

world. Above all, he was through and through an American, true to the principles which underlie American institutions. His address on *Democracy*, which he delivered in England, is one of the great statements of human liberty. A few years later, after his return to America, he gave another address to his own countrymen on *The Place of the Independent in Politics*. It was a noble defence of his own position, not without a trace of discouragement at the apparently sluggish movement in American self-government of recent years, but with that faith in the substance of his countrymen which gave him the right to use words of honest warning.

The public life of Mr. Lowell made him more of a figure before the world. He received honors from societies and universities; he was decorated by the highest honors which Harvard could pay officially; and Oxford and Cambridge, St. Andrews and Edinburgh and Bologna gave gowns. He established warm personal relations with Englishmen, and after his release from public office he made several visits to England. There, too, was buried his second wife, who died in 1885. The closing years of his life in his own country, though marked by domestic loneliness and growing physical infirmities, were rich in the continued expression of his large personality and in the esteem of hosts of friends. He delivered the public address in commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of Harvard University; he gave a course of lectures on the Old English Dramatists before the Lowell Institute; he collected a volume of his poems; he wrote and spoke on public affairs; and, the year before his death, revised, rearranged, and carefully edited a definitive series of his writings in ten volumes. He died at Elmwood, August 12, 1891. Since his death three small volumes have been added to his collected writings, and Mr. Norton has edited *Letters of James Russell Lowell*, in two volumes. His *Life*, in two volumes, has been written by Horace E. Scudder, and also, in one volume, by Ferris Greenslet.

goal, poet had at first to be his narrative

THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL

PRELUDE TO PART FIRST

OVER his keys the musing organist,
 Beginning doubtfully and far away,
 First lets his fingers wander as they list,
 And builds a bridge from Dreamland for his lay :
 Then, as the touch of his loved instrument
 Gives hope and fervor, nearer draws his theme,
 First guessed by faint auroral flushes sent
 Along the wavering vista of his dream.

Not only around our infancy
 Doth heaven with all its splendors lie ;
 Daily, with souls that cringe and plot,
 We Sinais climb and know it not.

4. See Lowell's own

"From one stage of our being to the next
 We pass unconscious o'er a slender bridge,
 The momentary work of unseen hands." . . .

A Glance Behind the Curtain.

9. Read the first four stanzas of *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*, and notice the similarity between Wordsworth's joyous May and Lowell's June. For the substitution of June for the May of English poets, see the opening stanzas of *Under the Willows*. The allusion in line 9 is rather to the thought of the entire stanza in the ode than to any single phrase or line.

12. Sinai's climb. See *The Study of the Vision of Sir Launfal*, p. 92, and Lowell's *Letters*, i, 190.

Over our manhood bend the skies ;
 Against our fallen and traitor lives
 The great winds utter prophecies ;
 With our faint hearts the mountain strives ;
 Its arms outstretched, the Druid wood
 Waits with its benedicite ;
 And to our age's drowsy blood
 Still shouts the inspiring sea.

Earth gets its price for what Earth gives us ;
 The beggar is taxed for a corner to die in,
 The priest hath his fee who comes and shrives us,
 We bargain for the graves we lie in ;
 At the Devil's booth are all things sold,
 Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold ;

17. **Druid wood.** Poets are fond of this figure. See "Druid-like device," *Indian-Summer Reverie*; also *Evangeline*,—

"The murmuring pines and the hemlocks
 Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinct in the twilight
 Stand like Druids of old."

The priests of the pagan religion among the Celts, the Druids, performed many rites in the woods, and the oak, especially, and the mistletoe were important in certain ceremonies. For the value attached to mistletoe growing upon an oak-tree, and for the manner of cutting it with a golden sickle, see Brand's *Popular Antiquities*. Longfellow uses this figure as a means of description, but Lowell gives to it a hidden meaning, which admirably adapts the form to the purpose of this poem. In his thought the trees of the forest have become, in this later time, the bearers of divine messages, thus taking the place of the priests who formerly found in them symbols of secret and unknown influences, potent to bless or to ban.

18. **benedicite.** See "old benedictions may recall" in *Di Fresco*, and Wordsworth's

"The thought of our past years in me doth breed
 Perpetual benedictions."

For a cap and bells our lives we pay,
 Bubbles we buy with a whole soul's tasking ;
 'T is heaven alone that is given away,
 'T is only God may be had for the asking ;
 No price is set on the lavish summer ;
 June may be had by the poorest comer.

And what is so rare as a day in June ?
 Then, if ever, come perfect days ;
 Then Heaven tries earth if it be in tune,
 And over it softly her warm ear lays ;
 Whether we look, or whether we listen,
 We hear life murmur, or see it glisten ;
 Every clod feels a stir of might,

An instinct within it that reaches and towers,
 And, groping blindly above it for light,
 Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers ;
 The flush of life may well be seen
 Thrilling back over hills and valleys ;
 The cowslip startles in meadows green,
 The buttercup catches the sun in its chalice,
 And there's never a leaf nor a blade too mean

27. The reference to the court jester of the Middle Ages is obvious. For the young, the significance of the figure borrowed from the adornment of the king's fool should be interpreted by conversation and illustration.

35. Compare with Lowell's personification of spring in

"Jes' so our Spring gits everythin' in tune."
Sunthin' in the Pastoral Line.

42. **Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers.** Wordsworth says, in the Ode,

"The sunshine is a glorious birth,"

and he devotes the whole of the next stanza of his poem to the manifestations of this glorious birth in the abounding life of the springtime.

To be some happy creature's palace ;
 27 The little bird sits at his door in the sun,
 28 Atilt like a blossom among the leaves,
 29 And lets his illumined being o'errun .
 30 With the deluge of summer it receives ;
 31 His mate feels the eggs beneath her wings,
 32 And the heart in her dumb breast flutters and sings ;
 33 He sings to the wide world, and she to her nest, —
 34 In the nice ear of Nature which song is the best ?

Now is the high-tide of the year,
 And whatever of life hath ebb'd away
 Comes flooding back with a ripply cheer,
 Into every bare inlet and creek and bay ;
 60 Now the heart is so full that a drop overfills it,
 We are happy now because God wills it ;
 No matter how barren the past may have been,
 'T is enough for us now that the leaves are green ;
 65 We sit in the warm shade and feel right well
 How the sap creeps up and the blossoms swell ;
 We may shut our eyes, but we cannot help knowing
 That skies are clear and grass is growing ;
 The breeze comes whispering in our ear,
 70 That dandelions are blossoming near,
 That maize has sprouted, that streams are flowing,
 That the river is bluer than the sky,
 That the robin is plastering his house hard by ;
 And if the breeze kept the good news back,
 75 For other couriers we should not lack ;
 We could guess it all by yon heifer's lowing, —
 And hark ! how clear bold chanticleer.
 Warmed with the new wine of the year,
 Tells all in his lusty crowing !

Joy comes, grief goes, we know not how ;
 80 Everything is happy now,
 Everything is upward striving ;
 'T is as easy now for the heart to be true
 As for grass to be green or skies to be blue, —
 85 'T is the natural way of living :
 Who knows whither the clouds have fled ?
 In the unscarred heaven they leave no wake ;
 And the eyes forget the tears they have shed,
 The heart forgets its sorrow and ache ;
 90 The soul partakes the season's youth,
 And the sulphurous rifts of passion and woe
 Lie deep 'neath a silence pure and smooth,
 Like burnt-out craters healed with snow.
 What wonder if Sir Launfal now
 95 Remembered the keeping of his vow ?

PART FIRST

reaches goal of beginning narrative
investigation is dropped & illustrates his truth here
 " MY golden spurs now bring to me,
 And bring to me my richest mail,
 For to-morrow I go over land and sea
 In search of the Holy Grail ;
 Shall never a bed for me be spread,
 100 Nor shall a pillow be under my head,

80. Compare Lowell's expression of the joyousness of all nature, animate and inanimate, with Wordsworth's

" And all the earth is gay ;
 Land and sea
 Give themselves up to jollity." . . .

" Ye blessed creatures, I have heard the stars
 to each other make." . . .

Till I begin my vow to keep ;
 Here on the rushes will I sleep,
 And perchance there may come a vision true
 Ere day create the world anew." 108

Slowly Sir Launfal's eyes grew dim,
 Slumber fell like a cloud on him,
 And into his soul the vision flew.

II

The crows flapped over by twos and threes,
 In the pool drowsed the cattle up to their knees, 110
 The little birds sang as if it were

The one day of summer in all the year,
 And the very leaves seemed to sing on the trees :
 The castle alone in the landscape lay
 Like an outpost of winter, dull and gray : 115

'T was the proudest hall in the North Countree,
 And never its gates might opened be,
 Save to lord or lady of high degree ;
 Summer besieged it on every side,
 But the churlish stone her assaults defied ; 120

She could not scale the chilly wall,
 Though around it for leagues her pavilions tall
 Stretched left and right,
 Over the hills and out of sight ;
 Green and broad was every tent, 125

And out of each a murmur went
 Till the breeze fell off at night.

III

The drawbridge dropped with a surly clang,
 And through the dark arch a charger sprang,
 Bearing Sir Launfal, the maiden knight, 130



AS SIR LAUNFAL MADE MORN THROUGH THE DARKSOME GATE

In his ^{golden} gilded mail, that flamed so bright
 It seemed the dark castle had gathered all
 Those shafts the fierce sun had shot over its wall

In his siege of three hundred summers long,
 And, binding them all in one blazing sheaf, 135

Had cast them forth : so, young and strong,
 And lightsome as a locust-leaf,
 Sir Launfal flashed forth in his maiden mail,
 To seek in all climes for the Holy Grail.

IV

It was morning on hill and stream and tree, 140

And morning in the young knight's heart ;
 Only the castle moodily

Rebuffed the gifts of the sunshine free,

And gloomed by itself apart ;

The season brimmed all other things up 145

Full as the rain fills the pitcher-plant's cup.

V

As Sir Launfal made morn through the darksome
 gate,

He was 'ware of a leper, crouched by the same,
Who begged with his hand and moaned as he sate ;

And a loathing over Sir Launfal came ; 150

The sunshine went out of his soul with a thrill,

The flesh 'neath his armor 'gan shrink and crawl,
 And midway its leap his heart stood still

Like a frozen waterfall ;

For this man, so foul and bent of stature, 155

Rasped harshly against his dainty nature,

And seemed the one blot on the summer morn, —

So he tossed him a piece of gold in scorn.

The leper raised not the gold from the dust
 "Better to me the poor man's crust, 160
 Better the blessing of the poor,
 Though I turn me empty from his door;
 That is no true alms which the hand can hold;
 He gives nothing but worthless gold
 Who gives from a sense of duty; 165
 But he who gives but a slender mite,
 And gives to that which is out of sight,
 That thread of the all-sustaining Beauty
 Which runs through all and doth all unite, —
 The hand cannot clasp the whole of his alms, 170
 The heart outstretches its eager palms,
 For a god goes with it and makes it store
 To the soul that was starving in darkness before."

PRELUDE TO PART SECOND

DOWN swept the chill wind from the mountain peak,
 From the snow five thousand summers old; 175

168. In *Beaver Brook* are the lines,

"To see how Beauty underlies
 Forevermore each form of use,"

and in *The Oak* the lines

Lord! all Thy works are lessons; each contains
 Some emblem of man's all-containing soul."

The last stanza of *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* suggests in another way that all nature bears a divine message to the observant.

174. Different moods are indicated by the two Preludes. The one is of June, the other of snow and winter; in each, the poet, like an organist, strikes a key which he holds in the subsequent parts. The second Prelude should correspond in literary form and significance with the first. For a discussion of this point, see p. 98. In the letter of Mr. Hosea Biglow, pp. 77-83, the lines

On open wold and hilltop bleak
 It had gathered all the cold,
 And whirled it like sleet on the wanderer's cheek;
 It carried a shiver everywhere
 From the unleafed boughs and pastures bare; 180
 The little brook heard it and built a roof
 'Neath which he could house him, winter-proof;
 All night by the white stars' frosty gleams
 He groined his arches and matched his beams;
 Slender and clear were his crystal spars 185
 As the lashes of light that trim the stars;
 He sculptured every summer delight
 In his halls and chambers out of sight;
 Sometimes his tinkling waters slipt
 Down through a frost-leaved forest-crypt, 190
 Long, sparkling aisles of steel-stemmed trees
 Bending to counterfeit a breeze;
 Sometimes the roof no fretwork knew
 But silvery mosses that downward grew;
 Sometimes it was carved in sharp relief 195
 With quaint arabesques of ice-fern leaf;

beginning "Snow-flakes come whisperin' on the pane" suggest, without parallelling, the description of winter given here.

181. In *An Indian-Summer Reverie* is a description of the river in "smooth plate-armor," . . .

"By the frost's clinking hammers forged at night."

The difference in these two descriptions lies chiefly in point of view; the little brook builds himself a house, and literally roofs it above his head. Lowell, in imagination, writes his description of this winter palace of ice from within, personifying the brook as builder and inhabitant. In the other description, written earlier, the river is seen from above, as encased in armor and exposed to the "lances of the sun." Even in the "fresh-spurred grots," and "the grass-arched channels to the sun denied," in the next stanza, the vision in the mind is always of the poet, or

Sometimes it was simply smooth and clear
 For the gladness of heaven to shine through, and here
 He had caught the nodding bulrush-tops
 And hung them thickly with diamond-drops, 200
 That crystallized the beams of moon and sun,
 And made a star of every one :

No mortal builder's most rare device
 Could match this winter-palace of ice ;
 'T was as if every image that mirrored lay 205
 In his depths serene through the summer day,
 Each fleeting shadow of earth and sky,
 Lest the happy model should be lost,
 Had been mimicked in fairy masonry
 By the elfin builders of the frost. 210

Within the hall are song and laughter,
 The cheeks of Christmas grow red and jolly,
 And sprouting is every corbel and rafter
 With lightsome green of ivy and holly ;

the reader, standing on the bank above and looking down on
 "the ebbing river."

In the descent of the storm-wind gathering the cold, and in
 the description of morning, her veins sapless and old, rising up
 decrepitly "for a last dim look at earth and sea," there is a
 haunting suggestion of the storm-blast in *The Ancient Mariner*
 chasing the good ship southward through mist and snow, but there
 is nowhere an imitation or a borrowed phrase. The true poet
 catches the very spirit and life from another man's work and
 thus enriches his own imagination. The resemblance that arises
 thus is elusive and difficult to trace, and is found, if at all, in a
 subtle similarity of atmosphere or purpose, or figurative concep-
 tion, adapted to a new point of view or use.

203. The Empress of Russia, Catherine II, in a magnificent
 freak, built a palace of ice, which was a nine-days' wonder.
 Cowper has given a poetical description of it in *The Task*, Book V,
 lines 131-176. For Lowell's indebtedness to this poem, see p. 103.

Through the deep gulf of the chimney wide 215
 Wallows the Yule-log's roaring tide ;
 The broad flame-pennons droop and flap
 And belly and tug as a flag in the wind ;
 Like a locust shrills the imprisoned sap,
 Hunted to death in its galleries blind ; 220
 And swift little troops of silent sparks,
 Now pausing, now scattering away as in fear,
 Go threading the soot-forest's tangled darks
 Like herds of startled deer.

But the wind without was eager and sharp, 225
 Of Sir Launfal's gray hair it makes a harp,
 And rattles and wrings
 The icy strings,
 Singing, in dreary monotone,
 A Christmas carol of its own, 230
 Whose burden still, as he might guess,
 Was "Shelterless, shelterless, shelterless !"
 The voice of the seneschal flared like a torch
 As he shouted the wanderer away from the porch,
 And he sat in the gateway and saw all night 235
 The great hall-fire, so cheery and bold,
 Through the window-slits of the castle old,
 Build out its piers of ruddy light
 Against the drift of the cold.

216. The Yule-log was anciently a huge log burned at the
 feast of Juul (pronounced Yule) by our Scandinavian ancestors
 in honor of the god Thor. Juul-tid (Yule-time) corresponded
 in time to Christmas tide, and when Christian festivities took the
 place of pagan, many ceremonies remained. The great log, still
 called the Yule-log, was dragged in and burned in the fireplace
 after Thor had been forgotten.

PART SECOND

I

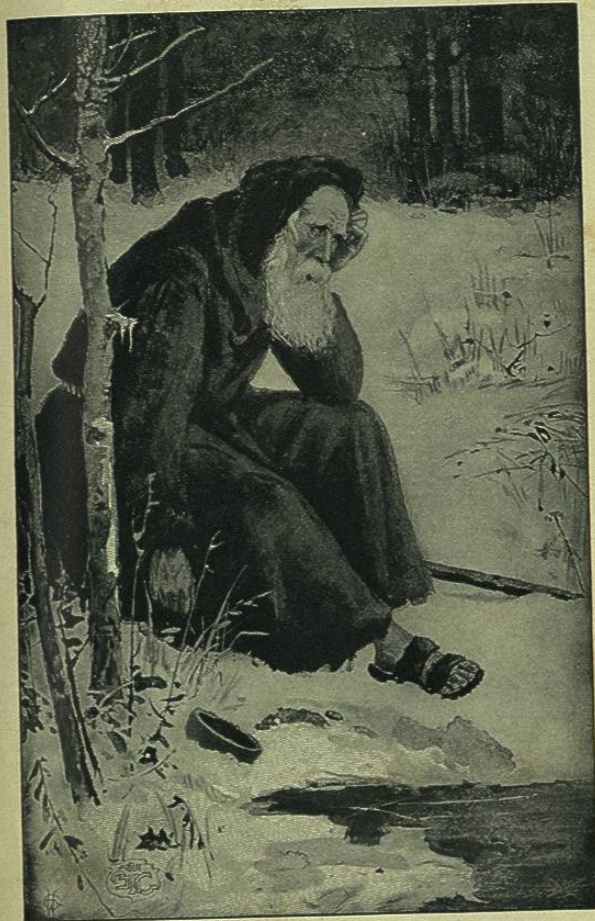
THERE was never a leaf on bush or tree, 240
 The bare boughs rattled shudderingly ;
 The river was dumb and could not speak,
 For the weaver Winter its shroud had spun ;
 A single crow on the tree-top bleak
 From his shining feathers shed off the cold sun ; 245
 Again it was morning, but shrunk and cold,
 As if her veins were sapless and old,
 And she rose up decrepitley
 For a last dim look at earth and sea.

II

Sir Launfal turned from his own hard gate, 250
 For another heir in his earldom sate ; *order*
 An old, bent man, worn out and frail,
 He came back from seeking the Holy Grail ;
 Little he *recked* of his earldom's loss, *remade*
 No more on his *surcoat* was blazoned the cross, 255
 But deep in his soul the sign he wore,
 The badge of the suffering and the poor.

III

Sir Launfal's raiment thin and spare
 Was idle mail 'gainst the barbed air,
 For it was just at the Christmas time ; 260
 So he mused, as he sat, of a sunnier clime,
 And sought for a shelter from cold and snow
 In the light and warmth of long-ago ;
 He sees the snake-like caravan crawl



SO HE MUSED, AS HE SAT, OF A SUNNIER CLIME

830
 257
 17
 20
 85.7
 29
 29

259
 19
 80

O'er the edge of the desert, black and small, 265
Then nearer and nearer, till, one by one,
He can count the camels in the sun,
As over the red-hot sands they pass
To where, in its slender necklace of grass,
The little spring laughed and leapt in the shade, 270
And with its own self like an infant played,
And waved its signal of palms.

IV

4 For Christ's sweet sake, I beg an alms; " —
The happy camels may reach the spring,
But Sir Launfal sees only the grewsome thing, 275
The leper, lank as the rain-blanch'd bone,
That cowers beside him, a thing as lone
And white as the ice-isles of Northern seas
In the desolate horror of his disease.

V

And Sir Launfal said, " I behold in thee 280
An image of Him who died on the tree;
Thou also hast had thy crown of thorns,
Thou also hast had the world's buffets and scorns,
And to thy life were not denied
The wounds in the hands and feet and side: 285
Mild Mary's Son, acknowledge me;
Behold, through him, I give to Thee!"

VI

Then the soul of the leper stood up in his eyes
And looked at Sir Launfal, and straightway he
Remembered in what a haughtier guise 290
He had flung an alms to leprosie,

When he girt his young life up in gilded mail
 And set forth in search of the Holy Grail.
 The heart within him was ashes and dust;
 He parted in twain his single crust, 298
 He broke the ice on the streamlet's brink,
 And gave the leper to eat and drink:
 'T was a mouldy crust of coarse brown bread,
 'T was water out of a wooden bowl, —
 Yet with fine wheaten bread was the leper fed, 300
 And 't was red wine he drank with his thirsty soul.

VII

As Sir Launfal mused with a downcast face,
 A light shone round about the place;
 The leper no longer crouched at his side,
 But stood before him glorified, 308
 Shining and tall and fair and straight
 As the pillar that stood by the Beautiful Gate, —
 Himself the Gate whereby men can
 Enter the temple of God in Man. 309

VIII

His words were shed softer than leaves from the pine,
 And they fell on Sir Launfal as snows on the brine,

310. Lowell seems to have used here a figure first suggested
 by Tennyson's lines,

“music that softer falls
 Than petals from blown roses on the grass.”

The suggestion is remote and must be traced through Lowell's
 fondness for poetic phrases and an almost unconscious adaptation
 of the figure to the more severe land of northern cold with which
 he was familiar. Our poet was also familiar with the source from
 which Tennyson drew so much of the beautiful imagery of *The
 Lotus Eaters*, *Enone*, and other early Idylls. In a letter dated
 June 28, 1839, he writes: “I have found a treasure to-day, — a

That mingle their softness and quiet in one
 With the shaggy unrest they float down upon;
 And the voice that was calmer than silence said,
 Lo, it is I, be not afraid! 315
 In many climes, without avail,
 Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;
 Behold, it is here, — this cup which thou
 Didst fill at the streamlet for Me but now;
 This crust is My body broken for thee 320
 This water His blood that died on the tree;
 The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
 In whatso we share with another's need:
 Not what we give, but what we share, —
 For the gift without the giver is bare; 325
 Who gives himself with his alms feeds three, —
 Himself, his hungering neighbor, and Me.”

IX

Sir Launfal awoke as from a swoond: —
 The Grail in my castle here is found! 330
 Hang my idle armor up on the wall,
 Let it be the spider's banquet-hall;
 He must be fenced with stronger mail
 Who would seek and find the Holy Grail.”

X

The castle gate stands open now,
 And the wanderer is welcome to the hall 335

small volume of about five hundred pages; not one of your
 attenuated modern things that seem like milk and water *watered*,
 but a goodly fat little fellow and full of the choicest dainties, viz.:
 Hesiod, Theocritus, Bion, Moschus, and extracts from Orpheus
 and some forty others, all with a Latin translation *ad verbum*.

As the hangbird is to the elm-tree bough ;
 No longer scowl the turrets tall,
 The Summer's long siege at last is o'er ;
 When the first poor outcast went in at the door,
 She entered with him in disguise, 340
 And mastered the fortress by surprise ;
 There is no spot she loves so well on ground,
 She lingers and smiles there the whole year round ;
 The meanest serf on Sir Launfal's land
 Has hall and bower at his command ; 348
 And there's no poor man in the North Countree
 But is lord of the earldom as much as he.

POEMS HAVING A SPECIAL RELATION TO
 THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL. GROUP A¹

THE SEARCH

I WENT to seek for Christ,
 And Nature seemed so fair
 That first the woods and fields my youth enticed,
 And I was sure to find him there :
 The temple I forsook,
 And to the solitude
 Allegiance paid ; but Winter came and shook
 The crown and purple from my wood ;
 His snows, like desert sands, with scornful drift,
 Besieged the columned aisle and palace-gate ; 10
 My Thebes, cut deep with many a solemn rift,
 But epitaphed her own sepulchred state :
 Then I remembered whom I went to seek,
 And blessed blunt Winter for his counsel bleak.

¹ See *The Study of The Vision of Sir Launfal*, p. 91.

Back to the world I turned, 17
 For Christ, I said, is King ; 15
 So the cramped alley and the hut I spurned,
 As far beneath his sojourning :
 Mid power and wealth I sought,
 But found no trace of him, 20
 And all the costly offerings I had brought
 With sudden rust and mould grew dim :
 I found his tomb, indeed, where, by their laws,
 All must on stated days themselves imprison,
 Mocking with bread a dead creed's grinning jaws, 25
 Witless how long the life had thence arisen ;
 Due sacrifice to this they set apart,
 Prizing it more than Christ's own living heart.

So from my feet the dust
 Of the proud World I shook ; 30
 Then came dear Love and shared with me his crust,
 And half my sorrow's burden took.
 After the World's soft bed,
 Its rich and dainty fare,
 Like down seemed Love's coarse pillow to my head, 35
 His cheap food seemed as manna rare ;
 Fresh-trodden prints of bare and bleeding feet,
 Turned to the heedless city whence I came,
 Hard by I saw, and springs of worship sweet
 Gushed from my cleft heart smitten by the same ; 40
 Love looked me in the face and spake no words,
 But straight I knew those footprints were the Lord's.

I followed where they led,
 And in a hovel rude,
 With naught to fence the weather from his head, 45

The King I sought for meekly stood ;
 A naked, hungry child
 Clung round his gracious knee,
 And a poor hunted slave looked up and smiled
 To bless the smile that set him free ; 50
 New miracles I saw his presence do, —
 No more I knew the hovel bare and poor,
 The gathered chips into a woodpile grew,
 The broken morsel swelled to goodly store ;
 I knelt and wept: my Christ no more I seek, 55
 His throne is with the outcast and the weak.

A PARABLE

SAID Christ our Lord, "I will go and see
 How the men, my brethren, believe in me."
 He passed not again through the gate of birth,
 But made himself known to the children of earth.

Then said the chief priests, and rulers, and kings, 5
 "Behold, now, the Giver of all good things ;
 Go to, let us welcome with pomp and state
 Him who alone is mighty and great."

With carpets of gold the ground they spread
 Wherever the Son of Man should tread, 10
 And in palace-chambers lofty and rare
 They lodged him, and served him with kingly fare.

Great organs surged through arches dim
 Their jubilant floods in praise of him ;
 And in church, and palace, and judgment-hall, 15
 He saw his own image high over all.

But still, wherever his steps they led,
 The Lord in sorrow bent down his head,
 And from under the heavy foundation-stones,
 The son of Mary heard bitter groans. 20

And in church, and palace, and judgment-hall,
 He marked great fissures that rent the wall,
 And opened wider and yet more wide
 As the living foundation heaved and sighed.

"Have ye founded your thrones and altars, then, 25
 On the bodies and souls of living men ?
 And think ye that building shall endure,
 Which shelters the noble and crushes the poor ?

"With gates of silver and bars of gold
 Ye have fenced my sheep from their Father's fold ;
 I have heard the dropping of their tears 31
 In heaven these eighteen hundred years."

"O Lord and Master, not ours the guilt,
 We build but as our fathers built ;
 Behold thine images, how they stand, 35
 Sovereign and sole, through all our land.

"Our task is hard, — with sword and flame
 To hold thine earth forever the same,
 And with sharp crooks of steel to keep
 Still, as thou leftest them, thy sheep." 40

Then Christ sought out an artisan,
 A low-browed, stunted, haggard man,
 And a motherless girl, whose fingers thin
 Pushed from her faintly want and sin.

These set he in the midst of them, 45
 And as they drew back their garment-hem,
 For fear of defilement, "Lo, here," said he,
 "The images ye have made of me!"

FREEDOM

ARE we, then, wholly fallen? Can it be
 That thou, North wind, that from thy mountains
 bringest
 Their spirit to our plains, and thou, blue sea,
 Who on our rocks thy wreaths of freedom flingest,
 As on an altar, — can it be that ye 5
 Have wasted inspiration on dead ears,
 Dulled with the too familiar clank of chains?
 The people's heart is like a harp for years
 Hung where some petrifying torrent rains
 Its slow-incrusting spray: the stiffened chords 10
 Faint and more faint make answer to the tears
 That drip upon them: idle are all words:
 Only a golden plectrum wakes the tone
 Deep buried 'neath that ever-thickening stone.

We are not free: doth Freedom, then, consist 15
 In musing with our faces toward the Past,
 While petty cares and crawling interests twist
 Their spider-threads about us, which at last
 Grow strong as iron chains, to cramp and bind
 In formal narrowness heart, soul, and mind? 20
 Freedom is re-created year by year,
 In hearts wide open on the Godward side,
 In souls calm-cadenced as the whirling sphere,
 In minds that sway the future like a tide.

No broadest creeds can hold her, and no codes; 25
 She chooses men for her august abodes,
 Building them fair and fronting to the dawn;
 Yet, when we seek her, we but find a few
 Light footprints, leading morn-ward through the
 dew:
 Before the day had risen, she was gone. 30

And we must follow: swiftly runs she on,
 And, if our steps should slacken in despair,
 Half turns her face, half smiles through golden hair,
 Forever yielding, never wholly won:
 That is not love which pauses in the race 35
 Two close-linked names on fleeting sand to trace;
 Freedom gained yesterday is no more ours;
 Men gather but dry seeds of last year's flowers;
 Still there's a charm ungranted, still a grace,
 Still rosy Hope, the free, the unattained, 40
 Makes us Possession's languid hand let fall;
 'Tis but a fragment of ourselves is gained,
 The Future brings us more, but never all.

And, as the finder of some unknown realm,
 Mounting a summit whence he thinks to see 45
 On either side of him the imprisoning sea,
 Beholds, above the clouds that overwhelm
 The valley-land, peak after snowy peak
 Stretch out of sight, each like a silver helm
 Beneath its plume of smoke, sublime and bleak, 50
 And what he thought an island finds to be
 A continent to him first oped, — so we
 Can from our height of Freedom look along
 A boundless future, ours if we be strong;

Or if we shrink, better remount our ships 55
 And, fleeing God's express design, trace back
 The hero-freighted Mayflower's prophet-track
 To Europe entering her blood-red eclipse.¹

STANZAS ON FREEDOM

Sung at the anti-slavery picnic in Dedham, on the anniversary of
 West Indian Emancipation, August 1, 1843.

MEN! whose boast it is that ye
 Come of fathers brave and free,
 If there breathe on earth a slave,
 Are ye truly free and brave?
 If ye do not feel the chain, 5
 When it works a brother's pain,
 Are ye not base slaves indeed,
 Slaves unworthy to be freed?

Women! who shall one day bear
 Sons to breathe New England air, 10
 If ye hear, without a blush,
 Deeds to make the roused blood rush
 Like red lava through your veins,
 For your sisters now in chains, —
 Answer! are ye fit to be 15
 Mothers of the brave and free?

Is true Freedom but to break
 Fetters for our own dear sake,
 And, with leathern hearts, forget
 That we owe mankind a debt? 20

¹ See Lowell's *Letters*, ii, 36, for the last part of this poem
 as originally written, and for Lowell's comment.

No! true Freedom is to share
 All the chains our brothers wear,
 And, with heart and hand, to be
 Earnest to make others free!

They are slaves who fear to speak 25
 For the fallen and the weak;
 They are slaves who will not choose
 Hatred, scoffing, and abuse,
 Rather than in silence shrink
 From the truth they needs must think; 30
 They are slaves who dare not be
 In the right with two or three.

BIBLIOLATRES

BOWING thyself in dust before a Book,
 And thinking the great God is thine alone,
 O rash iconoclast, thou wilt not brook
 What gods the heathen carves in wood and stone, 5
 As if the Shepherd who from outer cold
 Leads all his shivering lambs to one sure fold
 Were careful for the fashion of His crook.

There is no broken reed so poor and base,
 No rush, the bending tilt of swamp-fly blue,
 But He therewith the ravening wolf can chase, 10
 And guide His flock to springs and pastures new;
 Through ways unlooked for, and through many lands,
 Far from the rich folds built with human hands,
 The gracious footprints of His love I trace.

And what art thou, own brother of the clod, 15
 That from His hand the crook would'st snatch away

And shake instead thy dry and sapless rod,
 To scare the sheep out of the wholesome day?
 Yea, what art thou, blind, unconverted Jew,
 That with thy idol-volume's covers two 20
 Would'st make a jail to coop the living God?

Thou hear'st not well the mountain organ-tones
 By prophet ears from Hor and Sinai caught,
 Thinking the cisterns of those Hebrew brains
 Drew dry the springs of the All-knower's thought, 25
 Nor shall thy lips be touched with living fire,
 Who blow'st old altar-coals with sole desire
 To weld anew the spirit's broken chains.

God is not dumb, that He should speak no more;
 If thou hast wanderings in the wilderness 30
 And find'st not Sinai, 't is thy soul is poor;
 There towers the Mountain of the Voice no less,
 Which whoso seeks shall find, but he who bends,
 Intent on manna still and mortal ends,
 Sees it not, neither hears its thundered lore. 35

Slowly the Bible of the race is writ,
 And not on paper leaves nor leaves of stone;
 Each age, each kindred, adds a verse to it,
 Texts of despair or hope, of joy or moan. 39
 While swings the sea, while mists the mountains
 shroud,
 While thunder's surges burst on cliffs of cloud,
 Still at the prophets' feet the nations sit.

THE PRESENT CRISIS

[In the year 1844, which is the date of the following poem, the question of the annexation of Texas was pending, and it was made an issue of the presidential campaign then taking place. The anti-slavery party feared and opposed annexation, on account of the added strength which it would give to slavery, and the South desired it for the same reason.]

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,
 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. 5

Through the walls of hut and palace shoots the instan-
 taneous throe,
 When the travail of the Ages wrings earth's systems to
 and fro;
 At the birth of each new Era, with a recognizing 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 terror 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, delving in the
nobler clod. 15

For mankind are one in spirit, and an instinct bears along,
Round the earth's electric circle, the swift flash of
right or wrong ;
Whether conscious or unconscious, yet Humanity'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. 25

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 ?

17. This figure has special force from the fact that Morse's telegraph was first put in operation a few months before the writing of this poem.

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
hath passed by. 35

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 forever on the
throne, —
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the
dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above
his own. 40

29. Compare
" Truth crushed to earth shall rise again,
The eternal years of God are hers."

BRYANT.

37. " In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."