

Of these tremendous tokens of thy power,
His pride, and lays his strifes and follies
by ?¹¹¹

Oh, from these sterner aspects of thy face
Spare me and mine, nor let us need the
wrath

Of the mad unchained elements to teach
Who rules them. Be it ours to meditate,
In these calm shades, thy milder majesty,
And to the beautiful order of thy works
Learn to conform the order of our lives.¹
1825. 1825.

JUNE²

I GAZED upon the glorious sky
And the green mountains round,
And thought that when I came to lie
At rest within the ground,
'T were pleasant, that in flowery June,
When brooks send up a cheerful tune,
And groves a joyous sound,
The sexton's hand, my grave to make,
The rich, green mountain-turf should break.

A cell within the frozen mould,¹⁰
A coffin borne through sleet,
And icy clods above it rolled,
While fierce the tempests beat —
Away! — I will not think of these —
Blue be the sky and soft the breeze,
Earth green beneath the feet,
And be the damp mould gently pressed
Into my narrow place of rest.

There through the long, long summer
hours,
The golden light should lie,²⁰
And thick young herbs and groups of flow-
ers
Stand in their beauty by.

¹ These are lines 'of whose great rhythmical beauty it is scarcely possible to speak too highly.' (Poe.)

² Among the minor poems of Bryant, none has so much impressed me as the one which he entitles 'June.' The rhythmical flow, here, is even voluptuous — nothing could be more melodious. The poem has always affected me in a remarkable manner. The intense melancholy which seems to well up, perforce, to the surface of all the poet's cheerful sayings about his grave, we find thrilling us to the soul — while there is the truest poetic elevation in the thrill. The impression left is one of a pleasurable sadness. And if, in the remaining compositions which I shall introduce to you, there be more or less of a similar tone always apparent, let me remind you that (how or why we know not) this certain taint of sadness is inseparably connected with all the higher manifestations of true Beauty. (Poe.)

The oriole should build and tell
His love-tale close beside my cell;
The idle butterfly
Should rest him there, and there be heard
The housewife bee and humming-bird.

And what if cheerful shouts at noon
Come, from the village sent,
Or songs of maids, beneath the moon³⁰
With fairy laughter blent ?
And what if, in the evening light,
Betrothed lovers walk in sight
Of my low monument ?
I would the lovely scene around
Might know no sadder sight nor sound.

I know that I no more should see
The season's glorious show,
Nor would its brightness shine for me,
Nor its wild music flow;⁴⁰
But if, around my place of sleep,
The friends I love should come to weep,
They might not haste to go.
Soft airs, and song, and light, and bloom
Should keep them lingering by my tomb.

These to their softened hearts should bear
The thought of what has been,
And speak of one who cannot share
The gladness of the scene;
Whose part, in all the pomp that fills⁵⁰
The circuit of the summer hills,
Is that his grave is green;
And deeply would their hearts rejoice
To hear again his living voice.³
1825. 1826.

OCTOBER

Ay, thou art welcome, heaven's delicious
breath!
When woods begin to wear the crimson leaf,
And suns grow meek, and the meek suns
grow brief,
And the year smiles as it draws near its
death.
Wind of the sunny south! oh, still delay
In the gay woods and in the golden air,
Like to a good old age released from care,
Journeying, in long serenity, away.
In such a bright, late quiet, would that I

³ Bryant died in the month of June (1878), and was buried in the beautiful village cemetery at Roslyn, Long Island.

Might wear out life like thee, 'mid bowers
and brooks,
And, dearer yet, the sunshine of kind looks,
And music of kind voices ever nigh;
And when my last sand twinkled in the
glass,
Pass silently from men, as thou dost pass.
1826. 1826.

THE PAST¹

THOU unrelenting Past!
Strong are the barriers round thy dark
domain,
And fetters, sure and fast,
Hold all that enter thy unbreathing reign.

Far in thy realm withdrawn,
Old empires sit in sullenness and gloom,
And glorious ages gone
Lie deep within the shadow of thy womb.

Childhood, with all its mirth,
Youth, Manhood, Age that draws us to the
ground,¹⁰
And last, Man's Life on earth,
Glide to thy dim dominions, and are bound.

Thou hast my better years;
Thou hast my earlier friends, the good, the
kind,
Yielded to thee with tears —
The venerable form, the exalted mind.

My spirit yearns to bring
The lost ones back — yearns with desire
intense,
And struggles hard to wring
Thy bolts apart, and pluck thy captives
thence.²⁰

In vain; thy gates deny
All passage save to those who hence de-
part;
Nor to the streaming eye
Thou giv'st them back — nor to the broken
heart.

In thy abysses hide
Beauty and excellence unknown; to thee

¹ According to Godwin, Bryant considered this his best poem, setting it above 'Thanatopsis.'
The last stanza alludes to his father, and to a sister who died in her twenty-second year. See Godwin's *Life*, vol. i, p. 192.

Earth's wonder and her pride
Are gathered, as the waters to the sea;

Labors of good to man,
Unpublished charity, unbroken faith,³⁰
Love, that midst grief began,
And grew with years, and faltered not in
death.

Full many a mighty name
Lurks in thy depths, unuttered, unrevered;
With thee are silent fame,
Forgotten arts, and wisdom disappeared.

Thine for a space are they —
Yet shalt thou yield thy treasures up at last:
Thy gates shall yet give way,
Thy bolts shall fall, inexorable Past!⁴⁰

All that of good and fair
Has gone into thy womb from earliest time,
Shall then come forth to wear
The glory and the beauty of its prime.

They have not perished — no!
Kind words, remembered voices once so
sweet,
Smiles, radiant long ago,
And features, the great soul's apparent seat.

All shall come back; each tie
Of pure affection shall be knit again;⁵⁰
Alone shall Evil die,
And Sorrow dwell a prisoner in thy reign.

And then shall I behold
Him, by whose kind paternal side I sprung,
And her, who, still and cold,
Fills the next grave — the beautiful and
young.

1828. 1829.

THE EVENING WIND²

SPIRIT that breathest through my lattice,
thou
That cool'st the twilight of the sultry day,
Gratefully flows thy freshness round my
brow;
Thou hast been out upon the deep at
play,

² This poem, by its imaginative treatment of nature, and by its artistic completeness, aroused Poe's great admiration. He speaks of the last lines in the third stanza as 'breathing all the spirit of Shelley.'

Riding all day the wild blue waves till now,
Roughening their crests, and scattering
high their spray,
And swelling the white sail. I welcome
thee
To the scorched land, thou wanderer of the
sea!

Nor I alone; a thousand bosoms round
Inhale thee in the fulness of delight; 10
And languid forms rise up, and pulses
bound

Livelier, at coming of the wind of night;
And, languishing to hear thy grateful
sound,

Lies the vast inland stretched beyond the
sight.
Go forth into the gathering shade; go
forth,
God's blessing breathed upon the fainting
earth!

Go, rock the little wood-bird in his nest,
Curl the still waters, bright with stars,
and rouse

The wide old wood from his majestic rest,
Summoning from the innumerable
boughs 20

The strange, deep harmonies that haunt
his breast:

Pleasant shall be thy way where meekly
bows

The shutting flower, and darkling waters
pass,

And where the o'ershadowing branches
sweep the grass.

The faint old man shall lean his silver head
To feel thee; thou shalt kiss the child
asleep,

And dry the moistened curls that over-
spread

His temples, while his breathing grows
more deep;

And they who stand about the sick man's
bed,

Shall joy to listen to thy distant sweep, 30
And softly part his curtains to allow
Thy visit, grateful to his burning brow.

Go — but the circle of eternal change,
Which is the life of Nature, shall re-
store,

With sounds and scents from all thy mighty
range,

Thee to thy birthplace of the deep once
more;

Sweet odors in the sea-air, sweet and
strange,

Shall tell the home-sick mariner of the
shore;

And, listening to thy murmur, he shall
deem

He hears the rustling leaf and running
stream. 40

1829. 1830.

TO THE FRINGED GENTIAN¹

THOU blossom bright with autumn dew,
And colored with the heaven's own blue,
That openest when the quiet light
Succeeds the keen and frosty night,

Thou comest not when violets lean
O'er wandering brooks and springs un-
seen,

Or columbines, in purple dressed,
Nod o'er the ground-bird's hidden nest.

Thou waitest late and com'st alone,
When woods are bare and birds are
flown,

And frosts and shortening days portend
The aged year is near his end.

Then doth thy sweet and quiet eye
Look through its fringes to the sky,
Blue — blue — as if that sky let fall
A flower from its cerulean wall.

I would that thus, when I shall see
The hour of death draw near to me,
Hope, blossoming within my heart,
May look to heaven as I depart.

1829. 1832.

¹ Compare with this poem Wordsworth's 'To the Small Celandine,' and others.

Notice that Bryant addresses his verses to a distinctively American flower; as later he chooses an American bird, the bobolink, for the subject of a poem which is to be contrasted with Wordsworth's 'To the Skylark,' 'To the Green Linnet,' etc. Bryant gives the reason for this choice in a letter to his brother John, February 19, 1832: 'I saw some lines by you to the skylark. Did you ever see such a bird? Let me counsel you to draw your images, in describing Nature, from what you observe around you, unless you are professedly composing a description of some foreign country, when, of course, you will learn what you can from books. The skylark is an English bird, and an American who has never visited Europe has no right to be in raptures about it.'

HYMN OF THE CITY

NOT in the solitude
Alone may man commune with Heaven, or
see,
Only in savage wood
And sunny vale, the present Deity;
Or only hear his voice
Where the winds whisper and the waves re-
joice.

Even here do I behold
Thy steps, Almighty! — here, amidst the
crowd
Through the great city rolled,
With everlasting murmur deep and loud —
Choking the ways that wind 11
'Mongst the proud piles, the work of hu-
man kind.

Thy golden sunshine comes
From the round heaven, and on their
dwellings lies
And lights their inner homes;
For them Thou fill'st with air the unbounded
skies,
And givest them the stores
Of ocean, and the harvests of its shores.

Thy Spirit is around,
Quickening the restless mass that sweeps
along; 20
And this eternal sound —
Voices and footfalls of the numberless
throng —
Like the resounding sea,
Or like the rainy tempest, speaks of Thee.

And when the hour of rest
Comes, like a calm upon the mid-sea
brine,
Hushing its billowy breast —
The quiet of that moment too is thine;
It breathes of Him who keeps
The vast and helpless city while it sleeps. 30
1830? 1830.

SONG OF MARION'S MEN¹

OUR band is few but true and tried,
Our leader frank and bold;

¹ The exploits of General Francis Marion, the famous partisan warrior of South Carolina, form an interesting chapter in the annals of the American Revolution. The British troops were so harassed by the irregular

The British soldier trembles²
When Marion's name is told.
Our fortress is the good greenwood,
Our tent the cypress-tree;
We know the forest round us,
As seamen know the sea.
We know its walls of thorny vines,
Its glades of reedy grass, 10
Its safe and silent islands
Within the dark morass.

Woe to the English soldiery
That little dread us near!
On them shall light at midnight
A strange and sudden fear:
When, waking to their tents on fire,
They grasp their arms in vain,
And they who stand to face us
Are beat to earth again; 20
And they who fly in terror deem
A mighty host behind,
And hear the tramp of thousands
Upon the hollow wind.

Then sweet the hour that brings release
From danger and from toil:
We talk the battle over,
And share the battle's spoil.
The woodland rings with laugh and shout,
As if a hunt were up, 30
And woodland flowers are gathered
To crown the soldier's cup.
With merry songs we mock the wind
That in the pine-top grieves,
And slumber long and sweetly
On beds of oaken leaves.

Well knows the fair and friendly moon
The band that Marion leads —
The glitter of their rifles,
The scampering of their steeds. 40

and successful warfare which he kept up at the head of a few daring followers, that they sent an officer to remonstrate with him for not coming into the open field and fighting 'like a gentleman and a Christian.' (BRYANT.)

On the occasion of a reception given to Bryant in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1873, one of the speakers said that the 'Song of Marion's Men' had been sung in many a Southern bivouac, and warmed the soldier's heart at many a Confederate camp-fire.' See Godwin's *Life of Bryant*, vol. ii, pp. 330, 331.

² In the edition of Bryant's poems published in England in 1832, and edited by Washington Irving, this line was changed to

The foe-man trembles in his camp.

Considerable discussion over this change arose later in America, of which a full account can be found in Bigelow's *Life of Bryant*, pp. 129-130.

'T is life to guide the fiery barb
Across the moonlight plain;
'T is life to feel the night-wind
That lifts the tossing mane.
A moment in the British camp —
A moment — and away
Back to the pathless forest,
Before the peep of day.

Grave men there are by broad Santee,
Grave men with hoary hairs; 50
Their hearts are all with Marion,
For Marion are their prayers.
And lovely ladies greet our band
With kindest welcoming,
With smiles like those of summer,
And tears like those of spring.
For them we wear these trusty arms,
And lay them down no more
Till we have driven the Briton,
Forever, from our shore. 60

2837.

1831.

THE PRAIRIES¹

THESE are the gardens of the Desert,
these
The unshorn fields, boundless and beautiful,
For which the speech of England has no
name —
The Prairies. I behold them for the first,
And my heart swells, while the dilated
sight
Takes in the encircling vastness. Lo! they
stretch,
In airy undulations, far away,
As if the ocean, in his gentlest swell,
Stood still, with all his rounded billows
fixed,

¹ See the account of Bryant's first visit to the West, in Godwin's *Life*, vol. i, pp. 282-286. Especially significant is a passage from Bryant's letter to Richard H. Dana: 'I have seen the great West, where I ate corn and hominy, slept in log houses, with twenty men, women, and children in the same room. . . . At Jacksonville, where my two brothers live, I got on a horse, and travelled about a hundred miles to the northward over the immense prairies, with scattered settlements, on the edges of the groves. These prairies, of a soft, fertile garden soil, and a smooth undulating surface, on which you may put a horse to full speed, covered with high, thinly growing grass, full of weeds and gaudy flowers, and destitute of bushes or trees, perpetually brought to my mind the idea of their having been once cultivated. They looked to me like the fields of a race which had passed away, whose enclosures and habitations had decayed, but on whose vast and rich plains, smoothed and levelled by tillage, the forest had not yet encroached.'

And motionless forever. — Motionless? —
No — they are all unchained again. The
clouds
Sweep over with their shadows, and, be-
neath, 11

The surface rolls and fluctuates to the eye;
Dark hollows seem to glide along and chase
The sunny ridges. Breezes of the South!
Who toss the golden and the flame-like
flowers, 11

And pass the prairie-hawk that, poised on
high,
Flaps his broad wings, yet moves not² —
ye have played

Among the palms of Mexico and vines
Of Texas, and have crisped the limpid
brooks

That from the fountains of Sonora glide²⁰
Into the calm Pacific — have ye fanned
A nobler or a lovelier scene than this?
Man hath no power in all this glorious
work:

The hand that built the firmament hath
heaved
And smoothed these verdant swells, and
sown their slopes

With herbage, planted them with island
groves,
And hedged them round with forests. Fit-
ting floor

For this magnificent temple of the sky —
With flowers whose glory and whose mul-
titude 30

Rival the constellations! The great hea-
vens
Seem to stoop down upon the scene in
love, —

A nearer vault, and of a tenderer blue,
Than that which bends above our eastern
hills.

As o'er the verdant waste I guide my
steed,
Among the high rank grass that sweeps his
sides

The hollow beating of his footstep seems
A sacrilegious sound. I think of those
Upon whose rest he tramples. Are they
here —

The dead of other days? — and did the
dust 40
Of these fair solitudes once stir with life

² I have seen the prairie-hawk balancing himself in the air for hours together, apparently over the same spot; probably watching his prey. (BRYANT.)

And burn with passion? Let the mighty
mounds

That overlook the rivers, or that rise
In the dim forest crowded with old oaks,
Answer. A race, that long has passed
away,

Built them; — a disciplined and populous
race
Heaped, with long toil, the earth, while yet
the Greek

Was hewing the Pentelicus to forms
Of symmetry, and rearing on its rock
The glittering Parthenon. These ample
fields 50

Nourished their harvests, here their herds
were fed,

When haply by their stalls the bison lowed,
And bowed his maned shoulder to the yoke.
All day this desert murmured with their
toils,

Till twilight blushed, and lovers walked,
and wooed

In a forgotten language, and old tunes,
From instruments of unremembered form,
Gave the soft winds a voice. The red man
came —

The roaming hunter tribes, warlike and
fierce,
And the mound-builders vanished from the
earth. 60

The solitude of centuries untold
Has settled where they dwelt. The
prairie-wolf

Hunts in their meadows, and his fresh-dug
den

Yawns by my path. The gopher mines the
ground

Where stood their swarming cities. All is
gone;

All — save the piles of earth that hold
their bones,

The platforms where they worshipped un-
known gods,

The barriers which they builded from the
soil

To keep the foe at bay — till o'er the walls
The wild beleaguers broke, and, one by
one, 70

The strongholds of the plain were forced,
and heaped

With corpses. The brown vultures of the
wood

Flocked to those vast uncovered sepulchres,
And sat unscared and silent at their feast.

Haply some solitary fugitive,

Lurking in marsh and forest, till the sense
Of desolation and of fear became

Bitterer than death, yielded himself to
die.

Man's better nature triumphed then. Kind
words

Welcomed and soothed him; the rude
conquerors 80

Seated the captive with their chiefs; he
chose

A bride among their maidens, and at length
Seemed to forget — yet ne'er forgot — the
wife

Of his first love, and her sweet little ones,
Butchered, amid their shrieks, with all his
race.

Thus change the forms of being. Thus
arise

Races of living things, glorious in strength,
And perish, as the quickening breath of
God

Fills them, or is withdrawn. The red man,
too,

Has left the blooming wilds he ranged so
long, 90

And, nearer to the Rocky Mountains, sought
A wilder hunting-ground. The beaver builds
No longer by these streams, but far away,
On waters whose blue surface ne'er gave
back

The white man's face — among Missouri's
springs,

And pools whose issues swell the Oregon —
He rears his little Venice. In these plains
The bison feeds no more. Twice twenty
leagues

Beyond remotest smoke of hunter's camp,
Roams the majestic brute, in herds that
shake 100

The earth with thundering steps — yet here
I meet

His ancient footprints stamped beside the
pool.

Still this great solitude is quick with life.
Myriads of insects, gaudy as the flowers

They flutter over, gentle quadrupeds,
And birds, that scarce have learned the
fear of man,

Are here, and sliding reptiles of the ground,
Startlingly beautiful. The graceful deer

Bounds to the wood at my approach. The
bee,

A more adventurous colonist than man, 110

With whom he came across the eastern
 deep,
 Fills the savannas with his murmurings,
 And hides his sweets, as in the golden age,
 Within the hollow oak. I listen long
 To his domestic hum, and think I hear
 The sound of that advancing multitude
 Which soon shall fill these deserts. From
 the ground
 Comes up the laugh of children, the soft
 voice
 Of maidens, and the sweet and solemn
 hymn
 Of Sabbath worshippers. The low of herds
 Blends with the rustling of the heavy
 grain¹²¹
 Over the dark brown furrows. All at once
 A fresher wind sweeps by, and breaks my
 dream,
 And I am in the wilderness alone.
 1832. 1833.

THE BATTLE-FIELD

ONCE this soft turf, this rivulet's sands,
 Were trampled by a hurrying crowd,
 And fiery hearts and armed hands
 Encountered in the battle-cloud.

Ah! never shall the land forget
 How gushed the life-blood of her brave—
 Gushed, warm with hope and courage yet,
 Upon the soil they fought to save.

Now all is calm, and fresh, and still;
 Alone the chirp of flitting bird,¹⁰
 And talk of children on the hill,
 And bell of wandering kine, are heard.

No solemn host goes trailing by
 The black-mouthed gun and staggering
 wain;
 Men start not at the battle-cry,
 Oh, be it never heard again!

Soon rested those who fought; but thou
 Who minglest in the harder strife
 For truths which men receive not now,
 Thy warfare only ends with life.²⁰

A friendless warfare! lingering long
 Through weary day and weary year,
 A wild and many-weaponed throng
 Hang on thy front, and flank, and rear.

Yet nerve thy spirit to the proof,
 And blench not at thy chosen lot.
 The timid good may stand aloof,
 The sage may frown—yet faint thou
 not.

Nor heed the shaft too surely cast,
 The foul and hissing bolt of scorn;³⁰
 For with thy side shall dwell, at last,
 The victory of endurance born.

Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again,
 Th' eternal years of God are hers;
 But Error, wounded, writhes in pain,
 And dies among his worshippers.

Yea, though thou lie upon the dust,
 When they who helped thee flee in fear,
 Die full of hope and manly trust,
 Like those who fell in battle here.⁴⁰

Another hand thy sword shall wield,
 Another hand the standard wave,
 Till from the trumpet's mouth is pealed
 The blast of triumph o'er thy grave.
 1837. 1837.

THE ANTIQUITY OF FREEDOM

HERE are old trees, tall oaks, and gnarled
 pines,
 That stream with gray-green mosses; here
 the ground
 Was never trenched by spade, and flowers
 spring up
 Unsovn, and die ungathered. It is sweet
 To linger here, among the fitting birds
 And leaping squirrels, wandering brooks,
 and winds
 That shake the leaves, and scatter, as they
 pass,
 A fragrance from the cedars, thickly set
 With pale-blue berries. In these peaceful
 shades—
 Peaceful, unpruned, immeasurably old—¹⁰
 My thoughts go up the long dim path of
 years,
 Back to the earliest days of liberty.

O FREEDOM! thou art not, as poets
 dream,
 A fair young girl, with light and delicate
 limbs,
 And wavy tresses gushing from the cap

With which the Roman master crowned
 his slave
 When he took off the gyves. A bearded
 man,
 Armed to the teeth, art thou; one mailed
 hand
 Grasps the broad shield, and one the sword;
 thy brow,
 Glorious in beauty though it be, is scarred
 With tokens of old wars; thy massive
 limbs²¹
 Are strong with struggling. Power at thee
 has launched
 His bolts, and with his lightnings smitten
 thee;
 They could not quench the life thou hast
 from heaven;
 Merciless Power has dug thy dungeon
 deep,
 And his swart armorers, by a thousand
 fires,
 Have forged thy chain; yet, while he deems
 thee bound,
 The links are shivered, and the prison-walls
 Fall outward; terribly thou springest forth,
 As springs the flame above a burning pile,
 And shoutest to the nations, who return³¹
 Thy shoutings, while the pale oppressor
 flies.

Thy birthright was not given by human
 hands:
 Thou wert twin-born with man. In plea-
 sant fields,
 While yet our race was few, thou sat'st
 with him,
 To tend the quiet flock and watch the stars,
 And teach the reed to utter simple airs.
 Thou by his side, amid the tangled wood,
 Didst war upon the panther and the wolf,
 His only foes; and thou with him didst
 draw⁴⁰
 The earliest furrow on the mountain-side,
 Soft with the deluge. Tyranny himself,
 Thy enemy, although of reverend look,
 Hoary with many years, and far obeyed,
 Is later born than thou; and as he meets
 The grave defiance of thine elder eye,
 The usurper trembles in his fastnesses.

Thou shalt wax stronger with the lapse
 of years,
 But he shall fade into a feebler age—
 Feebler, yet subtler. He shall weave his
 snares,⁵⁰

And spring them on thy careless steps, and
 clap
 His withered hands, and from their ambush
 call
 His hordes to fall upon thee. He shall
 send
 Quaint maskers, wearing fair and gallant
 forms
 To catch thy gaze, and uttering graceful
 words
 To charm thy ear; while his sly imps, by
 stealth,
 Twine round thee threads of steel, light
 thread on thread,
 That grow to fetters; or bind down thy
 arms
 With chains concealed in chaplets. Oh!
 not yet
 Mayst thou unbrace thy corslet, nor lay
 by⁶⁰
 Thy sword; nor yet, O Freedom! close thy
 lids
 In slumber; for thine enemy never sleeps,
 And thou must watch and combat till the
 day
 Of the new earth and heaven. But wouldst
 thou rest
 Awhile from tumult and the frauds of
 men,
 These old and friendly solitudes invite
 Thy visit. They, while yet the forest-trees
 Were young upon the unviolated earth,
 And yet the moss-stains on the rock were
 new,
 Beheld thy glorious childhood, and re-
 joiced.⁷⁰
 1842. 1842.

'O MOTHER OF A MIGHTY RACE'

O MOTHER of a mighty race,
 Yet lovely in thy youthful grace!
 The elder dames, thy haughty peers,
 Admire and hate thy blooming years.
 With words of shame
 And taunts of scorn they join thy name.

For on thy cheeks the glow is spread
 That tints thy morning hills with red;
 Thy step—the wild-deer's rustling feet
 Within thy woods are not more fleet;¹⁰
 Thy hopeful eye
 Is bright as thine own sunny sky.

Ay, let them rail — those haughty ones,
While safe thou dwellest with thy sons.
They do not know how loved thou art,
How many a fond and fearless heart
Would rise to throw
Its life between thee and the foe.

They know not, in their hate and pride,
What virtues with thy children bide;
How true, how good, thy graceful maids
Make bright, like flowers, the valley-shades;
What generous men
Spring, like thine oaks, by hill and glen; —

What cordial welcomes greet the guest
By thy lone rivers of the West;
How faith is kept, and truth revered,
And man is loved, and God is feared,
In woodland homes,
And where the ocean border foams.

There's freedom at thy gates and rest
For Earth's down-trodden and opprest,
A shelter for the hunted head,
For the starved laborer toil and bread.
Power, at thy bounds,
Stops and calls back his baffled hounds.

O fair young mother! on thy brow
Shall sit a nobler grace than now.
Deep in the brightness of the skies
The thronging years in glory rise,
And, as they fleet,
Drop strength and riches at thy feet.

Thine eye, with every coming hour,
Shall brighten, and thy form shall tower;
And when thy sisters, elder born,
Would brand thy name with words of
scorn,
Before thine eye,
Upon their lips the taunt shall die.
1846. 1847.

THE PLANTING OF THE APPLE-TREE

COME, let us plant the apple-tree.
Cleave the tough greensward with the
spade;
Wide let its hollow bed be made;
There gently lay the roots, and there
Sift the dark mould with kindly care,
And press it o'er them tenderly,

As, round the sleeping infant's feet,
We softly fold the cradle-sheet;
So plant we the apple-tree.

What plant we in this apple-tree?
Buds, which the breath of summer days
Shall lengthen into leafy sprays;
Boughs where the thrush, with crimson
breast,
Shall haunt and sing and hide her nest;
We plant, upon the sunny lea,
A shadow for the noontide hour,
A shelter from the summer shower,
When we plant the apple-tree.

What plant we in this apple-tree?
Sweets for a hundred flowery springs
To load the May-wind's restless wings,
When, from the orchard-row, he pours
Its fragrance through our open doors;
A world of blossoms for the bee,
Flowers for the sick girl's silent room,
For the glad infant sprigs of bloom,
We plant with the apple-tree.

What plant we in this apple-tree?
Fruits that shall swell in sunny June,
And redden in the August noon,
And drop, when gentle airs come by,
That fan the blue September sky,
While children come, with cries of
glee,
And seek them where the fragrant grass
Betrays their bed to those who pass,
At the foot of the apple-tree.

And when, above this apple-tree,
The winter stars are quivering bright,
And winds go howling through the night,
Girls, whose young eyes o'erflow with mirth,
Shall peel its fruit by cottage-hearth,
And guests in prouder homes shall see,
Heaped with the grape of Cintra's vine
And golden orange of the line,
The fruit of the apple-tree.

The fruitage of this apple-tree
Winds and our flag of stripe and star
Shall bear to coasts that lie afar,
Where men shall wonder at the view,
And ask in what fair groves they grew;
And sojourners beyond the sea
Shall think of childhood's careless day,
And long, long hours of summer play,
In the shade of the apple-tree.

Each year shall give this apple-tree
A broader flush of roseate bloom,
A deeper maze of verdurous gloom,
And loosen, when the frost-clouds lower,
The crisp brown leaves in thicker shower.
The years shall come and pass, but we
Shall hear no longer, where we lie,
The summer's songs, the autumn's sigh,
In the boughs of the apple-tree.

And time shall waste this apple-tree.
Oh, when its aged branches throw
Thin shadows on the ground below,
Shall fraud and force and iron will
Oppress the weak and helpless still?
What shall the tasks of mercy be,
Amid the toils, the strifes, the tears
Of those who live when length of years
Is wasting this little apple-tree?

'Who planted this old apple-tree?'
The children of that distant day
Thus to some aged man shall say;
And, gazing on its mossy stem,
The gray-haired man shall answer them:
'A poet of the land was he,
Born in the rude but good old times;
'T is said he made some quaint old rhymes,
On planting the apple-tree.'¹
1849. 1864.

ROBERT OF LINCOLN

MERRILY swinging on brier and weed,
Near to the nest of his little dame,
Over the mountain-side or mead,
Robert of Lincoln is telling his name:
Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
Spink, spank, spink;
Snug and safe is that nest of ours,
Hidden among the summer flowers.
Chee, chee, chee.

¹ Compare a letter of Bryant's written November 17, 1846 (Godwin's *Life of Bryant*, vol. ii, pp. 27, 28): 'I have been, and am, at my place on Long Island, planting and transplanting trees, in the mist; sixty or seventy; some for shade; most for fruit. Hereafter, men, whose existence is at present merely possible, will gather pears from the trees which I have set in the ground, and wonder what old *covey* — for in those days the slang terms of the present time, by the ordinary process of change in languages, will have become classical — what old *covey* of past ages planted them? Or they will walk in the shade of the mulberry, apricot, and cherry trees that I have set in a row beside a green lane, and think, if they think at all about the matter — for who can tell what the great-grandchildren of ours will think about — that they sprang up of themselves by the way.'

Robert of Lincoln is gayly drest,
Wearing a bright black wedding-coat;
White are his shoulders and white his crest.
Hear him call in his merry note:
Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
Spink, spank, spink;
Look, what a nice new coat is mine,
Sure there was never a bird so fine.
Chee, chee, chee.

Robert of Lincoln's Quaker wife,
Pretty and quiet, with plain brown
wings,
Passing at home a patient life,
Broods in the grass while her husband
sings:
Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
Spink, spank, spink;
Brood, kind creature; you need not fear
Thieves and robbers while I am here.
Chee, chee, chee.

Modest and shy as a nun is she;
One weak chirp is her only note.
Braggart and prince of braggarts is he,
Pouring boasts from his little throat:
Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
Spink, spank, spink;
Never was I afraid of man;
Catch me, cowardly knaves, if you can!
Chee, chee, chee.

Six white eggs on a bed of hay,
Flecked with purple, a pretty sight!
There as the mother sits all day,
Robert is singing with all his might:
Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
Spink, spank, spink;
Nice good wife, that never goes out,
Keeping house while I frolic about.
Chee, chee, chee.

Soon as the little ones chip the shell,
Six wide mouths are open for food;
Robert of Lincoln bestirs him well,
Gathering seeds for the hungry brood.
Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
Spink, spank, spink;
This new life is likely to be
Hard for a gay young fellow like me.
Chee, chee, chee.

Robert of Lincoln at length is made
Sober with work, and silent with care;
Off is his holiday garment laid,

Half forgotten that merry air:
 Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
 Spink, spank, spink; 60
 Nobody knows but my mate and I
 Where our nest and our nestlings lie.
 Chee, chee, chee.

Summer wanes; the children are grown;
 Fun and frolic no more he knows;
 Robert of Lincoln's a humdrum crone;
 Off he flies, and we sing as he goes:
 Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
 Spink, spank, spink;
 When you can pipe that merry old strain, 70
 Robert of Lincoln, come back again.
 Chee, chee, chee.

1855.

1855.

OUR COUNTRY'S CALL

LAY down the axe; fling by the spade;
 Leave in its track the toiling plough;
 The rifle and the bayonet-blade
 For arms like yours were fitter now;
 And let the hands that ply the pen
 Quit the light task, and learn to wield
 The horseman's crooked brand, and rein
 The charger on the battle-field.

Our country calls; away! away!

To where the blood-stream blots the
 green. 10

Strike to defend the gentlest sway
 That Time in all his course has seen.
 See, from a thousand coverts — see,
 Spring the armed foes that haunt her
 track;

They rush to smite her down, and we
 Must beat the banded traitors back.

Ho! sturdy as the oaks ye cleave,
 And moved as soon to fear and flight,
 Men of the glade and forest! leave
 Your woodcraft for the field of fight. 20
 The arms that wield the axe must pour
 An iron tempest on the foe;
 His serried ranks shall reel before
 The arm that lays the panther low.

And ye who breast the mountain-storm
 By grassy steep or highland lake,
 Come, for the land ye love, to form
 A bulwark that no foe can break.
 Stand, like your own gray cliffs that mock

The whirlwind, stand in her defence; 30
 The blast as soon shall move the rock
 As rushing squadrons bear ye thence.

And ye whose homes are by her grand
 Swift rivers, rising far away,
 Come from the depth of her green land,
 As mighty in your march as they;
 As terrible as when the rains
 Have swelled them over bank and bourne,
 With sudden floods to drown the plains
 And sweep along the woods uporn. 40

And ye who throng, beside the deep,
 Her ports and hamlets of the strand,
 In number like the waves that leap
 On his long-murmuring marge of sand —
 Come like that deep, when, o'er his brim,
 He rises, all his floods to pour,
 And flings the proudest barks that swim,
 A helpless wreck, against the shore!

Few, few were they whose swords of old
 Won the fair land in which we dwell; 50
 But we are many, we who hold
 The grim resolve to guard it well.
 Strike, for that broad and goodly land,
 Blow after blow, till men shall see
 That Might and Right move hand in hand,
 And glorious must their triumph be!
 September, 1861. 1861.

THE LITTLE PEOPLE OF THE SNOW

Alice. One of your old-world stories,
 Uncle John,

Such as you tell us by the winter fire,
 Till we all wonder it is grown so late.

Uncle John. The story of the witch that
 ground to death

Two children in her mill, or will you have
 The tale of Goody Cutpurse?

Alice. Nay, now, nay,
 Those stories are too childish, Uncle John,
 Too childish even for little Willy here,
 And I am older, two good years, than he;
 No, let us have a tale of elves that ride, 10
 By night, with jingling reins, or gnomes of
 the mine,

Or water-fairies, such as you know how
 To spin, till Willy's eyes forget to wink,
 And good Aunt Mary, busy as she is,
 Lays down her knitting.

Uncle John. Listen to me, then.
 'T was in the olden time, long, long ago,
 And long before the great oak at our door
 Was yet an acorn, on a mountain's side
 Lived, with his wife, a cottager. They dwelt
 Beside a glen and near a dashing brook, 20
 A pleasant spot in spring, where first the
 wren
 Was heard to chatter, and, among the grass,
 Flowers opened earliest; but when winter
 came,
 That little brook was fringed with other
 flowers, —
 White flowers, with crystal leaf and stem,
 that grew
 In clear November nights. And, later still,
 That mountain-glen was filled with drifted
 snows
 From side to side, that one might walk
 across;
 While, many a fathom deep, below, the
 brook

Sang to itself, and leaped and trotted on 30
 Unfrozen, o'er its pebbles, toward the vale.

Alice. A mountain-side, you said; the
 Alps, perhaps,
 Or our own Alleghanies.

Uncle John. Not so fast,
 My young geographer, for then the Alps,
 With their broad pastures, haply were un-
 trod

Of herdsman's foot, and never human voice
 Had sounded in the woods that overhang
 Our Alleghanies' streams. I think it was
 Upon the slopes of the great Caucasus,
 Or where the rivulets of Ararat 40
 Seek the Armenian vales. That mountain
 rose

So high, that, on its top, the winter snow
 Was never melted, and the cottagers
 Among the summer blossoms, far below,
 Saw its white peaks in August from their
 door.

One little maiden, in that cottage-home,
 Dwelt with her parents, light of heart and
 limb,
 Bright, restless, thoughtless, flitting here
 and there,

Like sunshine on the uneasy ocean-waves,
 And sometimes she forgot what she was bid,
 As Alice does.

Alice. Or Willy, quite as oft. 51
 Uncle John. But you are older, Alice, two
 good years,

And should be wiser. Eva was the name

Of this young maiden, now twelve summers
 old.

Now you must know that, in those early
 times,

When autumn days grew pale, there came
 a troop

Of childlike forms from that cold mountain-
 top;

With trailing garments through the air they
 came,

Or walked the ground with girded loins,
 and threw

Spangles of silvery frost upon the grass, 60
 And edged the brooks with glistening para-
 pets,

And built its crystal bridges, touched the
 pool,

And turned its face to glass, or, rising
 thence,

They shook from their full laps the soft,
 light snow,

And buried the great earth, as autumn
 winds

Bury the forest-floor in heaps of leaves.
 A beautiful race were they, with baby
 brows,

And fair, bright locks, and voices like the
 sound

Of steps on the crisp snow, in which they
 talked

With man, as friend with friend. A merry
 sight 70

It was, when, crowding round the traveller,
 They smote him with their heaviest snow-
 flakes, flung

Needles of frost in handfuls at his cheeks,
 And, of the light wreaths of his smoking
 breath,

Wove a white fringe for his brown beard,
 and laughed

Their slender laugh to see him wink and
 grin

And make grim faces as he floundered on.
 But, when the spring came on, what ter-
 ror reigned

Among these Little People of the Snow!
 To them the sun's warm beams were shafts
 of fire, 80

And the soft south-wind was the wind of
 death.

Away they flew, all with a pretty scowl
 Upon their childish faces, to the north,
 Or scampered upward to the mountain's
 top,

And there defied their enemy, the Spring;

Skiping and dancing on the frozen peaks,
And moulding little snow-balls in their
palms,
And rolling them, to crush her flowers be-
low, 88
Down the steep snow-fields.

Alice. That, too, must have been
A merry sight to look at.

Uncle John. You are right,
But I must speak of graver matters now.
Midwinter was the time, and Eva stood,
Within the cottage, all prepared to dare
The outer cold, with ample furry robe
Close-belted round her waist, and boots of
fur,

And a broad kerchief, which her mother's
hand
Had closely drawn about her ruddy cheek.
'Now, stay not long abroad,' said the
good dame,
'For sharp is the outer air, and, mark me
well,

Go not upon the snow beyond the spot 100
Where the great linden bounds the neigh-
boring field.'

The little maiden promised, and went
forth,
And climbed the rounded snow-swells firm
with frost
Beneath her feet, and slid, with balancing
arms

Into the hollows. Once, as up a drift
She slowly rose, before her, in the way,
She saw a little creature, lily-cheeked,
With flowing flaxen locks, and faint blue
eyes,

That gleamed like ice, and robe that only
seemed
Of a more shadowy whiteness than her
cheek. 110

On a smooth bank she sat.

Alice. She must have been
One of your Little People of the Snow.

Uncle John. She was so, and, as Eva
now drew near,
The tiny creature bounded from her seat;
'And come,' she said, 'my pretty friend;
to-day

We will be playmates. I have watched
thee long, 150
And seen how well thou lov'st to walk these
drifts,

And scoop their fair sides into little cells,
And carve them with quaint figures, huge-
limbed men, 119

Lions, and griffins. We will have, to-day,
A merry ramble over these bright fields,
And thou shalt see what thou hast never
seen.'

On went the pair, until they reached the
bound

Where the great linden stood, set deep in
snow,

Up to the lower branches. 'Here we
stop,'

Said Eva, 'for my mother has my word
That I will go no farther than this tree.'
Then the snow-maiden laughed: 'And
what is this ?

This fear of the pure snow, the innocent
snow,

That never harmed aught living? Thou
mayst roam 130

For leagues beyond this garden, and return
In safety; here the grim wolf never prowls,
And here the eagle of our mountain-crag
Preys not in winter. I will show the
way,

And bring thee safely home. Thy mother,
sure,

Counselled thee thus because thou hadst no
guide.'

By such smooth words was Eva won to
break

Her promise, and went on with her new
friend,

Over the glistening snow and down a bank
Where a white shelf, wrought by the eddy-
ing wind, 140

Like to a billow's crest in the great sea,
Curtained an opening. 'Look, we enter
here.'

And straight, beneath the fair o'erhanging
fold,

Entered the little pair that hill of snow,
Walking along a passage with white walls,
And a white vault above where snow-stars
shed

A wintry twilight. Eva moved in awe,
And held her peace, but the snow-maiden
smiled,

And talked and tripped along, as down the
way,

Deeper they went into that mountainous
drift. 150

And now the white walls widened, and
the vault

Swelled upward, like some vast cathedral-
dome,

Such as the Florentine, who bore the name

Of heaven's most potent angel, reared
long since,

Or the unknown builder of that wondrous
fane,

The glory of Burgos. Here a garden lay,
In which the Little People of the Snow

Were wont to take their pastime when
their tasks

Upon the mountain's side and in the clouds
Were ended. Here they taught the silent
frost 160

To mock, in stem and spray, and leaf and
flower,

The growths of summer. Here the palm
upreared

Its white columnar trunk and spotless
sheaf

Of plume-like leaves; here cedars, huge as
those

Of Lebanon, stretched far their level
boughs,

Yet pale and shadowless; the sturdy oak
Stood, with its huge gnarled roots of seem-
ing strength,

Fast anchored in the glistening bank; light
sprays

Of myrtle, roses in their bud and bloom,
Drooped by the winding walks; yet all
seemed wrought 170

Of stainless alabaster; up the trees
Ran the lithe jessamine, with stalk and
leaf

Colorless as her flowers. 'Go softly on,'
Said the snow-maiden; 'touch not, with
thy hand,

The frail creation round thee, and beware
To sweep it with thy skirts. Now look
above.

How sumptuously these bowers are lighted
up

With shifting gleams that softly come and
go!

These are the northern lights, such as thou
seest

In the midwinter nights, cold, wandering
flames, 180

That float with our processions, through
the air;

And here, within our winter palaces,
Mimic the glorious daybreak.' Then she
told

How, when the wind, in the long winter
nights,

Swept the light snows into the hollow deli,
She and her comrades guided to its place

Each wandering flake, and piled them
quaintly up,

In shapely colonnade and glistening arch,
With shadowy aisles between, or bade them
grow, 189

Beneath their little hands, to bowery walks
In gardens such as these, and, o'er them all,
Built the broad roof. 'But thou hast yet
to see

A fairer sight,' she said, and led the way
To where a window of pellucid ice
Stood in the wall of snow, beside their
path.

'Look, but thou mayst not enter.' Eva
looked,

And lo! a glorious hall, from whose high
vault

Stripes of soft light, ruddy and delicate
green,

And tender blue, flowed downward to the
floor

And far around, as if the aërial hosts, 204
That march on high by night, with beamy
spears,

And streaming banners, to that place had
brought

Their radiant flags to grace a festival.
And in that hall a joyous multitude

Of those by whom its glistening walls were
reared,

Whirled in a merry dance to silvery sounds,
That rang from cymbals of transparent ice,
And ice-cups, quivering to the skilful touch
Of little fingers. Round and round they
flew,

As when, in spring, about a chimney-top,
A cloud of twittering swallows, just re-
turned, 211

Wheel round and round, and turn and wheel
again,

Unwinding their swift track. So rapidly
Flowed the meandering stream of that fair
dance,

Beneath that dome of light. Bright eyes
that looked

From under lily-brows, and gauzy scarfs
Sparkling like snow-wreaths in the early
sun,

Shot by the window in their mazy whirl.
And there stood Eva, wondering at the
sight

Of those bright revellers and that graceful
sweep 220

Of motion as they passed her; — long she
gazed,