

# **Dreams and Days: Poems**

George Parsons Lathrop

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# Dreams and Days: Poems

George Parsons Lathrop

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I

## **STRIKE HANDS, YOUNG MEN!**

Strike hands, young men!  
We know not when  
Death or disaster comes,

I

## Dreams and Days: Poems

Mightier than battle–drums  
To summon us away.  
Death bids us say farewell  
To all we love, nor stay  
For tears; and who can tell  
How soon misfortune's hand  
May smite us where we stand,  
Dragging us down, aloof,  
Under the swift world's hoof?

Strike hands for faith, and power  
To gladden the passing hour;  
To wield the sword, or raise a song;  
To press the grape; or crush out wrong.  
And strengthen right.  
Give me the man of sturdy palm  
And vigorous brain;  
Hearty, companionable, sane,  
'Mid all commotions calm,  
Yet filled with quick, enthusiastic fire;  
Give me the man  
Whose impulses aspire,  
And all his features seem to say, I can!

Strike hands, young men!  
'Tis yours to help rebuild the State,  
And keep the Nation great.  
With act and speech and pen  
'Tis yours to spread  
The morning–red  
That ushers in a grander day:  
To scatter prejudice that blinds,  
And hail fresh thoughts in noble minds;  
To overthrow bland tyrannies  
That cheat the people, and with slow disease  
Change the Republic to a mockery.  
Your words can teach that liberty  
Means more than just to cry "We're free"  
While bending to some new–found yoke.  
So shall each unjust bond be broke,  
Each toiler gain his meet reward,  
And life sound forth a truer chord.

Ah, if we so have striven,  
And mutually the grasp have given  
Of brotherhood,  
To work each other and the whole race good;

## Dreams and Days: Poems

What matter if the dream  
Come only partly true,  
And all the things accomplished seem  
Feeble and few?  
At least, when summer's flame burns low  
And on our heads the drifting snow  
Settles and stays,  
We shall rejoice that in our earlier days  
We boldly then  
Struck hands, young men!

## O JAY!

O jay  
Blue-jay!  
What are you trying to say?  
I remember, in the spring  
You pretended you could sing;  
But your voice is now still queerer,  
And as yet you've come no nearer  
To a song.  
In fact, to sum the matter,  
I never heard a flatter  
Failure than your doleful clatter.  
Don't you think it's wrong?  
It was sweet to hear your note,  
I'll not deny,  
When April set pale clouds afloat  
O'er the blue tides of sky,  
And 'mid the wind's triumphant drums  
You, in your white and azure coat,  
A herald proud, came forth to cry,  
The royal summer comes!

O JAY!

But now that autumn's here,  
And the leaves curl up in sheer  
Disgust,  
And the cold rains fringe the pine,  
You really must  
Stop that supercilious whine –  
Or you'll be shot, by some mephitic  
Angry critic.

You don't fulfill your early promise:  
You're not the smartest  
Kind of artist,  
Any more than poor Blind Tom is.  
Yet somehow, still,  
There's meaning in your screaming bill.  
What *are* you trying to say?

Sometimes your piping is delicious,  
And then again it's simply vicious;  
Though on the whole the varying jangle  
Weaves round me an entrancing tangle  
Of memories grave or joyous:  
Things to weep or laugh at;  
Love that lived at a hint, or  
Days so sweet, they'd cloy us;  
Nights I have spent with friends;  
Glistening groves of winter,  
And the sound of vanished feet  
That walked by the ripening wheat;  
With other things.... Not the half that  
Your cry familiar blends  
Can I name, for it is mostly  
Very ghostly;  
Such mixed-up things your voice recalls,  
With its peculiar quirks and falls.

Possibly, then, your meaning, plain,  
Is that your harsh and broken strain  
Tallies best with a world of pain.

Well, I'll admit  
There's merit in a voice that's truthful:  
Yours is not honey-sweet nor youthful,  
But querulously fit.  
And if we cannot sing, we'll say  
Something to the purpose, jay!

O JAY!



## THE STAR TO ITS LIGHT

Go, said the star to its light:  
Follow your fathomless flight!  
Into the dreams of space  
Carry the joy of my face.  
Go, said the star to its light:  
Tell me the tale of your flight.

As the mandate rang  
The heavens through,  
Quick the ray sprang:  
Unheard it flew,  
Sped by the touch of an unseen spur.  
It crumbled the dusk of the deep  
That folds the worlds in sleep,  
And shot through night with noiseless stir.

Then came the day;  
And all that swift array  
Of diamond–sparkles died.  
And lo! the far star cried:  
My light has lost its way!  
Ages on ages passed:  
The light returned, at last.

What have you seen,  
What have you heard

O ray serene,  
O flame-winged bird  
I loosed on endless air?  
Why do you look so faint and white?  
Said the star to its light.

O star, said the tremulous ray,  
Grief and struggle I found.  
Horror impeded my way.  
Many a star and sun  
I passed and touched, on my round.  
Many a life undone  
I lit with a tender gleam:  
I shone in the lover's eyes,  
And soothed the maiden's dream.  
But alas for the stifling mist of lies!  
Alas, for the wrath of the battle-field  
Where my glance was mixed with blood!  
And woe for the hearts by hate congealed,  
And the crime that rolls like a flood!  
Too vast is the world for me;  
Too vast for the sparkling dew  
Of a force like yours to renew.  
Hopeless the world's immensity!  
The suns go on without end:  
The universe holds no friend:  
And so I come back to you.

Go, said the star to its light:  
You have not told me aright.  
This you have taught: I am one  
In a million of million others  
Stars, or planets, or men;  
And all of these are my brothers.  
Carry that message, and then  
My guerdon of praise you have won!  
Say that I serve in my place:  
Say I will hide my own face  
Ere the sorrows of others I shun.  
So, then, my trust you'll requite.  
Go! said the star to its light.

## THE SUNSHINE OF THINE EYES"

The sunshine of thine eyes,  
(O still, celestial beam!)  
Whatever it touches it fills  
With the life of its lambent gleam.

The sunshine of thine eyes,  
O let it fall on me!  
Though I be but a mote of the air,  
I could turn to gold for thee!

## JESSAMINE

Here stands the great tree still, with broad bent head;  
Its wide arms grown weary, yet outspread  
With their old blessing. But wan memory weaves  
Strange garlands, now, amongst the darkening leaves.  
*And the moon hangs low in the elm.*

Beneath these glimmering arches Jessamine

THE SUNSHINE OF THINE EYES"

## Dreams and Days: Poems

Walked with her lover long ago; and in  
The leaf-dimmed light he questioned, and she spoke;  
Then on them both, supreme, love's radiance broke.  
*And the moon hangs low in the elm.*

Sweet Jessamine we called her; for she shone  
Like blossoms that in sun and shade have grown,  
Gathering from each alike a perfect white,  
Whose rich bloom breaks opaque through darkest night.  
*And the moon hangs low in the elm.*

For this her sweetness Walt, her lover, sought  
To win her; wooed her here, his heart o'er fraught  
With fragrance of her being; and gained his plea.  
So We will wed, they said, beneath this tree.  
*And the moon hangs low in the elm.*

Yet dreams of conquering greater prize for her  
Roused his wild spirit with a glittering spur.  
Eager for wealth, far, far from home he sailed;  
And life paused; while she watched joy vanish, veiled.  
*And the moon hangs low in the elm.*

Ah, better at the elm-tree's sunbrowned feet  
If he had been content to let life fleet  
Its wonted way! lord of his little farm,  
In zest of joys or cares unmixed with harm.  
*And the moon hangs low in the elm.*

For, as against a snarling sea one steers,  
He battled vainly with the surging years;  
While ever Jessamine must watch and pine,  
Her vision bounded by the bleak sea-line.  
*And the moon hangs low in the elm.*

Then silence fell; and all the neighbors said  
That Walt had married, faithless, or was dead:  
Unmoved in constancy, her tryst she kept,  
Each night beneath the tree, ere sorrow slept.

THE SUNSHINE OF THINE EYES"

*And the moon hangs low in the elm.*

So, circling years went by, till in her face  
Slow melancholy wrought a mingled grace,  
Of early joy with suffering's hard alloy  
Refined and rare, no doom could e'er destroy.

*And the moon hangs low in the elm.*

Sometimes at twilight, when sweet Jessamine  
Slow-footed, weary-eyed, passed by to win  
The elm, we smiled for pity of her, and mused  
On love that so could live, with love refused.

*And the moon hangs low in the elm.*

And none could hope for her. But she had grown  
Too high in love, for hope. She bloomed alone,  
Aloft in proud devotion; and secure  
Against despair; so sweet her faith, so sure.

*And the moon hangs low in the elm.*

Her wandering lover knew not well her soul.  
Discouraged, on disaster's changing shoal  
Stranding, he waited; starved on selfish pride,  
Long years; nor would obey love's homeward tide.

*And the moon hangs low in the elm.*

But, bitterly repenting of his sin,  
Deeper at last he learned to look within  
Sweet Jessamine's true heart when the past, dead,  
Mocked him with wasted years forever fled.

*And the moon hangs low in the elm.*

Late, late, oh late, beneath the tree stood two;  
In trembling joy, and wondering Is it true?  
Two that were each like some strange, misty wraith:  
Yet each on each gazed with a living faith.

*And the moon hangs low in the elm.*

Even to the tree-top sang the wedding-bell:  
Even to the tree-top tolled the passing knell.  
Beneath it Walt and Jessamine were wed,  
Beneath it many a year has she lain dead.

*And the moon hangs low in the elm.*

Here stands the great tree, still. But age has crept  
Through every coil, while Walt each night has kept  
The tryst alone. Hark! with what windy might  
The boughs chant o'er her grave their burial-rite!

*And the moon hangs low in the elm.*

## THE BOBOLINK

How sweetly sang the bobolink,  
When thou, my love, wast nigh!  
His liquid music from the brink  
Of some cloud-fountain seemed to sink,  
Far in the blue-domed sky.

How sadly sings the bobolink!  
No more my love is nigh:  
Yet rise, my spirit, rise, and drink  
Once more from that cloud-fountain's brink,  
Once more before I die!

## SAILOR'S SONG, RETURNING

The sea goes up; the sky comes down.  
Oh, can you spy the ancient town,  
The granite hills so green and gray,  
That rib the land behind the bay?  
O ye ho, boys. Spread her wings!  
Fair winds, boys: send her home!  
O ye ho!

Three years? Is it so long that we  
Have lived upon the lonely sea?  
Oh, often I thought we'd see the town,  
When the sea went up, and the sky came down.  
O ye ho, boys. Spread her wings!

Even the winter winds would rouse  
A memory of my father's house;  
For round his windows and his door  
They made the same deep, mouthless roar.  
O ye ho, boys. Spread her wings!

And when the summer's breezes beat,  
Methought I saw the sunny street  
Where stood my Kate. Beneath her hand  
She gazed far out, far out from land.  
O ye ho, boys. Spread her wings!

Farthest away, I oftenest dreamed  
That I was with her. Then it seemed  
A single stride the ocean wide  
Had bridged, and brought me to her side.

## Dreams and Days: Poems

O ye ho, boys. Spread her wings!

But though so near we're drawing, now,  
'T is farther off I know not how.  
We sail and sail: we see no home.  
Would that we into port were come!  
O ye ho, boys. Spread her wings!

At night, the same stars o'er the mast:  
The mast sways round however fast  
We fly still sways and swings around  
One scanty circle's starry bound.  
O ye ho, boys. Spread her wings!

Ah, many a month those stars have shone,  
And many a golden morn has flown,  
Since that so solemn, happy morn,  
When, I away, my babe was born.  
O ye ho, boys. Spread her wings!

And, though so near we're drawing, now,  
'T is farther off I know not how:  
I would not aught amiss had come  
To babe or mother there, at home!  
O ye ho, boys. Spread her wings!

'T is but a seeming: swiftly rush  
The seas, beneath. I hear the crush  
Of foamy ridges 'gainst the prow.  
Longing outspeeds the breeze, I know.  
O ye ho, boys. Spread her wings!

Patience, my mates! Though not this eve  
We cast our anchor, yet believe,  
If but the wind holds, short the run:  
We'll sail in with to-morrow's sun.  
O ye ho, boys. Spread her wings!  
Fair winds, boys: send her home!  
O ye ho!



## FIRST GLANCE

A budding mouth and warm blue eyes;  
A laughing face; and laughing hair,  
So ruddy was its rise  
From off that forehead fair;

Frank fervor in whate'er she said,  
And a shy grace when she was still;  
A bright, elastic tread;  
Enthusiastic will;

These wrought the magic of a maid  
As sweet and sad as the sun in spring;  
Joyous, yet half–afraid  
Her joyousness to sing.

**BRIDE BROOK**

Wide as the sky Time spreads his hand,  
And blindly over us there blows  
A swarm of years that fill the land,  
Then fade, and are as fallen snows.

Behold, the flakes rush thick and fast;  
Or are they years, that come between,  
When, peering back into the past,  
I search the legendary scene?

Nay. Marshaled down the open coast,  
Fearless of that low rampart's frown,  
The winter's white-winged, footless host  
Beleaguers ancient Saybrook town.

And when the settlers wake they stare  
On woods half-buried, white and green,  
A smothered world, an empty air:  
Never had such deep drifts been seen!

But Snow lies light upon my heart!  
An thou, said merry Jonathan Rudd,  
Wilt wed me, winter shall depart,  
And love like spring for us shall bud.

Nay, how, said Mary, may that be?  
No minister nor magistrate  
Is here, to join us solemnly;  
And snow-banks bar us, every gate.

Winthrop at Pequot Harbor lies,  
He laughed. And with the morrow's sun  
He faced the deputy's dark eyes:

## Dreams and Days: Poems

How soon, sir, may the rite be done?

At Saybrook? There the power's not mine,  
Said he. But at the brook we'll meet,  
That ripples down the boundary line;  
There you may wed, and Heaven shall see't.

Forth went, next day, the bridal train  
Through vistas dreamy with gray light.  
The waiting woods, the open plain,  
Arrayed in consecrated white,

Received and ushered them, along.  
The very beasts before them fled,  
Charmed by the spell of inward song  
These lovers' hearts around them spread.

Four men with netted foot-gear shod  
Bore the maid's carrying-chair aloft;  
She swayed above, as roses nod  
On the lithe stem their bloom-weight soft.

At last beside the brook they stood,  
With Winthrop and his followers;  
The maid in flake-embroidered hood,  
The magistrate well cloaked in furs,

That, parting, showed a glimpse beneath  
Of ample, throat-encircling ruff  
As white as some wind-gathered wreath  
Of snow quilled into plait and puff.

A few grave words, a question asked;  
Eyelids that with the answer fell  
Like falling petals; form that tasked  
Brief time; and so was wrought the spell!

## Dreams and Days: Poems

Then Brooklet, Winthrop smiled and said,  
Frost's finger on thy lip makes dumb  
The voice wherewith thou shouldst have sped  
These lovers on their way. But, come,

Henceforth forever be thou known  
By memory of this day's fair bride:  
So shall thy slender music's moan  
Sweeter into the ocean glide!

Then laughed they all, and sudden beams  
Of sunshine quivered through the sky.  
Below the ice, the unheard stream's  
Clear heart thrilled on in ecstasy;

And lo, a visionary blush  
Stole warmly o'er the voiceless wild;  
And in her rapt and wintry hush  
The lonely face of Nature smiled.

Ah, Time, what wilt thou? Vanished quite  
Is all that tender vision now;  
And, like lost snow-flakes in the night,  
Mute are the lovers as their vow.

And O thou little, careless brook,  
Hast thou thy tender trust forgot?  
Her modest memory forsook,  
Whose name, known once, thou utterest not?

Spring wakes the rill's blithe minstrelsy;  
In willow bough or alder bush  
Birds sing, o'er golden filigree  
Of pebbles 'neath the flood's clear gush;

But none can tell us of that name

BRIDE BROOK

More than the Mary. Men still say  
Bride Brook in honor of her fame;  
But all the rest has passed away.

## MAY-ROSE

[FOR A BIRTHDAY: MAY 20]

On this day to life she came  
    May-Rose, my May-Rose!  
With scented breeze, with flowered flame,  
She touched the earth and took her name  
    Of May, Rose.

Here, to-day, she grows and flowers  
    May-Rose, my May-Rose.  
All my life with light she dowers,  
And colors all the coming hours  
    With May, Rose!

## THE SINGING WIRE

Ethereal, faint that music rang,  
As, with the bosom of the breeze,  
It rose and fell and murmuring sang  
Aeolian harmonies!

I turned; again the mournful chords,  
In random rhythm lightly flung  
From off the wire, came shaped in words;  
And thus meseemed, they sung:

I, messenger of many fates,  
Strung to the tones of woe or weal,  
Fine nerve that thrills and palpitates  
With all men know or feel,

Is it so strange that I should wail?  
Leave me my tearless, sad refrain,  
When in the pine-top wakes the gale  
That breathes of coming rain.

There is a spirit in the post;  
It, too, was once a murmuring tree;  
Its withered, sad, imprisoned ghost  
Echoes my melody.

Come close, and lay your listening ear  
Against the bare and branchless wood.  
Can you not hear it crooning clear,  
As though it understood?

I listened to the branchless pole  
That held aloft the singing wire;  
I heard its muffled music roll,

Dreams and Days: Poems

And stirred with sweet desire:

O wire more soft than seasoned lute,  
Hast thou no sunlit word for me?  
Though long to me so coyly mute,  
Her heart may speak through thee!

I listened, but it was in vain.  
At first, the wind's old wayward will  
Drew forth the tearless, sad refrain.  
That ceased; and all was still.

But suddenly some kindling shock  
Struck flashing through the wire: a bird,  
Poised on it, screamed and flew; the flock  
Rose with him; wheeled and whirred.

Then to my soul there came this sense:  
Her heart has answered unto thine;  
She comes, to-night. Go, speed thee hence:  
Meet her; no more repine!

Perhaps the fancy was far-fetched;  
And yet, perhaps, it hinted true.  
Ere moonrise, Love, a hand was stretched  
In mine, that gave me you!

And so more dear to me has grown  
Than rarest tones swept from the lyre,  
The minor movement of that moan  
In yonder singing wire.

Nor care I for the will of states,  
Or aught beside, that smites that string,  
Since then so close it knit our fates,  
What time the bird took wing!

## THE HEART OF A SONG

Dear love, let this my song fly to you:  
Perchance forget it came from me.  
It shall not vex you, shall not woo you;  
But in your breast lie quietly.

Only beware, when once it tarries  
I cannot coax it from you, then.  
This little song my whole heart carries,  
And ne'er will bear it back again.

For if its silent passion grieve you,  
My heart would then too heavy grow;  
And it can never, never leave you,  
If joy of yours must with it go!



## **SOUTH-WIND**

Soft-throated South, breathing of summer's ease  
(Sweet breath, whereof the violet's life is made!)  
Through lips moist-warm, as thou hadst lately stayed  
'Mong rosebuds, wooing to the cheeks of these  
Loth blushes faint and maidenly: rich breeze,  
Still doth thy honeyed blowing bring a shade  
Of sad foreboding. In thy hand is laid  
The power to build or blight the fruit of trees,  
The deep, cool grass, and field of thick-combed grain.

Even so my Love may bring me joy or woe,  
Both measureless, but either counted gain  
Since given by her. For pain and pleasure flow  
Like tides upon us of the self-same sea.  
Tears are the gems of joy and misery.

## **THE LOVER'S YEAR**

Thou art my morning, twilight, noon, and eve,  
My summer and my winter, spring and fall;  
For Nature left on thee a touch of all  
The moods that come to gladden or to grieve  
The heart of Time, with purpose to relieve  
From lagging sameness. So do these forestall  
In thee such o'erheaped sweetnesses as pall  
Too swiftly, and the taster tasteless leave.

Scenes that I love to me always remain  
Beautiful, whether under summer sun  
Beheld, or, storm-dark, stricken across with rain.  
So, through all humors, thou 'rt the same sweet one:  
Doubt not I love thee well in each, who see  
Thy constant change is changeful constancy.

## NEW WORLDS

With my beloved I lingered late one night.  
At last the hour when I must leave her came:  
But, as I turned, a fear I could not name  
Possessed me that the long sweet evening might  
Prelude some sudden storm, whereby delight  
Should perish. What if death, ere dawn, should claim  
One of us? What, though living, not the same  
Each should appear to each in morning-light?

Changed did I find her, truly, the next day:  
Ne'er could I see her as of old again.  
That strange mood seemed to draw a cloud away,  
And let her beauty pour through every vein  
Sunlight and life, part of me. Thus the lover  
With each new morn a new world may discover.

## NIGHT IN NEW YORK

Haunted by unknown feet  
Ways of the midnight hour!  
Strangely you murmur below me,  
Strange is your half-silent power.  
Places of life and of death,  
Numbered and named as streets,  
What, through your channels of stone,  
Is the tide that unweariedly beats?  
A whisper, a sigh-laden breath,  
Is all that I hear of its flowing.  
Footsteps of stranger and foe  
Footsteps of friends, could we meet  
Alike to me in my sorrow;  
Alike to a life left alone.  
Yet swift as my heart they throb,  
They fall thick as tears on the stone:  
My spirit perchance may borrow  
New strength from their eager tone.

Still ever that slip and slide  
Of the feet that shuffle or glide,  
And linger or haste through the populous waste  
Of the shadowy, dim-lit square!  
And I know not, from the sound,  
As I sit and ponder within,  
The goal to which those steps are bound,  
On hest of mercy, or hest of sin,  
Or joy's short-measured round;  
Yet a meaning deep they bear  
In their vaguely muffled din.

Roar of the multitude,  
Chafe of the million-crowd,  
To this you are all subdued  
In the murmurous, sad night-air!  
Yet whether you thunder aloud,  
Or hush your tone to a prayer,

## Dreams and Days: Poems

You chant amain through the modern maze  
The only epic of our days.

Still as death are the places of life;  
The city seems crumbled and gone,  
Sunk 'mid invisible deeps  
The city so lately rife  
With the stir of brain and brawn.  
Haply it only sleeps;  
But what if indeed it were dead,  
And another earth should arise  
To greet the gray of the dawn?  
Faint then our epic would wail  
To those who should come in our stead.  
But what if that earth were ours?  
What if, with holier eyes,  
We should meet the new hope, and not fail?

Weary, the night grows pale:  
With a blush as of opening flowers  
Dimly the east shines red.  
Can it be that the morn shall fulfil  
My dream, and refashion our clay  
As the poet may fashion his rhyme?  
Hark to that mingled scream  
Rising from workshop and mill  
Hailing some marvelous sight;  
Mighty breath of the hours,  
Poured through the trumpets of steam;  
Awful tornado of time,  
Blowing us whither it will!

God has breathed in the nostrils of night,  
And behold, it is day!

## THE SONG-SPARROW

Glimmers gray the leafless thicket  
Close beside my garden gate,  
Where, so light, from post to picket  
Hops the sparrow, blithe, sedate;  
Who, with meekly folded wing,  
Comes to sun himself and sing.

It was there, perhaps, last year,  
That his little house he built;  
For he seems to perk and peer,  
And to twitter, too, and tilt  
The bare branches in between,  
With a fond, familiar mien.

Once, I know, there was a nest,  
Held there by the sideward thrust  
Of those twigs that touch his breast;  
Though 'tis gone now. Some rude gust  
Caught it, over-full of snow,  
Bent the bush, and stole it so.

Thus our highest holds are lost,  
In the ruthless winter's wind,  
When, with swift-dismantling frost,  
The green woods we dwelt in, thinn'd  
Of their leafage, grow too cold  
For frail hopes of summer's mold.

But if we, with spring-days mellow,  
Wake to woeful wrecks of change,  
And the sparrow's ritornello  
Scaling still its old sweet range;  
Can we do a better thing  
Than, with him, still build and sing?

Oh, my sparrow, thou dost breed  
Thought in me beyond all telling;  
Shootest through me sunlight, seed,  
And fruitful blessing, with that welling  
Ripple of ecstatic rest  
Gurgling ever from thy breast!

And thy breezy carol spurs  
Vital motion in my blood,  
Such as in the sap—wood stirs,  
Swells and shapes the pointed bud  
Of the lilac; and besets  
The hollow thick with violets.

Yet I know not any charm  
That can make the fleeting time  
Of thy sylvan, faint alarm  
Suit itself to human rhyme:  
And my yearning rhythmic word  
Does thee grievous wrong, blithe bird.

So, however thou hast wrought  
This wild joy on heart and brain,  
It is better left untaught.  
Take thou up the song again:  
There is nothing sad afloat  
On the tide that swells thy throat!

**I LOVED YOU, ONCE**

And did you think my heart  
    Could keep its love unchanging,  
Fresh as the buds that start  
    In spring, nor know estranging?  
Listen! The buds depart:  
    I loved you once, but now  
    I love you more than ever.

'T is not the early love;  
    With day and night it alters,  
And onward still must move  
    Like earth, that never falters  
For storm or star above.  
    I loved you once; but now  
    I love you more than ever.

With gifts in those glad days  
    How eagerly I sought you!  
Youth, shining hope, and praise:  
    These were the gifts I brought you.  
In this world little stays:  
    I loved you once, but now  
    I love you more than ever.

A child with glorious eyes  
    Here in our arms half sleeping  
So passion wakeful lies;  
    Then grows to manhood, keeping  
Its wistful, young surprise:  
    I loved you once, but now  
    I love you more than ever.

When age's pinching air  
    Strips summer's rich possession,  
And leaves the branches bare,  
    My secret in confession  
Still thus with you I'll share:  
    I loved you once, but now  
    I love you more than ever.



## THE BRIDE OF WAR

(ARNOLD'S MARCH TO CANADA, 1775)

I

The trumpet, with a giant sound,  
Its harsh war-summons wildly sings;  
And, bursting forth like mountain-springs,

II



## Dreams and Days: Poems

Poured from the hillside camping-ground,  
Each swift battalion shouting flings  
Its force in line; where you may see  
The men, broad-shouldered, heavily  
Sway to the swing of the march; their heads  
Dark like the stones in river-beds.

Lightly the autumn breezes  
Play with the shining dust-cloud  
Rising to the sunset rays  
From feet of the moving column.  
Soft, as you listen, comes  
The echo of iterant drums,  
Brought by the breezes light  
From the files that follow the road.  
A moment their guns have glowed  
Sun-smitten: then out of sight  
They suddenly sink,  
Like men who touch a new grave's brink!

### II

So it was the march began,  
The march of Morgan's riflemen,  
Who like iron held the van  
In unhappy Arnold's plan  
To win Wolfe's daring fame again.  
With them, by her husband's side,  
Jemima Warner, nobly free,  
Moved more fair than when, a bride,  
One year since, she strove to hide  
The blush it was a joy to see.

### III

O distant, terrible forests of Maine,  
With huge trees numberless as the rain  
That falls on your lonely lakes!  
(It falls and sings through the years, but wakes  
No answering echo of joy or pain.)

Your tangled wilderness was tracked  
With struggle and sorrow and vengeful act  
'Gainst Puritan, pagan, and priest.  
Where wolf and panther and serpent ceased,  
Man added the horrors your dark maze lacked.

The land was scarred with deeds not good,  
Like the fretting of worms on withered wood.  
What if its venomous spell  
Breathed into Arnold a prompting of Hell,  
With slow empoisoning force indued?

IV

As through that dreary realm he went,  
Followed a shape of dark portent:  
Pard-like, of furtive eye, with brain  
To treason narrowing, Aaron Burr,  
Moved loyal-seeming in the train,  
Led by the arch-conspirator.  
And craven Enos closed the rear,  
Whose honor's flame died out in fear.  
Not sooner does the dry bough burn  
And into fruitless ashes turn,  
Than he with whispered, false command  
Drew back the hundreds in his hand;  
Fled like a shade; and all forsook.

Wherever Arnold bent his look,  
Danger and doubt around him hung;  
And pale Disaster, shrouded, flung  
Black omens in his track, as though  
The fingers of a future woe  
Already clutched his life, to wring  
Some expiation for the thing  
That he was yet to do. A chill  
Struck helpless many a steadfast will  
Within the ranks; the very air  
Rang with a thunder-toned despair:  
The hills seemed wandering to and fro,  
Like lost guides blinded by the snow.

V

Yet faithful still 'mid woe and doubt  
One woman's loyal heart whose pain  
Filled it with pure celestial light  
Shone starry—constant like the North,  
Or that still radiance beaming forth  
From sacred lights in some lone fane.  
But he whose ring Jemima wore,  
By want and weariness all unstrung,  
Though strong and honest of heart and young,  
Shrank at the blast that pierced so fore  
Like a huge, invisible bird of prey  
Furious launched from Labrador  
And the granite cliffs of Saguenay!

Along the bleak Dead River's banks  
They forced amain their frozen way;  
But ever from the thinning ranks  
Shapes of ice would reel and fall,  
Human shapes, whose dying prayer  
Floated, a mute white mist, in air;  
The crowding snow their pall.

Spectre—like Famine drew near;  
Her doom—word hummed in his ear:  
Ah, weak were woman's hands to reach  
And save him from the hellish charms  
And wizard motion of those arms!  
Yet only noble womanhood  
The wife her dauntless part could teach:  
She shared with him the last dry food  
And thronged with hopefulness her speech,  
As when hard by her home the flood  
Of rushing Conestoga fills  
Its depth afresh from springtide rills!

All, all in vain!  
For far behind the invading rout  
These two were left alone;  
And in the waste their wildest shout  
Seemed but a smothered groan.

II

Like sheeted wanderers from the grave  
They moved, and yet seemed not to stir,  
As icy gorge and sere-leaf'd grove  
Of withered oak and shrouded fir  
Were passed, and onward still they strove;  
While the loud wind's artillery clave  
The air, and furious sleety rain  
Swung like a sword above the plain!

VI

They crossed the hills; they came to where  
Through an arid gloom the river Chaudiere  
Fled like a Maenad with outstreaming hair;  
And there the soldier sank, and died.  
Death-dumb he fell; yet ere life sped,  
Child-like on her knee he laid his head.  
She strove to pray; but all words fled  
Save those their love had sanctified.

And then her voice rose waveringly  
To the notes of a mother's lullaby;  
But her song was only Ah, must thou die?  
And to her his eyes death-still replied.

VII

Dead leaves and stricken boughs  
She heaped o'er the fallen form  
Wolf nor hawk nor lawless storm  
Him from his rest should rouse;  
But first, with solemn vows,  
Took rifle, pouch, and horn,  
And the belt that he had worn.  
Then, onward pressing fast  
Through the forest rude and vast,  
Hunger-wasted, fever-parch'd,  
Many bitter days she marched  
With bleeding feet that spurned the flinty pain;  
One thought always throbbing through her brain:  
They shall never say, 'He was afraid,'

They shall never cry, 'The coward stayed!'

VIII

Now the wilderness is passed;  
Now the first hut reached, at last.

Ho, dwellers by the frontier trail,  
Come forth and greet the bride of war!  
From cabin and rough settlement  
They come to speed her on her way  
Maidens, whose ruddy cheeks grow pale  
With pity never felt before;  
Children that cluster at the door;  
Mothers, whose toil-worn hands are lent  
To help, or bid her longer stay.  
But through them all she passes on,  
Strangely martial, fair and wan;  
Nor waits to listen to their cheers  
That sound so faintly in her ears.  
For now all scenes around her shift,  
Like those before a racer's eyes  
When, foremost sped and madly swift,  
Quick stretching toward the goal he flies,  
Yet feels his strength wane with his breath,  
And purpose fail 'mid fears of death,

Till, like the flashing of a lamp,  
Starts forth the sight of Arnold's camp,  
The bivouac flame, and sinuous gleam  
Of steel, where, crouched, the army waits,  
Ere long, beyond the midnight stream,  
To storm Quebec's ice-mounded gates.

IX

Then to the leader she was brought,  
And spoke her simply loyal thought.  
If, 'mid the shame of after-days,

## Dreams and Days: Poems

The man who wronged his country's trust  
(Yet now in worth outweighed all praise)  
Remembered what this woman wrought,  
It should have bowed him to the dust!  
Humbly my soldier-husband tried  
To do his part. He served, and died.  
But honor did not die. His name  
And honor bringing both, I came;  
And this his rifle, here, to show,  
While far away the tired heart sleeps,  
To-day his faith with you he keeps!

Proudly the war bride, ending so,  
Sank breathless in the dumb white snow.

## A RUNE OF THE RAIN

O many-toned rain!  
O myriad sweet voices of the rain!  
How welcome is its delicate overture  
At evening, when the moist and glowing west  
Seals all things with cool promise of night's rest.

At first it would allure  
The earth to kinder mood,  
With dainty flattering  
Of soft, sweet pattering:  
Faintly now you hear the tramp  
Of the fine drops, falling damp  
On the dry, sun-seasoned ground  
And the thirsty leaves, resound.

A RUNE OF THE RAIN

But anon, imbued  
With a sudden, bounding access  
Of passion, it relaxes  
All timider persuasion.  
And, with nor pretext nor occasion,  
Its wooing redoubles;  
And pounds the ground, and bubbles  
In sputtering spray,  
Flinging itself in a fury  
Of flashing white away;  
Till the dusty road,  
Dank—perfumed, is o'erflowed;  
And the grass, and the wide—hung trees,  
The vines, the flowers in their beds,  
The virid corn that to the breeze  
Rustles along the garden—rows,  
Visibly lift their heads,  
And, as the quick shower wilder grows,  
Upleap with answering kisses to the rain.

Then, the slow and pleasant murmur  
Of its subsiding,  
As the pulse of the storm beats firmer,  
And the steady rain  
Drops into a cadenced chiding!  
Deep—breathing rain,  
The sad and ghostly noise  
Wherewith thou dost complain —  
Thy plaintive, spiritual voice,  
Heard thus at close of day  
Through vaults of twilight gray  
Vexes me with sweet pain;  
And still my soul is fain  
To know the secret of that yearning  
Which in thine utterance I hear returning.  
Hush, oh hush!  
Break not the dreamy rush  
Of the rain:  
Touch not the marring doubt  
Words bring to the certainty  
Of its soft refrain;  
But let the flying fringes flout  
Their drops against the pane,  
And the gurgling throat of the water—spout  
Groan in the eaves amain.

The earth is wedded to the shower;  
Darkness and awe gird round the bridal hour!

II

O many-toned rain!  
It hath caught the strain  
Of a wilder tune,  
Ere the same night's noon,  
When dreams and sleep forsake me,  
And sudden dread doth wake me,  
To hear the booming drums of heaven beat  
The long roll to battle; when the knotted cloud,  
With an echoing loud,  
Bursts asunder  
At the sudden resurrection of the thunder;  
And the fountains of the air,  
Unsealed again, sweep, ruining, everywhere,  
To wrap the world in a watery winding-sheet.

III

O myriad sweet voices of the rain!  
When the airy war doth wane,  
And the storm to the east hath flown,  
Cloaked close in the whirling wind,  
There's a voice still left behind  
In each heavy-hearted tree,  
Charged with tearful memory  
Of the vanished rain:  
From their leafy lashes wet  
Drip the dews of fresh regret  
For the lover that's gone!  
All else is still;  
Yet the stars are listening,  
And low o'er the wooded hill  
Hangs, upon listless wing  
Outspread, a shape of damp, blue cloud,  
Watching, like a bird of evil  
That knows nor mercy nor reprieve,  
The slow and silent death of the pallid moon.

IV

A RUNE OF THE RAIN



But soon, returning duly,  
Dawn whitens the wet hilltops blueely.  
To her vision pure and cold  
The night's wild tale is told  
On the glistening leaf, in the mid-road pool,  
The garden mold turned dark and cool,  
And the meadows' trampled acres.  
But hark, how fresh the song of the winged music-makers!  
For now the moanings bitter,  
Left by the rain, make harmony  
With the swallow's matin-twitter,  
And the robin's note, like the wind's in a tree.  
The infant morning breathes sweet breath,  
And with it is blent  
The wistful, wild, moist scent  
Of the grass in the marsh which the sea nourisheth:  
And behold!  
The last reluctant drop of the storm,  
Wrung from the roof, is smitten warm  
And turned to gold;  
For in its veins doth run  
The very blood of the bold, unsullied sun!

## BREAKERS

Far out at sea there has been a storm,  
And still, as they roll their liquid acres,  
High-heaped the billows lower and glisten.  
The air is laden, moist, and warm  
With the dying tempest's breath;  
And, as I walk the lonely strand  
With sea-weed strewn, my forehead fanned  
By wet salt-winds, I watch the breakers,

Furious sporting, tossed and tumbling,  
Shatter here with a dreadful rumbling  
Watch, and muse, and vainly listen  
To the inarticulate mumbling  
Of the hoary-headed deep;  
For who may tell me what it saith,  
Muttering, moaning as in sleep?

Slowly and heavily  
Comes in the sea,  
With memories of storm o'erfreighted,  
With heaving heart and breath abated,  
Pregnant with some mysterious, endless sorrow,  
And seamed with many a gaping, sighing furrow.

Slowly and heavily  
Grows the green water-mound;  
But drawing ever nigher,  
Towering ever higher,  
Swollen with an inward rage  
Naught but ruin can assuage,  
Swift, now, without sound,  
Creeps stealthily  
Up to the shore  
Creeps, creeps and undulates;  
As one dissimulates  
Till, swayed by hateful frenzy,  
Through passion grown immense, he  
Bursts forth hostilely;  
And rising, a smooth billow  
Its swelling, sunlit dome  
Thinned to a tumid ledge  
With keen, curved edge  
Like the scornful curl  
Of lips that snarl  
O'ertops itself and breaks  
Into a raving foam;  
So springs upon the shore  
With a hungry roar;  
Its first fierce anger slakes  
On the stony shallow;  
And runs up on the land,  
Licking the smooth, hard sand,  
Relentless, cold, yet wroth;  
And dies in savage froth.

Then with its backward swirl  
The sands and the stones, how they whirl!

O, fiercely doth it draw  
Them to its chasm'd maw,  
And against it in vain  
They linger and strain;  
And as they slip away  
Into the seething gray  
Fill all the thunderous air  
With the horror of their despair,  
And their wild terror wreak  
In one hoarse, wailing shriek.

But scarce is this done,  
When another one  
Falls like the bolt from a bellowing gun,  
And sucks away the shore  
As that did before:  
And another shall smother it o'er.

Then there's a lull a half-hush;  
And forward the little waves rush,  
Toppling and hurrying,  
Each other worrying,  
And in their haste  
Run to waste.

Yet again is heard the trample  
Of the surges high and ample:  
Their dreadful meeting  
The wild and sudden breaking  
The dinting, and battering, and beating,  
And swift forsaking.

And ever they burst and boom,  
A numberless host;  
Like heralds of doom  
To the trembling coast;  
And ever the tangled spray  
Is tossed from the fierce affray,  
And, as with spectral arms  
That taunt and beckon and mock,  
And scatter vague alarms,  
Clasps and unclasps the rock;  
Listlessly over it wanders;  
Moodily, madly maunders,  
And hissing falls  
From the glistening walls.

So all day along the shore  
Shout the breakers, green and hoar,  
Weaving out their weird tune;  
Till at night the full moon  
Weds the dark with that ring  
Of gold that you see her fling  
On the misty air.  
Then homeward slow returning  
To slumbers deep I fare,  
Filled with an infinite yearning,  
With thoughts that rise and fall  
To the sound of the sea's hollow call,  
Breathed now from white-lit waves that reach  
Cold fingers o'er the damp, dark beach,  
To scatter a spray on my dreams;  
Till the slow and measured rote  
Brings a drowsy ease  
To my spirit, and seems  
To set it soothingly afloat  
On broad and buoyant seas  
Of endless rest, lulled by the dirge  
Of the melancholy surge.

## BLACKMOUTH, OF COLORADO

Who is Blackmouth? Well, that's hard to say.  
Mebbe he might ha' told you, 't other day,  
If you'd been here. Now, he's gone away.  
Come to think on, 't wouldn't ha' been no use  
If you'd called here earlier. His excuse  
Always was, whenever folks would ask him  
Where he hailed from, an' *would* tease an' task him;  
What d' you s'pose? He just said, I don' know.

That was truth. He came here long ago;

## Dreams and Days: Poems

But, before that, he'd been born somewhere:  
The conundrum started first, right there.  
Little shaver afore he knew his name  
Or the place from whereabouts he came  
On a wagon–train the Apaches caught him.  
Killed the old folks! But this cus' they brought him  
Safe away from fire an' knife an' arrows.  
So'thin' 'bout him must have touched their marrows:  
They was merciful; treated him real good;  
Brought him up to man's age well's they could.  
Now, d' you b'lieve me, that there likely lad,  
For all they used him so, went to the bad:  
Leastways left the red men, that he knew,  
'N' come to look for folks like me an' you;  
Goldarned white folks that he never saw.  
Queerest thing was though he loved a squaw,  
'T was on her account he planned escape;  
Shook the Apaches, an' took up red tape  
With the U. S. gov'ment arter a while;  
Tho' they do say gov'ment may be vile,  
Mean an' treacherous an' deceivin'. Well,  
I ain't sayin' our gov'ment is a sell.

Bocanegra Spanish term I've heard  
Stands for Blackmouth. Now this curious bird,  
Known as Bocanegra, gave his life  
Most for others. First, he saved his wife;  
Her I spoke of; nothin' but a squaw.  
You might wonder by what sort of law  
He, a white man born, should come to love her.  
But 't was somehow so: he *did* discover  
Beauty in her, of the holding kind.  
Some men love the light, an' some the shade.  
Round that little Indian girl there played  
Soft an' shadowy tremblings, like the dark  
Under trees; yet now an' then a spark,  
Quick 's a firefly, flashing from her eyes,  
Made you think of summer–midnight skies.  
She was faithful, too, like midnight stars.  
As for Blackmouth, if you'd seen the scars  
Made by wounds he suffered for her sake,  
You'd have called *him* true, and no mistake.

Growin' up a man, he scarcely met  
Other white folks; an' his heart was set  
On this red girl. Yet he said: We'll wait.  
You must never be my wedded mate  
Till we reach the white man's country. There,  
Everything that's done is fair and square.

## Dreams and Days: Poems

Patiently they stayed, thro' trust or doubt,  
Till tow'rds Colorado he could scout  
Some safe track. He told her: You go first.  
All my joy goes with you: that's the worst!  
But *I* wait, to guard or hide the trail.

Indians caught him; an' they gave him hail;  
Cut an' tortured him, till he was bleeding;  
Yet they found that still they weren't succeeding.  
Where's that squaw? they asked. We'll have her blood!  
Either that, or grind you into mud;  
Pick your eyes out, too, if you can't see  
Where she's gone to. Which, now, shall it be?  
Tell us where she's hid.

I'll show the way,  
Blackmouth says; an' leads toward dawn of day,  
Till they come straight out beside the brink  
Of a precipice that seems to sink  
Into everlasting gulfs below.  
Loose me! Blackmouth tells 'em. But go slow.  
Then they loosed him; and, with one swift leap,  
Blackmouth swooped right down into the deep;  
Jumped out into space beyond the edge,  
While the Apaches cowered along the ledge.  
Seven hundred feet, they say. That's guff!  
Seventy foot, I tell you, 's 'bout enough.  
Indians called him a dead antelope;  
But they couldn't touch the bramble-slope  
Where he, bruised and stabbed, crawled under brush.  
*Their* hand was beat hollow: *he* held a flush.

Day and night he limped or crawled along:  
Winds blew hot, yet sang to him a song  
(So he told me, once) that gave him hope.  
Every time he saw a shadow grope  
Down the hillsides, from a flying cloud,  
Something touched his heart that made him proud:  
Seemed to him he saw her dusky face  
Watching over him, from place to place.  
Every time the dry leaves rustled near,  
Seemed to him she whispered, Have no fear!

So at last he found her: they were married.  
But, from those days on, he always carried  
Marks of madness; actually yes!  
Trusted the good faith of these U. S.

Indian hate an' deviltry he braved;  
'N' scores an' scores of white men's lives he saved.  
Just for that, his name should be engraved.  
But it won't be! U. S. gov'ment dreads  
Men who're taller 'n politicians' heads.

All the while, his wife tho' half despised  
By the frontier folks that civilized  
An' converted her served by his side,  
Helping faithfully, until she died.  
Left alone, he lay awake o' nights,  
Thinkin' what they'd both done for the whites.  
Then he thought of her, and Indian people;  
Tryin' to measure, by the church's steeple,  
Just how Christian our great nation's been  
Toward those native tribes so full of sin.  
When he counted all the wrongs we've done  
To the wild men of the setting sun,  
Seem'd to him the gov'ment wa'n't quite fair.  
When its notes came due, it wa'n't right there.  
U. S. gov'ment promised Indians lots,  
But at last it closed accounts with shots.  
Mouth was black, perhaps; but *he* was white.  
Calling gov'ment black don't seem polite:  
Yet I'll swear, its actions wouldn't show  
'Longside Blackmouth's better 'n soot with snow.

Yes, sir! Blackmouth took the other side:  
Honestly for years an' years he tried  
Getting justice for the Indians. He,  
Risking life an' limb for you an' me;  
He, the man who proved his good intent  
By his deeds, an' plainly showed he meant  
He would die for us, turned round an' said:  
White men have been saved. Now, save the red!  
But it didn't pan out. No one would hark.  
Let the prairie-dogs an' Blackmouth bark,  
Said our folks. And no, he wa'n't resigned,  
But concluded he had missed his find.

*Where* is Blackmouth? That I can't decide.  
Red an' white men, both, he tried to serve;  
But I guess, at last, he lost his nerve.  
Kind o' tired out. See? He had his pride:  
Gave his life for others, far 's he could,  
Hoping it would do 'em some small good.  
Didn't seem to be much use. An' so

Well; you see that man, dropped in the snow,  
Where the crowd is? Suicide, they say.  
Looks as though he had quit work, to stay.  
Bullet in the breast. His *body* 's there;  
But poor Blackmouth's gone I don't know where!

## THE CHILD YEAR

I

Dying of hunger and sorrow:  
I die for my youth I fear!  
Murmured the midnight-haunting  
Voice of the stricken Year.

There like a child it perished  
In the stormy thoroughfare:  
The snow with cruel whiteness  
Had aged its flowing hair.

Ah, little Year so fruitful,  
Ah, child that brought us bliss,  
Must we so early lose you  
Our dear hopes end in this?

II



Too young am I, too tender,  
To bear earth's avalanche  
Of wrong, that grinds down life–hope,  
And makes my heart's–blood blanch.

Tell him who soon shall follow  
Where my tired feet have bled,  
He must be older, shrewder,  
Hard, cold, and selfish–bred

Or else like me be trampled  
Under the harsh world's heel.  
'Tis weakness to be youthful;  
'Tis death to love and feel.

III

Then saw I how the New Year  
Came like a scheming man,  
With icy eyes, his forehead  
Wrinkled by care and plan

For trade and rule and profit.  
To him the fading child  
Looked up and cried, Oh, brother!  
But died even while it smiled.

Down bent the harsh new–comer  
To lift with loving arm  
The wanderer mute and fallen;  
And lo! his eyes were warm;

All changed he grew; the wrinkles  
Vanished: he, too, looked young  
As if that lost child's spirit  
Into his breast had sprung.

So are those lives not wasted,  
Too frail to bear the fray.  
So Years may die, yet leave us  
Young hearts in a world grown gray.

## CHRISTENING

To-day I saw a little, calm-eyed child,  
Where soft lights rippled and the shadows tarried  
Within a church's shelter arched and aisled,  
Peacefully wondering, to the altar carried;

White-robed and sweet, in semblance of a flower;  
White as the daisies that adorned the chancel;  
Borne like a gift, the young wife's natural dower,  
Offered to God as her most precious hansel.

Then ceased the music, and the little one  
Was silent, with the multitude assembled  
Harkening; and when of Father and of Son  
He spoke, the pastor's deep voice broke and trembled.

But she, the child, knew not the solemn words,  
And suddenly yielded to a troublous wailing,  
As helpless as the cry of frightened birds  
Whose untried wings for flight are unavailing.

How much the same, I thought, with older folk!  
The blessing falls: we call it tribulation,  
And fancy that we wear a sorrow's yoke,  
Even at the moment of our consecration.

Pure daisy-child! Whatever be the form  
Of dream or doctrine, or of unbelieving,  
A hand may touch our heads, amid the storm  
Of grief and doubt, to bless beyond bereaving;

A voice may sound, in measured, holy rite  
Of speech we know not, tho' its earnest meaning  
Be clear as dew, and sure as starry light  
Gathered from some far-off celestial gleaning.

Wise is the ancient sacrament that blends  
This weakling cry of children in our churches  
With strength of prayer or anthem that ascends  
To Him who hearts of men and children searches;

Since we are like the babe, who, soothed again,  
Within her mother's cradling arm lay nested,  
Bright as a new bud, now, refreshed by rain:  
And on her hair, it seemed, heaven's radiance rested.

## THANKSGIVING TURKEY

Valleys lay in sunny vapor,  
And a radiance mild was shed  
From each tree that like a taper  
At a feast stood. Then we said,  
Our feast, too, shall soon be spread,  
Of good Thanksgiving turkey.

And already still November  
Drapes her snowy table here.  
Fetch a log, then; coax the ember;  
Fill your hearts with old-time cheer;  
Heaven be thanked for one more year,  
And our Thanksgiving turkey!

Welcome, brothers all our party  
Gathered in the homestead old!  
Shake the snow off and with hearty  
Hand-shakes drive away the cold;  
Else your plate you'll hardly hold  
Of good Thanksgiving turkey.

When the skies are sad and murky,  
'Tis a cheerful thing to meet  
Round this homely roast of turkey  
Pilgrims, pausing just to greet,  
Then, with earnest grace, to eat  
A new Thanksgiving turkey.

And the merry feast is freighted  
With its meanings true and deep.  
Those we've loved and those we've hated,  
All, to-day, the rite will keep,  
All, to-day, their dishes heap  
With plump Thanksgiving turkey.

But how many hearts must tingle  
Now with mournful memories!  
In the festal wine shall mingle  
Unseen tears, perhaps from eyes  
That look beyond the board where lies  
Our plain Thanksgiving turkey.

See around us, drawing nearer,  
Those faint yearning shapes of air  
Friends than whom earth holds none dearer!  
No alas! they are not there:  
Have they, then, forgot to share  
Our good Thanksgiving turkey?

Some have gone away and tarried  
Strangely long by some strange wave;  
Some have turned to foes; we carried  
Some unto the pine-girt grave:  
They 'll come no more so joyous-brave  
To take Thanksgiving turkey.

Nay, repine not. Let our laughter  
Leap like firelight up again.  
Soon we touch the wide Hereafter,  
Snow-field yet untrod of men:  
Shall we meet once more and when?  
To eat Thanksgiving turkey.

## **BEFORE THE SNOW**

## Dreams and Days: Poems

Autumn is gone: through the blue woodlands bare  
Shatters the rainy wind. A myriad leaves,  
Like birds that fly the mournful Northern air.  
Flutter away from the old forest's eaves.

Autumn is gone: as yonder silent rill,  
Slow eddying o'er thick leaf-heaps lately shed,  
My spirit, as I walk, moves awed and still,  
By thronging fancies wild and wistful led.

Autumn is gone: alas, how long ago  
The grapes were plucked, and garnered was the grain!  
How soon death settles on us, and the snow  
Wraps with its white alike our graves, our gain!

Yea, autumn's gone! Yet it robs not my mood  
Of that which makes moods dear, some shoot of spring  
Still sweet within me; or thoughts of yonder wood  
We walked in, memory's rare environing.

And, though they die, the seasons only take  
A ruined substance. All that's best remains  
In the essential vision that can make  
One light for life, love, death, their joys, their pains.



## YOUTH TO THE POET

(TO OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES)

Strange spell of youth for age, and age for youth,  
Affinity between two forms of truth!  
As if the dawn and sunset watched each other,  
Like and unlike as children of one mother  
And wondering at the likeness. Ardent eyes  
Of young men see the prophecy arise  
Of what their lives shall be when all is told;  
And, in the far-off glow of years called old,  
Those other eyes look back to catch a trace  
Of what was once their own unshadowed grace.  
But here in our dear poet both are blended  
Ripe age begun, yet golden youth not ended;  
Even as his song the willowy scent of spring  
Doth blend with autumn's tender mellowing,  
And mixes praise with satire, tears with fun,  
In strains that ever delicately run;  
So musical and wise, page after page,  
The sage a minstrel grows, the bard a sage.  
The dew of youth fills yet his late-sprung flowers,  
And day-break glory haunts his evening hours.  
Ah, such a life prefigures its own moral:  
That first Last Leaf is now a leaf of laurel,

Which smiling not, but trembling at the touch  
Youth gives back to the hand that gave so much.

EVENING OF DECEMBER 3, 1879.

## THE SWORD DHAM

How shall we honor the man who creates?  
Asked the Bedouin chief, the poet Antar;  
Who unto the truth flings open our gates,  
Or fashions new thoughts from the light of a star;  
Or forges with craft of his finger and brain  
Some marvelous weapon we copy in vain;  
Or chants to the winds a wild song that shall  
wander forever undying?

See! His reward is in envies and hates;  
In lips that deny, or in stabs that may kill.  
Nay, said the smith; for there's one here who waits  
Humbly to serve you with unmeasured skill,  
Sure that no utmost devotion can fail,  
Offered to *you*, nor unfriended assail  
The heart of the hero and poet Antar, whose  
fame is undying!

Speak, said the chief. Then the smith: O Antar,  
It is I who would serve you! I know, by the soul  
Of the poet within you, no envy can bar  
The stream of your gratitude, once let it roll.



## Dreams and Days: Poems

Listen. The lightning, your camel that slew,  
I caught, and wrought in this sword-blade for you;  
Sword that no foe shall encounter unhurt, or  
depart from undying.

Burst from the eyes of Antar a swift rain, Gratitude's  
glittering drops, as he threw  
One shining arm round the smith, like a chain.  
Closer the man to his bosom he drew;  
Thankful, caressing, with Great is my debt.  
Yea, said the smith, and his eyelids were wet:  
I knew the sword Dham would unite me with  
you in an honor undying.

So? asked the chief, as his thumb-point at will  
Silently over the sword's edge played.  
Ay! said the smith, but there's one thing, still:  
Who is the smiter, shall smite with this blade?  
Jealous, their eyes met; and fury awoke.  
I am the smiter! Antar cried. One stroke  
Rolled the smith's head from his neck, and gave  
him remembrance undying.

Seek now who may, no search will avail:  
No man the mate of this weapon shall own!  
Yet, in his triumph, the chieftain made wail:  
Slain is the craftsman, the one friend alone  
Able to honor the man who creates.  
I slew him I, who am poet! O fates,  
Grant that the envious blade slaying artists shall  
make them undying!

**AT THE GOLDEN GATE"**

Before the golden gate she stands,  
With drooping head, with idle hands  
Loose-clasped, and bent beneath the weight  
Of unseen woe. Too late, too late!  
    Those carved and fretted,  
    Starred, resetted  
Panels shall not open ever  
To her who seeks the perfect mate.

Only the tearless enter there:  
Only the soul that, like a prayer,  
No bolt can stay, no wall may bar,  
Shall dream the dreams grief cannot mar.  
    No door of cedar,  
    Alas, shall lead her  
Unto the stream that shows forever  
Love's face like some reflected star!

They say that golden barrier hides  
A realm where deathless spring abides;  
Where flowers shall fade not, and there floats  
Thro' moon-rays mild or sunlit notes  
    'Mid dewy alleys  
    That gird the palace,  
And fountain'd spray's unceasing quiver  
A dulcet rain of song-birds' notes.

The sultan lord knew not her name;  
But to the door that fair shape came:  
The hour had struck, the way was right,  
Traced by her lamp's pale, flickering light.  
    But ah, whose error  
    Has brought this terror?  
Whose fault has foiled her fond endeavor?  
The gate swings to: her hope takes flight.

The harp, the song, the nightingales  
She hears, beyond. The night-wind wails

Without, to sound of feast within,  
While here she stands, shut out by sin.  
    And be that revel  
    Of angel or devil,  
She longs to sit beside the giver,  
That she at last her prize may win.

Her lamp has fallen; her eyes are wet;  
Frozen she stands, she lingers yet;  
But through the garden's gladness steals  
A whisper that each heart congeals  
    A moan of grieving  
    Beyond relieving,  
Which makes the proudest of them shiver.  
And suddenly the sultan kneels!

The lamp was quenched; he found her dead,  
When dawn had turned the threshold red.  
Her face was calm and sad as fate:  
His sin, not hers, made her too late.  
    Some think, unbidden  
    She brought him, hidden,  
A truer bliss that came back never  
To him, unblest, who closed the gate.

## CHARITY

I

Unarmed she goeth; yet her hands

CHARITY

Strike deeper awe than steel—caparison'd bands.  
No fatal hurt of foe she fears,  
Veiled, as with mail, in mist of gentle tears.

II

'Gainst her thou canst not bar the door:  
Like air she enters, where none dared before.  
Even to the rich she can forgive  
Their regal selfishness, and let them live!

**HELEN AT THE LOOM**

Helen, in her silent room,  
Weaves upon the upright loom;  
Weaves a mantle rich and dark,  
Purpled over, deep. But mark  
How she scatters o'er the wool  
Woven shapes, till it is full  
Of men that struggle close, complex;  
Short-clipp'd steeds with wrinkled necks  
Arching high; spear, shield, and all  
The panoply that doth recall  
Mighty war; such war as e'en  
For Helen's sake is waged, I ween.  
Purple is the groundwork: good!  
All the field is stained with blood  
Blood poured out for Helen's sake;  
(Thread, run on; and shuttle, shake!)  
But the shapes of men that pass

Are as ghosts within a glass,  
Woven with whiteness of the swan,  
Pale, sad memories, gleaming wan  
From the garment's purple fold  
Where Troy's tale is twined and told.  
Well may Helen, as with tender  
Touch of rosy fingers slender  
She doth knit the story in  
Of Troy's sorrow and her sin,  
Feel sharp filaments of pain  
Reeled off with the well-spun skein,  
And faint blood-stains on her hands  
From the shifting, sanguine strands.

Gently, sweetly she doth sorrow:  
What has been must be to-morrow;  
Meekly to her fate she bows.  
Heavenly beauties still will rouse  
Strife and savagery in men:  
Shall the lucid heavens, then,  
Lose their high serenity,  
Sorrowing over what must be?  
If she taketh to her shame,  
Lo, they give her not the blame,  
Priam's wisest counselors,  
Aged men, not loving wars.  
When she goes forth, clad in white,  
Day-cloud touched by first moonlight,  
With her fair hair, amber-hued  
As vapor by the moon imbued  
With burning brown, that round her clings,  
See, she sudden silence brings  
On the gloomy whisperers  
Who would make the wrong all hers.  
So, Helen, in thy silent room,  
Labor at the storied loom;  
(Thread, run on; and shuttle, shake!)  
Let thy aching sorrow make  
Something strangely beautiful  
Of this fabric; since the wool  
Comes so tinted from the Fates,  
Dyed with loves, hopes, fears, and hates.  
Thou shalt work with subtle force  
All thy deep shade of remorse  
In the texture of the weft,  
That no stain on thee be left;  
Ay, false queen, shalt fashion grief,  
Grief and wrong, to soft relief.  
Speed the garment! It may chance,  
Long hereafter, meet the glance,

Of Oenone; when her lord,  
Now thy Paris, shall go tow'rd  
Ida, at his last sad end,  
Seeking her, his early friend,  
Who alone can cure his ill,  
Of all who love him, if she will.  
It were fitting she should see  
In that hour thine artistry,  
And her husband's speechless corse  
In the garment of remorse!

But take heed that in thy work  
Naught unbeautiful may lurk.  
Ah, how little signifies  
Unto thee what fortunes rise,  
What others fall! Thou still shall rule,  
Still shalt twirl the colored spool.  
Though thy yearning woman's eyes  
Burn with glorious agonies,  
Pitying the waste and woe,  
And the heroes falling low  
In the war around thee, here,  
Yet the least, quick-trembling tear  
'Twixt thy lids shall dearer be  
Than life, to friend or enemy.

There are people on the earth  
Doomed with doom of too great worth.  
Look on Helen not with hate,  
Therefore, but compassionate.  
If she suffer not too much,  
Seldom does she feel the touch  
Of that fresh, auroral joy  
Lighter spirits may decoy  
To their pure and sunny lives.  
Heavy honey 'tis she hives.  
To her sweet but burdened soul  
All that here she may control  
What of bitter memories,  
What of coming fate's surmise,  
Paris' passion, distant din  
Of the war now drifting in  
To her quiet idle seems;  
Idle as the lazy gleams  
Of some stilly water's reach,  
Seen from where broad vine-leaves pleach  
A heavy arch; and, looking through,  
Far away the doubtful blue  
Glimmers, on a drowsy day,

Crowded with the sun's rich gray;  
As she stands within her room,  
Weaving, weaving at the loom.

## THE CASKET OF OPALS

I

Deep, smoldering colors of the land and sea  
Burn in these stones, that, by some mystery,  
Wrap fire in sleep and never are consumed.  
Scarlet of daybreak, sunset gleams half spent  
In thick white cloud; pale moons that may have lent  
Light to love's grieving; rose-illuminated snows,  
And veins of gold no mine depth ever gloomed;  
All these, and green of thin-edged waves, are there.  
I think a tide of feeling through them flows  
With blush and pallor, as if some being of air,  
Some soul once human, wandering, in the snare  
Of passion had been caught, and henceforth doomed  
In misty crystal here to lie entombed.

And so it is, indeed. Here prisoned sleep  
The ardors and the moods and all the pain  
That once within a man's heart throbbed. He gave  
These opals to the woman whom he loved;  
And now, like glinting sunbeams through the rain,  
The rays of thought that through his spirit moved  
Leap out from these mysterious forms again.

The colors of the jewels laugh and weep  
As with his very voice. In them the wave  
Of sorrow and joy that, with a changing sweep,  
Bore him to misery or else made him blest  
Still surges in melodious, wild unrest.  
So when each gem in place I touch and take,  
It murmurs what he thought or what he spake.

FIRST OPAL

My heart is like an opal  
Made to lie upon your breast  
In dreams of ardor, clouded o'er  
By endless joy's unrest.

And forever it shall haunt you  
With its mystic, changing ray:  
Its light shall live when we lie dead,  
With hearts at the heart of day!

SECOND OPAL

If, from a careless hold,  
One gem of these should fall,  
No power of art or gold  
Its wholeness could recall:  
The lustrous wonder dies  
In gleams of irised rain,  
As light fades out from the eyes  
When a soul is crushed by pain.  
Take heed that from your hold  
My love you do not cast:  
Dim, shattered, vapor-cold  
That day would be its last.

II



THIRD OPAL

*He won her love; and so this opal sings  
With all its tints in maze, that seem to quake  
And leap in light, as if its heart would break:*

Gleam of the sea,  
Translucent air,  
Where every leaf alive with glee  
Glow in the sun without shadow of grief  
You speak of spring,  
When earth takes wing  
And sunlight, sunlight is everywhere!  
Radiant life,  
Face so fair  
Crowned with the gracious glory of wife  
Your glance lights all this happy day,  
Your tender glow  
And murmurs low  
Make miracle, miracle, everywhere.

Earth takes wing  
With birds do I care  
Whether of sorrow or joy they sing?  
No; for they make not my life nor destroy!  
My soul awakes  
At a smile that breaks  
In sun; and sunlight is everywhere!

III

*Then dawned a mood of musing thoughtfulness;  
As if he doubted whether he could bless  
Her wayward spirit, through each fickle hour,  
With love's serenity of flawless power,  
Or she remain a vision, as when first  
She came to soothe his fancy all athirst.*

FOURTH OPAL

We were alone: the perfumed night,  
Moonlighted, like a flower  
Grew round us and exhaled delight  
To bless that one sweet hour.

You stood where, 'mid the white and gold,  
The rose–fire through the gloom  
Touched hair and cheek and garment's fold  
With soft, ethereal bloom.

And when the vision seemed to swerve,  
'T was but the flickering shine  
That gave new grace, a lovelier curve,  
To every dream–like line.

O perfect vision! Form and face  
Of womanhood complete!  
O rare ideal to embrace  
And hold, from head to feet!

Could I so hold you ever could  
Your eye still catch the glow  
Of mine it were an endless good:  
Together we should grow

One perfect picture of our love!...  
Alas, the embers old  
Fell, and the moonlight fell, above  
Dim, shattered, vapor–cold.

IV

THE CASKET OF OPALS

## Dreams and Days: Poems

*What ill befell these lovers? Shall I say?  
What tragedy of petty care and sorrow?  
Ye all know, who have lived and loved: if nay,  
Then those will know who live and love tomorrow.  
But here at least is what this opal said,  
The fifth in number: and the next two bore  
My fancy toward that dim world of the dead,  
Where waiting spirits muse the past life o'er.*

### FIFTH OPAL

I dreamed my kisses on your hair  
Turned into roses. Circling bloom  
Crowned the loose-lifted tresses there.  
O Love, I cried, forever  
Dwell wreathed, and perfume-haunted  
By my heart's deep honey-breath!  
But even as I bending looked, I saw  
The roses were not; and, instead, there lay  
Pale, feathered flakes and scentless  
Ashes upon your hair!

### SIXTH OPAL

The love I gave, the love I gave,  
Wherewith I sought to win you  
Ah, long and close to you it clave  
With life and soul and sinew!  
My gentleness with scorn you cursed:  
You knew not what I gave.  
The strongest man may die of thirst:  
My love is in its grave!

### SEVENTH OPAL

You say these jewels were accurst  
With evil omen fraught.  
You should have known it from the first!  
This was the truth they taught:

No treasured thing in heaven or earth  
Holds potency more weird  
Than our hearts hold, that throb from birth  
With wavering flames insphered.

And when from me the gems you took,  
On that strange April day,  
My nature, too, I gave, that shook  
With passion's fateful play.

The mingled fate my love should give  
In these mute emblems shone,  
That more intensely burn and live  
While I am turned to stone.

V

*Listen now to what is said  
By the eighth opal, flashing red  
And pale, by turns, with every breath  
The voice of the lover after death.*

#### EIGHTH OPAL

I did not know before  
That we dead could rise and walk;  
That our voices, as of yore,  
Would blend in gentle talk.

I did not know her eyes  
Would so haunt mine after death,  
Or that she could hear my sighs,  
Low as the harp-string's breath.

But, ah, last night we met!  
From our stilly trance we rose,  
Thrilled with all the old regret  
The grieving that God knows.

She asked: Am I forgiven?  
And dost thou forgive? I said,  
Ah! how long for joy we'd striven!  
But now our hearts were dead.

Alas, for the lips I kissed  
And the sweet hope, long ago!  
On her grave chill hangs the mist;  
On mine, white lies the snow.

VI

*Harkening still, I hear this strain  
From the ninth opal's varied vein:*

NINTH OPAL

In the mountains of Mexico,  
Where the barren volcanoes throw  
Their fierce peaks high to the sky,  
With the strength of a tawny brute  
That sees heaven but to defy,  
And the soft, white hand of the snow  
Touches and makes them mute,

THE CASKET OF OPALS

Firm in the clasp of the ground  
The opal is found.  
By the struggle of frost and fire  
Created, yet caught in a spell  
From which only human desire  
Can free it, what passion profound  
In its dim, sweet bosom may dwell!

So was it with us, I think,  
Whose souls were formed on the brink  
Of a crater, where rain and flame  
Had mingled and crystallized.  
One venturous day Love came;  
Found us; and bound with a link  
Of gold the jewels he prized.

The agonies old of the earth,  
Its plenitude and its dearth,  
The torrents of flame and of tears,  
All these in our souls were inborn.  
And we must endure through the years  
The glory and burden of birth  
That filled us with fire of the morn.

Let the diamond lie in its mine;  
Let ruby and topaz shine;  
The beryl sleep, and the emerald keep  
Its sunned-leaf green! We know  
The joy of sufferings deep  
That blend with a love divine,  
And the hidden warmth of the snow!

#### TENTH OPAL

Colors that tremble and perish,  
Atoms that follow the law,  
You mirror the truth which we cherish,

#### THE CASKET OF OPALS

You mirror the spirit we saw.  
Glow of the daybreak tender,  
    Flushed with an opaline gleam,  
And passionate sunset—splendor  
    Ye both but embody a dream.  
Visions of cloud—hidden glory  
    Breaking from sources of light  
Mimic the mist of life's story.  
    Mingled of scarlet and white.  
Sunset—clouds iridescent,  
    Opals, and mists of the day,  
Are thrilled alike with the crescent  
    Delight of a deathless ray  
Shot through the hesitant trouble  
    Of particles floating in space,  
And touching each wandering bubble  
    With tints of a rainbowed grace.  
So through the veil of emotion  
    Trembles the light of the truth;  
And so may the light of devotion  
    Glorify life age and youth.  
Sufferings, pangs that seem cruel,  
    These are but atoms adrift:  
The light streams through, and a jewel  
    Is formed for us, Heaven's own gift!

## LOVE THAT LIVES

Dear face bright, glinting hair;  
    Dear life, whose heart is mine  
The thought of you is prayer,  
    The love of you divine.

## Dreams and Days: Poems

In starlight, or in rain;  
In the sunset's shrouded glow;  
Ever, with joy or pain,  
To you my quick thoughts go

Like winds or clouds, that fleet  
Across the hungry space  
Between, and find you, sweet,  
Where life again wins grace.

Now, as in that once young  
Year that so softly drew  
My heart to where it clung,  
I long for, gladden in you.

And when in the silent hours  
I whisper your sacred name,  
Like an altar-fire it showers  
My blood with fragrant flame!

Perished is all that grieves;  
And lo, our old-new joys  
Are gathered as in sheaves,  
Held in love's equipoise.

Ours is the love that lives;  
Its springtime blossoms blow  
Mid the fruit that autumn gives,  
And its life outlasts the snow.



**IV**

**BLUEBIRD'S GREETING**

Over the mossy walls,  
Above the slumbering fields  
Where yet the ground no fruitage yields,  
Save as the sunlight falls  
In dreams of harvest–yellow,  
What voice remembered calls,  
So bubbling fresh, so soft and mellow?

A darting, azure–feathered arrow  
From some lithe sapling's bow–curve, fleet  
The bluebird, springing light and narrow,  
Sings in flight, with gurglings sweet:

Out of the South I wing,  
Blown on the breath of Spring:

## Dreams and Days: Poems

The little faltering song  
That in my beak I bring  
Some maiden shall catch and sing,  
Filling it with the longing  
And the blithe, unfettered thronging  
Of her spirit's blossoming.

Warbling along  
In the sunny weather,  
Float, my notes,  
Through the sunny motes,  
Falling light as a feather!  
Flit, flit, o'er the fertile land  
'Mid hovering insects' hums;  
Fall into the sower's hand:  
Then, when his harvest comes,  
The seed and the song shall have flowered together.

From the Coosa and Altamaha,  
With a thought of the dim blue Gulf;  
From the Roanoke and Kanawha;  
From the musical Southern rivers,  
O'er the land where the fierce war-wolf  
Lies slain and buried in flowers;  
I come to your chill, sad hours  
And the woods where the sunlight shivers.  
I come like an echo: 'Awake!'  
I answer the sky and the lake  
And the clear, cool color that quivers  
In all your azure rills.  
I come to your wan, bleak hills  
For a greeting that rises dearer,  
To homely hearts draws me nearer  
Than the warmth of the rice-fields or wealth of the ranches.

I will charm away your sorrow,  
For I sing of the dewy morrow:  
My melody sways like the branches  
My light feet set astir:  
I bring to the old, as I hover,  
The days and the joys that were,  
And hope to the waiting lover!  
Then, take my note and sing,  
Filling it with the longing  
And the blithe, unfettered thronging

Of your spirit's blossoming!

Not long that music lingers:  
Like the breath of forgotten singers  
It flies, or like the March–cloud's shadow  
That sweeps with its wing the faded meadow  
Not long! And yet thy fleeting,  
Thy tender, flute–toned greeting,  
O bluebird, wakes an answer that remains  
The purest chord in all the year's refrains.

## THE VOICE OF THE VOID

I warn, like the one drop of rain  
On your face, ere the storm;  
Or tremble in whispered refrain  
    With your blood, beating warm.  
I am the presence that ever  
Baffles your touch's endeavor,  
Gone like the glimmer of dust  
    Dispersed by a gust.  
I am the absence that taunts you,  
The fancy that haunts you;  
The ever unsatisfied guess  
That, questioning emptiness,  
Wins a sigh for reply.  
    Nay; nothing am I,  
    But the flight of a breath  
    For I am Death!

## O WHOLESOME DEATH"

O wholesome Death, thy sombre funeral-car  
Looms ever dimly on the lengthening way  
Of life; while, lengthening still, in sad array,  
My deeds in long procession go, that are  
As mourners of the man they helped to mar.  
I see it all in dreams, such as waylay  
The wandering fancy when the solid day  
Has fallen in smoldering ruins, and night's star,  
Aloft there, with its steady point of light  
Mastering the eye, has wrapped the brain in sleep.  
Ah, when I die, and planets hold their flight  
Above my grave, still let my spirit keep  
Sometimes its vigil of divine remorse,  
'Midst pity, praise, or blame heaped o'er my corse!

## INCANTATION

When the leaves, by thousands thinned,  
A thousand times have whirled in the wind,  
And the moon, with hollow cheek,

O WHOLESOME DEATH"

Staring from her hollow height,  
Consolation seems to seek  
From the dim, reechoing night;  
And the fog—streaks dead and white  
Lie like ghosts of lost delight  
O'er highest earth and lowest sky;  
Then, Autumn, work thy witchery!

Strew the ground with poppy—seeds,  
And let my bed be hung with weeds,  
Growing gaunt and rank and tall,  
Drooping o'er me like a pall.  
Send thy stealthy, white—eyed mist  
Across my brow to turn and twist  
Fold on fold, and leave me blind  
To all save visions in the mind.  
Then, in the depth of rain—fed streams  
I shall slumber, and in dreams  
Slide through some long glen that burns  
With a crust of blood—red ferns  
And brown—withered wings of brake  
Like a burning lava—lake;  
So, urged to fearful, faster flow  
By the awful gasp, Hahk! hahk! of the crow,  
Shall pass by many a haunted rood  
Of the nutty, odorous wood;  
Or, where the hemlocks lean and loom,  
Shall fill my heart with bitter gloom;  
Till, lured by light, reflected cloud,  
I burst aloft my watery shroud,  
And upward through the ether sail  
Far above the shrill wind's wail;  
But, falling thence, my soul involve  
With the dust dead flowers dissolve;  
And, gliding out at last to sea,  
Lulled to a long tranquillity,  
The perfect poise of seasons keep  
With the tides that rest at neap.  
So must be fulfilled the rite  
That giveth me the dead year's might;  
And at dawn I shall arise  
A spirit, though with human eyes,  
A human form and human face;  
And where'er I go or stay,  
There the summer's perished grace  
Shall be with me, night and day.

## FAMINE AND HARVEST

[PLYMOUTH PLANTATION: 1622]

The strong and the tender,  
The young and the old,  
Unto Death we must render;  
Our silver, our gold.

To break their long sleeping  
No voice may avail:  
They hear not our weeping  
Our famished love's wail.

Yea, those whom we cherish  
Depart, day by day.  
Soon we, too, shall perish  
And crumble to clay.

And the vine and the berry  
Above us will bloom;  
The wind shall make merry  
While we lie in gloom.

Fear not! Though thou starvest,  
Provision is made:  
God gathers His harvest  
When our hopes fade!

## THE CHILD'S WISH GRANTED

Do you remember, my sweet, absent son,  
How in the soft June days forever done  
You loved the heavens so warm and clear and high;  
And when I lifted you, soft came your cry,  
Put me 'way up 'way, 'way up in blue sky ?

I laughed and said I could not; set you down,  
Your gray eyes wonder-filled beneath that crown  
Of bright hair gladdening me as you raced by.  
Another Father now, more strong than I,  
Has borne you voiceless to your dear blue sky.

## THE FLOWN SOUL

(FRANCIS HAWTHORNE LATHROP)

FEBRUARY 6, 1881

Come not again! I dwell with you  
Above the realm of frost and dew,  
Of pain and fire, and growth to death.  
I dwell with you where never breath  
Is drawn, but fragrance vital flows  
From life to life, even as a rose  
Unseen pours sweetness through each vein  
And from the air distills again.  
You are my rose unseen; we live  
Where each to other joy may give  
In ways untold, by means unknown  
And secret as the magnet–stone.

For which of us, indeed, is dead?  
No more I lean to kiss your head  
The gold–red hair so thick upon it;  
Joy feels no more the touch that won it  
When o'er my brow your pearl–cool palm  
In tenderness so childish, calm,  
Crept softly, once. Yet, see, my arm  
Is strong, and still my blood runs warm.  
I still can work, and think and weep.  
But all this show of life I keep  
Is but the shadow of your shine,  
Flicker of your fire, husk of your vine;  
Therefore, you are not dead, nor I  
Who hear your laughter's minstrelsy.  
Among the stars your feet are set;  
Your little feet are dancing yet  
Their rhythmic beat, as when on earth.  
So swift, so slight are death and birth!

Come not again, dear child. If thou  
By any chance couldst break that vow  
Of silence at thy last hour made;  
If to this grim life unafraid  
Thou couldst return, and melt the frost  
Wherein thy bright limbs' power was lost;  
Still would I whisper since so fair  
This silent comradeship we share  
Yes, whisper 'mid the unbidden rain

THE CHILD'S WISH GRANTED



Of tears: Come not, come not again!

## SUNSET AND SHORE

Birds that like vanishing visions go winging,  
White, white in the flame of the sunset's burning,  
Fly with the wild spray the billows are flinging,  
Blend, blend with the nightfall, and fade, unreturning!

Fire of the heaven, whose splendor all-glowing  
Soon, soon shall end, and in darkness must perish;  
Sea-bird and flame-wreath and foam lightly blowing;  
Soon, soon tho' we lose you, your beauty we cherish.

Visions may vanish, the sweetest, the dearest;  
Hush'd, hush'd be the voice of love's echo replying;  
Spirits may leave us that clung to us nearest:  
Love, love, only love dwells with us undying!

## THE PHOEBE-BIRD

(A REPLY)

Yes, I was wrong about the phoebe-bird.  
Two songs it has, and both of them I've heard:  
I did not know those strains of joy and sorrow  
Came from one throat, or that each note could borrow  
Strength from the other, making one more brave  
And one as sad as rain-drops on a grave.

But thus it is. Two songs have men and maidens:  
One is for hey-day, one is sorrow's cadence.  
Our voices vary with the changing seasons  
Of life's long year, for deep and natural reasons.  
Therefore despair not. Think not you have altered,  
If, at some time, the gayer note has faltered.  
We are as God has made us. Gladness, pain,  
Delight and death, and moods of bliss or bane,  
With love and hate, or good and evil all,  
At separate times, in separate accents call;  
Yet 't is the same heart-throb within the breast  
That gives an impulse to our worst and best.  
I doubt not when our earthly cries are ended,  
The Listener finds them in one music blended.

## A STRONG CITY

## Dreams and Days: Poems

For them that hope in Thee.... Thou shalt hide  
them in the secret of Thy face, from the disturbance of men.

Thou shalt protect them in Thy tabernacle from the  
contradiction of tongues.

Blessed be the Lord, for He hath shewn His wonderful  
mercy to me in a fortified city. *Psalm xxx.*

Beauty and splendor were on every hand:  
Yet strangely crawled dark shadows down the lanes,  
Twisting across the fields, like dragon-shapes  
That smote the air with blackness, and devoured  
The life of light, and choked the smiling world  
Till it grew livid with a sudden age  
The death of hope.

O squandered happiness;  
Vain dust of misery powdering life's fresh flower!  
The sky was holy, but the earth was not.

Men ruled, but ruled in vain; since wretchedness  
Of soul and body, for the mass of men,  
Made them like dead leaves in an idle drift  
Around the plough of progress as it drove  
Sharp through the glebe of modern days, to plant  
A civilized world. Ay; civilized but not Christian!

Civilization is a clarion voice  
Crying in the wilderness; a prophet-word  
Still unfulfilled. And lo, along the ways  
Crowded with nations, there arose a strife;  
Disturbance of men; tongues contradicting tongues;  
Madness of noise, that scattered multitudes;  
A trample of blind feet, beneath whose tread  
Truth's bloom shrank withered; while incessant mouths  
Howled Progress! Change! as though all moods of change  
Were fiats of truth eternal.

'Mid the din

Two pilgrims, faring forward, saw the light  
In a strong city, fortified, and moved  
Patiently thither. All your steps are vain,  
Cried scoffers. There is mercy in the world;  
But chiefly mercy of man to man. For we  
Are good. We help our fellows, when we can.  
Our charity is enormous. Look at these  
Long rolls of rich subscriptions. We are good.  
'T is true, God's mercy plays a part in things;  
But most is left to us; and we judge well.  
Stay with us in the field of endless war!  
Here only is health. Yon city fortified  
You dream of why, its ramparts are as dust.  
It gives no safety. One assaulting sweep  
Of our huge cohorts would annul its power  
Crush it in atoms; make it meaningless.

The pilgrims listened; but onward still they moved.  
They passed the gates; they stood upon a hill  
Enclosed, but in that strong enclosure free!  
Though earth opposed, they held the key to heaven.  
On came the turbulent multitude in war,  
Dashing against the city's walls; and swept  
Through all the streets, and robbed and burned and killed.  
The walls were strong; the gates were always open.  
And so the invader rioted, and was proud.  
But sudden, in seeming triumph, the enemy host  
Was stricken with death; and still the city stayed.  
Skyward the souls of its defenders rose,  
Returning soon in mist intangible  
That flashed with radiance of half-hidden swords;  
And those who still assaulted though they crept  
Into the inmost vantage-points, with craft  
Fell, blasted namelessly by this veiled flash,  
Even as they shouted out, The place is ours!

So those two pilgrims dwelt there, fortified  
In that strong city men had thought so frail.  
They died, and lived again. Fiercest attack  
Was as a perfumed breeze to them, which drew  
Their souls still closer unto God. And there  
Beauty and splendor bloomed untouched. The stars  
Spoke to them, bidding them be of good cheer,  
Though hostile hordes rushed over them in blood.  
And still the prayers of all that people rose  
As incense mingled with music of their hearts.  
For Christ was with them: angels were their aid.  
What though the enemy used their open gates?

The children of the citadel conquered all  
Their conquerors, smiting them with the pure light  
That shone in that strong city fortified.

### THREE DOVES

Seaward, at morn, my doves flew free;  
At eve they circled back to me.  
The first was Faith; the second, Hope;  
The third the whitest Charity.

Above the plunging surge's play  
Dream-like they hovered, day by day.  
At last they turned, and bore to me  
Green signs of peace thro' nightfall gray.

No shore forlorn, no loveliest land  
Their gentle eyes had left unscanned,  
'Mid hues of twilight-heliotrope  
Or daybreak fires by heaven-breath fanned.

Quick visions of celestial grace,  
Hither they waft, from earth's broad space,  
Kind thoughts for all humanity.  
They shine with radiance from God's face.

Ah, since my heart they choose for home,

Dreams and Days: Poems

Why loose them, forth again to roam?  
Yet look: they rise! with loftier scope  
They wheel in flight toward heaven's pure dome.

Fly, messengers that find no rest  
Save in such toil as makes man blest!  
Your home is God's immensity:  
We hold you but at his behest.

**V**

**ARISE, AMERICAN!**

The soul of a nation awaking,  
High visions of daybreak, I saw;  
A people renewed; the forsaking  
Of sin, and the worship of law.

Sing, pine-tree; shout, to the hoarser  
Response of the jubilant sea!  
Rush, river, foam-flecked like a courser;  
Warn all who are honest and free!

Our birth-star beckons to trial  
The faith of the far-fled years,  
Ere scorn was our share, and denial,  
Or laughter for patriots' tears.

And Faith shall come forth the finer,  
From trampled thickets of fire,  
And the orient open diviner  
Before her, the heaven rise higher.

O deep, sweet eyes, but severer  
Than steel! See you yet, where he comes  
Our hero? Bend your glance nearer;  
Speak, Faith! For, as wakening drums,

Your voice shall set his blood stirring;  
His heart shall grow strong like the main  
When the rowelled winds are spurring,  
And the broad tides landward strain.

O hero, art thou among us?  
O helper, hidest thou, still?  
Why hast thou no anthem sung us,  
Why workest thou not our will?

## Dreams and Days: Poems

For a smirk of the face, or a favor,  
Still shelters the cheat where he crawls;  
And the truth we began with needs braver  
Upholders, and loftier walls.

Too long has the land's soul slumbered  
In wearying dreams of gain,  
With prosperous falsity cumbered  
And dulled with bribes, as a bane.

Yes, cunning is civilized evil,  
And crafty the gold-baited snare;  
But virtue, in fiery upheaval,  
May cast fine device to the air.

Bring us the simple and stalwart  
Purpose of earlier days.  
Come! Far better than all were't  
Our precepts, our pride, and our lays

That the people in spirit should tremble  
With heed of the God-given Word;  
That we cease from our boast, nor dissemble,  
But follow where truth's voice is heard.

Come to us, mountain-dweller,  
Leader, wherever thou art;  
Skilled from thy cradle, a queller  
Of serpents, and sound to the heart!

Modest and mighty and tender;  
Man of an iron mold;  
Honest, fine-grained, our defender;  
American-souled!



## THE NAME OF WASHINGTON

[Read before the Sons of the Revolution, New-York, February 22, 1887]

Sons of the youth and the truth of the nation,  
Ye that are met to remember the man  
Whose valor gave birth to a people's salvation,  
Honor him now; set his name in the van.  
A nobleness to try for,  
A name to live and die for  
The name of Washington.

Calmly his face shall look down through the ages  
Sweet yet severe with a spirit of warning;  
Charged with the wisdom of saints and of sages;  
Quick with the light of a life-giving morning.  
A majesty to try for,  
A name to live and die for  
The name of Washington!

Though faction may rack us, or party divide us,  
And bitterness break the gold links of our story,  
Our father and leader is ever beside us.  
Live, and forgive! But forget not the glory  
Of him whose height we try for,  
A name to live and die for  
The name of Washington!

Still in his eyes shall be mirrored our fleeting  
Days, with the image of days long ended;  
Still shall those eyes give, immortally, greeting  
Unto the souls from his spirit descended.  
His grandeur we will try for,  
His name we 'll live and die for  
The name of Washington!

## GRANT'S DIRGE

I

Ah, who shall sound the hero's funeral march?  
And what shall be the music of his dirge?  
No single voice may chant the Nation's grief,  
No formal strain can give its woe relief.  
The pent-up anguish of the loyal wife,  
The sobs of those who, nearest in this life,  
Still hold him closely in the life beyond;  
These first, with threnody of memories fond.  
But look! Forth press a myriad mourners thronging,  
With hearts that throb in sorrow's exaltation,  
Moved by a strange, impassioned, hopeless longing  
To serve him with their love's last ministrations.  
Make way! Make way, from wave-bound verge to verge  
Of all our land, that this great multitude  
With lamentation proud albeit subdued,  
Deep murmuring like the ocean's mighty surge,  
May pass beneath the heavens' triumphal arch!

II

What is the sound we hear?  
Never the fall of a tear;  
For grief repressed  
In every breast  
More honors the man we revere.  
Rising from East and West,  
There echoes afar or near  
From the cool, sad North and the burning South  
A sound long since grown dear,  
When brave ranks faced the cannon's mouth  
And died for a faith austere:  
The tread of marching men,  
A steady tramp of feet  
That never flinched nor faltered when  
The drums of duty beat.  
With sable hats whose shade  
Falls from the cord of gold  
On every time-worn face;  
With tattered flags, in black enrolled,  
Beneath whose folds they warred of old;  
Forward, firmly arrayed,  
With a sombre, martial grace;  
So the Grand Army moves  
Commanded by the dead,  
Following him whose name it loves,  
Whose voice in life its footsteps led.

III

Those that in the combat perished,  
Hostile shapes and forms of friends,  
Those we hated, those we cherished,  
Meet the pageant where it ends.  
Flash of steel and tears forgiving  
Blend in splendor. Hark, the knell!  
Comrades ghostly join the living  
Dreaming, chanting: All is well.  
They receive the General sleeping,  
Him of spirit pure and large:  
Him they draw into their keeping  
Evermore, in faithful charge.

IV

Pass on, O steps, with your dead, sad note!  
For a people's homage is in the sound;  
And the even tread, in measured rote,  
As a leader is laid beneath the ground,  
Rumors the hum of a pilgrim train  
That shall trample the earth as tramples the rain,  
Seeking the door of the hero's tomb,  
Seeking him where he lies low in the gloom,  
Paying him tribute of worker and mage,  
Through age on age!

V

Tall pine-tree on McGregor's height,  
How didst thou grow to such a lofty bearing,  
For song of bird or beat of breeze uncaring,  
There where thy shadow touched the dying brow?  
Were all thy sinewy fibres shaped aright?  
Was there no flaw? With what mysterious daring  
Didst thou put forth each murmuring, odorous bough  
And trust it to the frail support of air?  
We only know that thou art now supreme:  
We know not how thou grewest so tall and fair.  
So from the unnoticed, humble earth arose  
The sturdy man whom we, bewailing, deem  
Worthy the wondrous name fame's far voice blows.  
And lo! his ancient foes  
Rise up to praise the plan  
Of modest grandeur, loyal trust,  
And generous power from man to man,  
That lifted him above the formless dust.  
O heart by kindness betrayed,  
O noble spirit snared and strayed  
Unmatched, upright thou standest still  
As that firm pine-tree rooted on the hill!

VI

No paragon was he,  
But moulded in the rough  
With every fault and scar  
Ingrained, and plain for all to see:  
Even as the rocks and mountains are,  
Common perhaps, yet wrought of such true stuff  
That common nature in his essence grew  
To something which till then it never knew;  
Ay, common as a vast, refreshing wind  
That sweeps the continent, or as some star  
Which, 'mid a million, shines out well-defined:  
With honest soul on duty bent,  
A servant-soldier, President;  
Meekest when crowned with victory,  
And greatest in adversity!

VII

A silent man whom, strangely, fate  
Made doubly silent ere he died,  
His speechless spirit rules us still;  
And that deep spell of influence mute,  
The majesty of dauntless will  
That wielded hosts and saved the State,  
Seems through the mist our spirits yet to thrill.  
His heart is with us! From the root  
Of toil and pain and brave endurance  
Has sprung at last the perfect fruit,  
The treasure of a rich assurance  
That men who nobly work and live  
A greater gift than life may give;  
Yielding a promise for all time,  
Which other men of newer date  
Surely redeem in deeds sublime.  
Forerunner of a valiant race,  
His voiceless spirit still reminds us  
Of ever-waiting, silent duty:  
The bond of faith wherewith he binds us  
Shall hold us ready hour by hour  
To serve the sacred, guiding power  
Whene'er it calls, where'er it finds us,  
With loyalty that, like a folded flower,  
Blooms at a touch in proud, full-circled beauty.

VIII

Like swelling river waves that strain,  
Onward the people crowd  
In serried, billowing train.  
And those so slow to yield,  
On many a hard fought field,  
Muster together  
Like a dark cloud  
In summer weather,  
Whose threatening thunders suddenly are stilled,  
And all the world is filled  
With smiling rest. Victory to him was pain,  
Till he had won his enemies by love;  
Had leashed the eagle and unloosed the dove;  
Setting on war's red roll the argent seal of peace.  
So here they form their solid ranks again,  
But in no mood of hatred or disdain.  
They say: Thou who art fallen at last,  
Beleaguered stealthily, o'ercome by death,  
Thy conqueror now shall be magnanimous  
Even as thou wast to us.  
But not for thee can we blot out the past:  
We would not, if we might, forget thy last  
Great act of war, that with a gentle hand  
Brought back our hearts unto the mighty mother,  
For whose defence and honor armed we stand.  
We hail thee brother,  
And so salute thy name with holy breath!

IX

Land of the hurricane!  
Land of the avalanche!  
Land of tempest and rain;  
Of the Southern sun and of frozen peaks;  
Stretching from main to main;  
Land of the cypress-glooms;  
Land of devouring looms;  
Land of the forest and ranch;  
Hush every sound to-day  
Save the burden of swarms that assemble  
Their reverence dear to pay  
Unto him who saved us all!

## Dreams and Days: Poems

Ye masses that mourn with bended head,  
Beneath whose feet the ground doth tremble  
With weight of woe and a sacred dread  
Lift up the pall  
That to us shall remain as a warrior's banner!  
Gaze once more on the fast closed eyes;  
Mark once the mouth that never speaks;  
Think of the man and his quiet manner:  
Weep if you will; then go your way;  
But remember his face as it looks to the skies,  
And the dumb appeal wherewith it seeks  
To lead us on, as one should say, Arise  
Go forth to meet your country's noblest day!

X

Ah, who shall sound the hero's funeral march?  
And what shall be the music of his dirge?  
Let generations sing, as they emerge  
And pass beneath the heavens' triumphal arch!

## BATTLE DAYS

I

Veteran memories rally to muster  
Here at the call of the old battle days:  
Cavalry clatter and cannon's hoarse bluster:

BATTLE DAYS

## Dreams and Days: Poems

All the wild whirl of the fight's broken maze:  
Clangor of bugle and flashing of sabre,  
Smoke–stifled flags and the howl of the shell,  
With earth for a rest place and death for a neighbor,  
And dreams of a charge and the deep rebel yell.  
Stern was our task in the field where the reaping  
Spared the ripe harvest, but laid our men low:  
Grim was the sorrow that held us from weeping:  
Awful the rush of the strife's ebb and flow.  
Swift came the silence our enemy hiding  
Sudden retreat in the cloud–muffled night:  
Swift as a hawk–pounce our hill–and–dale riding;  
Hundreds on hundreds we caught in their flight!  
Hard and incessant the danger and trial,  
Laid on our squadrons, that gladly bore all,  
Scorning to meet with delay or denial  
The summons that rang in the battle–days' call!

### II

Wild days that woke to glory or despair,  
And smote the coward soul with sudden shame,  
But unto those whose hearts were bold to dare  
All things for honor brought eternal fame:  
Lost days, undying days!  
With undiminished rays  
Here now on us look down,  
Illumining our crown  
Of leaves memorial, wet with tender dew  
For those who nobly died  
In fierce self–sacrifice of service true,  
Rapt in pure fire of life–disdaining pride;  
Men of this soil, who stood  
Firm for their country's good,  
From night to night, from sun to sun,  
Till o'er the living and the slain  
A woful dawn that streamed with rain  
Wept for their victory dearly won.

### III



Days of the future, prophetic days,  
Silence engulfs the roar of war;  
Yet, through all coming years, repeat the praise  
Of those leal comrades brave, who come no more!  
And when our voices cease,  
Long, long renew the chant, the anthem proud,  
Which, echoing clear and loud  
Through templed aisles of peace,  
Like blended tumults of a joyous chime,  
Shall tell their valor to a later time.  
Shine on this field; and in the eyes of men  
Rekindle, if the need shall come again,  
That answering light that springs  
In beaconing splendor from the soul, and brings  
Promise of faith well kept and deed sublime!

## KEENAN'S CHARGE

[CHANCELLORSVILLE, MAY, 1863]

I

The sun had set;  
The leaves with dew were wet:  
Down fell a bloody dusk  
On the woods, that second of May,  
Where Stonewall's corps, like a beast of prey,  
Tore through, with angry tusk.

## Dreams and Days: Poems

They've trapped us, boys!  
Rose from our flank a voice.  
With a rush of steel and smoke  
On came the rebels straight,  
Eager as love and wild as hate;  
And our line reeled and broke;

Broke and fled.  
No one stayed but the dead!  
With curses, shrieks, and cries,  
Horses and wagons and men  
Tumbled back through the shuddering glen,  
And above us the fading skies.

There's one hope, still  
Those batteries parked on the hill!  
Battery, wheel! ('mid the roar)  
Pass pieces; fix prolonge to fire  
Retiring. Trot! In the panic dire  
A bugle rings Trot and no more.

The horses plunged,  
The cannon lurched and lunged,  
To join the hopeless rout.  
But suddenly rode a form  
Calmly in front of the human storm,  
With a stern, commanding shout:

Align those guns!  
(We knew it was Pleasonton's.)  
The cannoneers bent to obey,  
And worked with a will at his word:  
And the black guns moved as if *they* had heard.  
But ah, the dread delay!

To wait is crime;  
O God, for ten minutes' time!  
The General looked around.  
There Keenan sat, like a stone,  
With his three hundred horse alone,

Less shaken than the ground.

Major, your men?  
Are soldiers, General. Then,  
Charge, Major! Do your best:  
Hold the enemy back, at all cost,  
Till my guns are placed; else the army is lost.  
You die to save the rest!

II

By the shrouded gleam of the western skies,  
Brave Keenan looked into Pleasonton's eyes  
For an instant clear, and cool, and still;  
Then, with a smile, he said: I will.

Cavalry, charge! Not a man of them shrank.  
Their sharp, full cheer, from rank on rank,  
Rose joyously, with a willing breath –  
Rose like a greeting hail to death.

Then forward they sprang, and spurred and clashed;  
Shouted the officers, crimson-sash'd;  
Rode well the men, each brave as his fellow,  
In their faded coats of the blue and yellow;  
And above in the air, with an instinct true,  
Like a bird of war their pennon flew.

With clank of scabbards and thunder of steeds,  
And blades that shine like sunlit reeds,  
And strong brown faces bravely pale  
For fear their proud attempt shall fail,  
Three hundred Pennsylvanians close  
On twice ten thousand gallant foes.

Line after line the troopers came

KEENAN'S CHARGE

## Dreams and Days: Poems

To the edge of the wood that was ring'd with flame;  
Rode in and sabred and shot and fell;  
Nor came one back his wounds to tell.  
And full in the midst rose Keenan, tall,  
In the gloom like a martyr awaiting his fall,  
While the circle-stroke of his sabre, swung  
'Round his head, like a halo there, luminous hung.

Line after line, aye, whole platoons,  
Struck dead in their saddles, of brave dragoons  
By the maddened horses were onward borne  
And into the vortex flung, trampled and torn;  
As Keenan fought with his men, side by side.

So they rode, till there were no more to ride.

But over them, lying there shattered and mute,  
What deep echo rolls? 'T is a death-salute,  
From the cannon in place; for heroes, you braved  
Your fate not in vain: the army was saved!

Over them now year following year  
Over their graves the pine-cones fall,  
And the whip-poor-will chants his spectre-call;  
But they stir not again: they raise no cheer:  
They have ceased. But their glory shall never cease,  
Nor their light be quenched in the light of peace.  
The rush of their charge is resounding still  
That saved the army at Chancellorsville.

## MARTHY VIRGINIA'S HAND

There, on the left! said the colonel: the battle  
had shuddered and faded away,  
Wraith of a fiery enchantment that left only  
ashes and blood—sprinkled clay  
Ride to the left and examine that ridge, where  
the enemy's sharpshooters stood.  
Lord, how they picked off our men, from the  
treacherous vantage—ground of the wood!  
But for their bullets, I'll bet, my batteries sent  
them something as good.  
Go and explore, and report to me then, and tell  
me how many we killed.  
Never a wink shall I sleep till I know our vengeance  
was duly fulfilled.

Fiercely the orderly rode down the slope of the  
corn—field scarred and forlorn,  
Ruttled by violent wheels, and scathed by the  
shot that had plowed it in scorn;  
Fiercely, and burning with wrath for the sight  
of his comrades crushed at a blow,  
Flung in broken shapes on the ground like  
ruined memorials of woe:  
These were the men whom at daybreak he knew,  
but never again could know.  
Thence to the ridge, where roots outthrust, and  
twisted branches of trees  
Clutched the hill like clawing lions, firm their  
prey to seize.

What's your report? and the grim colonel  
smiled when the orderly came back at last.  
Strangely the soldier paused: Well, they were  
punished. And strange his face, aghast.  
Yes, our fire told on them; knocked over fifty  
laid out in line of parade.  
Brave fellows, colonel, to stay as they did! But  
one I 'most wish had n't stayed.  
Mortally wounded, he'd torn off his knapsack;  
and then at the end he prayed  
Easy to see, by his hands that were clasped;

## Dreams and Days: Poems

and the dull, dead fingers yet held  
This little letter his wife's from the knapsack.  
A pity those woods were shelled!

Silent the orderly, watching with tears in his eyes  
as his officer scanned  
Four short pages of writing. What's this, about  
'Marthy Virginia's hand'?  
Swift from his honeymoon he, the dead soldier,  
had gone from his bride to the strife;  
Never they met again, but she had written him,  
telling of that new life,  
Born in the daughter, that bound her still closer  
and closer to him as his wife.  
Laying her baby's hand down on the letter,  
around it she traced a rude line;  
If you would kiss the baby, she wrote, you  
must kiss this outline of mine.

There was the shape of the hand on the page,  
with the small, chubby fingers outspread.  
Marthy Virginia's hand, for her pa, so the  
words on the little palm said.  
Never a wink slept the colonel that night, for  
the vengeance so blindly fulfilled;  
Never again woke the old battle-glow when the  
bullets their death-note shrilled.  
Long ago ended the struggle, in union of  
brotherhood happily stilled;  
Yet from that field of Antietam, in warning and  
token of love's command,  
See! there is lifted the hand of a baby Marthy  
Virginia's hand!

## GETTYSBURG: A BATTLE ODE

### I

Victors, living, with laureled brow,  
And you that sleep beneath the sword!  
Your song was poured from cannon throats:  
It rang in deep-tongued bugle-notes:  
Your triumph came; you won your crown,  
The grandeur of a world's renown.  
    But, in our later lays,  
    Full freighted with your praise,  
Fair memory harbors those whose lives, laid down  
    In gallant faith and generous heat,  
    Gained only sharp defeat.  
All are at peace, who once so fiercely warred:  
Brother and brother, now, we chant a common chord.

### II

For, if we say God wills,  
Shall we then idly deny Him  
Care of each host in the fight?  
His thunder was here in the hills  
When the guns were loud in July;  
And the flash of the musketry's light  
Was sped by a ray from God's eye.  
In its good and its evil the scheme  
Was framed with omnipotent hand,  
Though the battle of men was a dream  
That they could but half understand.  
Can the purpose of God pass by him?  
Nay; it was sure, and was wrought  
Under inscrutable powers:  
Bravely the two armies fought  
And left the land, that was greater than they, still theirs and ours!

### III

Lucid, pure, and calm and blameless  
Dawned on Gettysburg the day  
That should make the spot, once fameless,  
Known to nations far away.  
Birds were caroling, and farmers  
Gladdened o'er their garnered hay,  
When the clank of gathering armors  
Broke the morning's peaceful sway;  
And the living lines of foemen  
Drawn o'er pasture, brook, and hill,  
Formed in figures weird of omen  
That should work with mystic will  
Measures of a direful magic  
Shattering, maiming and should fill  
Glades and gorges with a tragic  
Madness of desire to kill.  
Skirmishers flung lightly forward  
Moved like scythemen skilled to sweep  
Westward o'er the field and nor'ward,  
Death's first harvest there to reap.  
You would say the soft, white smoke-puffs  
Were but languid clouds asleep,  
Here on meadows, there on oak-bluffs,  
Fallen foam of Heaven's blue deep.  
Yet that blossom-white outbreaking  
Smoke wove soon a martyr's shroud.  
Reynolds fell, with soul unquaking,  
Ardent-eyed and open-browed:  
Noble men in humbler raiment  
Fell where shot their graves had plowed,  
Dying not for paltry payment:  
Proud of home, of honor proud.

IV

Mute Seminary there,  
Filled once with resonant hymn and prayer,  
How your meek walls and windows shuddered then!  
Though Doubleday stemmed the flood,  
McPherson's Wood and Willoughby's Run  
Saw ere the set of sun  
The light of the gospel of blood.  
And, on the morrow again,  
Loud the unholy psalm of battle  
Burst from the tortured Devil's Den,  
In cries of men and musketry rattle



## Dreams and Days: Poems

Mixed with the helpless bellow of cattle  
Torn by artillery, down in the glen;  
While, hurtling through the branches  
Of the orchard by the road,  
Where Sickles and Birney were walled with steel,  
Shot fiery avalanches  
That shivered hope and made the sturdiest reel.  
Yet peach-bloom bright as April saw  
Blushed there anew, in blood that flowed  
O'er faces white with death-dealt awe;  
And ruddy flowers of warfare grew,  
Though withering winds as of the desert blew,  
Far at the right while Ewell and Early,  
Plunging at Slocum and Wadsworth and Greene,  
Thundered in onslaught consummate and surly;  
Till trembling nightfall crept between  
And whispered of rest from the heat of the whelming strife.  
But unto those forsaken of life  
What has the night to say?  
Silent beneath the moony sky,  
Crushed in a costly dew they lie:  
Deaf to plaint or paeon, they:  
Freed from Earth's dull tyranny.

### V

Wordless the night-wind, funereal plumes of the tree-tops swaying  
Writhing and nodding anon at the beck of the unseen breeze!  
Yet its voice ever a murmur resumes, as of multitudes praying:  
Liturgies lost in a moan like the mourning of far-away seas.  
May then those spirits, set free, a celestial council obeying,  
Move in this rustling whisper here thro' the dark, shaken trees?  
Souls that are voices alone to us, now, yet linger, returning  
Thrilled with a sweet reconciliation and fervid with speechless desire?  
Sundered in warfare, immortal they meet now with wonder and yearning,  
Dwelling together united, a rapt, invisible choir:  
Hearken! They wail for the living, whose passion of battle, yet burning,  
Sears and enfolds them in coils, and consumes, like a serpent of fire!

### VI

Men of New Hampshire, Pennsylvanians,  
Maine men, firm as the rock's rough ledge!  
Swift Mississippians, lithe Carolinians  
Bursting over the battle's edge!  
Bold Indiana men; gallant Virginians;  
Jersey and Georgia legions clashing;  
Pick of Connecticut; quick Vermonters;  
Louisianians, madly dashing;  
And, swooping still to fresh encounters,  
New-York myriads, whirlwind-led!  
All your furious forces, meeting,  
Torn, entangled, and shifting place,  
Blend like wings of eagles beating  
Airy abysses, in angry embrace.  
Here in the midmost struggle combining  
Flags immingled and weapons crossed  
Still in union your States troop shining:  
Never a star from the lustre is lost!

VII

Once more the sun deploys his rays:  
Third in the trilogy of battle-days  
The awful Friday comes:  
A day of dread,  
That should have moved with slow, averted head  
And muffled feet,  
Knowing what streams of pure blood shed,  
What broken hearts and wounded lives must meet  
Its pitiless tread.  
At dawn, like monster mastiffs baying,  
Federal cannon, with a din affraying,  
Roused the old Stonewall brigade,  
That, eagerly and undismayed,  
Charged amain, to be repelled  
After four hours' bitter fighting,  
Forth and back, with bayonets biting;  
Where in after years, the wood  
Flayed and bullet-riddled stood  
A presence ghostly, grim and stark,  
With trees all withered, wasted, gray,  
The place of combat night and day  
Like marshaled skeletons to mark.  
Anon, a lull: the troops are spelled.  
No sound of guns or drums

Disturbs the air.  
Only the insect-chorus faintly hums,  
Chirping around the patient, sleepless dead  
Scattered, or fallen in heaps all wildly spread;  
Forgotten fragments left in hurried flight;  
Forms that, a few hours since, were human creatures,  
Now blasted of their features,  
Or stamped with blank despair;  
Or with dumb faces smiling as for gladness,  
Though stricken by utter blight  
Of motionless, inert, and hopeless sadness.  
Fear you the naked horrors of a war?  
Then cherish peace, and take up arms no more.  
For, if you fight, you must  
Behold your brothers' dust  
Unpityingly ground down  
And mixed with blood and powder,  
To write the annals of renown  
That make a nation prouder!

VIII

All is quiet till one o'clock;  
Then the hundred and fifty guns,  
Metal loaded with metal in tons,  
Massed by Lee, send out their shock.  
And, with a movement magnificent,  
Pickett, the golden-haired leader,  
Thousands and thousands flings onward, as if he sent  
Merely a meek interceder.  
Steadily sure his division advances,  
Gay as the light on its weapons that dances.  
Agonized screams of the shell  
The doom that it carries foretell:  
Rifle-balls whistle, like sea-birds singing;  
Limbs are severed, and souls set winging;  
Yet Pickett's warriors never waver.  
Show me in all the world anything braver  
Than the bold sweep of his fearless battalions,  
Three half-miles over ground unsheltered  
Up to the cannon, where regiments weltered  
Prone in the batteries' blast that raked  
Swaths of men and, flame-tongued, drank  
Their blood with eager thirst unslaked.  
Armistead, Kemper, and Pettigrew  
Rush on the Union men, rank against rank,  
Planting their battle-flags high on the crest.

## Dreams and Days: Poems

Pause not the soldiers, nor dream they of rest,  
Till they fall with their enemy's guns at the breast  
And the shriek in their ears of the wounded artillery stallions.  
So Pickett charged, a man indued  
With knightly power to lead a multitude  
And bring to fame the scarred surviving few.

### IX

In vain the mighty endeavor;  
In vain the immortal valor;  
In vain the insurgent life outpoured!  
Faltered the column, spent with shot and sword;  
Its bright hope blanched with sudden pallor;  
While Hancock's trefoil bloomed in triple fame.  
He chose the field; he saved the second day;  
And, honoring here his glorious name,  
Again his phalanx held victorious sway.  
Meade's line stood firm, and volley on volley roared  
Triumphant Union, soon to be restored,  
Strong to defy all foes and fears forever.  
The Ridge was wreathed with angry fire  
As flames rise round a martyr's stake;  
For many a hero on that pyre  
Was offered for our dear land's sake,  
What time in heaven the gray clouds flew  
To mingle with the deathless blue;  
While here, below, the blue and gray  
Melted minglingly away,  
Mirroring heaven, to make another day.  
And we, who are Americans, we pray  
The splendor of strength that Gettysburg knew  
May light the long generations with glorious ray,  
And keep us undyingly true!

### X

Dear are the dead we weep for;  
Dear are the strong hearts broken!  
Proudly their memory we keep for  
Our help and hope; a token  
Of sacred thought too deep for  
Words that leave it unspoken.

## Dreams and Days: Poems

All that we know of fairest,  
All that we have of meetest,  
Here we lay down for the rarest  
Doers whose souls rose fleetest  
And in their homes of air rest,  
Ranked with the truest and sweetest.  
Days, with fiery-hearted, bold advances;  
Nights in dim and shadowy, swift retreat;  
Rains that rush with bright, embattled lances;  
Thunder, booming round your stirless feet;  
Winds that set the orchard with sweet fancies  
All abloom, or ripple the ripening wheat;  
Moonlight, starlight, on your mute graves falling;  
Dew, distilled as tears unbidden flow;  
Dust of drought in drifts and layers crawling;  
Lulling dreams of softly whispering snow;  
Happy birds, from leafy coverts calling;  
These go on, yet none of these you know:  
Hearing not our human voices  
Speaking to you all in vain,  
Nor the psalm of a land that rejoices,  
Ringing from churches and cities and foundries a mighty refrain!  
But we, and the sun and the birds, and the breezes that blow  
When tempests are striving and lightnings of heaven are spent,  
With one consent  
Make unto them  
Who died for us eternal requiem.

## XI

Lovely to look on, O South,  
No longer stately-scornful  
But beautiful still in pride,  
Our hearts go out to you as toward a bride!  
Garmented soft in white,  
Haughty, and yet how love-imbuing and tender!  
You stand before us with your gently mournful  
Memory-haunted eyes and flower-like mouth,  
Where clinging thoughts as bees a-cluster  
Murmur through the leafy gloom,  
Musical in monotone  
Whisper sadly. Yet a lustre  
As of glowing gold-gray light  
Shines upon the orient bloom,  
Sweet with orange-blossoms, thrown  
Round the jasmine-starred, deep night  
Crowning with dark hair your brow.

Ruthless, once, we came to slay,  
And you met us then with hate.  
Rough was the wooing of war: we won you,  
Won you at last, though late!  
Dear South, to-day,  
As our country's altar made us  
One forever, so we vow  
Unto yours our love to render:  
Strength with strength we here endow,  
And we make your honor ours.  
Happiness and hope shall sun you:  
All the wiles that half betrayed us  
Vanish from us like spent showers.

XII

Two hostile bullets in mid-air  
Together shocked,  
And swift were locked  
Forever in a firm embrace.  
Then let us men have so much grace  
To take the bullets' place,  
And learn that we are held  
By laws that weld  
Our hearts together!  
As once we battled hand to hand,  
So hand in hand to-day we stand,  
Sworn to each other,  
Brother and brother,  
In storm and mist, or calm, translucent weather:  
And Gettysburg's guns, with their death-giving roar,  
Echoed from ocean to ocean, shall pour  
Quickening life to the nation's core;  
Filling our minds again  
With the spirit of those who wrought in the  
Field of the Flower of Men!

## NOTES

[1] *Bride Brook*. The colony of New London (now part of Connecticut) was founded by John Winthrop, Jr., under the jurisdiction of Massachusetts. One of the boundary lines was a stream flowing into Long Island Sound, between the present city of New London and the Connecticut River. In the snowy winter of 1646, Jonathan Rudd, who dwelt in the settlement of Saybrook Fort, at the mouth of the Connecticut, sent for Winthrop to celebrate a marriage between himself and a certain Mary of Saybrook, whose last name has been lost. Winthrop performed the ceremony on the frozen surface of the streamlet, the farthest limit of his magistracy; and thereupon bestowed the name Bride Brook, which it still bears.

[2] *The Bride of War*. Jemima Warner, a Pennsylvania woman, was the wife of one of Morgan's riflemen. She marched with the expedition; and, when her husband perished of cold and exhaustion, she took his rifle and equipments and herself carried them to Quebec, where she delivered them to Arnold as a token of her husband's sacrifice, and proof that he was not a deserter.

Colonel Enos of Connecticut abandoned the column while it was struggling through the Dead River region, with his whole force, the rear-guard, numbering eight hundred men. But for this defection Arnold might have triumphed in his assault on Quebec. It is a curious circumstance that, with this traitor at the rear, and with Benedict Arnold at its head, the little army also counted in its ranks Aaron Burr, whose treason was to ripen after the war ended.

[3] *The Sword Dham*. Antar, the Bedouin poet-hero, was chief of the tribe of Ghaylib.

## Dreams and Days: Poems

[4] *The Name of Washington*. Read before the Sons of the Revolution, New-York, February 22, 1887, and adopted as the poem of the Society.

[5] *Marthy Virginia's Hand*. This was an actual incident in the experience of the late Colonel (formerly Captain) Albert J. Munroe. of the Third Rhode Island Artillery, a gallant officer, gentle and brave as well in peace as in war.

[6] *Gettysburg: A Battle Ode*. Written for the Society of the Army of the Potomac, and read at its re-union with Confederate survivors on the field of Gettysburg, July 3, 1888, the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Battle.