

Of tourney touched his adversary's shield  
 In token of defiance, but in sign  
 Of homage to the mastery, which is thine,  
 In English song; nor will I keep con-  
 cealed,  
 And voiceless as a rivulet frost-congealed,  
 My admiration for thy verse divine.  
 Not of the howling dervishes of song,  
 Who craze the brain with their delirious  
 dance,  
 Art thou, O sweet historian of the heart!  
 Therefore to thee the laurel-leaves be-  
 long,  
 To thee our love and our allegiance,  
 For thy allegiance to the poet's art.  
 1877. 1877.

A BALLAD OF THE FRENCH  
 FLEET<sup>1</sup>

OCTOBER, 1746

MR. THOMAS PRINCE *loquitur*.

A FLEET with flags arrayed  
 Sailed from the port of Brest,  
 And the Admiral's ship displayed  
 The signal: 'Steer southwest.'  
 For this Admiral D'Anville  
 Had sworn by cross and crown  
 To ravage with fire and steel  
 Our helpless Boston Town.

old English *wappan* is weapon, and *tac, tactus*, a touch-  
 ing, thereby this meeting called Wapentake, or touch-  
 ing of weapon, because that by that signe and ceremo-  
 nie of touching weapon or the lance, they were sworne  
 and confederate. — Master Lamberd in *Minshew*.  
 (LONGFELLOW.)

<sup>1</sup> After the capture of Louisburg in 1745 by the Mas-  
 sachusetts colonists, the French in revenge sent a large  
 fleet against Boston the next year; but it was so dis-  
 abled by storms that it had to put back.

Mr. Thomas Prince was the pastor of the Old South  
 Meeting-house.

In 1877, when the Old South was in danger of  
 being destroyed, Rev. Edward Everett Hale wrote to  
 Longfellow: 'You told me that if the spirit moved,  
 you would try to sing us a song for the Old South  
 Meeting-house. I have found such a charming story  
 that I think it will really tempt you. I want at least  
 to tell it to you. . . . The whole story of the fleet is  
 in Hutchinson's *Massachusetts*, ii. 384, 385. The story  
 of Prince and the prayer is in a tract in the College  
 Library, which I will gladly send you, or Mr. Sibley  
 will. I should think that the assembly in the meeting-  
 house in the gale, and then the terror of the fleet when  
 the gale struck them, would make a ballad—if the  
 spirit moved!'

Compare Whittier's 'In the Old South' and 'The  
 Landmarks,' and Holmes's 'An Appeal for the Old  
 South.'

There were rumors in the street,  
 In the houses there was fear 19  
 Of the coming of the fleet,  
 And the danger hovering near.  
 And while from mouth to mouth  
 Spread the tidings of dismay,  
 I stood in the Old South,  
 Saying humbly: 'Let us pray!'

'O Lord! we would not advise;  
 But if in thy Providence  
 A tempest should arise  
 To drive the French Fleet hence, 20  
 And scatter it far and wide,  
 Or sink it in the sea,  
 We should be satisfied,  
 And thine the glory be.'

This was the prayer I made,  
 For my soul was all on flame,  
 And even as I prayed  
 The answering tempest came;  
 It came with a mighty power,  
 Shaking the windows and walls, 31  
 And tolling the bell in the tower,  
 As it tolls at funerals.

The lightning suddenly  
 Unsheathed its flaming sword,  
 And I cried: 'Stand still, and see  
 The salvation of the Lord!'  
 The heavens were black with cloud,  
 The sea was white with hail,  
 And ever more fierce and loud  
 Blew the October gale. 40

The fleet it overtook,  
 And the broad sails in the van  
 Like the tents of Cushan shook,  
 Or the curtains of Midian.  
 Down on the reeling decks  
 Crashed the o'erwhelming seas;  
 Ah, never were there wrecks  
 So pitiful as these!

Like a potter's vessel broke  
 The great ships of the line; 50  
 They were carried away as a smoke,  
 Or sank like lead in the brine.  
 O Lord! before thy path  
 They vanished and ceased to be,  
 When thou didst walk in wrath  
 With thine horses through the sea!

1877.

1877.

SONG

STAY, stay at home, my heart, and rest;  
 Home-keeping hearts are happiest,  
 For those that wander they know not  
 where  
 Are full of trouble and full of care;  
 To stay at home is best.

Weary and homesick and distressed,  
 They wander east, they wander west,  
 And are baffled and beaten and blown  
 about  
 By the winds of the wilderness of doubt:  
 To stay at home is best.

Then stay at home, my heart, and rest;  
 The bird is safest in its nest;  
 O'er all that flutter their wings and fly  
 A hawk is hovering in the sky;  
 To stay at home is best. 1877. 1878.

FROM MY ARM-CHAIR

TO THE CHILDREN OF CAMBRIDGE

WHO PRESENTED TO ME, ON MY SEVENTY-  
 SECOND BIRTHDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1879, THIS  
 CHAIR MADE FROM THE WOOD OF THE VIL-  
 LAGE BLACKSMITH'S CHESTNUT TREE.<sup>1</sup>

AM I a king, that I should call my own  
 This splendid ebon throne?  
 Or by what reason, or what right divine,  
 Can I proclaim it mine?

Only, perhaps, by right divine of song  
 It may to me belong;  
 Only because the spreading chestnut tree  
 Of old was sung by me.

Well I remember it in all its prime,  
 When in the summer-time 10  
 The affluent foliage of its branches made  
 A cavern of cool shade.

There, by the blacksmith's forge, beside  
 the street,  
 Its blossoms white and sweet

<sup>1</sup> For an account of the chair, with its inscriptions,  
 see the *Life*, vol. iii, pp. 446-448. Longfellow gave  
 orders that every child who wished to see the chair  
 and sit in it should be allowed to do so; and had a  
 large number of copies of this poem printed, one of  
 which was given to each child who wished it.

Enticed the bees, until it seemed alive,  
 And murmured like a hive.

And when the winds of autumn, with a  
 shout,  
 Tossed its great arms about,  
 The shining chestnuts, bursting from the  
 sheath, 20  
 Dropped to the ground beneath.

And now some fragments of its branches  
 bare,  
 Shaped as a stately chair,  
 Have by my hearthstone found a home at  
 last,  
 And whisper of the past.

The Danish king could not in all his  
 pride  
 Repel the ocean tide,  
 But, seated in this chair, I can in rhyme  
 Roll back the tide of Time.

I see again, as one in vision sees,  
 The blossoms and the bees, 30  
 And hear the children's voices shout and  
 call,  
 And the brown chestnuts fall.

I see the smithy with its fires aglow,  
 I hear the bellows blow,  
 And the shrill hammers on the anvil beat  
 The iron white with heat!

And thus, dear children, have ye made for  
 me  
 This day a jubilee,  
 And to my more than threescore years and  
 ten  
 Brought back my youth again. 40

The heart hath its own memory, like the  
 mind,  
 And in it are enshrined  
 The precious keepsakes, into which is  
 wrought  
 The giver's loving thought.

Only your love and your remembrance  
 could  
 Give life to this dead wood,  
 And make these branches, leafless now so  
 long,  
 Blossom again in song.

1879.

1879.

ROBERT BURNS<sup>1</sup>

I SEE amid the fields of Ayr  
A ploughman, who, in foul and fair,  
Sings at his task  
So clear, we know not if it is  
The laverock's song we hear, or his,  
Nor care to ask.

For him the ploughing of those fields  
A more ethereal harvest yields  
Than sheaves of grain;  
Songs flush with purple bloom the rye, 10  
The plover's call, the curlew's cry,  
Singing in his brain.

Touched by his hand, the wayside weed  
Becomes a flower; the lowliest reed  
Beside the stream  
Is clothed with beauty; gorse and grass  
And heather, where his footsteps pass,  
The brighter seem.

He sings of love, whose flame illumines  
The darkness of lone cottage rooms; 20  
He feels the force,  
The treacherous undertow and stress  
Of wayward passions, and no less  
The keen remorse.

At moments, wrestling with his fate,  
His voice is harsh, but not with hate;  
The brush-wood, hung  
Above the tavern door, lets fall  
Its bitter leaf, its drop of gall  
Upon his tongue. 30

But still the music of his song  
Rises o'er all, elate and strong;  
Its master-chords  
Are Manhood, Freedom, Brotherhood,  
Its discords but an interlude  
Between the words.

And then to die so young and leave  
Unfinished what he might achieve!  
Yet better sure  
Is this, than wandering up and down, 40  
An old man in a country town,  
Infirm and poor.

For now he haunts his native land  
As an immortal youth; his hand

<sup>1</sup> Compare the poems on Burns by Whittier, Lowell ('At the Burns Centennial,' and 'Incident in a Railroad Car'), Holmes, Wordsworth, etc.

Guides every plough;  
He sits beside each ingle-nook,  
His voice is in each rushing brook,  
Each rustling bough.

His presence haunts this room to-night,  
A form of mingled mist and light 50  
From that far coast.  
Welcome beneath this roof of mine!  
Welcome! this vacant chair is thine,  
Dear guest and ghost!

1879. 1880.

## THE TIDE RISES, THE TIDE FALLS

THE tide rises, the tide falls,  
The twilight darkens, the curlew calls;  
Along the sea-sands damp and brown  
The traveller hastens toward the town,  
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

Darkness settles on roofs and walls,  
But the sea, the sea in the darkness calls;  
The little waves, with their soft, white  
hands,  
Efface the footprints in the sands,  
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

The morning breaks; the steeds in their  
stalls  
Stamp and neigh, as the hostler calls;  
The day returns, but nevermore  
Returns the traveller to the shore,  
And the tide rises, the tide falls. 30

1879. (1880.)

## JUGURTHA

How cold are thy baths, Apollo!  
Cried the African monarch, the splendid,  
As down to his death in the hollow  
Dark dungeons of Rome he descended,  
Uncrowned, unthroned, unattended;  
How cold are thy baths, Apollo!

How cold are thy baths, Apollo!  
Cried the Poet, unknown, unbefriended,  
As the vision, that lured him to follow,  
With the mist and the darkness blended,  
And the dream of his life was ended;  
How cold are thy baths, Apollo!

1879. (1880.)

THE CROSS OF SNOW<sup>1</sup>

IN the long, sleepless watches of the night,  
A gentle face—the face of one long dead—  
Looks at me from the wall, where round  
its head

The night-lamp casts a halo of pale light.  
Here in this room she died; and soul more  
white

Never through martyrdom of fire was led  
To its repose; nor can in books be read  
The legend of a life more benedict.  
There is a mountain in the distant West,  
That, sun-defying, in its deep ravines  
Displays a cross of snow upon its side.  
Such is the cross I wear upon my breast  
These eighteen years, through all the chang-  
ing scenes

And seasons, changeless since the day she  
died. 1886.

1879.

## NIGHT

INTO the darkness and hush of night  
Slowly the landscape sinks, and fades away,  
And with it fade the phantoms of the day,  
The ghosts of men and things, that haunt  
the light.

The crowd, the clamor, the pursuit, the  
flight,

The unprofitable splendor and display,  
The agitations, and the cares that prey  
Upon our hearts, all vanish out of sight.  
The better life begins; the world no more  
Molests us; all its records we erase  
From the dull commonplace book of our  
lives,

That like a palimpsest is written o'er  
With trivial incidents of time and place,  
And lo! the ideal, hidden beneath, revives. (1880.)  
1879.

## L'ENVOI

## THE POET AND HIS SONGS

As the birds come in the spring,  
We know not from where;  
As the stars come at evening  
From depths of the air;

As the rain comes from the cloud,  
And the brook from the ground;

<sup>1</sup> See the note on 'Divina Commedia,' p. 240.

As suddenly, low or loud,  
Out of silence a sound;

As the grape comes to the vine,  
The fruit to the tree;  
As the wind comes to the pine,  
And the tide to the sea;

As come the white sails of ships  
O'er the ocean's verge;  
As comes the smile to the lips,  
The foam to the surge;

So come to the Poet his songs,  
All hitherward blown  
From the misty realm, that belongs  
To the vast Unknown.

His, and not his, are the lays  
He sings; and their fame  
Is his, and not his; and the praise  
And the pride of a name.

For voices pursue him by day,  
And haunt him by night,  
And he listens, and needs must obey,  
When the Angel says, 'Write!' 1880.

1880.

POSSIBILITIES<sup>2</sup>

WHERE are the Poets, unto whom belong  
The Olympian heights; whose singing  
shafts were sent

Straight to the mark, and not from bows  
half bent,

But with the utmost tension of the thong?  
Where are the stately argosies of song,  
Whose rushing keels made music as they  
went

Sailing in search of some new continent,  
With all sail set, and steady winds and  
strong?

Perhaps there lives some dreamy boy, un-  
taught

In schools, some graduate of the field or  
street,

Who shall become a master of the art,  
An admiral sailing the high seas of thought,  
Fearless and first, and steering with his  
fleet

For lands not yet laid down in any chart.  
1882. 1884

<sup>2</sup> This is the last, but two, of Longfellow's poems.

THE BELLS OF SAN BLAS<sup>1</sup>

WHAT say the Bells of San Blas  
To the ships that southward pass  
From the harbor of Mazatlan?  
To them it is nothing more  
Than the sound of surf on the shore,—  
Nothing more to master or man.

But to me, a dreamer of dreams,  
To whom what is and what seems  
Are often one and the same,—  
The Bells of San Blas to me  
Have a strange, wild melody,  
And are something more than a name.

For bells are the voice of the church;  
They have tones that touch and search  
The hearts of young and old;  
One sound to all, yet each  
Lends a meaning to their speech,  
And the meaning is manifold.

They are a voice of the Past,  
Of an age that is fading fast,  
Of a power austere and grand;  
When the flag of Spain unfurled  
Its folds o'er this western world,  
And the priest was lord of the land.

The chapel that once looked down  
On the little seaport town  
Has crumbled into the dust;  
And on oaken beams below  
The bells swing to and fro,  
And are green with mould and rust.

'Is, then, the old faith dead,'  
They say, 'and in its stead

<sup>1</sup> Longfellow's last poem, written (except the concluding stanza) on March 12, 1882. The subject was suggested by a few lines of an article on Mexico, in *Harper's Magazine* for March, telling of the destroyed convent of San Blas (on the Pacific Coast) and its bells.

Is some new faith proclaimed,  
That we are forced to remain  
Naked to sun and rain,  
Unsheltered and ashamed?

'Once in our tower aloof  
We rang over wall and roof  
Our warnings and our complaints;  
And round about us there  
The white doves filled the air,  
Like the white souls of the saints.

'The saints! Ah, have they grown  
Forgetful of their own?  
Are they asleep, or dead,  
That open to the sky  
Their ruined Missions lie,  
No longer tenanted?

'Oh, bring us back once more  
The vanished days of yore,  
When the world with faith was filled;  
Bring back the fervid zeal,  
The hearts of fire and steel,  
The hands that believe and build.

'Then from our tower again  
We will send over land and main  
Our voices of command,  
Like exiled kings who return  
To their thrones, and the people learn  
That the Priest is lord of the land!'

O Bells of San Blas, in vain  
Ye call back the Past again!  
The Past is deaf to your prayer;  
Out of the shadows of night  
The world rolls into light;  
It is daybreak everywhere.<sup>2</sup>

1882.

1882.

<sup>2</sup> These were Longfellow's last verses. He added the concluding stanza of the poem, written in a firm hand, and dated, only nine days before his death.

## JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

THE VAUDOIS TEACHER<sup>1</sup>

'O LADY fair, these silks of mine are beautiful and rare,—  
The richest web of the Indian loom, which  
beauty's queen might wear;  
And my pearls are pure as thy own fair neck,  
with whose radiant light they vie;  
I have brought them with me a weary way,  
— will my gentle lady buy?'

The lady smiled on the worn old man  
through the dark and clustering  
curls  
Which veiled her brow, as she bent to view  
his silks and glittering pearls;  
And she placed their price in the old man's  
hand and lightly turned away,  
But she paused at the wanderer's earnest  
call,— 'My gentle lady, stay!'

<sup>1</sup> This poem was suggested by the account given of the manner in which the Waldenses disseminated their principles among the Catholic gentry. They gained access to the house through their occupation as peddlers of silks, jewels, and trinkets. 'Having disposed of some of their goods,' it is said by a writer who quotes the inquisitor Rainerus Sacco, 'they cautiously intimated that they had commodities far more valuable than these, inestimable jewels, which they would show if they could be protected from the clergy. They would then give their purchasers a Bible or Testament, and thereby many were deluded into heresy.' (WHITTIER.)

The poem was early translated into French and Italian, and became a favorite among all the Waldenses, who however did not know of its American origin. When the Waldensian synod learned of this, in 1875, they instructed their Moderator to send Whittier a letter of thanks and appreciation. This letter, which Whittier greatly prized, began:—

'Dear and Honored Brother,—I have recently learned by a letter from my friend, J. C. Fletcher, now residing in Naples, that you are the author of the charming little poem, "The Vaudois Colporteur," which was translated several years ago in French by Professor de Felicé, of Montauban, and of which there is also an excellent Italian translation, made by M. Giovanni Nicolini, Professor of our College at Torre Pellicé. There is not a single Vaudois who has received any education who cannot repeat from memory "The Vaudois Colporteur" in French or in Italian.'

See the whole letter, in Pickard's *Life of Whittier*, vol. II, pp. 607-608. Whittier's reply (given in the *Life*, pp. 608-609) was translated into Italian and circulated throughout Italy.

'O lady fair, I have yet a gem which a purer lustre flings,  
Than the diamond flash of the jewelled  
crown on the lofty brow of kings;  
A wonderful pearl of exceeding price,  
whose virtue shall not decay,  
Whose light shall be as a spell to thee and  
a blessing on thy way!'

The lady glanced at the mirroring steel  
where her form of grace was seen,  
Where her eye shone clear, and her dark  
locks waved their clasping pearls  
between;  
'Bring forth thy pearl of exceeding worth,  
thou traveller gray and old,  
And name the price of thy precious gem,  
and my page shall count thy gold.'

The cloud went off from the pilgrim's  
brow, as a small and meagre book,  
Unchased with gold or gem of cost, from  
his folding robe he took!  
'Here, lady fair, is the pearl of price, may  
it prove as such to thee!  
Nay, keep thy gold—I ask it not, for the  
word of God is free!'

The hoary traveller went his way, but the  
gift he left behind  
Hath had its pure and perfect work on that  
highborn maiden's mind,  
And she hath turned from the pride of sin  
to the lowliness of truth,  
And given her human heart to God in its  
beautiful hour of youth!

And she hath left the gray old halls, where  
an evil faith had power,  
The courtly knights of her father's train,  
and the maidens of her bower;  
And she hath gone to the Vaudois vales by  
lordly feet untrod,  
Where the poor and needy of earth are  
rich in the perfect love of God!

1830.