

# **Narrative and Legendary Poems: Bay of Seven Islands and Others**

## **From Volume I., The Works of Whittier**

**John Greenleaf Whittier**

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From Volume I., The Works of Whittier: Narrative and Legendary Poems  
#11 in our series by John Greenleaf Whittier

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NARRATIVE AND LEGENDARY

POEMS

BY  
JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

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THE BAY OF SEVEN ISLANDS.

The volume in which "The Bay of Seven Islands" was published was dedicated to the late Edwin Percy Whipple, to whom more than to any other person I was indebted for public recognition as one worthy of a place in American literature, at a time when it required a great degree of courage to urge such a claim for a pro-scribed abolitionist. Although younger than I, he had gained the reputation of a brilliant essayist, and was regarded as the highest American authority in criticism. His wit and wisdom enlivened a small literary circle of young men including Thomas Starr King, the eloquent preacher, and Daniel N. Haskell of the Daily Transcript, who gathered about our common friend dames T. Fields at the Old Corner Bookstore. The poem which gave title to the volume I inscribed to my friend and neighbor Harriet Prescott Spofford, whose poems have lent a new interest to our beautiful river-valley.

FROM the green Amesbury hill which bears the name  
Of that half mythic ancestor of mine  
Who trod its slopes two hundred years ago,  
Down the long valley of the Merrimac,  
Midway between me and the river's mouth,  
I see thy home, set like an eagle's nest  
Among Deer Island's immemorial pines,  
Crowning the crag on which the sunset breaks  
Its last red arrow. Many a tale and song,

Which thou hast told or sung, I call to mind,  
Softening with silvery mist the woods and hills,  
The out-thrust headlands and inreaching bays  
Of our northeastern coast-line, trending where  
The Gulf, midsummer, feels the chill blockade  
Of icebergs stranded at its northern gate.

To thee the echoes of the Island Sound  
Answer not vainly, nor in vain the moan  
Of the South Breaker prophesying storm.  
And thou hast listened, like myself, to men  
Sea-periled oft where Anticosti lies  
Like a fell spider in its web of fog,  
Or where the Grand Bank shallows with the wrecks  
Of sunken fishers, and to whom strange isles  
And frost-rimmed bays and trading stations seem  
Familiar as Great Neck and Kettle Cove,  
Nubble and Boon, the common names of home.  
So let me offer thee this lay of mine,  
Simple and homely, lacking much thy play  
Of color and of fancy. If its theme  
And treatment seem to thee befitting youth  
Rather than age, let this be my excuse  
It has beguiled some heavy hours and called  
Some pleasant memories up; and, better still,  
Occasion lent me for a kindly word  
To one who is my neighbor and my friend.  
1883.

. . . . .

The skipper sailed out of the harbor mouth,  
Leaving the apple-bloom of the South  
For the ice of the Eastern seas,  
In his fishing schooner Breeze.

Handsome and brave and young was he,  
And the maids of Newbury sighed to see  
His lessening white sail fall  
Under the sea's blue wall.

Through the Northern Gulf and the misty screen  
Of the isles of Mingan and Madeleine,  
St. Paul's and Blanc Sablon,  
The little Breeze sailed on,

Backward and forward, along the shore  
Of lorn and desolate Labrador,  
And found at last her way  
To the Seven Islands Bay.

The little hamlet, nestling below  
Great hills white with lingering snow,  
With its tin-roofed chapel stood  
Half hid in the dwarf spruce wood;

Green-turfed, flower-sown, the last outpost  
Of summer upon the dreary coast,  
With its gardens small and spare,

Sad in the frosty air.

Hard by where the skipper's schooner lay,  
A fisherman's cottage looked away  
Over isle and bay, and behind  
On mountains dim-defined.

And there twin sisters, fair and young,  
Laughed with their stranger guest, and sung  
In their native tongue the lays  
Of the old Provencal days.

Alike were they, save the faint outline  
Of a scar on Suzette's forehead fine;  
And both, it so befell,  
Loved the heretic stranger well.

Both were pleasant to look upon,  
But the heart of the skipper clave to one;  
Though less by his eye than heart  
He knew the twain apart.

Despite of alien race and creed,  
Well did his wooing of Marguerite speed;  
And the mother's wrath was vain  
As the sister's jealous pain.

The shrill-tongued mistress her house forbade,  
And solemn warning was sternly said  
By the black-robed priest, whose word  
As law the hamlet heard.

But half by voice and half by signs  
The skipper said, "A warm sun shines  
On the green-banked Merrimac;  
Wait, watch, till I come back.

"And when you see, from my mast head,  
The signal fly of a kerchief red,  
My boat on the shore shall wait;  
Come, when the night is late."

Ah! weighed with childhood's haunts and friends,  
And all that the home sky overbends,  
Did ever young love fail  
To turn the trembling scale?

Under the night, on the wet sea sands,  
Slowly unclasped their plighted hands  
One to the cottage hearth,  
And one to his sailor's berth.

What was it the parting lovers heard?  
Nor leaf, nor ripple, nor wing of bird,  
But a listener's stealthy tread  
On the rock-moss, crisp and dead.

He weighed his anchor, and fished once more  
By the black coast-line of Labrador;

And by love and the north wind driven,  
Sailed back to the Islands Seven.

In the sunset's glow the sisters twain  
Saw the Breeze come sailing in again;  
Said Suzette, "Mother dear,  
The heretic's sail is here."

"Go, Marguerite, to your room, and hide;  
Your door shall be bolted!" the mother cried:  
While Suzette, ill at ease,  
Watched the red sign of the Breeze.

At midnight, down to the waiting skiff  
She stole in the shadow of the cliff;  
And out of the Bay's mouth ran  
The schooner with maid and man.

And all night long, on a restless bed,  
Her prayers to the Virgin Marguerite said  
And thought of her lover's pain  
Waiting for her in vain.

Did he pace the sands? Did he pause to hear  
The sound of her light step drawing near?  
And, as the slow hours passed,  
Would he doubt her faith at last?

But when she saw through the misty pane,  
The morning break on a sea of rain,  
Could even her love avail  
To follow his vanished sail?

Meantime the Breeze, with favoring wind,  
Left the rugged Moisis hills behind,  
And heard from an unseen shore  
The falls of Manitou roar.

On the morrow's morn, in the thick, gray weather  
They sat on the reeling deck together,  
Lover and counterfeit,  
Of hapless Marguerite.

With a lover's hand, from her forehead fair  
He smoothed away her jet-black hair.  
What was it his fond eyes met?  
The scar of the false Suzette!

Fiercely he shouted: "Bear away  
East by north for Seven Isles Bay!"  
The maiden wept and prayed,  
But the ship her helm obeyed.

Once more the Bay of the Isles they found  
They heard the bell of the chapel sound,  
And the chant of the dying sung  
In the harsh, wild Indian tongue.

A feeling of mystery, change, and awe

Was in all they heard and all they saw  
Spell-bound the hamlet lay  
In the hush of its lonely bay.

And when they came to the cottage door,  
The mother rose up from her weeping sore,  
And with angry gestures met  
The scared look of Suzette.

"Here is your daughter," the skipper said;  
"Give me the one I love instead."  
But the woman sternly spake;  
"Go, see if the dead will wake!"

He looked. Her sweet face still and white  
And strange in the noonday taper light,  
She lay on her little bed,  
With the cross at her feet and head.

In a passion of grief the strong man bent  
Down to her face, and, kissing it, went  
Back to the waiting Breeze,  
Back to the mournful seas.

Never again to the Merrimac  
And Newbury's homes that bark came back.  
Whether her fate she met  
On the shores of Carraquette,

Miscou, or Tracadie, who can say?  
But even yet at Seven Isles Bay  
Is told the ghostly tale  
Of a weird, unspoken sail,

In the pale, sad light of the Northern day  
Seen by the blanketed Montagnais,  
Or squaw, in her small kyack,  
Crossing the spectre's track.

On the deck a maiden wrings her hands;  
Her likeness kneels on the gray coast sands;  
One in her wild despair,  
And one in the trance of prayer.

She flits before no earthly blast,  
The red sign fluttering from her mast,  
Over the solemn seas,  
The ghost of the schooner Breeze!  
1882.

#### THE WISHING BRIDGE.

AMONG the legends sung or said  
Along our rocky shore,  
The Wishing Bridge of Marblehead  
May well be sung once more.

An hundred years ago (so ran  
The old-time story) all  
Good wishes said above its span  
Would, soon or late, befall.

If pure and earnest, never failed  
The prayers of man or maid  
For him who on the deep sea sailed,  
For her at home who stayed.

Once thither came two girls from school,  
And wished in childish glee  
And one would be a queen and rule,  
And one the world would see.

Time passed; with change of hopes and fears,  
And in the self-same place,  
Two women, gray with middle years,  
Stood, wondering, face to face.

With wakened memories, as they met,  
They queried what had been  
"A poor man's wife am I, and yet,"  
Said one, "I am a queen.

"My realm a little homestead is,  
Where, lacking crown and throne,  
I rule by loving services  
And patient toil alone."

The other said: "The great world lies  
Beyond me as it lay;  
O'er love's and duty's boundaries  
My feet may never stray.

"I see but common sights of home,  
Its common sounds I hear,  
My widowed mother's sick-bed room  
Sufficeth for my sphere.

"I read to her some pleasant page  
Of travel far and wide,  
And in a dreamy pilgrimage  
We wander side by side.

"And when, at last, she falls asleep,  
My book becomes to me  
A magic glass: my watch I keep,  
But all the world I see.

"A farm-wife queen your place you fill,  
While fancy's privilege  
Is mine to walk the earth at will,  
Thanks to the Wishing Bridge."

"Nay, leave the legend for the truth,"  
The other cried, "and say  
God gives the wishes of our youth,

But in His own best way!"  
1882.

#### HOW THE WOMEN WENT FROM DOVER.

The following is a copy of the warrant issued by Major Waldron, of Dover, in 1662. The Quakers, as was their wont, prophesied against him, and saw, as they supposed, the fulfilment of their prophecy when, many years after, he was killed by the Indians.

To the constables of Dover, Hampton, Salisbury, Newbury, Rowley, Ipswich, Wenham, Lynn, Boston, Roxbury, Dedham, and until these vagabond Quakers are carried out of this jurisdiction. You, and every one of you, are required, in the King's Majesty's name, to take these vagabond Quakers, Anne Colman, Mary Tomkins, and Alice Ambrose, and make them fast to the cart's tail, and driving the cart through your several towns, to whip them upon their naked backs not exceeding ten stripes apiece on each of them, in each town; and so to convey them from constable to constable till they are out of this jurisdiction, as you will answer it at your peril; and this shall be your warrant.

RICHARD WALDRON.

Dated at Dover, December 22, 1662.

This warrant was executed only in Dover and Hampton. At Salisbury the constable refused to obey it. He was sustained by the town's people, who were under the influence of Major Robert Pike, the leading man in the lower valley of the Merrimac, who stood far in advance of his time, as an advocate of religious freedom, and an opponent of ecclesiastical authority. He had the moral courage to address an able and manly letter to the court at Salem, remonstrating against the witchcraft trials.

THE tossing spray of Cocheco's fall  
Hardened to ice on its rocky wall,  
As through Dover town in the chill, gray dawn,  
Three women passed, at the cart-tail drawn!

Bared to the waist, for the north wind's grip  
And keener sting of the constable's whip,  
The blood that followed each hissing blow  
Froze as it sprinkled the winter snow.

Priest and ruler, boy and maid  
Followed the dismal cavalcade;  
And from door and window, open thrown,  
Looked and wondered gaffer and crone.

"God is our witness," the victims cried,  
We suffer for Him who for all men died;  
The wrong ye do has been done before,  
We bear the stripes that the Master bore!

And thou, O Richard Waldron, for whom  
We hear the feet of a coming doom,  
On thy cruel heart and thy hand of wrong

Vengeance is sure, though it tarry long.

"In the light of the Lord, a flame we see  
Climb and kindle a proud roof-tree;  
And beneath it an old man lying dead,  
With stains of blood on his hoary head."

"Smite, Goodman Hate-Evil!--harder still!"  
The magistrate cried, "lay on with a will!  
Drive out of their bodies the Father of Lies,  
Who through them preaches and prophecies!"

So into the forest they held their way,  
By winding river and frost-rimmed bay,  
Over wind-swept hills that felt the beat  
Of the winter sea at their icy feet.

The Indian hunter, searching his traps,  
Peered stealthily through the forest gaps;  
And the outlying settler shook his head,--  
"They're witches going to jail," he said.

At last a meeting-house came in view;  
A blast on his horn the constable blew;  
And the boys of Hampton cried up and down,  
"The Quakers have come!" to the wondering town.

From barn and woodpile the goodman came;  
The goodwife quitted her quilting frame,  
With her child at her breast; and, hobbling slow,  
The grandam followed to see the show.

Once more the torturing whip was swung,  
Once more keen lashes the bare flesh stung.  
"Oh, spare! they are bleeding!" a little maid cried,  
And covered her face the sight to hide.

A murmur ran round the crowd: "Good folks,"  
Quoth the constable, busy counting the strokes,  
"No pity to wretches like these is due,  
They have beaten the gospel black and blue!"

Then a pallid woman, in wild-eyed fear,  
With her wooden noggin of milk drew near.  
"Drink, poor hearts!" a rude hand smote  
Her draught away from a parching throat.

"Take heed," one whispered, "they'll take your cow  
For fines, as they took your horse and plough,  
And the bed from under you." "Even so,"

She said; "they are cruel as death, I know."

Then on they passed, in the waning day,  
Through Seabrook woods, a weariful way;  
By great salt meadows and sand-hills bare,  
And glimpses of blue sea here and there.

By the meeting-house in Salisbury town,

The sufferers stood, in the red sundown,  
Bare for the lash! O pitying Night,  
Drop swift thy curtain and hide the sight.

With shame in his eye and wrath on his lip  
The Salisbury constable dropped his whip.  
"This warrant means murder foul and red;  
Cursed is he who serves it," he said.

"Show me the order, and meanwhile strike  
A blow at your peril!" said Justice Pike.  
Of all the rulers the land possessed,  
Wisest and boldest was he and best.

He scoffed at witchcraft; the priest he met  
As man meets man; his feet he set  
Beyond his dark age, standing upright,  
Soul-free, with his face to the morning light.

He read the warrant: "These convey  
From our precincts; at every town on the way  
Give each ten lashes." "God judge the brute!  
I tread his order under my foot!

"Cut loose these poor ones and let them go;  
Come what will of it, all men shall know  
No warrant is good, though backed by the Crown,  
For whipping women in Salisbury town!"

The hearts of the villagers, half released  
From creed of terror and rule of priest,  
By a primal instinct owned the right  
Of human pity in law's despite.

For ruth and chivalry only slept,  
His Saxon manhood the yeoman kept;  
Quicker or slower, the same blood ran  
In the Cavalier and the Puritan.

The Quakers sank on their knees in praise  
And thanks. A last, low sunset blaze  
Flashed out from under a cloud, and shed  
A golden glory on each bowed head.

The tale is one of an evil time,  
When souls were fettered and thought was crime,  
And heresy's whisper above its breath  
Meant shameful scourging and bonds and death!

What marvel, that hunted and sorely tried,  
Even woman rebuked and prophesied,  
And soft words rarely answered back  
The grim persuasion of whip and rack.

If her cry from the whipping-post and jail  
Pierced sharp as the Kenite's driven nail,  
O woman, at ease in these happier days,  
Forbear to judge of thy sister's ways!

How much thy beautiful life may owe  
To her faith and courage thou canst not know,  
Nor how from the paths of thy calm retreat  
She smoothed the thorns with her bleeding feet.  
1883.

#### SAINT GREGORY'S GUEST.

A TALE for Roman guides to tell  
To careless, sight-worn travellers still,  
Who pause beside the narrow cell  
Of Gregory on the Caelian Hill.

One day before the monk's door came  
A beggar, stretching empty palms,  
Fainting and fast-sick, in the name  
Of the Most Holy asking alms.

And the monk answered, "All I have  
In this poor cell of mine I give,  
The silver cup my mother gave;  
In Christ's name take thou it, and live."

Years passed; and, called at last to bear  
The pastoral crook and keys of Rome,  
The poor monk, in Saint Peter's chair,  
Sat the crowned lord of Christendom.

"Prepare a feast," Saint Gregory cried,  
"And let twelve beggars sit thereat."  
The beggars came, and one beside,  
An unknown stranger, with them sat.

"I asked thee not," the Pontiff spake,  
"O stranger; but if need be thine,  
I bid thee welcome, for the sake  
Of Him who is thy Lord and mine."

A grave, calm face the stranger raised,  
Like His who on Gennesaret trod,  
Or His on whom the Chaldeans gazed,  
Whose form was as the Son of God.

"Know'st thou," he said, "thy gift of old?"  
And in the hand he lifted up  
The Pontiff marvelled to behold  
Once more his mother's silver cup.

"Thy prayers and alms have risen, and bloom  
Sweetly among the flowers of heaven.  
I am The Wonderful, through whom  
Whate'er thou askest shall be given."

He spake and vanished. Gregory fell  
With his twelve guests in mute accord  
Prone on their faces, knowing well

Their eyes of flesh had seen the Lord.

The old-time legend is not vain;  
Nor vain thy art, Verona's Paul,  
Telling it o'er and o'er again  
On gray Vicenza's frescoed wall.

Still wheresoever pity shares  
Its bread with sorrow, want, and sin,  
And love the beggar's feast prepares,  
The uninvited Guest comes in.

Unheard, because our ears are dull,  
Unseen, because our eyes are dim,  
He walks our earth, The Wonderful,  
And all good deeds are done to Him.  
1883.

#### BIRCHBROOK MILL.

A NOTELESS stream, the Birchbrook runs  
Beneath its leaning trees;  
That low, soft ripple is its own,  
That dull roar is the sea's.

Of human signs it sees alone  
The distant church spire's tip,  
And, ghost-like, on a blank of gray,  
The white sail of a ship.

No more a toiler at the wheel,  
It wanders at its will;  
Nor dam nor pond is left to tell  
Where once was Birchbrook mill.

The timbers of that mill have fed  
Long since a farmer's fires;  
His doorsteps are the stones that ground  
The harvest of his sires.

Man trespassed here; but Nature lost  
No right of her domain;  
She waited, and she brought the old  
Wild beauty back again.

By day the sunlight through the leaves  
Falls on its moist, green sod,  
And wakes the violet bloom of spring  
And autumn's golden-rod.

Its birches whisper to the wind,  
The swallow dips her wings  
In the cool spray, and on its banks  
The gray song-sparrow sings.

But from it, when the dark night falls,

The school-girl shrinks with dread;  
The farmer, home-bound from his fields,  
Goes by with quickened tread.

They dare not pause to hear the grind  
Of shadowy stone on stone;  
The plashing of a water-wheel  
Where wheel there now is none.

Has not a cry of pain been heard  
Above the clattering mill?  
The pawing of an unseen horse,  
Who waits his mistress still?

Yet never to the listener's eye  
Has sight confirmed the sound;  
A wavering birch line marks alone  
The vacant pasture ground.

No ghostly arms fling up to heaven  
The agony of prayer;  
No spectral steed impatient shakes  
His white mane on the air.

The meaning of that common dread  
No tongue has fitly told;  
The secret of the dark surmise  
The brook and birches hold.

What nameless horror of the past  
Broods here forevermore?  
What ghost his unforgiven sin  
Is grinding o'er and o'er?

Does, then, immortal memory play  
The actor's tragic part,  
Rehearsals of a mortal life  
And unveiled human heart?

God's pity spare a guilty soul  
That drama of its ill,  
And let the scenic curtain fall  
On Birchbrook's haunted mill  
1884.

#### THE TWO ELIZABETHS.

Read at the unveiling of the bust of Elizabeth Fry at the Friends'  
School, Providence, R. I.

A. D. 1209.

AMIDST Thuringia's wooded hills she dwelt,  
A high-born princess, servant of the poor,  
Sweetening with gracious words the food she dealt  
To starving throngs at Wartburg's blazoned door.

A blinded zealot held her soul in chains,  
Cramped the sweet nature that he could not kill,  
Scarred her fair body with his penance-pains,  
And gauged her conscience by his narrow will.

God gave her gifts of beauty and of grace,  
With fast and vigil she denied them all;  
Unquestioning, with sad, pathetic face,  
She followed meekly at her stern guide's call.

So drooped and died her home-blown rose of bliss  
In the chill rigor of a discipline  
That turned her fond lips from her children's kiss,  
And made her joy of motherhood a sin.

To their sad level by compassion led,  
One with the low and vile herself she made,  
While thankless misery mocked the hand that fed,  
And laughed to scorn her piteous masquerade.

But still, with patience that outwearied hate,  
She gave her all while yet she had to give;  
And then her empty hands, importunate,  
In prayer she lifted that the poor might live.

Sore pressed by grief, and wrongs more hard to bear,  
And dwarfed and stifled by a harsh control,  
She kept life fragrant with good deeds and prayer,  
And fresh and pure the white flower of her soul.

Death found her busy at her task: one word  
Alone she uttered as she paused to die,  
"Silence!"--then listened even as one who heard  
With song and wing the angels drawing nigh!

Now Fra Angelico's roses fill her hands,  
And, on Murillo's canvas, Want and Pain  
Kneel at her feet. Her marble image stands  
Worshipped and crowned in Marburg's holy fane.

Yea, wheresoe'er her Church its cross uprears,  
Wide as the world her story still is told;  
In manhood's reverence, woman's prayers and tears,  
She lives again whose grave is centuries old.

And still, despite the weakness or the blame  
Of blind submission to the blind, she hath  
A tender place in hearts of every name,  
And more than Rome owns Saint Elizabeth!

A. D. 1780.

Slow ages passed: and lo! another came,  
An English matron, in whose simple faith  
Nor priestly rule nor ritual had claim,  
A plain, uncanonized Elizabeth.

No sackcloth robe, nor ashen-sprinkled hair,  
Nor wasting fast, nor scourge, nor vigil long,  
Marred her calm presence. God had made her fair,  
And she could do His goodly work no wrong.

Their yoke is easy and their burden light  
Whose sole confessor is the Christ of God;  
Her quiet trust and faith transcending sight  
Smoothed to her feet the difficult paths she trod.

And there she walked, as duty bade her go,  
Safe and unsullied as a cloistered nun,  
Shamed with her plainness Fashion's gaudy show,  
And overcame the world she did not shun.

In Earlham's bowers, in Plashet's liberal hall,  
In the great city's restless crowd and din,  
Her ear was open to the Master's call,  
And knew the summons of His voice within.

Tender as mother, beautiful as wife,  
Amidst the throngs of prisoned crime she stood  
In modest raiment faultless as her life,  
The type of England's worthiest womanhood.

To melt the hearts that harshness turned to stone  
The sweet persuasion of her lips sufficed,  
And guilt, which only hate and fear had known,  
Saw in her own the pitying love of Christ.

So wheresoe'er the guiding Spirit went  
She followed, finding every prison cell  
It opened for her sacred as a tent  
Pitched by Gennesaret or by Jacob's well.

And Pride and Fashion felt her strong appeal,  
And priest and ruler marvelled as they saw  
How hand in hand went wisdom with her zeal,  
And woman's pity kept the bounds of law.

She rests in God's peace; but her memory stirs  
The air of earth as with an angel's wings,  
And warms and moves the hearts of men like hers,  
The sainted daughter of Hungarian kings.

United now, the Briton and the Hun,  
Each, in her own time, faithful unto death,  
Live sister souls! in name and spirit one,  
Thuringia's saint and our Elizabeth!  
1885.

#### REQUITAL.

As Islam's Prophet, when his last day drew  
Nigh to its close, besought all men to say  
Whom he had wronged, to whom he then should pay

A debt forgotten, or for pardon sue,  
And, through the silence of his weeping friends,  
A strange voice cried: "Thou owest me a debt,"  
"Allah be praised!" he answered. "Even yet  
He gives me power to make to thee amends.  
O friend! I thank thee for thy timely word."  
So runs the tale. Its lesson all may heed,  
For all have sinned in thought, or word, or deed,  
Or, like the Prophet, through neglect have erred.  
All need forgiveness, all have debts to pay  
Ere the night cometh, while it still is day.  
1885.

## THE HOMESTEAD.

AGAINST the wooded hills it stands,  
Ghost of a dead home, staring through  
Its broken lights on wasted lands  
Where old-time harvests grew.

Unploughed, unsown, by scythe unshorn,  
The poor, forsaken farm-fields lie,  
Once rich and rife with golden corn  
And pale green breadths of rye.

Of healthful herb and flower bereft,  
The garden plot no housewife keeps;  
Through weeds and tangle only left,  
The snake, its tenant, creeps.

A lilac spray, still blossom-clad,  
Sways slow before the empty rooms;  
Beside the roofless porch a sad  
Pathetic red rose blooms.

His track, in mould and dust of drouth,  
On floor and hearth the squirrel leaves,  
And in the fireless chimney's mouth  
His web the spider weaves.

The leaning barn, about to fall,  
Resounds no more on husking eves;  
No cattle low in yard or stall,  
No thresher beats his sheaves.

So sad, so drear! It seems almost  
Some haunting Presence makes its sign;  
That down yon shadowy lane some ghost  
Might drive his spectral kine!

O home so desolate and lorn!  
Did all thy memories die with thee?  
Were any wed, were any born,  
Beneath this low roof-tree?

Whose axe the wall of forest broke,

And let the waiting sunshine through?  
What goodwife sent the earliest smoke  
Up the great chimney flue?

Did rustic lovers hither come?  
Did maidens, swaying back and forth  
In rhythmic grace, at wheel and loom,  
Make light their toil with mirth?

Did child feet patter on the stair?  
Did boyhood frolic in the snow?  
Did gray age, in her elbow chair,  
Knit, rocking to and fro?

The murmuring brook, the sighing breeze,  
The pine's slow whisper, cannot tell;  
Low mounds beneath the hemlock-trees  
Keep the home secrets well.

Cease, mother-land, to fondly boast  
Of sons far off who strive and thrive,  
Forgetful that each swarming host  
Must leave an emptier hive.

O wanderers from ancestral soil,  
Leave noisome mill and chaffering store:  
Gird up your loins for sturdier toil,  
And build the home once more!

Come back to bayberry-scented slopes,  
And fragrant fern, and ground-nut vine;  
Breathe airs blown over holt and copse  
Sweet with black birch and pine.

What matter if the gains are small  
That life's essential wants supply?  
Your homestead's title gives you all  
That idle wealth can buy.

All that the many-dollared crave,  
The brick-walled slaves of 'Change and mart,  
Lawns, trees, fresh air, and flowers, you have,  
More dear for lack of art.

Your own sole masters, freedom-willed,  
With none to bid you go or stay,  
Till the old fields your fathers tilled,  
As manly men as they!

With skill that spares your toiling hands,  
And chemic aid that science brings,  
Reclaim the waste and outworn lands,  
And reign thereon as kings  
1886.

HOW THE ROBIN CAME.

## AN ALGONQUIN LEGEND.

HAPPY young friends, sit by me,  
Under May's blown apple-tree,  
While these home-birds in and out  
Through the blossoms flit about.  
Hear a story, strange and old,  
By the wild red Indians told,  
How the robin came to be:

Once a great chief left his son,--  
Well-beloved, his only one,--  
When the boy was well-nigh grown,  
In the trial-lodge alone.  
Left for tortures long and slow  
Youths like him must undergo,  
Who their pride of manhood test,  
Lacking water, food, and rest.

Seven days the fast he kept,  
Seven nights he never slept.  
Then the young boy, wrung with pain,  
Weak from nature's overstrain,  
Faltering, moaned a low complaint  
"Spare me, father, for I faint!"  
But the chieftain, haughty-eyed,  
Hid his pity in his pride.  
"You shall be a hunter good,  
Knowing never lack of food;  
You shall be a warrior great,  
Wise as fox and strong as bear;  
Many scalps your belt shall wear,  
If with patient heart you wait  
Bravely till your task is done.  
Better you should starving die  
Than that boy and squaw should cry  
Shame upon your father's son!"

When next morn the sun's first rays  
Glistened on the hemlock sprays,  
Straight that lodge the old chief sought,  
And boiled saimp and moose meat brought.  
"Rise and eat, my son!" he said.  
Lo, he found the poor boy dead!

As with grief his grave they made,  
And his bow beside him laid,  
Pipe, and knife, and wampum-braid,  
On the lodge-top overhead,  
Preening smooth its breast of red  
And the brown coat that it wore,  
Sat a bird, unknown before.  
And as if with human tongue,  
"Mourn me not," it said, or sung;  
"I, a bird, am still your son,  
Happier than if hunter fleet,  
Or a brave, before your feet  
Laying scalps in battle won.

Friend of man, my song shall cheer  
Lodge and corn-land; hovering near,  
To each wigwam I shall bring  
Tidings of the coming spring;  
Every child my voice shall know  
In the moon of melting snow,  
When the maple's red bud swells,  
And the wind-flower lifts its bells.  
As their fond companion  
Men shall henceforth own your son,  
And my song shall testify  
That of human kin am I."

Thus the Indian legend saith  
How, at first, the robin came  
With a sweeter life from death,  
Bird for boy, and still the same.  
If my young friends doubt that this  
Is the robin's genesis,  
Not in vain is still the myth  
If a truth be found therewith  
Unto gentleness belong  
Gifts unknown to pride and wrong;  
Happier far than hate is praise,--  
He who sings than he who slays.

#### BANISHED FROM MASSACHUSETTS.

1660.

On a painting by E. A. Abbey. The General Court of Massachusetts enacted Oct. 19, 1658, that "any person or persons of the cursed sect of Quakers" should, on conviction of the same, be banished, on pain of death, from the jurisdiction of the common-wealth.

OVER the threshold of his pleasant home  
Set in green clearings passed the exiled Friend,  
In simple trust, misdoubting not the end.  
"Dear heart of mine!" he said, "the time has come  
To trust the Lord for shelter." One long gaze  
The goodwife turned on each familiar thing,--  
The lowing kine, the orchard blossoming,  
The open door that showed the hearth-fire's blaze,--  
And calmly answered, "Yes, He will provide."  
Silent and slow they crossed the homestead's bound,  
Lingering the longest by their child's grave-mound.  
"Move on, or stay and hang!" the sheriff cried.  
They left behind them more than home or land,  
And set sad faces to an alien strand.

Safer with winds and waves than human wrath,  
With ravening wolves than those whose zeal for God  
Was cruelty to man, the exiles trod  
Drear leagues of forest without guide or path,  
Or launching frail boats on the uncharted sea,

Round storm-vexed capes, whose teeth of granite ground  
The waves to foam, their perilous way they wound,  
Enduring all things so their souls were free.  
Oh, true confessors, shaming them who did  
Anew the wrong their Pilgrim Fathers bore  
For you the Mayflower spread her sail once more,  
Freighted with souls, to all that duty bid  
Faithful as they who sought an unknown land,  
O'er wintry seas, from Holland's Hook of Sand!

So from his lost home to the darkening main,  
Bodeful of storm, stout Macy held his way,  
And, when the green shore blended with the gray,  
His poor wife moaned: "Let us turn back again."  
"Nay, woman, weak of faith, kneel down," said he,  
And say thy prayers: the Lord himself will steer;  
And led by Him, nor man nor devils I fear!  
So the gray Southwicks, from a rainy sea,  
Saw, far and faint, the loom of land, and gave  
With feeble voices thanks for friendly ground  
Whereon to rest their weary feet, and found  
A peaceful death-bed and a quiet grave  
Where, ocean-walled, and wiser than his age,  
The lord of Shelter scorned the bigot's rage.  
Aquidneck's isle, Nantucket's lonely shores,  
And Indian-haunted Narragansett saw  
The way-worn travellers round their camp-fire draw,  
Or heard the plashing of their weary oars.  
And every place whereon they rested grew  
Happier for pure and gracious womanhood,  
And men whose names for stainless honor stood,  
Founders of States and rulers wise and true.  
The Muse of history yet shall make amends  
To those who freedom, peace, and justice taught,  
Beyond their dark age led the van of thought,  
And left unforfeited the name of Friends.  
O mother State, how foiled was thy design  
The gain was theirs, the loss alone was thine.

#### THE BROWN DWARF OF RUGEN.

The hint of this ballad is found in Arndt's Miirchen, Berlin, 1816. The ballad appeared first in St. Nicholas, whose young readers were advised, while smiling at the absurd superstition, to remember that bad companionship and evil habits, desires, and passions are more to be dreaded now than the Elves and Trolls who frightened the children of past ages.

THE pleasant isle of Rugen looks the Baltic water o'er,  
To the silver-sanded beaches of the Pomeranian  
shore;

And in the town of Rambin a little boy and maid  
Plucked the meadow-flowers together and in the  
sea-surf played.

Alike were they in beauty if not in their degree  
He was the Amptman's first-born, the miller's  
child was she.

Now of old the isle of Rugen was full of Dwarfs  
and Trolls,  
The brown-faced little Earth-men, the people without  
souls;

And for every man and woman in Rugen's island  
found  
Walking in air and sunshine, a Troll was  
underground.

It chanced the little maiden, one morning, strolled  
away  
Among the haunted Nine Hills, where the elves  
and goblins play.

That day, in barley-fields below, the harvesters had  
known  
Of evil voices in the air, and heard the small horns  
blown.

She came not back; the search for her in field and  
wood was vain  
They cried her east, they cried her west, but she  
came not again.

"She's down among the Brown Dwarfs," said the  
dream-wives wise and old,  
And prayers were made, and masses said, and  
Rambin's church bell tolled.

Five years her father mourned her; and then John  
Deitrich said  
"I will find my little playmate, be she alive or  
dead."

He watched among the Nine Hills, he heard the  
Brown Dwarfs sing,  
And saw them dance by moonlight merrily in a  
ring.

And when their gay-robed leader tossed up his cap  
of red,  
Young Deitrich caught it as it fell, and thrust it  
on his head.

The Troll came crouching at his feet and wept for  
lack of it.  
"Oh, give me back my magic cap, for your great  
head unfit!"

"Nay," Deitrich said; "the Dwarf who throws his  
charmed cap away,  
Must serve its finder at his will, and for his folly  
pay."

"You stole my pretty Lisbeth, and hid her in the earth;  
And you shall ope the door of glass and let me lead her forth."

"She will not come; she's one of us; she's mine!" the Brown Dwarf said;  
The day is set, the cake is baked, to-morrow we shall wed."

"The fell fiend fetch thee!" Deitrich cried, "and keep thy foul tongue still.  
Quick! open, to thy evil world, the glass door of the hill!"

The Dwarf obeyed; and youth and Troll down, the long stair-way passed,  
And saw in dim and sunless light a country strange and vast.

Weird, rich, and wonderful, he saw the elfin under-land,--  
Its palaces of precious stones, its streets of golden sand.

He came unto a banquet-hall with tables richly spread,  
Where a young maiden served to him the red wine and the bread.

How fair she seemed among the Trolls so ugly and so wild!  
Yet pale and very sorrowful, like one who never smiled!

Her low, sweet voice, her gold-brown hair, her tender blue eyes seemed  
Like something he had seen elsewhere or some thing he had dreamed.

He looked; he clasped her in his arms; he knew the long-lost one;  
"O Lisbeth! See thy playmate--I am the Amptman's son!"

She leaned her fair head on his breast, and through her sobs she spoke  
"Oh, take me from this evil place, and from the elfin folk,

"And let me tread the grass-green fields and smell the flowers again,  
And feel the soft wind on my cheek and hear the dropping rain!

"And oh, to hear the singing bird, the rustling of the tree,  
The lowing cows, the bleat of sheep, the voices of

the sea;

"And oh, upon my father's knee to sit beside the  
door,  
And hear the bell of vespers ring in Rambin  
church once more!"

He kissed her cheek, he kissed her lips; the Brown  
Dwarf groaned to see,  
And tore his tangled hair and ground his long  
teeth angrily.

But Deitrich said: "For five long years this tender  
Christian maid  
Has served you in your evil world and well must  
she be paid!

"Haste!--hither bring me precious gems, the  
richest in your store;  
Then when we pass the gate of glass, you'll take  
your cap once more."

No choice was left the baffled Troll, and, murmuring,  
he obeyed,  
And filled the pockets of the youth and apron of  
the maid.

They left the dreadful under-land and passed the  
gate of glass;  
They felt the sunshine's warm caress, they trod the  
soft, green grass.

And when, beneath, they saw the Dwarf stretch up  
to them his brown  
And crooked claw-like fingers, they tossed his red  
cap down.

Oh, never shone so bright a sun, was never sky so  
blue,  
As hand in hand they homeward walked the pleasant  
meadows through!

And never sang the birds so sweet in Rambin's  
woods before,  
And never washed the waves so soft along the Baltic  
shore;

And when beneath his door-yard trees the father  
met his child,  
The bells rung out their merriest peal, the folks  
with joy ran wild.

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