

# **The Tent on the Beach and Others**

## **Part 4, From Volume IV., The Works of Whittier: Personal Poems**

### **John Greenleaf Whittier**

Project Gutenberg EBook, Tent on the Beach and Others  
Part 4, From Volume IV., The Works of Whittier: Personal Poems  
#29 in our series by John Greenleaf Whittier

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THE TENT ON THE BEACH  
BY  
JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

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THE TENT ON THE BEACH

It can scarcely be necessary to name as the two companions whom I reckoned with myself in this poetical picnic, Fields the lettered magnate, and Taylor the free cosmopolite. The long line of sandy beach which defines almost the whole of the New Hampshire sea-coast is especially marked near its southern extremity, by the salt-meadows of Hampton. The Hampton River winds through these meadows, and the reader may, if he choose, imagine my tent pitched near its mouth, where also was the scene of the Wreck of Rivermouth. The green bluff to the northward is Great Boar's Head; southward is the Merrimac, with Newburyport lifting its steeples above brown roofs and green trees on banks.

I would not sin, in this half-playful strain,--  
Too light perhaps for serious years, though born  
Of the enforced leisure of slow pain,--  
Against the pure ideal which has drawn  
My feet to follow its far-shining gleam.  
A simple plot is mine: legends and runes  
Of credulous days, old fancies that have lain  
Silent, from boyhood taking voice again,  
Warmed into life once more, even as the tunes  
That, frozen in the fabled hunting-horn,

Thawed into sound:--a winter fireside dream  
Of dawns and-sunsets by the summer sea,  
Whose sands are traversed by a silent throng  
Of voyagers from that vaster mystery  
Of which it is an emblem;--and the dear  
Memory of one who might have tuned my song  
To sweeter music by her delicate ear.

When heats as of a tropic clime  
Burned all our inland valleys through,  
Three friends, the guests of summer time,  
Pitched their white tent where sea-winds blew.  
Behind them, marshes, seamed and crossed  
With narrow creeks, and flower-embossed,  
Stretched to the dark oak wood, whose leafy arms  
Screened from the stormy East the pleasant inland farms.

At full of tide their bolder shore  
Of sun-bleached sand the waters beat;  
At ebb, a smooth and glistening floor  
They touched with light, receding feet.  
Northward a 'green bluff broke the chain  
Of sand-hills; southward stretched a plain  
Of salt grass, with a river winding down,  
Sail-whitened, and beyond the steeples of the town,

Whence sometimes, when the wind was light  
And dull the thunder of the beach,  
They heard the bells of morn and night  
Swing, miles away, their silver speech.  
Above low scarp and turf-grown wall  
They saw the fort-flag rise and fall;  
And, the first star to signal twilight's hour,  
The lamp-fire glimmer down from the tall light-house tower.

They rested there, escaped awhile  
From cares that wear the life away,  
To eat the lotus of the Nile  
And drink the poppies of Cathay,--  
To fling their loads of custom down,  
Like drift-weed, on the sand-slopes brown,  
And in the sea waves drown the restless pack  
Of duties, claims, and needs that barked upon their track.

One, with his beard scarce silvered, bore  
A ready credence in his looks,  
A lettered magnate, lording o'er  
An ever-widening realm of books.  
In him brain-currents, near and far,  
Converged as in a Leyden jar;  
The old, dead authors thronged him round about,  
And Elzevir's gray ghosts from leathern graves looked out.

He knew each living pundit well,  
Could weigh the gifts of him or her,  
And well the market value tell  
Of poet and philosopher.  
But if he lost, the scenes behind,

Somewhat of reverence vague and blind,  
Finding the actors human at the best,  
No readier lips than his the good he saw confessed.

His boyhood fancies not outgrown,  
He loved himself the singer's art;  
Tenderly, gently, by his own  
He knew and judged an author's heart.  
No Rhadamanthine brow of doom  
Bowed the dazed pedant from his room;  
And bards, whose name is legion, if denied,  
Bore off alike intact their verses and their pride.

Pleasant it was to roam about  
The lettered world as he had, done,  
And see the lords of song without  
Their singing robes and garlands on.  
With Wordsworth paddle Rydal mere,  
Taste rugged Elliott's home-brewed beer,  
And with the ears of Rogers, at fourscore,  
Hear Garrick's buskined tread and Walpole's wit once more.

And one there was, a dreamer born,  
Who, with a mission to fulfil,  
Had left the Muses' haunts to turn  
The crank of an opinion-mill,  
Making his rustic reed of song  
A weapon in the war with wrong,  
Yoking his fancy to the breaking-plough  
That beam-deep turned the soil for truth to spring and grow.

Too quiet seemed the man to ride  
The winged Hippogriff Reform;  
Was his a voice from side to side  
To pierce the tumult of the storm?  
A silent, shy, peace-loving man,  
He seemed no fiery partisan  
To hold his way against the public frown,  
The ban of Church and State, the fierce mob's hounding down.

For while he wrought with strenuous will  
The work his hands had found to do,  
He heard the fitful music still  
Of winds that out of dream-land blew.  
The din about him could not drown  
What the strange voices whispered down;  
Along his task-field weird processions swept,  
The visionary pomp of stately phantoms stepped:

The common air was thick with dreams,--  
He told them to the toiling crowd;  
Such music as the woods and streams  
Sang in his ear he sang aloud;  
In still, shut bays, on windy capes,  
He heard the call of beckoning shapes,  
And, as the gray old shadows prompted him,  
To homely moulds of rhyme he shaped their legends grim.

He rested now his weary hands,

And lightly moralized and laughed,  
As, tracing on the shifting sands  
A burlesque of his paper-craft,  
He saw the careless waves o'errun  
His words, as time before had done,  
Each day's tide-water washing clean away,  
Like letters from the sand, the work of yesterday.

And one, whose Arab face was tanned  
By tropic sun and boreal frost,  
So travelled there was scarce a land  
Or people left him to exhaust,  
In idling mood had from him hurled  
The poor squeezed orange of the world,  
And in the tent-shade, as beneath a palm,  
Smoked, cross-legged like a Turk, in Oriental calm.

The very waves that washed the sand  
Below him, he had seen before  
Whitening the Scandinavian strand  
And sultry Mauritanian shore.  
From ice-rimmed isles, from summer seas  
Palm-fringed, they bore him messages;  
He heard the plaintive Nubian songs again,  
And mule-bells tinkling down the mountain-paths of Spain.

His memory round the ransacked earth  
On Puck's long girdle slid at ease;  
And, instant, to the valley's girth  
Of mountains, spice isles of the seas,  
Faith flowered in minster stones, Art's guess  
At truth and beauty, found access;  
Yet loved the while, that free cosmopolite,  
Old friends, old ways, and kept his boyhood's dreams in sight.

Untouched as yet by wealth and pride,  
That virgin innocence of beach  
No shingly monster, hundred-eyed,  
Stared its gray sand-birds out of reach;  
Unhoused, save where, at intervals,  
The white tents showed their canvas walls,  
Where brief sojourners, in the cool, soft air,  
Forgot their inland heats, hard toil, and year-long care.

Sometimes along the wheel-deep sand  
A one-horse wagon slowly crawled,  
Deep laden with a youthful band,  
Whose look some homestead old recalled;  
Brother perchance, and sisters twain,  
And one whose blue eyes told, more plain  
Than the free language of her rosy lip,  
Of the still dearer claim of love's relationship.

With cheeks of russet-orchard tint,  
The light laugh of their native rills,  
The perfume of their garden's mint,  
The breezy freedom of the hills,  
They bore, in unrestrained delight,  
The motto of the Garter's knight,

Careless as if from every gazing thing  
Hid by their innocence, as Gyges by his ring.

The clanging sea-fowl came and went,  
The hunter's gun in the marshes rang;  
At nightfall from a neighboring tent  
A flute-voiced woman sweetly sang.  
Loose-haired, barefooted, hand-in-hand,  
Young girls went tripping down the sand;  
And youths and maidens, sitting in the moon,  
Dreamed o'er the old fond dream from which we wake too soon.

At times their fishing-lines they plied,  
With an old Triton at the oar,  
Salt as the sea-wind, tough and dried  
As a lean cusk from Labrador.  
Strange tales he told of wreck and storm,--  
Had seen the sea-snake's awful form,  
And heard the ghosts on Haley's Isle complain,  
Speak him off shore, and beg a passage to old Spain!

And there, on breezy morns, they saw  
The fishing-schooners outward run,  
Their low-bent sails in tack and flaw  
Turned white or dark to shade and sun.  
Sometimes, in calms of closing day,  
They watched the spectral mirage play,  
Saw low, far islands looming tall and nigh,  
And ships, with upturned keels, sail like a sea the sky.

Sometimes a cloud, with thunder black,  
Stooped low upon the darkening main,  
Piercing the waves along its track  
With the slant javelins of rain.  
And when west-wind and sunshine warm  
Chased out to sea its wrecks of storm,  
They saw the prisms in thin spray showers  
Where the green buds of waves burst into white froth flowers.

And when along the line of shore  
The mists crept upward chill and damp,  
Stretched, careless, on their sandy floor  
Beneath the flaring lantern lamp,  
They talked of all things old and new,  
Read, slept, and dreamed as idlers do;  
And in the unquestioned freedom of the tent,  
Body and o'er-taxed mind to healthful ease unbent.

Once, when the sunset splendors died,  
And, trampling up the sloping sand,  
In lines outreaching far and wide,  
The white-waned billows swept to land,  
Dim seen across the gathering shade,  
A vast and ghostly cavalcade,  
They sat around their lighted kerosene,  
Hearing the deep bass roar their every pause between.

Then, urged thereto, the Editor  
Within his full portfolio dipped,

Feigning excuse while seaching for  
(With secret pride) his manuscript.  
His pale face flushed from eye to beard,  
With nervous cough his throat he cleared,  
And, in a voice so tremulous it betrayed  
The anxious fondness of an author's heart, he read:

## THE WRECK OF RIVERMOUTH

The Goody Cole who figures in this poem and The Changeling as Eunice Cole, who for a quarter of a century or more was feared, persecuted, and hated as the witch of Hampton. She lived alone in a hovel a little distant from the spot where the Hampton Academy now stands, and there she died, unattended. When her death was discovered, she was hastily covered up in the earth near by, and a stake driven through her body, to exorcise the evil spirit. Rev. Stephen Bachiler or Batchelder was one of the ablest of the early New England preachers. His marriage late in life to a woman regarded by his church as disreputable induced him to return to England, where he enjoyed the esteem and favor of Oliver Cromwell during the Protectorate.

Rivermouth Rocks are fair to see,  
By dawn or sunset shone across,  
When the ebb of the sea has left them free,  
To dry their fringes of gold-green moss  
For there the river comes winding down,  
From salt sea-meadows and uplands brown,  
And waves on the outer rocks afoam  
Shout to its waters, "Welcome home!"

And fair are the sunny isles in view  
East of the grisly Head of the Boar,  
And Agamenticus lifts its blue  
Disk of a cloud the woodlands o'er;  
And southerly, when the tide is down,  
'Twixt white sea-waves and sand-hills brown,  
The beach-birds dance and the gray gulls wheel  
Over a floor of burnished steel.

Once, in the old Colonial days,  
Two hundred years ago and more,  
A boat sailed down through the winding ways  
Of Hampton River to that low shore,  
Full of a goodly company  
Sailing out on the summer sea,  
Veering to catch the land-breeze light,  
With the Boar to left and the Rocks to right.

In Hampton meadows, where mowers laid  
Their scythes to the swaths of salted grass,  
"Ah, well-a-day! our hay must be made!"  
A young man sighed, who saw them pass.  
Loud laughed his fellows to see him stand  
Whetting his scythe with a listless hand,  
Hearing a voice in a far-off song,  
Watching a white hand beckoning long.



"Fie on the witch!" cried a merry girl,  
As they rounded the point where Goody Cole  
Sat by her door with her wheel atwirl,  
A bent and blear-eyed poor old soul.  
"Oho!" she muttered, "ye 're brave to-day!  
But I hear the little waves laugh and say,  
'The broth will be cold that waits at home;  
For it 's one to go, but another to come!"

"She's cursed," said the skipper; "speak her fair:  
I'm scary always to see her shake  
Her wicked head, with its wild gray hair,  
And nose like a hawk, and eyes like a snake."  
But merrily still, with laugh and shout,  
From Hampton River the boat sailed out,  
Till the huts and the flakes on Star seemed nigh,  
And they lost the scent of the pines of Rye.

They dropped their lines in the lazy tide,  
Drawing up haddock and mottled cod;  
They saw not the Shadow that walked beside,  
They heard not the feet with silence shod.  
But thicker and thicker a hot mist grew,  
Shot by the lightnings through and through;  
And muffled growls, like the growl of a beast,  
Ran along the sky from west to east.

Then the skipper looked from the darkening sea  
Up to the dimmed and wading sun;  
But he spake like a brave man cheerily,  
"Yet there is time for our homeward run."  
Veering and tacking, they backward wore;  
And just as a breath-from the woods ashore  
Blew out to whisper of danger past,  
The wrath of the storm came down at last!

The skipper hauled at the heavy sail  
"God be our help!" he only cried,  
As the roaring gale, like the stroke of a flail,  
Smote the boat on its starboard side.  
The Shoalsmen looked, but saw alone  
Dark films of rain-cloud slantwise blown,  
Wild rocks lit up by the lightning's glare,  
The strife and torment of sea and air.

Goody Cole looked out from her door  
The Isles of Shoals were drowned and gone,  
Scarcely she saw the Head of the Boar  
Toss the foam from tusks of stone.  
She clasped her hands with a grip of pain,  
The tear on her cheek was not of rain  
"They are lost," she muttered, "boat and crew!  
Lord, forgive me! my words were true!"

Suddenly seaward swept the squall;  
The low sun smote through cloudy rack;  
The Shoals stood clear in the light, and all  
The trend of the coast lay hard and black.

But far and wide as eye could reach,  
No life was seen upon wave or beach;  
The boat that went out at morning never  
Sailed back again into Hampton River.

O mower, lean on thy bended snath,  
Look from the meadows green and low  
The wind of the sea is a waft of death,  
The waves are singing a song of woe!  
By silent river, by moaning sea,  
Long and vain shall thy watching be  
Never again shall the sweet voice call,  
Never the white hand rise and fall!

O Rivermouth Rocks, how sad a sight  
Ye saw in the light of breaking day  
Dead faces looking up cold and white  
From sand and seaweed where they lay.  
The mad old witch-wife wailed and wept,  
And cursed the tide as it backward crept  
"Crawl back, crawl back, blue water-snake  
Leave your dead for the hearts that break!"

Solemn it was in that old day  
In Hampton town and its log-built church,  
Where side by side the coffins lay  
And the mourners stood in aisle and porch.  
In the singing-seats young eyes were dim,  
The voices faltered that raised the hymn,  
And Father Dalton, grave and stern,  
Sobbed through his prayer and wept in turn.

But his ancient colleague did not pray;  
Under the weight of his fourscore years  
He stood apart with the iron-gray  
Of his strong brows knitted to hide his tears;  
And a fair-faced woman of doubtful fame,  
Linking her own with his honored name,  
Subtle as sin, at his side withstood  
The felt reproach of her neighborhood.

Apart with them, like them forbid,  
Old Goody Cole looked drearily round,  
As, two by two, with their faces hid,  
The mourners walked to the burying-ground.  
She let the staff from her clasped hands fall  
"Lord, forgive us! we're sinners all!"  
And the voice of the old man answered her  
"Amen!" said Father Bachiler.

So, as I sat upon Appledore  
In the calm of a closing summer day,  
And the broken lines of Hampton shore  
In purple mist of cloudland lay,  
The Rivermouth Rocks their story told;  
And waves aglow with sunset gold,  
Rising and breaking in steady chime,  
Beat the rhythm and kept the time.

And the sunset paled, and warmed once more  
With a softer, tenderer after-glow;  
In the east was moon-rise, with boats off-shore  
And sails in the distance drifting slow.  
The beacon glimmered from Portsmouth bar,  
The White Isle kindled its great red star;  
And life and death in my old-time lay  
Mingled in peace like the night and day!

. . . . .

"Well!" said the Man of Books, "your story  
Is really not ill told in verse.  
As the Celt said of purgatory,  
One might go farther and fare worse."  
The Reader smiled; and once again  
With steadier voice took up his strain,  
While the fair singer from the neighboring tent  
Drew near, and at his side a graceful listener bent.  
1864.

#### THE GRAVE BY THE LAKE

At the mouth of the Melvin River, which empties into Moulton-Bay in  
Lake Winnepesaukee, is a great mound. The Ossipee Indians had their  
home in the neighborhood of the bay, which is plentifully stocked  
with fish, and many relics of their occupation have been found.

Where the Great Lake's sunny smiles  
Dimple round its hundred isles,  
And the mountain's granite ledge  
Cleaves the water like a wedge,  
Ringed about with smooth, gray stones,  
Rest the giant's mighty bones.

Close beside, in shade and gleam,  
Laughs and ripples Melvin stream;  
Melvin water, mountain-born,  
All fair flowers its banks adorn;  
All the woodland's voices meet,  
Mingling with its murmurs sweet.

Over lowlands forest-grown,  
Over waters island-strown,  
Over silver-sanded beach,  
Leaf-locked bay and misty reach,  
Melvin stream and burial-heap,  
Watch and ward the mountains keep.

Who that Titan cromlech fills?  
Forest-kaiser, lord o' the hills?  
Knight who on the birchen tree  
Carved his savage heraldry?  
Priest o' the pine-wood temples dim,  
Prophet, sage, or wizard grim?

Rugged type of primal man,

Grim utilitarian,  
Loving woods for hunt and prowl,  
Lake and hill for fish and fowl,  
As the brown bear blind and dull  
To the grand and beautiful:

Not for him the lesson drawn  
From the mountains smit with dawn,  
Star-rise, moon-rise, flowers of May,  
Sunset's purple bloom of day,--  
Took his life no hue from thence,  
Poor amid such affluence?

Haply unto hill and tree  
All too near akin was he  
Unto him who stands afar  
Nature's marvels greatest are;  
Who the mountain purple seeks  
Must not climb the higher peaks.

Yet who knows in winter tramp,  
Or the midnight of the camp,  
What revealings faint and far,  
Stealing down from moon and star,  
Kindled in that human clod  
Thought of destiny and God?

Stateliest forest patriarch,  
Grand in robes of skin and bark,  
What sepulchral mysteries,  
What weird funeral-rites, were his?  
What sharp wail, what drear lament,  
Back scared wolf and eagle sent?

Now, whate'er he may have been,  
Low he lies as other men;  
On his mound the partridge drums,  
There the noisy blue-jay comes;  
Rank nor name nor pomp has he  
In the grave's democracy.

Part thy blue lips, Northern lake!  
Moss-grown rocks, your silence break!  
Tell the tale, thou ancient tree!  
Thou, too, slide-worn Ossipee!  
Speak, and tell us how and when  
Lived and died this king of men!

Wordless moans the ancient pine;  
Lake and mountain give no sign;  
Vain to trace this ring of stones;  
Vain the search of crumbling bones  
Deepest of all mysteries,  
And the saddest, silence is.

Nameless, noteless, clay with clay  
Mingles slowly day by day;  
But somewhere, for good or ill,  
That dark soul is living still;

Somewhere yet that atom's force  
Moves the light-poised universe.

Strange that on his burial-sod  
Harebells bloom, and golden-rod,  
While the soul's dark horoscope  
Holds no starry sign of hope!  
Is the Unseen with sight at odds?  
Nature's pity more than God's?

Thus I mused by Melvin's side,  
While the summer eventide  
Made the woods and inland sea  
And the mountains mystery;  
And the hush of earth and air  
Seemed the pause before a prayer,--

Prayer for him, for all who rest,  
Mother Earth, upon thy breast,--  
Lapped on Christian turf, or hid  
In rock-cave or pyramid  
All who sleep, as all who live,  
Well may need the prayer, "Forgive!"

Desert-smothered caravan,  
Knee-deep dust that once was man,  
Battle-trenches ghastly piled,  
Ocean-floors with white bones tiled,  
Crowded tomb and mounded sod,  
Dumbly crave that prayer to God.

Oh, the generations old  
Over whom no church-bells tolled,  
Christless, lifting up blind eyes  
To the silence of the skies!  
For the innumerable dead  
Is my soul disquieted.

Where be now these silent hosts?  
Where the camping-ground of ghosts?  
Where the spectral conscripts led  
To the white tents of the dead?  
What strange shore or chartless sea  
Holds the awful mystery?

Then the warm sky stooped to make  
Double sunset in the lake;  
While above I saw with it,  
Range on range, the mountains lit;  
And the calm and splendor stole  
Like an answer to my soul.

Hear'st thou, O of little faith,  
What to thee the mountain saith,  
What is whispered by the trees?  
Cast on God thy care for these;  
Trust Him, if thy sight be dim  
Doubt for them is doubt of Him.

"Blind must be their close-shut eyes  
Where like night the sunshine lies,  
Fiery-linked the self-forged chain  
Binding ever sin to pain,  
Strong their prison-house of will,  
But without He waiteth still.

"Not with hatred's undertow  
Doth the Love Eternal flow;  
Every chain that spirits wear  
Crumbles in the breath of prayer;  
And the penitent's desire  
Opens every gate of fire.

"Still Thy love, O Christ arisen,  
Yearns to reach these souls in prison!  
Through all depths of sin and loss  
Drops the plummet of Thy cross!  
Never yet abyss was found  
Deeper than that cross could sound!"

Therefore well may Nature keep  
Equal faith with all who sleep,  
Set her watch of hills around  
Christian grave and heathen mound,  
And to cairn and kirkyard send  
Summer's flowery dividend.

Keep, O pleasant Melvin stream,  
Thy sweet laugh in shade and gleam  
On the Indian's grassy tomb  
Swing, O flowers, your bells of bloom!  
Deep below, as high above,  
Sweeps the circle of God's love.  
1865

. . . . .

He paused and questioned with his eye  
The hearers' verdict on his song.  
A low voice asked: Is 't well to pry  
Into the secrets which belong  
Only to God?--The life to be  
Is still the unguessed mystery  
Unsealed, unpierced the cloudy walls remain,  
We beat with dream and wish the soundless doors in vain.

"But faith beyond our sight may go."  
He said: "The gracious Fatherhood  
Can only know above, below,  
Eternal purposes of good.  
From our free heritage of will,  
The bitter springs of pain and ill  
Flow only in all worlds. The perfect day  
Of God is shadowless, and love is love always."

"I know," she said, "the letter kills;  
That on our arid fields of strife  
And heat of clashing texts distils

The clew of spirit and of life.  
But, searching still the written Word,  
I fain would find, Thus saith the Lord,  
A voucher for the hope I also feel  
That sin can give no wound beyond love's power to heal."

"Pray," said the Man of Books, "give o'er  
A theme too vast for time and place.  
Go on, Sir Poet, ride once more  
Your hobby at his old free pace.  
But let him keep, with step discreet,  
The solid earth beneath his feet.  
In the great mystery which around us lies,  
The wisest is a fool, the fool Heaven-helped is wise."

The Traveller said: "If songs have creeds,  
Their choice of them let singers make;  
But Art no other sanction needs  
Than beauty for its own fair sake.  
It grinds not in the mill of use,  
Nor asks for leave, nor begs excuse;  
It makes the flexile laws it deigns to own,  
And gives its atmosphere its color and its tone.

"Confess, old friend, your austere school  
Has left your fancy little chance;  
You square to reason's rigid rule  
The flowing outlines of romance.  
With conscience keen from exercise,  
And chronic fear of compromise,  
You check the free play of your rhymes, to clap  
A moral underneath, and spring it like a trap."

The sweet voice answered: "Better so  
Than bolder flights that know no check;  
Better to use the bit, than throw  
The reins all loose on fancy's neck.  
The liberal range of Art should be  
The breadth of Christian liberty,  
Restrained alone by challenge and alarm  
Where its charmed footsteps tread the border land of harm.

"Beyond the poet's sweet dream lives  
The eternal epic of the man.  
He wisest is who only gives,  
True to himself, the best he can;  
Who, drifting in the winds of praise,  
The inward monitor obeys;  
And, with the boldness that confesses fear,  
Takes in the crowded sail, and lets his conscience steer.

"Thanks for the fitting word he speaks,  
Nor less for doubtful word unspoken;  
For the false model that he breaks,  
As for the moulded grace unbroken;  
For what is missed and what remains,  
For losses which are truest gains,  
For reverence conscious of the Eternal eye,  
And truth too fair to need the garnish of a lie."

Laughing, the Critic bowed. "I yield  
The point without another word;  
Who ever yet a case appealed  
Where beauty's judgment had been heard?  
And you, my good friend, owe to me  
Your warmest thanks for such a plea,  
As true withal as sweet. For my offence  
Of cavil, let her words be ample recompense."

Across the sea one lighthouse star,  
With crimson ray that came and went,  
Revolving on its tower afar,  
Looked through the doorway of the tent.  
While outward, over sand-slopes wet,  
The lamp flashed down its yellow jet  
On the long wash of waves, with red and green  
Tangles of weltering weed through the white foam-wreaths seen.

"Sing while we may,--another day  
May bring enough of sorrow;--thus  
Our Traveller in his own sweet lay,  
His Crimean camp-song, hints to us,"  
The lady said. "So let it be;  
Sing us a song," exclaimed all three.  
She smiled: "I can but marvel at your choice  
To hear our poet's words through my poor borrowed voice."

. . . . .

Her window opens to the bay,  
On glistening light or misty gray,  
And there at dawn and set of day  
In prayer she kneels.

"Dear Lord!" she saith, "to many a borne  
From wind and wave the wanderers come;  
I only see the tossing foam  
Of stranger keels.

"Blown out and in by summer gales,  
The stately ships, with crowded sails,  
And sailors leaning o'er their rails,  
Before me glide;  
They come, they go, but nevermore,  
Spice-laden from the Indian shore,  
I see his swift-winged Isidore  
The waves divide.

"O Thou! with whom the night is day  
And one the near and far away,  
Look out on yon gray waste, and say  
Where lingers he.  
Alive, perchance, on some lone beach  
Or thirsty isle beyond the reach  
Of man, he hears the mocking speech  
Of wind and sea.

"O dread and cruel deep, reveal



The secret which thy waves conceal,  
And, ye wild sea-birds, hither wheel  
And tell your tale.  
Let winds that tossed his raven hair  
A message from my lost one bear,--  
Some thought of me, a last fond prayer  
Or dying wail!

"Come, with your dreariest truth shut out  
The fears that haunt me round about;  
O God! I cannot bear this doubt  
That stifles breath.  
The worst is better than the dread;  
Give me but leave to mourn my dead  
Asleep in trust and hope, instead  
Of life in death!"

It might have been the evening breeze  
That whispered in the garden trees,  
It might have been the sound of seas  
That rose and fell;  
But, with her heart, if not her ear,  
The old loved voice she seemed to hear  
"I wait to meet thee: be of cheer,  
For all is well!"  
1865

. . . . .  
The sweet voice into silence went,  
A silence which was almost pain  
As through it rolled the long lament,  
The cadence of the mournful main.  
Glancing his written pages o'er,  
The Reader tried his part once more;  
Leaving the land of hackmatack and pine  
For Tuscan valleys glad with olive and with vine.

#### THE BROTHER OF MERCY.

Piero Luca, known of all the town  
As the gray porter by the Pitti wall  
Where the noon shadows of the gardens fall,  
Sick and in dolor, waited to lay down  
His last sad burden, and beside his mat  
The barefoot monk of La Certosa sat.

Unseen, in square and blossoming garden drifted,  
Soft sunset lights through green Val d'Arno sifted;  
Unheard, below the living shuttles shifted  
Backward and forth, and wove, in love or strife,  
In mirth or pain, the mottled web of life  
But when at last came upward from the street  
Tinkle of bell and tread of measured feet,  
The sick man started, strove to rise in vain,  
Sinking back heavily with a moan of pain.  
And the monk said, "'T is but the Brotherhood  
Of Mercy going on some errand good

Their black masks by the palace-wall I see."  
Piero answered faintly, "Woe is me!  
This day for the first time in forty years  
In vain the bell hath sounded in my ears,  
Calling me with my brethren of the mask,  
Beggar and prince alike, to some new task  
Of love or pity,--haply from the street  
To bear a wretch plague-stricken, or, with feet  
Hushed to the quickened ear and feverish brain,  
To tread the crowded lazaretto's floors,  
Down the long twilight of the corridors,  
Midst tossing arms and faces full of pain.  
I loved the work: it was its own reward.  
I never counted on it to offset  
My sins, which are many, or make less my debt  
To the free grace and mercy of our Lord;  
But somehow, father, it has come to be  
In these long years so much a part of me,  
I should not know myself, if lacking it,  
But with the work the worker too would die,  
And in my place some other self would sit  
Joyful or sad,--what matters, if not I?  
And now all's over. Woe is me!"--"My son,"  
The monk said soothingly, "thy work is done;  
And no more as a servant, but the guest  
Of God thou enterest thy eternal rest.  
No toil, no tears, no sorrow for the lost,  
Shall mar thy perfect bliss. Thou shalt sit down  
Clad in white robes, and wear a golden crown  
Forever and forever."--Piero tossed  
On his sick-pillow: "Miserable me!  
I am too poor for such grand company;  
The crown would be too heavy for this gray  
Old head; and God forgive me if I say  
It would be hard to sit there night and day,  
Like an image in the Tribune, doing naught  
With these hard hands, that all my life have wrought,  
Not for bread only, but for pity's sake.  
I'm dull at prayers: I could not keep awake,  
Counting my beads. Mine's but a crazy head,  
Scarce worth the saving, if all else be dead.  
And if one goes to heaven without a heart,  
God knows he leaves behind his better part.  
I love my fellow-men: the worst I know  
I would do good to. Will death change me so  
That I shall sit among the lazy saints,  
Turning a deaf ear to the sore complaints  
Of souls that suffer? Why, I never yet  
Left a poor dog in the strada hard beset,  
Or ass o'erladen! Must I rate man less  
Than dog or ass, in holy selfishness?  
Methinks (Lord, pardon, if the thought be sin!)  
The world of pain were better, if therein  
One's heart might still be human, and desires  
Of natural pity drop upon its fires  
Some cooling tears."

Thereat the pale monk crossed  
His brow, and, muttering, "Madman! thou art lost!"

Took up his pyx and fled; and, left alone,  
The sick man closed his eyes with a great groan  
That sank into a prayer, "Thy will be done!"  
Then was he made aware, by soul or ear,  
Of somewhat pure and holy bending o'er him,  
And of a voice like that of her who bore him,  
Tender and most compassionate: "Never fear!  
For heaven is love, as God himself is love;  
Thy work below shall be thy work above."  
And when he looked, lo! in the stern monk's place  
He saw the shining of an angel's face!  
1864.

. . . . .

The Traveller broke the pause. "I've seen  
The Brothers down the long street steal,  
Black, silent, masked, the crowd between,  
And felt to doff my hat and kneel  
With heart, if not with knee, in prayer,  
For blessings on their pious care."

Reader wiped his glasses: "Friends of mine,  
I'll try our home-brewed next, instead of foreign wine."

#### THE CHANGELING.

For the fairest maid in Hampton  
They needed not to search,  
Who saw young Anna Favor  
Come walking into church,

Or bringing from the meadows,  
At set of harvest-day,  
The frolic of the blackbirds,  
The sweetness of the hay.

Now the weariest of all mothers,  
The saddest two-years bride,  
She scowls in the face of her husband,  
And spurns her child aside.

"Rake out the red coals, goodman,--  
For there the child shall lie,  
Till the black witch comes to fetch her  
And both up chimney fly.

"It's never my own little daughter,  
It's never my own," she said;  
"The witches have stolen my Anna,  
And left me an imp instead.

"Oh, fair and sweet was my baby,  
Blue eyes, and hair of gold;  
But this is ugly and wrinkled,  
Cross, and cunning, and old.

"I hate the touch of her fingers,  
I hate the feel of her skin;  
It's not the milk from my bosom,  
But my blood, that she sucks in.

"My face grows sharp with the torment;  
Look! my arms are skin and bone!  
Rake open the red coals, goodman,  
And the witch shall have her own.

"She 'll come when she hears it crying,  
In the shape of an owl or bat,  
And she'll bring us our darling Anna  
In place of her screeching brat."

Then the goodman, Ezra Dalton,  
Laid his hand upon her head  
"Thy sorrow is great, O woman!  
I sorrow with thee," he said.

"The paths to trouble are many,  
And never but one sure way  
Leads out to the light beyond it  
My poor wife, let us pray."

Then he said to the great All-Father,  
"Thy daughter is weak and blind;  
Let her sight come back, and clothe her  
Once more in her right mind.

"Lead her out of this evil shadow,  
Out of these fancies wild;  
Let the holy love of the mother  
Turn again to her child.

"Make her lips like the lips of Mary  
Kissing her blessed Son;  
Let her hands, like the hands of Jesus,  
Rest on her little one.

"Comfort the soul of thy handmaid,  
Open her prison-door,  
And thine shall be all the glory  
And praise forevermore."

Then into the face of its mother  
The baby looked up and smiled;  
And the cloud of her soul was lifted,  
And she knew her little child.

A beam of the slant west sunshine  
Made the wan face almost fair,  
Lit the blue eyes' patient wonder,  
And the rings of pale gold hair.

She kissed it on lip and forehead,  
She kissed it on cheek and chin,  
And she bared her snow-white bosom  
To the lips so pale and thin.

Oh, fair on her bridal morning  
Was the maid who blushed and smiled,  
But fairer to Ezra Dalton  
Looked the mother of his child.

With more than a lover's fondness  
He stooped to her worn young face,  
And the nursing child and the mother  
He folded in one embrace.

"Blessed be God!" he murmured.  
"Blessed be God!" she said;  
"For I see, who once was blinded,--  
I live, who once was dead.

"Now mount and ride, my goodman,  
As thou lovest thy own soul  
Woe's me, if my wicked fancies  
Be the death of Goody Cole!"

His horse he saddled and bridled,  
And into the night rode he,  
Now through the great black woodland,  
Now by the white-beached sea.

He rode through the silent clearings,  
He came to the ferry wide,  
And thrice he called to the boatman  
Asleep on the other side.

He set his horse to the river,  
He swam to Newbury town,  
And he called up Justice Sewall  
In his nightcap and his gown.

And the grave and worshipful justice  
(Upon whose soul be peace!)  
Set his name to the jailer's warrant  
For Goodwife Cole's release.

Then through the night the hoof-beats  
Went sounding like a flail;  
And Goody Cole at cockcrow  
Came forth from Ipswich jail.  
1865

. . . . .

"Here is a rhyme: I hardly dare  
To venture on its theme worn out;  
What seems so sweet by Doon and Ayr  
Sounds simply silly hereabout;  
And pipes by lips Arcadian blown  
Are only tin horns at our own.  
Yet still the muse of pastoral walks with us,  
While Hosea Biglow sings, our new Theocritus."

## THE MAIDS OF ATTITASH.

Attitash, an Indian word signifying "huckleberry," is the name of a large and beautiful lake in the northern part of Amesbury.

In sky and wave the white clouds swam,  
And the blue hills of Nottingham  
Through gaps of leafy green  
Across the lake were seen,

When, in the shadow of the ash  
That dreams its dream in Attitash,  
In the warm summer weather,  
Two maidens sat together.

They sat and watched in idle mood  
The gleam and shade of lake and wood;  
The beach the keen light smote,  
The white sail of a boat;

Swan flocks of lilies shoreward lying,  
In sweetness, not in music, dying;  
Hardback, and virgin's-bower,  
And white-spiked clethra-flower.

With careless ears they heard the splash  
And breezy wash of Attitash,  
The wood-bird's plaintive cry,  
The locust's sharp reply.

And teased the while, with playful band,  
The shaggy dog of Newfoundland,  
Whose uncouth frolic spilled  
Their baskets berry-filled.

Then one, the beauty of whose eyes  
Was evermore a great surprise,  
Tossed back her queenly head,  
And, lightly laughing, said:

"No bridegroom's hand be mine to hold  
That is not lined with yellow gold;  
I tread no cottage-floor;  
I own no lover poor.

"My love must come on silken wings,  
With bridal lights of diamond rings,  
Not foul with kitchen smirch,  
With tallow-dip for torch."

The other, on whose modest head  
Was lesser dower of beauty shed,  
With look for home-hearths meet,  
And voice exceeding sweet,

Answered, "We will not rivals be;  
Take thou the gold, leave love to me;  
Mine be the cottage small,

And thine the rich man's hall.

"I know, indeed, that wealth is good;  
But lowly roof and simple food,  
With love that hath no doubt,  
Are more than gold without."

Hard by a farmer hale and young  
His cradle in the rye-field swung,  
Tracking the yellow plain  
With windrows of ripe grain.

And still, whene'er he paused to whet  
His scythe, the sidelong glance he met  
Of large dark eyes, where strove  
False pride and secret love.

Be strong, young mower of the-grain;  
That love shall overmatch disdain,  
Its instincts soon or late  
The heart shall vindicate.

In blouse of gray, with fishing-rod,  
Half screened by leaves, a stranger trod  
The margin of the pond,  
Watching the group beyond.

The supreme hours unnoted come;  
Unfelt the turning tides of doom;  
And so the maids laughed on,  
Nor dreamed what Fate had done,--

Nor knew the step was Destiny's  
That rustled in the birchen trees,  
As, with their lives forecast,  
Fisher and mower passed.

Erelong by lake and rivulet side  
The summer roses paled and died,  
And Autumn's fingers shed  
The maple's leaves of red.

Through the long gold-hazed afternoon,  
Alone, but for the diving loon,  
The partridge in the brake,  
The black duck on the lake,

Beneath the shadow of the ash  
Sat man and maid by Attitash;  
And earth and air made room  
For human hearts to bloom.

Soft spread the carpets of the sod,  
And scarlet-oak and golden-rod  
With blushes and with smiles  
Lit up the forest aisles.

The mellow light the lake aslant,  
The pebbled margin's ripple-chant

Attempered and low-toned,  
The tender mystery owned.

And through the dream the lovers dreamed  
Sweet sounds stole in and soft lights streamed;  
The sunshine seemed to bless,  
The air was a caress.

Not she who lightly laughed is there,  
With scornful toss of midnight hair,  
Her dark, disdainful eyes,  
And proud lip worldly-wise.

Her haughty vow is still unsaid,  
But all she dreamed and coveted  
Wears, half to her surprise,  
The youthful farmer's guise!

With more than all her old-time pride  
She walks the rye-field at his side,  
Careless of cot or hall,  
Since love transfigures all.

Rich beyond dreams, the vantage-ground  
Of life is gained; her hands have found  
The talisman of old  
That changes all to gold.

While she who could for love dispense  
With all its glittering accidents,  
And trust her heart alone,  
Finds love and gold her own.

What wealth can buy or art can build  
Awaits her; but her cup is filled  
Even now unto the brim;  
Her world is love and him!  
1866.

. . . . .

The while he heard, the Book-man drew  
A length of make-believing face,  
With smothered mischief laughing through  
"Why, you shall sit in Ramsay's place,  
And, with his Gentle Shepherd, keep  
On Yankee hills immortal sheep,  
While love-lorn swains and maids the seas beyond  
Hold dreamy tryst around your huckleberry-pond."

The Traveller laughed: "Sir Galahad  
Singing of love the Trouvere's lay!  
How should he know the blindfold lad  
From one of Vulcan's forge-boys?"--"Nay,  
He better sees who stands outside  
Than they who in procession ride,"  
The Reader answered: "selectmen and squire  
Miss, while they make, the show that wayside folks admire.



"Here is a wild tale of the North,  
Our travelled friend will own as one  
Fit for a Norland Christmas hearth  
And lips of Christian Andersen.  
They tell it in the valleys green  
Of the fair island he has seen,  
Low lying off the pleasant Swedish shore,  
Washed by the Baltic Sea, and watched by Elsinore."

#### KALLUNDBORG CHURCH

"Tie stille, barn min  
Imorgen kommer Fin,  
Fa'er din,  
Og gi'er dig Esbern Snares nine og hjerte at lege med!"  
Zealand Rhyme.

"Build at Kallundborg by the sea  
A church as stately as church may be,  
And there shalt thou wed my daughter fair,"  
Said the Lord of Nesvek to Esbern Snare.

And the Baron laughed. But Esbern said,  
"Though I lose my soul, I will Helva wed!"  
And off he strode, in his pride of will,  
To the Troll who dwelt in Ulshoi hill.

"Build, O Troll, a church for me  
At Kallundborg by the mighty sea;  
Build it stately, and build it fair,  
Build it quickly," said Esbern Snare.

But the sly Dwarf said, "No work is wrought  
By Trolls of the Hills, O man, for naught.  
What wilt thou give for thy church so fair?"  
"Set thy own price," quoth Esbern Snare.

"When Kallundborg church is builded well,  
Than must the name of its builder tell,  
Or thy heart and thy eyes must be my boon."  
"Build," said Esbern, "and build it soon."

By night and by day the Troll wrought on;  
He hewed the timbers, he piled the stone;  
But day by day, as the walls rose fair,  
Darker and sadder grew Esbern Snare.

He listened by night, he watched by day,  
He sought and thought, but he dared not pray;  
In vain he called on the Elle-maids shy,  
And the Neck and the Nis gave no reply.

Of his evil bargain far and wide  
A rumor ran through the country-side;  
And Helva of Nesvek, young and fair,  
Prayed for the soul of Esbern Snare.

And now the church was wellnigh done;

One pillar it lacked, and one alone;  
And the grim Troll muttered, "Fool thou art  
To-morrow gives me thy eyes and heart!"

By Kallundborg in black despair,  
Through wood and meadow, walked Esbern Snare,  
Till, worn and weary, the strong man sank  
Under the birches on Ulshoi bank.

At, his last day's work he heard the Troll  
Hammer and delve in the quarry's hole;  
Before him the church stood large and fair  
"I have builded my tomb," said Esbern Snare.

And he closed his eyes the sight to hide,  
When he heard a light step at his side  
"O Esbern Snare!" a sweet voice said,  
"Would I might die now in thy stead!"

With a grasp by love and by fear made strong,  
He held her fast, and he held her long;  
With the beating heart of a bird afeard,  
She hid her face in his flame-red beard.

"O love!" he cried, "let me look to-day  
In thine eyes ere mine are plucked away;  
Let me hold thee close, let me feel thy heart  
Ere mine by the Troll is torn apart!

"I sinned, O Helva, for love of thee!  
Pray that the Lord Christ pardon me!"  
But fast as she prayed, and faster still,  
Hammered the Troll in Ulshoi hill.

He knew, as he wrought, that a loving heart  
Was somehow baffling his evil art;  
For more than spell of Elf or Troll  
Is a maiden's prayer for her lover's soul.

And Esbern listened, and caught the sound  
Of a Troll-wife singing underground  
"To-morrow comes Fine, father thine  
Lie still and hush thee, baby mine!

"Lie still, my darling! next sunrise  
Thou'lt play with Esbern Snare's heart and eyes!"  
"Ho! ho!" quoth Esbern, "is that your game?  
Thanks to the Troll-wife, I know his name!"

The Troll he heard him, and hurried on  
To Kallundborg church with the lacking stone.  
"Too late, Gaffer Fine!" cried Esbern Snare;  
And Troll and pillar vanished in air!

That night the harvesters heard the sound  
Of a woman sobbing underground,  
And the voice of the Hill-Troll loud with blame  
Of the careless singer who told his name.

Of the Troll of the Church they sing the rune  
By the Northern Sea in the harvest moon;  
And the fishers of Zealand hear him still  
Scolding his wife in Ulshoi hill.

And seaward over its groves of birch  
Still looks the tower of Kallundborg church,  
Where, first at its altar, a wedded pair,  
Stood Helva of Nesvek and Esbern Snare!  
1865.

. . . . .

"What," asked the Traveller, "would our sires,  
The old Norse story-tellers, say  
Of sun-graved pictures, ocean wires,  
And smoking steamboats of to-day?  
And this, O lady, by your leave,  
Recalls your song of yester eve:  
Pray, let us have that Cable-hymn once more."  
"Hear, hear!" the Book-man cried, "the lady has the floor.

"These noisy waves below perhaps  
To such a strain will lend their ear,  
With softer voice and lighter lapse  
Come stealing up the sands to hear,  
And what they once refused to do  
For old King Knut accord to you.  
Nay, even the fishes shall your listeners be,  
As once, the legend runs, they heard St. Anthony."

#### THE CABLE HYMN.

O lonely bay of Trinity,  
O dreary shores, give ear!  
Lean down unto the white-lipped sea  
The voice of God to hear!

From world to world His couriers fly,  
Thought-winged and shod with fire;  
The angel of His stormy sky  
Rides down the sunken wire.

What saith the herald of the Lord?  
"The world's long strife is done;  
Close wedded by that mystic cord,  
Its continents are one.

"And one in heart, as one in blood,  
Shall all her peoples be;  
The hands of human brotherhood  
Are clasped beneath the sea.

"Through Orient seas, o'er Afric's plain  
And Asian mountains borne,  
The vigor of the Northern brain  
Shall nerve the world outworn.

"From clime to clime, from shore to shore,  
Shall thrill the magic thread;  
The new Prometheus steals once more  
The fire that wakes the dead."

Throb on, strong pulse of thunder! beat  
From answering beach to beach;  
Fuse nations in thy kindly heat,  
And melt the chains of each!

Wild terror of the sky above,  
Glide tamed and dumb below!  
Bear gently, Ocean's carrier-dove,  
Thy errands to and fro.

Weave on, swift shuttle of the Lord,  
Beneath the deep so far,  
The bridal robe of earth's accord,  
The funeral shroud of war!

For lo! the fall of Ocean's wall  
Space mocked and time outrun;  
And round the world the thought of all  
Is as the thought of one!

The poles unite, the zones agree,  
The tongues of striving cease;  
As on the Sea of Galilee  
The Christ is whispering, Peace!  
1858.

. . . . .

"Glad prophecy! to this at last,"  
The Reader said, "shall all things come.  
Forgotten be the bugle's blast,  
And battle-music of the drum.

"A little while the world may run  
Its old mad way, with needle-gun  
And iron-clad, but truth, at last, shall reign  
The cradle-song of Christ was never sung in vain!"

Shifting his scattered papers, "Here,"  
He said, as died the faint applause,  
"Is something that I found last year  
Down on the island known as Orr's.  
I had it from a fair-haired girl  
Who, oddly, bore the name of Pearl,  
(As if by some droll freak of circumstance,)  
Classic, or wellnigh so, in Harriet Stowe's romance."

#### THE DEAD SHIP OF HARPSWELL.

What flecks the outer gray beyond  
The sundown's golden trail?  
The white flash of a sea-bird's wing,  
Or gleam of slanting sail?

Let young eyes watch from Neck and Point,  
And sea-worn elders pray,--  
The ghost of what was once a ship  
Is sailing up the bay.

From gray sea-fog, from icy drift,  
From peril and from pain,  
The home-bound fisher greets thy lights,  
O hundred-harbored Maine!  
But many a keel shall seaward turn,  
And many a sail outstand,  
When, tall and white, the Dead Ship looms  
Against the dusk of land.

She rounds the headland's bristling pines;  
She threads the isle-set bay;  
No spur of breeze can speed her on,  
Nor ebb of tide delay.  
Old men still walk the Isle of Orr  
Who tell her date and name,  
Old shipwrights sit in Freeport yards  
Who hewed her oaken frame.

What weary doom of baffled quest,  
Thou sad sea-ghost, is thine?  
What makes thee in the haunts of home  
A wonder and a sign?  
No foot is on thy silent deck,  
Upon thy helm no hand;  
No ripple hath the soundless wind  
That smites thee from the land!

For never comes the ship to port,  
Howe'er the breeze may be;  
Just when she nears the waiting shore  
She drifts again to sea.  
No tack of sail, nor turn of helm,  
Nor sheer of veering side;  
Stern-fore she drives to sea and night,  
Against the wind and tide.

In vain o'er Harpswell Neck the star  
Of evening guides her in;  
In vain for her the lamps are lit  
Within thy tower, Seguin!  
In vain the harbor-boat shall hail,  
In vain the pilot call;  
No hand shall reef her spectral sail,  
Or let her anchor fall.

Shake, brown old wives, with dreary joy,  
Your gray-head hints of ill;  
And, over sick-beds whispering low,  
Your prophecies fulfil.  
Some home amid yon birchen trees  
Shall drape its door with woe;  
And slowly where the Dead Ship sails,  
The burial boat shall row!

From Wolf Neck and from Flying Point,  
From island and from main,  
From sheltered cove and tided creek,  
Shall glide the funeral train.  
The dead-boat with the bearers four,  
The mourners at her stern,--  
And one shall go the silent way  
Who shall no more return!

And men shall sigh, and women weep,  
Whose dear ones pale and pine,  
And sadly over sunset seas  
Await the ghostly sign.  
They know not that its sails are filled  
By pity's tender breath,  
Nor see the Angel at the helm  
Who steers the Ship of Death!  
1866.

. . . . .

"Chill as a down-east breeze should be,"  
The Book-man said. "A ghostly touch  
The legend has. I'm glad to see  
Your flying Yankee beat the Dutch."  
"Well, here is something of the sort  
Which one midsummer day I caught  
In Narragansett Bay, for lack of fish."  
"We wait," the Traveller said;  
"serve hot or cold your dish."

#### THE PALATINE.

Block Island in Long Island Sound, called by the Indians Manisees, the isle of the little god, was the scene of a tragic incident a hundred years or more ago, when The Palatine, an emigrant ship bound for Philadelphia, driven off its course, came upon the coast at this point. A mutiny on board, followed by an inhuman desertion on the part of the crew, had brought the unhappy passengers to the verge of starvation and madness. Tradition says that wreckers on shore, after rescuing all but one of the survivors, set fire to the vessel, which was driven out to sea before a gale which had sprung up. Every twelvemonth, according to the same tradition, the spectacle of a ship on fire is visible to the inhabitants of the island.

Leagues north, as fly the gull and auk,  
Point Judith watches with eye of hawk;  
Leagues south, thy beacon flames, Montauk!

Lonely and wind-shorn, wood-forsaken,  
With never a tree for Spring to waken,  
For tryst of lovers or farewells taken,

Circled by waters that never freeze,  
Beaten by billow and swept by breeze,  
Lieth the island of Manisees,

Set at the mouth of the Sound to hold  
The coast lights up on its turret old,  
Yellow with moss and sea-fog mould.

Dreary the land when gust and sleet  
At its doors and windows howl and beat,  
And Winter laughs at its fires of peat!

But in summer time, when pool and pond,  
Held in the laps of valleys fond,  
Are blue as the glimpses of sea beyond;

When the hills are sweet with the brier-rose,  
And, hid in the warm, soft dells, unclose  
Flowers the mainland rarely knows;

When boats to their morning fishing go,  
And, held to the wind and slanting low,  
Whitening and darkening the small sails show,--

Then is that lonely island fair;  
And the pale health-seeker findeth there  
The wine of life in its pleasant air.

No greener valleys the sun invite,  
On smoother beaches no sea-birds light,  
No blue waves shatter to foam more white!

There, circling ever their narrow range,  
Quaint tradition and legend strange  
Live on unchallenged, and know no change.

Old wives spinning their webs of tow,  
Or rocking weirdly to and fro  
In and out of the peat's dull glow,

And old men mending their nets of twine,  
Talk together of dream and sign,  
Talk of the lost ship Palatine,--

The ship that, a hundred years before,  
Freighted deep with its goodly store,  
In the gales of the equinox went ashore.

The eager islanders one by one  
Counted the shots of her signal gun,  
And heard the crash when she drove right on!

Into the teeth of death she sped  
(May God forgive the hands that fed  
The false lights over the rocky Head!)

O men and brothers! what sights were there!  
White upturned faces, hands stretched in prayer!  
Where waves had pity, could ye not spare?

Down swooped the wreckers, like birds of prey  
Tearing the heart of the ship away,  
And the dead had never a word to say.

And then, with ghastly shimmer and shine  
Over the rocks and the seething brine,  
They burned the wreck of the Palatine.

In their cruel hearts, as they homeward sped,  
"The sea and the rocks are dumb," they said  
"There 'll be no reckoning with the dead."

But the year went round, and when once more  
Along their foam-white curves of shore  
They heard the line-storm rave and roar,

Behold! again, with shimmer and shine,  
Over the rocks and the seething brine,  
The flaming wreck of the Palatine!

So, haply in fitter words than these,  
Mending their nets on their patient knees  
They tell the legend of Manisees.

Nor looks nor tones a doubt betray;  
"It is known to us all," they quietly say;  
"We too have seen it in our day."

Is there, then, no death for a word once spoken?  
Was never a deed but left its token  
Written on tables never broken?

Do the elements subtle reflections give?  
Do pictures of all the ages live  
On Nature's infinite negative,

Which, half in sport, in malice half,  
She shows at times, with shudder or laugh,  
Phantom and shadow in photograph?

For still, on many a moonless night,  
From Kingston Head and from Montauk light  
The spectre kindles and burns in sight.

Now low and dim, now clear and higher,  
Leaps up the terrible Ghost of Fire,  
Then, slowly sinking, the flames expire.

And the wise Sound skippers, though skies be fine,  
Reef their sails when they see the sign  
Of the blazing wreck of the Palatine!  
1867.

. . . . .

"A fitter tale to scream than sing,"  
The Book-man said. "Well, fancy, then,"  
The Reader answered, "on the wing  
The sea-birds shriek it, not for men,  
But in the ear of wave and breeze!"  
The Traveller mused: "Your Manisees  
Is fairy-land: off Narragansett shore



Who ever saw the isle or heard its name before?

"T is some strange land of Flyaway,  
Whose dreamy shore the ship beguiles,  
St. Brandan's in its sea-mist gray,  
Or sunset loom of Fortunate Isles!"  
"No ghost, but solid turf and rock  
Is the good island known as Block,"  
The Reader said. "For beauty and for ease  
I chose its Indian name, soft-flowing Manisees!

"But let it pass; here is a bit  
Of unrhymed story, with a hint  
Of the old preaching mood in it,  
The sort of sidelong moral squint  
Our friend objects to, which has grown,  
I fear, a habit of my own.  
'Twas written when the Asian plague drew near,  
And the land held its breath and paled with sudden fear."

#### ABRAHAM DAVENPORT

The famous Dark Day of New England, May 19, 1780, was a physical puzzle for many years to our ancestors, but its occurrence brought something more than philosophical speculation into the winds of those who passed through it. The incident of Colonel Abraham Davenport's sturdy protest is a matter of history.

In the old days (a custom laid aside  
With breeches and cocked hats) the people sent  
Their wisest men to make the public laws.  
And so, from a brown homestead, where the Sound  
Drinks the small tribute of the Mianas,  
Waved over by the woods of Rippowams,  
And hallowed by pure lives and tranquil deaths,  
Stamford sent up to the councils of the State  
Wisdom and grace in Abraham Davenport.

'T was on a May-day of the far old year  
Seventeen hundred eighty, that there fell  
Over the bloom and sweet life of the Spring,  
Over the fresh earth and the heaven of noon,  
A horror of great darkness, like the night  
In day of which the Norland sagas tell,--

The Twilight of the Gods. The low-hung sky  
Was black with ominous clouds, save where its rim  
Was fringed with a dull glow, like that which climbs  
The crater's sides from the red hell below.  
Birds ceased to sing, and all the barn-yard fowls  
Roosted; the cattle at the pasture bars  
Low'd, and looked homeward; bats on leathern wings  
Flitted abroad; the sounds of labor died;  
Men prayed, and women wept; all ears grew sharp  
To hear the doom-blast of the trumpet shatter  
The black sky, that the dreadful face of Christ  
Might look from the rent clouds, not as he looked  
A loving guest at Bethany, but stern

As Justice and inexorable Law.

Meanwhile in the old State House, dim as ghosts,  
Sat the lawgivers of Connecticut,  
Trembling beneath their legislative robes.  
"It is the Lord's Great Day! Let us adjourn,"  
Some said; and then, as if with one accord,  
All eyes were turned to Abraham Davenport.  
He rose, slow cleaving with his steady voice  
The intolerable hush. "This well may be  
The Day of Judgment which the world awaits;  
But be it so or not, I only know  
My present duty, and my Lord's command  
To occupy till He come. So at the post  
Where He hath set me in His providence,  
I choose, for one, to meet Him face to face,--  
No faithless servant frightened from my task,  
But ready when the Lord of the harvest calls;  
And therefore, with all reverence, I would say,  
Let God do His work, we will see to ours.  
Bring in the candles." And they brought them in.

Then by the flaring lights the Speaker read,  
Albeit with husky voice and shaking hands,  
An act to amend an act to regulate  
The shad and alewife fisheries. Whereupon  
Wisely and well spake Abraham Davenport,  
Straight to the question, with no figures of speech  
Save the ten Arab signs, yet not without  
The shrewd dry humor natural to the man  
His awe-struck colleagues listening all the while,  
Between the pauses of his argument,  
To hear the thunder of the wrath of God  
Break from the hollow trumpet of the cloud.

And there he stands in memory to this day,  
Erect, self-poised, a rugged face, half seen  
Against the background of unnatural dark,  
A witness to the ages as they pass,  
That simple duty hath no place for fear.  
1866.

He ceased: just then the ocean seemed  
To lift a half-faced moon in sight;  
And, shore-ward, o'er the waters gleamed,  
From crest to crest, a line of light,  
Such as of old, with solemn awe,  
The fishers by Gennesaret saw,  
When dry-shod o'er it walked the Son of God,  
Tracking the waves with light where'er his sandals trod.

Silently for a space each eye  
Upon that sudden glory turned  
Cool from the land the breeze blew by,  
The tent-ropes flapped, the long beach churned  
Its waves to foam; on either hand  
Stretched, far as sight, the hills of sand;

With bays of marsh, and capes of bush and tree,  
The wood's black shore-line loomed beyond the meadowy sea.

The lady rose to leave. "One song,  
Or hymn," they urged, "before we part."  
And she, with lips to which belong  
Sweet intuitions of all art,  
Gave to the winds of night a strain  
Which they who heard would hear again;  
And to her voice the solemn ocean lent,  
Touching its harp of sand, a deep accompaniment.

#### THE WORSHIP OF NATURE.

The harp at Nature's advent strung  
Has never ceased to play;  
The song the stars of morning sung  
Has never died away.

And prayer is made, and praise is given,  
By all things near and far;  
The ocean looketh up to heaven,  
And mirrors every star.

Its waves are kneeling on the strand,  
As kneels the human knee,  
Their white locks bowing to the sand,  
The priesthood of the sea'

They pour their glittering treasures forth,  
Their gifts of pearl they bring,  
And all the listening hills of earth  
Take up the song they sing.

The green earth sends her incense up  
From many a mountain shrine;  
From folded leaf and dewy cup  
She pours her sacred wine.

The mists above the morning rills  
Rise white as wings of prayer;  
The altar-curtains of the hills  
Are sunset's purple air.

The winds with hymns of praise are loud,  
Or low with sobs of pain,--  
The thunder-organ of the cloud,  
The dropping tears of rain.

With drooping head and branches crossed  
The twilight forest grieves,  
Or speaks with tongues of Pentecost  
From all its sunlit leaves.

The blue sky is the temple's arch,  
Its transept earth and air,  
The music of its starry march  
The chorus of a prayer.

So Nature keeps the reverent frame  
With which her years began,  
And all her signs and voices shame  
The prayerless heart of man.

. . . . .

The singer ceased. The moon's white rays  
Fell on the rapt, still face of her.  
"\_Allah il Allah\_! He hath praise  
From all things," said the Traveller.  
"Oft from the desert's silent nights,  
And mountain hymns of sunset lights,  
My heart has felt rebuke, as in his tent  
The Moslem's prayer has shamed my Christian knee unbent."

He paused, and lo! far, faint, and slow  
The bells in Newbury's steeples tolled  
The twelve dead hours; the lamp burned low;  
The singer sought her canvas fold.  
One sadly said, "At break of day  
We strike our tent and go our way."  
But one made answer cheerily, "Never fear,  
We'll pitch this tent of ours in type another year."

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