

# BEERS HENRY AUGUSTIN

THE TWO TWILIGHTS

# Henry Beers

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# The Two Twilights

## PREFACE

The contents of this volume include selections from two early books of verse, long out of print; a few pieces from *The Ways of Yale* (Henry Holt & Co); and a handful of poems contributed of late years to the magazines and not heretofore collected.

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*HENRY A. BEERS.*

# THE THANKLESS MUSE

The muses ring my bell and run away.  
I spy you, rogues, behind the evergreen:  
You, wild Thalia, romper in the hay;  
And you, Terpsichore, you long-legged quean.  
When I was young you used to come and stay,  
But, now that I grow older, 'tis well seen  
What tricks ye put upon me. Well-a-day!  
How many a summer evening have ye been  
Sitting about my door-step, fain to sing  
And tell old tales, while through the fragrant dark  
Burned the large planets, throbbed the brooding sound  
Of crickets and the tree-toads' ceaseless ring;  
And in the meads the fire-fly lit her spark  
Where from my threshold sank the vale profound.

# BLUE ROSES OF ACADEMUS

So late and long the shadows lie  
Under the quadrangle wall:  
From such a narrow strip of sky  
So scant an hour the sunbeams fall,  
They hardly come to touch at all  
This cool, sequestered corner where,  
Beside the chapel belfry tall,  
I cultivate my small parterre.

Poor, sickly blooms of Academe,  
Recluses of the college close,  
Whose nun-like pallor would beseem  
The violet better than the rose:  
There's not a bud among you blows  
With scent or hue to lure the bee:  
Only the thorn that on you grows —  
Only the thorn grows hardily.

Pale cloisterers, have you lost so soon  
The way to blush? Do you forget  
How once, beneath the enamored moon,  
You climbed against the parapet,  
To touch the breast of Juliet  
Warm with a kiss, wet with a tear,

In gardens of the Capulet,  
Far south, my flowers, not here – not here?

# THE WINDS OF DAWN

Whither do ye blow?  
For now the moon is low.  
Whence is it that ye come,  
And where is it ye go?  
All night the air was still,  
The crickets' song was shrill;  
But now there runs a hum  
And rustling through the trees.  
A breath of coolness wakes,  
As on Canadian lakes,  
And on Atlantic seas,  
And each high Alpine lawn  
Begin the winds of dawn.



# ANACREONTIC

I would not be  
A voyager on the windy seas:  
More sweet to me  
This bank where crickets chirp, and bees  
Buzz drowsy sunshine minstrelsies.

I would not bide  
On lonely heights where shepherds dwell.  
At twilight tide  
The sounds that from the valley swell,  
Soft breathing lute and herdsman's bell,  
Are sweeter far  
Than music of cold mountain rills.  
The evening star  
Wakes love and song below, but chills  
With mist and breeze the gloomy hills.

I would not woo  
Some storm-browed Juno, queenly fair.  
Soft eyes of blue  
And sudden blushes unaware  
Do net my heart in silken snare.

I do not love

The eyrie, but low woodland nest

Of cushat dove:

Not wind, but calm; not toil, but rest

And sleep in grassy meadow's breast.

# BUMBLE BEE

As I lay yonder in tall grass  
A drunken bumble-bee went past  
Delirious with honey toddy.  
The golden sash about his body  
Could scarce keep in his swollen belly  
Distent with honey-suckle jelly.  
Rose liquor and the sweet pea wine  
Had filled his soul with song divine;  
Deep had he drunk the warm night through:  
His hairy thighs were wet with dew.  
Full many an antic he had played  
While the world went round through sleep and shade.  
Oft had he lit with thirsty lip  
Some flower-cup's nectared sweets to sip,  
When on smooth petals he would slip  
Or over tangled stamens trip,  
And headlong in the pollen rolled,  
Crawl out quite dusted o'er with gold.  
Or else his heavy feet would stumble  
Against some bud and down he'd tumble  
Amongst the grass; there lie and grumble  
In low, soft bass – poor maudlin bumble!  
With tipsy hum on sleepy wing  
He buzzed a glee – a bacchic thing

Which, wandering strangely in the moon,  
He learned from grigs that sing in June,  
Unknown to sober bees who dwell  
Through the dark hours in waxen cell.  
When south wind floated him away  
The music of the summer day  
Lost something: sure it was a pain  
To miss that dainty star-light strain.

# WATER LILIES AT SUNSET

Mine eyes have seen when once at sunset hour  
White lily flocks that edged a lonely lake  
All rose and sank upon the lifting swell  
That swayed their long stems lazily, and lapped  
Their floating pads and stirred among the leaves.  
And when the sun from western gates of day  
Poured colored flames, they, kissed to ruddy shame,  
So blushed through snowy petals, that they glowed  
Like roses morning-blown in dewy bowers,  
When garden-walks lie dark with early shade.  
That so their perfumed chalices were brimmed  
With liquid glory till they overflowed  
And spilled rich lights and purple shadows out,  
That splashed the pool with gold, and stained its waves  
In tints of violet and ruby blooms.  
But when the flashing gem that lit the day  
Dropped in its far blue casket of the hills,  
The rainbow paintings faded from the mere,  
The wine-dark shades grew black, the gilding dimmed,  
While, paling slow through tender amber hues,  
The crimsoned lilies blanched to coldest white,  
And wanly shivered in the evening breeze.  
When twilight closed – when earliest dew-drops fell  
All frosty-chill deep down their golden hearts,

They shrank at that still touch, as maidens shrink,  
When love's first footstep frights with sweet alarms  
The untrod wildness of their virgin breasts;  
Then shut their ivory cups, and dipping low  
Their folded beauties in the gloomy wave,  
They nodded drowsily and heaved in sleep.  
But sweeter far than summer dreams at dawn,  
Their mingled breaths from out the darkness stole,  
Across the silent lake, the winding shores,  
The shadowy hills that rose in lawny slopes,  
The marsh among whose reeds the wild fowl screamed,  
And dusky woodlands where the night came down.

# BETWEEN THE FLOWERS

An open door and door-steps wide,  
With pillared vines on either side,  
And terraced flowers, stair over stair,  
Standing in pots of earthenware  
Where stiff processions filed around —  
Black on the smooth, sienna ground.  
Tubers and bulbs now blossomed there  
Which, in the moisty hot-house air,  
Lay winter long in patient rows,  
Glassed snugly in from Christmas snows:  
Tuberose, with white, waxy gems  
In bunches on their reed-like stems;  
Their fragrance forced by art too soon  
To mingle with the sweets of June.  
(So breathes the thin blue smoke, that steals  
From ashes of the gilt pastilles,  
Burnt slowly, as the brazier swings,  
In dim saloons of eastern kings.)  
I saw the calla's arching cup  
With yellow spadix standing up,  
Its liquid scents to stir and mix —  
The goldenest of toddy-sticks;  
Roses and purple fuchsia drops;  
Camellias, which the gardener crops

To make the sickening wreaths that lie  
On coffins when our loved ones die.  
These all and many more were there;  
Monsters and grandifloras rare,  
With tropical broad leaves, grown rank,  
Drinking the waters of the tank  
Wherein the lotus-lilies bathe;  
All curious forms of spur and spathe,  
Pitcher and sac and cactus-thorn,  
There in the fresh New England morn.  
But where the sun came colored through  
Translucent petals wet with dew,  
The interspace was carpeted  
With oriel lights and nodes of red,  
Orange and blue and violet,  
That wove strange figures, as they met,  
Of airier tissue, brighter blooms  
Than tumble from the Persian looms.  
So at the pontiff's feasts, they tell,  
From the board's edge the goblet fell,  
Spilled from its throat the purple tide  
And stained the pavement far and wide.  
Such steps wise Sheba trod upon  
Up to the throne of Solomon;  
So bright the angel-crowded steep  
Which Israel's vision scaled in sleep.  
What one is she whose feet shall dare  
Tread that illuminated stair?  
Like Sheba, queen; like angels, fair?



Oh listen! In the morning air  
The blossoms all are hanging still —  
The queen is standing on the sill.  
No Sheba she; her virgin zone  
Proclaims her royalty alone:  
(Such royalty the lions own.)  
Yet all too cheap the patterned stone  
That paves kings' palaces, to feel  
The pressure of her gaiter's heel.  
The girlish grace that lit her face  
Made sunshine in a dusky place —  
The old silk hood, demure and quaint,  
Wherein she seemed an altar-saint  
Fresh-tinted, though in setting old  
Of dingy carving and tarnished gold;  
Her eyes, the candles in that shrine,  
Making Madonna's face to shine.  
Lingering I passed, but evermore  
Abide with me the open door,  
The doorsteps wide, the flowers that stand  
In brilliant ranks on either hand,  
The two white pillars and the vine  
Of bitter-sweet and lush woodbine,  
And – from my weary paths as far  
As Sheba or the angels are —  
Between, upon the wooden sill,  
Thou, Queen of Hearts, art standing still.

# AS YOU LIKE IT

Here while I read the light forsakes the pane;  
Metempsychosis of the twilight gray —  
Into green aisles of Epping or Ardenne  
The level lines of print stretch far away.

The book-leaves whisper like the forest-leaves;  
A smell of ancient woods, a breeze of morn,  
A breath of violets from the mossy paths  
And hark! the voice of hounds – the royal horn,

Which, muffled in the ferny coverts deep,  
Utters the three sweet notes that sound recall;  
As, riding two by two between the oaks,  
Come on the paladins and ladies all.

The court will rest from chase in this smooth glade  
That slopes to meet yon little rushy stream,  
Where in the shallows nod the arrow-heads,  
And the blue flower-de-luce's banners gleam.

The gamekeepers are coupling of the hounds;  
The pages hang bright scarfs upon the boughs;  
The new-slain quarry lies upon the turf  
Whereon but now he with the herd did browse.

The silk pavilion shines among the trees;  
The mighty pasties and the flagons strong  
Give cheer to the dear heart of many a knight,  
And many a dame whose beauty lives in song.

Meanwhile a staging improvised and rude  
Rises, whereon the masquers and the mimes  
Play for their sport a pleasant interlude,  
Fantastic, gallant, pointing at the times.

Their green-room is the wide midsummer wood;  
Down some far-winding gallery the deer —  
The dappled dead-head of that sylvan show —  
Starts as the distant ranting strikes his ear.

They use no traverses nor painted screen  
To help along their naked, out-door wit:  
(Only the forest lends its leafy scene)  
Yet wonderfully well they please the pit.

The plaudits echo through the wide parquet  
Where the fair audience upon the grass,  
Each knight beside his lady-love, is set,  
While overhead the merry winds do pass.

The little river murmurs in its reeds,  
And somewhere in the verdurous solitude  
The wood-thrush drops a cool contralto note,

An orchestra well-tuned unto their mood.

As runs the play so runs the afternoon;  
The curtain and the sun fall side by side;  
The epilogue is spoke, the twilight come;  
Then homeward through the darkening glades they ride.

# THE OLD CITY

Ancient city, down thy street  
Minstrels make their music sweet;  
Sound of bells is on the air,  
Fountains sing in every square,  
Where, from dawn to shut of day,  
Maidens walk and children play;  
And at night, when all are gone,  
The waters in the dark sing on,  
Till the moonrise and the breeze  
Whiten the horse-chestnut trees.  
Cool thou liest, leisured, slow,  
On the plains of long ago,  
All unvexed of fretful trades  
Through thy rich and dim arcades,  
Overlooking lands below  
Terraced to thy green plateau.

Dear old city, it is long  
Since I heard thy minstrels' song,  
Since I heard thy church-bells deep,  
Since I watched thy fountains leap.  
Yet, whichever way I turn,  
Still I see the sunset burn  
At the ending of the street,

Where the chestnut branches meet;  
Where, between the gay bazaars,  
Maidens walk with eyes like stars,  
And the slippered merchants go  
On the pavements to and fro.  
Upland winds blow through my sleep,  
Moonrise glimmers, waters leap,  
Till, awaking, thou dost seem  
Like a city of a dream, —  
Like a city of the air,  
Builded high, aloof and fair, —  
Such as childhood used to know  
On the plains of long ago.

# AMETHYSTS

Not the green eaves of our young woods alone  
Shelter new violets, by the spring rains kissed;  
In the hard quartz, by some old April sown,  
Blossoms Time's flower, the steadfast amethyst.

"Here's pansies, they're for thoughts" – weak thoughts though  
fair;

June sees their opening, June their swift decay.  
But those stone bourgeons stand for thoughts more rare,  
Whose patient crystals colored day by day.

Might I so cut my flowers within the rock,  
And prison there their sweet escaping breath;  
Their petals then the winter's frost should mock,  
And only Time's slow chisel work their death.

If out of those embedded purple blooms  
Were quarried cups to hold the purple wine,  
Greek drinkers thought the glorious, maddening fumes  
Were cooled with radiance of that gem divine.

Might I so wed the crystal and the grape,  
Passion's red heart and plastic Art's endeavor,  
Delirium should take on immortal shape,

Dancing and blushing in strong rock forever.



# KATY DID

In a windy tree-top sitting,  
Singing at the fall of dew,  
Katy watched the bats a-flitting,  
While the twilight's curtains drew  
Closer round her; till she only  
Saw the branches and the sky —  
Rocking late and rocking lonely,  
Anchored on the darkness high.  
And the song that she was singing,  
In the windy tree-tops swinging,  
Was *under the tree, under the tree*  
*The fox is digging a pit for me.*

When the early stars were sparkling  
Overhead, and down below  
Fireflies twinkled, through the darkling  
Thickets she heard footsteps go —  
Voice of her false lover speaking,  
Laughing to his sweetheart new: —  
"Half my heart for thee I'm breaking:  
Did not Katy love me true?"  
Then no longer she was singing,  
But through all the wood kept ringing —  
*Katy did, Katy did, Katy did love thee*

*And the fox is digging a grave for me.*

# NARCISSUS

Where the black hemlock slants athwart the stream  
He came to bathe; the sun's pursuing beam  
Laid a warm hand upon him, as he stood  
Naked, while noonday silence filled the wood.  
Holding the boughs o'erhead, with cautious foot  
He felt his way along the mossy root  
That edged the brimming pool; then paused and dreamed.  
Half like a dryad of the tree he seemed,  
Half like the naiad of the stream below,  
Suspended there between the water's flow  
And the green tree-top world; the love-sick air  
Coaxing with softest touch his body fair  
A little longer yet to be content  
Outside of its own crystal element.  
And he, still lingering at the brink, looked down  
And marked the sunshine fleck with gold the brown  
And sandy floor which paved that woodland pool.  
But then, within the shadows deep and cool  
Which the close hemlocks on the surface made,  
Two eyes met his yet darker than that shade  
And, shining through the watery foliage dim,  
Two white and slender arms reached up to him.  
"Comest thou again, now all the woods are still,  
Fair shape, nor even Echo from the hill

Calls her Narcissus? Would her voice were thine,  
Dear speechless image, and could answer mine!  
Her I but hear and thee I may but see;  
Yet, Echo, thou art happy unto me;  
For though thyself art but a voice, sad maid,  
Thy love the substance is and my love shade.  
Alas! for never may I kiss those dumb  
Sweet lips, nor ever hope to come  
Into that shadow-world that lies somewhere —

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