

A PASTORAL POEM,
AND OTHER PIECES.



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A

PASTORAL POEM,

AND

OTHER PIECES.

33
BY JOHN MCGOVERN.



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1882.

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*Upon the sails which urge my ship along
The Architect has writ that all shall sink
Into eternity. I therefore cast
A bottle in the sea.*

TO
MY BELOVED WIFE,
A HASTENING FRIEND,
WHEN EVEN NOBLE DUTY MIGHT HAVE COME
WITH STATELY STEP,
I DEDICATE THESE LINES.

THE AUTHOR.



A PASTORAL POEM.

Immersed in sunshine, tremulous, intense,
Lie depths of wheat, and corn, and pasturage;
And where the acres meet in rivalry,
A miser-pond evades the Sun-King's tithes,
Hiding with lily leaves an envied hoard.
Far off, an oaken family surround
A giant of hard fibre, who has sat
At feast with Time himself, and banqueted
On centuries. There well-fed cattle stand,
Watching unenviously the outer sky,
Where cloud-flocks graze upon the sides of heaven.
Some proud pond Ararat has stayed a plank
And raised it well aslant; upon this perch
A row of turtles bask their checkered backs,
And view with stolid look the overtures
Of nodding reeds and fawning marsh-grass nigh.
The weary wheat-stems stoop like mendicants,
While alien rye-stalks rear their empty heads
To officer the legions massed as close

As Persians were on Marathon. The corn—
 (Just o'er a gray worm-fence where chipmunks romp)
 A green, cockaded host, in phalanx drawn,
 Each soldier armed with many cutlasses—
 Bespeaks the pomp of disciplined array,
 Nor flinches in the fervor of the sun.

O'er all a storm-portending haze; from all,
 A heated perfume—clover, wheat, and corn.

* * * * *

The swanlike clouds that swam with swelling wing
 In tropic, halcyon, horizon seas,
 Have changed to furious cars of war, and drive
 To offer scowling battle with the sun.
 High o'er Andean lines of cloud there looms
 A solemn Chimborazo of the sky,
 And from its avalanching sides flash forth
 The spears of hosts in heavenly ambushade.

The black clouds upward clamber, and the mount
 Attains new height, till now, as Titans mad
 Pile other mountains on too recklessly,
 The upper fabric topples—yet, indeed,
 Some nightmare compromise with gravity
 Leaves Earth uncrushed.*

Anon, a horrid sight
 Hovers on high: The flapping stormcloud seems
 A mighty vampire come to suck the world.

Hotly the archers pour their golden darts
 From parapets of light and battlements
 With glory blazing—dreadlessly and dire
 Not less, their hideous enemy assaults
 The splendid citadel—alas! how soon
 Beleagnèred Day is fallen prisoner!

Now dirgeless shadows in long pageant come,
 Of gloom the celebrants, death-angel-like;
 And as their progress blackens field and pond
 The turtles scramble down in clumsy haste,
 And loyal cornstalks on the distant hill
 Wave goodbys sunward with bright oriflammes.

Down through an air come up from nether earth,
 Forth from the turmoil of inverted seas,
 A fiery force with crash on crash is hurled
 Athwart the reaches of concavity,
 Thrilling all things as if the startled earth
 Rocked in volcanic violence. This signal made,
 The volleys of the pirate squadrons pound'
 Hard on the haughty corn, the modest wheat,
 And on the lily leaves like musketry
 Rattle their crystal bullets. Gusts of air

Chase nimble swirls of rain; through yeasty mists
 A million worlds join to the universe,
 And shackles of white lightning manacle
 The trembling sky. Heaven is an idol-house
 Thick with abominations, and its walls,
 Its lurid walls, are darkened with the shapes
 Of pagan elements in revelry.
 Fiercer the orgy; round the guilty dome
 Rebellious whirlwinds mad in concourse plunge,
 And thunders join the treasonable fray
 Bellowing with insurrection.

* * * * *

The storm recedes, the sun shines out, the clouds,
 Like fallen fortresses, their portals ope
 Before the flight of earthward-hurrying beams—
 And lo! the couriers with their victory!
 The music of the herd comes o'er the mead
 In homely cowbell tones, as rude to-day
 As in Pan's time. The clover-synod kneels—
 Each tiny bishop's mitre lit with gems—
 And pompous rustles fill the aisles of corn,
 As though the wives of modern Pharisees
 Passed to their public prayer. Behind a gorge
 Of ether icebergs Hope, at azure loom,
 In warp of sunrays with a woof of rain,
 Arches her rainbow web upon the black
 That curtains all the east, where crowds the storm.

O NIGHT! O NIGHT!

How bright the carpet where Jehovah strides
His constellations! Hail! O splendid Hour
Complete with glory—all thy Milky Way
Pulsing eternity! Man upward looks;
He looks, and upward aims; and calm-eyed beasts
That sleep not, have thy golden deep for dreams!
Lo I, most miserable of the flesh,
Proclaim within me throbbings of the light
From yonder stars. For I have something starlike
Jealously sentineled, and leashed with heartstrings,
Which when the heavens throw their portals wide
To pay thee, Night, their ceremonial,
Peers forth on each familiar galaxy,
As if those beacons burned for its return.
And as I lay my head at rest, each eve,
Thy oft-recurring mandate to obey,
O! Night, I feel my prisoner more glad,
More confident of his release. Alas!
Why breaks my soul so quickly from my keep?

Why yearns, alas! my body for my soul?
Alas! why does my quivering form belie
Its wretched doom when I upsend my eyes?
O Night! forgive my corporal delight!
Forgive my body's envy of my soul!
Make my poor flesh and blood like calm-eyed beast's,
And let me have thy golden deep for dreams!

1881.

PRIEST OF THE MORNING.

The morning twilight surges through the dome—
The dawn awaits. So has my soul sat still,
And, like this day, full late the beam of peace
Has come from haunts deep in the Eastern stars.
Fierce writhes and coils the Night, and westward rolls
A mass of darkness and despair, a load
To weight a Universe, put on a world!
O life! O God! O sea of orient sky!
There is with me an end of soughing waves!—
An end of casting anchors in mid sea!—
An end of chart without a firmament!
Now Morn uplifts this sinister pavilion;

Now valiant Hope rebukes my soul's confusion ;
Now Joy stands at the gateways of my heart
Guiding the flood. O Sun in hidden heaven !
Whose gold is liveried on thy couriers
The utmost clouds—whose coming carpets Earth
Beauteous with life—whose coming tunes the woods
With warblers' sweet devotions—to my voice,
My ruder song, give rapid messengers—
The invisible acolytes of thy golden fane—
To wing it to yon pillar in the air,
Thy morning altar lit with silver fires !

Accept my offering ; pour thy earliest gold
Out on thy pitiful, who then shall be
All holy-dipped, emerged from Paradise—
A glorious slave, thy shining worshiper !

1881.

DEATH AND MY FELLOWS.

I thought, with selfish thankfulness: "If men
"Were all immortal save myself, how sad,
"How sadly terrible, would be my plight!
"How like the Aztecs' captive I should be—
"A victim for the knife, though loaded down
"With luxuries—if I were hailed each morn
"By brothers of the sun! And, when I died,
"With what astonishment the golden-aged
"Would look upon my corpse! my villain corpse!
"That in their company had flashed a gem
"Which had been stolen—property of soul
"Sought by the Officer!" With thinking this,
I went among my comrades yesterday,
And offered them ambrosia for their locks
And nectar in their cups! I told them all,
That godlike ichor made their countenance
Most pleasurable—their flesh o'er-radiant!
The world smiled like a narrow-sighted babe
That sees, yet can but see, its mother's breast,
And I, poor courtier, sick with giving joy,

Fled toward my dreams last night in dismal dread
That Death should cast his ashes over me,
And never-dying beings bear my pall!

1881.

THE POET.

I.

He sits before a great keyed instrument,
The human heart—built like some Alpine mill
To wheel its echoes to the joyous heights
Or urge them through the gloom. And as he sits,
O'er all the jarrings of the rough red rill
That plunges down to Death, he strikes a chord
And Love reverberates. Pleased with his craft,
He, holding all his keys, with quivering hands
Joins on Affection's softening part, and plies
Sad Duty's stops and lowly harmonies.

Thus flows the psalm of Family and of Home—
The sweetest measures of the poet's art,
Yet on his mystic keyboard, oh! how few
The pipes that play!—how insignificant!

II.

Then comes the flame, the flaming stride of War—
The poet's hearthstone set to head the graves
Of slaughtered sire and son ! Then breaks the storm
From forth the angry pipes ; then comes the roar
Of mighty octaves, wild and haggardly,
With passion-cries of freedom crashed and hurled
In grievous ruin, like some city's sack
Of precious wares. Behold yon tyrant's throne
Set high beyond the hurt of cannon's wrath !—
Yet see it quake !—aye ! 't is an airy thing
To shore the moving deeps of Liberty !

III.

The player trembles like his low-blown reeds,
His hand is weak, the snow drifts through his pipes.
Where breaks that flood which filled the gorge of life
With such sweet-sounding waves that voyagers
Baptized with freshened hearts ?—the gloria !
Why drowns he not with joyous giant chords
The tempest of an unhomed, childless wo ?

Thou heedest not ! The patriarchal ear
Hears from the strains on High some cadences ;
He holds his touch upon the keys thus light
That he may join the Choir in unison.

Behold his aged face (chiseled by Time—
 An evil sculptor, yet a master-hand) !
 Sublime he smiles and strikes the key of heaven,
 Asking of his still noble house of sound
 But this last anthem. Hark ! it swells anew !
 Now breathe in prayer and fall ye on your knees !
 Now lave ye in the holy waves of holy airs !
 The God of Hosts hymns with his wafting worlds—
 Adoring Earth pulsates with Paradise !

1882.

IRKOUTSK TO SAN FRANCISCO.

(*By Telegraph, Dec. 21, 1881.*)

The grinding ices of the central sea
 Closed round our mariners. The continents
 Peered past the circle of the Dipper stars
 Through fog and storm—in fear. Then when the King
 Of Coldland fell upon these venturers
 He crushed their hardy ship within his hand,
 And cast them freezing toward Siberia.

They touch the world again ; and all the world,
Pleased like a mother with her babe at breast,
Trembles with joy. These wonders have we seen
This white-haired year of this hoar century.

Irkutska to Francisco! ah! the road
Has not thus always shrunk to nothingness!
Look on the exile from the Russian's nod,
Who plods, month after month, toward withered hearts,
And sighs for holy Kieff and Moscow's dome
Behind white Ural's skylike barricades !
Think of the Man of Destiny, who stopped
At Borodino's marsh, and sepulchered
His polyglotted host ; and of his flight,
In frosty fever and with starving maw,
Toward burned Smolenska, Beresina's bridge,
And Minska's ashes ! O the pestilence
Of Konigsberg !—the backward swath of death
Two thousand miles ! Pass now to brighter days
For pomp of man—blacker for Liberty !
Hear Eylau's storm ! See man's pale Conqueror
Throw up his tell-tale breastworks on the plain ;
Red Nieman basely coiling round her sons
At Friedland, and the raft of Tilsit, made
To barge the fortunes of a world of slaves !
Pass Jena, Wagram, Austerlitz, and Ulm ;

Make progress through great capitals o'erthrown
To Paris, maniacal city, realm
Best governed by a madman. Next to Spain :
Leave him who flung himself upon a rock
In the Atlantic, and take galleon
With Christopher Columbus ; mutiny
Against his greatness ; urge that he be thrown
Among the floating grasses of the stinking seas ;
Then help him rear the cross on Salvador,
And render thanks that he shall die in rags
Fanged by small envy. Then hear the Savage shriek,
And see him leap the air as rifle-ball
Tears his wild vitals. Smell the forest fires
That keep great landscapes smoking like the pit
Of an impatient hell. And when the oaks
Have sturdily withstood the woodman's blows
Till falls the last of a long dynasty,
Look on the canvas of the pioneer
Spread o'er his peaceful van. Ere long the banks
Of flowing waters point and prophecy
The Patriarchal River. On its hills
That stand a half-mile back and silent prate
About the past, take Fremont's hand, and press
Across the continent. Climb up the peaks
And through the driven snow ; push now for life,
As did the Arctic mariner on Lena's floes :

Toil on, o'er middle deserts ; climb new snows,
 And with the Pathfinder lie down to hear
 The solemn clangor of the Great South Sea.

Irkutska speaks ! How is it that we hear ?
 Did not these labors fall to man's poor lot ?
 Or has this planet had a nightmare dream
 And, starting up, proclaimed it History ?

The *papa* lisped by kissing babe at night
 Did drift on word-waves from Siberia's plains—
 Did journey west, e'en like this telegraph,
 Full twenty thousand miles, and yet did dwell
 Full twenty thousand years upon the way !
 How, then, shall simple songster read these signs ?
 Are scores of thousand zodiacs a jot
 To point God's periods ? Or is a flight
 That jibes at distance, mocks at time, itself
 An essence of the ages, or a soul
 Of dying world ? O God ! I can but see,
 Here in my darkness, that our compass spreads
 Within Thy narrowest metes ; I can but give
 For shortest record in Thy chronicles
 The years our dust shall moon yon noble sun !

The Aryan, this morning, stretched his hand,
 And, o'er a pathway strown with centuries,

Knocked at the Golden Gate ! Such was the act !
 Yet not more fugitive and brief than man !
 Nor yet than his abode, this girdled orb !
 A spark of light, sped by the craft of man ;
 A flash of years hurled from the hand of God—
 So passes man's short history here on earth—
 So passes earth's short history here in heaven !

1881.

TO JOHN PETER LYDIARD.

The leaves will fall upon the green—
 The bard will sigh with grief !
 Yet broader far will be the scene,
 And beautiful each leaf.

Cold years will gather like the night—
 The bard will moan the snow !
 Thine eye the more shall beam with light
 Thy heart the warmer glow.

OBLIVION.

Man whitens into death and lays him down
In dreadful slumber 'neath a roof-like mound
That sinks soon in upon his dust. A stone
His name proclaims a little longer, falls,
And crumbles, having filled an empty use.
Anon the plow rives up the fattened ground,
And harvests press like anxious waves. Then war.
The peaceful plowman flees before a host
Of conquering invaders, come to sack,
And strip, and pillage. Soon the straggling brush
Starts into saplings, and the saplings wax
To solemn woods. Now comes the simple bard,
And peers with wonder in among the trees
That weave their colors with the fragrant air,
And sings: "This is the forest—this must be
"The forest called primeval, and untrod."
Forward the cycles roll—the ax, the fires,
The plow, the harvest moons, the grave, the sword,
The impenetrable councils of the oaks,

And last some circlings of a corse-like orb—
Until the world, a worn and fluttering moth,
Drops in the central conflagration and expires.

1881.

TO H. G. C.

Bird in the woods ! how drear to me
The moaning of the woods will be
When thou dost sing thy morning lay
In fairer forests, far away !

When ermined Winter scowled on thee—
A wandering warbler, sad to see—
Meek was thy mien 'neath his restraint,
Thy plumes were piteous, not thy plaint.

But when the Summer came to thee,
How thou didst swell with melody !
Thy song will ever welcome be
In my sweet-echoing memory.

Bird in the woods ! how mute will be
 These music-throbbing leaves to me
 When owls of envy, hawks of scorn,
 Hoot through the night, rail at the morn !

1882.

THE SPARROW'S TOMB.

A sparrow sank with plaintive wail ;
 " You hurt me, Wind ! " she said ;
 " I kill thee, birdling ! " screamed the gale,
 And fled.

My Mary romped upon the lawn ;
 The place with laughter rang ;
 She glowed with color like the dawn,
 And sang.

A ruffled little corse she found ;
 Her heart more slowly throbb'd ;
 She built a tiny funeral mound,
 And sobbed.

1881.

A SUNSET THOUGHT.

As in the east the clouds one e'en
In solemn pageant bore Night's pall,
There glittered in the west a scene
Which my poor syllables recall.

The sun a rapid red ball rolled
Hard on an undergulf of sky ;
In flames of amethyst and gold
The funeral pyre of Day rose high.

Beneath this radiant sunset view
Cast on the west, a morass lay,
And marshy fogs took pleasing hue
That at the dawn were drear and gray.

To mist and vapors death-distent
With febrile taint, this transient spell
Of solar necromancy lent
The subtle tints of ocean shell.

All heaven with mottled ether gleamed
Flamboyantly before my eyes,

And for a purple moment seemed
The outer walls of Paradise.

Bright waves of liquid jasper hove
On soft Elysian shores of pearl,
And iridescent Evening strove
Her longest pennons to unfurl.

Though I did thrill before this scope
Of genie's principality,
I thought : "The heaven afar is *Hope*,
"The marsh beneath, *Reality*."

1875.

MEMORY.

Our hopes may lie as cold as love fear-sapped —
As ripe to be inhumed oblivion-wrapped —
Yet mournfully we keep them on their biers,
Palled in the shadows of the gloomy years.

Deep in our misty woe we hover prone
Above their corses, and, with bated groan,

The story of their life and death recite
Unto our only friend, the poor, blind Night.

Our wounds are all we have — we love them well ;
Their quickness pleases us — we nurse the spell ;
Not one of us dare crave, for our distress,
The clammy keep of blank Forgetfulness.

1873.

A FRAGMENT.

Elberon, Sept. 19, 1881.

Thou Garfield, on thy narrow cot of death
In linen pall, hast statelier repose
Than any form since mangered Bethlehem.
O ! wake, one moment—wake, if but to hear
A nation's sob of anguish, and a world
Chanting thy mass ! Awake, if but to feel
A people's jealous clamor for thy corse,
Pinched now in piteous misery, aye, and dragged
At Horror's car !

1881.

CLOUDS.

I saw a cloudlet, yestere'en,
 'Paled on a fulgent ray —
A tiny buoy in azure seas,
 A golden thread its stay.

Heaped in the east, to dizzy height,
 Darkening the Evening's red,
A mural front of inky mist
 Scowled o'er the Day's death-bed.

The cloudlet lost its anchoring
 And sailed in beauty free,
To meet its wrath-cowled kin arrayed
 Beyond the ether-sea.

Alas ! in half-an-hour it loomed
 A coign of vantage high
Upon the buttressed battlements
 That fortified the sky.

Gone was its snowy buoyancy —
 Fierce was its craggy form ;

It even threw a pall athwart
The ramparts of the storm.

I have seen joyous human hearts
Lose every loving trait,
And cloak themselves, till Death did come,
In wo, and scorn, and hate.

1873.

A LEAF.

From out the topmost bulb — a budding sentry —
A leaflet spread its green against the blue ;
The songsters heralded its earthly entry,
And it was christened in the Morning's dew.

All through the summer, on an oak that towered
A stately captain of his lordly kind,
It fanned the birdlings in their nest embowered,
Or from their housing turned the churlish wind.

Then Autumn chanting came, in vestments sober,
Bearing the cup of dissolution's lees ;
Forth in the majesty of hazed October,
A withered leaf was hearsed upon the breeze.

1872

A LAKESIDE REVERIE.

As if enticed from out some lustrous sea,
Yon evening star drips with redundant beams.
Forth from the generous east, the rising Moon
Gives silvern charity, while pauper Earth
Laves in her magic smiles, and laughs begemmed.
Down at the hemming of her azure realm
There goeth out afar, and right, and left,
An aqueous glass, compound of stuff so pure
That even mermaids would be chary lest
Their sportings might offend its cleanliness.
Brooched on the rippling offing of this sheet —
A vague remoteness pampered by the gloam —
In watery mimicry her likeness sits ;
The wavelets coming to my feet steal each

From it a tiny load of melting light,
And seem a disciplined procession ; or,
A weird-wove cordage of resplendent strands
Thrown out from shore to give an anchorage,
And held distent in deprecation lest, mayhap,
The image which it fetters free itself
And flee from Evening's court to Dusk's domain.

From out a chapel's walls, back in the town,
An organ's pipes impel rich sound-waves on
To meet the liquid waves that pat the sands ;
Nought but the deep substructure of the strain
Floats to my drowsy ear — it is enough ;
My brain is pleased to conjure up the rest,
And lose itself in harmonies that scorn
The galling harness of acquaintanceship.

Wild, wintry tossings o'er, Earth dreams to-night,
While Peace with mother-vigil throws a spell
Along the borders of this surflless sea,
And brooks no boisterous mockings of her sway.

Perhaps a zephyr, romping with its mate,
Annoys a sleepy leaf ; all else is mute.

When last I stood upon this beach, the sky
Was carmine, and the waters blood-like seemed ;
I viewed Destruction's panoply, and breathed

An atmosphere made up of fright and awe.
Not all the circlings of this hoary world
In thin vacuity have meted out
The fiery peer of that demoniac night.
CHICAGO, 1873.

OCTOBER.

There is a holy time, ere Autumn's going —
A radiant month embossed upon the year —
When leaves wash in the sunshine overflowing
To swell the splendor of the season's gear.

The stately maples make their reverence sighing,
As Nature wafts her solemn breath aby ;
The birds in hush and sadness plan their flying
To climes where snowflakes feather not the sky.

When my heart-wounds have felt their softest ointments,
October's pageantry arrayed the days ;
And in the dead-house of my disappointments,
Not one lies palled in Indian-Summer's haze.
1872.

UNREST.

The mind's a battle-field,
 Where fortified doubtings yield
 To companies of stronger doubts,
 Whose boisterous jeers and skeptic shouts
 More oft annoy
 Than vouchsafe joy.

Yet, if with faith I pray,
 Lo ! that same hour and day,
 With equal faith, my bitter foe
 May ask my great hope's overthrow —
 One faithful prayer
 No fruit will bear.

As well pray "Shine, O Sun !"
 As, "Let Thy will be done !"
 A cry for even strength to bear
 Is in itself specific prayer —
 Beseeching God
 "Let me be God !"
 5

If we are thoughtless hurled
Upon this frowning world,
Clanking with manacles of sin,
Forged ere our sorry lives begin —
 With flesh and mind
 To wrong inclined —

Then it is truly base
To breed the hapless race ;
Unless from instinct men rebel,
What an illimitable Hell
 When Matter crumbles
 And Time succumbs !

Does the great God permit
A brutal fiend to sit
In rival state, to rack the ghosts
Of countless, helpless, human hosts
 Whose earthly all
 Was pain and gall ?

If we could comprehend
Soul-burning without end,
Our utterance would have one sound —
That we might 'scape the pit profound
 Where Satan rules
 Midst imps and ghouls.

But thought unbidden delves,
And men still ask themselves :
“ Is 't intuition or conceit
That makes our lives seem incomplete
Unless there be
Futurity? ”

The sweetest joys alloy,
And our content destroy —
Seem waspish satires fierce with barbs,
And fiends in satisfying garbs —
Hollow at best
As hell-fool's jest.

I lay upon my bed,
And wondered if the dead
Are tortured with the hopes and fears,
The heavy hearts and burning tears,
That weigh on us,
And prey on us.

1873.

FAME.

Tall mountains meet, and giddy greet
The clouds in their exalted homes ;
What may they show, save ice and snow,
Unto the fleets that pass their domes ?

Their crests are bold with solar gold ;
Their shimmering cliffs enchant the eye ;
Yet Earth shows not more dreary spot
Than toilers in their heights descry.

There points a peak which mortals seek —
Fraught are its crags with human woes ;
Shrill through its fasts shriek envy-blasts —
Forever drift Hate's blinding snows.

Its towering height beams with a light —
The wondrous blaze of Glory's orb ;
Still those who gaze feel most the rays,
While they who climb no warmth absorb.

Contentment creeps — Renown climbs steep
Where consummations ne'er appease ;

Below how oft, when Care's aloft,
 Unhappiness, distrustful, flees.

1872.

THE CRY OF YOUTH.

When life eludes me, and I die,
 Will funeral-shrouded vessels ply
 A sobbing sea ;
 Or jagged minor-keyed refrains
 And sombre-decorated trains
 Attendant be ?

Will gloomy flags and pennons float
 At solemn half-mast — will remote
 Humanity
 Feel that a force hath disappeared,
 And left Earth nought but stark and biered
 Inanity ?

Will I on stately staging lie,
 While lutes attune to grief-ode's cry
 And laureates rhyme ?

Will centuries increase my fame —
 Will History shout out my name
 To clockless time ?

1873.

I PRAY.

When white-eyed Death shall fright my timid flesh,
 And chase my spirit from his charnelry,
 May willing yet unwilling hands take me
 To unoffended Nature. Then, O God !
 Give me the memory of an honest man,
 And unseen flowers shall keep my grave as sweet
 As lilac-banks that make one narrow week
 The only recollection of a year.

1881.

ALFRED MYER.

There was a weather-guessing man appointed,
 And with the unction of State pay anointed ;

When this man died, they said, without effort'ry,
"He rendered Signal Service to his country."

1872.

TURN, OH ! YE SOULS !

Some souls have climbed, with bent ill-timed,
High up the fastnesses of Fate,
And have been stung, and rudely flung
Far downward by Mishap and Hate.

Across Life's plain, with will inane,
They backward walk, nor care to view
Aught save the Past, until, at last,
Eternity shall all renew.

Striving to hearse their pains they curse
Each lengthened day, each dreary night,
And fall with groans o'er little stones
That harm not those who walk aright.

The one great Wo of long ago
Frowns down upon their glamoured gaze

In dim relief, snow-capped with grief,
 Cloud-frocked in memory's mystic haze.

Turn, oh, ye souls ! to brighter goals !
 Watch not Despair's appalling brow !
 The altar flames within Hope's fanes
 Flash forth in splendor even now.

Turn, oh, ye souls ! Let solemn tolls
 No longer knell o'er bliss inhumed !
 Peal out the birth of suffering Worth
 In noble purposes illumed !

1874.

COLOGNE ON WHITE CLOVER.

IN THE PARK.

By golden strand of crimson sea,
 Through broad exotic bowers,
 My little Mary walked with me
 And sighed for sweeter flowers.

She turned from mounds of flaming red
 To search the sward for clover ;
 " I only want zose f'owers," she said,
 " Wis c'ogne all spwinkled over."

1882.

A METAPHOR.

BEHOLD, in the middle of the seas, upon a rock cresting the hot waves, a little man with a wide jaw, with a gray cutaway coat, with a peculiar hat! He is imprisoned, he is a cipher, he is of slight importance! Nay, he is of the utmost importance. He is the greatest man who ever lived. Look once again! He has wasted away. The heat of the sun has beaten upon his tar-scented dwelling, and hastened his death. He hears the roar of the great storm on the ocean. He believes the enemy has opened with every piece of its artillery. He orders a corps into the open doors of death. The guns are turned, the enemy is in a panic, and the king of kings sits down to write his bulletin: "Head of the Army —" he writes, and his spirit passes in the midst of the vision. A world of petty men breathes in God-given relief. A man is dead the beatings of whose heart sent the direst terrors through the kingdoms of this world.

In this little earth, this St. Helena of space, there is immured the Mind of Man, beaten by the storms, prostrated by the passions, circumscribed by the frequent vicissitudes of human life. Again: It is surely a cipher; it belongs simply in this Saint Helena, to which it seems indigenous! Nay. Who shall take it upon himself to say that this celestial fire, this Mind of Man, is not co-eternal with the other works of God which interperse the universes, and who, too, shall say that this toadlike planet, the earth, ugly and venomous, wears not yet a precious jewel in its head?

1880.

A FLIGHT OF FANCY.

I FELL to talking with a learned man. He spoke of the telephone, and said they would succeed soon in using a ray of light to conduct the waves of sound. It was simple as the sun itself! You took a concave reflector, bathed in some certain chemicals, turned the rays of sunlight which en-

tered it upon some far-off reflector of the same kind, perhaps six miles away. It flashed in response to the line of light established. You spoke into your own reflector; your voice sounded in the reflector six miles away, having traveled along the ray of light. Now for my thought: Here is the gross beginning of the use of light as a highway. Upon this golden highway we can travel to Orion, and all his fires shall pulsate to our syllables! And, behold! there is, beyond this slow-paced Light, which travels to but one world in a second, another force—the grand invisible chain which holds the stars together—Gravitation! This chain shall be the turnpike of our tongues, and we shall speak to all the orbs in space! And now, shall we believe these elder worlds have not, too, sat at Nature's feet? May not they then have often spoken us, as the steamship, passing its sister in the watery spaces, sends forth a word of greeting? Then may the traditions of superstition—traditions of voices in the sky—have no improbability save the single coincidence of the tongue spoken being intelligible to terrestrial ears!

ASTRONOMY AND LOVE.

An aged seer sat in his tower at night,
And watched this journeying world's liege satellite
In plenitude of splendor move on high
And gild the cloudy vestments of the sky.
An air of lore prevailed about the sage —
An air of lore perceptible as Age.

He sat alone,

And cried : " O God ! I vaunted, years ago,
" That ignorance was a conquerable wo ;
" But now, alas ! e'en while I grasp the keys
" Which would unlock thine ark of mysteries,
" My trammels tighten, and my dust is urned —
" My brains go back to nothingness unlearned."

A beauteous maiden, in that self-same hour,
Looked from her chamber-window toward the tower.
That night, a youth, in her esteem arrayed,
Had by a slight, unwitting sign betrayed
His love and hope unto her watchful eye,
And made her happy, while he made her shy.

Thus she had left him, seeming hard to win —
 Her fears dispelled where his were ushered in.
 As was her nightly wont, she viewed the dome
 Where new-born knowledge found a fostering home,
 And saw the old astronomer intent
 (With penetrating sight by Science lent)
 On stellar depth, or lunar waste of world,
 Or meteor down from dizzy zenith hurled ;
 And watched his shadowy acts with thought and gaze
 Akin to those which lassies in the days
 Of hoar Astrology and Alchemy,
 Bestowed on Gebir or on Doctor Dee.

She sat alone,
 Her beauty rarefied by halcyon rays
 Of lavish moonlight white as calcium-blaze,
 And planned a life of joy without rebuff,
 And whispered to her heart : “ I know enough.”

1875.

SAD RIVALRIES.

Sometimes to female convict-pens, I've read in prison-tales,
 There come, robed in their finery, grand ladies from the town,

And God's most wretched stretch their necks far o'er impeding
pales,

And, mute with greedy interest, inspect each passing gown.

And then, for days, they proudly deck their prison-habit lank
With leprous shreds of calicoes, set with a slavish care
That smacks the inspiration of the latest fashion-prank
They noted in the trapping of their visitors' rich wear.

These Autumn-days the city streets begin their thin parades
Of what few dusty, starveling leaves the curb-cramped maples
lose,

And ape the cushioned luxury of giant-arbores glades,—
The carpetings imperial of sylvan avenues.

1873.

THE FIRST SNOW.

Swift meteors coursed the upper night ;
The midnight groaned with snow ;
The under night, with leaves bedight,
Roamed sadly to and fro.

Then came a white November morn,
A waking romp and shout
Of chubby Mary, three years born—
Of Wonder, looking out.

“What is zat s`uff on everysing ?”

“Why that is snow, my dear.”

“Zen it is Chwis`mas. Zis will bwing
Old Santa Clauses here !”

Old Fat now tugging at a shelf ;
Now gorgeous with a frown ;
Now working slyly like an elf,
To get a hammer down.

“Don`t bozzer me ! I sink you`d see
I`s got all I can `ten` to ;
I`s worried my life out of me
Wis twouble I has been to !”

And so she works, and puffs, and pounds,
With hammer, socks, and tacks,
And sings with joy, and hides the wounds
Of half a dozen whacks.

At last the socks—a dozen quite—
Hang in a circling row,
With Fatty sunny as the light
In the south window`s bow :

“ O my ! I wouldn't for zis worl'
 Have Santa Clauses s'out :
 ' Mary-to-Harriet, you bad little girl !
 Your s'ockin's was n't out ! ' ”

1881.

HELP!

Lost in the maelstrom of this sinless world's disdain,
 Crouched on a pier that crept out from the city,
 She pictured to herself her like in grief and pain,
 And, self-oblivious, wept in fervid pity.

Then moans and dizzy thoughts—a shivering wish to share
 The friendly grave's release from spectral hauntings ;
 Fate holding out the awful chalice of despair,
 And asp-fanged mem'ries chorusing their tauntings.

An ill-precursing scenc—she mid her dead hopes' ghosts,
 A youthful type of Earth's most wretched daughters ;
 O'erhead, the astral sparklings of the midnight hosts ;
 Below, the pulsings of the sleeping waters.

1873.

SPENCERIAN STANZAS.

The President of an institution having in trust three million dollars, the savings of thirteen thousand people, fled from Chicago Aug. 26, 1877.

O fashioner of destinies forlorn,
 Impelled by black rapacity to steal
 The garnered penny, stitched (for babe just born)
 From shirts at tenpence grudged, Time doth not heal
 The ghastly rift thy craven hand did deal
 In gentle Self-Denial's side. Thy pelf
 Should sink thy ship ; yet thou canst calmly feel —
 Perchance if tost about on state-room shelf —
 The waves beneath to be less treacherous than thyself !

Flee with thy half-a-million from the spot
 Where half a million curse thee as a thief ;
 And when thy fugitive remains shall rot
 Beneath some desecrated turf, there, chief,
 Should stand a baleful upas, bent in grief,
 That if a mourner ever came that way,
 Thy deadly perfidy, upsucked, from every leaf

Might flow effusively, to goad his stay,
And once more blight his heart, as did thy living clay !
1877.

A NEST OF MICE.

A tiny maid once found a nest
Of new-born mice ;
And filled with childish horror lest,
By grim device,
The house-cat should the place invest,
She sought advice.

Her ten-year'd brother, if he must,
Would take their care.
—That night he told the boys with gust
How puss did fare ;
And they pronounced his sister's trust
A thing quite rare !

How oft some little hope or aim
Is trusting bared
To those who, had we silent came,

Would ne'er have cared —
 Save that, mayhap, malicious game
 Might worse have fared.

1874.

TO WILL OWENS.

—

WE OFT HAVE SAID.

—

Why should we dread To-morrow's way,
 If we have walked aright To-day ?
 Lo ! then like safely-guarded sheep,
 Let us lie down To-night, and sleep !

—

YE PRINTER !

—

O Printer of this little book !
 When we are prisoners of the past,
 Each reader of these lines will look
 Not on the mould less than the cast ;
 So lend me all the art thou hast !



DOGGEREL RHYMES.

ODE TO THE GREAT DEEP.

Prodigious dampness ! Thy poor shore
 Gets many a welt ;
Thy blinding surf, with angry roar,
 Wetteth my pelt !

Thou deep significance of Size !
 Thou boss of tanks !
But gaze I, and my hair doth rise
 In solid hanks !

I marvel not that thou shouldst call
 Thyself complete,
And cringe me that all else is small —
 E'en my conceit !

Came I prepared, with words combined,
 To stun the gods —
To launch strange trope upon the wind
 In ponderous wads ;

But now, alas ! thy endless blare
 My genius scoops ;
 My fancy ebbs — I ne'er may wear
 Rhyme's liripoops !

1872.

ODE TO THE RAINBOW.

Celestial barber-pole ! Now vaults my thought —
 Now skirmish 'neath my trusty scalp, uncaught,
 Most frisk conceits, and wild, unhaltered tropes,
 That but more fierce cavort as my pen gropes
 Midst clumsy words and discommoding sense,
 For pompous apostrophic utterance.
 Could thy vast advertisement front the earth
 Unfadingly, quick would my soul give birth
 To feverish hankerings for my life to be
 One languid loaf, that I might ever see
 The heavenly promise which thou seem'st to show
 To barbers' ill-shaved victims here below.
 Who runs thy shop, that thus can paste each hue
 Upon the sky — gigantic bill-board blue ?

Communicate his name, and I will buy,
 Forthwith a tender trombone, soft and shy,
 And with its breathings I'll the ether twist,
 And blow his praise afar — nor e'er desist,
 Until my friends, with love (and ears) suggest
 That sweetest of brass rhapsodies — a rest.
 1873.

ODE TO THE SUN.

Caloric potentate ! Thy rise is opportune —
 A sentimental mammal claws his lyre ;
 He will in haste fife high his adolescent croon,
 Nor stop for decency or hire.

Unchallenged Sun of myriad suns — arch-boss above !
 The warmth of thy fierce gaze this world upon
 Doth even shame the fervor of the manly love
 I bear my mother's only son !

Thou art not versatile ; yet this machine hath run
 Since gassy times that I'll not try to spell,
 And thou hast proved to all that thou canst be the Sun
 By simply doing one thing well.

Thou Chairman of Committee on Celestial Light !
Compared with thee our brag lamps seem a mess ;
E'en with " Chicago brass " concoct we naught so bright—
We've not the recipe, I guess !

We don't cut up such shines with our poor carthly might,
Or we a portion of thy disk would fix
High in the fasts of our mosquito-breeding Night
To teach the moon and stars some tricks.

Alack ! black cloud-hulks coast the sullen west, and Morn
An all-day wetness hatcheth out, I ween,
To dank this facile air, and spur each drowsy corn,
And make my trusty togs feel mean ;

Therefore I will no longer thrash my howling muse,
Its sweetest doggerels clutching greedily ;
To limply linger here would my nice sense abuse—
I'll steer me homeward speedily ;

For if a man don't quickly seek the inside dry
When outside dampness is a certainty,
Then should impassioned kick with hot repeat apply,
And telescope his vertebræ.

1874.

ODE TO THE MOON.

Pellucid bunch of light ! Thy tranced mug
Hath velveted my throat with mellow squawk ;
I am inspired ; incline a listening lug,
Nor suffer Common-Sense my yawp to balk.

Poised in the blue, thou art a winsome sight ;
O'er all thy radiance meek rich beauty flings ;
And as I waltz the earth this gilt-edged night,
My soul laves in soft reveries and things.

Avert thy gaze and we have nought of worth ;
For e'en the very wisest men confess
That hope, and love, and joy, and fame of earth,
Are moonshine — all of them — no more nor less.

How wonderful, that one of gentle sex —
Light's floating Empress — should, while ages go,
And Solar whims with changing phases vex
From arc to disc, have but one face to show !

Who says thou art green cheese ? My gall is stirred.
I would that I could egg unpitying Shame

To hound the cur to whom it first occurred
 To smear with vulgar curd so fair a fame.

If thou (soft swains forbid !) shouldst ever fluke,
 And thy process antique refuse to shine,
 What orb could mount thine abdicated juke ?
 What gas-contractor's grieving mine ?

My Muse's tail, alas ! begins to droop ;
 Convulsively her rhythmic pinions flap ;
 Resignedly I chuck her in her coop,
 Nor doggerel fantasies hope yet to trap.

1872.

A DIGEST.

The waiter told me if I chewed
 I could have Hash — I meekly mewed :
 Ambiguous dish ! By thy warm steam !
 Give to a boarding waif some gleam
 Of hepeful light — some token grant
 That thy maligners idly rant

When they aver that every sweet
 Exhaled from thee bespeaks the meat
 Of rodent cohorts foully "served"
 By incensed cooks, who thus have swerved
 From set prescriptions, and appeased
 Themselves by hashing what displeased.

Grant that I may, with blissful gust,
 Partake of thee. Own 'tis not just
 That I be jostled with the thought
 Of fitful female—skirmish-fraught
 With *hair*-breadth 'scapes, where such escapes
 Were ne'er for thee ; nor that the shapes
 Of cats athwart my mind's expanse
 Should view me oft, in hosts, askance
 Or startle me with hollow wails,
 And spectral look, and ghastly tates
 Dilating on their gloomy fate,
 And pledging me a haunting hate.

Give me thine "ear." They oft relate
 Tales of the place whence emanate
 Thyself or kindred—for thy look
 Is very like—tales which have shook
 E'en mine own faith. Behold, they say,
 In going past ye kitchen-way,
 That dogs and sausages do walk

Tremendous distance round to balk
 The yearnings of those kitchen-folk
 (By some most foul and back-door stroke
 Of dead-fall strategy) to end
 Their frisk ingenuousness — to blend
 The two economies — (the brute
 With the domestic) — salt to suit,
 And, when well-mixed, no chance e'er miss
 To court the world's analysis.

They do impeach ——

Thy color changes — I was bold ;
 I asked too much — thou hast grown cold.
 Yet say they this ; if I abuse
 Their meaning, or aught else accuse —
 Then may I ne'er strike harsh-bard's lyre,
 Nor doggerel eminence desire !

1872.



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