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THE POISONED LAKE
AND OTHER POEMS



ALANSON HARTPENCE



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The
POISONED LAKE

AND OTHER POEMS

By
ALANSON HARTPENCE



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The Poisoned Lake
and Other Poems

The Poisoned Lake and Other Poems

PRELUDE.

COULD you follow birds of passage
As they drift o'er evening skies,
Then perchance you might discover
Where my sweet Arcadia lies.

Gentle country, rolling country ;
Hills and dells where brooks reside :—
Lowing cattle, failing hours ;
Homes where loving hearts abide.

So I sing you of Arcadia
As it was my paradise,
And midst its waving green hills—
Grief to tell it—
There the lake of poison lies.

PART I.

A MIDST the whitened field of daisies,
With little care to what might guide;
Neath the summer's golden sunshine,
Free of care I wandered wide.

Wandered wide, wandered wide,
Free of care I wandered wide
Till I met a little shepherd:—
Flute and sheepskin, curls beside!

“Whither wanders my pretty pathway,
Ah, my dear youth, pray confide;—
Winds it long yon wooded hillside
To where by chance some fairies 'bide?”

Ah! nay; nay, sir:
Dreadful things to it will guide;
Midst that dark and gloomy forest
Runs the wild wolf there to hide!”

“All we shepherds hold it fearful,
For 'tis not as you surmise:—
Oft have heard I fathers caution,
‘Go not hence in any guise.’”

Loving father, fearing father,
Trusting naught to youthful eyes;
Thinks he then his child might falter,
And in wildwood lost, of hunger dies.

Then for caution to his children,
Tells he them such loving lies;
But the words this lad has spoken
Were not meant for manly size.

So on turning to the shepherd
Said I to him: Lad, good-bye;
But my words were hardly spoken
Before I heard his warning cry.

“Oh, I pray you stay from the hillside,
Caring not what fate may guide;
For my tame owls often told me,
Lies a lake the other side:

Oh, so dreadful! Oh, so fearful!
Where he who drinks shall rot and die,
And lay unmourned of long the lake side
Save for the pines' remembrant sigh."

But to heed him naught could keep me,
So I bade him fond good day;
Told him naught could harm me,
And smiling went the hill-side way.

Upwards through the mighty forest
Faintly traced my path away,
And as I follow now more thoughtful
Hear I then a mournful lay.

Little shepherd; arms akimbo,
With nodded head to flute he plays:
Six small fingers slowly wander
And plaintive melody obeys.

Rising high it shortly finds me,
And midst the ferns and foliage fades;
Seeming mourns my rash departure,
And still all responsibility evades.

Higher, higher ; onwards, onwards,
Mount I towards the azured sky ;
While the air so sad and mournful
Grows more distant from on high.

Distant, distant, still more distant,
Borne on breezes stealing by ;—
Intermittent times of silence—
There—I knew it could but die.

Now how lovely grows the forest
As it lights and breaks away ;—
There on summit bald and lonely,
Weary now, my steps will stay.

Rest I then on warm earth's surface,
And dreaming wait the waning day ;
Where the silence loves to linger,
And still small breezes play.

So with weary steps I plodded
To gain the height I would abide,
And soon o'er crest of nearing summit
Breaks in view the country side.

Neath me here the valley wanders ;
Midst the green hills doomed to fade
In the blue of yon horizon,
And the earth's translucent shade.

While here on summit lonely
Save for solitary pine,
That shades me in long shadows
And scents the air with wine ;

I lay me on my brown pine carpet,
And with face turned towards the sky :—
All my senses lulled in music,
Watch the great clouds drifting by.

Drooping eyelids, scents of flowers ;—
Now for rest my spirit goes :
Shadow hunts in far-off dreamland,
While the sweet air softly blows.

PART II.

WHAT was that that bade me follow
Down the valley there below?—
There they come now, coaxing ever.
Think they then to make me go?

Lovely maids, so gently treading,
Call me now with laughter gay:—
See their forms so softly blending
With this gloom so weird and gray!

Still more near they now approach me,
And in sensuous rhythm dance around,
Cry aloud, throw me kisses,
Then stand still with ne'er a sound;

While from out their midst there standeth
One more lovely than the rest,
And with faltering form before me,
Smiles, sways and then addressed:

“Come with me to the lake below,
Where silver waters lap and flow,
And drink me there the waters fair
That fire the blood and deaden care,

Till naught but more will satisfy,
So great is thirst’s demanding cry,
Wrought in fiery blood’s desire
That would in cool bliss expire!

Come! come to the lake with me
And learn love’s utmost ecstasy!
Gaze on me now from head to toe:
Am I not perfect as women go?”

Then with wild delight the maidens fair
Form a hand-clasped circle there,
And round me in mad whirling reel
Till naught of senses can I feel,

As onwards staggered I:
Now held on soft arms reeling by,
Then swept with maddened tide
Down the gloomy mountain side,

Where only streaks of light break through,—
A hellish yellow in their hue—
And trees stand gaunt and leafless there,
As though by forest fire stripped bare;

While from all about there seems to rise
One great note of silence terrorized,
As if some strange half-stated fear
Was about to reach completion here.

Down, down we quickly passed
Before the circle broke at last,
As rose there to the sky
One long and fearful cry.

How quickly stopped the maidens then
For all to gaze in terror, when
One stood pointing upwards, where
A great snake swung his body there:

With tail on black limb twisted round,
And long, sleek body dangling down,—
Just where a shaft of light broke through
That made his scales to glisten blue;

Now back and forth, and high and low
We see his head on lithe neck go,
While impatient tongue well justifies
The blood-red glare of beady eyes,—

Which holds us in hypnotic spell—
Till at our feet the serpent fell
And hissing lay, with mouth agape,
That fearing now we soon escape

By in the wild wood taking flight,—
Where soon in shadow lost to sight,
We follow down the mountain side
With naught but fear to act as guide!

Helter skelter down we fled,—
Here and there in wild wood sped—
At last to stay in thicket where
We see the lake in distance there.

Then gathered round the maidens all,—
As loud there rang a bugle's call—
And pointing where a clearing lay
Bade me follow there away.

Soon they led me to the clearing,—
Where the light broke through—
And before me, on a throne of marble,
Sat the King of Pleasure, who

Watched our entrance with mild interest
And beckoned then a slave :
Told him tell us come before him
And dismissed him with a wave.

As we stand there now before him
Stepped there forth a lovely maid,
And bowing then in deepest reverence,
With silver voice essayed :

“We have brought you from the mountain—
Captive—here to-day,
Who would drink of pleasure’s passion,
And steeped in senses e’er be gay.

Grant him drink of favored waters,
So of pleasure he may learn,
And before from here departing
Can prude morality discern!”

Straightway then the King of Pleasure
Clapped his hands, and called by name
Maiden who with golden goblet
Held o'er head in answer came.

And there, before me standing,
Bade me take and contents drain
Ere its waters lose their magic
And time its powers wane.

Then to my lips I pressed the goblet
And quaffed its contents all :—
No sooner done than if by magic
My fleeting senses pall.

And now I stand in drunken stupor,
While the maidens dance with joy,—
Laughing at my strange condition—
And with merry jest would me annoy ;

Till spoke the king in voice of stridence,
Telling them begone away,
And hunt the wild boar in the forest
Where, found at last at parting day,

They can in silence steal upon him,
And while he lies in rude rest—slay—
Then wreathe for me a wreath of bristles
To crown me in appropriate way.

Away, away they soon have vanished,
And leave me standing lone
Before the King, who then surveyed me,
With dark visage, from his throne.

Shortly then, with sense returning,
I hear his stern voice bid me take
The way that winds through yonder foliage
And leads me onward to the lake.

PART III.

HOW strange and dark these waters look!
How weird the skies are over-head!
Grim hour of dusk hangs over all
While hoots the wild owl for the dead.

With slow and silent wings sails by
A hawk with murder in his breast;
Impatient bats dart here and there,
As though by blind and mad fear pressed.

Dark forms of life are gathered here
And edge the lake shore round;
Lone cries of fear ring loud and clear
To mock the drear owl's hooting sound.

Spirit of fate, that here innate
Echoes my spirit now,
Rends my breast from hope of the best,
And kills every former vow.

With fierce wild beats my heart mad leaps,
So great has grown my want ;
My throat burns fire with mad desire
Through drink from goblet left to haunt.

Drink, drink—my being cries—
Drink to quell this maddening fire!
Drink, and let thy soul so dire
In a senseless heaven expire!

And so I sought the lake-side now,
And there on hands and knees,—
Groping my way where the waters stay—
Sought my thirst's wild feeling to appease.

It seemed as though on slimy shore
The waters eddied in,
Like long black fingers from a hand
Darkened with the curse of sin.

And every time I bent to drink
The eddy flowed away
And stayed just where, if followed there,
To drink with ease one may.

I followed on with frenzied might
And each time bent to gain,
But ere my lips had reached their prize,
The magic waters wane.

Exhaustion now lays hold on me
To stay my dreary way,
And on a tuft of rushes near,
My weary head I lay ;

While sombrous shadows darken all,
And soon my struggles cease,
For I felt the silent wings of death
Would bring my spirit peace.

When lo! there rose a soulful moan,
And through the dusk I see
A chalk-white face that hovers apace :
A face once known to me.

How different now, from once so fair,
Are the eyes that peer in mine!
Where, Oh where, is the lustre fair,
And the lashes long and fine?

Cease, Oh cease, thy mute appeal
And tell me can it be,
Thou too hast drunk of the poisoned lake
And killed thy soul like me?

One look of proof was cast my way,
Then vanished face and form;
While over my soul a terror rolled
Like the violence of a storm.

And all of a sudden there came to me,
The horror of it all:
The horror of passions and instincts strong
And with what ease we fall.

Then I cried release from the mighty flesh,
And cried for a soul more strong:
A cry that sounds from the hearts of men
As long as the world goes 'long.

And the answer came in a manner then,
For the heavens broke in day:
Flooding the night with a golden light,
And banished my dream away.

.

The lake at my feet dissolved in mist,
Then changed to summit where
Over my head, on a branch of the pine,
A bird called its mate from there :

Just a few notes from the warbler's throat,
As the sun stole in my eyes—
A great gold ball on the horizon wall
At the end of the day it lies.

Short Poems

Short Poems

VINE LEAVES.

COULD I wreath a wreath,
My love to wear,
For choice of vine leaf
I would despair.

One could find ne'er one so fair
As to grace that head of golden hair.
And grant it found, would not it jar
In the pure white light of her soul's star?

But I think perchance
Were I forced to choose
The ivy geranium
Would I use.

The one with leaves like wax,—
Classic formed that pink flowers tax:
Which loves to grow in tropic clime
O'er the high front wall in spring time.

Yes, the leaves would do:
And the pink flowers too
Would kiss her hair
At random here and there.

AQUA BENEDICTA.

ONE morning, in spring, some time ago—
A chance had led me there—
I found a little red-brick church
Not far from the village square.

There were trees about and ivy grew,
To soften the red-brick walls;
While from some leafy recess near,
A discreet oriole calls.

No alien sound was there to break
The peace that charmed the place,
Save the crunch of my steps on the graveled
path
That marked my loitering pace.

I found the church doors opened wide,
And gazed at the shrine within;
Where an aged priest in surpliced gown
Chanted an aged hymn.

It seemed so quiet and restful there,
And a change from nature's green
That I crossed the hallowed brown-stone arch
And stole to a pew unseen.

And I sat and dreamt the time away
'Twixt a pious stained glass saint,
And a half-opened window in gothic style ;
Where a wandering bee droned faint.

Till in there whirled with never a thought
Three sparrows in noisy race,
And perched on the edge of the sacred font ;
Which they used for a bathing place.

They fluttered and ducked in the holy bowl,
And chirped in wildest rant ;
Little heeding or caring in any way,
The good priest's pious chant.

There was naught to stay their boist'rous glee,
Till the priest had finished his prayer ;
And came down the aisle saying Ave Maria,
And stopped in wonderment there.

Two of the three flew away in a scare ;
But the other one stood his ground,
And chirped like mad at the godly man,
With all the breath that he found.

It must have been his solemn face
That melted the little one's heart,
For he took to his wings in sudden fear,
And flew to a perch like a dart.

'Twas on the bust of a saint he lit—
Some martyr of pagan hate—
And hopped about in a rudely way,
On the good man's poor bald pate.

There he spread his wings in ruffled pride,
And with a last long chirp defied
The world of sanctity, and vanished in
The warm luxuriant air outside.

A SHOWER.

HAVE you ever heard the rumble
Of the thunder far away?
It speaks a coming shower
To ease the heat of day;
Then the clouds come drifting over,
And the world grows dark and gray—
But first there came the rumble
Of the thunder far away.

Have you ever heard the patter
Of the rain-drops on the road?
They come in slow succession
Then faster in their mode;
Then the air grows fresh and fragrant,
As the clouds pour down their load—
But first there came the patter
Of the rain-drops on the road.

Have you ever seen the breaking
Of the dark and leaden sky?

How it filled the world with beauty
And caused the rain to die!
Then the long bright streaks of sunshine
Came streaming from on high—
But first there came the breaking
Of the dark and leaden sky.

Have you ever seen the rainbow,
And its many colored parts,
As it arched the world in glory
Where the sun threw out its darts?
Then the rose-bush by the road-side
Is hung with rain-drop hearts—
But they'll all go dropping, dropping
When that yellow songster starts.

And so the shower passes,
And the world in quiet lies,
With the verdure all reblooming,
And the deep blue in the skies.
And so the shower passes,
And the world in quiet lies,
With the verdure all reblooming,
And a deep blue in the skies.

A NIGHT PICTURE.

HOW wild, how wild is the wind to-night
In its mad race o'er the earth;
How it blows the willow's streaming hair
Where the brook runs by in mirth!

How wild, how wild is the wind to-night,
See it drive the dark clouds by;
How massive they look as changing form
They pass o'er the silvered sky!

In still, in strife, it comes and goes
Like the life of a human heart:
The rain must fall as human tears,
And then will strife depart.

FAME.

ISN'T this a pleasant room:—
You must not make a sound—
A lovely rug, a table,
See the book-shelves all around?

Two gentlemen are seated
Near the lamp in easy-chairs,
They're both engulfed, with nodded heads,
In the wilds of authors' lairs.

Presently one asketh
In a meditative voice:
"Did you ever read this writer?
He's just my style and choice."

And shortly came the answer:—
"What, poems by so and so?
Oh, yes; he's great—
Er—a—he died some time ago."

THE TRAVELER TELLS.

THE low coast stretched its sandy shores,
To breast the mighty sea;
The moon hung low with a tropical glow,
And a sick hot heat hung over the lee.
A group of desolate palm trees stood
Where the hills in the horizon ran free;
Those ancient hills, where through the night
A lion kept a lone sentry—
And all that I loved and all that I knew
Were thousands of miles from me.

DOMESTICITY.

WE went walking in the mountains,—
My little love and me—
And the road led through a valley
Midst the wildest scenery.

But my thoughts were not with nature,
For my love was near to me:—
And I kissed her, and I kissed her
'Neath an old elm tree.

I can hardly say what happened,
But some freak of fantasy
Made me turn and curse my action,
As onwards wandered we.

It seemed to me, I reasoned,—
With all its ecstasy—
Love but pays to nature:—
For our life it is the fee.

So with toads and snakes and lizards,
And with everything we see.
Man's a slave of nature :
Shall it be the same with me?

While thus my thoughts went running,
My little love ran free,
Plucking buttercups and daisies
In merry ecstasy ;

Till perchance she spies me :
"Oh, so sad," said she,
And asked to know the reason
For such despondency.

So I told her of my reasons,
Said a wild man I would be,
And run in yonder forest
In wild defiance.

And quickly came the answer :
"That's just what we will be,
'Cause if you should be going
You surely would want me."

But, my little love, I reasoned,
I think that you can see,
You never would be able
To run as fast as me;

And should you take a tumble
Over a fallen tree,
There'd be no one there to help you
In such calamity.

"What! you'd go on running
With never a thought for me,
Without so much as stopping
To see what happened me?"

But can't you see, I asked her,
What that would have to be:
Why, that would be commencing
Our domesticity!

"Well, I s'pose it would," she answered,
And then quite heartily:
"But I know you'd be a gentleman
And help and care for me."

SPRING—A FRAGMENT.

AND then came the spring.
Oh the spring!
Green, gold,
And apple blossom incarnate.
A soft sighing breeze,
Faint rustling trees;—
Oh the spring! Oh the spring!

A SONG.

TO-DAY, my love, the south wind blows,
All laden with warmth and treasure.
Come away, come away to the open fields
And bask in this glorious weather!

My heart's astir with the first touch of spring,
And I would we were happy together.
Come away, come away where the brown
woods breathe
And the green creeps over the meadow!

TO A PAIR OF SHOES.

HOW indifferent you are,
How lifeless, mute,
As you stand collapsed—in pair—
In spite of your delicate feminine air.
I suppose you're trying to compute
The number of days she'll wear you yet
Before you're cast aside—
Ah, forever you would abide!

You're lucky, my friends.
What joy to enfold
Those delicate ankles in your tops
Of soft-lined kid.
And when that little white foot,
All clothed in black,
Rests on your soul (as mine)
What fierce love must impel your dumb heart—
I fain would play your part.

MYSTERY.

I WALKED in the woods one summer's
night
And a vision there came in the pale moon-light,
Treading so softly o'er the jewel-strewn grass:
Delicate, sensitive, a budding lass.

She held one hand o'er her silken breast
And her silvered arms hung close at rest;
While her head was turned as her breath came
warm,
And the cold moon kissed her ivory form.

I hid me 'neath a moss-grown tree
And watched this lass as she came toward me;
Like music she glides o'er the woodland lawn,
Half leading, half led by a spotted fawn.

Now she stays a while at a wild rose bower
To fondle and scent that tender flower,

And then for joy she garlands her doe
And laughs with delight at finding it so.

But soon her mirth was doomed to fade
For the lithe fawn heard some sound I made,
And sudden stood still to scent the air
Whilst the maid looked round in wonder there.

Then I knew they could but find me soon
So I stepped forth boldly in the light of the
 moon,
Holding the nymph and her fawn at bay
And spreading stark terror where once was
 play.

Just for an instant they stand their ground
Then leaps the wild fawn with bound on bound,
Scatt'ring those roses of fairest tints
All bruised and broken in its own foot-prints.

Now swift as an arrow from savage bow
Speeds the wild fawn, where none may know,
Leaving its mistress all trembling with fear
And soon to be captive of mortal man here

“What ho! my fair maiden,” in turning, I cry,
“Thy fawn has escaped me, but thou must not
try,
For I will soon hold thee if thou dost insist,—”
So saying I grasped the maid by her wrist.

Down on her knees sinks the maiden in fear,
Begging me free her by all that is dear;
And weeping with bowed head she pleads me
relent,
Saying she meant me no evil intent.

“But who art thou, maiden?” unheeding, I say;
“And why camest thou here by woodland
way?—
Come cease thy dull weeping and look up at me,
Then if thou wilt tell me I’ll let thee go free!”

“Oh, sir!” said the maiden; “I bid thee take
care,
For I am called Myst’ry, whom man should
beware,
And if I should grant thee and look in thy face,
Why straightway I’d lose me all heavenly
grace.”

And so with bowed head she waits my reply,
Which soon with rude action, thus answered

I,—

By forcing so cruelly this maid as she lies
To look, ere she cared to, in my mortal eyes.

Then boastfully laughing as mortals are wont,
I tell her to go join her fawn in its haunt,
Saying I find her as most mortal maids;
For little cares mankind when mystery fades.

“Oh, now that you know me thou seest no
charm,”

Said the maiden arising to be free of harm;
Then cautiously retreating a few steps or so,
She stops to say scornfully before she will go:

“Thou think’st thou dost know me—poor fool-
ish man—

Still just as much mystery as ever I am,
For all is but mystery that eyes can behold:—
Good-bye, fool mortal, be thou less bold!”

I CELEBRATE MYSELF.

AFTER WALT WHITMAN.

I CELEBRATE myself!
I am truly wonderful:—
I am a microbe on a grain of dust
That is being blown somewhere through mys-
tery;
But I say that I can conquer the forces of na-
ture,
For I can build bridges—
I am truly a wonderful parasite.

I am a wonderful man amongst men!
I go out in nature to write poetry:—
I look up at the sun and cry—
Oh glorious sun!
The sun is larger than I am,
The sun is a million times larger
Than the speck of dust I am on;
Still I compliment the sun—
Still I say I am a wonderful man.

Again I cry, Oh glorious sun!
And the sun answers me not.
The sun is but a small speck of dust,
A mere nothing amongst all the other suns
That my eyes can behold.
And the thousands of suns that I can behold
Must be as a speck of dust
To all the suns in existence.
I laugh with sardonic glee;
I toy with my ear.
I say I am a wonderful man
And celebrate myself.

I say I am an American
And celebrate my birth-right.
Some one near says he is a Frenchman.
I laugh at his pride
And am ready to murder this other little me,
Thereby celebrating myself as an American.
I glory in the fact of my birth-right.
I belong to the most wonderful amongst na-
tions,
For I am an American.
I will do anything to emphasize it:
I stretch dried skins on a wooden rim
And pound on my instrument,

Which I call a drum.
I make a great noise.
I go out and parade at night.
There beneath the cold stretch of stars,
I parade in celebration of my birth-right;
While the little torch that I carry in my hat
Flickers its small wan blaze in competition
With the cold cruel constancy of the stars.
Thus I celebrate myself and my birth-right.

I am a wonderful man!
I say there is a Maker of all things
And tell of Him one day in seven.
I endow Him with all the petty virtues I have
not.
I hide me from the sun in a little building
And grow quite eloquent about this Maker.
I declare in a loud voice
That He is all good,
And a woman who sits before me
With a cancer in her breast
Half believes what I declare.
I go on and tell more about my fancied Maker.
I picture Him just a little better than myself.
I make Him dwarf Himself to my level.
I declare what He thinks.

I celebrate myself.
And when I have finished my discourse,
I go to my home well satisfied.
And as I pass through the streets homewards,
My eyes are cast down to the pavement.
I do not look at the stars.
Now that I have reached my own little building
I go up stairs and prepare for bed
And am soon in deep slumber.
But outside, the night sleeps not.
It sleeps not, but reigns silently.
With the silence of its great black truth.
With the silence of the stars.
With the silence of billions of miles of space.
With the silence of mystery.
With the silence of death.
And I do not celebrate myself,
Because I am asleep
And therefore as if dead.

NOTHING AND SOMETHING.

IM only a poet of small repute,—
And of fame am apt to despair—
But I know the truth of a woman's heart,
For I've gazed in wonderment there.

A woman's love is a wonderful thing,
And should be cherished with care;
For like a fragile Florentine Vase
It's apt to be hard to repair.

SLEEP.

NIGHT! draw thy sable curtains
O'er the tired stage of day!
Moon! disturb not the hours
With the light of thy sad countenance!
Welcome! thou silent spirit of sleep;
Speed thee on thy holy rounds,
Kissing the heavy eye-lids of grief
Into the cool depths of thy Elysian fields!
Fare thee well! O world of sadness,
For I too bow before the silken emblem of
sleep!

AT ANCHOR.

WE lay and rolled in the trough of the sea
And the wind in the rigging howled its
misery.

The night pressed down on the mighty deep
And the ship was quiet with the hush of sleep.

PARTING IN PORT.

SAD was the world that night,
Chill blew the winter's wind;
Far glowed the harbor's light,
Dark lay the sea behind.

Slowly our ship moved on,
Waiting its pilot guide;
Cold broke the moon on high,
Lighting the waters wide.

Sad was my heart that night,
Chilled by a fate unkind;
For ere the morning's light,
Left I my love behind.

Tearless we parted there,
Each knew that fate defied;
Bravely she bade me go,
Out in the world so wide.

Cast they the ropes away,
While I on the Tender's side
Waved me my love good-bye,—
Wishing I ere had died.

TO AN EVERY-DAY WOMAN.

DLOWN has the spirit,—
Gone with the day—
Still stay to mock us,
Death and the clay.

Hushed are the heart-beats,—
Stilled is the strife—
Peace lingers o'er her,
So lately of life.

And so life has 'parted :
Poor mortal heart,—
Firm in its striving—
Came to depart.

Spirit of nature :
Mark her we pray—
Brave in her striving—
Best that she may!

LAMENT.

DARK is the world to me,
Black with despair ;
Heart drinks its misery
 Deadened with care.
The past hurls its curses
 Of passion's lost strife,
To sicken my soul
 Of all future life.

Age and the skeleton
 Of memories come,
Sit down beside me,
 Striking me dumb.
Dark is the world to me,
 Black with despair ;
Heart drinks its misery
 Deadened with care.

BY A MOUNTAIN BROOK.

I SLEPT one night by a mountain brook
Beneath a cloudless sky,
And the moon shone down in solemn state
O'er the high tree tops near by.

I awoke this night with yearning breast
At the lull of the midnight hour,
And the silvered silence seemed so great
That my heart grew oppressed by its power.

I lay this night in wonder wrapped
Till the moon hung low in the sky,
Leaving the woods in mystic dark—
With the murmuring brook and I.

SEPTEMBER.

SEPTEMBER : thou art as a lovely woman
Who hath reached her maturity,
And loves not with youth's fiery blood,
But rather with the warmth of fever.

Thou welcomest me in thy arms
With such assuring tenderness
That I note not such signs
Of age as are about you.

Ah September, I love thy spirit!
In thy embrace there is rest,
And a quiet tenderness stays with thee;
Of thy love there is no questioning.

OCTOBER.

BEHOLD the woodland, in her pride
Of age, and departing year,
Hath cast aside her robe of green;
And hath stolen from the summer's sky, the
rainbow:
Bedecking herself, high and low, in color mag-
nificent!

BY THE RIVER.

WHERE the river winds its way,
Birds are singing rondolay;
All is happy, all is gay,
Life's worth living when it's May.

Bees are humming, snakes are sunning,
Brooks are running thereaway;
For there's bluest blue above us,
And there's sunshine all the day.

Little care have we for morrow,
Naught can now our joys allay;
Life's worth living by the river,
In the merry month of May.

ON AN OCEAN LINER.

I WAS weary, I was home-sick,
And the night dragged slowly by:
While I lay and watched for day-light
To spread its wings on high.

But the hours went more slowly,
As if by Titans held in check,
So I wrapped me in my great coat
And stole up on the deck.

There I sought the lee side shelter
And leaned against the rail
Just as the lonely lookout
Sang his watch-call through the gale.

All was dark up in the heavens,
All was dark upon the sea,
And the sighing of the rigging
Bore my heart in company.

'Gainst our ship the great sea thundered
Till she trembled all afeared,
While the sea ran back in darkness—
Waiting cat-like to appear :

Then in times of utmost silence,
While we bent to meet the sea,
The murmur of the waters
Sang my heart in sympathy.

But the howling of the high winds
Soon broke that magic spell,
Like a thousand throated demons
Driven o'er a wat'ry Hell.

And I stood there all forlornly,
While the tempest raged on high,
And the memories of a lifetime
Like a line of men pressed by :

Like a line of lifetime convicts,
Who shuffle past in place,
And each one turns to show me
His pallid prison face.

Till to free me from this vision,
I gazed off through the dark,
Where far out in the blackness
Glowed a single fiery spark.

Oh star of hope,—I pondered—
How I glory in your sight,
For you mark the distant harbor
We make by morning's light!

And then I fell to watching
This far-off hopeful sign,
And I wondered had its watchman
A heart more sad than mine.

And thus against the railing,
My lonely watch I keep,
While our great ship—never quailing—
Fights its battle with the deep,

Till—hark! there chimes a signal
Like hope new-born set free,
And soon we turn to make our port
And run before the sea.

Now, as the light grows brighter,
The first faint streaks of day
Come trooping o'er the distant shore
To make the world grow gray.

And then, in light of morning,
The gulls sweep down from high
And o'er our ship go sailing
With many an anxious cry;

While 'midst the clouds of heaven,
The morning sun breaks free
To throw her grand celestial light
Upon the darkened sea.

And soon her conq'ring rays disperse
The heavens' molten gray,
For one by one o'er yonder rim
The dark clouds sail away.

And now beneath the holy blue,
The harbor's mouth we make,
Where quiet sea and nearing land
Seem but some inland lake.

Full many a joyous heart has come
To hail the nearing shore,
And o'er our deck the happy throng
Go laughing back and fore.

Great loves, high hopes, seem common things
Beneath this joyous blue,—
And I know not how it happened me,
My heart seemed joyous too.

INNOMINATUM.

GLORIOUS passion unconfined
Hath made me nature's prey.
Instinct, temperament—both combined—
Have left me naught to say.

Both good and bad are words of men,
Both words from God—some think and
say—
But when His magic thought comes in,
Emotions are His word and play.

So the living of life is a passive thing,
And resistance is our care—
It's not worth while to fume at nature,
She hasn't our sense of what's fair.

I WONDER WILL YOU LOVE ME.

I WONDER will you love me
In the days yet long to come,
When time has left its traces
And life seems all but done.

I wonder will your heart be mine
And love be just as true
Or will some thing of evil come
To kill the love in you.

As lovers vow their loved ones
So oft I've vowed to you,
Still life changes, hearts grow different,
And I wonder will yours too.

TO A PARASITIC WOMAN.

OH I know you my fine beauty ;
Oh I know you well enough :
I don't mind it if you hate me—
You look ugly in a huff.

Oh I know you my fine beauty,
And understand your ways:—
I've seen you drag my fellow man
In delusion half his days.

You take the love he gives you,
And grant him be your slave ;
Or perhaps you did reward him,
With that ice-cold kiss you gave.

Your message is destruction,
You ravage on the soul ;
The only love that you can know
Has one person in its role.

Oh I hate your ghastly beauty—
You walk in every class
From the dame of high society
To the simple village lass.

Oh I loathe you! Oh I hate you!
But I'm glad to say you're scarce,
Else I hardly would have courage
To write whate'er I dar'st.

THE RAVEN AND THE SKULL.

ONCE, at dead of night,
When one can hear
The howling silence
Beating on one's brain,
I lay—tempest tossed—
With fever's racking pain.
And, just as I
Was falling in
The deep bliss of sleep,
I opened wide my eyes
To find the raven and the skull;—
A dull, dead white
Against the night,
With Raven perched above.
There he sits
And pecks and gnaws—
Those claws—I thought them fangs—
They ran in ear-pits, eye-pits—
Just then I felt the fever's pain
Shake me in its jaws.

When at last the blur
Had cleared from my eyes,
I found him perched erect,
Croaking in greatest glee
These strange words to me :
“Good and bad !
False and true !
All is one,
One is all.
Thou art Him
And He is thee.”
With fevered might,
To rid me of his sight,
I raised myself
To strike him dead.
But the skull went back in the night,
And the last that caught my sight
Was the sagging, wagging jaw,
As I heard it say,
In a scraping, grinding way :
“Good and bad !
False and true !
All is one,
One is all,
Thou art Him
And He is thee.”

A MOOD.

WEARY with pain and earthly woe,
Canker of life, blurred vision,
Blood on dust, heart sunk low ;
My fate and God's decision.

Thus burdened at the close of day,
From the sooty city I shrank away
And sank myself in the deep cool woods,
Where nature's magic held its sway.

Casting myself on a small stream's brink,
Breast to breast with nature, I began to think.
Almighty God, Merciless Destiny,
Mad hand of fate, Gigantic Despot,
Hast Thou no heart?

Songs of the Infinite

Songs of the Infinite

IT was a winter night
In a city bright
When a ragged sight
By window's light
We see in street below.

Through alley and street,
Through the blinding sleet,
Not stopping to meet
But with step less fleet,
We see him go.

.
The light is long past,—
Now he's caught in the blast,
Now pausing at last—
Murm'ring: "Seeing fate so cast,
Be it so."

Now turning at length
With regaining strength,
As the hand of fate
He breaks in a gate,
While murm'ring low :—

“O ye home of buried bone,
And of the widows' groaning moan!
O old home in nature's lap,
Where all return at the mystic rap!
O ye white-eyed spectre drear
That dost greet mine entrance here!
Tell me truly, with break of day
Steals my sad soul away?
Tell me secret,—ere my sad life slips—
Plucked from countless speechless lips!
Ah! now I hear your crooning low
Rising above the wild wind's blow :
“It is the law—Be it so!”

Weak with hunger and pain,
Lurching, he walks again,
As foot-fall gives on snow-clad ground
A dull and hollow sound
To those below.

Now through the gloom
He sees a tomb.
Look, he tries the door!
Locked; he tries once more!
“Fate—Be it so.”

Weak, he can but fall.
Now the shelter of the wall,—
He gropes to find—
Leaves the mad storm half behind.
“Fate—Be it so.”

Here, crouching protection from the storm,
We see his gaunt and haggard form;
While he murmurs in half articulate way.
Hark to what he has to say,
Hark and know :

THE MYSTIC HAND.

There is a hand,—
A mighty hand,
The hand of fate,
The hand of time,—
That here all elements
Did combine;
The hand that rolled,—

Rolled the ball—
And on it made
Mountains and seas,
Plains and all;
The hand that from
Nothing brought
Mountains of rock,
And the atom wrought,
Both matter from thought,
Part of the master mind;
The hand that moves
Indomitable fate,—
That our weakness proves—
By unrelenting laws
That on humanity gnaws;
The hand that from
The dark it takes
And you with matter
From its mind it makes,
And puts you here
In the sun's great light
But for an instant,—
In proportion right—
While in that instant—
O so fleeting—
The mystic hand is beating

Ever again, ever again repeating,
In the whirling of the ball,
A funeral march for all.

O the mystic hand
That placed you here,—
That placed her here
(Both matter from thought)—
And life's drama wrote
That the first men brought:
The same old drama
Of ages past
That for countless hordes
Of men was cast—
Reward of life,
Base instincts shove,
Better still,
Divine force of love—
Thumb and fore-finger close
To press
You breast to breast—
You know the rest.

While in life's instant,—
O so fleeting!—
The mystic hand is beating

Ever again, ever again repeating,
In the whirling of the ball,
A funeral march for all.

What means—
O what means
The mind of matter
As over this world
We poor specks
It doth scatter.
What means—
O what means
The mind of matter
By our second of life?
Does He but wish
His power to flatter?
And if that be so,
Why, O why
Did he give me here
This that men call soul?
Soul:
Is it but some forgotten mind
Of the workman's left behind?
Let us hope with intention kind,
To guide us back to the master mind:—
“It is the law—Be it so.”

LAW.

Everything is as it was set :
Purpose—and power—driven.
The laws of men
Are but the laws of God
Indirectly given ;
The ways of men
But the way of God ;
The power of men
But the power of God ;
All conform to the dominant nod :
“Be it so.”

All is
Law, law, law,
Conceived set, given.
Hear the grinding mill of time
Grinding with the chime
Of law, law, law !
Hear we can its presence tell
By a wild and piercing yell
Of some animal victim,
Caught in conflicting wheels of law
(I wonder if the Creator saw).

Such as self-preservation and death.
Never stopping for mortal woes,
Onward, onward it goes,
As the countless horde like me it takes
And back into nothing makes :
It is the law—"Be it so."

.

The storm is past,
Heaven's clear at last,
The moon fills the night
With silver light.

A gentle breeze
Moans in the trees
And of a sudden stops
As if not understood.

Everything still
Except distant rill,
Beauty serene
Reigneth supreme.

All is well
As held in the spell

Our wandr'er repeats,
With wild heart-beats,
The song here given :

BEAUTY AND HOPE.

Beauty, beauty,
Food of passion,
Hypocritical smile of God :
Ah, but might I tear thy heart out
And read the meaning there written,—
Meaning of the God that made thee,
Meaning of the God that made me,
Meaning of all !
Beauty, beauty,
All life have I pursued thee,
All life have I wooed thee !
Art thou but purpose of passion ?
No, no, for I have seen thee
As deep melancholy of the woodland :
Sad soul of God
It seems as though
Thou echoed the soul that made thee,
And thou art the soul of man
In grander form.

Beauty, beauty,
 Mood of matter,
 Matter from the mind of God:
 In thy melancholy smile
 So heartfelt, loving,
 Lies hope,—
 Hope for we poor mortals,
 Hope for all!

.

A distant bell
 Tolled the midnight hour;
 Then with exultant lay
 Rang in the Christmas day.

.

“Peal forth wild bell,
 Peal forth the story
 Of the Christ you tell:
 The story the Christ gave,
 The story of Mohammed,
 And Plato, mild and grave;
 The story of hope,—
 The hope of mankind
 For life everlasting.
 This hope,

That from our minds did come :
 These minds of matter,—
 Surely we fashioned them not!
 And the master mind that fashioned
 Did it not make hope.”

Ah, now methinks I hear the mystic rap,
 (My poor matter wants of sap)
 Or is it rib-bone's fall on coffin floor?
 No! 'tis death rapping at the door.”

He stands erect,
 No fear on face can we detect :
 Hollow cheeks and eye-pits sunk,
 Racked with pain and weakness drunk.

“Death! I fear thee not ;
 I never cast my earthly lot.
 I am but part of the infinite,
 Part of the infinite mind!”

Before the law of death doth grasp,—

Or will God to his bosom clasp?—
With uplifted hand to infinite sky,
His soul gives forth a parting cry:

EMANCIPATION.

“Out of the infinite,
Out of the mystery,
Came I here:
Conceived
But not conceiving,
Lodged with this matter,—
Part, parcel of the infinite mind.
Here am I:
Life, God, son of the father,
Brought and bound by rule and law
Of God’s medium, nature;
Bound with this matter.
What is my offence,
Great God, ruler of nature?
Oh to rend the bonds that bind me,
Cruel, cruel God to so confine me!
Oh to free the soul
And understand the infinite whole!
I will!
I am I:

Son of the father,—
A God in my right—
I will not creep, crawl and pray.
The son shall be as the father :
Thy child has grown with time.
The son shall—”

Look, look!
He reels,
Instinct, God given instinct :
He throws himself
And gains his feet.
He reels again :
A second in the hands of law,
A second in the hands of God.
Fate, chance!
He crashes his head against the wall
And rolls over dead.
Law, law, law,
All is law—
Be it so.

.

Now the sad winds blow
And drift the snow

In a beautiful scroll
About his clay.

.

Thus ends my poem of to-day;
Of the end
Surmise what you may.
Of him
I have naught more to say,
Except,
He was subject to the law of decay:
It is the law—
Be it so.
Again I add this key,
To the thought and way
Of God or Gods—
Who knows?
Be it so!

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