

ETCHINGS IN VERSE

BY

CHARLES LEMUEL THOMPSON

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ETCHINGS IN VERSE

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TO

WILLIAM C. GRAY

*Face to face within the glow
Of life's forge-fires,
And in the camp-flames' overflow
Among the pine-tree spires;
Face to face till toil and rest
By years are rounded, so
That friendship has its last and best
In our life's afterglow.*

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Songs of Faith.

SONGS OF FAITH.

CRYPT AND CATHEDRAL.

THE pile of a great cathedral stood,
In the ages long ago,
On the marge where the great Rhine river flowed
To the breadth of the sea below;
And under the deep, dim arch and nave,
Where the river washed the walls,
Was the gloomy crypt, a waiting grave,
With its silent, shadowy halls.

When the morning struggled through windows low,
When the sunset fell aslant,
A hooded friar, with utterance slow,
Rehearsed the Litany Chant
With a choir of boys from streets and lanes,
Who stood where the death-damp dripped,
And sang together the friar's strains,
In the great cathedral's crypt.

And the friar said, "As each one learns
The chant in this prison-gloom,
He shall pass, by a stair that winds and turns,
To the great cathedral room ;
He shall stand in a surplice white as snow,
Where the lights of the altar fall,
And the voice of his song shall rise and flow
Like a glory along the wall."

Oh ! world-wide prison, girt with graves,
The songs you echo now,
When the singers learn, shall lift their waves
Where the veiled angels bow ;
The sound of the harps reverberates,
The altar-lights are aglow,
But the full cathedral-service waits
For the singers from below.

SIBYL AND SAINT.

FROM the Cumæan rock a wailing voice,
That was not the cry of the sea,
Sent up to the Tarquin's gloomy throne
A message of destiny.

He could not read, so he buried the book,
And strengthened bars and walls :
In vain ; the Sibyl's voice yet haunts
The Tarquin's empty halls.

From the Patmos rock a singing voice
Floats to the western sea,
And the crumbling arches hear the tones
Of an open prophecy.

"Seal not the book," so said the Saint
To the world by the sunset sea ;
Who will, may read on the Roman hills
The Sibyl's mystery.

THE RAVEN AND THE DOVE.

He sent forth a raven, which went to and fro. — GEN. viii. 7.
And the dove came in to him in the evening. — GEN. viii. 11.

I.

THE arms of a great unrest had flung,
Like the arms of a shoreless sea,
With hatches down, my Life along,
Sealed dark in its mystery.

Helpless I rocked in the foamy grave,
Or shivered upon the crest,
While every sob of every wave
Found an echo in my breast.

There was no hand upon the wheel,
On the yards no shred of sail ;
Drifted my barque's unsteady keel
Down the gray path of the gale.

Within my heart a Thought was caged,
Fierce-eyed and strong of wing,
That bolder grew as tempests raged, —
A wild undaunted thing.

Perhaps its eye could pierce the rage
Of passion's stormy roll,
And bring me news of anchorage,
And haven for my soul.

Perhaps its wing, that sports with Death,
Beyond the storm could fly,
And find in lands of summer breath
The end of mystery.

I drew the window back and sent
This fierce-eyed Thought abroad,
And I saw it plunge, with wings down-bent,
In quest for Life and God.

What storm could break its flashing wing?
Or stay it from the shore?
I waited, but my brave storm-king
Came back to me no more.

Ah! the restless Thought flew east and west :
What cared it for my woe,
Since it found its aim and only rest
In its wanderings to and fro?

II.

A meek-eyed Thought was in my breast,
Timid in voice and form.
How it loved the shelter of the nest!
I flung it against the storm.

A far-off note across the bars
Of the gray clouds came to me,
As if from the veiled and silent stars,—
A song in a minor key.

As my bird rose up o'er the sea so wide,
I knew it had found the art
Of climbing the storm on the rising tide
Of a song from a trembling heart.

Ah! weary day; but at eve I heard,
Across the sobbing sea,
The plaintive song of a tired bird
Come floating back to me.

Oh ! fading light of a day how brief,
Fading on sea and land,
And my timid Dove with an olive-leaf
Falls to my outstretched hand,

And the leaf is green. Still rocks my barque
In the waves and the deepening night,
But my heart is still ; for past the dark
Is the world of Life and Light.

GUIDANCE.

I.

ALONG the keys a child's hand strayed,
And discords filled the air ;
Even so my blundering heart, I said,
That seeks to voice its prayer.

I have no art to shape my speech,
My thoughts, unsteady, stray
Amid the countless cares that reach
From dawn to darkening day.

The melody I fain would lift
Breaks up in jangled chords,
Through which the voiceless longings drift
That cannot rise to words.

II.

The mother's hands the child's surround,
Knowledge and love combine,
That unskilled fingers may give sound
To thoughts or hopes divine.

And those who hear the notes expand
Along the evening's calm,
Cannot divide the baby's hand
From mother's circling palm.

O Love Divine ! that reachest down
To choose the keys for me,
Amid each wild, discordant tone
Discerning melody,

Lay Thou the hand of grace along
My heart, and softly wreath
Amid my failures the sweet song
Of hope I cannot breathe.

When round me evening's shadows flow
And the lesson is all done,
Only my heart and God will know
His hand and mine were one.

A LAUREL SPRAY.

WHERE the rock goes sheer to the lake below,
Far up on the lichened wall
The starry spray of a laurel bough
Looks up to the bastions tall, —
Looks up to the deep blue silent sea,
Clinging close to the rock the while,
And starry and white — all timidly —
Looks down on me with a smile.

Could I cling so, I wonder, holding fast
On the perilous front of things,
With an eye of longing upward cast,
And a rooting of faith that clings?
With only a stone for a resting-place,
In some lone and far defile,
Could I touch my rock with a lowly grace,
And toss to the world a smile?

WHEREFORE.

I DROP my question down the far
Clear depths of Heaven's mystery,
As reverently as to the sea
Descends sometimes a falling star,

And all is still. The waves, indeed,
In murmurs deep upon the shore
Whisper of gain, of comforts more
Abounding where is sorest need,

Of service given by those who wait,
Of sweetness from the flower pressed,
Of crowns with lustre all unguessed,
Beyond the veil, within the gate.

But the deep sea glides on so still,
My star is quenched within its waves ;
All questions find their voiceless graves
In the great flood of God's great will.

Philosophy, in stately flow,
Rhymes its proud reasons far and wide ;
But Faith looks down the silent tide,
And meekly whispers, " Even so."

A SUMMER REVERY.

THE breath that whirls yon leaflet round,
Or bends the grain in measured waves,
Hath its helm set in that profound
Where God is. All the far-off caves
Of Æolus are shaped by Him. Even so
My wandering breath of faint desire,
Is it not His? Doth He not know
Its path, and all its flight inspire?

Across the sunset's throbbing glow
Yon fleecy cloud, how aimlessly
Drifts on and on, and yet I know
God's will is all its liberty. .
Oh! that to my fancy, aimless too,
The current of the skies were given,
My lightest thought, with drawing true,
Setting toward the port of heaven.

And when I in my pride rebel,
Or in my darkness feel despair,
Let me but think, this world — as well
Its sullen storm and its calm air —
Is not more surely, softly wound
By yon blue arms of bending sky,
Than all my life is folded round
By God's love — oh! how boundlessly.

MY ROBIN.

A LITTLE robin came to me
A-tiptoe on the winter's edge;
Behind him, storms hung gloomily.
He poised upon their yielding ledge.

His velvet breast was full and red,
A warm light lit his liquid eye,
And then — although mid grasses dead
He walked — I knew the prophecy.

Not anywhere a flower bloomed,
Not any flush on grass or tree,
But well I knew the winter doomed,
Because that robin came to me.

Await me other storms, I know,
But on their cold, dissolving slope
Will walk with plumage all aglow
My fair-eyed red-breast robin, — Hope.

VEILED.

IN the half-finished tower of granite the great refractor stood,
Around it resounded the tools of workers in stone and wood.

A veil was over the eye that longed for the gates of light,
And the glance that could rive the Pleiads was under the lids of night.

Voiceless and hooded, yet holding the mysteries deep of the sky,
The kingly face bendeth, and droopeth the burning and marvellous eye,—

The eye that could meet, on the far-away shores of Creation, the gleams
That come o'er the sunless gulfs, with footfalls silent as dreams.

Bowing his head like a discrowned king imprisoned
in stone,
The shadow-girt telescope stands till the task of the
workers is done.

O Soul! with a vision to open the outermost gates
of life,
Silent and veiled bending down, mid the workmen's
clamor and strife.

The Hope that would fly with its beacon of flame to
kindle it far
On the hills that rise dimly and lone past the light
of the dimmest star,

Is hooded and roofed; and the Thought which erst
wandered with God is stilled,
Till the heavens pour light, and the unveiled soul with
God is filled.

AFTER THE RAIN.

OUT of the sobs of the winter's storm
The leaves of spring-time grow,
And behind the drifts of the apple bloom
Are the drifts of whirling snow.

The velvet robe of the prairies wide
Is wrought by the shuttles of rain,
And the robin sings in the tree that moaned
With the March day's dull refrain.

Perhaps, O Soul, it will yet appear
There is life in the beating rain,
And not for nought the shuttles fly
O'er the quivering threads of pain.

Perhaps a bird will sing some day
In the barren boughs that thrill,
Like stricken harps, with memory
Of storms that haunt them still.

AN AUTUMN DAY.

I CLIMB the stairs of a sinking world,
To my every step they sway ;
The ashen skies are touched with death,
But my soul is glad to-day.

The low south wind creeps o'er the leaves
With step both sad and sweet ;
How wondrous fair this flashing world,
Thus dying at my feet.

I seem to feel it drift from me,
Across the dreamy haze,
And like some island far at sea
It fades along the days.

And while it wavers and grows dim,
Somehow my steps are set
Upon a pavement which, unseen,
Grows firm and firmer yet.

And like the marble rise that once
Sloped to the temple high,
Where great Minerva looked across
The Ægean Sea and sky,

So climbs my soul the altar stairs,
Whose landing-place commands
At once the fading world below,
And Heaven's rising lands.

THE TEMPLE BY THE SEA.

WHERE a mountain sloping shoreward dips lush
grasses in the sea,
Ribbed in granite veins, and robed in ivy banners
hanging free,
Stands an ancient temple, built for Christ the Lord by
sinful men,
Who within its lifted arches chant His praise in noblest
strain.

Float the voices of the blessings outward with pro-
phetic tone,
Vex the ocean-queens of Passion on their vast and
wandering throne ;
And the Spirit of all Evil in that sea that cannot
rest,
Troubled, beats white arms of anguish on its dark and
throbbing breast.

Rise the vengeful Naiads, clutching at the fair and
 blooming strand,
Day and night to silent caverns drawing down the
 yielding sand ;
But the worshippers, unshaken, lift their pæans to the
 skies,
And, as once on sacred Galilee, the sounds of peace
 arise.

Near and nearer crowd the billows, treading back the
 crumbling shore,
Fiercely drowning all the praises in their deep and
 hollow roar,
Or with deft and devilish fingers slipping white along
 the beach,
And with murmurs smooth and siren up the glittering
 sands they reach.

Fierce or gentle, working ever in the darkness and
 the day,
They have washed the earth and flowers from the tem-
 ple walls away ;
Blandly now, in mock obeisance and in triumph pre-
 mature,
Crouch the waves, and lay their pallid lips upon the
 jasper pure.

But the worshippers untremulous chant on the melody,
And the blended chords of peace, good-will, float out
upon the sea.

Back recoil the billows, like a baffled soul that, un-
aware,
Seeks itself to gather passion from the depths of its
despair.

Then the ocean shakes with thunder, and the bugles
sound as when

Old Euroclydon's great trumpet smites along the riven
main.

High the waves uprear their crests, and, flinging shat-
tered flags of spray,

Charge along the darkness where the sword of light-
ning points the way.

Poised and curled an instant, gathering fury for the
final shock,

One by one the trembling billows break themselves on
wall and rock, —

Wall and deep-ribbed rock, that from the passion of
the sinking flood

Seem to rise and gleam resplendent, like the shining
gates of God.

All along the sacred arches, where the light of evening plays,
Earth's divinest music falls in vesper notes of lowly praise ;
And the waves, their white heads bowing, conquered
by that wondrous song,
Backward swinging, bear its echoes all the broad sea-way along.

Star-sprent curtains of Time's evening trail on spell-bound land and sea,
While along the bars of heaven climbs the temple melody ;
And the white-lipped waves have joined the anthem of the sons of men,
And around the Rock of Ages fall and sob, "Amen
— *Amen!*"

SUNRISE ON THE BAY.

THE last white star had slipped its ray
 Within its tent of blue ;
The great sun sends the level day
 Along the world anew ;
So, Lord, within Thy larger will
 My trembling will would hide,
And in Thy glory, deep and still,
 Invisible abide.

See Sunrise lay her freshened face
 Across the ropes and spars,
As Hope, each day with fairer grace,
 Lights up her prison bars.
Creep the white sands to bending waves,
 That shake their plumes of spray ;
So, Lord, my life before Thee craves
 For baptisms day by day.

Laughs the great ocean round the keel,
 Busy the yards and deck ;
The land-locked crafts the tide-wave feel,
 White wings the blue fields fleck ;
So, Lord, my spirit waits for Thee,
 Oh, wave of glory come !
One throb of love shall set me free,
 One breath shall waft me home.

REMINISCENCE.

MY brain is backward turned to-night,
And to my senses come
Strangely familiar sights and thoughts,
As from some far-off home.

All Memory's doors are broken through,
The Then and Now are one ;
Whate'er I see or feel or do
Before I've felt and done.

By strange reversal, all the tide
Of being sets not in
From future years, but from the past ;
I live that which hath been.

The faces on the street are old :
I've seen them otherwheres ;
The very songs of friends come back,
Echoes of well-known airs.

My griefs cannot oppress me now,
My hopes cannot elate ;
Long have those shadows swept my path,
Those hopes stood at my gate.

The stream runs backward, and I know
The freightage of each wave ;
It only brings me in its flow
That which to it I gave.

I wonder have I lived before
In some premundane way,
And are the sights and sounds that tire
Doubled from some far day?

Is this the cost of looking back?
O Memory, close the door !
For I cannot bide the weariness
Of the same life o'er and o'er.

I turn from the old farewells and tears,
Wines of old joys are stale ;
I bend my ears to To-morrow's lip,
To listen — or flushed, or pale.

A DREAM OF THE CHRIST.

A CHRISTMAS VISION.

THE evening light fell on the wall,
Where, in the shadow mist,
I looked upon the figures tall
Of "Le Triomphe du Christ:"

Procession vast from every land
By our first parents led,
With prophets, saints, — a mighty band, —
Round Christ, the living head.

Apostles' hands His chariot roll,
With blended strength and grace,
While saints press toward the aureole
That lights the holy face.

I looked upon that triumph scene,
Marking its movement well,
Until the evening dropped her screen,
And tired eyelids fell.

I saw the canvas rise, expand ;
From out its shadows dim
An angel, stooping, touched my hand,
And bade me follow him.

I knew not how, but space and time
Seemed no more to be, —
As if that angel who, sublime,
Shall stand on land and sea

Had spoken ; and the walls that bind
Us in to space and day,
Like mists before a rising wind,
Had all been blown away.

I saw the battles of the world
For God and liberty
As sometimes, by the clouds unfurled,
Visions rise from the sea.

I saw a Bedouin chief alone
Receive one word from God,
Follow that star that westward shone
Across Euphrates' flood.

Around him desert sands are whirled,
His moving tents gleam white,
As once to find a newer world
The dove's wings flashed the light.

Open the Shechem gateway falls,
Dark Ebal waits for him,
And glad in answering blessings calls
To stately Gerizim.

The curling altar-smoke ascends,
And in its radiant cloud
The Bedouin, now transfigured, stands
Abram, the friend of God.

I see that altar cloud uplift
Its rainbow hues, and span
From Hermon snows to desert drift,
From Beersheba to Dan.

Who runs may read its hopeful word,
Needing no prophet's ken;
The Tabernacle of the Lord
At length has come to men.

And as its curtains flowed abroad
From rivers to the sea,
Within it came the hosts of God,
A goodly company.

Isaac I saw as when he stood
In field at eventide,
Waiting from lands beyond the flood
The coming of his bride ;

Jacob in life's hope and review
On Bethel's lighted ridge,
Finding betwixt the old and new
An angel-guarded bridge.

And even as I looked, the land
Was full of struggling life, —
Prophets in many a peaceful band,
And warriors clad for strife.

I heard a shout from Jordan's vale
Swell up to Carmel's crown,
And, lo ! the walls of Ai reel,
And Jericho falls down.

Along a hill where tents like flocks
Were pitched in proud array,
With crash and flash among the rocks,
Stern Gideon won the day.

I heard the song of Deborah,
In passion's sweeping flood,
Wheel into line 'gainst Sisera
The olden stars of God.

And 'mid these scenes, as in a storm
Warbles a bird's low strain,
Ruth walked, fair face and stately form,
And gleaned the yellow grain.

I saw amid the wild acclaim
A youth, his forehead bare,
Taking a crown and royal name.
Was he not passing fair?

And then another, to him first sang,
Bending above his harp :
Then seized his crown, while the land rang
With war-cries wild and sharp.

The harp played on — wrought were its strains
 With every speech and tongue —
Till weary earth from all her pains
 Found solace in the song ;

And then the prophets, as of yore,
 Great hearts and foreheads bent,
Stood up, and all their faces o'er
 Shone sovereign content.

Elijah, calm on Carmel's crest,
 God's fire in his eye ;
And with his face turned to the East,
 Expectant Malachi ;

And in between, that goodly throng
 With life and daring word,
Singing in sweet prelude song
 The coming of the Lord, —

Singing 'mid fires and wars' alarms
 And Israel's breaking hopes,
As sings the lark 'mid breaking storms,
 Along the sunrise slopes.

And then the angel touched my hand,
Lo! down the brightening sky,
Along the far-off desert strand,
A new Star stood on high.

Its orb, increasing, fairer glowed,
In larger circles shone,
Till over Zion's hill it stood,
A white and stately Sun.

And then a shadow, dark and vast
(Whether from earth or sky
I could not tell), its darkness cast
Over that burning eye.

That orb sank back within its veil,
As in a crimson sea
Sinks the spent day, when great storms trail
Around it sullenly.

As one in sleep cannot divide
The moment from the hour,
So unto me, who in that tide
Of light by some strange power

Was held suspense above the shade
Of the still world below ;
No mark of any time was made,
I knew not any flow

Of years or ages, — all were one, —
As down a stream of light
That came from some unrisen sun,
We sailed above the night.

Above a rock, storm-washed and lone,
We paused. An old man there
Stood where the sea-mists round him blown
Were blent with his white hair.

We heard the passion of his soul
Rise with the thundering sea,
As sometimes the great organ's roll
The singer's voice sets free.

He spoke of a far city fair
As speaks a child of home ;
And then, as in heart-breaking prayer,
“ Even so, Lord Jesus, come.”

That city fair we could not see,
But flushing through the mist
A hint of pearl, chalcedony,
Jasper, and amethyst.

Still onward borne, a fair land bounds
Like Triton from the sea ;
Like Triton, blowing deathless sounds
Of songful poetry.

Mother of Arts, loved Attica,
Crown of a world's delights,
Where classic waters to the sea
Dash down from Parnes' heights.

The Parthenon the morning greets ;
Flashes Minerva's shield,
Beacon of light to tossing fleets
On Ægea's blue field.

My eye roams over mart and shrine,
Proud temples every way,
And marble gods, that, half-divine,
Their Phidias-touch betray ;

But 'mid them all a form and face
Human, yet godlike more
Than sculptured gods, with kingly grace
Writ all his features o'er.

'Mid Cynic sneer and Stoic glance
He stands all dauntlessly ;
Olympian Jove in marble trance
Looks not more calm than he.

Bent is his form, but underneath
His shaggy brows, eyes gleam
Like flaming sword from out the sheath.
His words are like a stream

That from some mountain downward hurled
Shoots out against the sea,
Piercing dark waves that crested, curled,
Resist it scornfully.

And as we gazed, the "long walls" reeled,
The gods more pallid grew,
A tremor shook Minerva's shield,
And Schiller's dream was true.

The gods of Hellas bend their brows,
The oracle is dumb,
A shadow veils Olympus' snows,
The unknown God has come !

As fleecy clouds, by light winds driven,
Float through an August day,
So we down azure streams of heaven
Southward were borne away,

Till Afric's sand in yellow waves
To meet the sea-waves crept,
And broke around the royal graves
Where the great Ptolemies slept.

Toward Hypatia's lecture hall,
Far as our sight could reach,
Crowds surged to hear the god's last call
In woman's silver speech.

But as she spake in pleading tone,
Her tuneful words between,
We heard, across the desert blown,
The breath of Augustine.

It rang like steel in battle shock ;
It was the new world's cry, —
An echo from lone Patmos' rock,
“ *De Civitat Dei.*”

I looked across the ages wide.
Lo ! through Sahara flows
A crystal flood, and on its side
The lily and the rose.

And over all the Ethiop lands —
From east to western flood —
A thousand shafts of flame, like hands,
Were upward stretched to God.

I to my guide, “The torch, whence sent,
From what Promethean fount,
That thus enswathes a continent,
As burned the Sinai mount?”

He smote his hand upon my eyes,
And then behold, all space
Spread out against the farthest skies ;
We seemed in every place.

I saw great Luther theses nail
Upon the old church door,
And every blow like doom-notes fell
The seven-hilled City o'er.

Huss in his flaming winding-sheet,
Pillar of guidance grand,
To lead God's host, through desert heat,
To a fair and holy land.

Calvin, iconoclast of God,
Granite in face and form ;
A Moses, ruling with his rod
The spirit of the storm.

Across the sunny fields of France
The fiery terror strode ;
For Huguenots the flame and lance
Burst back the gates of God.

Round Britain's isles its white waves thrilled,
Rolled round a vessel's keel ;
The flapping sail its hot breath filled,
But Heaven manned the wheel.

I saw it shoot within the shade
Of a new world's greeting pines,
Where guarding rocks, with pearl o'erlaid,
Offered their sacred shrines.

I saw the Pentecostal tongues
Fall like the falling stars,
The wildernesses rang with songs,
The darkness broke with spars

Of dawn, like golden volleys sent
Athwart the dying night,
When Phœbus, with his bow down-bent,
Shoots javelins of light.

And then, as when in Israel,
The patriots lit their fires,
Signalling over plain and dell,
Battle for home and sires,

So the great mountain altars were
Whichever way I turned,
Alps, Andes, lit the quivering air,
The Himalayas burned.

As often when the sun has set
And paints no more the fields,
Above the world it lingers yet,
And with deft fingers builds,

Uprears a palace, radiant, rare,
In magic symmetry,
Blazoned with every color fair
For the young stars to see ;

So while an evening hush stole o'er
The world we looked upon,
Those mountain flames to heaven's shore
Uprose and blent as one, —

Blent and rolled inward, fold on fold,
Of plastic fire inwrought,
Until the farthest heavens a mould
Apocalyptic caught,

Appeared the jasper walls, four-square,
Ten thousand furlongs high,
With crystal dome that everywhere
Rose through the starry sky.

But whether flames from earth upbent
Had wrought the vision there,
Or whether down from heaven sent
That city of the air,

I could not tell; I only knew,
As flashed each jasper wall,
The saints' and poets' dream was true:
The Mother of us all

Her wandering children would enfold,
Earth's sorrows all above,
Within her arms of pearl and gold,
Within her heart of love.

Lowered on wings of rosy flame
I saw the glassy floors,
And peoples everywhither came
Around its pearl-set doors.

Prophets, long prisoners of their dream,
Basked in the opening rays;
Paul looked as when he met the gleam
Of the Nubian lion's gaze;

John on its threshold stood again
With that seraphic awe
That lit his face on Patmos, when
Its prototype he saw.

And in the shadow rim that lay
Beyond earth's belt of light,
Dark faces pressing toward the day
Greeted the vision bright.

From Plato's brow the shadow fell,—
Was that his city, too,
For which his faith had builded well,
And better than he knew?

And near him his great teacher bent
Toward the central blaze,
Not with the thinker's thought intent,
But with the prophet's praise ;

The Bard of Chios, no more blind,
Rising from his long night,
Saw all the visions of his mind
Solved in that ray of white.

I watched the sunless light unfold
All lands in centric rings,
Till, lo ! above the streets of gold
I heard the sound of wings.

I woke. The light fell on the wall,
Full on the canvas shone ;
But prophets and saints had faded all,
And I saw Christ alone.

Songs of Sentiment.

SONGS OF SENTIMENT.

MY CENTRIPETAL.

AS looking to-night to the concave dark,
And listening, bowed with awe,
To the music that climbs on infinite bars,
To the rhythm of heavenly law,
I fancied the thought of a sensitive star,
When it hung in that exquisite pause,
Where the slackening force of its outward flight
Was yielding to central laws.

One moment it trembled between the glow
Of the sun, with its bands of light,
And the wave-like shadow-drift that fell
Somewhere on the shores of night.
One moment between the impulse wild
That shot it along the sky,
And the force, that in curves of graceful sweep,
Would give it an orbit for aye.

Was it foolish to think these thoughts to-night,
When the stars came one by one,
And the Milky Way, like a vessel's wake,
Bloomed white in the track of the sun?
Was it only a fancy that cheered my walk
From the dusty ways of the town,
To the little gate that bars me in,
While the world goes up and down?

Nay! rather my life has the mood of the star, —
Having passed the dread suspense
'Twixt the central drawings of love and light,
And the world's tract, dark and dense.
It has stood in a vibrant equipoise
On the line that sharply bars
The glow of one centre from the gleams
Of a thousand wandering stars.

I yield to the fireside light that draws
My life to its orbit curve,
And over it throws the golden cords
That never will slacken or swerve.
What care I now for the strife of tongues,
And the highway's restless roar?
For the outer world is less and less,
And the inner more and more.

The cedar and palm have bent to the blast,
And fallen on Lebanon's brow,
And the apples of Youth's Hesperides
Are ashes and bitterness now.
But higher above my door-way climbs
My vine with its evening shade,
And the fig-tree puts forth tender leaves,
That never will fall or fade.

So I muse as I turn from the haunts of men ;
Though their shadows are on my track,
Yet the evening lamp of home, I know,
Has power to beat them back.
No more a man-worried man, but a king,
Stoops under my cottage door ;
For the outer world is less and less,
And the inner more and more.

THE HOUSE-TOP WALK.¹

WEATHER-STAINED and beaten and empty
now,
The long, long vigil is o'er ;
No longer the ships go out to sea,
And the watchers wait no more.
Sailors and watchers are resting now,
Some on this sandy lea,
And some, with the sea-grass round them twined,
Are asleep in the wandering sea.

But it comes to me, as I walk the street
Of the quaint historic town,
A vision these scenes have looked upon
In the years so long ago, —

¹ Along the ridge of the roof of many houses in Nantucket there is a platform railed in, called "the walk," from which the families of the sailors were wont to watch the outgoing and incoming ships.

A vision of struggle with storm and tide
By the brave ones, called to roam
On the wrathful way of the ocean wide,
And a vision of love at home.

On the house-top walk in the morning gray,
And yet in the deepening night,
They watch for the flash of a homeward sail,
Or the swing of a masthead light.
It is morn again, and again 't is eve,
So the days drag one by one ;
And the steadfast thing in the changeful scene
Is the love that will have its own.

So the hair grows gray and the faces thin,
For the sea is empty still ;
And the lonely years will have their way,
And God will have His will.
But the watch is o'er. What matters now
Though the ships drift endlessly,
Though some are asleep in the graveyard there,
And some in the wandering sea?

PAGANINI.

HE shambled awkward on the stage, the while
Across the waiting audience swept a smile.

With clumsy touch, when first he drew the bow,
He snapped a string. The audience tittered low.

Another stroke! Off flies another string!
With laughter now the circling galleries ring.

Once more! The third string breaks its quivering
strands,
And hisses greet the player as he stands.

He stands,—the while his genius, unbereft,
Is calm; one string and Paganini left!

He plays. The one string's daring notes uprise
Against the storm, as if they sought the skies.

A silence falls — then awe ; the people bow,
And they who erst had hissed, are weeping now.

And when the last note trembling died away,
Some shouted “Bravo !” some had learned to pray.

THE CANTATRICE.

A DAUGHTER of the gods, she sang
Of glory, love, and art
In godlike notes, o'er marble lips,
And from a marble heart.

Oh, songful Undine ! Could I woo
And wed, and make her mine,
I'd break her queenly heart, — and then
Her song would be divine.

LOVE.

PENELOPE weaveth o'er and o'er,
As faithful waiteth she
Her lord from far Calypso's shore.
Oh, rare Penelope !

Old love hath triumph over new
Old love hath mighty arms,
Reaching adown the far sea's blue
To unbind Calypso's charms.

Proud sails again Ulysses spreads,
Flieth his heart before ;
Penelope weaveth endless threads,
And waiteth on the shore.

The siren's isle must passed be, —
Ah, Love, port hard the nelm,
Lest the hope of true Penelope
The song-waves overwhelm.

Floats the mad music on the wind,
But the sailor's ears so fast
Great Love did close, and sweetly bind
Ulysses to the mast.

The fair ship flieth on and on,
Love sets her needle straight;
Penelope, thy faith hath won, —
Ulysses's at the gate.

ADRIFT.

A CHILD with daring hand
Stooped down and pushed her tiny boat
From the shelving shore ; she watched it float
Seaward, far out from land.

At eve, when day was done,
She wept because the boat no more
Came back, — stranded on some far shore
Around the setting sun.

Sweet child ! how like us all.
We push our boats and wait in vain.
No sail is on the restless main,
And the far shadows fall.

ASPIRATION.

When for earth too fancy-loose
And too low for heaven.

MRS. BROWNING.

LARK from English meadows springing,
Level bars of sunrise climbing,
At the azure gateway ringing
All thy liquid soul in rhyming
Music for the nest below;
Impulse of thy flight supernal
Checked by love that downward calleth, —
Love that from the blue eternal
To the nest of birdlings falleth
In a wavering flight and slow.

Ever thus, my soul, thy song,
Though it break against the sky,
Feels the earthward drawing strong,
And relapses to a sigh.

And the wing that cleft the air
 With an impulse brave and true,
Heaven yielding, bendeth where
 Gleams the world in transient dew.

Eagle of the mountain, springing
 Out upon the airy ocean,
Beating back its storm-waves, swinging
 Cloudward with a daring motion
 Till the heights of space are won ;
Bruised and buffeted by racking
 Of the storms, he sinketh weary,
Slow, unconquered, backward tracking,
 Like a victor, to his eyrie,
 With his eye upon the sun.

Ever thus, my soul, thy flight
 Overreaches not the cloud,
And, though brave thou spurn the night,
 It will bind thee in its shroud.
Though thy wings be downward bent,
 Yet to thee be triumph won,
If, with plumage torn and rent,
 Thou canst look upon the sun.

IMMORTALITY.

I BENT o'er a plant that rose to throw
To my hand one waxen bloom,
And a viewless censer to and fro
Wafted clouds of rare perfume.
From a desert plain a wild wind swept
With fierce and fiery breath ;
It fell where my heart its vigil kept,
And smote my flower to death.

I stood where a silver-bladed stream
Cleft the old gray hills in twain,
And its song was the music of the dream
That made me a boy again ;
But the stream ran on with shining feet, —
Ran toward the dying day, —
And its white lips wildly seemed to greet
Waters so far away.

I stood where a million stars shone fair
Through the flush of a summer night,
But only one, down the bending air,
Touched me with its shaft of light.
One moment above me it stately stood,
Like the Bethlehem Star of old,
And then, in its own white glory-flood
Wheeled under the sea-waves cold.

But my cloud of perfume somewhere dips
Its viewless wings to me,
And the little streamlet's hungry lips
Have kissed some soundless sea.
My fallen star, through other skies,
Some fadeless landscape laves,
And yet for me, with a sweet surprise,
'T will touch the jasper waves.

HALF WAY ON.

GRASSES entangled with shadows,
Branches that sway overhead,
Vistas down spangled meadows,
And a brook with a noiseless tread :

Out of the hills of the morning
It winds a widening stream,
And shows, to the evening turning,
A network of shadow and gleam.

A thread from the purple mountains
Of the dewy early day,
Nurtured by all the fountains
That spring in the grassy way.

A deep, wide river throbbing
On a dim and sounding shore,
With white lips tremulous sobbing
At the twilight's dusky door.

Which to the heart is dearer,
The brook of the morning bright,
Or the wave that, white and weary,
Kisses the shores of night?

Fair is the gate of the Even,
And fair the Morning dews ;
Like Paul 'twixt the earth and the heaven,
I know not which to choose.

PRESENTIMENT.

FROM the silent gates of long ago
Came, with presentient beat,
A shadow of voiceless mystery,
And now it hath touched my feet.

Shall I question the sad-eyed prophet?
Shall I bid the dark veil say
What sibyl face it keepeth
Hidden from sight away?

What is that heavy portent?
Is it the brow of Jove?
Or, under the stormy vestment,
The face and heart of Love?

I cannot tell; but the shadow
That so o'erflows my feet
Has sent to my heart a feeling
Of peace that is strange and sweet.

No more will I seek thy visage,
Sphinx of my desert way ;
Through the night let Silence keep thy lips,
They will speak at the dawn of day.

UNSPOKEN.

HOW smooth the speech of summer waves,
 Telling their moods to me!
But in vain I listen for the voice
 Of the dim and olden sea.

From the grave of the fair Atlantis
 Comes neither breath nor sound,
And the stillness of the upper Pole
 Guards the lost Eden round.

Then speak, O Soul! thy word to me
 With lightest summer breath;
But my heart goes out to the spell-bound sea
 That silent lies beneath.

I bend my ear to the silver speech,
 But the deeper soul I keep
For the waveless, breathless silence where
 The dearest mysteries sleep,

And I wait ; for I know the heavy depths
Will yet bring gifts to me,
And the lost Atlantis bloom again
In the midst of the crystal sea.

BLENDING CHORDS.

Space is ample, east and west,
But two cannot go abreast.

EMERSON.

THE heavens are full of stars whose mood
Draws each to all, yet every one
Moves on in stately solitude,
A sad, self-centred, lonely sun.

So draws my soul to thee, O Man !
Though stellar spaces intervene ;
And yet across my orbit's plan
To walk with thee in vain I lean.

A cosmic ruin waits the star
That breaks its bands its twin to greet ;
But heaven's vastest spaces are
The bonds for fellowship — how sweet !

Along the rising octave bars
Of distance, infinite and lone,
The well-sphered music of the stars
Breaks round the white and central throne.

Somewhere, afar, my minor strain,
Trembling, with other songs will blend ;
And I shall know, in its refrain,
The fellowship that hath no end.

A DREAM.

I DREAMED a dream where setting suns
Purpled the ocean's rim,
While long slant waves across the beach
Chanted an evening hymn, —

A dream I could not tell to men ;
Earth never learned its speech, —
A longing in the voiceless soul
For something out of reach.

And now I walk again with men,
In life's keen fever-fret,
And through the glare of common things
My vision haunts me yet ;

It plays across my moods, my cares,
Like shadows on a stream,
And calls me — holds me — unawares.
Oh, might I live my dream !

NEARING HOME.

“HE is rapidly failing,” — so smooth came the
stroke
Down the telegraph line. Through the silence it
broke
On a heart well-inured to such crashes ere now.
And yet, it was strange! That father whose brow
Was held clear toward Heaven and level to men
Through the storms that blew out of the threescore
and ten,
Whose strength seemed perennial like that of the
pine, —
“He is failing,” — strange words down the telegraph
line.

Groans the train through the night, through city and
land ;
The race is with Death for the grasp of that hand.

“Nearing home — nearing home,” sing the wheels
as they fly ;

Nearing home in the light of the fading sky.

I, swift to the home that has drawn me these
years,

And he unto his, in the sphere beyond spheres :

To the father on earth, through the gloom-gates of
even ;

To the Father above, through the pearl-gates of
heaven.

Ah ! which shall be first in this race for the home,

House below — house on high — which the sooner
shall come ?

It is done ; thou art first. Take the crown, oh,
thou best

Of all fathers ! I meekly salute thee at rest.

AT LAST.

AS birds by counter currents flung
Along the yielding air,
So fly my agitated thoughts
Across the Everywhere.

One instant on some Pisgah height
I catch the roll of seas,
When straight, 'mid beasts of prey, I fall
At bay upon my knees.

The mists one moment bury me
Beneath their darkening pall,
Again their gates of amethyst
Roll back, and show me all, —

The all of time, its recompense
That comes to balance pain ;
The all of God, whose fulness leaves
No space to want again.

What matters it? An atom blown
Across the sea or land,
Whose origin is Heaven's throne,
Whose destiny, God's hand :

It shall survive the sport of chance,
Survive its own unrest ;
The final wind that picks it up
Shall dash it to God's breast.

I have no science to forecast
The way that wind shall blow,
Save only this, the will of God,
It never shall o'erflow.

Within this faith, behind its veil,
I keep my anchor grip,
And hold my forehead to the storm,
My finger to my lip.

Some suns there are whose light not yet
Has found these lower skies.
Some thoughts of God are on their way ;
I wait their keen surprise.

ONONO-KOMATCH.

I N the Pantheon group of the Land of the Sun,
The first 'mid the great and revered of Nipon,
Is the portrait of her who gave fortune, rank, love,
For faith in her art. How she patiently strove
To put into voice what the poet-soul feels
Is shown by the canvas, where meekly she kneels
By the basin of water, and washes away
The lines all unworthy the light of the day.

When Charlemagne opened the new day for France,
And Haroun-al-Rachid with a pen for a lance
Burst open the Bosphorus gate to the west,
That its letters might enter Arabia the blest,
Did the world know that far in the unspoken seas,
On a shut, dreaming isle, was a greater than these,—
A woman, who, while they were vaunting great
themes,
Blotted out her best word, because false to her
dreams?

As she stands at the Temple of Fame with her hands
 All empty and piteous, while full-jewelled bands
 Bind the foreheads of artists and poets and kings,
 Is this not her plea, "This withered life brings
 But itself; no work that remains hath it done.
 It poured out its desolate days one by one
 In devotion to thoughts unattainably high.
 While others bring sheaves, I have only a sigh."

So her poems are not in the Manyoshu,
 They are not in the treasures of Sandeishu,
 (The many-tomed records of Japanese lore,
 Which the diligent sages have writ o'er and o'er).
 The burning thoughts of her fiery brain
 You will seek in the Manyoko in vain;
 For when were there words that prisons could be
 For a spirit so broken, so boundless and free?

Who lives for the words that have no song,
 For the Truth, 'gainst the world's empurpled Wrong,
 For the Art that never a temple adorns,
 And the Life that bends for a crown of thorns,
 For the sunlit cloud of a dream sublime
 That holds no rain for the fields of Time,
 Shall find in the spirit that breaks with a sigh
 The guerdon of best immortality.

On the Pantheon walls of the fair Nipon
Are graven the songs of the Land of the Sun ;
And there, 'mid the sculptured gods of the brain,
A meek maiden kneeleth, her face full of pain.
She is nearest the altar ; her fingers entwine
Round a manuscript, written with only one line.
'T is Onono-Komatch, and on the crushed scroll,
*"My harp-strings are snapped by the storm in my
soul."*

Prophetic the sign in the maiden's hand ;
As a wave white-footed creeps up the strand,
So the rising tide of her Art's despair
Swept off the poems that looked so fair.
She holds in her heart what the heart can feel,
And her far-away eyes, in wrapt appeal,
Are set to the Sunrise, swift and strong,
That can open the Memnon-lips of song.

SHIP AHOY!

THE ships of the year have touched the shore,
Their lading has been good ;
And as we count their treasures o'er, —
Their fine wheat for our food,

Their wine of love our hearts to cheer,
Spices from Long Ago,
Rare gifts of friendship far and near,
The love that loved us so, —

Our hearts beat quick to Him who kept
Our ships within His hand,
Whose breath, while we have toiled or slept,
Has wafted them to land.

But from the treasures at our feet,
We lift expectant eyes ;
The pennons of a distant fleet
Are flecked against the skies.

Afar, like phantom ships, they ride ;
But every sunrise casts
Deeper reflections in the tide,
And statelier rise the masts.

The sails, like pinions of the gull,
Curve forward, sharp and thin ;
The dancing houris clasp the hull, —
Our ships are coming in.

What faces o'er the gunwale lean,
To meet us on the strand?
What eyes, alight with loving sheen,
What stroke of hand to hand?

What hearts against our hearts to fall —
What loyal steps to beat
Their march with ours till comes the call
That halts the weary feet?

Ah, who can tell? But fair Hope keeps
Her watch by unknown seas ;
And Faith, like Peter, seaward leaps,
And God be thanked for these.

Songs of Travel.

SONGS OF TRAVEL.

MONT BLANC.

NOT from the Vale of Chamouni,
Where the flow of pleasant streams
Is veiled by the lingering morning mist,
As a thought may be clothed in dreams ;

Where the gleaming gates of the glaciers old
The stately entrance bar
To the pinnacles and bastions high
Of the mountains vast and far ;

Not there, where the grasses whisper low,
And the sweet-voiced birdlings sing,
Can I take the measure of thy form,
Thou storm-wrapped, stately king !

But from some weary Col de Balme,
Lonely and far and bleak
Where the voice of the little birds is hushed,
And eternal voices speak ;

Where the world in dimness sinks away,
And the purple distance shows
Thine upward rise of solitude,
And everlasting snows.

Even so I leave the paths of men,
And the voices that I love,
In a daring climb, somewhere to find
A throne that is built above

The last dim peak of the Alpine way,
And beyond a sinking world,
Beyond the star-decked robe of eve
In its purple distance furled,

Where lone, and vast, and full of rest —
Worthy the spirit's land,
Worthy the weight of a weary faith —
Rises the throne of God.

THE JUNGFRAU.

WEARY the rugged heights I climb
 To gaze upon thy form,
Only to find, in stern reserve,
 Thou hast veiled thyself in storm.

I cannot see thine icy slope,
 But o'er thy bastions strong
I hear thine avalanchine voice
 Pass thundering along.

I cannot catch its syllables ;
 Its inarticulate roll
Is like to that with which God sends
 His will across my soul.

I wait : the evening light reveals,
 Amid the breaking clouds
One peaceful gleam of radiant snow
 Beyond the shattered shrouds.

I wait, indeed. At evening time,
When lifts life's mystery,
One great white thought of God shall speak
His righteousness to me.

THE STAUBBACH FALL.

WHAT Titan from yon beetling crag,
Down flung thee, so
To break thee on these jagged rocks
And stop thy flow?

In vain! for in thy fall I saw
Thee change to mist,
And waver to and fro in gold
And amethyst,

And thus glide to the depths below,
As soft and still
As falls the dew when sinks the sun
Behind the hill.

I saw thee body forth thyself
Once more a stream,
And hasten on with joyous feet
Of silver gleam.

I saw thee touch the roots of flowers,
And the green grass
Did lift and start to greener life
As thou didst pass.

Oh, Staubbach brook, my spirit touch !
Teach me the art,
When rudely flung by Titan force,
And torn apart,

To hide awhile within the veil,
And gather then,
Even on the rocks, new speed to go
And serve again ;

New faith in Him, who, though I fall,
Confirms my feet,
And sends me on 'mid flowers fair
And meadows sweet.

PAULUS CONTRA MUNDUM.

At my first answer no man stood with me; . . . notwithstanding,
the Lord stood with me. — 2 TIM. iv. 16, 17.

THE present fades. These ruins vast
Glide backward to the stately past,
Where they emerge, ruins no more,
But piles of marble as of yore,
Complete from tessellated floor
To carved dome that vaulted o'er
The statues and the marble frieze
Of Phidias and Praxiteles.
The Coliseum shades the sky;
A hollow mountain thrust on high,
From underneath whose sounding floor
Rises the Nubian lion's roar.
The Saturn temple, strong and fair,
Leans out upon the purple air,
While just above — dark tier on tier —
The prison's frowning walls appear.

Along the Via Sacra there,
With bare head bent in peaceful prayer,
Passes the feeble form of Paul,
To stand in Cæsar's judgment hall,
Alone! save Luke — one heart is left
Lest life be all too much bereft —
And God; He never fails to stand
Where great souls for Him take the brand
Of shame and scorn. And so they meet —
Cæsar and Paul. Ah, judgment seat!
The approaching feet are judgment shod,
Thy prisoner looks the looks of God.

The hungry lions wait their prey;
And, Cæsar, thou — the judgment day.
Cast out beyond thy city wall,
Imperial Rome, the corse of Paul!
But, see thy Coliseum fall —
And with it, thou: while at the call
Of Christian ages, round thy shrines
Full many a Christian temple shines.
Silent the Via Sacra now,
Scarred marble faces round it bow,
Worn columns mark the way of doom. —
The monuments on Glory's tomb;

But o'er these stately stepping-stones
Across a dark world's brightening zones,
I see a regal form move on,
With steps that lighten like the sun,—
Move on, from sea to western sea,
With only God for company.

THE SILENT HOUSE.

GRASS-PAVED, the silent road rolls on
Over the mountain side ;
Maple and birch and sumach plumes
Lie rich in the sunset's tide.
And past their gates of red and gold
A lone house stands, full worn and old.

Storm-scarred are blackened sides and roof,
Rafters sink one by one ;
Across the dust-strewn, yielding floor
Slants the red evening sun.
And empty windows — sightless eyes —
Stare out against the deepening skies.

How once those chambers rang with mirth,
What merry lights were flung abroad,
What royal cheer was for the guest
Who came along that lonely road !
Deserted now ; and vacant eyes
Look down the path that silent lies.

On other roads, on paths of steel,
The merry groups whirl on;
They have left the waiting house alone,
In the sad September sun.
Sumach and maple flames roll round
The old house sinking to the ground.

“THE SEA IS HIS.”

MAN claims the land, but his domain
Stops at the shore.
God's wandering acres of the main
Roll on before.

I look this vast expanse abroad,
My rest is this:
This is the blue-veined palm of God,
“The sea is His.”

Far from the world men walk upon,
Why should I fear?
Across this Galilee the Son
Of God draws near.

I lie within his hand. Above
Benignant bends
The blue eye of his boundless love,
And that defends.

LYING AT THE BAR.

THE exile has been long,
And broad, too broad the sea,
Across the which my longing heart
Has beaten heavily.

And now the sunset falls
On western hills afar ;
But the sails are down, the tide is out,
We are lying at the bar.

And on beyond the sunset gates
Another land I ween ;
And for its friends my exiled heart
Hath longings deep and keen.

Oh ! silent tide, when comest thou
Beyond yon evening star?
My thoughts, my hopes are flying on, —
I am lying at the bar.



Songs of Camp.

SONGS OF CAMP.

A CAMP REVERY.

AS a lance of sunrise over the hill
Pierces the mists that lie
Dun and heavy on field and rill,
From the woods to the western sky,

So the lance of firelight bursts to-night
The shadow-gates of the past,
And shows in the glow of its dancing light
The years with their treasures vast.

I am rich, I think, in this sombre wood,
With a richness past compare ;
For time is not, and in memory's flood
I am yester's happy heir.

What is it I hear? Through the silence round
Comes, borne on a current fleet,
A laughing ripple of baby sound,
And the patter of baby feet.

I am strangled again in the old arm-chair,
I am fast in the meshes light
Of the curls that net me everywhere,
And moisten my eyes to-night.

For the loneliest hour, on seas or lands
(Match it no solitude can),
Is the day when the strangling baby hands
Unclasp from the neck of the man ;

When the game of bo-peep goes out of the hall,
As the game of the years comes in,
And we play more alone, and care not at all
Whether we lose or we win.

I am counting over my pearls. Ah, here
Is one which a mighty wave
From a mighty depth has brought, — a tear
Made crystal in its deep sea grave.

I wrung it out on a baby's face,
I dashed it away from me ;
Now it comes back, by its transformed grace
To light my eternity.

Another wave to my idle feet
Has flung a tinted shell,
Burdened with music sad and sweet,
From a depth no line can tell.

It has no sound for other ears ;
But to my heart alone,
It sobs and sings of far-off years
In a haunting undertone.

So I listen and dream ; and beneath the free
Groined arches of the pines,
The church of the village comes to me
With its square and modest lines.

From its silent doors the ghost of a hymn
Comes quavering along,
As if the dead, from their silence dim,
Were keeping up the song.

Though the parson sleeps in his grassy tent,
The voice of his trembling prayer,
Sweeter than sound of an instrument,
Lingers upon the air.

I am walking again in the grasses deep
Of the churchyard's empty way,
I am reading the names of those who sleep
'Neath the marbles worn and gray ;

And they who have gone, come back to me
As I read each moss-grown stone, —
Heaven's goodly and shining company, —
And I am no more alone.

Is it the wind that sighs in the pines,
Or the strange, sweet noise of wings?
A path of fire through the wood that shines,
Or a vision of heavenly things?

Is this woodland temple a Gothic shrine,
With its swaying lines and bands?
Or is it, in shadow, the rise divine
Of the house not made with hands?

I cannot tell ; but the dream I dream
Of the fading days of yore
Has a dash that, like a mountain stream,
Cuts open the hills before.

My heart leaps out of the past with a bound
That requires somewhere should be,
Beyond the shadows that bind me round,
A landing-place for me.

So I rest awhile in the shadow here,
This tent of God's own love,
While Memory guards the darkening rear,
And Hope flies on above.

So, heart of mine, fly on before,
The path through the woods is free,
While I wait for the house where evermore
My dwelling-place shall be.

INTO THE FOREST.

THE storm had passed; its winding sheet was
wrapped
Around the pines that stood like spectres grim
Adown the glittering spaces of the wood,
Around the uptorn roots and far-off cliffs
That gleamed as if the sun his light had wrecked
Upon their jagged front. Our muffled train
Tossed back the drifts as vessels lift the spray;
The smoke-wreaths darkly closed around the trees
And trailed along the whiteness, as a doubt
Sometimes falls shapeless on fair fields of Truth.

Afar along the track, with shambling gait,
A lone, wild child of this lone forest pressed
His weary way like one who has no aim;
His tattered blanket held across a breast
From which all love of life had died away;
His head bent low as in a thought of pride
That had been blasted like a shivered pine,
Which, lightning-struck, stands dead, but cannot fall.

The whistle blows ; the sad face hardly turns.
There is no protest in the quiet eyes,
Or in the ambling muffled step that slides
Across the conqueror's iron path and seeks
The stillness of the woods that once were his, —
By sufferance now his refuge for a day,
Till some new force shall cross his doubtful path
And turn him back and round, till death shall come
And give him place within its ample gloom.

Oh, iron track of a great nation's life !
Oh, force too pitiless, that drives along
Trade, knowledge, art, religion, on a slope
That glitters fair and white like Heaven's road,
But, like a fiery Fate, thrusts off the life
Which God had throned along these temple aisles !

The weaker ever falls before the strong,
And flesh and blood must yield to nerves of steel.
Art holds her lever straight through blasted hopes ;
But down the depths of history there gleams
A troubled look, a Nemesis, that haunts
The way our brother went with sullen face.
And in the far-off gloom there stands a fact
Of judgment, still and white, like yonder pine
That, pallid, shows the way God's lightning went.

LEGEND OF DEVIL'S LAKE.

HOW deep and still the summer noon that rests
Upon this lake. Within these jagged cliffs
Nor breath nor sound finds way. The shadows fall
From tree or cloud, as motionless and still
As dreams fall down upon the souls that are
At peace with God and man. The scarped rocks,
Like castle walls that guard enchanted ground,
Hold changeless ward around the waters deep,
Whose sharp and broken curving shores appear
As if a piece of sky, once wrecked along
Yon crags, had fallen down, and haply found
A resting-place as still as its own heaven.

'T was here, in times long gone, a chieftain dwelt
Whose treasure-trove was not in arms or lands
(Since these by stronger tribes had wrested been),
But in a daughter, in whose eyes the stars
Might look for clearness, in whose well-poised form
And grace of manner passing clouds might look

For rest and motion, in whose heart as in
A mirror all the beauty of the world
Was glassed. Her step was light upon the grass
As footfall of the shadow from the cloud,
Her voice was as the note of early bird,
Her laughter like the fall of waters cool
Amid the ferny glens; and far and near
Her presence was a benediction pure, —
A nameless fragrance on the very air,
As comes along the garden when the night
Is still, and silent dews from heaven fall.

Two lovers sought the maiden's heart and hand;
The one a prince from lands beyond 'the flood,
High-born and wearing on his girdle signs
Of valor fierce, of wars and victories.
The other was her girlhood friend, — a youth
Of carriage noble, frank of face and mien,
Her playmate on the smooth and pebbly shore
Of the strange lake; her helper in the arts
That soothed her father's heart and cheered his days.
As interlaced the sunbeams 'mid the shade
Of bending trees above the hut, so these
Blent thought with thought, and brightened toil with
toil.

One evening, when the level sun his spears
Of light sent quivering on the distant hill,
These lovers waited for the old chief's word ;
While dutiful the daughter stood with eyes
Downcast, and meek hands folded on her breast.
Burned in the old chief's heart the pent up fire
Of valor yet. Gone were his lands, his bands ;
But quenchless was the light that kindled now,
And only daring should his daughter win.
He pointed to a far-off crag that hung
Above the silent depths, and thus he spake :

“ On yonder height an eagle hath her nest.
Who first from out that nest shall to me bring
An eaglet, shall my daughter's hand receive.”
Scarce spoken were the words when prince and
youth
With equal bound sprang forth. Love lent her wings.
As leaps the chamois on the sides of Alps,
So on from crag to crag, from ledge to ledge,
Urged by hot hearts, and side by side, the twain
Rushed on. The last sharp arrow from the sun
Just touched the splintered height when sprang the
youth
With one exultant bound, and reached the nest,

Bent down to seize the prize, when, lo! the prince,
With hands by mad and ruthless passion nerved,
Hurled the fair youth adown the awful height, —
A hundred fathoms down. The silent lake
Received his form, to yield it not again
Until the sea gives up its buried dead.

The maiden with a heart of prayer had watched
Each step, had seen her lover grasp the prize,
Had seen him fall, had seen the waters close.
With flying feet she reached the pebbly shore.
One thrust, — her light canoe glides swiftly out;
Her lithe form scarcely bends while with deft hands
She guides the arrowy bark to that dread spot
Where still the waters restless sway, as if
They mourned the dead. One moment that fair form
Erect, as marble rigid, stood above that grave;
Two pleading hands rise up against the gathering
 night,
And then a plunge as swift as sunlight ends
The tragedy of love. The youth hath won
His bride. The waves close over; the canoe
Floats idly to the shore; the stars come out
And wheel in groups above the double grave,
As if to look upon the mystery of love.

Ages have come and gone ; but still, when stars
Take up their stations on the heights of space
(So runs the legend of this Spirit Lake),
A maiden, fair and stately calm, is seen
With steady stroke to send her spirit-boat
Around the waters still, as seeking that
Which lost, on earth can nevermore be found.

THE LAST CAMP-FIRE.

PILE on the pine and hemlock boughs,
Send up the starry shower ;
Ten days of wildwood friendship be
Concentred in this hour.

To-morrow comes the world again,
Its paths of dark or light ;
To-night we draw the circle close,
And every face is bright.

Kind memories more than hemlock flames
Across our foreheads creep,
And underneath these placid days
Are friendships true and deep.

The camp-fire is a vulcan forge,
Within whose throbbing glow
Are welded bands that will not break
Till Life's tent is laid low.

How hard soe'er old Time may strike,
Or sudden storms may brew,
The rivet-pins of kindly thoughts
Will keep this circle true.

Around Life's camp the shadows lie,
And dark aisles of the wood,
And ope their silent mystery,
We would not if we could ;

But rather face to face we turn,
And when our hope declines,
We'll trace the way the sparks reveal
Above the silent pines.

Then pile the pine and hemlock boughs,
Send up the starry shower ;
Before to-morrow's battle call
Let freedom have one hour.

Perchance, when the last battle's fought,
In the last evening's damp,
Our earthly thought of heaven's rest
Will be this Brulé camp.

Miscellaneous.

MISCELLANEOUS.

A TALE OF THE ROAD.

BY AN OLD ENGINEER.

NO, my running days are over,
The engineer needs rest ;
My hand is shaky, children,
There's a tugging pain in my breast.
But here in the twilight gather,
I'll tell you a tale of the road
That will ring in my head forever,
Till it rests beneath the sod.

We were lumbering on in the twilight,
The night was dropping her shade,
And the "Gladiator" labored,
Climbing the top of the grade.
The train was heavily laden,
So I let my engine rest,
Climbing the grading slowly,
Till we reached the upland's crest.

I held my watch to the lamp-light,
Ten minutes behind the time,
Lost in the slackened motion
Of the upgrade's heavy climb;
But I knew the miles of the prairie
That stretched a level track,
So I touched the gauge of the boiler,
And pulled the lever back.

Over the rails a-gleaming,
Forty an hour or so,
The engine leaped like a demon
Breathing a fiery glow;
But to me, ahold of the lever,
She seemed a child alway,
Ready to mind me ever,
And my lightest touch obey.

I was proud, you know, of my engine,
Holding her steady that night,
With my eye on the track before us
Ablaze with the drummond light.
We neared a well-known cabin,
Where a child of three or four
Oft waved to me a signal,
A-playing round the door.

My hand was firm on the throttle
As we swept around the curve,
When something afar in the shadow
Struck fire through every nerve.
I sounded the brakes, and crashing
The reverse lever down in dismay,
Near and nearer, — oh, God! eighty paces
Ahead was the child at its play.

One instant, one awful and only,
The world flew around in my brain;
I smote my hand hard on my forehead
To keep back the terrible pain.
The train I thought flying forever,
With mad irresistible roll,
While the cries of the dying, the night wind,
Swept in to my shuddering soul.

Then I stood on the front of the engine,
How I got there I never could tell,
My feet planted firm on the cross-bar
Where the cow-catcher slopes to the rail;
One hand firmly locked on the coupler,
And one stretched out in the night,
While my eye gauged the distance, and measured
The speed of our slackening flight.

My mind, thank God! it was steady;
I saw the curls of her hair,
And the face that, turning in wonder,
Was lit by the deadly glare.
I know little more; but I heard it,
The groan of the anguished wheels,
And remember thinking, "The engine
In agony trembles and reels."

One rod—to the day of my dying
I shall think that old engine reared back,
And as she recoiled with a shudder,
I swept my hand over the track.
Then darkness fell on my eyelids;
But I heard the surge of the train,
And the poor old engine creaking,
As racked by a deadly pain.

They found us, they said, on the gravel,
My fingers enmeshed in her hair,
And she on my bosom a-climbing,
To nestle securely there.
We are not much given to crying,
We men that run on the road,
But that night, they said, there were faces
With tears on them lifted to God.

For years in the eve and the morning
As I neared the cabin again,
My hand on the lever unconsciously pressed,
And lowered the speed of the train.
When my engine blew her greeting,
She always came to the door ;
And her look, so full of heaven,
Blesses me evermore.

THE CRYSTAL PRISON.

I N the library's shadiest corner,
One sultry morn of July,
As I glanced from my reading of Dorner
A spider I chanced to espy ;
A gray and a long-legged spider,
Well poised on eight pedals he stood,
In a somewhat contemplative mood.
On the sunshine he rested one eye,
And the other was opened much wider
On the vellum of "Synopsis Poli."

To clap down a goblet upon him,
An invisible jail,
Was the thought not of mischief or play,
But an entomological way
Of scientific and painful duty, —

A duty whose rule is
(Although it so cruel is),
First catch, then empale,
Then sprinkle with snuff,
Or other odorous stuff,
This thin, gray Arachnid beauty.

Then, recalling wise Solomon's message,
"To the ant, thou sluggard, and learn!"
"A spider," I said, "sure may presage
A moral, as well as an ant;
It is solemn and stilted, and can't
Be bad for giving a turn
Of an ethical sort to one's thinking."
So, shutting my book, I sat winking
At my prisoner, who, with one eye
Stood stupidly, silently blinking
At the light of that day in July;
The other, opened much wider,
Was lifted to "Synopsis Poli,"—
My ambitious Arachnid Spider!

When he roused from his strange meditation,
It occurred to that venturesome spider
He would stroll through a part of creation;

And in the green fields of the room,—
On the carpet, with flowers abloom,—
He would achieve of the world a much wider
 Idea than ever before.
He would climb up the window or door,
The corners he e'en would explore,
And stand on the far away shore
Of the hearth, and look up to the dark,
 Deep dome of the chimney-flue,
 Be dazed by the ray struggling through
From the land of the cloud and the lark;
Or else he would climb on the book-case shelf,
And, like other philosophers, see for himself
 How deep and how high,
 How near to the sky
Is that time-scented vellum of "Synopsis Poli."

But alas for the spider who never had learned
There are walls that are crystal, and one may be
 turned
From his stroll through the universe, deftly and
 quick,
By boundaries viewless, but firm, high, and thick!
 So he battered his head in a reckless endeavor
 To go through the prison of glass,—

First one side, then t'other; but, of course, he
could never

That invisible barrier pass.

Then he took to his legs, with the thought, no
doubt:

“My head, indeed, is broken;

But he who can climb may always get out
Of prison or trouble or torment or doubt,
For the top of things is open.”

Alas! little prisoner, yield to your fate.

Your courage is ample, your legs are eight,
But glass is a slippery wall;

Your philosophy also is all askew,

For the top of *your* prison has no hole through,—

A crystal dome over all!

So avail you nor legs, so graceful and fair,

Nor the wisdom that looks with a Solonic air

And a quizzical eye

At “Synopsis Poli,”

With a stare which despair

Makes hopeless and hopelessly wider,

My discouraged Arachnid Spider.

Ah! could we but measure the distance between

Aspiring and doing, 't were well.

The horizon is crystal,—may never be seen,—

All the same it determines, decisive and keen,
Our crystalline prison or cell.
Ah! small past believing
The world of achieving,
Though vast be the realm of our dream;
And ever, as outward
Our faces are set,
Our steps are thrown backward,
The barriers are met
In the walls without visible gleam.
In prison-bound vision,
The far-off Elysian
Blue fields of our fame may appear.
But there's practical pith
In the Persian myth:
Round the world is a crystalline sphere.
So no more will I jeer
At the spider, for here
Is a prison we all must share;
Nor laugh at the eye
So ambitiously high
At "Poli Synopsis" there.
Though my freedom be wider
There are books beyond call
Of insect or man,
And sun-rays fall

Past our vision to scan.
'T wixt the Can't and the Can
Solid buttressed the wall,
And the dome's over all,
Both for insect and man,
Fellow-prisoner, Arachnidial Spider.

DIVIDING THE WORLD.

[FROM THE GERMAN OF SCHILLER.]

“**B**EHOLD the world ! Oh, men hear my decision,”
Cried Jupiter from his great throne ;
“ I give it you for brotherly division,
For feoff and endless loan.”

Then hands in choosing were outstretched,
Bestirred him sharply, old and young.
The richly fruited fields the farmer reached ;
The lord to forests clung ;

The merchant took the well-stored riches ;
The abbot chose the noblest wine ;
The king shut down on roads and bridges,
And cried, “ The tenth is mine ! ”

Too late, when ended the division,
The poet came from lands unnamed,
Only to hear, in tones of sharp derision,
That everything was claimed.

“Alas! shall I be dispossessed, —
I, thy most true and loyal son?”
To Jupiter he cried, in tones depressed,
And fell before the throne.

“In dreamland hast thou been abiding?”
Replied the god. “Why call to me?
Where wert thou then when men were earth dividing?”
The poet said, “With thee.

“My eyes upon thy face were feasting,
My ear, on heaven’s harmony;
Forgive the soul that to thy presence hastening,
Has given the world for thee.”

“What shall be done!” cried Jove, “the world is
given;
The chase, the mart are not my own.
But come to me; find access free to heaven,
And welcome to my throne.”

AT THE DOORS.

[FROM THE GERMAN.]

I KNOCKED at the gilded door of Wealth;
Through the window was given a farthing by stealth.

I sought Love's beautiful close-shut door;
But many as eager had reached it before.

The gate of Honor I tried in vain;
"Only the knighted can entrance gain."

I sought the lowly roof of Toil,
Only from pains and groans to recoil.

The house of Friendship then I tried.
There were none to show it, far and wide.

A little house I remembered then.
At last thereto I shall entrance gain.

It has already full many a guest;
But for many more in the Grave is rest.

TONGUES OF FLAME.

WEARY with the empty life, that frothing surges
on the street ;
Weary with a restless, fevered brain, and aimless, tramp-
ing feet ;

Close pursued by shadows, reaching arms across the
busy town,
Drawing veils along the world, and setting in the sky
a crown ;

Shutting out the little *Now*, to chafe along the dark-
ened sea,
Merest pebble tossed by waves that murmur through
eternity, —

I, alone, with dreams that arch-like span the cold ex-
panse of years,
Springing lightly from the present, like a bridge that
has no piers ;

I, alone, am musing while the shadows of the dark-
ening room,
Touched by firelight, range around me like gilt vol-
umes of the gloom.

Moody is my fancy, sweeping backward through the
world's long age ;
Fame is but a book of shadows, with a gilding to the
page.

Ah, my lady, when your poet's tinted leaf you deftly
turn,
Think, God only sees the shadow underneath the
thoughts that burn !

Then I touched the dying embers, and the flashes
mounting higher
For an instant lit the bust of Tasso with a tongue of
fire ;

Fell on him who stood beside him, — in his marble
trance between
Heaven and hell, — the broken-hearted, stately, dream-
eyed Florentine !

Oh, my Tasso ! pouring us the wine of Zion's royal
dream,
And thy cold lips vainly begging for a draught from
Lethe's stream !

Oh, my exiled Dante ! reaping where no Beatrice may
glean ;
Treading marl of lonely death, and holding sheaves of
golden sheen !

Gathering bravely for the garnerers of the world's re-
motest age ;
Dying hungry, trampled by thy Italy's insensate rage !

Slant the shadows back, and forward falls a flicker-
ing wave of light
On the lettered books, where names shine out like
stars along the night ;

And as billows crowned with sunrise fall on rock and
yielding strand,
Giving brightness to the granite, spurning back the
drifted sand,

So those royal names look down upon me with their
 deep-drawn lines,
Cut by waves of Ages, on whose crests a dawn eternal
 shines !

Mighty artists ! pausing tremulous with prophecies sub-
 lime,
And with hand unerring, carving pedestals as broad as
 Time.

And my heavy thoughts that drifting hid my Plato from
 my ken,
Beaten back, have left me in the kingly fellowship again.

Smooth and firm the shore of life, along which treading
 years have paved
Pathways to the silent shrines in everlasting sunlight
 laved.

Jostled by the narrow foreheads in the iron ways of
 men,
Crowded from the line of march whose shining goal is
 empty gain,

Glad for refuge from the glitter which is only splendid
 gloom,
Through the doors of lifted Ages slides my soul, — and
 here is room.

Faintly to my reverent spirit comes the ringing pavement
tread

Of the throng who in the market barter brains and heart
for bread !

But I stand among the Centuries that, with priestly
gems impearled,

Noiseless light the altar candles for the homage of the
world.

And from out the dome above me — like the setting of
a crown —

Thought's Apostles, mute, immortal, look with radiant
faces down !

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