

THE

BOOK OF GOLD



Turn back, turn back it is not yet too late;
Turn back, O guilty! nor seek to expiate
Bad deeds by worse and save the hand from shame
By plunging all thy soul into the flame.

J. T. TROWBRIDGE

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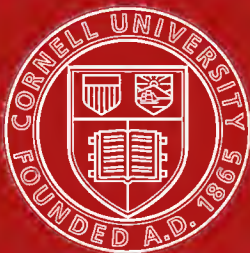
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THE BOOK OF GOLD

AND OTHER POEMS



"AND BUT ONE THING NOW WAS WANTED TO FULFIL HER DARLING DREAMS."

[Page 60.]

THE BOOK OF GOLD

AND

OTHER POEMS

By JOHN TOWNSEND TROWBRIDGE

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



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TO

GRACE EVELYN.

*Companions, that have made my days so sweet,
O Songs! that shed a glory round my feet
In the lone desert of the city street ;*

*That filled the morning with a fresher dew,
And robed the rainbow in a lovelier hue ;
Lending the heavens a more celestial blue,*

*And a more awful splendor to the sea ;
Go forth, ye winged witnesses, and be
To other men what ye have been to me !*

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THE BOOK OF GOLD.

A Christmas Story.

PART I.

CHRISTMAS-EVE.

ONE snowy Christmas-eve it came to pass,
As Richard Ray was turning down the gas
In the old book-shop, casting into gloom
The dusty rows on rows that lined the room,
And antique folios piled on shelf and floor,
Two strangers, meeting, halted at his door,
And entered singly.

Short and slight the first,
In short black cloak, with ample cape reversed
Above his head to shield him from the snow—
A quaintly improvised capote; below,
A strange bright face, large-eyed, intense, peered out:
A man of forty years or thereabout.

Lightly the snow-flakes from its folds he shook,
And from his cloak produced a ponderous book.
“A fine old ‘Burton!’ I dare swear,” quoth he;
“There’s not another such this side the sea.
Since I am here to turn an honest penny,
I ought to laud my wares; but what can any

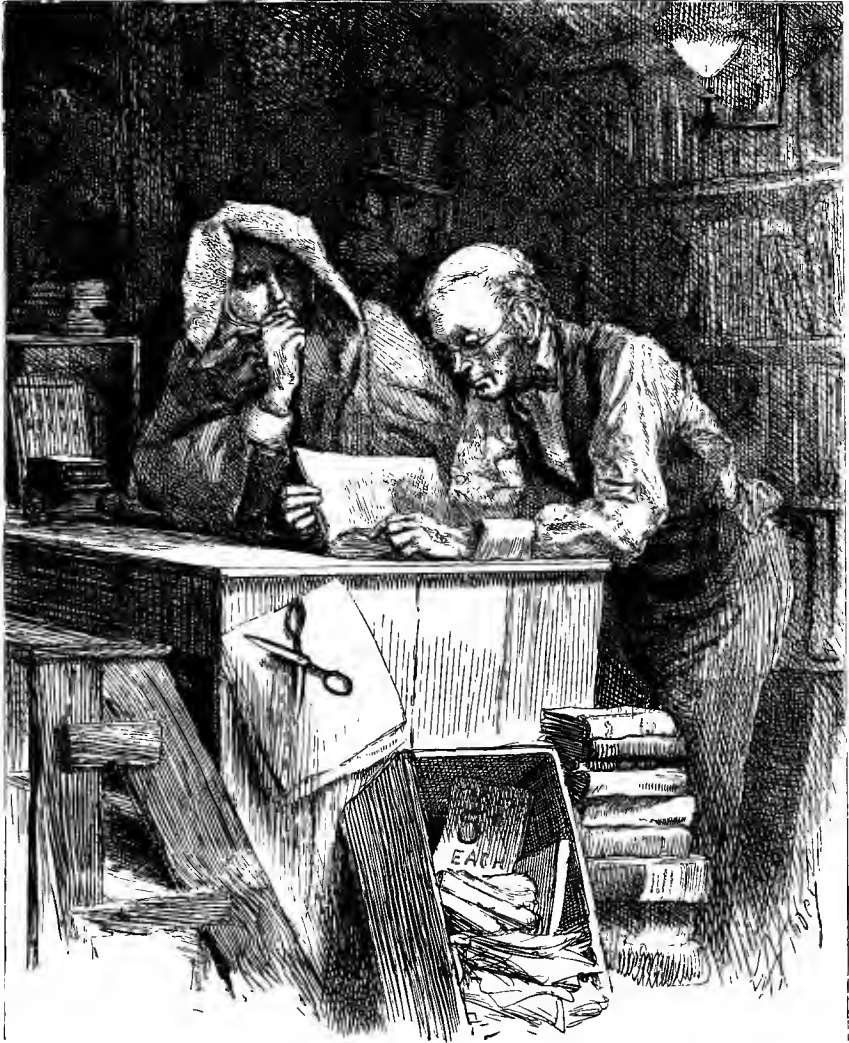
Reasonably fair and candid villain say
 In praise of friends he's plotting to betray?
 My rare old 'Robert Burton'! there he lies!"
 Scanning the shopman with deep wondrous eyes,
 Full of unspeakable great thoughts. "How much?
 This leather fellow at your Midas-touch
 Should turn to gold; and gold I need, Heaven knows."

Over the counter, spectacles on nose,
 Old Richard stooped: "Ah, surely; so it is!
 I ought to find a purchaser for this:"
 And named a price that touched the stranger's pride.

"What! sell a life-long friend so cheap?" he cried.
 "I'd sooner seek an air-hole in the ice
 And drown myself!" he vowed—and took the price.
 Then, with a smile so quaint it well might move
 Another's tears: "Who knows but this may prove
 The nucleus of a fortune? Thanks!" he said,
 Flung the black cape once more above his head,
 And went his way.

In dark and silent mood,
 Aside, meanwhile, the second stranger stood:
 A tall fair youth, but anxious-eyed and wan;
 Brows nobly arched, but all their freshness gone,
 Withered and parched by fires that raged within—
 The hidden fires of suffering and of sin.

Why he had entered there I scarce can tell.
 He neither came to purchase nor to sell;
 But, as a hunted wretch, in desperate strait,
 Remorse and terror knocking at his gate,
 Seeks any corner, Maurice Allanburn,
 Harassed, beset, not knowing where to turn,
 Had paused at Richard's door. If all were told,
 Perhaps he would have clutched the old man's gold.
 For Allanburn, a pious widow's son,
 Affianced, loved, even to the verge had run



"OVER THE COUNTER, SPECTACLES ON NOSE, OLD RICHARD STOOPED."

A secret course of ruinous excess,
 Till he was ready, in his dire distress,
 To fling himself on any frantic deed,—
 To mount unbridled violence as a steed,
 And leap the abyss, or perish utterly.

“Dishonor I will never live to see:
 When all has failed, then this!” he said, and pressed
 A hidden vial sewed into his vest.
 “The swift news of my death shall overtake
 The rumor of disgrace, and kindly break
 Their poor hearts first.”

What hope is there? Suspected

Already by the house he serves; detected,
 He fears, and tracked by spies this night; the end
 Is menacingly nigh. And now the friend,
 With whose forged name he has been forced to borrow
 Some thousands in his absence, comes to-morrow.
 Gold, only gold, much gold, this very night,
 Or ignominious and precipitate flight—
 Naught else can save him; and he will not fly.
 “There’s none so wretched, so ensnared, as I!”

So Maurice stood and watched, aloof in shade,
 The shopman and the stranger at their trade.
 “What furious need of gold to such as he?”
 He mutters. “I could laugh at poverty,
 And welcome toil, no matter where or what,
 With but a crust by honest labor got.
 Has he staked all upon some reckless game—
 The hopes of youth, an honorable name?
 Is life itself, and more than life, at stake—
 A mother’s love, a young girl’s heart to break?
 If not, let him be happy.”

With the air

Of one who had a common errand there,
 Maurice drew near and cast an absent look
 Over the pages of a little book
 Which lay upon the counter, till by chance
 A single sentence riveted his glance.

*Turn back, turn back; it is not yet too late:
 Turn back, O youth! nor seek to expiate*

*Bad deeds by worse, and save the hand from shame
By plunging all thy soul into the flame.*

He started, read again, and still again,
With a strange fascination. But just then—

“An admirable book,” the old man said;
“‘Right Thinking and Right Living:’ ’twill be read,
And, I predict, be famous, centuries hence.
The author is a man of wit and sense—
Charles Masters. Out of print, I think, just now.
Only a shilling. Thank you,” with a bow.
“A merry Christmas to you, and good-night;”
And Richard Ray once more turned down the light.

And with a quick glance up and down, to learn
If he is spied and followed, Allanburn
Goes forth again into the whirling storm.

The crowd sweeps by: the shop-girl’s flitting form;
The brisk mechanic coming from his work;
The prosperous merchant, and the honest clerk;
The happy poor man, with his pack of toys,
The Santa Claus of his own girls and boys;
The fatherless apprentice lad, who stops
To feast his eyes before the glittering shops—
No Christmas gifts for him, but he can fill
His dreams with presents, and be happy still;
The sleighing parties, in their fairy shells,
The muffled drivers and the jingling bells;
The cheery newsboy, shouting through the storm
(Blowing his finger-tips to keep them warm)
The last great forgery, the awful crime.
“Whose turn,” thinks Maurice, “will it be next time?”
And hears in fancy, “Shocking suicide!”—
His own dread fate by all the newsboys cried.

In groups, or friendly couples, or alone,
Each with a hope and purpose of his own,

He sees them pass; and thinks what pleasant things
 The season to the humblest fireside brings,
 Happy alike who give and who receive;
 And all his memories of Christmas-eve—
 The expectant stockings by the chimney hung;
 The sweet conspiracies of old and young;
 The Christmas-tree, with its surprising fruits—
 Toys, candies, picture-books, the boy's first boots;
 The days of innocence and hope and joy;
 The fond proud mother, and the proud fond boy:
 And many a fault and many a broken vow
 Rush over him; and he beholds even now
 In their suburban home that mother wait,
 And listen for his footstep at the gate,
 While with light hand some graceful task she plies,
 Preparing still for him some sweet surprise.
 And Maurice stifles in his throat the cry,
 "There's none so wretched and so base as I."

Her image haunts him, waiting there in vain,
 And conscience urges with its stinging pain;
 And Maurice, entering at a well-known door,
 As on like errands, many a time before,
 Snatches a pen and sets himself to write:
 "Mother, do not expect me home to-night;
 Important business."

Flashing through the wire,
 The words will find the widow by her fire;
 And she will sigh, "His work is never done.
 Ah, Laura, what a husband you have won!
 So faithful, so industrious, so sedate!
 No wonder he is pale and worn of late,
 With so much business on his hands"—the while
 He hastens to a bar-room to beguile
 His misery for a moment, and impart
 Fresh resolution to his faltering heart.

He meets a friend; puts on an easy air
 Of gayety, and sees through his despair

A sudden gleam. "Ah, Murdock, you're my man!
Lend me a trifle—anything you can;
For Christmas gifts have ruined me, and I
Have still to purchase"—forging lie on lie.

The loan obtained, they chat and clink their glasses;
And Maurice notes a short slight man who passes,
Advancing to the bar with eager pace,
In short black mantle, with a strange bright face.
The wondrous eyes and the great soul within
Glow with deep fervor as he calls for gin.
He lifts with nervous hand the glass and drinks,
And pays with Richard's coin. And Maurice thinks:
"Was this his fearful need, his mad desire,
To quench a fiery thirst with fiercer fire?
No hope for him! But I may yet restore
All I have perilled by one venture more."

Straight to a gaming-palace he repairs;
Climbs with quick step the too familiar stairs;
The hot hope mounting to his head like fumes
Of maddening wine, he walks the gilded rooms,
The scene of half his losses. Seated there,
To Heaven, or Chance, or Fate, he breathes a prayer,
To look with favoring eyes upon his sin—
The last, he vows, if he may only win.
Not for his own, but for his mother's sake,
For Laura's, he implores; and his last stake
On the green cloth with trembling hand lets fall,
Wins, loses, wins again, and loses all.

And all is over. Mother's eyes no more
Shall greet him with glad welcome at the door.
No more for him the rose of love shall bloom,
And trance the senses with its charmed perfume;
Beauty delight, or social pleasure blow
The heart's dull embers to a heavenly glow.
The world its myriad industries shall ply,
And all its vast concerns full-sailed sweep by;

And Friendship shall endure, and Hope shall trim
Her deathless lamp, but nevermore for him.

So Allanburn upon that Christmas-eve,
His ruined youth despairing to retrieve,
Locked in his melancholy lodging, sits
And meditates, or walks the room by fits,
And writes his everlasting sad farewells
To those he loves, until the Christmas bells



“HOPE EVERMORE! LOVE EVERMORE!” THEY SING.”

Peal joyously upon the stormy air—
Peal sweet and clear, and through the tumult bear
The golden tidings of the reign of Peace.
“For Love is born: let wrong and sorrow cease!
Sorrow no more! hope evermore!” they ring;
“Hope evermore! love evermore!” they sing,
To all the world; and all the world is blest:
To all the world but one, for whom no rest,

No respite from despair and anguish, save
A shameful death and a dishonored grave.

And after death? He will not pause to think:
Resolved to leap, why falter on the brink?
Folded his letters, with a strangely steady,
Cold hand he seals them, and now all is ready.
He reaches for the vial at his breast,
And finds instead, forgotten in his vest,
The little book placed there some hours ago.
The leaves fall open in his hand, and, lo!
Before him, like a flaming sword that turns
All ways, once more the fiery sentence burns.

*Turn back, turn back; it is not yet too late:
Turn back, O youth! nor seek to expiate
Bad deeds by worse, and save the hand from shame
By plunging all thy soul into the flame!*

He started to his feet, dashed down the book,
And to and fro across the chamber took
Quick frenzied strides; then hurriedly prepared
The deadly draught, and in the mirror glared
At his own spectre, ghastly pale and grim,
With glass uplifted, coldly mocking him.

"'Tis but a shadow, and what more am I?
Come, Nothingness! and, World and Life, good-bye!"
He raised the glass—the shadow did the same;
He closed his eyes, and suddenly, like flame,
Leaped forth the warning to his inner sight,
In living letters read by their own light:

Turn back, turn back; it is not yet too late.

Be it Charles Masters, Providence, or Fate,
Something has stayed his hand. From off the floor
He takes the little book and reads once more.

*When all is lost, one refuge yet remains,
 One sacred solace, after all our pains :
 Go lay thy head and weep thy tears, O youth !
 Upon the dear maternal breast of Truth.*

Still as he reads, the Christmas bells he hears,
 And in their frozen sources start his tears.

*Dismiss the evil counsels of Deceit,
 Fling off the mask, and downward to thy feet
 Let the false vesture of concealment fall,
 And, owning all thy wrongs, atone for all.*

At every word he feels the searching steel
 That probes the quivering heart, but probes to heal.

*Every false path, though fair and long it seem,
 Leads to some pit ; and happy thou mayst deem
 Thy wayward youth, whose lesson comes not late—
 O fortunate, when most unfortunate !*

So Allanburn, with soul absorbed, intent,
 Reads on ; and each prophetic word seems meant
 For his own heart ; such broad bright wisdom shines,
 Such swift conviction lightens in the lines.
 And all the while the holy bells are ringing,
 The spirits of the Christmas bells are singing,
 Filling the stormy world with hymns of peace.

“For love is born: let wrong and sorrow cease!
 Sorrow no more! hope evermore!” they ring
 “Hope evermore! love evermore!” they sing.
 And all the rock of self is cleft and shaken;
 And deep within, sweet blessed springs awaken
 Of comfort and new courage, not to die
 This coward’s death, and like a traitor fly
 The demons he has conjured, but to live,
 Strong in the strength which only truth can give.

PART II.

CHRISTMAS-NIGHT.

AND Maurice lived. And as a traveller—lost
 By night upon some trackless prairie, crossed
 By wind-driven, leaping flames, while ever nigher
 Sweeps the red-maned wild hurricane of fire
 With hoof of thunder and devouring breath,
 And all the air is lit with lurid death—
 Kindles before his feet the crisp dry grass,
 And burns the path where he will safely pass;
 And the flames die behind him, and the morn
 Beholds him far on blackened plains forlorn:
 But life is left, and hope; so Allanburn,
 By frank avowal of his guilt and stern
 Self-condemnation, quelled the rage of men,
 Forestalled his foes, and won his friends again,
 As 'twere, before he lost them.

Desolate

And long the labor seemed, to reinstate
 Fallen fortune and lost honor to restore;
 But will and heart were strong, and evermore
 He kept the little volume by his side—
 His savior once, and now his constant guide
 And solace in the long ennobling strife,
 Incarnating its wisdom in his life.

*To lose with high endeavor is to win;
 And they but fail who build success on sin,
 Whose gilded walls of happiness shall stand
 As baseless palaces on sea-washed sand.*

Each day's experience taught him to construe
Its old dry truths with meanings fresh and new.

*Be then thy conscience as the eternal rock,
Wave-buffeted, unmoved by every shock
Of roaring condemnation, hate, and wrong :
Set thou thereon thy pharos high and strong.*

Thus as he played his arduous daily part,
He learned its lofty precepts all by heart.

*Let two allied and equal laws control
Thy being—law for body and law for soul ;
As the steam-chariot, with obedient wheel,
Flies safely on its parallels of steel.*

Nor prudent virtues only ; rising thence,
It taught him faith and wise beneficence.

*Religion is no leaf of faded green,
Or flower of vanished fragrance, pressed between
The pages of a Bible ; but from seeds
Of love it springeth, watered by good deeds.*

So passed the whirling years, some nine or ten ;
And now the Christmas-time brings round again
Its innocent revels, and draws near its close,
When homeward through the city Maurice goes.

Tired Nature lets her starry eyelid down,
A wintry quiet falls on all the town,
A tingling frost is in the silent air,
His own breath whitens on his beard and hair,
As Allanburn, with homeward-hasting feet,
Awakes the echoes of the icy street.

The shops, on Christmas-eve ablaze with light,
Are closed and dark on this cold Christmas-night.
But in the homes about him, Maurice knows
What pleasure sparkles and what comfort glows :

The dance, the song and story, told or sung;
Smiles from the elders, laughter from the young;
Enraptured childhood with its pictured page;
The homely games, uniting youth and age—
Scenes which the curtained windows scarce conceal:
And all the joys which friends and kindred feel
In that glad time—with sympathizing heart,
He seems to see and hear and take a part
In all; and now his eager fancy runs
Before to his own home and little ones.
There waits the partner of his home and life,
Their mother and (ecstatic thought!) his wife,
The ever-faithful Laura. Fondly there
His own good mother from her easy-chair
Watches the baby Maurice on the floor,
Upbuilding still, to see it fall once more,
His toppling house of blocks; or turns to smile
On little Laura by her side the while,
Bending in the warm light her glowing head,
Hushing her doll and putting it to bed.

The last house falls in ruins; in the box
Are packed at last the bright new Christmas blocks;
The doll's asleep, the cradle put away;
And so the happy children end their play,
And in imagination now he sees
Two cherubs in white night-gowns on their knees,
Mingling their curls before the mother's chair,
Lisping with dewy lips their evening prayer.
How sweet the picture! Suddenly the past
Rises to dash it; and he starts aghast,
Seeing his own pale spectral image stand
Within a mocking mirror, glass in hand.

While thus amid his blessings he must think
Of perils passed, and shudder at the brink
Of one black gulf, the dark remembrance makes
What is seem brighter; as he sometimes wakes
At midnight from the hideous dream, to press
More closely his dear present happiness.

He hurries on with eased and thankful heart;
 And of a sudden sees before him start
 From a by-street the figure of a child,
 A wretched girl in rags, who puts up wild



"HIS OWN GOOD MOTHER FROM HER EASY-CHAIR
 WATCHES THE BABY MAURICE ON THE FLOOR."

Entreating hands, and cries out piteously,
 "Oh, sir! who is there—who will come and see
 My father? He is very sick! I fear—"
 "My child, I will go with you. Is it near?"
 And, comprehending what she scarce can say,
 He follows where she quickly leads the way.

Down the by-street where red-eyed rum-shops glare,
 And with hot breath defile the evening air,
 Where pines pale Poverty, while Vice and Crime
 With lurid orgies vex the hallowed time;
 Across a court and upward through the gloom
 Of creaking stairs, she leads to a cold room,
 Ill-odored with foul drugs and misery,
 Where from his couch a man starts up to see
 A stranger come.

“Art thou the Christ?” he cries;
 And in the wan white face and wondrous eyes,
 Where now the awful fires of fever burn,
 Is something which recalls to Allanburn
 Old Richard’s book-shop and one long-ago
 White Christmas-eve. “Art thou the Christ or no?”

“Not I,” said Maurice, as amazed he stood,
 “But in His name I come to do you good.”

“Idle your labor, if you be not He.
 No Christ at second-hand will do for me.
 For know you who I am?—Sir, a lost soul!
 Hear overhead Jehovah’s thunder roll!
 It mutters—do you mark it?—‘Woe! woe! woe!’”

Maurice replied: “I do not hear it so.
 It says you shall be saved. For Christ is here:
 In me He comes to bring you help and cheer,
 For you and for your child.”

“For her indeed!
 And, sir, I thank you; she has woful need.
 But I am driven about the desert world
 By my own burning; hither and thither whirled
 Forever, a wailing, wandering ghost of sin,
 Through regions where Lord Christ has never been.
 And yet I was a master once, and taught
 Divine Philosophy; preached, wrote, and brought

Refreshment to some hearts, I verily think.
 Now I am perishing for a little drink;
 And if you bear a charitable mind,
 As I must deem—for in your face I find
 A certain eloquence—give me some gin.
 You'll tell me that has been my special sin:
 Not so: it was the world-consuming thirst
 For fresher power and larger life which first
 Fevered my soul; then, in the sacred name
 Of inspiration, sovereign Opium came.
 In gorgeous dreams he stalks, the Lord of Pain:
 Gin is a little page that bears his train.
 In pomp before us to the feast he goes,
 But ever, at the pageant's sorrowful close,
 Puts off his robes of fantasy and dream,
 And in his naked death's-head grins supreme.

“You're right: that little hunchback last held rum;
 That other bottle smells of laudanum.
 To purchase that my little girl was sent
 Starved through the street, and our last coin was spent.
 Now curse me for a fool; and go your way;
 But in your censure don't forget to say,
 'HE WAS THE BOUND THRALL OF LORD OPIUM.' ”

“Unhappy man! think you that I have come
 With judgment to condemn you? What am I?”
 Says Maurice, as he puts the bottles by,
 And takes the sick man's hot dry hand in his.
 “A fellow-man, to whom all miseries
 Through his own sin and suffering are made known;
 Who censures no man's folly but his own.”

“And have you kissed Temptation? in the cup
 Of madness drunk all hope and manhood up?
 I am more guilty; yet I am the same
 Who once, and with some reason, bore the name
 Of Genius; for my spirit, in my youth,
 Explored all knowledge and conceived all truth.

And—let me whisper it—I had a wife,
 Won from a pleasant home and gentle life :
 A violet just opened in the air
 Of the sweet May is not so sweet and fair.
 And we were happy, and I loved her well ;
 And hers was greater love ; and when I fell,
 She strove with me, strove for me, and forgave me,
 And would have saved, if mighty love could save me,
 Pleading with Heaven and men and me my cause.
 But all my resolutions were as straws
 That bind a sleeping lion when he wakes.
 Why, sir, for her and our dear children's sakes
 To prudence I a thousand times was pledged ;
 And with that venom-thought the tooth is edged
 Which gnaws me here. But now her sleep is sound,
 Under the buttercups, in the cool ground,
 While I am burning. Where are you, my girl ?
 Fidelia ! child ! my brain is all awlirl.
 I cannot see you well."

She nestles near :

"Oh, father ! don't you know me ? I am here."

With feeble hand he takes her thin wan shoulder,
 And for an eager moment seems to hold her
 In his soul's steadfast gaze : he sees the sad
 And patient little face which never had
 Its share of smiles ; small features, which should be
 All freshness, pinched with early penury.
 And eyes—still like her mother's, tender blue,
 Through every trial heavenly deep and true
 In their affection—at this moment dim
 With piteous tears, not for herself, but him.

He held her there, and fondly gazed, and smiled
 With mournful pathos : "My poor orphan child !
 You've had no parent since your mother died."

"Oh, father ! I have you." But he replied,

“Your own good father died some years ago.
I *was* that father; but this man of woe,
Who chides, neglects you, makes your dear heart bleed,
I pray you think it is not I indeed.
A father should have cherished this frail flower,
And nourished it in gentle sun and shower,
And kept it, with a father’s manifold
Fond troubles, from rude winds and wintry cold.

“I dreamed just now that it was Christmas-day;
And I saw troops of children at their play,
And you among them, and your little brother—
He had not died of hunger. And your mother,
All hope and happy smiles, was at my side.
And with unutterable love and pride
We watched and kept you ever in our sight,
And all was happiness and warmth and light.
You were not cold or hungry any more;
You were like other children. Then the roar
Of laughing fiends awoke me, and I saw
My darling shivering on her bed of straw.
But do not mind. When I am gone, for you,
My poor Fidele, the vision may come true.
Then you’ll forgive your father. Do not weep.
I am too weak and ill. Now let me sleep.”

So saying, he sunk back upon his bed.

And Maurice drew the child aside, and said,
“Have you no friends, no kindred, who should know,
Nor other home to which you two can go?”

“My mother’s friends; but they are far away.
They would have had me go to them and stay—
Forsake my father!” weeping, she replied.
“But mother left him to me when she died.
‘Be good to him; be always good and true.’
That was her charge, and so what could I do?

They call him wicked. Oh, it is not so!
 But, good or wicked, this is all I know:
 He is my father, and has need of me."

"And you do well," cries Maurice, cheerily.
 "Your little heart is very brave and strong.
 Now watch till I return; 'twill not be long."

Five minutes takes him to a coach; ten more,
 And he alights in haste at his own door.
 There busy hands in ample baskets pack
 Fuel and food, and he is whirling back;
 Finds a physician by the way; and, lo!
 Into that dismal chamber steals a glow
 Of comfort. Kindlings crackle in the grate;
 The table beams with bounty, where of late
 Only the rank-breathed empty bottles stood;
 While in the child the sense of gratitude
 For gifts that seem by Heavenly Mercy sent
 Is lost in wonder and bewilderment.

"Eat, child!" But now beside the patient's bed
 The doctor sits; and ere she touches bread,
 Though from long fasting weak in every limb,
 She trembling waits for words of hope from him.

As when an infant gone astray has climbed
 Some dizzy height, and any act ill-timed
 Of rescuing friends may cause its hold to miss,
 And dash it down the dreadful precipice,
 But slowly, step by step, with toil and pain,
 The way it climbed must it descend again:
 So this strayed soul has groped along the ledge
 Of life-o'er-death, till at the very edge
 He swoons, suspended in the giddy air;
 And only tender love and utmost care
 And all the skill which ever science gave
 Can save him, if indeed even such can save.

The wise physician, seated at his task—
 His kindly features moulded to a mask
 Of calm grave thought, through which no faintest ray
 To kindle expectation finds its way—
 Counts pulse, and ponders symptoms, and prepares
 The patient's powders, while the patient glares
 Delirious; then takes leave; but at the door,
 Seeing the child's eyes question and implore,
 Puts off the doctor and resumes the man,
 And speaks what comfortable words he can.

And now Fidele is pacified and fed.
 She sleeps, and Maurice watches in her stead
 Through weary hours; till, just as morning breaks,
 The patient from a fitful slumber wakes,
 But cannot move for utter weariness.
 "Fidele!" he whines, in querulous distress;
 Sees the strange watcher there, and at the sight
 Gropes feebly in his memories of the night
 To find again the half-remembered face.

"Let the child rest; command me in her place,"
 Says Maurice, pillowing the patient's head.

"Something I do recall," the sick man said.
 "But solve me now the riddle if you can:
 You are, I deem, a prosperous gentleman;
 I, the forlorn self-ruined wretch you see,
 Not worth your thought; and yet you waste on me
 Your time and thought. We've met, I think, before?
 Nay, speak, or I shall only talk the more."

"You are a man—enough for me to know
 I can relieve a fellow-mortal's woe.
 But you are more to me than common men.
 Once, twice, indeed, we've met;" and how and when
 (To soothe his patient) Allanburn relates.
 "That night the subtle circles of our fates
 Appeared to touch; so that in memory
 I've seen you still, and wondered what might be

Your fortunes since. Dark as they were that night,
 My own were in a far more evil plight.
 And I was saved—almost by chance it seemed—
 So mere a chance that often I have dreamed
 It was your path of life, not mine, it crossed,
 And you were saved instead, and I was lost.”

The other sighed, “No chance! Our destiny,
 With its heaven-reaching branches, is a tree
 Which grows from little seeds in our own hearts;
 The elements strengthen, bend, or rend the parts,
 And they are sound or flawed. My will was weak,
 The very pith and root of all. But speak!”

“What was my chance or providence? A book,
 Which from the counter carelessly I took—
 A little faded volume, thumbed and old,
 But to my life and need a BOOK OF GOLD.”

The sick man groaned. “Talk not of books to me!
 If they could save, be sure I should not be
 This burnt-out wick; but a lamp glorified,
 Set in the windows of the Lord, to guide
 Benighted souls, to cheer the tempest-tossed,
 And show the Way of Life, which I have lost.”

Quoth Allanburn: “All that you say, and more,
 My author in his book has said before.

*“Good books are pearl and gold; yet not of them
 Is builded bright the New Jerusalem:
 Hear thou thyself the Voice the prophets heard,
 And shape in thine own life the shining Word.*

“But now, we talk too much, and you must rest.”

In the pale face a vivid gleam expressed
 Surprise, hope, doubt. “I had wellnigh forgot
 That such a book was written. Is it not
 ‘Right Thinking and Right Living?’”

Maurice cried,
 "You know it!" And a look almost of pride
 And joy into the strange bright visage stole.

"Thank Heaven, if it has helped a single soul!
 Enough, O friend! But you are here to gain
 A deeper lesson than its leaves contain;
 Since he whose words can save, himself may be
 Among the lost."

"Charles Masters!"

"I am he :
 Be not too much amazed and grieved; for I
 Am happy, and contented now to die."

"Dear soul! and have I sought you far and near,"
 Cries Allanburn, "at last to find you here?
 My benefactor! *'Tis not yet too late!*
 All that I have, life, happiness, estate,
 I owe to you; and, help me, Heaven! I yet
 Will pay some portion of the precious debt
 In love and service to your child and you."

"I am repaid," Charles Masters said, and drew
 A long deep sigh of peace. "You bring me rest,
 And almost make me feel that I am blessed.
 Cherish my child—she has a heart of gold.
 But all your prayers and patience cannot hold
 This bruised reed up, and make it grow again.
 Seek not to keep my memory among men,
 But set these warning words above my grave:
 'OTHERS HE SAVED, HIMSELF HE COULD NOT SAVE.'"



THE WRECK OF THE FISHING-BOAT.

PART I.

CAPE PORPOISE is a little fishing town :

Where the tide billow, which the Atlantic rolls
Foaming on reef and beach, glides rippling down
Through sinuous creeks and over shining shoals,
Floating a few light craft, upon the brown
Impassive ooze careened with slanting poles,
Or, reflux, leaves all slack and bare again,—
It nestles in the rocky coast of Maine.

In their unchanging, ancient village hived—
Few drones in that compact community—
The hardy fisher-folk have wived and thrived,
Drawing a scant subsistence from the sea,
Through many generations ; and survived
Tempest and wreck, and dire calamity
Of war—French, English, Indian—and embargo,
And British cruisers catching crew and cargo.

Few drones, I said : there will be, now and then,
Some good-for-nothing idlers found amid
The best communities of bees and men ;
Nor could Cape Porpoise ever quite get rid
Of such unthrifty fellows as Wild Ben—
A youth of shining talents, which he hid

In Scriptural earth of self-indulgent sloth—
Under a punch-bowl or a tavern cloth.

A natural boatman—nimble with the sail,
The oar, the seine ; no lad more skilled than he
To calk a leak, splice rope, or brave the gale :
A very imp he seemed of the wild sea.
Handy to help, yet never within hail
When needed most ; but he was sure to be
Off with his cronies somewhere, getting drunk
Over in Biddeford or Kennebunk.



“WILD BEN.”

Ben’s father was a fisherman—Job Nelson.
He set the scapegrace to repair, one day,
The foremast step—or socket on the kelson—
Of their small craft, the *Lark*, moored in the bay.
“Do it right now,” he said, “and do it well, son,
Or the next blow will bear it quite away.
'Tis wrenched and parted ; and I’m in no hurry
To risk dimasting in another flurry.

“I’ll put that catch of codfish on the flakes ;
 Then you must help me underrun the trawl.”
 Ben from the shelf the saw and hatchet takes,
 When round the cove he hears a comrade call ;
 To go with whom his task he soon forsakes,
 Careless who mends the boat or helps to haul
 The lines that night. Hatchet and saw are left
 Upon the shore, hid in a rocky cleft.

The fish were put upon the flakes to dry ;
 Then Job, all ready for the voyage, looked round,
 And searched the little seaport low and high,
 And called ; but Ben was nowhere to be found.
 ’Twas only the wild loon that laughed reply,
 Over by Redin’s Island—dreary sound !
 That far, half-human call which sometimes mocks
 The seeker for some lost one mid the rocks.

Ben’s father stormed, and gave him up at last,
 But would not leave the trawl another day.
 The afternoon and tide were going fast ;
 The *Lark* would soon be stranded where she lay.
 “I wonder did the rogue secure the mast ?
 Whether he did or not, I cannot stay ;
 I’ll take the tools and mend the step myself,
 If need be.” But the tools had left the shelf.

Job Nelson raved, and on the absent one
 Volleys of violent invective poured.
 But goodwife Jane, who loved her wayward son,
 Stood pale and quiet while her husband roared ;
 Then mildly said, “I’m sure he must have done
 The task you bid, and left the tools aboard.
 So say no more. I always like to go
 And help you with the trawl, and that you know.”

The young ones were just coming in from school—
 A girl of six, two boys of eight and ten ;
 A babe there was beside—as seemed the rule
 In every house—of that sweet season when

Babes first begin to push a chair or stool :
 A little brood much younger than Wild Ben.
 (Three others in the rocky hills were laid,
 Where you would think a grave could scarce be made.)

The mother soon their simple supper spread,
 And nursed her babe, and hastened to prepare
 For sea, with more of pleasure than of dread,
 And gave the infant to the others' care,
 And left them with their bowls of milk and bread,
 And started ; but went back and kissed them where,
 Grouped in the open cottage door, they stood
 To see her off, and charged them to be good,—

Again, and still again—she knew not why ;
 But as she quickly turned to go, there gushed
 A sudden tender torrent to her eye ;
 And over her a fearful feeling rushed,
 As if some great calamity were nigh,
 And that dear babe might nevermore be hushed
 And comforted on her warm breast at night ;
 But soon she laughed such fancies out of sight.

“ You'll see us coming with the tide at dark,”
 She promised them, and hurried to the pier,
 Where Job already had his little bark ;
 And down the steep wharf-ladder to the sheer
 Groped with slow feet, and stepped aboard the *Lark* ;
 Then listened, as they pushed away, to hear
 The happy children shouting from the door,
 And watched, until her home was seen no more.

The breeze was fair, the passage smooth and swift ;
 And, huddled in the door-way, side by side,
 The children saw the little vessel drift
 Among the islands scattered far and wide,
 Where broke the sea through many a foaming rift—
 A feather wafted by the wind and tide
 Away, away, to veer at last from sight
 Round Folly Island, by Goat Island Light.

The children ate their meal of milk and bread,
And played at wreck and raft with bowl and spoon;
And Job, the oldest, put the babe to bed;
Then, as the slow, full-freighted afternoon
Went down the west with wake all fiery red,
And over isle and inlet sailed the moon,
They waited for their parents, anxious-eyed,
To see them coming with the coming tide.

Pulse of the world! hoarse sea with heaving breath,
Swaying some grief's great burden to and fro!
Fierce heart that neither hears nor answereth,
Sounding its own eternal wail of woe!
Punctual as day, unheeding life or death,
Wasting the ribs of earth with ceaseless throe;
Remorseless, strong, resistless, resting never,
The tides come in, the tides come in forever!

The tide came in, and flooded creek and cove,
And spread on marsh and meadow far away
Under the moon; and many a dim sail hove
Softly in sight, and gleamed along the bay,
And folded its pale wing, no more to rove;
And hearths were bright, and, blithe from breeze and spray
And chasing breakers, fathers, sons, and brothers
Went home to happy children, wives, and mothers.

The tide came in, and shoulder-deep the pier
Wallowed in waves that lapped and leaped and glistened;
And still, to see one longed-for sail appear,
The lonesome little watchers gazed and listened
Until their fluttering hearts were filled with fear,
And beat against the bars like birds imprisoned.
Their parents came not with the coming tide;
And now the hungry babe awoke and cried.

The others cried for sympathy or fright,
Till little Job assumed a manly air,
And brushed his tears, and said, "The moon is bright;
We'll hurry to the wharf to meet them there;

I'm sure by that time they will be in sight.
 I'll carry Baby; Willie, you'll take care
 That Sissy doesn't fall. Of course, you know,
 It's the big catch of fish that keeps them so."

He soothed the babe, and tied his sister's hood,
 And led them forth with childish words of cheer :



"AND STILL THEIR LONG AND LONESOME VIGIL
 KEEP."

"Don't cry! you know she told us to be good!"
 Then to the wharf, shuddering with cold and fear.
 The tide was in; the steep wharf-ladder stood
 Plunged in the deep wide flood, which lashed the pier,
 And brimmed the bay, and gleamed among the isles,
 And silvered shores and shoals for glittering miles.

But over all that bright expanse no sail.

The wind had freshened, and was blowing strong ;
And well those little ones might quake and quail,

Harking to catch their father's cheery song,
To hear the waves instead, and rising gale :

No sound beside, but evermore the long
Roll of the thundering breakers far away.
The night was chill : it was the month of May.

They find a skiff careened upon the pier,

And into this the trembling wretches creep,
And cuddle close, eager for warmth and cheer,

And still their long and lonesome vigil keep,
Scanning the, troubled waters far and near,

Till all but Job have cried themselves to sleep.
He wraps his shivering sister in his coat,
Then falls asleep himself, there in the boat.

PART II.

AND now, half sobered from his late carouse,
 Wild Ben went slowly sauntering up the street.
 Thinking of home and wrath with sullen brows,
 He sidled to the door with stealthy feet,
 But stared amazed to find an empty house—
 A lamp still burning in the window-seat,
 Which Job had set, upon the seaward side,
 To cheer his parents coming with the tide.

Ben glowered and growled, and searched both house and shed,
 Then stood and studied, in a sort of maze,
 The vacant cradle and each empty bed.
 The lamp flame, flickering to a dying blaze,
 Leaped, quivered, vanished, and the moon instead
 Poured through the quiet panes its haunting rays,
 While in his flesh and stirring hair the youth
 Felt a cold, curdling horror of the truth.

He from the cupboard brought a loaf and bowl,
 And tried to eat; and cursed and swore a little,
 To still the rising terrors of his soul;
 But strove in vain to solve the fearful riddle.
 Then like some conscious murderer, he stole
 From the deserted house. It was the middle
 Of the dread night: the village slept; afar
 The savage ocean roared on reef and bar.

The smacks, sails furled, and headed all one way,
 Veered on the tide in the strong wind which drove
 Now tempest-like athwart the little bay:
 Only the *Lark* was absent from the cove,

And, tethered to the buoy where late she lay,
The dory reared and champed, as if it strove,
Frighted, to fly. Ben seemed to see and hear
In every object sight or sound of fear.

Then all his faults, the counsels he had spurned,
Thronged on his heart, like fiends, to chide and mock.
The one bright eye of the lone light-house burned
Far off. What does it see on wave or rock,
Or in the burying surf? The tide has turned ;
White in the moon, the wild, fleet waters flock,
From shoals and creeks, back to their deep sea caves—
Realm of strewn wrecks and cold, uncovered graves.

In his strange horror and bewildering fear
He seeks the landing, and discovers there,
In the old boat abandoned on the pier,
A living heap—Job's face, with tangled hair,
And in the moonlight on that face a tear ;
He notes, beside, Job's little arms, half bare,
And, closely nestled, covered by his coat,
The others, all asleep there in the boat.

He saw the small breasts heave ; he felt them breathe :
A shadow in the moonlight, dark and dumb,
He watched them for a moment from beneath
Remorseful brows, while every sense seemed numb
With inward agony ; then gnashed his teeth.
Job staggered up—" Oh, father, have you come ?"
But no kind father's eyes looked down on him ;
Only his brother stood there, pale and grim.

" What are you doing here so late at night ?
Where's mother ?" " Why, she went instead of you.
Oh, Ben, I hope you did the mending right !
The tools were gone, and what could father do ?"
Ben gave a groan ; recoiling with affright,
The little boatman wakes his little crew ;
And Ben, arousing from his stupor, tries
To quiet them with well-intended lies.

He launched a skiff, and, cursing smack and trawl,
 Leaped in, and sent the trembling wretches home,
 And rowed till on the outmost island wall
 He saw the gathering surges burst and comb,
 Loud-booming, and the angered sea was all
 One awful waste of tumbling waves and foam :
 No sail, nor any lonesome thing afloat,
 Save him, in his own tide-borne, tossing boat.

Stoutly he pulled, and strained his eyes across
 The running surf and restless rolling sea,
 By Vaughan's low isle and lonely Albatross ;
 But only rock and ocean can he see.
 Tumultuously the hoary waters toss
 Their mighty plumes, careering endlessly ;
 And the beaked breakers with loud rustling wings
 Flap on the reef like wild, infuriate things.

Ah, many a time as to a mad carouse
 Had he rowed forth, to feel the rush, the thrill,
 The towering surge come tumbling on his bows ;
 The boat, held firm by its bold rider's will—
 The mind's electric presence, which endows
 Even wood with life and senseless things with skill—
 Rising triumphant, flinging off the wave ;
 Man the sole master, even the sea his slave !

But now there is a fury in his brain :
 The frolic purpose and the joy are gone,
 And but the practised power and will remain.
 Brows drenched with spray and sweat, wild-eyed and wan,
 He mounts the surges, resolute to gain
 The open sea, and to the trawl pulls on ;
 Finds the long line of tossing floats still there,
 But living object never anywhere.

But what is this the slow great seas uplift,
 Weltering, low-sunken, glimmering in the dim
 Sad rays of the drooping moon ? A wreck adrift,
 With heaving, wave-washed side turned up at him,

And through the gaping ribs a ghastly rift :
Some foundered boat capsized. His senses swim ;
Madly he gazes round ; on every side
Rolls billowy desolation wild and wide.

PART III.

'Twas now some hours since Job his lines had hauled,
 Secured the captured fish, and dropped once more
 His freshly baited hooks ; while Jane, installed
 As mate to her brave captain, prompt with oar,
 Boat-hook, or bait to help him, scarce recalled
 The doubts that shook her at the cottage door.
 The hold well stored, the hatchway closed, the sails
 Fill, strain, swell proudly, and the rushing rails

Sweep through the water, bowing to the bubbles,
 Upon the cheery homeward track at last.
 The lucky fisherman forgets his troubles,
 And hopefully he eyes the swaying mast
 And sunlit canvas, as the *Lark* redoubles
 Her wingèd speed in the increasing blast ;
 And the glad mother turns across the foam
 Her yearning gaze with tender thoughts of home.

Then, in the midst of pleasant talk, they feel
 A sudden shock, a lurch, and hear a crash.
 The staggering foremast, parted from the keel,
 Drops slantwise down, and tears a hideous gash
 In the *Lark's* side, through which the waters steal,
 Rising about their feet with ominous splash,
 As pitching heavily she lies, brought to,
 And sinking, spite of all that Job can do.

And so the worst—far worse than aught he feared—
 Had come to pass. Too terrified to speak,
 Jane bailed the gushing water, while he cleared
 The hatch, and strove to stanch the dreadful leak.

Still, as the cruel ice-cold waters neared
Her knees, her waist, she did not start nor shriek,
But bailed amidst the fish that swam about,
Till a great wave washed in, and they swam out.

She saw the escaping fish as in a dream,
And frantically still the bucket plied.
But now the vessel, settling on her beam,
Turned to the sky her glistening, splintered side :
This too she noticed ; and in that supreme
Dread moment thought of many things beside—
Her home, her babes, three little hill-side graves,
And her and Job there struggling in the waves.

Fast to the wreck they cling ; but every sea
Deluges them with waters deadly cold.
They sink, they rise, they gaze despairingly
Round the wide waste of waters to behold
Some sail ; but only far-off sails they see,
Faintly suffused with pale ethereal gold.
Across the fluctuating gilded swells,
The sun is setting over York and Wells.

“ Job, are we lost ? ” said Jane. “ Cling for your life ! ”
He cried. “ I ’ ll save you. ” Round the sunken deck
He swam, and cut the halyards with his knife,
And, working in the water to his neck,
Lashed spar to spar ; then caught his sinking wife
Just as a great wave swept her from the wreck,
And drew her forth, half drowned, with streaming hair,
Upon his little raft, and lashed her there—

On the drenched canvas stretched, a dripping heap.
And still the sails descried were few and far.
And so the day went down upon the deep,
And the moon shimmered, and the light-house star
Pencilled its ruddy beam across the sweep
Of wandering waters ; while, with breast to spar,
Shaping his course to reach the nearest shore,
Job swam, and pushed his laden raft before.

THE WRECK OF THE FISHING-BOAT.

"Oh, Job," said Jane, "I am so cold! I ache
In every bone. Dear Job, if I should die,
Be gentle with the children for my sake.
Oh, now I think, I wish to live, that I



"AND SO THE DAY WENT DOWN UPON THE DEEP."

May do my duty better. If you take
Another wife, I hope that she will try
To love our dear ones, and be kind to you.
Forgive poor Ben for what he failed to do."

“Don't talk of dying and of other wives
 Quite yet,” cries Job; “I'll get you safe to land.”
 But, terribly and strongly as he strives,
 Not all the might of manhood can withstand
 The wrenching seas and sharp cross-wind that drives
 The raft away towards some more distant strand.
 Still, for a while he bravely struggles, loath
 To quit the raft, which will not bear them both.

Off the dim cape of moonlit Arundel*
 Slowly they drift, scarce fifty rods away,
 Soon to be swept by wind and drenching swell
 Helplessly on, across an open bay,
 As Job, in fierce despair, foresees too well.
 “Oh, Jane,” he says, “there is no other way,
 But I must leave you. I will swim ashore
 For help—God help us!” He could say no more.

“I thought of that. If you are sure to reach
 The rock and save yourself, I pray you, go.
 But, oh,” she said, “for *their* sake, I beseech,
 Take care. The sea is terrible, you know,
 On those sharp ledges.” “There's a pebbly beach
 Close in the point. I'll rest a minute. Oh,
 Now must I leave you?” “Touch me first,” said Jane.
 “Dear Job, for we may never meet again.”

So they touched hands upon the cold wet mast
 With quick, convulsive pressure, and with wan,
 Strange faces in the moonlight looked their last,
 And said their last farewells—and Job was gone:

* *Arundel* is the name under which the township of Kennebunkport (in York County, Maine) was incorporated in 1717, and by which it was known for over a hundred years; when it was discarded, and for fifty years more disappeared from the vocabulary of the coast. It has recently been restored, however, to the broad, green, wood-crested promontory—now a favorite summer resort—lying immediately east of the mouth of the Kennebunk River, and called *Cape Arundel* when it is not called *Ocean Bluff*. The “open bay” alluded to in this stanza is Wells Bay. The “long dark river pier,” mentioned farther on, is the immense granite breakwater at the mouth of the Kennebunk. “Old Fort Beach” is on Cape Arundel, not far from the “Spouting Rock:” it is a natural sea-wall of pebbles and smooth stones, from which many a ship has been ballasted. The village of Cape Porpoise is near the other—that is to say, the eastern—extremity of the township of Kennebunkport, and is one of the oldest settlements on the coast.

Forth from her side a slow dark object passed,
 Tossed by the sweeping waves; and, drifting on,
 She watched him from her raft, and held her breath,
 And prayed, "Oh, save him, save him, Lord, from death!"

She watched him sink, and mount, and disappear;
 Then strained each aching sense to see him gain
 The gray grim shore, his signal shout to hear,
 Forgetting her own peril and sharp pain;
 Broke from her bonds, half rising from her bier,
 And gazed and shrieked and wrung her hands in vain,
 In unimaginable wild distress—
 Alone in the vast ocean's loneliness.

No answering shout, no dim emerging shape—
 Or they are lost in the perpetual roar
 Of waters and the formless glooms that drape
 The solitary coast. And evermore
 The raft is slowly drifting from the cape;
 And still no dory from the inner shore
 And long dark river pier, nor boatman's cry,
 Brings hope that *he* is safe and help is nigh.

She nears the spindle of the Fishing Rocks,
 Where rise the boisterous deeps in dire turmoil,
 And shake towards heaven their loosened silvery locks;
 And now the reef-rent billows froth and boil
 Around the rocking raft with violent shocks,
 Thundering in endless onset and recoil.
 Then dies the roar behind her, slowly dwindle
 Foam-circled ledge and lonely moonlit spindle.

Dying she seems; and, like one dying, sums
 Her good and evil days in manifold
 Visions of home and love; till life becomes
 A dream of misery and mortal cold,
 And mercifully pain itself benumbs
 The sense of pain. And so the night grows old;
 And, like a shuttle of the wind, which shifts
 Sharply about, back towards the cape she drifts.

PART IV.

THE night grows old, the moon is low, the stars
Drowse in the liquid depths of heaven. And now,
With hope reawakened by the missing spars,
Ben searches sea and shore, and drives his bow
Amidst the breakers of the rocks and bars;
Darting with desperate speed his daring prow
At any shape or shadow, which may be
Shadow or shape he longs, yet dreads, to see.

He rounds the cape, from cove to cove he rows,
And, as the moon is setting, comes at last
To Old Fort Beach, which, half in shadow, shows
A long low shape upon the shingle cast.
Through tumbling kelp, rolled in the undertow's
Enormous foaming jaws that hold it fast,
He shoots his skiff ashore, and stoops beside
That long low shape left stranded by the tide:

A mass of spars and twisted ropes, still wet
From the receding wave, with flecks of spume on
The dark, drenched sail, and something darker yet—
A shadow in the shadow, ghastly, human,
Stretched on the raft. Mother and son have met.
Cold to the touch, appalling, droops the woman.
He lifts her from the raft, and, kneeling there,
Bends over her in terror and despair.

“Mother!—O God! you are not dead!” He takes
A rum-flask from his coat in furious haste,
And for the first time in his wild youth makes
Wise use of its bad contents. At the taste

THE WRECK OF THE FISHING-BOAT.

She gives a little moan of pain, and wakes
Slowly to consciousness of strong arms placed
Around her, and a shadowy visage bowed
Above her in a sort of dreamy cloud.



“MOTHER!—O GOD! YOU ARE NOT DEAD!”

And, for the first time in his life, he prays—
To Heaven, to her, with mingled oaths, as if
Profanity and prayer were kin. He lays
Full half his garments on her in the skiff,

And pushes off in the moon's faint last rays ;
And rows away by sombre cove and cliff,
And on through flashing surge and shadowy air,
Under the light-house lantern's streaming glare.

Meanwhile the little ones lie sunk in deep
And restful slumber, till, with direful din,
Which fills the house and wakes them from their sleep,
A sudden headlong force comes bursting in.
Staring with fear, upright the youngsters leap,
And see what seems their brother Benjamin
Bearing a great black burden on his arm
In the gray dawn, and shouting loud alarm.

“ Quick ! for the doctor, for the neighbors, run !
Mother is drowned ! ” Half naked, from the shed,
With sobs of terror, speeds the oldest one.
The others, wondering, whispering, “ Is she dead ? ”
Clasp their small hands, while the remorseful son
Is getting her into their soft warm bed.
Too weak for words, she gives a pitying sigh
And faint sweet smile, to hear her baby cry.

She had not thought that ever she should hear
That cry again. And now she seems half blessed :
Ben is so good, her little home so dear !
Now, if she dies, she feels that this is best—
To fold her palms with friends and kindred near,
In her dear home, and then be laid to rest
By gentle hands beside those little graves,
And not to perish in the cold dark waves.

If only Job were safe ! That thought again,
With throbbing life's return, distracts her mind.
The neighbors now come hurrying, earnest men
And white-faced, eager women, all so kind.
Some stay to serve the sick, and some, with Ben,
Put forth in boats and scour the coast to find
The missing man ; while springs triumphantly
The glorious sun from out the glorious sea.

Its far-off flag of smoke a steamship trails
 Across the fiery orb ; and here and there,
 On the blue dome of ocean, tacking sails
 Darken and brighten in the purple air.
 Forgetting death and wreck and ruthless gales,
 The broad bright sea is marvellously fair !
 With quivering scales and panting side, lies curled
 The azure dragon round about the world.



“ BUT WITH THE CHILDREN WALKED THE OLDEST SON.”

Such beauty seems a mockery of their quest.
 The frolic waters well their secret keep,
 And hide grim death beneath a lovely breast.
 Down in the green recesses of the deep,
 Where, to and fro, in noiseless dark unrest,
 The slow mysterious plumes of sea-weed sweep,
 With upturned face and sightless, staring eyes,
 Beckoning with spectral hand, the dead man lies.

Five days they search in vain ; upon the last,
 A farmer gathering sea-weed hears a yelp
 Of terror from his cur, and starts aghast
 At something hideous tangled in the kelp.
 Ox-goad and fork down on the beach are cast ;
 And from the nearest farm runs ready help.
 'Tis done : the slow, unwieldy oxen start,
 With a dread burden oozing in the cart.

Beside the little graves is shaped another ;
Then the sad burial. Her own life scarce won
From death, at home still lay the weak, wan mother ;
But with the children walked the oldest son,
His hat plucked fiercely on his brow—their brother
From that time forth, and father, both in one—
Rage in his heart, and on his bowed soul set
The thorny crown of sorrow, vain regret.





AUNT HANNAH.

SHE is known to all the town, in her quaintly fashioned gown,
And wide bonnet—you would guess it at the distance of a mile ;
With her little sprigs of smilax, and her lavender and lilacs,
Snowy napkins and big basket, and serenely simple smile.

She is just a little queer ; and few gentlefolk, I fear,
In their drawing-rooms would welcome that benignant, beaming
face ;
And the truth is, old Aunt Hannah's rather antiquated manners
In some fashionable circles would seem sadly out of place.

Yet there's something quite refined in her manners and her mind,
As you presently discover ; and 'tis well enough to know,
Everything that now so odd is in the bonnet and the bodice
Was the very height of fashion five-and-forty years ago.

She was then a reigning belle ; and I've heard old ladies tell
How at all the balls and parties Hannah Amsden took the lead :
Perfect bloom and maiden sweetness, lily grace of rare complete-
ness,
Though the stalk stands rather stiffly now the flower has gone to
seed.

She had all that love could give, all that makes it sweet to live—
Fond caresses, jewels, dresses ; and with eloquent appeal
Many a proud and rich adorer knelt—in metaphor—before her :
Metaphorically only does your modern lover kneel.

If she heeded, 'twas because, in their worship, their applause,
 Her perfection was reflected, and a pleasing music heard ;
 But she suffered them no nearer than her goldfinch or her mirror,
 And she hardly held them dearer than her pier-glass or her bird.

But at last there came a day when she gave her heart away—
 If that rightly be called giving which is neither choice nor will,
 But a charm, a fascination, and a wild sweet exultation—
 All the fresh young life outgoing in a strange ecstatic thrill.

At a city ball, by chance, she first met his ardent glance.
 He was neither young nor handsome, but a man of subtle parts,
 With an eye of such expression as your lover by profession
 Finds an excellent possession when he goes a-hunting hearts.

It could trouble, it could burn ; and when first he chanced to turn
 That fine glance on Hannah Amsden, it lit up with swift desire,
 With a sudden dilatation, and a radiant admiration,
 And shot down her soul's deep heaven like a meteor trailing fire.

How was any one to know that those eyes had looked just so
 On a hundred other women, with a gaze as bright and strange?
 There are men who change their passions even oftener than their
 fashions,
 And the best of loving always, to their mind, is still to change.

Nay, it was not base deceit : his own conquest seemed complete.
 They were soon affianced lovers ; and her opening life was filled
 With the flush of flame-lit fancies, morning's rosy-hued romances,
 All the dews of hope and rapture love's delicious dawn distilled.

Home the country maiden went ; and a busy summer spent
 All in bridal preparations, blissful troubles, happy woes ;
 Fitting dresses, filling presses, little crosses and distresses—
 Those preliminary prickles to the hymeneal rose.

Never, since the world began, course of true love smoother ran ;
 Not an eddy of dissension, nor the ripple of a doubt.
 All the neighbors and relations came with kind congratulations,
 And a hundred invitations to the wedding-feast went out.

All the preparations thrived, and the wedding-day arrived :

Pleased but pensive moved the mother ; and the father, with a smile

Broad and genial as the summer, gave a welcome to each comer :

All things turned on golden hinges, all went merry for a while.

And the lovely bride, arrayed all in laces and brocade,

Orange blossoms in her tresses (strange as now the story seems),
Quite enchanting and enchanted, in her chamber blushed and panted,

And but one thing now was wanted to fulfil her darling dreams.

For the clergyman was there, to unite the happy pair,

And the guests were all assembled, and the company sat dumb ;

And the banquet was belated, and the maid was still unmated,

And the wedding waited, waited, for a coach that did not come.

Then a few began to sneer, and a horror and a fear

Fell on friends and anxious parents ; and the bride with cheek
aflake,

All too rudely disenchanted, in her chamber paced and panted ;

And the one thing still was wanted ; and the one thing never
came.

Glassy smiles and feeble chat—then the parson took his hat,

And the wedding guests departed, glad to breathe the outer air ;

Till the last farewell was taken, kind word offered, kind hand shaken ;

And the great house stood forsaken in its shame and its despair.

With a firmness justified less by hope, perhaps, than pride,

All her misery, all their pity, Hannah bore without complaint ;

Till her hasting mother met her, pale and breathless, with a letter,

And she saw the superscription, and shrieked "Frederick!" and
grew faint.

With quick hand the seal she broke, and she neither breathed nor
spoke,

But a sudden ashy paleness all her fair face overspread ;

And a terror seemed to hold her, and her cheek grew cold and
colder,

And her icy fingers rattled in the paper as she read.

In her chamber once alone, on the floor she lay like stone,
With her bridal gear about her—all that idle, fine array;
And the white moon, white and holy, to her chamber bar climbed
slowly,
And looked in upon the lowly, wretched lady where she lay.

Why the letter was delayed, what the poor excuse he made,
Mattered little there to Hannah lying on the moonlit floor.
'Twas his heart that had miscarried; for some new toy he had tarried:
In a fortnight he was married, and she never saw him more.

Came the glorious autumn days—golden hills, cerulean haze—
And still Hannah kept her chamber with her shame and her de-
spair;
All the neighbors and relations came and offered consolations,
And the preacher preached up patience, and remembered her in
prayer.

Spite of all that they could say, Hannah Amsden pined away.
Came the dull days of November, came the winter, wild and white:
Lonely, listless, hours together she would sit and watch the weather,
Or the cold bright constellations pulsing in the pallid night.

For a twelvemonth and a day so poor Hannah pined away.
Came once more the fatal morning, came the dread hours that had
been:
All the anguish she lived over, waiting, wailing for her lover.
Then the new dawn shone about her, and a sweeter dawn within.

All her soul bleached white and pure, taught by suffering to endure,
Taught by sorrow to know sorrow, and to bind the bleeding
heart,
Now a pale and placid sister in the world that lately missed her—
Sweetly pale where Peace had kissed her—patient Hannah chose
her part.

To do good was her delight, all her study day and night;
And around her, like a fragrance in the halo round a saint,
Breathed the holy exhalation of her life and occupation.
But the rising generation soon began to call her quaint.



"SO SHE STILL GOES UP AND DOWN ON HER ERRANDS THROUGH THE TOWN."

For her self-forgetfulness even extended to her dress ;
Milliner and mantua-maker never crossed her threshold more ;
But the bodice, and the bonnet with the wondrous bow upon it,
Kept their never-changing fashion of the faded years before.

So she still goes up and down on her errands through the town;
And sometimes a school-girl titters, or an urchin stops to grin,
Or a village cur barks at her; but to her 'tis little matter—
You may fleer or you may flatter—such deep peace her soul is in.

Among all the sick and poor there is nobody so sure
Of a welcome and a blessing; and who sees her once appear,
Coming round some poor man's trellis with her dainty pots of jellies,
Or big basket brimmed with bounty, soon forgets that she is queer.

For her pleasant words, addressed to the needy and distressed,
Are so touching and so tender, full of sympathy and cheer,
By the time your smile is ready for the simple, dear old lady,
It is pretty sure to tremble in the balance with a tear.





TOM'S COME HOME.

WITH its heavily rocking and swinging load,
The stage-coach rolls up the mountain road.
The mowers lean on their scythes and say,
"Hullo! what brings Big George this way?"
The children climb the slats and wait
To see him drive past the door-yard gate;
When, four in hand, sedate and grand, -
He brings the old craft like a ship to land.
At the window, mild grandmotherly eyes
Beam from their glasses with quaint surprise,
Grow wide with wonder, and guess, and doubt;
Then a quick, half-stifled voice shrieks out,
"Tom! Tom's come home!"

The face at the casement disappears,
To shine at the door, all joy and tears,
As a traveller, dusty and bearded and brown,
Over the wheel steps lightly down.
"Well, mother!" "My son!" And to his breast
A forward-tottering form is pressed.
She lies there, and cries there; now at arm's-length
Admires his manly size and strength
(While he winks hard one misty eye);
Then calls to the youngsters staring nigh—
"Quick! go for your gran'ther! run, boys, run!
Tell him your uncle—tell him his son—
Our Tom's come home!"

The stage-coach waits; but little cares she
 What faces pleasantly smile to see
 Her jostled glasses and tumbled cap.
 Big George's hands the trunk unstrap
 And bear it in; while two light-heeled
 Young Mercuries fly to the mowing field,



"NOW AT ARM'S-LENGTH ADMIRES HIS MANLY SIZE AND STRENGTH."

And shriek and beckon, and meet half-way
 The old gran'ther, lame, and gaunt, and gray,
 Coat on arm, half in alarm,
 Striding over the stony farm.

The good news clears his cloudy face,
 And he cries, as he quickens his anxious pace,
 "Tom? Tom come home?"

With twitching cheek and quivering lid
 (A soft heart under the hard lines hid),
 And "Tom, how d'e do?" in a husky voice,
 He grasps with rough, strong hand the boy's—
 A boy's no more. "I shouldn't have known
 That beard." While Tom's fine barytone
 Rolls out from his deep chest cheerily,
 "You're hale as ever, I'm glad to see."
 In the low back porch the mother stands,
 And rubs her glasses with trembling hands,
 And, smiling with eyes that blear and blink,
 Chimes in, "I never!" and "Only think!
 Our Tom's come home!"

With question and joke and anecdote,
 He brushes his hat, they dust his coat,
 While all the household gathers near—
 Tanned urchins, eager to see and hear,
 And large-eyed, dark-eyed shy young mother,
 Widow of Tom's unlucky brother,
 Who turned out ill, and was drowned at the mill:
 The stricken old people mourn him still,
 And the hope of their lives in him undone;
 But grief for the dissolute, ruined son—
 Their best-loved and oldest boy—
 Is all forgotten, or turned to joy,
 Now Tom's come home.

Yet Tom was never the favored child,
 Though Tom was steady, and Will was wild;
 But often his own and his brother's share
 Of blows or blame he was forced to bear;
 Till at last he said, "Here is no room
 For both—I go!" Now he to whom
 Scant grace was shown has proved the one
 Large-hearted, upright, trusty son;

And well may the old folks joy to find
His brow so frank and his eye so kind,
No shadow of all the past allowed
To trouble the present hour, or cloud
His welcome home.

His trunk unlocked, the lid he lifts,
And lays out curious, costly gifts;
For Tom has prospered since he went
Into his long self-banishment.
Each youngster's glee, as he hugs his share,
The widow's surprise, and the old folks' air
Of affectionate pride in a son so good,
Thrill him with generous gratitude.
And he thinks, "Am I that lonely lad
Who went off friendless, poor, and sad,
That dismal day from my father's door?"
And can it be true he is here once more
In his childhood's home?

'Tis hard to think of his brother dead,
And a widow and orphans here in his stead—
So little seems changed since they were young!
The row of pegs where the hats were hung;
The checkered chimney and hearth of bricks;
The sober old clock with its lonesome ticks
And shrill, loud chime for the flying time;
The stairs the bare feet used to climb,
Tom chasing his wild bedfellow Will;
And there is the small low bedroom still,
And the table he had when a little lad:
Ah, Tom, does it make you sad or glad,
This coming home?

Tom's heart is moved. "Now don't mind me!
I am no stranger guest," cries he.
"And, father, I say!"—with the old-time laugh—
"Don't kill for me any fatted calf!
But go now and show me the sheep and swine
And the cattle—where is that colt of mine?—

And the farm and crops—is harvest over?
 I'd like a chance at the oats and clover!
 I can mow, you'll find, and cradle and bind,
 Load hay, stow away, pitch, rake behind;
 For I know a scythe from a well-sweep yet.
 In an hour I'll make you quite forget
 That I've been from home."

He plucks from its peg an old farm hat,
 And with cordial chat upon this and that,
 Tom walks with his father about the place.
 There's a pensive grace in his fine young face
 As they loiter under the orchard trees,
 As he breathes once more the mountain breeze,
 And looks from the hill-side far away,
 Over pasture and fallow and field of hay,
 To the hazy peaks of the azure range,
 Which change forever, yet never change.
 The wild sweet winds his welcome blow:
 Even old Monadnock seems to know
 That Tom's come home.

The old man stammers and speaks at last:
 "You notice your mother is failing fast,
 Though she can't see it. Poor Will's disgrace
 And debts, and the mortgage on the place;
 His sudden death—'twas a dreadful blow;
 She couldn't bear up like a man, you know.
 She's talked of you since the trouble came:
 Some things in the past she seems to blame
 Herself for; what, it is hard to tell.
 I marvel how she keeps round so well,
 For often all night she lies awake.
 I'm thankful, if only for her sake,
 That you've come home."

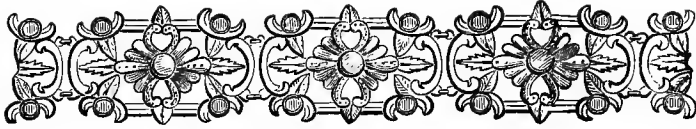
They visit the field: Tom mows with the men;
 And now they come round to the porch again.
 The mother draws Tom aside, lets sink
 Her voice to a whisper, and—"What do you think?"

Tom wanders forth across the lot,
And, under the stars—though Tom is not
So pious as boys sometimes have been—
Thanks Heaven, that turned his thoughts from sin,
And blessed him, and brought him home once more.
And now he knocks at a cottage door,



"NONE SO GLAD AS SHE THAT TOM'S COME HOME."

For one who has waited many a year
In hope that thrilling sound to hear;
Who, happy as other hearts may be,
Knows well there is none so glad as she
That Tom's come home.



THE BALLAD OF ARABELLA.

'Twas the good fast yacht, *The Mermaid*, that went sailing down
the bay,
With a party predetermined to be jolly, one would say,
By the demijohns and boxes, by the lemons and the beer,
And the ice, that went aboard her just before she left the pier.

With the wind upon her quarter, how she courtesies and careens
To the nodding, laughing billows! how her tower of canvas leans!
Past the headland, by the islands, with the flying gulls she flew,
And her long wake lay behind her like a stripe across the blue.

And I guess that all were happy on her deck, except, perhaps,
Mr. Brown—one of your poetizing, sentimental chaps:
In the midst of joy and juleps he sits spiritless and pale,
With his chin upon his knuckles and his elbow on the rail—

Quite Byronic, I assure you—and his mournful gaze intent
On the fascinating features of Miss Arabella Bent.
That is she beside the mast there, with the tumbler and the straw:
Such a laugh you hear but seldom, and such teeth you never saw.

Quite distinguished for her beauty—say, a dozen years ago—
And as famous for her fortune: that has doubled, as we know.
And I say it is a pity that an heiress can't invest
In some Beauty-saving Fund, and keep her charms at interest.

But though envious tongues will tell you that the native growth is
thin
On her temples, and perhaps a shade too heavy on her chin,

Still Miss Arabella tosses a superb array of curls,
And the downy lips are parted by a dazzling row of pearls.

Teeth so fine you might suspect them, but that curious eyes behold
“In their Milky Way of whiteness just one little star of gold”—



“THAT IS SHE BESIDE THE MAST THERE, WITH THE TUMBLER AND THE STRAW.”

That is what our poet called it in a sonnet that he wrote,
Which 'tis much to be regretted that we haven't room to quote.

She has had a hundred lovers, and she held them cheap as dirt—
For I grieve to say she's been a most unconscionable flirt.

But they fell away to sixty, and they dwindled down to six,
And now, having passed the forest, she must make a choice of sticks.

Only two at last are left her—Colonel Birch and Mr. Brown.
It was long a question which should be the envy of the town.
For a while it seemed the poet; now it certainly is Birch,
And at ten o'clock next Tuesday she will marry him in church.

There he is—and not by any means a crooked stick is he:
It is wonderful how very straight an old Bent beau can be!
He has fought his country's battles—in a commissary's tent;
And he still is young and handsome—in the eyes of Bella Bent.

Well might her perfidious conduct drive a poet-lover mad!
After all his sighs and sonnets, it was really too bad.
Although poor, and six-and-thirty, and his last book hasn't sold,
'Twas her teeth that took his fancy, and he cares not for her gold.

Calmly sipping, sits the Colonel; and he keeps his eye the while
On his heiress; and you read it in his half-developed smile,
Cold and quiet as his sabre's edge just started from its sheath—
'Twas her gold that fired his fancy, and he cares not for her teeth.

So the yacht sailed down the harbor to a favorite fishing-ground,
Where the skipper dropped an anchor; for the gentlemen were
bound

Just to try their hands at cod, and have a chowder. There she lay
Rocking on the ocean billows that came rolling up the bay;

And the hooks went down with clam bait, and—in short, the luck
was fine;

Even Brown grew interested in an unpoetic line;
And he smiled; but Arabella grew as suddenly quite pale,
Leaned her cheek upon her hand, and laid her arm upon the rail.

Like the lady in the ballad, she grew sick as he grew well;
With the heaving of the billows her fair bosom heaved and fell:
He is actually jolly, when, at every sudden lurch,
Dizzy, dreadful, dying qualms oppress the future Mrs. Birch.

She is bending by the gunwale—all at once you hear a scream:
 From her lips, in anguish parted, with a glitter and a gleam,
 Something darts into the flashing wave, and disappears beneath,
 While in strangely altered accents, "Oh, my teeth!" says she, "my
 teeth!"



"ONE MAD BREEZE HAS SNATCHED HER BONNET, AND ANOTHER HAS HER HAIR."

Then as she is wildly leaning, gazing downward in despair,
 One mad breeze has snatched her bonnet, and another has her hair.
 It all happened in a moment: in the ocean sink the pearls,
 And far off upon the water float the bonnet and the curls.

And could that be Arabella, the pale ghost that shrieking fled?—
 All below, a lovely woman, but above, a spectral head!

Something sadder than sea-sickness now disturbed the maiden's breast,
And it wasn't her lost tresses that had left her so distressed.

Brown was busy with his fishing, and just then he had a bite;
The sharp line it cut his fingers, but he pulled with all his might.
"Help!" he shouted. 'Twas a monster, but at last it flopping lay
In the yacht, just at the moment they were getting under way.



"HERE'S YOUR BEAUTIFUL NEW BONNET, AND YOUR VERY WAVY HAIR."

"Now what's up?" says Brown. "The anchor—and a big fish on
your line!

Don't you know? Why, Arabella gave her salt tears to the brine,
And her hair-pins to the sculpins, and, the oddest thing of all,
What should fall into the water but her thundering water-fall!"

Much amazed was Brown to hear it (though the worst had not been
said),

When up spoke the jovial skipper, "Now let's put for Porpoise Head;

There we'll land and have our chowder; we have fish enough,"
says he.

"First the locks are to be rescued; we will run then for the quay.

"Steer for yonder bobbing buoy!" It was the chignon that he
meant.

Soon the yacht was laid along-side; out from her a paddle went.
Vastly pleased were all to see it, and indeed they had been dull
Not to smile at woman's tresses dripping from *The Mermaid's* scull.

Then they made for Porpoise Landing. In the cabin, Birch the
while

Pleaded fondly with his lady: "Dearest, let me see you smile!
Here's your beautiful new bonnet, and your very wavy hair."
But she said, "Oh, what's a bonnet? and, oh, Colonel! what is hair?"

From her interesting features then her handkerchief she took,
Opened wide those lovely lips of hers, and hoarsely whispered,
"Look!"

All that dazzling row had vanished! Birch's blood within him froze;
But he quickly said, "I love you—love you still, in spite of those!"

"But you do not, oh! you do not, see the point, dear Colonel, yet:
Full five weeks it took my dentist to get up that splendid set;
And, alas! I've been and lost 'em where you can't go down and
search,
And how *can* a woman give her hand—without her teeth—in church?"

"All the world expects the wedding, and next Tuesday is the day;
I was going to look so stunning, and—oh! what will people say?
Then there's Brown—think what a triumph it will surely be to him!"
"I must say it is a fix!" replies the Colonel, looking grim.

Then the ladies crowded round her: "We are coming to the pier!
Are you better? Bite this cracker; it will do you good, my dear.
Pretty soon we'll have our chowder—you are fond of that, you know."
But the maid behind her muffler only moaned and murmured, "No!

"Leave me here!" And so they left her, with the Colonel by her side:
Never sat so glum a bridegroom by so dismal-faced a bride.

All the rest went, laughing, romping, on the shore, just out of reach
Of the breakers that came dashing their white foreheads on the beach.

All but Brown: up to the cottage through the glaring sand he trod,
Proudly following the varlet who bore off the monster cod.



“ALL BUT BROWN: UP TO THE COTTAGE THROUGH THE GLARING SAND HE TROD.”

“For,” says he, “I hooked the fellow, and I’m bound to see him weighed.”

That is done, and still he lingers, “just to see a chowder made.”

Through the fellow’s long white waistcoat slides the steward’s polished knife;

Stops at something: “Here’s a— Bless me! what in time? Upon my life!”

Now I know you won't believe me ; but there, grinning from within,
Through a very broad incision, with a cool, sarcastic grin,

Stowed away with stolen clam bait, crab and shrimp and octopod,
In the belly of that careless, indiscriminating cod,
Was the strangest, oddest, queerest, most amazing prize, which he
For some shining bait had swallowed as it wriggled through the sea.



"FACE TO FACE, WITH LOWERING FOREHEADS, THE TWO RIVALS, STOOPING, STOOD."

"Arabella's teeth, by Heaven!"—Brown has seized them, and, behold!

In their "Milky Way of whiteness" there's his little "star of gold,"
Where the dentist, more completely to disguise the vulgar truth,
By a masterly device had plugged an artificial tooth!

Out rushed Brown—with tragic gestures he ran down upon the shore,
His fine eyes in frenzy rolling as they never rolled before;

In his hand he grasped the treasure. "Oh, I see it all!" says he;
"Without these she can't be married, and she'll maybe yet have me."

Then up went his hand to hurl them, but as quickly it came down :
After all, there was a streak of magnanimity in Brown.
"Oh, deceitful Arabella! falsest of all womankind!
I was going to fling 'em farther, but I guess I'll change my mind.

"Though she's treated me so meanly, and I know she loves me not,
I won't be too hard upon her"—and he started for the yacht.
"Cruel, cruel Arabella! now your fate is in my hand!"
And he thrust it in his pocket as he strode along the strand.

In the gloomy little cabin the unhappy couple sat:
Arabella, lightly shrieking, dropped her chignon and her hat,
Upon which she had been making indispensable repairs,
As with sudden clank and clatter Brown came stumbling down the
stairs.

Then upleaped her faithful Colonel, in no amicable mood;
Face to face, with lowering foreheads, the two rivals, stooping, stood,
For they both were rather tallish, and the cabin roof was low.
"Sir," says Brown, "you do not know me, or you wouldn't meet me so.

"I have come to do a service to that lady weeping there;
For, Miss Bent, I know your secret, and I beg you won't despair.
You shall go to church on Tuesday; you shall wear your bridal
wreath!"
And from out his trousers pocket he produced the missing teeth.

"Mine!" (upspringing, Arabella gave her head a fearful thump).
"Brown! oh, Brown! where did you get them? I declare, you are
a trump!
I had lost them in the ocean!" "And I found them on the shore!"
For he didn't deem it kindness at the time to tell her more.

"Why, what *did* you think?" "At first," said he, "I thought it was
a spoon."
She replied, "Who would have thought that they could wash ashore
so soon!"
And she dipped them in a tumbler, turned her back upon the two—
(While Brown whispered to the Colonel: "H—m!" "You don't
say!" "Yes, I do!")

For a moment; then she turned again, and, to be brief, she had
 No more cause to use a muffler, nor occasion to be sad.
 Then the Colonel spoke: "Excuse me, Brown; I didn't understand;
 You're an honorable fellow, and I offer you my hand."

With a smile the other took it, while the grateful lady said,
 As before *The Mermaid's* mirror she arrayed her graceful head,
 "Brown, I wish I could reward you, but I cannot marry two;
 But some other time I trust that I may do as much for you."

"Do not think of it, I beg you. Though it's been a bitter cup,
 I've been cured of some illusions, and I freely give you up.



"AND HE WHISPERED TO THE LADY WHO SAT BLUSHING BY HIS SIDE."

I shall change my occupation, and do better now, I hope:
 I am going out of poetry, and going into soap."

"And you'll be our friend?" says Bella. "So we've settled this affair!

Now let's go and have some chowder, for I'm hungry as a bear."
 And she joined the merry party, and she shook her dewy curls,
 And the lightning of her laughter was a dazzling flash of pearls.

And at ten A.M. on Tuesday she and Colonel Birch were wed:
 'Twas a cheerful, glad occasion—for his creditors—'tis said.

All admired his manly bearing, so serenely calm was he,
And collected—as 'twas hoped that now those little bills might be.

She was just one cloud of loveliness, from bridal wreath and veil
To the vast voluminous flounces, and the drifted, snowy trail.
Brown was present, and he couldn't for his life repress a smile,
As he saw the white teeth glitter half-way down the shady aisle.

And he whispered to the lady who sat blushing by his side
('Twas the old soap-maker's daughter, who was soon to be his bride)
That there could have been no wedding—though the fact seemed
very odd—
If it hadn't been for him and that accommodating cod.

6



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