

Poems eBook

Poems by Denis Florence MacCarthy

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Page 1

Birth-night of the Humming Birds.

[Illustration: The Departure of the Fairies]

I.

I'll tell you a Fairy Tale that's new:
How the merry Elves o'er the ocean flew
From the Emerald isle to this far-off shore,
As they were wont in the days of yore;
And played their pranks one moonlit night,
Where the zephyrs alone could see the sight.

II.

Ere the Old world yet had found the New,
The fairies oft in their frolics flew
To the fragrant isles of the Caribbee—
Bright bosom-gems of a golden sea.
Too dark was the film of the Indian's eye,
These gossamer sprites to suspect or spy,—
So they danced 'mid the spicy groves unseen,
And mad were their merry pranks, I ween;
For the fairies, like other discreet little elves,
Are freest and fondest when all by themselves.
No thought had they that in after time,
The Muse would echo their deeds in rhyme;
So gayly doffing light stocking and shoe,
They tripped o'er the meadow all dappled in dew.

III.

I could tell, if I would, some right merry tales,
Of unslipper'd fairies that danced in the vales—
But the lovers of scandal I leave in the lurch—
And, beside, these elves don't belong to the church.
If they danced—be it known—'twas not in the clime
Of your Mathers and Hookers, where laughter was crime;
Where sentinel virtue kept guard o'er the lip,
Though witchcraft stole into the heart by a slip!
Oh no! 'twas the land of the fruit and the flower—



Where Summer and Spring both dwelt in one bower—
Where one hung the citron, all ripe from the bough,
And the other with blossoms encircled her brow;
Where the mountains embosomed rich tissues of gold,
And the rivers o'er rubies and emeralds rolled.
It was there, where the seasons came only to bless,
And the fashions of Eden still lingered, in dress,
That these gay little fairies were wont, as I say,
To steal in their merriest gambols away.
But dropping the curtain o'er frolic and fun,
Too good to be told, or too bad to be done,
I give you a legend from Fancy's own sketch,
Though I warn you he's given to fibbing—the wretch!
Yet I learn by the legends of breezes and brooks,
'Tis as true as the fairy tales told in the books.

IV.

One night, when the moon shone fair on the main,
Choice spirits were gathered from meadow and plain—
And lightly embarking from Erin's bold cliffs,
They slid o'er the wave in their moonbeam skiffs.
A ray for a rudder—a thought for a sail—
Swift, swift was each bark as the wing of the gale.



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[Illustration: Voyage of the Fairies]

Yet long were the tale,
Should I linger to say
What gambol and frolic
Enlivened the way;
How they flirted with bubbles
That danced on the wave,
Or listened to mermaids
That sang from the cave;
Or slid with the moonbeams
Down deep to the grove
Of coral, where mullet
And goldfish rove:
How there, in long vistas
Of silence and sleep,
They waltzed, as if mocking
The death of the deep:
How, oft, where the wreck
Lay scattered and torn,
They peeped in the skull,
All ghastly and lorn;
Or deep, 'mid wild rocks,
Quizzed the goggling shark,
And mouthed at the sea-wolf,
So solemn and stark;
Each seeming to think
That the earth and the sea
Were made but for fairies,
For gambol and glee!

V.

Enough, that at last they came to the Isle,
Where moonlight and fragrance were rivals the while.
Not yet had those vessels from Palos been here,
To turn the bright gem to the blood-mingled tear.
Oh no! still blissful and peaceful the land,
And the merry elves flew from the sea to the strand.
Right happy and joyous seemed now the fond crew,
As they tripped 'mid the orange groves flashing in dew,
For they were to hold a revel that night,
A gay fancy ball, and each to be dight



In the gem or the flower that fancy might choose,
From mountain or vale, for its fragrance or hues.

VI.

Away sped the maskers like arrows of light
To gather their gear for the revel bright.
To the dazzling peaks of far-off Peru,
In emulous speed some sportively flew,
And deep in the mine, or 'mid glaciers on high,
For ruby and sapphire searched heedful and sly.
For diamonds rare that gleam in the bed
Of Brazilian streams, some merrily sped,
While others for topaz and emerald stray,
'Mid the cradle cliffs of the Paraguay.

[Illustration: The Fairies' Search]

VII.

As these are gathering the rarest of gems,
Others are plucking the rarest of stems.
They range wild dells where the zephyr alone,
To the blushing blossoms before was known;
Through forests they fly, whose branches are hung
By creeping plants, with fair flowerets strung,
Where temples of nature with arches of bloom,
Are lit by the moonlight, and faint with perfume.
They stray where the mangrove and clematis twine,
Where azalia and laurel in rivalry shine;
Where, tall as the oak, the



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passion-tree glows,
And jasmine is blent with rhodora and rose.
O'er blooming savannas and meadows of light,
'Mid regions of summer they sweep in their flight,
And gathering the fairest, they speed to their bower,
Each one with his favorite brilliant or flower.

VIII.

The hour is come, and the fairies are seen
In their plunder arrayed on the moonlit green.
The music is breathed—'tis a soft strain of pleasure,
And the light giddy throng whirl into the measure.

[Illustration: The Fairy Dance]

'Twas a joyous dance, and the dresses were bright,
Such as never were known till that famous night;
For the gems and the flowers that shone in the scene,
O'ermatched the regalia of princess and queen.
No gaudy slave to a fair one's brow
Was the rose, or the ruby, or emerald now,
But lighted with souls by the playful elves,
The brilliants and blossoms seemed dancing themselves.

IX.

Of all that did chance, 'twere a long tale to tell,
Of the dresses and waltzes, and who was the belle;
But each was so happy, and all were so fair,
That night stole away and the dawn caught them there!
Such a scampering never before was seen,
As the fairies' flight on that island green.
They rushed to the bay with twinkling feet,
But vain was their haste, for the moonlight fleet
Had passed with the dawn, and never again
Were those fairies permitted to traverse the main.
But 'mid the groves, when the sun was high,
The Indian marked with a worshipping eye,
The *humming birds*, all unknown before,



Glancing like thoughts from flower to flower,
And seeming as if earth's loveliest things,
The brilliants and blossoms, had taken wings:
And Fancy hath whispered in numbers light,
That these are the fairies who danced that night,
And linger yet in the garb they wore,
Content in our clime and more blest than before!

[Illustration: Indians' discovery of the Humming Birds]

Lake Superior.

[Illustration: Lake Superior]

Father of Lakes! thy waters bend,
Beyond the eagle's utmost view,
When, throned in heaven, he sees thee send
Back to the sky its world of blue.

Boundless and deep the forests weave
Their twilight shade thy borders o'er,
And threatening cliffs, like giants, heave
Their rugged forms along thy shore.

Nor can the light canoes, that glide
Across thy breast like things of air,
Chase from thy lone and level tide,
The spell of stillness deepening there.

Yet round this waste of wood and wave,
Unheard, unseen, a spirit lives,
That, breathing o'er each rock and cave,
To all, a wild, strange aspect gives.



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The thunder-riven oak, that flings
Its grisly arms athwart the sky,
A sudden, startling image brings
To the lone traveller's kindled eye.

The gnarled and braided boughs that show
Their dim forms in the forest shade,
Like wrestling serpents seem, and throw
Fantastic horrors through the glade.

The very echoes round this shore,
Have caught a strange and gibbering tone,
For they have told the war-whoop o'er,
Till the wild chorus is their own.

Wave of the wilderness, adieu—
Adieu, ye rocks, ye wilds, ye woods!
Roll on, thou Element of blue,
And fill these awful solitudes!

Thou hast no tale to tell of man.
God is thy theme. Ye sounding caves,
Whisper of Him, whose mighty plan,
Deems as a bubble all your waves!

The Leaf.

[Illustration: The Leaf]

It came with spring's soft sun and showers,
Mid bursting buds and blushing flowers;
It flourished on the same light stem,
It drank the same clear dews with them.
The crimson tints of summer morn
That gilded one, did each adorn:
The breeze that whispered light and brief
To bud or blossom, kissed the leaf;
When o'er the leaf the tempest flew,
The bud and blossom trembled too.

But its companions passed away,
And left the leaf to lone decay.
The gentle gales of spring went by:
The fruits and flowers of summer die.



The autumn winds swept o'er the hill,
And winter's breath came cold and chill.
The leaf now yielded to the blast,
And on the rushing stream was cast.
Far, far it glided to the sea,
And whirled and eddied wearily,
Till suddenly it sank to rest,
And slumbered in the ocean's breast.

Thus life begins—its morning hours,
Bright as the birthday of the flowers—
Thus passes like the leaves away,
As withered and as lost as they.
Beneath the parent roof we meet
In joyous groups, and gayly greet
The golden beams of love and light,
That dawn upon the youthful sight.
But soon we part, and one by one,
Like leaves and flowers, the group is gone.
One gentle spirit seeks the tomb,
His brow yet fresh with childhood's bloom:
Another treads the paths of fame,
And barter peace to win a name.
Another still, tempts fortune's wave,
And seeking wealth, secures a grave.
The last, grasps yet the brittle thread:
Though friends are gone and joy is dead—
Still dares the dark and fretful tide,
And clutches at its power and pride—
Till suddenly the waters sever,
And like the leaf, he sinks for ever!

The Bubble Chase.



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[Illustration: The Bubble Chase]

Twas morn, and, wending on its way,
Beside my path a stream was playing;
And down its banks, in humor gay,
A thoughtless boy was idly straying.

Light as the breeze they onward flew—
That joyous youth and laughing tide,
And seemed each other's course to woo,
For long they bounded side by side.

And now the dimpling water staid,
And glassed its ripples in a nook;
And on its breast a bubble played,
Which won the boy's admiring look.

He bent him o'er the river's brim,
And on the radiant vision gazed;
For lovelier still it seemed to him,
That in its breast his imaged blazed.

With beating heart and trembling finger,
He stooped the wondrous gem to clasp,
But, spellbound, seemed a while to linger,
Ere yet he made th' adventurous grasp.

And still a while the glittering toy,
Coquettish, seemed to shun the snare,
And then more eager grew the boy,
And followed with impetuous air.

Round and around, with heedful eyes,
He chased it o'er the wavy river:
He marked his time and seized his prize,
But in his hand it burst for ever!

Upon the river's marge he sate,
The tears adown his young cheek gushing;
And long,—his heart disconsolate—
He heeded not the river's rushing.

But tears will cease. And now the boy
Once more looked forth upon the stream:



'Twas morning still, and lo! a toy,
Bright as the last one, in the beam!

He rose—pursued—the bubble caught;
It burst—he sighed—then others chased;
And as I parted, still he sought
New bubbles in their downward haste.

My onward path I still pursued,
Till the high noontide sun was o'er me.
And now, though changed in form and mood,
That Youth and river seemed before me.

The deepened stream more proudly swept,
Though chafed by many a vessel's prow;
The Youth in manhood's vigor stept,
But care was chiselled on his brow.

Still on the stream he kept his eye,
And wooed the bubbles to the shore,
And snatched them, as they circled by,
Though bursting as they burst before.

Once more we parted. Yet again
We met—though now 'twas evening dim:
Onward the waters rushed amain,
And vanished o'er a cataract's brim.

Though swift and dark the raging surge,
The Bubble-Chaser still was there;
And, bending o'er the dizzy verge,
Clutched at the gaudy things of air.

With staff in hand and tottering knee,
Upon the slippery brink he stood,
And watched, with doting ecstasy,
Each wreath of foam that rode the flood.



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“One bubble more!” I heard him call,
And saw his trembling fingers play:
He snatched, and down the roaring fall,
With the lost bubble, passed away!

A Dream of Life.

[Illustration: Dream of Life]

When I was young—long, long ago—
I dreamed myself among the flowers;
And fancy drew the picture so,
They seemed like Fairies in their bowers.

The rose was still a rose, you know—
But yet a maid. What could I do?
You surely would not have me go,
When rosy maidens seem to woo?

My heart was gay, and 'mid the throng
I sported for an hour or two;
We danced the flowery paths along,
And did as youthful lovers do.

But sports must cease, and so I dreamed
To part with these, my fairy flowers—
But oh, how very hard it seemed
To say good-by 'mid such sweet bowers!

And one fair Maid of modest air
Gazed on me with her eye of blue;
I saw the tear-drop gathering there—
How could I say to her, Adieu!

I fondly gave my hand and heart,
And we were wed. Bright hour of youth!
How little did I think to part
With my sweet bride, whose name was Truth!

But time passed on, and Truth grew gray,
And chided, though with gentlest art:
I loved her, though I went astray,
And almost broke her faithful heart.



And then I left her, and in tears—
These could not move my hardened breast!
I wandered, and for weary years
I sought for bliss, but found no rest.

I sought—yet ever sought in vain—
To find the peace, the joy of youth:
At last, I turned me back again,
And found them with my faithful Truth.

The Surf Sprite.

[Illustration: The Surf Sprite]

I.

In the far off sea there is many a sprite,
Who rests by day, but awakes at night.
In hidden caves where monsters creep,
When the sun is high, these spectres sleep:
From the glance of noon, they shrink with dread,
And hide 'mid the bones of the ghastly dead.
Where the surf is hushed, and the light is dull,
In the hollow tube and the whitened skull,
They crouch in fear or in whispers wail,
For the lingering night, and the coming gale.
But at even-tide, when the shore is dim,
And bubbling wreaths with the billows swim,
They rise on the wing of the freshened breeze,
And flit with the wind o'er the rolling seas.

II.



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At summer eve, as I sat on the cliff,
I marked a shape like a dusky skiff,
That skimmed the brine, toward the rocky shore—
I heard a voice in the surge's roar—
I saw a form in the flashing spray,
And white arms beckoned me away.
Away o'er the tide we went together,
Through shade and mist and stormy weather—
Away, away, o'er the lonely water,
On wings of thought like shadows we flew,
Nor paused 'mid scenes of wreck and slaughter,
That came from the blackened waves to view.
The staggering ship to the gale we left,
The drifting corse and the vacant boat;
The ghastly swimmer all hope bereft—
We left them there on the sea to float!
Through mist and shade and stormy weather,
That night we went to the icy Pole,
And there on the rocks we stood together,
And saw the ocean before us roll.
No moon shone down on the hermit sea,
No cheering beacon illumed the shore,
No ship on the water, no light on the lea,
No sound in the ear but the billow's roar!
But the wave was bright, as if lit with pearls,
And fearful things on its bosom played;
Huge crakens circled in foamy whirls,
As if the deep for their sport was made,
And mighty whales through the crystal dashed,
And upward sent the far glittering spray,
Till the darkened sky with the radiance flashed,
And pictured in glory the wild array.[A]

III.

Hast thou seen the deep in the moonlight beam,
Its wave like a maiden's bosom swelling?
Hast thou seen the stars in the water's gleam,
As if its depths were their holy dwelling?
We met more beautiful scenes that night,
As we slid along in our spirit-car,
For we crossed the South Sea, and, ere the light,
We doubled Cape Horn on a shooting star.



In our way we stooped o'er a moonlit isle,
Which the fairies had built in the lonely sea,
And the Surf Sprite's brow was bent with a smile,
As we gazed through the mist on their revelry.
The ripples that swept to the pebbly shore,
O'er shells of purple in wantonness played,
And the whispering zephyrs sweet odors bore,
From roses that bloomed amid silence and shade.
In winding grottos, with gems all bright,
Soft music trembled from harps unseen,
And fair forms glided on wings of light,
'Mid forests of fragrance, and valleys of green.
There were voices of gladness the heart to beguile,
And glances of beauty too fond to be true—
For the Surf Sprite shrieked, and the Fairy Isle,
By the breath of the tempest was swept from our view.

IV.



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Then the howling gale o'er the billows rushed,
And trampled the sea in its march of wrath;
From stooping clouds the red lightnings gushed,
And thunders moved in their blazing path.
'Twas a fearful night, but my shadowy guide
Had a voice of glee as we rode on the gale,
For we saw afar a ship on the tide,
With a bounding course and a fearless sail.
In darkness it came, like a storm-sent bird,
But another ship it met on the wave:
A shock—a shout—but no more we heard,
For they both went down to their ocean-grave!
We paused on the misty wing of the storm,
As a ruddy flash lit the face of the deep,
And far in its bosom full many a form
Was swinging down to its silent sleep.
Another flash! and they seemed to rest,
In scattered groups, on the floor of the tide:
The lover and loved, they were breast to breast,
The mother and babe, they were side by side.
The leaping waves clapped their hands in joy,
And gleams of gold with the waters flowed,
But the peace of the sleepers knew no alloy,
For all was hushed in their lone abode!

V.

On, on, like midnight visions, we passed,
The storm above, and the surge below,
And shrieking forms swept by on the blast,
Like demons speeding on errands of woe.
My spirit sank, for aloft in the cloud,
A Star-set Flag on the whirlwind flew,
And I knew that the billow must be the shroud
Of the noble ship and her gallant crew.
Her side was striped with a belt of white,
And a dozen guns from each battery frowned,
But the lightning came in a sheet of flame,[B]
And the towering sails in its folds were wound.
Vain, vain was the shout, that in battle rout,
Had rung as a knell in the ear of the foe,
For the bursting deck was heaved from the wreck,
And the sky was bathed in the awful glow!



The ocean shook to its oozy bed,
As the swelling sound to the canopy went,
And the splintered fires like meteors shed
Their light o'er the tossing element.
A moment they gleamed, then sank in the foam,
And darkness swept over the gorgeous glare—
They lighted the mariners down to their home,
And left them all sleeping in stillness there!

VI.

The storm is hushed, and my vision is o'er,
The Surf Sprite changed to a foamy wreath,
The night is deepened along the shore,
And I thread my way o'er the dusky heath.
But often again I shall go to that cliff,
And seek for her form on the flashing tide,
For I know she will come in her airy skiff,
And over the sea we shall swiftly ride!



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[Footnote A: The Laplanders are said to entertain the idea that the coruscations of the Aurora Borealis, are occasioned by the sports of the fishes in the polar seas.]

[Footnote B: The loss of the United States Sloop-of-War Hornet, in the Gulf of Mexico, 1829, suggested this passage. She was supposed to have gone down in a hurricane, but as nothing is positively known on the subject, it is not beyond lawful poetical license to imagine, at least in a dream, that the powder magazine was set on fire by the lightning, and the ship rent in pieces, by the explosion.]

[Illustration: Vignette]

The First Frost of Autumn.

[Illustration: The First Frost of Autumn]

At evening it rose in the hollow glade,
Where wild-flowers blushed 'mid silence and shade;
Where, hid from the gaze of the garish noon,
They were slyly wooed by the trembling moon.
It rose—for the guardian zephyrs had flown,
And left the valley that night alone.
No sigh was borne from the leafy hill,
No murmur came from the lapsing rill;
The boughs of the willow in silence wept,
And the aspen leaves in that sabbath slept.
The valley dreamed, and the fairy lute
Of the whispering reed by the brook was mute.
The slender rush o'er the glassy rill,
As a marble shaft, was erect and still,
And no airy sylph on the mirror wave,
A dimpling trace of its footstep gave.
The moon shone down, but the shadows deep
Of the pensile flowers, were hushed in sleep.
The pulse was still in that vale of bloom,
And the Spirit rose from its marshy tomb.
It rose o'er the breast of a silver spring,
Where the mist at morn shook its snowy wing,
And robed like the dew, when it woos the flowers.
It stole away to their secret bowers.

With a lover's sigh, and a zephyr's breath,
It whispered bliss, but its work was death:
It kissed the lip of a rose asleep,
And left it there on its stem to weep:



It froze the drop on a lily's leaf,
And the shivering blossom was bowed in grief.
O'er the gentian it breathed, and the withered flower
Fell blackened and scathed in its lonely bower;
It stooped to the asters all blooming around,
And kissed the buds as they slept on the ground.
They slept, but no morrow could waken their bloom,
And shrouded by moonlight, they lay in their tomb.

The Frost Spirit went, like the lover light,
In search of fresh beauty and bloom that night
Its wing was plumed by the moon's cold ray,
And noiseless it flew o'er the hills away.
It flew, yet its dallying fingers played,
With a thrilling touch, through the maple's shade;
It toyed with the leaves of the sturdy oak,
It sighed o'er the aspen,



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and whispering spoke

To the bending sumach, that stooped to throw
Its chequering shade o'er a brook below.
It kissed the leaves of the beech, and breathed
O'er the arching elm, with its ivy wreathed:
It climbed to the ash on the mountain's height—
It flew to the meadow, and hovering light
O'er leafy forest and fragrant dell,
It bound them all in its silvery spell.
Each spreading bough heard the whispered bliss,
And gave its cheek to the gallant's kiss—
Though giving, the leaves disdainingly shook,
As if refusing the boon they took.

Who dreamed that the morning's light would speak,
And show that kiss on the blushing cheek?
For in silence the fairy work went through—
And no croning owl of the scandal knew:
No watch-dog broke from his slumbers light,
To tell the tale to the listening night.
But that which in secret is darkly done,
Is oft displayed by the morrow's sun;
And thus the leaves in the light revealed,
With their glowing hues what the night concealed.
The sweet, frail flowers that once welcomed the morn,
Now drooped in their bowers, all shrivelled and lorn;
While the hardier trees shook their leaves in the blast—
Though tell-tale colors were over them cast.
The maple blushed deep as a maiden's cheek,
And the oak confessed what it would not speak.
The beech stood mute, but a purple hue
O'er its glossy robe was a witness true.
The elm and the ivy with varying dyes,
Protesting their innocence, looked to the skies:
And the sumach rouged deeper, as stooping to look,
It glanced at the colors that flared in the brook.
The delicate aspen grew nervous and pale,
As the tittering forest seemed full of the tale;
And the lofty ash, though it tossed up its bough,
With a puritan air on the mountain's brow,
Bore a purple tinge o'er its leafy fold,
And the hidden revel was gayly told!



The Sea-Bird.

[Illustration: The Sea-Bird]

Far, far o'er the deep is my island throne,
Where the sea-gull roams and reigns alone;
Where nought is seen but the beetling rock,
And nought is heard but the ocean-shock,
And the scream of birds when the storm is nigh,
And the crash of the wreck, and the fearful cry
Of drowning men, in their agony.
I love to sit, when the waters sleep,
And ponder the depths of the glassy deep,
Till I dream that I float on a corse at sea,
And sing of the feast that is made for me.
I love on the rush of the storm to sail,
And mingle my scream with the hoarser gale.
When the sky is dark, and the billow high,
When the tempest sweeps in its terror by,
I love to ride on the maddening blast—
To flap my wing o'er the fated mast,
And sing to the crew a song of fear,
Of the reef and the surge that await them here.



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When the storm is done and the revel is o'er,
I love to sit on the rocky shore,
And tell to the ear of the dying breeze,
The tales that are hushed in the sullen seas;
Of the ship that sank in the reefy surge,
And left her fate to the sea-gull's dirge:
Of the lover that sailed to meet his bride,
And his story gave to the secret tide:
Of the father that went on the trustless main,
And never was met by his child again:
Of the hidden things which the waves conceal,
And the sea-bird's song can alone reveal.

I tell of the ship that hath found a grave—
Her spars still float on the restless wave,
But down in the halls of the voiceless deep,
The forms of the brave and the beautiful sleep.
I saw the storm as it gathered fast,
I heard the roar of the coming blast,
I marked the ship in her fearful strife,
As she flew on the tide, like a thing of life.
But the whirlwind came, and her masts were wrung,
Away, and away on the waters flung.
I sat on the gale o'er the sea-swept deck,
And screamed in delight o'er the coming wreck:
I flew to the reef with a heart of glee,
And wiled the ship to her destiny.
On the hidden rocks like a hawk she rushed,
And the sea through her riven timbers gushed:
O'er the whirling surge the wreck was flung,
And loud on the gale wild voices rung.
I gazed on the scene—I saw despair
On the pallid brows of a youthful pair.
The maiden drooped like a gentle flower,
When lashed by the gale in its quivering bower:
Her arms round her lover she wildly twined,
And gazed on the sea with a wildered mind.
He bent o'er the trembler, and sheltered her form,
From the splash of the sea, and the sweep of the storm;
But woe to the lover, and woe to the maid,
Whose hopes on the treacherous deep are laid!
For the Sea hath a King whose palaces shine,
In lustre and light down the pearly brine,



And he loves to gather in glory there,
The choicest things of the earth and air.
In his deep saloons with coral crowned,
Where gems are sparkling above and around,
He gathers his harem of love and grace,
And beauty he takes to his cold embrace.
The winds and the waves are his messengers true.
And lost is the wanderer whom they pursue.
They sweep the shore, they plunder the wreck,
His stores to heap, and his halls to deck.
Oh! lady and lover, ye are doomed their prey—
They come! they come! ye are swept away!
Ye sink in the tide,—but it cannot sever
The fond ones who sleep in its depths for ever!



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Wild! wild was the storm, and loud was its roar,
And strange were the sights that I hovered o'er:
I saw the babe with its mother die;
I listened to catch its parting sigh;
And I laughed to see the black billows play
With the sleeping child in their gambols gay.
I saw a girl whose arms were white,
As the foam that flashed on the billows' height;
And the ripples played with her glossy curls,
And her cheek was kissed by the dancing whirls;
But her bosom was dead to hope and fear,
For she shuddered not as the shark came near.
I poised my foot on the forehead fair
Of a lovely boy that floated there;
I looked in the eyes of the drowning brave,
As they upward gazed through the glassy wave;
I screamed o'er the bubbles that told of death,
And stooped as the last gave up his breath.
I flapped my wing, for the work was done—
The storm was hushed, and the laughing sun
Sent his gushing light o'er the sullen seas—
And I tell my tale to the fainting breeze,
Of the hidden things which the waves conceal,
And the sea-bird's song can alone reveal!

[Illustration: Vignette]

The King of Terrors.

[Illustration: The King of Terrors]

I.

As a shadow He flew, but sorrow and wail
Came up from his path, like the moan of the gale.
His quiver was full, though his arrows fell fast
As the sharp hail of winter when urged by the blast.
He smiled on each shaft as it flew from the string,
Though feathered by fate, and the lightning its wing.
Unerring, unsparing, it sped to its mark,
As the mandate of destiny, certain and dark.
The mail of the warrior it severed in twain,—
The wall of the castle it shivered amain:



No shield could shelter, no prayer could save,
And Love's holy shrine no immunity gave.
A babe in the cradle—its mother bent o'er,—
The arrow is sped,—and that babe is no more!
At the faith-plighting altar, a lovely one bows,—
The gem on her finger,—in Heaven her vows;
Unseen is the blow, but she sinks in the crowd,
And her bright wedding-garment is turned to a shroud!

II.

On flew the Destroyer, o'er mountain and main,—
And where there was life, there, there are the slain!
No valley so deep, no islet so lone,
But his shadow is cast, and his victims are known.
He paused not, though years rolled weary and slow,
And Time's hoary pinion drooped languid and low:
He paused not till Man from his birth-place was swept,
And the sea and the land in solitude slept.

III.



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On a mountain he stood, for the struggle was done,—
A smile on his lip for the victory won.
The city of millions,—lone islet and cave,
The home of the hermit,—all earth was a grave!
The last of his race, where the first saw the light,
The monarch had met, and triumphed in fight:
Swift, swift was the steed, o'er Shinar's wide sand,
But swifter the arrow that flew from Death's hand!

IV.

O'er the mountain he seems like a tempest to lower,
Triumphant and dark in the fulness of power;
And flashes of flame, that play round his crest,
Bespeak the fierce lightning that glows in his breast.
But a vision of wonder breaks now on his sight;
The blue vault of heaven is gushing with light,
And, facing the tyrant, a form from the sky
Returns the fierce glance of his challenging eye.
A moment they pause,—two princes of might,—
The Demon of Darkness,—an Angel of Light!
Each gazes on each,—no barrier between—
And the quivering rocks shrink aghast from the scene!
The sword of the angel waves free in the air;
Death looks to his quiver,—no arrow is there!
He falls like a pyramid, crumbled and torn;
And a vision of light on his dying eye borne,
In glory reveals the blest souls of the slain,—
And he sees that his sceptre was transient and vain;
For, 'mid the bright throng, e'en the infant he slew,
And the altar-struck bride, beam full on the view!

The Rainbow Bridge.

[Illustration: The Rainbow Bridge]

Love and Hope and Youth, together—
Travelling once in stormy weather,
Met a deep and gloomy tide,
Flowing swift and dark and wide.
'Twas named the river of Despair,—
And many a wreck was floating there!
The urchins paused, with faces grave,



Debating how to cross the wave,
When lo! the curtain of the storm
Was severed, and the rainbow's form
Stood against the parting cloud—
Emblem of peace on trouble's shroud!
Hope pointed to the signal flying,
And the three, their shoulders plying,
O'er the stream the light arch threw—
A rainbow bridge of loveliest hue!
Now, laughing as they tripped it o'er,
They gayly sought the other shore:
But soon the hills began to frown,
And the bright sun went darkly down.
Though their step was light and fleet,
The rainbow vanished 'neath their feet,—
And down they went,—the giddy things!
But Hope put forth his ready wings,—
And clinging Love and Youth he bore
In triumph to the other shore.
But ne'er I ween should mortals deem
On rainbow bridge to cross a stream,
Unless bright, buoyant Hope is nigh,
And, light with Love and Youth, they fly!



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The Rival Bubbles.

[Illustration: The Rival Bubbles]

Two bubbles on a mountain stream,
Began their race one shining morn,
And lighted by the ruddy beam,
Went dancing down 'mid shrub and thorn.

The stream was narrow, wild and lone,
But gayly dashed o'er mound and rock,
And brighter still the bubbles shone,
As if they loved the whirling shock.

Each leaf, and flower, and sunny ray,
Was pictured on them as they flew,
And o'er their bosoms seemed to play
In lovelier forms and colors new.

Thus on they went, and side by side,
They kept in sad and sunny weather,
And rough or smooth the flowing tide,
They brightest shone when close together.

Nor did they deem that they could sever,
That clouds could rise, or morning wane;
They loved, and thought that love for ever
Would bind them in its gentle chain.

But soon the mountain slope was o'er,
And 'mid new scenes the waters flowed,
And the two bubbles now no more
With their first morning beauty glowed.

They parted, and the sunny ray
That from each other's love they borrowed;
That made their dancing bosoms gay,
While other bubbles round them sorrowed:

That ray was dimmed, and on the wind
A shadow came, as if from Heaven;
Yet on they flew, and sought to find
From strife, the bliss that love had given.



They parted, yet in sight they kept,
And rivals now the friends became,
And if, perchance, the eddies swept
Them close, they flashed with flame.

And fiercer forward seemed to bound,
With the swift ripples toward the main;
And all the lesser bubbles round,
Each sought to gather in its train.

They strove, and in that eager strife
Their morning friendship was forgot,
And all the joys that sweeten life,
The rival bubbles knew them not.

The leaves, the flowers, the grassy shore,
Were all neglected in the chase,
And on their bosoms now no more
These forms of beauty found a place.

But all was dim and drear within,
And envy dwelt where love was known,
And images of fear and sin
Were traced, where truth and pleasure shone.

The clouds grew dark, the tide swelled high,
And gloom was o'er the waters flung,
But riding on the billows, nigh
Each other now the bubbles swung.

Closer and closer still they rushed,
In anger o'er the rolling river;
They met, and 'mid the waters crushed,
The rival bubbles burst for ever!

Good Night.

The sun has sunk behind the hills,
The shadows o'er the landscape creep;
A drowsy sound the woodland fills,
And nature folds her arms to sleep:
Good night—good night.



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The chattering jay has ceased his din—
The noisy robin sings no more—
The crow, his mountain haunt within,
Dreams 'mid the forest's surly roar:
Good night—good night.

The sunlit cloud floats dim and pale;
The dew is falling soft and still;
The mist hangs trembling o'er the vale,
And silence broods o'er yonder mill:
Goodnight—good night.

The rose, so ruddy in the light,
Bends on its stem all rayless now,
And by its side the lily white
A sister shadow, seems to bow:
Good night—good night.

The bat may wheel on silent wing—
The fox his guilty vigils keep—
The boding owl his dirges sing;
But love and innocence will sleep:
Good night—good night!

The Mississippi.[A]

[Illustration: The Mississippi]

I.

Far in the West, where snow-capt mountains rise,
Like marble shafts beneath Heaven's stooping dome,
And sunset's dreamy curtain drapes the skies,
As if enchantment there would build her home—
O'er wood and wave, from haunts of men away—
From out the glen, all trembling like a child,
A babbling streamlet comes as if to play—
Albeit the scene is savage, lone and wild.
Here at the mountain's foot, that infant wave
'Mid bowing leaves doth hide its rustic birth—
Here learns the rock and precipice to brave—
And go the Monarch River of the Earth!
Far, far from hence, its bosom deep and wide,



Bears the proud steamer on its fiery wing—
Along its banks, bright cities rise in pride,
And o'er its breast their gorgeous image fling.
The Mississippi needs no herald now—
But here within this glen unknown to fame,
It flows content—a bubble on its brow,
A leaf upon its breast—without a name!

[Illustration: Banks of the Mississippi]

II.

Strange contrasts here—for on the glacier's height,
The tempest raves, and arrowy lightnings leap—
Yet deep beneath, the wild flowers lone and light,
On slender stems in breezeless silence sleep.
Skyward the racing eagles wildly fling
Their savage clamor to the echoing dell—
While sheltered deep, the bee with folded wing,
Voluptuous slumbers in his fragrant cell.
Around, the splintered rocks are heaped to heaven,
With grisly caverns yawning wide between,
As if the Titans there had battle given,
And left their ruin written on the scene!
Yet o'er these ghastly shapes, soft lichens wind,
And timid daisies droop, and tranquil flowers
A robe of many-colored beauty, bind,
As if some vagrant fairy claimed these bowers.

III.



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Fit cradle this—Majestic Stream, for thee!
Nursed at the glacier's foot—by tempests fed—
The lightning flashing o'er thy canopy,
And thunders pealing round thine infant bed—
The pious Indian marks thy mystic birth,
'Mid storm and cloud, and nature's aspect wild—
And wondering, deems thee not a thing of earth,
But great Manitto's fair and favored child.
Aye—and the mind, by inspiration taught,
Like nature's pupil feels a Presence near,
Which bids the bosom tremble with the thought
That He who came from Teman hath been here![B]

IV.

What thronging fancies crowd upon the soul,
As from these heights the Giant Stream we trace,
And wander with its waters as they roll
From hence, to their far ocean dwelling-place—
Marking its birth in this bleak frigid zone,
Its conquering march to yonder tropic shore,
The boundless valley which it makes its own,
With thousand tribute rivers as they pour!
No classic page its story to reveal;
No nymph, or naiad, sporting in its glades;
No banks encrimsoned with heroic steel;
And haunted yet by dim poetic shades—
Its annals linger in the eternal rock,
Hoary with centuries; in cataracts that sing
To the dull ear of ages; in the shock
Of plunging glaciers that madly fling,
The forest like a flight of spears, aloft:
In wooded vales that spread beyond the view;
In boundless prairies, blooming fair and soft;
In mantling vines that teem with clusters blue;
And as the sunny south upon us breathes—
In orange groves that scent the balmy air,
And tempt soft summer with its fragrant wreaths,
Throughout the year to be a dweller there.



V.

These of the past their whispered lore unfold,
And fertile fancy with its wizard art,
May weave wild legends, as the seers of old
Made gods and heroes into being start.
Perchance some mystic mound may wake the spell:
A crumbled skull—a spear—a vase of clay
Within its bosom half the tale may tell—
And all the rest 'tis fancy's gift to say.
Alas! that ruthless science in these days,
To its stern crucible hath brought at last,
The cherished shapes that all so fondly gaze
Upon us from the dim poetic past!
Else might these moonlit prairies show at dawn,
The dew-swept circle of the elfin dance—
These woodlands teem with sportive fay and faun—
These grottoes glimmer with sweet Echo's glance.
Perchance a future Homer might have wrought
From out the scattered wreck of ages fled,
Some long lost Troy, where mighty heroes fought,
And made the earth re-echo with their tread!



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VI.

It may not be, for though these scenes are fair,
As fabled Arcady—the sylph and fay,
And all their gentle kindred, shun the air,
Where car and steamer make their stormy way.
Perchance some Cooper's magic art may wake
The sleeping legends of this mighty vale,
And twine fond memories round the lawn and lake,
Where Warrior fought or Lover told his tale:
And when the Red Man's form hath left these glades,
And memory's moonlight o'er his story streams,
From their dim graves shall rise heroic shades,
And fill the fancy with romantic dreams.
Then, in the city's gorgeous squares shall rise
The chiselled column to the admiring view—
To mark the spot where some stern Black Hawk lies,
Whom ages gone, our glorious grandsires slew!

[Illustration: The Indian Lovers]

VII.

Dim shadows these that come at Fancy's call—
Yet deeper scenes before the Patriot rise,
As fate's stern prophet lifts the fearful pall,
And shows the future to his straining eyes.
Oh! shall that vision paint this glorious vale
With happy millions o'er its bosom spread—
Or ghastly scenes where battle taints the gale
With brother's blood by brother's weapon shed?
Away, ye phantom fears—the scene is fair,
Down the long vista of uncounted years;
Bright harvests smile, sweet meadows scent the air,
And peaceful plenty o'er the scene appears.
The village rings with labor's jocund laugh,
The hoyden shout around the school-house door,
The old man's voice, as bending o'er his staff,
He waxes valiant in the tales of yore:
Far tapering spires from teeming cities rise,
The sabbath bell comes stealing on the air,
A holy anthem seeks the bending skies,



And earth and heaven seem fondly blended there!
Aye—and beyond, where distance spreads its blue,
Down the unfolding vale of future time,
A glorious vision rises on the view,
And wakes the bosom with a hope sublime.
Majestic Stream! at dim Creation's dawn,
Thou wert a witness of that glorious birth—
And thy proud waters still shall sweep the lawn
When Peace shall claim dominion of the earth.
Here in this vale for mighty empire made,
Perchance the glorious flag shall be unfurled,
And violence and wrong and ruin fade,
Before its conquering march around the world!

[Footnote A: We are told by the Geographers that the Missouri, which rises in the glaciers of the Rocky Mountains, is properly the head stream of the Mississippi, and it is thus regarded in these lines. In this view, the Mississippi is the longest river in the world.]



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[Footnote B: Habakkuk iii. 3.]

[Illustration: Vignette]

The Two Windmills.

[Illustration: The Two Windmills]

Two neighbors, living on a hill,
Had each—and side by side—a mill.
The one was Jones,—a thrifty wight—
Whose mill in every wind went right.
The storm and tempest vainly spent
Their rage upon it—round it went!
E'en when the summer breeze was light,
The whirling wings performed their flight;
And hence a village saying rose—
“As sure as Jones’s mill, it goes.”

Not so with neighbor Smith’s—close by;
Full half the time it would not ply:
Save only when the wind was west,
Still as a post it stood at rest.
By every tempest it was battered,
By every thundergust 'twas shattered;
Through many a rent the rain did filter;
And, fair or foul, 'twas out of kilter;
And thus the saying came at last—
“Smith’s mill is made for folks that fast.”

Now, who can read this riddle right?
Two mills are standing on a height—
One whirling brisk, whate'er the weather,
The other, idle, weeks together!

Come, gentle reader, lend thine ear,
And thou the simple truth shalt hear;
And mark,—for here the moral lurks,—
Smith held to faith, but not to works;
While Jones believed in both, and so,
By faith and practice, made it go!

Smith prayed, and straight sent in his bill,
Expecting Heaven to tend his mill;



And grumbled sore, whene'er he found
That wheels ungreased would not go round.

Not so with Jones—for, though as prayerful,
To grease his wheels he e'er was careful,
And healed, with ready stitch, each rent
That ruthless time or tempest sent;
And thus, by works, his faith expressed,
Good neighbor Jones by Heaven was blessed.

The Ideal and the Actual.

My boat is on the bounding tide,
Away, away from surge and shore;
A waif upon the wave I ride,
Without a rudder or an oar.

Blow as ye list, ye breezes, blow—
The compass now is nought to me;
Flow as ye will, ye billows, flow,
If but ye bear me out to sea.

Yon waving line of dusky blue,
Where care and toil oppress the heart—
To thee I bid a long adieu,
And smile to feel that thus we part.

There let the sweating ploughman toil,
The yearning miser count his gain,
The fevered scholar waste his oil,
But I am bounding o'er the main!

How fresh these breezes to the brow—
How dear this freedom to the soul;
Bright ocean, I am with thee now,
So let thy golden billows roll!

* * * * *

But stay—what means this throbbing brain—
This heaving chest—these pulses quick?
Oh, take me to the land again,
For I am very, very sick!



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The Golden Dream.

In midnight dreams the Wizard came,
And beckoned me away—
With tempting hopes of wealth and fame,
He cheered my lonely way.
He led me o'er a dusky heath,
And there a river swept,
Whose gay and glassy tide beneath,
Uncounted treasure, slept.
The wooing ripples lightly dashed
Around the cherished store,
And circling eddies brightly flashed
Above the yellow ore.
I bent me o'er the deep smooth stream,
And plunged the gold to get,—
But oh! it vanished with my dream—
And I got dripping wet!
O'er lonely heath and darksome hill,
As shivering home I went,
The mocking Wizard whispered shrill,
'Thou'dst better been content!'

The Gipsy's Prayer.

[Illustration: The Gipsy's Prayer]

Our altar is the dewy sod—
Our temple yon blue throne of God:
No priestly rite our souls to bind—
We bow before the Almighty Mind.

Oh, Thou whose realm is wide as air—
Thou wilt not spurn the Gipsies' prayer:
Though banned and barred by all beside,
Be Thou the Outcast's guard and guide.

Poor fragments of a Nation wrecked—
Its story whelmed in Time's neglect—
We drift unheeded on the wave,
If God refuse the lost to save.

Yet though we name no Fatherland—
And though we clasp no kindred hand—



Though houseless, homeless wanderers we—
Oh give us Hope, and Heaven with Thee!

Inscription for a Rural Cemetery.

Peace to the dead! The forest weaves,
Around your couch, its shroud of leaves;
While shadows dim and silence deep,
Bespeak the quiet of your sleep.

Rest, pilgrim, here! Your journey o'er,
Life's weary cares ye heed no more;
Time's sun has set, in yonder west—
Your work is done—rest, Pilgrim, rest!

Rest till the morning hour; wait
Here, at Eternity's dread gate,
Safe in the keeping of the sod,
And the sure promises of God.

Dark is your home—yet round the tomb,
Tokens of hope—sweet flowerets bloom;
And cherished memories, soft and dear,
Blest as their fragrance, linger here!

We speak, yet ye are dumb! How dread
This deep, stern silence of the Dead!
The whispers of the Grave, severe,
The listening Soul alone can hear!

Song: The Robin.

[Illustration: The Robin]

At misty dawn,
At rosy morn,
The Redbreast sings alone:
At twilight dim,
Still, still, his hymn
Hath a sad, and sorrowing tone.

Another day, his song is gay,
For a listening bird is near—
O ye who sorrow, come borrow, borrow,
A lesson of robin here!



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Thoughts at Sea.

Here is the boundless ocean,—there the sky,
O'er-arching broad and blue—
Telling of God and heaven—how deep, how high,
How glorious and true!

Upon the wave there is an anthem sweet,
Whispered in fear and love,
Sending a solemn tribute to the feet
Of Him who sits above.

God of the waters! Nature owns her King!
The Sea thy sceptre knows;
At thy command the tempest spreads its wing,
Or folds it to repose.

And when the whirlwind hath gone rushing by,
Obedient to thy will,
What reverence sits upon the wave and sky,
Humbled, subdued, and still!

Oh! let my soul, like this submissive sea,
With peace upon its breast,
By the deep influence of thy Spirit be
Holy and hushed to rest.

And as the gladdening sun lights up the morn,
Bidding the storm depart,
So may the Sun of Righteousness adorn,
With love, my shadowed heart.

A Burial at Sea.

[Illustration: Burial at Sea]

The shore hath blent with the distant skies,
O'er the bend of the crested seas,
And the leaning ship in her pathway flies,
On the sweep of the freshened breeze.

Swift be its flight! for a dying guest
It bears across the billow,
And she fondly sighs in her native West
To find a peaceful pillow.



There, o'er the tide, her kindred sleep,
And she would sleep beside them—
It may not be! for the sea is deep,
And the waves—the waves divide them!

It may not be! for the flush is flown,
That lighted her lily cheek—
'Twas the passing beam, ere the sun goes down.—
Life's last and loveliest streak.

'Tis gone, and a dew is o'er her now—
The dew of the mornless eve—
No morrow will shine on that pallid brow,
For the spirit hath ta'en its leave.

* * * * *

The ship heaves to, and the funeral rite,
O'er the lovely form is said,
And the rough man's cheek with tears is bright,
As he lowers the gentle dead.

The corpse sinks down, alone—alone,
To its dark and dreary grave,
And the soul on a lightened wing hath flown,
To the world beyond the wave.

* * * * *

'Tis a fearful thing in the sea to sleep
Alone in a silent bed—
'Tis a fearful thing on the shoreless deep
Of the spirit-world to tread!

The Dream of Youth.

[Illustration: The Dream of Youth]

In days of yore, while yet the world was new,
And all around was beautiful to view—
When spring or summer ruled the happy hours,
And golden fruit hung down mid opening flowers;

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When, if you chanced among the woods to stray,
The rosy-footed dryad led the way,—
Or if, beside a mountain brook, your path,
You ever caught some naiad at her bath:
'Twas in that golden day, that Damon strayed.
Musing, alone, along a Grecian glade.
Retired the scene, yet in the morning light,
Athens in view, shone glimmering to the sight.
'Twas far away, yet painted on the skies,
It seemed a marble cloud of glorious dyes,
Where yet the rosy morn, with lingering ray,
Loved on the sapphire pediments to play.
But why did Damon heed the *distant* scene?
For he was young, and all around was green:
A noisy brook was romping through the dell,
And on his ear the laughing echoes fell:
Along his path the stooping wild flowers grew,
And woo'd the very zephyrs as they flew.
Then why young Damon, heeding nought around,
Seemed in some thrall of distant vision bound,
I cannot tell—but dreamy grew his gaze,
And all his thought was in a misty maze.
Awhile he sauntered—then beneath a tree,
He sat him down, and there a reverie
Came o'er his spirit like a spell,—and bright,
A truth-like vision, shone upon his sight.
Around on every side, with glowing pinions,
A circling band, as if from Jove's dominions,
All wooing came, and sought with wily art,
To steal away the youthful dreamer's heart.
One offered wealth—another spoke of fame,
And held a wreath to twine around his name.
One brought the pallet, and the magic brush,
By which creative art bids nature blush,
To see her rival—and the artful boy,
His story told—the all-entrancing joy
His skill could give,—but well the rogue concealed
The piercing thorns that flourish, unrevealed,
Along the artist's path—the poverty, the strife
Of study, and the weary waste of life—



All these, the drawback of his wily tale,
The little artist covered with a veil.

Young Damon listened, and his heart beat high—
But now a cunning archer gained his eye—
And stealing close, he whispered in his ear,
A glowing tale, so musical and dear,
That Damon vowed, like many a panting youth,
To Love, eternal constancy and truth!
But while the whisper from his bosom broke,
A fearful Image to his spirit spoke:
With frowning brow, and giant arm he stood,
Holding a glass, as if in threatening mood,
He waited but a moment for the sand,
To sweep the idle Dreamer from the land!

Young Damon started, and his dream was o'er,
But to his soul, the seeming vision bore
A solemn meaning, which he could not spurn—
And Youth, perchance, may from our fable learn,
That while the beckoning passions woo and sigh,
time, with his ready scythe, stands listening by.



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Remembrance.[A]

You bid the minstrel strike the lute,
And wake once more a soothing tone—
Alas! its strings, untuned, are mute,
Or only echo moan for moan.

The flowers around it twined are dead,
And those who wreathed them there, are flown;
The spring that gave them bloom is fled,
And winter's frost is o'er them thrown.

Poor lute! forgot 'mid strife and care,
I fain would try thy strings once more,—
Perchance some lingering tone is there—
Some cherished melody of yore.

If flowers that bloom no more are here,
Their odors still around us cling—
And though the loved are lost-still dear,
Their memories may wake the string.

I strike—but lo, the wonted thrill,
Of joy in sorrowing cadence dies:
Alas! the minstrel's hand is chill,
And the sad lute, responsive, sighs.

'Tis ever thus—our life begins,
In Eden, and all fruit seems sweet—
We taste and knowledge, with our sins,
Creeps to the heart and spoils the cheat.

In youth, the sun brings light alone—
No shade then rests upon the sight—
But when the beaming morn is flown,
We see the shadows—not the light

I once found music every where—
The whistle from the willow wrung—
The string, set in the window, there,
Sweet measures to my fancy flung.

But now, this dainty lute is dead—
Or answers but to sigh and wail,



Echoing the voices of the fled,
Passing before me dim and pale!

Yet angel forms are in that train,
And One upon the still air flings,
Of woven melody, a strain,
Down trembling from Her heaven-bent wings.

'Tis past—that Speaking Form is flown—
But memory's pleased and listening ear,
Shall oft recall that choral tone,
To love and poetry so dear.

And far away in after time,
Shall blended Piety and Love
Find fond expression in the rhyme,
Bequeathed to earth by One above.

* * * * *

Poor lute!—thy bounding pulse is still,—
Yet all thy silence I forgive,
That thus thy last—thy dying thrill,
Would make Her gentle virtues live!

[Footnote A: Written by request for the “Memorial,” a work published in New-York, 1850, in commemoration of the late Frances S. Osgood,—edited by Mary E. Hewett.]

The Old Oak.

[Illustration: The Old Oak]

Friend of my early days, we meet once more!
Once more I stand thine aged boughs beneath,
And hear again the rustling music pour,
Along thy leaves, as whispering spirits breathe.

Full many a day of sunshine and of storm,
Since last we parted, both have surely known;
Thy leaves are thinned, decrepit is thy form,—
And all my cherished visions, they are flown!



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How beautiful, how brief, those sunny hours
 Departed now, when life was in its spring—
When Fancy knew no scene undecked with flowers,
 And Expectation flew on Fancy's wing!

Here, on the bank, beside this whispering stream,
 Which still runs by as gayly as of yore,
Marking its eddies, I was wont to dream
 Of things away, on some far fairy shore.

Then every whirling leaf and bubbling ball,
 That floated by, was full of radiant thought;
Each linked with love, had music at its call,
 And thrilling echoes o'er my bosom brought.

The bird that sang within this gnarled oak,
 The waves that dallied with its leafy shade,
The mellow murmurs from its boughs that broke,
 Their joyous tribute to my spirit paid.

No phantom rose to tell of future ill,
 No grisly warning marr'd my prophet dreams—
My heart translucent as the leaping rill,
 My thoughts all free and flashing at its beams.

Here is the grassy knoll I used to seek
 At summer noon, beneath the spreading shade,
And watch the flowers that stooped with glowing cheek,
 To meet the romping ripples as they played.

Here is the spot which memory's magic glass
 Hath often brought, arrayed in fadeless green,
Making this oak, this brook, this waving grass—
 A simple group—fond Nature's fairest scene.

And as I roamed beside the Rhone or Rhine,
 Or other favored stream, in after days,
With jealous love, this rivulet would shine,
 Full on my heart, and claim accustomed praise.

And oh! how oft by sorrow overborne,
 By care oppressed, or bitter malice wrung,
By friends betrayed, or disappointment torn,
 My weary heart, all sickened and unstrung—



Hath yearned to leave the bootless strife afar,
And find beneath this oak a quiet grave,
Where the rough echo of the world's loud jar,
Yields to the music of the mellow wave!

And now again I stand this stream beside;
Again I hear the silver ripples flow—
I mark the whispers murmuring o'er the tide,
And the light bubbles trembling as they go.

But oh! the magic-spell that lingered here,
In boyhood's golden age, my heart to bless,
With the bright waves that rippled then so clear,
Is lost in ocean's dull forgetfulness.

Gone are the visions of that glorious time—
Gone are the glancing birds I loved so well,
Nor will they wake again their silver chime,
From the deep tomb of night in which they dwell!

And if perchance some fleeting memories steal,
Like far-off echoes to my dreaming ear,
Away, ungrasped, the cheating visions wheel,
As spectres start upon the wing of fear.



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Alas! the glorious sun, which then was high,
Touching each common thing with rosy light,
Is darkly banished from the lowering sky—
And life's dull onward pathway lies, in night.

Yes—I am changed—and this gray gnarled form,
Its leaves all scattered by the rending blast,
Is but an image of my heart;—the storm—
The storm of life, doth make us such at last!

Farewell, old oak! I leave thee to the wind,
And go to struggle with the chafing tide—
Soon to the dust thy form shall be resigned,
And I would sleep thy crumbling limbs beside.

Thy memory will pass; thy sheltering shade,
Will weave no more its tissue o'er the sod;
And all thy leaves, ungathered in the glade,
Shall, by the reckless hoof of time, be trod.

My cherished hopes, like shadows and like leaves,
Name, fame, and fortune—each shall pass away;
And all that castle-building fancy weaves,
Shall sleep, unthinking, as the drowsy clay.

But from thy root another tree shall bloom—
With living leaves its tossing boughs shall rise;
And the winged spirit—bursting from the tomb,—
Oh, shall it spring to light beyond these skies?

To a Wild Violet, in March.

[Illustration: To a Wild Violet, in March]

My pretty flower,
How cam'st thou here?
Around thee all
Is sad and sere,—
The brown leaves tell
Of winter's breath,
And all but thou
Of doom and death.



The naked forest
Shivering sighs,—
On yonder hill
The snow-wreath lies,
And all is bleak—
Then say, sweet flower,
Whence cam'st thou here
In such an hour?

No tree unfolds its timid bud—
Chill pours the hill-side's lurid flood—
The tuneless forest all is dumb—
Whence then, fair violet, didst thou come?

Spring hath not scattered yet her flowers,
But lingers still in southern bowers;
No gardener's art hath cherished thee,
For wild and lone thou springest free.

Thou springest here to man unknown,
Waked into life by God alone!
Sweet flower—thou tellest well thy birth,—
Thou cam'st from Heaven, though soiled in earth!

Illusions.

I.

As down life's morning stream we glide,
Full oft some Flower stoops o'er its side,
And beckons to the smiling shore,
Where roses strew the landscape o'er:
Yet as we reach that Flower to clasp,
It seems to mock the cheated grasp,
And whisper soft, with siren glee,
"My bloom is not—oh not for thee!"

II.



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Within Youth's flowery vale I tread,
By some entrancing shadow led—
And Echo to my call replies—
Yet, as she answers, lo, she flies!
And, as I seem to reach her cell—
The grotto, where she weaves her spell—
The Nymph's sweet voice afar I hear—
So Love departs, as we draw near!

III.

Upon a mountain's dizzy height,
Ambition's temple gleams with light:
Proud forms are moving fair within,
And bid us strive that light to win.
O'er giddy cliff and crag we strain,
And reach the mountain top—in vain!
For lo! the temple, still afar,
Shines cold and distant as a star.

IV.

I hear a voice, whose accents dear
Melt, like soft music, in mine ear.
A gentle hand, that seems divine,
Is warmly, fondly clasped in mine;
And lips upon my cheeks are pressed,
That whisper tones from regions blest:
But soon I start—for friendship's kiss
Is gone, and lo! a serpent's hiss.

V.

The sun goes down, and shadows rest
On the gay scenes by morning blest;
The gathering clouds invest the air—
Yet one bright constant Star is there.
Onward we press, with heavy load,
O'er tangled path and rough'ning road,
For still that Star shines bright before;
But now it sinks, and all is o'er!



The Rose: to Ellen.

[Illustration: The Rose]

The sportive sylphs that course the air,
Unseen on wings that twilight weaves,
Around the opening rose repair,
And breathe sweet incense o'er its leaves.

With sparkling cups of bubbles made,
They catch the ruddy beams of day,
And steal the rainbow's sweetest shade,
Their blushing favorite to array.

They gather gems with sunbeams bright,
From floating clouds and falling showers—
They rob Aurora's locks of light
To grace their own fair queen of flowers.

Thus, thus adorned, the speaking Rose,
Becomes a token fit to tell,
Of things that words can ne'er disclose,
And nought but this reveal so well.

Then take my flower, and let its leaves
Beside thy heart be cherished near,
While that confiding heart receives
The thought it whispers to thine ear!

The Maniac.

[Illustration: The Maniac]

On a tall cliff that overhung the deep,
A maniac stood. He heeded not the sweep
Of the swift gale that lashed the troubled main,
And spread with showery foam the watery plain.
His reckless foot was on the dizzy line
That edged the rock, impending



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o'er the brine;

His form was bent, and leaning from the height,
Like the light gull whose wing is stretched for flight.
Far down beneath his feet, the surges broke;
Above his head the pealing thunders spoke;
Around him flashed the lightning's ruddy glare,
And rushing torrents swept along the air.
But nought he heeded, save a gallant sail
That on the sea was wrestling with the gale.
Far on the ocean's billowy verge she hung,
And strove to shun the storm that landward swung.
With many a tack she turned her bending side
To the rude blast, and bravely stemmed the tide.
In vain! the bootless strife with fate is o'er—
And the doomed vessel nears the iron shore.
A mighty bird, she seems, whose wing is rent
By the red shaft from heaven's fierce quiver sent.
Her mast is shivered and her helm is lashed,
Around her prow the kindled waves are dashed—
And as an eagle swooping in its might,
Toward the dark cliff she speeds her headlong flight.
She comes, she strikes! the trembling wave withdraws,
And the hushed elements a moment pause;
Then swelling high above their helpless prey,
The billows burst, and bear the wreck away!

One look to heaven the raptured Maniac cast,
One low breathed murmur from his bosom passed:
'God of the soul and sea! I read thy choice—
Told by the shipwreck and the whirlwind's voice.
In this dread omen I can trace my doom,
And hear thee bid me seek an ocean-tomb.
Like the lost ship my weary mind hath striven
With the wild tempest o'er my spirit driven;
That strife is done—and the dim caverned sea
Of this wrecked bosom must the mansion be.
Thou who canst bid the billows cease to roll,
Oh! smooth a pillow for my weary soul—
Watch o'er the pilgrim in his shadowy sleep,
And send sweet dreams to light the sullen deep!'



Thus spoke the maniac, while above he gazed,
And his pale hands beseechingly upraised;
Then on the viewless wind he swiftly sprung,
And far below his senseless form was flung;
A thin white spray told where he met the wave,
And battling surges thunder o'er his grave!

The Two Shades.

[Illustration: The Two Shades]

Along that gloomy river's brim,
Where Charon plies the ceaseless oar,
Two mighty Shadows, dusk and dim,
Stood lingering on the dismal shore.
Hoarse came the rugged Boatman's call,
While echoing caves enforced the cry—
And as they severed life's last thrall,
Each Spirit spoke one parting sigh.
"Farewell to earth! I leave a name,
Written in fire, on field and flood—



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Wide as the wind, the voice of fame,
Hath borne my fearful tale of blood.
And though across this leaden wave,
Returnless now my spirit haste,
Napoleon's name shall know no grave,
His mighty deeds be ne'er erased.
The rocky Alp, where once was set
My courser's hoof, shall keep the seal,
And ne'er the echo there forget
The clangor of my glorious steel.
Marengo's hill-sides flow with wine—
And summer there the olive weaves,
But busy memory e'er will twine
The blood-stained laurel with its leaves.
The Danube's rushing billows haste
With the black ocean-wave to hide—
Yet is my startling story traced,
In every murmur of its tide.
The pyramid on Giseh's plain,
Its founder's fame hath long forgot—
But from its memory, time, in vain
Shall strive Napoleon's name to blot.
The bannered storm that floats the sky,
With God's red quiver in its fold,
O'er startled realms shall lowering fly,
A type of me, till time is told.
The storm—a thing of weal and woe,
Of life and death, of peace and power—
That lays the giant forest low,
Yet cheers the bent grass with its shower—
That, in its trampled pathway leaves,
The uptorn roots to bud anew,
And where the past o'er ruin grieves,
Bids fresher beauty spring to view:—
The storm—an emblem of my name,—
Shall keep my memory in the skies—
Its flash-wreathed wing, a flag of flame,
Shall spread my glory as it flies.”

The Spirit passed, and now alone,
The darker Shadow trod the shore—
Deep from his breast the parting tone
Swept with the wind, the landscape o'er.



“Farewell! I will not speak of deeds,—
For these are written but in sand—
And, as the furrow choked with weeds,
Fade from the memory of the land.
The war-plumed chieftain cannot stay,
To guard the gore his blade hath shed—
Time sweeps the purple stain away,
And throws a veil o’er glory’s bed.
But though my form must fade from view.
And Byron bow to fate resigned,—
Undying as the fabled Jew,
Harold’s dark spirit stays behind!
And he who yet in after years,
Shall tread the vine-clad shores of Rhine,
In Chillon’s gloom shall pour his tears,
Or raptured, see blue Lemman shine—
He shall not—cannot, go alone—
Harold unseen shall seek his side:
Shall whisper in his ear a tone,
So seeming sweet, he cannot chide.
He cannot chide; although he feel,
While listening to the magic verse,
A serpent round his bosom steal,
He still shall hug the coiling curse.



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Or if beneath Italian skies,
The wanderer's feet delighted glide,
Harold, in merry Juan's guise,
Shall be his tutor and his guide.
One living essence God hath poured
In every heart—the love of sway—
And though he may not wield the sword,
Each is a despot in his way.
The infant rules by cries and tears—
The maiden, with her sunny eyes—
The miser, with the hoard of years—
The monarch, with his clanking ties.
To me the will—the power—were given.
O'er plaything man to weave my spell,
And if I bore him up to heaven,
'Twas but to hurl him down to hell.
And if I chose upon the rack
Of doubt to stretch the tortured mind,
To turn Faith's heavenward footstep back,
Her hope despoiled—her vision, blind—
Or if on Virtue's holy brow,
A wreath of scorn I sought to twine—
And bade her minions mocking bow,
With sweeter vows at pleasure's shrine—
Or if I mirrored to the thought,
With glorious truth the charms of earth,
While yet the trusting fool I taught,
To scoff at Him who gave it birth—
Or if I filled the soul with light,
And bore its buoyant wing in air—
To plunge it down in deeper night,
And mock its maniac wanderings there—
I did but wield the wand of power,
That God intrusted to my clasp,
And not, the tyrant of an hour—
Will I resign it to Death's grasp!
The despot with his iron chain,
In idle bonds the limbs may bind—
He who would hold a sterner reign,
Must twine the links around the mind.



Thus I have thrown upon my race,
A chain that ages cannot rend—
And mocking Harold stays to trace,
The slaves that to my sceptre bend.”

The Teacher's Lesson.

I saw a child some four years old,
Along a meadow stray;
Alone she went—unchecked—untold—
Her home not far away.

She gazed around on earth and sky—
Now paused, and now proceeded;
Hill, valley, wood,—she passed them by,
Unmarked, perchance unheeded.

And now gay groups of roses bright,
In circling thickets bound her—
Yet on she went with footsteps light,
Still gazing all around her.

And now she paused, and now she stooped,
And plucked a little flower—
A simple daisy 'twas, that drooped
Within a rosy bower.

The child did kiss the little gem,
And to her bosom pressed it;
And there she placed the fragile stem,
And with soft words caressed it.

I love to read a lesson true,
From nature's open book—
And oft I learn a lesson new,
From childhood's careless look.



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Children are simple—loving—true;
'Tis Heaven that made them so;
And would you teach them—be so too—
And stoop to what they know.

Begin with simple lessons—things
On which they love to look:
Flowers, pebbles, insects, birds on wings—
These are God's spelling-book.

And children know His A, B, C,
As bees where flowers are set:
Would'st thou a skilful teacher be?—
Learn, then, this alphabet.

From leaf to leaf, from page to page,
Guide thou thy pupil's look,
And when he says, with aspect sage,
"Who made this wondrous book?"

Point thou with reverent gaze to heaven,
And kneel in earnest prayer,
That lessons thou hast humbly given,
May lead thy pupil there.

Perennials.

Life is a journey, and its fairest flowers
Lie in our path beneath pride's trampling feet;
Oh, let us stoop to virtue's humble bowers,
And gather those, which, faded, still are sweet.

These way-side blossoms amulets are of price;
They lead to pleasure, yet from dangers warn;—
Turn toil to bliss, this earth to Paradise,
And sunset death to heaven's eternal morn.

A good deed done hath memory's blest perfume,—
A day of self-forgetfulness, all given
To holy charity, hath perennial bloom
That goes, undrooping, up from earth to heaven.

Forgiveness, too, will flourish in the skies—
Justice, transplanted thither, yields fair fruit;



And if repentance, borne to heaven, dies,
'Tis that no tears are there to wet its root.

To a Lady who had been Singing.

The spirit-harp within the breast
A spirit's touch alone can know,—
Yet thine the power to wake its rest,
And bid its echoing numbers flow.

Yes,—and thy minstrel art the while,
Can blend the tones of weal and we,
So archly, that the heart may smile,
Though bright, unbidden tear-drops flow.

And thus thy wizard skill can weave
Music's soft twilight o'er the breast,
As mingling day and night, at eve,
Robe the far purpling hills for rest.

Thy voice is treasured in my soul,
And echoing memory shall prolong
Those woman tones, whose sweet control
Melts joy and sorrow into song.

The tinted sea-shell, borne away
Far from the ocean's pebbly shore,
Still loves to hum the choral lay,
The whispering mermaid taught of yore.

The hollow cave, that once hath known
Echo's lone voice, can ne'er forget—
But gives—though parting years have flown—
The wild responsive cadence yet.

So shall thy plaintive melody,
Undying, linger in my heart,
Till the last string of memory,
By death's chill finger struck, shall part!



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The Broken Heart.

Oh think not with love's soft token,
Or music my heart to thrill—
For its strings—its strings are broken,
And the chords would fain be still!

Oh think not to waken the measure
Of joy on a ruined lute—
Think not to waken pleasure,
Where grief sits mourning and mute.

The pearls that gleam in the billow,
But darken the gloom of the deep—
And laughter plants the pillow
With thorns, where sorrow would sleep.

The gems that gleam on the finger
Of her who is sleeping and cold,
But wring the hearts that linger.
And dream of the love they told.

My bosom is but a grave,
My breast a voiceless choir—
Speak not to the echoless cave,
Touch not the broken lyre!

The Star Of The West.

I.

The cannon is mute and the sword in its sheath—
Uncrimsoned the banner floats joyous and fair:
Yet beauty is twining an evergreen wreath,
And the voice of the minstrel is heard on the air.
Are these for the glory encircling a crown—
A phantom evoked but by tyranny's breath?
Are these for the conqueror's vaunted renown—
All ghastly with gore, and all tainted with death?
Bright Star of the West—broad Land of the Free,
The wreath and the anthem are woven for thee!



II.

When Tyranny came, his fierce lions aloft
Told the instinct that burned in his cohorts of mail—
But our eagles swooped down, and the battle-field oft,
Was the grave of the foeman,—stern, ghastly and pale.
The cloud of the strife rolled darkly away—
And the carnage-fed wolves slunk back to their den—
While Peace shone around like the god of the day,
And shed her blest light on the children of men.
Bright Star of the West—broad Land of the Free!
The wreath and the anthem are woven for thee!

III.

Thus Liberty dawned from the midnight of years;
And here rose her altar. Oh kneel at her shrine!
Her blessings unnumbered—ye children of tears,
Whatever be thy Fatherland—lo they are thine!
In faith and in joy, let us cherish the light,
That comes like the sunshine all warm from above,
For thus shall the Demons that sprung from the night
Of the Past fade away in the noontide of love.
Bright Star of the West—broad Land of the Free,
The wreath and the anthem are woven for thee!

IV.



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Stern Seer of the future, thy curtain unroll,
And show to long ages our empire of peace—
Where man never bent to the despot's control,
And the spirit of liberty never shall cease.
Our Stars and our Stripes 'mid battle's loud thunder,
Were bound by our sires in the wedlock of love—
Oh! ne'er shall the spirit of strife put asunder,
The *Union* thus hallowed by spirits above.
Bright Star of the West—broad Land of the Free,
The wreath and the anthem are woven for thee!

The Outcast.

[Illustration: The Outcast]

I.

Far, far away, where sunsets weave
Their golden tissues o'er the scene,
And distant glaciers, dimly heave,
Like trailing ghosts, their peaks between—
Where, at the Rocky Mountain's base,
Arkansas, yet an infant, lingers,
A while the drifting leaves to chase,
Like laughing youth, with playful fingers—
There Nature, in her childhood, wrought
'Mid rock and rill, with leaf and flower,
A vale more beautiful than thought
E'er gave to favored fairy's bower:
And in that hidden hermitage,
Of forest, river, lake, and dell,—
While Time himself grew gray and sage,
The lone Enchantress loved to dwell.

II.

Ages have flown,—the vagrant gales
Have swept that lonely land; the flowers
Have nodded to the breeze; the vales,
Long, long, have sheltered in their bowers,
The forest minstrels; and the race
Of mastodons hath come and gone;



And with the stream of time, the chase
Of bubbling life hath swept the lawn,
Unmarked, save that the bedded clay,
Tells where some giant sleeper lies;
And wrinkled cliffs, tottering and gray,
Whisper of crumbled centuries.
Yet there the valley smiles; the tomb
Of ages is a garden gay,
And wild flowers freshen in their bloom,
As from the sod they drink decay.
And creeping things of every hue,
Dwell in this savage Eden-land,
And all around it blushes new,
As when it rose at God's command.
Untouched by man, the forests wave,
The floods pour by, the torrents fall,
And shelving cliff and shadowy cave,
Hang as bold nature hung them all!
The hunter's wandering foot hath wound,
To this far scene, perchance like mine,
And there a Forest Dreamer found,
Who walks the dell with spectral mien.
Youthful his brow, his bearing high—
Yet writhed his lip, and all subdued,
The fire that once hath lit his eye.
Wayward and sullen oft his mood;
But he perchance may deign to tell,
As he hath told to me, his tale,
In words like these,—while o'er the dell,
The autumn twilight wove its veil.



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III.

“Stranger! these woods are wild and drear;
These tangled paths are rough and lone;
These dells are full of things of fear,
And should be rather shunned than known.
Then turn thy truant foot away,
And seek afar the cultured glade,
Nor dare with reckless step to stray,
'Mid these lone realms of fear and shade!
You go not, and you seek to hear,
Why one like me should idly roam,
'Mid scenes like these, so dark, so drear—
These rocks my bed, these woods my home?”

IV.

“One crime hath twined with serpent coil
Around my heart its fatal fold;
And though my struggling bosom toil,
To heave the monster from its hold—
It will not from its victim part.
By day or night, in down or dell,
Where'er I roam, still, still my heart
Is pressed by that sad serpent spell.
Aye, as the strangling boa clings
Around his prey with fatal grasp,
And as he feels each struggle, wrings
His victim with a closer clasp;
Nor yet till every pulse is dumb,
And every fluttering spasm o'er,
Releases, what, in death o'ercome,
Can strive or struggle now no more;
So is my wrestling spirit wrung,
By that one deep and deadly sin,
That will not, while I live, be flung,
From its sad work of woe within.”

[Illustration: “My native hills,” &c.]



V.

“My native hills are far away,
Beneath a soft and sunny sky;
Green as the sea, the forests play,
'Mid the fresh winds that sweep them by.
I loved those hills, I loved the flowers,
That dashed with gems their sunny swells,
And oft I fondly dreamed for hours,
By streams within those mountain dells.
I loved the wood—each tree and leaf,
In breeze or blast, to me was fair,
And if my heart was touched with grief,
I always found a solace there.
My parents slumbered in the tomb;
But thrilling thoughts of them came back,
And seemed within my breast to bloom.
As lone I ranged the forest track.
The wild flowers rose beneath my feet
Like memories dear of those who slept,
And all around to me was sweet,
Although, perchance, I sometimes wept.
I wept, but not, oh not in sadness,
And those bright tears I would not smother,
For less they flowed in grief than gladness,
So blest the memory of my mother.
And she was linked, I know not why,
With leaves and flowers, and landscapes fair
And all beneath the bending sky,
As if she still were with



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me there.

The echo bursting from the dell,
Recalled her song beside my bed;
The hill-side with its sunny swell,
Her bosom-pillow for my head.
The breathing lake at even-tide,
When o'er it fell the down of night,
Seemed the sweet heaven, which by her side,
I found in childhood's dreams of light:
And morning, as it brightly broke,
And blessed the hills with joyous dyes,
Was like her look, when first I woke,
And found her gazing in my eyes.

VI.

“Nature became my idol; wood,
Wave, wilderness,—I loved them all;
I loved the forest and the solitude,
That brooded o'er the waterfall,—
I loved the autumn winds that flew
Between the swaying boughs at night,
And from their whispers fondly drew
Wild woven dreams of lone delight.
I loved the stars, and musing sought
To read them in their depths of blue—
My fancy spread her sail of thought,
And o'er that sea of azure flew.
Hovering in those blest paths afar,
The wheeling planets seem to trace,
My spirit found some islet-star,
And chose it for its dwelling-place.
I loved the morn, and ere the lay
Of plaintive meadow-lark began,
'Mid dewy shrubs I tore my way,
Up the wild crag where waters ran.
I listened to the babbling tide,
And thought of childhood's merry morn,—
I listened to the bird that tried
Prelusive airs, amid the thorn.
And then I went upon my way;



Yet ere the sunrise kissed my cheek,
I stood upon the forehead gray
Of some lone mountain's dizzy peak.
A ruddy light was on the hill,
But shadows in the valley slept;
A white mist rested o'er the rill,
And shivering leaves with tear-drops wept.
The sun came up, and nature woke,
As from a deep and sweet repose;
From every bush soft music broke,
And blue wreaths from each chimney rose.
From the green vale that lay below.
Full many a carol met my ear;
The boy that drove the teeming cow.
And sung or whistled in his cheer;
The dog that by his master's side,
Made the lone copse with echoes ring:
The mill that whirling in the tide,
Seemed with a droning voice to sing;
The lowing herd, the bleating flock,
And many a far-off murmuring wheel:
Each sent its music up the rock,
And woke my bosom's echoing peal.

VII.



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“And thus my early hours went o’er:
Each scene and sound but gave delight;
Or if I grieved, ’twas like the shower,
That comes in sunshine, brief and bright.
My heart was like the summer lake,
A mirror in some valley found,
Whose depths a mimic world can make
More beautiful than that around.
The wood, the slope, the rocky dell,
To others dear, were dearer yet
To me; for they would fondly dwell
Mirrored in memory; and set
In the deep azure of my dreams
At night, how sweet they rose to view!
How soft the echo, and the streams,
How swift their laughing murmurs flew!
And when the vision broke at morn,
The music in my charmed ear,
As of some fairy’s lingering horn,—
My native hills, how soft, how dear!

VIII.

“So passed my boyhood; ’twas a stream
Of frolic flow, ’mid Nature’s bowers;
A ray of light—a golden dream—
A morning fair—a path of flowers!
But now another charm came o’er me:
The ocean I had never seen;
Yet suddenly it rolled before me,
With all its crested waves of green!
Soft sunny islands, far and lone,
Where the shy petrel builds her nest;
Deep coral caves to mermaids known—
These were my visions bright and blest.
Oh! how I yearned to meet the tide,
And hear the bristling surges sweep;
To stand the watery world beside,
And ponder o’er the glorious deep!
I bade my home adieu, and bent
My eager footsteps toward the shore,
And soon my native hills were blent,
With the pale sky that arched them o’er.



Four days were passed, and now I stood
Upon a rock that walled the deep:
Before me rolled the boundless flood,
A glorious dreamer in its sleep.
'Twas summer morn, and bright as heaven;
And though I wept, I was not sad,
For tears, thou knowest, are often given
When the overflowing heart is glad.
Long, long I watched the waves, whose whirls
Leaped up the rocks, their brows to kiss,
And dallied with the sea-weed curls,
That stooped and met, as if in bliss.
Long, long I listened to the peal,
That whispered from the pebbly shore,
And like a spirit seemed to steal
In music to my bosom's core.
And now I looked afar, and thought
The sea a glad and glorious thing;
And fancy to my bosom brought
Wild dreams upon her wizard wing—
Her wing that stretched o'er spreading waves,
And chased the far-off flashing ray,
Or hovering deep in twilight caves,
Caught the lone mermaid at her play.

IX.



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“And thus the sunny day went by,
And night came brooding o’er the seas;
A thick cloud swathed the distant sky,
And hollow murmurs filled the breeze.
The white gull screaming, left the rock,
And seaward bent its glancing wing,
While heavy waves, with measured shock,
Made the dun cliff with echoes ring.
How changed the scene! The glassy deep
That slumbered in its resting-place,
And seeming in its morning sleep
To woo me to its soft embrace,
Now wakened, was a fearful thing,—
A giant with a scowling form,
Who from his bosom seemed to fling
The blackened billows to the storm.
The wailing winds in terror gushed
From the swart sky, and seemed to lash
The foaming waves, which madly rushed
Toward the tall cliff with headlong dash.
Upward the glittering spray was sent,
Backward the growling surges whirled,
And splintered rocks by lightnings rent,
Down thundering midst the waves were hurled.
I trembled, yet I would not fly;
I feared, yet loved, the awful scene;
And gazing on the sea and sky,
Spell-bound I stood the rocks between.

X.

“’Twas strange that I, a mountain boy,
A lover of green fields and flowers,—
One, who with laughing rills could toy,
And hold companionship for hours,
With leaves that whispered low at night,
Or fountains bubbling from their springs,
Or summer winds, whose downy flight,
Seemed but the sweep of angel wings:—
’Twas strange that I should love the clash
Of ocean in its maddest hour,
And joy to see the billows dash
O’er the rent cliff with fearful power.



'Twas strange,—but I was nature's own,
Unchecked, untutored; in my soul
A harp was set that gave its tone
To every touch without control.

The zephyr stirred in childhood warm,
Thoughts like itself, as soft and blest;
And the swift fingers of the storm
Woke its own echo in my breast.

Aye, and the strings that else had lain
Untouched, and to myself unknown,
Within my heart, gave back the strain
That o'er the sea and rock was thrown.

Yes, and wild passions, which had slept
Within their cradle, as the waves

At morning by the winds unswept,
Rippling within their infant caves—

Now, wakened into billows, rose,
And held communion with the storm:

I saw the air and ocean close
In deadly struggle; marked the form

Of the dun cloud with misty wing,
That wrestled with the giant main;

I saw the racing billows spring
Like lions leaping from the plain;



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I saw the surf that upward threw
Gray pyramids of foam to heaven;
I heard the battle-cry that flew
Along the cliff, as though t'were given
To cheer the elemental war;
I heard the wild bird screaming near;
I felt the rock beneath me jar,
As if the granite thrilled with fear;
I saw, I heard,—yet in my heart
The cloud, the cliff, the billow seemed
As of myself an imaged part,—
Things I had seen, or oft had dreamed;
And in my ear, the thundering tide
Was music, and the ocean's moan
An echo of my spirit, wide
As the wave, and stormy as its own.

XI.

“So passed my morning dreams away,
Like birds that shun a wintry cloud,
And phantom visions, grim and gray,
Came mist-like from the watery shroud:
Prophetic visions of the deep,
Emblems of those within the breast,
Which, summoned from their shadowy sleep,
Ride on the storm by passion pressed!
In ghastly shapes they rose to view,
All gibbering from their crystal caves,
As if some horrid mirth they drew
From the wild uproar of the waves.
With beckoning hands they seemed to urge
My footsteps down the dizzy way,
To join their train upon the surge,
And dance with them amidst the spray:
And such the madness of my brain,
That I was fain to seek the throng;
To meet and mingle on the main,
With their mad revelry and song.



One step, and down the dizzy cliff,
My form had to the waters swung,
But gliding in a wreathy skiff,
That o'er the crested billows hung,
A white form like my mother seemed
To shine a moment on my eye;—
With warning look the vision gleamed,
Then vanished upward to the sky!

XII.

“I left the thundering tide, and sought
Once more the mountain and the stream;
But long the wrestling ocean wrought
Within my bosom: as a dream
My boyhood vanished, and I woke
Startled to manhood's early morn;
No father's hand my pride to yoke,
No mother's angel voice to warn.
No,—and the gentle vision, lost,
That once could curb my wayward will,
And lull my bosom passion-tossed,
With one soft whisper, “Peace, be still!”—
That vision, spurned by manhood's pride,
Came down from heaven to me no more,
And I was launched without a guide,
To be a wreck on passion's shore.
Alas! the giddy bark at sea,
'Mid waves that woo it down to death,
From helm and compass wafted free,
The toy of every tempest's breath,—
Is but a type



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of him who goes,

Trusting to nature, on the tide
Of life, where breezy passion blows,
To overwhelm the adventurer in his pride.

Yes, for the smoothest lake hath waves
Within its bosom, which will rise

And revel when the tempest raves;
The cloud will come o'er gentlest skies;
And not a favored spot on earth,
The furrowing ploughman finds, but there
The rank and ready weeds have birth,
Sown by the winds to mock his care.

'Tis thus with every human heart;
The seeds of ill are scattered wide,
And flaunting flowers of vice will start
Thick o'er the soil they seek to hide.

Aye, and the gentleness of youth,
That seems some hill-side sown with flowers,
Odorous, as if with budding truth,
Shoots into wild fantastic bowers.

The spark for ever tends to flame;
The ray that quivers in the splash
Of yonder river, is the same
That feeds the lightning's ruddy flash.

The summer breeze that fans the rose,
Or eddies down some flowery path,
Is but the infant gale that blows
To-morrow with the whirlwind's wrath.

And He alone, who wields the storm,
And bids the arrowy lightning play,
Can guide the heart, when wild and warm,
It springs on passion's wing away!

One angel minister is sent,
To guard and guide us to the sky,
And still Her sheltering wing is bent,
Till manhood rudely throws it by.

Oh, then with mad disdain we spurn
A mother's gentle teaching; throw
Her bosom from us, and we burn,
To rush in freedom, where the glow
Of pleasure lights the dancing wave:
We launch the bark, we woo the gale,



And reckless of the darkling grave
That yawns below, we speed the sail!

XIII.

“Stranger! a murderer stands before thee!
To tell the guilty tale were vain—
It is enough—the curse is o’er me—
And I am but a wandering Cain.
What boots it that the world bestows,
For deeds of death its honors dear?
The blood that from the duel flows,
Will cry to heaven, and heaven will hear!
Thou shalt not kill!’ ’Twas deeply traced
In living stone, and thunder-sealed;
It cannot be by man effaced,
Or fashion’s impious act repealed.
And though we seek with thin deceit,
To blind Jehovah’s piercing gaze,
Call murder, honor,—can we cheat
The Omniscient with a specious phrase?
Alas! ’tis adding crime to crime,
To veil the blood our hands have spilt,
And seek by words of softening chime,
To lend blest virtue’s charm to guilt.
Oh, no! in vain the world may give

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The fearful deed a gentle name—
I slew my friend, and now I live
To feel perdition's glowing flame.
His missile cut the upward air—
Mine, winged with murder won its way,
Straight to his manly bosom,—there
He fell, unconscious as the clay!
One thrill of triumph through me swept,—
But, as I gazed upon his brow,
A chilling horror o'er me crept,—
And I am what thou seest now!

[Illustration: The Moonlit Prairie]

XIV.

“Stranger,—thy bosom cannot know
The desolation of the soul,
When the rough, gale hath ceased to blow,
Yet o'er it bids the billow roll.
A helmless wreck upon the tide—
An earthquake's ruin wrapped in gloom—
A gnarled oak blasted in its pride—
Are feeble emblems of my doom.
There is a tongue in every leaf,
A sigh in every tossing tree—
A murmur in each wave; of grief
They whisper, and they speak to me.
Nature hath many voices—strings
Of varied melody: and oft
Lone spirits come on breezy wings,
To wake their music sad or soft.
But in the wilderness, where Heaven
Is the wrapt listener, the tone
Is ever mournful: there is given,
A chorus for the skies, alone.
At night, when the pale moonlight falls
O'er prairies, sleeping like a grave,
And glorious through these mountain halls,



Pours in a flood its silvery wave—
I climb the cliff, and hear the song,
That o'er the breast of stillness steals:
I hear the cataract thundering strong
From far; I hear the wave that peals
Along the lone lake's pebbly shore;
I hear the sweeping gust that weaves
The tree tops, and the winds that pour
In rippling lapses through the leaves.
And as the diapason sweeps
Across the breast of night, the moan
Of wolves upon the spirit creeps,
Lending the hymn a wilder tone.
The panther's wail, the owlet's scream,
The whippoorwill's complaining song,
Blend with the cataract's solemn theme,
And the wild cadences prolong.
And often when the heart is chilled
By the deep harmony, the note
Of some light-hearted bird is trilled
Upon the breeze. How sweet its throat!
Yet, as a gem upon the finger
Of a pale corse, deepens the gloom,
By its bright rays that laugh and linger
In the dread bosom of the tomb;
So doth the note of that wild bird,
Sadden the anthem of the hills,
And my hushed bosom, spirit-stirred,
With lonelier desolation thrills.

XV.



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“You bid me pray? aye, I have prayed!
Each cliff and cave, each rock and glen,
Have heard my ardent lips invade
The ear of Heaven,—again, again.
And in the secret hour of night,
When all-revealing darkness brings
Its brighter world than this of light—
My spirit, borne on wizard wings,
Hath won its upward way afar,
And ranged the shoreless sea of dreams—
Hath touched at many a wheeling star
That shines beyond these solar beams;
And on the trackless deep of thought,
Like Him, who found this Western World,
'Mid doubt and storm my passage wrought,
Till weary fancy's wing was furled—
And, as the sky-bent eagle, borne
Down by the lightning blast of heaven,
So was my outcast spirit torn,
And backward to its dwelling driven.
Yet not in vain, perchance, my tears,
My penitence, my patient prayer,
For, softened with the flow of years,
My breast is lightened of its care.
And once at night when meteors flew
Down on their glittering wings from heaven,
My mother's spirit met my view,
Whispering of peace and sin forgiven!
Yet, though my lip to thee confess,
My wrestling bosom's sweet relief,
Think not I count my crime the less,
That pitying Heaven hath soothed my grief.
No—yon wild rose hath sweet perfume
To scatter on this desert air;
Yet, hid beneath its fragrant bloom,
Sharp thorns are set, the flesh to tear.
And thus, repentance, while it brings
Forgiveness to the broken heart,
Still leaves contrition's thousand stings
To waken sorrow with their smart.



XVI.

“Such is my story—this my home,—
And I the monarch of the dell—
Above my head, the forest dome,—
Around, the battlements that swell
To heaven, and make my castle strong.
My messengers are winds that lave
Far reedy shores, and bring me song,
Blent with the murmurs of the wave.
And birds of every rainbow hue,
The antelope, and timid deer,
The wild goat mingling with the blue
Of heaven on yonder rock, are here.
And oft at morn, the mocking-bird
Doth greet me with its sweetest lay;
The wood-dove, where the bush is stirred,
Looks from its cover on my way.
I would not break the spider’s thread,—
The buzzing insect dances free;
I crush no toad beneath my tread,—
The lizard crawls in liberty!
I harm no living thing; my sway
Of peace hath soothed the grumbling bear,—
The wolf walks by in open day,
And fawns upon me from his lair.
Aye, and my heart hath bowed so low,
I gather in this solitude,
Joy from the love that seems to flow
From these brute tenants of the leafy wood.



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[Illustration: The Farewell]

XVII.

“Stranger, farewell! The deepening eve doth warn,
And the mild moonlight beckons thee away;
And, ere the lingering night shall melt to morn,
Let thy swift foot across the prairie stray.
Nay, tempt me not! for I alone am cast,
A wretch from all I used to grieve or bless;
And doomed to wail and wander here at last,
Am deeply wedded to the wilderness.
Thy hand again shall feel the thrilling grasp
Of friendship—and thine ear shall catch the tone
Of joyous kindred; and thine arm shall clasp,
Perchance, some gentle bosom to thine own.
Oh God! ’tis right—for he hath never torn,
With his own daring hand the thread of life—
He ne’er hath stolen thy privilege, or borne
A fellow mortal down in murderous strife!

XVIII.

“Stranger, farewell! these woods shall be my home,
And here shall be my grave! My hour is brief,
But while it lasts, it is my task to roam,
And read of Heaven from nature’s open leaf.
And though I wander from my race away,
As some lone meteor, dim and distant, wheels
In wintry banishment, where but a ray
Of kindred stars in timid twilight steals—
Still will I catch the light that faintly falls
Through my leaf-latticed window of the skies,
And I will listen to the voice that calls
From heaven, where the wind stricken forest sighs.
And I will read of dim Creation’s morn,
From the deep archives of these mossy hills—
On wings of wizard thought, my fancy, borne
Back by the whispers of these pouring rills,
Shall read the unwritten record of the land—
For God, unwitnessed here hath walked the dell,
These cliffs have quivered at his loud command,



These waters blushed, where his deep shadow fell!
And at his bidding, 'mid these solitudes,
The ebb and flow of life have poured their waves,
Till Time, the hoary sexton of these woods,
Despairing, broods o'er the uncounted graves.
And warrior tribes have come from some far land,
And made these mountains echo with their cry—
And they have mouldered—and their mighty hand
Hath writ no record on the earth or sky!
And 'mid the awful stillness of their grave,
The forest oaks have flourished; and the breath
Of years hath swept their races, wave on wave,
As ages fainted on the shores of death.
The tumbling cliff perchance hath thundered deep,
Like a rough note of music in the song
Of centuries, and the whirlwind's crushing sweep,
Hath ploughed the forest with its furrows strong.

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And though these legends, like the eddy leaves
Of autumn, scattered by the whirlwind's breath,
Are borne away where dim Oblivion weaves
Her shroud, within the rayless halls of death;
Still with a prophet gaze I'll thread my way,
And wake the giant spectres of the tomb;
With fancy's wand I'll chase the phantoms gray,
And burst the shadowy seal that shrouds their doom.
Thus shall the past its misty lore unfold,
And bid my soul on nature's ladder rise,
Till I shall meet some clasping hand, whose hold
Shall draw my homesick spirit to the skies.

XIX.

"Farewell! the thread of sympathy that tied
My heart to man is sundered, and I go
To hold communion with the shades that glide,
Wherever forests wave, or waters flow.
And when my fluttering heart shall faint and fail,
These limbs shall totter to some hollow cave,
Where the poor Dreamer's dream shall cease. The gale
Shall gather music from the wood and wave,
And pour it in my dying ear; the wing
Of busy zephyrs to the flowers shall go,
And from them all their sweetest odors bring,
To soothe, perchance, their fainting lover's woe.
My sinking soul shall catch the dreamy sound
Of far-off waters, murmuring to their doom,
And eddy winds, from distant mountains bound,
Shall come to sing a requiem round my tomb.
The breeze shall o'er me weave a leafy shroud,
And I shall slumber in the shadowy dell—
Till God shall rend the spirit's darkling cloud,
And give it wings of light. Stranger, Farewell!"

Good and Evil.

[Illustration: The Expulsion from Eden]



When man from Paradise was driven,
And thorns around his pathway sprung,
Sweet Mercy wandering there from heaven
Upon those thorns bright roses flung.

Aye, and as Justice cursed the ground,
She stole behind, unheard, unseen—
And while the curses fell around,
She scattered seeds of joy between.

And thus, as evils sprung to light,
And spread, like weeds, their poisons wide,
Fresh healing plants came blooming bright,
And stood, to check them, side by side.

And now, though Eden blooms afar,
And man is exiled from its bowers,
Still mercy steals through bolt and bar,
And brings away its choicest flowers.

The very toil, the thorns of care,
That Heaven in wrath for sin imposes,
By mercy changed, no curses are—
One brings us rest, the other roses.

Thus joy is linked with every woe—
Each cup of ill its pleasure brings;
The rose is crushed, but then, you know,
The sweeter fragrance from it springs.



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If justice throw athwart our way,
A deepening eve of fear and sorrow,
Hope, like the moon, reflects the ray
Of the bright sun that shines to-morrow.

And mercy gilds with stars the night;
Sweet music plays through weeping willows;
The blackest cave with gems is bright,
And pearls illumine the ocean billows.

The very grave, though clouds may rise,
And shroud it o'er with midnight gloom,
Unfolds to faith the deep blue skies,
That glorious shine beyond the tomb.

The Mountain Stream.

One summer morn, while yet the thrilling lay,
Of the dew-loving lark was full and strong,
Trampling the wild flowers in my careless way,
Up the steep mountain-side I strode along—
My only guide, a brook whose joyous song,
Seemed like a boy's light-hearted roundelay,
As down it rushed, the leafy bowers among,
Scattering o'er bud and bloom its pearly spray—
A beauteous semblance of life's opening day.

And looking back to that all-gladdening morn,
When I was free and sportive as the stream—
When roses blushed with no suspected thorn,
And fancy's sunlight gilded every dream—
While hope yet shed its sweet delusive beam,
And disappointment still delayed to warn—
With fond regret, I still pursued the theme—
With clambering step still up the steep was borne,
Too sad to smile, too pleased perchance to mourn.

And now I stood beside that rivulet's spring,
That came unbidden with a bubbling bound—
And stealing forth, a gentle trembling thing,
It seemed an infant fearing all around—
Yet clinging to its mother's breast—the ground.
But soon it bolder grew, and with a wing
It went: its carol was a joyous sound,



Making the silent woods responsive ring,
And the far forest-echoes, sighing, sing.

And now I stood upon the mountain's height—
Like a wide map, the landscape lay unrolled—
There could I trace that rivulet's path of light,
From the steep mountain to the sea of gold;
Now leaping o'er the rocks like chamois bold,—
Now like a crouching hare concealed from sight,—
Now hid beneath the willow's bowering fold,
As if they sought to stay its arrowy flight,
Then give it forth again more swift and bright.

'Twas changeful—beautiful; now dark, now fair—
A tale of life, from childhood to the tomb—
Its birth-place near the skies, in mountain air,
Where wild flowers throw around their sweet perfume,
Like the blest thoughts that often brightly bloom,
At home, beneath a mother's culturing care—
Its form now hid in shadows, such as gloom
Our downward way—its grave in ocean, where
It mingles with the wave—a dweller there!



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And though that stream be hidden from the view,
'Tis yet preserved 'neath ocean's briny crest:
That wide eternity of waves is true—
And as the planets anchored in their rest,
The sparkling streamlet lives; and while unblest,
The land-wave stagnant lingers—there the blue
Tide holds the river stainless in its breast—
An image still of life, that sparkles through
The starry deep of heaven, for ever new.

[Illustration: Vignette]