

We prayed for love to loose the chain;
'T is shorn by battle's axe in twain!

Nor skill nor strength nor zeal of ours
Has mined and heaved the hostile towers;
Not by our hands is turned the key
That sets the sighing captives free. 40

A redder sea than Egypt's wave
Is piled and parted for the slave;
A darker cloud moves on in light;
A fiercer fire is guide by night!

The praise, O Lord! is thine alone,
In thy own way thy work is done!
Our poor gifts at thy feet we cast,
To whom be glory, first and last!

1865.

1865.

THE ETERNAL GOODNESS

O FRIENDS! with whom my feet have trod
The quiet aisles of prayer,
Glad witness to your zeal for God
And love of man I bear.

I trace your lines of argument;
Your logic linked and strong
I weigh as one who dreads dissent,
And fears a doubt as wrong.

But still my human hands are weak
To hold your iron creeds:
Against the words ye bid me speak
My heart within me pleads. 10

Who fathoms the Eternal Thought?
Who talks of scheme and plan?
The Lord is God! He needeth not
The poor device of man.

I walk with bare, hushed feet the ground
Ye tread with boldness shod;
I dare not fix with mete and bound
The love and power of God. 20

Ye praise his justice; even such
His pitying love I deem:
Ye seek a king; I fain would touch
The robe that hath no seam.

Ye see the curse which overbroods
A world of pain and loss;
I hear our Lord's beatitudes
And prayer upon the cross.

More than your schoolmen teach, with-
in

Myself, alas! I know: 30
Too dark ye cannot paint the sin,
Too small the merit show.

I bow my forehead to the dust,
I veil mine eyes for shame,
And urge, in trembling self-distrust,
A prayer without a claim.

I see the wrong that round me lies,
I feel the guilt within;
I hear, with groan and travail-cries,
The world confess its sin. 40

Yet, in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed trust my spirit clings;
I know that God is good!

Not mine to look where cherubim
And seraphs may not see,
But nothing can be good in Him
Which evil is in me.

The wrong that pains my soul below
I dare not throne above, 50
I know not of his hate, — I know
His goodness and his love.

I dimly guess from blessings known
Of greater out of sight,
And, with the chastened Psalmist, own
His judgments too are right.

I long for household voices gone,
For vanished smiles I long,
But God hath led my dear ones on,
And He can do no wrong. 60

I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.

And if my heart and flesh are weak
To bear an untried pain,
The bruised reed He will not break,
But strengthen and sustain.

No offering of my own I have,
Nor works my faith to prove; 70
I can but give the gifts He gave,
And plead his love for love.

And so beside the Silent Sea
I wait the muffled oar;
No harm from Him can come to me
On ocean or on shore.

I know not where his islands lift
Their fringed palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond his love and care. 80

O brothers! if my faith is vain,
If hopes like these betray,
Pray for me that my feet may gain
The sure and safer way.

And Thou, O Lord! by whom are seen
Thy creatures as they be,
Forgive me if too close I lean
My human heart on Thee!

1865?

SNOW-BOUND¹

A WINTER IDYL

TO THE MEMORY OF THE HOUSEHOLD IT DESCRIBES

THIS POEM IS DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR

As the Spirits of Darkness be stronger in the dark,
so Good Spirits, which be Angels of Light, are augmented not only by the Divine light of the Sun, but also by our common Wood Fire: and as the Celestial Fire drives away dark spirits, so also this our Fire of Wood doth the same. — COR. AGRIPPA, *Occult Philosophy*, Book I. ch. v.

Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,
Arrives the snow, and, driving o'er the fields,
Seems nowhere to alight: the whited air
Hides hills and woods, the river and the heaven,
And veils the farm-house at the garden's end.
The sled and traveller stopped, the courier's feet
Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit
Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed
In a tumultuous privacy of storm.

EMERSON. *The Snow Storm.*

THE sun that brief December day
Rose cheerless over hills of gray,
And, darkly circled, gave at noon
A sadder light than waning moon.

¹ The inmates of the family at the Whittier home-
stead who are referred to in the poem were my father,
mother, my brother and two sisters, and my uncle and
aunt, both unmarried. In addition, there was the dis-
trict school-master, who boarded with us. The 'not
unfeared, half-welcome guest' was Harriet Livermore,
daughter of Judge Livermore, of New Hampshire, a
young woman of fine natural ability, enthusiastic, ec-
centric, with slight control over her violent temper,
which sometimes made her religious profession doubt-
ful. She was equally ready to exhort in school-house
prayer-meetings and dance in a Washington ball-room,
while her father was a member of Congress. She early
embraced the doctrine of the Second Advent, and felt
it her duty to proclaim the Lord's speedy coming.
With this message she crossed the Atlantic and spent
the greater part of a long life in travelling over Europe
and Asia. She lived some time with Lady Hester Stan-
hope, a woman as fantastic and mentally strained as
herself, on the slope of Mt. Lebanon, but finally quar-
relled with her in regard to two white horses with red
marks on their backs which suggested the idea of sad-
dles, on which her titled hostess expected to ride into

Slow tracing down the thickening sky
Its mute and ominous prophecy,
A portent seeming less than threat,
It sank from sight before it set.

Jerusalem with the Lord. A friend of mine found her,
when quite an old woman, wandering in Syria with a
tribe of Arabs, who with the Oriental notion that mad-
ness is inspiration, accepted her as their prophetess
and leader. At the time referred to in 'Snow-Bound'
she was boarding at the Rocks Village, about two miles
from us.

In my boyhood, in our lonely farm-house, we had
scanty sources of information; few books and only a
small weekly newspaper. Our only annual was the
Almanac. Under such circumstances story-telling was
a necessary resource in the long winter evenings. My
father when a young man had traversed the wilderness
to Canada, and could tell us of his adventures with In-
dians and wild beasts, and of his sojourn in the French
villages. My uncle was ready with his record of hunt-
ing and fishing and, it must be confessed, with stories,
which he at least half believed, of witchcraft and ap-
paritions. My mother, who was born in the Indian-
haunted region of Somersworth, New Hampshire, be-
tween Dover and Portsmouth, told us of the inroads of
the savages, and the narrow escape of her ancestors.
She described strange people who lived on the Piscat-
aqua and Cochecho, among whom was Bantam the sor-
cerer. I have in my possession the wizard's 'conjuring
book,' which he solemnly opened when consulted. It
is a copy of Cornelius Agrippa's *Magie*, printed in 1651,
dedicated to Dr. Robert Child, who, like Michael Scott,
had learned

the art of glammorie
In Padua beyond the sea,

and who is famous in the annals of Massachusetts,
where he was at one time a resident, as the first man
who dared petition the General Court for liberty of
conscience. The full title of the book is *Three Books
of Occult Philosophy*, by Henry Cornelius Agrippa,
Knight, Doctor of both Laws, Counsellor to Caesar's
Sacred Majesty and Judge of Prerogative Court.
(WHITTIER.)

See also Pickard's *Life of Whittier*, vol. i, pp. 27-36,
and vol. ii, pp. 494-500; and *Whittier-Land*, pp. 12, 24,
33, 74.

A chill no coat, however stout,
Of homespun stuff could quite shut out, 10
A hard, dull bitterness of cold,
That checked, mid-vein, the circling race
Of life-blood in the sharpened face,
The coming of the snow-storm told.
The wind blew east; we heard the roar
Of Ocean on his wintry shore,
And felt the strong pulse throbbing there
Beat with low rhythm our inland air.

Meanwhile we did our nightly chores, —
Brought in the wood from out of doors, 20
Littered the stalls, and from the mows
Raked down the herd's-grass for the cows:
Heard the horse whinnying for his corn;
And, sharply clashing horn on horn,
Impatient down the stanchion rows
The cattle shake their walnut bows;
While, peering from his early perch
Upon the scaffold's pole of birch,
The cock his crested helmet bent
And down his querulous challenge sent. 30

Unwarmed by any sunset light
The gray day darkened into night,
A night made hoary with the swarm
And whirl-dance of the blinding storm,
As zigzag, wavering to and fro,
Crossed and recrossed the winged snow:
And ere the early bedtime came
The white drift piled the window-frame,
And through the glass the clothes-line posts
Looked in like tall and sheeted ghosts. 40

So all night long the storm roared on:
The morning broke without a sun;
In tiny spherule traced with lines
Of Nature's geometric signs,
In starry flake, and pellicle,
All day the hoary meteor fell;
And, when the second morning shone,
We looked upon a world unknown,
On nothing we could call our own.
Around the glistening wonder bent 50
The blue walls of the firmament,
No cloud above, no earth below, —
A universe of sky and snow!
The old familiar sights of ours
Took marvellous shapes; strange domes
and towers
Rose up where sty or corn-crib stood,
Or garden-wall, or belt of wood;
A smooth white mound the brush-pile
showed,

A fenceless drift what once was road;
The bridle-post an old man sat 60
With loose-flung coat and high cocked hat;
The well-curb had a Chinese roof;
And even the long sweep, high aloof,
In its slant splendor, seemed to tell
Of Pisa's leaning miracle.

A prompt, decisive man, no breath
Our father wasted: 'Boys, a path!'
Well pleased (for when did farmer boy
Count such a summons less than joy?)
Our buskins on our feet we drew; 70
With mittened hands, and caps drawn low,
To guard our necks and ears from snow,
We cut the solid whiteness through.
And, where the drift was deepest, made
A tunnel walled and overlaid
With dazzling crystal: we had read
Of rare Aladdin's wondrous cave,
And to our own his name we gave,
With many a wish the luck were ours
To test his lamp's supernal powers.
We reached the barn with merry din,
And roused the prisoned brutes within.
The old horse thrust his long head out,
And grave with wonder gazed about;
The cock his lusty greeting said,
And forth his speckled harem led;
The oxen lashed their tails, and hooked,
And mild reproach of hunger looked;
The horned patriarch of the sheep,
Like Egypt's Amun roused from sleep, 90
Shook his sage head with gesture mute,
And emphasized with stamp of foot.

All day the gusty north-wind bore
The loosening drift its breath before;
Low circling round its southern zone,
The sun through dazzling snow-mist shone.
No church-bell lent its Christian tone
To the savage air, no social smoke
Curled over woods of snow-hung oak.
A solitude made more intense 100
By dreary-voiced elements,
The shrieking of the mindless wind,
The moaning tree-boughs swaying blind,
And on the glass the unmeaning beat
Of ghostly finger-tips of sleet.
Beyond the circle of our hearth
No welcome sound of toil or mirth
Unbound the spell, and testified
Of human life and thought outside.
We minded that the sharpest ear 110
The buried brooklet could not hear,

The music of whose liquid lip
Had been to us companionship,
And, in our lonely life, had grown
To have an almost human tone.

As night drew on, and, from the crest
Of wooded knolls that ridged the west,
The sun, a snow-blown traveller, sank
From sight beneath the smothering bank,
We piled, with care, our nightly stack 120
Of wood against the chimney-back, —
The oaken log, green, huge, and thick,
And on its top the stout back-stick;
The knotty forestick laid apart,
And filled between with curious art
The ragged brush; then, hovering near,
We watched the first red blaze appear,
Heard the sharp crackle, caught the gleam
On whitewashed wall and sagging beam,
Until the old, rude-furnished room 130
Burst, flower-like, into rosy bloom;
While radiant with a mimic flame
Outside the sparkling drift became,
And through the bare-boughed lilac-tree
Our own warm hearth seemed blazing free.
The crane and pendent trammels showed,
The Turks' heads on the andirons glowed;
While childish fancy, prompt to tell
The meaning of the miracle,
Whispered the old rhyme: '*Under the tree,
When fire outdoors burns merrily,* 141
There the witches are making tea.'

The moon above the eastern wood
Shone at its full; the hill-range stood
Transfigured in the silver flood,
Its blown snows flashing cold and keen,
Dead white, save where some sharp ravine
Took shadow, or the sombre green
Of hemlocks turned to pitchy black
Against the whiteness at their back. 150
For such a world and such a night
Most fitting that unwarming light,
Which only seemed where'er it fell
To make the coldness visible.

Shut in from all the world without,
We sat the clean-winged hearth about,
Content to let the north-wind roar
In baffled rage at pane and door,
While the red logs before us beat
The frost-line back with tropic heat; 160
And ever, when a louder blast
Shook beam and rafter as it passed,
The merrier up its roaring draught

The great throat of the chimney laughed;
The house-dog on his paws outspread
Laid to the fire his drowsy head,
The cat's dark silhouette on the wall
A couchant tiger's seemed to fall;
And, for the winter fireside meet,
Between the andirons' straddling feet, 170
The mug of cider simmered slow,
The apples sputtered in a row,
And, close at hand, the basket stood
With nuts from brown October's wood.

What matter how the night behaved?
What matter how the north-wind raved?
Blow high, blow low, not all its snow
Could quench our hearth-fire's ruddy glow.
O Time and Change! — with hair as gray
As was my sire's that winter day, 180
How strange it seems, with so much gone
Of life and love, to still live on!
Ah, brother! only I and thou!¹
Are left of all that circle now, —
The dear home faces whereupon
That fitful firelight paled and shone.
Henceforward, listen as we will,
The voices of that hearth are still;
Look where we may, the wide earth o'er
Those lighted faces smile no more. 190
We tread the paths their feet have worn,
We sit beneath their orchard trees,
We hear, like them, the hum of bees
And rustle of the bladed corn;
We turn the pages that they read,
Their written words we linger o'er,
But in the sun they cast no shade,
No voice is heard, no sign is made,
No step is on the conscious floor!
Yet Love will dream, and Faith will trust 200
(Since He who knows our need is just)
That somehow, somewhere, meet we must.
Alas for him who never sees
The stars shine through his cypress-trees!
Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
Nor looks to see the breaking day
Across the mournful marbles play!
Who hath not learned, in hours of faith,
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That Life is ever lord of Death, 210
And Love can never lose its own!

We sped the time with stories old,
Wrought puzzles out, and riddles told,

¹ Whittier's only brother, Matthew, was born in 1812 and died in 1883. See Pickard's *Life of Whittier*, vol. 4, pp. 31-32.

Or stammered from our school-book lore
 'The Chief of Gambia's golden shore.'¹
 How often since, when all the land
 Was clay in Slavery's shaping hand,
 As if a far-blown trumpet stirred
 The languorous sin-sick air, I heard:
 'Does not the voice of reason cry,
 Claim the first right which Nature gave,
 From the red scourge of bondage fly,
 Nor deign to live a burdened slave!
 Our father rode again his ride
 On Memphremagog's wooded side;
 Sat down again to moose and samp
 In trapper's hut and Indian camp;
 Lived o'er the old idyllic ease
 Beneath St. François' hemlock-trees;
 Again for him the moonlight shone
 On Norman cap and bodiced zone;
 Again he heard the violin play
 Which led the village dance away.
 And mingled in its merry whirl
 The grandam and the laughing girl.
 Or, nearer home, our steps he led
 Where Salisbury's level marshes spread
 Mile-wide as flies the laden bee;
 Where merry mowers, hale and strong,
 Swept, scythe on scythe, their swaths
 along
 The low green prairies of the sea.
 We shared the fishing off Boar's Head,
 And round the rocky Isles of Shoals
 The hake-broil on the drift-wood coals;
 The chowder on the sand-beach made,
 Dipped by the hungry, steaming hot
 With spoons of clam-shell from the pot.
 We heard the tales of witchcraft old,
 And dream and sign and marvel told
 To sleepy listeners as they lay
 Stretched idly on the salted hay,
 Adrift along the winding shores,
 When favoring breezes deigned to blow
 The square sail of the gundelow
 And idle lay the useless oars.

Our mother, while she turned her wheel
 Or run the new-knit stocking-heel,
 Told how the Indian hordes came down
 At midnight on Coheco town,
 And how her own great-uncle bore
 His cruel scalp-mark to fourscore.

¹ 'The African Chief' was the title of a poem by Mrs. Sarah Wentworth Morton, wife of the Hon. Perez Morton, a former attorney-general of Massachusetts. Mrs. Morton's *nom de plume* was *Philetia*. The school-book in which 'The African Chief' was printed was Caleb Bingham's *The American Preceptor*. (WHITTIER.)

Recalling, in her fitting phrase,
 So rich and picturesque and free
 (The common unrhymed poetry
 Of simple life and country ways),
 The story of her early days,—
 She made us welcome to her home;
 Old hearths grew wide to give us room;
 We stole with her a frightened look
 At the gray wizard's conjuring-book,
 The fame whereof went far and wide
 Through all the simple country-side;
 We heard the hawks at twilight play,
 The boat-horn on Piscataqua,
 The loon's weird laughter far away;
 We fished her little trout-brook, knew
 What flowers in wood and meadow grew,
 What sunny hillsides autumn-brown
 She climbed to shake the ripe nuts down,
 Saw where in sheltered cove and bay
 The ducks' black squadron anchored lay,
 And heard the wild-geese calling loud
 Beneath the gray November cloud.

Then, haply, with a look more grave,
 And soberer tone, some tale she gave
 From painful Sewel's ancient tome,²
 Beloved in every Quaker home,
 Of faith fire-winged by martyrdom,
 Or Chalkley's Journal, old and quaint,³—
 Gentlest of skippers, rare sea-saint!—
 Who, when the dreary calms prevailed,
 And water-butt and bread-cask failed,

² 'Painful Sewel's ancient tome' . . . is the *History of the Christian People called Quakers*, by William Sewel, a Dutchman . . . He died about 1725. . . . It was originally written in Low Dutch, and translated into English by Sewel himself. . . . It is devoted mostly to the persecutions of the Friends in Great Britain and in America. (Pickard's *Life of Whittier*.)

³ Chalkley's own narrative of this incident, as given in his *Journal*, is as follows: 'To stop their murmuring, I told them they should not need to cast lots, which was usual in such cases, which of us should die first, for I would freely offer up my life to do them good. One said, "God bless you! I will not eat any of you." Another said, "He would die before he would eat any of me," and so said several. I can truly say, on that occasion, at that time, my life was not dear to me, and that I was serious and ingenuous in my proposition: and as I was leaning over the side of the vessel, thoughtfully considering my proposal to the company, and looking in my mind to Him that made me, a very large dolphin came up towards the top or surface of the water, and looked me in the face; and I called the people to put a hook into the sea, and take him, for here is one come to redeem me (I said to them). And they put a hook into the sea, and the fish readily took it and they caught him. He was longer than myself. I think he was about six feet long, and the largest that ever I saw. This plainly showed us that we ought not to distrust the providence of the Almighty. The people were quieted by this act of Providence, and murmured no more. We caught enough to eat plentifully of, till we got into the capes of Delaware.' (WHITTIER.)

And cruel, hungry eyes pursued
 His portly presence mad for food,
 With dark hints muttered under breath
 Of casting lots for life or death,
 Offered, if Heaven withheld supplies,
 To be himself the sacrifice.
 Then, suddenly, as if to save
 The good man from his living grave,
 A ripple on the water grew,
 A school of porpoise flashed in view.
 'Take, eat,' he said, 'and be content;
 These fishes in my stead are sent
 By Him who gave the tangled ram
 To spare the child of Abraham.'

Our uncle, innocent of books,
 Was rich in lore of fields and brooks,¹
 The ancient teachers never dumb
 Of Nature's unhousted lyceum.
 In moons and tides and weather wise,
 He read the clouds as prophecies,
 And foul or fair could well divine,
 By many an occult hint and sign,
 Holding the cunning-warded keys
 To all the woodcraft mysteries;
 Himself to Nature's heart so near
 That all her voices in his ear
 Of beast or bird had meanings clear,
 Like Apollonius of old,
 Who knew the tales the sparrows told,
 Or Hermes, who interpreted
 What the sage cranes of Nilus said;
 A simple, guileless, childlike man,
 Content to live where life began;
 Strong only on his native grounds,
 The little world of sights and sounds
 Whose girdle was the parish bounds,
 Whereof his fondly partial pride
 The common features magnified,
 As Surrey hills to mountains grew
 In White of Selborne's loving view,—
 He told how teal and loon he shot,
 And how the eagle's eggs he got,
 The feats on pond and river done,
 The prodigies of rod and gun;
 Till, warming with the tales he told,
 Forgotten was the outside cold,
 The bitter wind unheeded blew,
 From ripening corn the pigeons flew,
 The partridge drummed i' the wood, the
 mink

Went fishing down the river-brink;

¹ Compare Emerson's 'Wood-Notes.' On Whittier's uncle, see Pickard's *Life of Whittier*, vol. 1, pp. 32-33, and Whittier's *Prose Works*, vol. 1, pp. 323-325, 'The Fish I did n't Catch.'

In fields with bean or clover gay,
 The woodchuck, like a hermit gray,
 Peered from the doorway of his cell;
 The muskrat plied the mason's trade,
 And tier by tier his mud-walls laid;
 And from the shagbark overhead
 The grizzled squirrel dropped his shell.

Next, the dear aunt, whose smile of
 cheer
 And voice in dreams I see and hear—
 The sweetest woman ever Fate
 Perverse denied a household mate,
 Who, lonely, homeless, not the less
 Found peace in love's unselfishness,
 And welcome whereso'er she went,
 A calm and gracious element,
 Whose presence seemed the sweet in-
 come
 And womanly atmosphere of home—
 Called up her girlhood memories,
 The huskings and the apple-bees,
 The sleigh-rides and the summer sails,
 Weaving through all the poor details
 And homespun warp of circumstance
 A golden woof-thread of romance.
 For well she kept her genial mood
 And simple faith of maidenhood;
 Before her still a cloud-land lay,
 The mirage loomed across her way;
 The morning dew, that dries so soon
 With others, glistened at her noon;
 Through years of toil and soil and care,
 From glossy tress to thin gray hair,
 All unprofaned she held apart
 The virgin fancies of the heart.
 Be shame to him of woman born
 Who hath for such but thought of scorn.

There, too, our elder sister² plied
 Her evening task the stand beside;
 A full, rich nature, free to trust,
 Truthful and almost sternly just,
 Impulsive, earnest, prompt to act,
 And make her generous thought a fact,
 Keeping with many a light disguise
 The secret of self-sacrifice.
 O heart sore-tried! thou hast the best,
 That Heaven itself could give thee,—
 rest,
 Rest from all bitter thoughts and things!
 How many a poor one's blessing went
 With thee beneath the low green tent
 Whose curtain never outward swings!

² Mary Whittier, 1806-1860. Pickard's *Life*, i, 29.

As one who held herself a part¹
 Of all she saw, and let her heart
 Against the household bosom lean,
 Upon the motley-braided mat
 Our youngest and our dearest sat,
 Lifting her large, sweet, asking eyes,
 Now bathed in the unfading green
 And holy peace of Paradise.
 Oh, looking from some heavenly hill,⁴⁰⁰
 Or from the shade of saintly palms,
 Or silver reach of river calms,
 Do those large eyes behold me still?
 With me one little year ago:—
 The chill weight of the winter snow
 For months upon her grave has lain;
 And now, when summer south-winds blow
 And brier and harebell bloom again,
 I tread the pleasant paths we trod,
 I see the violet-sprinkled sod,⁴¹⁰
 Whereon she leaned, too frail and weak
 The hillside flowers she loved to seek,
 Yet following me where'er I went
 With dark eyes full of love's content.
 The birds are glad; the brier-rose fills
 The air with sweetness; all the hills
 Stretch green to June's unclouded sky;
 But still I wait with ear and eye
 For something gone which should be nigh,
 A loss in all familiar things,⁴²⁰
 In flower that blooms, and bird that sings.
 And yet, dear heart! remembering thee,
 Am I not richer than of old?
 Safe in thy immortality,
 What change can reach the wealth I
 hold?
 What chance can mar the pearl and gold
 Thy love hath left in trust with me?
 And while in life's late afternoon,
 Where cool and long the shadows grow,
 I walk to meet the night that soon⁴³⁰
 Shall shape and shadow overflow,
 I cannot feel that thou art far,
 Since near at need the angels are;
 And when the sunset gates unbar,
 Shall I not see thee waiting stand,
 And, white against the evening star,
 The welcome of thy beckoning hand?
 Brisk wielder of the birch and rule,
 The master of the district school

¹ On Whittier's sister Elizabeth, his household companion and his closest friend until her death, in 1864, see Pickard's *Life*, vol. i, pp. 29-31; *Whittier-Land*, p. 74; Whittier's poems 'To My Sister,' and 'The Last Eve of Summer;' and her own poems, in the *Riverside* and *Cambridge Editions of Whittier's Works*.

Held at the fire his favored place,⁴⁴⁰
 Its warm glow lit a laughing face
 Fresh-hued and fair, where scarce appeared
 The uncertain prophecy of beard.
 He teased the mitten-blinded cat,
 Played cross-pins on my uncle's hat,
 Sang songs, and told us what befalls
 In classic Dartmouth's college halls.
 Born the wild Northern hills among,
 From whence his yeoman father wrung
 By patient toil subsistence scant,⁴⁵⁰
 Not competence and yet not want,
 He early gained the power to pay
 His cheerful, self-reliant way;
 Could doff at ease his scholar's gown
 To peddle wares from town to town;
 Or through the long vacation's reach
 In lonely lowland districts teach,
 Where all the droll experience found
 At stranger hearths in boarding round,
 The moonlit skater's keen delight,⁴⁶⁰
 The sleigh-drive through the frosty night,
 The rustic-party, with its rough
 Accompaniment of blind-man's-buff,
 And whirling-plate, and forfeits paid,
 His winter task a pastime made.
 Happy the snow-locked homes wherein
 He tuned his merry violin,
 Or played the athlete in the barn,
 Or held the good dame's winding-yarn,
 Or mirth-provoking versions told⁴⁷⁰
 Of classic legends rare and old,
 Wherein the scenes of Greece and Rome
 Had all the commonplace of home,
 And little seemed at best the odds
 'Twixt Yankee pedlers and old gods;
 Where Pindus-born Arachthus took
 The guise of any grist-mill brook,
 And dread Olympus at his will
 Became a huckleberry hill.

A careless boy that night he seemed;⁴⁸⁰
 But at his desk he had the look
 And air of one who wisely schemed,
 And hostage from the future took
 In trained thought and lore of book.
 Large-brained, clear-eyed, of such as he
 Shall Freedom's young apostles be,
 Who, following in War's bloody trail,
 Shall every lingering wrong assail;
 All chains from limb and spirit strike,⁴⁹⁰
 Uplift the black and white alike;
 Scatter before their swift advance
 The darkness and the ignorance,
 The pride, the lust, the squalid sloth,

Which nurtured Treason's monstrous
 growth,
 Made murder pastime, and the hell
 Of prison-torture possible;
 The cruel lie of caste refute,
 Old forms remould, and substitute
 For Slavery's lash the freeman's will,
 For blind routine, wise-handed skill;⁵⁰⁰
 A school-house plant on every hill,
 Stretching in radiate nerve-lines thence
 The quick wires of intelligence;
 Till North and South together brought
 Shall own the same electric thought,
 In peace a common flag salute,
 And, side by side in labor's free
 And unresentful rivalry,
 Harvest the fields wherein they fought.

Another guest that winter night⁵¹⁰
 Flashed back from lustrous eyes the light.
 Unmarked by time, and yet not young,
 The honeyed music of her tongue
 And words of meekness scarcely told
 A nature passionate and bold,
 Strong, self-concentred, spurning guide,
 Its milder features dwarfed beside
 Her unbent will's majestic pride.
 She sat among us, at the best,⁵²⁰
 A not unfeared, half-welcome guest,
 Rebuking with her cultured phrase
 Our homeliness of words and ways.
 A certain pard-like, treacherous grace
 Swayed the lithe limbs and dropped the
 lash,
 Lent the white teeth their dazzling flash;
 And under low brows, black with night,
 Rayed out at times a dangerous light;
 The sharp heat-lightnings of her face
 Presaging ill to him whom Fate
 Condemned to share her love or hate.⁵³⁰
 A woman tropical, intense
 In thought and act, in soul and sense,
 She blended in a like degree
 The vixen and the devotee,
 Revealing with each freak or feint
 The temper of Petruccio's Kate,
 The raptures of Siena's saint.
 Her tapering hand and rounded wrist
 Had facile power to form a fist;

¹ See Whittier's introductory note to 'Snow-Bound.' He wrote to Fields in sending him the poem: 'The portrait of that strange pilgrim, Harriet Livermore. . . who used to visit us, is as near the life as I can give it.' An amusing anecdote of how Miss Livermore found and read this characterization of herself is told in Pickard's *Whittier-Land*, p. 39.

The warm, dark languish of her eyes⁵⁴⁰
 Was never safe from wrath's surprise.
 Brows saintly calm and lips devout
 Knew every change of scowl and pout;
 And the sweet voice had notes more high
 And shrill for social battle-cry.

Since then what old cathedral town
 Has missed her pilgrim staff and gown,
 What convent-gate has held its lock
 Against the challenge of her knock!
 Through Smyrna's plague-hushed thorough-
 fares,⁵⁵⁰
 Up sea-set Malta's rocky stairs,
 Gray olive slopes of hills that hem
 Thy tombs and shrines, Jerusalem,
 Or startling on her desert throne
 The crazy Queen of Lebanon²
 With claims fantastic as her own,
 Her tireless feet have held their way;
 And still, unrestful, bowed, and gray,
 She watches under Eastern skies,
 With hope each day renewed and fresh,
 The Lord's quick coming in the flesh,⁵⁶¹
 Whereof she dreams and prophecies!

Where'er her troubled path may be,
 The Lord's sweet pity with her go!
 The outward wayward life we see,
 The hidden springs we may not know.
 Nor is it given us to discern
 What threads the fatal sisters spun,
 Through what ancestral years has run
 The sorrow with the woman born,⁵⁷⁰
 What forged her cruel chain of moods,
 What set her feet in solitudes,
 And held the love within her mute,
 What mingled madness in the blood,
 A life-long discord and annoy,
 Water of tears with oil of joy,
 And hid within the folded bud
 Perversities of flower and fruit.
 It is not ours to separate
 The tangled skein of will and fate,⁵⁸⁰
 To show what metes and bounds should
 stand
 Upon the soul's debatable land,
 And between choice and Providence
 Divide the circle of events;
 But He who knows our frame is just,
 Merciful and compassionate,
 And full of sweet assurances

² An interesting account of Lady Hester Stanhope may be found in Kinglake's *Eothen*, chap. viii. (WHITTIER.)

And hope for all the language is,
That He remembereth we are dust!

At last the great logs, crumbling low, 590
Sent out a dull and duller glow,
The bull's-eye watch that hung in view,
Ticking its weary circuit through,
Pointed with mutely warning sign
Its black hand to the hour of nine.
That sign the pleasant circle broke:
My uncle ceased his pipe to smoke,
Knocked from its bowl the refuse gray,
And laid it tenderly away;
Then roused himself to safely cover 600
The dull red brands with ashes over.
And while, with care, our mother laid
The work aside, her steps she stayed
One moment, seeking to express
Her grateful sense of happiness
For food and shelter, warmth and health,
And love's contentment more than wealth,
With simple wishes (not the weak,
Vain prayers which no fulfilment seek,
But such as warm the generous heart, 610
O'er-prompt to do with Heaven its part)
That none might lack, that bitter night,
For bread and clothing, warmth and light.

Within our beds awhile we heard
The wind that round the gables roared,
With now and then a ruder shock,
Which made our very bedsteads rock.
We heard the loosened clapboards tost,
The board-nails snapping in the frost;
And on us, through the unplastered wall,
Felt the light sifted snow-flakes fall. 621
But sleep stole on, as sleep will do
When hearts are light and life is new;
Faint and more faint the murmurs grew,
Till in the summer-land of dreams
They softened to the sound of streams,
Low stir of leaves, and dip of oars,
And lapsing waves on quiet shores.

Next morn we wakened with the shout
Of merry voices high and clear; 630
And saw the teamsters drawing near
To break the drifted highways out.
Down the long hillside treading slow
We saw the half-buried oxen go,
Shaking the snow from heads uptost,
Their straining nostrils white with frost.
Before our door the straggling train
Drew up, an added team to gain.
The elders threshed their hands a-cold,

Passed, with the cider-mug, their jokes
From lip to lip; the younger folks 641
Down the loose snow-banks, wrestling,
rolled,

Then toiled again the cavalcade
O'er windy hill, through clogged ravine,
And woodland paths that wound between
Low drooping pine-boughs winter-weighted.
From every barn a team afoot,
At every house a new recruit,
Where, drawn by Nature's subtlest law,
Haply the watchful young men saw 650
Sweet doorway pictures of the curls
And curious eyes of merry girls,
Lifting their hands in mock defence
Against the snow-ball's compliments,
And reading in each missive tost
The charm with Eden never lost.

We heard once more the sleigh-bells' sound;
And, following where the teamsters led,
The wise old Doctor went his round,
Just pausing at our door to say, 660
In the brief autocratic way
Of one who, prompt at Duty's call,
Was free to urge her claim on all,
That some poor neighbor sick abed
At night our mother's aid would need.
For, one in generous thought and deed,
What mattered in the sufferer's sight
The Quaker matron's inward light,
The Doctor's mail of Calvin's creed? 670
All hearts confess the saints elect
Who, twain in faith, in love agree,
And melt not in an acid sect
The Christian pearl of charity!

So days went on: a week had passed
Since the great world was heard from last.
The Almanac we studied o'er,
Read and reread our little store
Of books and pamphlets, scarce a score;
One harmless novel, mostly hid
From younger eyes, a book forbid, 680
And poetry (or good or bad,
A single book was all we had),
Where Ellwood's meek, drab-skirted Muse,
A stranger to the heathen Nine,
Sang, with a somewhat nasal whine,
The wars of David and the Jews.¹

¹ Thomas Ellwood, one of the Society of Friends, a contemporary and friend of Milton, and the suggester of *Paradise Regained*, wrote an epic poem in five books, called *David's*, the life of King David of Israel. He wrote the book, we are told, for his own diversion, so it was not necessary that others should be

At last the floundering carrier bore
The village paper to our door.
Lo! broadening outward as we read,
To warmer zones the horizon spread; 690
In panoramic length unrolled
We saw the marvels that it told.
Before us passed the painted Creeks,
And daft McGregor on his raids
In Costa Rica's everglades.
And up Taygetos winding slow
Rode Ypsilanti's Mainote Greeks,
A Turk's head at each saddle-bow!
Welcome to us its week-old news,
Its corner for the rustic Muse, 700
Its monthly gauge of snow and rain,
Its record, mingling in a breath
The wedding bell and dirge of death:
Jest, anecdote, and love-lorn tale,
The latest culprit sent to jail;
Its hue and cry of stolen and lost,
Its vendue sales and goods at cost,
And traffic calling loud for gain.
We felt the stir of hall and street,
The pulse of life that round us beat; 710
The chill embargo of the snow
Was melted in the genial glow;
Wide swung again our ice-locked door,
And all the world was ours once more!

Clasp, Angel of the backward look
And folded wings of ashen gray
And voice of echoes far away,
The brazen covers of thy book;
The weird palimpsest old and vast,
Wherein thou hid'st the spectral past; 720
Where, closely mingling, pale and glow
The characters of joy and woe;
The monographs of outlived years,
Or smile-illumed or dim with tears,

ABRAHAM DAVENPORT¹

IN the old days (a custom laid aside
With breeches and cocked hats) the people
sent

diverted by it. Ellwood's autobiography, a quaint and delightful book, may be found in Howells's series of *Choice Autobiographies*. (*Riverside Literature Series*.)
¹ The famous Dark Day of New England, May 19, 1780, was a physical puzzle for many years to our ancestors, but its occurrence brought something more than philosophical speculation into the minds of those who passed through it. The incident of Colonel Abraham Davenport's sturdy protest is a matter of history. (WHITTIER.)

Green hills of life that slope to death,
And haunts of home, whose vistaed trees
Shade off to mournful cypresses
With the white amaranths underneath.
Even while I look, I can but heed
The restless sands' incessant fall, 730
Importunate hours that hours succeed,
Each clamorous with its own sharp need,
And duty keeping pace with all.
Shut down and clasp the heavy lids;
I hear again the voice that bids
The dreamer leave his dream midway
For larger hopes and graver fears;
Life greatens in these later years,
The century's aloe flowers to-day!

Yet, haply, in some lull of life, 740
Some Truce of God which breaks its
strife,
The worldling's eyes shall gather dew,
Dreaming in throngful city ways
Of winter joys his boyhood knew;
And dear and early friends — the few
Who yet remain — shall pause to view
These Flemish pictures of old days;
Sit with me by the homestead hearth,
And stretch the hands of memory forth 749
To warm them at the wood-fire's blaze!
And thanks untraced to lips unknown
Shall greet me like the odors blown
From unseen meadows newly mown,
Or lilies floating in some pond,
Wood-fringed, the wayside gaze be-
yond;
The traveller owns the grateful sense
Of sweetness near, he knows not whence,
And, pausing, takes with forehead bare
The benediction of the air.
1865. 1866.

Their wisest men to make the public laws.
And so, from a brown homestead, where
the Sound
Drinks the small tribute of the Mianas,
Waved over by the woods of Rippowams,
And hallowed by pure lives and tranquil
deaths,
Stamford sent up to the councils of the
State
Wisdom and grace in Abraham Davenport.

'T was on a May-day of the far old year
Seventeen hundred eighty, that there fell

Over the bloom and sweet life of the
Spring,
Over the fresh earth and the heaven of
noon,
A horror of great darkness, like the night
In day of which the Norland sagas tell,—
The Twilight of the Gods. The low-hung
sky
Was black with ominous clouds, save where
its rim
Was fringed with a dull glow, like that
which climbs
The crater's sides from the red hell below.
Birds ceased to sing, and all the barn-yard
fowls
Roosted; the cattle at the pasture bars
Lowed, and looked homeward; bats on
leathern wings
Flitted abroad; the sounds of labor died;
Men prayed, and women wept; all ears grew
sharp
To hear the doom-blast of the trumpet
shatter
The black sky, that the dreadful face of
Christ
Might look from the rent clouds, not as He
looked
A loving guest at Bethany, but stern
As Justice and inexorable Law.

Meanwhile in the old State House, dim
as ghosts,
Sat the lawgivers of Connecticut,
Trembling beneath their legislative robes.
'It is the Lord's Great Day! Let us ad-
journ,'
Some said; and then, as if with one accord,
All eyes were turned to Abraham Daven-
port.
He rose, slow cleaving with his steady voice
The intolerable hush. 'This well may be
The Day of Judgment which the world
awaits;
But be it so or not, I only know
My present duty, and my Lord's command
To occupy till He come. So at the post
Where He hath set me in his providence,
I choose, for one, to meet Him face to
face,—
No faithless servant frightened from my
task,
But ready when the Lord of the harvest
calls;
And therefore, with all reverence, I would
say,

Let God do his work, we will see to
ours.
Bring in the candles.' And they brought
them in.

Then by the flaring lights the Speaker
read,
Albeit with husky voice and shaking hands,
An act to amend an act to regulate
The shad and alewife fisheries. Where-
upon
Wisely and well spake Abraham Daven-
port,
Straight to the question, with no figures of
speech
Save the ten Arab signs, yet not without
The shrewd dry humor natural to the man:
His awe-struck colleagues listening all the
while,
Between the pauses of his argument,
To hear the thunder of the wrath of God
Break from the hollow trumpet of the
cloud.

And there he stands in memory to this
day,
Erect, self-poised, a rugged face, half seen
Against the background of unnatural dark,
A witness to the ages as they pass,
That simple duty hath no place for fear.

THE DEAD SHIP OF HARPS- WELL

WHAT flecks the outer gray beyond
The sundown's golden trail?
The white flash of a sea-bird's wing,
Or gleam of slanting sail?
Let young eyes watch from Neck and Point,
And sea-worn elders pray,—
The ghost of what was once a ship
Is sailing up the bay!
From gray sea-fog, from icy drift,
From peril and from pain,
The home-bound fisher greets thy lights,
O hundred-harbored Maine!
But many a keel shall seaward turn,
And many a sail outstand,
When, tall and white, the Dead Ship looms
Against the dusk of land.

She rounds the headland's bristling pines;
She threads the isle-set bay;

No spur of breeze can speed her on,
Nor ebb of tide delay.
Old men still walk the Isle of Orr
Who tell her date and name,
Old shipwrights sit in Freeport yards
Who hewed her oaken frame.

What weary doom of baffled quest,
Thou sad sea-ghost, is thine?
What makes thee in the haunts of home
A wonder and a sign?
No foot is on thy silent deck,
Upon thy helm no hand;
No ripple hath the soundless wind
That smites thee from the land!

For never comes the ship to port,
How'er the breeze may be;
Just when she nears the waiting shore
She drifts again to sea.
No tack of sail, nor turn of helm,
Nor sheer of veering side,
Stern-fore she drives to sea and night,
Against the wind and tide.

In vain o'er Harpswell Neck the star
Of evening guides her in;
In vain for her the lamps are lit
Within thy tower, Seguin!
In vain the harbor-boat shall hail,
In vain the pilot call;
No hand shall reef his spectral sail,
Or let her anchor fall.

Shake, brown old wives, with dreary joy,
Your gray-head hints of ill;
And, over sick-beds whispering low,
Your prophecies fulfil.
Some home amid yon birchen trees
Shall drape its door with woe;
And slowly where the Dead Ship sails,
The burial boat shall row!

From Wolf Neck and from Flying Point,
From island and from main,
From sheltered cove and tided creek,
Shall glide the funeral train.
The dead-boat with the bearers four,
The mourners at her stern,—
And one shall go the silent way
Who shall no more return!

And men shall sigh, and women weep,
Whose dear ones pale and pine,
And sadly over sunset seas

Await the ghostly sign.
They know not that its sails are filled
By pity's tender breath,
Nor see the Angel at the helm
Who steers the Ship of Death!

OUR MASTER¹

IMMORTAL Love, forever full,
Forever flowing free,
Forever shared, forever whole,
A never-ebbing sea!

Our outward lips confess the name
All other names above;
Love only knoweth whence it came
And comprehendeth love.

Blow, winds of God, awake and blow
The mists of earth away!
Shine out, O Light Divine, and show
How wide and far we stray!

Hush every lip, close every book,
The strife of tongues forbear;
Why forward reach, or backward look,
For love that clasps like air?

We may not climb the heavenly steeps
To bring the Lord Christ down:
In vain we search the lowest deeps,
For Him no depths can drown.

Nor holy bread, nor blood of grape,
The lineaments restore
Of Him we know in outward shape
And in the flesh no more.

He cometh not a king to reign;
The world's long hope is dim;
The weary centuries watch in vain
The clouds of heaven for Him.

Death comes, life goes; the asking eye
And ear are answerless;
The grave is dumb, the hollow sky
Is sad with silentness.

The letter fails, and systems fall,
And every symbol wanes;

¹ Five of the best-known hymns by Whittier are taken from this poem, beginning with the first, seventh, sixteenth, twenty-fourth, and thirty-fifth stanzas.