

A great man's memory is the only thing
With influence to outlast the present whim
And bind us as when here he knit our
golden ring.

All of him that was subject to the hours³⁷⁹
Lies in thy soil and makes it part of ours:
Across more recent graves,
Where unresentful Nature waves
Her pennons o'er the shot-ploughed sod,
Proclaiming the sweet Truce of God,
We from this consecrated plain stretch out
Our hands as free from afterthought or
doubt

As here the united North
Poured her embrownèd manhood forth
In welcome of our savior and thy son.³⁹⁰
Through battle we have better learned thy
worth,

The long-breathed valor and undaunted
will,
Which, like his own, the day's disaster
done,

Could, safe in manhood, suffer and be still.
Both thine and ours the victory hardly
won;

If ever with distempered voice or pen
We have misdeemed thee, here we take it
back,

And for the dead of both don common
black.

Be to us evermore as thou wast then,
As we forget thou hast not always been,
Mother of States and unpolluted men,⁴⁰¹
Virginia, fitly named from England's manly
queen!

1875.

1875.

AN ODE

FOR THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1876

I

ENTRANCED I saw a vision in the cloud
That loitered dreaming in yon sunset sky,
Full of fair shapes, half creatures of the
eye,
Half chance-evoked by the wind's fantasy
In golden mist, an ever-shifting crowd:
There, 'mid unreal forms that came and
went

In air-spun robes, of evanescent dye,
A woman's semblance shone preëminent;
Not armed like Pallas, not like Hera proud,

But as on household diligence intent,¹⁰
Beside her visionary wheel she bent
Like Aretë or Bertha, nor than they
Less queenly in her port: about her knee
Glad children clustered confident in play:
Placid her pose, the calm of energy;
And over her broad brow in many a round
(That loosened would have gilt her gar-
ment's hem),
Succinct, as toil prescribes, the hair was
wound

In lustrous coils, a natural diadem.
The cloud changed shape, obsequious to the
whim

Of some transmuted influence felt in me,²⁰
And, looking now, a wolf I seemed to see
Limned in that vapor, gaunt and hunger-
bold,

Threatening her charge: resolve in every
limb,

Erect she flamed in mail of sun-wove gold,
Penthesilea's self for battle dight;
One arm uplifted braced a flickering spear,
And one her adamant shield made light;
Her face, helm-shadowed, grew a thing to
fear,

And her fierce eyes, by danger challenged,
took

Her trident-sceptred mother's dauntless
look.³⁰

'I know thee now, O goddess-born!' I
cried,
And turned with loftier brow and firmer
stride;

For in that spectral cloud-work I had seen
Her image, bodied forth by love and pride,
The fearless, the benign, the mother-eyed,
The fairer world's toil-consecrated queen.

2

What shape by exile dreamed elates the
mind

Like hers whose hand, a fortress of the
poor,

No blood in vengeance spilt, though lawful,
stains?

Who never turned a suppliant from her
door?

Whose conquests are the gains of all man-
kind?

To-day her thanks shall fly on every wind,
Unstinted, unrebuked, from shore to shore,
One love, one hope, and not a doubt be-
hind!

Cannon to cannon shall repeat her praise

Banner to banner flap it forth in flame;
Her children shall rise up to bless her
name,

And wish her harmless length of days,
The mighty mother of a mighty brood,⁵⁰
Blessed in all tongues and dear to every
blood,

The beautiful, the strong, and, best of all,
the good.

3

Seven years long was the bow
Of battle bent, and the heightening
Storm-heaps convulsed with the throe
Of their uncontainable lightning;

Seven years long heard the sea
Crash of navies and wave-borne thunder;
Then drifted the cloud-rack a-lee,
And new stars were seen, a world's won-
der;

Each by her sisters made bright,⁶⁰
All binding all to their stations,
Cluster of manifold light
Startling the old constellations:
Men looked up and grew pale:
Was it a comet or star,
Omen of blessing or bale,
Hung o'er the ocean afar?

4

Stormy the day of her birth:
Was she not born of the strong,⁷⁰
She, the last ripeness of earth,
Beautiful, prophesied long?

Stormy the days of her prime:
Hers are the pulses that beat
Higher for perils sublime,
Making them fawn at her feet.

Was she not born of the strong?
Was she not born of the wise?
Daring and counsel belong
Of right to her confident eyes:⁸⁰

Human and motherly they,
Careless of station or race:
Hearken! her children to-day
Shout for the joy of her face.

II

I

No praises of the past are hers,
No fanes by hallowing time caressed,
No broken arch that ministers
To Time's sad instinct in the breast:

She has not gathered from the years
Grandeur of tragedies and tears,⁹⁰
Nor from long leisure the unrest
That finds repose in forms of classic grace:
These may delight the coming race
Who haply shall not count it to our crime
That we who fain would sing are here
before our time.

She also hath her monuments;
Not such as stand decrepitiy resigned
To ruin-mark the path of dead events
That left no seed of better days behind,
The tourist's pensioners that show their
scars¹⁰⁰

And maunder of forgotten wars;
She builds not on the ground, but in the
mind,

Her open-hearted palaces
For larger-thoughted men with heaven and
earth at ease:

Her march the plump mow marks, the
sleepless wheel,
The golden sheaf, the self-swayed com-
monweal;

The happy homesteads hid in orchard trees
Whose sacrificial smokes through peaceful
air

Rise lost in heaven, the household's silent
prayer;

What architect hath bettered these?¹¹⁰
With softened eye the westward traveller
sees

A thousand miles of neighbors side by side,
Holding by toil-won titles fresh from God
The lands no serf or seigneur ever trod,
With manhood latent in the very sod,
Where the long billow of the wheatfield's
tide

Flows to the sky across the prairie wide,
A sweeter vision than the castled Rhine,
Kindly with thoughts of Ruth and Bible-
days benign.

2

O ancient commonwealths, that we revere
Haply because we could not know you
near,¹²¹

Your deeds like statues down the aisles of
Time

Shine peerless in memorial calm sublime,
And Athens is a trumpet still, and Rome;
Yet which of your achievements is not foam
Weighed with this one of hers (below you
far

In fame, and born beneath a milder star),

That to Earth's orphans, far as curves the
dome
Of death-deaf sky, the bounteous West
means home,
With dear precedency of natural ties ¹³⁰
That stretch from roof to roof and make
men gently wise?
And if the nobler passions wane,
Distorted to base use, if the near goal
Of insubstantial gain
Tempt from the proper race-course of the
soul
That crowns their patient breath
Whose feet, song-sandalled, are too fleet
for Death,
Yet may she claim one privilege urbane
And haply first upon the civic roll,
That none can breathe her air nor grow
humane. ¹⁴⁰

3

Oh, better far the briefest hour
Of Athens self-consumed, whose plastic
power
Hid Beauty safe from Death in words or
stone;
Of Rome, fair quarry where those eagles
crowd
Whose fulgurous vans about the world had
blown
Triumphphant storm and seeds of polity;
Of Venice, fading o'er her shipless sea,
Last iridescence of a sunset cloud;
Than this inert prosperity,
This bovine comfort in the sense alone! ¹⁵⁰
Yet art came slowly even to such as those,
Whom no past genius cheated of their
own
With prudence of o'er-mastering precedent;
Petal by petal spreads the perfect rose,
Secure of the divine event;
And only children rend the bud half-blown
To forestall Nature in her calm intent:
Time hath a quiver full of purposes
Which miss not of their aim, to us un-
known,
And brings about the impossible with ease:
Haply for us the ideal dawn shall break ¹⁶¹
From where in legend-tinted line
The peaks of Hellas drink the morning's
wine,
To tremble on our lids with mystic sign
Till the drowsed ichor in our veins awake
And set our pulse in tune with moods
divine:

Long the day lingered in its sea-fringed
nest,
Then touched the Tuscan hills with golden
lance
And paused; then on to Spain and France
The splendor flew, and Albion's misty
crest: ¹⁷⁰
Shall Ocean bar him from his destined
West?
Or are we, then, arrived too late,
Doomed with the rest to grope disconsolate,
Foreclosed of Beauty by our modern date?

III

I

Poets, as their heads grow gray,
Look from too far behind the eyes,
Too long-experienced to be wise
In guileless youth's diviner way;
Life sings not now, but prophesies;
Time's shadows they no more behold, ¹⁸⁰
But, under them, the riddle old
That mocks, bewilders, and defies:
In childhood's face the seed of shame,
In the green tree an ambushed flame,
In Phosphor a vaunt-guard of Night,
They, though against their will, divine,
And dread the care-dispelling wine
Stored from the Muse's vintage bright,
By age imbued with second-sight.
From Faith's own eyelids there peeps out,
Even as they look, the leer of doubt; ¹⁹¹
The festal wreath their fancy loads
With care that whispers and forebodes:
Nor this our triumph-day can blunt Me-
gæra's goads.

2

Murmur of many voices in the air
Denounces us degenerate,
Unfaithful guardians of a noble fate,
And prompts indifference or despair:
Is this the country that we dreamed in
youth,
Where wisdom and not numbers should
have weight, ²⁰⁰
Seed-field of simpler manners, braver
truth,
Where shams should cease to dominate
In household, church, and state?
Is this Atlantis? This the unpoisoned soil,
Sea-whelmed for ages and recovered late,
Where parasitic greed no more should coil

IV

1

Round Freedom's stem to bend awry and
blight
What grew so fair, sole plant of love and
light?
Who sit where once in crowned seclusion
sate
The long-proved athletes of debate ²¹⁰
Trained from their youth, as none thinks
needful now?
Is this debating club where boys dispute,
And wrangle o'er their stolen fruit,
The Senate, erewhile cloister of the few,
Where Clay once flashed and Webster's
cloudy brow
Brooded those bolts of thought that all the
horizon knew?

3

Oh, as this pensive moonlight blurs my
pines,
Here while I sit and meditate these lines,
To gray-green dreams of what they are by
day,
So would some light, not reason's sharp-
edged ray, ²²⁰
Trance me in moonshine as before the
flight
Of years had won me this unwelcome right
To see things as they are, or shall be
soon,
In the frank prose of undissembling noon!

4

Back to my breast, ungrateful sigh!
Whoever fails, whoever errs,
The penalty be ours, not hers!
The present still seems vulgar, seen too
nigh;
The golden age is still the age that's past:
I ask no drowsy opiate ²³⁰
To dull my vision of that only state
Founded on faith in man, and therefore
sure to last.
For, O my country, touched by thee,
The gray hairs gather back their gold;
Thy thought sets all my pulses free;
The heart refuses to be old;
The love is all that I can see.
Not to thy natal-day belong
Time's prudent doubt or age's wrong, ²⁴⁰
But gifts of gratitude and song:
Unsummoned crowd the thankful words,
As sap in spring-time floods the tree,
Foreboding the return of birds,
For all that thou hast been to me!

2

They steered by stars the elder shipmen
knew,
And laid their courses where the currents
draw
Of ancient wisdom channelled deep in law,
The undaunted few
Who changed the Old World for the
New, ²⁷⁰
And more devoutly prized
Than all perfection theorized
The more imperfect that had roots and
grew.
They founded deep and well,
Those danger-chosen chiefs of men
Who still believed in Heaven and Hell,
Nor hoped to find a spell,
In some fine flourish of a pen,
To make a better man
Than long-considering Nature will or can,
Secure against his own mistakes, ²⁸¹
Content with what life gives or takes,

And acting still on some fore-ordered plan,
A cog of iron in an iron wheel,
Too nicely poised to think or feel,
Dumb motor in a clock-like common-
weal.
They wasted not their brain in schemes
Of what man might be in some bubble-
sphere,
As if he must be other than he seems
Because he was not what he should be
here,²⁹⁰
Postponing Time's slow proof to petulant
dreams:
Yet herein they were great
Beyond the incredulous lawgivers of yore,
And wiser than the wisdom of the shelf,
That they conceived a deeper-rooted state,
Of hardier growth, alive from rind to
core,²⁹⁰
By making man sole sponsor of himself.

DEATH OF QUEEN MERCEDES¹

HERS all that Earth could promise or be-
stow, —
Youth, Beauty, Love, a crown, the beckon-
ing years,
Lids never wet, unless with joyous tears,
A life remote from every sordid woe,
And by a nation's swelled to lordlier flow.
What lurking-place, thought we, for doubts
or fears,
When, the day's swan, she swam along the
cheers
Of the Alcalá, five happy months ago?
The guns were shouting Io Hymen then
That, on her birthday, now denounce her
doom;
The same white steeds that tossed their
scorn of men
To-day as proudly drag her to the tomb.
Grim jest of fate! Yet who dare call it
blind,
Knowing what life is, what our human-kind?
1878. (1888.)

¹ Anything more tragic than the circumstances of her death it would be hard to imagine. She was actually receiving extreme unction while the guns were firing in honor of her eighteenth birthday, and four days later we saw her dragged to her dreary tomb at the Escorial, followed by the coach and its eight white horses in which she had driven in triumph from the church to the palace on the day of her wedding. The poor brutes tossed their snowy plumes as haughtily now as then. (LOWELL, in a letter to his daughter, Mabel Lowell Burnett, July 26, 1878. Quoted by permission of Messrs. Harper and Brothers.)

3

God of our fathers, Thou who wast,
Art, and shalt be when those eye-wise who
flout
Thy secret presence shall be lost³⁰⁰
In the great light that dazzles them to
doubt,
We, sprung from loins of stalwart men
Whose strength was in their trust
That Thou wouldst make thy dwelling in
their dust
And walk with those a fellow-citizen
Who build a city of the just,
We, who believe Life's bases rest
Beyond the probe of chemic test,
Still, like our fathers, feel Thee near,
Sure that, while lasts the immutable decree,
The land to Human Nature dear³¹¹
Shall not be unbeloved of Thee.
1876. 1876.

PHŒBE²

ERE pales in Heaven the morning star
A bird, the loneliest of its kind,
Hears Dawn's faint footfall from afar
While all its mates are dumb and blind.
It is a wee sad-colored thing,
As shy and secret as a maid,
That, ere in choir the robins sing,
Pipes its own name like one afraid.
It seems pain-prompted to repeat
The story of some ancient ill,¹⁰
But *Phæbe! Phæbe!* sadly sweet
Is all it says, and then is still.
It calls and listens. Earth and sky,
Hushed by the pathos of its fate,
Listen: no whisper of reply
Comes from its doom-dissevered mate.
Phæbe! it calls and calls again,
And Ovid, could he but have heard,
Had hung a legendary pain
About the memory of the bird;²⁰

A pain articulate so long,
In penance of some mouldered crime

² For Lowell's careful revision of this poem, see his letters to Mr. Richard Watson Gilder, September 4, 5, 6, 8, and 12, and October 24, 1881; quoted in the *Cambridge Edition of Lowell*, pp. 480-481.

Whose ghost still flies the Furies' thong
Down the waste solitudes of time.

Waif of the young World's wonder-hour,
When gods found mortal maidens fair,
And will malign was joined with power
Love's kindly laws to overbear,

Like Progne, did it feel the stress
And coil of the prevailing words³⁰
Close round its being, and compress
Man's ampler nature to a bird's?

One only memory left of all
The motley crowd of vanished scenes,
Hers, and vain impulse to recall
By repetition what it means.

Phæbe! is all it has to say
In plaintive cadence o'er and o'er,
Like children that have lost their way,
And know their names, but nothing more.

Is it a type, since Nature's Lyre⁴¹
Vibrates to every note in man,
Of that insatiable desire,
Meant to be so since life began?

I, in strange lands at gray of dawn,
Wakeful, have heard that fruitless plaint
Through Memory's chambers deep with-
drawn
Renew its iterations faint.

So nigh! yet from remotest years
It summons back its magic, rife⁵⁰
With longings unappeased, and tears
Drawn from the very source of life.
1881. 1881.

TO WHITTIER

ON HIS SEVENTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY

NEW ENGLAND'S poet, rich in love as years,
Her hills and valleys praise thee, her swift
brooks
Dance in thy verse; to her grave sylvan
nooks
Thy steps allure us, which the wood-thrush
hears
As maids their lovers', and no treason fears;
Through thee her Merrimacs and Agio-
chooks

And many a name uncouth win gracious
looks,
Sweetly familiar to both Englands' ears:

Peaceful by birthright as a virgin lake,
The lily's anchorage, which no eyes behold
Save those of stars, yet for thy brother's
sake
That lay in bonds, thou blewst a blast as
bold
As that wherewith the heart of Roland
brake,
Far heard across the New World and the
Old.
1882. 1882.

TO HOLMES

ON HIS SEVENTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY

DEAR Wendell, why need count the years
Since first your genius made me thrill,
If what moved then to smiles or tears,
Or both contending, move me still?

What has the Calendar to do
With poets? What Time's fruitless tooth
With gay immortals such as you
Whose years but emphasize your youth?

One air gave both their lease of breath;
The same paths lured our boyish feet;¹⁰
One earth will hold us safe in death
With dust of saints and scholars sweet.

Our legends from one source were drawn,
I scarce distinguish yours from mine,
And *don't* we make the Gentiles yawn
With 'You remembers?' o'er our wine!²⁰

If I, with too senescent air,
Invade your elder memory's pale,
You snub me with a pitying 'Where
Were you in the September Gale?'²⁰

Both stared entranced at Lafayette,
Saw Jackson dubbed with LL. D.
What Cambridge saw not strikes us yet
As scarcely worth one's while to see.

Ten years my senior, when my name
In Harvard's entrance-book was writ,
Her halls still echoed with the fame
Of you, her poet and her wit.

'Tis fifty years from then to now:
But your Last Leaf renews its green, 30
Though, for the laurels on your brow
(So thick they crowd), 't is hardly seen.

The oriole's fledglings fifty times
Have flown from our familiar elms;
As many poets with their rhymes
Oblivion's darkling dust o'erwhelms.

The birds are hushed, the poets gone
Where no harsh critic's lash can reach,
And still your winged brood sing on
To all who love our English speech. 40

Nay, let the foolish records be
That make believe you're seventy-five:
You're the old Wendell still to me,—
And that's the youngest man alive.

The gray-blue eyes, I see them still,
The gallant front with brown o'erhung,
The shape alert, the wit at will,
The phrase that stuck, but never stung.

You keep your youth as you Scotch firs,
Whose gaunt line my horizon hems, 50
Though twilight all the lowland blurs,
Hold sunset in their ruddy stems.

You with the elders? Yes, 't is true,
But in no sadly literal sense,
With elders and coevals too,
Whose verb admits no preterite tense.

Master alike in speech and song
Of fame's great antiseptic—Style,
You with the classic few belong
Who tempered wisdom with a smile. 60

Outlive us all! Who else like you
Could sift the seedcorn from our chaff,
And make us with the pen we knew
Deathless at least in epitaph?
1884. 1884.

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IN vain we call old notions fudge,
And bend our conscience to our deal-
ing;
The Ten Commandments will not budge,
And stealing will continue stealing.
1885. 1886.

SIXTY-EIGHTH BIRTHDAY

As life runs on, the road grows strange
With faces new, and near the end
The milestones into headstones change,
'Neath every one a friend.
1887.

INSCRIPTION

PROPOSED FOR A SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS' MONUMENT IN BOSTON

To those who died for her on land and
sea,
That she might have a country great and
free,
Boston builds this: build ye her monument
In lives like theirs, at duty's summons
spent. 1887.

ENDYMION¹

A MYSTICAL COMMENT ON TITIAN'S 'SACRED AND PROFANE LOVE'

I

MY day began not till the twilight fell,
And, lo, in ether from heaven's sweetest
well,
The New Moon swam divinely isolate
In maiden silence, she that makes my fate
Haply not knowing it, or only so
As I the secrets of my sheep may know;
Nor ask I more, entirely blest if she,
In letting me adore, ennoble me
To height of what the Gods meant making
man,
As only she and her best beauty can. 10
Mine be the love that in itself can find
Seed of white thoughts, the lilies of the
mind,
Seed of that glad surrender of the will
That finds in service self's true purpose
still;
Love that in outward fairness sees the tent
Pitched for an inmate far more excellent;
Love with a light irradiate to the core,
Lit at her lamp, but fed from inborn store;

¹ See Scudder's *Life of Lowell*, vol. ii, pp. 371, 372,
and also two letters from Lowell to Mr. Garrison, on
'Endymion,' quoted in Greenslet's *Lowell*, pp. 217, 218.

Love thrice-requited with the single joy 19
Of an immaculate vision naught could cloy,
Dearer because, so high beyond my scope,
My life grew rich with her, unbrided by
hope

Of other guerdon save to think she knew
One grateful votary paid her all her due;
Happy if she, high-radiant there, resigned
To his sure trust her image in his mind.
O fairer even than Peace is when she
comes

Hushing War's tumult, and retreating
drums

Fade to a murmur like the sough of bees
Hidden among the noon-stilled linden-trees,
Bringer of quiet, thou that canst allay 31
The dust and din and travail of the day,
Strewer of Silence, Giver of the dew
That doth our pastures and our souls re-
new,

Still dwell remote, still on thy shoreless sea
Float unattained in silent empery,
Still light my thoughts, nor listen to a
prayer

Would make thee less imperishably fair!

II

Can, then, my twofold nature find content
In vain conceits of airy blandishment? 40
Ask I no more? Since yesterday I task
My storm-strewn thoughts to tell me what
I ask:

Faint premonitions of mutation strange
Steal o'er my perfect orb, and, with the
change,

Myself am changed; the shadow of my
earth

Darkens the disk of that celestial worth
Which only yesterday could still suffice
Upwards to waft my thoughts in sacrifice;
My heightened fancy with its touches
warm

Moulds to a woman's that ideal form; 50
Nor yet a woman's wholly, but divine
With awe her purer essence bred in mine.
Was it long brooding on their own surmise,
Which, of the eyes engendered, fools the
eyes,

Or have I seen through that translucent air
A Presence shaped in its seclusions bare,
My Goddess looking on me from above
As look our russet maidens when they love,
But high-uplifted o'er our human heat
And passion-paths too rough for her pearl
feet? 60

Slowly the Shape took outline as I gazed
At her full-orbed or crescent, till, bedazed
With wonder-working light that subtly
wrought

My brain to its own substance, steeping
thought

In trances such as poppies give, I saw
Things shut from vision by sight's sober
law,

Amorphous, changeful, but defined at last
Into the peerless Shape mine eyes hold fast.
This, too, at first I worshipt: soon, like
wine,

Her eyes, in mine poured, frenzy-philtred
mine; 70

Passion put Worship's priestly raiment on
And to the woman knelt, the Goddess gone.
Was I, then, more than mortal made? or
she

Less than divine that she might mate with
me?

If mortal merely, could my nature cope
With such o'ermastery of maddening hope?
If Goddess, could she feel the blissful woe
That women in their self-surrender know?

III

Long she abode aloof there in her heaven,
Far as the grape-bunch of the Pleiad seven
Beyond my madness' utmost leap; but
here 81

Mine eyes have feigned of late her rapture
near,

Moulded of mind-mist that broad day dis-
pels,

Here in these shadowy woods and brook-
lulled dells.

Have no heaven-habitants e'er felt a void
In hearts sublimed with ichor unalloyed?
E'er longed to mingle with a mortal fate
Intense with pathos of its briefer date?
Could she partake, and live, our human
stains?

Even with the thought there tingles through
my veins 90

Sense of unwarmed renewal; I, the dead,
Receive and house again the ardor fled,
As once Alcestis; to the ruddy brim

Feel masculine virtue flooding every limb,
And life, like Spring returning, brings the
key

That sets my senses from their winter free,
Dancing like naked fauns too glad for
shame.

Her passion, purified to palest flame,
Can it thus kindle? Is her purpose this?
I will not argue, lest I lose a bliss¹⁰⁰
That makes me dream Tithonus' fortune
mine

(Or what of it was palpably divine
Ere came the fruitlessly immortal gift);
I cannot curb my hope's imperious drift
That wings with fire my dull mortality;
Though fancy-forged, 't is all I feel or see.

IV

My Goddess sinks; round Latmos' darken-
ing brow

Trembles the parting of her presence now,
Faint as the perfume left upon the grass
By her limbs' pressure or her feet that
pass¹¹⁰

By me conjectured, but conjectured so
As things I touch far fainter substance
show.

Was it mine eyes' imposture I have seen
Flit with the moonbeams on from shade to
sheen

Through the wood-openings? Nay, I see
her now

Out of her heaven new-lighted, from her
brow

The hair breeze-scattered, like loose mists
that blow

Across her crescent, goldening as they go
High-kirtled for the chase, and what was
shown,

Of maiden rondure, like the rose half-
blown.¹²⁰

If dream, turn real! If a vision, stay!
Take mortal shape, my philtre's spell obey!
If hags compel thee from thy secret sky
With gruesome incantations, why not I,
Whose only magic is that I distil

A potion, blent of passion, thought, and
will,

Deeper in reach, in force of fate more
rich,

Than e'er was juice wrung by Thessalian
witch

From moon-enchanted herbs, — a potion
brewed

Of my best life in each diviner mood?¹³⁰
Myself the elixir am, myself the bowl
Seething and mantling with my soul of soul.
Taste and be humanized: what though the
cup,

With thy lips frenzied, shatter? Drink it
up!

If but these arms may clasp, o'erquited so,
My world, thy heaven, all life means I
shall know.

V

Sure she hath heard my prayer and granted
half,

As Gods do who at mortal madness laugh
Yet if life's solid things illusion seem,
Why may not substance wear the mask of
dream?¹⁴⁰

In sleep she comes; she visits me in
dreams,

And, as her image in a thousand streams,
So in my veins, that her obey, she sees,
Floating and flaming there, her images
Bear to my little world's remotest zone
Glad messages of her, and her alone.

With silence-sandalled Sleep she comes to
me

(But softer-footed, sweeter-browed, than
she),

In motion gracious as a seagull's wing,
And all her bright limbs, moving, seem to
sing.¹⁵⁰

Let me believe so, then, if so I may
With the night's bounty feed my beggared
day.

In dreams I see her lay the goddess down
With bow and quiver, and her crescent-
crown

Flicker and fade away to dull eclipse
As down to mine she deigns her longed-for
lips;

And as her neck my happy arms enfold,
Flooded and lusted with her loosened gold,
She whispers words each sweeter than a
kiss:

Then, wakened with the shock of sudden
bliss,¹⁶⁰

My arms are empty, my awakener fled,
And, silent in the silent sky o'erhead,
But coldly as on ice-plated snow, she
gleams,

Herself the mother and the child of dreams.

VI

Gone is the time when phantasms could
appease

My quest phantasmal and bring cheated
ease;

When, if she glorified my dreams, I felt
Through all my limbs a change immortal
melt

At touch of hers illuminate with soul.

Not long could I be stilled with Fancy's
dole;¹⁷⁰

Too soon the mortal mixture in me caught
Red fire from her celestial flame, and
fought

For tyrannous control in all my veins:
My fool's prayer was accepted; what re-
mains?

Or was it some eidolon merely, sent
By her who rules the shades in banishment,
To mock me with her semblance? Were
it thus,

How 'scape I shame, whose will was trai-
torous?

What shall compensate an ideal dimmed?
How blanch again my statue virgin-limbed,
Soiled with the incense-smoke her chosen
priest¹⁸¹

Poured more profusely as within decreased
The fire unearthly, fed with coals from far
Within the soul's shrine? Could my fallen
star

Be set in heaven again by prayers and tears
And quenchless sacrifice of all my years,
How would the victim to the flamen leap,
And life for life's redemption paid hold
cheap!

But what resource when she herself de-
scends

From her blue throne, and o'er her vassal
beds¹⁹⁰

That shape thrice-deified by love, those eyes
Wherein the Lethe of all others lies?

When my white queen of heaven's remote-
ness tires,

Herself against her other self conspires,
Takes woman's nature, walks in mortal
ways,

And finds in my remorse her beauty's
praise?

Yet all would I renounce to dream again
The dream in dreams fulfilled that made
my pain,

My noble pain that heightened all my years
With crowns to win and prowess-breeding
tears;²⁰⁰

Nay, would that dream renounce once more
to see

Her from her sky there looking down at me!

VII

Goddess, reclimb thy heaven, and be once
more

An inaccessible splendor to adore,

A faith, a hope of such transcendent worth
As bred ennobling discontent with earth;
Give back the longing, back the elated
mood

That, fed with thee, spurned every meaner
good;

Give even the spur of impotent despair
That, without hope, still bade aspire and
dare;²¹⁰

Give back the need to worship, that still
pours

Down to the soul the virtue it adores!

Nay, brightest and most beautiful, deem
naught

These frantic words, the reckless wind of
thought:

Still stoop, still grant, — I live but in thy
will;

Be what thou wilt, but be a woman still!
Vainly I cried, nor could myself believe
That what I prayed for I would fain re-
ceive.

My moon is set; my vision set with her;
No more can worship vain my pulses stir.
Goddess Triform, I own thy triple spell,²²¹
My heaven's queen, — queen, too, of my
earth and hell!

1887.¹

1888.

AUSPEX

My heart, I cannot still it,
Nest that had song-birds in it;
And when the last shall go,
The dreary days, to fill it,
Instead of lark or linnet,
Shall whirl dead leaves and snow.

Had they been swallows only,
Without the passion stronger
That skyward longs and sings, —
Woe's me, I shall be lonely
When I can feel no longer
The impatience of their wings!

A moment, sweet delusion,
Like birds the brown leaves hover;
But it will not be long
Before the wild confusion
Fall wavering down to cover
The poet and his song.

(1888.)

¹ Parts of the poem were written much earlier.

THE PREGNANT COMMENT

OPENING one day a book of mine,
I absent, Hester found a line
Praised with a pencil-mark, and this
She left transfigured with a kiss.

When next upon the page I chance,
Like Poussin's nymphs my pulses dance,
And whirl my fancy where it sees
Pan piping 'neath Arcadian trees,
Whose leaves no winter-scenes rehearse,
Still young and glad as Homer's verse.
'What mean,' I ask, 'these sudden joys?
This feeling fresher than a boy's?
What makes this line, familiar long,
New as the first bird's April song?
I could, with sense illumined thus,
Clear doubtful texts in Æschylus!'

Laughing, one day she gave the key,
My riddle's open-sesame;
Then added, with a smile demure,
Whose downcast lids veiled triumph sure,
'If what I left there give you pain,
You — you — can take it off again;
'T was for *my* poet, not for him,
Your Doctor Donne there!'

Earth grew dim
And wavered in a golden mist,
As rose, not paper, leaves I kissed.
Donne, you forgive? I let you keep
Her precious comment, poet deep.

(1888.)

TELEPATHY

'AND how could you dream of meeting?'
Nay, how can you ask me, sweet?
All day my pulse had been beating
The tune of your coming feet.

And as nearer and ever nearer
I felt the throb of your tread,
To be in the world grew dearer,
And my blood ran rosier red.

Love called, and I could not linger,
But sought the forbidden tryst,
As music follows the finger
Of the dreaming lutanist.

And though you had said it and said it,
'We must not be happy to-day,'

Was I not wiser to credit
The fire in my feet than your Nay?
(1888.)

THE SECRET

I HAVE a fancy: how shall I bring it
Home to all mortals wherever they be?
Say it or sing it? Shoe it or wing it,
So it may outrun or outfly ME,
Merest cocoon-web whence it broke free?

Only one secret can save from disaster,
Only one magic is that of the Master:
Set it to music; give it a tune, —
Tune the brook sings you, tune the breeze
brings you,
Tune the wild columbines nod to in June!

This is the secret: so simple, you see!
Easy as loving, easy as kissing,
Easy as — well, let me ponder — as miss-
ing,
Known, since the world was, by scarce two
or three.

1888.

MONNA LISA

SHE gave me all that woman can,
Nor her soul's nunnery forego,
A confidence that man to man
Without remorse can never show.

Rare art, that can the sense refine
Till not a pulse rebellious stirs,
And, since she never can be mine,
Makes it seem sweeter to be hers!

(1888.)

THE NOBLER LOVER

If he be a nobler lover, take him!
You in you I seek, and not myself;
Love with men's what women choose to
make him,
Seraph strong to soar, or fawn-eyed elf:
All I am or can, your beauty gave it,
Lifting me a moment nigh to you,
And my bit of heaven, I fain would save
it —
Mine I thought it was, I never knew.

What you take of me is yours to serve
you,
All I give, you gave to me before;
Let him win you! If I but deserve you,
I keep all you grant to him and more:
You shall make me dare what others dare
not,
You shall keep my nature pure as snow,
And a light from you that others share
not
Shall transfigure me where'er I go.

Let me be your thrall! However lowly
Be the bondsman's service I can do,
Loyalty shall make it high and holy;
Naught can be unworthy, done for you.
Men shall say, 'A lover of this fashion
Such an icy mistress well beseems.'
Women say, 'Could we deserve such pas-
sion,
We might be the marvel that he dreams.'

(1895.)

'FRANCISCUS DE VERULAMIO
SIC COGITAVIT'

THAT's a rather bold speech, my Lord
Bacon,
For, indeed, is 't so easy to know
Just how much we from others have
taken,
And how much our own natural flow?

Since your mind bubbled up at its foun-
tain,
How many streams made it elate,
While it calmed to the plain from the
mountain,
As every mind must that grows great?

While you thought 't was You thinking as
newly
As Adam still wet with God's dew, ¹⁰
You forgot in your self-pride that truly
The whole Past was thinking through
you.

Greece, Rome, nay, your namesake, old
Roger,
With Truth's nameless delvers who
wrought
In the dark mines of Truth, helped to prod
your
Fine brain with the goad of their thought.

As mummy was prized for a rich hue
The painter no elsewhere could find,
So 't was buried men's thinking with which
you
Gave the ripe mellow tone to your
mind. ²⁰

I heard the proud strawberry saying,
'Only look what a ruby I've made!'
It forgot how the bees in their maying
Had brought it the stuff for its trade.

And yet there's the half of a truth in it,
And my Lord might his copyright sue;
For a thought's his who kindles new youth
in it,
Or so puts it as makes it more true.

The birds but repeat without ending
The same old traditional notes, ³⁰
Which some, by more happily blending,
Seem to make over new in their throats;

And we men through our old bit of song
run,
Until one just improves on the rest,
And we call a thing his, in the long run,
Who utters it clearest and best. ^{1888.}

IN A COPY OF OMAR KHAYYÁM

THESE pearls of thought in Persian gulfs
were bred,
Each softly lucent as a rounded moon;
The diver Omar plucked them from their
bed,
Fitzgerald strung them on an English
thread.

Fit rosary for a queen, in shape and hue,
When Contemplation tells her pensive
beads
Of mortal thoughts, forever old and new.
Fit for a queen? Why, surely then for
you!

The moral? Where Doubt's eddies toss
and twirl
Faith's slender shallop till her footing reel,
Plunge: if you find not peace beneath the
whirl,
Groping, you may like Omar grasp a pearl. ^{1888.}

TURNER'S OLD TÉMÉRAIRE

UNDER A FIGURE SYMBOLIZING THE
CHURCH

THOU wast the fairest of all man-made
things;
The breath of heaven bore up thy cloudy
wings,
And, patient in their triple rank,
The thunders crouched about thy flank,
Their black lips silent with the doom of
kings.

The storm-wind loved to rock him in thy
pines,
And swell thy vans with breath of great
designs;
Long-wildered pilgrims of the main
By thee relaid their course again,
Whose prow was guided by celestial signs.

How didst thou trample on tumultuous
seas,
Or, like some basking sea-beast stretched
at ease,
Let the bull-fronted surges glide
Caressingly along thy side,
Like glad hounds leaping by the hunts-
man's knees!

Heroic feet, with fire of genius shod,
In battle's ecstasy thy deck have trod,
While from their touch a fulgor ran
Through plank and spar, from man to man,
Welding thee to a thunderbolt of God.

Now a black demon, belching fire and
steam,
Drags thee away, a pale, dismantled
dream,
And all thy desecrated hulk
Must landlocked lie, a helpless bulk,
To gather weeds in the regardless stream.

Woe's me, from Ocean's sky-horizoned air
To this! Better, the flame-cross still aflare,
Shot-shattered to have met thy doom
Where thy last lightnings cheered the
gloom,
Than here be safe in dangerless despair.

Thy drooping symbol to the flagstaff
elings,
Thy rudder soothes the tide to lazy rings,

Thy thunders now but birthdays greet,
Thy planks forget the martyrs' feet,
Thy masts what challenges the sea-wind
brings.

Thou a mere hospital, where human
wrecks,
Like winter-flies, crawl those renowned
decks,
Ne'er trodden save by captive foes,
And wonted sternly to impose
God's will and thine on bowed imperial
necks!

Shall nevermore, engendered of thy fame,
A new sea-eagle heir thy conqueror name,
And with commissioned talons wrench
From thy supplanter's grimy clench
His sheath of steel, his wings of smoke
and flame?

This shall the pleased eyes of our children
see;
For this the stars of God long even as
we;
Earth listens for his wings; the Fates
Expectant lean; Faith cross-propt waits,
And the tired waves of Thought's insur-
gent sea.

ON A BUST OF GENERAL
GRANT¹

STRONG, simple, silent are the [steadfast]
laws
That sway this universe, of none withstood,
Unconscious of man's outeries or applause,
Or what man deems his evil or his good;

¹ This poem is the last, so far as is known, written by
Mr. Lowell. He laid it aside for revision, leaving two
of the verses incomplete. In a pencilled fragment of
the poem the first verse appears as follows:—

Strong, simple, silent, such are Nature's Laws.

In the final copy, from which the poem is now printed,
the verse originally stood:—

Strong, steadfast, silent are the laws.

but 'steadfast' is crossed out, and 'simple' written
above.

A similar change is made in the ninth verse of the
stanza, where 'simplicity' is substituted for 'stead-
fastness.' The change from 'steadfast' to 'simple'
was not made, probably through oversight, in the first
verse of the second stanza. There is nothing to indi-
cate what epithet Mr. Lowell would have chosen to
complete the first verse of the third stanza. (Note by
Professor C. E. Norton, in *Last Poems of James Rus-
sell Lowell*.)

And when the Fates ally them with a cause
That wallows in the sea-trough and seems
lost,
Drifting in danger of the reefs and sands
Of shallow counsels, this way, that way,
tost,
Strength, silence, simpleness, of these three
strands
They twist the cable shall the world hold
fast
To where its anchors clutch the bed-rock
of the Past.

Strong, simple, silent, therefore such was
he
Who helped us in our need; the eternal law
That who can saddle Opportunity
Is God's elect, though many a mortal flaw
May minish him in eyes that closely see,
Was verified in him: what need we say
Of one who made success where others
failed,
Who, with no light save that of common
day,
Struck hard, and still struck on till For-
tune quailed,
But that (so sift the Norns) a desperate
van
Ne'er fell at last to one who was not wholly
man.

A face all prose where Time's [benignant]
haze

Softens no raw edge yet, nor makes all fair
With the beguiling light of vanished days;
This is relentless granite, bleak and bare,
Roughhewn, and scornful of æsthetic
phrase;
Nothing is here for fancy, nought for
dreams,
The Present's hard uncompromising light
Accents all vulgar outlines, flaws, and
seams,
Yet vindicates some pristine natural right
O'ertopping that hereditary grace
Which marks the gain or loss of some time-
fondled race.

So Marius looked, methinks, and Crom-
well so,
Not in the purple born, to those they led
Nearer for that and costlier to the foe,
New moulders of old forms, by nature
bred

The exhaustless life of manhood's seeds to
show,
Let but the ploughshare of portentous
times
Strike deep enough to reach them where
they lie:
Despair and danger are their fostering
climes,
And their best sun bursts from a stormy
sky:
He was our man of men, nor would abate
The utmost due manhood could claim of
fate.

Nothing ideal, a plain-people's man
At the first glance, a more deliberate
ken
Finds type primeval, theirs in whose veins
ran
Such blood as quelled the dragon in his
den,
Made harmless fields, and better worlds
began:
He came grim-silent, saw and did the
deed
That was to do; in his master-grip
Our sword flashed joy; no skill of words
could breed
Such sure conviction as that close-clamped
lip;
He slew our dragon, nor, so seemed it,
knew
He had done more than any simplest man
might do.

Yet did this man, war-tempered, stern as
steel
Where steel opposed, prove soft in civil
sway;
The hand hilt-hardened had lost tact to
feel
The world's base coin, and glozing knaves
made prey
Of him and of the entrusted Common-
weal;
So Truth insists and will not be denied.
We turn our eyes away, and so will
Fame,
As if in his last battle he had died
Victor for us and spotless of all blame,
Doer of hopeless tasks which praters shirk,
One of those still plain men that do the
world's rough work.

1891.

1892.