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W666 The Druid Sacrifice
and
Other Verses

Judor Williams

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THE DRUID SACRIFICE,
AND
OTHER VERSES.

✓
BY TUDOR WILLIAMS.



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THE DRUID SACRIFICE,

AND

OTHER VERSES.

THE DRUID SACRIFICE.

Where forests dim enclose a spacious glade,
Where moonlight mingles with the inky shade
Of serried boughs thrust forth in open space,
Like many arms of suppliants for grace,
There towers an oak, the grandest of its race,
Majestic monarch of the lonely place;
Reverenced so widely that from distant lands
Its fame has drawn rapt priests and pilgrim bands.

Through centuries long has thriven the giant tree,
Renewing youth and growth perennially.
Of vasty top and bole of mighty girth
And roots broad-delving in the heart of earth,
Still staunch it stands, full-leaved and green and
hale,
As if Death's blight o'er it should ne'er prevail.

Unnumbered tribes have perished in its past
And countless more it proudly shall outlast,
Time's wear defying and each wrecking blast.
Beside its stretch of staid unreckoned years,
How brief, though rich, man's fevered span ap-
pears !

Around its trunk and branches drooping low
Entwines profuse the sacred mistletoe;
And not remote an altar huge of stone
And massive blocks in roughly-circling row,
That seem by sportive, careless Titans strewn,
A shrine of rude, barbaric worship show.
Its votaries wild bedeckments vain have scorned;
No pious gifts hang on the weathered walls,
With lichens only, hoar and dun, adorned,
The tapestry of Nature's rugged halls.
Builded far back in immemorial days—
Its floor the earth, its roof the reachless sky,
To hint a creed firm-based and broad and high—
Unlike the piles that finer races raise,
It here has stood untouched by time's decays
And shall endure while ages yet shall fly.

Night's calming spell upon the scene is thrown,
Deserted now save by a hermit lone,
A grizzled owl, perched on a leafy spray,
Who blinks and chides the moon's intrusive ray.

With hootings shrill he wakes from torpid sleep
An ancient serpent in his burrow deep
'Neath matted roots. But else throughout the
wood
Prevails the sway of deepening quietude.
The warblers sleep; the zephyr's breathings light
Scarce thrill the leaves, and through the hush of
night
The rillet creeps in faintest-tinkling flight.

Deep, solemn awe the stilly scene excites,
For reverend Druids here work mystic rites.
'This is their temple, sacred to that one
Whom they adore, transcending moon and sun;
The formless Spirit, holy, grand and pure,
That owns all power, that ever shall endure;
Creator it of all the eye can see,
Willer of all e'er happed or e'er shall be;
Ruler of earth, and, office more sublime,
Rewarder strict of every deed of time;
That blissful meeds or dire inflictions doles,
Through endless years, to men's immortal souls.

Slow pass the hours, told but by nature's signs;
Now nigh the zenith coldly lustrous shines
The silver orb and midnight's silence grows,
Till deathlike seems the passive world's repose.

The owl, his moonlit perch long since forsook,
Has fluttered awkward to a darker nook,
And ceased his plaining 'mid embowering vines,
And by himself in sullen muteness pines.
The prowling wolf that nigh the cromlech strayed
Has slunk away unhowling and afraid.
No deeper peace on old God's-acres rests
Than now the trackless wilderness invests.
Not e'en the tremblings of a petty plant
Nor insects' flights the sculptured stillness mar.
Naught seems to stir except the twinklings scant
Of some moon-paled, faint-shining, restless star.

But ends the quiet ere it lingers long.
Faint through the woodland sounds a distant chant,
Like muffled roars of waterfalls afar;
And through the pauses of the deep-toned song
Are heard the tokens of a coming throng—
The slow and measured tread of many feet,
Like rhythm of waves on sands remote that beat;
The scream and rustle of disparted boughs
That from their coverts startled beasts arouse;
The clang of sword and shield and heavy spear,
Hoarse trumpet blasts that jar upon the ear
And bursts of martial harpings shrill and clear.
Loud and more loud the uproar soon has grown,
Till by the moonbeams coming nigh are shown,
Ill-ordered, winding through arboreal aisles,
A strange procession's weird and awesome files.

First come the priesthood, in white samite clad,
A noble, grave and venerated band,
The wise, the learned judges of the land,
Loved by the good, abhorred but by the bad.
Naught may withstand or thwart their high decrees,
For they are versed in awful mysteries.
Theirs is the lore, the ceremonial skill,
To solve th' almighty, unseen Being's will.
Clothed on are they with power and sanctity;
E'en kings must bow before their sovereignty.
Truth's oracles, 'tis theirs to mediate
Twixt man and heaven, to speak the hests of fate.
Whom wrathful they shall excommunicate
Wanders an outcast o'er the earth, forlorn,
By all men shunned, the loathly mark of scorn;
For him no more the altar's fire shall glow
Nor blood of sacrificial victims flow,
Nor savory offering nor due ritual show
The God above well-served by man below.
But few there be of impulse so perverse
That they shall dare the dread Druidic curse,
Which blights life's joy and dooms to ceaseless woe.

A leader stately, venerable and hoar,
With beard august his bosom flowing o'er
White as the seeming of the drifted snow,
By pace or two precedes the Druid host,
The grandest soul the order high may boast.

Scant are the locks that deck his domelike head;
Austere 's his look and on his brow is read
The tale of thought severe and sorrow's throe.
In their deep sockets still his dark eyes glow,
With holy zeal and fire prophetic lit;
Nor truer seer is named in olden writ.
Observer keen of how time's happenings tend,
Deep currents noting with the upper flow,
He claims the art the future's veil to rend
And things to come with foresight true to know.
The high Arch-Druid's regal robe he wears,
And in his hand a rod of potence bears
Made magical by many a secret rite
And incantation in the dead of night;
A simple wand of no intrinsic power,
Cut but at random in a hazel bower,
Yet now endued with priestly spell and charm.
If waved aright with due and mystic speech,
What deeds of wonder may it not perform?
All evil forces quickly 'twill disarm
(Or so the legends of the order teach);
It calms the sea and stills the roaring storm,
Averts the plague and fortune's every harm;
In battle gives to vaunting foes alarm
And aids the favored victory's goals to reach.

Next, holding backward by a little space,
Follow the bards, who move at blither pace.

Each bears a harp behind his shoulder flung,
The Cambrian harp, with wondrous cunning strung,
Whose glorious measures through the world have
rung.

In various garbs, as suits each wearer's whim,
These are arrayed; and some are lithe of limb,
And some are bowed beneath the weight of age;
Yet every visage, howso grooved and grim,
Wears a fine light of youthfulness and joy;
For every heart swells with the minstrel's rage
And stirring fancies oft their thoughts employ.
Llewelyn leads them, Britain's present pride,
Whose fame beyond the seas has travelled wide.
Most skillful master he of song and lyre,
The laureate fit of Britain's fervent choir.
Of stately form; of strong yet winsome face,
Whereon is shown each swift emotion's trace;
Of lofty soul by no base thought defiled;
Of manful heart, yet gentle as a child;
With voice vast-volumed, filling all the wild,
And yet as sweet as e'er the ear beguiled;
With wondrous power he sways the hearts of men;
War's ardor rouses, calls forth pity's tears;
Love's rapture kindles; wakens awes and fears;
Hymns praise to that Great Being 'yond our ken,
Whom Nature symbols, whom each soul reveres;
Peoples the wood, the cavern and the glen
With fairy folk earth ne'er shall know again;
And lore and legend of the bygone years

In an exhaustless, copious flood he pours,
Like some full stream that brims its grassy shores ;
Nor any land had long in serfage lain,
Had he with freedom's song the echoes woke;
For then e'en babes had broken slavery's chain
And from their necks flung off the humbling yoke.

Then rolls along a chariot neatly wrought
With that crude art the Orient fathers taught
When 'neath burning skies the tribes ancestral
fought.

Upon its axles sharpest blades are set,
That reap in war 'mid riven ranks of foes
A harvest dread; dark traces these disclose
Of blood that late their cruel edges wet.
The car is drawn by restless, shaggy steeds,
Such as the wild with rudest nurture breeds.
In it, alone, a stalwart chieftain rides,
Attired for war and bearing princely gear
Of sword and shield and ominous-rattling spear.
The loosened rein the rider scarcely heeds—
With voice alone the brutes well-trained he guides.
The forest maze, obedient to his will,
They, wonted, thrud as if with reasoning skill.

And last approach a wild and warlike crew,
In scant and semi-savage raiment drest;
With rough and hairy arms all bare to view
And half exposed each broad and painted breast.

Incessant action suits these sturdy forms,
Tanned dun and toughened by the suns and storms;
The slow pace irks and goads their fierce unrest.
Rude weapons theirs of metal dull and soft,
Unfit with hard, well-tempered arms to cross ;
Nathless in fight with these they conquer oft,
Unchecked by carnage and excessive loss.
Their targes small of wicker and of hide,
But not their courage, mail-clad foes deride.
An ample banner do they bear aloft
Which in its web a magic potence holds ;
The great Red Dragon blazoned on its folds
Fiercely has glowered on many a stubborn field
Where valorous hosts to death alone would yield.
Bold soldiers these, who hold their country dear,
And harshest death far less than thralldom fear.
If still they've failed to drive invaders back,
'Tis not that ardor in their cause they lack,
Or any deed of valor do not dare.
The bonds of discipline too loose they wear
Nor give to unity sufficing heed ;
They deem of leaders they have little need ;
Each for himself fights on, whoso may lead ;
Too oft they trust to scattered bravery,
While foes close-knit bear off the victory.

A sturdy captain marches at their front
Whose chiefest joy is in the battle's brunt ;

A brawny giant he, fit but for war,
Of strength herculean, with keen love of strife.
His body's marked with many a livid scar,
Telling of wounds that oft nigh sapped his life.
Disdaining deeply light and peaceful shows
Where men nor deal nor take blood-letting blows,
'Mid Britain's range no braver warrior bides,
Though his rash zeal discretion oft outrides.

In loose array the warriors grim surround
A haughty captive with his arms fast-bound.
He, while the legion at its camp delayed,
With heedless steps into the forest strayed,
And there in ambush fell, nigh in the view
Of his own comrades; prompt his sword he drew
And made mad battle with outnumbering foes,
And three he felled that ne'er again uprose,
And more he tortured with disabling wounds.
But ere his fellows, drawn by conflict's sounds,
Sped to his rescue, he was seized and borne
Swiftly by hidden paths to death deferred.
Now has he need his virile soul to gird
With all of courage it has ever worn.

Of slender frame and fine patrician mould,
But with a soldier's bearing stern and cold,
He is in chains undaunted, manly souled.
With eagle glance each act and scene he notes,
Nor fear would feel e'en though a thousand throats

His doom might clamor ; and his visage proud
Wears Roman scorn for this barbarian crowd.
One legion oft has swept a nation down,
One soldier quelled a rabble with a frown ;
No Roman e'er before a mob has cowered.
Though helpless now, by numbers overpowered,
His spirit high, audacious, he maintains,
Nor yet from speech of sharp contempt refrains ;
Unbind his arms, give him but sword and shield,
He'd brave his captors all in open field.

Still on they move and in the glade deploy ;
Then, halting, form a broken, medlied mass,
And, chanting loud, express triumphant joy
O'er some event most weighty come to pass.
Then, as the resonant song of triumph ends,
Each in his place in silentness abides,
While the Arch-Druid to the altar glides.
Lowly before the structure plain he bends,
In pious, awed, and reverential wise,
Then lifts his hands and, looking toward the skies,
Utters an invocation loud and clear,
In striking words, yet simple and severe.
And though their purport vaguely he doth guess,
The fervent tones the captive's soul impress.
Not e'en the imperial pontiffs of his home
In grander supplicance e'er besieged the dome.
A sense of nearness to all-potent might,
But thinly veiled from mortal's prying sight,

Pervades the throng with an unwonted power
And Heaven approves the sternly hallowed hour.

The prayer ended, swift the chant's renewed,
The mingled voices sounding deep and hoarse,
Betokening hearts with feeling strong imbued.
As when rough waves in rocky caves intrude
And rave and bellow with a muffled force,
So seems the song, and when it dies away,
The great Arch-Druid to the stilled array
In grave and solemn style thus makes discourse :

“ Dark dangers now o'er menaced Britain brood,
Within her threshold trench the wide world's foes,
Who many lands and nations have subdued,
Whose power at conquest's constant banquet grows,
And would gulp down and swallow all the earth.
The God of Britain angered at the dearth
Of worship due to his transcendent worth,
Wrathful at lack of human virtue, sends
Sharp visitation on his impious sons ;
And since each fiat of the Spirit runs
Until the culprit in contrition bends,
Now should we beg his favor with the price
Of earnest prayer and noblest sacrifice.
Nor shall the blood of the base brutes suffice
The God's resentment fully to appease.
Would ye with proper gift the Spirit please,
Unto his altar finer victims bring ;
Let reasoning life be worship's offering.

Soul's seemly caskets faraway excel
The crude bodies of the mindless beasts ;
God's chiefest choice is not what mortals fell
And butcher vilely for their ravenous feasts.
A worthier tribute at his feet we lay
And loose a soul from its encasing clay.
War's horrid whirl has to our durance given
One who, blood-dyed, against our land has striven.
Out of the flock of our invaders haled,
'This captive brave, whose spirit ne'er has quailed,
Shall be this night's vicarious offering meet,
And the ascending bloody savor sweet
Shall plead for us at Heaven's exalted seat.
And when the sacrificial debt is paid,
With due observance of the sacred rites,
And we have sued the Spirit for his aid,
Haply shall dire invasion's plague be stayed,
And we be rescued from this war's affrights.
Thus we at once a double object gain—
From his high wrath the Deity dissuade
And wreak revenge for loss in many fights
Of Britain's heroes murderously slain.
Yet ere to high solemnities we turn,
Our souls should all with grand emotions burn,
Nerving us up unto the purpose stern.
What in all time has stirred the human breast
With more of rapture and to higher zest,
Or has made men more mettlesome and strong,
Than have the strains of high heroic song?

Song's magic power I, therefore, would invoke,
E'en in the presence of the worshipped oak,
Around whose bole and boughs the sacred vine
Its lush festoons doth gracefully entwine.
Sing then, Llewelyn, bard of skill divine,
Thou crowning glory of the tuneful line ;
The splendid story of our race relate
Which has so oft the souls of Britons fired.
Thy song in cowards courage could create,
And e'en of traitors earnest patriots make ;
Nigh in dead bosoms could thy strains inspired
The love of duty and of glory wake."

Thus summoned, moves the honored bard to where
Amid a vacant purlieu of the glade
A mossy rock provides a bardic chair,
A throne most fit for song's rude sovereign made.
There seated soon, his massive harp he tunes,
And for a time in dreamy musing croons,
While all the crowd expectant, stilled, admire
And wait the song whereof they never tire.

Nor do they wait unsated and in vain ;
His heavy locks of raven, like a mane,
He tosses proudly ; glowing is his glance ;
And as the chords he sweeps with master stroke,
And sounds enrapturing deftly doth evoke,
This prelude brief sonorously he chants :

Land of our fathers, Britain fair,
Encircled by the guarding sea,
Thy sons were ever free as air,
And shall for evermore be free.

The alien fierce in vain shall cross
The angry bosom of the waves;
Ne'er shall we suffer freedom's loss,
Or crouch in terror as his slaves.

Upon this dear and sacred soil
The foot of conquest none shall place,
For soon resistless shall recoil
Our fury on the intruding race.

While curbless rolls the raging brine,
Thus long great Britain's realm shall stand,
Nor e'er her sons and daughters pine
Beneath a conqueror's iron hand.

The bard has paused, but from the quivering
strings
His dexterous fingers force a stirring strain,
While through the glade a deafening refrain—
“Tra Mor, tra Brython”—from his listeners rings.
A lofty joy each Briton's bosom fills;
With stormy zeal each patriot spirit thrills;
Each burns at once to strike the glorious blow
That shall o'erwhelm and crush the cruel foe.

Rome's iron phalanx all in fancy pierce,
Her serried cohorts break and rout and slay,
And drag adown in shame her eagles fierce,
Which ne'er again on Britons' hearts shall prey.

Their rage with pride is by the bard beheld
And all his soul with ecstasy is swelled.
With grander voice and with transfigured mien
He thus resumes and thrills the night serene :

Spirit of the ancient bards,
My unimpassioned soul inspire,
And in this bosom dull and cold
Enkindle swift the sacred fire.

And ye, the mighty ones of eld—
The sages, heroes, Druids, kings—
The potency of your souls impart
To him who thus ineptly sings.

Chant, chant the praises
Of Britain's lustrous past ;
Her glory shall be fadeless,
Her power for aye shall last.

Far from the cradling Summerland,
The sons of Gomer spread,
On Troia's plains and 'neath her towers
They left heroic dead.

Through many a vast and hostile realm
They clove triumphant way
And flung assailing hosts aside
As rocks fling off the spray.

The kingly hero, Gadarn, led
The brave, devoted bands,
Stern victor he on every field,
Fierce terror of the lands.

None could resist their onward march
That wrought out fate's decree ;
They reached the limits of the land
And leaped across the sea.

Beyond the whitened walls they found
A new and lasting home,
And but at utmost verge of earth
Sea-bounded ceased to roam.

In vain the ancient nations fought
This fair domain to save ;
They yielded to the victor's might
Or filled the conquered's grave.

Then like yon huge and deathless oak
The Cymric people grew,
And filled the spacious goodly isle,
Nor dark disaster knew.

Aye, through the ages long they throve
And 'scaped misfortune's frown,
While still their influence widened far
And waxed their bright renown.

Where dwelt there princes half so well
With royal traits endowed,
So grand of port, so gracious-wayed,
So mettlesome and proud?

Where sang there bards with nobler voice,
That could with skill rehearse
More splendid deeds, to defter strains,
In more melodious verse?

And, glorious priesthood of our land,
How time expands your fame!
'Neath skies remote the tribes revere
The Druids' power and name.

A chosen people sooth are we,
The Spirit's favored race;
Nor ever shall untoward fates
Our glory long abase.

'Tis but our own unworthy acts
That give our foeman heart
To trespass on our isle whence soon
He shall in grief depart.

No craven crowd his blade has scourged,
No crouching slaves he finds ;
But freemen who to him oppose
Stout hearts and stouter minds.

Alas the black and dismal day
When first up from the sea,
Like monsters of the waters, strode
Rome's armored legionry.

As when the surges madly leap
Futile 'gainst flinty rocks,
So on their rigid front of shields
Dashed Britain's battle shocks.

Though by our forceful spears transfixed
Some fell and 'mid the brine
Found fitting graves, yet onward moved
To shore that firm-set line.

Fierce raged the battle on the strand
And for a time was stayed
Their steady front, till Britain's power
More fully was arrayed.

Then did the adverse tides of war
Against each other dash
Till shook the land and roared the air
With their impetuous clash.

What feats of valor then were wrought
No bard is skilled to tell,
For who can duly sing the jousts
Of demons in their hell.

Uncertain seemed the stubborn fray,
But 'mid its ebb and flow,
Still on the foreign legions moved,
With surest progress slow.

Our princes brandished rattling spears,
And gave their steeds the goad,
And like the grim, avenging fates
Upon the foe they rode.

Swift whirled their scythe-armed chariot wheels,
The keen, resistless blades
Mowed through the shivered Roman ranks
That shrunk like tim'rous maids.

And death on every hand they dealt
With each unerring thrust,
Till many a rash invader lay
Soul-rifled in the dust.

Nor with less eager valiantness
The chieftains' followers fought ;
Our meanest from our loftiest sons
The patriot ardor caught.

But, ah, upon our arms was laid
Awhile the Spirit's ban;
And Cæsar's rallied minions smote
Too hard each scattered clan.

In victory's flushed, elated hour
We tasted sour defeat;
Our chiefest lords the alien seized
Despite their coursers fleet.

The ground was strewn with Britons slain,
With flowing blood 'twas dyed;
And dolefully all Britain groaned,
Low-humbled from her pride.

Yet with the courage of the free
That ne'er will be subdued
The brave Caswallon's loyal hosts
Oft war's wild game renewed

Till, wearied with the bootless strife,
World-conquering Cæsar, foiled,
Fain proffered facile terms of peace
And from the land recoiled.

No laurel crowns he gathered here,
No glory hence he bore;
With sense of loss and thwarted aims
He hurried from our shore.

Then for an hundred placid years
The sea-girt realm had rest,
Ere baffled Rome dared bear again
Her eagles to the West.

Though wheedled by the specious plea
Of Britain's traitorous son,
Rome's vain, imperial imbecile
A childish victory won.

His pompous fleet filled all the sea,
And, anchoring nigh the strand,
His boldest soldiers, landing, seized
Trophies of shells and sand.

Then sated with such conquest vast
His sails were swift unfurled,
And homeward slunk the sovereign clown,
The butt of all the world.

But now the fierce invaders swarm
By sterner spirits led,
And oft before their trenchant arms
Our valiantest have fled.

What glorious hope the land inspired
When from his fortress far
Rushed great Caradoc, fiery-souled,
And checked the tide of war!

By him the scattered tribes conjoined
To petty feuds gave pause;
Destruction of the foreign foe
They made their holy cause.

Into the fury of the fight
His blasting might he flung,
While in the balance of the fates
The doom of Britain hung.

E'en like a whirlwind from the north,
That in wild autumn's day
Drives the dead leaves in screaming flight,
So raged he in the fray.

And oft it seemed our hated foes
Would in the seas be swept,
And evermore our sacred shore
In peacefulness be kept.

But victory to the Roman arms
Was granted from on high;
What human prowess could avail
Against a wrathful sky?

But be not Britain's heart cast down,
Nor hope, nor courage fail;
The glorious memories of our sires
To nerve us shall avail.

Forgotten be the evil days,
Avaunt the dastard mood;
For heaven appeased shall aid us yet
To quell yon hostile brood.

Dwell we in this exalting hour
On deeds that fire the soul,
And swear that we anew shall win
The way to triumph's goal.

Much then in song is finely told
Of famous chiefs and warriors bold
Who laurels won in times of old,
When in renowned wars they fought.
To patriot frenzy high are wrought
The hearers, who with wild applause
Fill in each brief and frequent pause;
And oft amid the ringing strain
With joy o'erfilled they cheer amain.

The song has ceased, the bard is mute;
Once more they give him loud salute
In honor of his tuneful feat;
And he withdrawing from his seat
His comrades joins; at his retreat
The great Arch-Druid, sternly set
To bring to act his solemn threat,
Silence with gesture grave commands,
And spreading forth his holy hands,

In earnestness of dread belief,
Thus utters exhortation brief:
“Vicarious blood now Britain’s needs demand,
To wash away her sin’s polluting brand.
Hale then the victim to the altar’s side,
And, offering up his youthful bloom and pride,
Placate the powers that o’er the world preside,
And ward from us the deluge dire of gore,
And strength and glory to the land restore.”

A murmur loud ensues, in which are blent
The assembly’s triumph, vengeance and assent.
All futile now were pity’s warm appeal
To breasts made ruthless by fanatic zeal.
Aye superstition like a sheath of steel
Hardens the heart, else soft and quick to feel;
And earth has known no sin or sorrow worse
Than such as breed from human creeds perverse.
All eyes, agloat, upon the captive bend;
All deem his death scourged Britain’s ills shall end;
No friend starts up to plead for a reprieve;
None gathered here o’er his harsh doom shall grieve.
He can but hope that in some coming fray
His vengeful comrades shall recall this day
And with shed blood his loss and theirs repay.

Two stalwart guards the fated prisoner lead
Unto the spot where he is doomed to bleed;
But masked in scorn he scarcely seems to heed

The ominous preparings of his foes
Which swift and most ignoble death propose.
To fortune's shifts the Roman's soul is steeled.
What boots it where, in court or camp or field,
Or how, the final and escapeless dart
Transfixes his inured, unshrinking heart,
'Mid custom'd peril feelingless as flint?
In this dark hour one thought his breast consoles:
"I've done for Rome my duty without stint";
And love for her his spirit so controls
That death's undreaded suffered for her sake.
From that short slumber which he soon must take
His hope it is in virtue's heaven to wake,
And in Elysian happiness to spend
The æons countless, gliding without end.

Oh, firm-fixed faith in immortality—
Man's grandest dream, if but a dream it be—
Who holds thee fast fears no adversity
And is not rasped by haps on land or sea.
What can it matter if this earthly span,
The merest dot in an eternal plan,
Be glad or joyful, if but duty's hest
In every act the candid being guide?
The virtuous mortal ever is the blest,
For in that soul where virtue doth reside
Reign strength and peace, whatever may betide.

Muttering weird spells the great Arch-Druid plies
His magic rod before their reverent eyes ;
A circle scant around the captive draws,
And through the air with curious motion sways
The potent verge, that in the pallid rays
Gleams strange and fateful; and all breasts he
 awes

With gruesome ritual that is slowly wrought.
Nor long the flock of priests in silence stays,
But, with the frenzy of the occasion fraught,
These oft in guttural unison repeat
Conjuring phrases, most vindictive prayer,
Till wizard vengeance taints the wholesome air.
Soon all the scene with horror is replete ;
Some ghastly relics of the dead expose,
Some brandish serpents darting tongues of flame,
Some scatter philters whence a vapor flows,
Of bluish tint, as from the pit it came.
Betimes they join in most bewildering march,
With doleful chants, wild shouts and harshest
 cries,
That like the tones of very Bedlam rise
In fierce confusion to the airy arch.

As when a storm, that in the summertide
Has raged portentous, all its force expends
In one last burst and then abruptly ends,
While utter calm rests o'er the region wide,

And moved to do what manliness inspires.
The warlike blood of his patrician sires
Seethed in his veins, and to the trumpet's sound
He felt his heart with eager rapture bound,
Nor could he rest till far from peace and home
He joined the hosts that waged the wars of Rome.
'Gainst Gaul and Teuton he had battle made
And valor stout on hundred fields displayed.
Still fired with zeal he crossed to Britain's strand,
And dyed anew in blood his tireless brand,
In every conflict winning fresh renown.
Bright seemed the gifts the future held in store,
And all his sky a glow of promise wore ;
Within his reach loomed glory's lustrous crown ;
And high command in army and in state
Seemed like a bird upon his lure to wait,
Ere long to flit within his very grasp.
Most bitter 'tis when fortune, vainly sought
Through toilsome years, eludes the yearning clasp ;
But sadder still when comes at last to naught
The steadfast train of ever-prospering years,
And rude misfortunes blast most bright careers.
Not they who fail to climb have sorest plights,
But those dashed sudden down from dizzy heights.

Some tender qualms for one brief moment fill
The captive's soul and so dissolve his will,
That nigh the tears from their sealed fountains start ;
Ah, hard it is with this sweet life to part,

And o'er him sweeps a wave of fond regret
For mother, sire, for brothers blithe and brave,
For sisters fair, and one more treasured yet,
The queen and idol of his inmost heart,
Who ne'er shall know nor weep beside his grave.
But feelings soft not long may him unman,
His Stoic creed swift puts them under ban ;
With will repaired his private grief he quells
And every thought save that of Rome dispels.
His hope for her his strongest passion proves,
And only thus his lips to utterance moves :

Gods that rule the fate of Rome,
Never lessened be her glory ;
Ever wider be her sway,
And more lustrous still her story.

May her vengeance dire descend
On each unsubmitting foe,
And the might of all this world
At her conquering feet fall low.

He speaks no more, but in proud silence waits
The galling end predestined by the fates.
Swiftly they strip him, tightly bind his feet,
And lay him prostrate on the stony bed.
Not e'en his eyes for mercy do entreat,
He counts himself already 'mong the dead,

Nor more for life nor mortal things has care,
Scorning to note time's few remaining sands.
No space for shrift the urgent hour can spare ;
Beside his victim the Arch-Druid stands
With golden knife uplifted in the air ;
The baleful blade gleams in the moonlight's glare,
Then with a vengeful energy descends ;
The too soft rind and case of life it rends,
And plunging deeply to the being's quick,
The vital seat invades with deadly prick.
The blade withdrawn lets forth a spouting flood,
And soon the sward is redly dyed with blood.
Few gasps and throes the victim's passing mark ;
Soon, soon the strife and pangs of life are o'er ;
The soul flies forth through that rude opened
door,
And lost fore'er the animating spark,
The bloodied corse lies moveless there and stark.
Then, while his mien ferocious fury mars,
The breathless breast the stern Arch-Druid hews,
And drags to light from 'neath its bony bars
The heart still quivering, pouring forth profuse
The streaming fluid from its severed sluice ;
And as a miser gloats upon his gold,
Or as a tiger on his prey in hold,
So gazes he with joy and fierceness fond
On life's spoilt chalice whence the wine has rolled,
The wine that glowed in youth's distended veins.
With flaming eyes the organ filched is conned ;

Then he on high the dripping trophy waves,
While ruddy rain his sacred vesture stains,
And in life's stream each priest his fingers laves.

At once spontaneous frenzied shouts respond,
And for a space the crowd exulting raves,
Like madmen boisterous breaking every bond.
Then chanting savage hymns the Druid choir
Haste to and fro and build a funeral pyre.
A ragged heap of branches dead they raise,
Whereon the corse with scornful curse they cast ;
Then light the pile ; and soon the expanding blaze
Steadfastly burns, unurged by any blast,
With hungry zest its prey consuming fast,
While odorous smoke uprises like a mast.
High leap the flames and far outshine the moon ;
Their cracklings loud with priestly chants attune ;
While, in his rest disturbed, the wildered owl
With hollow voice reproves the action foul.
The ancient serpent in his dusty bed,
Awakened, lifts his swoln and hideous head.
Galled by the uproar, he unwinds his coil,
And, hissing shrilly, glares on the turmoil.

Now sound the harps in mighty harmony ;
The bards burst forth in song tempestuously ;
The brazen trumpets blare discordantly ;
The clamorous warriors dance in vengeful glee ;
Their weapons clash in martial revelry ;

The dragon glows upon the flaunted flag,
And seems with joy his scaly tail to wag;
And as in flame the burning body wastes
And heat intense its dissolution hastes,
Far more uproarious still the concourse grows ;
Till at the instant of cremation's close
One mighty mass of overwhelming sound
Fills all the air, while roars the forest round.

The grave Arch-Druid stands the while unmoved,
His spacious brow with thought intensest grooved
Gazing intently on the blazing pile
Where lies the victim of his frightful creed.
If he be earnest or a lord of guile,
No man the truth in that stern face may read.
But when the climax of the frenzy breaks,
His potent wand impatiently he shakes
And with a look the sounding tumult tames ;
Then 'mid the silence loudly thus exclaims :
" The deed is done and expiation 's wrought ;
Well pleased the God his favor has restored.
Soon shall the rash and vain intruding horde
To ruinous expulsive rout be brought.
Uplifted now is Britain's weighty curse.
Exulting, sanguine now, ye bands, disperse
And through the woodland take your several ways,
Filling the forest with your anthemed praise.
The priesthood here shall linger and make sure
With secret rites that victory shall endure.

Go, soldiers! battle in your country's cause
With bolder hearts where grand Caradoc sways.
Bards, tune anew your jubilating songs ;
Druids, fore'er shall stand our holy laws,
And all shall perish who have wrought us wrongs."

Low due obeisance then the listeners make
Unto their noble head, who them doth bless.
With song and shout the bards and warriors take
Departure quick, rejoicing that the stress
Of evil days shall ne'er again oppress.
Some time the priesthood at the scene remain,
Performing acts of darkest witchery ;
Abroad they cast the ashes of the slain,
And oft they glide around the kingly tree
And posture, pray and chant confusedly.
Long ere they cease the wearied moon declines,
Till in the glade no ray of brightness shines,
And all the circle of the temple rude
Is hid in heavy shadows of the wood.

But what can check the mastering march of Rome?

Not curious rites nor blood on altars shed.
The eagles still wing on beneath the dome
And Britain trembles to the Roman's tread.

To farther coverts still her people fly,
In vain anew each stern assault they meet ;
The moldering forms of Britain's choicest lie
Upon the fields of carnage and defeat.

Nine bloody years her struggling sons maintain
Their manful part in the unequal fray ;
Till Britain's hope in dreadful slaughter dies
On Caer Caradoc's black and awful day.

And scenes more fearful later years behold,
When bards and priests, on Mona's holy isle,
In general butchery and extinction fall
And brutal foes the nation's shrine defile ;

When virtuous Buddug, queen of lofty soul,
Resentful, smarting 'neath degrading wrongs,
Unites her tribes, the work of vengeance plies
And massacres the hated alien throngs ;

When once again the huge embattled hosts
Of Rome and Britain fierce conclusions try,
And frowning fate and murderous defeat
Prompt the proud queen by her own act to die.

But, though oft beaten, straight the elastic race
Unvanquished rises from each stunning fall ;
And battles on 'gainst every foe and odds,
Nor any power its spirit can enthral.

And yet survives unmingled and distinct
That sturdy race of ancient pure descent,
And shall endure till time's concluding hour
A people separate wholly and unblent.

Their language lives, still vital as of yore,
 As they superior to all varying fates !
 Oh, for an eye prophetic to discern
 What noble mission yet upon them waits.

THE FOUNTAIN.

Anigh a grassy slope there lay,
 Deep-shaded by a stooping oak,
 A fount, whose bosom's bubbling play,
 Like simple music far away,
 Upon the ear all faintly broke.
 Close to the brink the clovers grew,
 Wreathing the rounded bowl from view ;
 And through the fields a runlet found
 A slender channel, and it wound
 'Neath hairy sedge and plummy brake
 Like some long, secret-gliding snake.

As crystal clear, and icy cold,
 The waters were—sweet, free from roil—
 As if the dews which flowers fold
 Within their fragrant hearts had rolled
 Adown the steep, escaping soil.
 The bleached sand formed their stainless bed,
 While pebbles, amber, white and red,

Upon the snowy smoothness strewn,
Though merest tinsel bits of stone,
Yet gleamed like gems of priceless worth
Fresh-fashioned from the mines of earth.

Nor any land, cerulean-skied,
That boasts of vintage old and rare,
In lauding song renowned wide,
More luscious nectar e'er supplied
Than there I quaffed, when from the glare
Of summer days, heat-smit, I fled
Beneath the screen the leafage spread,
And, on the sward's soft cushion flung,
Long o'er the welling coolness hung,
And, with a child's impetuous zest,
My fierce thirst quenched at nature's breast.

THE TRUE ACTOR.

Not wearing moods but as a mask,
Is the true actor at his task,
Aiming with formal, cold pretense,
Merely to trick the outer sense ;
Forced feigning, shallow, soulless art
Ne'er yet has touched or thrilled the heart.

THE LEAVES.

But what he *seems*, that sooth *is* he,
 While lasts his *rôle* of mimicry ;
 Whether by grandest impulse caught
 His soul's to tragic fury wrought,
 Whether to gayness it unbends,
 Or melting power to pathos lends.

In nature lies the potent source
 Of joy and pity, love and force ;
 Art but on crudity improves,
 And ne'er alone the being moves ;
 Both blended in proportion meet,
 The world falls at the mimic's feet.

THE LEAVES.

New life's tide through each vein welling,
 On each spray the buds are swelling,
 Of the future's green pomp telling.
 Like my new-born hopes are these
 Burgeonings of shrubs and trees.

Like an army's banners flaunting,
 Tuneful winds their dimness haunting,
 Leafage dense the boughs are vaunting.
 Like my full-fledged hopes are these
 Garnitures of shrubs and trees.

Touched with splendors beyond naming,
Gorgeous-hued the leaves are flaming,
Rapturous admiration claiming.

Like my dazzling hopes are these
Glories rich of shrubs and trees.

Frost-smit now the leaves are dying,
From the lifeless branches flying,
Or in faded masses lying.

Like my perished hopes are these
Cast-off gauds of shrubs and trees.

THE GOLDEN AGE.

Not, looking backward, may our mortal eyes
The golden age of fabled yore discern,
Nor, hasting forward, shall we e'er attain
The age of gold that haunts us in our dreams.
The race, slow-rising from a brutish past,
Ne'er left a nobler era in its wake,
But moving upward, aye left worse behind.
'Tis but as men remotest childhood view,
The aging world, through mem'ry's magic lens,
Gazes with longing back o'er misty years,
That like far lands seem in their dimness fair ;
And aye before us fresh horizons ope,
Howe'er so lofty and so far our way,

And still the world its weary path shall climb
To newer, higher, nobler eminence
While time shall be, nor evermore shall gain
A height which sates the ever-growing soul,
Nor e'er make real all hopes and aims ideal.

Nathless, this present is a golden age
Which far o'ertowers mere fancy's visionings.
Though day's full brightness still afar impends,
And æons more precede the perfect noon,
Yet olden twilight whitens slow to dawn,
And Progress bears her lustrous banner on,
And we the joy of grand advancement know.
Now is the glorious law of growth discerned,
And clear it seems that system rules the world,
Not wild caprice, and that all matters move
With fruitful potence to one mighty end.
What is, what shall be, are to what has been
As trunk and branches that from roots expand.
Cause and effect in an unbroken chain
Link all the eras of the growing world,
And new improvement on the ages waits.
This is time's hour with glory most replete ;
The wiser race, and keener-eyed, beholds
Life's common ores shot thick with purest gold ;
And in this present, that, familiar grown,
Oft sordid seems, dull, stale, of little worth,
Sees shining forth such wonders as surpass
The Orient tales and myths of Greece and Rome.

MANHOOD'S TEST.

Not ascetic self-denial
 In the lonely desert waste,
Or in solitary cell,
 Of man's nobleness doth tell ;
But to pass through fiery trial,
Bitterness of loss to know,
 Every acrid drop to taste
Poured from envy's venom'd vial ;
The full scale of human woe
 With the quivering heart to sound,
And yet let no evil throw
 Hope and honor to the ground.

'Tis a weak and craven bent
 Life's unkindly strife to shun ;
Better were the being rent
 By much sorrow than by none.
Wouldst be forceless as a shade ?
Then life's crucial tests evade.
Strong and wise thou canst not be,
Knowing naught of agony.

PREMONITIONS.

Though earthly natures, love of dross,
To future fate our vision blind ;
Though in our usual moods at loss,
How we shall leap death's gulf across,
Or meaning in life's struggle find,—
Moments, and sometimes hours, there be
Of clear, exalted sight, when we
Beyond the barriers seem to see
Of life the grand and lucid key,
The solving of all mystery.

Then fancy o'er the dark abyss
A bridge of radiance bright extends
That with the farther boundary blends,
A pathway from yon world to this.
And we, un'ware of sin and evil,
In hope's delightful visions revel,
And in our inner spirits feel
That surely all we dream is real ;
That life but as a fleeting night
Precedes the everlasting light ;
And, when from time's stern durance freed,
In bliss we drop each ill and need.

THE CHERRY TREE.

Stately and tall and laden with bloom,
A huge bouquet held by unseen hands,
Flooding with fragrance the spacious room,
The cherry tree nigh my window stands.

Each flitting warbler caroling greets
The incense-wafting, blossoming tree ;
Over the flower-cups brimming with sweets
Hovers the feasting, murmurous bee.

Through the snowy boughs the wind croons low,
And the sound wakes a dreamy delight,
While quivering sprays o'er the green sward throw
Balmy showers of the petals white.

Full soon shall be doffed this costume gay
For a livery sober of green,
And emerald globes swelling `day by day
'Mid the clustering leaves be seen.

Ere long the ripening gems shall glow,
Dotting the foliage dense with fire,
And the birds above and men below
Shall eye rich fruitage with keen desire

THE BROOK.

Unfettered waters gushing wild
In crystal clearness, undefiled,
Spill o'er the rim of a rocky bowl,
And hasten down a furrowed knoll,
Dancing and flashing as they go,
In musical and joyous flow.

Swift to the level mead they pass,
But 'mid the verdant velvet grass—
With clover bloom and daisies pied—
They love to linger and coyly hide
In shadows cast by sedges rank,
That arches twine from bank to bank.

Through many a rift in the woven green
The waters glisten in noontide's sheen,
But they creep at last to a stirless pool
'Neath willows' dense, dim arbor cool,
Where drooping boughs form a safe retreat
From the garish beams and fervid heat.

A PARABLE.

Up rolled the clouds and filled the sky
With thick'ning masses, dark of hue ;
The quickened breeze tempestuous blew ;
Their loom the lightnings fierce did ply,
And silver threads, swift fading, flew
Throughout the gloomy pall on high,
While loud the tone of thunders grew.
The land was parched and all athirst,
The sultry tide by men was curst ;
Yet swept the mocking vapors by,
Nor from their humid fullness burst
One cooling stream ere they dispersed.

A single cloud swam from the crest
Of distant hills—so frail and slight
That, as it passed in lonely flight,
Scarce did a noted shadow rest
Upon the meadow's emerald vest.
Yet freely from its lofty height
Upon a lily's drooping head
Baptismal drops of life it shed.

LIFE'S LAST LEAF.

When life's last leaf is turned, my friend,
And Death's grim pen, dipped deep in night,
Begins upon the page to write
Those sad and pregnant words, "The End";
May we not then all weakly shrink,
Like babes upon a chasm's brink,
Nor our waned strength in wailings spend.

But as one reads a pleasing tale
That to a climax bright and sweet
Is fitly brought, so may we meet
The hour when earthly force shall fail;
Give o'er this world without a sigh,
And into Death's mist-hidden vale
Pass with good heart and steady eye.

THE RESCUE.

A NEW ENGLAND LEGEND.

Upon a trancing summer night,
When o'er old Spruce Nob's shaggy height
The moon, full-orbed, shone calm and bright ;
When in the latticed porch the gay,
Glad chat of youth had died away,
And some fresh theme we wistful sought
To rouse anew the flow of thought ;
This tale the white-haired Elder told—
Drawn from a rich and various store
Of curious legendary lore,
And chance recast in fancy's mold.

I.

“Curst be the witch and let her die,”—
In Forest town uprose the cry,
Loud-uttered by accusers stern
In whom an ignorant zeal did burn ;
“The Evil One her soul doth own,
With life let her for sins atone.

“Have there been godless fancies bred
In any young and foolish head ;

Have men in wanton ways been led ;
Hath age its reverend manners shed ;
'Gainst sacred things do any rail ;
In holy life do any fail ;
Hath there been strange and deathly ail ;
Hath drouth or storm the land distressed ;
Hath any mortal, plagued, unblessed,
With fearful visions been oppressed ;
Have vice and crime and scandal thriven
'Too gross and rank to be forgiven ;
Hath discord, like a fiend in wait,
Disturbed the home, the church, the State ?
Then 'tis the witch's work ; her spell
Hath potence born of deepest hell.
Upon her head be vengeance done
Ere sets this eve yon sinking sun."

Then in the hamlet's crooked street
The townsmen made all haste to meet,
In childish eagerness to hear
The hinted tidings rendered clear.
Darkminded and unlearned were they,
The toys of their unreason's play,
And held in superstition's sway.

"Now, who with black and hellish art
Hath acted thus the foul fiend's part ?"
Growled Goodman Green, with puzzled frown.
"No soul I know within the town

So lost to right and ruth and grace
That with vile magic 'twould destroy
The neighbors' health and peace and joy.
If any can this witchcraft trace,
Let him its hateful worker name ;
And if sufficing proof appear,
The witch shall find her traffic dear,
E'en though she were mine own good dame."

Then spoke a man of stolid mien,
Of cruel lips and shifting eyes :
"Methinks it were not hard to glean
Proofs to convince the truly wise.
Not without reasons I accuse ;
The dame who all our mischiefs brews
In yonder crumbling cabin bides.
I know not if through air she rides
Upon her broom at midnight murk,
But often do I see her lurk
At nightfall where the shadows lie
Heaviest near the forest's edge,
While hideous bats about her fly
And frogs croak harshly in the sedge ;
And hear her muttering to herself,
As if she spoke to wraith or elf ;—
Sometimes she croons in weirdest tones,
Till chills the marrow in my bones,
The while she gathers unknown herbs ;
And if one wandering by disturbs

Her secret task, her song she curbs,
And to her hut glides, silent, back,
While follows closely in her track
A cat most spiteful, huge and black—
All witches that were ever known
Feline familiars black did own.
And sometimes, when the town's abed,
Belated villagers have spied
Through her hut's chinks gleam dully red
A light no mortal means supplied ;
And, creeping cautiously anigh,
Have peered within, where met the eye
A sight that might the stoutest daunt.
I say it not in empty vaunt,
But I once witnessed it and steeled
Myself to note the things revealed.
Above the coals that strangely glowed
A caldron hung upon a crane ;
From it, wild-bubbling, overflowed
An odorous liquor, dark of stain ;
And oft therein the dame bestowed
Her simples in the darkness culled—
Shunning the sheen of sun and moon—
And sing-songed some unearthly tune
Whose notes the kettle's gurglings dulled ;
While near the crackling hearth the cat,
With green and blazing eyeballs, sat,
And mewed and spit and lashed his tail
That thumped the floor, a furry flail ;

And as if she invoked a curse
Upon some soul that stirred her hate,
Or sued for power the imp perverse,
Or worshipped him, infatuate,
The dame with lifted hands did pray
And raved like one with wits astray.
But what was more enacted, I
Had no great craving to descry ;
For horror seized so sharp on me
I had no option but to flee."

Then broke in several eagerly :
" This dame's deeds are a mystery.
Thou tellest things we know are true,
For we ourselves have witnessed them,
Though to their pith we had no clue.
Is aught more needed to condemn ?
Ah, blind indeed our eyes have been
To acts that smack of harm and sin."

" But what," demanded Goodman Green,
" What if these doings thou hast seen,
And didst not at the tavern sit
That night till ale had marred thy wit
And wrought a nightmare in thy brain ?
For drink goes not against thy grain.
Why foolish acts to evil strain ?
These antics of the dame may mean
Naught save disorder of the spleen.

Hard would it go with all mankind,
If every rash and crack-brained deed
Were reckoned sin and 'twere agreed
In every fool a fiend to find.

Thou hadst a very proper fright
For peering into homes at night.
There is no harm when dims the day
In going forth to chant and pray ;
And culling simples is no crime,
Whate'er the spot, whate'er the time ;
Nor have the statutes e'er forbid
Boiling of herbs when day is hid.
While as for that her cat is black,
So too is mine, yet makes no wrack.
This dame hath lived so worthily
That she hath 'scaped all calumny.
Her virtues and her goodness shine
As if they had a source divine.
Beware how thou dost wrong impute
To one whose life bears holy fruit."

Then did a woman, too, exclaim :
"O man, upon thy head be shame,
Aspersing thus a noble dame
With hints so covert and malign,
Unmanly, craven, serpentine.
If hearts ye have, none here shall stir
To vex our household comforter.
For illness, puzzlements and woes

Ever the dame a cordial knows.
To us an angel she hath been ;
Her heart is kind, her wit is keen,
There is no soul on earth more clean,
More free from any taint of sin.
If every mortal owned her worth
A heavenlier place were this base earth."

"Aye, aye," the general comment rose,
"We in the dame our faith repose.
Ere slanderous tales we shall believe,
Some grains of proof we must receive
That she hath caused the world to grieve."

"Hear, then," the accuser crass replied,
"The tale in full ere ye deride.
Hath then this dame bewitched you all,
That thus on me your ire doth fall ?
Not always from mere outwardness
The heart's true worth we rightly guess.
The deadliest plant may bear a bloom
That peers the rose in sweet perfume ;
And apples with the smoothest skin
Oft hide a burrowing worm within ;
Oft devils strut in angels' guise ;
Before men's dull and dazzled eyes.
There is no seeming, howso fair,
That villains may not don and wear.
My story told, doubt, if ye dare,
This dame's complete iniquity,
And let your rage burst forth on me.

“ One night I saw her loitering
Amid the gloom and heard her sing
A doleful tune ; and then, next morn,
The frost had spoiled the flowering corn ;
Another eve with mummeries new
She conjured ; then a fierce wind blew,—
While hail and water fell amain,—
O’erthrowing trees, destroying grain ;
Again she charmed and followed soon
A fatal pest among the kine ;—
Struck ill at morn, they died at noon,
Or surely ere the day’s decline.
But last was worst of trouble’s sum ;
For after she that night had brewed
Her potion strange the plague ensued
Whereto our children did succumb.
In yonder yard behold the graves,
O Goodman Green, of mine and thine ;
So fresh, no grass above them waves,
And we have ceased not to repine.
In all our memories lingers still
Record of other woe and ill.
Dissension, scandal, vice and crime
Her craft hath wrought full many a time.
’Tis but of late I’ve pondered o’er
These evil haps and sought their cause,
Not noting soon the moving straws
Fanned by the winds of her design ;
And long from judgment I forebore,

For I to clemency incline.
But now, shall we this woman spare
To bring us added pain and care?
Nay, in the name of wronged and dead,
I call for vengeance on her head."

"Enough!" the gaping hearers bawled,
While women wept and wailed in vain;
"Her guilt is surely all too plain.
Naught now our spirits shall restrain
From the dread task to which we're called."

"Alas," assented Goodman Green,
"I have no wish the bad to screen.
If she with Satan is in league,
If 'gainst our weal she makes intrigue,
And wears the mask of base deceit,
Her doom cannot arrive too fleet.
I say no more in her defense,
Let her abide the consequence."

They answered him with loud applause
Of men to resolution won
By logic void of any flaws,
Sure of the merit of their cause,
And eager that their task were done.
Then in a body grim they strode
In silence to the dame's abode.

II.

Forth from her hovel poor and rude,
Where she had dwelt in solitude,
The angry mob the beldame haled ;
And as before their wrath she quailed,
Sure signs of guilt they saw in dread,
And roared, "'Tis time the witch were dead.
We shall not vex a magistrate,
But shall ourselves decree her fate ;
Like redmen's captives she shall die ;
The flames around her leaping high
Her flesh shall burn and purify,
Perchance, her soul, till she expire
In pangs to 'scape a fiercer fire."
The dame, too frightened nigh to speak,
Yet strove her innocence to plead ;
But none amid the din would heed
Her protestations faint and weak.
By frenzy spurred to violence,
With roughest haste they dragged her thence ;
Indifferent to her feeble age,
Imbruted by their credulous rage.

Where serried trees cast shade profound,
They chose unhallowed torture's ground,
And to the stake relentless bound
The trembling dame and heaped around,
In piles fantastic and awry,
The pitchy fagots dead and dry ;

While o'er the forest dense and vast,
Declining day's light-giver cast
With fainter force his mellow beams ;
And swiftly dimmer grew the face
Of earth, and twilight came apace,
And night gloomed nigh upon the place.
Like monsters seen in gruesome dreams,
When lawless fancy horrors finds,
The shadows took grotesquest shape,
And seemed to those benighted minds
The forms of ghosts and fiends to ape.
And as eve's stillness deeper grew,
Timorous glances round they threw ;
And when the sudden sound they heard
Of crackling twig or twittering bird,
They shuddered inly, for they knew
Their task unlawful none could bless ;—
Both fear and conscience made them rue,
And were they but in numbers less,
Nor 'gainst the dame such anger nursed,
They would have quit the work accursed.
Hence, though with willful vim they wrought,
Their souls with dreads and qualms were fraught
Nor with the drams their leader doled
Grew they more wise or firmer-souled.

A space she felt from out her heart
All courage, hope, and faith depart ;
But soon recovering from despair,

With pallid face and hoary hair
Thin-streaming on the shuddering air,
The dame stood wrapt in voiceless prayer.
Her eyes were closed as if in sleep,
And her old visage, wrinkled deep,
Soft-lit with resignation's glow,
Revealed no more wild terror's throe.
Confronted surely with her doom,
Keen fear to calmest faith gave room ;
At worst her pangs could be but brief,
And she held fast the sweet belief
That death is simply but a birth
To life beyond the scenes of earth,—
That lot where stainless souls shall be
Immersed in pure felicity.
So in her heart she could forgive
The mob that swore she should not live,
Since it was but the instrument
To set her free, 'mid sorrows pent.

Some her uplifted face who saw
Were deeply touched with ruth and awe ;
Now fain would they conform to law,
And have the woman wan and frail
Tried in the court's impartial pale ;
But 'mid the boisterous crew too weak
Their numbers were release to seek.
So on the dame with thoughts unbarred
In helplessness they sadly stared,

Their manful courage all unstrung,
While harsh remorse their spirits wrung.
The pyre was lit, the flickering flame
Crept snakelike toward the menaced dame.
At first with movement torpid, tame,
It wound along in gleaming maze ;
Then, blinding the unready gaze,
Leaped up at once a broadening blaze
That dully roared and far and near
Illumed the forest spaces drear.
Shook then the air with ghoulish cries :
“ She dies, aha ! the fiend’s friend dies ! ”
Then, frenzy by its shouts enhanced,
About the spreading fire they danced,
By superstition madmen made,
Fit tools for that demoniac trade.

Once more her strength the dame forsook,
As with a wild and startled look
(For the mad noise her musings broke)
She peered about through flame and smoke
At that delirious revelry.
Could life a darker hour disclose
Than this of friends turned all to foes,
So clamorous for blood, aglee
O’er most extreme atrocity ?
Nay, ’tis all mundane torment’s height,
When earth’s nigh fading from the sight,
To feel that unbewept we go,

While they who should assuage our woe
But brutal pangs for us prepare
And swell with curses our despair.

Some fates such bitterness distill
As doth harsh sorrow's cup o'erfill.
For such a gentle soul as she
Could Heaven no milder doom decree ?
Amid her fellows, in good will,
She had dwelt blameless her life long,
Nor e'en in thought had done them wrong.
Her voice was ne'er in bickerings heard ;
She ne'er had spoke a venomed word ;
Her kindness reached all souls in need ;
Her heart for sorrow's wounds could bleed ;
Her charity for all could plead,
Nor ever questioned worth nor creed
When moved to do a gracious deed.
Erewhile had she been called "The Good,"
Yet now beside the sombre wood
Threatened by cruel death she stood,
And knew how swift a people's mood
Of love turns to ingratitude.

Yet by her fervent faith upheld,
Not long the dame's firm soul was quelled.
As to the hand divine she clung
Away her doubts and fears she flung,
And, nerved unto the ordeal dire,
No longer dreaded foes nor fire ;

But waited Death with patience, sure
That she his worst could now endure.
So while the flames still closer crept,
And round the raucous madmen swept,
While very pandemonium reigned,
She by unshaken faith sustained,
Unmoved within her soul remained ;
And 'mid red flames and smoke-wreaths dim
Loud-chanted faith's triumphant hymn.

III.

But hark ! a cry, that, stern and shrill,
Echoes awoke from wood and hill
And seemed the clamor wild to still.
As if some fateful potent spell
Upon the sons of Bedlam fell,
And, startling, hushed their mouthings loud,
The erst mad-leaping, raving crowd
Stood awe-struck, gazing here and there—
At wood, o'er glade, through fummy air—
With tense and superstitious stare ;
And wondered much what might portend
That weird, strange voice, which seemed to blend
Such grief and fury in its tone
As ne'er from human tongue were known.
Was it some demon from the pit
Who his sulphureous realm had quit
To drag the dame's bad soul below
To regions of unending woe ?

Not long they glared in blank dismay,
For, 'mid the deepening twilight gray,
Like an avenger, swiftly ran
Toward that mad scene a savage man.
A redman's raiment rude he wore,
And in his clenched hands he bore
The tomahawk and scalping-knife,
As if he rushed to sanguined strife;
Quiver and bow hung at his back,
And eagle-plumes of deepest black
Waved o'er his high and bronzed brow
Where wrath its furrows rough did plow.
His eyes glowed fierce, like living coals,
Striking a terror to their souls;
And from his chest expansive, deep,
They heard the whoop of battle leap;
While all their coward flesh did creep,
As if from his unearthly home
Some dark and evil sprite had come.

On, on he flew with features set,
As if he feared no foeman's let,
E'en though a hostile world he met;
A tall, barbaric chieftain, grand
As some roused giant; and the band
Of torturers trembled as he sped,
And, panic-stricken, would have fled
Ere he had reached them, but so fast
He rushed upon them that he passed

All furious through their loose array,
Thrusting impeters from his way,
While they shrank back in fear and awe,
Like jackals from the lion's paw ;
And ere a man could stay his hands
He flung aside the scorching brands,
And with one thrust of his sharp blade
He cut the thongs the dame that held,
Then loud and fierce defiance yelled ;
Upheld the dame on his strong arm,
Dashed boldly through the cringing swarm,
And waved his threatening axe on high,
While boundless scorn blazed in his eye
And made the nearer cravens fly.
None dared his progress brave to stay,
For utter dread upon them lay ;
He seemed not made of mortal clay
Who thus, courageous, swift and strong,
Could dare and daunt and cheat the throng
Of their due victim weak and frail ;
So, sooner than is told the tale,
The sheltering trees the rescuer gained,
And, in the forest's cunning trained,
Hastened unto a covert dark
Where keenest search no trace could mark
Of his well-urged and skillful flight ;
Then halted till should fall the night,
Ere he his course again pursued
Through the unpathed and bodeful wood.

IV.

Beneath a rock's o'erhanging crest,
Within a niche of ample size,
By tangled growths fenced from surprise
The fugitives took transient rest.
By strong emotions overpowered,
The dame awhile in dumbness cowered,
Not knowing what her rescuer meant,
With hope and dread within her blent ;
While he, upon the earth bent down,
Listened for murmurs from the town,
But heard no sound of sharp pursuit ;
The dusk and mighty woods were mute ;
No living thing went to or fro.
Then to himself he muttered low :
" The paleface cravens do not dare
To chase the Panther to his lair."

The dame his meaning well divined,
For each in other's tongue was skilled
In fair degree, and each could find
The thought that alien phrases filled.
Not long to silence then resigned
The dame, all fain to ease her mind,
Yet stammering in wilderment,
Thus made appeal : " With what intent
Have I been snatched from Death's grim jaws ?

Is this releasing but a pause
Ere newer torture I shall meet?
Ah, life at best is sad and fleet,
And age's grave yawns at my feet ;
Let mercy then incite a blow
That, hard and quick, shall end this woe.
But if because thy heart can ache
Thou tear'st me from the deadly stake—
Since weak old age with force appealed
Unto thy ruth too long congealed—
If thou hast saved my life indeed,
My warmest thanks shall be thy meed ;
And henceforth as my prayers soar
To that Great Spirit all adore,
I shall invoke high heaven to bless
My champion in this grave distress.
Surely thy life should be replete
With glory for this noble feat,
While God's high favor shall attend
Thy ways e'ermore, unto the end."

" Oh, aged one," the chief replied,
" Be thy good heart at utter ease,
For thou hast 'scaped all enemies.
While I am present at thy side
Thy footsteps shall I fondly guide,
And all my strength and bravery
Shall strive to keep ill-hap from thee.

Sweet freedom's thine ; no torture waits
Beyond the vicious white man's gates.
To ruder scenes thy life I'll bear,
Yet shalt thou know less spite and care.
Thou shalt be honored in our tribe,
And whoso at thy worth shall gibe
Shall die as sudden as the oak
Is blasted by the lightning's stroke.
Know that the redman, while he lives,
Though he no injury forgives,
Yet ne'er forgets a kindly act,
Nor e'er in gratefulness has lacked.
Me, doubtless, thou didst soon forget,
But I remember still my debt,
Nor deem that I have paid thee yet."

"To me no mortal oweth aught,"
Murmured the dame. "Yet thou dost seem
A figure in some ancient dream
On memory's fading tablet caught."
"List," said the chief, "while I relate
Briefly how we are linked by fate:

"'Twas in a winter long ago,
When all the land was robed in snow ;
When cold winds through the woodlands howled
And hunger's ghost upon us scowled.
All food had failed, and gaunt and faint,
Both braves and squaws, who made no plaint,

Crouched shivering by their feeble fires ;
And e'en the flint-heart warrior sires
Were stirred to tears by children's moans
And could but answer back with groans.
For wheresoe'er we hunters came
We found the forests void of game ;
And some by deep fatigue o'ercome
Fell in the drifts and, famished, numb,
Lay helpless there and chilled and died,
While driven flakes their graves supplied,
With redman's burial rites denied.
Awful is famine in the cold,
When droop and die the young and old
Like blossoms nipped by early frost,
Vigor and grace untimely lost.
I could not bear the dreadful scene
Where only death could intervene
'Twixt lives and woe ; so I uprose
Resolved to battle with the snows ;
Nor fawnlike die in passive throes.
As one in burning fever's craze
To whom unnatural strength is lent,
Blindly I rushed in devious ways,
Not knowing whither I was bent ;
And all that day I raced and raved,
Until my life was nearly spent ;
Death frowned, but I was strangely saved
Ere he his fatal arrow sent.
For on a cabin snug and warm
I stumbled mid a roaring storm.

With cheerful light its windows glowed ;
All quickly to its door I strode ;
Then, with a last, despairing yell,
Senseless upon the snow I fell ;
Nor knew aught more till I awoke
'Mid light and warmth and felt the stroke
Of gentlest hands upon my brow—
Their healing touch I feel e'en now—
And had the joy of starving men
To whom food's taste has come again.
Too weak my rescuer to thank,
Into a slumber deep I sank,
Nor woke until tempestuous night
Gave way to morning calm and bright.
Then in new strength and youth I rose,
And ere that day's eventful close
Abundant game I found and slew
To save from death our starving crew.
Thou wert the rescuer ; many owe
To thee their lives and love thy name
And will with joy thy friendship claim.
Chief debtor I ; thou didst bestow
On me such help, such kindness show
As sons from mothers only know.
Thou didst not note my visage red ;
The savage one so gently fed
Was more by kind words comforted.
And now in this thy dreadful plight,
Though face be red, this heart is white
And beats for thee with purpose right.

White mother, without kin or friend
To ward from thee a poignant end,
The chief who from the flame has won
Thy life henceforth shall be thy son.
To yon Great Spirit give the praise,
Who shaped this eve my aimless ways
That I thy fearful need should see,
And charged me thus to rescue thee."

"Alas, 'twas little I did do,"
Replied the dame with streaming eyes,
In faltering tones and pious wise ;
"The Lord above contemns no hue ;
There is no barrier to His grace
Of lot or form or tint of face.
In His regard all men are one
Great, varied race saved by His Son.
I looked not on thy skin ; thy soul
I knew was human, and God's scroll
Bore thee and me upon its roll.
Young brave, who with so ready hand
Hast rescued this poor burning brand,
Who camest as sent by will divine,
I will accept the wondrous sign.
For, by my proper people spurned,
To some new mission I am turned.
With thy wild nation if I dwell
I may the truth to pagans tell,
And lift their lives to higher planes ;

So it shall be that it was well
That I once suffered scorns and pains.
I'm but a bent and wrinkled crone
Of lot obscure and spirit lone,
But unto me it hath been shown
How God can work deliverance,
Even when sorrow's waves advance
And threaten to engulf the soul
Cowering on the strand of dole.
So, lead me on, devoted brave,
Heaven did our lives for purpose save ;
Work we amain in His good plan,
And worthier make this earthly span."

The chief, unspeaking, bowed assent,
And when the day, shut in his tent,
Its inky curtains had unfurled,
And darkness brooding o'er the world
Its shelter to the fleeing lent,
The twain took up their silent march
Through tangled brush and 'neath the arch
Of low-hung boughs that e'en in day
Had proved a hindrance to their way.
But patiently they plodded on,
Till, far from peril's clutches gone,
They stayed their steps beside a stream
Whose murky mirror showed the gleam

Of pallid stars that twinkled through
The leafage rifts ; the brave there drew
Forth from a bush his birch canoe,
And on the river's placid breast
They sped beyond all hostile quest.

V.

Not long the mob, shamefaced, dismayed,
Lingered within the darkling glade,
Which weirder grew in evening's shade,
While murmured hollowly the brook
That through the aisles arboreal played.
Oft looking back, in fear, to view
The dreaded spot, each man withdrew
And homeward straight himself betook.
Long in the legends of the town
The vivid tale was handed down
Of how the Fiend in redman's guise
Bore off the dame before their eyes ;
And what a terror struck them all
To see the fierce-miened savage tall
When, with the dame upon his arm,
He strode away, defying harm,—
Ah, such a bold, demoniac air
The Prince of Darkness sole could wear ;
And oft, rejoicing, men would say,
“ The witch, sooth, got the devil's pay.”

But from that time, through quiet years,
Aloof from white men's hates and sneers,
Perturbed no more by bitter fears,
Within a wigwam of the wood,
Where none dared roughly to intrude,
All honored the old dame abode
And swayed the redmen by the code
Of gentleness and piety,
And won their love and loyalty.
Her influence tamed the people wild,
Roused in them ruth and made them mild,
And prone to shun whate'er defiled ;
Somewhat she taught them to abhor
The cruelties and wastes of war,
Till they grew fond of arts of peace,
Of steadfast ways and wealth's increase ;
But found themselves exalted more
By her rich gifts of sacred lore.
They prized and blessed her while she stayed
On earth and wrought with them and prayed ;
And when at last, in ripest age,
Was writ for her life's latest page,
Stamped with the image of the cross,
They mourned as for a mother's loss.
And, in traditions crude and quaint,
She lived the redman's guardian saint.

HERBERT SPENCER.

Time's foremost thinker, he from off the height
Of vast unfolding science, looked afar
And saw the Truth's full-burning, glorious star
The erst deep gloom of human thought make bright.
Eld's sages' eyes were keen, but lacked the light
Wherewith true knowledge 'lumes the cosmic maze ;
They saw purblindly, hindered in their gaze
By ignorance' darkness, superstition's haze ;
Through mystic reasonings led to denser night.
He, like an eagle of wide-reaching sight,
Above the clouds and mists his eyry made
And clear the whole great universe surveyed ;
Traced grand effects each to its potent cause ;
Discerned creation's high, undoubted laws,
And read the future, science' perfect seer.
He voiced his vision with deliverance clear ;
No qualms of doubt his strong, bold utterance stayed,
Nor for dead faiths he shed the futile tear,
Nor gave them tribute of his mere disdain ;
For all the deeds and dreamings of the past
Are but chilled links in Progress' lengthening chain
To the new glowing era welded fast.
His message startled men ; sad souls, afraid
Lest he earth's hoary creeds might overturn
With cumulative fact and logic stern,

Fiercely, in vain, they strove to circumvent
Or to refute the master's argument.
Wide o'er the globe his forceful thought has spread
With hope and joy displacing gloom and dread ;
And now has dawned the full triumphant day
When all mankind shall own its thorough sway.
For truth and reason with resistless might
E'en fearful bigot souls in time invade ;
The veriest dolt in season due must learn ;
Clearly at last the blindest shall discern
In nature's book man's gospel grand displayed.

TO THE SEA.

Thou mighty Sea, expansive, measureless ;
Blue liquid robe wrapped round the heaving breast
Of giant Earth, responsive to each pulse
Of her huge throbbing heart—grand is thy stretch,
Here from my feet, where breaking ripples plash,
Far off, to dim horizons, where thy surge
Laves heaven's lower arch ! Sublime's thy sweep !
Fit floor for yonder curved exalted sky,
Great nature's palace dome, where chainless winds
Forever waft the changing, restless clouds,
In depths cerulean floating like the foam
On thy broad waters borne ! Unshackled Sea !
Eye roll thy countless billows fierce and wild

And roar thine anthem stern, O emblem vast
Of freedom and of power. Beholding thee,
Man's bosom swells as one of thine own waves,
And all the fetters of his dreary thoughts
Burst like weak webs. O exultation sweet,
And wid'ning fancy! Here upon thy shore,
Lifelong, Old Ocean, I would muse and dream,
Rapt by thy murmurous and unceasing play,
Until my soul so kindred grew to thine,
That all thy moods and passions should be mine.

OCEAN'S GLEE.

Hark to the wind-stirred sea,
Sporting most mightily!
Like a serpent huge and grand
Writhing lithe upon the sand,
On the long and curving shore
Roll the waters o'er and o'er
With a far-resounding roar;
And the clamor swelling high
Seems to echo from the sky,
Till all the space of earth and air around
Is filled with medley sweet of dinning sound.

Far out o'er all the deep
The flashing billows leap,

LIBERTY'S STATUE.

And toss on high great caps of broken foam ;
 And barks with canvas white,
 Fast gliding from the sight, [roam.
 Like strong-winged birds the spacious ocean
 Oh, wild and splendid in its giant glee
 Is the surging, sunlit, wide-expanding sea.

LIBERTY'S STATUE.

Majestical, sublime, her figure towers,
 Dwarfing the lowly islet where it stands
 Amid the spacious, beauteous, busy bay,
 Haven of commerce with unnumbered lands.
 Before the greatest city of the west,
 The chief metropolis of earth to be, [loom,
 Through centuries' flight this presence grand shall
 Colossal sign of nations' amity.
 With visage calm and mild, benignant eyes,
 With glowing torch held toward the outer sea,
 She 'lumes the portal wide of Freedom's shrine,
 And welcomes thus all who oppression flee :
 "Come ye from distant realms,
 Where age-propped wrong o'erwhelms,
 Where men, crushed down, like babes still feeble
 Come to a purer air, [creep;
 Where men are men and dare
 To claim their rights and Freedom's service keep ;
 Haste from the lands effete

Bristling around with hate,
And life's more sweet and high allurements reap.
For here prevails in gross defects' despite
Earth's richest dower of sweetness and of light."

A NOVEMBER DANDELION.

'Twas on a dim November day ;
The fields were dun, the air was cold ;
When wandering in a rugged way
I saw where 'mid sere grasses lay
 A dot of living gold.

A modest blossom claimed of spring,
Defiant of the season late,
Or which all summer slumbering
Woke up on winter's breast to cling,
 Thus tempted icy fate.

It seemed a futile sacrifice
For such a gentle flower to bloom
Beneath the chill, unkindly skies,
At that sad time when Nature lies
 Torpida, as in her tomb.

SPRING.

And yet unto the gazer's heart
 It sent a sudden thrill of cheer
 To find so fair a bloom could start,
 Bursting the bonds of frost apart,
 From out a spot so drear.

SPRING.

Shine out, O sun of spring ;
 Quicken the torpid germs
 Of life in wood and field ;
 Grant Nature milder terms,
 O Spring, thou heart-soft maid,
 Than Winter stern, who laid
 On earth, left nude by autumn to the cold,
 A stifling shroud, frost-glued in every fold.

Breathe warm, O winds of Spring ;
 Green, timid shoots caress,
 And charm them into bolder growth
 With murmured tenderness.
 Ye rains, light-pattering,
 Baptize these babes of Spring,
 Till chaplets fair of blade, leaf, bloom bedeck
 The happy land and mend the Winter's wreck.

THE METTOWEE.

There's a river fair and placid
Memory visions oft to me ;
'Tis the river of my childhood,
The meandering Mettowee.

Through the narrow valley winding
Onward to the inland sea,
With a low and peaceful murmur
Glides the tranquil Mettowee ;

'Mid the green and lowly meadows,
'Neath the bridges, by the mills,—
And its bosom wears the shadows
Of the everlasting hills.

Dainty willows, tall and drooping,
Dip their tresses in its flow ;
On its swarded banks the daisies
In their starlike myriads grow.

Deep its limpid waters mirror
Bluest skies and trees and flowers,
Showing there a world as mighty,
But more fairy-like than ours.

JULY IN VERMONT.

Once again, as oft in childhood,
 Idly stretched upon the shore,
 Whiling summer hours in revery,
 On the quiet stream I'd pore ;

Then my life would for a moment
 Seem unruffled as the stream,
 And the gliding of existence
 Be one sweet and halcyon dream.

But the river seeks the ocean ;
 So my shallop reached life's sea,
 Where, sore-tossed on troubled surges,
 Oft I mourn thee, Mettowee.

JULY IN VERMONT.

Now browns the clover's crimson ball,
 The daisy's ripened seedlets fall,
 And stiffer grows the herd's grass tall,
 And elders bloom beside the wall.

Ripe, red and lush the raspberries glow
 'Mid verdant leaves on brambles low,
 That flourish in a straggling row
 Where'er the scythe forbears to mow.

With bearded plumes uplifted high,
Billowy sways the tawny rye ;
Where darkly green the oat-fields lie
A million kerneled pennons fly.

Fierce is the sun's unbroken glare,
And stifling seems the languid air ;
Slow creep the rillet's waters spare ;
A dusty coat the still leaves wear.

Unfreshened by the niggard rain,
The herbage wilts on hill and plain ;
The kine, all listless, browse in vain,
With ample udders on the wane.

Where mowers stout their blades have plied,
Lie parched and brown the meadows wide ;
And into every spot the tide
Of harvest fragrancies doth glide.

POULTNEY RIVER.

From the full heart, unthrobbing, of the hills
Forthgushing, o'er earth's sloping breast it speeds ;
The trickling tributes drawn from springs and rills—
Their liquid mites—its slender streamlet feeds.
Down rocky stairs in rashest haste it leaps,
With joyous murmurs robes itself in foam ;
Then ripples limpid 'twixt the level meads,

Or in deep gorges, pooled and placid, sleeps,
As if no more its waters tamed would roam.
But, swift or slow, its onward course it keeps,
And ceaseless flows, where'er its windings make,
In day's broad sheen or in the mottled shades,
Until at last it peacefully invades
Champlain's fair realm and mingles with the lake.

THE DREAMER.

Wearied of all the bustles of life,
The dreamer withdrew to his den ;
"I will hold me aloof," he said, "from the strife,
The jostle and uproar of men.

"And hard and long I shall seek for truth,
With a spirit cool and serene,
Till the light I reach, and grasp the key
To life's entroubled scene."

But lo, as he mused in his calm retreat,
Endeavor's hour was gone ;
And through the struggle, the rush and heat
The world moved grandly on.

Settled was many a problem deep
Ere he of a key could dream ;
And he found that in life's rude clashes oft
Truth flashes her brightest beam.

WOMAN.

Woman, in e'en thy cramped and narrowed past,
'Twas ever ordered that thy work should be
Beneficent to this humanity.

Wielding through love an influence deep and vast,
For truth and virtue all thy force was cast ;
And though man's drudge o'erlong, his toy and
slave,

Thy soul the world its purest leaven gave.

But now the bonds are rent that held thee fast,
And quickened thought has brought thee widened
scope,

Thy mind expanded and thy powers set free,—
No longer doomed in petty spheres to grope—
Man's equal now in deed and destiny—

What nobler things of thee may we not hope,
What laurels bright can fate withhold from thee?

MIDNIGHT MOONLIGHT.

Yon silver keystone of night's sable arch

Gleams calmly down upon the sleeping world ;

The twinkling stars have stayed their silent march

'Mid courses vast where they through time have
whirled.

The massive hills in solemn grandeur stand ;
 The glistening waters broad unruffled lie ;
 Hushed are the forests, and the tranquil land
 Communes responsive with the halcyon sky.

The air is stirless, and each plant and tree,
 Bathed in the lustre of the midnight sheen,
 A carven shape of marble seems to be,
 While mystic beauty floods the whole transfigured
 scene.

LINCOLN.

Ah, woeful deed to strike such greatness down
 In the ripe fullness of its work and fame !
 Fate, fain to add more glory to his name,
 Veiling her love beneath a cruel frown,
 Decreed to him the martyr's sable crown.
 The rueful tale to time's remotest years
 Shall move the soul and tap the fount of tears,
 Watering anew his deathless green renown.
 Nor less the meed of grief and honor they
 In whose wronged name the crazed assassin wrought
 To that great-souled and kindly genius pay.
 He sorrowed aye when maddened brethren fought ;
 No conqueror he whose pleasure 'twas to slay :
 He only right and peace and Union sought.

LIFE.

How glad 's the tide of simple youth
When earth is sweet and fair,
And the fresh heart and untried soul
Dwell in illusions rare !

Beauty o'er all the world has thrown
Her mantle bright and fine ;
From lustrous stars and glowing eyes
Beams radiance nigh divine.

Relentless Care stands far aloof,
Sorrows all swiftly glide ;
Life's merry stream through meadows pours
Where brilliant blooms abide.

Then Hope, with tireless, deftest hand,
Upon his glowing screen,
In pigments mingled by the gods,
Paints many a roseate scene.

Fancy with free and daring wing
Through glorious regions soars,
And with a princely summons tries
At heaven's most secret doors.

And Love, the sum and crown of all,
Itself seems riches vast,
Destined through every change to grow
And evermore to last.

What high aspirings, noble zeals,
The raptured being fill !
There seems no task too hard, no bound
To youth's undaunted will.

The years pass on ; life's currents flow
In grooves more sharp and deep ;
O'er roughening rocks, through barren banks,
Down many a jagged steep.

Toil, like an iron despot, rules
Our little lives' domains,
And spectral Care a constant hold
Within the bosom gains.

Hope's iridescent bubbles break
Smitten by Fact's hard wand,
And Fancy folds her wearied wings
And droops at Care's right hand.

"Great things attempted, little done,"
Thus do we brand the past ;
What feat can crown our failing strength
Since life speeds on so fast ?

For length of days we vainly cry,
For more of gift and might ;
Ere we complete a day's due task
Shall fall the numbing night.

With struggle worn, oft plunged in grief,
Time's rugged real we face,
And fear our lots no more may claim
A triumph or a grace.

Now Love has lost its olden glow,
And Zeal has banked its fire ;
And Duty's sober mood supplants
Youth's impulse and desire.

What deeper meanings now invest
Each action, thought and sound ;
Wisdom and worthiness we find
In life's most common round.

The words which once mere music seemed
Form now a prophet's screed ;
The phrases which a poet dreamed
Now serve our deepest need.

No more these passing shows of time
Can dupe our opened minds ;
We pierce the cheating masks of things,
Seek kernels 'neath the rinds.

Firm nerves we need and dauntless wills,
For life grows chill and stern ;
Nor e'er within our older souls
Shall early raptures burn.

THE ABANDONED FARM.

'Mid yon drear plot of long-neglected ground,
Vacant the once well-peopled farmhouse stands ;
With ne'er a trace nor e'en an echo left
Of all its former blithe and busy bands.

How fair of yore through circling trees it gleamed !
Though humble, pleasant, neatly kept and trim ;
Now faded, frayed, by variant weathers worn,
It wears a front inhospitably grim.

The olden elms that bent their branches low,
A foliage shield against the sun and storm,
The ruthless axe long since has shorn away,
And blackened stumps the scene once fine deform.

The door's ajar ; the empty windows stare
Like open orbs of sudden-strangled dead ;
The loosened clapboards rattle in the gusts,
And mossy shingles warp and gape o'erhead.

The rended chimney, reft of many a brick,
Totters and leans above the sagging roof ;
The swallow hosts that gorged its smoky throat
Now from its shelter chill hold far aloof.

Those chambers once the tight, secure retreat
Of mortals toiling, joying, or at rest,
Now sun and rain and breeze and mist invade,
Nor beast, nor bird finds there a lair or nest.

Cold is the hearth where blazed the household fire ;
With dingy embers and gray ash 'tis strown ;
The glow of coals, the kettle's cheery song
Shall here no more for luxury's lack atone.

Ne'er more the scenes which memory portrays
Within this ruin shall enacted be—
The family throngs, the romps of festive swains,
And those last rites of dark solemnity.

And all without a desolation reigns,
With naught to charm or glad the wistful eye ;
Nigh this sad spot less glorious seem the hills,
And dimmer bends the azure of the sky.

Yon broken gate, half from its hinges torn,
No longer bars and yet impedes the way ;
The pathway paved with rudely fashioned stone
The lawless grasses litter with decay.

Still towers the sweep beside the curbless well,
A dark up-pointing finger of despair ;
It creaks and quivers in each passing blast
And soon shall fall 'neath time's and weather's
wear.

Those waters once so sparkling and so pure,
Delicious draught to parched and temperate men,
Now dust-defiled and mantled o'er with scum,
Shall never tempt the thirsty lip again.

Upon its pole the pigeon-cot survives,
But cooing tribes no longer harbor there ;
Nor preen their plumes, nor toss their burnished
crests,
Nor cut their nimble circles in the air.

The spacious barn, whose mows with fragrant hay
Or bearded grain was plenished well of yore,
Whose floor resounded to the thresher's flail,
Long since despoiled, shall ne'er renew its store.

No more its walls on frosty eves shall ring
With merry voices of the husking bee,
Nor young hearts there with careless zest enjoy
The harvest hours of mingled toil and glee.

The stables dim where cattle lowed and moaned
By irksome stanchions in their prison bound,
The stalls where horses whinnied, neighed and
pawed
Molder unused, in silence most profound.

The barnyard music of the fowls is hushed—
Though rude, 'twas sweet to every wonted ear—
The hen's loud cackle and the goose's scream,
The piercing notes of far-heard chanticleer.

Where bloomed the garden, gay in mingled hues,
With patient care and toilful tendance tilled,
Now weeds run riot, choking floral broods,
And nettles claim the space that lilies filled.

Upon the mead where grew the velvet sward
The pigmy forest has already sprung ;
The poison ivy and the wild-grape vine
O'er tumbled walls their networks thick have
flung.

The ancient orchard wears an aspect sad ;
 'Mid blighting webs o'er all its foliage spun
Enclustered worms await the quickening hour
 When they shall flaunt gay-pinioned in the sun.

Thick, hoary moss the rotting trunks entwines ;
 The shrivelled fruit from gnarly boughs depends ;
The crumbling bark swarms with the pecker's prey ;
 Consuming rust the wilting foliage rends.

Yon fields, erst fertile, where with tireless arms
 The plow and hoe the lusty farmer plied,
Now fallow lie, with tangled growths o'erstrorn,
 A dreary waste with cold repulsion eyed.

Man wrests from Nature but with constant strife
 Dominion, space, for just a passing day ;
Swift she reconquers his untilled domains
 And reasserts her wild and savage sway.

Alas ! that e'er one happy human home,
 Which toil and care and stern denial cost,
Should be forsook forever and destroyed,
 A centre, source, of gracious influence lost.

Here in this spot once cherished and endeared
 A sturdy race bore life's vicissitude ;
In patience labored and with cheerful will,
 Nor deemed its lot and calling hard and rude.

But softer sinews and a wider aim
Its offspring owned and shrank from drudging toil;
By easier modes they sought for richer gains
And scorned the meagre yieldings of the soil.

To where the city proudly reared its piles,
And culture, wealth and fashion centring lured,
The sons and daughters of the homestead thronged
To 'scape the hardships those of old endured.

And were they happier, wiser than their sires?
To them apply the one unerring test:
Where'er the soul most nobly can expand,
That is the lot which evermore is best.

But in the cramped and thickly-peopled town,
Where fevered men with anxious effort strive,
There is a sense of prisonage and doom,
And love of nature lingers still alive.

And yet shall dawn that more auspicious day
When from o'ercrowded, noisome haunts shall flee
The city's poor, beset with want and woe,
To rural haunts and fuller liberty.

Then once again shall each abandoned farm
Beneath the hands of earnest toilers thrive,
And anxious hearts ensconced in homes secure
From life and time a richer joy derive.

IF ONLY ONCE.

If only once in ages yonder sun
With grand effulgence filled the boundless blue,
Or the full moon in queenly state uprose,
Flooding the earth and air with rarest sheen ;
If in a lifetime only once we saw
The beauteous pageant of the budding stars
In heaven's high campus at the eve unfold
To blooms of fire—this were a sight so grand
'Twould stir the sense and wake in every heart
Deep and tumultuous wonderment and joy.
If spring but seldom came, were flowers more rare,
If clouds and hills and forests, lakes and streams
Of beauties fine made more infrequent show,
Then were this world a trancing wonderland
And men again had faith in miracles.

BEECHER IN BRONZE.

Beecher, thy form in bronze, of noble port,
And as in very life it once appeared,
In thy dear city's homely forum reared,
The loving homage of all eyes to court,
Faces the hall where weighty civic cares
The people's servants task,—as if with zeal
Thou still wert watchful o'er the public weal.

And o'er the thronged and noisy thoroughfares
Thy keen and pleased glances seem to glide,
As when in life, scanning the human tide,
Thou lovedst its bustlings, chafings and its blares,
Yet 'mid its turmoils ever wert serene.
'Twas well they placed amid this busy scene
This speaking image of the champion great
Who in life's ceaseless strifes and battlings led
The hosts of men, and leads them still, though dead,
Moulding the world by deathless power innate.
Sublimar Cid, undaunted friend of man,
Thy merest semblance fires the fainting van,
And fills thy fellows with a mighty need
To do some manful, some exalted deed.

Full firm thy front was in the living clay
As in this metal that knows not to bend.
Thou didst not falter in the bitterest day,
Thou wert not laggard to the glorious end ;—
'Mid blaze and blast forever strong and stable,
'Mid calm and storm unmoved, indomitable.
First in thy city, foremost among men,
Of church and state a pillar fair and grand,
There was no bound thy sympathy could pen,
No worthful work that lacked thy aiding hand.
Spokesman not only of thine own great land,
But prophet also of thy time and kind,
Thy lips by fear in silence ne'er were glued.

All men thy brothers were, though poor and rude ;
Thou gav'st to causes grand thy royal mind,
Thy soul magnanimous, thy boundless heart,
And ever took the weak, downtrodden's part.
Alike, unquelled, the oppressors of the slave
And the alien mob's wild raging thou didst brave.

IN MOOD EXALTED.

The glory of an autumn day
Fills all the land and lifts my soul
To nobler mood, and frees the thought
Which common needs too oft control.

I gloat upon the enchanting scenes
That deck the hills, the plain, the vale,
And feel within my raptured breast
That beauty's joys can never fail.

And beautiful as is the face
Of rich-robed nature, now appears
The aspects of this mortal life,
Maugre its ills and glooms and fears.

Serene content and insight clear
Hold in this hour a gracious sway ;
And trammels of old bents and doubts
Like worn-out fetters drop away.

Despite past qualms, or those to be,
In boundless faith this hour I feel
That wisest goodness rules the world,
That life is bliss and death but weal.

The hests of high beneficence
I question not, but fully trust ;
All shall be well, though finite sight
The scales of ignorance encrust.

Whence I have come or whither tend,
The import of this earthly scene,
For ends of certain good is hid
Behind Eternal Wisdom's screen.

If in the picture of this life
Dark hues are mingled with the bright,
'Tis that the work may fairer seem
And we more clearly know the light.

Not by mere blind, unthinking chance
The concourse of the worlds was wrought,
But by a grand intelligence,
The source of purpose and of thought.

No despot rules the universe
To whom mankind must cringe and bend,
Forbidding manhood, reasoning, search,
But an exalted, helpful friend.

There is no God who would oppress
The feeble creatures of His will,
Capricious raining boons or banes,
Yet claiming men's true worship still.

If man owes duty unto God,
God owes vast duty unto man ;
Duty is sentient being's law,
The essence of the cosmic plan.

God would not that we men be slaves,
Or fools or weaklings filled with dread
Lest He for some unnoted slip
Should launch His terrors on our head.

The aspiring will, the active powers
Were given, not to rust in vain,
But that through use and high emprise
Man might a higher level gain.

The light the lamp of reason sheds
Was kindled at a flame divine ;
O'er life's oft darkened, surging sea
Its beacon rays, safe-guiding, shine.

Be we then brave and filled with hope,
Act nobly each his fated part,
With sweet belief that mind and will
Share sovereignty with boundless heart.

Now too my heart folds all mankind
Of every clime and hue and creed ;
I would that every human soul
Might find the good that fits its need.

I would that prejudice and hate
From out the hearts of men might die ;
That jealousies and wars might cease
And peace endure while time shall fly ;

And that the nations might be bound
In universal brotherhood ;—
Too small is earth, too brief is life
For other acts than tend to good.

And now a grand sustaining hope,
A prophecy of things to be,
Inspires my soul, and clearly traced
The future's course I seem to see.

Time comes when Freedom shall unfurl
Her banner blest in every land,
When iron thrones shall crumbled lie,
When men in manhood's worth shall stand.

Then shall each wall that caste has reared
Be broken by the people's might,
And in life's struggle all shall own
An equal chance and equal right.

Then knowledge o'er the world shall spread,
Till life's dark ways all bright shall be,
And from the earth shall pass the reign
And curse of dull credulity.

From superstition's blighting grip
The souls of men shall set them free,
And rise from fetid depths of gloom
To heights of calm felicity.

Nor shall the haggard fiend of want
Prey on the hapless millions more;
For science, skill and liberal modes
Shall bring to all an ample store.

Then justice, tolerance, charity
Shall o'er the race bear fuller sway,
And higher aims and worthier lives
Shall glorify the coming day.

Not idle shall the nations sit,
Nor beg for blessings from the skies,
But labor on in unison
To make of earth a paradise.

NOT BUILT WITH HANDS.

I have a house not built with hands,
Nor founded on the shifting sands
Of wealth and place and fame and power,
That oft do vanish in an hour.

Sooth, 'tis a castle in the air,
Yet it defies time's stress and wear ;
And as if based upon a rock
Survives life's fiercest storm and shock.

It is a structure of my dreams
That thus so firm and lasting seems ;
And its dimensions grand and fair
Bright fancy aye keeps in repair.

Mine 'tis alone ; none else can take
Possession, or my title break ;
Amid the changeful scenes of earth
'Tis all I have of stable worth.

THE SEA MARSH.

The tide has ebb'd ; the waters flee ;
The marsh beside the shrunken sea
Lies parched and cheerless, dull and brown ;
The sapless sedges droop and sigh
As the arid, blighting wind blows by ;
And the bright sun shines keenly down
From the fervid furnace of the sky.
All drear and dismal is the waste
Which erst with many a stream the living waters
 laced.

The tide 's at flood ; resistlessly
Flows back the conquering, swelling sea ;
Each bay and inlet drained it fills
With swift profusion, till they send
Throughout the waste a myriad rills
Which in one grateful freshet blend.
New life the moistened sedges thrills ;
They rouse as from a dream of death,
And in the evening's balmy breath
With rustling song of joy they sway ;
While o'er the scene soft moonbeams play
And mystic beauty lend ne'er known in garish day.

THE PATHS TO FAME.

Hard are the paths of toil that lead to fame ;
Firm will needs he who treads them steadfastly,
A buoyant heart, a never-quailing soul,
A purpose swerveless as the hests of fate,
A hope undying, consecration high.
On that stern way up cold ambition's steep,
With wearied limbs and bleeding feet they climb
Who seek the summit of success's peak ;
The winds of chill neglect blow on them oft ;
The rains of scorn upon their heads pour keen ;
Tempestuous hate around them oft doth rage ;
And bitterer still the clouds of doubt and fear
Oft wrap and blind them till they halt and fall,
Enfeebled, faint, dismayed, disconsolate.
Yet on and upward do their footsteps tend,
Nor do they stop to gloat upon the meads
Whose velvet verdures tempt them in the vales ;
Nor turn aside to rest them 'neath the boughs
Of rustling groves that cast enticing shade ;
Nor list to songs of sirens—pleasure, ease—
That utter ever invitations sweet
To mount no further, to forego the strain
Of arduous toiling and ignobly live
In soft content and aimless indolence.

THE DAYS THAT BE.

Far nobler are the days that be
Than all the times of chivalry.
Not now the chiefs of cruel hordes
Gain highest glory with their swords,
Writing their names on history's page
With flame and blood and brutal rage.
Now he who owns the noblest soul
Shines loftiest on great honor's roll ;
He who is chief in peaceful arts
Wins grandest meed from human hearts ;
And he who leads the hosts of thought
Wears bays more bright than wars e'er brought.

THE STAR AND THE METEOR.

A star quivered in the frosty sky,
A pure, bright star,
With no mist to mar
Its crystal radiance ; but it shone too high
For the low-bent gaze of mortal eye—
Too pure, too fine, too far,
A steadfast and unvalued star.

A meteor flashed through the riven air,
Blinding the sight
With its dazzling light ;
All the awestruck world with a startled stare
Viewed the passing portent's vivid glare ;
But soon in the depths of night
It plunged and was lost to the sight.

But the star shone on with a ray serene,
Fixed in its place
In the vast of space ;
And some rare souls there were, I ween,
Who loved and lauded its beauteous sheen,
Though the general race
Ne'er noted it shining in its place.

TAKEN UNAWARES.

His soul was steeled 'gainst women's wiles,
He ran the gauntlet of their smiles,
Their winsome glances, siren tones,
And all the spells which passion owns,
Safe as the knight who, 'mid the strife,
Fights on unharmed, with charmed life.

He disciplined his too soft heart,
And shunning bliss escaped the smart ;
Till, triumphing o'er all assail,
He deemed he wore a perfect mail,
Without the slightest break or gate
For subtle love to penetrate.

But one who sleeps upon his guard
Is doomed e'en though his armor 's hard
And of best proof ; and so it happed
That he one day, a-dreaming, napped,
And waking, found his spirit fond
Was captive in a silken bond,
So very slight and yet so strong,
It weakens not through decades long,
But firmer grows and sweeter still ;
So he for freedom has no will,
And daily joys that he was spared
To be by that sweet elf ensnared.

CONJECTURE.

Do tender eyes in other, higher spheres
A pitying gaze on earth's tired millions bend ?
Do they o'erfill with sympathetic tears
When mortals mourn and wails of woe ascend ?

Are there warm hearts beyond our human ken,
Akin to those that break in this sad vale?
And do they beat condolingly for men
In anguish wrung and in despair's dark pale?

And are there minds in which the keen desire
For knowledge, truth no progress gained allays;
Which still must search and question and aspire,
E'en through the flight of never-ending days?

Runs there through all the scattered worlds of space
A bond of kinship strong and sweet and fine,—
The mundane knit to the celestial race
And each allied unto the One Divine?

GOOD NIGH AT HAND.

Yon distant sky wears not more fair a hue
Than is the ocean's or the lakelet's blue;
The far-off stars no greater beauty yield
Than do the flowers which decorate the field;
And storied angels scarce in worth compete
With human natures loving, pure and sweet.

Not all remote from life's restricted round,
But nigh at hand, the sum of good is found.
The soul illumed, that 'neath the surface sees,
In common things finds pleasing mysteries.
Beauty and grandeur ever greet the eyes
When reason's sway has made the spirit wise.

AGNOSTIC.

I have sailed on the ocean of infinite thought —
And what have I found that is certain? Naught.
If this I discard, or if that I believe,
Is it not that the shows of existence deceive?
Oh, once when I stood on the great ocean's brink,
Truth seemed the sure prize of all who would think;
And I hoped—ah, the rash aspirations of youth!—
To find on some strand the pearl of the truth.
But many a year have I sailed the seas o'er,
With never a haven nor the gleam of a shore;
Still vaster and wider the waters expand;
Life's mystery deepens on every hand;
Till now I know well this life will have rolled
Away ere the Fates Truth's self shall unfold;
Nor dare I have faith that 'yond the deep night
Of death and the grave there is knowledge and light.

THE VACANT THRONE.

Lo, vacant stands the lofty throne of song,
Dark-draped, while low the fallen sceptre lies;
And men peer round with wistful, straining eyes
To find the King to whom their loves belong.
Claimants there be amid the tuneful throng,
Aspiring sons of greatness here and there,

And some are fair and noble, good and strong,
But still the world awaits the royal heir.
Whence he shall come no mortal can foreknow—
Scion of grandeur, spawn of sons of scorn,
In manger base, or regal chamber born,
Be his condition most exalt or low,
True lord of genius, wearing greatness' sign,
His sway shall be by highest right divine.

THE MINSTREL.

The minstrel 'neath the willows sat
And tuned his changeful harp ;
The wayside throngers paused to hear
Its accents soft or sharp.

He chanted a song of a broken heart,
A wild and plaintive strain ;
The eyes of the listeners filled with tears,
As their breasts were pierced with pain.

He rolled forth a lyric of wildest war ;
A clamor brave uprose ;
Each idler wore a martial air
And scorned his fancied foes.

He trilled a ditty of mirth and joy ;
The crowd went wild with glee ;
The merry shout and the nimble dance
Revealed their gayety.

He sang of love's resistless power
In measures ardent, sweet ;
The maidens melted and their swains
Knelt stricken at their feet.

In deep and reverent tone he hymned
Thanksgiving, praise and prayer ;
The awe of worship filled their souls
Who else had worshipped ne'er.

He sang the patriot's noble deeds,
He praised a hero's death ;
And each one vowed to serve his land
Until his latest breath.

He wailed the wrongs of downtrod men,
He cursed the despot's sway ;
The multitude with wrathful cries
The tyrant rose to slay.

In tender tones he murmured low :
" A truce to bitter strife ;
O mortals, here fraternal dwell,
For brief and swift is life."

A calm fell on the listening throng,
Each clasped his neighbor's hand ;
The harp was hushed, the harper gone,
But peace was in the land.

A CONTRAST.

Lo, heavy mists the blooming vales enfold,
While barren peaks glow in the sunlight's gold,
And fairer seem in gilding ether pure
Than those rich lands envapored and obscure.
Thus human souls devoid of proper worth
Oft shine with glory of exalted birth,
While scanty fortune and a lowly state
Bedim the virtues of the native great.

FAITH.

What the dim future hath in store
No sage is visioned me to tell ;
Yet, if I judge by times before,
Whate'er shall be, it shall be well.

Of the vanished past I make no complaints ;
Fate better wrought than my desire ;
With faith serene as any saint's,
I strive undaunted and aspire.

For whatsoe'er for me is best,
That shall the power o'erruling give ;
Submissive to the high behest,
In duty's ways I toil and live.

THE TRUEST FRIEND OF MAN.

Not he who strides a shrinking world—
Colossal, selfish, stern—
Not he who wins the bays of fame
Men's warmest love shall earn.

Not every deed of worth is writ
On glory's gleaming page ;
For many an inexalted soul
Has nobly served his age.

He is the truest friend of man
Who does his proper part,
Though it be low, with honest will
And with a gentle heart.

THE SOUL'S LOGIC.

Not toil, nor care, defeat, nor woe
Can make this life an empty span ;
But, dying, turning all to dust,
To be no longer soulful man.

Alas for worth and noble aims
If to this earthly globule bound,
Nor in the mighty range of space
For us a higher sphere be found.

Is this poor plane we oft despise
The highest reach of human kind?
Then why such loftier heights we see,
To glory infinite not blind?

O human spirit that aspires,
Revolting were that cruel doom
Which led thee up thought's highest peak,
Then cast thee in a hopeless tomb.

SERENADE.

Though the stars are shining bright,
Lady, fearless view the night ;
There's no splendor in the skies
That can pale your lustrous eyes ;
Rather would each starry blaze
Wane before your dazzling gaze—
Lady, fearless view the night.

Lady, turn my night to day ;
Let me not go scorned away ;
Dumbly, long, I've loved thee well,
Daring not my love to tell ;
Only 'neath night's friendly veil
Have I heart to voice the tale—
Let me not go scorned away.

THE WILLOW.

O willow, lithe willow, o'er the brook bending,
In beautiful curves to the water descending,
Thy tresses, low-hung, with the quick current blend-
ing,
Are swaying and sweeping in rhythm unending.

Dim is the shade 'neath the thick drooping willow,
Soft is the sward tufted high for a pillow,
Sweet is the sound of each miniature billow
Of the swift-gliding stream with its murmurings
mellow.

A DREAMER'S NOOK.

Where the slow, still stream is wending,
'Neath the dense-laced boughs low-bending,
In the wood gloom, deep and cool ;
Where no beam of sunlight glistens
E'er on inky ooze or pool ;
Where the ear intently listens
As for whispers, low and faint,
—Purr of joy or muffled plaint—
Where, idly dreaming, one may toss
Vision-stirred on couch of moss ;
There it were a blessèd thing,
Lone in the wild a-lingering,
No intruder being by,
Hours of summer days to lie,
Indolent, 'neath fancy's spell,
Pondering what no tongue may tell.



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