

'If he did, I would pray the wind and sea
To keep him forever from thee and me!'

Then out of the sea blew a dreadful blast;
Like the cry of a dying man it passed.

The young girl hushed on her lips a groan,
But through her tears a strange light
shone, — 40

The solemn joy of her heart's release
To own and cherish its love in peace.

'Dearest!' she whispered, under breath,
'Life was a lie, but true is death.

'The love I hid from myself away
Shall crown me now in the light of day.

'My ears shall never to wooer list,
Never by lover my lips be kissed.

'Sacred to thee am I henceforth,
Thou in heaven and I on earth!' 50

She came and stood by her sister's bed:
'Hall of the Heron is dead!' she said.

'The wind and the waves their work have
done,
We shall see him no more beneath the sun.

'Little will reck that heart of thine;
It loved him not with a love like mine.

'I, for his sake, were he but here,
Could hem and 'broider thy bridal gear,

'Though hands should tremble and eyes
be wet,
And stitch for stitch in my heart be set. 60

'But now my soul with his soul I wed;
Thine the living, and mine the dead!' 1871.

THE THREE BELLS

BENEATH the low-hung night cloud
That raked her splintering mast
The good ship settled slowly,
The cruel leak gained fast.

Over the awful ocean
Her signal guns pealed out.

Dear God! was that thy answer
From the horror round about?

A voice came down the wild wind,
'Ho! ship ahoy!' its cry: 10
'Our stout Three Bells of Glasgow
Shall lay till daylight by!'

Hour after hour crept slowly,
Yet on the heaving swells
Tossed up and down the ship-lights,
The lights of the Three Bells!

And ship to ship made signals,
Man answered back to man,
While oft, to cheer and hearten,
The Three Bells nearer ran; 20

And the captain from her taffrail
Sent down his hopeful cry:
'Take heart! Hold on!' he shouted!
'The Three Bells shall lay by!'

All night across the waters
The tossing lights shone clear;
All night from reeling taffrail
The Three Bells sent her cheer.

And when the dreary watches
Of storm and darkness passed, 30
Just as the wreck lurched under,
All souls were saved at last.

Sail on, Three Bells, forever,
In grateful memory sail!
Ring on, Three Bells of rescue,
Above the wave and gale!

Type of the Love eternal,
Repeat the Master's cry,
As tossing through our darkness
The lights of God draw nigh! 40
1872.

CONDUCTOR BRADLEY¹

CONDUCTOR BRADLEY (always may his
name
Be said with reverence!), as the swift doom
came,
Smitten to death, a crushed and mangled
frame,

¹ A railway conductor who lost his life in an accident
on a Connecticut railway, May 9, 1873. (WHITTIER.)

A MYSTERY¹

THE river hemmed with leaning trees
Wound through its meadows green;
A low, blue line of mountains showed
The open pines between.

One sharp, tall peak above them all
Clear into sunlight sprang:
I saw the river of my dreams,
The mountains that I sang!

No clew of memory led me on,
But well the ways I knew; 10
A feeling of familiar things
With every footstep grew.

Not otherwise above its crag
Could lean the blasted pine;
Not otherwise the maple hold
Aloft its red ensign.

So up the long and shorn foot-hills
The mountain road should creep;
So, green and low, the meadow fold
Its red-haired kine asleep. 20

The river wound as it should wind;
Their place the mountains took;
The white torn fringes of their clouds
Wore no unwonted look.

Yet ne'er before that river's rim
Was pressed by feet of mine,
Never before mine eyes had crossed
That broken mountain line.

A presence, strange at once and known,
Walked with me as my guide; 30
The skirts of some forgotten life
Trailed noiseless at my side.

Was it a dim-remembered dream?
Or glimpse through æons old?
The secret which the mountains kept
The river never told.

But from the vision ere it passed
A tender hope I drew,
And, pleasant as a dawn of spring,
The thought within me grew, 40

That love would temper every change,
And soften all surprise,

¹ Compare Lowell's 'In the Twilight.'

Sank, with the brake he grasped just where
he stood

To do the utmost that a brave man could,
And die, if needful, as a true man should.

Men stooped above him; women dropped
their tears

On that poor wreck beyond all hopes or
fears,
Lost in the strength and glory of his years.

What heard they? Lo! the ghastly lips
of pain, 10
Dead to all thought save duty's, moved
again:
'Put out the signals for the other train!'

No nobler utterance since the world be-
gan
From lips of saint or martyr ever ran,
Electric, through the sympathies of man.

Ah me! how poor and noteless seem to
this
The sick-bed dramas of self-conscious-
ness,
Our sensual fears of pain and hopes of
bliss!

Oh, grand, supreme endeavor! Not in
vain
That last brave act of failing tongue and
brain! 20
Freighted with life the downward rushing
train,

Following the wrecked one, as wave follows
wave,
Obeyed the warning which the dead lips
gave.
Others he saved, himself he could not
save.

Nay, the lost life *was* saved. He is not
dead
Who in his record still the earth shall
tread
With God's clear aureole shining round
his head.

We bow as in the dust, with all our pride
Of virtue dwarfed the noble deed beside.
God give us grace to live as Bradley
died! 30

1873.

1873.

And, misty with the dreams of earth,
The hills of Heaven arise.

1873.

THE PRAYER OF AGASSIZ¹

ON the isle of Penikese,
Ringed about by sapphire seas,
Fanned by breezes salt and cool,
Stood the Master with his school.
Over sails that not in vain
Wooded the west-wind's steady strain,
Line of coast that low and far
Stretched its undulating bar,
Wings aslant across the rim
Of the waves they stooped to skim, 10
Rock and isle and glistening bay,
Fell the beautiful white day.

Said the Master to the youth:
'We have come in search of truth,
Trying with uncertain key
Door by door of mystery;
We are reaching, through his laws,
To the garment-hem of Cause,
Him, the endless, unbegun,
The Unnamable, the One 20
Light of all our light the Source,
Life of life, and Force of force.

As with fingers of the blind,
We are groping here to find
What the hieroglyphics mean
Of the Unseen in the seen,
What the Thought which underlies
Nature's masking and disguise,
What it is that hides beneath
Blight and bloom and birth and death. 30
By past efforts unavailing,
Doubt and error, loss and failing,
Of our weakness made aware,

¹ The island of Penikese in Buzzard's Bay was given by Mr. John Anderson to Agassiz for the uses of a summer school of natural history. A large barn was cleared and improvised as a lecture-room. Here, on the first morning of the school, all the company was gathered. 'Agassiz had arranged no programme of exercises,' says Mrs. Agassiz, in *Louis Agassiz; his Life and Correspondence*, 'trusting to the interest of the occasion to suggest what might best be said or done. But, as he looked upon his pupils gathered there to study nature with him, by an impulse as natural as it was unpremeditated, he called upon them to join in silently asking God's blessing on their work together. The pause was broken by the first words of an address no less fervent than its unspoken prelude.' This was in the summer of 1873, and Agassiz died the December following. (WHITTIER.)

On the threshold of our task
Let us light and guidance ask,
Let us pause in silent prayer!'

Then the Master in his place
Bowed his head a little space,
And the leaves by soft airs stirred, 40
Lapse of wave and cry of bird,
Left the solemn hush unbroken
Of that wordless prayer unspoken,
While its wish, on earth unsaid,
Rose to heaven interpreted.
As, in life's best hours, we hear
By the spirit's finer ear
His low voice within us, thus
The All-Father heareth us;
And his holy ear we pain 50
With our noisy words and vain.
Not for Him our violence
Storming at the gates of sense,
His the primal language, his
The eternal silences!

Even the careless heart was moved,
And the doubting gave assent,
With a gesture reverent,
To the Master well-beloved.
As thin mists are glorified 60
By the light they cannot hide,
All who gazed upon him saw,
Through its veil of tender awe,
How his face was still uplit
By the old sweet look of it,
Hopeful, trustful, full of cheer,
And the love that casts out fear.
Who the secret may declare
Of that brief, unuttered prayer?
Did the shade before him come 70
Of th' inevitable doom,
Of the end of earth so near,
And Eternity's new year?

In the lap of sheltering seas
Rests the isle of Penikese;
But the lord of the domain
Comes not to his own again:
Where the eyes that follow fail,
On a vaster sea his sail
Drifts beyond our beck and hail. 80
Other lips within its bound
Shall the laws of life expound;
Other eyes from rock and shell
Read the world's old riddles well:
But when breezes light and bland
Blow from Summer's blossomed lap,

When the air is glad with wings,
And the blithe song-sparrow sings,
Many an eye with his still face
Shall the living ones displace,
Many an ear the word shall seek 90
He alone could fitly speak.
And one name forevermore
Shall be uttered o'er and o'er
By the waves that kiss the shore,
By the curlew's whistle sent
Down the cool, sea-scented air;
In all voices known to her,
Nature owns her worshipper,
Half in triumph, half lament. 100
Thither Love shall tearful turn,
Friendship pause uncovered there,
And the wisest reverence learn
From the Master's silent prayer.

1874.

1874.

A SEA DREAM¹

WE saw the slow tides go and come,
The curving surf-lines lightly drawn,
The gray rocks touched with tender
bloom
Beneath the fresh-blown rose of dawn.

We saw in richer sunsets lost
The sombre pomp of showery noons;
And signalled spectral sails that crossed
The weird, low light of rising moons.

On stormy eves from cliff and head
We saw the white spray tossed and
spurned; 10
While over all, in gold and red,
Its face of fire the lighthouse turned.

The rail-car brought its daily crowds,
Half curious, half indifferent,
Like passing sails or floating clouds,
We saw them as they came and went.

But, one calm morning, as we lay
And watched the mirage-lifted wall
Of coast, across the dreamy bay,
And heard afar the curlew call, 20

And nearer voices, wild or tame,
Of airy flock and childish throng,
Up from the water's edge there came
Faint snatches of familiar song.

¹ See Pickard's *Whittier-Land*, pp. 67-72.

Careless we heard the singer's choice
Of old and common airs; at last
The tender pathos of his voice
In one low chanson held us fast.

A song that mingled joy and pain,
And memories old and sadly sweet; 30
While, timing to its minor strain,
The waves in lapsing cadence beat.

The waves are glad in breeze and sun;
The rocks are fringed with foam;
I walk once more a haunted shore,
A stranger, yet at home,
A land of dreams I roam.

Is this the wind, the soft sea-wind
That stirred thy locks of brown?
Are these the rocks whose mosses knew
The trail of thy light gown, 41
Where boy and girl sat down?

I see the gray fort's broken wall,²
The boats that rock below;
And, out at sea, the passing sails
We saw so long ago
Rose-red in morning's glow.

The freshness of the early time
On every breeze is blown;
As glad the sea, as blue the sky, — 50
The change is ours alone;
The saddest is my own.

A stranger now, a world-worn man,
Is he who bears my name;
But thou, methinks, whose mortal life
Immortal youth became,
Art evermore the same.

Thou art not here, thou art not there,
Thy place I cannot see;
I only know that where thou art 60
The blessed angels be,
And heaven is glad for thee.

Forgive me if the evil years
Have left on me their sign;
Wash out, O soul so beautiful,
The many stains of mine
In tears of love divine!

² The place that was in the mind of the poet when he wrote this stanza was on the rocks at Marblehead, where he had spent an early morning more than forty years before. (*Cambridge Edition of Whittier's Poems.*)

I could not look on thee and live,
If thou wert by my side;
The vision of a shining one,
The white and heavenly bride,
Is well to me denied. 70

But turn to me thy dear girl-face
Without the angel's crown,
The wedded roses of thy lips,
Thy loose hair rippling down
In waves of golden brown.

Look forth once more through space and
time,
And let thy sweet shade fall
In tenderest grace of soul and form 80
On memory's frescoed wall,
A shadow, and yet all!

Draw near, more near, forever dear!
Where'er I rest or roam,
Or in the city's crowded streets,
Or by the blown sea foam,
The thought of thee is home!

At breakfast hour the singer read
The city news, with comment wise,
Like one who felt the pulse of trade 90
Beneath his finger fall and rise.

His look, his air, his curt speech, told
The man of action, not of books,
To whom the corners made in gold
And stocks were more than seaside
nooks.

Of life beneath the life confessed
His song had hinted unawares;
Of flowers in traffic's ledgers pressed,
Of human hearts in bulls and bears.

But eyes in vain were turned to watch 100
That face so hard and shrewd and strong;
And ears in vain grew sharp to catch
The meaning of that morning song.

In vain some sweet-voiced querist sought
To sound him, leaving as she came;
Her baited album only caught
A common, unromantic name.

No word betrayed the mystery fine,
That trembled on the singer's tongue;

He came and went, and left no sign 110
Behind him save the song he sung. 1874.

SUNSET ON THE BEARCAMP

A GOLD fringe on the purpling hem
Of hills the river runs,
As down its long, green valley falls
The last of summer's suns.
Along its tawny gravel-bed
Broad-flowing, swift, and still,
As if its meadow levels felt
The hurry of the hill,
Noiseless between its banks of green 10
From curve to curve it slips;
The drowsy maple-shadows rest
Like fingers on its lips.

A waif from Carroll's wildest hills,
Unstoried and unknown;
The ursine legend of its name
Prowls on its banks alone.
Yet flowers as fair its slopes adorn
As ever Yarrow knew,
Or, under rainy Irish skies,
By Spenser's Mulla grew; 20
And through the gaps of leaning trees
Its mountain cradle shows:
The gold against the amethyst,
The green against the rose.

Touched by a light that hath no name,
A glory never sung,
Aloft on sky and mountain wall
Are God's great pictures hung.
How changed the summits vast and old!
No longer granite-browed, 30
They melt in rosy mist; the rock
Is softer than the cloud;
The valley holds its breath; no leaf
Of all its elms is twirled:
The silence of eternity
Seems falling on the world.

The pause before the breaking seals
Of mystery is this;
Yon miracle-play of night and day
Makes dumb its witnesses. 40
What unseen altar crowns the hills
That reach up stair on stair?
What eyes look through, what white wings
fan
These purple veils of air?

What Presence from the heavenly heights
To those of earth stoops down?
Not vainly Hellas dreamed of gods
On Ida's snowy crown!

Slow fades the vision of the sky,
The golden water pales, 50
And over all the valley-land
A gray-winged vapor sails.
I go the common way of all;
The sunset fires will burn,
The flowers will blow, the river flow,
When I no more return.
No whisper from the mountain pine
Nor lapsing stream shall tell
The stranger, treading where I tread, 60
Of him who loved them well.

But beauty seen is never lost,
God's colors all are fast;
The glory of this sunset heaven
Into my soul has passed,
A sense of gladness unconfined
To mortal date or clime;
As the soul liveth, it shall live
Beyond the years of time.
Beside the mystic asphodels 70
Shall bloom the home-born flowers,
And new horizons flush and glow
With sunset hues of ours.

Farewell! these smiling hills must wear
Too soon their wintry frown,
And snow-cold winds from off them
shake
The maple's red leaves down.
But I shall see a summer sun
Still setting broad and low;
The mountain slopes shall blush and bloom,
The golden water flow. 80
A lover's claim is mine on all
I see to have and hold,—
The rose-light of perpetual hills,
And sunsets never cold!
1875. 1876.

LEXINGTON

1775

No Berserk thirst of blood had they,
No battle-joy was theirs, who set
Against the alien bayonet
Their homespun breasts in that old day.

Their feet had trodden peaceful ways;
They loved not strife, they dreaded
pain;
They saw not, what to us is plain,
That God would make man's wrath his
praise.

No seers were they, but simple men;
Its vast results the future hid: 10
The meaning of the work they did
Was strange and dark and doubtful then.

Swift as their summons came they left
The plough mid-furrow standing still,
The half-ground corn grist in the
mill,
The spade in earth, the axe in cleft.

They went where duty seemed to call,
They scarcely asked the reason why;
They only knew they could but die, 20
And death was not the worst of all!

Of man for man the sacrifice,
All that was theirs to give, they gave.
The flowers that blossomed from their
grave
Have sown themselves beneath all skies.

Their death-shot shook the feudal tower,
And shattered slavery's chain as well;
On the sky's dome, as on a bell,
Its echo struck the world's great hour.

That fateful echo is not dumb:
The nations listening to its sound 30
Wait, from a century's vantage-ground,
The holier triumphs yet to come,—

The bridal time of Law and Love,
The gladness of the world's release,
When, war-sick, at the feet of Peace
The hawk shall nestle with the dove! —

The golden age of brotherhood
Unknown to other rivalries
Than of the mild humanities,
And gracious interchange of good, 40

When closer strand shall lean to strand,
Till meet, beneath saluting flags,
The eagle of our mountain-crag,
The lion of our Motherland!
1875. 1875.

CENTENNIAL HYMN¹

I

OUR fathers' God! from out whose hand
The centuries fall like grains of sand,
We meet to-day, united, free,
And loyal to our land and Thee,
To thank Thee for the era done,
And trust Thee for the opening one.

II

Here, where of old, by thy design,
The fathers spake that word of thine
Whose echo is the glad refrain
Of rended bolt and falling chain,
To grace our festal time, from all
The zones of earth our guests we call.

III

Be with us while the New World greets
The Old World thronging all its streets,
Unveiling all the triumphs won
By art or toil beneath the sun;
And unto common good ordain
This rivalry of hand and brain.

IV

Thou, who hast here in concord furled
The war flags of a gathered world,
Beneath our Western skies fulfil
The Orient's mission of good-will,
And, freighted with love's Golden Fleece,
Send back its Argonauts of peace.

V

For art and labor met in truce,
For beauty made the bride of use,
We thank Thee; but, withal, we crave
The austere virtues strong to save,
The honor proof to place or gold,
The manhood never bought nor sold!

VI

Oh make Thou us, through centuries
long,
In peace secure, in justice strong;
Around our gift of freedom draw
The safeguards of thy righteous law:
And, cast in some diviner mould,
Let the new cycle shame the old!

1876.

1876.

¹ Written for the opening of the International Exhibition, Philadelphia, May 10, 1876. The music for the hymn was written by John K. Paine, and may be found in *The Atlantic Monthly* for June, 1876.

(WHITTIER.)

THE PROBLEM

I

NOT without envy Wealth at times must
look
On their brown strength who wield the
reaping-hook
And scythe, or at the forge-fire shape
the plough
Or the steel harness of the steeds of steam;
All who, by skill and patience, anyhow
Make service noble, and the earth redeem
From savageness. By kingly accolade
Than theirs was never worthier knighthood
made.
Well for them, if, while demagogues their
vain
And evil counsels proffer, they maintain
Their honest manhood unseduced, and
wage
No war with Labor's right to Labor's gain
Of sweet home-comfort, rest of hand and
brain,
And softer pillow for the head of Age.

II

And well for Gain if it ungrudging yields
Labor its just demand; and well for
Ease
If in the uses of its own, it sees
No wrong to him who tills its pleasant
fields
And spreads the table of its luxuries.
The interests of the rich man and the poor
Are one and same, inseparable evermore;
And, when scant wage or labor fail to give
Food, shelter, raiment, wherewithal to live,
Need has its rights, necessity its claim.
Yea, even self-wrought misery and shame
Test well the charity suffering long and
kind.
The home-pressed question of the age can
find
No answer in the catch-words of the blind
Leaders of blind. Solution there is none
Save in the Golden Rule of Christ alone.
1876? (1878.)

RESPONSE²

BESIDE that milestone where the level sun,
Nigh unto setting, sheds his last, low rays

² Written in response to the many tokens of esteem which Whittier received on his seventieth birthday.

THE TRAILING ARBUTUS

I WANDERED lonely where the pine-trees
made
Against the bitter East their barricade,
And, guided by its sweet
Perfume, I found, within a narrow dell,
The trailing spring flower tinted like a
shell
Amid dry leaves and mosses at my feet.
From under dead boughs, for whose loss
the pines
Moaned ceaseless overhead, the blossoming
vines
Lifted their glad surprise,
While yet the bluebird smoothed in leafless
trees
His feathers ruffled by the chill sea-breeze,
And snow-drifts lingered under April
skies.

1877.

AT EVENTIDE

POOR and inadequate the shadow-play
Of gain and loss, of waking and of
dream,
Against life's solemn background needs
must seem
At this late hour. Yet, not unthankfully,
I call to mind the fountains by the way,
The breath of flowers, the bird-song on the
spray,
Dear friends, sweet human loves, the joy
of giving
And of receiving, the great boon of liv-
ing
In grand historic years when Liberty
Had need of word and work, quick sympa-
thies
For all who fail and suffer, song's relief,
Nature's uncloying loveliness; and chief,
The kind restraining hand of Provi-
dence,
The inward witness, the assuring sense
Of an Eternal Good which overlies
The sorrow of the world, Love which out-
lives
All sin and wrong, Compassion which for-
gives
To the uttermost, and Justice whose clear
eyes
Through lapse and failure look to the in-
tent,
And judge our frailty by the life we meant.

1878.

OUR AUTOCRAT¹

His laurels fresh from song and lay,
Romance, art, science, rich in all,
And young of heart, how dare we say
We keep his seventieth festival?
No sense is here of loss or lack;
Before his sweetness and his light
The dial holds its shadow back,
The charmed hours delay their flight.
His still the keen analysis
Of men and moods, electric wit,
Free play of mirth, and tenderness
To heal the slightest wound from it.

And his the pathos touching all
Life's sins and sorrows and regrets,

¹ Read at the breakfast given in honor of Holmes's seventieth birthday.

Its hopes and fears, its final call
And rest beneath the violets.

His sparkling surface scarce betrays
The thoughtful tide beneath it rolled,
The wisdom of the latter days,
And tender memories of the old. 20

What shapes and fancies, grave or gay,
Before us at his bidding come!
The Treadmill tramp, the One-Horse
Shay,
The dumb despair of Elsie's doom!

The tale of Avis and the Maid,
The plea for lips that cannot speak,
The holy kiss that Iris laid
On Little Boston's pallid cheek!

Long may he live to sing for us
His sweetest songs at evening time, 30
And, like his Chambered Nautilus,
To holier heights of beauty climb!

Though now unnumbered guests surround
The table that he rules at will,
Its Autocrat, however crowned,
Is but our friend and comrade still.

The world may keep his honored name,
The wealth of all his varied powers;
A stronger claim has love than fame,
And he himself is only ours! 40
1879. 1879.

GARRISON¹

THE storm and peril overpast,
The hounding hatred shamed and still,
Go, soul of freedom! take at last
The place which thou alone canst fill.

Confirm the lesson taught of old —
Life saved for self is lost, while they
Who lose it in his service hold
The lease of God's eternal day.

Not for thyself, but for the slave
Thy words of thunder shook the world; 10

¹ My poetical service in the cause of freedom is almost synchronous with his life of devotion to the same cause. (WHITTIER.)

See Pickard's *Life of Whittier*, vol. ii, p. 668; and the article on Garrison in *Whittier's Prose Works*, vol. iii, pp. 189-192.

No selfish griefs or hatred gave
The strength wherewith thy bolts were
hurled.

From lips that Sinai's trumpet blew
We heard a tender under song;
Thy very wrath from pity grew,
From love of man thy hate of wrong.

Now past and present are as one;
The life below is life above;
Thy mortal years have but begun
Thy immortality of love. 20

With somewhat of thy lofty faith
We lay the outworn garment by,
Give death but what belongs to death,
And life the life that cannot die!

Not for a soul like thine the calm
Of selfish ease and joys of sense;
But duty, more than crown or palm,
Its own exceeding recompense.

Go up and on! thy day well done,
Its morning promise well fulfilled, 30
Arise to triumphs yet unwon,
To holier tasks that God has willed.

Go, leave behind thee all that mars
The work below of man for man;
With the white legions of the stars
Do service such as angels can.

Wherever wrong shall right deny
Or suffering spirits urge their plea,
Be thine a voice to smite the lie,
A hand to set the captive free! 40
1879. 1879.

THE LOST OCCASION²

SOME die too late and some too soon,
At early morning, heat of noon,
Or the chill evening twilight. Thou,
Whom the rich heavens did so endow
With eyes of power and Jove's own brow,
With all the massive strength that fills
Thy home-horizon's granite hills,
With rarest gifts of heart and head
From manliest stock inherited,
New England's stateliest type of man, 10
In port and speech Olympian;

² See the note on 'Ichabod,' p. 282.

Whom no one met, at first, but took
A second awed and wondering look
(As turned, perchance, the eyes of Greece
On Phidias' unveiled masterpiece);
Whose words in simplest homespun clad,
The Saxon strength of Cædmon's had,
With power reserved at need to reach
The Roman forum's loftiest speech,
Sweet with persuasion, eloquent 20
In passion, cool in argument,
Or, ponderous, falling on thy foes
As fell the Norse god's hammer blows,
Crushing as if with Talus' flail
Through Error's logic-woven mail,
And failing only when they tried
The adamant of the righteous side, —
Thou, foiled in aim and hope, bereaved
Of old friends, by the new deceived,
Too soon for us, too soon for thee, 30
Beside thy lonely Northern sea,
Where long and low the marsh-lands spread,
Laid wearily down thy august head.

Thou shouldst have lived to feel below
Thy feet Disunion's fierce upthrow;
The late-sprung mine that underlaid
Thy sad concessions vainly made.
Thou shouldst have seen from Sumter's wall
The star-flag of the Union fall,
And armed rebellion pressing on
The broken lines of Washington! 40
No stronger voice than thine had then
Called out the utmost might of men,
To make the Union's charter free
And strengthen law by liberty.
How had that stern arbitrament
To thy gray age youth's vigor lent,
Shaming ambition's paltry prize
Before thy disillusioned eyes;
Breaking the spell about thee wound 50
Like the green withes that Samson bound;
Redeeming in one effort grand,
Thyself and thy imperilled land!
Ah, cruel fate, that closed to thee,
O sleeper by the Northern sea,
The gates of opportunity!
God fills the gaps of human need,
Each crisis brings its word and deed.
Wise men and strong we did not lack;
But still, with memory turning back, 60
In the dark hours we thought of thee,
And thy lone grave beside the sea.
Above that grave the east winds blow,
And from the marsh-lands drifting slow
The sea-fog comes, with evermore

The wave-wash of a lonely shore,
And sea-bird's melancholy cry,
As Nature fain would typify
The sadness of a closing scene,
The loss of that which should have been. 70
But, where thy native mountains bare
Their foreheads to diviner air,
Fit emblem of enduring fame,
One lofty summit keeps thy name.
For thee the cosmic forces did
The rearing of that pyramid,
The prescient ages shaping with
Fire, flood, and frost thy monolith.
Sunrise and sunset lay thereon
With hands of light their benison, 80
The stars of midnight pause to set
Their jewels in its coronet.
And evermore that mountain mass
Seems climbing from the shadowy pass¹
To light, as if to manifest
Thy nobler self, thy life at best!
1880.

STORM ON LAKE ASQUAM

A CLOUD, like that the old-time Hebrew saw
On Carmel prophesying rain, began
To lift itself o'er wooded Cardigan,
Growing and blackening. Suddenly, a flaw

Of chill wind menaced; then a strong blast
beat
Down the long valley's murmuring pines,
and woke
The noon-dream of the sleeping lake, and
broke
Its smooth steel mirror at the mountains'
feet.

Thunderous and vast, a fire-veined darkness
swept
Over the rough pine-bearded Asquam
range;
A wraith of tempest, wonderful and
strange,
From peak to peak the cloudy giant stepped.

One moment, as if challenging the storm,
Chocorua's tall, defiant sentinel
Looked from his watch-tower; then the
shadow fell,
And the wild rain-drift blotted out his form.

¹ Mt. Webster stands next the White Mountain Notch, at the southern end of the Presidential Range.

And over all the still unhidden sun,
Weaving its light through slant-blown
veils of rain,
Smiled on the trouble, as hope smiles on
pain;
And, when the tumult and the strife were
done,

With one foot on the lake, and one on
land,
Framing within his crescent's tinted
streak
A far-off picture of the Melvin peak,
Spent broken clouds the rainbow's angel
spanned.

1882.

THE POET AND THE CHILDREN

LONGFELLOW

With a glory of winter sunshine
Over his locks of gray,
In the old historic mansion
He sat on his last birthday;

With his books and his pleasant pic-
tures,
And his household and his kin,
While a sound as of myriads singing
From far and near stole in.

It came from his own fair city,
From the prairie's boundless plain, 10
From the Golden Gate of sunset,
And the cedarn woods of Maine.

And his heart grew warm within him,
And his moistening eyes grew dim,
For he knew that his country's children
Were singing the songs of him:

The lays of his life's glad morning,
The psalms of his evening time,
Whose echoes shall float forever
On the winds of every clime. 20

All their beautiful consolations,
Sent forth like birds of cheer,
Came flocking back to his windows,
And sang in the Poet's ear.

Grateful, but solemn and tender,
The music rose and fell

With a joy akin to sadness
And a greeting like farewell.

With a sense of awe he listened
To the voices sweet and young; 30
The last of earth and the first of heaven
Seemed in the songs they sung.

And waiting a little longer
For the wonderful change to come,
He heard the Summoning Angel,
Who calls God's children home!

And to him in a holier welcome
Was the mystical meaning given
Of the words of the blessed Master:
'Of such is the kingdom of heaven!' 40
1882.

AN AUTOGRAPH

I WRITE my name as one,
On sands by waves o'errun
Or winter's frosted pane,
Traces a record vain.

Oblivion's blankness claims
Wiser and better names,
And well my own may pass
As from the strand or glass.

Wash on, O waves of time!
Melt, noons, the frosty rime! 10
Welcome the shadow vast,
The silence that shall last!

When I and all who know
And love me vanish so,
What harm to them or me
Will the lost memory be?

If any words of mine,
Through right of life divine,
Remain, what matters it
Whose hand the message writ? 20

Why should the 'crown's quest'
Sit on my worst or best?
Why should the showman claim
The poor ghost of my name?

Yet, as when dies a sound
Its spectre lingers round,
Haply my spent life will
Leave some faint echo still.

A whisper giving breath
Of praise or blame to death, 30
Soothing or saddening such
As loved the living much.

Therefore with yearnings vain
And fond I still would fain
A kindly judgment seek,
A tender thought bespeak.

And, while my words are read,
Let this at least be said:
'Whate'er his life's defeatures,
He loved his fellow-creatures. 40

'If, of the Law's stone table,
To hold he scarce was able
The first great precept fast,
He kept for man the last.

'Through mortal lapse and dulness
What lacks the Eternal Fulness,
If still our weakness can
Love Him in loving man?

'Age brought him no despairing
Of the world's future faring; 50
In human nature still
He found more good than ill.

'To all who dumbly suffered,
His tongue and pen he offered;
His life was not his own,
Nor lived for self alone.

'Hater of din and riot
He lived in days unquiet;
And, lover of all beauty,
Trode the hard ways of duty. 60

'He meant no wrong to any
He sought the good of many,
Yet knew both sin and folly, —
May God forgive him wholly!' 1882?

UNITY¹

FORGIVE, O Lord, our severing ways,
The separate altars that we raise,
The varying tongues that speak thy praise!

¹ This poem was written by Mr. Whittier while he was a guest at the Asquam House. A fair was being held in aid of the little Episcopal church at Holderness, and people at the hotel were asked to contribute. These lines were Whittier's contribution, and the ladies

Suffice it now. In time to be
Shall one great temple rise to Thee,
Thy church our broad humanity.

White flowers of love its walls shall
climb,
Sweet bells of peace shall ring its chime,
Its days shall all be holy time.

The hymn, long sought, shall then be
heard,
The music of the world's accord,
Confessing Christ, the inward word!

That song shall swell from shore to shore,
One faith, one love, one hope restore
The seamless garb that Jesus wore!
1883.

SWEET FERN

THE subtle power in perfume found
Nor priest nor sibyl vainly learned;
On Grecian shrine or Aztec mound
No censor idly burned.

That power the old-time worships knew,
The Corybantes' frenzied dance,
The Pythian priestess swooning through
The wonderland of trance.

And Nature holds, in wood and field,
Her thousand sunlit censers still; 20
To spells of flower and shrub we yield
Against or with our will.

I climbed a hill path strange and new
With slow feet, pausing at each turn;
A sudden waft of west wind blew
The breath of the sweet fern.

That fragrance from my vision swept
The alien landscape; in its stead,
Up fairer hills of youth I stepped,
As light of heart as tread. 20

I saw my boyhood's lakelet shine
Once more through rifts of woodland
shade;

I knew my river's winding line
By morning mist betrayed.

in charge of the fair received ten dollars for them. They were written in an album now in the possession of a niece of Whittier's Philadelphia friend, Joseph Liddon Pennock. (PICKARD.)

With me June's freshness, lapsing brook,
Murmurs of leaf and bee, the call
Of birds, and one in voice and look
In keeping with them all.

A fern beside the way we went
She plucked, and, smiling, held it up, ³⁰
While from her hand the wild, sweet
scent
I drank as from a cup.

O potent witchery of smell!
The dust-dry leaves to life return,
And she who plucked them owns the
spell
And lifts her ghostly fern.

Or sense or spirit? Who shall say
What touch the chord of memory thrills?
Once passed, and left the August day
Ablaze on lonely hills. ⁴⁰

1884.

SAMUEL J. TILDEN

GREYSTONE, AUGUST 4, 1886

ONCE more, O all-adjusting Death!
The nation's Pantheon opens wide;
Once more a common sorrow saith
A strong, wise man has died.

Faults doubtless had he. Had we not
Our own, to question and asperse
The worth we doubted or forgot
Until beside his hearse?

Ambitious, cautious, yet the man
To strike down fraud with resolute
hand;
A patriot, if a partisan,
He loved his native land.

So let the mourning bells be rung,
The banner droop its folds half way,
And while the public pen and tongue
Their fitting tribute pay,

Shall we not vow above his bier
To set our feet on party lies,
And wound no more a living ear
With words that Death denies?

1886.

1886.

THE BARTHOLDI STATUE

1886

THE land, that, from the rule of kings,
In freeing us, itself made free,
Our Old World Sister, to us brings
Her sculptured Dream of Liberty:

Unlike the shapes on Egypt's sands
Uplifted by the toil-worn slave,
On Freedom's soil with freemen's hands
We rear the symbol free hands gave.

O France, the beautiful! to thee
Once more a debt of love we owe:
In peace beneath thy Colors Three,
We hail a later Rochambeau!

Rise, stately Symbol! holding forth
Thy light and hope to all who sit
In chains and darkness! Belt the earth
With watch-fires from thy torch uplift!

Reveal the primal mandate still
Which Chaos heard and ceased to be,
Trace on mid-air th' Eternal Will
In signs of fire: 'Let man be free!'

Shine far, shine free, a guiding light
To Reason's ways and Virtue's aim,
A lightning-flash the wretch to smite
Who shields his license with thy name!

1886.

1887.

TO E. C. S.¹

POET and friend of poets, if thy glass
Detects no flower in winter's tuft of
grass,
Let this slight token of the debt I owe
Outlive for thee December's frozen
day,
And, like the arbutus budding under
snow,
Take bloom and fragrance from some
morn of May
When he who gives it shall have gone the
way
Where faith shall see and reverent trust
shall know.

1890.

¹ The dedication of Whittier's last volume, *At Sundown*, to Edmund Clarence Stedman.

THE LAST EVE OF SUMMER

SUMMER's last sun nigh unto setting shines
Through yon columnar pines,
And on the deepening shadows of the
lawn
Its golden lines are drawn.

Dreaming of long gone summer days like
this,
Feeling the wind's soft kiss,
Grateful and glad that failing ear and
sight
Have still their old delight,

I sit alone, and watch the warm, sweet
day
Lapse tenderly away; ¹⁰
And, wistful, with a feeling of forecast,
I ask, 'Is this the last?'

'Will nevermore for me the seasons run
Their round, and will the sun
Of ardent summers yet to come forget
For me to rise and set?'

Thou shouldst be here, or I should be with
thee
Wherever thou mayst be,
Lips mute, hands clasped, in silences of
speech
Each answering unto each. ²⁰

For this still hour, this sense of mystery
far
Beyond the evening star,
No words outworn suffice on lip or scroll:
The soul would fain with soul

Wait, while these few swift-passing days
fulfil
The wise-disposing Will,
And, in the evening as at morning, trust
The All-Merciful and Just.

The solemn joy that soul-communion feels
Immortal life reveals; ³⁰
And human love, its prophecy and sign,
Interprets love divine.

Come then, in thought, if that alone may be,
O friend! and bring with thee
Thy calm assurance of transcendent Spheres
And the Eternal Years!

1890.

1890.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

FROM purest wells of English undefiled
None deeper drank than he, the New
World's child,
Who in the language of their farm-fields
spoke
The wit and wisdom of New England folk,
Shaming a monstrous wrong. The world-
wide laugh
Provoked thereby might well have shaken
half
The walls of Slavery down, ere yet the ball
And mine of battle overthrew them all.
1891. 1891.

TO OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

8TH MO. 29TH, 1892

AMONG the thousands who with hail and
cheer
Will welcome thy new year,
How few of all have passed, as thou and I,
So many milestones by!

We have grown old together; we have
seen,
Our youth and age between,
Two generations leave us, and to-day
We with the third hold way,

Loving and loved. If thought must back-
ward run
To those who, one by one, ¹⁰
In the great silence and the dark beyond
Vanished with farewells fond,

Unseen, not lost; our grateful memories
still
Their vacant places fill,
And with the full-voiced greeting of new
friends
A tenderer whisper blends.

Linked close in a pathetic brotherhood
Of mingled ill and good,
Of joy and grief, of grandeur and of shame,
For pity more than blame, — ²⁰

The gift is thine the weary world to make
More cheerful for thy sake,
Soothing the ears its Miserere pains,
With the old Hellenic strains,

Lighting the sullen face of discontent
With smiles for blessing sent.
Enough of selfish wailing has been had,
Thank God! for notes more glad.

Life is indeed no holiday; therein
Are want, and woe, and sin,³⁰
Death and its nameless fears, and over all
Our pitying tears must fall.

Sorrow is real; but the counterfeit
Which folly brings to it,
We need thy wit and wisdom to resist,
O rarest Optimist!

Thy hand, old friend! the service of our
days,
In differing moods and ways
May prove to those who follow in our train
Not valueless nor vain.⁴⁰

Far off, and faint as echoes of a dream,
The songs of boyhood seem,
Yet on our autumn boughs, unflown with
spring,
The evening thrushes sing.

The hour draws near, howe'er delayed and
late,
When at the Eternal Gate
We leave the words and works we call our
own,
And lift void hands alone

For love to fill. Our nakedness of
soul
Brings to that Gate no toll;⁵⁰
Giftless we come to Him, who all things
gives,
And live because He lives.

1892. 1892.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

OLD IRONSIDES¹

AY, tear her tattered ensign down!
Long has it waved on high,
And many an eye has danced to see
That banner in the sky;
Beneath it rung the battle shout,
And burst the cannon's roar;—
The meteor of the ocean air
Shall sweep the clouds no more.

Her deck, once red with heroes' blood,
Where knelt the vanquished foe,
When winds were hurrying o'er the flood,
And waves were white below,
No more shall feel the victor's tread,
Or know the conquered knee;—
The harpies of the shore shall pluck
The eagle of the sea!

Oh, better that her shattered hulk
Should sink beneath the wave;

¹ One genuine lyric outburst, however, done in this year of the law, almost made him in a way actually famous. The frigate *Constitution*, historic indeed, but old and unseaworthy, then lying in the navy yard at Charlestown, was condemned by the Navy Department to be destroyed. Holmes read this in a newspaper paragraph, and it stirred him. On a scrap of paper, with a lead pencil, he rapidly shaped the impetuous stanzas of 'Old Ironsides,' and sent them to the *Daily Advertiser*, of Boston. Fast and far they travelled through the newspaper press of the country; they were even printed in hand-bills and circulated about the streets of Washington. An occurrence, which otherwise would probably have passed unnoticed, now stirred a national indignation. The astonished Secretary made haste to retrace a step which he had taken quite innocently in the way of business. The *Constitution's* tattered ensign was not torn down. The ringing, spirited verses gave the gallant ship a reprieve, which satisfied sentimentality, and a large part of the people of the United States had heard of O. W. Holmes, law student at Cambridge, who had only come of age a month ago. (*Morse's Life of Holmes*, vol. i, pp. 79, 80.)

This is probably the only case in which a government policy was changed by the verses of a college student. The frigate *Constitution* was launched in 1797, first served in the war against the pirates in the Mediterranean, and made a brilliant record in the war of 1812. In 1834 she was almost entirely rebuilt, and continued in commission until 1881. From that time she was kept at the navy yard at Portsmouth, N. H., until in 1897 she was taken to the Charlestown Navy Yard for the celebration of the centenary of her launching.

Her thunders shook the mighty deep,
And there should be her grave;
Nail to the mast her holy flag,
Set every threadbare sail,
And give her to the god of storms,
The lightning and the gale!

1830.

1830.

THE BALLAD OF THE OYSTER-MAN²

It was a tall young oysterman lived by the
river-side,
His shop was just upon the bank, his boat
was on the tide;
The daughter of a fisherman, that was so
straight and slim,
Lived over on the other bank, right oppo-
site to him.

It was the pensive oysterman that saw a
lovely maid,
Upon a moonlight evening, a-sitting in the
shade;
He saw her wave her handkerchief, as much
as if to say,
'I'm wide awake, young oysterman, and all
the folks away.'

Then up arose the oysterman, and to him-
self said he,
'I guess I'll leave the skiff at home, for
fear that folks should see;
I read it in the story-book, that, for to kiss
his dear,
Leander swam the Hellespont, — and I will
swim this here.'

² Except for the ballad of 'Old Ironsides,' the 'Metrical Essay on Poetry' written for the Phi Beta Kappa meeting in 1836, and a few other occasional poems, Holmes wrote little but humorous verse from 1830 to 1848; most of this he excluded from the later editions of his work. 'The Ballad of the Oysterman,' and 'The Spectre Pig,' are the best of his parodies on the pseudo-ballads so popular at that time.