

A swift-betraying vision's Ganymede,
 Yet to have greatly dreamed precludes low
 ends;
 Great days have ever such a morning-red,
 On such a base great futures are built up,
 And aspiration, though not put in act,
 Comes back to ask its plighted troth again,
 Still watches round its grave the unlaid
 ghost
 Of a dead virtue, and makes other hopes,
 Save that implacable one, seem thin and
 bleak¹⁵⁰
 As shadows of bare trees upon the snow,
 Bound freezing there by the unpyting
 moon.

While other youths perplexed their mando-
 lins,
 Praying that Thetis would her fingers twine
 In the loose glories of her lover's hair,
 And wile another kiss to keep back day,
 I, stretched beneath the many-centuried
 shade
 Of some writhed oak, the wood's Laocoön,
 Did of my hope a dryad mistress make,
 Whom I would woo to meet me privily,¹⁶⁰
 Or underneath the stars, or when the moon
 Flecked all the forest floor with scattered
 pearls.
 O days whose memory tames to fawning
 down
 The surly fell of Ocean's bristled neck!

I know not when this hope enthralled me
 first,
 But from my boyhood up I loved to hear
 The tall pine-forests of the Apennine
 Murmur their hoary legends of the sea,
 Which hearing, I in vision clear beheld
 The sudden dark of tropic night shut
 down¹⁷⁰
 O'er the huge whisper of great watery
 wastes,
 The while a pair of herons trailingy
 Flapped inland, where some league-wide
 river hurled
 The yellow spoil of unconjectured realms
 Far through a gulf's green silence, never
 scarred
 By any but the North-wind's hurrying
 keels.
 And not the pines alone; all sights and
 sounds
 To my world-seeking heart paid fealty,
 And catered for it as the Cretan bees

Brought honey to the baby Jupiter,¹⁸⁰
 Who in his soft hand crushed a violet,
 Godlike foremusing the rough thunder's
 gripe;
 Then did I entertain the poet's song,
 My great Idea's guest, and, passing o'er
 That iron bridge the Tuscan built to hell,
 I heard Ulysses tell of mountain-chains
 Whose adamantine links, his manacles,
 The western main shook growling, and still
 gnawed.
 I brooded on the wise Athenian's tale
 Of happy Atlantis, and heard Björne's¹⁹⁰
 keel
 Crunch the gray pebbles of the Vinland
 shore:
 I listened, musing, to the prophecy
 Of Nero's tutor-victim; lo, the birds
 Sing darkling, conscious of the climbing
 dawn.
 And I believed the poets; it is they
 Who utter wisdom from the central deep,
 And, listening to the inner flow of things,
 Speak to the age out of eternity.

Ah me! old hermits sought for solitude
 In caves and desert places of the earth,²⁰⁰
 Where their own heart-beat was the only
 stir
 Of living thing that comforted the year;
 But the bald pillar-top of Simeon,
 In midnight's blankest waste, were popu-
 lous,
 Matched with the isolation drear and deep
 Of him who pines among the swarm of
 men,
 At once a new thought's king and pris-
 oner,
 Feeling the truer life within his life,
 The fountain of his spirit's prophecy,²¹⁰
 Sinking away and wasting, drop by drop,
 In the ungrateful sands of sceptic ears.
 He in the palace-aisles of untrod woods
 Doth walk a king; for him the pent-up
 cell
 Widens beyond the circles of the stars,
 And all the sceptred spirits of the past
 Come thronging in to greet him as their
 peer;
 But in the market-place's glare and throng
 He sits apart, an exile, and his brow
 Aches with the mocking memory of its
 crown.
 Yet to the spirit select there is no choice;
 He cannot say, This will I do, or that,²²⁷

For the cheap means putting Heaven's ends
 in pawn,
 And bartering his bleak rocks, the freehold
 stern
 Of destiny's first-born, for smoother fields
 That yield no crop of self-denying will;
 A hand is stretched to him from out the
 dark,
 Which grasping without question, he is led
 Where there is work that he must do for
 God.
 The trial still is the strength's complement,
 And the uncertain, dizzy path that scales²³⁰
 The sheer heights of supremest purposes
 Is steeper to the angel than the child.
 Chances have laws as fixed as planets have,
 And disappointment's dry and bitter root,
 Envy's harsh berries, and the choking pool
 Of the world's scorn, are the right mother-
 milk
 To the tough hearts that pioneer their kind,
 And break a pathway to those unknown
 realms
 That in the earth's broad shadow lie en-
 thralled;
 Endurance is the crowning quality,²⁴⁰
 And patience all the passion of great hearts;
 These are their stay, and when the leaden
 world
 Sets its hard face against their fateful
 thought,
 And brute strength, like the Gaulish con-
 queror,
 Clangs his huge glaive down in the other
 scale,
 The inspired soul but flings his patience in,
 And slowly that outweighs the ponderous
 globe,—
 One faith against a whole earth's unbelief,
 One soul against the flesh of all mankind.

Thus ever seems it when my soul can hear
 The voice that errs not; then my triumph
 gleams,²⁵¹
 O'er the blank ocean beckoning, and all
 night
 My heart flies on before me as I sail;
 Far on I see my lifelong enterprise,
 That rose like Ganges 'mid the freezing
 snows
 Of a world's solitude, sweep broadening
 down,
 And, gathering to itself a thousand streams,
 Grow sacred ere it mingle with the sea;
 I see the ungated wall of chaos old,

With blocks Cyclopean hewn of solid night,
 Fade like a wreath of unreturning mist²⁶¹
 Before the irreversible feet of light;—
 And lo, with what clear omen in the east
 On day's gray threshold stands the eager
 dawn,
 Like young Leander rosy from the sea
 Glowing at Hero's lattice!

One day more
 These muttering shoalbrains leave the
 helm to me:
 God, let me not in their dull ooze be
 stranded;
 Let not this one frail bark, to hollow
 which
 I have dug out the pith and sinewy heart
 Of my aspiring life's fair trunk, be so²⁷¹
 Cast up to warp and blacken in the sun,
 Just as the opposing wind 'gins whistle off
 His cheek-swollen pack, and from the lean-
 ing mast
 Fortune's full sail strains forward!

One poor day! —
 Remember whose and not how short it is!
 It is God's day, it is Columbus's.
 A lavish day! One day, with life and
 heart,²⁷⁸
 Is more than time enough to find a world.
 1844. (1847.)¹

THE PRESENT CRISIS²

WHEN a deed is done for Freedom, through
 the broad earth's aching breast
 Runs a thrill of joy prophetic, trembling
 on from east to west,

¹ Lowell's *Poems, Second Series*, dated 1848, was really published in 1847.

² Written when the annexation of Texas was being discussed, but universal in its application.
 For twenty years the solemn monitory music of this poem never ceased to récho in public halls. In the Lowell Memorial Address which George William Curtis delivered before the Brooklyn Institute, February 22, 1892, he said in his heightened way of some passages of 'The Present Crisis': 'Wendell Phillips winged with their music and tipped with their flame the dart of his fervid appeal and manly scorn. As he quoted them with suppressed emotion in his low, melodious, penetrating voice, the white plume of the resistless Navarre of eloquence gained a loftier grace, that relentless sword of invective a more flashing edge.' And the stanza of 'The Present Crisis' beginning 'For humanity sweeps onward' was made by Sumner the text and motif of that famous 'Crime against Speech' oration that provoked the assault of Preston Brooks (Greenleaf's *Lowell*, pp. 79, 80.)

And the slave, where'er he cowers, feels
the soul within him climb
To the awful verge of manhood, as the
energy sublime
Of a century bursts full-blossomed on the
thorny stem of Time.

Through the walls of hut and palace shoots
the instantaneous throe,
When the travail of the Ages wrings
earth's systems to and fro;
At the birth of each new Era, with a recog-
nizing start,
Nation wildly looks at nation, standing
with mute lips apart,
And glad Truth's yet mightier man-child
leaps beneath the Future's heart. 10

So the Evil's triumph sendeth, with a ter-
ror and a chill,
Under continent to continent, the sense of
coming ill,
And the slave, where'er he cowers, feels
his sympathies with God
In hot tear-drops ebbing earthward, to be
drunk up by the sod,
Till a corpse crawls round unburied, delv-
ing in the nobler clod.

For mankind are one in spirit, and an in-
stinct bears along,
Round the earth's electric circle, the swift
flash of right or wrong;
Whether conscious or unconscious, yet Hu-
manity's vast frame
Through its ocean-sundered fibres feels the
gush of joy or shame; —
In the gain or loss of one race all the rest
have equal claim. 20

Once to every man and nation comes the
moment to decide,
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for
the good or evil side;
Some great cause, God's new Messiah,
offering each the bloom or blight,
Parts the goats upon the left hand, and the
sheep upon the right,
And the choice goes by forever 'twixt that
darkness and that light.

Hast thou chosen, O my people, on whose
party thou shalt stand,
Ere the Doom from its worn sandals shakes
the dust against our land?

Though the cause of Evil prosper, yet 't is
Truth alone is strong,
And, albeit she wander outcast now, I see
around her throng
Troops of beautiful, tall angels, to enshield
her from all wrong. 30

Backward look across the ages and the
beacon-moments see,
That, like peaks of some sunk continent,
jut through Oblivion's sea;
Not an ear in court or market for the low
foreboding cry
Of those Crises, God's stern winnowers,
from whose feet earth's chaff must
fly;
Never shows the choice momentous till the
judgment bath passed by.

Careless seems the great Avenger; history's
pages but record
One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt
old systems and the Word;
Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong for-
ever on the throne, —
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, be-
hind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping
watch above his own. 40

We see dimly in the Present what is small
and what is great,
Slow of faith how weak an arm may turn
the iron helm of fate,
But the soul is still oracular; amid the
market's din,
List the ominous stern whisper from the
Delphic cave within, —
'They enslave their children's children who
make compromise with sin.'

Slavery, the earth-born Cyclops, fellest of
the giant brood,
Sons of brutish Force and Darkness, who
have drenched the earth with blood,
Famished in his self-made desert, blinded
by our purer day,
Gropes in yet unblasted regions for his
miserable prey; —
Shall we guide his gory fingers where our
helpless children play? 50

Then to side with Truth is noble when we
share her wretched crust,

Ere her cause bring fame and profit, and
't is prosperous to be just;
Then it is the brave man chooses, while the
coward stands aside,
Doubting in his abject spirit, till his Lord
is crucified,
And the multitude make virtue of the faith
they had denied.

Count me o'er earth's chosen heroes, —
they were souls that stood alone,
While the men they agonized for hurled
the contumelious stone,
Stood serene, and down the future saw the
golden beam incline
To the side of perfect justice, mastered by
their faith divine,
By one man's plain truth to manhood and
to God's supreme design. 60

By the light of burning heretics Christ's
bleeding feet I track,
Toiling up new Calvaries ever with the
cross that turns not back,
And these mounts of anguish number how
each generation learned
One new word of that grand *Credo* which
in prophet-hearts hath burned
Since the first man stood God-conquered
with his face to heaven upturned.

For Humanity sweeps onward: where to-
day the martyr stands,
On the morrow crouches Judas with the
silver in his hands;
Far in front the cross stands ready and the
crackling fagots burn,
While the hooting mob of yesterday in
silent awe return
To glean up the scattered ashes into His-
tory's golden urn. 70

'T is as easy to be heroes as to sit the idle
slaves
Of a legendary virtue carved upon our
father's graves,
Worshippers of light ancestral make the
present light a crime; —
Was the Mayflower launched by cowards,
steered by men behind their time?
Turn those tracks toward Past or Future,
that make Plymouth Rock sublime?

They were men of present valor, stalwart
old iconoclasts,

Unconvinced by axe or gibbet that all vir-
tue was the Past's;
But we make their truth our falsehood,
thinking that hath made us free,
Hoarding it in mouldy parchments, while
our tender spirits flee
The rude grasp of that great Impulse which
drove them across the sea. 80

They have rights who dare maintain them;
we are traitors to our sires,
Smothering in their holy ashes Freedom's
new-lit altar-fires;
Shall we make their creed our jailer?
Shall we, in our haste to slay,
From the tombs of the old prophets steal
the funeral lamps away
To light up the martyr-fagots round the
prophets of to-day?

New occasions teach new duties; Time
makes ancient good uncouth;
They must upward still, and onward, who
would keep abreast of Truth;
Lo, before us gleam her camp-fires! we
ourselves must Pilgrims be,
Launch our Mayflower, and steer boldly
through the desperate winter sea,
Nor attempt the Future's portal with the
Past's blood-rusted key. 90
December, 1844. 1845.

A CONTRAST

Thy love thou sentest oft to me,
And still as oft I thrust it back;
Thy messengers I could not see
In those who everything did lack,
The poor, the outcast and the black.

Pride held his hand before mine eyes,
The world with flattery stuffed mine
ears;
I looked to see a monarch's guise,
Nor dreamed thy love would knock for
years,
Poor, naked, fettered, full of tears.

Yet, when I sent my love to thee,
Thou with a smile didst take it in,
And entertain'dst it royally,
Though grimed with earth, with hunger
thin,
And leprous with the taint of sin.

Now every day thy love I meet,
As o'er the earth it wanders wide,
With weary step and bleeding feet,
Still knocking at the heart of pride
And offering grace, though still denied.

1845.

AN INDIAN-SUMMER REVERIE ¹

WHAT visionary tints the year puts on,
When falling leaves falter through motionless air
Or humbly cling and shiver to be gone!
How shimmer the low flats and pastures bare,
As with her nectar Hebe Autumn fills
The bowl between me and those distant hills,
And smiles and shakes abroad her misty,
tremulous hair!

No more the landscape holds its wealth apart,
Making me poorer in my poverty,
But mingles with my senses and my heart;
My own projected spirit seems to me
In her own reverie the world to steep;
'T is she that waves to sympathetic sleep,
Moving, as she is moved, each field and hill
and tree.

How fuse and mix, with what unfelt degrees,
Clasped by the faint horizon's languid arms,
Each into each, the hazy distances!
The softened season all the landscape charms;
Those hills, my native village that embay,
In waves of dreamier purple roll away,
And floating in mirage seem all the glimmering farms.

Far distant sounds the hidden chickadee
Close at my side; far distant sound the leaves;

¹ The reader familiar with Lowell's life will readily recognize the local references which occur in this poem. To others it may be worth while to point out that the village smithy is the same as that commemorated by Longfellow, that Allston lived in the section of Cambridge known as Cambridgeport, that some of the old willows at the causeway and still stand, and that the group is the one which gave the name to *Under the Willows*. (Cambridge Edition of Lowell's Poetical Works.)

The fields seem fields of dream, where
Memory
Wanders like gleanings Ruth; and as the sheaves
Of wheat and barley wavered in the eye
Of Boaz as the maiden's glow went by,
So tremble and seem remote all things the sense receives.

The cock's shrill trump that tells of scattered corn,
Passed breezily on by all his flapping mates,
Faint and more faint, from barn to barn is borne,
Southward, perhaps to far Magellan's Straits;
Dimly I catch the throb of distant flails;
Silently overhead the hen-hawk sails,
With watchful, measuring eye, and for his quarry waits.

The sobered robin, hunger-silent now,
Seeks cedar-berries blue, his autumn cheer;
The chipmunk, on the shingly shagbark's bough
Now saws, now lists with downward eye and ear,
Then drops his nut, and, cheeping, with a bound
Whisks to his winding fastness underground;
The clouds like swans drift down the streaming atmosphere.

O'er yon bare knoll the pointed cedar shadows
Drowse on the crisp, gray moss; the ploughman's call
Creeps faint as smoke from black, fresh-furrowed meadows;
The single crow a single caw lets fall;
And all around me every bush and tree
Says Autumn's here, and Winter soon will be,
Who snows his soft, white sleep and silence over all.

The birch, most shy and ladylike of trees,
Her poverty, as best she may, retrieves,
And hints at her foregone gentilities
With some saved relics of her wealth of leaves;
The swamp-oak, with his royal purple on,

Glares red as blood across the sinking sun,
As one who prouder to a falling fortune cleaves.

He looks a sagem, in red blanket wrapt,
Who, 'mid some council of the sad-garbed whites,
Erect and stern, in his own memories lapt,
With distant eye broods over other sights,
Sees the hushed wood the city's flare replace,
The wounded turf heal o'er the railway's trace,
And roams the savage Past of his undwindled rights.

The red-oak, softer-grained, yields all for lost,
And, with his crumpled foliage stiff and dry,
After the first betrayal of the frost,
Rebuffs the kiss of the relenting sky;
The chestnuts, lavish of their long-hid gold,
To the faint Summer, beggared now and old,
Pour back the sunshine hoarded 'neath her favoring eye.

The ash her purple drops forgivingly
And sadly, breaking not the general hush;
The maple-swamps glow like a sunset sea,
Each leaf a ripple with its separate flush;
All round the wood's edge creeps the skirting blaze
Of bushes low, as when, on cloudy days,
Ere the rain fall, the cautious farmer burns his brush.

O'er yon low wall, which guards one unkempt zone,
Where vines and weeds and scrub-oaks intertwine
Safe from the plough, whose rough, discordant stone
Is massed to one soft gray by lichens fine,
The tangled blackberry, crossed and recrossed, weaves
A prickly network of ensanguined leaves;
Hard by, with coral beads, the prim black-alders shine.

Pillaring with flame this crumbling boundary,
Whose loose blocks topple 'neath the plough-boy's foot,
Who, with each sense shut fast except the eye,
Creeps close and scares the jay he hoped to shoot,
The woodbine up the elm's straight stem aspires,
Coiling it, harmless, with autumnal fires;
In the ivy's paler blaze the martyr oak stands mute.

Below, the Charles, a stripe of nether sky,
Now hid by rounded apple-trees between,
Whose gaps the misplaced sail sweeps bellying by,
Now flickering golden through a woodland screen,
Then spreading out, at his next turn beyond,
A silver circle like an inland pond—
Slips seaward silently through marshes purple and green.

Dear marshes! vain to him the gift of sight
Who cannot in their various incomes share,
From every season drawn, of shade and light,
Who sees in them but levels brown and bare;
Each change of storm or sunshine scatters free
On them its largess of variety,
For Nature with cheap means still works her wonders rare.

In Spring they lie one broad expanse of green,
O'er which the light winds run with glimmering feet:
Here, yellower stripes track out the creek unseen,
There, darker growths o'er hidden ditches meet;
And purpler stains show where the blossoms crowd,
As if the silent shadow of a cloud
Hung there becalmed, with the next breath to fleet.

All round, upon the river's slippery edge,
Witching to deeper calm the drowsy tide,
Whispers and leans the breeze-entangling
sedge;
Through emerald glooms the lingering
waters slide,
Or, sometimes wavering, throw back the
sun,
And the stiff banks in eddies melt and run
Of dimpling light, and with the current
seem to glide.

In Summer 't is a blithesome sight to
see,¹²⁰
As, step by step, with measured swing, they
pass,
The wide-ranked mowers wading to the
knee,
Their sharp scythes panting through the
wiry grass;
Then, stretched beneath a rick's shade in
a ring,
Their nooning take, while one begins to
sing
A stave that droops and dies 'neath the
close sky of brass.

Meanwhile that devil-may-care, the bobo-
link,
Remembering duty, in mid-quaver stops
Just ere he sweeps o'er rapture's tremu-
lous brink,
And 'twixt the winrows most demurely
drops,¹³⁰
A decorous bird of business, who provides
For his brown mate and fledglings six
besides,
And looks from right to left, a farmer 'mid
his crops.

Another change subdues them in the Fall,
But saddens not; they still show merrier
tints,
Though sober russet seems to cover all;
When the first sunshine through their dew-
drops glints,
Look how the yellow clearness, streamed
across,
Redeems with rarer hues the season's
loss,
As Dawn's feet there had touched and left
their rosy prints.¹⁴⁰

Or come when sunset gives its freshened
zest,

Lean o'er the bridge and let the ruddy
thrill,
While the shorn sun swells down the hazy
west,
Glow opposite;— the marshes drink their
fill
And swoon with purple veins, then slowly
fade
Through pink to brown, as eastward
moves the shade,
Lengthening with stealthy creep, of Si-
mond's darkening hill.

Later, and yet ere Winter wholly shuts,
Ere through the first dry snow the runner
grates,
And the loath cart-wheel screams in
slippery ruts,¹⁵⁰
While firmer ice the eager boy awaits,
Trying each buckle and strap beside the
fire,
And until bedtime plays with his desire,
Twenty times putting on and off his new-
bought skates;—

Then, every morn, the river's banks shine
bright
With smooth plate-armor, treacherous and
frail,
By the frost's clinking hammers forged
at night,
'Gainst which the lances of the sun prevail,
Giving a pretty emblem of the day
When guiltier arms in light shall melt
away,¹⁶⁰
And states shall move free-limbed, loosed
from war's cramping mail.

And now those waterfalls the ebbing
river
Twice every day creates on either side
Tinkle, as through their fresh-sparred
grots they shiver
In grass-arched channels to the sun denied;
High flaps in sparkling blue the far-
heard crow,
The silvered flats gleam frostily below,
Suddenly drops the gull and breaks the
glassy tide.

But crowned in turn by vying seasons
three,
Their winter halo hath a fuller ring;¹⁷⁰
This glory seems to rest immovably, —

The others were too fleet and vanishing;
When the hid tide is at its highest flow,
O'er marsh and stream one breathless
trance of snow
With brooding fulness awes and hushes
everything.

The sunshine seems blown off by the bleak
wind,
As pale as formal candles lit by day;
Gropes to the sea the river dumb and
blind;
The brown ricks, snow-thatched by the
storm in play,
Show pearly breakers combing o'er their
lee,¹⁸⁰
White crests as of some just enchanted
sea,
Checked in their maddest leap and hanging
poised midway.

But when the eastern blow, with rain
aslant,
From mid-sea's prairies green and rolling
plains
Drives in his wallowing herds of billows
gaunt,
And the roused Charles remembers in his
veins
Old Ocean's blood and snaps his gyves of
frost,
That tyrannous silence on the shores is
tost
In dreary wreck, and crumbling desolation
reigns.

Edgewise or flat, in Druid-like device,¹⁹⁰
With leaden pools between or gullies
bare,
The blocks lie strewn, a bleak Stonehenge
of ice;
No life, no sound, to break the grim de-
spair,
Save sullen plunge, as through the sedges
stiff
Down crackles riverward some thaw-
sapped cliff,
Or when the close-wedged fields of ice
crunch here and there.

But let me turn from fancy-pictured
scenes
To that whose pastoral calm before me lies:
Here nothing harsh or rugged inter-
venes;

The early evening with her misty dyes²⁰⁰
Smooths off the ravelled edges of the
nigh,
Relieves the distant with her cooler sky,
And tones the landscape down, and soothes
the wearied eyes.

There gleams my native village, dear to
me,
Though higher change's waves each day
are seen,
Whelming fields famed in boyhood's his-
tory,
Sanding with houses the diminished
green;
There, in red brick, which softening time
defies,
Stand square and stiff the Muses' fac-
tories;—
How with my life knit up is every well-
known scene!²¹⁰

Flow on, dear river! not alone you flow
To outward sight, and through your marshes
wind;
Fed from the mystic springs of long-
ago,
Your twin flows silent through my world
of mind:¹
Grow dim, dear marshes, in the evening's
gray!
Before my inner sight ye stretch away,
And will forever, though these fleshly eyes
grow blind.

Beyond the hillock's house-bespotted
swell,
Where Gothic chapels house the horse and
chaise,
Where quiet cits in Grecian temples
dwell,²²⁰
Where Coptic tombs resound with prayer
and praise,
Where dust and mud the equal year di-
vide,
There gentle Allston lived, and wrought,
and died,
Transfiguring street and shop with his illu-
minated gaze.

Virgilium vidi tantum, — I have seen
But as a boy, who looks alike on all,
That misty hair, that fine Undine-like
mien,

¹ Compare Emerson's 'Two Rivers,' p. 87.

Tremulous as down to feeling's faintest
call;—
Ah, dear old homestead! count it to thy
fame
That thither many times the Painter
came;—
One elm yet bears his name, a feathery tree
and tall.

Swiftly the present fades in memory's
glow,—
Our only sure possession is the past;
The village blacksmith died a month ago,
And dim to me the forge's roaring blast;
Soon fire-new mediævals we shall see
Oust the black smithy from its chestnut-
tree,
And that hewn down, perhaps, the beehive
green and vast.¹

How many times, prouder than king on
throne,
Loosed from the village school-dame's A's
and B's,
Panting have I the creaky bellows blown,
And watched the pent volcano's red in-
crease,
Then paused to see the ponderous sledge,
brought down
By that hard arm voluminous and brown,
From the white iron swarm its golden van-
ishing bees.

Dear native town! whose choking elms
each year
With eddying dust before their time turn
gray,
Pining for rain,—to me thy dust is dear;
It glorifies the eve of summer day,
And when the westering sun half sunken
burns,
The mote-thick air to deepest orange
turns,
The westward horseman rides through
clouds of gold away,

So palpable, I've seen those unshorn few,
The six old willows at the causey's end
(Such trees Paul Potter never dreamed
nor drew),
Through this dry mist their checkering
shadows send,

¹ The tree was cut down by the city authorities in 1876. See the note on Longfellow's 'Village Blacksmith,' p. 108.

Striped, here and there, with many a
long-drawn thread,
Where streamed through leafy chinks the
trembling red,
Past which, in one bright trail, the hang-
bird's flashes blend.

Yes, dearer far thy dust than all that
e'er,
Beneath the awarded crown of victory,
Gilded the blown Olympic charioteer;
Though lightly prized the ribboned parch-
ments three,
Yet *collegisse juvat*, I am glad
That here what colleging was mine I
had,—
It linked another tie, dear native town, with
thee!

Nearer art thou than simply native earth,
My dust with thine concedes a deeper tie;
A closer claim thy soil may well put
forth,
Something of kindred more than sympa-
thy;
For in thy bounds I reverently laid away
That blinding anguish of forsaken clay,
That title I seemed to have in earth and
sea and sky,

That portion of my life more choice to
me
(Though brief, yet in itself so round and
whole)
Than all the imperfect residue can be;—
The Artist saw his statue of the soul
Was perfect; so, with one regretful
stroke,
The earthen model into fragments broke,
And without her the impoverished seasons
roll.
1847. 1847.

HEBE

I SAW the twinkle of white feet,
I saw the flash of robes descending;
Before her ran an influence fleet,
That bowed my heart like barley bending

As, in bare fields, the searching bees
Pilot to blooms beyond our finding,
It led me on, by sweet degrees
Joy's simple honey-cells unbinding.

Those Graces were that seemed grim
Fates;
With nearer love the sky leaned o'er me;
The long-sought Secret's golden gates
On musical hinges swung before me.

I saw the brimmed bowl in her grasp
Thrilling with godhood; like a lover
I sprang the proffered life to clasp;—
The beaker fell; the luck was over.

The Earth has drunk the vintage up;
What boots it patch the goblet's splinters?
Can Summer fill the icy cup,
Whose treacherous crystal is but Winter's?

O spendthrift haste! await the Gods;
The nectar crowns the lips of Patience;
Haste scatters on unthankful sods
The immortal gift in vain libations.

Coy Hebe flies from those that woo,
And shuns the hands would seize upon
her;
Follow thy life, and she will sue
To pour for thee the cup of honor.

1847.

THE CHANGELING¹

I HAD a little daughter,
And she was given to me
To lead me gently backward
To the Heavenly Father's knee,
That I, by the force of nature,
Might in some dim wise divine
The depth of his infinite patience
To this wayward soul of mine.

I know not how others saw her,
But to me she was wholly fair,
And the light of the heaven she came
from
Still lingered and gleamed in her hair;
For it was as wavy and golden,
And as many changes took,
As the shadows of sun-gilt ripples
On the yellow bed of a brook.

To what can I liken her smiling
Upon me, her kneeling lover,

¹ Lowell's first child, Blanche, was born December 31, 1845, and died March 19, 1847. The sorrow of her loss was softened by the birth of a second daughter in the autumn of 1847. See 'The First Snow-Fall.'

How it leaped from her lips to her eye-
lids,
And dimpled her wholly over,
Till her outstretched hands smiled also,
And I almost seemed to see
The very heart of her mother
Sending sun through her veins to me!

She had been with us scarce a twelve-
month,
And it hardly seemed a day,
When a troop of wandering angels
Stole my little daughter away;
Or perhaps those heavenly Zingari
But loosed the hampering strings,
And when they had opened her cage-
door,
My little bird used her wings.

But they left in her stead a changeling,
A little angel child,
That seems like her bud in full blossom,
And smiles as she never smiled:
When I wake in the morning, I see it
Where she always used to lie,
And I feel as weak as a violet
Alone 'neath the awful sky.

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As weak, yet as trustful also;
For the whole year long I see
All the wonders of faithful Nature
Still worked for the love of me;
Winds wander, and dews drip earth-
ward,
Rain falls, suns rise and set,
Earth whirls, and all but to prosper
A poor little violet.

This child is not mine as the first was,
I cannot sing it to rest,
I cannot lift it up fatherly
And bliss it upon my breast:
Yet it lies in my little one's cradle
And sits in my little one's chair,
And the light of the heaven she's gone to
Transfigures its golden hair.

1847.

1847.

SHE CAME AND WENT

As a twig trembles, which a bird
Lights on to sing, then leaves unbent,
So is my memory thrilled and stirred;—
I only know she came and went.

As clasps some lake, by gusts unriven,
The blue dome's measureless content,
So my soul held that moment's heaven;—
I only know she came and went.

As, at one bound, our swift spring heaps
The orchards full of bloom and scent,
So clove her May my wintry sleeps;—
I only know she came and went.

An angel stood and met my gaze,
Through the low doorway of my tent;
The tent is struck, the vision stays;—
I only know she came and went.

Oh, when the room grows slowly dim,
And life's last oil is nearly spent,
One gush of light these eyes will brim,
Only to think she came and went.

1847?

(1849.)

'I THOUGHT OUR LOVE AT
FULL, BUT I DID ERR'

I THOUGHT our love at full, but I did err;
Joy's wreath drooped o'er mine eyes; I
could not see

That sorrow in our happy world must be
Love's deepest spokesman and interpreter:
But, as a mother feels her child first stir
Under her heart, so felt I instantly
Deep in my soul another bond to thee
Thrill with that life we saw depart from her;
O mother of our angel child! twice dear!
Death knits as well as parts, and still, I wis,
Her tender radiance shall infold us here,
Even as the light, borne up by inward bliss,
Threads the void glooms of space without
a fear,

To print on farthest stars her pitying kiss.

(1849.)

THE BIGLOW PAPERS¹

FIRST SERIES

No. I

A LETTER²

FROM MR. EZEKIEL BIGLOW OF JAALAM
TO THE HON. JOSEPH T. BUCKINGHAM,
EDITOR OF THE BOSTON COURIER, IN-
CLOSING A POEM OF HIS SON, MR.
HOSEA BIGLOW

JAYLEM, June 1846.

MISTER EDDYTER, — Our Hosea wuz
down to Boston last week, and he see a

¹ Cumberland in his *Memoirs* tells us that when, in the midst of Admiral Rodney's great sea-fight, Sir Charles Douglas said to him, 'Behold, Sir George, the Greeks and Trojans contending for the body of Patroclus!' the Admiral answered, peevishly, 'Damn the Greeks and damn the Trojans! I have other things to think of.' After the battle was won, Rodney thus to Sir Charles, 'Now, my dear friend, I am at the service of your Greeks and Trojans, and the whole of Homer's *Iliad*, or as much of it as you please!' I had some such feeling of the impertinence of our pseudo-classicality when I chose our homely dialect to work in. Should we be nothing, because somebody had contrived to be something (and that perhaps in a provincial dialect) ages ago? and be nothing by our very attempt to be that something, which they had already been, and which therefore nobody could be again without being a bore? Is there no way left, then, I thought, of being natural, of being *naïf*, which means nothing more than native, of belonging to the age and country in which you are born? The Yankee, at least, is a new phenomenon; let us try to be *that*. . . . To me the dialect was native, was spoken all about me when a boy, at a time when an Irish day-laborer was as rare as an Ameri-

cruetin Sarjunt a struttin round as popler
as a hen with 1 chicking, with 2 fellers a

can one now. Since then I have made a study of it so far as opportunity allowed. But when I write in it, it is as in a mother tongue, and I am carried back far beyond any studies of it to long-ago nooning in my father's hay-fields, and to the talk of Sam and Job over their jug of *blackstrap* under the shadow of the ash-tree which still dapples the grass whence they have been gone so long. (LOWELL, in the 'Introduction' to the *Biglow Papers*, 1866.)

I only know that I believed our war with Mexico (though we had as just ground for it as a strong nation ever has against a weak one) to be essentially a war of false pretences, and that it would result in widening the boundaries and so prolonging the life of slavery. . . . Against these and many other things I thought all honest men should protest. I was born and bred in the country, and the dialect was homely to me. I tried my first *Biglow Paper* in a newspaper, and found that it had a great run. So I wrote the others from time to time during the year which followed, always very rapidly, and sometimes (as with 'What Mr. Robinson thinks') at one sitting.

When I came to collect them and publish them in a volume, I conceived my parson-editor with his pedantry and verbosity, his amiable vanity and superiority to the verses he was editing, as a fitting artistic background and soil. It gave me the chance, too, of glancing obliquely at many things which were beyond the horizon of my other characters. (LOWELL, in a letter on the first series of the *Biglow Papers*, September 13, 1859, to Thomas Hughes, who was planning an English reprint of them. *Lowell's Letters*, vol. i, pp. 296, 297. Quoted by the kind permission of Messrs. Harper & Bros.) On the political effect of the *Biglow Papers*, see Greenslet's *Lowell*, pp. 84-86.

² The act of May 13, 1846, authorized President Polk to employ the militia, and call out 50,000 volunteers, if

drummin and fifin arter him like all nater.
the sarjunt he thout Hosea hed n't gut his
i teeth cut cos he looked a kindo's though
he'd jest com down, so he cal'lated to hook
him in, but Hosity wood n't take none o' his
sarse for all he hed much as 20 Rooster's
tales stuck onto his hat and eenamost enuf
brass a bobbin up and down on his shoul-
ders and figureed onto his coat and trousis,
let alone wut nater hed sot in his featers,
to make a 6 pounder out on.

wal, Hosea he com home considerabal
riled, and arter I'd gone to bed I heern
Him a thrashin round like a short-tailed
Bull in fi-time. The old Woman ses she
to me ses she, Zekle, ses she, our Hosee's
gut the chollery o' suthin anuther ses she,
don't you Bee skeered, ses I, he's oney
amakin pottery¹ ses i, he's ollers on hand
at that ere busynes like Da & martin, and
shure enuf, cum mornin, Hosity he cum down
stares full chizzle, hare on eend and cote
tales flyin, and sot rite of to go reed his
varses to Parson Wilbur bein he haint aney
grate shows o' book larin himself, bimeby
he cum back and sed the parson wuz drefle
tickled with 'em as i hoop you will Be, and
said they wuz True grit.

Hosea ses taint hardly fair to call 'em
hisn now, cos the parson kind o' slied off
sum o' the last varses, but he told Hosee
he did n't want to put his ore in to tetch
to the Rest on 'em, bein they wuz verry well
As thay wuz, and then Hosity ses he sed
suthin a nuther about Simplex Mundishes
or sum sech feller, but I guess Hosea kind
o' did n't hear him, for I never hearn o'
nobody o' that name in this villadge, and
I've lived here man and boy 76 year cum
next tater diggin, and thair aint no wheres
a kitting spryer 'n I be.

necessary. He immediately called for the full number of volunteers, asking Massachusetts for 777 men. On May 26 Governor Briggs issued a proclamation for the enrolment of the regiment. As the President's call was merely a request and not an order, many Whigs and the Abolitionists were for refusing it. *The Liberator* for June 5 severely censured the governor for complying, and accused him of not carrying out the resolutions of the last Whig Convention, which had pledged the party to present as firm a front of opposition to the institution as was consistent with their allegiance to the Constitution.' (Note by Mr. Frank Beverly Williams, in the *Riverside and Cambridge Editions of Lowell's Poetical Works*.)

¹ *Aut insanit, aut versos facit.* — H. W. (The comments signed H. W. are made by the Rev. Homer Wilbur, A. M., pastor of the First Church in Jaalam, who edits the poems of his young parishioner Hosea Biglow.)

If you print 'em I wish you'd jest let
folks know who hosity's father is, cos my ant
Keziah used to say it's nater to be curus
ses she, she aint livin though and he's
a likely kind o' lad.

EZEKIEL BIGLOW.

THRASH away, you'll hev to rattle
On them kittle-drums o' yourn,—
'T aint a knowin' kind o' cattle
Thet is ketched with mouldy corn;
Put in stiff, you fifer feller,
Let folks see how spry you be,—
Guess you'll toot till you are yellor
'Fore you git ahold o' me!

'Thet air flag's a leetle rotten,
Hope it aint your Sunday's best;—
Fact! it takes a sight o' cotton
To stuff out a soger's chest:
Sence we farmers hev to pay fer 't,
Ef you must wear humps like these,
S'posin' you should try salt hay fer 't,
It would du ez slick ez grease.

'T would n't suit them Southun fellers,
They're a drefle graspin' set,
We must ollers blow the bellers
Wen they want their irons het;
May be it's all right ez preachin',
But my narves it kind o' grates,
Wen I see the overreachin'
O' them nigger-drivin' States.

Them thet rule us, them slave-traders,
Haint they cut a thunderin' swarth
(Helped by Yankee renegaders),
Thru the vartu o' the North!
We begin to think it's nater
To take sarse an' not be riled;—
Who'd expect to see a tater
All on eend at bein' biled?

Ez fer war, I call it murder,—
There you hev it plain an' flat;
I don't want to go no furdur
Than my Testyment fer that;
God hez sed so plump an' fairly,
It's ez long ez it is broad,
An' you've gut to git up airly
Ef you want to take in God.

'T aint your eppyletts an' feathers
Make the thing a grain more right;