

We see dimly in the Present what is small and what is great,

Slow of faith how weak an arm may turn the iron helm of fate,

But the soul is still oracular ; amid the market's din,  
List the ominous stern whisper from the Delphic cave within, —

“They enslave their children's children who make compromise with sin.” 45

Slavery, the earth-born Cyclops, fellest of the giant brood,

Sons of brutish Force and Darkness, who have drenched the earth with blood,

Famished in his self-made desert, blinded by our purer day,

Gropes in yet unblasted regions for his miserable prey ; —

Shall we guide his gory fingers where our helpless children play? 50

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

Ere her cause bring fame and profit, and 't is prosperous to be just ;

Then it is the brave man chooses, while the coward stands aside,

Doubting in his abject spirit, till his Lord is crucified,  
And the multitude make virtue of the faith they had denied. 55

50. For the full story of Cyclops, which runs in suggestive phrase through these five lines, see the ninth book of the *Odyssey*. The translation by G. H. Palmer will be found especially satisfactory.

Count me o'er earth's chosen heroes, — they were souls that stood alone,

While the men they agonized for hurled the contumelious stone,

Stood serene, and down the future saw the golden beam incline

To the side of perfect justice, mastered by their faith divine,

By one man's plain truth to manhood and to God's supreme design. 60

By the light of burning heretics Christ's bleeding feet I track,

Toiling up new Calvaries ever with the cross that turns not back,

And these mounts of anguish number how each generation learned

One new word of that grand *Credo* which in prophet-hearts hath burned

Since the first man stood God-conquered with his face to heaven upturned. 65

For Humanity sweeps onward : where to-day the martyr stands,

On the morrow crouches Judas with the silver in his hands ;

Far in front the cross stands ready and the crackling fagots burn,

While the hooting mob of yesterday in silent awe return

To glean up the scattered ashes into History's golden urn. 70

'T is as easy to be heroes as to sit the idle slaves  
Of a legendary virtue carved upon our fathers' graves,  
Worshippers of light ancestral make the present light  
a crime ; —

Was the Mayflower launched by cowards, steered by  
men behind their time ?

Turn those tracks toward Past or Future, that make  
Plymouth Rock sublime ? 75

They were men of present valor, stalwart old icono-  
clasts,

Unconvinced by axe or gibbet that all virtue was the  
Past's ;

But we make their truth our falsehood, thinking that  
hath made us free,

Hoarding it in mouldy parchments, while our tender  
spirits flee

The rude grasp of that great Impulse which drove them  
across the sea. 80

They have rights who dare maintain them ; we are trai-  
tors to our sires,

Smothering in their holy ashes Freedom's new-lit altar-  
fires ;

Shall we make their creed our jailer ? Shall we, in our  
haste to slay,

From the tombs of the old prophets steal the funeral  
lamps away

To light up the martyr-fagots round the proplets of  
to-day ? 85

New occasions teach new duties ; Time makes ancient  
good uncouth ;

They must upward still, and onward, who would keep  
abreast of Truth ;

Lo, before us gleam her camp-fires ! we ourselves must  
Pilgrims be.

Launch our Mayflower, and steer boldly through the  
desperate winter sea,

Nor attempt the Future's portal with the Past's blood-  
rusted key. 90

## TO W. L. GARRISON

"Some time afterward, it was reported to me by the city officers  
that they had ferreted out the paper and its editor ; that his office  
was an obscure hole, his only visible auxiliary a negro boy, and his  
supporters a few very insignificant persons of all colors." — *Letter of*  
*H. G. Otis.*

In a small chamber, friendless and unseen,  
Toiled o'er his types one poor, unlearned young  
man ;

The place was dark, unfurnished, and mean ; —  
Yet there the freedom of a race began.

Help came but slowly ; surely no man yet 5  
Put lever to the heavy world with less :  
What need of help ? He knew how types were set,  
He had a dauntless spirit, and a press.

Such earnest natures are the fiery pith,  
The compact nucleus, round which systems grow ; 10  
Mass after mass becomes inspired therewith,  
And whirls impregnate with the central glow.

6. Archimedes, a great philosopher of antiquity, used to say,  
"Only give me a place to stand on, and I will move the world  
with my lever."

O Truth ! O Freedom ! how are ye still born  
 In the rude stable, in the manger nursed !  
 What humble hands unbar those gates of morn 15  
 Through which the splendors of the New Day  
 burst !

What ! shall one monk, scarce known beyond his  
 cell,  
 Front Rome's far-reaching bolts, and scorn her  
 frown ?

Brave Luther answered YES ; that thunder's swell  
 Rocked Europe, and discharmed the triple crown. 20

Whatever can be known of earth we know,  
 Sneered Europe's wise men, in their snail-shells  
 curled ;

No ! said one man in Genoa, and that No  
 Out of the dark created this New World.

Who is it will not dare himself to trust ? 25  
 Who is it hath not strength to stand alone ?  
 Who is it thwarts and bilks the inward MUST ?  
 He and his works, like sand, from earth are blown.

Men of a thousand shifts and wiles, look here !  
 See one straightforward conscience put in pawn 30  
 To win a world ; see the obedient sphere  
 By bravery's simple gravitation drawn !

Shall we not heed the lesson taught of old,  
 And by the Present's lips repeated still,  
 In our own single manhood to be bold, 35  
 Fortressed in conscience and impregnable will ?

We stride the river daily at its spring,  
 Nor, in our childish thoughtlessness, foresee,  
 What myriad vassal streams shall tribute bring,  
 How like an equal it shall greet the sea. 40

O small beginnings, ye are great and strong,  
 Based on a faithful heart and weariless brain !  
 Ye build the future fair, ye conquer wrong,  
 Ye earn the crown, and wear it not in vain.

## WENDELL PHILLIPS

HE stood upon the world's broad threshold ; wide  
 The din of battle and of slaughter rose ;  
 He saw God stand upon the weaker side,  
 That sank in seeming loss before its foes :  
 Many there were who made great haste and sold 3  
 Unto the cunning enemy their swords,  
 He scorned their gifts of fame, and power, and gold,  
 And, underneath their soft and flowery words,  
 Heard the cold serpent hiss ; therefore he went  
 And humbly joined him to the weaker part, 10  
 Fanatic named, and fool, yet well content  
 So he could be the nearer to God's heart,  
 And feel its solemn pulses sending blood  
 Through all the widespread veins of endless good.

POEMS HAVING A SPECIAL RELATION TO  
THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL. GROUP B<sup>1</sup>

"Indeed, there could scarcely have been a better nesting place for one who was all his life long to love the animation of nature and to portray in verse and prose its homely and friendly aspects rather than its large, solemn, and expansive scenes. . . . From the upper windows of the house — that tower of enchantment for many a child — he could see a long curve of the Charles, the wide marshes beyond the river, and the fields which lay between Elmwood and the village of Cambridge. Within the place itself were the rose-bushes and asters, the heavy headed goat's-beard, the lilac bushes and syringas which bordered the path from the door to what his father, in New England phrase, called the avenue, and which later became formally Elmwood Avenue. . . . And in the trees and bushes sang the birds that were to be his companions through life. Over the buttercups whistled the orioles; and bobolinks, catbirds, linnets, and robins were to teach him notes, —

The Aladdin's trap-door of the past to lift.

A spring morning which witnessed the sudden miracle of regeneration; an hour of summer, when he sat dappled with sunshine, in a cherry-tree; a day in autumn, when the falling leaves moved as an accompaniment to his thought; the creaking of the snow beneath his feet, when the familiar world was transformed as in a vision to a polar solitude: —

Instant the candid chambers of my brain  
Were painted with these sovran images;  
And later visions seem but copies pale  
From those unfading frescos of the past,  
Which I, young savage, in my age of flint,  
Gazed at, and dimly felt a power in me  
Parted from nature by the joy in her  
That doubtfully revealed me to myself."

Scudder's *James Russell Lowell*.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Study of The Vision of Sir Launfal*, p. 94.

BEAVER BROOK

HUSHED with broad sunlight lies the hill,  
And, minuting the long day's loss,  
The cedar's shadow, slow and still,  
Creeps o'er its dial of gray moss.

Warm noon brims full the valley's cup,  
The aspen's leaves are scarce astir;  
Only the little mill sends up  
Its busy, never-ceasing burr.

Climbing the loose-piled wall that hems  
The road along the mill-pond's brink,  
From 'neath the arching barberry-stems  
My footstep scares the shy chewink.

Beneath a bony buttonwood  
The mill's red door lets forth the din;  
The whitened miller, dust-imbued,  
Flits past the square of dark within.

No mountain torrent's strength is here;  
Sweet Beaver, child of forest still,  
Heaps its small pitcher to the ear,  
And gently waits the miller's will.

Swift slips Undine along the race  
Unheard, and then, with flashing bound,  
Floods the dull wheel with light and grace,  
And, laughing, hunts the loath drudge round.

18. Beaver Brook was within walking distance of the poet's home. See *The Nightingale in the Study* and *Mr. Hosea Biglow to the Editor of the Atlantic Monthly*.

The miller dreams not at what cost  
 The quivering millstones hum and whirl, 25  
 Nor how for every turn are tost  
 Armfuls of diamond and of pearl.

But Summer cleared my happier eyes  
 With drops of some celestial juice, 30  
 To see how Beauty underlies,  
 Forevermore each form of use.

And more ; methought I saw that flood,  
 Which now so dull and darkling steals, 35  
 Thick, here and there, with human blood,  
 To turn the world's laborious wheels.

No more than doth the miller there,  
 Shut in our several cells, do we  
 Know with what waste of beauty rare 40  
 Moves every day's machinery.

Surely the wiser time shall come  
 When this fine overplus of might,  
 No longer sullen, slow, and dumb,  
 Shall leap to music and to light.

In that new childhood of the Earth 45  
 Life of itself shall dance and play,  
 Fresh blood in Time's shrunk veins make mirth,  
 And labor meet delight half-way.

## AL FRESCO

"THE MILL," 1849.

THE dandelions and buttercups  
 Gild all the lawn ; the drowsy bee  
 Stumbles among the clover-tops,  
 And summer sweetens all but me :  
 Away, unfruitful lore of books, 5  
 For whose vain idiom we reject  
 The soul's more native dialect,  
 Aliens among the birds and brooks,  
 Dull to interpret or conceive  
 What gospels lost the woods retrieve ! 10  
 Away, ye critics, city-bred,  
 Who springes set of thus and so,  
 And in the first man's footsteps tread,  
 Like those who toil through drifted snow !  
 Away, my poets, whose sweet spell 15  
 Can make a garden of a cell !  
 I need ye not, for I to-day  
 Will make one long sweet verse of play.

Snap, chord of manhood's tenser strain !  
 To-day I will be a boy again ; 20  
 The mind's pursuing element,  
 Like a bow slackened and unbent,  
 In some dark corner shall be leant.  
 The robin sings, as of old, from the limb !  
 The catbird croons in the lilac bush ! 25

15. There is a delightful pair of poems by Wordsworth, *Exposition and Reply*, and *The Tables Turned*, which show how another poet treats books and nature.

Through the dim arbor, himself more dim,  
 Silently hops the hermit-thrush,  
 The withered leaves keep dumb for him ;  
 The irreverent buccaneering bee  
 Hath stormed and rifled the nunnery 30  
 Of the lily, and scattered the sacred floor  
 With haste-dropt gold from shrine to door ;  
 There, as of yore,  
 The rich, milk-tingeing buttercup  
 Its tiny polished urn holds up, 35  
 Filled with ripe summer to the edge,  
 The sun in his own wine to pledge ;  
 And our tall elm, this hundredth year  
 Doge of our leafy Venice here,  
 Who, with an annual ring, doth wed 40  
 The blue Adriatic overhead,  
 Shadows with his palatial mass  
 The deep canals of flowing grass.

O unestrangèd birds and bees !  
 O face of Nature always true ! 45  
 O never-unsympathizing trees !  
 O never-rejecting roof of blue,  
 Whose rash disherison never falls  
 On us unthinking prodigals,  
 Yet who convictest all our ill, 50  
 So grand and unappeasable !  
 Methinks my heart from each of these  
 Plucks part of childhood back again,  
 Long there imprisoned, as the breeze  
 Doth every hidden odor seize 55  
 Of wood and water, hill and plain ;  
 Once more am I admitted peer

In the upper house of Nature here,  
 And feel through all my pulses run  
 The royal blood of breeze and sun. 60

Upon these elm-arched solitudes  
 No hum of neighbor toil intrudes ;  
 The only hammer that I hear  
 Is wielded by the woodpecker,  
 The single noisy calling his 65  
 In all our leaf-hid Sybaris ;  
 The good old time, close-hidden here,  
 Persists, a loyal cavalier,  
 While Roundheads prim, with point of fox,  
 Probe wainscot-chink and empty box ; 70  
 Here no hoarse-voiced iconoclast  
 Insults thy statues, royal Past ;  
 Myself too prone the axe to wield,  
 I touch the silver side of the shield  
 With lance reversed, and challenge peace, 75  
 A willing convert of the trees.

How chanced it that so long I tost  
 A cable's length from this rich coast,  
 With foolish anchors hugging close  
 The beckoning weeds and lazy ooze, 80  
 Nor had the wit to wreck before  
 On this enchanted island's shore,  
 Whither the current of the sea,  
 With wiser drift, persuaded me ?

O, might we but of such rare days 85  
 Build up the spirit's dwelling-place !

A temple of so Parian stone  
 Would brook a marble god alone,  
 The statue of a perfect life,  
 Far-shrined from earth's bestaining strife. 90  
 Alas! though such felicity  
 In our next world here may not be,  
 Yet, as sometimes the peasant's hut  
 Shows stones which old religion cut  
 With text inspired, or mystic sign 95  
 Of the Eternal and Divine,  
 Torn from the consecration deep  
 Of some fallen nunnery's mossy sleep,  
 So, from the ruins of this day  
 Crumbling in golden dust away, 100  
 The soul one gracious block may draw,  
 Carved with some fragment of the law,  
 Which, set in life's prosaic wall,  
 Old benedictions may recall,  
 And lure some nunlike thoughts to take 105  
 Their dwelling here for memory's sake.

## AN INDIAN-SUMMER REVERIE

[When Mr. Lowell wrote this poem he was living at Elmwood in Cambridge, at that time quite remote from town influences, — Cambridge itself being scarcely more than a village, — but now rapidly losing its rustic surroundings. The Charles River flowed near by, then a limpid stream, untroubled by factories or sewage. It is a tidal river and not far from Elmwood winds through broad salt marshes. Mr. Longfellow's old home is a short stroll nearer town, and the two poets exchanged pleasant shots, as may be seen by Lowell's *To H. W. L.*, and Longfellow's *The Herons of Elmwood*. In *Under the Willows* Mr. Lowell has, as it were, indulged in another reverie at a later period of his life, among the same familiar surroundings.]

WHAT visionary tints the year puts on,  
 When falling leaves falter through motionless air  
 Or numbly cling and shiver to be gone!  
 How shimmer the low flats and pastures bare,  
 As with her nectar Hebe Autumn fills 5  
 The bowl between me and those distant hills,  
 And smiles and shakes abroad her misty, tremulous hair!

No more the landscape holds its wealth apart,  
 Making me poorer in my poverty,  
 But mingles with my senses and my heart; 10  
 My own projected spirit seems to me  
 In her own reverie the world to steep;  
 'Tis she that waves to sympathetic sleep,  
 Moving, as she is moved, each field and hill and tree.

How fuse and mix, with what unfelt degrees, 15  
 Clasped by the faint horizon's languid arms,  
 Each into each, the hazy distances!  
 The softened season all the landscape charms;  
 Those hills, my native village that embay,  
 In waves of dreamier purple roll away, 20  
 And floating in mirage seem all the glimmering farms.

Far distant sounds the hidden chickadee  
 Close at my side; far distant sound the leaves;  
 The fields seem fields of dream, where Memory  
 Wanders like gleaning Ruth; and as the sheaves 25  
 Of wheat and barley wavered in the eye  
 Of Boaz as the maiden's glow went by,  
 So tremble and seem remote all things the sense re-  
 ceives.

The cook's shrill trump that tells of scattered corn,  
 Passed breezily on by all his flapping mates, 30  
 Faint and more faint, from barn to barn is borne,  
 Southward, perhaps to far Magellan's Straits;  
 Dimly I catch the throb of distant flails;  
 Silently overhead the hen-hawk sails,  
 With watchful, measuring eye, and for his quarry waits.

The sobered robin, hunger-silent now, 36  
 Seeks cedar-berries blue, his autumn cheer;  
 The chipmunk, on the shingly shagbark's bough,  
 Now saws, now lists with downward eye and ear,  
 Then drops his nut, and, with a chipping bound, 40  
 Whisks to his winding fastness underground;  
 The clouds like swans drift down the streaming atmosphere.

O'er yon bare knoll the pointed cedar shadows  
 Drowse on the crisp, gray moss; the ploughman's call  
 Creeps faint as smoke from black, fresh-furrowed  
 meadows; 45  
 The single crow a single caw lets fall;  
 And all around me every bush and tree  
 Says Autumn's here, and Winter soon will be,  
 Who snows his soft, white sleep and silence over all.

The birch, most shy and ladylike of trees, 50  
 Her poverty, as best she may, retrieves,  
 And hints at her foregone gentilities  
 With some saved relics of her wealth of leaves;  
 The swamp-oak, with his royal purple on,  
 Glares red as blood across the sinking sun, 55  
 As one who prouder to a falling fortune cleaves.

He looks a sachem, in red blanket wrapt,  
 Who, 'mid some council of the sad-garbed whites,  
 Erect and stern, in his own memories lapt,  
 With distant eye broods over other sights, 60  
 Sees the hushed wood the city's flare replace,  
 The wounded turf heal o'er the railway's trace,  
 And roams the savage Past of his undwindled rights.

The red-oak, softer-grained, yields all for lost,  
 And, with his crumpled foliage stiff and dry, 65  
 After the first betrayal of the frost,  
 Rebuffs the kiss of the relenting sky;  
 The chestnuts, lavish of their long-hid gold,  
 To the faint Summer, beggared now and old, 69  
 Pour back the sunshine hoarded 'neath her favoring eye.

The ash her purple drops forgivingly  
 And sadly, breaking not the general hush;  
 The maple-swamps glow like a sunset sea,  
 Each leaf a ripple with its separate flush;  
 All round the wood's edge creeps the skirting  
 blaze 75  
 Of bushes low, as when, on cloudy days,  
 Ere the rain falls, the cautious farmer burns his brush.

O'er yon low wall, which guards one unkempt zone,  
 Where vines and weeds and scrub-oaks intertwine  
 Safe from the plough, whose rough, discordant  
 stone 80  
 Is massed to one soft gray by lichens fine,  
 The tangled blackberry, crossed and recrossed,  
 weaves  
 A prickly network of ensanguined leaves;  
 Hard by, with coral beads, the prim black-alders shine.



Pillaring with flame this crumbling boundary, 85  
Whose loose blocks topple 'neath the ploughboy's  
foot,

Who, with each sense shut fast except the eye,  
Creeps close and scares the jay he hoped to shoot,  
The woodbine up the elm's straight stem aspires,  
Coiling it, harmless, with autumnal fires; 90  
In the ivy's paler blaze the martyr oak stands mute.

Below, the Charles, a stripe of nether sky,  
Now hid by rounded apple-trees between,  
Whose gaps the misplaced sail sweeps bellying by,  
Now flickering golden through a woodland screen, 95  
Then spreading out, at his next turn beyond,  
A silver circle like an inland pond—  
Slips seaward silently through marshes purple and  
green.

Dear marshes! vain to him the gift of sight  
Who cannot in their various incomes share, 100  
From every season drawn, of shade and light,  
Who sees in them but levels brown and bare;  
Each change of storm or sunshine scatters free  
On them its largess of variety,  
For Nature with cheap means still works her wonders  
rare. 105

In Spring they lie one broad expanse of green,  
O'er which the light winds run with glimmering  
feet:  
Here, yellower stripes track out the creek un-  
seen,  
There, darker growths o'er hidden ditches meet;

And purpler stains show where the blossoms  
crowd, 110  
As if the silent shadow of a cloud  
Hung there becalmed, with the next breath to fleet.

All round, upon the river's slippery edge,  
Witching to deeper calm the drowsy tide,  
Whispers and leans the breeze-entangling  
sedge; 115  
Through emerald glooms the lingering waters slide,  
Or, sometimes wavering, throw back the sun,  
And the stiff banks in eddies melt and run  
Of dimpling light, and with the current seem to  
glide.

In Summer 't is a blithesome sight to see, 120  
As, step by step, with measured swing, they pass,  
The wide-ranked mowers wading to the knee,  
Their sharp scythes panting through the wiry grass;  
Then, stretched beneath a rick's shade in a ring,  
Their nooning take, while one begins to sing 125  
A stave that droops and dies 'neath the close sky of  
brass.

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

Another change subdues them in the Fall,  
 But saddens not; they still show merrier tints, 135  
 Though sober russet seems to cover all;  
 When the first sunshine through their dewdrop  
 glints,  
 Look how the yellow clearness, streamed across,  
 Redeems with rarer hues the season's loss,  
 As Dawn's feet there had touched and left their rosy  
 prints. 140

Or come when sunset gives its freshened zest,  
 Lean o'er the bridge and let the ruddy thrill,  
 While the shorn sun swells down the hazy west,  
 Glow opposite;— the marshes drink their fill  
 And swoon with purple veins, then slowly fade 145  
 Through pink to brown, as eastward moves the  
 shade,  
 Lengthening with stealthy creep, of Simond's darken-  
 ing hill.

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

Then, every morn, the river's banks shine  
 bright 155  
 With smooth plate-armor, treacherous and frail,

By the frost's clinking hammers forged at night,  
 'Gainst which the lances of the sun prevail,  
 Giving a pretty emblem of the day  
 When guiltier arms in light shall melt away, 160  
 And states shall move free-limbed, loosed from war's  
 cramping mail.

And now those waterfalls the ebbing river  
 Twice every day creates on either side  
 Tinkle, as through their fresh-sparred grots they  
 shiver  
 In grass-arched channels to the sun denied; 165  
 High flaps in sparkling blue the far-heard crow,  
 The silvered flats gleam frostily below,  
 Suddenly drops the gull and breaks the glassy tide.

But crowned in turn by vying seasons three,  
 Their winter halo hath a fuller ring; 170  
 This glory seems to rest immovably,—  
 The others were too fleet and vanishing;  
 When the hid tide is at its highest flow,  
 O'er marsh and stream one breathless trance of  
 snow 174  
 With brooding fulness awes and hushes everything.

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

But when the eastern blow, with rain aslant,  
 From mid-sea's prairies green and rolling plains  
 Drives in his wallowing herds of billows gaunt, 185  
 And the roused Charles remembers in his veins  
 Old Ocean's blood and snaps his gyves of frost,  
 That tyrannous silence on the shores is tost  
 In dreary wreck, and crumbling desolation reigns.

Edgewise or flat, in Druid-like device, 190  
 With leaden pools between or gullies bare,  
 The blocks lie strewn, a bleak Stonehenge of ice ;  
 No life, no sound, to break the grim despair,  
 Save sullen plunge, as through the sedges stiff  
 Down crackles riverward some thaw-sapped cliff,  
 Or when the close-wedged fields of ice crunch here and  
 there. 196

But let me turn from fancy-pictured scenes  
 To that whose pastoral calm before me lies :  
 Here nothing harsh or rugged intervenes ;  
 The early evening with her misty dyes 200  
 Smooths off the ravelled edges of the nigh,  
 Relieves the distant with her cooler sky,  
 And tones the landscape down, and soothes the wearied  
 eyes.

There gleams my native village, dear to me,  
 Though higher change's waves each day are seen, 205  
 Whelming fields famed in boyhood's history,  
 Sanding with houses the diminished green ;  
 There, in red brick, which softening time defies,  
 Stand square and stiff the Muses' factories ; —  
 How with my life knit up is every well-known scene !

Flow on, dear river ! not alone you flow 211  
 To outward sight, and through your marshes wind ;  
 Fed from the mystic springs of long-ago,  
 Your twin flows silent through my world of mind :  
 Grow dim, dear marshes, in the evening's gray !  
 Before my inner sight ye stretch away, 216  
 And will forever, though these fleshly eyes grow blind.

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

*Virgilium vidi tantum*, — I have seen 225  
 But as a boy, who looks alike on all,  
 That misty hair, that fine Undine-like mien,  
 Tremulous as down to feeling's faintest call ; —  
 Ah, dear old homestead ! count it to thy fame  
 That thither many times the Painter came ; —  
 One elm yet bears his name, a feathery tree and tall. 231

223. In *Cambridge Thirty Years Ago*, which treats in prose of much the same period as this poem reproduces, Mr. Lowell has given more in detail his recollections of Washington Allston, the painter. The whole paper may be read as a prose counterpart to this poem. It is published in *Fireside Travels*.

225. *Virgilium vidi tantum*, I barely saw Virgil, a Latin phrase applied to one who has merely had a glimpse of a great man.

227. Undine is the heroine of a romantic tale by Baron De la Motte Fouqué. She is represented as a water-nymph who wins a human soul only by a union with mortality which brings pain and sorrow.

Swiftly the present fades in memory's glow, —

Our only sure possession is the past ;

The village blacksmith died a month ago,

And dim to me the forge's roaring blast ; 235

Soon fire-new mediævals we shall see

Oust the black smithy from its chestnut-tree,

And that hewn down, perhaps, the bee-hive green and vast.

How many times, prouder than king on throne,

Loosed from the village school-dame's A's and B's,

Panting have I the creaky bellows blown, 241

And watched the pent volcano's red increase,

Then paused to see the ponderous sledge, brought down

By that hard arm voluminous and brown, 244

From the white iron swarm its golden vanishing bees.

Dear native town! whose choking elms each year

With eddying dust before their time turn gray,

Pining for rain, — to me thy dust is dear ;

It glorifies the eve of summer day, 249

And when the westering sun half sunken burns,

The mote-thick air to deepest orange turns,

The westward horseman rides through clouds of gold away,

So palpable, I've seen those unshorn few,

The six old willows at the causey's end

234. The village blacksmith of Longfellow's well-known poem. The prophecy came true as regards the hewing-down of the chestnut-tree, which was cut down in 1876.

(Such trees Paul Potter never dreamed nor drew), 255

Through this dry mist their checkering shadows send,

Striped, here and there, with many a long-drawn thread,

Where streamed through leafy chinks the trembling red,

Past which, in one bright trail, the hangbird's flashes blend.

Yes, dearer far thy dust than all that e'er, 260

Beneath the awarded crown of victory,

Gilded the blown Olympic charioteer ;

Though lightly prized the ribboned parchments three,

Yet *collegisse juvat*, I am glad

That here what *colleging* was mine I had, — 265

It linked another tie, dear native town, with thee !

Nearer art thou than simply native earth,

My dust with thine concedes a deeper tie ;

A closer claim thy soil may well put forth,

Something of kindred more than sympathy ; 270

For in thy bounds I reverently laid away

That blinding anguish of forsaken clay,

That title I seemed to have in earth and sea and sky,

264. *Collegisse juvat*. Horace in his first ode says, *Curriculo pulverem Olympicum Collegisse juvat*; that is, *It's a pleasure to have collected the dust of Olympus on your carriage-wheels*. Mr. Lowell, helping himself to the words, says, "It's a pleasure to have been at college;" for college in its first meaning is a *collecion* of men, as in the phrase "The college of cardinals."

That portion of my life more choice to me  
(Though brief, yet in itself so round and whole) 275

Than all the imperfect residue can be; —  
The Artist saw his statue of the soul  
Was perfect; so, with one regretful stroke,  
The earthen model into fragments broke,  
And without her the impoverished seasons roll. 280

## HEBE

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

As, in bare fields, the searching bees 5  
Pilot to blooms beyond our finding,  
It led me on, by sweet degrees  
Joy's simple honey-cells unbinding.

Those Graces were that seemed grim Fates;  
With nearer love the sky leaned o'er me; 10  
The long-sought Secret's golden gates  
On musical hinges swung before me.

I saw the brimmed bowl in her grasp  
Thrilling with godhood; like a lover  
I sprang the proffered life to clasp; — 15  
The beaker fell; the luck was over.

275. The volume containing this poem was reverently dedicated "To the ever fresh and happy memory of our little Blanche."

The Earth has drunk the vintage up;  
What boots it patch the goblet's splinters?  
Can Summer fill the icy cup,  
Whose treacherous crystal is but Winter's? 20

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

Coy Hebe flies from those that woo, 25  
And shuns the hands would seize upon her;  
Follow thy life, and she will sue  
To pour for thee the cup of honor.

## THE OAK

WHAT gnarled stretch, what depth of shade, is his!  
There needs no crown to mark the forest's king;  
How in his leaves outshines full summer's bliss!  
Sun, storm, rain, dew, to him their tribute bring, 5  
Which he with such benignant royalty  
Accepts, as overpayeth what is lent;  
All nature seems his vassal proud to be,  
And cunning only for his ornament.

How towers he, too, amid the billowed snows,  
An unquelled exile from the summer's throne, 10  
Whose plain, unincinctured front more kingly shows,  
Now that the obscuring courtier leaves are flown.  
His boughs make music of the winter air,  
Jewelled with sleet, like some cathedral front  
Where clinging snow-flakes with quaint art repair 15  
The dints and furrows of time's envious brunt.

How doth his patient strength the rude March wind  
 Persuade to seem glad breaths of summer breeze,  
 And win the soil that fain would be unkind,  
 To swell his revenues with proud increase! 20  
 He is the gem; and all the landscape wide  
 (So doth his grandeur isolate the sense)  
 Seems but the setting, worthless all beside,  
 An empty socket, were he fallen thence.

So, from oft converse with life's wintry gales, 25  
 Should man learn how to clasp with tougher roots  
 The inspiring earth; how otherwise avails  
 The leaf-creating sap that sunward shoots?  
 So every year that falls with noiseless flake  
 Should fill old scars up on the stormward side, 30  
 And make hoar age revered for age's sake,  
 Not for traditions of youth's leafy pride.

So, from the pinched soil of a churlish fate,  
 True hearts compel the sap of sturdier growth,  
 So between earth and heaven stand simply great, 35  
 That these shall seem but their attendants both;  
 For nature's forces with obedient zeal  
 Wait on the rooted faith and oaken will;  
 As quickly the pretender's cheat they feel,  
 And turn mad Pucks to flout and mock him still. 40

Lord! all Thy works are lessons; each contains  
 Some emblem of man's all-containing soul;  
 Shall he make fruitless all Thy glorious pains,  
 Delving within Thy grace an eyeless mole?

40. See Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Make me the least of thy Dodona-grove, 45  
 Cause me some message of thy truth to bring,  
 Speak but a word through me, nor let thy love  
 Among my boughs disdain to perch and sing.

## THE HARVARD COMMEMORATION

"THE Commemoration services (July 21, 1865) took place in the open air, in the presence of a great assembly. Prominent among the speakers were Major-General Meade, the hero of Gettysburg, and Major-General Devens. The wounds of the war were still fresh and bleeding, and the interest of the occasion was deep and thrilling. The summer afternoon was drawing to its close when the poet began the recital of the ode. No living audience could for the first time follow with intelligent appreciation the delivery of such a poem. To be sure, it had its obvious strong points and its sonorous charms; but, like all the later poems of the author, it is full of condensed thought and requires study. The reader to-day finds many passages whose force and beauty escaped him during the recital, yet the effect of the poem at the time was overpowering. The face of the poet, always singularly expressive, was on this occasion almost transfigured, — glowing, as if with an inward light. It was impossible to look away from it. Our age has furnished many great historic scenes, but this Commemoration combined the elements of grandeur and pathos, and produced an impression as lasting as life. Of the merits of the ode it is perhaps too soon to speak. In nobility of sentiment and sustained power it appears to take rank among the first in the language. To us, with the memories of the war in mind, it seems more beautiful and of a finer quality than the best of Dryden's. What the people of the coming centuries will say, who knows? We only know that the auditors,

45. A grove of oaks at Dodona, in ancient Greece, was the seat of a famous oracle.

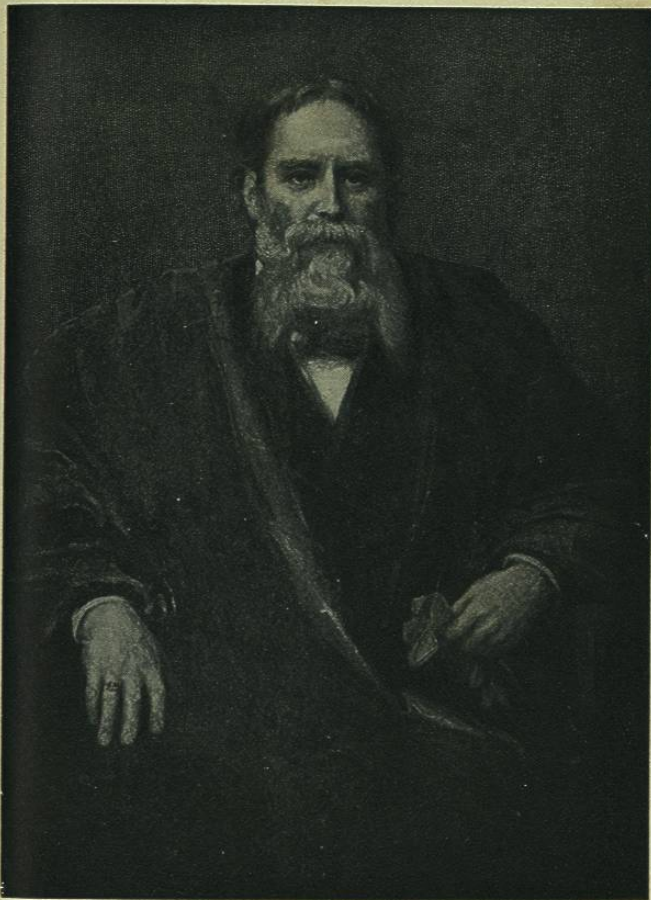
scholars and soldiers alike, were dissolved in admiration and tears." — Underwood's *James Russell Lowell*.

The chapter entitled "Lowell and the War for the Union" in Scudder's *Biography of Lowell* should be read as an introduction to the study of the *Commemoration Ode*. A passage in one of Lowell's letters, 8 December, 1868, reveals the mood in which the poem was written and the intensity of feeling that inspired it. The letter was addressed to the author of a review of the volume of verse which included the ode, and the passage reads as follows: —

"I am not sure if I understand what you say about the tenth strophe. You will observe that it leads naturally to the eleventh, and that I there justify a certain narrowness in it as an expression of the popular feeling as well as my own. I confess I have never got over the feeling of wrath with which (just after the death of my nephew Willie) I read in an English paper that nothing was to be hoped of an army officered by tailor's apprentices and butcher boys. The poem was written with a vehement speed, which I thought I had lost in the skirts of my professor's gown. Till within two days of the celebration I was hopelessly dumb, and then it all came with a rush, literally making me lean (*mi fece magro*), and so nervous that I was weeks in getting over it. I was longer in getting the new (eleventh) strophe to my mind than in writing the rest of my poem. In *that* I hardly changed a word, and it was so undeliberate that I did not find out till after it was printed that some of the verses lacked corresponding rhymes. . . . I had put the ethical and political view so often in prose that I was weary of it. The motives of the war? I had impatiently urged them again and again, — but for an ode they must be in the blood and not the memory."

In 1886, in a letter to R. W. Gilder, Lowell describes the composition of this ode and the effect of the effort upon himself. He says: —

"The passage about Lincoln was not in the ode as originally recited, but added immediately after. More than



LOWELL IN HIS OXFORD GOWN

eighteen months before, however, I had written about Lincoln in the *North American Review*—an article which pleased him. I did divine him earlier than most men of the Brahmin caste. The ode itself was an improvisation. Two days before the Commemoration I had told my friend Child that it was impossible—that I was dull as a door-mat. But the next day something gave me a jog and the whole thing came out of me with a rush. I sat up all night writing it out clear, and took it on the morning of the day to Child. ‘I have something, but don’t yet know what it is, or whether it will do. Look at it and tell me.’ He went a little way apart with it under an elm-tree in the college yard. He read a passage here and there, brought it back to me, and said, ‘Do? I should think so! Don’t you be scared.’ And I was n’t, but virtue enough had gone out of me to make me weak for a fortnight after. I was amazed at the praises I got. Trevelyan told me afterwards that he never could have carried through the abolition of purchase in the British Army but for the reinforcement he got from that poem.”

The study of the versification of *Commemoration Ode* reveals many of Lowell’s theories in regard to the adaptation of measures, stanzaic forms, etc., to the spirit of the poem, on the one hand, and on the other to the manner of his presentation. He believed that an author in composing his verses must adapt his measures to recitation, that is to the ear; or to the eye, that is to reading, as the case might be. The Memorial Odes were composed for recitation, and the poet’s own words best disclose how this purpose influenced him in the selection and adaptation of conventional verse forms. He writes:—

“The poems [*Three Memorial Poems*] were all intended for public recitation. That was the first thing to be considered. I suppose my ear (from long and painful practice on poems) has more technical practice in this than almost any. The least tedious measure is the rhymed heroic, but this, too, palls unless relieved by passages of wit or even