

## XII

Bow down, dear Land, for thou hast found  
release!

Thy God, in these distempered days,  
Hath taught thee the sure wisdom of  
His ways,  
And through thine enemies hath wrought  
thy peace!

Bow down in prayer and praise! 410  
No poorest in thy borders but may now  
Lift to the juster skies a man's enfran-  
chised brow.

O Beautiful! my country! ours once  
more!

Smoothing thy gold of war-dishevelled hair  
O'er such sweet brows as never other wore,  
And letting thy set lips,

Freed from wrath's pale eclipse,  
The rosy edges of their smile lay bare,  
What words divine of lover or of poet  
Could tell our love and make thee know it,  
Among the Nations bright beyond com-  
pare?

What were our lives without thee? 421  
What all our lives to save thee?  
We reckon not what we gave thee;  
We will not dare to doubt thee,  
But ask whatever else, and we will dare!

1865.

1865.

## THE MINER

Down 'mid the tangled roots of things  
That coil about the central fire,  
I seek for that which giveth wings  
To stoop, not soar, to my desire.

Sometimes I hear, as 't were a sigh,  
The sea's deep yearning far above,  
'Thou hast the secret not,' I cry,  
'In deeper deeps is hid my Love.'

They think I burrow from the sun,  
In darkness, all alone, and weak; 10  
Such loss were gain if He were won,  
For 't is the sun's own Sun I seek.

'The earth,' they murmur, 'is the tomb  
That vainly sought his life to prison;  
Why grovel longer in the gloom?  
He is not here; he hath arisen.'

More life for me where he hath lain  
Hidden while ye believed him dead,

Than in cathedrals cold and vain,  
Built on loose sands of *It is said.* 20

My search is for the living gold;  
Him I desire who dwells recluse,  
And not his image worn and old,  
Day-servant of our sordid use.

If him I find not, yet I find  
The ancient joy of cell and church,  
The glimpse, the surety undefined,  
The unquenched ardor of the search.

Happier to chase a flying goal  
Than to sit counting laurelled gains,  
To guess the Soul within the soul 31  
Than to be lord of what remains.

Hide still, best Good, in subtle wise,  
Beyond my nature's utmost scope;  
Be ever absent from mine eyes  
To be twice present in my hope!

1866.

TO H. W. L.<sup>1</sup>

ON HIS BIRTHDAY, 27TH FEBRUARY, 1867

I NEED not praise the sweetness of his song,  
Where limpid verse to limpid verse suc-  
ceeds

Smooth as our Charles, when, fearing lest  
he wrong  
The new moon's mirrored skiff, he slides  
along,  
Full without noise, and whispers in his  
reeds.

With loving breath of all the winds his  
name  
Is blown about the world, but to his  
friends

A sweeter secret hides behind his fame,  
And Love steals shyly through the loud  
acclaim  
To murmur a *God bless you!* and there  
ends. 10

<sup>1</sup> See Lowell's letter sent with these verses, Febru-  
ary 27, 1867, in the *Letters*, vol. i, pp. 378, 379. In this  
letter a stanza was added to the poem:—

A gift of symbol-flowers I meant to bring,  
White for thy candor, for thy kindness red;  
But Nature here denies them to the Spring,  
And in forced blooms an odorous warmth will cling  
Not artless: take this bunch of verse instead.

(*Life of Longfellow*, vol. iii, p. 84.)

As I muse backward up the checkered years  
Wherein so much was given, so much was  
lost,

Blessings in both kinds, such as cheapen  
tears,—  
But hush! this is not for profaner ears;  
Let them drink molten pearls nor dream  
the cost.

Some suck up poison from a sorrow's core,  
As naught but nightshade grew upon  
earth's ground;  
Love turned all his to heart's-ease, and the  
more  
Fate tried his bastions, she but forced a door  
Leading to sweeter manhood and more  
sound. 20

Even as a wind-waved fountain's swaying  
shade  
Seems of mixed race, a gray wraith shot  
with sun,  
So through his trial faith translucent rayed  
Till darkness, half disnatured so, betrayed  
A heart of sunshine that would fain o'er-  
run.

Surely if skill in song the shears may stay  
And of its purpose cheat the charmed  
abyss,  
If our poor life be lengthened by a lay,  
He shall not go, although his presence may,  
And the next age in praise shall double  
this. 30

Long days be his, and each as lusty-sweet  
As gracious natures find his song to be;  
May Age steal on with softly-cadenced feet  
Falling in music, as for him were meet  
Whose choicest verse is harsher-toned  
than he!

1867.

THE NIGHTINGALE IN THE  
STUDY<sup>1</sup>

'COME forth!' my catbird calls to me,  
'And hear me sing a cavatina

<sup>1</sup> I have not felt in the mood to do much during my  
imprisonment. One little poem I have written, 'The  
Nightingale in the Study.' . . . 'T is a dialogue between  
my catbird and me—he calling me out of doors, I giv-  
ing my better reasons for staying within. Of course  
my nightingale is Calderon. (LOWELL, in a letter to  
Professor C. E. Norton, July 8, 1867. *Lowell's Letters*,  
Harper and Brothers, vol. i, p. 390.)

That, in this old familiar tree,  
Shall hang a garden of Alcina.

'These buttercups shall brim with wine  
Beyond all Lesbian juice or Massie;  
May not New England be divine?  
My ode to ripening summer classic?

'Or, if to me you will not hark,  
By Beaver Brook a thrush is ringing 10  
Till all the alder-coverts dark  
Seem sunshine-dappled with his singing.

'Come out beneath the unmastered sky,  
With its emancipating spaces,  
And learn to sing as well as I,  
Without premeditated graces.

'What boot your many-volumed gains,  
Those withered leaves forever turning,  
To win, at best, for all your pains,  
A nature mummy-wrapt in learning? 20

'The leaves wherein true wisdom lies  
On living trees the sun are drinking;  
Those white clouds, drowsing through the  
skies,  
Grew not so beautiful by thinking.

'"Come out!" with me the oriole cries,  
Escape the demon that pursues you!  
And, hark, the cuckoo weatherwise,  
Still hiding farther onward, woos you.'

'Alas, dear friend, that, all my days,  
Hast poured from that syringa thicket 30  
The quaintly discontinuous lays  
To which I hold a season-ticket,

'A season-ticket cheaply bought  
With a dessert of pilfered berries,  
And who so oft my soul hast caught  
With morn and evening voluntaries,

'Deem me not faithless, if all day  
Among my dusty books I linger,  
No pipe, like thee, for June to play  
With fancy-led, half-conscious finger. 40

'A bird is singing in my brain  
And bubbling o'er with mingled fancies,  
Gay, tragic, rapt, right heart of Spain  
Fed with the sap of old romances.

'I ask no ampler skies than those  
His magic music rears above me,

No falsers friends, no truer foes, —  
And does not Doña Clara love me ?

'Cloaked shapes, a twanging of guitars,  
A rush of feet, and rapiers clashing, 50  
Then silence deep with breathless stars,  
And overhead a white hand flashing.

'O music of all moods and climes,  
Vengeful, forgiving, sensuous, saintly,  
Where still, between the Christian chimes,  
The Moorish cymbal tinkles faintly !

'O life borne lightly in the hand,  
For friend or foe with grace Castilian !  
O valley safe in Fancy's land,  
Not tramped to mud yet by the million !

'Bird of to-day, thy songs are stale 61  
To his, my singer of all weathers,  
My Calderon, my nightingale,  
My Arab soul in Spanish feathers.

'Ah, friend, these singers dead so long,  
And still, God knows, in purgatory,  
Give its best sweetness to all song,  
To Nature's self her better glory.' 1867. 1867.

#### AN EMBER PICTURE

How strange are the freaks of memory !  
The lessons of life we forget,  
While a trifle, a trick of color,  
In the wonderful web is set, —

Set by some mordant of fancy,  
And, spite of the wear and tear  
Of time or distance or trouble,  
Insists on its right to be there.

A chance had brought us together;  
Our talk was of matters-of-course; 10  
We were nothing, one to the other,  
But a short half-hour's resource.

We spoke of French acting and actors,  
And their easy, natural way:  
Of the weather, for it was raining  
As we drove home from the play.

We debated the social nothings  
We bore ourselves so to discuss;  
The thunderous rumors of battle  
Were silent the while for us. 20

Arrived at her door, we left her  
With a drippingly hurried adieu,  
And our wheels went crunching the gravel  
Of the oak-darkened avenue.

As we drove away through the shadow,  
The candle she held in the door  
From rain-varnished tree-trunk to tree-  
trunk  
Flashed fainter, and flashed no more; —

Flashed fainter, then wholly faded  
Before we had passed the wood; 30  
But the light of the face behind it  
Went with me and stayed for good.

The vision of scarce a moment,  
And hardly marked at the time,  
It comes unbidden to haunt me,  
Like a scrap of ballad-rhyme.

Had she beauty ? Well, not what they call 40  
so;  
You may find a thousand as fair;  
And yet there's her face in my memory  
With no special claim to be there.

As I sit sometimes in the twilight,  
And call back to life in the coals  
Old faces and hopes and fancies  
Long buried (good rest to their souls !),

Her face shines out in the embers;  
I see her holding the light,  
And hear the crunch of the gravel  
And the sweep of the rain that night.

'Tis a face that can never grow older,  
That never can part with its gleam, 50  
'Tis a gracious possession forever,  
For is it not all a dream ? 1867.

#### IN THE TWILIGHT

MEN say the sullen instrument,  
That, from the Master's bow,  
With pangs of joy or woe,  
Feels music's soul through every fibre sent  
Whispers the ravished strings  
More than he knew or meant;  
Old summers in its memory glow;  
The secrets of the wind it sings;  
It hears the April-loosened springs; 20

And mixes with its mood 10  
All it dreamed when it stood  
In the murmurous pine-wood  
Long ago !

The magical moonlight then  
Steeped every bough and cone;  
The roar of the brook in the glen  
Came dim from the distance blown;  
The wind through its glooms sang low,  
And it swayed to and fro  
With delight as it stood, 20  
In the wonderful wood,  
Long ago !

O my life, have we not had seasons  
That only said, Live and rejoice ?  
That asked not for causes and reasons,  
But made us all feeling and voice ?  
When we went with the winds in their  
blowing,  
When Nature and we were peers,  
And we seemed to share in the flowing  
Of the inexhaustible years ? 30  
Have we not from the earth drawn juices  
Too fine for earth's sordid uses ?  
Have I heard, have I seen  
All I feel, all I know ?  
Doth my heart overween ?  
Or could it have been  
Long ago ?

Sometimes a breath floats by me,  
An odor from Dreamland sent,  
That makes the ghost seem nigh me 40  
Of a splendor that came and went,  
Of a life lived somewhere, I know not  
In what diviner sphere,  
Of memories that stay not and go not,  
Like music heard once by an ear  
That cannot forget or reclaim it,  
A something so shy, it would shame it  
To make it a show,  
A something too vague, could I name it, 50  
For others to know,  
As if I had lived it or dreamed it,  
As if I had acted or schemed it,  
Long ago !

And yet, could I live it over,  
This life that stirs in my brain,  
Could I be both maiden and lover,  
Moon and tide, bee and clover,  
As I seem to have been, once again,  
Could I but speak it and show it,

This pleasure more sharp than pain, 60  
That baffles and lures me so,  
The world should once more have a poet,  
Such as it had  
In the ages glad,  
Long ago ! 1868.

#### FOR AN AUTOGRAPH

THOUGH old the thought and oft exprest,  
'Tis his at last who says it best, —  
I'll try my fortune with the rest.

Life is a leaf of paper white  
Whereon each one of us may write  
His word or two, and then comes night.

'Lo, time and space enough,' we cry,  
'To write an epic !' so we try.  
Our nibs upon the edge, and die.

Muse not which way the pen to hold,  
Luck hates the slow and loves the bold,  
Soon come the darkness and the cold.

Greatly begin ! though thou have time  
But for a line, be that sublime, —  
Not failure, but low aim, is crime.

Ah, with what lofty hope we came !  
But we forget it, dream of fame,  
And scrawl, as I do here, a name. (1868.)

#### THE FOOT-PATH

It mounts athwart the windy hill  
Through shallow slopes of upland bare,  
And Fancy climbs with foot-fall still  
Its narrowing curves that end in air.

By day, a warmer-hearted blue  
Stoops softly to that topmost swell;  
Its thread-like windings seem a clue  
To gracious climes where all is well.

By night, far yonder, I surmise  
An ampler world than clips my ken, 10  
Where the great stars of happier skies  
Commingle nobler fates of men.

I look and long, then haste me home,  
Still master of my secret rare;

Once tried, the path would end in Rome,  
But now it leads me everywhere.

Forever to the new it guides,  
From former good, old overmuch;  
What Nature for her poets hides,  
'T is wiser to divine than clutch. 20

The bird I list hath never come  
Within the scope of mortal ear;  
My prying step would make him dumb,  
And the fair tree, his shelter, sear.

Behind the hill, behind the sky,  
Behind my inmost thought, he sings;  
No feet avail; to hear it nigh,  
The song itself must lend the wings.

Sing on, sweet bird close hid, and raise  
Those angel stairways in my brain, 30  
That climb from these low-vaulted days  
To spacious sunshines far from pain.

Sing when thou wilt, enchantment fleet,  
I leave thy covert haunt untrod,  
And envy Science not her feat  
To make a twice-told tale of God.

They said the fairies tript no more,  
And long ago that Pan was dead;  
'T was but that fools preferred to bore  
Earth's rind inch-deep for truth instead.

Pan leaps and pipes all summer long, 41  
The fairies dance each full-mooned night,  
Would we but doff our lenses strong,  
And trust our wiser eyes' delight.

City of Elf-land, just without  
Our seeing, marvel ever new,  
Glimpsed in fair weather, a sweet doubt  
Sketched-in, mirage-like, on the blue,

I build thee in yon sunset cloud,  
Whose edge allures to climb the height;  
I hear thy drowned bells, inly-loud, 51  
From still pools dusk with dreams of night.

Thy gates are shut to hardest will,  
Thy countersign of long-lost speech,—  
Those fountained courts, those chambers still,  
Fronting Time's far East, who shall reach?

I know not, and will never pry,  
But trust our human heart for all;  
Wonders that from the seeker fly  
Into an open sense may fall. 60

Hide in thine own soul, and surprise  
The password of the unwary elves;  
Seek it, thou canst not bribe their spies;  
Unsought, they whisper it themselves. 1868.

## ALADDIN

WHEN I was a beggarly boy,  
And lived in a cellar damp,  
I had not a friend nor a toy,  
But I had Aladdin's lamp;  
When I could not sleep for the cold,  
I had fire enough in my brain, 30  
And builded, with roofs of gold,  
My beautiful castles in Spain!

Since then I have toiled day and night,  
I have money and power good store,  
But I'd give all my lamps of silver bright  
For the one that is mine no more;  
Take, Fortune, whatever you choose,  
You gave, and may snatch again;  
I have nothing 't would pain me to lose,  
For I own no more castles in Spain! 1853, 1868.

TO CHARLES ELIOT NORTON<sup>1</sup>

## AGRO DOLCE

THE wind is roistering out of doors,  
My windows shake and my chimney roars;  
My Elmwood chimneys seem crooning to  
me,  
As of old, in their moody, minor key,  
And out of the past the hoarse wind blows,  
As I sit in my arm-chair, and toast my toes.

'Ho! ho! nine-and-forty,' they seem to sing,  
'We saw you a little toddling thing.  
We knew you child and youth and man,  
A wonderful fellow to dream and plan, 10  
With a great thing always to come,— who knows?  
Well, well! 'tis some comfort to toast one's toes.

<sup>1</sup> Written as dedication of the volume *Under the Willows and other Poems*.

'How many times have you sat at gaze  
Till the mouldering fire forgot to blaze,  
Shaping among the whimsical coals  
Fancies and figures and shining goals!  
What matters the ashes that cover those?  
While hickory lasts you can toast your toes.

'O dream-ship-builder! where are they all,  
Your grand three-deckers, deep-chested  
and tall, 20  
That should crush the waves under canvas piles,  
And anchor at last by the Fortunate Isles?  
There's gray in your beard, the years turn foes,  
While you muse in your arm-chair, and toast your toes.'

I sit and dream that I hear, as of yore,  
My Elmwood chimneys' deep-throated  
roar;  
If much be gone, there is much remains;  
By the embers of loss I count my gains,  
You and yours with the best, till the old  
hope glows  
In the fanciful flame, as I toast my toes. 30

Instead of a fleet of broad-browed ships,  
To send a child's armada of chips!  
Instead of the great guns, tier on tier,  
A freight of pebbles and grass-blades  
sere!

'Well, maybe more love with the less gift  
goes,'  
I growl, as, half moody, I toast my toes. 1868. 1868.

AGASSIZ<sup>1</sup>

Come  
Dicesti egli ebbe? non viv' egli ancora?  
Non fiere gli occhi suoi lo dolce lome?

I

I

THE electric nerve, whose instantaneous  
thrill  
Makes next-door gossips of the antipodes,

<sup>1</sup> See Lowell's letters to Professor Charles Eliot Norton, February 2, and February 26, 1874, especially the second letter. Lowell was in Florence when Agassiz died. 'His death,' he says, 'came home to me in a singular way, growing into my consciousness from day to day as if it were a graft new-set, that by degrees became part of my own wood and drew a greater share of my sap than belonged to it, as grafts sometimes will.' (*Lowell's Letters*, Harper and Brothers, vol. II, pp. 115-116.) See also the references in note on p. 211.

Confutes poor Hope's last fallacy of ease,—  
The distance that divided her from ill:  
Earth sentient seems again as when of old  
The horny foot of Pan  
Stamped, and the conscious horror ran  
Beneath men's feet through all her fibres  
cold:

Space's blue walls are mined; we feel the  
throe  
From underground of our night-mantled  
foe: 10  
The flame-winged feet  
Of Trade's new Mercury, that dry-shod run  
Through briny abysses dreamless of the  
sun,

Are mercilessly fleet,  
And at a bound annihilate  
Ocean's prerogative of short reprieve;  
Surely ill news might wait,  
And man be patient of delay to grieve:  
Letters have sympathies  
And tell-tale faces that reveal, 20  
To senses finer than the eyes,  
Their errand's purport ere we break the  
seal;

They wind a sorrow round with circum-  
stance  
To stay its feet, nor all unwarned displace  
The veil that darkened from our sidelong  
glance

The inexorable face:  
But now Fate stuns as with a mace;  
The savage of the skies, that men have  
caught  
And some scant use of language  
taught,  
Tells only what he must,— 30  
The steel-cold fact in one laconic thrust.

2

So thought I, as, with vague, mechanic eyes,  
I scanned the festering news we half de-  
spise

Yet scramble for no less,  
And read of public scandal, private fraud,  
Crime flaunting scot-free while the mob  
applaud,  
Office made vile to bribe unworthiness,  
And all the unwholesome mess  
The Land of Honest Abraham serves of  
late

To teach the Old World how to wait,  
When suddenly, 41  
As happens if the brain, from overweight  
Of blood, infect the eye,

Three tiny words grew lurid as I read,  
And reeled commingling: *Agassiz is dead*.  
As when, beneath the street's familiar jar,  
An earthquake's alien omen rumbles far,  
Men listen and forebode, I hung my head,  
And strove the present to recall,  
As if the blow that stunned were yet to  
fall. 50

## 3

Uprooted is our mountain oak,  
That promised long security of shade  
And brooding-place for many a winged  
thought;  
Not by Time's softly-cadenced stroke  
With pauses of relenting pity stayed,  
But ere a root seemed sapt, a bough de-  
cayed,  
From sudden ambush by the whirlwind  
caught  
And in his broad maturity betrayed!

## 4

Well might I, as of old, appeal to you,  
O mountains, woods, and streams, 60  
To help us mourn him, for ye loved him  
too;  
But simpler moods befit our modern  
themes,  
And no less perfect birth of nature can,  
Though they yearn tow'rd him, sympathize  
with man,  
Save as dumb fellow-prisoners through a  
wall;  
Answer ye rather to my call,  
Strong poets of a more unconscious day,  
When Nature spake nor sought nice rea-  
sons why,  
Too much for softer arts forgotten since  
That teach our forthright tongue to lisp  
and mince, 70  
And drown in music the heart's bitter cry!  
Lead me some steps in your directer way,  
Teach me those words that strike a solid  
root  
Within the ears of men;  
Ye chiefly, virile both to think and feel,  
Deep-chested Chapman and firm-footed  
Ben,  
For he was masculine from head to heel.  
Nay, let himself stand undiminished by  
With those clear parts of him that will not  
die.  
Himself from out the recent dark I claim  
To hear, and, if I flatter him, to blame; 81

To show himself, as still I seem to see,  
A mortal, built upon the antique plan,  
Brimful of lusty blood as ever ran,  
And taking life as simply as a tree!  
To claim my foiled good-by let him ap-  
pear,  
Large-limbed and human as I saw him  
near,  
Loosed from the stiffening uniform of  
fame:

And let me treat him largely: I should fear  
(If with too prying lens I chanced to err,  
Mistaking catalogue for character), 91  
His wise forefinger raised in smiling blame.  
Nor would I scant him with judicial  
breath

And turn mere critic in an epitaph;  
I choose the wheat, incurious of the chaff  
That swells fame living, chokes it after  
death,

And would but memorize the shining half  
Of his large nature that was turned to me:  
Fain had I joined with those that honored  
him

With eyes that darkened because his were  
dim, 100  
And now been silent: but it might not be.

## II

## I

In some the genius is a thing apart,  
A pillared hermit of the brain,  
Hoarding with incommunicable art  
Its intellectual gain;

Man's web of circumstance and fate  
They from their perch of self observe,  
Indifferent as the figures on a slate

Are to the planet's sun-swung curve  
Whose bright returns they calculate;  
Their nice adjustment, part to part,

Were shaken from its serviceable mood 112  
By unpremeditated stirs of heart  
Or jar of human neighborhood:

Some find their natural selves, and only  
then,

In furloughs of divine escape from men,  
And when, by that brief ecstasy left bare,  
Driven by some instinct of desire,

They wander worldward, 't is to blink and  
stare,

Like wild things of the wood about a fire,  
Dazed by the social glow they cannot  
share; 121

His nature brooked no lonely lair,  
But basked and bourgeoned in copartnery,  
Companionship, and open-windowed glee:

He knew, for he had tried,  
Those speculative heights that lure  
The unpractised foot, impatient of a guide,  
Tow'rd ether too attenuately pure  
For sweet unconscious breath, though dear  
to pride,

But better loved the foothold sure 130  
Of paths that wind by old abodes of men  
Who hope at last the churchyard's peace  
secure,

And follow time-worn rules, that them  
suffice,

Learned from their sires, traditionally wise,  
Careful of honest custom's how and when;  
His mind, too brave to look on Truth  
askance,

No more those habitudes of faith could  
share,

But, tinged with sweetness of the old Swiss  
manse,

Lingered around them still and fain would  
spare.

Patient to spy a sullen egg for weeks, 140  
The enigma of creation to surprise,  
His truer instinct sought the life that  
speaks

Without a mystery from kindly eyes;  
In no self-spun cocoon of prudence wound,  
He by the touch of men was best inspired,  
And caught his native greatness at rebound  
From generousities itself had fired;

Then how the heat through every fibre ran,  
Felt in the gathering presence of the man,  
While the apt word and gesture came un-  
bid! 150

Virtues and faults it to one metal wrought,  
Fined all his blood to thought,  
And ran the molten man in all he said or  
did.

All Tully's rules and all Quintilian's too  
He by the light of listening faces knew,  
And his rapt audience all unconscious lent  
Their own roused force to make him elo-  
quent;

Persuasion fondled in his look and tone;  
Our speech (with strangers prudish) he  
could bring

To find new charm in accents not her own;  
Her coy constraints and icy hindrances 161  
Melted upon his lips to natural ease,  
As a brook's fetters swell the dance of  
spring.

Nor yet all sweetness: not in vain he wore,  
Nor in the sheath of ceremony, controlled  
By velvet courtesy or caution cold,  
That sword of honest anger prized of old,  
But, with two-handed wrath,  
If baseness or pretension crossed his path,  
Struck once nor needed to strike more.

## 2

His magic was not far to seek, — 171  
He was so human! Whether strong or  
weak,

Far from his kind he neither sank nor  
soared,

But sate an equal guest at every board:  
No beggar ever felt him condescend,  
No prince presume; for still himself he bare  
At manhood's simple level, and where'er  
He met a stranger, there he left a friend.

How large an aspect! nobly unsevere,  
With freshness round him of Olympian  
cheer, 180

Like visits of those earthly gods he came;  
His look, wherever its good-fortune fell,  
Doubled the feast without a miracle,  
And on the hearthstone danced a happier  
flame;

Philemon's crabbed vintage grew benign;  
Amphitryon's gold-juice humanized to wine.

## III

## I

The garrulous memories  
Gather again from all their far-flown  
nooks,

Singly at first, and then by twos and threes,  
Then in a throng innumerable, as the rooks  
Thicken their twilight files 191

Tow'rd Tintern's gray repose of roofless  
aisles:

Once more I see him at the table's head  
When Saturday her monthly banquet  
spread

To scholars, poets, wits,  
All choice, some famous, loving things, not  
names,

And so without a twinge at others' fames;  
Such company as wisest moods befits,  
Yet with no pedant blindness to the worth  
Of undeliberate mirth, 200

Natures benignly mixed of air and earth,  
Now with the stars and now with equal zest  
Tracing the eccentric orbit of a jest.

2

I see in vision the warm-lighted hall,  
The living and the dead I see again,  
And but my chair is empty; 'mid them all  
'T is I that seem the dead: they all remain  
Immortal, changeless creatures of the brain:  
Wellnigh I doubt which world is real  
most,

Of sense or spirit, to the truly sane; <sup>210</sup>  
In this abstraction it were light to deem  
Myself the figment of some stronger  
dream;

They are the real things, and I the ghost  
That glide unhindered through the solid  
door,

Vainly for recognition seek from chair to  
chair,

And strive to speak and am but futile air,  
As truly most of us are little more.

3

Him most I see whom we most dearly miss,  
The latest parted thence,

His features poised in genial armistice <sup>220</sup>  
And armed neutrality of self-defence  
Beneath the forehead's walled preëminence,  
While Tyro, plucking facts with careless  
reach,

Settles off-hand our human how and  
whence;

The long-trained veteran scarcely wincing  
hears

The infallible strategy of volunteers  
Making through Nature's walls its easy  
breach,

And seems to learn where he alone could  
teach.

Ample and ruddy, the board's end he fills  
As he our fireside were, our light and  
heat, <sup>230</sup>

Centre where minds diverse and various  
skills

Find their warm nook and stretch unham-  
pered feet;

I see the firm benignity of face,  
Wide-smiling champaign, without tameness  
sweet,

The mass Teutonic toned to Gallic grace,  
The eyes whose sunshine runs before the  
lips

While Holmes's rockets curve their long  
ellipse,

And burst in seeds of fire that burst  
again

To drop in scintillating rain.

4

There too the face half-rustic, half-divine,  
Self-poised, sagacious, freaked with hu-  
mor fine, <sup>241</sup>

Of him who taught us not to mow and  
mope

About our fancied selves, but seek our  
scope

In Nature's world and Man's, nor fade to  
hollow-trope,

Content with our New World and timely  
bold

To challenge the o'ermastery of the Old;  
Listening with eyes averse I see him sit  
Pricked with the cider of the Judge's wit  
(Ripe-hearted homebrew, fresh and fresh  
again),

While the wise nose's firm-built aquiline  
Curves sharper to restrain <sup>251</sup>

The merriment whose most unruly moods  
Pass not the dumb laugh learned in lis-  
tening woods

Of silence-shedding pine:

Hard by is he whose art's consoling spell  
Hath given both worlds a whiff of aspho-  
del,

His look still vernal 'mid the wintry ring  
Of petals that remember, not foretell,  
The paler primrose of a second spring.

5

And more there are: but other forms  
arise <sup>260</sup>

And seen as clear, albeit with dimmer  
eyes:

First he from sympathy still held apart  
By shrinking over-eagerness of heart,  
Cloud charged with searching fire, whose  
shadow's sweep

Heightened mean things with sense of  
brooding ill,

And steeped in doom familiar field and  
hill, —

New England's poet, soul reserved and  
deep,

November nature with a name of May,  
Whom high o'er Concord plains we laid  
to sleep,

While the orchards mocked us in their  
white array <sup>270</sup>

And building robins wondered at our  
tears,

Snatched in his prime, the shape august  
That should have stood unbent 'neath

fourscore years,

6

Yea truly, as the sallowing years  
Fall from us faster, like frost-loosened  
leaves

Pushed by the misty touch of shortening  
days,

And that unawakened winter nears,  
'T is the void chair our surest guest re-  
ceives,

'T is lips long cold that give the warm-  
est kiss,

'T is the lost voice comes oftenest to our  
ears;

We count our rosary by the beads we  
miss:

To me, at least, it seemeth so,  
An exile in the land once found divine, <sup>310</sup>

While my starved fire burns low,  
And homeless winds at the loose case-  
ment whine

Shrill ditties of the snow-roofed Apen-  
nine.

IV

1

Now forth into the darkness all are gone,  
But memory, still unsated, follows on,  
Retracing step by step our homeward walk,  
With many a laugh among our serious  
talk,

Across the bridge where, on the dimpling  
tide,

The long red streamers from the windows  
glide,

Or the dim western moon <sup>320</sup>  
Rocks her skiff's image on the broad lagoon,

And Boston shows a soft Venetian side  
In that Arcadian light when roof and tree,

Hard prose by daylight, dream in Italy;  
Or haply in the sky's cold chambers wide

Shivered the winter stars, while all below,  
As if an end were come of human ill,

The world was wrapt in innocence of snow  
And the cast-iron bay was blind and still;

These were our poetry; in him perhaps <sup>330</sup>  
Science had barred the gate that lets in  
dream,

And he would rather count the perch and  
bream

Than with the current's idle fancy lapse;  
And yet he had the poet's open eye

That takes a frank delight in all it sees,  
Nor was earth voiceless, nor the mystic

sky,

The noble head, the eyes of furtive trust,  
All gone to speechless dust.

Shy nature, too, and stung with life's  
unrest,

Whom we too briefly had but could not  
hold,

Who brought ripe Oxford's culture to  
our board,

The Past's incalculable hoard, <sup>280</sup>  
Mellowed by scutcheoned panes in clois-  
ters old,

Seclusions, ivy-hushed, and pavements  
sweet

With immemorial lisp of musing feet;  
Young head time-tensured smoother than

a friar's,

Boy face, but grave with answerless de-  
sires,

Poet in all that poets have of best,  
But foiled with riddles dark and cloudy

aims,

Who now hath found sure rest,  
Not by still Isis or historic Thames,

Nor by the Charles he tried to love with  
me, <sup>290</sup>

But, not misplaced, by Arno's hallowed  
brim,

Nor scorned by Santa Croce's neighbor-  
ing fames,

Haply not mindless, wheresoe'er he  
be,

Of violets that to-day I scattered over  
him, <sup>2</sup>

He, too, is there, <sup>3</sup>  
After the good centurion fitly named,

Whom learning dulled not, nor conven-  
tion tamed,

Shaking with burly mirth his hyacinthine  
hair,

Our hearty Grecian of Homeric ways,  
Still found the surer friend where least he  
hoped the praise. <sup>300</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Hugh Clough, who lived in Cambridge from 1852 to 1853. Lowell speaks of him in the 'Introduction' to the *Biglow Papers*, 1866, as among those whose opinion and encouragement he most valued: 'With a feeling too tender and grateful to be mixed with any vanity, I mention as one of these the late A. H. Clough, who more than any one of those I have known (no longer living), except Hawthorne, impressed me with the constant presence of that indefinable thing we call genius.'

<sup>2</sup> Clough's grave is in the little Protestant Cemetery at Florence, near that of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and not far from Walter Savage Landor's.

<sup>3</sup> Cornelius C. Felton. See Longfellow's 'Three Friends of Mine.'

To him the life-long friend of fields and trees:  
 Then came the prose of the suburban street,  
 Its silence deepened by our echoing feet,  
 And converse such as rambling hazard finds;  
 Then he who many cities knew and many minds,  
 And men once world-noised, now mere Ossian forms  
 Of misty memory, bade them live anew  
 As when they shared earth's manifold delight,  
 In shape, in gait, in voice, in gesture true,  
 And, with an accent heightening as he warms,  
 Would stop forgetful of the shortening night,  
 Drop my confining arm, and pour profuse  
 Much worldly wisdom kept for others' use,  
 Not for his own, for he was rash and free,  
 His purse or knowledge all men's, like the sea.  
 Still can I hear his voice's shrilling might  
 (With pauses broken, while the fitful spark  
 He blew more hotly rounded on the dark  
 To hint his features with a Rembrandt light)  
 Call Oken back, or Humboldt, or Lamarek,  
 Or Cuvier's taller shade, and many more  
 Whom he had seen, or knew from others' sight,  
 And make them men to me as ne'er before:  
 Not seldom, as the undeadened fibre stirred  
 Of noble friendships knit beyond the sea,  
 German or French thrust by the lagging word,  
 For a good leash of mother-tongues had he.  
 At last, arrived at where our paths divide,  
 'Good night!' and, ere the distance grew too wide,  
 'Good night!' again; and now with cheated ear  
 I half hear his who mine shall never hear.

2

Sometimes it seemed as if New England air  
 For his large lungs too parsimonious were,  
 As if those empty rooms of dogma drear

370

Where the ghost shivers of a faith austere  
 Counting the horns o'er of the Beast,  
 Still scaring those whose faith in it is least,  
 As if those snaps o' th' moral atmosphere  
 That sharpen all the needles of the East,  
 Had been to him like death,  
 Accustomed to draw Europe's freer breath

In a more stable element;

Nay, even our landscape, half the year morose,

Our practical horizon grimly pent,  
 Our air, sincere of ceremonious haze,  
 Forcing hard outlines mercilessly close,  
 Our social monotone of level days,  
 Might make our best seem banishment;

But it was nothing so;

Haply his instinct might divine,  
 Beneath our drift of puritanic snow,

The marvel sensitive and fine

Of sanguinaria over-rash to blow

And trust its shyness to an air malign;  
 Well might he prize truth's warranty and pledge

In the grim outcrop of our granite edge,  
 Or Hebrew fervor flashing forth at need  
 In the gaunt sons of Calvin's iron breed,  
 As prompt to give as skilled to win and keep;

But, though such intuitions might not cheer,

Yet life was good to him, and, there or here,

With that sufficing joy, the day was never cheap;

Thereto his mind was its own ample sphere,

And, like those buildings great that through the year

Carry one temperature, his nature large

Made its own climate, nor could any marge

Traced by convention stay him from his bent:

He had a habitude of mountain air;  
 He brought wide outlook where he went,  
 And could on sunny uplands dwell

Of prospect sweeter than the pastures fair

High-hung of viny Neufchâtel;

Nor, surely, did he miss

Some pale, imaginary bliss

Of earlier sights whose inner landscape still was Swiss.

v

i

I cannot think he wished so soon to die  
 With all his senses full of eager heat,  
 And rosy years that stood expectant by  
 To buckle the winged sandals on their feet,

He that was friends with Earth, and all her sweet

Took with both hands unsparingly:  
 Truly this life is precious to the root,  
 And good the feel of grass beneath the foot;

To lie in buttercups and clover-bloom,  
 Tenants in common with the bees,  
 And watch the white clouds drift through gulfs of trees,

Is better than long waiting in the tomb;  
 Only once more to feel the coming spring  
 As the birds feel it, when it bids them sing,

Only once more to see the moon  
 Through leaf-fringed abbey-arches of the elms

Curve her mild sickle in the West  
 Sweet with the breath of hay-cocks, were a boon

Worth any promise of soothsayer realms

Or casual hope of being elsewhere blest;  
 To take December by the beard

And crush the creaking snow with springy foot,

While overhead the North's dumb streamers shoot,

Till Winter fawn upon the cheek endeared,

Then the long evening-ends  
 Lingered by cosy chimney-nooks,

With high companionship of books  
 Or slippared talk of friends

And sweet habitual looks,

Is better than to stop the ears with dust:  
 Too soon the spectre comes to say, 'Thou must!'

2

When toil-crooked hands are crost upon the breast,

They comfort us with sense of rest;  
 They must be glad to lie forever still;

Their work is ended with their day;  
 Another fills their room; 't is the World's

ancient way,

Whether for good or ill;  
 But the deft spinners of the brain,  
 Who love each added day and find it gain,

Them overtakes the doom  
 To snap the half-grown flower upon the loom

(Trophy that was to be of life-long pain),  
 The thread no other skill can ever knit again.

'T was so with him, for he was glad to live,

'T was doubly so, for he left work begun;  
 Could not this eagerness of Fate forgive

Till all the allotted flax were spun?  
 It matters not; for, go at night or noon,

A friend, when'er he dies, has died too soon,

And, once we hear the hopeless *He is dead,*

So far as flesh hath knowledge, all is said.

vi

i

I seem to see the black procession go:  
 That crawling prose of death too well I know,

The vulgar paraphrase of glorious woe;  
 I see it wind through that unsightly grove,

Once beautiful, but long defaced  
 With granite permanence of cockney taste

And all those grim disfigurements we love:

There, then, we leave him: Him? such costly waste

Nature rebels at: and it is not true  
 Of those most precious parts of him we knew:

Could we be conscious but as dreamers be,  
 'T were sweet to leave this shifting life of tents

Sunk in the changeless calm of Deity;  
 Nay, to be mingled with the elements,  
 The fellow-servant of creative powers,  
 Partaker in the solemn year's events,  
 To share the work of busy-fingered hours,

To be night's silent almoner of dew,  
 To rise again in plants and breathe and grow,

480

To stream as tides the ocean caverns  
through,  
Or with the rapture of great winds to  
blow  
About earth's shaken coignes, were not a  
fate  
To leave us all-disconsolate;  
Even endless slumber in the sweetening  
sod  
Of charitable earth  
That takes out all our mortal stains,  
And makes us cleaner neighbors of the  
cloud,  
Methinks were better worth<sup>490</sup>  
Than the poor fruit of most men's wake-  
ful pains,  
The heart's insatiable ache:  
But such was not his faith,  
Nor mine: it may be he had trod  
Outside the plain old path of *God thus*  
*spake,*  
But God to him was very God,  
And not a visionary wraith  
Skulking in murky corners of the mind,  
And he was sure to be<sup>499</sup>  
Somehow, somewhere, imperishable as He,  
Not with His essence mystically combined,  
As some high spirits long, but whole and  
free,  
A perfected and conscious Agassiz.  
And such I figure him: the wise of old  
Welcome and own him of their peaceful  
fold,  
Not truly with the guild enrolled  
Of him who seeking inward guessed  
Diviner riddles than the rest,  
And groping in the darks of thought  
Touched the Great Hand and knew it  
not;<sup>510</sup>  
Rather he shares the daily light,  
From reason's charier fountains won,  
Of his great chief, the slow-paced Stagy-  
rite,  
And Cuvier clasps once more his long-lost  
son.

2

The shape erect is prone: forever stilled  
The winning tongue; the forehead's high-  
piled heap,  
A cairn which every science helped to  
build,  
Unvalued will its golden secrets keep:  
He knows at last if Life or Death be  
best:

Wherever he be flown, whatever vest<sup>520</sup>  
The being hath put on which lately here  
So many-friended was, so full of cheer  
To make men feel the Seeker's noble zest,  
We have not lost him all; he is not gone  
To the dumb herd of them that wholly  
die;  
The beauty of his better self lives on  
In minds he touched with fire, in many an  
eye  
He trained to Truth's exact severity;  
He was a Teacher: why be grieved for  
him<sup>529</sup>  
Whose living word still stimulates the  
air?  
In endless file shall loving scholars come  
The glow of his transmitted touch to share,  
And trace his features with an eye less  
dim  
Than ours whose sense familiar wont  
makes numb.  
1874. 1874.

SONNET<sup>1</sup>

## SCOTTISH BORDER

As sinks the sun behind yon alien hills  
Whose heather-purpled slopes, in glory  
rolled,  
Flush all my thought with momentary  
gold,  
What pang of vague regret my fancy  
thrills?  
Here 'tis enchanted ground the peasant  
tills,  
Where the shy ballad dared its blooms un-  
fold,  
And memory's glamour makes new sights  
seem old,  
As when our life some vanished dream  
fulfils.  
Yet not to thee belong these painless tears,  
Land loved ere seen: before my darkened  
eyes,  
From far beyond the waters and the years,  
Horizons mute that wait their poet rise;  
The stream before me fades and disap-  
pears,  
And in the Charles the western splendor  
dies.  
1875.

<sup>1</sup> See Lowell's letter to Howells, March 21, 1875.  
*Letters*, vol. ii, p. 137.

## THREE MEMORIAL POEMS

'Coscienza fusca  
O della propria o dell' altrui vergogna  
Pur sentirà la tua parola brusca.'

If I let fall a word of bitter mirth,<sup>1</sup>  
When public shames more shameful pardon won,  
Some have misjudged me, and my service done,  
If small, yet faithful, deemed of little worth:  
Through veins that drew their life from Western earth  
Two hundred years and more my blood hath run  
In no polluted course from sire to son;  
And thus was I predestined ere my birth  
To love the soil wherewith my fibres own  
Instinctive sympathies; yet love it so  
As honor would, nor lightly to dethrone  
Judgment, the stamp of manhood, nor forego  
The son's right to a mother dearer grown  
With growing knowledge and more chaste than snow.

ODE<sup>2</sup>

READ AT THE ONE HUNDREDTH ANNI-  
VERSARY OF THE FIGHT AT CONCORD  
BRIDGE

19TH APRIL, 1875

## I

Who cometh over the hills,  
Her garments with morning sweet,  
The dance of a thousand rills  
Making music before her feet?  
Her presence freshens the air;  
Sunshine steals light from her face;  
The leaden footstep of Care  
Leaps to the tune of her pace,  
Fairness of all that is fair,  
Grace at the heart of all grace,<sup>10</sup>  
Sweetener of hut and of hall,  
Bringer of life out of naught,  
Freedom, oh, fairest of all  
The daughters of Time and Thought!

## II

She cometh, cometh to-day:  
Hark! hear ye not her tread,  
Sending a thrill through your clay,  
Under the sod there, ye dead,  
Her nurslings and champions?  
Do ye not hear, as she comes,<sup>20</sup>  
The bay of the deep-mouthed guns,  
The gathering rote of the drums?

<sup>1</sup> Alluding to the lines in the second stanza of Low-  
ell's 'Agassiz,' which were written in 1874, when the  
political corruption of that time was being revealed and  
in many cases condoned,—lines which were at the  
time severely criticised as 'unpatriotic.'  
<sup>2</sup> See Lowell's letter to James B. Thayer, January  
14, 1877. *Letters*, vol. ii, pp. 188-191.

The bells that called ye to prayer,  
How wildly they clamor on her,  
Crying, 'She cometh! prepare  
Her to praise and her to honor,  
That a hundred years ago  
Scattered here in blood and tears  
Potent seeds wherefrom should grow  
Gladness for a hundred years!'<sup>30</sup>

## III

Tell me, young men, have ye seen  
Creature of diviner mien  
For true hearts to long and cry for,  
Manly hearts to live and die for?  
What hath she that others want?  
Brows that all endearments haunt,  
Eyes that make it sweet to dare,  
Smiles that cheer untimely death,  
Looks that fortify despair,  
Tones more brave than trumpet's breath;  
Tell me, maidens, have ye known<sup>41</sup>  
Household charm more sweetly rare,  
Grace of woman ampler blown,  
Modesty more debonair,  
Younger heart with wit full grown?  
Oh for an hour of my prime,  
The pulse of my hotter years,  
That I might praise her in rhyme  
Would tingle your eyelids to tears,  
Our sweetness, our strength, and our star,  
Our hope, our joy, and our trust,<sup>51</sup>  
Who lifted us out of the dust,  
And made us whatever we are!

## IV

Whiter than moonshine upon snow  
Her raiment is, but round the hem