

Personal Poems II

Part 2, From Volume IV., The Works of Whittier: Personal Poems

John Greenleaf Whittier

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Part 2, From Volume IV., The Works of Whittier: Personal Poems
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PERSONAL POEMS

BY

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

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THE CROSS.

Richard Dillingham, a young member of the Society of Friends, died in the Nashville penitentiary, where he was confined for the act of aiding the escape of fugitive slaves.

"The cross, if rightly borne, shall be
No burden, but support to thee;"
So, moved of old time for our sake,
The holy monk of Kempen spake.

Thou brave and true one! upon whom
Was laid the cross of martyrdom,
How didst thou, in thy generous youth,
Bear witness to this blessed truth!

Thy cross of suffering and of shame
A staff within thy hands became,
In paths where faith alone could see
The Master's steps supporting thee.

Thine was the seed-time; God alone
Beholds the end of what is sown;
Beyond our vision, weak and dim,
The harvest-time is hid with Him.

Yet, unforgotten where it lies,
That seed of generous sacrifice,
Though seeming on the desert cast,
Shall rise with bloom and fruit at last.
1852.

THE HERO.

The hero of the incident related in this poem was Dr. Samuel Gridley
Howe, the well-known philanthropist, who when a young man volunteered
his aid in the Greek struggle for independence.

"Oh for a knight like Bayard,
Without reproach or fear;
My light glove on his casque of steel,
My love-knot on his spear!

"Oh for the white plume floating
Sad Zutphen's field above,--
The lion heart in battle,
The woman's heart in love!

"Oh that man once more were manly,
Woman's pride, and not her scorn:
That once more the pale young mother
Dared to boast 'a man is born'!

"But, now life's slumberous current
No sun-bowed cascade wakes;
No tall, heroic manhood
The level dulness breaks.

"Oh for a knight like Bayard,
Without reproach or fear!
My light glove on his casque of steel,
My love-knot on his spear!"

Then I said, my own heart throbbing
To the time her proud pulse beat,
"Life hath its regal natures yet,
True, tender, brave, and sweet!

"Smile not, fair unbeliever!
One man, at least, I know,
Who might wear the crest of Bayard
Or Sidney's plume of snow.

"Once, when over purple mountains
Died away the Grecian sun,
And the far Cyllenian ranges
Paled and darkened, one by one,--

"Fell the Turk, a bolt of thunder,
Cleaving all the quiet sky,
And against his sharp steel lightnings
Stood the Suliote but to die.

"Woe for the weak and halting!
The crescent blazed behind
A curving line of sabres,
Like fire before the wind!

"Last to fly, and first to rally,
Rode he of whom I speak,
When, groaning in his bridle-path,
Sank down a wounded Greek.

"With the rich Albanian costume
Wet with many a ghastly stain,
Gazing on earth and sky as one
Who might not gaze again.

"He looked forward to the mountains,
Back on foes that never spare,
Then flung him from his saddle,
And placed the stranger there.

"Allah! hu!" Through flashing sabres,
Through a stormy hail of lead,
The good Thessalian charger
Up the slopes of olives sped.

"Hot spurred the turbaned riders;
He almost felt their breath,
Where a mountain stream rolled darkly down
Between the hills and death.

"One brave and manful struggle,--
He gained the solid land,
And the cover of the mountains,
And the carbines of his band!"

"It was very great and noble,"
Said the moist-eyed listener then,
"But one brave deed makes no hero;

Tell me what he since hath been!"

"Still a brave and generous manhood,
Still an honor without stain,
In the prison of the Kaiser,
By the barricades of Seine.

"But dream not helm and harness
The sign of valor true;
Peace hath higher tests of manhood
Than battle ever knew.

"Wouldst know him now? Behold him,
The Cadmus of the blind,
Giving the dumb lip language,
The idiot-clay a mind.

"Walking his round of duty
Serenely day by day,
With the strong man's hand of labor
And childhood's heart of play.

"True as the knights of story,
Sir Lancelot and his peers,
Brave in his calm endurance
As they in tilt of spears.

"As waves in stillest waters,
As stars in noonday skies,
All that wakes to noble action
In his noon of calmness lies.

"Wherever outraged Nature
Asks word or action brave,
Wherever struggles labor,
Wherever groans a slave,--

"Wherever rise the peoples,
Wherever sinks a throne,
The throbbing heart of Freedom finds
An answer in his own.

"Knight of a better era,
Without reproach or fear!
Said I not well that Bayards
And Sidneys still are here?"
1853.

RANTOUL.

No more fitting inscription could be placed on the tombstone of Robert Rantoul than this: "He died at his post in Congress, and his last words were a protest in the name of Democracy against the Fugitive-Slave Law."

One day, along the electric wire
His manly word for Freedom sped;

We came next morn: that tongue of fire
Said only, "He who spake is dead!"

Dead! while his voice was living yet,
In echoes round the pillared dome!
Dead! while his blotted page lay wet
With themes of state and loves of home!

Dead! in that crowning grace of time,
That triumph of life's zenith hour!
Dead! while we watched his manhood's prime
Break from the slow bud into flower!

Dead! he so great, and strong, and wise,
While the mean thousands yet drew breath;
How deepened, through that dread surprise,
The mystery and the awe of death!

From the high place whereon our votes
Had borne him, clear, calm, earnest, fell
His first words, like the prelude notes
Of some great anthem yet to swell.

We seemed to see our flag unfurled,
Our champion waiting in his place
For the last battle of the world,
The Armageddon of the race.

Through him we hoped to speak the word
Which wins the freedom of a land;
And lift, for human right, the sword
Which dropped from Hampden's dying hand.

For he had sat at Sidney's feet,
And walked with Pym and Vane apart;
And, through the centuries, felt the beat
Of Freedom's march in Cromwell's heart.

He knew the paths the worthies held,
Where England's best and wisest trod;
And, lingering, drank the springs that welled
Beneath the touch of Milton's rod.

No wild enthusiast of the right,
Self-poised and clear, he showed alway
The coolness of his northern night,
The ripe repose of autumn's day.

His steps were slow, yet forward still
He pressed where others paused or failed;
The calm star clomb with constant will,
The restless meteor flashed and paled.

Skilled in its subtlest wile, he knew
And owned the higher ends of Law;
Still rose majestic on his view
The awful Shape the schoolman saw.

Her home the heart of God; her voice

The choral harmonies whereby
The stars, through all their spheres, rejoice,
The rhythmic rule of earth and sky.

We saw his great powers misapplied
To poor ambitions; yet, through all,
We saw him take the weaker side,
And right the wronged, and free the thrall.

Now, looking o'er the frozen North,
For one like him in word and act,
To call her old, free spirit forth,
And give her faith the life of fact,--

To break her party bonds of shame,
And labor with the zeal of him
To make the Democratic name
Of Liberty the synonyme,--

We sweep the land from hill to strand,
We seek the strong, the wise, the brave,
And, sad of heart, return to stand
In silence by a new-made grave!

There, where his breezy hills of home
Look out upon his sail-white seas,
The sounds of winds and waters come,
And shape themselves to words like these.

"Why, murmuring, mourn that he, whose power
Was lent to Party over-long,
Heard the still whisper at the hour
He set his foot on Party wrong?

"The human life that closed so well
No lapse of folly now can stain
The lips whence Freedom's protest fell
No meaner thought can now profane.

"Mightier than living voice his grave
That lofty protest utters o'er;
Through roaring wind and smiting wave
It speaks his hate of wrong once more.

"Men of the North! your weak regret
Is wasted here; arise and pay
To freedom and to him your debt,
By following where he led the way!"
1853.

WILLIAM FORSTER.

William Forster, of Norwich, England, died in East Tennessee, in the 1st month, 1854, while engaged in presenting to the governors of the States of this Union the address of his religious society on the evils of slavery. He was the relative and coadjutor of the

Buxtons, Gurneys, and Frys; and his whole life, extending al-most to threescore and ten years, was a pore and beautiful example of Christian benevolence. He had travelled over Europe, and visited most of its sovereigns, to plead against the slave-trade and slavery; and had twice before made visits to this country, under impressions of religious duty. He was the father of the Right Hon. William Edward Forster. He visited my father's house in Haverhill during his first tour in the United States.

The years are many since his hand
Was laid upon my head,
Too weak and young to understand
The serious words he said.

Yet often now the good man's look
Before me seems to swim,
As if some inward feeling took
The outward guise of him.

As if, in passion's heated war,
Or near temptation's charm,
Through him the low-voiced monitor
Forewarned me of the harm.

Stranger and pilgrim! from that day
Of meeting, first and last,
Wherever Duty's pathway lay,
His reverent steps have passed.

The poor to feed, the lost to seek,
To proffer life to death,
Hope to the erring,--to the weak
The strength of his own faith.

To plead the captive's right; remove
The sting of hate from Law;
And soften in the fire of love
The hardened steel of War.

He walked the dark world, in the mild,
Still guidance of the Light;
In tearful tenderness a child,
A strong man in the right.

From what great perils, on his way,
He found, in prayer, release;
Through what abysmal shadows lay
His pathway unto peace,

God knoweth : we could only see
The tranquil strength he gained;
The bondage lost in liberty,
The fear in love unfeigned.

And I,--my youthful fancies grown
The habit of the man,
Whose field of life by angels sown
The wilding vines o'erran,--

Low bowed in silent gratitude,
My manhood's heart enjoys
That reverence for the pure and good
Which blessed the dreaming boy's.

Still shines the light of holy lives
Like star-beams over doubt;
Each sainted memory, Christlike, drives
Some dark possession out.

O friend! O brother I not in vain
Thy life so calm and true,
The silver dropping of the rain,
The fall of summer dew!

How many burdened hearts have prayed
Their lives like thine might be
But more shall pray henceforth for aid
To lay them down like thee.

With weary hand, yet steadfast will,
In old age as in youth,
Thy Master found thee sowing still
The good seed of His truth.

As on thy task-field closed the day
In golden-skied decline,
His angel met thee on the way,
And lent his arm to thine.

Thy latest care for man,--thy last
Of earthly thought a prayer,--
Oh, who thy mantle, backward cast,
Is worthy now to wear?

Methinks the mound which marks thy bed
Might bless our land and save,
As rose, of old, to life the dead
Who touched the prophet's grave
1854.

TO CHARLES SUMNER.

If I have seemed more prompt to censure wrong
Than praise the right; if seldom to thine ear
My voice hath mingled with the exultant cheer
Borne upon all our Northern winds along;
If I have failed to join the fickle throng
In wide-eyed wonder, that thou standest strong
In victory, surprised in thee to find
Brougham's scathing power with Canning's grace combined;
That he, for whom the ninefold Muses sang,
From their twined arms a giant athlete sprang,
Barbing the arrows of his native tongue
With the spent shafts Latona's archer flung,
To smite the Python of our land and time,
Fell as the monster born of Crissa's slime,

Like the blind bard who in Castalian springs
Tempered the steel that clove the crest of kings,
And on the shrine of England's freedom laid
The gifts of Cumve and of Delphi's shade,--
Small need hast thou of words of praise from me.
Thou knowest my heart, dear friend, and well canst guess
That, even though silent, I have not the less
Rejoiced to see thy actual life agree
With the large future which I shaped for thee,
When, years ago, beside the summer sea,
White in the moon, we saw the long waves fall
Baffled and broken from the rocky wall,
That, to the menace of the brawling flood,
Opposed alone its massive quietude,
Calm as a fate; with not a leaf nor vine
Nor birch-spray trembling in the still moonshine,
Crowning it like God's peace. I sometimes think
That night-scene by the sea prophetic,
(For Nature speaks in symbols and in signs,
And through her pictures human fate divines),
That rock, wherefrom we saw the billows sink
In murmuring rout, uprising clear and tall
In the white light of heaven, the type of one
Who, momentarily by Error's host assailed,
Stands strong as Truth, in greaves of granite mailed;
And, tranquil-fronted, listening over all
The tumult, hears the angels say, Well done!
1854.

BURNS

ON RECEIVING A SPRIG OF HEATHER IN BLOSSOM.

No more these simple flowers belong
To Scottish maid and lover;
Sown in the common soil of song,
They bloom the wide world over.

In smiles and tears, in sun and showers,
The minstrel and the heather,
The deathless singer and the flowers
He sang of live together.

Wild heather-bells and Robert Burns
The moorland flower and peasant!
How, at their mention, memory turns
Her pages old and pleasant!

The gray sky wears again its gold
And purple of adorning,
And manhood's noonday shadows hold
The dews of boyhood's morning.

The dews that washed the dust and soil
From off the wings of pleasure,
The sky, that flecked the, ground of toil
With golden threads of leisure.

I call to mind the summer day,
The early harvest mowing,
The sky with sun and clouds at play,
And flowers with breezes blowing.

I hear the blackbird in the corn,
The locust in the haying;
And, like the fabled hunter's horn,
Old tunes my heart is playing.

How oft that day, with fond delay,
I sought the maple's shadow,
And sang with Burns the hours away,
Forgetful of the meadow.

Bees hummed, birds twittered, overhead
I heard the squirrels leaping,
The good dog listened while I read,
And wagged his tail in keeping.

I watched him while in sportive mood
I read "The Twa Dogs" story,
And half believed he understood
The poet's allegory.

Sweet day, sweet songs! The golden hours
Grew brighter for that singing,
From brook and bird and meadow flowers
A dearer welcome bringing.

New light on home-seen Nature beamed,
New glory over Woman;
And daily life and duty seemed
No longer poor and common.

I woke to find the simple truth
Of fact and feeling better
Than all the dreams that held my youth
A still repining debtor,

That Nature gives her handmaid, Art,
The themes of sweet discoursing;
The tender idyls of the heart
In every tongue rehearsing.

Why dream of lands of gold and pearl,
Of loving knight and lady,
When farmer boy and barefoot girl
Were wandering there already?

I saw through all familiar things
The romance underlying;
The joys and griefs that plume the wings
Of Fancy skyward flying.

I saw the same blithe day return,
The same sweet fall of even,
That rose on wooded Craigie-burn,

And sank on crystal Devon.

I matched with Scotland's heathery hills
The sweetbrier and the clover;
With Ayr and Doon, my native rills,
Their wood-hymns chanting over.

O'er rank and pomp, as he had seen,
I saw the Man uprising;
No longer common or unclean,
The child of God's baptizing!

With clearer eyes I saw the worth
Of life among the lowly;
The Bible at his Cotter's hearth
Had made my own more holy.

And if at times an evil strain,
To lawless love appealing,
Broke in upon the sweet refrain
Of pure and healthful feeling,

It died upon the eye and ear,
No inward answer gaining;
No heart had I to see or hear
The discord and the staining.

Let those who never erred forget
His worth, in vain bewailings;
Sweet Soul of Song! I own my debt
Uncancelled by his failings!

Lament who will the ribald line
Which tells his lapse from duty,
How kissed the maddening lips of wine
Or wanton ones of beauty;

But think, while falls that shade between
The erring one and Heaven,
That he who loved like Magdalen,
Like her may be forgiven.

Not his the song whose thunderous chime
Eternal echoes render;
The mournful Tuscan's haunted rhyme,
And Milton's starry splendor!

But who his human heart has laid
To Nature's bosom nearer?
Who sweetened toil like him, or paid
To love a tribute dearer?

Through all his tuneful art, how strong
The human feeling gushes
The very moonlight of his song
Is warm with smiles and blushes!

Give lettered pomp to teeth of Time,
So "Bonnie Doon" but tarry;

Blot out the Epic's stately rhyme,
But spare his Highland Mary!
1854.

TO GEORGE B. CHEEVER

So spake Esaias: so, in words of flame,
Tekoa's prophet-herdsman smote with blame
The traffickers in men, and put to shame,
All earth and heaven before,
The sacerdotal robbers of the poor.

All the dread Scripture lives for thee again,
To smite like lightning on the hands profane
Lifted to bless the slave-whip and the chain.
Once more the old Hebrew tongue
Bends with the shafts of God a bow new-strung!

Take up the mantle which the prophets wore;
Warn with their warnings, show the Christ once more
Bound, scourged, and crucified in His blameless poor;
And shake above our land
The unquenched bolts that blazed in Hosea's hand!

Not vainly shalt thou cast upon our years
The solemn burdens of the Orient seers,
And smite with truth a guilty nation's ears.
Mightier was Luther's word
Than Seckingen's mailed arm or Hutton's sword!
1858.

TO JAMES T. FIELDS

ON A BLANK LEAF OF "POEMS PRINTED, NOT PUBLISHED."

Well thought! who would not rather hear
The songs to Love and Friendship sung
Than those which move the stranger's tongue,
And feed his unselected ear?

Our social joys are more than fame;
Life withers in the public look.
Why mount the pillory of a book,
Or barter comfort for a name?

Who in a house of glass would dwell,
With curious eyes at every pane?
To ring him in and out again,
Who wants the public crier's bell?

To see the angel in one's way,
Who wants to play the ass's part,--
Bear on his back the wizard Art,
And in his service speak or bray?

And who his manly locks would shave,
And quench the eyes of common sense,
To share the noisy recompense
That mocked the shorn and blinded slave?

The heart has needs beyond the head,
And, starving in the plenitude
Of strange gifts, craves its common food,--
Our human nature's daily bread.

We are but men: no gods are we,
To sit in mid-heaven, cold and bleak,
Each separate, on his painful peak,
Thin-cloaked in self-complacency.

Better his lot whose axe is swung
In Wartburg woods, or that poor girl's
Who by the him her spindle whirls
And sings the songs that Luther sung,

Than his who, old, and cold, and vain,
At Weimar sat, a demigod,
And bowed with Jove's imperial nod
His votaries in and out again!

Ply, Vanity, thy winged feet!
Ambition, hew thy rocky stair!
Who envies him who feeds on air
The icy splendor of his seat?

I see your Alps, above me, cut
The dark, cold sky; and dim and lone
I see ye sitting,--stone on stone,--
With human senses dulled and shut.

I could not reach you, if I would,
Nor sit among your cloudy shapes;
And (spare the fable of the grapes
And fox) I would not if I could.

Keep to your lofty pedestals!
The safer plain below I choose
Who never wins can rarely lose,
Who never climbs as rarely falls.

Let such as love the eagle's scream
Divide with him his home of ice
For me shall gentler notes suffice,--
The valley-song of bird and stream;

The pastoral bleat, the drone of bees,
The flail-beat chiming far away,
The cattle-low, at shut of day,
The voice of God in leaf and breeze;

Then lend thy hand, my wiser friend,
And help me to the vales below,
(In truth, I have not far to go,)
Where sweet with flowers the fields extend.

1858.

THE MEMORY OF BURNS.

Read at the Boston celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns, 25th 1st mo., 1859. In my absence these lines were read by Ralph Waldo Emerson.

How sweetly come the holy psalms
From saints and martyrs down,
The waving of triumphal palms
Above the thorny crown
The choral praise, the chanted prayers
From harps by angels strung,
The hunted Cameron's mountain airs,
The hymns that Luther sung!

Yet, jarring not the heavenly notes,
The sounds of earth are heard,
As through the open minster floats
The song of breeze and bird
Not less the wonder of the sky
That daisies bloom below;
The brook sings on, though loud and high
The cloudy organs blow!

And, if the tender ear be jarred
That, haply, hears by turns
The saintly harp of Olney's bard,
The pastoral pipe of Burns,
No discord mars His perfect plan
Who gave them both a tongue;
For he who sings the love of man
The love of God hath sung!

To-day be every fault forgiven
Of him in whom we joy
We take, with thanks, the gold of Heaven
And leave the earth's alloy.
Be ours his music as of spring,
His sweetness as of flowers,
The songs the bard himself might sing
In holier ears than ours.

Sweet airs of love and home, the hum
Of household melodies,
Come singing, as the robins come
To sing in door-yard trees.
And, heart to heart, two nations lean,
No rival wreaths to twine,
But blending in eternal green
The holly and the pine!

IN REMEMBRANCE OF JOSEPH STURGE.

In the fair land o'erwatched by Ischia's mountains,
Across the charmed bay
Whose blue waves keep with Capri's silver fountains
Perpetual holiday,

A king lies dead, his wafer duly eaten,
His gold-bought masses given;
And Rome's great altar smokes with gums to sweeten
Her foulest gift to Heaven.

And while all Naples thrills with mute thanksgiving,
The court of England's queen
For the dead monster so abhorred while living
In mourning garb is seen.

With a true sorrow God rebukes that feigning;
By lone Edgbaston's side
Stands a great city in the sky's sad raining,
Bareheaded and wet-eyed!

Silent for once the restless hive of labor,
Save the low funeral tread,
Or voice of craftsman whispering to his neighbor
The good deeds of the dead.

For him no minster's chant of the immortals
Rose from the lips of sin;
No mitred priest swung back the heavenly portals
To let the white soul in.

But Age and Sickness framed their tearful faces
In the low hovel's door,
And prayers went up from all the dark by-places
And Ghettos of the poor.

The pallid toiler and the negro chattel,
The vagrant of the street,
The human dice wherewith in games of battle
The lords of earth compete,

Touched with a grief that needs no outward draping,
All swelled the long lament,
Of grateful hearts, instead of marble, shaping
His viewless monument!

For never yet, with ritual pomp and splendor,
In the long heretofore,
A heart more loyal, warm, and true, and tender,
Has England's turf closed o'er.

And if there fell from out her grand old steeples
No crash of brazen wail,
The murmurous woe of kindreds, tongues, and peoples
Swept in on every gale.

It came from Holstein's birchen-belted meadows,
And from the tropic calms
Of Indian islands in the sunlit shadows
Of Occidental palms;

From the locked roadsteads of the Bothniaii peasants,
And harbors of the Finn,
Where war's worn victims saw his gentle presence
Come sailing, Christ-like, in,

To seek the lost, to build the old waste places,
To link the hostile shores
Of severing seas, and sow with England's daisies
The moss of Finland's moors.

Thanks for the good man's beautiful example,
Who in the vilest saw
Some sacred crypt or altar of a temple
Still vocal with God's law;

And heard with tender ear the spirit sighing
As from its prison cell,
Praying for pity, like the mournful crying
Of Jonah out of hell.

Not his the golden pen's or lip's persuasion,
But a fine sense of right,
And Truth's directness, meeting each occasion
Straight as a line of light.

His faith and works, like streams that intermingle,
In the same channel ran
The crystal clearness of an eye kept single
Shamed all the frauds of man.

The very gentlest of all human natures
He joined to courage strong,
And love outreaching unto all God's creatures
With sturdy hate of wrong.

Tender as woman, manliness and meekness
In him were so allied
That they who judged him by his strength or weakness
Saw but a single side.

Men failed, betrayed him, but his zeal seemed nourished
By failure and by fall;
Still a large faith in human-kind he cherished,
And in God's love for all.

And now he rests: his greatness and his sweetness
No more shall seem at strife,
And death has moulded into calm completeness
The statue of his life.

Where the dews glisten and the songbirds warble,
His dust to dust is laid,
In Nature's keeping, with no pomp of marble
To shame his modest shade.

The forges glow, the hammers all are ringing;
Beneath its smoky vale,
Hard by, the city of his love is swinging

Its clamorous iron flail.

But round his grave are quietude and beauty,
And the sweet heaven above,--
The fitting symbols of a life of duty
Transfigured into love!
1859.

BROWN OF OSSAWATOMIE

John Brown of Ossawatimie spake on his dying day:
"I will not have to shrive my soul a priest in Slavery's pay.
But let some poor slave-mother whom I have striven to free,
With her children, from the gallows-stair put up a prayer for me!"

John Brown of Ossawatimie, they led him out to die;
And lo! a poor slave-mother with her little child pressed nigh.
Then the bold, blue eye grew tender, and the old harsh face grew mild,
As he stooped between the jeering ranks and kissed the negro's child.

The shadows of his stormy life that moment fell apart;
And they who blamed the bloody hand forgave the loving heart.
That kiss from all its guilty means redeemed the good intent,
And round the grisly fighter's hair the martyr's aureole bent!

Perish with him the folly that seeks through evil good
Long live the generous purpose unstained with human blood!
Not the raid of midnight terror, but the thought which underlies;
Not the borderer's pride of daring, but the Christian's sacrifice.

Nevermore may yon Blue Ridges the Northern rifle hear,
Nor see the light of blazing homes flash on the negro's spear.
But let the free-winged angel Truth their guarded passes scale,
To teach that right is more than might, and justice more than mail!

So vainly shall Virginia set her battle in array;
In vain her trampling squadrons knead the winter snow with clay.
She may strike the pouncing eagle, but she dares not harm the dove;
And every gate she bars to Hate shall open wide to Love!
1859.

NAPLES

INSCRIBED TO ROBERT C. WATERSTON, OF BOSTON.

Helen Waterston died at Naples in her eighteenth year, and lies
buried in the Protestant cemetery there. The stone over her grave
bears the lines,

Fold her, O Father, in Thine arms,
And let her henceforth be
A messenger of love between
Our human hearts and Thee.

I give thee joy!--I know to thee
The dearest spot on earth must be
Where sleeps thy loved one by the summer sea;

Where, near her sweetest poet's tomb,
The land of Virgil gave thee room
To lay thy flower with her perpetual bloom.

I know that when the sky shut down
Behind thee on the gleaming town,
On Baiae's baths and Posilippo's crown;

And, through thy tears, the mocking day
Burned Ischia's mountain lines away,
And Capri melted in its sunny bay;

Through thy great farewell sorrow shot
The sharp pang of a bitter thought
That slaves must tread around that holy spot.

Thou knewest not the land was blest
In giving thy beloved rest,
Holding the fond hope closer to her breast,

That every sweet and saintly grave
Was freedom's prophecy, and gave
The pledge of Heaven to sanctify and save.

That pledge is answered. To thy ear
The unchained city sends its cheer,
And, tuned to joy, the muffled bells of fear

Ring Victor in. The land sits free
And happy by the summer sea,
And Bourbon Naples now is Italy!

She smiles above her broken chain
The languid smile that follows pain,
Stretching her cramped limbs to the sun again.

Oh, joy for all, who hear her call
From gray Camaldoli's convent-wall
And Elmo's towers to freedom's carnival!

A new life breathes among her vines
And olives, like the breath of pines
Blown downward from the breezy Apennines.

Lean, O my friend, to meet that breath,
Rejoice as one who witnesseth
Beauty from ashes rise, and life from death!

Thy sorrow shall no more be pain,
Its tears shall fall in sunlit rain,
Writing the grave with flowers: "Arisen again!"
1860.

A MEMORIAL

Moses Austin Cartland, a dear friend and relation, who led a faithful life as a teacher and died in the summer of 1863.

Oh, thicker, deeper, darker growing,
The solemn vista to the tomb
Must know henceforth another shadow,
And give another cypress room.

In love surpassing that of brothers,
We walked, O friend, from childhood's day;
And, looking back o'er fifty summers,
Our footprints track a common way.

One in our faith, and one our longing
To make the world within our reach
Somewhat the better for our living,
And gladder for our human speech.

Thou heard'st with me the far-off voices,
The old beguiling song of fame,
But life to thee was warm and present,
And love was better than a name.

To homely joys and loves and friendships
Thy genial nature fondly clung;
And so the shadow on the dial
Ran back and left thee always young.

And who could blame the generous weakness
Which, only to thyself unjust,
So overprized the worth of others,
And dwarfed thy own with self-distrust?

All hearts grew warmer in the presence
Of one who, seeking not his own,
Gave freely for the love of giving,
Nor reaped for self the harvest sown.

Thy greeting smile was pledge and prelude
Of generous deeds and kindly words;
In thy large heart were fair guest-chambers,
Open to sunrise and the birds;

The task was thine to mould and fashion
Life's plastic newness into grace
To make the boyish heart heroic,
And light with thought the maiden's face.

O'er all the land, in town and prairie,
With bended heads of mourning, stand
The living forms that owe their beauty
And fitness to thy shaping hand.

Thy call has come in ripened manhood,
The noonday calm of heart and mind,
While I, who dreamed of thy remaining

To mourn me, linger still behind,

Live on, to own, with self-upbraiding,
A debt of love still due from me,--
The vain remembrance of occasions,
Forever lost, of serving thee.

It was not mine among thy kindred
To join the silent funeral prayers,
But all that long sad day of summer
My tears of mourning dropped with theirs.

All day the sea-waves sobbed with sorrow,
The birds forgot their merry trills
All day I heard the pines lamenting
With thine upon thy homestead hills.

Green be those hillside pines forever,
And green the meadowy lowlands be,
And green the old memorial beeches,
Name-carven in the woods of Lee.

Still let them greet thy life companions
Who thither turn their pilgrim feet,
In every mossy line recalling
A tender memory sadly sweet.

O friend! if thought and sense avail not
To know thee henceforth as thou art,
That all is well with thee forever
I trust the instincts of my heart.

Thine be the quiet habitations,
Thine the green pastures, blossom-sown,
And smiles of saintly recognition,
As sweet and tender as thy own.

Thou com'st not from the hush and shadow
To meet us, but to thee we come,
With thee we never can be strangers,
And where thou art must still be home.
1863.

BRYANT ON HIS BIRTHDAY

Mr. Bryant's seventieth birthday, November 3, 1864, was celebrated
by a festival to which these verses were sent.

We praise not now the poet's art,
The rounded beauty of his song;
Who weighs him from his life apart
Must do his nobler nature wrong.

Not for the eye, familiar grown
With charms to common sight denied,
The marvellous gift he shares alone
With him who walked on Rydal-side;

Not for rapt hymn nor woodland lay,
Too grave for smiles, too sweet for tears;
We speak his praise who wears to-day
The glory of his seventy years.

When Peace brings Freedom in her train,
Let happy lips his songs rehearse;
His life is now his noblest strain,
His manhood better than his verse!

Thank God! his hand on Nature's keys
Its cunning keeps at life's full span;
But, dimmed and dwarfed, in times like these,
The poet seems beside the man!

So be it! let the garlands die,
The singer's wreath, the painter's meed,
Let our names perish, if thereby
Our country may be saved and freed!
1864.

THOMAS STARR KING

Published originally as a prelude to the posthumous volume of
selections edited by Richard Frothingham.

The great work laid upon his twoscore years
Is done, and well done. If we drop our tears,
Who loved him as few men were ever loved,
We mourn no blighted hope nor broken plan
With him whose life stands rounded and approved
In the full growth and stature of a man.
Mingle, O bells, along the Western slope,
With your deep toll a sound of faith and hope!
Wave cheerily still, O banner, half-way down,
From thousand-masted bay and steepled town!
Let the strong organ with its loftiest swell
Lift the proud sorrow of the land, and tell
That the brave sower saw his ripened grain.
O East and West! O morn and sunset twain
No more forever!--has he lived in vain
Who, priest of Freedom, made ye one, and told
Your bridal service from his lips of gold?
1864.

LINES ON A FLY-LEAF.

I need not ask thee, for my sake,
To read a book which well may make
Its way by native force of wit
Without my manual sign to it.
Its piquant writer needs from me
No gravely masculine guaranty,

And well might laugh her merriest laugh
At broken spears in her behalf;
Yet, spite of all the critics tell,
I frankly own I like her well.
It may be that she wields a pen
Too sharply nibbed for thin-skinned men,
That her keen arrows search and try
The armor joints of dignity,
And, though alone for error meant,
Sing through the air irreverent.
I blame her not, the young athlete
Who plants her woman's tiny feet,
And dares the chances of debate
Where bearded men might hesitate,
Who, deeply earnest, seeing well
The ludicrous and laughable,
Mingling in eloquent excess
Her anger and her tenderness,
And, chiding with a half-caress,
Strives, less for her own sex than ours,
With principalities and powers,
And points us upward to the clear
Sunned heights of her new atmosphere.

Heaven mend her faults!--I will not pause
To weigh and doubt and peck at flaws,
Or waste my pity when some fool
Provokes her measureless ridicule.
Strong-minded is she? Better so
Than dulness set for sale or show,
A household folly, capped and belled
In fashion's dance of puppets held,
Or poor pretence of womanhood,
Whose formal, flavorless platitude
Is warranted from all offence
Of robust meaning's violence.
Give me the wine of thought whose head
Sparkles along the page I read,--
Electric words in which I find
The tonic of the northwest wind;
The wisdom which itself allies
To sweet and pure humanities,
Where scorn of meanness, hate of wrong,
Are underlaid by love as strong;
The genial play of mirth that lights
Grave themes of thought, as when, on nights
Of summer-time, the harmless blaze
Of thunderless heat-lightning plays,
And tree and hill-top resting dim
And doubtful on the sky's vague rim,
Touched by that soft and lambent gleam,
Start sharply outlined from their dream.

Talk not to me of woman's sphere,
Nor point with Scripture texts a sneer,
Nor wrong the manliest saint of all
By doubt, if he were here, that Paul
Would own the heroines who have lent
Grace to truth's stern arbitrament,

Foregone the praise to woman sweet,
And cast their crowns at Duty's feet;
Like her, who by her strong Appeal
Made Fashion weep and Mammon feel,
Who, earliest summoned to withstand
The color-madness of the land,
Counted her life-long losses gain,
And made her own her sisters' pain;
Or her who, in her greenwood shade,
Heard the sharp call that Freedom made,
And, answering, struck from Sappho's lyre
Of love the Tyrtman carmen's fire
Or that young girl,--Domremy's maid
Revived a nobler cause to aid,--
Shaking from warning finger-tips
The doom of her apocalypse;
Or her, who world-wide entrance gave
To the log-cabin of the slave,
Made all his want and sorrow known,
And all earth's languages his own.
1866.

GEORGE L. STEARNS

No man rendered greater service to the cause of freedom than Major
Stearns in the great struggle between invading slave-holders and
the free settlers of Kansas.

He has done the work of a true man,--
Crown him, honor him, love him.
Weep, over him, tears of woman,
Stoop manliest brows above him!

O dusky mothers and daughters,
Vigils of mourning keep for him!
Up in the mountains, and down by the waters,
Lift up your voices and weep for him,

For the warmest of hearts is frozen,
The freest of hands is still;
And the gap in our picked and chosen
The long years may not fill.

No duty could overtask him,
No need his will outrun;
Or ever our lips could ask him,
His hands the work had done.

He forgot his own soul for others,
Himself to his neighbor lending;
He found the Lord in his suffering brothers,
And not in the clouds descending.

So the bed was sweet to die on,
Whence he saw the doors wide swung
Against whose bolted iron
The strength of his life was flung.

And he saw ere his eye was darkened
The sheaves of the harvest-bringing,
And knew while his ear yet hearkened
The voice of the reapers singing.

Ah, well! The world is discreet;
There are plenty to pause and wait;
But here was a man who set his feet
Sometimes in advance of fate;

Plucked off the old bark when the inner
Was slow to renew it,
And put to the Lord's work the sinner
When saints failed to do it.

Never rode to the wrong's redressing
A worthier paladin.
Shall he not hear the blessing,
"Good and faithful, enter in!"
1867

GARIBALDI

In trance and dream of old, God's prophet saw
The casting down of thrones. Thou, watching lone
The hot Sardinian coast-line, hazy-hilled,
Where, fringing round Caprera's rocky zone
With foam, the slow waves gather and withdraw,
Behold'st the vision of the seer fulfilled,
And hear'st the sea-winds burdened with a sound
Of falling chains, as, one by one, unbound,
The nations lift their right hands up and swear
Their oath of freedom. From the chalk-white wall
Of England, from the black Carpathian range,
Along the Danube and the Theiss, through all
The passes of the Spanish Pyrenees,
And from the Seine's thronged banks, a murmur strange
And glad floats to thee o'er thy summer seas
On the salt wind that stirs thy whitening hair,--
The song of freedom's bloodless victories!
Rejoice, O Garibaldi! Though thy sword
Failed at Rome's gates, and blood seemed vainly poured
Where, in Christ's name, the crowned infidel
Of France wrought murder with the arms of hell
On that sad mountain slope whose ghostly dead,
Unmindful of the gray exorcist's ban,
Walk, unappeased, the chambered Vatican,
And draw the curtains of Napoleon's bed!
God's providence is not blind, but, full of eyes,
It searches all the refuges of lies;
And in His time and way, the accursed things
Before whose evil feet thy battle-gage
Has clashed defiance from hot youth to age
Shall perish. All men shall be priests and kings,
One royal brotherhood, one church made free
By love, which is the law of liberty

1869.

TO LYDIA MARIA CHILD,

ON READING HER POEM IN "THE STANDARD."

Mrs. Child wrote her lines, beginning, "Again the trees are clothed in vernal green," May 24, 1859, on the first anniversary of Ellis Gray Loring's death, but did not publish them for some years afterward, when I first read them, or I could not have made the reference which I did to the extinction of slavery.

The sweet spring day is glad with music,
But through it sounds a sadder strain;
The worthiest of our narrowing circle
Sings Loring's dirges o'er again.

O woman greatly loved! I join thee
In tender memories of our friend;
With thee across the awful spaces
The greeting of a soul I send!

What cheer hath he? How is it with him?
Where lingers he this weary while?
Over what pleasant fields of Heaven
Dawns the sweet sunrise of his smile?

Does he not know our feet are treading
The earth hard down on Slavery's grave?
That, in our crowning exultations,
We miss the charm his presence gave?

Why on this spring air comes no whisper
From him to tell us all is well?
Why to our flower-time comes no token
Of lily and of asphodel?

I feel the unutterable longing,
Thy hunger of the heart is mine;
I reach and grope for hands in darkness,
My ear grows sharp for voice or sign.

Still on the lips of all we question
The finger of God's silence lies;
Will the lost hands in ours be folded?
Will the shut eyelids ever rise?

O friend! no proof beyond this yearning,
This outreach of our hearts, we need;
God will not mock the hope He giveth,
No love He prompts shall vainly plead.

Then let us stretch our hands in darkness,
And call our loved ones o'er and o'er;
Some day their arms shall close about us,
And the old voices speak once more.

No dreary splendors wait our coming
Where rapt ghost sits from ghost apart;
Homeward we go to Heaven's thanksgiving,
The harvest-gathering of the heart.
1870.

THE SINGER.

This poem was written on the death of Alice Cary. Her sister
Phoebe, heart-broken by her loss, followed soon after. Noble and
richly gifted, lovely in person and character, they left behind
them only friends and admirers.

Years since (but names to me before),
Two sisters sought at eve my door;
Two song-birds wandering from their nest,
A gray old farm-house in the West.

How fresh of life the younger one,
Half smiles, half tears, like rain in sun!
Her gravest mood could scarce displace
The dimples of her nut-brown face.

Wit sparkled on her lips not less
For quick and tremulous tenderness;
And, following close her merriest glance,
Dreamed through her eyes the heart's romance.

Timid and still, the elder had
Even then a smile too sweetly sad;
The crown of pain that all must wear
Too early pressed her midnight hair.

Yet ere the summer eve grew long,
Her modest lips were sweet with song;
A memory haunted all her words
Of clover-fields and singing birds.

Her dark, dilating eyes expressed
The broad horizons of the west;
Her speech dropped prairie flowers; the gold
Of harvest wheat about her rolled.

Fore-doomed to song she seemed to me
I queried not with destiny
I knew the trial and the need,
Yet, all the more, I said, God speed?

What could I other than I did?
Could I a singing-bird forbid?
Deny the wind-stirred leaf? Rebuke
The music of the forest brook?

She went with morning from my door,
But left me richer than before;
Thenceforth I knew her voice of cheer,
The welcome of her partial ear.

Years passed: through all the land her name
A pleasant household word became
All felt behind the singer stood
A sweet and gracious womanhood.

Her life was earnest work, not play;
Her tired feet climbed a weary way;
And even through her lightest strain
We heard an undertone of pain.

Unseen of her her fair fame grew,
The good she did she rarely knew,
Ungessed of her in life the love
That rained its tears her grave above.

When last I saw her, full of peace,
She waited for her great release;
And that old friend so sage and bland,
Our later Franklin, held her hand.

For all that patriot bosoms stirs
Had moved that woman's heart of hers,
And men who toiled in storm and sun
Found her their meet companion.

Our converse, from her suffering bed
To healthful themes of life she led
The out-door world of bud and bloom
And light and sweetness filled her room.

Yet evermore an underthought
Of loss to come within us wrought,
And all the while we felt the strain
Of the strong will that conquered pain.

God giveth quietness at last!
The common way that all have passed
She went, with mortal yearnings fond,
To fuller life and love beyond.

Fold the rapt soul in your embrace,
My dear ones! Give the singer place
To you, to her,--I know not where,--
I lift the silence of a prayer.

For only thus our own we find;
The gone before, the left behind,
All mortal voices die between;
The unheard reaches the unseen.

Again the blackbirds sing; the streams
Wake, laughing, from their winter dreams,
And tremble in the April showers
The tassels of the maple flowers.

But not for her has spring renewed
The sweet surprises of the wood;
And bird and flower are lost to her
Who was their best interpreter.

What to shut eyes has God revealed?
What hear the ears that death has sealed?
What undreamed beauty passing show
Requites the loss of all we know?

O silent land, to which we move,
Enough if there alone be love,
And mortal need can ne'er outgrow
What it is waiting to bestow!

O white soul! from that far-off shore
Float some sweet song the waters o'er.
Our faith confirm, our fears dispel,
With the old voice we loved so well!
1871.

HOW MARY GREW.

These lines were in answer to an invitation to hear a lecture of Mary Grew, of Philadelphia, before the Boston Radical Club. The reference in the last stanza is to an essay on Sappho by T. W. Higginson, read at the club the preceding month.

With wisdom far beyond her years,
And graver than her wondering peers,
So strong, so mild, combining still
The tender heart and queenly will,
To conscience and to duty true,
So, up from childhood, Mary Grew!

Then in her gracious womanhood
She gave her days to doing good.
She dared the scornful laugh of men,
The hounding mob, the slanderer's pen.
She did the work she found to do,--
A Christian heroine, Mary Grew!

The freed slave thanks her; blessing comes
To her from women's weary homes;
The wronged and erring find in her
Their censor mild and comforter.
The world were safe if but a few
Could grow in grace as Mary Grew!

So, New Year's Eve, I sit and say,
By this low wood-fire, ashen gray;
Just wishing, as the night shuts down,
That I could hear in Boston town,
In pleasant Chestnut Avenue,
From her own lips, how Mary Grew!

And hear her graceful hostess tell
The silver-voiced oracle
Who lately through her parlors spoke
As through Dodona's sacred oak,
A wiser truth than any told

By Sappho's lips of ruddy gold,--
The way to make the world anew,
Is just to grow--as Mary Grew
1871.

SUMNER

"I am not one who has disgraced beauty of sentiment by deformity of conduct, or the maxims of a freeman by the actions of a slave; but, by the grace of God, I have kept my life unsullied."
--MILTON'S _Defence of the People of England_.

O Mother State! the winds of March
Blew chill o'er Auburn's Field of God,
Where, slow, beneath a leaden arch
Of sky, thy mourning children trod.

And now, with all thy woods in leaf,
Thy fields in flower, beside thy dead
Thou sittest, in thy robes of grief,
A Rachel yet un comforted!

And once again the organ swells,
Once more the flag is half-way hung,
And yet again the mournful bells
In all thy steeple-towers are rung.

And I, obedient to thy will,
Have come a simple wreath to lay,
Superfluous, on a grave that still
Is sweet with all the flowers of May.

I take, with awe, the task assigned;
It may be that my friend might miss,
In his new sphere of heart and mind,
Some token from my band in this.

By many a tender memory moved,
Along the past my thought I send;
The record of the cause he loved
Is the best record of its friend.

No trumpet sounded in his ear,
He saw not Sinai's cloud and flame,
But never yet to Hebrew seer
A clearer voice of duty came.

God said: "Break thou these yokes; undo
These heavy burdens. I ordain
A work to last thy whole life through,
A ministry of strife and pain.

"Forego thy dreams of lettered ease,
Put thou the scholar's promise by,
The rights of man are more than these."
He heard, and answered: "Here am I!"

He set his face against the blast,
His feet against the flinty shard,
Till the hard service grew, at last,
Its own exceeding great reward.

Lifted like Saul's above the crowd,
Upon his kingly forehead fell
The first sharp bolt of Slavery's cloud,
Launched at the truth he urged so well.

Ah! never yet, at rack or stake,
Was sorer loss made Freedom's gain,
Than his, who suffered for her sake
The beak-torn Titan's lingering pain!

The fixed star of his faith, through all
Loss, doubt, and peril, shone the same;
As through a night of storm, some tall,
Strong lighthouse lifts its steady flame.

Beyond the dust and smoke he saw
The sheaves of Freedom's large increase,
The holy fanes of equal law,
The New Jerusalem of peace.

The weak might fear, the worldling mock,
The faint and blind of heart regret;
All knew at last th' eternal rock
On which his forward feet were set.

The subtlest scheme of compromise
Was folly to his purpose bold;
The strongest mesh of party lies
Weak to the simplest truth he told.

One language held his heart and lip,
Straight onward to his goal he trod,
And proved the highest statesmanship
Obedience to the voice of God.

No wail was in his voice,--none heard,
When treason's storm-cloud blackest grew,
The weakness of a doubtful word;
His duty, and the end, he knew.

The first to smite, the first to spare;
When once the hostile ensigns fell,
He stretched out hands of generous care
To lift the foe he fought so well.

For there was nothing base or small
Or craven in his soul's broad plan;
Forgiving all things personal,
He hated only wrong to man.

The old traditions of his State,
The memories of her great and good,
Took from his life a fresher date,
And in himself embodied stood.

How felt the greed of gold and place,
The venal crew that schemed and planned,
The fine scorn of that haughty face,
The spurning of that bribeless hand!

If than Rome's tribunes statelier
He wore his senatorial robe,
His lofty port was all for her,
The one dear spot on all the globe.

If to the master's plea he gave
The vast contempt his manhood felt,
He saw a brother in the slave,--
With man as equal man he dealt.

Proud was he? If his presence kept
Its grandeur wheresoe'er he trod,
As if from Plutarch's gallery stepped
The hero and the demigod,

None failed, at least, to reach his ear,
Nor want nor woe appealed in vain;
The homesick soldier knew his cheer,
And blessed him from his ward of pain.

Safely his dearest friends may own
The slight defects he never hid,
The surface-blemish in the stone
Of the tall, stately pyramid.

Suffice it that he never brought
His conscience to the public mart;
But lived himself the truth he taught,
White-souled, clean-handed, pure of heart.

What if he felt the natural pride
Of power in noble use, too true
With thin humilities to hide
The work he did, the lore he knew?

Was he not just? Was any wronged
By that assured self-estimate?
He took but what to him belonged,
Unenvious of another's state.

Well might he heed the words he spake,
And scan with care the written page
Through which he still shall warm and wake
The hearts of men from age to age.

Ah! who shall blame him now because
He solaced thus his hours of pain!
Should not the o'erworn thresher pause,
And hold to light his golden grain?

No sense of humor dropped its oil
On the hard ways his purpose went;
Small play of fancy lightened toil;

He spake alone the thing he meant.

He loved his books, the Art that hints
A beauty veiled behind its own,
The graver's line, the pencil's tints,
The chisel's shape evoked from stone.

He cherished, void of selfish ends,
The social courtesies that bless
And sweeten life, and loved his friends
With most unworldly tenderness.

But still his tired eyes rarely learned
The glad relief by Nature brought;
Her mountain ranges never turned
His current of persistent thought.

The sea rolled chorus to his speech
Three-banked like Latium's tall trireme,
With laboring oars; the grove and beach
Were Forum and the Academe.

The sensuous joy from all things fair
His strenuous bent of soul repressed,
And left from youth to silvered hair
Few hours for pleasure, none for rest.

For all his life was poor without,
O Nature, make the last amends
Train all thy flowers his grave about,
And make thy singing-birds his friends!

Revive again, thou summer rain,
The broken turf upon his bed
Breathe, summer wind, thy tenderest strain
Of low, sweet music overhead!

With calm and beauty symbolize
The peace which follows long annoy,
And lend our earth-bent, mourning eyes,
Some hint of his diviner joy.

For safe with right and truth he is,
As God lives he must live alway;
There is no end for souls like his,
No night for children of the day!

Nor cant nor poor solitudes
Made weak his life's great argument;
Small leisure his for frames and moods
Who followed Duty where she went.

The broad, fair fields of God he saw
Beyond the bigot's narrow bound;
The truths he moulded into law
In Christ's beatitudes he found.

His state-craft was the Golden Rule,
His right of vote a sacred trust;

Clear, over threat and ridicule,
All heard his challenge: "Is it just?"

And when the hour supreme had come,
Not for himself a thought he gave;
In that last pang of martyrdom,
His care was for the half-freed slave.

Not vainly dusky hands upbore,
In prayer, the passing soul to heaven
Whose mercy to His suffering poor
Was service to the Master given.

Long shall the good State's annals tell,
Her children's children long be taught,
How, praised or blamed, he guarded well
The trust he neither shunned nor sought.

If for one moment turned thy face,
O Mother, from thy son, not long
He waited calmly in his place
The sure remorse which follows wrong.

Forgiven be the State he loved
The one brief lapse, the single blot;
Forgotten be the stain removed,
Her righted record shows it not!

The lifted sword above her shield
With jealous care shall guard his fame;
The pine-tree on her ancient field
To all the winds shall speak his name.

The marble image of her son
Her loving hands shall yearly crown,
And from her pictured Pantheon
His grand, majestic face look down.

O State so passing rich before,
Who now shall doubt thy highest claim?
The world that counts thy jewels o'er
Shall longest pause at Sumner's name!
1874.

THEIRS

I.
Fate summoned, in gray-bearded age, to act
A history stranger than his written fact,
Him who portrayed the splendor and the gloom
Of that great hour when throne and altar fell
With long death-groan which still is audible.
He, when around the walls of Paris rung
The Prussian bugle like the blast of doom,
And every ill which follows unblest war
Maddened all France from Finistere to Var,
The weight of fourscore from his shoulders flung,

And guided Freedom in the path he saw
Lead out of chaos into light and law,
Peace, not imperial, but republican,
And order pledged to all the Rights of Man.

II.

Death called him from a need as imminent
As that from which the Silent William went
When powers of evil, like the smiting seas
On Holland's dikes, assailed her liberties.
Sadly, while yet in doubtful balance hung
The weal and woe of France, the bells were rung
For her lost leader. Paralyzed of will,
Above his bier the hearts of men stood still.
Then, as if set to his dead lips, the horn
Of Roland wound once more to rouse and warn,
The old voice filled the air! His last brave word
Not vainly France to all her boundaries stirred.
Strong as in life, he still for Freedom wrought,
As the dead Cid at red Toloso fought.
1877.

FITZ-GREENE HALLECK.

AT THE UNVEILING OF HIS STATUE.

Among their graven shapes to whom
Thy civic wreaths belong,
O city of his love, make room
For one whose gift was song.

Not his the soldier's sword to wield,
Nor his the helm of state,
Nor glory of the stricken field,
Nor triumph of debate.

In common ways, with common men,
He served his race and time
As well as if his clerkly pen
Had never danced to rhyme.

If, in the thronged and noisy mart,
The Muses found their son,
Could any say his tuneful art
A duty left undone?

He toiled and sang; and year by year
Men found their homes more sweet,
And through a tenderer atmosphere
Looked down the brick-walled street.

The Greek's wild onset gall Street knew;
The Red King walked Broadway;
And Alnwick Castle's roses blew
From Palisades to Bay.

Fair City by the Sea! upraise

His veil with reverent hands;
And mingle with thy own the praise
And pride of other lands.

Let Greece his fiery lyric breathe
Above her hero-urns;
And Scotland, with her holly, wreath
The flower he culled for Burns.

Oh, stately stand thy palace walls,
Thy tall ships ride the seas;
To-day thy poet's name recalls
A prouder thought than these.

Not less thy pulse of trade shall beat,
Nor less thy tall fleets swim,
That shaded square and dusty street
Are classic ground through him.

Alive, he loved, like all who sing,
The echoes of his song;
Too late the tardy meed we bring,
The praise delayed so long.

Too late, alas! Of all who knew
The living man, to-day
Before his unveiled face, how few
Make bare their locks of gray!

Our lips of praise must soon be dumb,
Our grateful eyes be dim;
O brothers of the days to come,
Take tender charge of him!

New hands the wires of song may sweep,
New voices challenge fame;
But let no moss of years o'ercreeper
The lines of Halleck's name.
1877.

WILLIAM FRANCIS BARTLETT.

Oh, well may Essex sit forlorn
Beside her sea-blown shore;
Her well beloved, her noblest born,
Is hers in life no more!

No lapse of years can render less
Her memory's sacred claim;
No fountain of forgetfulness
Can wet the lips of Fame.

A grief alike to wound and heal,
A thought to soothe and pain,
The sad, sweet pride that mothers feel
To her must still remain.

Good men and true she has not lacked,
And brave men yet shall be;
The perfect flower, the crowning fact,
Of all her years was he!

As Galahad pure, as Merlin sage,
What worthier knight was found
To grace in Arthur's golden age
The fabled Table Round?

A voice, the battle's trumpet-note,
To welcome and restore;
A hand, that all unwilling smote,
To heal and build once more;

A soul of fire, a tender heart
Too warm for hate, he knew
The generous victor's graceful part
To sheathe the sword he drew.

When Earth, as if on evil dreams,
Looks back upon her wars,
And the white light of Christ outstreams
From the red disk of Mars,

His fame who led the stormy van
Of battle well may cease,
But never that which crowns the man
Whose victory was Peace.

Mourn, Essex, on thy sea-blown shore
Thy beautiful and brave,
Whose failing hand the olive bore,
Whose dying lips forgave!

Let age lament the youthful chief,
And tender eyes be dim;
The tears are more of joy than grief
That fall for one like him!
1878.

BAYARD TAYLOR.

I.
"And where now, Bayard, will thy footsteps tend?"
My sister asked our guest one winter's day.
Smiling he answered in the Friends' sweet way
Common to both: "Wherever thou shall send!
What wouldst thou have me see for thee?" She laughed,
Her dark eyes dancing in the wood-fire's glow
"Loffoden isles, the Kilpis, and the low,
Unsetting sun on Finmark's fishing-craft."
"All these and more I soon shall see for thee!"
He answered cheerily: and he kept his pledge
On Lapland snows, the North Cape's windy wedge,
And Tromso freezing in its winter sea.
He went and came. But no man knows the track

Of his last journey, and he comes not back!

II.

He brought us wonders of the new and old;
We shared all climes with him. The Arab's tent
To him its story-telling secret lent.
And, pleased, we listened to the tales he told.
His task, beguiled with songs that shall endure,
In manly, honest thoroughness he wrought;
From humble home-lays to the heights of thought
Slowly he climbed, but every step was sure.
How, with the generous pride that friendship hath,
We, who so loved him, saw at last the crown
Of civic honor on his brows pressed down,
Rejoiced, and knew not that the gift was death.
And now for him, whose praise in deafened ears
Two nations speak, we answer but with tears!

III.

O Vale of Chester! trod by him so oft,
Green as thy June turf keep his memory. Let
Nor wood, nor dell, nor storied stream forget,
Nor winds that blow round lonely Cedarcroft;
Let the home voices greet him in the far,
Strange land that holds him; let the messages
Of love pursue him o'er the chartless seas
And unmapped vastness of his unknown star
Love's language, heard beyond the loud discourse
Of perishable fame, in every sphere
Itself interprets; and its utterance here
Somewhere in God's unfolding universe
Shall reach our traveller, softening the surprise
Of his rapt gaze on unfamiliar skies!
1879.

OUR AUTOCRAT.

Read at the breakfast given in honor of Dr. Holmes by the
publishers of the Atlantic Monthly, December 3, 1879.

His laurels fresh from song and lay,
Romance, art, science, rich in all,
And young of heart, how dare we say
We keep his seventieth festival?

No sense is here of loss or lack;
Before his sweetness and his light
The dial holds its shadow back,
The charmed hours delay their flight.

His still the keen analysis
Of men and moods, electric wit,
Free play of mirth, and tenderness
To heal the slightest wound from it.

And his the pathos touching all
Life's sins and sorrows and regrets,

Its hopes and fears, its final call
And rest beneath the violets.

His sparkling surface scarce betrays
The thoughtful tide beneath it rolled,
The wisdom of the latter days,
And tender memories of the old.

What shapes and fancies, grave or gay,
Before us at his bidding come
The Treadmill tramp, the One-Horse Shay,
The dumb despair of Elsie's doom!

The tale of Avis and the Maid,
The plea for lips that cannot speak,
The holy kiss that Iris laid
On Little Boston's pallid cheek!

Long may he live to sing for us
His sweetest songs at evening time,
And, like his Chambered Nautilus,
To holier heights of beauty climb,

Though now unnumbered guests surround
The table that he rules at will,
Its Autocrat, however crowned,
Is but our friend and comrade still.

The world may keep his honored name,
The wealth of all his varied powers;
A stronger claim has love than fame,
And he himself is only ours!

WITHIN THE GATE.

L. M. C.

I have more fully expressed my admiration and regard for Lydia
Maria Child in the biographical introduction which I wrote for the
volume of Letters, published after her death.

We sat together, last May-day, and talked
Of the dear friends who walked
Beside us, sharers of the hopes and fears
Of five and forty years,

Since first we met in Freedom's hope forlorn,
And heard her battle-horn
Sound through the valleys of the sleeping North,
Calling her children forth,

And youth pressed forward with hope-lighted eyes,
And age, with forecast wise
Of the long strife before the triumph won,
Girded his armor on.

Sadly, ass name by name we called the roll,

We heard the dead-bells toll
For the unanswering many, and we knew
The living were the few.

And we, who waited our own call before
The inevitable door,
Listened and looked, as all have done, to win
Some token from within.

No sign we saw, we heard no voices call;
The impenetrable wall
Cast down its shadow, like an awful doubt,
On all who sat without.

Of many a hint of life beyond the veil,
And many a ghostly tale
Wherewith the ages spanned the gulf between
The seen and the unseen,

Seeking from omen, trance, and dream to gain
Solace to doubtful pain,
And touch, with groping hands, the garment hem
Of truth sufficing them,

We talked; and, turning from the sore unrest
Of an all-baffling quest,
We thought of holy lives that from us passed
Hopeful unto the last,

As if they saw beyond the river of death,
Like Him of Nazareth,
The many mansions of the Eternal days
Lift up their gates of praise.

And, hushed to silence by a reverent awe,
Methought, O friend, I saw
In thy true life of word, and work, and thought
The proof of all we sought.

Did we not witness in the life of thee
Immortal prophecy?
And feel, when with thee, that thy footsteps trod
An everlasting road?

Not for brief days thy generous sympathies,
Thy scorn of selfish ease;
Not for the poor prize of an earthly goal
Thy strong uplift of soul.

Than thine was never turned a fonder heart
To nature and to art
In fair-formed Hellas in her golden prime,
Thy Philothea's time.

Yet, loving beauty, thou couldst pass it by,
And for the poor deny
Thyself, and see thy fresh, sweet flower of fame
Wither in blight and blame.

Sharing His love who holds in His embrace
The lowliest of our race,
Sure the Divine economy must be
Conservative of thee!

For truth must live with truth, self-sacrifice
Seek out its great allies;
Good must find good by gravitation sure,
And love with love endure.

And so, since thou hast passed within the gate
Whereby awhile I wait,
I give blind grief and blinder sense the lie
Thou hast not lived to die!
1881.

IN MEMORY.

JAMES T. FIELDS.

As a guest who may not stay
Long and sad farewells to say
Glides with smiling face away,

Of the sweetness and the zest
Of thy happy life possessed
Thou hast left us at thy best.

Warm of heart and clear of brain,
Of thy sun-bright spirit's wane
Thou hast spared us all the pain.

Now that thou hast gone away,
What is left of one to say
Who was open as the day?

What is there to gloss or shun?
Save with kindly voices none
Speak thy name beneath the sun.

Safe thou art on every side,
Friendship nothing finds to hide,
Love's demand is satisfied.

Over manly strength and worth,
At thy desk of toil, or hearth,
Played the lambent light of mirth,--

Mirth that lit, but never burned;
All thy blame to pity turned;
Hatred thou hadst never learned.

Every harsh and vexing thing
At thy home-fire lost its sting;
Where thou wast was always spring.

And thy perfect trust in good,

Faith in man and womanhood,
Chance and change and time, withstood.

Small respect for cant and whine,
Bigot's zeal and hate malign,
Had that sunny soul of thine.

But to thee was duty's claim
Sacred, and thy lips became
Reverent with one holy Name.

Therefore, on thy unknown way,
Go in God's peace! We who stay
But a little while delay.

Keep for us, O friend, where'er
Thou art waiting, all that here
Made thy earthly presence dear;

Something of thy pleasant past
On a ground of wonder cast,
In the stiller waters glassed!

Keep the human heart of thee;
Let the mortal only be
Clothed in immortality.

And when fall our feet as fell
Thine upon the asphodel,
Let thy old smile greet us well;

Proving in a world of bliss
What we fondly dream in this,--
Love is one with holiness!
1881.

WILSON

Read at the Massachusetts Club on the seventieth anniversary the
birthday of Vice-President Wilson, February 16, 1882.

The lowliest born of all the land,
He wrung from Fate's reluctant hand
The gifts which happier boyhood claims;
And, tasting on a thankless soil
The bitter bread of unpaid toil,
He fed his soul with noble aims.

And Nature, kindly provident,
To him the future's promise lent;
The powers that shape man's destinies,
Patience and faith and toil, he knew,
The close horizon round him grew,
Broad with great possibilities.

By the low hearth-fire's fitful blaze
He read of old heroic days,

The sage's thought, the patriot's speech;
Unhelped, alone, himself he taught,
His school the craft at which he wrought,
His lore the book within his, reach.

He felt his country's need; he knew
The work her children had to do;
And when, at last, he heard the call
In her behalf to serve and dare,
Beside his senatorial chair
He stood the unquestioned peer of all.

Beyond the accident of birth
He proved his simple manhood's worth;
Ancestral pride and classic grace
Confessed the large-brained artisan,
So clear of sight, so wise in plan
And counsel, equal to his place.

With glance intuitive he saw
Through all disguise of form and law,
And read men like an open book;
Fearless and firm, he never quailed
Nor turned aside for threats, nor failed
To do the thing he undertook.

How wise, how brave, he was, how well
He bore himself, let history tell
While waves our flag o'er land and sea,
No black thread in its warp or weft;
He found dismembered States, he left
A grateful Nation, strong and free!

THE POET AND THE CHILDREN.

LONGFELLOW.

WITH a glory of winter sunshine
Over his locks of gray,
In the old historic mansion
He sat on his last birthday;

With his books and his pleasant pictures,
And his household and his kin,
While a sound as of myriads singing
From far and near stole in.

It came from his own fair city,
From the prairie's boundless plain,
From the Golden Gate of sunset,
And the cedarn woods of Maine.

And his heart grew warm within him,
And his moistening eyes grew dim,
For he knew that his country's children
Were singing the songs of him,

The lays of his life's glad morning,
The psalms of his evening time,
Whose echoes shall float forever
On the winds of every clime.

All their beautiful consolations,
Sent forth like birds of cheer,
Came flocking back to his windows,
And sang in the Poet's ear.

Grateful, but solemn and tender,
The music rose and fell
With a joy akin to sadness
And a greeting like farewell.

With a sense of awe he listened
To the voices sweet and young;
The last of earth and the first of heaven
Seemed in the songs they sung.

And waiting a little longer
For the wonderful change to come,
He heard the Summoning Angel,
Who calls God's children home!

And to him in a holier welcome
Was the mystical meaning given
Of the words of the blessed Master
"Of such is the kingdom of heaven!"
1882

A WELCOME TO LOWELL

Take our hands, James Russell Lowell,
Our hearts are all thy own;
To-day we bid thee welcome
Not for ourselves alone.

In the long years of thy absence
Some of us have grown old,
And some have passed the portals
Of the Mystery untold;

For the hands that cannot clasp thee,
For the voices that are dumb,
For each and all I bid thee
A grateful welcome home!

For Cedarcroft's sweet singer
To the nine-fold Muses dear;
For the Seer the winding Concord
Paused by his door to hear;

For him, our guide and Nestor,
Who the march of song began,
The white locks of his ninety years
Bared to thy winds, Cape Ann!

For him who, to the music
Her pines and hemlocks played,
Set the old and tender story
Of the lorn Acadian maid;

For him, whose voice for freedom
Swayed friend and foe at will,
Hushed is the tongue of silver,
The golden lips are still!

For her whose life of duty
At scoff and menace smiled,
Brave as the wife of Roland,
Yet gentle as a Child.

And for him the three-hilled city
Shall hold in memory long,
Those name is the hint and token
Of the pleasant Fields of Song!

For the old friends unforgotten,
For the young thou hast not known,
I speak their heart-warm greeting;
Come back and take thy own!

From England's royal farewells,
And honors fitly paid,
Come back, dear Russell Lowell,
To Elmwood's waiting shade!

Come home with all the garlands
That crown of right thy head.
I speak for comrades living,
I speak for comrades dead!
AMESBURY, 6th mo., 1885.

AN ARTIST OF THE BEAUTIFUL.

GEORGE FULLER

Haunted of Beauty, like the marvellous youth
Who sang Saint Agnes' Eve! How passing fair
Her shapes took color in thy homestead air!
How on thy canvas even her dreams were truth!
Magician! who from commonest elements
Called up divine ideals, clothed upon
By mystic lights soft blending into one
Womanly grace and child-like innocence.
Teacher I thy lesson was not given in vain.
Beauty is goodness; ugliness is sin;
Art's place is sacred: nothing foul therein
May crawl or tread with bestial feet profane.
If rightly choosing is the painter's test,
Thy choice, O master, ever was the best.
1885.

MULFORD.

Author of The Nation and The Republic of God.

Unnoted as the setting of a star
He passed; and sect and party scarcely knew
When from their midst a sage and seer withdrew
To fitter audience, where the great dead are
In God's republic of the heart and mind,
Leaving no purer, nobler soul behind.
1886.

TO A CAPE ANN SCHOONER

Luck to the craft that bears this name of mine,
Good fortune follow with her golden spoon
The glazed hat and tarry pantaloons;
And wheresoe'er her keel shall cut the brine,
Cod, hake and haddock quarrel for her line.
Shipped with her crew, whatever wind may blow,
Or tides delay, my wish with her shall go,
Fishing by proxy. Would that it might show
At need her course, in lack of sun and star,
Where icebergs threaten, and the sharp reefs are;
Lift the blind fog on Anticosti's lee
And Avalon's rock; make populous the sea
Round Grand Manan with eager finny swarms,
Break the long calms, and charm away the storms.
OAK KNOLL, 23 3rd mo., 1886.

SAMUEL J. TILDEN.

GREYSTONE, AUG. 4, 1886.

Once more, O all-adjusting Death!
The nation's Pantheon opens wide;
Once more a common sorrow saith
A strong, wise man has died.

Faults doubtless had he. Had we not
Our own, to question and asperse
The worth we doubted or forgot
Until beside his hearse?

Ambitious, cautious, yet the man
To strike down fraud with resolute hand;
A patriot, if a partisan,
He loved his native land.

So let the mourning bells be rung,
The banner droop its folds half way,
And while the public pen and tongue
Their fitting tribute pay,

Shall we not vow above his bier
To set our feet on party lies,
And wound no more a living ear
With words that Death denies?

1886

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