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THE POETICAL WORKS  
OF  
OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES  
[1893 three volume set]

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## TO MY READERS

NAY, blame me not; I might have spared  
Your patience many a trivial verse,  
Yet these my earlier welcome shared,  
So, let the better shield the worse.

And some might say, "Those ruder songs  
Had freshness which the new have lost;  
To spring the opening leaf belongs,  
The chestnut-burs await the frost."

When those I wrote, my locks were brown,  
When these I write--ah, well a-day!  
The autumn thistle's silvery down  
Is not the purple bloom of May.

Go, little book, whose pages hold  
Those garnered years in loving trust;  
How long before your blue and gold  
Shall fade and whiten in the dust?

O sexton of the alcoved tomb,  
Where souls in leathern cerements lie,  
Tell me each living poet's doom!  
How long before his book shall die?

It matters little, soon or late,  
A day, a month, a year, an age,--  
I read oblivion in its date,  
And Finis on its title-page.

Before we sighed, our griefs were told;  
Before we smiled, our joys were sung;  
And all our passions shaped of old  
In accents lost to mortal tongue.

In vain a fresher mould we seek,--  
Can all the varied phrases tell  
That Babel's wandering children speak  
How thrushes sing or lilacs smell?

Caged in the poet's lonely heart,  
Love wastes unheard its tenderest tone;  
The soul that sings must dwell apart,  
Its inward melodies unknown.

Deal gently with us, ye who read  
Our largest hope is unfulfilled,--

The promise still outruns the deed,--  
The tower, but not the spire, we build.

Our whitest pearl we never find;  
Our ripest fruit we never reach;  
The flowering moments of the mind  
Drop half their petals in our speech.

These are my blossoms; if they wear  
One streak of morn or evening's glow,  
Accept them; but to me more fair  
The buds of song that never blow.  
April 8, 1862.

## EARLIER POEMS

### 1830-1836 OLD IRONSIDES

This was the popular name by which the frigate Constitution was known. The poem was first printed in the Boston Daily Advertiser, at the time when it was proposed to break up the old ship as unfit for service. I subjoin the paragraph which led to the writing of the poem. It is from the Advertiser of Tuesday, September 14, 1830:--

"Old Ironsides.--It has been affirmed upon good authority that the Secretary of the Navy has recommended to the Board of Navy Commissioners to dispose of the frigate Constitution. Since it has been understood that such a step was in contemplation we have heard but one opinion expressed, and that in decided disapprobation of the measure. Such a national object of interest, so endeared to our national pride as Old Ironsides is, should never by any act of our government cease to belong to the Navy, so long as our country is to be found upon the map of nations. In England it was lately determined by the Admiralty to cut the Victory, a one-hundred gun ship (which it will be recollected bore the flag of Lord Nelson at the battle of Trafalgar,) down to a seventy-four, but so loud were the lamentations of the people upon the proposed measure that the intention was abandoned. We confidently anticipate that the Secretary of the Navy will in like manner consult the general wish in regard to the Constitution, and either let her remain in ordinary or rebuild her whenever the public service may require."--New York Journal of Commerce.

The poem was an impromptu outburst of feeling and was published on the next day but one after reading the above paragraph.

AY, tear her tattered ensign down  
Long has it waved on high,  
And many an eye has danced to see  
That banner in the sky;  
Beneath it rung the battle shout,  
And burst the cannon's roar;--  
The meteor of the ocean air  
Shall sweep the clouds no more.

Her deck, once red with heroes' blood,  
Where knelt the vanquished foe,  
When winds were hurrying o'er the flood,  
And waves were white below,  
No more shall feel the victor's tread,  
Or know the conquered knee;--  
The harpies of the shore shall pluck  
The eagle of the sea!

Oh better that her shattered hulk  
Should sink beneath the wave;  
Her thunders shook the mighty deep,  
And there should be her grave;  
Nail to the mast her holy flag,  
Set every threadbare sail,  
And give her to the god of storms,  
The lightning and the gale!

#### THE LAST LEAF

This poem was suggested by the appearance in one of our streets of a venerable relic of the Revolution, said to be one of the party who threw the tea overboard in Boston Harbor. He was a fine monumental specimen in his cocked hat and knee breeches, with his buckled shoes and his sturdy cane. The smile with which I, as a young man, greeted him, meant no disrespect to an honored fellow-citizen whose costume was out of date, but whose patriotism never changed with years. I do not recall any earlier example of this form of verse, which was commended by the fastidious Edgar Allan Poe, who made a copy of the whole poem which I have in his own handwriting. Good Abraham Lincoln had a great liking for the poem, and repeated it from memory to Governor Andrew, as the governor himself told me.

I SAW him once before,  
As he passed by the door,  
And again  
The pavement stones resound,  
As he totters o'er the ground  
With his cane.

They say that in his prime,  
Ere the pruning-knife of Time  
Cut him down,  
Not a better man was found  
By the Crier on his round  
Through the town.

But now he walks the streets,  
And he looks at all he meets  
Sad and wan,  
And he shakes his feeble head,  
That it seems as if he said,  
"They are gone."

The mossy marbles rest  
On the lips that he has prest  
In their bloom,  
And the names he loved to hear  
Have been carved for many a year  
On the tomb.

My grandmamma has said--  
Poor old lady, she is dead  
Long ago--  
That he had a Roman nose,  
And his cheek was like a rose  
In the snow.

But now his nose is thin,  
And it rests upon his chin  
Like a staff,  
And a crook is in his back,  
And a melancholy crack  
In his laugh.

I know it is a sin  
For me to sit and grin  
At him here;  
But the old three-cornered hat,  
And the breeches, and all that,  
Are so queer!

And if I should live to be  
The last leaf upon the tree  
In the spring,  
Let them smile, as I do now,  
At the old forsaken bough  
Where I cling.

#### THE CAMBRIDGE CHURCHYARD

OUR ancient church! its lowly tower,  
Beneath the loftier spire,  
Is shadowed when the sunset hour  
Clothes the tall shaft in fire;  
It sinks beyond the distant eye  
Long ere the glittering vane,  
High wheeling in the western sky,  
Has faded o'er the plain.

Like Sentinel and Nun, they keep  
Their vigil on the green;  
One seems to guard, and one to weep,  
The dead that lie between;  
And both roll out, so full and near,  
Their music's mingling waves,  
They shake the grass, whose pennoned spear  
Leans on the narrow graves.

The stranger parts the flaunting weeds,  
Whose seeds the winds have strown  
So thick, beneath the line he reads,  
They shade the sculptured stone;  
The child unveils his clustered brow,  
And ponders for a while  
The graven willow's pendent bough,  
Or rudest cherub's smile.

But what to them the dirge, the knell?  
These were the mourner's share,--  
The sullen clang, whose heavy swell  
Throbb'd through the beating air;  
The rattling cord, the rolling stone,  
The shelving sand that slid,  
And, far beneath, with hollow tone  
Rung on the coffin's lid.

The slumberer's mound grows fresh and green,  
Then slowly disappears;  
The mosses creep, the gray stones lean,  
Earth hides his date and years;  
But, long before the once-loved name  
Is sunk or worn away,  
No lip the silent dust may claim,  
That pressed the breathing clay.

Go where the ancient pathway guides,  
See where our sires laid down  
Their smiling babes, their cherished brides,  
The patriarchs of the town;  
Hast thou a tear for buried love?  
A sigh for transient power?  
All that a century left above,  
Go, read it in an hour!

The Indian's shaft, the Briton's ball,  
The sabre's thirsting edge,  
The hot shell, shattering in its fall,  
The bayonet's rending wedge,--  
Here scattered death; yet, seek the spot,  
No trace thine eye can see,  
No altar,--and they need it not  
Who leave their children free!

Look where the turbid rain-drops stand  
In many a chiselled square;  
The knightly crest, the shield, the brand  
Of honored names were there;--  
Alas! for every tear is dried  
Those blazoned tablets knew,  
Save when the icy marble's side  
Drips with the evening dew.

Or gaze upon yon pillared stone,  
The empty urn of pride;  
There stand the Goblet and the Sun,--  
What need of more beside?

Where lives the memory of the dead,  
Who made their tomb a toy?  
Whose ashes press that nameless bed?  
Go, ask the village boy!

Lean o'er the slender western wall,  
Ye ever-roaming girls;  
The breath that bids the blossom fall  
May lift your floating curls,  
To sweep the simple lines that tell  
An exile's date and doom;  
And sigh, for where his daughters dwell,  
They wreath the stranger's tomb.

And one amid these shades was born,  
Beneath this turf who lies,  
Once beaming as the summer's morn,  
That closed her gentle eyes;  
If sinless angels love as we,  
Who stood thy grave beside,  
Three seraph welcomes waited thee,  
The daughter, sister, bride.

I wandered to thy buried mound  
When earth was hid below  
The level of the glaring ground,  
Choked to its gates with snow,  
And when with summer's flowery waves  
The lake of verdure rolled,  
As if a Sultan's white-robed slaves  
Had scattered pearls and gold.

Nay, the soft pinions of the air,  
That lift this trembling tone,  
Its breath of love may almost bear  
To kiss thy funeral stone;  
And, now thy smiles have passed away,  
For all the joy they gave,  
May sweetest dews and warmest ray  
Lie on thine early grave!

When damps beneath and storms above  
Have bowed these fragile towers,  
Still o'er the graves yon locust grove  
Shall swing its Orient flowers;  
And I would ask no mouldering bust,  
If e'er this humble line,  
Which breathed a sigh o'er other's dust,  
Might call a tear on mine.

#### TO AN INSECT

The Katydid is "a species of grasshopper found in the United States, so called from the sound which it makes."--Worcester.  
I used to hear this insect in Providence, Rhode Island, but I



do not remember hearing it in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where I passed my boyhood. It is well known in other towns in the neighborhood of Boston.

I LOVE to hear thine earnest voice,  
Wherever thou art hid,  
Thou testy little dogmatist,  
Thou pretty Katydid  
Thou mindest me of gentlefolks,--  
Old gentlefolks are they,--  
Thou say'st an undisputed thing  
In such a solemn way.

Thou art a female, Katydid  
I know it by the trill  
That quivers through thy piercing notes,  
So petulant and shrill;  
I think there is a knot of you  
Beneath the hollow tree,--  
A knot of spinster Katydids,---  
Do Katydids drink tea?

Oh tell me where did Katy live,  
And what did Katy do?  
And was she very fair and young,  
And yet so wicked, too?  
Did Katy love a naughty man,  
Or kiss more cheeks than one?  
I warrant Katy did no more  
Than many a Kate has done.

Dear me! I'll tell you all about  
My fuss with little Jane,  
And Ann, with whom I used to walk  
So often down the lane,  
And all that tore their locks of black,  
Or wet their eyes of blue,--  
Pray tell me, sweetest Katydid,  
What did poor Katy do?

Ah no! the living oak shall crash,  
That stood for ages still,  
The rock shall rend its mossy base  
And thunder down the hill,  
Before the little Katydid  
Shall add one word, to tell  
The mystic story of the maid  
Whose name she knows so well.

Peace to the ever-murmuring race!  
And when the latest one  
Shall fold in death her feeble wings  
Beneath the autumn sun,  
Then shall she raise her fainting voice,  
And lift her drooping lid,  
And then the child of future years  
Shall hear what Katy did.

## THE DILEMMA

Now, by the blessed Paphian queen,  
Who heaves the breast of sweet sixteen;  
By every name I cut on bark  
Before my morning star grew dark;  
By Hymen's torch, by Cupid's dart,  
By all that thrills the beating heart;  
The bright black eye, the melting blue,--  
I cannot choose between the two.

I had a vision in my dreams;--  
I saw a row of twenty beams;  
From every beam a rope was hung,  
In every rope a lover swung;  
I asked the hue of every eye  
That bade each luckless lover die;  
Ten shadowy lips said, heavenly blue,  
And ten accused the darker hue.

I asked a matron which she deemed  
With fairest light of beauty beamed;  
She answered, some thought both were fair,--  
Give her blue eyes and golden hair.  
I might have liked her judgment well,  
But, as she spoke, she rung the bell,  
And all her girls, nor small nor few,  
Came marching in,--their eyes were blue.

I asked a maiden; back she flung  
The locks that round her forehead hung,  
And turned her eye, a glorious one,  
Bright as a diamond in the sun,  
On me, until beneath its rays  
I felt as if my hair would blaze;  
She liked all eyes but eyes of green;  
She looked at me; what could she mean?

Ah! many lids Love lurks between,  
Nor heeds the coloring of his screen;  
And when his random arrows fly,  
The victim falls, but knows not why.  
Gaze not upon his shield of jet,  
The shaft upon the string is set;  
Look not beneath his azure veil,  
Though every limb were cased in mail.

Well, both might make a martyr break  
The chain that bound him to the stake;  
And both, with but a single ray,  
Can melt our very hearts away;  
And both, when balanced, hardly seem  
To stir the scales, or rock the beam;  
But that is dearest, all the while,  
That wears for us the sweetest smile.

## MY AUNT

MY aunt! my dear unmarried aunt!  
Long years have o'er her flown;  
Yet still she strains the aching clasp  
That binds her virgin zone;  
I know it hurts her,--though she looks  
As cheerful as she can;  
Her waist is ampler than her life,  
For life is but a span.

My aunt! my poor deluded aunt!  
Her hair is almost gray;  
Why will she train that winter curl  
In such a spring-like way?  
How can she lay her glasses down,  
And say she reads as well,  
When through a double convex lens  
She just makes out to spell?

Her father--grandpapa I forgive  
This erring lip its smiles--  
Vowed she should make the finest girl  
Within a hundred miles;  
He sent her to a stylish school;  
'T was in her thirteenth June;  
And with her, as the rules required,  
"Two towels and a spoon."

They braced my aunt against a board,  
To make her straight and tall;  
They laced her up, they starved her down,  
To make her light and small;  
They pinched her feet, they singed her hair,  
They screwed it up with pins;--  
Oh never mortal suffered more  
In penance for her sins.

So, when my precious aunt was done,  
My grandsire brought her back;  
(By daylight, lest some rabid youth  
Might follow on the track;)  
"Ah!" said my grandsire, as he shook  
Some powder in his pan,  
"What could this lovely creature do  
Against a desperate man!"

Alas! nor chariot, nor barouche,  
Nor bandit cavalcade,  
Tore from the trembling father's arms  
His all-accomplished maid.  
For her how happy had it been  
And Heaven had spared to me  
To see one sad, ungathered rose  
On my ancestral tree.

## REFLECTIONS OF A PROUD PEDESTRIAN

I SAW the curl of his waving lash,  
And the glance of his knowing eye,  
And I knew that he thought he was cutting a dash,  
As his steed went thundering by.

And he may ride in the rattling gig,  
Or flourish the Stanhope gay,  
And dream that he looks exceeding big  
To the people that walk in the way;

But he shall think, when the night is still,  
On the stable-boy's gathering numbers,  
And the ghost of many a veteran bill  
Shall hover around his slumbers;

The ghastly dun shall worry his sleep,  
And constables cluster around him,  
And he shall creep from the wood-hole deep  
Where their spectre eyes have found him!

Ay! gather your reins, and crack your thong,  
And bid your steed go faster;  
He does not know, as he scrambles along,  
That he has a fool for his master;

And hurry away on your lonely ride,  
Nor deign from the mire to save me;  
I will paddle it stoutly at your side  
With the tandem that nature gave me!

## DAILY TRIALS

### BY A SENSITIVE MAN

OH, there are times  
When all this fret and tumult that we hear  
Do seem more stale than to the sexton's ear  
His own dull chimes.

Ding dong! ding dong!  
The world is in a simmer like a sea  
Over a pent volcano,--woe is me  
All the day long!

From crib to shroud!  
Nurse o'er our cradles screameth lullaby,  
And friends in boots tramp round us as we die,  
Snuffling aloud.

At morning's call  
The small-voiced pug-dog welcomes in the sun,  
And flea-bit mongrels, wakening one by one,  
Give answer all.

When evening dim  
Draws round us, then the lonely caterwaul,  
Tart solo, sour duet, and general squall,--  
These are our hymn.

Women, with tongues  
Like polar needles, ever on the jar;  
Men, plugless word-spouts, whose deep fountains are  
Within their lungs.

Children, with drums  
Strapped round them by the fond paternal ass;  
Peripatetics with a blade of grass  
Between their thumbs.

Vagrants, whose arts  
Have caged some devil in their mad machine,  
Which grinding, squeaks, with husky groans between,  
Come out by starts.

Cockneys that kill  
Thin horses of a Sunday,--men, with clams,  
Hoarse as young bisons roaring for their dams  
From hill to hill.

Soldiers, with guns,  
Making a nuisance of the blessed air,  
Child-crying bellmen, children in despair,  
Screeching for buns.

Storms, thunders, waves!  
Howl, crash, and bellow till ye get your fill;  
Ye sometimes rest; men never can be still  
But in their graves.

## EVENING

### BY A TAILOR

DAY hath put on his jacket, and around  
His burning bosom buttoned it with stars.  
Here will I lay me on the velvet grass,  
That is like padding to earth's meagre ribs,  
And hold communion with the things about me.  
Ah me! how lovely is the golden braid  
That binds the skirt of night's descending robe!  
The thin leaves, quivering on their silken threads,  
Do make a music like to rustling satin,  
As the light breezes smooth their downy nap.

Ha! what is this that rises to my touch,  
So like a cushion? Can it be a cabbage?  
It is, it is that deeply injured flower,  
Which boys do flout us with;--but yet I love thee,  
Thou giant rose, wrapped in a green surtout.  
Doubtless in Eden thou didst blush as bright  
As these, thy puny brethren; and thy breath  
Sweetened the fragrance of her spicy air;  
But now thou seemest like a bankrupt beau,  
Stripped of his gaudy hues and essences,  
And growing portly in his sober garments.

Is that a swan that rides upon the water?  
Oh no, it is that other gentle bird,  
Which is the patron of our noble calling.  
I well remember, in my early years,  
When these young hands first closed upon a goose;  
I have a scar upon my thimble finger,  
Which chronicles the hour of young ambition.  
My father was a tailor, and his father,  
And my sire's grandsire, all of them were tailors;  
They had an ancient goose,--it was an heirloom  
From some remoter tailor of our race.  
It happened I did see it on a time  
When none was near, and I did deal with it,  
And it did burn me,--oh, most fearfully!

It is a joy to straighten out one's limbs,  
And leap elastic from the level counter,  
Leaving the petty grievances of earth,  
The breaking thread, the din of clashing shears,  
And all the needles that do wound the spirit,  
For such a pensive hour of soothing silence.  
Kind Nature, shuffling in her loose undress,  
Lays bare her shady bosom;--I can feel  
With all around me;--I can hail the flowers  
That sprig earth's mantle,--and yon quiet bird,  
That rides the stream, is to me as a brother.  
The vulgar know not all the hidden pockets,  
Where Nature stows away her loveliness.  
But this unnatural posture of the legs  
Cramps my extended calves, and I must go  
Where I can coil them in their wonted fashion.

#### THE DORCHESTER GIANT

The "pudding-stone" is a remarkable conglomerate found very abundantly in the towns mentioned, all of which are in the neighborhood of Boston. We used in those primitive days to ask friends to \_ride\_ with us when we meant to take them to \_drive\_ with us.

THERE was a giant in time of old,  
A mighty one was he;  
He had a wife, but she was a scold,

So he kept her shut in his mammoth fold;  
And he had children three.

It happened to be an election day,  
And the giants were choosing a king  
The people were not democrats then,  
They did not talk of the rights of men,  
And all that sort of thing.

Then the giant took his children three,  
And fastened them in the pen;  
The children roared; quoth the giant, "Be still!"  
And Dorchester Heights and Milton Hill  
Rolled back the sound again.

Then he brought them a pudding stuffed with plums,  
As big as the State-House dome;  
Quoth he, "There 's something for you to eat;  
So stop your mouths with your 'lection treat,  
And wait till your dad comes home."

So the giant pulled him a chestnut stout,  
And whittled the boughs away;  
The boys and their mother set up a shout,  
Said he, "You 're in, and you can't get out,  
Bellow as loud as you may."

Off he went, and he growled a tune  
As he strode the fields along;  
'T is said a buffalo fainted away,  
And fell as cold as a lump of clay,  
When he heard the giant's song.

But whether the story 's true or not,  
It is n't for me to show;  
There 's many a thing that 's twice as queer  
In somebody's lectures that we hear,  
And those are true, you know.

What are those lone ones doing now,  
The wife and the children sad?  
Oh, they are in a terrible rout,  
Screaming, and throwing their pudding about,  
Acting as they were mad.

They flung it over to Roxbury hills,  
They flung it over the plain,  
And all over Milton and Dorchester too  
Great lumps of pudding the giants threw;  
They tumbled as thick as rain.

Giant and mammoth have passed away,  
For ages have floated by;  
The suet is hard as a marrow-bone,  
And every plum is turned to a stone,  
But there the puddings lie.

And if, some pleasant afternoon,  
You 'll ask me out to ride,

The whole of the story I will tell,  
And you shall see where the puddings fell,  
And pay for the punch beside.

TO THE PORTRAIT OF "A LADY"  
IN THE ATHENAEUM GALLERY

WELL, Miss, I wonder where you live,  
I wonder what's your name,  
I wonder how you came to be  
In such a stylish frame;  
Perhaps you were a favorite child,  
Perhaps an only one;  
Perhaps your friends were not aware  
You had your portrait done.

Yet you must be a harmless soul;  
I cannot think that Sin  
Would care to throw his loaded dice,  
With such a stake to win;  
I cannot think you would provoke  
The poet's wicked pen,  
Or make young women bite their lips,  
Or ruin fine young men.

Pray, did you ever hear, my love,  
Of boys that go about,  
Who, for a very trifling sum,  
Will snip one's picture out?  
I'm not averse to red and white,  
But all things have their place,  
I think a profile cut in black  
Would suit your style of face!

I love sweet features; I will own  
That I should like myself  
To see my portrait on a wall,  
Or bust upon a shelf;  
But nature sometimes makes one up  
Of such sad odds and ends,  
It really might be quite as well  
Hushed up among one's friends!

THE COMET

THE Comet! He is on his way,  
And singing as he flies;  
The whizzing planets shrink before  
The spectre of the skies;  
Ah! well may regal orbs burn blue,  
And satellites turn pale,



Ten million cubic miles of head,  
Ten billion leagues of tail!

On, on by whistling spheres of light  
He flashes and he flames;  
He turns not to the left nor right,  
He asks them not their names;  
One spurn from his demoniac heel,--  
Away, away they fly,  
Where darkness might be bottled up  
And sold for "Tyrian dye."

And what would happen to the land,  
And how would look the sea,  
If in the bearded devil's path  
Our earth should chance to be?  
Full hot and high the sea would boil,  
Full red the forests gleam;  
Methought I saw and heard it all  
In a dyspeptic dream!

I saw a tutor take his tube  
The Comet's course to spy;  
I heard a scream,--the gathered rays  
Had stewed the tutor's eye;  
I saw a fort,--the soldiers all  
Were armed with goggles green;  
Pop cracked the guns! whiz flew the balls!  
Bang went the magazine!

I saw a poet dip a scroll  
Each moment in a tub,  
I read upon the warping back,  
"The Dream of Beelzebub;"  
He could not see his verses burn,  
Although his brain was fried,  
And ever and anon he bent  
To wet them as they dried.

I saw the scalding pitch roll down  
The crackling, sweating pines,  
And streams of smoke, like water-spouts,  
Burst through the rumbling mines;  
I asked the firemen why they made  
Such noise about the town;  
They answered not,--but all the while  
The brakes went up and down.

I saw a roasting pullet sit  
Upon a baking egg;  
I saw a cripple scorch his hand  
Extinguishing his leg;  
I saw nine geese upon the wing  
Towards the frozen pole,  
And every mother's gosling fell  
Crisped to a crackling coal.

I saw the ox that browsed the grass  
Writhe in the blistering rays,

The herbage in his shrinking jaws  
Was all a fiery blaze;  
I saw huge fishes, boiled to rags,  
Bob through the bubbling brine;  
And thoughts of supper crossed my soul;  
I had been rash at mine.

Strange sights! strange sounds! Oh fearful dream!  
Its memory haunts me still,  
The steaming sea, the crimson glare,  
That wreathed each wooded hill;  
Stranger! if through thy reeling brain  
Such midnight visions sweep,  
Spare, spare, oh, spare thine evening meal,  
And sweet shall be thy sleep!

### THE MUSIC-GRINDERS

THERE are three ways in which men take  
One's money from his purse,  
And very hard it is to tell  
Which of the three is worse;  
But all of them are bad enough  
To make a body curse.

You're riding out some pleasant day,  
And counting up your gains;  
A fellow jumps from out a bush,  
And takes your horse's reins,  
Another hints some words about  
A bullet in your brains.

It's hard to meet such pressing friends  
In such a lonely spot;  
It's very hard to lose your cash,  
But harder to be shot;  
And so you take your wallet out,  
Though you would rather not.

Perhaps you're going out to dine,--  
Some odious creature begs  
You'll hear about the cannon-ball  
That carried off his pegs,  
And says it is a dreadful thing  
For men to lose their legs.

He tells you of his starving wife,  
His children to be fed,  
Poor little, lovely innocents,  
All clamorous for bread,--  
And so you kindly help to put  
A bachelor to bed.

You're sitting on your window-seat,  
Beneath a cloudless moon;

You hear a sound, that seems to wear  
The semblance of a tune,  
As if a broken fife should strive  
To drown a cracked bassoon.

And nearer, nearer still, the tide  
Of music seems to come,  
There's something like a human voice,  
And something like a drum;  
You sit in speechless agony,  
Until your ear is numb.

Poor "home, sweet home" should seem to be  
A very dismal place;  
Your "auld acquaintance" all at once  
Is altered in the face;  
Their discords sting through Burns and Moore,  
Like hedgehogs dressed in lace.

You think they are crusaders, sent  
From some infernal clime,  
To pluck the eyes of Sentiment,  
And dock the tail of Rhyme,  
To crack the voice of Melody,  
And break the legs of Time.

But hark! the air again is still,  
The music all is ground,  
And silence, like a poultice, comes  
To heal the blows of sound;  
It cannot be,--it is,--it is,--  
A hat is going round!

No! Pay the dentist when he leaves  
A fracture in your jaw,  
And pay the owner of the bear  
That stunned you with his paw,  
And buy the lobster that has had  
Your knuckles in his claw;

But if you are a portly man,  
Put on your fiercest frown,  
And talk about a constable  
To turn them out of town;  
Then close your sentence with an oath,  
And shut the window down!

And if you are a slender man,  
Not big enough for that,  
Or, if you cannot make a speech,  
Because you are a flat,  
Go very quietly and drop  
A button in the hat!

THE TREADMILL SONG

THE stars are rolling in the sky,  
The earth rolls on below,  
And we can feel the rattling wheel  
Revolving as we go.  
Then tread away, my gallant boys,  
And make the axle fly;  
Why should not wheels go round about,  
Like planets in the sky?

Wake up, wake up, my duck-legged man,  
And stir your solid pegs  
Arouse, arouse, my gawky friend,  
And shake your spider legs;  
What though you're awkward at the trade,  
There's time enough to learn,--  
So lean upon the rail, my lad,  
And take another turn.

They've built us up a noble wall,  
To keep the vulgar out;  
We've nothing in the world to do  
But just to walk about;  
So faster, now, you middle men,  
And try to beat the ends,--  
It's pleasant work to ramble round  
Among one's honest friends.

Here, tread upon the long man's toes,  
He sha'n't be lazy here,--  
And punch the little fellow's ribs,  
And tweak that lubber's ear,--  
He's lost them both,--don't pull his hair,  
Because he wears a scratch,  
But poke him in the further eye,  
That is n't in the patch.

Hark! fellows, there 's the supper-bell,  
And so our work is done;  
It's pretty sport,--suppose we take  
A round or two for fun!  
If ever they should turn me out,  
When I have better grown,  
Now hang me, but I mean to have  
A treadmill of my own!

## THE SEPTEMBER GALE

This tremendous hurricane occurred on the 23d of September, 1815.  
I remember it well, being then seven years old. A full account of  
it was published, I think, in the records of the American Academy  
of Arts and Sciences. Some of my recollections are given in The  
Seasons, an article to be found in a book of mine entitled Pages  
from an Old Volume of Life.

I'M not a chicken; I have seen  
Full many a chill September,  
And though I was a youngster then,  
That gale I well remember;  
The day before, my kite-string snapped,  
And I, my kite pursuing,  
The wind whisked off my palm-leaf hat;  
For me two storms were brewing!

It came as quarrels sometimes do,  
When married folks get clashing;  
There was a heavy sigh or two,  
Before the fire was flashing,--  
A little stir among the clouds,  
Before they rent asunder,--  
A little rocking of the trees,  
And then came on the thunder.

Lord! how the ponds and rivers boiled!  
They seemed like bursting craters!  
And oaks lay scattered on the ground  
As if they were p'taters;  
And all above was in a howl,  
And all below a clatter,--  
The earth was like a frying-pan,  
Or some such hissing matter.

It chanced to be our washing-day,  
And all our things were drying;  
The storm came roaring through the lines,  
And set them all a flying;  
I saw the shirts and petticoats  
Go riding off like witches;  
I lost, ah! bitterly I wept,--  
I lost my Sunday breeches!

I saw them straddling through the air,  
Alas! too late to win them;  
I saw them chase the clouds, as if  
The devil had been in them;  
They were my darlings and my pride,  
My boyhood's only riches,--  
"Farewell, farewell," I faintly cried,--  
"My breeches! Oh my breeches!"

That night I saw them in my dreams,  
How changed from what I knew them!  
The dews had steeped their faded threads,  
The winds had whistled through them  
I saw the wide and ghastly rents  
Where demon claws had torn them;  
A hole was in their amplest part,  
As if an imp had worn them.

I have had many happy years,  
And tailors kind and clever,  
But those young pantaloons have gone  
Forever and forever!  
And not till fate has cut the last

Of all my earthly stitches,  
This aching heart shall cease to mourn  
My loved, my long-lost breeches!

#### THE HEIGHT OF THE RIDICULOUS

I WROTE some lines once on a time  
In wondrous merry mood,  
And thought, as usual, men would say  
They were exceeding good.

They were so queer, so very queer,  
I laughed as I would die;  
Albeit, in the general way,  
A sober man am I.

I called my servant, and he came;  
How kind it was of him  
To mind a slender man like me,  
He of the mighty limb.

"These to the printer," I exclaimed,  
And, in my humorous way,  
I added, (as a trifling jest,)  
"There'll be the devil to pay."

He took the paper, and I watched,  
And saw him peep within;  
At the first line he read, his face  
Was all upon the grin.

He read the next; the grin grew broad,  
And shot from ear to ear;  
He read the third; a chuckling noise  
I now began to hear.

The fourth; he broke into a roar;  
The fifth; his waistband split;  
The sixth; he burst five buttons off,  
And tumbled in a fit.

Ten days and nights, with sleepless eye,  
I watched that wretched man,  
And since, I never dare to write  
As funny as I can.

#### THE LAST READER

I SOMETIMES sit beneath a tree  
And read my own sweet songs;  
Though naught they may to others be,

Each humble line prolongs  
A tone that might have passed away  
But for that scarce remembered lay.

I keep them like a lock or leaf  
That some dear girl has given;  
Frail record of an hour, as brief  
As sunset clouds in heaven,  
But spreading purple twilight still  
High over memory's shadowed hill.

They lie upon my pathway bleak,  
Those flowers that once ran wild,  
As on a father's careworn cheek  
The ringlets of his child;  
The golden mingling with the gray,  
And stealing half its snows away.

What care I though the dust is spread  
Around these yellow leaves,  
Or o'er them his sarcastic thread  
Oblivion's insect weaves  
Though weeds are tangled on the stream,  
It still reflects my morning's beam.

And therefore love I such as smile  
On these neglected songs,  
Nor deem that flattery's needless wile  
My opening bosom wrongs;  
For who would trample, at my side,  
A few pale buds, my garden's pride?

It may be that my scanty ore  
Long years have washed away,  
And where were golden sands before  
Is naught but common clay;  
Still something sparkles in the sun  
For memory to look back upon.

And when my name no more is heard,  
My lyre no more is known,  
Still let me, like a winter's bird,  
In silence and alone,  
Fold over them the weary wing  
Once flashing through the dews of spring.

Yes, let my fancy fondly wrap  
My youth in its decline,  
And riot in the rosy lap  
Of thoughts that once were mine,  
And give the worm my little store  
When the last reader reads no more!

POETRY:

A METRICAL ESSAY, READ BEFORE THE PHI BETA KAPPA SOCIETY,  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY, AUGUST, 1836

TO CHARLES WENTWORTH UPHAM, THE FOLLOWING METRICAL ESSAY IS  
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

This Academic Poem presents the simple and partial views of a young person trained after the schools of classical English verse as represented by Pope, Goldsmith, and Campbell, with whose lines his memory was early stocked. It will be observed that it deals chiefly with the constructive side of the poet's function. That which makes him a poet is not the power of writing melodious rhymes, it is not the possession of ordinary human sensibilities nor even of both these qualities in connection with each other. I should rather say, if I were now called upon to define it, it is the power of transfiguring the experiences and shows of life into an aspect which comes from his imagination and kindles that of others. Emotion is its stimulus and language furnishes its expression; but these are not all, as some might infer was the doctrine of the poem before the reader.

A common mistake made by young persons who suppose themselves to have the poetical gift is that their own spiritual exaltation finds a true expression in the conventional phrases which are borrowed from the voices of the singers whose inspiration they think they share.

Looking at this poem as an expression of some aspects of the *\_ars poetica\_*, with some passages which I can read even at this mature period of life without blushing for them, it may stand as the most serious representation of my early efforts. Intended as it was for public delivery, many of its paragraphs may betray the fact by their somewhat rhetorical and sonorous character.

SCENES of my youth! awake its slumbering fire!  
Ye winds of Memory, sweep the silent lyre!  
Ray of the past, if yet thou canst appear,  
Break through the clouds of Fancy's waning year;  
Chase from her breast the thin autumnal snow,  
If leaf or blossom still is fresh below!

Long have I wandered; the returning tide  
Brought back an exile to his cradle's side;  
And as my bark her time-worn flag unrolled,  
To greet the land-breeze with its faded fold,  
So, in remembrance of my boyhood's time,  
I lift these ensigns of neglected rhyme;  
Oh, more than blest, that, all my wanderings through,  
My anchor falls where first my pennons flew!

.....

The morning light, which rains its quivering beams  
Wide o'er the plains, the summits, and the streams,  
In one broad blaze expands its golden glow  
On all that answers to its glance below;  
Yet, changed on earth, each far reflected ray  
Braids with fresh hues the shining brow of day;  
Now, clothed in blushes by the painted flowers,  
Tracks on their cheeks the rosy-fingered hours;  
Now, lost in shades, whose dark entangled leaves



Drip at the noontide from their pendent eaves,  
Fades into gloom, or gleams in light again  
From every dew-drop on the jewelled plain.

We, like the leaf, the summit, or the wave,  
Reflect the light our common nature gave,  
But every sunbeam, falling from her throne,  
Wears on our hearts some coloring of our own  
Chilled in the slave, and burning in the free,  
Like the sealed cavern by the sparkling sea;  
Lost, like the lightning in the sullen clod,  
Or shedding radiance, like the smiles of God;  
Pure, pale in Virtue, as the star above,  
Or quivering roseate on the leaves of Love;  
Glaring like noontide, where it glows upon  
Ambition's sands,--the desert in the sun,--  
Or soft suffusing o'er the varied scene  
Life's common coloring,--intellectual green.

Thus Heaven, repeating its material plan,  
Arched over all the rainbow mind of man;  
But he who, blind to universal laws,  
Sees but effects, unconscious of their cause,--  
Believes each image in itself is bright,  
Not robed in drapery of reflected light,--  
Is like the rustic who, amidst his toil,  
Has found some crystal in his meagre soil,  
And, lost in rapture, thinks for him alone  
Earth worked her wonders on the sparkling stone,  
Nor dreams that Nature, with as nice a line,  
Carved countless angles through the boundless mine.

Thus err the many, who, entranced to find  
Unwonted lustre in some clearer mind,  
Believe that Genius sets the laws at naught  
Which chain the pinions of our wildest thought;  
Untaught to measure, with the eye of art,  
The wandering fancy or the wayward heart;  
Who match the little only with the less,  
And gaze in rapture at its slight excess,  
Proud of a pebble, as the brightest gem  
Whose light might crown an emperor's diadem.

And, most of all, the pure ethereal fire  
Which seems to radiate from the poet's lyre  
Is to the world a mystery and a charm,  
An AEGIS wielded on a mortal's arm,  
While Reason turns her dazzled eye away,  
And bows her sceptre to her subject's sway;  
And thus the poet, clothed with godlike state,  
Usurped his Maker's title--to create;  
He, whose thoughts differing not in shape, but dress,  
What others feel more fitly can express,  
Sits like the maniac on his fancied throne,  
Peeps through the bars, and calls the world his own.

There breathes no being but has some pretence  
To that fine instinct called poetic sense

The rudest savage, roaming through the wild;  
The simplest rustic, bending o'er his child;  
The infant, listening to the warbling bird;  
The mother, smiling at its half-formed word;  
The boy uncaged, who tracks the fields at large;  
The girl, turned matron to her babe-like charge;  
The freeman, casting with unpurchased hand  
The vote that shakes the turret of the land;  
The slave, who, slumbering on his rusted chain,  
Dreams of the palm-trees on his burning plain;  
The hot-cheeked reveller, tossing down the wine,  
To join the chorus pealing "Auld lang syne";  
The gentle maid, whose azure eye grows dim,  
While Heaven is listening to her evening hymn;  
The jewelled beauty, when her steps draw near  
The circling dance and dazzling chandelier;  
E'en trembling age, when Spring's renewing air  
Waves the thin ringlets of his silvered hair;--  
All, all are glowing with the inward flame,  
Whose wider halo wreathes the poet's name,  
While, unenbalmed, the silent dreamer dies,  
His memory passing with his smiles and sighs!

If glorious visions, born for all mankind,  
The bright auroras of our twilight mind;  
If fancies, varying as the shapes that lie  
Stained on the windows of the sunset sky;  
If hopes, that beckon with delusive gleams,  
Till the eye dances in the void of dreams;  
If passions, following with the winds that urge  
Earth's wildest wanderer to her farthest verge;--  
If these on all some transient hours bestow  
Of rapture tingling with its hectic glow,  
Then all are poets; and if earth had rolled  
Her myriad centuries, and her doom were told,  
Each moaning billow of her shoreless wave  
Would wail its requiem o'er a poet's grave!

If to embody in a breathing word  
Tones that the spirit trembled when it heard;  
To fix the image all unveiled and warm,  
And carve in language its ethereal form,  
So pure, so perfect, that the lines express  
No meagre shrinking, no unlaced excess;  
To feel that art, in living truth, has taught  
Ourselves, reflected in the sculptured thought;--  
If this alone bestow the right to claim  
The deathless garland and the sacred name,  
Then none are poets save the saints on high,  
Whose harps can murmur all that words deny!

But though to none is granted to reveal  
In perfect semblance all that each may feel,  
As withered flowers recall forgotten love,  
So, warmed to life, our faded passions move  
In every line, where kindling fancy throws  
The gleam of pleasures or the shade of woes.

When, schooled by time, the stately queen of art

Had smoothed the pathways leading to the heart,  
Assumed her measured tread, her solemn tone,  
And round her courts the clouds of fable thrown,  
The wreaths of heaven descended on her shrine,  
And wondering earth proclaimed the Muse divine.  
Yet if her votaries had but dared profane  
The mystic symbols of her sacred reign,  
How had they smiled beneath the veil to find  
What slender threads can chain the mighty mind!

Poets, like painters, their machinery claim,  
And verse bestows the varnish and the frame;  
Our grating English, whose Teutonic jar  
Shakes the racked axle of Art's rattling car,  
Fits like mosaic in the lines that gird  
Fast in its place each many-angled word;  
From Saxon lips Anacreon's numbers glide,  
As once they melted on the Teian tide,  
And, fresh transfused, the Iliad thrills again  
From Albion's cliffs as o'er Achaia's plain  
The proud heroic, with, its pulse-like beat,  
Rings like the cymbals clashing as they meet;  
The sweet Spenserian, gathering as it flows,  
Sweeps gently onward to its dying close,  
Where waves on waves in long succession pour,  
Till the ninth billow melts along the shore;  
The lonely spirit of the mournful lay,  
Which lives immortal as the verse of Gray,  
In sable plumage slowly drifts along,  
On eagle pinion, through the air of song;  
The glittering lyric bounds elastic by,  
With flashing ringlets and exulting eye,  
While every image, in her airy whirl,  
Gleams like a diamond on a dancing girl!

Born with mankind, with man's expanded range  
And varying fates the poet's numbers change;  
Thus in his history may we hope to find  
Some clearer epochs of the poet's mind,  
As from the cradle of its birth we trace,  
Slow wandering forth, the patriarchal race.

I.

When the green earth, beneath the zephyr's wing,  
Wears on her breast the varnished buds of Spring;  
When the loosed current, as its folds uncoil,  
Slides in the channels of the mellowed soil;  
When the young hyacinth returns to seek  
The air and sunshine with her emerald beak;  
When the light snowdrops, starting from their cells,  
Hang each pagoda with its silver bells;  
When the frail willow twines her trailing bow  
With pallid leaves that sweep the soil below;  
When the broad elm, sole empress of the plain,  
Whose circling shadow speaks a century's reign,

Wreathes in the clouds her regal diadem,--  
A forest waving on a single stem;--  
Then mark the poet; though to him unknown  
The quaint-mouthed titles, such as scholars own,  
See how his eye in ecstasy pursues  
The steps of Nature tracked in radiant hues;  
Nay, in thyself, whate'er may be thy fate,  
Pallid with toil or surfeited with state,  
Mark how thy fancies, with the vernal rose,  
Awake, all sweetness, from their long repose;  
Then turn to ponder o'er the classic page,  
Traced with the idyls of a greener age,  
And learn the instinct which arose to warm  
Art's earliest essay and her simplest form.

To themes like these her narrow path confined  
The first-born impulse moving in the mind;  
In vales unshaken by the trumpet's sound,  
Where peaceful Labor tills his fertile ground,  
The silent changes of the rolling years,  
Marked on the soil or dialled on the spheres,  
The crested forests and the colored flowers,  
The dewy grottos and the blushing bowers,--  
These, and their guardians, who, with liquid names,  
Strephons and Chloes, melt in mutual flames,  
Woo the young Muses from their mountain shade,  
To make Arcadias in the lonely glade.

Nor think they visit only with their smiles  
The fabled valleys and Elysian isles;  
He who is wearied of his village plain  
May roam the Edens of the world in vain.  
'T is not the star-crowned cliff, the cataract's flow,  
The softer foliage or the greener glow,  
The lake of sapphire or the spar-hung cave,  
The brighter sunset or the broader wave,  
Can warm his heart whom every wind has blown  
To every shore, forgetful of his own.

Home of our childhood! how affection clings  
And hovers round thee with her seraph wings!  
Dearer thy hills, though clad in autumn brown,  
Than fairest summits which the cedars crown!  
Sweeter the fragrance of thy summer breeze  
Than all Arabia breathes along the seas!  
The stranger's gale wafts home the exile's sigh,  
For the heart's temple is its own blue sky!

Oh happiest they, whose early love unchanged,  
Hopes undissolved, and friendship unestranged,  
Tired of their wanderings, still can deign to see  
Love, hopes, and friendship, centring all in thee!

And thou, my village! as again I tread  
Amidst thy living and above thy dead;  
Though some fair playmates guard with charter fears  
Their cheeks, grown holy with the lapse of years;  
Though with the dust some reverend locks may blend,  
Where life's last mile-stone marks the journey's end;

On every bud the changing year recalls,  
The brightening glance of morning memory falls,  
Still following onward as the months unclothe  
The balmy lilac or the bridal rose;  
And still shall follow, till they sink once more  
Beneath the snow-drifts of the frozen shore,  
As when my bark, long tossing in the gale,  
Furled in her port her tempest-rended sail!

What shall I give thee? Can a simple lay,  
Flung on thy bosom like a girl's bouquet,  
Do more than deck thee for an idle hour,  
Then fall unheeded, fading like the flower?  
Yet, when I trod, with footsteps wild and free,  
The crackling leaves beneath yon linden-tree,  
Panting from play or dripping from the stream,  
How bright the visions of my boyish dream  
Or, modest Charles, along thy broken edge,  
Black with soft ooze and fringed with arrowy sedge,  
As once I wandered in the morning sun,  
With reeking sandal and superfluous gun,  
How oft, as Fancy whispered in the gale,  
Thou wast the Avon of her flattering tale!  
Ye hills, whose foliage, fretted on the skies,  
Prints shadowy arches on their evening dyes,  
How should my song with holiest charm invest  
Each dark ravine and forest-lifting crest!  
How clothe in beauty each familiar scene,  
Till all was classic on my native green!

As the drained fountain, filled with autumn leaves,  
The field swept naked of its garnered sheaves,  
So wastes at noon the promise of our dawn,  
The springs all choking, and the harvest gone.

Yet hear the lay of one whose natal star  
Still seemed the brightest when it shone afar;  
Whose cheek, grown pallid with ungracious toil,  
Glowed in the welcome of his parent soil;  
And ask no garlands sought beyond the tide,  
But take the leaflets gathered at your side.

## II.

But times were changed; the torch of terror came,  
To light the summits with the beacon's flame;  
The streams ran crimson, the tall mountain pines  
Rose a new forest o'er embattled lines;  
The bloodless sickle lent the warrior's steel,  
The harvest bowed beneath his chariot wheel;  
Where late the wood-dove sheltered her repose  
The raven waited for the conflict's close;  
The cuirassed sentry walked his sleepless round  
Where Daphne smiled or Amaryllis frowned;  
Where timid minstrels sung their blushing charms,  
Some wild Tyrtæus called aloud, "To arms!"

When Glory wakes, when fiery spirits leap,  
Roused by her accents from their tranquil sleep,  
The ray that flashes from the soldier's crest  
Lights, as it glances, in the poet's breast;--  
Not in pale dreamers, whose fantastic lay  
Toys with smooth trifles like a child at play,  
But men, who act the passions they inspire,  
Who wave the sabre as they sweep the lyre!

Ye mild enthusiasts, whose pacific frowns  
Are lost like dew-drops caught in burning towns,  
Pluck as ye will the radiant plumes of fame,  
Break Caesar's bust to make yourselves a name;  
But if your country bares the avenger's blade  
For wrongs unpunished or for debts unpaid,  
When the roused nation bids her armies form,  
And screams her eagle through the gathering storm,  
When from your ports the bannered frigate rides,  
Her black bows scowling to the crested tides,  
Your hour has past; in vain your feeble cry  
As the babe's wailings to the thundering sky!

Scourge of mankind! with all the dread array  
That wraps in wrath thy desolating way,  
As the wild tempest wakes the slumbering sea,  
Thou only teachest all that man can be.  
Alike thy tocsin has the power to charm  
The toil-knit sinews of the rustic's arm,  
Or swell the pulses in the poet's veins,  
And bid the nations tremble at his strains.

The city slept beneath the moonbeam's glance,  
Her white walls gleaming through the vines of France,  
And all was hushed, save where the footsteps fell,  
On some high tower, of midnight sentinel.  
But one still watched; no self-encircled woes  
Chased from his lids the angel of repose;  
He watched, he wept, for thoughts of bitter years  
Bowed his dark lashes, wet with burning tears  
His country's sufferings and her children's shame  
Streamed o'er his memory like a forest's flame;  
Each treasured insult, each remembered wrong,  
Rolled through his heart and kindled into song.  
His taper faded; and the morning gales  
Swept through the world the war-song of Marseilles!

Now, while around the smiles of Peace expand,  
And Plenty's wreaths festoon the laughing land;  
While France ships outward her reluctant ore,  
And half our navy basks upon the shore;  
From ruder themes our meek-eyed Muses turn  
To crown with roses their enamelled urn.

If e'er again return those awful days  
Whose clouds were crimsoned with the beacon's blaze,  
Whose grass was trampled by the soldier's heel,  
Whose tides were reddened round the rushing keel,  
God grant some lyre may wake a nobler strain  
To rend the silence of our tented plain!

When Gallia's flag its triple fold displays,  
Her marshalled legions peal the Marseillaise;  
When round the German close the war-clouds dim,  
Far through their shadows floats his battle-hymn;  
When, crowned with joy, the camps' of England ring,  
A thousand voices shout, "God save the King!"  
When victory follows with our eagle's glance,  
Our nation's anthem pipes a country dance!

Some prouder Muse, when comes the hour at last,  
May shake our hillsides with her bugle-blast;  
Not ours the task; but since the lyric dress  
Relieves the statelier with its sprightliness,  
Hear an old song, which some, perchance, have seen  
In stale gazette or cobwebbed magazine.  
There was an hour when patriots dared profane  
The mast that Britain strove to bow in vain;  
And one, who listened to the tale of shame,  
Whose heart still answered to that sacred name,  
Whose eye still followed o'er his country's tides  
Thy glorious flag, our brave Old Ironsides  
From yon lone attic, on a smiling morn,  
Thus mocked the spoilers with his school-boy scorn.

### III.

When florid Peace resumed her golden reign,  
And arts revived, and valleys bloomed again,  
While War still panted on his-broken blade,  
Once more the Muse her heavenly wing essayed.  
Rude was the song: some ballad, stern and wild,  
Lulled the light slumbers of the soldier's child;  
Or young romancer, with his threatening glance  
And fearful fables of his bloodless lance,  
Scared the soft fancy of the clinging girls,  
Whose snowy fingers smoothed his raven curls.  
But when long years the stately form had bent,  
And faithless Memory her illusions lent,  
So vast the outlines of Tradition grew  
That History wondered at the shapes she drew,  
And veiled at length their too ambitious hues  
Beneath the pinions of the Epic Muse.

Far swept her wing; for stormier days had brought  
With darker passions deeper tides of thought.  
The camp's harsh tumult and the conflict's glow,  
The thrill of triumph and the gasp of woe,  
The tender parting and the glad return,  
The festal banquet and the funeral urn,  
And all the drama which at once uprears  
Its spectral shadows through the clash of spears,  
From camp and field to echoing verse transferred,  
Swelled the proud song that listening nations heard.  
Why floats the amaranth in eternal bloom  
O'er Ilium's turrets and Achilles' tomb?  
Why lingers fancy where the sunbeams smile  
On Circe's gardens and Calypso's isle?

Why follows memory to the gate of Troy  
Her plumed defender and his trembling boy?  
Lo! the blind dreamer, kneeling on the sand  
To trace these records with his doubtful hand;  
In fabled tones his own emotion flows,  
And other lips repeat his silent woes;  
In Hector's infant see the babes that shun  
Those deathlike eyes, unconscious of the sun,  
Or in his hero hear himself implore,  
"Give me to see, and Ajax asks no more!"

Thus live undying through the lapse of time  
The solemn legends of the warrior's clime;  
Like Egypt's pyramid or Paestum's fane,  
They stand the heralds of the voiceless plain.  
Yet not like them, for Time, by slow degrees,  
Saps the gray stone and wears the embroidered frieze,  
And Isis sleeps beneath her subject Nile,  
And crumbled Neptune strews his Dorian pile;  
But Art's fair fabric, strengthening as it rears  
Its laurelled columns through the mist of years,  
As the blue arches of the bending skies  
Still gird the torrent, following as it flies,  
Spreads, with the surges bearing on mankind,  
Its starred pavilion o'er the tides of mind!

In vain the patriot asks some lofty lay  
To dress in state our wars of yesterday.  
The classic days, those mothers of romance,  
That roused a nation for a woman's glance;  
The age of mystery, with its hoarded power,  
That girt the tyrant in his storied tower,  
Have passed and faded like a dream of youth,  
And riper eras ask for history's truth.

On other shores, above their mouldering towns,  
In sullen pomp the tall cathedral frowns,  
Pride in its aisles and paupers at the door,  
Which feeds the beggars whom it fleeced of yore.  
Simple and frail, our lowly temples throw  
Their slender shadows on the paths below;  
Scarce steal the winds, that sweep his woodland tracks,  
The larch's perfume from the settler's axe,  
Ere, like a vision of the morning air,  
His slight-framed steeple marks the house of prayer;  
Its planks all reeking and its paint undried,  
Its rafters sprouting on the shady side,  
It sheds the raindrops from its shingled eaves  
Ere its green brothers once have changed their leaves.

Yet Faith's pure hymn, beneath its shelter rude,  
Breathes out as sweetly to the tangled wood  
As where the rays through pictured glories pour  
On marble shaft and tessellated floor;--  
Heaven asks no surplice round the heart that feels,  
And all is holy where devotion kneels.  
Thus on the soil the patriot's knee should bend  
Which holds the dust once living to defend;  
Where'er the hireling shrinks before the free,



Each pass becomes "a new Thermopylae"!  
Where'er the battles of the brave are won,  
There every mountain "looks on Marathon"!

Our fathers live; they guard in glory still  
The grass-grown bastions of the fortified hill;  
Still ring the echoes of the trampled gorge,  
With \_God and Freedom. England and Saint George\_!  
The royal cipher on the captured gun  
Mocks the sharp night-dews and the blistering sun;  
The red-cross banner shades its captor's bust,  
Its folds still loaded with the conflict's dust;  
The drum, suspended by its tattered marge,  
Once rolled and rattled to the Hessian's charge;  
The stars have floated from Britannia's mast,  
The redcoat's trumpets blown the rebel's blast.

Point to the summits where the brave have bled,  
Where every village claims its glorious dead;  
Say, when their bosoms met the bayonet's shock,  
Their only corselet was the rustic frock;  
Say, when they mustered to the gathering horn,  
The titled chieftain curled his lip in scorn,  
Yet, when their leader bade his lines advance,  
No musket wavered in the lion's glance;  
Say, when they fainted in the forced retreat,  
They tracked the snow-drifts with their bleeding feet,  
Yet still their banners, tossing in the blast,  
Bore Ever Ready, faithful to the last,  
Through storm and battle, till they waved again  
On Yorktown's hills and Saratoga's plain.

Then, if so fierce the insatiate patriot's flame,  
Truth looks too pale and history seems too tame,  
Bid him await some new Columbiad's page,  
To gild the tablets of an iron age,  
And save his tears, which yet may fall upon  
Some fabled field, some fancied Washington!

#### IV.

But once again, from their AEolian cave,  
The winds of Genius wandered on the wave.  
Tired of the scenes the timid pencil drew,  
Sick of the notes the sounding clarion blew,  
Sated with heroes who had worn so long  
The shadowy plumage of historic song,  
The new-born poet left the beaten course,  
To track the passions to their living source.

Then rose the Drama;--and the world admired  
Her varied page with deeper thought inspired  
Bound to no clime, for Passion's throb is one  
In Greenland's twilight or in India's sun;  
Born for no age, for all the thoughts that roll  
In the dark vortex of the stormy soul,  
Unchained in song, no freezing years can tame;

God gave them birth, and man is still the same.  
So full on life her magic mirror shone,  
Her sister Arts paid tribute to her throne;  
One reared her temple, one her canvas warmed,  
And Music thrilled, while Eloquence informed.  
The weary rustic left his stinted task  
For smiles and tears, the dagger and the mask;  
The sage, turned scholar, half forgot his lore,  
To be the woman he despised before.  
O'er sense and thought she threw her golden chain,  
And Time, the anarch, spares her deathless reign.

Thus lives Medea, in our tamer age,  
As when her buskin pressed the Grecian stage;  
Not in the cells where frigid learning delves  
In Aldine folios mouldering on their shelves,  
But breathing, burning in the glittering throng,  
Whose thousand bravoës roll untired along,  
Circling and spreading through the gilded halls,  
From London's galleries to San Carlo's walls!

Thus shall he live whose more than mortal name  
Mocks with its ray the pallid torch of Fame;  
So proudly lifted that it seems afar  
No earthly Pharos, but a heavenly star,  
Who, unconfined to Art's diurnal bound,  
Girds her whole zodiac in his flaming round,  
And leads the passions, like the orb that guides,  
From pole to pole, the palpitating tides!

V.

Though round the Muse the robe of song is thrown,  
Think not the poet lives in verse alone.  
Long ere the chisel of the sculptor taught  
The lifeless stone to mock the living thought;  
Long ere the painter bade the canvas glow  
With every line the forms of beauty know;  
Long ere the iris of the Muses threw  
On every leaf its own celestial hue,  
In fable's dress the breath of genius poured,  
And warmed the shapes that later times adored.

Untaught by Science how to forge the keys  
That loose the gates of Nature's mysteries;  
Unschool'd by Faith, who, with her angel tread,  
Leads through the labyrinth with a single thread,  
His fancy, hovering round her guarded tower,  
Rained through its bars like Danaë's golden shower.

He spoke; the sea-nymph answered from her cave  
He called; the naiad left her mountain wave  
He dreamed of beauty; lo, amidst his dream,  
Narcissus, mirrored in the breathless stream;  
And night's chaste empress, in her bridal play,  
Laughed through the foliage where Endymion lay;  
And ocean dimpled, as the languid swell

Kissed the red lip of Cytherea's shell.

Of power,--Bellona swept the crimson field,  
And blue-eyed Pallas shook her Gorgon shield;  
O'er the hushed waves their mightier monarch drove,  
And Ida trembled to the tread of Jove!

So every grace that plastic language knows  
To nameless poets its perfection owes.  
The rough-hewn words to simplest thoughts confined  
Were cut and polished in their nicer mind;  
Caught on their edge, imagination's ray  
Splits into rainbows, shooting far away;--  
From sense to soul, from soul to sense, it flies,  
And through all nature links analogies;  
He who reads right will rarely look upon  
A better poet than his lexicon!

There is a race which cold, ungenial skies  
Breed from decay, as fungous growths arise;  
Though dying fast, yet springing fast again,  
Which still usurps an unsubstantial reign,  
With frames too languid for the charms of sense,  
And minds worn down with action too intense;  
Tired of a world whose joys they never knew,  
Themselves deceived, yet thinking all untrue;  
Scarce men without, and less than girls within,  
Sick of their life before its cares begin;--  
The dull disease, which drains their feeble hearts,  
To life's decay some hectic thrill's imparts,  
And lends a force which, like the maniac's power,  
Pays with blank years the frenzy of an hour.

And this is Genius! Say, does Heaven degrade  
The manly frame, for health, for action made?  
Break down the sinews, rack the brow with pains,  
Blanch the right cheek and drain the purple veins,  
To clothe the mind with more extended sway,  
Thus faintly struggling in degenerate clay?

No! gentle maid, too ready to admire,  
Though false its notes, the pale enthusiast's lyre;  
If this be genius, though its bitter springs  
Glowed like the morn beneath Aurora's wings,  
Seek not the source whose sullen bosom feeds  
But fruitless flowers and dark, envenomed weeds.

But, if so bright the dear illusion seems,  
Thou wouldst be partner of thy poet's dreams,  
And hang in rapture on his bloodless charms,  
Or die, like Raphael, in his angel arms,  
Go and enjoy thy blessed lot,--to share  
In Cowper's gloom or Chatterton's despair!

Not such were they whom, wandering o'er the waves,  
I looked to meet, but only found their graves;  
If friendship's smile, the better part of fame,  
Should lend my song the only wreath I claim,  
Whose voice would greet me with a sweeter tone,

Whose living hand more kindly press my own,  
Than theirs,--could Memory, as her silent tread  
Prints the pale flowers that blossom o'er the dead,  
Those breathless lips, now closed in peace, restore,  
Or wake those pulses hushed to beat no more?

Thou calm, chaste scholar! I can see thee now,  
The first young laurels on thy pallid brow,  
O'er thy slight figure floating lightly down  
In graceful folds the academic gown,  
On thy curled lip the classic lines that taught  
How nice the mind that sculptured them with thought,  
And triumph glistening in the clear blue eye,  
Too bright to live,--but oh, too fair to die!

And thou, dear friend, whom Science still deploras,  
And Love still mourns, on ocean-severed shores,  
Though the bleak forest twice has bowed with snow  
Since thou wast laid its budding leaves below,  
Thine image mingles with my closing strain,  
As when we wandered by the turbid Seine,  
Both blessed with hopes, which revelled, bright and free,  
On all we longed or all we dreamed to be;  
To thee the amaranth and the cypress fell,--  
And I was spared to breathe this last farewell!

But lived there one in unremembered days,  
Or lives there still, who spurns the poet's bays,  
Whose fingers, dewy from Castalia's springs,  
Rest on the lyre, yet scorn to touch the strings?  
Who shakes the senate with the silver tone  
The groves of Pindus might have sighed to own?  
Have such e'er been? Remember Canning's name!  
Do such still live? Let "Alaric's Dirge" proclaim!

Immortal Art! where'er the rounded sky  
Bends o'er the cradle where thy children lie,  
Their home is earth, their herald every tongue  
Whose accents echo to the voice that sung.  
One leap of Ocean scatters on the sand  
The quarried bulwarks of the loosening land;  
One thrill of earth dissolves a century's toil  
Strewed like the leaves that vanish in the soil;  
One hill o'erflows, and cities sink below,  
Their marbles splintering in the lava's glow;  
But one sweet tone, scarce whispered to the air,  
From shore to shore the blasts of ages bear;  
One humble name, which oft, perchance, has borne  
The tyrant's mockery and the courtier's scorn,  
Towers o'er the dust of earth's forgotten graves,  
As once, emerging through the waste of waves,  
The rocky Titan, round whose shattered spear  
Coiled the last whirlpool of the drowning sphere!

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