lives divine in Heaven again!

“Once in that great town below us,  
    In a poor and narrow street,  
Dwelt a little sickly orphan;  
    Gentle aid, or pity sweet,  
Never in life’s rugged pathway  
    Guided his poor tottering feet.



"All the striving anxious forethought  
That should only come with age,  
Weighed upon his baby spirit,  
Showed him soon life's sternest page;  
Grim Want was his nurse, and Sorrow  
Was his only heritage.

\* \* \* \* \*

"One bright day, with feeble footsteps,  
Slowly forth he tried to crawl,  
Through the crowded city's pathways,  
Till he reached a garden-wall,  
Where 'mid princely halls and mansions  
Stood the lordliest of all.

\* \* \* \* \*

"He, against the gate of iron,  
Pressed his wan and wistful face,  
Gazing with an awe-struck pleasure  
At the glories of the place;  
Never had his brightest day-dream  
Shone with half such wondrous grace.

"You were playing in that garden,  
Throwing blossoms in the air,  
Laughing when the petals floated  
Downwards on your golden hair;  
And the fond eyes watching o'er you,  
And the splendor spread before you,  
Told a House's Hope was there.

“When your servants, tired of seeing  
Such a face of want and woe,  
Turning to the ragged orphan,  
Gave him coin, and bade him go,  
Down his cheeks, so thin and wasted,  
Bitter tears began to flow.

“But that look of childish sorrow  
On your tender child-heart fell,  
And you plucked the reddest roses  
From the tree you loved so well,  
Passed them through the stern, cold grating  
Gently bidding him ‘Farewell.’

“Dazzled by the fragrant treasure  
And the gentle voice he heard,  
In the poor forlorn boy’s spirit,  
Joy, the sleeping Seraph, stirred,  
In his hand he took the flowers,  
In his heart the loving word.

“So he crept to his poor garret;  
Poor no more, but rich and bright,  
For the holy dreams of childhood—  
Love, and Rest, and Hope, and Light—  
Floated round the orphan’s pillow  
Through the starry summer night.

Day dawned, yet the visions lasted;  
All too weak to rise he lay;  
Did he dream that none spake harshly,—  
All were strangely kind that day?  
Surely then his treasured roses  
Must have charmed all ills away

“And he smiled, though they were fading  
One by one their leaves were shed:  
‘Such bright things could never perish,  
They would bloom again,’ he said.  
When the next day’s sun had risen  
Child and flowers both were dead.

“Know, dear little one! our Father  
Will no gentle deed disdain;  
Love on the cold earth beginning  
Lives divine in Heaven again,  
While the angel hearts that beat there  
Still all tender thoughts retain.”

So the angel ceased, and gently  
O'er his little burden leant;  
While the child gazed from the shining,  
Loving eyes that o'er him bent,  
To the blooming roses by him,  
Wondering what that mystery meant.

Thus the radiant angel answered  
And with tender meaning smiled;  
"Ere your childlike, loving spirit,  
Sin and the dark world defiled,  
God has given me leave to seek you,—  
I was once that little child!"

\* \* \* \* \*

In the churchyard of that city  
Rose a tomb of marble rare,  
Decked, as soon as Spring awakened,  
With her buds and blossoms fair,—  
And a humble grave beside it,—  
No one knew who rested there.

## THE NAMES OF OUR LADY

[Like every true child of genius, Miss Procter finds her tenderest sentiments in religious expression. Her hymns and poems are the outpourings of the love of God and His holy Mother. With the true Faith she imbibed a tender love for Mary.

Her lines on "The Names of Our Lady" show her heartfelt and varied devotion to our Immaculate Queen.]

Through the wide world thy children raise  
Their prayers, and still we see  
Calm are the nights and bright the days  
Of those who trust in thee.

Around thy starry crown are wreathed  
So many names divine;  
Which is the dearest to my heart,  
And the most worthy thine?

*Star of the Sea:* we kneel and pray  
When tempests raise their voice;  
Star of the Sea! the haven reached,  
We call thee and rejoice.

*Help of the Christian:* in our need  
Thy mighty aid we claim;  
If we are faint and weary, then  
We trust in that dear name.

*Our Lady of the Rosary:*

What name can be so sweet  
As what we call thee when we place  
Our chaplets at thy feet.

*Bright Queen of Heaven:* when we are sad,  
Best solace of our pain:—  
It tells us though on earth we toil,  
Our Mother lives and reigns.

*Our Lady of Mount Carmel:* thus  
Sometimes thy name is known;  
It tells us of the badge we wear,  
To live and die thine own.

*Our Lady Dear of Victories:*  
We see our faith oppressed,  
And, praying for our erring land,  
We love that name the best.

*Refuge of Sinners:* many a soul,  
By guilt cast down, and sin,  
Has learned through this dear name of thine  
Pardon and peace to win.

*Health of the Sick:* when anxious hearts  
Watch by the sufferer's bed,  
On this sweet name of thine they lean,  
Consoled and comforted,

*Mother of Sorrows:* many a heart  
Half broken by despair  
Has laid its burden by the Cross  
And found a mother there.

*Queen of all Saints:* the Church appeals  
For her loved dead to thee;  
She knows they wait in patient pain  
A bright eternity.

*Fair Queen of Virgins:* thy pure band,  
The lilies round thy throne,  
Love the dear title which they bear  
Most that it is thine own.

*True Queen of Martyrs:* if we shrink  
From want, or pain, or woe,  
We think of the sharp sword that pierced  
Thy heart, and call thee so.

*Mary:* the dearest name of all,  
The holiest and the best;  
The first low word that Jesus lisped  
Laid on His Mother's breast.

*Mary:* the name that Gabriel spoke,  
The name that conquers hell;  
*Mary:* the name that through high heaven  
The angels love so well.

*Mary*—our comfort and our hope,—  
O, may that word be given  
To be the last we sigh on earth,—  
The first we breathe in heaven.



QUOTATIONS FROM MISS PROCTER

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“ Know, dear little one! our Father  
 Will no gentle deed disdain;  
 Love on the cold earth beginning  
 Lives divine in Heaven again,  
 While the angel hearts that beat there  
 Still all tender thoughts retain.”

—*Angel's Story.*

Judge not; the workings of his brain  
 And of his heart thou canst not see;  
 What looks to thy dim eyes a stain,  
 In God's pure light may only be  
 A scar, brought from some well-won field,  
 Where thou wouldst only faint and yield.

—*Judge Not.*

One by one thy duties wait thee,  
 Let thy whole strength go to each,  
 Let no future dreams elate thee,  
 Learn thou first what these can teach.

—*One by One.*

Rise! for the day is passing,  
 And you lie dreaming on;  
 The others have buckled their armor,  
 And forth to the fight are gone:  
 A place in the ranks awaits you,  
 Each man has some part to play;  
 The Past and the Future are nothing;  
 In the face of the stern to-day.

—*Now.*

Let thy gold be cast in the furnace,  
 Thy red gold, precious and bright;  
 Do not fear the hungry fire  
 With its caverns of burning light;  
 And thy gold shall return more precious,  
 Free from every spot and stain;  
 For gold must be tried by fire,  
 As a heart must be tried by pain.

—*Cleansing Fires.*

Pray; though the gift you ask for  
 May never comfort your fears,  
 May never repay your pleading,  
 Yet pray, and with hopeful tears;  
 No real Poet ever wove in numbers  
 All his dream; but the diviner part,  
 Hidden from all the world, spake to him only  
 In the voiceless silence of his heart.

—*Unexpressed.*

Great may he be who can command  
 And rule with just and tender sway;  
 Yet is diviner wisdom taught  
 Better by him who can obey.

—*Maxims.*

The prayer of those who suffer  
Has the strength of Love and Death.

—*The Tyrant and the Captive.*

God's world has one great echo;  
Whether calm blue mists are curled,  
Or lingering dew-drops quiver,  
Or red storms are unfurled.  
The same deep love is throbbing  
Through the great heart of God's world  
An answer, not that you long for,  
But diviner, will come one day;  
Your eyes are too dim to see it,  
Yet strive, and wait, and pray.

—*Strive, Wait and Pray.*

O, these are voices of the Past,  
Links of a broken chain,  
Wings that can bear me back to times  
Which cannot come again;  
Yet God forbid that I should lose  
The echoes that remain!

—*Voices of the Past.*

Give thy heart's best treasures,  
From fair Nature learn;  
Give thy love—and ask not,  
Wait not a return!  
And the more thou spendest  
From thy little store,  
With a double bounty  
God will give thee more.

—*Give.*

L. of C.

Learn the mystery of Progression duly;  
Do not call each glorious change, Decay;  
But know we only hold our treasures truly  
When it seems as if they passed away.

—*Incompleteness.*

Words are mighty, words are living;  
Serpents with their venomous stings,  
Or bright angels crowding round us,  
With heaven's light upon their wings:  
Every word has its own spirit,  
True or false, that never dies;  
Every word man's lips have uttered  
Echoes in God's skies.

—*Words.*

A little longer still Patience, Beloved:  
A little longer still, ere Heaven unroll  
The Glory and the Brightness and the Wonder,  
Eternal and divine, that waits thy soul!

—*A Little Longer.*

## QUESTIONS

## A LOST CHORD

- 1 Who is the author of "A Lost Chord?"
- 2 From what gifted pen have we a short sketch of her life?
- 3 Which are the best known of Miss Procter's poems?
- 4 What are the characteristics of her poems?
- 5 Why are they popular?
- 6 How does Charles Dickens first receive her poems?
- 7 How does "A Lost Chord" rank among her works?
- 8 To what class of poetry does it belong?
- 9 Which of her other poems are of the same tenor?
- 10 What is the purpose of "A Lost Chord?"
- 11 Describe the style of the poem.
- 12 What forms of stanza and rhyme are used?
- 13 Scan the second stanza.
- 14 Quote the lines from Lowell's "Vision of Sir Launfal" suggested by the first stanza.
- 15 Where does the poet carry you in thought when she speaks of being seated at the organ?
- 16 Why do we associate the organ with the church?
- 17 Could the organist have been playing for any service?
- 18 What lines in this poem recall the words, "Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast?"

- 19 At what hour of the day was she playing?
- 20 What picture rises before the mind with the words:  
    *"It lay on my fevered spirit  
        With a touch of infinite calm?"*
- 21 Explain the paradox in lines 15 and 16.
- 22 What is the "one lost chord divine" which the poet's soul is seeking?"
- 23 When does the poet hope to hear it again?
- 24 Give the origin of the word "Amen."
- 25 What is a psalm?
- 26 Who is the Royal Psalmist? When did he live?
- 27 What is meant by an "Angel's Psalm?"
- 28 What is a chord?
- 29 Who only can give "infinite calm?"
- 30 Point out the figure in lines 23 and 25.
- 31 Why is the word Heaven capitalized?
- 32 Why are the organ keys called "noisy"?
- 33 What mention is made of the organ in history?
- 34 What pictures does this poem create in the imagination?
- 35 Give the keynote of the poem.

QUESTIONS

INCOMPLETENESS

- 1 To what class of poetry does "Incompleteness" belong?
- 2 What lesson does the poem give?
- 3 What is its keynote?
- 4 What is its style?
- 5 Give the structure of the verse.
- 6 In what does the poet say consists the worth and beauty of every created object?
- 7 What is the real glory of the Spring?
- 8 Give the development of the four Seasons.
- 9 In what sense is each year a new creation?
- 10 What hope enhances the beauty of the dawn?
- 11 Of what does the mysterious twilight give promise?
- 12 How do Childhood's smiles borrow unconscious graces from strife?
- 13 Why is it said "Men and women are children of a larger growth?"
- 14 Explain the contrast that lies between "Angel glances" and "Life's sorrow."
- 15 What meaning lies hidden in the 17th and 18th lines of this poem?

- 16 What lines of Longfellow's "Psalm of Life" do they recall?
- 17 In what lines has the poet reached the climax?
- 18 What renders human love perfect?
- 19 By what great mystery of religion has human love become literally divine?
- 20 In what consists the mystery of Progression?
- 21 What figure predominates?
- 22 What beautiful antithesis in the third stanza?
- 23 What transformation does line 22 suggest?
- 24 What is the meaning of the last line?



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