

**BRYANT
WILLIAM
CULLEN**

POETICAL WORKS OF
WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

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WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

The ancestry of William Cullen Bryant might have been inferred from the character of his writings, which reflect whatever is best and noblest in the life and thought of New England. It was a tradition that the first Bryant of whom there is any account in the annals of the New World came over in the Mayflower, but the tradition is not authenticated. What is known of this gentleman, Mr. Stephen Bryant, is that he came over from England, and that he was at Plymouth, Massachusetts, as early as 1632. He married Abigail Shaw, who had emigrated with her father, and who bore him several children between 1650 and 1665, it is to be presumed at Plymouth, of which town he was chosen constable in 1663. Stephen Bryant had a son named Ichabod, who was the father of Philip Bryant, who was born in 1732. Philip Bryant married Silence Howard, the daughter of Dr. Abiel Howard, of West Bridgewater, whose

profession he adopted, being a practitioner in medicine in North Bridgewater. He was the father of nine children, one of whom, Peter Bryant, born in 1767, succeeded him in his profession. Young Dr. Bryant became enamored of Miss Sarah Snell, the daughter of Mr. Ebenezer Snell, of Bridgewater, who removed his family to Cumington, whither he was followed by his future son-in-law, who married the lady of his love in 1792. Two years later, on the 3d of November, there was born to him a man-child, who was to win, and to leave,

"One of the few immortal names
That were not born to die."

Dr. Bryant was proud of his profession; and in the hope, no doubt, that his son would become a shining light therein, he perpetuated at his christening the name of a great medical authority, who had departed this life four years before – William Cullen. Dr. Bryant was the last of his family to practise the healing art; for Nature, wiser than he, early determined the future course of Master William Cullen Bryant. He was not to be a doctor, but a poet. A poet, that is, if he lived to be anything; for the chances were against his living at all. The lad was exceedingly frail, and had a head the immensity of which troubled his anxious father. How to reduce it to the normal size was a puzzle which Dr. Bryant solved in a spring of clear, cold water, which burst out of the ground on or near his homestead, and into which the child was

immersed every morning, head and all, by two of Dr. Bryant's students – kicking lustily, we may be sure, at this matutinal dose of hydropathy.

William Cullen Bryant came of Mayflower stock, his mother being a descendant of John Alden; and the characteristics of his family included some of the sterner qualities of the Puritans. Grandfather Snell was a magistrate, and, without doubt a severe one, for the period was not one which favored leniency to criminals. The whipping-post was still extant in Massachusetts, and the poet remembered that it stood about a mile from his early home at Cummington, and that he once saw a young fellow of eighteen who had received forty lashes as a punishment for a theft he had committed. It was, he thought, the last example of corporal punishment inflicted by law in that neighborhood, though the whipping-post remained in its place for several years, a possible terror to future evildoers. "Spare the rod, spoil the child," was the Draconian code then; and the rod, in the shape of a little bundle of birchen twigs, bound together with a small cord, was generally suspended on a nail against the wall in the kitchen, and was as much a part of the necessary furniture as the crane that hung in the fireplace or the shovel and tongs.

Magistrate Snell was a disciplinarian of the stricter sort; and as he and his wife resided with Dr. Bryant and his family, the latter stood in awe of him, so much so that young William Cullen was prevented from feeling anything like affection for him. It was an age of repression, not to say oppression, for children,

who had few rights that their elders were bound to respect. To the terrors of the secular arm were added the deeper terrors of the spiritual law, for the people of that primitive period were nothing if not religious. The minister was the great man, and his bodily presence was a restraint upon the unruly, and the ruly too, for that matter. The lines of our ancestors did not fall in pleasant places as far as recreations were concerned; for they were few and far between, consisting, for the most part, of militia musters, "raisings," corn-huskings, and singing-schools, diversified with the making of maple sugar and cider. Education was confined to the three R's, though the children of wealthy parents were sent to colleges as they now are. It was not a genial social condition, it must be confessed, to which William Cullen Bryant was born, though it might have been worse but for his good father, who was in many respects superior to his rustic neighbors. A broad-shouldered, muscular gentleman, proud of his strength, his manners were gentle and reserved, his disposition was serene, and he was fond of society. He was not without political distinction, for he was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives for several terms, and afterward to the State Senate, and he associated with the cultivated circles of Boston both as a legislator and a physician.

William Cullen Bryant was fortunate in his father, who, if he was disappointed when he found that his son was born to be a follower of Apollo and not of Æsculapius, kept his disappointment to himself, and encouraged the lad in his poetical

attempts. We have the authority of the poet himself that his father taught his youth the art of verse, and that he offered him to the Muses in the bud of life. His first efforts were several clever "Enigmas," in imitation of the Latin writers, a translation from Horace, and a copy of verses which were written in his twelfth year, to be recited at the close of the winter school, "in the presence of the Master, the Minister of the parish, and a number of private gentlemen." They were printed on the 18th of March, 1807, in the *Hampshire Gazette*, from which these particulars are derived, and which was favored with other contributions from the pen of "C. B."

The juvenile poems of William Cullen Bryant are as clever as those of Chatterton, Pope, and Cowley; but they are in no sense original, and it would have been strange if they had been. There was no original writing in America at the time they were written; and if there had been, it would hardly have commended itself to the old-fashioned taste of Dr. Bryant, to whom Pope was still a power in poetry, as Addison, no doubt, was in prose. It was natural, therefore, that he should offer his boy to the strait-laced Muses of Queen Anne's time; that the precocious boy should lisp in heroic couplets, and that he should endeavor to be satirical. Politics were running high in the first decade of the present century, and the favorite bug-bear in New England was President Jefferson, who in 1807 had laid an embargo on American shipping, in consequence of the decrees of Napoleon, and the British orders in council in relation thereto. This act

was denounced, and by no one more warmly than by Master Bryant, who made it the subject of a satire, which was published in Boston in 1808. It was entitled "The Embargo; or, Sketches of the Times," and was printed for the purchasers, who were found in sufficient numbers to exhaust the first edition. It is said to have been well received, but doubts were expressed as to whether the author was really a youth of thirteen. His friends came to his rescue in an "Advertisement," which was prefixed to a second edition of his little *brochure*, published in the following year, and certified to his age from their personal knowledge of himself and his family. They also certified to his extraordinary talents, though they should prefer to have him judged by his works, without favor or affection. They concluded by stating that the printer was authorized to disclose their names and places of residence.

The early poetical exercises of William Cullen Bryant, like those of all young poets, were colored by the books which he read. Among these were the works of Pope, as I have already intimated, and, no doubt, the works of Cowper and Thomson. The latter, if they were in the library of Dr. Bryant, do not appear to have impressed his son at this time; nor, indeed, does any English poet except Pope, so far as we can judge from his contributions to the *Hampshire Gazette*, which were continued from time to time. They were bookish and patriotic; one, which was written at Cummington on the 8th of January, 1810, being "The Genius of Columbia;" and another, "An Ode for the Fourth of July, 1812," to the tune of "Ye Gentlemen of England." These

productions are undeniably clever, but they are not characteristic of their writer, nor of the nature which surrounded his birthplace, with which he was familiar, and of which he was a close observer, as his poetry was soon to disclose.

He entered Williams College, in Williamstown, Mass., in his sixteenth year, and remained there until 1812, distinguishing himself for aptness and industry in classical learning and polite literature. At the end of two years he withdrew, and commenced the study of law, first with Judge Howe, of Worthington, and afterward with Mr. William Baylies, of Bridgewater. So far he had written nothing but clever amateur verse; but now, in his eighteenth year, he wrote an imperishable poem. The circumstances under which it was composed have been variously stated, but they agree in the main particulars, and are thus given in "The Bryant Homestead Book" (1870), apparently on authentic information: "It was here at Cummington, while wandering in the primeval forests, over the floor of which were scattered the gigantic trunks of fallen trees, mouldering for long years, and suggesting an indefinitely remote antiquity, and where silent rivulets crept along through the carpet of dead leaves, the spoil of thousands of summers, that the poem entitled 'Thanatopsis' was composed. The young poet had read the poems of Kirke White, which, edited by Southey, were published about that time, and a small volume of Southey's miscellaneous poems; and some lines of those authors had kindled his imagination, which, going forth over the face of the inhabitants of the globe,

sought to bring under one broad and comprehensive view the destinies of the human race in the present life, and the perpetual rising and passing away of generation after generation who are nourished by the fruits of its soil, and find a resting-place in its bosom." We should like to know what lines in Southey and Kirke White suggested "Thanatopsis," that they might be printed in letters of gold hereafter.

When the young poet quitted Cummington to begin his law studies, he left the manuscript of this incomparable poem among his papers in the house of his father, who found it after his departure. "Here are some lines that our William has been writing," he said to a lady to whom he showed them. She read them, and, raising her eyes to the face of Dr. Bryant, burst into tears – a tribute to the genius of his son in which he was not ashamed to join. Blackstone bade his Muse a long adieu before he turned to wrangling courts and stubborn law; and our young lawyer intended to do the same (for poetry was starvation in America seventy years ago), but habit and nature were too strong for him. There is no difficulty in tracing the succession of his poems, and in a few instances the places where they were written, or with which they concerned themselves. "Thanatopsis," for example, was followed by "The Yellow Violet," which was followed by the "Inscription for the Entrance to a Wood," and the song beginning "Soon as the glazed and gleaming snow." The exquisite lines "To a Waterfowl" were written at Bridgewater, in his twentieth year, where he was still pursuing the study of law,

which appears to have been distasteful to him. The concluding stanza sank deeply into a heart that needed its pious lesson:

"He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright."

The lawyer-poet had a long way before him, but he did not tread it alone; for, after being admitted to the bar in Plymouth, and practising for a time in Plainfield, near Cummington, he removed to Great Barrington, in Berkshire, where he saw the dwelling of the Genevieve of his chilly little "Song," his Genevieve being Miss Frances Fairchild of that beautiful town, whom he married in his twenty-seventh year, and who was the light of his household for nearly half a century. It was to her, the reader may like to know, that he addressed the ideal poem beginning "O fairest of the rural maids" (*circa* 1825), "The Future Life" (1837), and "The Life that Is" (1858); and her memory and her loss are tenderly embalmed in one of the most touching of his later poems, "October, 1866."

"Thanatopsis" was sent to the *North American Review* (whether by its author or his father we are not told), and with such a modest, not to say enigmatical, note of introduction, that its authorship was left in doubt. The *Review* was managed by a club of young literary gentlemen, who styled themselves "The North American Club," two of whose members, Mr. Richard

Henry Dana and Mr. Edward Tyrrel Channing, were considered its editors. Mr. Dana read the poem carefully, and was so surprised at its excellence that he doubted whether it was the production of an American, an opinion in which his associates are understood to have concurred. While they were hesitating about its acceptance, he was told that the writer was a member of the Massachusetts Senate; and, the Senate being then in session, he started immediately from Cambridge for Boston. He reached the State House, and inquired for Senator Bryant. A tall, middle-aged man, with a business-like look, was pointed out to him. He was satisfied that he could not be the poet he sought, so he posted back to Cambridge without an introduction. The story ends here, and rather tamely; for the original narrator forgot, or perhaps never knew, that Dr. Bryant was a member of the Senate, and that it was among the possibilities that *he* was the Senator with a similar name. American poetry may be said to have commenced in 1817 with the September number of the *North American Review*, which contained "Thanatopsis" and the "Inscription for the Entrance of a Wood," the last being printed as a "Fragment." Six months later, in March, 1818, the impression which "Thanatopsis" created was strengthened by the appearance of the lines "To a Waterfowl," and the "Version of a Fragment of Simonides."

Mr. Bryant's literary life may now be said to have begun, though he depended upon the practice of his profession for his daily bread. He continued his contributions to the *North*

American Review in the shape of prose papers on literary topics, and maintained the most friendly relations with its conductors; notably so with Mr. Dana, who was seven years his elder, and who possessed, like himself, the accomplishment of verse. At the suggestion of this poetical and critical brother, he was invited to deliver a poem before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard College – an honor which is offered only to those who have already made a reputation, and are likely to reflect credit on the Society as well as on themselves. He accepted, and in 1821 wrote his first poem of any length, "The Ages," which still remains the best poem of the kind that was ever recited before a college society either in this country or in England; grave, stately, thoughtful, presenting in animated, picturesque stanzas a compact summary of the history of mankind. A young Englishman of twenty-one – Thomas Babington Macaulay – delivered in the same year a poem on "Evening," before the students of Trinity College, Cambridge; and it is instructive to compare his conventional heroics with the spirited Spenserian stanzas of William Cullen Bryant.

The lines "To a Waterfowl," which were written at Bridgewater in 1815, were followed by "Green River," "A Winter Piece," "The West Wind," "The Burial-Place," "Blessed are they that mourn," "No man knoweth his Sepulchre," "A Walk at Sunset," and "The Hymn to Death."

These poems, which cover a period of six busy years, are interesting to the poetic student as examples of the

different styles of their writer, and of the changing elements of his thoughts and feelings. "Green River," for example, is a momentary revealment of his shy temperament and his daily pursuits. Its glimpses of nature are charming, and his wish to be beside its waters is the most natural one in the world. The young lawyer is not complimentary to his clients, whom he styles "the dregs of men," while his pen, which does its best to serve them, becomes "a barbarous pen." He is dejected, but a visit to the river will restore his spirits; for, as he gazes upon its lonely and lovely stream,

"An image of that calm life appears
That won my heart in my greener years."

"A Winter Piece" is a gallery of woodland pictures which anything of the kind in the language. "A Walk at Sunset" is notable in that it is the first poem in which we see (faintly, it must be confessed) the aboriginal element, which was soon to become a prominent one in Mr. Bryant's poetry. It was inseparable from the primeval forests of the New World, but he was the first to perceive its poetic value. The "Hymn to Death" – stately, majestic, consolatory – concludes with a touching tribute to the worth of his good father, who died while he was writing it, at the age of fifty-four. The year 1821 was an important one to Mr. Bryant, for it witnessed the publication of his first collection of verse, his marriage, and the death of his father.

The next four years of Mr. Bryant's life were more productive than any that had preceded them, for he wrote upward of thirty poems during that time. The aboriginal element was creative in "The Indian Girl's Lament," "An Indian Story," "An Indian at the Burial-Place of his Fathers," and, noblest of all, "Monument Mountain;" the Hellenic element predominated in "The Massacre at Scio" and "The Song of the Greek Amazon;" the Hebraic element touched him lightly in "Rizpah" and the "Song of the Stars;" and the pure poetic element was manifest in "March," "The Rivulet" (which, by the way, ran through the grounds of the old homestead at Cummington), "After a Tempest," "The Murdered Traveler," "Hymn to the North Star," "A Forest Hymn," "O fairest of the rural maids," and the exquisite and now most pathetic poem, "June." These poems and others not specified here, if read continuously and in the order in which they were composed, show a wide range of sympathies, a perfect acquaintance with many measures, and a clear, capacious, ever-growing intellect. They are all distinctive of the genius of their author, but neither exhibits the full measure of his powers. We can say of none of them, "The man who wrote this will never write any better."

The publication of Mr. Bryant's little volume of verse was indirectly the cause of his adopting literature as a profession. It was warmly commended, and by no one more so than by Mr. Gulian C. Verplanck, in the columns of the *New York American*. He was something of a literary authority at the time,

a man of fortune and college-bred, known in a mild way as the author of an anniversary discourse delivered before the New York Historical Society in 1818, of a political satire entitled "The Bucktail Bards," and later of an "Essay on the Doctrine of Contracts." Among his friends was Mr. Henry D. Sedgwick, a summer neighbor, so to speak, of Mr. Bryant's, having a country-house at Stockbridge, a few miles from Great Barrington, and a house in town, which was frequented by the *literati* of the day, such as Verplanck, Halleck, Percival, Cooper, and others of less note. An admirer of Mr. Bryant, Mr. Sedgwick set to work, with the assistance of Mr. Verplanck, to procure him literary employment in New York, in order to enable him to escape his hated bondage to the law; and he was appointed assistant editor of a projected periodical called the *New York Review and Athenæum Magazine*. The at last enfranchised lawyer dropped his barbarous pen, closed his law-books, and in the winter or spring of 1825 removed with his household to New York. The projected periodical was started, as these sanguine ventures always are, with fair hopes of success. It was well edited, and its contributors were men of acknowledged ability. The June number contained two poems which ought to have made a great hit. One was "A Song of Pitcairn's Island;" the other was "Marco Bozzaris." There was no flourish of trumpets over them, as there would be now; the writers merely prefixed their initials, "B." and "H." The reading public of New York were not ready for the *Review*, which had been projected for their mental

enlightenment; so, after about a year's struggle, it was merged in the *New York Literary Gazette*, which began its mission about four years before. This magazine shared the fate of its companion in a few months, when it was consolidated with the *United States Literary Gazette*, which in two months was swallowed up in the *United States Review*. The honor of publishing and finishing the last was shared by Boston and New York. Profit in these publications there was none, though Bryant, Halleck, Willis, Dana, Bancroft, and Longfellow wrote for them. Too good, or not good enough, they lived and died prematurely. Mr. Bryant's success as a metropolitan man of letters was not brilliant so far; but there were other walks than those of pure literature open to him, as to others, and into one of the most bustling of these he entered in his thirty-second year. In other words, he became one of the editors of the *Evening Post*. Henceforth he was to live by journalism.

Journalism, though an exacting pursuit, leaves its skillful followers a little leisure in which to cultivate literature. It the heyday of those ephemeral trifles, Annuals, and Mr. Bryant found time to edit one, with the assistance of his friend Mr. Verplanck, and his acquaintance Mr. Robert C. Sands (who, by the way, was one of the editors of the *Commercial Advertiser*), and a very creditable work it was. His contributions to "The Talisman" included some of his best poems. Poetry was the natural expression of his genius – a fact which he could never understand, for it always seemed to him that prose was the natural

expression of all mankind. His prose was, and always continued to be, masterly. Its earliest examples, outside of his critical papers in the *North American Review* and other periodicals (and outside of the *Evening Post*, of course), are two stories entitled "Medfield" and "The Skeleton's Cave," contributed by him to "Tales of the Glauber Spa" (1832) – a collection of original stories by Mr. James K. Paulding, Mr. Verplanck, Mr. Sands, Mr. William Leggett, and Miss Catharine Sedgwick. Three years before (1828) he had become the chief editor of the *Evening Post*. Associated with him was Mr. Leggett, who had shown some talent as a writer of sketches and stories, and who had failed, like himself, in conducting a critical publication, for which his countrymen were not ready. He made a second collection of his poems at this time (1832), a copy of which was sent by Mr. Verplanck to Mr. Washington Irving, who was then, what he had been for years, the idol of English readers, and not without weight with the Trade. Would he see if some English house would not reprint it? No leading publisher nibbled at it, not even Murray, who was Mr. Irving's publisher; but an obscure bookseller named Andrews finally agreed to undertake it, if Mr. Irving would put his valuable name on the title-page as the editor. He was not acquainted with Mr. Bryant, but he was a kind-hearted, large-souled gentleman, who knew good poetry when he saw it, and he consented to "edit" the book. He was not a success in the estimation of Andrews, who came to him one day, by no means a merry Andrew, and declared that the book would ruin him unless

one or more changes were made in the text. What was amiss in it? He turned to the "Song of Marion's Men," and stumbled over an obnoxious couplet in the first stanza:

"The British soldier trembles
When Marion's name is told."

"That won't do at all, you know." The absurdity of the objection must have struck the humorist comically; but as he wanted the volume republished, he good-naturedly saved the proverbial valor of the British soldier by changing the first line to

"The foeman trembles in his camp,"

and the tempest in a teapot was over, as far as England was concerned. Not as far as the United States was concerned, however; for when the circumstance became known to Mr. Leggett, he excoriated Mr. Irving for his subserviency to a bloated aristocracy, and so forth. Mr. John Wilson reviewed the book in *Blackwood's Magazine* in a half-hearted way, patronizing the writer with his praise.

The poems that Mr. Bryant wrote during the first seven years of his residence in New York (some forty in number, not including translations) exhibited the qualities which distinguished his genius from the beginning, and were marked by characteristics which were rather acquired than inherited. In other words, they were somewhat different from those which

were written at Great Barrington. The Hellenic element was still visible in "The Greek Partisan" and "The Greek Boy," and the aboriginal element in "The Disinterred Warrior." The large imagination of "The Hymn to the North Star" was radiant in "The Firmament," and in "The Past." Ardent love of nature found expressive utterance in "Lines on Revisiting the Country," "The Gladness of Nature," "A Summer Ramble," "A Scene on the Banks of the Hudson," and "The Evening Wind." The little book of immortal dirges had a fresh leaf added to it in "The Death of the Flowers," which was at once a pastoral of autumn and a monody over a beloved sister. A new element appeared in "The Summer Wind," and was always present afterward in Mr. Bryant's meditative poetry – the association of humanity with nature – a calm but sympathetic recognition of the ways of man and his presence on the earth. The power of suggestion and of rapid generalization, which was the key-note of "The Ages," lived anew in every line of "The Prairies," in which a series of poems present themselves to the imagination as a series of pictures in a gallery – pictures in which breadth and vigor of treatment and exquisite delicacy of detail are everywhere harmoniously blended, and the unity of pure Art is attained. It was worth going to the ends of the world to be able to write "The Prairies."

Confiding in the discretion of his associate Mr. Leggett, and anxious to escape from his daily editorial labors, Mr. Bryant sailed for Europe with his family in the summer of 1834. It was

his intention to perfect his literary studies while abroad, and to devote himself to the education of his children; but his intention was frustrated, after a short course of travel in France, Germany, and Italy, by the illness of Mr. Leggett, whose mistaken zeal in the advocacy of unpopular measures had seriously injured the *Evening Post*. He returned in haste early in 1836, and devoted his time and energies to restoring the prosperity of his paper. Nine years passed before he ventured to return to Europe, though he managed to visit certain portions of his own country. His readers tracked his journeys through the letters which he wrote to the *Evening Post*, and which were noticeable for justness of observation and clearness of expression. A selection from Mr. Bryant's foreign and home letters was published in 1852, under the title of "Letters of a Traveler."

The life of a man of letters is seldom eventful. There are, of course, exceptions to the rule; for literature, like other polite professions, is never without its disorderly followers. It is instructive to trace their careers, which are usually short ones; but the contemplation of the calm, well-regulated, self-respecting lives of the elder and wiser masters is much more satisfactory. We pity the Maginns, and Mangans, and Poes, whom we have always with us; but we admire and reverence such writers as Wordsworth, and Thackeray, and Bryant, who dignify their high calling. The last thirty years of the life of Mr. Bryant were devoid of incidents, though one of them (1866) was not without the supreme sorrow – death. He devoted himself to journalism as

conscientiously as if he still had his spurs to win, discussing all public questions with independence and fearlessness; and from time to time, as the spirit moved him, he added to our treasures of song, contributing to the popular magazines of the period, and occasionally issuing these contributions in separate volumes. He published "The Fountain and Other Poems" in 1842; "The White-Footed Deer and Other Poems" in 1844; a collected edition of his poems, with illustrations by Leutze, in 1846; an edition in two volumes in 1855; "Thirty Poems" in 1866; and in 1876 a complete illustrated edition of his poetical writings. To the honors which these volumes brought him he added fresh laurels in 1870 and 1871 by the publication of his translation of the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" – a translation which was highly praised both at home and abroad, and which, if not the best that the English language is capable of, is, in many respects, the best which any English-writing poet has yet produced.

There comes a day in the intellectual lives of most poets when their powers cease to be progressive and productive, or are productive only in the forms to which they have accustomed themselves, and which have become mannerisms. It was not so with Mr. Bryant. He enjoyed the dangerous distinction of proving himself a great poet at an early age; he preserved this distinction to the last, for the sixty-four years which elapsed between the writing of "Thanatopsis" and the writing of "The Flood of Years" witnessed no decay of his poetic capacities, but rather the growth and development of trains of thought and forms of verse of which

there was no evidence in his early writings. His sympathies were enlarged as the years went on, and the crystal clearness of his mind was colored with human emotions.

To Bryant, beyond all other modern poets, the earth was a theatre upon which the great drama of life was everlastingly played. The remembrance of this fact is his inspiration in "The Fountain," "An Evening Revery," "The Antiquity of Freedom," "The Crowded Street," "The Planting of the Apple-Tree," "The Night Journey of a River," "The Sower," and "The Flood of Years." The most poetical of Mr. Bryant's poems are, perhaps, "The Land of Dreams," "The Burial of Love," "The May Sun sheds an Amber Light," and "The Voice of Autumn;" and they were written in a succession of happy hours, and in the order named. Next to these pieces, as examples of pure poetry, should be placed "Sella" and "The Little People of the Snow," which are exquisite fairy fantasies. The qualities by which Mr. Bryant's poetry are chiefly distinguished are serenity and gravity of thought; an intense though repressed recognition of the mortality of mankind; an ardent love for human freedom; and unrivaled skill in painting the scenery of his native land. He had no superior in this walk of poetic art – it might almost be said no equal, for his descriptions of nature are never inaccurate or redundant. "The Excursion" is a tiresome poem, which contains several exquisite episodes. Mr. Bryant knew how to write exquisite episodes, and to omit the platitudes through which we reach them in other poets.

It is not given to many poets to possess as many residences as Mr. Bryant, for he had three – a town-house in New York, a country-house, called "Cedarmere," at Roslyn, Long Island, and the old homestead of the Bryant family at Cummington. He passed the winter months in New York, and the summer and early autumn months at his country-houses. No distinguished man in America was better known by sight than he.

"O good gray head that all men knew"

rose unbidden to one's lips as he passed his fellow-pedestrians in the streets of the great city, active, alert, with a springing step and a buoyant gait. He was seen in all weathers, walking down to his office in the morning, and back to his house in the afternoon – an observant antiquity, with a majestic white beard, a pair of sharp eyes, and a face which, noticed closely, recalled the line of the poet:

"A million wrinkles carved his skin."

Mr. Bryant had a peculiar talent, in which the French excel – the talent of delivering discourses upon the lives and writings of eminent men; and he was always in request after the death of his contemporaries.

Beginning with a eulogy on his friend Cole, the painter, who died in 1848, he paid his well-considered tributes to the memory of Cooper and Irving, and assisted at the dedication in

the Central Park of the Morse, Shakespeare, Scott, and Halleck monuments. His addresses on those occasions, and others that might be named, were models of justice of appreciation and felicity of expression. His last public appearance was at the Central Park, on the afternoon of May 29, 1878, at the unveiling of a statue to Mazzini. It was an unusually hot day, and after delivering his address, which was remarkable for its eloquence, he accompanied General James Grant Wilson, an acquaintance of some years' standing, to his residence in East Seventy-fourth street. General Wilson reached his door with Mr. Bryant leaning on his arm; he took a step in advance to open the inner door, and while his back was turned the poet fell, striking his head on the stone platform of the front steps. It was his death-blow; for, though he recovered his consciousness sufficiently to converse a little, and was able to ride to his own house with General Wilson, his fate was sealed. He lingered until the morning of the 12th of June, when his capacious spirit passed out into the Unknown. Two days later all that was mortal of him was buried beside the grave of his wife at Roslyn.

Such was the life and such the life-work of William Cullen Bryant.

R. H. STODDARD.

TO THE READER

The poems in this volume follow each other in the order in which they were written, it being believed that this arrangement would be as satisfactory to the reader as any classification founded on the nature of the subjects or their mode of treatment.

POEMS

THE AGES¹

I

When to the common rest that crowns our days,
Called in the noon of life, the good man goes,
Or full of years, and ripe in wisdom, lays
His silver temples in their last repose;
When, o'er the buds of youth, the death-wind blows
And blights the fairest; when our bitter tears
Stream, as the eyes of those that love us close,
We think on what they were, with many fears
Lest goodness die with them, and leave the coming years.

¹ In this poem, written and first printed in the year 1821, the author has endeavored, from a survey of the past ages of the world, and of the successive advances of mankind in knowledge, virtue, and happiness, to justify and confirm the hopes of the philanthropist for the future destinies of the human race.

II

And therefore, to our hearts, the days gone by,
When lived the honored sage whose death we wept,
And the soft virtues beamed from many an eye,
And beat in many a heart that long has slept —
Like spots of earth where angel-feet have stepped,
Are holy; and high-dreaming bards have told
Of times when worth was crowned, and faith was kept,
Ere friendship grew a snare, or love waxed cold —
Those pure and happy times – the golden days of old.

III

Peace to the just man's memory; let it grow
Greener with years, and blossom through the flight
Of ages; let the mimic canvas show
His calm benevolent features; let the light
Stream on his deeds of love, that shunned the sight
Of all but heaven, and in the book of fame
The glorious record of his virtues write
And hold it up to men, and bid them claim
A palm like his, and catch from him the hallowed flame.

IV

But oh, despair not of their fate who rise
To dwell upon the earth when we withdraw!
Lo! the same shaft by which the righteous dies,
Strikes through the wretch that scoffed at mercy's law
And trode his brethren down, and felt no awe
Of Him who will avenge them. Stainless worth,
Such as the sternest age of virtue saw,
Ripens, meanwhile, till time shall call it forth
From the low modest shade, to light and bless the earth.

V

Has Nature, in her calm, majestic march,
Faltered with age at last? does the bright sun
Grow dim in heaven? or, in their far blue arch,
Sparkle the crowd of stars, when day is done,
Less brightly? when the dew-lipped Spring comes on,
Breathes she with airs less soft, or scents the sky
With flowers less fair than when her reign begun?
Does prodigal Autumn, to our age, deny
The plenty that once swelled beneath his sober eye?

VI

Look on this beautiful world, and read the truth
In her fair page; see, every season brings
New change, to her, of everlasting youth;
Still the green soil, with joyous living things,
Swarms, the wide air is full of joyous wings,
And myriads, still, are happy in the sleep
Of ocean's azure gulfs, and where he flings
The restless surge. Eternal Love doth keep,
In his complacent arms, the earth, the air, the deep.

VII

Will then the merciful One, who stamped our race
With his own image, and who gave them sway
O'er earth, and the glad dwellers on her face,
Now that our swarming nations far away
Are spread, where'er the moist earth drinks the day,
Forget the ancient care that taught and nursed
His latest offspring? will he quench the ray
Infused by his own forming smile at first,
And leave a work so fair all blighted and accursed?

VIII

Oh, no! a thousand cheerful omens give
Hope of yet happier days, whose dawn is nigh.
He who has tamed the elements, shall not live
The slave of his own passions; he whose eye
Unwinds the eternal dances of the sky,
And in the abyss of brightness dares to span
The sun's broad circle, rising yet more high,
In God's magnificent works his will shall scan —
And love and peace shall make their paradise with man.

IX

Sit at the feet of History – through the night
Of years the steps of virtue she shall trace,
And show the earlier ages, where her sight
Can pierce the eternal shadows o'er their face; —
When, from the genial cradle of our race,
Went forth the tribes of men, their pleasant lot
To choose, where palm-groves cooled their dwelling-place,
Or freshening rivers ran; and there forgot
The truth of heaven, and kneeled to gods that heard them not.

X

Then waited not the murderer for the night,
But smote his brother down in the bright day,
And he who felt the wrong, and had the might,
His own avenger, girt himself to slay;
Beside the path the unburied carcass lay;
The shepherd, by the fountains of the glen,
Fled, while the robber swept his flock away,
And slew his babes. The sick, untended then,
Languished in the damp shade, and died afar from men.

XI

But misery brought in love; in passion's strife
Man gave his heart to mercy, pleading long,
And sought out gentle deeds to gladden life;
The weak, against the sons of spoil and wrong,
Banded, and watched their hamlets, and grew strong;
States rose, and, in the shadow of their might,
The timid rested. To the reverent throng,
Grave and time-wrinkled men, with locks all white,
Gave laws, and judged their strifes, and taught the way of
right;

XII

Till bolder spirits seized the rule, and nailed
On men the yoke that man should never bear,
And drave them forth to battle. Lo! unveiled
The scene of those stern ages! What is there?
A boundless sea of blood, and the wild air
Moans with the crimsoned surges that entomb
Cities and bannered armies; forms that wear
The kingly circlet rise, amid the gloom,
O'er the dark wave, and straight are swallowed in its womb.

XIII

Those ages have no memory, but they left
A record in the desert – columns strown
On the waste sands, and statues fallen and cleft,
Heaped like a host in battle overthrown;
Vast ruins, where the mountain's ribs of stone
Were hewn into a city; streets that spread
In the dark earth, where never breath has blown
Of heaven's sweet air, nor foot of man dares tread
The long and perilous ways – the Cities of the Dead!

XIV

And tombs of monarchs to the clouds up-piled —
They perished, but the eternal tombs remain —
And the black precipice, abrupt and wild,
Pierced by long toil and hollowed to a fane; —
Huge piers and frowning forms of gods sustain
The everlasting arches, dark and wide,
Like the night-heaven, when clouds are black with rain.
But idly skill was tasked, and strength was plied,
All was the work of slaves to swell a despot's pride.

XV

And Virtue cannot dwell with slaves, nor reign
O'er those who cower to take a tyrant's yoke;
She left the down-trod nations in disdain,
And flew to Greece, when Liberty awoke,
New-born, amid those glorious vales, and broke
Sceptre and chain with her fair youthful hands:
As rocks are shivered in the thunder-stroke.
And lo! in full-grown strength, an empire stands
Of leagued and rival states, the wonder of the lands.

XVI

Oh, Greece! thy flourishing cities were a spoil
Unto each other; thy hard hand oppressed
And crushed the helpless; thou didst make thy soil
Drunk with the blood of those that loved thee best;
And thou didst drive, from thy unnatural breast,
Thy just and brave to die in distant climes;
Earth shuddered at thy deeds, and sighed for rest
From thine abominations; after-times,
That yet shall read thy tale, will tremble at thy crimes!

XVII

Yet there was that within thee which has saved
Thy glory, and redeemed thy blotted name;
The story of thy better deeds, engraved
On fame's unmouldering pillar, puts to shame
Our chiller virtue; the high art to tame
The whirlwind of the passions was thy own;
And the pure ray, that from thy bosom came,
Far over many a land and age has shone,
And mingles with the light that beams from God's own

throne.

XVIII

And Rome – thy sterner, younger sister, she
Who awed the world with her imperial frown —
Rome drew the spirit of her race from thee,
The rival of thy shame and thy renown.
Yet her degenerate children sold the crown
Of earth's wide kingdoms to a line of slaves;
Guilt reigned, and woe with guilt, and plagues came down,
Till the North broke its floodgates, and the waves
Whelmed the degraded race, and weltered o'er their graves.

XIX

Vainly that ray of brightness from above,
That shone around the Galilean lake,
The light of hope, the leading star of love,
Struggled, the darkness of that day to break;
Even its own faithless guardians strove to slake,
In fogs of earth, the pure ethereal flame;
And priestly hands, for Jesus' blessed sake,
Were red with blood, and charity became,

In that stern war of forms, a mockery and a name.

XX

They triumphed, and less bloody rites were kept
Within the quiet of the convent-cell;
The well-fed inmates pattered prayer, and slept,
And sinned, and liked their easy penance well.
Where pleasant was the spot for men to dwell,
Amid its fair broad lands the abbey lay,
Sheltering dark orgies that were shame to tell,
And cowled and barefoot beggars swarmed the way,
All in their convent weeds, of black, and white, and gray.

XXI

Oh, sweetly the returning muses' strain
Swelled over that famed stream, whose gentle tide
In their bright lap the Etrurian vales detain,
Sweet, as when winter storms have ceased to chide,
And all the new-leaved woods, resounding wide,
Send out wild hymns upon the scented air.
Lo! to the smiling Arno's classic side
The emulous nations of the West repair,

And kindle their quenched urns, and drink fresh spirit there.

XXII

Still, Heaven deferred the hour ordained to rend
From saintly rottenness the sacred stole;
And cowl and worshipped shrine could still defend
The wretch with felon stains upon his soul;
And crimes were set to sale, and hard his dole
Who could not bribe a passage to the skies;
And vice, beneath the mitre's kind control,
Sinned gayly on, and grew to giant size,
Shielded by priestly power, and watched by priestly eyes.

XXIII

At last the earthquake came – the shock, that hurled
To dust, in many fragments dashed and strown,
The throne, whose roots were in another world,
And whose far-stretching shadow awed our own.
From many a proud monastic pile, o'erthrown,
Fear-struck, the hooded inmates rushed and fled;
The web, that for a thousand years had grown
O'er prostrate Europe, in that day of dread

Crumbled and fell, as fire dissolves the flaxen thread.

XXIV

The spirit of that day is still awake,
And spreads himself, and shall not sleep again;
But through the idle mesh of power shall break
Like billows o'er the Asian monarch's chain;
Till men are filled with him, and feel how vain,
Instead of the pure heart and innocent hands,
Are all the proud and pompous modes to gain
The smile of Heaven; – till a new age expands
Its white and holy wings above the peaceful lands.

XXV

For look again on the past years; – behold,
How like the nightmare's dreams have flown away
Horrible forms of worship, that, of old,
Held, o'er the shuddering realms, unquestioned sway:
See crimes, that feared not once the eye of day,
Rooted from men, without a name or place:
See nations blotted out from earth, to pay
The forfeit of deep guilt; – with glad embrace

The fair disburdened lands welcome a nobler race.

XXVI

Thus error's monstrous shapes from earth are driven;
They fade, they fly – but Truth survives their flight;
Earth has no shades to quench that beam of heaven;
Each ray that shone, in early time, to light
The faltering footstep in the path of right,
Each gleam of clearer brightness shed to aid
In man's maturer day his bolder sight,
All blended, like the rainbow's radiant braid,
Pour yet, and still shall pour, the blaze that cannot fade.

XXVII

Late, from this Western shore, that morning chased
The deep and ancient night, which threw its shroud
O'er the green land of groves, the beautiful waste,
Nurse of full streams, and lifter-up of proud
Sky-mingling mountains that o'erlook the cloud.
Erewhile, where yon gay spires their brightness rear,
Trees waved, and the brown hunter's shouts were loud
Amid the forest; and the bounding deer

Fled at the glancing plume, and the gaunt wolf yelled near.

XXVIII

And where his willing waves yon bright blue bay
Sends up, to kiss his decorated brim,
And cradles, in his soft embrace, the gay
Young group of grassy islands born of him,
And crowding nigh, or in the distance dim,
Lifts the white throng of sails, that bear or bring
The commerce of the world; – with tawny limb,
And belt and beads in sunlight glistening,
The savage urged his skiff like wild bird on the wing.

XXIX

Then all this youthful paradise around,
And all the broad and boundless mainland, lay
Cooled by the interminable wood, that frowned
O'er mount and vale, where never summer ray
Glanced, till the strong tornado broke his way
Through the gray giants of the sylvan wild;
Yet many a sheltered glade, with blossoms gay
Beneath the showery sky and sunshine mild,

Within the shaggy arms of that dark forest smiled.

XXX

There stood the Indian hamlet, there the lake
Spread its blue sheet that flashed with many an oar,
Where the brown otter plunged him from the brake,
And the deer drank: as the light gale flew o'er,
The twinkling maize-field rustled on the shore;
And while that spot, so wild, and lone, and fair,
A look of glad and guiltless beauty wore,
And peace was on the earth and in the air,
The warrior lit the pile, and bound his captive there.

XXXI

Not unavenged – the foeman, from the wood,
Beheld the deed, and, when the midnight shade
Was stillest, gorged his battle-axe with blood;
All died – the wailing babe – the shrinking maid
And in the flood of fire that scathed the glade,
The roofs went down; but deep the silence grew,
When on the dewy woods the day-beam played;
No more the cabin-smokes rose wreathed and blue,

And ever, by their lake, lay moored the bark canoe.

XXXII

Look now abroad – another race has filled
These populous borders – wide the wood recedes,
And towns shoot up, and fertile realms are tilled;
The land is full of harvests and green meads;
Streams numberless, that many a fountain feeds,
Shine, disembowered, and give to sun and breeze
Their virgin waters; the full region leads
New colonies forth, that toward the western seas
Spread, like a rapid flame among the autumnal trees.

XXXIII

Here the free spirit of mankind, at length,
Throws its last fetters off; and who shall place
A limit to the giant's unchained strength,
Or curb his swiftness in the forward race?
On, like the comet's way through infinite space.
Stretches the long untravelled path of light,
Into the depths of ages; we may trace,
Afar, the brightening glory of its flight,

Till the receding rays are lost to human sight.

XXXIV

Europe is given a prey to sterner fates,
And writhes in shackles; strong the arms that chain
To earth her struggling multitude of states;
She too is strong, and might not chafe in vain
Against them, but might cast to earth the train
That trample her, and break their iron net.
Yes, she shall look on brighter days and gain
The meed of worthier deeds; the moment set
To rescue and raise up, draws near – but is not yet.

XXXV

But thou, my country, thou shalt never fall,
Save with thy children – thy maternal care,
Thy lavish love, thy blessings showered on all —
These are thy fetters – seas and stormy air
Are the wide barrier of thy borders, where,
Among thy gallant sons who guard thee well,
Thou laugh'st at enemies: who shall then declare
The date of thy deep-founded strength, or tell

How happy, in thy lap, the sons of men shall dwell?

THANATOPSIS

To him who in the love of Nature holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language; for his gayer hours
She has a voice of gladness, and a smile
And eloquence of beauty, and she glides
Into his darker musings, with a mild
And healing sympathy, that steals away
Their sharpness, ere he is aware. When thoughts
Of the last bitter hour come like a blight
Over thy spirit, and sad images
Of the stern agony, and shroud, and pall,
And breathless darkness, and the narrow house,
Make thee to shudder, and grow sick at heart; —
Go forth, under the open sky, and list
To Nature's teachings, while from all around —
Earth and her waters, and the depths of air —
Comes a still voice — Yet a few days, and thee
The all-beholding sun shall see no more
In all his course; nor yet in the cold ground,
Where thy pale form was laid, with many tears,
Nor in the embrace of ocean, shall exist
Thy image. Earth, that nourished thee, shall claim
Thy growth, to be resolved to earth again,
And, lost each human trace, surrendering up
Thine individual being, shalt thou go

To mix for ever with the elements,
To be a brother to the insensible rock
And to the sluggish clod, which the rude swain
Turns with his share, and treads upon. The oak
Shall send his roots abroad, and pierce thy mould.

Yet not to thine eternal resting-place
Shalt thou retire alone, nor couldst thou wish
Couch more magnificent. Thou shalt lie down
With patriarchs of the infant world – with kings,
The powerful of the earth – the wise, the good,
Fair forms, and hoary seers of ages past,
All in one mighty sepulchre. The hills
Rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun, – the vales
Stretching in pensive quietness between;
The venerable woods – rivers that move
In majesty, and the complaining brooks
That make the meadows green; and, poured round all,
Old Ocean's gray and melancholy waste, —
Are but the solemn decorations all
Of the great tomb of man. The golden sun,
The planets, all the infinite host of heaven,
Are shining on the sad abodes of death,
Through the still lapse of ages. All that tread
The globe are but a handful to the tribes
That slumber in its bosom. – Take the wings
Of morning, pierce the Borean wilderness,
Or lose thyself in the continuous woods
Where rolls the Oregon, and hears no sound,

Save his own dashings – yet the dead are there:
And millions in those solitudes, since first
The flight of years began, have laid them down
In their last sleep – the dead reign there alone,
So shalt thou rest, and what if thou withdraw
In silence from the living, and no friend
Take note of thy departure? All that breathe
Will share thy destiny. The gay will laugh
When thou art gone, the solemn brood of care
Plod on, and each one as before will chase
His favorite phantom; yet all these shall leave
Their mirth and their employments, and shall come
And make their bed with thee. As the long train
Of ages glide away, the sons of men,
The youth in life's green spring, and he who goes
In the full strength of years, matron and maid,
The speechless babe, and the gray-headed man —
Shall one by one be gathered to thy side,
By those, who in their turn shall follow them.

So live, that when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan, which moves
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

THE YELLOW VIOLET

When beechen buds begin to swell,
And woods the blue-bird's warble know.
The yellow violet's modest bell
Peeps from the last year's leaves below.

Ere russet fields their green resume,
Sweet flower, I love, in forest bare,
To meet thee, when thy faint perfume
Alone is in the virgin air.

Of all her train, the hands of Spring
First plant thee in the watery mould.
And I have seen thee blossoming
Beside the snow-bank's edges cold.

Thy parent sun, who bade thee view
Pale skies, and chilling moisture sip,
Has bathed thee in his own bright hue,
And streaked with jet thy glowing lip.

Yet slight thy form, and low thy seat,
And earthward bent thy gentle eye,
Unapt the passing view to meet,
When loftier flowers are flaunting nigh.

Oft, in the sunless April day,
Thy early smile has stayed my walk;
But midst the gorgeous blooms of May,
I passed thee on thy humble stalk.

So they, who climb to wealth, forget
The friends in darker fortunes tried.
I copied them – but I regret
That I should ape the ways of pride.

And when again the genial hour
Awakes the painted tribes of light,
I'll not o'erlook the modest flower
That made the woods of April bright.

INSCRIPTION FOR THE ENTRANCE TO A WOOD

Stranger, if thou hast learned a truth which needs
No school of long experience, that the world
Is full of guilt and misery, and hast seen
Enough of all its sorrows, crimes, and cares,
To tire thee of it, enter this wild wood
And view the haunts of Nature. The calm shade
Shall bring a kindred calm, and the sweet breeze
That makes the green leaves dance, shall waft a balm
To thy sick heart. Thou wilt find nothing here
Of all that pained thee in the haunts of men,
And made thee loathe thy life. The primal curse
Fell, it is true, upon the unsinning earth,
But not in vengeance. God hath yoked to guilt
Her pale tormentor, misery. Hence, these shades
Are still the abodes of gladness; the thick roof
Of green and stirring branches is alive
And musical with birds, that sing and sport
In wantonness of spirit; while below
The squirrel, with raised paws and form erect,
Chirps merrily. Throngs of insects in the shade
Try their thin wings and dance in the warm beam
That waked them into life. Even the green trees
Partake the deep contentment; as they bend

To the soft winds, the sun from the blue sky
Looks in and sheds a blessing on the scene.
Scarce less the cleft-born wild-flower seems to enjoy
Existence, than the wingèd plunderer
That sucks its sweets. The mossy rocks themselves,
And the old and ponderous trunks of prostrate trees
That lead from knoll to knoll a causey rude
Or bridge the sunken brook, and their dark roots,
With all their earth upon them, twisting high,
Breathe fixed tranquillity. The rivulet
Sends forth glad sounds, and tripping o'er its bed
Of pebbly sands, or leaping down the rocks,
Seems, with continuous laughter, to rejoice
In its own being. Softly tread the marge,
Lest from her midway perch thou scare the wren
That dips her bill in water. The cool wind,
That stirs the stream in play, shall come to thee.
Like one that loves thee nor will let thee pass
Ungreeted, and shall give its light embrace.

SONG

Soon as the glazed and gleaming snow
Reflects the day-dawn cold and clear,
The hunter of the West must go
In depth of woods to seek the deer.

His rifle on his shoulder placed,
His stores of death arranged with skill,
His moccasins and snow-shoes laced —
Why lingers he beside the hill?

Far, in the dim and doubtful light,
Where woody slopes a valley leave,
He sees what none but lover might,
The dwelling of his Genevieve.

And oft he turns his truant eye,
And pauses oft, and lingers near;
But when he marks the reddening sky,
He bounds away to hunt the deer.

TO A WATERFOWL

Whither, midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way?

Vainly the fowler's eye
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,
As, darkly seen against the crimson sky,
Thy figure floats along.

Seek'st thou the plashy brink
Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,
Or where the rocking billows rise and sink
On the chafed ocean-side?

There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast —
The desert and illimitable air —
Lone wandering, but not lost.

All day thy wings have fanned,
At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere,
Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,
Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end;
Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest,
And scream among thy fellows; reeds shall bend,
Soon, o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form; yet, on my heart
Deeply has sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart.

He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

GREEN RIVER

When breezes are soft and skies are fair,
I steal an hour from study and care,
And hie me away to the woodland scene,
Where wanders the stream with waters of green,
As if the bright fringe of herbs on its brink
Had given their stain to the waves they drink;
And they, whose meadows it murmurs through,
Have named the stream from its own fair hue.
Yet pure its waters – its shallows are bright
With colored pebbles and sparkles of light,
And clear the depths where its eddies play,
And dimples deepen and whirl away,
And the plane-tree's speckled arms o'ershoot
The swifter current that mines its root,
Through whose shifting leaves, as you walk the hill,
The quivering glimmer of sun and rill
With a sudden flash on the eye is thrown,
Like the ray that streams from the diamond-stone.
Oh, loveliest there the spring days come,
With blossoms, and birds, and wild-bees' hum;
The flowers of summer are fairest there,
And freshest the breath of the summer air;
And sweetest the golden autumn day
In silence and sunshine glides away.

Yet, fair as thou art, thou shunnest to glide,
Beautiful stream! by the village side;
But windest away from haunts of men,
To quiet valley and shaded glen;
And forest, and meadow, and slope of hill,
Around thee, are lonely, lovely, and still,
Lonely – save when, by thy rippling tides,
From thicket to thicket the angler glides;
Or the simpler comes, with basket and book,
For herbs of power on thy banks to look;
Or haply, some idle dreamer, like me,
To wander, and muse, and gaze on thee,
Still – save the chirp of birds that feed
On the river cherry and seedy reed,
And thy own wild music gushing out
With mellow murmur of fairy shout,
From dawn to the blush of another day,
Like traveller singing along his way.

That fairy music I never hear,
Nor gaze on those waters so green and clear,
And mark them winding away from sight,
Darkened with shade or flashing with light,
While o'er them the vine to its thicket clings,
And the zephyr stoops to freshen his wings,
But I wish that fate had left me free
To wander these quiet haunts with thee,
Till the eating cares of earth should depart,
And the peace of the scene pass into my heart;

And I envy thy stream, as it glides along
Through its beautiful banks in a trance of song.

Though forced to drudge for the dregs of men,
And scrawl strange words with the barbarous pen,
And mingle among the jostling crowd,
Where the sons of strife are subtle and loud —
I often come to this quiet place,
To breathe the airs that ruffle thy face,
And gaze upon thee in silent dream,
For in thy lonely and lovely stream
An image of that calm life appears
That won my heart in my greener years.

A WINTER PIECE

The time has been that these wild solitudes,
Yet beautiful as wild, were trod by me
Oftener than now; and when the ills of life
Had chafed my spirit – when the unsteady pulse
Beat with strange flutterings – I would wander forth
And seek the woods. The sunshine on my path
Was to me as a friend. The swelling hills,
The quiet dells retiring far between,
With gentle invitation to explore
Their windings, were a calm society
That talked with me and soothed me. Then the chant
Of birds, and chime of brooks, and soft caress
Of the fresh sylvan air, made me forget
The thoughts that broke my peace, and I began
To gather simples by the fountain's brink,
And lose myself in day-dreams. While I stood
In Nature's loneliness, I was with one
With whom I early grew familiar, one
Who never had a frown for me, whose voice
Never rebuked me for the hours I stole
From cares I loved not, but of which the world
Deems highest, to converse with her. When shrieked
The bleak November winds, and smote the woods,
And the brown fields were herbless, and the shades.
That met above the merry rivulet.

Were spoiled, I sought, I loved them still; they seemed
Like old companions in adversity.
Still there was beauty in my walks; the brook,
Bordered with sparkling frost-work, was as gay
As with its fringe of summer flowers. Afar,
The village with its spires, the path of streams
And dim receding valleys, hid before
By interposing trees, lay visible
Through the bare grove, and my familiar haunts
Seemed new to me. Nor was I slow to come
Among them, when the clouds, from their still skirts,
Had shaken down on earth the feathery snow,
And all was white. The pure keen air abroad,
Albeit it breathed no scent of herb, nor heard
Love-call of bird nor merry hum of bee,
Was not the air of death, Bright mosses crept
Over the spotted trunks, and the close buds,
That lay along the boughs, instinct with life,
Patient, and waiting the soft breath of Spring,
Feared not the piercing spirit of the North.
The snow-bird twittered on the beechen bough,
And 'neath the hemlock, whose thick branches bent
Beneath its bright cold burden, and kept dry
A circle, on the earth, of withered leaves,
The partridge found a shelter. Through the snow
The rabbit sprang away. The lighter track
Of fox, and the raccoon's broad path, were there,
Crossing each other. From his hollow tree
The squirrel was abroad, gathering the nuts

Just fallen, that asked the winter cold and sway
Of winter blast, to shake them from their hold.

But Winter has yet brighter scenes – he boasts
Splendors beyond what gorgeous Summer knows;
Or Autumn with his many fruits, and woods
All flushed with many hues. Come when the rains
Have glazed the snow and clothed the trees with ice,
While the slant sun of February pours
Into the bowers a flood of light. Approach!
The incrusted surface shall upbear thy steps,
And the broad arching portals of the grove
Welcome thy entering. Look! the massy trunks
Are cased in the pure crystal; each light spray,
Nodding and tinkling in the breath of heaven,
Is studded with its trembling water-drops,
That glimmer with an amethystine light.
But round the parent-stem the long low boughs
Bend, in a glittering ring, and arbors hide
The glassy floor. Oh! you might deem the spot
The spacious cavern of some virgin mine,
Deep in the womb of earth – where the gems grow,
And diamonds put forth radiant rods and bud
With amethyst and topaz – and the place
Lit up, most royally, with the pure beam
That dwells in them. Or haply the vast hall
Of fairy palace, that outlasts the night,
And fades not in the glory of the sun; —
Where crystal columns send forth slender shafts

And crossing arches; and fantastic aisles
Wind from the sight in brightness, and are lost
Among the crowded pillars. Raise thine eye;
Thou seest no cavern roof, no palace vault;
There the blue sky and the white drifting cloud
Look in. Again the wildered fancy dreams
Of spouting fountains, frozen as they rose,
And fixed, with all their branching jets, in air,
And all their sluices sealed. All, all is light;
Light without shade. But all shall pass away
With the next sun. From numberless vast trunks
Loosened, the crashing ice shall make a sound
Like the far roar of rivers, and the eve
Shall close o'er the brown woods as it was wont.

And it is pleasant, when the noisy streams
Are just set free, and milder suns melt off
The plashy snow, save only the firm drift
In the deep glen or the close shade of pines —
'Tis pleasant to behold the wreaths of smoke
Roll up among the maples of the hill,
Where the shrill sound of youthful voices wakes
The shriller echo, as the clear pure lymph,
That from the wounded trees, in twinkling drops,
Falls, mid the golden brightness of the morn,
Is gathered in with brimming pails, and oft,
Wielded by sturdy hands, the stroke of axe
Makes the woods ring. Along the quiet air,
Come and float calmly off the soft light clouds,

Such as you see in summer, and the winds
Scarce stir the branches. Lodged in sunny cleft,
Where the cold breezes come not, blooms alone
The little wind-flower, whose just opened eye
Is blue as the spring heaven it gazes at —
Startling the loiterer in the naked groves
With unexpected beauty, for the time
Of blossoms and green leaves is yet afar.
And ere it comes, the encountering winds shall oft
Muster their wrath again, and rapid clouds
Shade heaven, and bounding on the frozen earth
Shall fall their volleyed stores, rounded like hail
And white like snow, and the loud North again
Shall buffet the vexed forest in his rage.

THE WEST WIND

Beneath the forest's skirt I rest,
Whose branching pines rise dark and high,
And hear the breezes of the West
Among the thread-like foliage sigh.

Sweet Zephyr! why that sound of woe?
Is not thy home among the flowers?
Do not the bright June roses blow,
To meet thy kiss at morning hours?

And lo! thy glorious realm outspread —
Yon stretching valleys, green and gay,
And yon free hill-tops, o'er whose head
The loose white clouds are borne away.

And there the full broad river runs,
And many a fount wells fresh and sweet,
To cool thee when the mid-day suns
Have made thee faint beneath their heat.

Thou wind of joy, and youth, and love;
Spirit of the new-wakened year!
The sun in his blue realm above
Smooths a bright path when thou art here.

In lawns the murmuring bee is heard,
The wooing ring-dove in the shade;
On thy soft breath, the new-fledged bird
Takes wing, half happy, half afraid.

Ah! thou art like our wayward race; —
When not a shade of pain or ill
Dims the bright smile of Nature's face,
Thou lov'st to sigh and murmur still.

THE BURIAL-PLACE.²

A FRAGMENT

Erewhile, on England's pleasant shores, our sires
Left not their churchyards unadorned with shades
Or blossoms, but indulgent to the strong
And natural dread of man's last home, the grave,
Its frost and silence – they disposed around,
To soothe the melancholy spirit that dwelt
Too sadly on life's close, the forms and hues
Of vegetable beauty. There the yew,
Green ever amid the snows of winter, told
Of immortality, and gracefully
The willow, a perpetual mourner, drooped;
And there the gadding woodbine crept about,
And there the ancient ivy. From the spot
Where the sweet maiden, in her blossoming years
Cut off, was laid with streaming eyes, and hands
That trembled as they placed her there, the rose

² The first half of this fragment may seem to the reader borrowed from the essay on Rural Funerals in the fourth number of "The Sketch-book." The lines were, however, written more than a year before that number appeared. The poem, unfinished as it is, would hardly have been admitted into this collection, had not the author been unwilling to lose what had the honor of resembling so beautiful a composition.

Sprung modest, on bowed stalk, and better spoke
Her graces, than the proudest monument.
There children set about their playmate's grave
The pansy. On the infant's little bed,
Wet at its planting with maternal tears,
Emblem of early sweetness, early death,
Nestled the lowly primrose. Childless dames,
And maids that would not raise the reddened eye —
Orphans, from whose young lids the light of joy
Fled early – silent lovers, who had given
All that they lived for to the arms of earth,
Came often, o'er the recent graves to strew
Their offerings, rue, and rosemary, and flowers.

The pilgrim bands who passed the sea to keep
Their Sabbaths in the eye of God alone,
In his wide temple of the wilderness,
Brought not these simple customs of the heart
With them. It might be, while they laid their dead
By the vast solemn skirts of the old groves,
And the fresh virgin soil poured forth strange flowers
About their graves; and the familiar shades
Of their own native isle, and wonted blooms,
And herbs were wanting, which the pious hand
Might plant or scatter there, these gentle rites
Passed out of use. Now they are scarcely known,
And rarely in our borders may you meet
The tall larch, sighing in the burial-place,
Or willow, trailing low its boughs to hide

The gleaming marble. Naked rows of graves
And melancholy ranks of monuments
Are seen instead, where the coarse grass, between,
Shoots up its dull green spikes, and in the wind
Hisses, and the neglected bramble nigh,
Offers its berries to the schoolboy's hand,
In vain – they grow too near the dead. Yet here,
Nature, rebuking the neglect of man,
Plants often, by the ancient mossy stone,
The brier-rose, and upon the broken turf
That clothes the fresher grave, the strawberry plant
Sprinkles its swell with blossoms, and lays forth
Her ruddy, pouting fruit...

"BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN."

Oh, deem not they are blest alone
Whose lives a peaceful tenor keep;
The Power who pities man, hath shown
A blessing for the eyes that weep.

The light of smiles shall fill again
The lids that overflow with tears;
And weary hours of woe and pain
Are promises of happier years.

There is a day of sunny rest
For every dark and troubled night:
And grief may hide an evening guest,
But joy shall come with early light.

And thou, who, o'er thy friend's low bier,
Dost shed the bitter drops like rain,
Hope that a brighter, happier sphere
Will give him to thy arms again.

Nor let the good man's trust depart,
Though life its common gifts deny, —
Though with a pierced and bleeding heart

And spurned of men, he goes to die.

For God hath marked each sorrowing day
And numbered every secret tear,
And heaven's long age of bliss shall pay
For all his children suffer here.

"NO MAN KNOWETH HIS SEPULCHRE."

When he, who, from the scourge of wrong,
Aroused the Hebrew tribes to fly,
Saw the fair region, promised long,
And bowed him on the hills to die;

God made his grave, to men unknown,
Where Moab's rocks a vale infold,
And laid the aged seer alone
To slumber while the world grows old.

Thus still, whene'er the good and just
Close the dim eye on life and pain,
Heaven watches o'er their sleeping dust
Till the pure spirit comes again.

Though nameless, trampled, and forgot,
His servant's humble ashes lie,
Yet God hath marked and sealed the spot,
To call its inmate to the sky.

A WALK AT SUNSET

When insect wings are glistening in the beam
Of the low sun, and mountain-tops are bright,
Oh, let me, by the crystal valley-stream,
Wander amid the mild and mellow light;
And while the wood-thrush pipes his evening lay,
Give me one lonely hour to hymn the setting day.

Oh, sun! that o'er the western mountains now
Go'st down in glory! ever beautiful
And blessed is thy radiance, whether thou
Colorest the eastern heaven and night-mist cool,
Till the bright day-star vanish, or on high
Climbest and streamest thy white splendors from mid-sky.

Yet, loveliest are thy setting smiles, and fair,
Fairest of all that earth beholds, the hues,
That live among the clouds, and flush the air,
Lingering and deepening at the hour of dews.
Then softest gales are breathed, and softest heard
The plaining voice of streams, and pensive note of bird.

They who here roamed, of yore, the forest wide,
Felt, by such charm, their simple bosoms won;
They deemed their quivered warrior, when he died,
Went to bright isles beneath the setting sun;

Where winds are aye at peace, and skies are fair,
And purple-skirted clouds curtain the crimson air.

So, with the glories of the dying day,
Its thousand trembling lights and changing hues,
The memory of the brave who passed away
Tenderly mingled; – fitting hour to muse
On such grave theme, and sweet the dream that shed
Brightness and beauty round the destiny of the dead.

For ages, on the silent forests here,
Thy beams did fall before the red man came
To dwell beneath them; in their shade the deer
Fed, and feared not the arrow's deadly aim.
Nor tree was felled, in all that world of woods,
Save by the beaver's tooth, or winds, or rush of floods.

Then came the hunter tribes, and thou didst look,
For ages, on their deeds in the hard chase,
And well-fought wars; green sod and silver brook
Took the first stain of blood; before thy face
The warrior generations came and passed,
And glory was laid up for many an age to last.

Now they are gone, gone as thy setting blaze
Goes down the west, while night is pressing on,
And with them the old tale of better days,
And trophies of remembered power, are gone.
Yon field that gives the harvest, where the plough

Strikes the white bone, is all that tells their story now.

I stand upon their ashes in thy beam,
The offspring of another race, I stand,
Beside a stream they loved, this valley-stream;
And where the night-fire of the quivered band
Showed the gray oak by fits, and war-song rung,
I teach the quiet shades the strains of this new tongue.

Farewell! but thou shalt come again – thy light
Must shine on other changes, and behold
The place of the thronged city still as night —
States fallen – new empires built upon the old —
But never shalt thou see these realms again
Darkened by boundless groves, and roamed by savage men.

HYMN TO DEATH

Oh! could I hope the wise and pure in heart
Might hear my song without a frown, nor deem
My voice unworthy of the theme it tries, —
I would take up the hymn to Death, and say
To the grim power, The world hath slandered thee
And mocked thee. On thy dim and shadowy brow
They place an iron crown, and call thee king
Of terrors, and the spoiler of the world,
Deadly assassin, that strik'st down the fair,
The loved, the good – that breathest on the lights
Of virtue set along the vale of life,
And they go out in darkness. I am come,
Not with reproaches, not with cries and prayers,
Such as have stormed thy stern, insensible tar
From the beginning; I am come to speak
Thy praises. True it is, that I have wept
Thy conquests, and may weep them yet again,
And thou from some I love wilt take a life
Dear to me as my own. Yet while the spell
Is on my spirit, and I talk with thee
In sight of all thy trophies, face to face,
Meet is it that my voice should utter forth
Thy nobler triumphs; I will teach the world
To thank thee. Who are thine accusers? – Who?
The living! – they who never felt thy power,

And know thee not. The curses of the wretch
Whose crimes are ripe, his sufferings when thy hand
Is on him, and the hour he dreads is come,
Are writ among thy praises. But the good —
Does he whom thy kind hand dismissed to peace,
Upbraid the gentle violence that took off
His fetters, and unbarred his prison-cell?

Raise then the hymn to Death. Deliverer!
God hath anointed thee to free the oppressed
And crush the oppressor. When the armed chief,
The conqueror of nations, walks the world,
And it is changed beneath his feet, and all
Its kingdoms melt into one mighty realm —
Thou, while his head is loftiest and his heart
Blasphemes, imagining his own right hand
Almighty, thou dost set thy sudden grasp
Upon him, and the links of that strong chain
Which bound mankind are crumbled; thou dost break
Sceptre and crown, and beat his throne to dust.
Then the earth shouts with gladness, and her tribes
Gather within their ancient bounds again.
Else had the mighty of the olden time,
Nimrod, Sesostris, or the youth who feigned
His birth from Libyan Ammon, smitten yet
The nations with a rod of iron, and driven
Their chariot o'er our necks. Thou dost avenge,
In thy good time, the wrongs of those who know
No other friend. Nor dost thou interpose

Only to lay the sufferer asleep,
Where he who made him wretched troubles not
His rest – thou dost strike down his tyrant too.
Oh, there is joy when hands that held the scourge
Drop lifeless, and the pitiless heart is cold.
Thou too dost purge from earth its horrible
And old idolatries; – from the proud fanes
Each to his grave their priests go out, till none
Is left to teach their worship; then the fires
Of sacrifice are chilled, and the green moss
O'ercreeps their altars; the fallen images
Cumber the weedy courts, and for loud hymns,
Chanted by kneeling multitudes, the wind
Shrieks in the solitary aisles. When he
Who gives his life to guilt, and laughs at all
The laws that God or man has made, and round
Hedges his seat with power, and shines in wealth, —
Lifts up his atheist front to scoff at Heaven,
And celebrates his shame in open day,
Thou, in the pride of all his crimes, cutt'st off
The horrible example. Touched by thine,
The extortioner's hard hand foregoes the gold
Wrung from the o'er-worn poor. The perjurer,
Whose tongue was lithe, e'en now, and voluble
Against his neighbor's life, and he who laughed
And leaped for joy to see a spotless fame
Blasted before his own foul calumnies,
Are smit with deadly silence. He, who sold
His conscience to preserve a worthless life,

Even while he hugs himself on his escape,
Trembles, as, doubly terrible, at length,
Thy steps o'ertake him, and there is no time
For parley, nor will bribes unclench thy grasp.
Oft, too, dost thou reform thy victim, long
Ere his last hour. And when the reveller,
Mad in the chase of pleasure, stretches on,
And strains each nerve, and clears the path of life
Like wind, thou point'st him to the dreadful goal,
And shak'st thy hour-glass in his reeling eye,
And check'st him in mid course. Thy skeleton hand
Shows to the faint of spirit the right path,
And he is warned, and fears to step aside.
Thou sett'st between the ruffian and his crime
Thy ghastly countenance, and his slack hand
Drops the drawn knife. But, oh, most fearfully
Dost thou show forth Heaven's justice, when thy shafts
Drink up the ebbing spirit – then the hard
Of heart and violent of hand restores
The treasure to the friendless wretch he wronged.
Then from the writhing bosom thou dost pluck
The guilty secret; lips, for ages sealed,
Are faithless to their dreadful trust at length,
And give it up; the felon's latest breath
Absolves the innocent man who bears his crime;
The slanderer, horror-smitten, and in tears,
Recalls the deadly obloquy he forged
To work his brother's ruin. Thou dost make
Thy penitent victim utter to the air

The dark conspiracy that strikes at life,
And aims to whelm the laws; ere yet the hour
Is come, and the dread sign of murder given.

Thus, from the first of time, hast thou been found
On virtue's side; the wicked, but for thee,
Had been too strong for the good; the great of earth
Had crushed the weak for ever. Schooled in guile
For ages, while each passing year had brought
Its baneful lesson, they had filled the world
With their abominations; while its tribes,
Trodden to earth, imbruted, and despoiled,
Had knelt to them in worship; sacrifice
Had smoked on many an altar, temple-roofs
Had echoed with the blasphemous prayer and hymn:
But thou, the great reformer of the world,
Tak'st off the sons of violence and fraud
In their green pupilage, their lore half learned —
Ere guilt had quite o'errun the simple heart
God gave them at their birth, and blotted out
His image. Thou dost mark them flushed with hope,
As on the threshold of their vast designs
Doubtful and loose they stand, and strik'st them down.

...

Alas! I little thought that the stern power,
Whose fearful praise I sang, would try me thus
Before the strain was ended. It must cease —
For he is in his grave who taught my youth

The art of verse, and in the bud of life
Offered me to the Muses. Oh, cut off
Untimely! when thy reason in its strength,
Ripened by years of toil and studious search,
And watch of Nature's silent lessons, taught
Thy hand to practise best the lenient art
To which thou gavest thy laborious days,
And, last, thy life. And, therefore, when the earth
Received thee, tears were in unyielding eyes
And on hard cheeks, and they who deemed thy skill
Delayed their death-hour, shuddered and turned pale
When thou wert gone. This faltering verse, which thou
Shalt not, as wont, o'erlook, is all I have
To offer at thy grave – this – and the hope
To copy thy example, and to leave
A name of which the wretched shall not think
As of an enemy's, whom they forgive
As all forgive the dead. Rest, therefore, thou
Whose early guidance trained my infant steps —
Rest, in the bosom of God, till the brief sleep
Of death is over, and a happier life
Shall dawn to waken thine insensible dust.

Now thou art not – and yet the men whose guilt
Has wearied Heaven for vengeance – he who bears
False witness – he who takes the orphan's bread,
And robs the widow – he who spreads abroad
Polluted hands in mockery of prayer,
Are left to cumber earth. Shuddering I look

On what is written, yet I blot not out
The desultory numbers; let them stand,
The record of an idle revery.

THE MASSACRE AT SCIO.³

Weep not for Scio's children slain;
Their blood, by Turkish falchions shed,
Sends not its cry to Heaven in vain
For vengeance on the murderer's head.

Though high the warm red torrent ran
Between the flames that lit the sky,
Yet, for each drop, an armèd man
Shall rise, to free the land, or die.

And for each corpse, that in the sea
Was thrown, to feast the scaly herds,
A hundred of the foe shall be
A banquet for the mountain-birds.

Stern rites and sad shall Greece ordain
To keep that day along her shore,
Till the last link of slavery's chain
Is shattered, to be worn no more.

³ This poem, written about the time of the horrible butchery of the Sciotes by the Turks, in 1824, has been more fortunate than most poetical predictions. The independence of the Greek nation which it foretold, has come to pass, and the massacre, by inspiring a deeper detestation of their oppressors, did much to promote that event.

THE INDIAN GIRL'S LAMENT

An Indian girl was sitting where
Her lover, slain in battle, slept;
Her maiden veil, her own black hair,⁴
Came down o'er eyes that wept;
And wildly, in her woodland tongue,
This sad and simple lay she sung:

"I've pulled away the shrubs that grew
Too close above thy sleeping head,
And broke the forest-boughs that threw
Their shadows o'er thy bed,
That, shining from the sweet southwest,
The sunbeams might rejoice thy rest.

"It was a weary, weary road
That led thee to the pleasant coast,
Where thou, in his serene abode,
Hast met thy father's ghost;
Where everlasting autumn lies
On yellow woods and sunny skies.

"'Twas I the broidered mocsen made,

⁴ "The unmarried females have a modest falling down of the hair over the eyes."

That shod thee for that distant land;
'Twas I thy bow and arrows laid
Beside thy still cold hand;
Thy bow in many a battle bent,
Thy arrows never vainly sent.

"With wampum-belts I crossed thy breast,
And wrapped thee in the bison's hide,
And laid the food that pleased thee best,
In plenty, by thy side,
And decked thee bravely, as became
A warrior of illustrious name.

"Thou'rt happy now, for thou hast passed
The long dark journey of the grave,
And in the land of light, at last,
Hast joined the good and brave;
Amid the flushed and balmy air,
The bravest and the loveliest there.

"Yet, oft to thine own Indian maid
Even there thy thoughts will earthward stray —
To her who sits where thou wert laid,
And weeps the hours away,
Yet almost can her grief forget,
To think that thou dost love her yet.

"And thou, by one of those still lakes
That in a shining cluster lie,

On which the south wind scarcely breaks
The image of the sky,
A bower for thee and me hast made
Beneath the many-colored shade.

"And thou dost wait and watch to meet
My spirit sent to join the blessed,
And, wondering what detains my feet
From that bright land of rest,
Dost seem, in every sound, to hear
The rustling of my footsteps near."

ODE FOR AN AGRICULTURAL CELEBRATION

Far back in the ages,
The plough with wreaths was crowned;
The hands of kings and sages
Entwined the chaplet round;
Till men of spoil disdained the toil
By which the world was nourished,
And dews of blood enriched the soil
Where green their laurels flourished.
— Now the world her fault repairs —
The guilt that stains her story;
And weeps her crimes amid the cares
That formed her earliest glory.

The proud throne shall crumble,
The diadem shall wane,
The tribes of earth shall humble
The pride of those who reign;
And War shall lay his pomp away; —
The fame that heroes cherish,
The glory earned in deadly fray
Shall fade, decay, and perish.
Honor waits, o'er all the earth,
Through endless generations,

The art that calls her harvest forth,
And feeds th' expectant nations.

RIZPAH

And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the hill before the Lord; and they fell all seven together, and were put to death in the days of the harvest, in the first days, in the beginning of barley-harvest.

And Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until the water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest upon them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night.

2 Samuel, xxi. 10.

Hear what the desolate Rizpah said,
As on Gibeah's rocks she watched the dead.
The sons of Michal before her lay,
And her own fair children, dearer than they:
By a death of shame they all had died,
And were stretched on the bare rock, side by side.
And Rizpah, once the loveliest of all
That bloomed and smiled in the court of Saul,
All wasted with watching and famine now,
And scorched by the sun her haggard brow,
Sat mournfully guarding their corpses there,
And murmured a strange and solemn air;
The low, heart-broken, and wailing strain
Of a mother that mourns her children slain:

"I have made the crags my home, and spread
On their desert backs my sackcloth bed;
I have eaten the bitter herb of the rocks,
And drunk the midnight dew in my locks;
I have wept till I could not weep, and the pain
Of the burning eyeballs went to my brain.
Seven blackened corpses before me lie,
In the blaze of the sun and the winds of the sky.
I have watched them through the burning day,
And driven the vulture and raven away;
And the cormorant wheeled in circles round,
Yet feared to alight on the guarded ground.
And when the shadows of twilight came,
I have seen the hyena's eyes of flame,
And heard at my side his stealthy tread,
But aye at my shout the savage fled:
And I threw the lighted brand to fright
The jackal and wolf that yelled in the night.

"Ye were foully murdered, my hapless sons,
By the hands of wicked and cruel ones;
Ye fell, in your fresh and blooming prime,
All innocent, for your father's crime.
He sinned – but he paid the price of his guilt
When his blood by a nameless hand was spilt;
When he strove with the heathen host in vain,
And fell with the flower of his people slain,
And the sceptre his children's hands should sway

From his injured lineage passed away.

"But I hoped that the cottage-roof would be
A safe retreat for my sons and me;
And that while they ripened to manhood fast,
They should wean my thoughts from the woes of the past;
And my bosom swelled with a mother's pride,
As they stood in their beauty and strength by my side,
Tall like their sire, with the princely grace
Of his stately form, and the bloom of his face.

"Oh, what an hour for a mother's heart,
When the pitiless ruffians tore us apart!
When I clasped their knees and wept and prayed,
And struggled and shrieked to Heaven for aid,
And clung to my sons with desperate strength,
Till the murderers loosed my hold at length,
And bore me breathless and faint aside,
In their iron arms, while my children died.
They died – and the mother that gave them birth
Is forbid to cover their bones with earth.

"The barley-harvest was nodding white,
When my children died on the rocky height,
And the reapers were singing on hill and plain,
When I came to my task of sorrow and pain.
But now the season of rain is nigh,
The sun is dim in the thickening sky,
And the clouds in sullen darkness rest

Where he hides his light at the doors of the west.
I hear the howl of the wind that brings
The long drear storm on its heavy wings;
But the howling wind and the driving rain
Will beat on my houseless head in vain:
I shall stay, from my murdered sons to scare
The beasts of the desert, and fowls of air."

THE OLD MAN'S FUNERAL

I saw an aged man upon his bier,
His hair was thin and white, and on his brow
A record of the cares of many a year; —
Cares that were ended and forgotten now.
And there was sadness round, and faces bowed,
And woman's tears fell fast, and children wailed aloud.

Then rose another hoary man and said,
In faltering accents, to that weeping train:
"Why mourn ye that our aged friend is dead?
Ye are not sad to see the gathered grain,
Nor when their mellow fruit the orchards cast,
Nor when the yellow woods let fall the ripened mast.

"Ye sigh not when the sun, his course fulfilled,
His glorious course, rejoicing earth and sky,
In the soft evening, when the winds are stilled,
Sinks where his islands of refreshment lie,
And leaves the smile of his departure, spread
O'er the warm-colored heaven and ruddy mountain head.

"Why weep ye then for him, who, having won
The bound of man's appointed years, at last,
Life's blessings all enjoyed, life's labors done,
Serenely to his final rest has passed;

While the soft memory of his virtues, yet,
Lingers like twilight hues, when the bright sun is set?

"His youth was innocent; his riper age
Marked with some act of goodness every day;
And watched by eyes that loved him, calm and sage,
Faded his late declining years away.
Meekly he gave his being up, and went
To share the holy rest that waits a life well spent.

"That life was happy; every day he gave
Thanks for the fair existence that was his;
For a sick fancy made him not her slave,
To mock him with her phantom miseries.
No chronic tortures racked his aged limb,
For luxury and sloth had nourished none for him.

"And I am glad that he has lived thus long,
And glad that he has gone to his reward;
Nor can I deem that Nature did him wrong,
Softly to disengage the vital cord.
For when his hand grew palsied, and his eye
Dark with the mists of age, it was his time to die."

THE RIVULET

This little rill, that from the springs
Of yonder grove its current brings,
Plays on the slope awhile, and then
Goes prattling into groves again,
Oft to its warbling waters drew
My little feet, when life was new.
When woods in early green were dressed,
And from the chambers of the west
The warm breezes, travelling out,
Breathed the new scent of flowers about,
My truant steps from home would stray,
Upon its grassy side to play,
List the brown thrasher's vernal hymn,
And crop the violet on its brim,
With blooming cheek and open brow,
As young and gay, sweet rill, as thou.

And when the days of boyhood came,
And I had grown in love with fame,
Duly I sought thy banks, and tried
My first rude numbers by thy side.
Words cannot tell how bright and gay
The scenes of life before me lay.
Then glorious hopes, that now to speak
Would bring the blood into my cheek,

Passed o'er me; and I wrote, on high,
A name I deemed should never die.

Years change thee not. Upon yon hill
The tall old maples, verdant still,
Yet tell, in grandeur of decay,
How swift the years have passed away,
Since first, a child, and half afraid,
I wandered in the forest shade.
Thou, ever-joyous rivulet,
Dost dimple, leap, and prattle yet;
And sporting with the sands that pave
The windings of thy silver wave,
And dancing to thy own wild chime,
Thou laughest at the lapse of time.
The same sweet sounds are in my ear
My early childhood loved to hear;
As pure thy limpid waters run;
As bright they sparkle to the sun;
As fresh and thick the bending ranks
Of herbs that line thy oozy banks;
The violet there, in soft May dew,
Comes up, as modest and as blue;
As green amid thy current's stress,
Floats the scarce-rooted watercress;
And the brown ground-bird, in thy glen,
Still chirps as merrily as then.

Thou changest not – but I am changed

Since first thy pleasant banks I ranged;
And the grave stranger, come to see
The play-place of his infancy,
Has scarce a single trace of him
Who sported once upon thy brim.
The visions of my youth are past —
Too bright, too beautiful to last.
I've tried the world – it wears no more
The coloring of romance it wore.
Yet well has Nature kept the truth
She promised in my earliest youth.
The radiant beauty shed abroad
On all the glorious works of God,
Shows freshly, to my sobered eye,
Each charm it wore in days gone by.

Yet a few years shall pass away,
And I, all trembling, weak, and gray,
Bowed to the earth, which waits to fold
My ashes in the embracing mould,
(If haply the dark will of Fate
Indulge my life so long a date),
May come for the last time to look
Upon my childhood's favorite brook.
Then dimly on my eye shall gleam
The sparkle of thy dancing stream;
And faintly on my ear shall fall
Thy prattling current's merry call;
Yet shalt thou flow as glad and bright

As when thou met'st my infant sight.

And I shall sleep – and on thy side,
As ages after ages glide,
Children their early sports shall try,
And pass to hoary age and die.
But thou, unchanged from year to year,
Gayly shalt play and glitter here;
Amid young flowers and tender grass
Thy endless infancy shall pass;
And, singing down thy narrow glen,
Shalt mock the fading race of men.

MARCH

The stormy March is come at last,
With wind, and cloud, and changing skies;
I hear the rushing of the blast,
That through the snowy valley flies.

Ah, passing few are they who speak,
Wild, stormy month! in praise of thee;
Yet though thy winds are loud and bleak,
Thou art a welcome month to me.

For thou, to northern lands, again
The glad and glorious sun dost bring,
And thou hast joined the gentle train
And wear'st the gentle name of Spring.

And, in thy reign of blast and storm,
Smiles many a long, bright, sunny day,
When the changed winds are soft and warm,
And heaven puts on the blue of May.

Then sing aloud the gushing rills
In joy that they again are free,
And, brightly leaping down the hills,
Renew their journey to the sea.

The year's departing beauty hides
Of wintry storms the sullen threat;
But in thy sternest frown abides
A look of kindly promise yet.

Thou bring'st the hope of those calm skies,
And that soft time of sunny showers,
When the wide bloom, on earth that lies,
Seems of a brighter world than ours.

CONSUMPTION

Ay, thou art for the grave; thy glances shine
Too brightly to shine long; another Spring
Shall deck her for men's eyes – but not for thine —
Sealed in a sleep which knows no wakening.
The fields for thee have no medicinal leaf,
And the vexed ore no mineral of power;
And they who love thee wait in anxious grief
Till the slow plague shall bring the fatal hour.
Glide softly to thy rest then; Death should come
Gently, to one of gentle mould like thee,
As light winds wandering through groves of bloom
Detach the delicate blossom from the tree.
Close thy sweet eyes, calmly, and without pain;
And we will trust in God to see thee yet again.

AN INDIAN STORY

"I know where the timid fawn abides
In the depths of the shaded dell,
Where the leaves are broad and the thicket hides,
With its many stems and its tangled sides,
From the eye of the hunter well.

"I know where the young May violet grows,
In its lone and lowly nook,
On the mossy bank, where the larch-tree throws
Its broad dark bough, in solemn repose,
Far over the silent brook.

"And that timid fawn starts not with fear
When I steal to her secret bower;
And that young May violet to me is dear,
And I visit the silent streamlet near,
To look on the lovely flower."

Thus Maquon sings as he lightly walks
To the hunting-ground on the hills;
'Tis a song of his maid of the woods and rocks,
With her bright black eyes and long black locks,
And voice like the music of rills.

He goes to the chase – but evil eyes

Are at watch in the thicker shades;
For she was lovely that smiled on his sighs,
And he bore, from a hundred lovers, his prize,
The flower of the forest maids.

The boughs in the morning wind are stirred,
And the woods their song renew,
With the early carol of many a bird,
And the quickened tune of the streamlet heard
Where the hazels trickle with dew.

And Maquon has promised his dark-haired maid,
Ere eve shall redden the sky,
A good red deer from the forest shade,
That bounds with the herd through grove and glade,
At her cabin-door shall lie.

The hollow woods, in the setting sun,
Ring shrill with the fire-bird's lay;
And Maquon's sylvan labors are done,
And his shafts are spent, but the spoil they won
He bears on his homeward way.

He stops near his bower – his eye perceives
Strange traces along the ground —
At once to the earth his burden he heaves;
He breaks through the veil of boughs and leaves;
And gains its door with a bound.

But the vines are torn on its walls that leant,
And all from the young shrubs there
By struggling hands have the leaves been rent,
And there hangs on the sassafras, broken and bent,
One tress of the well-known hair.

But where is she who, at this calm hour,
Ever watched his coming to see?
She is not at the door, nor yet in the bower;
He calls – but he only hears on the flower
The hum of the laden bee.

It is not a time for idle grief,
Nor a time for tears to flow;
The horror that freezes his limbs is brief —
He grasps his war-axe and bow, and a sheaf
Of darts made sharp for the foe.

And he looks for the print of the ruffian's feet
Where he bore the maiden away;
And he darts on the fatal path more fleet
Than the blast hurries the vapor and sleet
O'er the wild November day.

'Twas early summer when Maquon's bride
Was stolen away from his door;
But at length the maples in crimson are dyed,
And the grape is black on the cabin-side —
And she smiles at his hearth once more.

But far in the pine-grove, dark and cold,
Where the yellow leaf falls not,
Nor the autumn shines in scarlet and gold,
There lies a hillock of fresh dark mould,
In the deepest gloom of the spot.

And the Indian girls, that pass that way,
Point out the ravisher's grave;
"And how soon to the bower she loved," they say,
"Returned the maid that was borne away
From Maquon, the fond and the brave."

SUMMER WIND

It is a sultry day; the sun has drunk
The dew that lay upon the morning grass;
There is no rustling in the lofty elm
That canopies my dwelling, and its shade
Scarce cools me. All is silent, save the faint
And interrupted murmur of the bee,
Settling on the sick flowers, and then again
Instantly on the wing. The plants around
Feel the too potent fervors: the tall maize
Rolls up its long green leaves; the clover droops
Its tender foliage, and declines its blooms.
But far in the fierce sunshine tower the hills,
With all their growth of woods, silent and stern,
As if the scorching heat and dazzling light
Were but an element they loved. Bright clouds,
Motionless pillars of the brazen heaven —
Their bases on the mountains – their white tops
Shining in the far ether – fire the air
With a reflected radiance, and make turn
The gazer's eye away. For me, I lie
Languidly in the shade, where the thick turf,
Yet virgin from the kisses of the sun,
Retains some freshness, and I woo the wind
That still delays his coming. Why so slow,
Gentle and voluble spirit of the air?

Oh, come and breathe upon the fainting earth
Coolness and life. Is it that in his caves
He hears me? See, on yonder woody ridge,
The pine is bending his proud top, and now
Among the nearer groves, chestnut and oak
Are tossing their green boughs about. He comes;
Lo, where the grassy meadow runs in waves!
The deep distressful silence of the scene
Breaks up with mingling of unnumbered sounds
And universal motion. He is come,
Shaking a shower of blossoms from the shrubs,
And bearing on their fragrance; and he brings
Music of birds, and rustling of young boughs,
And sound of swaying branches, and the voice
Of distant waterfalls. All the green herbs
Are stirring in his breath; a thousand flowers,
By the road-side and the borders of the brook,
Nod gayly to each other; glossy leaves
Are twinkling in the sun, as if the dew
Were on them yet, and silver waters break
Into small waves and sparkle as he comes.

AN INDIAN AT THE BURIAL- PLACE OF HIS FATHERS

It is the spot I came to seek —
My father's ancient burial-place,
Ere from these vales, ashamed and weak,
Withdrew our wasted race.
It is the spot – I know it well —
Of which our old traditions tell.

For here the upland bank sends out
A ridge toward the river-side;
I know the shaggy hills about,
The meadows smooth and wide,
The plains, that, toward the southern sky,
Fenced east and west by mountains lie.

A white man, gazing on the scene,
Would say a lovely spot was here,
And praise the lawns, so fresh and green,
Between the hills so sheer.
I like it not – I would the plain
Lay in its tall old groves again.

The sheep are on the slopes around,
The cattle in the meadows feed,

And laborers turn the crumbling ground,
Or drop the yellow seed,
And prancing steeds, in trappings gay,
Whirl the bright chariot o'er the way.

Methinks it were a nobler sight
To see these vales in woods arrayed,
Their summits in the golden light,
Their trunks in grateful shade,
And herds of deer that bounding go
O'er hills and prostrate trees below.

And then to mark the lord of all,
The forest hero, trained to wars,
Quivered and plumed, and lithe and tall,
And seamed with glorious scars,
Walk forth, amid his reign, to dare
The wolf, and grapple with the bear.

This bank, in which the dead were laid,
Was sacred when its soil was ours;
Hither the silent Indian maid
Brought wreaths of beads and flowers,
And the gray chief and gifted seer
Worshipped the god of thunders here.

But now the wheat is green and high
On clods that hid the warrior's breast,
And scattered in the furrows lie

The weapons of his rest;
And there, in the loose sand, is thrown
Of his large arm the mouldering bone.

Ah, little thought the strong and brave
Who bore their lifeless chieftain forth —
Or the young wife that weeping gave
Her first-born to the earth,
That the pale race, who waste us now,
Among their bones should guide the plough.

They waste us – ay – like April snow
In the warm noon, we shrink away;
And fast they follow, as we go
Toward the setting day —
Till they shall fill the land, and we
Are driven into the Western sea.

But I behold a fearful sign,
To which the white men's eyes are blind;
Their race may vanish hence, like mine,
And leave no trace behind,
Save ruins o'er the region spread,
And the white stones above the dead.

Before these fields were shorn and tilled,
Full to the brim our rivers flowed;
The melody of waters filled
The fresh and boundless wood;

And torrents dashed and rivulets played,
And fountains spouted in the shade.

Those grateful sounds are heard no more,
The springs are silent in the sun;
The rivers, by the blackened shore,
With lessening current run;
The realm our tribes are crushed to get
May be a barren desert yet.

SONG

Dost thou idly ask to hear
At what gentle seasons
Nymphs relent, when lovers near
Press the tenderest reasons?
Ah, they give their faith too oft
To the careless wooer;
Maidens' hearts are always soft:
Would that men's were truer!

Woo the fair one when around
Early birds are singing;
When, o'er all the fragrant ground,
Early herbs are springing:
When the brookside, bank, and grove,
All with blossoms laden,
Shine with beauty, breathe of love, —
Woo the timid maiden.

Woo her when, with rosy blush,
Summer eve is sinking;
When, on rills that softly gush,
Stars are softly winking;
When through boughs that knit the bower
Moonlight gleams are stealing;
Woo her, till the gentle hour

Wake a gentler feeling.

Woo her when autumnal dyes
Tinge the woody mountain;
When the dropping foliage lies
In the weedy fountain;
Let the scene, that tells how fast
Youth is passing over,
Warn her, ere her bloom is past,
To secure her lover.

Woo her when the north winds call
At the lattice nightly;
When, within the cheerful hall,
Blaze the fagots brightly;
While the wintry tempest round
Sweeps the landscape hoary,
Sweeter in her ear shall sound
Love's delightful story.

HYMN OF THE WALDENSES

Hear, Father, hear thy faint afflicted flock
Cry to thee, from the desert and the rock;
While those, who seek to slay thy children, hold
Blasphemous worship under roofs of gold;
And the broad goodly lands, with pleasant airs
That nurse the grape and wave the grain, are theirs.

Yet better were this mountain wilderness,
And this wild life of danger and distress —
Watchings by night and perilous flight by day,
And meetings in the depths of earth to pray —
Better, far better, than to kneel with them,
And pay the impious rite thy laws condemn.

Thou, Lord, dost hold the thunder; the firm land
Tosses in billows when it feels thy hand;
Thou dashest nation against nation, then
Stillest the angry world to peace again.
Oh, touch their stony hearts who hunt thy sons —
The murderers of our wives and little ones.

Yet, mighty God, yet shall thy frown look forth
Unveiled, and terribly shall shake the earth.
Then the foul power of priestly sin and all
Its long-upheld idolatries shall fall.

Thou shalt raise up the trampled and oppressed,
And thy delivered saints shall dwell in rest.

MONUMENT MOUNTAIN.⁵

Thou who wouldst see the lovely and the wild
Mingled in harmony on Nature's face,
Ascend our rocky mountains. Let thy foot
Fail not with weariness, for on their tops
The beauty and the majesty of earth,
Spread wide beneath, shall make thee to forget
The steep and toilsome way. There, as thou stand'st,
The haunts of men below thee, and around
The mountain-summits, thy expanding heart
Shall feel a kindred with that loftier world
To which thou art translated, and partake

⁵ The mountain called by this name is a remarkable precipice in Great Barrington, overlooking the rich and picturesque valley of the Housatonic, in the western part of Massachusetts. At the southern extremity is, or was a few years since, a conical pile of small stones, erected, according to the tradition of the surrounding country, by the Indians, in memory of a woman of the Stockbridge tribe who killed herself by leaping from the edge of the precipice. Until within a few years past, small parties of that tribe used to arrive from their settlement in the western part of the State of New York, on visits to Stockbridge, the place of their nativity and former residence. A young woman belonging to one of these parties related, to a friend of the author, the story on which the poem of Monument Mountain is founded. An Indian girl had formed an attachment for her cousin, which, according to the customs of the tribe, was unlawful. She was, in consequence, seized with a deep melancholy, and resolved to destroy herself. In company with a female friend, she repaired to the mountain, decked out for the occasion in all her ornaments, and, after passing the day on the summit in singing with her companion the traditional songs of her nation, she threw herself headlong from the rock, and was killed.

The enlargement of thy vision. Thou shalt look
Upon the green and rolling forest-tops,
And down into the secrets of the glens,
And streams that with their bordering thickets strive
To hide their windings. Thou shalt gaze, at once,
Here on white villages, and tilth, and herds,
And swarming roads, and there on solitudes
That only hear the torrent, and the wind,
And eagle's shriek. There is a precipice
That seems a fragment of some mighty wall,
Built by the hand that fashioned the old world,
To separate its nations, and thrown down
When the flood drowned them. To the north, a path
Conducts you up the narrow battlement.
Steep is the western side, shaggy and wild
With mossy trees, and pinnacles of flint,
And many a hanging crag. But, to the east,
Sheer to the vale go down the bare old cliffs —
Huge pillars, that in middle heaven upbear
Their weather-beaten capitals, here dark
With moss, the growth of centuries, and there
Of chalky whiteness where the thunderbolt
Has splintered them. It is a fearful thing
To stand upon the beetling verge, and see
Where storm and lightning, from that huge gray wall,
Have tumbled down vast blocks, and at the base
Dashed them in fragments, and to lay thine ear
Over the dizzy depth, and hear the sound
Of winds, that struggle with the woods below,

Come up like ocean murmurs. But the scene
Is lovely round; a beautiful river there
Wanders amid the fresh and fertile meads,
The paradise he made unto himself,
Mining the soil for ages. On each side
The fields swell upward to the hills; beyond,
Above the hills, in the blue distance, rise
The mountain-columns with which earth props heaven.

There is a tale about these reverend rocks,
A sad tradition of unhappy love,
And sorrows borne and ended, long ago,
When over these fair vales the savage sought
His game in the thick woods. There was a maid,
The fairest of the Indian maids, bright-eyed,
With wealth of raven tresses, a light form,
And a gay heart. About her cabin-door
The wide old woods resounded with her song
And fairy laughter all the summer day.
She loved her cousin; such a love was deemed,
By the morality of those stern tribes,
Incestuous, and she struggled hard and long
Against her love, and reasoned with her heart,
As simple Indian maiden might. In vain.
Then her eye lost its lustre, and her step
Its lightness, and the gray-haired men that passed
Her dwelling, wondered that they heard no more
The accustomed song and laugh of her, whose looks
Were like the cheerful smile of Spring, they said,

Upon the Winter of their age. She went
To weep where no eye saw, and was not found
Where all the merry girls were met to dance,
And all the hunters of the tribe were out;
Nor when they gathered from the rustling husk
The shining ear; nor when, by the river's side,
They pulled the grape and startled the wild shades
With sounds of mirth. The keen-eyed Indian dames
Would whisper to each other, as they saw
Her wasting form, and say, *The girl will die.*

One day into the bosom of a friend,
A playmate of her young and innocent years,
She poured her griefs. "Thou know'st, and thou alone,"
She said, "for I have told thee, all my love,
And guilt, and sorrow. I am sick of life.
All night I weep in darkness, and the morn
Glares on me, as upon a thing accursed,
That has no business on the earth. I hate
The pastimes and the pleasant toils that once
I loved; the cheerful voices of my friends
Sound in my ear like mockings, and, at night,
In dreams, my mother, from the land of souls,
Calls me and chides me. All that look on me
Do seem to know my shame; I cannot bear
Their eyes; I cannot from my heart root out
The love that wrings it so, and I must die."

It was a summer morning, and they went

To this old precipice. About the cliffs
Lay garlands, ears of maize, and shaggy skins
Of wolf and bear, the offerings of the tribe
Here made to the Great Spirit, for they deemed,
Like worshippers of the elder time, that God
Doth walk on the high places and affect
The earth-o'erlooking mountains. She had on
The ornaments with which her father loved
To deck the beauty of his bright-eyed girl,
And bade her wear when stranger warriors came
To be his guests. Here the friends sat them down,
And sang, all day, old songs of love and death,
And decked the poor wan victim's hair with flowers,
And prayed that safe and swift might be her way
To the calm world of sunshine, where no grief
Makes the heart heavy and the eyelids red.
Beautiful lay the region of her tribe
Below her – waters resting in the embrace
Of the wide forest, and maize-planted glades
Opening amid the leafy wilderness.
She gazed upon it long, and at the sight
Of her own village peeping through the trees,
And her own dwelling, and the cabin roof
Of him she loved with an unlawful love,
And came to die for, a warm gush of tears
Ran from her eyes. But when the sun grew low
And the hill shadows long, she threw herself
From the steep rock and perished. There was scooped,
Upon the mountain's southern slope, a grave;

And there they laid her, in the very garb
With which the maiden decked herself for death,
With the same withering wild-flowers in her hair.
And o'er the mould that covered her, the tribe
Built up a simple monument, a cone
Of small loose stones. Thenceforward all who passed,
Hunter, and dame, and virgin, laid a stone
In silence on the pile. It stands there yet.
And Indians from the distant West, who come
To visit where their fathers' bones are laid,
Yet tell the sorrowful tale, and to this day
The mountain where the hapless maiden died
Is called the Mountain of the Monument.

AFTER A TEMPEST

The day had been a day of wind and storm,
The wind was laid, the storm was overpast,
And stooping from the zenith, bright and warm,
Shone the great sun on the wide earth at last.
I stood upon the upland slope, and cast
Mine eye upon a broad and beauteous scene,
Where the vast plain lay girt by mountains vast,
And hills o'er hills lifted their heads of green,
With pleasant vales scooped out and villages between.

The rain-drops glistened on the trees around,
Whose shadows on the tall grass were not stirred,
Save when a shower of diamonds, to the ground,
Was shaken by the flight of startled bird;
For birds were warbling round, and bees were heard
About the flowers; the cheerful rivulet sung
And gossiped, as he hastened oceanward;
To the gray oak the squirrel, chiding, clung,
And chirping from the ground the grasshopper upsprung.

And from beneath the leaves that kept them dry
Flew many a glittering insect here and there,
And darted up and down the butterfly,
That seemed a living blossom of the air,
The flocks came scattering from the thicket, where

The violent rain had pent them; in the way
Strolled groups of damsels frolicsome and fair;
The farmer swung the scythe or turned the hay,
And 'twixt the heavy swaths his children were at play.

It was a scene of peace – and, like a spell,
Did that serene and golden sunlight fall
Upon the motionless wood that clothed the fell,
And precipice upspringing like a wall,
And glassy river and white waterfall,
And happy living things that trod the bright
And beauteous scene; while far beyond them all,
On many a lovely valley, out of sight,
Was poured from the blue heavens the same soft golden light.

I looked, and thought the quiet of the scene
An emblem of the peace that yet shall be,
When o'er earth's continents, and isles between,
The noise of war shall cease from sea to sea,
And married nations dwell in harmony;
When millions, crouching in the dust to one,
No more shall beg their lives on bended knee,
Nor the black stake be dressed, nor in the sun
The o'erlabored captive toil, and wish his life were done.

Too long, at clash of arms amid her bowers
And pools of blood, the earth has stood aghast,
The fair earth, that should only blush with flowers
And ruddy fruits; but not for aye can last

The storm, and sweet the sunshine when 'tis past.
Lo, the clouds roll away – they break – they fly,
And, like the glorious light of summer, cast
O'er the wide landscape from the embracing sky,
On all the peaceful world the smile of heaven shall lie.

AUTUMN WOODS

Ere, in the northern gale,
The summer tresses of the trees are gone,
The woods of Autumn, all around our vale,
Have put their glory on.

The mountains that infold,
In their wide sweep, the colored landscape round,
Seem groups of giant kings, in purple and gold,
That guard the enchanted ground.

I roam the woods that crown
The uplands, where the mingled splendors glow,
Where the gay company of trees look down
On the green fields below.

My steps are not alone
In these bright walks; the sweet southwest, at play,
Flies, rustling, where the painted leaves are strown
Along the winding way.

And far in heaven, the while,
The sun, that sends that gale to wander here,
Pours out on the fair earth his quiet smile —
The sweetest of the year.

Where now the solemn shade,
Verdure and gloom where many branches meet;
So grateful, when the noon of summer made
The valleys sick with heat?

Let in through all the trees
Come the strange rays; the forest depths are bright;
Their sunny colored foliage, in the breeze,
Twinkles, like beams of light.

The rivulet, late unseen,
Where bickering through the shrubs its waters run,
Shines with the image of its golden screen,
And glimmerings of the sun.

But 'neath you crimson tree,
Lover to listening maid might breathe his flame,
Nor mark, within its roseate canopy,
Her blush of maiden shame.

Oh, Autumn! why so soon
Depart the hues that make thy forests glad,
Thy gentle wind and thy fair sunny noon,
And leave thee wild and sad!

Ah! 'twere a lot too blest
Forever in thy colored shades to stray;
Amid the kisses of the soft southwest
To roam and dream for aye;

And leave the vain low strife
That makes men mad – the tug for wealth and power —
The passions and the cares that wither life,
And waste its little hour.

MUTATION

They talk of short-lived pleasure – be it so —
Pain dies as quickly: stern, hard-featured pain
Expires, and lets her weary prisoner go.
The fiercest agonies have shortest reign;
And after dreams of horror, comes again
The welcome morning with its rays of peace.
Oblivion, softly wiping out the stain,
Makes the strong secret pangs of shame to cease:
Remorse is virtue's root; its fair increase
Are fruits of innocence and blessedness:
Thus joy, o'erborne and bound, doth still release
His young limbs from the chains that round him press.
Weep not that the world changes – did it keep
A stable, changeless state, 'twere cause indeed to weep.

NOVEMBER

Yet one smile more, departing, distant sun!
One mellow smile through the soft vapory air,
Ere, o'er the frozen earth, the loud winds run,
Or snows are sifted o'er the meadows bare.
One smile on the brown hills and naked trees,
And the dark rocks whose summer wreaths are cast,
And the blue gentian-flower, that, in the breeze,
Nods lonely, of her beauteous race the last.
Yet a few sunny days, in which the bee
Shall murmur by the hedge that skirts the way,
The cricket chirp upon the russet lea,
And man delight to linger in thy ray.
Yet one rich smile, and we will try to bear
The piercing winter frost, and winds, and darkened air.

SONG OF THE GREEK AMAZON

I buckle to my slender side
The pistol and the scimitar,
And in my maiden flower and pride
Am come to share the task of war.
And yonder stands the fiery steed,
That paws the ground and neighs to go,
My charger of the Arab breed —
I took him from the routed foe.

My mirror is the mountain-spring,
At which I dress my ruffled hair;
My dimmed and dusty arms I bring,
And wash away the blood-stain there.
Why should I guard from wind and sun
This cheek, whose virgin rose is fled?
It was for one – oh, only one —
I kept its bloom, and he is dead.

But they who slew him – unaware
Of coward murderers lurking nigh —
And left him to the fowls of air,
Are yet alive – and they must die!
They slew him – and my virgin years
Are vowed to Greece and vengeance now.
And many an Othman dame, in tears,

Shall rue the Grecian maiden's vow.

I touched the lute in better days,
I led in dance the joyous band;
Ah! they may move to mirthful lays
Whose hands can touch a lover's hand.
The march of hosts that haste to meet
Seems gayer than the dance to me;
The lute's sweet tones are not so sweet
As the fierce shout of victory.

TO A CLOUD

Beautiful cloud! with folds so soft and fair,
Swimming in the pure quiet air!
Thy fleeces bathed in sunlight, while below
Thy shadow o'er the vale moves slow;
Where, midst their labor, pause the reaper train,
As cool it comes along the grain.
Beautiful cloud! I would I were with thee
In thy calm way o'er land and sea;
To rest on thy unrolling skirts, and look
On Earth as on an open book;
On streams that tie her realms with silver bands,
And the long ways that seam her lands;
And hear her humming cities, and the sound
Of the great ocean breaking round.
Ay – I would sail, upon thy air-borne car,
To blooming regions distant far,
To where the sun of Andalusia shines
On his own olive-groves and vines,
Or the soft lights of Italy's clear sky
In smiles upon her ruins lie.
But I would woo the winds to let us rest
O'er Greece, long fettered and oppressed,
Whose sons at length have heard the call that comes
From the old battle-fields and tombs,
And risen, and drawn the sword, and on the foe

Have dealt the swift and desperate blow,
And the Othman power is cloven, and the stroke
Has touched its chains, and they are broke.
Ay, we would linger, till the sunset there
Should come, to purple all the air,
And thou reflect upon the sacred ground
The ruddy radiance streaming round.
Bright meteor! for the summer noontide made!
Thy peerless beauty yet shall fade.
The sun, that fills with light each glistening fold,
Shall set, and leave thee dark and cold:
The blast shall rend thy skirts, or thou mayst frown
In the dark heaven when storms come down;
And weep in rain, till man's inquiring eye
Miss thee, forever, from the sky.

THE MURDERED TRAVELLER.⁶

When Spring, to woods and wastes around,
Brought bloom and joy again,
The murdered traveller's bones were found,
Far down a narrow glen.

The fragrant birch, above him, hung
Her tassels in the sky;
And many a vernal blossom sprung,
And nodded careless by.

The red-bird warbled, as he wrought

⁶ Some years since, in the month of May, the remains of a human body, partly devoured by wild animals, were found in a woody ravine, near a solitary road passing between the mountains west of the village of Stockbridge. It was supposed that the person came to his death by violence, but no traces could be discovered of his murderers. It was only recollected that one evening, in the course of the previous winter, a traveller had stopped at an inn in the village of West Stockbridge: that he had inquired the way to Stockbridge; and that, in paying the innkeeper for something he had ordered, it appeared that he had a considerable sum of money in his possession. Two ill-looking men were present, and went out about the same time that the traveller proceeded on his journey. During the winter, also, two men of shabby appearance, but plentifully supplied with money, had lingered for a while about the village of Stockbridge. Several years afterward, a criminal, about to be executed for a capital offence in Canada, confessed that he had been concerned in murdering a traveller in Stockbridge for the sake of his money. Nothing was ever discovered respecting the name or residence of the person murdered.

His hanging nest o'erhead,
And fearless, near the fatal spot,
Her young the partridge led.

But there was weeping far away,
And gentle eyes, for him,
With watching many an anxious day,
Were sorrowful and dim.

They little knew, who loved him so,
The fearful death he met,
When shouting o'er the desert snow,
Unarmed, and hard beset; —

Nor how, when round the frosty pole
The northern dawn was red,
The mountain-wolf and wild-cat stole
To banquet on the dead;

Nor how, when, strangers found his bones,
They dressed the hasty bier,
And marked his grave with nameless stones,
Unmoistened by a tear.

But long they looked, and feared, and wept,
Within his distant home;
And dreamed, and started as they slept,
For joy that he was come.

Long, long they looked – but never spied
His welcome step again,
Nor knew the fearful death he died
Far down that narrow glen.

HYMN TO THE NORTH STAR

The sad and solemn night
Hath yet her multitude of cheerful fires;
The glorious host of light
Walk the dark hemisphere till she retires;
All through her silent watches, gliding slow,
Her constellations come, and climb the heavens, and go.

Day, too, hath many a star
To grace his gorgeous reign, as bright as they:
Through the blue fields afar,
Unseen, they follow in his flaming way:
Many a bright lingerer, as the eve grows dim,
Tells what a radiant troop arose and set with him.

And thou dost see them rise,
Star of the Pole! and thou dost see them set.
Alone, in thy cold skies,
Thou keep'st thy old unmoving station yet,
Nor join'st the dances of that glittering train,
Nor dipp'st thy virgin orb in the blue western main.

There, at morn's rosy birth,
Thou lookest meekly through the kindling air,
And eve, that round the earth
Chases the day, beholds thee watching there;

There noontide finds thee, and the hour that calls
The shapes of polar flame to scale heaven's azure walls.

Alike, beneath thine eye,
The deeds of darkness and of light are gone;
High toward the starlit sky
Towns blaze, the smoke of battle blots the sun,
The night storm on a thousand hills is loud,
And the strong wind of day doth mingle sea and cloud.

On thy unaltering blaze
The half-wrecked mariner, his compass lost,
Fixes his steady gaze,
And steers, undoubting, to the friendly coast;
And they who stray in perilous wastes, by night,
Are glad when thou dost shine to guide their footsteps right.

And, therefore, bards of old,
Sages and hermits of the solemn wood,
Did in thy beams behold
A beauteous type of that unchanging good,
That bright eternal beacon, by whose ray
The voyager of time should shape his heedful way.

THE LAPSE OF TIME

Lament who will, in fruitless tears,
The speed with which our moments fly;
I sigh not over vanished years,
But watch the years that hasten by.

Look, how they come – a mingled crowd
Of bright and dark, but rapid days;
Beneath them, like a summer cloud,
The wide world changes as I gaze.

What! grieve that time has brought so soon
The sober age of manhood on!
As idly might I weep, at noon,
To see the blush of morning gone.

Could I give up the hopes that glow
In prospect like Elysian isles;
And let the cheerful future go,
With all her promises and smiles?

The future! – cruel were the power
Whose doom would tear thee from my heart,
Thou sweetener of the present hour!
We cannot – no – we will not part.

Oh, leave me, still, the rapid flight
That makes the changing seasons gay,
The grateful speed that brings the night,
The swift and glad return of day;

The months that touch, with added grace,
This little prattler at my knee,
In whose arch eye and speaking face
New meaning every hour I see;

The years, that o'er each sister land
Shall lift the country of my birth,
And nurse her strength, till she shall stand
The pride and pattern of the earth:

Till younger commonwealths, for aid,
Shall cling about her ample robe,
And from her frown shall shrink afraid
The crowned oppressors of the globe.

True – time will seam and blanch my brow —
Well – I shall sit with aged men,
And my good glass will tell me how
A grizzly beard becomes me then.

And then, should no dishonor lie
Upon my head, when I am gray,
Love yet shall watch my fading eye,
And smooth the path of my decay.

Then haste thee, Time – 'tis kindness all
That speeds thy wingèd feet so fast:
Thy pleasures stay not till they pall,
And all thy pains are quickly past.

Thou fliest and bear'st away our woes,
And as thy shadowy train depart,
The memory of sorrow grows
A lighter burden on the heart.

THE SONG OF THE STARS

When the radiant morn of creation broke,
And the world in the smile of God awoke,
And the empty realms of darkness and death
Were moved through their depths by his mighty breath,
And orbs of beauty and spheres of flame
From the void abyss by myriads came —
In the joy of youth as they darted away,
Through the widening wastes of space to play,
Their silver voices in chorus rang,
And this was the song the bright ones sang:

"Away, away, through the wide, wide sky,
The fair blue fields that before us lie —
Each sun with the worlds that round him roll,
Each planet, poised on her turning pole;
With her isles of green, and her clouds of white,
And her waters that lie like fluid light.

"For the source of glory uncovers his face,
And the brightness o'erflows unbounded space,
And we drink as we go to the luminous tides
In our ruddy air and our blooming sides:
Lo, yonder the living splendors play;
Away, on our joyous path, away!

"Look, look, through our glittering ranks afar,
In the infinite azure, star after star,
How they brighten and bloom as they swiftly pass!
How the verdure runs o'er each rolling mass!
And the path of the gentle winds is seen,
Where the small waves dance, and the young woods lean.

"And see, where the brighter day-beams pour,
How the rainbows hang in the sunny shower;
And the morn and eve, with their pomp of hues,
Shift o'er the bright planets and shed their dews;
And 'twixt them both, o'er the teeming ground,
With her shadowy cone the night goes round!

"Away, away! in our blossoming bowers,
In the soft airs wrapping these spheres of ours,
In the seas and fountains that shine with morn,
See, Love is brooding, and Life is born,
And breathing myriads are breaking from night,
To rejoice, like us, in motion and light.

"Glide on in your beauty, ye youthful spheres,
To weave the dance that measures the years;
Glide on, in the glory and gladness sent
To the furthest wall of the firmament —
The boundless visible smile of Him
To the veil of whose brow your lamps are dim."

A FOREST HYMN

The groves were God's first temples. Ere man learned
To hew the shaft, and lay the architrave,
And spread the roof above them – ere he framed
The lofty vault, to gather and roll back
The sound of anthems; in the darkling wood,
Amid the cool and silence, he knelt down,
And offered to the Mightiest solemn thanks
And supplication. For his simple heart
Might not resist the sacred influences
Which, from the stilly twilight of the place,
And from the gray old trunks that high in heaven
Mingled their mossy boughs, and from the sound
Of the invisible breath that swayed at once
All their green tops, stole over him, and bowed
His spirit with the thought of boundless power
And inaccessible majesty. Ah, why
Should we, in the world's riper years, neglect
God's ancient sanctuaries, and adore
Only among the crowd, and under roofs
That our frail hands have raised? Let me, at least,
Here, in the shadow of this aged wood,
Offer one hymn – thrice happy, if it find
Acceptance in His ear.

Father, thy hand

Hath reared these venerable columns, thou
Didst weave this verdant roof. Thou didst look down
Upon the naked earth, and, forthwith, rose
All these fair ranks of trees. They, in thy sun,
Budded, and shook their green leaves in thy breeze,
And shot toward heaven. The century-living crow
Whose birth was in their tops, grew old and died
Among their branches, till, at last, they stood,
As now they stand, massy, and tall, and dark,
Fit shrine for humble worshipper to hold
Communion with his Maker. These dim vaults,
These winding aisles, of human pomp or pride
Report not. No fantastic carvings show
The boast of our vain race to change the form
Of thy fair works. But thou art here – thou fill'st
The solitude. Thou art in the soft winds
That run along the summit of these trees
In music; thou art in the cooler breath
That from the inmost darkness of the place
Comes, scarcely felt; the barky trunks, the ground,
The fresh moist ground, are all instinct with thee.
Here is continual worship; – Nature, here,
In the tranquillity that thou dost love,
Enjoys thy presence. Noiselessly, around,
From perch to perch, the solitary bird
Passes; and yon clear spring, that, midst its herbs,
Wells softly forth and wandering steps the roots
Of half the mighty forest, tells no tale
Of all the good it does. Thou hast not left

Thyself without a witness, in the shades,
Of thy perfections. Grandeur, strength, and grace
Are here to speak of thee. This mighty oak —
By whose immovable stem I stand and seem
Almost annihilated – not a prince,
In all that proud old world beyond the deep,
E'er wore his crown as loftily as he
Wears the green coronal of leaves with which
Thy hand has graced him. Nestled at his root
Is beauty, such as blooms not in the glare
Of the broad sun. That delicate forest flower,
With scented breath and look so like a smile,
Seems, as it issues from the shapeless mould,
An emanation of the indwelling Life,
A visible token of the upholding Love,
That are the soul of this great universe.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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