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BESIDE THE STILL WATERS.

LEGENDS, LYRICS, ELEGIES.

By GEORGE ALEXANDER KOHUT.

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Lovingly Inscribed

to

REBEKAH KOHUT.

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This copy is number

To My Mother

I fain would make this sonnet sing like song,
In accents tremulous of sweet accord,
The variations of a single word,
So musically quivering along
The magic keys of that diviner sense,
Which thrills with rapture at the touch of art
And ravishes the human soul and heart
When deep emotions are the most intense;
In syllables of rhyme I fain would frame
One tender word, as holy as a shrine,
—The first we lisp, the last we e'er resign—
And fervently invoke in God's own name
A whisper'd benediction from above
To hallow and to sanctify her love.

January, 1901.

A Fable

A stately pine of boastful mien
  Upon a rugged cliff did stand;
The sun bathed both in golden sheen,
  The selfsame sky above them spanned.

"Be not so proud," the ancient rock
  Once gently chid the tap'ring pine;
" 'Tis not quite seemly that you mock
  The ancient stone your roots entwine;

"I'm used to be esteemed, revered,
  In every place, in every zone:
The Ten Great Words to men endeared
  Were writ by God himself on stone!"

"Yet dare I glance into the sky,"
  Rejoined the graceful, vaunting pine;
"The Saviour on the cross did die;
  I carried one who was divine!"

They quarreled, but they still abide,
  The ancient rock, the boastful tree;
They dwell together, side by side—
  And cannot part, by God's decree.

March, 1901.

"WHAT DOEST THOU, ELIJAH?"

(I Kings xix. 9—15)

I.

Elijah pined sore 'neath a juniper tree,
  Whilst Jezebel fumed in her wrath;
He fled for his life, yet he feared to be free,
  In dread of its aftermath;
Not daring to face the fierce queen in her mood,
He hied to the forest, to fret and to brood.

II.

For lo! he had slain all the prophets, forsooth!
  And put the anointed to sword;
The servants of Baal that had swerved from the truth,
  Whom God the Eternal abhorred;
By the clear-flowing brook of Kishon they died,
Who heathen gods served and Adonai denied.

III.

Then Jezebel swore a most terrible oath,
  —For Ahab, the ruler, was weak—
She'd malice and courage sufficient for both,
  Her unhallowed vengeance to wreak;
And vowed by her life the proud prophet to slay,
Ere dusk shall have kissed down the eyelids of day.

IV.

Alone, near Beer Sheba, the forest he sought,
  —His servant remaining behind;—
His nerves were atingle, his brain overwrought,

He sat 'neath a shrub and repined;
Then lifting his world-weary eyes up on high,
He earnestly wished of the Lord but to die.

V.

" 'Tis enough," wailed the prophet, "now take my life!
Deliver me, hence, Lord, in peace;
My days are fulfilled and now reck'ning is rife,
Give unto my sad soul release.
What profit doth man find in all that he gathers?
He's worse, but no better, than have been his fathers!"

VI.

He lay himself down and soon sank into sleep,—
When wondrous it is to relate:
An angel of God, who is nigh when we weep,
Upon him his finger he laid;
And roused him and bade him to get on his feet,
The God of his fathers enjoined him to eat.

VII.

Elijah beheld, as he rose to obey,
A cake that was baken on coal;
A cruse full of water stood near where he lay,
To slake the parched thirst of his soul;
He drank of the draught, and he ate of the food—
And relapsed in his solemn mood.

VIII.

Then once more the angel of God did appear,
And touching the prophet, he said:

"Arise now and eat, for the journey, I fear,
Is far for thy sore feet to tread!"
And forty days more was his spent strength sustained,
Till Horeb, the mountain of God, was attained.

IX.

And thither arriving, he lodged in a cave,
When lo! came the word of the Lord;
—"The voice of the daughter of God" sounded grave;
It solemnly rang as it soared;—
He heard, all aquiver with awe and with fear:
"My servant, Elijah, what doest thou here?"

X.

"Hot zeal hath consumed me for Thee, Lord of Hosts,"
The pessimist prophet replied;
"Thine Israel, once faithful, of folly now boasts:
Thine altars the wanton defiled;
Thy highpriests they slew and I only am spared,
But I too, if not fled, their fate would have shared."

XI.

"Go forth!" was the mandate "and stand on the hill,
Before the Eternal, thy God!"
The Call of the Spirit had vanquished his will,
The soul of the seer was o'erawed;
His heart was hushed still, and his pulse quivered fast,
As God, in His Majesty, over him passed.

XII.

The breath of the Lord rent the mountains in twain—
'Twas a strong and a terrible gale;
It crumbled the rocks by the might of its main,
And the prophet did visibly pale;
Yet, not in the wind and not in the thunder
Was the Lord who cleaved the mountains asunder.

XIII.

In rumble of earthquake, or fire, or flame,
The Spirit of God does not dwell;
—Our turbulent conscience and tumults of shame,
Some echo celestial may quell—
A Voice that is still and is small, when its rings,
Oft crashes the thunder of holier things.

XIV.

Elijah then wrapped him his mantle around,
And covered his face in its fold;
He entered the cave to escape from the sound,
That silently, solemnly, rolled;
When lo! chimed again the dread voice in his ear:
"My servant, Elijah, what doest thou here?"

* * *

XV.

O prophets and seers that still slay with the sword,
The Lord, God of Hosts, to appease;
Who hurtle the lightning and thunder the word,
The idol of self-love to please:
Beseech not to die when all self-love is done,
The kingdom of heaven by conscience is won.

XVI.

The world has no patience with sensitive souls,
  Who bury their woes in a cave;
From torrids of wrath one may flee to the poles,
  To pine and to brood and to rave;
The mission of God is but truly fulfilled
When hope rushes swift, and the spirit is stilled.

XVII.

A Voice that is hushed of the silence within
  Whispers of life and its beauty;
We hear it resounding far over the din,
  Summons celestial to Duty;
To prince or to pauper, to savage or seer:
"My servant, Elijah, what doest thou here?"

* * *

September, 1901.

NOTE to verse ix, line 3: *Bath-Kol,* "The voice of the daughter of God," is a poetic fancy of the Rabbis to describe a heavenly echo. See Whittier's reference to the *Bath-Kol* in his poem on the *Two Rabbins:* "Pausing to hear that Daughter of a Voice." Wordsworth makes use of the same metaphor in the opening line of his *Ode to Duty:* "Stern daughter of the Voice of God."

THE REWARD OF CHARITY

A Talmudic Tradition.

In Baba Bathra, on the Talmud page,
The tale is told of Benjamin, the Sage,
The almoner, who kept the revenues,
Collected in the Temple for the use
Of those he loved far better than the priests,
Whose tithe-receipts were ample for their feasts.
And wisely, too, these poor-pence he bestowed,
Regardless of the reading of the code,
Which bade him scan with diligent concern
The status of each applicant, in turn.
E'er vigilant to succor deep distress,
The meagre funds now every day grew less,
Until he found, whene'er the week expired,
That he'd expended more than he'd acquired.
And oftener than not he borrowed more
From out his own resources for the poor.

It chanced, one day, when want and famine spread
Throughout the land,—inspiring all with dread—
A woman came to Benjamin the Good,
Imploring him, in mercy's name, for food.
He lifted up a pale and anxious face
And said to her, with melancholy grace:
"I swear, my daughter, by God's holy shrine,
Our funds are spent, or else they would be thine!"
"O, Rabbi," came the quavering reply,
"Then with my seven children I must die!"
The Rabbi felt no human need was worse
And gave her all he carried in his purse.

In course of time he sickened and he knew
His days on earth remaining were but few;—
For Death was there, impatient by his side,
The one great pow'r no human yet defied.
But lo! the Hosts and Archangels began
To intercede for this God-fearing man:
"Thou'st said, O Lord," in chorus they appealed,
"That he, who but one single soul did shield
Is counted as though he had saved the world.
Shall Benjamin the Righteous now be hurled,
So early to his doom? Who freely gave
His meagre hoard to rescue from the grave,
Eight human souls?"—Thus spake the angels, and
Their shimm'ring wings the Council-Chamber spanned;
They waited breathless for the mandate—Word
Of Him Who rules the earth. At last they heard
The high behest reverberate and soar:
"That man shall live yet twenty-two years more!"

* * *

And hence the name of Benjamin is wrote
With that of other righteous men of note,
Eternally in old Rabbinic Script,
As though he were some great Apocalypt.

January, 1903.

THE RABBI AND THE ANGEL

Rabbi Ben Saphra, as the twilight spread
Its purple shadows o'er the Book he read,
Serenely stood, while closing it, and prayed:
"May lurking dangers find me unafraid!"
And, gath'ring up within his wrinkled palm
The Sacred Tome which wardeth off all harm,
He bent his steps with tremulous desire
Toward that still place where angel-hosts inspire
The human soul to ecstasies of prayer,
And garner all the garlands woven there
Of pious men's resolves, and place them prone
Upon God's shining, everlasting Throne.
He saw no light save one which flickered low
Before the shrine, since days of long ago.
Yet was he dauntless, as he neared the ark,
His heart glowed brightly in the semi-dark.
And all within his placid spirit felt
That Presence nigh which true devotion spelt.
With eager fingers he undid the lock,
The while his pulse was ticking like a clock.
The bolt flew back; the sacred scrolls in white
Looked just like children, in the sombre light.
And, as he raised his feeble eyes aloft,
He heard the sound of whisp'rings low and soft,
And then the brush of angel-wings thrilled through
His inmost parts; and there, before he knew,
Betwixt two scrolls, with outstretched pinions, stood
The Seraph Sandalphon. And, ere he could
Recover from this wonderful surprise,

The Vision vanished straight before his eyes.
Then, prostrate, in the shadow of the shrine,
Ben Saphra heard the echo, the divine—
The Daughter of God's own celestial Voice—
Which caused his hallowed spirit to rejoice,
So low it smote and yet so clarion clear
Upon his list'ning, well-instructed ear:
"Draw nigh the Ark of Covenant, and see
What Sandalphon, my Seraph, left for thee!"
The Rabbi swayed and wrapped the sacred shawl
Around his head, in answer to the call;
Approaching, then, the casket, and impelled
By other Pow'r than his, lo! he beheld,
Betwixt the scrolls of God's eternal Law,
Where angel's wings his spirit-fancy saw
A wreath of flowers the Shining One and Fair
Did weave of his sincerely uttered prayer.
For Sandalphon is charged with this sweet task
And brings from God the garlands that we ask.

October, 1903.

NOTE: *Sandalphon*, the Angel of Prayer, the subject of one of Longfellow's poems, is mentioned by the Rabbis as the tallest angel in heaven. He stands behind the divine throne and places crowns and floral wreaths upon the head of the Creator. These wreaths he weaves from the prayers of the sons of men. This quaint tradition is mentioned in the special prayers offered in the synagogue on *Succoth*.

WHY THE FACE OF MOSES SHONE.

(Exodus xxxiv., 29-35.)

A Jewish Tradition.

For forty days and forty nights
The prophet fasted on the heights,
On Sinai's peaks he spake with God,
His being strangely overawed.

"Write down these words; 'tis My command
That they be written by thy hand;
Fore'er a witness they shall be
Of Israel's gift of Prophecy!"

And Moses wrote the Ten Words down;
O'er every one he placed a crown,
An olden legend tells us why:
"They were to rule the world for aye."

He dipped his pen in starry light—
His sight grew dim, it shone so bright—
The Letters were of golden hue,
They shimmer still for me and you.

On tablets twain the Prophet wrote
This Testament of wondrous note,
This heritage of ages past,
Bequeathed to all the world, to last.

The task was done, and Moses seemed
To wonder why the light yet beamed;
He wished to write one other word,
But, murm'ring "Nay", looked heavenward.

" 'Tis not for man to know Thy ways;
To probe the stars; to pluck the rays
From planets high, his spirit dares—
For man, O Lord, Thy Image bears;

"He soars upon the wings of thought
To find how all things Thou hast wrought;
He sets no bounds to his keen quest;
Not knowing all, he doubts the rest.

"Shall I reveal to human mind
What it, unaided, ne'er can find?
Shall I command the heart to hope,
And lead them who in darkness grope?

"Shall I unveil to mortal man
The mysteries which make Thy plan
A blessing for the universe—
And change the boon into a curse?

"Nay, Lord of Hosts, he shall not see
With mortal eyes Eternity;
But every heart shall feel its glow—
The wistful stream of life must flow;

"And every eye shall steadfast gaze,
Above the mist, o'er all the maze
Of many doubts and many ills,
Beyond the Everlasting Hills.

" 'Tis better far the human soul
Should strive and struggle toward the goal,
Lest, learning all, man cease to care
How Spirit, freed from flesh, may fare."

And, saying this, with solemn mien,
His face was wreathed in starry sheen:
He wiped his pen upon his brow,
And Light streamed forth, he knew not how.

The Mountain flamed, as in a cloud,
Th' Eternal passed—and Moses bowed;
Then, holding high the Tablets twain,
Transfigured, he came down again.

He wist not that his face did shine
By grace of God in every line;
The people saw, and, moved to fear,
Not even Aaron ventured near.

Then Moses knew that Hand Divine
Had traced o'er him that lustrous Sign;
He called to them and veiled the light
Which dazzled on their sense and sight.

They all came nigh, while Moses spake
The Ten Commands, which made them quake,
The Law of Right the world obeys,
When men behold its blinding rays.

And lo! unwritten glory glows
From each pure heart that heaven knows;
From every pen that's dipped in light
Effulgence gleams to cheer the night.

And every man who mounts the hill,
Where God reveals to all His Will,
Shall wear upon his forehead clear
The wondrous Sign which blessed the Seer.

The light of Hope which glistened then,
Unwritten on the Prophet's pen,
And shone o'er him, he knew not how,
Streams out from every God-kissed brow.

May, 1904.

THE RABBI AND THE CRIPPLE

(A Tale From the Talmud.)

Reb Simeon, the novice, just ordained,
And conscious of the knowledge he had gained,
Was journeying, well mounted on a mule,
From Migdal Ezer, center of a School
Of sage Tannaim, at whose feet he'd heard
The Torah's subtle, soul-impelling word,—
When lo! the beast which bore him, reared, and stood
Quite sudden still, and roused him from his mood.
He raised the lash, impatient of delay,
But then perceived, directly in his way,
A little man, mis-shapen and ill-starred,
Whose puny weight all further progress barred.
Now, drawing rein, he frowned upon the sight,
And uttered loud what every Israelite
Is bound to whisper very soft and low,
On seeing things uncommon in their woe:
"Be thou exalted, King of all the Earth,
Who fashionest all beings from their birth
According to Thy high omniscient will!"—
The blessing done, his voice rang out quite shrill,
(Unmindful of the greeting he received,
Nor caring if his banter pleased or grieved:)
"Whence hailest thou, ill-favored, ugly shape,
So strangely like the elemental ape;
Are sons of men, where thou abidest, thus
Unhandsome—and hast come to mock at us?
Begone! let no unseemly thing intrude
Upon my sight, in this uplifted mood."
The cripple blanched, and faltered for a space—

Half scorn half sorrow warring on his face.
He strove to speak, but found no voice to say
A word of bane to blight him on his way.
Nor would he have invoked it to his ill,
For soon serene, and master of his will,
He flashed his eye full on the Rabbi's own,
And slowly said, a tremor in his tone:
"Go, Rabbi, go, seek out the Master! He
Alone must bear the blame, who fashioned me
Thus feeble and ignoble, that you may
Insult His Image in my shapeless clay.
Reprove Him then; pray fail not to upbraid
The Potter for the shattered wheel he made!"
Reb Simeon quailed, and, pallid to the lips,
A death-chill in his very finger tips,
Could offer no reply. His buoyant mood
No longer served his purpose to be rude.
The light had fled from out his fervent eye,
And in his strait, he prayed that he might die.
A thousand visions flitted o'er his brain
Within one second's overwhelming pain:
He saw himself in Migdal, where he'd spent
The teeming years in study reverent.
Once more he heard the drone of voices near
In sing-song zeal, responding to the seer,
Who, robed in white, with flowing beard of gray,
Rocked to and fro, in learned quandary;
He visioned next the Master, who engrossed
In colloquy with some ancestral ghost,
Glanced up at him, one day (as he, obscure,
And all alone, felt sure to be secure)
And, startled, called: "O Simeon, my son!
Dost tarry yet? The day well nigh is done!

Thou seemest pale and overstrained and frail;
Soul without flesh is never of avail!
I bid thee, lad, depart, and take some ease
Thou art too spent for midnight reveries!"
He then recalled, with pulsating remorse,
Each precious hour of spirit-intercourse,
In those rare days, when God abode in prayer,
And Mercy claimed what time he had to spare.
And, O, the look of lingering caress,
The falt'ring tone (too tear-laden to bless)
At parting, when the patriarch of lore
Stood wistfully beside the open door,
And, finding voice, this last injunction gave—
To serve him on his errand to the grave:
"Be flexible, as is the tender reed,
And not unbending as the cedar! Heed
God's high commands; they point the road to bliss!"
(Which gentle speech he hallowed with a kiss.)
Thus conjured forth, his f a n c y spared him naught,
As Conscience woke each tantalizing thought.
"Alas!" rued he, and felt it as a pang,
"Before my mule had gone a parasang,
I've sheer forgot the precepts of the Sage,
Who taught me every grief to assuage,
And never, with a conscious wrong intent,
To violate the Law's high sacrament.
O woe is me, I, self-condemned, must bear
The throe of guilt, henceforward, everywhere!"
Thus mournfully the Rabbi pondered, and
Flushed scarlet with his own self-reprimand,
Dismounted slowly, and with humble mien

Knelt in the dust to make his sorrow keen:
"Forgive me, brother!" ran his plea; "Behold
Him humble, who once essayed to be bold.
Contritely I beseech thee to be kind;
My heart spake not; it was my wayward mind
That shaped the words which hurt thee to the quick!"
The cripple, deaf to plaintive rhetoric,
And nursing still his grievance, said with scorn:
"Better far that thou hadst not been born
Than thus to mock a creature, maimed and ill,
To merely vent thy sacrilegious will!
And thou'rt ordained a Rabbi? Would there were,
In Israel's ranks, none like unto thee, Sir!"
Crestfallen now, the culprit scholar strode,
Beside his mule, the weary homeward road.
No further word was said betwixt the twain,
Each felt the other's palpitating pain;
Each knew the other's secret thought, and weighed
The consequence of this grim escapade.

The village reached, they wondered both to see
Approaching them a goodly company.
Young men and old, fair maidens, clad in white,
Turned out to meet the laureled Israelite,
Who, full of honors in his tender years,
Was held to be the favored of the seers
Of Talmud lore. The hamlet was agleam
With color and device, as did beseem
The welcome of a venerated guest.
And lo! an old man headed all the rest,

Who, clasping in his tremulous embrace,
The shamefaced youth before the populace,
Intoned the hallowed formula of prayer.
The peace-salaam yet lingered in the air
When he, whose soul was bitter with its pain
Broke out, his features quivering again:
"Ye call him Rabbi, who disdains to greet
A fellow-creature walking in the street;
Who taunts me with the blemish of my frame
In language far too frivolous to name?
Alas for Israel, if her leaders may
Insult the Lord's own handiwork of clay!"
Thus spake the cripple, and then turned to go
—His stature waxing greater in the glow.—
Reb Simeon, to those assembled there
Had seemed, till then, an angel of despair
—So grief-stricken and motionless he stood,
As though his limbs were petrified to wood!—
But now he moves and every nerve is tense
To hear the Rabbi's piteous defence:
"Alas, dear friends, I stand condemned of sin
Before my nearest hoary-headed kin;
But yet I fain would have you intercede
With him who spake so harshly of my deed.
My soul is draped in cerements of woe;
I've plead with him to pardon me, but no,
(Resentment drives forgiveness from the breast!)
His heart remains relentless to my quest.
O bid him stay and mercifully show
The kindness I neglected to bestow!"
The Rabbi paused, and every eye now sought
The cripple, who seemed riveted in thought.
A murmur thrilled his being like a prayer,

As earnest faces met him everywhere—
One mute appeal looked out at him from all.
At last, he whispered, answering the call,
(His face aglow with yielding, till it shone:)
"O Rabbi, thou hast taught me to condone!
Forget the grudge I've harbored; let us be
Good comrades, allied through this misery!"
The Rabbi kissed the proferred hand, and stood
Transfigured into sweeter brotherhood.
Then, lifting up his voice, in accents low,
But tender as a comforting in woe,
And waxing stronger, as he gathered force
From out the Torah's ever-limpid source,
He preached a sermon resonant of what
His wayward mood had venerated not:
Of courtesy and kindness, its half-kin,
And how atonement expiateth sin.
And all that newly-consecrated throng
In wonderment forgot the Rabbi's wrong,
As he invoked the lullaby-refrain
The Master taught in Migdal, when the pain
Of parting brought such exquisite caress
As caused his very soul to effervesce;
And, ever after, through the teeming years,
That message was like music to their ears.

February, 1905.

ABRAHAM AND THE IDOLATER

(Retold from the Persian of Sa'adi)

As Abraham, the Friend of God, once stood
Before his tent, in meditative mood,
Engrossed in deep communion with the Lord
The Only One his fervent soul adored,—
He lifted up his eyes, and from afar
A "stranger" loomed, appearing like a star,
To cheer the dark, which came on unawares,
The while he swayed, enraptured, in his prayers.
With kindling eye and animated face
He beckoned him a welcome to his place,
And forward sped, so keen was his desire
To pay him homage, ere he drew much nigher.
The man was old and gray, and trembled half,
And tottered on by leaning on his staff.
So feeble was his frame, that now and then
He paused to rest—and plodded on again:
"I give thee peace!" said Abram, bending low,
His countenance with welcome all aglow;
"Suffer me, I pray thee, to restore
Thy feeble frame, and lead thee to my door;
Break bread with me; my humble home awaits
A guest or two at each one of its gates;
For, lo! my tent is built, by Heaven's leave,
On every side a stranger to receive;
It gives me joy to greet him and to lave
His tired feet—since this is all I crave:
To satisfy and shelter all who need
Of my abundance but a scanty meed;
And all I ask of him who slakes his thirst

And stills his hunger, is to thank Him first
Who guides the wand'rer safely on his way
And sends sweet slumber at the end of day."
Then Abram fetched the whitest bread and wine,
And o'er his head a halo seemed to shine,
As he besought his guest to praise the Lord,
Whom he and all his tribe alone adored.
The stranger bowed, and eager to partake,
Without a word the dainty bread he brake,
And made to eat, when Abram once again
(Upon his face a look of sudden pain)
In louder tone enjoined the hoary-head
To bless the Unseen Hand that sent him bread.
"Dear friend," began the wayfarer; "Not so
Am I accustomed gratitude to show
For benefits received; I cannot boast
Of faith in things unknown; my worshipped God
Is one who leaves my senses overawed:
And lurid flame and vivid flash of fire
Are sign and symbol of his fearful ire.
O noble host, my thanks are thine alone
For loving kindness to a stranger shown;
May Ormuzd and Ahriman vouchsafe grace
Unto thy household. Favored be thy race
That rears up sons as reverent as thou!"—
The light died out of Abram's eyes. "What now?"
Demanded he indignantly of him
Who would not do his zeal–inspired whim;
"Thou wilt not make obeisance? Dost deny
The power of the Holy One on High?
Away with thee; thou canst not tarry here!"
And forthwith out into the starless night
He drove the haggard pilgrim with a blight;

Nor paused he e'en to light him on his way
(As was his wont, with those that every day
Sought shelter 'neath his roof); then facing East,
Forgetting both his hunger and the feast,
He now began to chant the evening prayer.
The Echo of a Still voice in the air—
A whisper waxing mighty, as he stood
Now stole upon his spirit's solitude.
Then he discerned the rustle of a wing
And knew the Lord despised his offering.
Wrath melted into Mercy, as he heard
The Holy One's most awe-inspiring Word:
"Have I not borne a hundred years with thee,
In patience, Abram, ere thou soughtest me?
Why shouldst thou not, one single hour, forbear?"—
The Still Small Voice yet lingered in the air
When Abram rose, and taking wine and bread,
(His tender heart oppressed by growing dread)
Strode swiftly out into the cheerless night,
To seek the stranger, banished with a blight,—
When, in his path, irradiate and serene,
An angel stood, sweet Pity in his eyes—
The God-sent guest, transfigured in disguise.

February, 1909.

QUEEN ESTHER

(Purim 5663.)

I.

On his throne, so rich and splendid,
By his courtiers well attended,
Sat the monarch, great and mighty,
None in all of Susa like he;
Lords and nobles bent before him,
Ever eager to adore him,
And he looked right proud and regal,
As outspread o'er him an eagle,
Richly carved in alabaster,
Made him loom out all the vaster.

II.

In the throne-room there reigned silence,
None dared speak—all feared his violence;
And 'twas death to him, who entered
Unannounced to where was centered
All of Persia's peerless glory.
You may read the ancient story
In the Record of the Ages,
Writ by Israel's seers and sages,
In the ancient Book of Esther,
Whose heroic deeds have blest her.

III.

There the king sat, robed in ermine,
Melancholy as a sermon,
And he almost wished the boys
Of the court would make some noise—

No one ventured there to cheer him,
For they knew they had to fear him—
And he was about to thunder
That his throne be torn asunder
In his wrath so great and mighty,
When his Queen, advancing, spied he.

IV.

All were now in consternation—
For one even in her station,
Unless she were so requested,
Could not enter unmolested—
Yet, behold, she was not frightened,
And the gloomy monarch brightened,
And stretched out his jewelled sceptre,
Not to stay or intercept her,
But to bid her come yet nigher
To her lordly liege and sire.

V.

And Queen Esther, still advancing,
Blushed—it made her more entrancing—
Faltered, paused and murmured slowly:
She was of the "lowly, lowly!—
And had come but to invite him,
For his kindness to requite him,
To a banquet, where with Haman
(But no other common layman)
He might feast upon her bounty,—
He will come to her, O won't he?"

VI.

And the king made haste to answer,
Ere she framed the words, "You can, sir?"

And with Haman he attended—
You know full well how it ended;
How he built the stately gallows,
For her uncle and his fellows;
How, in turn, he came to dangle,
Having got things in a tangle,
When he dined with sweet Queen Esther,
Never thinking to molest her.

March, 1903.

HOW ESTHER SAVED HER PEOPLE

(Purim, 5664)

I.

The palace is in tumult and in tears,
For Persia's King, in anger, had dismissed
The noble Queen, his royal lips had kissed—
It is the sound of wailing that one hears!
Now Susa's prince is desolate and lone;
He grieves and frets, and scorns to be consoled.
The courtiers stand aghast, and e'en the bold
Dare not approach the monarch on his throne.

II.

His sov'reign wrath is o'er, but keen regret
Yet fills the heart of Ahasueros since
He did a thing unseemly in a prince,—
To put away his life-mate, in a pet.
But soon the six score provinces he rules
Are made to know his high imperious will,
To gainsay which would be to merit ill,
And reap all Persia's endless ridicules.
He means to wed, and every maiden fair
Is bid to come, arrayed in splendor, and
Fulfil the monarch's absolute command.
The beauty of his empire is all there,
But he perceives, amid that shining throng,
Of fine-clad dames, one simple maid alone;
He covets her, and claims her for his own,
A thousand winsome women from among:
Hadassah, kin of Mordecai, the Jew,

An orphan child, his love had reared to be
—Adorned with but her sweet simplicity—
A favored Queen, renowned the whole world through.

III.

And he abode, to be near her, within
The courtyard of the palace to observe
How best he might his cherished people serve,—
The brethren whom he honored as his kin.
There, every day, proud Haman passed him by,
The vizier chief, to whom all bent the knee,
And kissed the dust, excepting only he,
Who worshipped God that dwelleth up on high.
To Him alone would he obeisance make;
His creed forbade that prostrate he should fall
Before the man, who towered over all,
And made the hearts of all his subjects quake.
And Haman saw how Mordecai withheld
The homage due to his exalted rank,
He looked his wrath, and Mordecai's heart sank,
Though from his lips a fervent pray'r upwelled.
He knew too well that vengeance soon would smite
Both him and his, and all the Hebrews, who
Abode in peace, and ever greater grew—
But, nonetheless, he gloried in the right.
That day he heard, as thoughtfully he stood
Within the gate, how treason had resolved
To slay the King, and how, it had involved
The Queen he loved, his Hadassah the good.

Forthwith he made the foul plot known to her,
And thus restrained the murder of his sire.
The deed then done, he humbly did retire,
Content to know the crime did not occur.

IV.

But Haman, bent on punishing him, swore
That Jew and all his brother Jews should die;
He fixed the day, and wished that it were nigh,
So that the race might trouble him no more.
Then, straightway, to the presence of the King
The vizier went for sanction to destroy
The hated tribe that clouded all his joy.
The monarch heard, and granted everything.
Thus, surely armed with royal pow'r, he wrote
The fell decree which spread the King's commands
With swiftness through his provinces and lands.
And Persia read, and eagerly took note.
Not yet content, high gallows he had built
Whereon to hang the obst'nate Mordecai,
Who frankly dared his wishes to defy,
That he might pay for his most flagrant guilt.
It chanced, one night, that Ahasueros woke,
And restless grew, and could not sleep again.
He called aloud for his high chamberlain,
To read to him from out the Record Book.
He bade him say what first his random glance
Beheld upon the open page. The man,
With measured voice, then solemnly began:
"It happened, in the course of time, by chance,
That Mordecai, the Jew, did overhear
The King's own servants, plotting him to slay;

He brought the tidings here without delay,
His loyal heart quite overwrought with fear."
The Scribe here stopped. "Go on!" the King cried out,
"And what, I pray, was the reward he reaped?"
"There's none wrote down!" Then up the proud prince leaped,
And thundered: "What! is any one without?"
The door just then, quite sudden thrown ajar,
Revealed the form of Haman, robed in state;
"Well-met, my lord!" exclaimed the King, irate,
Detaching from his royal breast a star,
"Thou art, in sooth, the very man I crave!
Pray tell me how a monarch should exalt
A fav'rite subject, who hath not a fault?"
On hearing this, the vizier grew quite grave,
Though fierce delight tugged at his vain, old heart,
"The man in whom the King doth find delight
Shall on his royal steed be led, in sight
Of gaping thousands, through the public mart.
The King's own crown shall deck his honored head,
His ermine cloak shall cover him, and one,
Who is the city's very noblest son,
Shall walk before him, with becoming tread.
Let him cry out: 'Thus doth our sov'reign show
The man, whom he doth truly well esteem,
Such honor as appropriate may seem
To his high merit!' "—Haman all aglow,
Awaited then the order of the King.—
The monarch smiled, then looking quickly stern,

Said: "Mordecai, the Jew, did nobly earn
The glory thou describest. Go, then, bring
That worthy man, who dwells within the gate;
Put him in purple, and upon my steed,
Announce to all his unrewarded deed
Which saved thy sov'reign from the hand of fate!—
Crestfallen, Haman carried out the will
Of his imperious King. That done, he rushed
To tell his wife how had his pride been crushed,
And plot anew to do the Jews some ill.

V.

But lo! the royal courier comes to say
His gracious Queen awaits him at the feast
She has prepared. He goes, though not the least
In mood to taste a morsel e'en that day.
Queen Esther knew he was her kinsman's foe,
And that he strove to wipe out all her race.
She bade the Jews to intercede for grace
To stay the hand that meditated woe.
In sackcloth and in ashes they bewailed
The threat'ning fate which hung o'er Israel, and
Proclaimed a Fast, by Mordecai's command,
Whose trust in God ne'er faltered and ne'er failed.
Thus, anxiously awaiting the dread day,
When young and old should ruthlessly be slain,
They looked to her, who never did disdain
To solace them, and be their prop and stay.
The noble Queen, determined to frustrate,
The fiendish plot of Haman, then appealed

To her liege lord, though deftly she concealed
At first, that he was master of her fate.
Three banquets she had caused to be prepared,
Inviting him and Haman to partake
Of costly wines, their ready thirst to slake,
And still she left her purpose undeclared.

VI.

But now, when drink suffused his cheeks, and caused
His royal heart to swell and overflow,
Queen Esther said in gentle tones and low,
The while the King looked eager, as she paused:
"Whate'er thou askest, dear belovéd queen,
Is thine before the wish be sheer expressed!"
"O, sire," she plead, "my soul is much distressed;
Deliver me from peril, which, unseen,
Doth threaten me and all my race with death!"
"With death?" all flushed, the monarch cried, and rose,
"O, name the wretches daring to be foes
Of thy sweet peace!" Then, scarcely taking breath,
He cried: "Speak out, o Queen!" She raised her beauteous head,
And, pointing out the wicked Haman, spake:
"He it is who's caused my heart to quake,
And fills my soul with foreboding and dread;
For, know, o sire, this man has vowed to slay
Both me and mine, my people and my kin,
Whose loyalty is their one only sin.—
O bid him now the cruel decree to stay!"

"And has he dared?" the monarch fiercely hissed;
"This is too much! I must go out to ease
My o'erwrought head; I tremble at the knees!"
And out he rushed, with firmly clenchèd fist.
Then Haman, pale and haggard, sought to turn
Queen Esther's heart, and, prostrate, prayed that she
Should save him in his dire extremity.
The King returned (his anger fierce did burn)
"What now! Presumes this wretch to sue for grace?
Away with him!" Just then a slave appeared,
And bowing low, at cow'ring Haman leered,
Then said:"My lord, the gallows are in place!"
"The gallows?" roared the irate King; "what for?"
"He had them built for Mordecai, o sire!"
At this the King could not restrain his ire,
And off the knave's gold epaulets he tore.
"Then make ye haste, and hang him up, instead,
Together with his hopeful sons, that none
May ever dare to do as he has done!"

VII.

And thus was foiled the wicked Haman's plot
Against the Jews in Shushan, long ago,
When Israel's God great wonders wrought to show
That He, our Keeper, sleeps and slumbers not;
That ever, when disaster threatens, He

Redeems them all who trust in Him, and say:
"The Lord of Hosts, our Refuge and our stay,
Shall be our Help through all eternity."

February, 1904.

PASSOVER HYMN

To Thee, our Father's God, we owe
The wonders wrought so long ago,
When Pharaoh and his myriad hosts
Were vanquished with their vaunted boasts;

When Thou didst lead Thy people o'er
The heaving sea, in days of yore,
And didst avert from them all harm,
With outstretched hand and mighty arm;

When Amalek, the crafty foe,
By treach'ry sought to bring us low,
Thou gavest strength to Moses, and
Didst set to naught what he had planned.

When later, in the wilderness,
Thy children suffered keen distress,
Thou didst, great God, dispatch with speed
Sweet manna to relieve their need.

And water gushed from rocks to still
All Israel's thirst, by Thy sheer will;
They who rebelled perceived Thy might
In cloud by day, in flame by night.

Thou didst reveal thy Holy Law
To fill each human heart with awe,
And Sinai's quaking thunder still
Proclaims Thy never-changing will.

Thou spakest through Thy seers and kings
To us of everlasting things,

And with the quick'ning rays of grace
Thou didst surround Thy Chosen Race.

For slavery-chain and funeral pyre
Were never symbols of thine ire;
They bruised the flesh and burnt the frame,
To make us zealous for Thy Name.

No pow'r o'er us shall e'er prevail,
If Israel falter not nor fail
To carry out Thy high behest—
O, Lord of Hosts, forever blest!

March, 1904.

BY THE RIVERS OF BABEL

(Ninth of Ab, 5661: July 25, 1901)

We sat by the Rivers of Babel
  And wept o'er the loss of the Shrine,
But Yahweh, the God of our Fathers,
  We've never yet learned to resign.

We sat by the Rivers of Babel—
  The Harp on the willows we hung;
Our hearts were too stricken with sorrow
  To yield our emotion to song.

We sat by the Rivers of Babel,
  While Seers were lamenting our woes;
We thought of the many in exile,
  Transported from home by their foes.

We sat by the Rivers of Babel
  And yearned for the Zion of old,
Dearer by far to our spirits
  Than glitter of glory or gold.

We sit by the Rivers of Babel,
  The Harp we retune and we sing
Hosannahs to Yahweh, our Father,
  Who sheltered us e'er 'neath His wing.

"ALL SAINTS' DAY"

(Ninth of Ab, 5661: July 25, 1901.)

Sing low, my heart! this day is sacred still;
  Despite the passing tumult of the years,
  I bring to it the tribute of my tears;
A mystic awe weighs down upon my quill:
With inward eye I see the tott'ring wall—
  The citadel of righteousness—decay,
  In sight of God, twice on the self-same day;
I feel the fetters and the fearsome thrall
Which chained my martyred race to Ghetto gate;
  I see the fagot flame with zealous ire,
  I hear the cry of faith from out the fire—
The tone of love from 'mid the din of hate;
  I bless Thy name, O Lord of Hosts, and pray
  To make all Israel consecrate this day!

THE NINTH OF AB.

(5663.)

It singeth low in Judah's heart
  The ancient, plaintive, secret woe,
When, by the willows of the stream,
  In Babylon his tears did flow.

To-day, as then, his harp is mute,
  The exile still laments and moans,
And chants the dirges of his grief
  Beside a holocaust of bones.

All blanched and charred his kindred lie,
  The martyred slain, who saw again
Their Temple sacked, their homes profaned
  Within the sight of faithless men.

No prophet voices his complaint
  In elegies of rhythmic prose;
The Scriptures writ to-day are read
  In callousness and cold repose.

Still, in His high and holy place,
  The Lord of Earth holds solemn court
And He shall judge each deed of blood—
  Be that deed done in fane or fort.

To Him, the Father and the Friend
  Of patriarchs and seers and hosts,
We leave our destinies resigned—
  Defying all our foemen's boasts.

The Temple will be yet rebuilt
  And Israel come into his own.
The voiceless harp shall speak anew
  With melody and joyous tone.

No longer shall the Jew repair
  To shattered wall, to weep and pray;
The Ninth of Ab shall be to him
  A consecrated All-Saints' Day.

No weird lament, nor plaintive dirge
  Shall echo through the Tents of Shem,
But hallelujahs shall resound
  From Beersheba to Bethlehem.

And allthe world shall pause and hear
  Those wondrous strains reverberate,
And every human heart shall sing
  Of brotherhood, and banish hate.

And the Messiah, Prince of Peace,
  Shall come and sound his bugle-blast—
The Living and the Dead shall rise,
  And bury out of sight the Past.

August, 1903.

I SING OF THEE, O ISRAEL

(Rosh ha-Shanah, 5662.)

I sing of thee, O Israel, yea, triumphantly I sing
Of all thy well-earned glory and thine unremembered wrong,
The holy love of heaven and thy martyrdom of years,
A never-ending, everlasting song.

I sing of thee, O Israel, with exulting in my voice,
A psalm of praise and thanksgiving for all that thou hast wrought
From immemorial days that shine with lustre and with light,
Until the years their tardy blessings brought.

I sing of thee, O Israel, and repeat the glad refrain,
Which echoes through the temple-halls, from Beersheba to Dan;
I love the plaintive accents of thy liturgy and prayer
And rapturously chant them when I can.

I sing of thee, O Israel, when the solemn season nighs
Which brings with it the olden need of intercourse with God;
My heart goes out to all my kin, my spirit is athril,
My soul is moved and strangely overawed.

I sing of thee, O Israel, and commit thee to His care,
Who tended thee with inf'nite love and led thee by the hand;
Who sleepeth not nor slumbereth, amid the storm and stress
Of evil thou survivest to withstand.

September, 1901.

ROSH HA-SHANAH

5662

Eternal God, whose everlasting Grace
Did shelter us and shield with outstretched Hand,
We ask for strength to follow Thy command,
And pray Thee, Lord, to turn Thy shining Face
Upon Thine erstwhile consecrated race;
To cause us all and each to understand
That Thou art near to guide us with design
Inscrutable; that every passing year
Triumpheth over tyranny and fear;
That Judah's chosen destiny divine
Is guarded by Jehovah, at Whose shrine
We swear the ancient statutes to revere—
Upon this solemn, soul-uplifting day,
We purify our hearts, and pause to pray!

September, 1901.

YOM KIPPUR

O Lord of Hosts, Thou Only One,
Art radiant in star and sun,
"Thy Will be done!"

All life is Thine ere life's begun,
All life is Thine when life is run,
"Thy Will be done!"

The scarlet thread of sin is spun,
Forgive us, Gracious, Holy One,
"Thy Will be done!"

October, 1900.

PRAYER FOR THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

(Yom Kippur, 5662.)

If I have failed, my God, to see
That Thy great Love was guiding me;
If I have missed the open path
Of Truth, which e'er Thy sanction hath;
If, busy with the passing hour,
I noted not Thy glorious Power;
And, 'mid the boast and pomp of things,
Restrained my spirit on its wings;
Then, Father, show me Grace, I pray,
And lead me toward the righteous way;
Then, Lord of Hosts, compassion me,
And let Thy Love my shelter be!

September, 1901.

THE DEATH OF THE OLD YEAR

A Fable

(Rosh-ha-Shanah, 5664.)

Once, long ago, by God's good grace,
The old year and the new stood face to face.
They bowed to each other politely, then said
The New Year to the Old: "Pray, go to bed;
You look so fatigued and fagged out and worn,
I'll watch o'er the world, in your stead, till morn!"
The Old Year looked up with a rare sweet smile
And tenderly answered: "Do tarry a while;
And if I no longer can hold up my head
I'll let you keep vigil, and then go to bed."
The New Year still lingered and tearfully turned
His beautiful eyes towards the lamp, that now burned
Dismal and low, with a flickering glare,
As though it were trying to keep off the air;
And there he sat silent, and made not a sign,—
He knew that that Vigil was all but divine.

The silvery stars were now fading away,
And the sky's sombre black was just turning to grey,
And the moon's pallid cheeks were becoming fast white,
As swifter and swifter came Dawn's early light.
The Old Year grew weaker and called to his friend:
"My comrade, my comrade, but this is the End!

O promise to do all that I've left undone,
And God will reward you when your sands are run!"
"I promise," the New Year then solemnly said—
And with that the soul of the Old Year was fled.

September, 1904.

ATONEMENT

(Kippur, 5664.)

Great God, if I have strangely erred,
Let all my faults be sepulchred;
Great God, if I have foully dealt,
Make Anger into Mercy melt;
Great God, if I have failed to do,
Vouchsafe Thy Grace to me anew;
Great God, if I have wrought but harm,
Extend to me Thy Shelt'ring Arm;
Great God, with Thee, all humankind,
If penitent, shall favor find.

September, 1904.

A SONNET OF REPENTANCE

(Kippur Eve, 5664.)

Let not Thy wrath consume me, gracious God,
When, bowed down, on the Great White Day I stand
Before the shrine to grope for Mercy's hand,
My inmost being tremulously awed;—
When, quite forgetting fleshly needs, I crave,
Enveloped in the garments of the grave,
Forgiveness for the havoc I have wrought
Within my soul. There, desolate and cold,
A convict-spirit fearing to be bold,
Resides my Better Self whom I have fought
Misguidedly, unmindful of the law
Which brings us with our misdeeds face to face.
But now contrite, I supplicate thy grace
That from the path of sin I may withdraw.

September, 1903.

THE HAMMER OF THE LORD

When Malice vies with Envy to proclaim
That Israel had the courage to excel
In all the arts of Peace,—but to rebel
Against the tyrant and achieve proud Fame,
By dint of prowess worthy of its name,
And, sword in hand, to glory as he fell
Upon the battlefield, he did not dare,—
I charge thee, read the Record of the deeds
The Maccabees accomplished; how they freed
Their kinsmen from the yoke; and in the flare
Of trumpet-sound and triumph scorned the greed
Of pillage; and but hastened to repair
The hallowed Shrine, polluted by the foe,
Whose wanton boasts the Lord of Hosts laid low.

February, 1901.

CONVERT YOUR OWN HEATHEN

Convert your own heathen, let the pagan pray
To his ancient idols in his ancient way;
What to you is sacred, is his wanton whim—
Your God is Jehovah, his are Elohim.

In your right the Bible, in your left the sword,
You have preached the Gospel while the cannon roared;
Priests are singing anthems, soldiers sack and loot;
The True Faith you planted has not taken root.

Not the shell a-shrieking, nor the myriad slain,
Nor the war-scarred heroes, nor the martyrs' pain
Add a jot to glory or a gain to God,
If you barter honor for an inch of clod.

Why send missionaries to the aged East?
Why seek to unbridle there the human beast?
Worship in your temples—pagoda or mosque
Gleam alike respiendent in the darkest dusk.

You revere the Fathers of the Early Church,
They the Tomb of Ages diligently search:
Where Ancestors slumber they kneel at the shrine
Of the dead whose solace no man can resign.

In the sight of Heaven all is pious prayer,
Whether cross or crescent talismans you wear,

Whether o'er the altar incense floats or not,
Whether you be Hebrew, Greek, or Hottentot.

Why this fevered frenzy human souls to save?
God will never forfeit what in love He gave;
If your heart be holy and your purpose fair,
You may leave your Spirit in your Maker's care!

Thrust not your Religion on the heathen host,
Do not make a fetich of your culture's boast,
Civilize the nations, teach them to refrain
From the lust of power at the cost of pain.

Do not crush the soul-life of the savage brave,
Do not drive the godless to a godless grave,
Spare your human brother, though he bestial be,
Many hymns are sung to one celestial Key.

Convert your own heathen, let the pagan pray
To his ancient idols in his ancient way;
What to you is sacred, is his wanton whim—
Your God is Jehovah, his are Elohim.

September, 1900.

RUIN, BRITANNIA!

Cheer for the boon of the Briton, leer at the blight of the Boer,
God of humanity, witness how they crimson the dust with their gore!
Transvaal, aglint with the metal, beckons Britannia's sons;
Men have become mad marauders, the plows have been chained to the guns.

And myriads are marshalled to battle, the pretext is righteousness sheer;
The lion in anger is roaring, and courage intensifies fear.
Now look at the mien of the mighty, then glance in the eye of the meek,
And question, with God at your pillow, what right has the wrong here to seek?

Scoff with the scorn of the millions, who rebel though they're bid to the feast.
Ask them if man be His image, or else but a beautiful beast
Whose claws are so fashioned for grasping that they rend away sinew and bone,
Though mercy alone is true judgment, when we hear our fellow-men groan.

And if they vouchsafe the answer which hurtles from cannon and shell,
And callous to lift up the fallen, they point to the fearless that fell,
Then louder than shriek of the shrapnel and keener than clashing of steel

Shall ring out your clamorous passion as the
words in a prophet's appeal.

For the isles have been shorn of their verdure
and doomed are the young and the strong,
Who were hied with all haste to wreak vengeance
for the right which the rulers call wrong.
India's fevered and famished must yield yet
more victims to slay;
The Colonies, Canada, furnish their quota of
quivering clay.

O England, once pride of the peerless, the peer
now, alas, of the proud!
Thou Ultima Thule of glory, to whose hand the
whole universe bowed,
At whose feet the world's nations, contending,
the homage of reverence laid,
Iniquity leadeth thy legions, to guilt not to bat-
tle arrayed!

To reap in the harvest of others, to rob and to
raid and despoil
Thou speedest thy conquering vassals that never
trod holier soil.
'Neath smoldering summits of Sinai now riot and
revelry laugh;
Thy prophets hold converse with heaven, thy
multitudes worship the calf.

Aye, Naboth has vineyards to covet, when
Ahabs and Jezebels reign,
And the Vaal is abloom with the bullion and the
veldt is aglow with the grain;

Money makes martial the music, Mammon rules Saxon and Gaul—
Kingdoms are builded for conquest, republics are fated to fall.

Lives count for naught in the balance, death is a soldier's delight;
Creed is the science of slaughter, greed is the measure of might.
The paupers are taxed by the princes for treasure and blood and decay—
All hell's ashriek with a clamorous Yes, while the heavens are thundering Nay!

Cheer for the boon of the Briton, leer at the blight of the Boer,
God of humanity, witness how they crimson the dust with their gore!
Transvaal, aglint with the metal, beckons Britannia's sons
Men have become mad marauders, the plows have been chained to the guns

September, 1900.

RETURN, O PARIAH!

[The most prominent Christian inhabitants of Koenigsberg, Prussia, have signed a petition to the Government to repeal the law which prohibits Russian Jews to sojourn in the interior of Prussia. The petitioners point out the great benefits Prussia reaps from Russian Jewish enterprise in German commerce; the extraordinary relief which these very Jews extended to Christians, as well as their own charitable institutions. The Russian Jews, concludes the petition, are indispensable to the general progress of Koenigsberg, and stagnation must set in in its commercial life the moment an attempt is made by the police to execute the expulsion law.—*American Press Report, August 6th, 1900.*]

Return, thou outcast, trodden down,
To Koenigsberg, the Prussian town!
Both envy and mistrust are quelled,
And nothing thrives since thou, expelled,
Didst seize anew the wand'rer's staff—
A challenge in the sobbing laugh,
Which trembled in thy voice and mien
Howe'er it strove to seem serene.
They greet thee with the kiss of peace,
And offer thee their homes to lease;
They sway the Council to repeal
The edict—and thy hurt to heal
They tell thee how they yearn for thee,
Thou Pariah of Liberty!
Yet no such meed of Christian grace
Was meted to the "Chosen Race",
In all the gloomy days of old,
When every human heart was cold,
And heeded not the cries that rose
To heaven, full of Israel's woes;—
And though to-day this tragic tribe

Is goaded on with jeer and gibe:
Behold! the nations need his skill,
His brain, his purse, his heart, his quill,
His honest zeal, his eager zest,
To be the first in every quest;
They need the strong and subtle touch
That fashions out of nothing much;
They need the wand that conjures gold
(Without him naught is bought or sold);—
The gold his boon, the gold his bane:
It saved him when all else was vain;
It made him and it marred him too;
It bade him strive; it dared him do;
It brought him friend, it brought him foe;
It thrilled him through the thrall and throe
Of exile and of banishment—
For with this rod, where'er he went,
He parted wide the ocean's bed,
And crossed the roaring Seas of Red,
Dyed crimson with the blood of those
Who dared the tyrant to oppose—
But yet he hoarded not the gold
His diligence had gained and doled:
To have, according to the Law
(And this he daily prayed with awe,)
Was but to give a goodly part,
With open hand and willing heart.
For charity, the Rabbins say,
Is plea enough, on Judgment Day,
To save the soul from sin and thrall,
And wing it unto God withal.
And thus the Jew, his soul to save,
His mite to every nation gave;

He paid his tithe, the Levite's due,
The half, the whole, he offered too,
For Golgotha or Zion, when
Mere self alone stirred other men;
For kith or kin, or country's weal,
For shrines at which he could not kneel,
Without betraying sacred trust,
—Though humbled to the very dust,—
He sacrificed, with hallowed mien,
His best to serve the Nazarene;
His heart the world's—his faith alone
Remained unswerving, e'er his own,
Although he saw the Hallowed One
In mitred priest and vandal Hun.
The Golden Rule which Moses taught,
And Hillel into precept wrought,
And Jesus gently interwove
With love which over duty strove,
The Jew alone of all the creeds
Did crystallize in loving deeds.
The mandate sounds still true, though dim:
"One law for thee, one law for him,
Who lives estranged within thy gates."
The Lord of Hosts no stranger hates—
And if, perchance, rude human hands
Dare set to naught His high commands;
Or malice, with the sword of might,
Stain crimson all the pure and white,
And making courage but the creed
Of ruthless lust and savage greed,
Presume to mock the deathless Law
Which fills the Universe with awe:
Then swift and dire, 'tis so ordained,

For innocence, so spotless, stained,
Shall flash the wrath of Wronged Right,
In glare of day or dark of night,
From those alert, eternal skies,
Whence peer the Everlasting Eyes,
That neither sleep nor slumber know,
And weep when Israel's lot is woe.—

* * *

Justice cannot be blindfolded:
Nations' destinies are molded
By a Law, whose Book of Ages,
Interleaved with unknown pages,
Tells of races long forgotten,
Sin bequeathing, sin-begotten,
For where Righteousness is wanting,
Soon decay must end the vaunting.
God has tested us and sifted,
And the worthy He has lifted
Nearer to His throned station,
Where the Pure of every nation
—So the Rabbins promised often—
Into purer rays shall soften;
Where the outcast, spurned and scorned,
Crowned shall be and light-adorned;
And the plea for mercy quivers
Like an anthem o'er the rivers;
Sweet with incense, hushed with glory,
Sung in psalm and told in story,
Praying to One *Mundi Lumen,*
Till the human heart is human,
And the spirit, upward soaring,
God alone shall be adoring!

August, 1900.

KADDISH FOR ZION

A Dirge for the Ninth of Ab, 5660.

Say Kaddish, say Kaddish, for Zion of old,
When level with desolate dust
The violent heathen in purple and gold
Ruthlessly ravished her trust.

Say Kaddish, say Kaddish, for Zion of old,
The temple destroyed and despoiled,
The vessels polluted by vandal hands bold,
The Beauty of Holiness soiled.

Say Kaddish, say Kaddish, for Zion anew,
For Zion so wond'rously fair;
Her visions unfolding the spirit to view;
Her Sinais aflash in the flare.

Say Kaddish, say Kaddish, for Zion to-day,
The Ninth of the Dread Moon of Ab,
What cares for ideals and for memories, pray,
The backsliding, stiffnecked mob?

Say Kaddish, say Kaddish, for Israel's proud cant
Of kissing Jerusalem's walls.
O hear me, Adonay! I yearningly chant,
While Zion is thrilled with her thralls.

Say Kaddish, say Kaddish, with lingering woe,
And sing with the Prophet a dirge.
Within, not without, now vaunteth the foe;
The spirit is swept by a scourge.

August, 1900.

ISRAEL'S WELTSCHMERZ

(Dedicated to one who would found a School of Jewish Poetry.)

Dost seek to rouse the minstrelsy of woe,
Which quivers 'long the chords of Judah's heart?
Wouldst bid the unwept tears of anguish start
He garnered to his aching breast? They flow
Unbidden, when no human eye perceives
The bitterness they symbolize, but God's;
When he, who loves him least of all, most lauds
The martyrdom of pent-up sighs he heaves;
Wouldst have him sing,—as David and the seers,
The troubadours of Zion's Golden Age,
Once sang of Joy in Sorrow's gilded cage—
With all Life's tumult beating on his ears?
O let no hymn of Andalusian Spain
Revive the Mem'ry of forgotten Pain!

February, 1901.

ZIONISTS' SONG

("How Long, O Lord?")

I.

How long, O Lord,
  The thrill and throe,
The filling of our cup of woe,
  The vaunting boast of Israel's foe—
How long, O Lord, how long?

II.

We fear to close
  Our weary eyes,
O'er land and sea dark treach'ry lies,
  On Thee alone our hope relies;—
How long, O Lord, how long?

III.

How long, O Lord,
  This wizard-spell,
This muffled moan, this solemn knell,
  The plaintive dirge of those that fell,—
Because they loved Thee, Lord?

IV.

A myriad host
  Of martyred slaves
Will rise from out their open graves
  And march with girded loins, like braves,—
Led forth by thee, O Lord!

V.

Save Zion now
  From vandal hands;

O gather us from many lands,
  We vow to heed all Thy commands—
Redeem us, Lord of Hosts!

February, 1901.

THE PARIAH'S PRAYER

(Kishineff, April, 1903.)

I.

O sires of Anglo-Saxon blood,
  Whose forebears fought at Lexington,
Whose guiltless freedom, at its flood,
  Was wrested from the "faithless one";
To you, proud yeomen of the world,
  The Sov'reign Lords of Land and Sea,
Whose unstained standards are unfurled—
  To you we come on bended knee.

II.

America, O champion Knight,
  Thou, erstwhile, on these very shores
Didst battle in the cause of right!
  We knock at thy wide open doors,
With fettered hands that helpless are;
  In God's own name we supplicate
To hold them still for us ajar,
  And shield us from the Russian's hate.

III.

We, children of the Martyred Race,
  Are freemen, and proud kinship claim
With Lincoln of the shining face,
  Who gave to Liberty a name;—
We charge you solemnly to spare
  The outraged, outcast, steadfast Jew,
Who fell into the fowler's snare;
  Who, maimed and bruised, cries out to you!

April, 1903.

KISHINEFF

God, our fathers' God, have mercy,
  Since to pray to men is vain,
Thou alone canst stay the slaughter,
  Thou alone canst heal our pain.

Thou alone canst guard the blameless
  From the burly, brutal toe,
O be mindful of our anguish,
  Humbled are we, high and low.

The defenseless and the outraged,
  And the maimed who cannot lift
Aloft their palsied arms in prayer,
  And who have no other gift

Save Devotion pure and simple,
  Love of Thee and fear of sin;—
Shield, O shield, Eternal Father,
  From the men who hem them in;

From the lawless and the savage
  Who make mock of Thy command,
Who, with frenzied hate and fury,
  Set to naught what Thou hast planned.

Crown the martyrs, brave and holy,
  Who were sacrificed and slain—
God, our father's God, O hear us,
  Since to pray to men is vain!

May, 1903.

A PRAYER FOR KISHINEFF

God of our Fathers, Lord of Hosts,
Our shield, defense and battle-cry,
Who, when Thou punishest our boasts,
Dost downward look with streaming eye,—
Take pity on the martyred braves,
Who found at *Kishineff* their graves.

God of our Fathers, Lord of Hosts,
Who didst vouchsafe us e'er and now,
Abundantly Thy meed of grace,
Teach us to bear and meekly bow,—
Send down on them Thy healing balm,
Who came at *Kishineff* to harm.

God of our Fathers, Lord of Hosts,
Who watchest o'er with tender care
The scattered remnants of thy Race,
We supplicate Thee, spare, o spare,
The hunted and the trodden-down,
In *Kishineff*, the godless town.

God of our Fathers, Lord of Hosts,
Be with us still, we need Thee sore—
Poor victims of man's savage hate,
Which slakes its ruthless thirst with gore,—
O take the sacrificed and slain
Of *Kishineff* to Thee again!

May, 1903.

TO THE CHRISTIAN NATION

December 25, 1904

TEXT: "Why do the peoples rage?" (*Psalm* II:1)

When shall this tumult cease, and nations learn
That violence is bestial, and cries out
Each pious Christian's sacrilegious doubt?
Wherefore the raging, and the vaunting boast,
The lust of power, the armor-laden host,
The flame of vengeance, swift to flare and burn?
Is this the creed and tenet of the Jew,
Who preached his gentle doctrine, in the days
When Galilee—the parting of the ways—
Was strangely full of peace? Shall he arise,
With tears of pity streaming from his eyes,
From Golgotha, to say this unto you:
"Forgive them, God, they know not what they do!
These Christians, strangely purblind in their view!"

AN APOSTROPHE TO CHRIST

December 25, 1905.

I.

Arise, O Christ, for now they need thee sore:
These slaves in cowl and cassock who adore
The image of the cross. In thy great name
They wield the sword and light the fagot-flame,
And kindle lust and brutalized desire,
And drag thy gentle precepts in the mire,
And wreak unhallowed vengeance for the lie:
That thine own brethren sentenced thee to die!

II.

Come down, O crucified, and stanch the blood
Of all thy kinsmen, flowing in a flood;
Extend the hand that cunning knew to heal
Of old, in Galilee, when mute appeal
Sufficed to bring sweet pity to thine eyes;—
O comfort now thy nation's agonies,
Bind up its wounds, Samaritan the good,
Who taughtest men the test of brotherhood.

SONNET*

Thy spirit, Sage, is ever on the wing,
  And, soaring midway 'twixt the earth and sky,
  Those higher kindred of thy soul draw nigh
To whom thy lofty thoughts, transfigured, cling.
From wrinkled parchment and decaying script,
  Thou lurest long-lost Wisdom fragmentwise,
  Rejoicing and enlightening the eyes.
There's none in modern Jewry, thus equipped,
To teach the truth and spread abroad The Law,
  And with the peal of prophecy intone
  How Beauty shines in Holiness alone,
And that to hold the Spirit well in awe
The letter must be guarded, not forsook,
Ye Race of Priests, Ye People of the Book!

* Suggested by Professor Schechter's luminous Epistle on "Spiritual Religion," in the *Jewish Chronicle*, November 30th, 1899.

January, 1901.

A SONNET OF GREETING

(Inscribed to Professor Schechter, on his arrival in America, April 17th, 1902.)

Be happy, though here no Genizah waits
For wizard-spell; albeit no parchment hoar
Doth languish in our lumber-rooms of lore;
In this New World, behind dull garret-gates,
No Wisdom lurks. Papyrus-roll and rune,
And codices from far Kai-Fung-Fu's fanes
Are garnered by our traders for their gains!
But yet we give thee cheer, and ask the boon
Of comradeship among thy treasured books:
Be thou a friend, who gently overlooks
Our many faults of mind; who will sustain,
With counsel and incomparable pen,
The high resolves which move us, weaker men,
The holy truths thou teachest to attain!

DREYFUS

When France, regardless of her noble creed,
Betrayed thee foully into trait'rous hands,
Defiant of a righteous God's commands,
And chained thee, guiltless of unhallow'd deed,
With impious torture till thy soul did bleed,
Upon a sun-scorched solitary rock,
To perish of thy crimson shame and mock;
Thy honor sold, thy sword a broken reed;
(Could human anguish be more exquisite?)—
Ah, then spake Truth, prophetic and sublime,
And, as of old, appeared a wondrous writ*
Amid this feasting infamy of crime:
To tell thee, France, that Heaven's lamps are lit,
And Justice reigns unto the end of Time.

May, 1901.

*Zola's "J'accuse," arraigning the Republic in defense of Dreyfus.

TO THEODORE HERZL*

Who called thee to such holy, high estate?
Who taught thy lips the all-redeeming Word,
Which touched us to emotion, as we heard,
And soars aloft to Him, That guides our fate?
Who kindled Ardor's undiminished flame:
To make thee bold and eager to attain,
Despite of all that gives thee deepest pain,
The highest good, not evanescent fame?
Who doth sustain the skyward lifted hand—
The hopeful sign and symbol of our zeal,
Upraised high our shattered nerves to steel,
As if in warning that we dauntless stand?—
It is the God within the Nation's soul
That spurs him on to dare to do the right;
He guides his steps and steadieth his sight
That he may strive unswerving towards the goal.
Like all true servants of the living God
Thou gavest heed to that Celestial Voice,
And didst assume our burdens, of thy choice—
Thy heart inspired, thy spirit overawed.
Remain our true exemplar in the Strife,
Though good reward or evil be thy share;
We follow thee, for Zion, everywhere
To struggle for the newly dawning life!

January, 1902.

*Translated from the German of Rev. Dr. Gustav Gottheil.

THE VINDICATION OF CAPTAIN DREYFUS

Draw nearer to the throne of humbled France!
Her welcome arms now wistfully receive
The valiant soldier, sent home on reprieve.—
She looks not at thy pallid face askance,
But, moved to deep compassion for thy fate,
She beckons Justice nigher, that she may
Persuade thee that her guilt is washed away,
And that thy pain has purged France of her hate.
Now doth the Goddess lead thy falt'ring feet,
And thou hast need of courage but to take
Thine own again, for thy great country's sake.
Behold France rising from her sov'reign seat
To offer thee thy broken sword, repaired,
For, verily, thou'st dared what none have dared!

April, 1904.

MORITZ STEINSCHNEIDER

(Commemorative of his 86th Birthday, March 30th, 1902.)

His strength unspent, with purpose keen and bold,
He still performs those Titan-tasks of yore
Which brought him fame and placed him in the fore
Of Glory's stately ranks. Why call him old
Who wields the Spirit's Sword with such disdain
Of battle-din and tumult? In whose train
A host of brave disciples still contend
For what we covet most in life: The Truth?
Ah, nay, these are but symbols of his youth,
These teeming years, not tokens of the end;
They cannot be an earnest of decay
For, lo! he still doth marshal in array
Those splendid thoughts, whose armament is Light,
To pierce and penetrate the deepest night.

TO NAPHTALI HERZ IMBER*

Now hath he come at last into his own
The ancient bard, whose Rubaiyat alone
Gives counsel in a polyglot of tongues
And seldom speaks a dreary monotone.

Here music stirs the subtlest and the best
And lulls each vague uneasiness to rest;
Here whisper gentle houri-voices low
Sweet secrets from the borders of the blest.

'Twas left to thee, O Imber, to restore
The matchless cadence of old Khayyam's lore
And him in lyric fervor to surpass,
As none hath ventured hitherto before.

All Israel's bards re-echo in thy heart!
So wondrous is thy imitative art
That, were the master here to read thy rhyme
He'd hail thee as his very counterpart.

Indeed, the Persian Poet of the Wine—
Thy kindred by some ordinance divine—
Hath pledged thee in the ruddy tankard's glow
And made more fragrant every noble line.

What care we if thou'rt vassal to the bowl
The Sultan-Grape rules every poet's soul

---

* Inscribed to Imber, and prefixed to his HA-KOS, a Hebrew translation of Fitzgerald's version of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam (New York, 1905).

And mitred priest and cowléd anchorite
Are subject to the Tulip-Cup's control.

Go, quench thy thirst! no morbid eye shall glance
At thy dishevelled, silv'ring locks askance,
Remain our frenzied troubadour of rhyme
And rouse the slumb'ring Omars from their trance!

May, 1905.

TO DR. ALBERT A. BERG

If my frail hands were fashioned firm as thine,
So supple, dext'rous, tender with the grace
Of touch and healing, fain would I then trace
With rev'rent fingers blessings on thy face;
But God Himself has set His seal divine
So surely on that classic brow of thine,
And stamped it with the Genius of thy Race,
That neither priest nor prophet need to lift
His voice in pray'r, to vouchsafe thee a gift;
Great gifts are thine: the Hebrew's passionate heart
His nobleness, proud lineage and lore,
His subtle sympathy, the wizard art
To cauterize and cure each wounded part—
And make life saner, sweeter than before!

April, 1910.

SONNET TO A FRIEND

(ACROSTIC)

Here, gentle friend, where genial skies look down,
And frolic laughs at every gath'ring frown;—
Removed from dull convention and deceit,
Remote from cities swelt'ring in their heat—
Your comradeship and charming presence lend
Joy to each moment's comfortable trend;
And when, besides, your humor flows like wine,
Can one like me have courage to repine?
Or feel the irk and weariness of things
Before the Spirit's upward soaring wings?
Know then, dear friend, and mark this to be true:
Unconsciously my heart goes out to you;
God's blessings rest upon your faithful head!
EL *Shaddai* give you Manna for your bread!

August, 1910.

THE JEWISH EMIGRANT'S HYMN

This is the Canaan of Promise
Bequeathed to our Fathers of yore
Flowing with milk and with honey
And not with oppression and gore!

Stalwart as Lebanon's Cedars
And fragrant as tapering pine
Its men are as strong as Anakim
Its women as soft as the vine.

We hail thee, sail-studded harbor,
We greet thee, hospitable shore,
With fingers uplifted to Heaven
We call on the God we adore:

We swear to give love and allegiance
To the Land, where sweet Liberty reigns
And pray th' Eternal above us
To hallow our pleasures and pains!

Hear us! we mean to be loyal
For now that the Red Sea is crossed
Thy Light is our Pillar of Fire
And Egypt forever is lost.

Here Slavery's fetters are broken;
Here all men are equal and free;
The flesh is not bruised by the knout,
The frail is not felled like a tree.

This is the Land of the Homeless:
Of Teuton and Semite and Gaul;
The Stars and the Stripes are floating
Alike over each one and all.

This is the Canaan of Promise
Bequeathed to our Fathers of yore.
Flowing with milk and with honey
And not with oppression and gore!

February, 1901.

THE HIGHER ANTHROPOMORPHISM

I love Thee God and fear Thee, not as they
Who imaged Thee in every floating cloud,
And tremblingly their stricken shoulders bowed,
Whene'er the skies were overcast and gray,
Or thunders crashed, or lightnings leaped about
To smite men with the terror of the Lord;—
Such craven weaklings fearfully adored:
They worshiped Thee in misgiving and doubt,
And brought to Thee their incense and their prayer,
And sacrificed nigh all they had to give,
In awe of Thee, that kith and kin might live;—
But, I, O Father, creature of thy care,
Look trustingly aloft into thy Face
And realize that Thou art Love and Grace!

August, 1901.

CARITAS*

To thee we rear this love-wrought monument
Philanthropy! enveloped in the flesh:
To consecrate the blessed name afresh
Of selfless twain, who scorned emolument,
And thus exalt the Merit we esteem.—
This graceful symbol pointing to the skies,
Shall rivet the beholder with surprise;
Upon its upturned face the sun's bright gleam
Shall glow, and guild the message graven there
That Virtue, linked with Charity abides,
And that this Creedless Shrine all glory hides
Save that of Good;—that Mercy is not rare
If such true lives are dedicate to do
What God allots, in wisdom, but to few.

February, 1901.

*Lines suggested by the projected Memorial in honor of Baron and Baroness de Hirsch, in New York City.

THE ROYAL ROBE

(A theme suggested by the publication of the "Jewish Encyclopedia.")

The shuttle flies, the cloth is being spun
To drape a form that shivered long in rags,
And journeyed from the mire, to reach the crags,
Along the lowlands, where the rising sun
Caressed him (as he passed, with staff in hand,)
The homeless Jew, with nothing but a Book
For comradeship, when all else he forsook,
To pilgrim to his God, o'er sea and land;
Unswerving in his purpose as the stars,
That, in their courses, fought for him, of yore,
When, wounded sore, the tattered Remnant bore
The Ark to victory.—A myriad scars
He hides beneath his threadbare gabardine,
Which now the Purple covers with its sheen.

February, 1901.

FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH*

Sons of the Covenant, glory-crowned,
  Who sprang from out the loins of seers,
The glad hosannas that resound
  Do homage to your fifty years;
They chant the Spirit's glad refrain,
  They voice the People's proud acclaim,
With festal song, in every fane,
  All vie to magnify your name;
Where'er the Sons of Abraham dwell,
  They bless the deeds you've wrought so well!

Sons of the Covenant, far and wide,
  From sun-lit land to ocean shore,
We bid you ever to abide
  By Him of old, Whom we adore:
To serve the cause of right, and stay
  The hand of wrong, which seeks to wreak
Each passing year, each passing day,
  Unhallowed vengeance on the weak—
Remain the refuge and the hope
  Of all, who in deep darkness grope!

* Lines dedicated to the officers and members of the Independent Order B'nai B'rith, on the occasion of its Golden Jubilee, March 8th, 1903.

MY FATHER'S BIBLE

In Memoriam—April 22, 1842.

I.

My many shelves are filled with costly tomes,
All variously old, and wrapped in skins,
Like sombre monks, enveloped to their chins;—
There are among them bindings from the homes
And workshops of the masters of the trades:
Parchment, vellum, sheepskin, half morocco,
Smell of midnight oil, and stale tobacco,
That breathe the scent of their possessors' grades;—
There are, too, new books, sumpt'ously arrayed
In modern garb—uncut and deckle-edged—
Resplendent in their gilt, and deftly made,
Which, more than once, in trouble, I have pledged,
But none of these respond to my caress,
When I'm in quest of long-lost happiness.

II.

There is ***one*** book, far dearer than the rest,
Upon my treasured shelves: It is not bound
In costly skin or vellum, yet profound
Is the esteem and rev'rence in my breast,
As I now lift it from its wonted place,
To bless it first, and read it for a space:—
It gives me comfort now, though time was when
Fierce anguish smote my soul, as, all unseen,
The crumbled leaves I turned, and saw between
The crystal drops of sorrow once again

Which wrung my blessèd father's spirit then;—
But now I read it, ever so serene,
And close the BIBLE gently, when I've done,
And kiss its covers, too, when I'm alone.

April, 1904.

THE SONG OF SONGS

I am asleep, but my heart is awake
To the glory of Life and its beauty,
To the discord and conflict of Duty,
To all the stress which makes the Spirit quake
With thund'rous tumult and the still small Voice;
I slumber, but my soul is strangely stirred:
It soars, unfettered, like a startled bird,
Beyond the pale, where pallid men rejoice
That Sorrow spares them still. In that high sphere
Of Purpose and Communing with one's God,
Where every sense is thrilled and overawed
By something far removed from fleshly fear—
My waking heart strikes one celestial chord
And, singing low, reposes in the Lord.

January, 1905.

IN DARKNESS*

I.

My books are orphaned, and they stand
Sequestered on their silent shelves;
Dejectedly around them still
My mournful thoughts disport themselves.

II.

Closed shall they be, forevermore,
My treasured tomes, that proved to be
A solace in my every woe
Bright stars in life's deep misery.

III.

They once did send a ray of light
Across my all too dreary way
And quickened me with hope anew
In *Galuth's* lonely night and day.

IV.

Here in this book yet burns the flame
Which kindled and sustained my soul.
Here are the weapons which I raised
Against the baleful Fate's control.

V.

But now since darker terrors loom
And blindness brings eternal night

* **Translation of Morris Rosenfeld's poem, entitled:** "*In der Finster.*"

Lost is my life's sweet Paradise
My book's blank pages give no light.

VI.

Then fare ye well, ye treasured books
Entombed upon your silent shelves;
Dejectedly around ye still
My mournful thoughts disport themselves.

March, 1907.

SONGS OF DEGREES

(PARAPHRASES of PSALMS CXX and CXXI.)

PSALM CXX.

I sought the Lord in my distress
He hearkened to my call;
Deliver, Lord, my soul from stress
And falsehood's wicked thrall.

Can unto thee the lying tongue
Do aught of wanton guile?
Its sting is sharp as arrows flung
Its glowing flames defile.

Alas for me, that must abide
In Mesech, and must dwell
In Kedar's tents, where they deride
The peace I love so well.

Behold! I keep a silent tongue,
But when I move to speak
They meditate but strife and wrong
And overrule the meek.

PSALM CXXI.

Aloft the everlasting hills
I lift mine anxious eyes,
Encompassed by surrounding ills
On Thee my hope relies.

My help, behold! it cometh swift
From Him Who made the earth,
To Whom all Nature owes her gift
And Heaven, too, its birth.

He'll suffer not thy falt'ring foot
To ever go astray,
He slumb'reth not, thou mayest put
Thy trust in Him alway.

Lo! Israel's keeper sleepeth not,
Nor doth He e'er grow faint:
Thy shadow, when the sun glows hot,
Thy right hand's kind restraint.

By day no fiery dart shall smite
Thine unprotected head,
The moonbeams of the kindling night
Shall no discomfort shed.

The Lord preserveth thee from woe
And safeguardeth thy soul;
He watcheth thee both come and go,
As on the seasons roll.

DOES HE KNOW NOW?

(An Ode to Robert Ingersoll.)

Thou too, most wondrous conjurer of doubt,
Whose epigrams have put thy peers to rout;
Whose scorpion-sting has stung to nameless scorn
The myriad-minded fancies that adorn
The faith, the hope, the logic of the brave—
Thou, too, at last, hast found a godless grave,
Wherein are laid beneath the worm-worn sod
Thy mighty instincts that were born of God;
The charm, the force, the stress, the afterglow
Of power that like cataracts did flow,
And now, in the holy hush of listless dreams,
Forever stilled and hushed and listless seems.
Dost thou yet cling with all-denying doubt
To fevered phantoms roaming 'round about?
Or hast thou learnt, in star-lit planet spheres,
The noblest truth which mystery reveres?
And failing that, hast learnt, at last, to bear
With all the whims and aims and errors rare
Which man, weaving in the loom of lowly time,
Spins and broiders with reasoned thread of rhyme
Into silken-shimmered curtains that are spread
O'er those aims and whims and errors, when they're dead?
Canst now tell us, from thy resting place,
Of His unending, unabating grace?
Or art still proud, still prone to prophesy
That man, human only, needs must die?

Thy tongue, so truth-betouched, so silver-tipped,
—For who dare deny thee this God-given gift?—
Fain would recall the phrase of long ago:
"I DO NOT KNOW! "

July, 1899.

ISAAC MAYER WISE

Here resteth in the arms of soft repose,
A sage esteemed alike of friends and foes;
Who ne'er did wrong with conscious will or whim,
And through the maze and mist looked up to Him
With vision keener than the quest of men
Who gaze a-dream, and dream a-gaze again
Upon the flitting Shadow of His grace,
And fail to see His Glory face to face.
God's spirit stirred his soul and moved his will,
And moves and stirs us each when all is still
And silent as the speechless dust which holds
The frame enthralled beneath its throbbing molds.
The stress which swayed his high and proud desire
Was tempered zeal, which flared and flamed like fire,
And unconsumed, because not overfed,
It kindled light where darkness reigned instead.
Because he ruled, while other men are led,
Let no man whisper ill against the dead,
But rather breathe a blessing 'pon the name
Which laurels him and Israel all with fame.
The precept Pope so nobly felt and voiced
His heart and mind held always equipoised:
"For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
He ne'er is wrong whose life is in the right!"

March, 1900.

DAVID KAUFMANN

(In memoriam—*ob.* July, 1899.)

Amid the murm'ring din and seething strife
  Of all the world's contending victories,
  Thou, modest scholar, writing histories
Hast caused Judaea's past to pulse with life;
  Hast conjured, with the magic of thy touch,
Whose quiver had the thrill of the sublime,
The soul from its clay; and hast rescued time
  From its only foe: oblivion's clutch,
Which holds enthralled beneath its aged crust
  The teeming mysteries of throbbing thought
  So many tried to find, yet few have sought
To read aright, and read aright, to trust.
  Great Poet-Thinker, Critic of the Past,
  Thine is a memory to live, to last!

August, 1900.

"HE GIVETH HIS BELOVED SLEEP"

(In memory of Rev. Dr. A. S. Bettelheim, who died and was buried at sea, August 21, 1890.)

"He giveth his beloved sleep!"
A chant arose, a dirge too deep
For pious psalm or rhythmic song
The silent, surging waves along—
As we wrapped him in a banner,
With the softest mien and manner.

"He giveth his beloved sleep!"
Dare grief rebel or sorrow weep,
When radiant in sweet repose
The heavens ope as eyelids close,
And lustre beams and splendors loom
O'er new-made mound and ancient tomb?

"He giveth his beloved sleep!"
'Tis joy to sow, 'tis joy to reap
The harvest of the golden years;
The dew-drop, clear as crystal tears,
Descends upon the winnowed wheat—
And makes it fragrant, soft and sweet.

"He giveth his beloved sleep!"
And o'er him seraphs vigil keep;
No more pain, no more harassing,
Death is into spirit passing,
Rest is but a rarer rapture,
Without siege, or storm, or capture.

"He giveth his beloved sleep!"
The shepherd gathers in his sheep—
Greener verdure, softer meadows,
Sunlight dancing o'er the shadows;
Bravely follow, He is leading—
Bounty flows for all your needing.

"He giveth his beloved sleep!"
Then slumber in the briny deep;
Summoned in a Voice that falters
Find thou peace in troubled waters,
Folded in a starry banner,
With the softest mien and manner.

August, 1900.

SONNET

(In memory of Rev. Dr. Aaron Siegfried Bettelheim, who died and was buried at sea, August 21, 1890.)

The seething billows chant their requiem
Complainingly about thy liquid tomb,
Wherein thou sleepest, cut off in thy bloom,
While we, ashore, intone a Te Deum
Upon the day which Memory reveres,
And raise a song of thanksgiving and praise
To Him, Who guided thee on wondrous ways
Of righteousness and pow'r; Who dried our tears
And made us feel, as swift the years rolled on,
That we were not forlorn; that thou art here
Abiding with us always; ever near
To bless us as of old;—that thou'rt not gone
Away from us, but leadest by the hand
Thy falt'ring kin, who follow His command.

August, 1901.

SONNET

(Written on the 10th Anniversary of the death of Professor H. Graetz, Historian of the Jews. Died September 7, 1891.)

We light the lamp and say the Kaddish prayer
For thee, illustrious dead! Nor is this all,—
To-day thy deeds we vividly recall;
The noble lore, the art, the patient care
Thou broughtest to thy task; the mighty share
Thou holdest in the glory of the race,
Whose destinies thy rev'rent hand did trace
Unfadingly upon the lum'nous page
Of History. Thy record is not blurred;
The name thou bearest is a household-word
In Judah's tents; and every unborn age
Shall laud thee more and bless thee more, o sage!
And Israel, mindful of this solemn day,
Shall light the lamp, and think of thee, and pray.

September, 1901.

HALLOWED KINSHIP

(Jahrzeit: Iyar 20, 5662.)

Can I forget, my father and my friend,
How tenderly you reared me and restrained
The tumult that within me raged,—and reigned
With gentleness I failed to comprehend,
But yet with firmness, born of that sweet trait,
Which, in mine eyes alone, would make you great:
The mild rebuke of love?—you were so nigh
To me, the child, and then the striving man,
That God Himself seemed present in the plan
Of that deep Kinship, subtle and so high,
Which made us comrades, brothers in the quest
For Him, to Whom we sacrificed our best.
You taught me what true Aspiration is;
How Honor scorns the pelf which lures the strong:
And that the Right is holier than Wrong—
For nothing else I thank you more than this.

May 27, 1902.

GUSTAV GOTTHEIL

(Died April 15, 1903.)

God healed him while he slept,
  And took His shepherd home,
And many thousand tender hands
  Now bear him to the tomb.

His life was crowded with the deeds
  Which crown his calm repose,
Upon his gleaming coat of arms,
  No guilty glory glows.

Dream on, O Prince in Israel, dream,
  In thy celestial home,
While many thousand loyal friends
  Chant Kaddish at the tomb.

April 16, 1903.

ELEGY

(In Memoriam Rev. Dr. Gustav Gottheil. Born at Pinne, Prussian Posen, May 28, 1827; died in New York, April 15, 1903.)

I.

Master, we, who at thy feet,
Have learnt to love the Lord of Hosts,
With trembling accents we repeat,
(Forgetting all our vaunts and boasts,)
That thou wast great in work and prayer—
Thy monuments are everywhere.

II.

Not only now, when on the bier
Thou liest pale, we hold thee dear,
For e'er and always, in the past,
Our trusting hearts have held thee fast;
To all of us and each thou wast
A cherished friend—alas, now lost!

III.

And I, among the least of those,
Who brought to thee their wounds and woes,
(Whom with a firm caressing hand,
Thou knew'st to heal and reprimand,)
Feel desolate, bereft and lone,
As though thou wert my very own.

IV.

To that historic tomb where they,
Who loved thee most now weep and pray,
Thy fond disciples, too, shall make

A pilgrimage for old times' sake,
And bending low, beside them, I
Shall crave an answer to my cry!

April, 1903.

A THRENODY

In Memoriam ALEXANDER KOHUT:

April 22, 1842—May 25, 1894.

A FRAGMENT

"My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." (II Kings, ch. II, 12).

I.

Imparadised—I sing of him,
Who dwells amidst the Seraphim;
Who, far removed by distant years,
Is visioned clearly through my tears;
Whose presence sets, where'er I go,
The spark of memory aglow;
Along whose star-lit path I find
Sustenance for soul and mind;
Who still remains, lest I should err,
Father, Friend, and Counsellor!—
These feeble syllables of rhyme
Deep in the silent tomb shall chime,
These tender words of mine shall stir
The spirit in its sepulchre;
And thrill the heart awakened there
To hear the accents of my prayer.

II.

For, imaged to my roseate view,
Appears the radiant being I knew:
So stately, tall, and strong of build,
In form a Greek of ancient guild;
(In feature, too, by strange intent,

The Hellenist and Hebrew blent.)
The same majestic mien is there
Mirrored in the magic air;
The glancing eye, the shining face,
A very arsenal of grace;
The shapely head, the massive brow,
Transfigured by the priestly vow;
The del'cate hands, so marble white,
That spread o'er many tablets light;
The glist'ning, flowing, raven hair,
Which made his oval face so fair;
The mighty shoulders one could trace
Saul-like o'er the populace;
The outstretched arms, like poised wings,
Brooding o'er the cosmic things;
The regal frame, all robed in white,
Like some ancestral Israelite—
By Heaven's own inscrut'ble plan
God's very counterpart in man!

III.

O man of God, o godly man,
Great sheik of our lone caravan!
O'er parched and arid wastes we plod,
Content to walk where thou hast trod;
Unswerving in the path of good,
We cling to thy sweet brotherhood;
The path no longer yields, and we
Are footsore in the quest of thee;
We miss the gladness and the voice
Which bade us rally and rejoice;
We miss the firm, elastic tread,
The buoyant goal to which it led;

We miss the tender, trusting look,
The roadside-reading in The Book,
The manly counsel, high disdain
Of every illy-gotten gain;
The calm persuasion, wise and meek,
Which brought unsought what we did seek;
The mystic spell that wrought such charm
And deftly kept us out of harm.

IV.

And who could match that tongue of flame,
Which smote unsparing every blame,
And then, in turn, with inf'nite love,
Could speak in accents of the dove?
The rich, fine cadence, soft and low,
Like mute appeal from hidden woe;
The rhythmic flow of passionate speech,
That wonder worked in all and each;
The irresist'ble spell of sound
That swayed a multitude around,
And lifted up the contrite few
And taught the wayward to be true;—
The words of fire that wreathed the shrine
With incense fragrantly divine;
The kindling tones that clarioned loud
The Will of "Him that dwelt in cloud?"

V.

His very presence, everywhere,
Breathed benediction in the air;
His white, caressing, helpful hand
Wrought subtle magic, like a wand
That wizard fingers softly raise

To uninitiated gaze.
The tranquil dignity which dwelt
Upon his brow, one almost felt;
The faith serene which filled his life
Met bravely every secret strife,
And skeptic unbelief limped on,
Fearful of this paragon!
Nor was he autocratic when,
In comradeship with other men,
He called to task with del'cate wit
The Higher Critics of The Writ,
Who with a ruthless, vandal hand,
Quite failing it to understand,
Dissect, uproot and pull apart,
With strangely ill-instructed art
The venerable Holy Book:
Such sacrilege he could not brook,
And swift his righteous anger smote
Both lowly men and men of note.

VI.

He was, withal, surpassing kind
To thinkers of whatever mind,
And listened eagerly to learn—
A docile pupil, in his turn.
His patience with their foibles waned
When sacred things were scoffed, profaned;—
Respecting every human creed,
He crystallized in loving deed
His own unsullied credo; none
E'er hallowed more the Holy One!
Nor was there man, who so revered
The leaders true religion reared:

Confucius, Buddha, Moses were
Entombed in his heart's sepulchre.
The Naz'rene seer his spirit knew
As pupil of the gentle Jew,
Who first expressed the pregnant thought
That all else in the world was naught
If fellow-feeling did not dwell
Within the soul's strong citadel.
Nor was the rugged Luther less
Entitled to his heart's caress,
And Wilberforce and Channing too,
Were brothers to his kindred view.
In all them, with discerning eye,
And sympathy that asked not why
He cherished and esteemed the man—
Much mightier than tribe or clan,
Than cassock, cowl, or temple-hall,
Than crescent, shield and cross and all
—Dead symbols that endure to-day
To mock our fellowship of clay!—
Far dearer than their forms and prayers
And litanies that were their wares
Far sweeter than their borrowed psalms,
The telling beads with unctious palms,
The bowing, cringing, bending low,
As though th' Eternal lived below;
Aye, dearer to his spirit far
Than fane or mosque or incense-jar:
Were human lives that strove to teach,
By other means than stilted speech,
That deep, indwelling, lasting good
Is totem of our brotherhood;
That in us each and in us all

Reveals himself the All-in-All;
That God made tender hearts and strong
E'en heathen Hottentots among;
That character makes kinship sure,
However cultured is the boor;
That spirits in a conclave meet,
And with their evanescent feet
Traverse the universal globe
To touch each others' wings and probe
Affinities that seem to speak
Across each tow'ring crag and peak,
O'er Pyrennes and Apennines,
Without the aid of flame-charged lines:
For e'er and always, sweet and low,
Come whisperings of kindred woe,
Strange voices sound vibrating through
The corridors of each heart true;
Celestial guests unbidden come
To talk to us of those gone home;
Immortal friends, in spirit-guise,
Look in on us with wistful eyes;
They take us by the hand with such
Impalpably exquisite touch,
That, somehow, we begin to feel
The smarting wound within us heal,
That, somewhere, deep within the breast,
All our aching goes to rest,
And that we'll never know just why
Doubt is changed to certainty;
That fast and sure, and anchored firm,
As beneath the sod the worm,
As upon the sky the star,
As the skin above the scar,

Is God's subtle hope and trust
Sleeping in the cosmic dust;—
And that He himself shall care
For our kinsmen garnered there!

May 25, 1904.

IF I HAD KNOWN, DEAR MASTER!

(In Memoriam: Moritz Steinschneider, died January 28, 1907.)

If I had known, dear Master, when of late
I held thy hand within my own to say
The thousand things I'd thought of on the way,
But sheer forgot, for very awe, to state;—
If I had known the summons was so near,
And that thy presence never more would grace
The little room which was the trysting place
Of every scholar, booklover and seer
That came from North, from South, from East and West,
To call himself thy pupil and be blest—
I fain would have besought thee to allow
My unclean lips to kiss the wizard hand
That made of learning such a wonderland,
And lost its matchless cunning only now.

January 28, 1907.

MORITZ STEINSCHNEIDER

(An elegy paraphrased after Jeremiah xxxi, 15, and II Samuel, i, 19-27.)

I.

A voice is heard in Ramah
Lamenting for the dead
Rachel, weeping for her children
Will not be comforted.

II.

How are the mighty fallen!
O tell it not in Gath,
Lest Askelon, rejoicing, reap
A gleeful aftermath.

III.

For slain is Israel's beauty
On proud Gilboa's height,
And perished are the spears of war
That flourished in the fight.

IV.

Ye mountains, may upon you
No dew descend, nor rain,
Nor shall your fertile meadows yield
Their crop of golden grain.

V.

For there the chieftain's weapon
Is vilely cast away,
As though a consecrated king
Were only common clay.

VI.

More strong than lions was he,
  More swift than eagles' flight;
Aye, fair and pleasant was the life
  Of this great Israelite.

VII.

Then weep, O Israel's daughters,
  No more shall ye be clothed
In scarlet and in golden robes,
  As they that are betrothed.

VIII.

In sackcloth and in ashes,
  For Zion thus bereaved,
Are ye appareled to bemoan
  What ne'er can be retrieved.

IX.

Departed is her glory,
  In thy high places slain,
No such anointed king shall rule
  Jerusalem again.

X.

A voice is heard in Ramah
  Lamenting for the dead;
Rachel, weeping for her children
  Will not be comforted.

February 1, 1907.

SONNETS TO THE MEMORY OF ESTHER J. RUSKAY

I.

Not to lament, or dirges to intone,
In falt'ring accents, tearfully and low,
To tell the story of our kindred woe,
Are we convened in solemn unison;—
Nor are we come to string the broken lute,
To wake its slumb'ring silence with a song
And chant thy praise in consecrated tongue—
The harp hangs still there, sorrow-sealed and mute,
Upon the willows waving o'er thy grave,
Where, peradventure, unseen hands shall sweep
The severed chords—and we, who vigil keep,
May hear the music of thy voice, and lave
The hallowed ground with tears, and solace seek
Of Him, Who loves the contrite and the meek.

II.

We meet to-day to call upon thy name,
With wistful eyes to contemplate and trace
Each feature of thy well-remembered face;
And as we light the faint memorial flame
To hear above the cadence of our prayer
The brush of wings across the tranquil air,
As though thy radiant spirit rustled there;—
To see thee once again, ere yet we go
Our devious ways, unmindful of the gloom,
And know that though we robed thee for the tomb

Thou livest yet, transfigured and aglow,
In far-off fields of fragrant asphodel,
Where seraphs and thy starry kindred dwell—
Revered and loved and mourned in Israel.

March, 1908.

JOSEPH MAYOR ASHER

Deep be thy sleep, brave Prophet-Priest of God!
Thy spirit-wars are waged, and tranquil now—
The laurel of our homage on thy brow—
Thou dreamest; whilst we whisper overawed,
And name thee in our hearts, and deep and low
Say Kaddish o'er thy cerements of snow.
Thine be the peace of God, great, restless heart!
No more shall wound thee Israel's native woe;
No more shall strive against thee friend or foe;
Thou art our stern-eyed seer—the counterpart
Of AMOS and ELIJAH, blent in one.
Our kindred sense perceives thee, and we trace
The Saintliness of Ages on thy face,
Now that thy work is gloriously done.

November, 1909.

CONTENTS