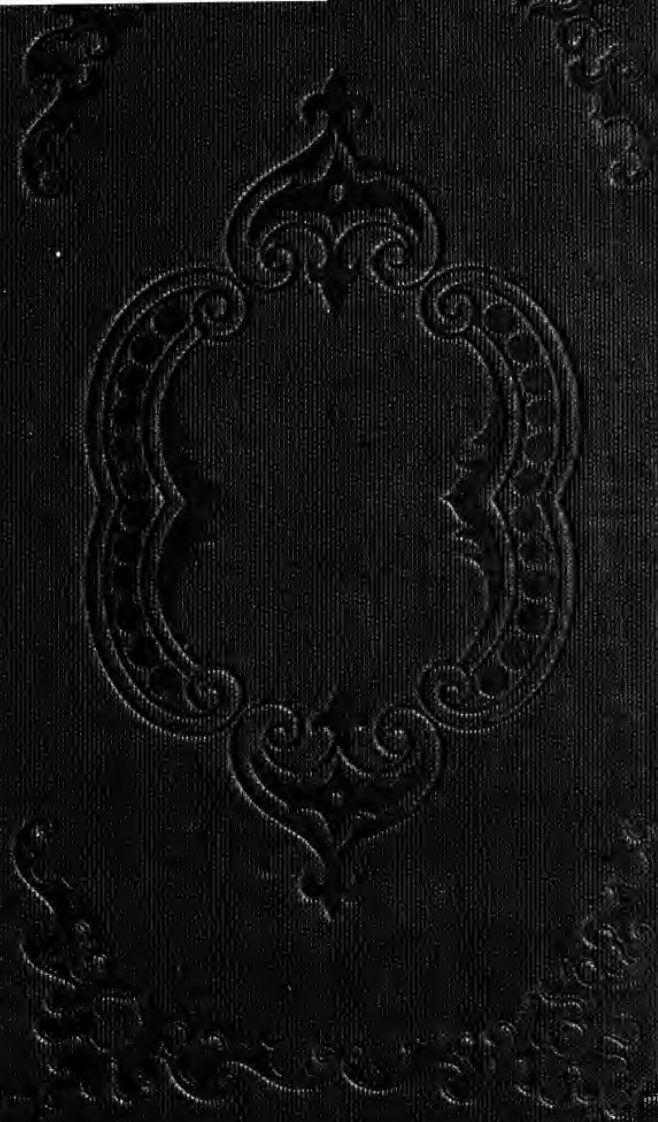
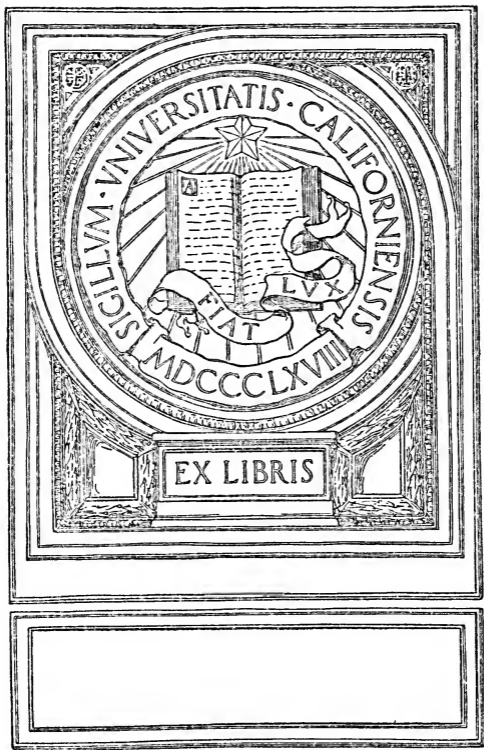


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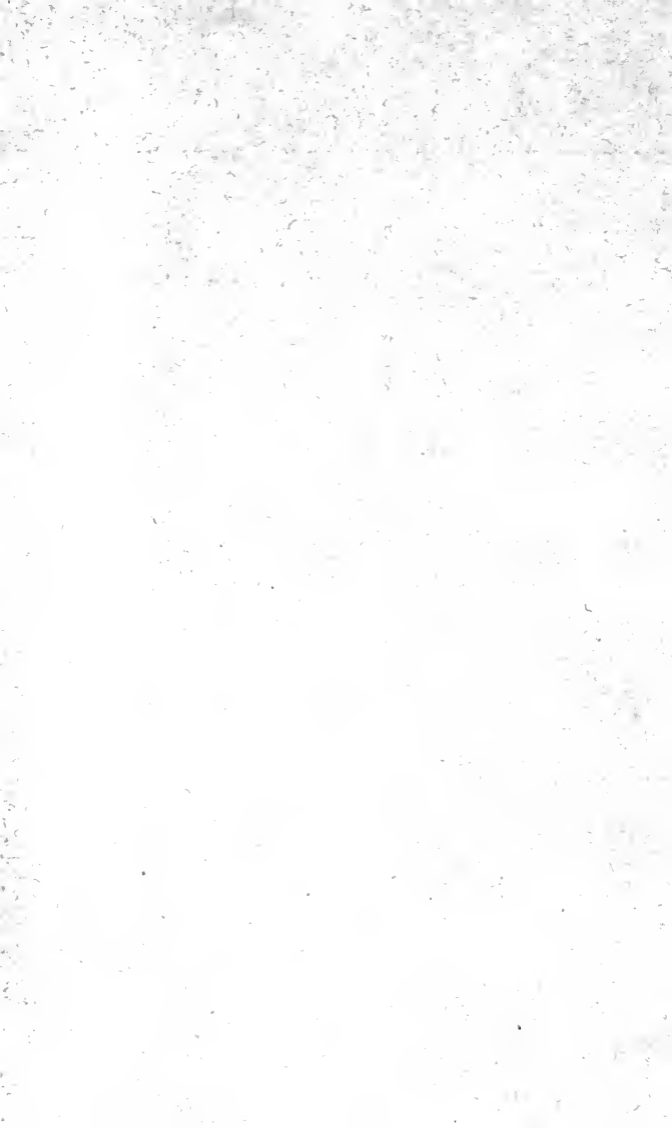
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SYLVIA;

OR,

THE LAST SHEPHERD.

SYLVIA;

OR,

THE LAST SHEPHERD.

AN ECLOGUE.

And Other Poems.

BY

THOMAS BUCHANAN READ.

11

PHILADELPHIA:

PARRY & MILLAN,

SUCCESSORS TO A. HART, LATE CAREY & HART.

1857.

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TO

Henry C. Townsend, Esq.

To you, my friend, whose youthful feet have known
The same bright hills and valleys as my own ;
Whose eye learned beauty from the selfsame scene,
Which, still remembered, keeps our pathways green ;
From the same minstrel-stream and poet-birds
Learned what I oft would fain recall in words :—
To you I bring this handful of wild flowers,
By memory plucked from those dear fields of ours ;
And when their freshness and their perfume die,
On friendship's shrine still let them fondly lie.

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SYLVIA;

OR,

THE LAST SHEPHERD.

PRELUDE.

THE MOWERS.

“HERE mid the clover’s crimson realm
We’ll rest us through the glowing noon,
Beneath this broad and liberal elm,
Slow nodding to his hundredth June.

“On this low branch our scythes shall sway,
Fresh reeking from the field in bloom;
While, breathing o’er the new-mown hay,
The air shall fan us with perfume.

“And here the cottage maid shall spread
The viands on the stainless cloth,—
The golden prints, the snow-white bread,
The chilly pitcher crowned with froth.

“And you, fair youth, whose shepherd look
Brings visions of the pastoral time,—
Your hay-fork shouldered like a crook,
Your speech the natural voice of rhyme,—

“Although the world is far too ripe
To hark,—or, hearkening, would disdain,—
Come, pour along your fancied pipe
The music of some rustic strain.

“We’ll listen as we list the birds,—
And, being pleased, will hold it wise ;
And deem we sit mid flocks and herds
Beneath the far Arcadian skies.”

Thus spake the mowers; while the maid,
The fairest daughter of the realm,
Stood twining in the happy shade
A wreath of mingled oak and elm.

And this, with acorns interwound,
And violets inlaid with care,
Fame's temporary priestess bound
In freshness round her druids hair.

The breeze with sudden pleasure played,
And, dancing in from bough to bough,
Let one slant sunbeam down, which stayed
A moment on the crownéd brow.

The birds, as with a newborn thrill,
Sang as they only sing at morn,
While through the noon from hill to hill
Echoed the winding harvest-horn.

With upturned face and lips apart,

He mused a little, but not long;

For clustered in his boundless heart

Sang all the morning-stars of song.

SYLVIA;

OR

THE LAST SHEPHERD.

THE ECLOGUE.

I.

IN middle of a noble space,
Of antique wood and boundless plain,
Queen Sylvia, regent of all grace,
Held long-descended reign.

The diadem her forehead wore
Was her bright hair, a golden band ;
And she, as sceptre, ever bore
A distaff in her hand.

In russet train, with rustling tread,
She walked like morning, dewy-eyed,
And like Saint Agnes, ever led
A white lamb at her side.

And she to all the flowery land
Was dear as are the summer skies;
And round her waving mulberry-wand
Swarmed all the butterflies.

Queen was she of the flaxen skein,
And empress of the snowy fleece,
And o'er the silkworm's small domain
Held guard in days of peace.

II.

To own her sway the woods were proud,
The solemn forest, wreathed and old;
To her the pluméd forests bowed
Their rustling ranks of gold.

Mantled in majesty complete,
She walked among her flocks and herds;
Where'er she moved, with voices sweet,
Sang all her laureate birds.

All happy sounds waved softly near,
With perfume from the fields of dew;
From every hill, bold chanticleer
His silver clarion blew.

The bees her honey-harvest reaped,
The fields were murmurous with their glee;
And loyal to her hives, they heaped
Her waxen treasury.

All pleasures round her loved to press,
To sing their sweetest madrigals;—
She never knew the weariness
Which dwells in grander halls.

III.

What time came in the welcome spring,
The happy maiden looked abroad,
And saw her lover gayly fling
The flax athwart the sod.

Hither and thither the yellow seed
Young Leon sprinkled o'er the plain,
As a farmer to his feathery breed
Full hands of golden grain.

As o'er the yielding mould he swayed,
He whistled to his measured tread
A happy tune; for he saw the maid
Spinning the future thread.

Or saw the shuttle in her room
Fly, like a bird, from hand to hand;
And then his arm, as at a loom,
Swung wider o'er the land.

He wondered what the woof would be,—
Or for the poor, or for the proud?
A bridal garment fluttering free?
Or formal winding-shroud?

IV.

THEN May recrossed the southern hill,—
Her heralds thronged the elms and eaves;
And Nature, with a sudden thrill,
Burst all her buds to leaves.

Loud o'er the slope a streamlet flung
Fresh music from its mountain springs,
As if a thousand birds there sung
And flashed their azure wings.

“Flow on,” the maiden sang, “and whirl,
Sweet stream, your music o’er the hill,
And touch with your light foot of pearl
The wheel of yonder mill.”

It touched the wheel, and in the vale
Died from the ear and passed from view,—
Like a singing bird that is seen to sail
Into the distant blue;—

Died where the river shone below,
Where white sails through the vapour glowed,
Like great archangels moving slow
On some celestial road.

V.

How sweet it is when twilight wakes
A many-voicéd eve in May,—
When Sylvia's western casement takes
The farewell flame of day:

When cattle from the upland lead
Or drive their lengthening shadows home;
While bringing from the odorous mead
Deep pails of snowy foam.

The milkmaid sings, and, while she stoops,
Her hands keep time ; the night-hawk's wail
Pierces the twilight, till he swoops
And mocks the sounding pail.

Then sings the robin, he who wears
A sunset memory on his breast,
Pouring his vesper hymns and prayers
To the red shrine of the west.

Deep in the grove the woodland sprites
Start into frequent music brief ;
And there the whip-poor-will recites
The ballad of his grief.

The ploughs turn home ; the anvils cease ;
The forge has faded with the sun ;
The heart of the loom is soothed to peace,
And the toiling day is done.

VI.

A LOVER'S heart hath no repose;
'Tis ever thundering in his ear
The story of his joys and woes,—
The light remote, the shadow near.

And Leon, penning his fleecy stock,
Felt hope as painful as despair,
While one by one heaven's starry flock
Came up the fields of air.

True shepherd,—like the men of old,—
He knew to call each as it came;
And, as his flock leaped in the fold,
Each had a starry name.

There, clustered close in slumbrous peace,
He gazed on them with shepherd pride,
And saw each deep and pillowy fleece
Through Sylvia's soft hands glide.

In that still hour, where none might mark,
He leaned against the shadowy bars;
Soft tearlight blurred the deepening dark
And doubled all the stars.

And, starlike, through the valley dim
The tapers shot their guiding rays;
But one there was which seemed to him
To set the night ablaze.

To his impatient feet it flowed,
A stream of gold along the sod;
Then like the road to glory glowed
The love-lit path he trod!

VII.

OUT of her tent, as one afraid,
The moon along the purple field
Stole like an oriental maid,
Her beauty half concealed.

And, peering with her vestal torch
Between the vines at Sylvia's door,
She saw two shadows in the porch
Pass and repass the floor.

On the far hill the dreary hound
Saddened the evening with his howl;
In the near grove—a shuddering sound—
Echoed the ominous owl.

Three times, as at a robber band,
The guardian mastiff leaped his chain;
Three times the hand in Leon's hand
Grew chill and shook with pain.

And Sylvia said, "These, Leon, these
Are the dismal sounds which three nights past
Came herald to the mysteries
Of dreams too sad to last.

VIII.

“FIRST of the mournful sights, I saw
Our flocks fly bleating from a hound,
And many a one his savage jaw
Dragged bleeding to the ground.

“The rest sought shelter in despair,
And in a brake were robbed and torn;
The cruel hound had an ally there
In every brier and thorn.

“In nightmare chains my feet were set,
For I could neither move nor scream:—
Oh, Leon, it makes me tremble yet,
Although 'twas but a dream!

“Anon I struggled forth, and took
From off our mastiff's neck the chain;
He leaped the gate, he leaped the brook,
And snarled across the plain.

“Then how they fought! My sight grew dim,
In straining to the field remote:
At length he threw that bloodhound grim,
And held him by the throat!

IX.

“AND then I heard your neighing train,—
Its silver bells rang down the breeze,—
And saw the white arch of your wain
Between the roadside trees.

“Announced as by an ocean storm,
A horseman from the east in ire
Rode to retrieve his hound : his form
Was robed in scarlet fire.

“But when you saw our murdered field—

And saw in midst the struggling hounds—

And him whose sword made threat to wield

Destruction o'er our grounds ;—

“You loosed the best steed of your team,

And seized the weapon nearest hand,—

Then sped the hill and leaped the stream,

And bade the invader stand.

“Then came the horrid sight and sound :

At length I saw the foe retreat,

And swooned for joy ; but waking found

You bleeding at my feet !

X.

“I bore you in; with my own hand
I tended you long nights and days;
And heard with pride how all the land
Was ringing with your praise.

“But when your deepest wounds were well,—
This, Leon, is the saddest part,—
A lady came with witching spell,
And claimed you, hand and heart.

“She came in all her southern pride;
And, though she was as morning bright,
An Afric bondmaid at her side
Stooped like a starless night.

“She moved as she were monarch born,
And smiled her sweetest smile on you;
But scorned me with her lofty scorn,
Until I shrank from view.

“When you were gone, all hope had flown,—
Grief held to me her bitter crust;
My distaff droped, my loom o'erthrown
Lay trampled in the dust.

XI.

“I KNOW such dreams are empty, vain;
And yet may rest upon the heart,
Like chillness of a summer rain
After the clouds depart.

“And still the dream went on:—each hour
Some new-born wonder filled the dream:—
First came the labourers to o’erpower
And chain our little stream.

“A giant prison-wall they made;—
Our brook, recoiling in her fears,
Over our meadows wildly strayed,
And drowned them with her tears.

“And then they reared a stately home,—
Not one, but many, for this queen;
The gleam of tower and spire and dome
Through all the land was seen.

“And when her orgies swelled the breeze,
Loudly a mile away or more
Was borne the voice of her revelries,
The rattle and the roar.

XII.

“You grew to her more fond and near,
And mine no more! Ah, never more
You brought the antlered forest deer
And laid it at my door.

“And ever round the hall and hearth,
These branching emblems of the chase
Mocked me with memory of the mirth
Which once made bright the place.

“No more 'neath autumn's sun or cloud

 You paid to me the pleasing tax
Of labour at the swingle loud,
 Breaking the brittle flax.

“No more when winter walked our clime

 We woke the evening-lighted room,
With laugh and song, still keeping time
 To whirring wheel or loom.

“Nor blazed the great logs as of yore,

 Cheered with the cricket's pastoral song;
The cider and the nuts were o'er,
 And gone the jovial throng.

“The hearth was basely narrowed down;

 The antlered walls were stripped and bare;
The oaken floor no more was known,—
 A foreign woof was there.

XIII.

“AND never more your ringing team
 Made music in our happy dale ;
Instead, an earthquake winged with steam
 Roared through our sundered vale.

“And where yon river seaward runs,
 The white-winged barges ceased to roam ;
Instead, came great leviathans
 Trampling the waves to foam.

“And there was rushing to and fro,
As if the nation suddenly
Made haste to meet some foreign foe
Impending on the sea.

“And all this horrid roar and rage—
The clash of steel and flash of ire
Was the giant march of the Conquering Age
Flapping his flags of fire!

“He strode the land from east to west:—
Then death in my despair was sweet,
And soon above my buried breast
Trampled the world's loud feet.

“The dreary dream is past and told;
But, Leon, swear to still be true,
Even though with charms a thousandfold
A queen should smile on you.”

This, Leon swore,—swore still to pay
The fealty he long had borne;
The years which followed best can say
If Leon was forsworn.

XIV.

“FORSWORN!” The fields all sighed, “forsworn!”

When Sylvia pined into her shroud;
And all the pastures lay forlorn,
O’ershadowed with a cloud.

The homesteads wept with childish sob,
“Forsworn!” and every wheel was dumb;
The looms were muffled, each low throb
Was like a funeral drum.

The maidens hid in Maytime grotts,
Their distaffs twined with blossoms sweet,
With pansies and forget-me-nots,
And laid them at her feet.

“Forsworn!” they sighed, and sprinkled o’er
Her breast the loveliest flowers of May;
And then these fair pall-bearers bore
Her gentle dust away.

“Forsworn!” The grandams moved about
Like useless shadows in their gloom;
And oft they brought their distaffs out,
And sat beside her tomb.

“Forsworn!” All nature sighs, “forsworn!”
And Sylvia’s is a nameless grave;
The blossoms which above her mourn
Mid tangled grasses wave.

XV.

PROUD Leon sits beside his bride,
His chariot manned by Nubian grooms,—
His lady rustling in the pride
Of stuffs of foreign looms.

Secure, important, and serene,
The master of a wide domain,
He looks abroad with lordly mien,—
This once poor shepherd swain.

You scarce would think to see him now,
In all his grandeur puffed and full,
He e'er had guided flock or plough
In simple, homespun wool.

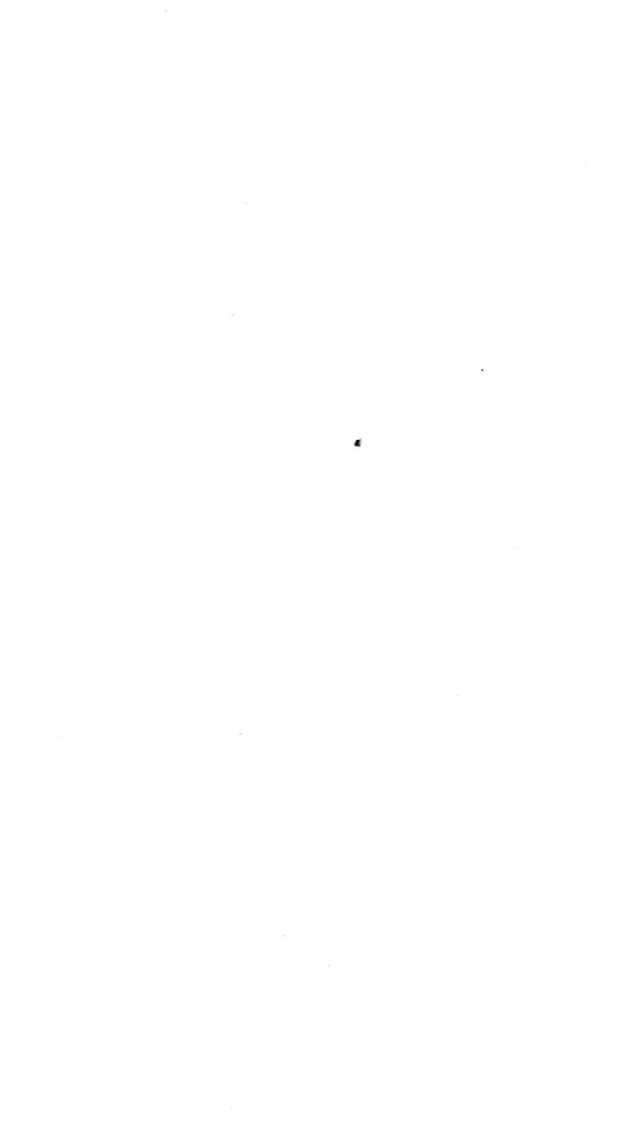
The chain of gold is still a chain;—
There may be moments he would pay
The bulk of all his marvelous gain
For what has passed away!

SYLVIA;

OR,

THE LAST SHEPHERD.

THE CONCLUSION.



THE MOURNFUL MOWERS.

THUS sang the shepherd crowned at noon,
And every breast was heaved with sighs;—
Attracted by the tree and tune,
The wingéd singers left the skies.

Close to the minstrel sat the maid;
His song had drawn her fondly near:
Her large and dewy eyes betrayed
The secret to her bosom dear.

The factory people through the fields,
Pale men and maids and children pale,
Listened, forgetful of the wheels,
Till the loud summons woke the vale.

And all the mowers rising said,
“The world has lost its dewy prime ;
Alas ! the Golden age is dead,
And we are of the Iron time !

“The wheel and loom have left our homes,—
Our maidens sit with empty hands,
Or toil beneath yon roaring domes,
And fill the factory’s pallid bands.

“The fields are swept as by a war,
Our harvests are no longer blithe ;
Yonder the iron mower’s car
Comes with his devastating seythe.

“They lay us waste by fire and steel,
Besiege us to our very doors;
Our crops before the driving wheel
Fall captive to the conquerors.

“The pastoral age is dead, is dead!
Of all the happy ages chief;
Let every mower bow his head,
In token of sincerest grief.

“And let our brows be thickly bound
With every saddest flower that blows;
And all our scythes be deeply wound
With every mournful leaf that grows.”

Thus sang the mowers; and they said,
“The world has lost its dewy prime;
Alas! the Golden age is dead,
And we are of the Iron time!”

Each wreathed his scythe and twined his head;
They took their slow way through the plain:
The minstrel and the maiden led
Across the fields the solemn train.

The air was rife with clamorous sounds,
Of clattering factory—thundering forge,—
Conveyed from the remotest bounds
Of smoky plain and mountain gorge.

Here, with a sudden shriek and roar,
The rattling engine thundered by;
A steamer past the neighbouring shore
Convulsed the river and the sky.

The brook that erewhile laughed abroad,
And o'er one light wheel loved to play,
Now, like a felon, groaning trod
Its hundred treadmills night and day.

The fields were tilled with steeds of steam,
Whose fearful neighing shook the vales;
Along the road there rang no team,—
The barns were loud, but not with flails.

And still the mournful mowers said,
“The world has lost its dewy prime;
Alas! the Golden age is dead,
And we are of the Iron time!”

Miscellaneous.

THE BLESSED DEAD.

OH, happy childhood! tender buds of spring
Touched in the Maytime by a wandering frost;
Ye have escaped the summer's sultry wing:
No drought hath parched you, and no wind hath tossed,
Shaking the pearls of morning from your breast:
Ye have been gathered ere your sweets were lost,
Ere wingéd passions stole into your rest
To rob the heart of all its dewy store.
Now in the endless Maytime overhead,
In starry gardens of the azure shore,
Ye bloom in light, and are for evermore
The blessed dead.

Ye youths and maidens, dear to Joy and Love,
But fallen midway between morn and noon,—
Or bird-like flown, as if some longing dove
Should seek a better clime while yet 'tis June,
Leaving our fields forlorn! Oh, happy flight!
Gone while your hearts are full of summer tune,
And ignorant of the autumnal blight,—
Ere yet a leaf hath withered on the bough
Or innocent rose hath drooped its dying head:
Gone with the virgin lilies on your brow,
Ye, singing in immortal youth, are now
The blessed dead.

And ye, who in the harvest of your years
Were stricken when the sun was in mid air,
And left the earth bedewed at noon with tears,—
Ye have known all of life that is most fair,
The laugh of April and the summer bloom.
Ye with the orange-blossoms in your hair,
Who sleep in bridal chambers of the tomb;

Or ye, who with the sickle in the hand
Have bowed amid the sheaves the manly head,
And left the toil unto a mournful band,—
Ye all are numbered in yon resting land,
The blessed dead.

And ye, who like the stately upland oak
Breasted the full allotted storms of time,
And took new strength from every gusty stroke,—
And ye, who like a vine long taught to climb
And weigh its native branches with ripe fruit,—
Much have ye suffered 'neath the frosty rime
Which autumn brings and winter's loud dispute!
But now, transplanted in the fields afar,
Your age is like a withered foliage shed,—
And where Youth's fountain sparkles like a star,
This have ye learned, they only live who are
The blessed dead.

THE PHANTOM LEADERS.

By starlight they rode in their speed and their might,
A warrior host sweeping down through the night,—
An army of spectres, they sped on the wind,
With swords piercing front and plumes streaming
 behind;
On the highways of air they were led as by Mars,
While their steeds shod with thunder seemed tramp-
 ling the stars!
Like a fleet in a gale, they careered through the
 night,
And the path where they passed flashed with phos-
 phorous light.

In the front galloped Brutus, a foe to all peace,
His blade gleaming red with the blood of Lucrece;
And, turning towards Rome, bent his way down the
heaven,

Repeating the oath which of old he had given.

“These modern Tarquins must fall!” was his cry;

“By the blade of their own bloody guilt they shall
die!”

And, strange though it be, there Mohammed was seen,
His Arab’s mane sweeping his mantle of green,
And the watchwords engraved on his drawn scimitar
Were “Allah, il Allah!” each letter a star.

Gustavus-Adolphus of Sweden was there,

As at Lützen he rode with his battle-blade bare.

And, like their own turbulent torrents let loose

By a storm in the Highlands, sped Wallace and Bruce.

Sobieski, the Pole, gave his charger the rein,

Every stroke of whose hoof broke a fetter in twain.

There was Olaf of Norway, whose mandate and sword

The heathen struck down in the name of the Lord.

There sped fiery Tell with his crossbow and dart,
The barb glowing crimson from Gessler's proud heart.
And close by his side, the beloved of his peers,
Bold Winklereid rode with his arms full of spears;
The same old self-sacrifice lighting his eye,
And "Make way for Liberty!" still was his cry.
There was Luther, no braver e'er rode to the field,
And the word of the Lord was his buckler and shield,
While the weapon he grasped was the same he had
 sped
In a moment of anger at Lucifer's head.
There was Cromwell, that monarch who never wore
 crown,
With his Bible and sword and his puritan frown
And with him Charles-Albert, the Piedmontese star,
As he rode ere betrayed on the field of Novarre.
There with garments still red from that last fatal day,
The ghost of Bozzaris sped fierce for the fray;
And close by his side, with an eye full of fire,
Rode Byron, still grasping his sword and his lyre;

And the war-kindling numbers which fell from his
tongue

Like the notes of a wild battle-clarion were flung!

And just in advance galloped Körner and Burns

Unsheathing the war-song and falchion by turns!

There, gazing and listening, my spirit entranced

Leaped for joy as these poets for Freedom advanced;

And I felt the warm thought through my bosom
descend,

That the bard to be true must be Liberty's friend!

Then came a dim host to my vision unknown,

Like those lights which astronomers number alone;

But their voice still made clear what the eye could
not see,

Crying, "Down with the tyrant wherever he be!"

But why swept these phantoms? Whence rode they,
and where?

What occasion had summoned these allies of air?

I looked, and beheld the swift spread of the blaze
Which dazzled the stars with the pulse of its rays,
As if through the darkness the lightning had played,
And in midst of its splendour been suddenly stayed :
There I read the great words spread like fiery wings
Where "weighed and found wanting" confronted the
kings!

And this army of spectres, led on by that light,
Like a cloud on a hurricane swept through the night ;
And this was their cry coming down on the gale,
"The modern Belshazzars are weighed in the scale!"

THE GREAT SURVEY.

A SONG OF FREMONT'S MEN.

WITH glory firing every brain,
With courage in each breast,
We cross the roaring Rubicon,
The boundary of the West.

Our path lies o'er the prairie,
Where the herds of bison hie,—
Jove's thunder rolling from their feet,
His lightning in each eye;—

Where o'er these wide Olympian fields
The curbless coursers speed,—
Where Fear, the desperate charioteer,
Scourges the frantic steed.

Fear rules the chariot of the wind
Before the march of man,
And flying, yields these fenceless fields
To the leader of our clan.

But where yon frantic dwellers tramp
The rank and tangled grass,
We trace the mighty path where soon
A swifter steed shall pass:—

Ay, swifter than yon courser
With his wild mane streaming wide,
Though he strained until his nostril foam
With crimson stains were dyed;—

His tread make louder thunder
Than the herd down yonder path;
His glance flash fiercer lightning
Than the bison's eye of wrath.

His mane from off his iron neck
Shall sweep the cloud in ire,
The foam from his nostrils flashing wide
Be flecked with blood of fire.

Ay, he shall sweep this conquered plain
Swift as a meteor star,
And the chariot which he wings shall be
Progression's mighty car.

And all along its glittering side
The grateful hand of Fame
Shall write in blazing capitals
Our fearless leader's name.

Lo, before us in the distance,
Like a cloud that threatens storm,
Peak after peak looms blue and bleak
O'er the mountain's monster form.

Soon o'er its rocky ramparts,
On the eagle's native crag,
The Napoleon of the Western Alps
Shall plant his conquering flag.

And following in his footsteps
Ere a few short years go by,
There shall cleave the nation's highway,
There the thundering car shall fly.

It shall pierce the white Sierra,
Pass the California mine,
Till it reach the far Pacific
In a long continuous line.

Of old the Spaniard crossed the height,
And strode into the main,
And smote the ocean with his sword,
And claimed its realm for Spain;

But a greater shall descend, and hold
The sea with weightier sway,
For the mighty pier of his giant road
Shall stride into the bay;—

Shall stride breast-deep into the sea,—
There set its foot of steel,
And hold the watery realm to serve
And guard the commonweal.

And even from Narraganset
To the farthest sands of gold
This bond shall clasp the continent
With firm and steadfast hold.

And he whose giant energy
Laid down its course sublime,
Be held through future centuries
The Leader of his time.

A BIRTHDAY THOUGHT IN ITALY.

INSCRIBED TO MISS S. R. B.

As once the trembling Lombard saw
The swift barbarians' line of spears
Wind down the Alps, thus here in awe
I watch the approaching line of years.

They come, the Goth and vandal bands,
With savage tread and look uncouth;
With spear and mace and murderous brands,
They file towards the plains of youth.

Down into life's Etrurian vales,
O'er green campagnas broad and fair,
They sweep like bitter Nor'land gales,
And fright the calm Italian air.

Their barbarous feet know no restraint;
They vent their rage before our eyes:
The shrines that held our dearest saint
A ruined heap before us lies.

The temples by our young hearts reared,
Their ruffian malice batters down;
Ambition's altars, unrevered,
With domes of Hope, lie overthrown.

And Friendship's wayside shrines and towers
Too oft are shattered as they pass:
Oft Love, a statue wreathed with flowers,
Lies at their feet a crumbled mass.

But like these pure Etruscan skies,
 Unsullied by the Goth's control,
One fane the vandal Time defies,—
 The dome of sunshine in the soul!

And thou, fair maid, so young and blest!
 When impious years shall touch thy brow,
Still hold this sunshine in thy breast,
 And be as beautiful as now.

Bagna di Lucca, August 16, 1855.

THE STAYED CURSE.

WITH face half hidden in ungathered hair,
Which fell like sunshine o'er her shoulders bare,
She leaned her cheek against her chamber wall,
As if to note when some far voice should call.
Her weary soul stood at its prison bars,
Fainting to hear a summons from the stars:
For life was now a midnight wilderness,
Wherein none whispered peace to her distress,
Save One, whose voice, of love and pity blended,
Mid her loud grief was not yet comprehended.

She heard alone the vulture sailing by,
Led by the foulest birds of calumny;
Felt the cold serpents crawl against her feet,
And saw the gaunt wolves steal to her retreat.
The wide world scowled and reddened at her shame,
Scorching her soul with horror; and her name
Was struck, as with the violent hand of rage,
With one huge blot from off the social page.
What wonder that the soul thus rudely wrung
Should shape such words as half appalled the tongue!
Words like fierce arrows for the faithless breast
Where love had dreamed with too confiding rest;
Shafts which, once sped at random from the lips,
Some friendly fiend must guide to their eclipse
In the dark heart, where, on his starless throne,
Deception sat, and, smiling, reigned alone!

Thus had she nursed her grief for many days,
And thus the curse was struggling from her breast,

When, as the midnight's solemn sentry bell
Struck vaguely through her woe-engendered haze,
Announcing, as it were, the mournful guest,
She heard the sudden close of wings which fell,
Together with the rustling sound of sighs;
And presently, uplifting her blank eyes,
Beheld a dull and ashen form of woe
Stand looking its great melancholy there,
As if long years of under-world despair
Had fanned him with the hottest airs that blow
Athwart the fierce Sahara fields below!
The wings were leaden-hued and ruffled all,
As if long beaten 'gainst some stormy wall,
Or blown contrary by belligerent gusts,
Then trailed for ages through the cinder dusts
On plains adjacent, where the Stygian pours,
Hissing forever on volcanic shores!
She looked, and on her lips the curse was stayed!
Thrice all the vengeance which her soul had planned

Burned on the forehead of the fallen shade!

Her purpose dropt—as from the archer's hand
Might fall the arrow if he saw the foe
Struck by the lightning's swift and surer blow!
The curse was stayed—she looked to heaven and sighed,
“Forgive! forgive!” and in her prayer she died!

ALICIA.

THREE days have passed, three dreamy days and nights,
And in my heart one thought asserts its will,
That, like a wayward child no frown deters or frights,
Puts this one question, "Do you cherish still
In memory that sweet picture which we saw,
So full of mellow shades and golden lights,
Where the wild-hearted poet through his awe
Burst into song, forgetful of all law,
Though lowly born, and boldly soared above,
Until a princess heard and trembled at his love?"

Ah, yes, that glowing picture stays with you;
For I remember as you gazed you sighed,
Because of the great space between the two,
Till melting pity left you dewy-eyed!
Had you been that fair princess, you had said,
“This poet mounted on his lyric throne,
And with the crown of laurel on his head,
Hath state majestic equal to my own!”
And with a countenance benign and sweet,
You would have raised him to your throne of gold!
If such thy generous nature—then, behold,
There sits a poet singing at your feet!

ELLA.

FAIR maid, when you and such as you,—
And such methinks are far and few,—
Come, like the first star, to relieve
The shadows of the deepening eve,
An influence soft as summer dew
Steals down the twilight of my soul,
And, with a secret, sweet control,
Revives the drooping flowers of hope,
Until again Life's darkened slope
Is veiled with perfume and delight,
As in that soft auroral hour,

Before the frost had left its blight
 On leaf or bud or flower,—
Before the autumnal gusts of Pain
Had breathed athwart my summer plain.

Fair be thy pathway, gentle star,
Along Life's shadowy fields afar:
Long may thy smile as now renew
Full many a flower with light and dew;—
And when beyond the realms of night
 Thou gain'st the far celestial bourne,
Then be it said she passed from sight
A deathless star o'erveiled with light
 Within the glory of the morn.

TWENTY-ONE.

SOME BIRTHDAY LINES TO J. R. T.

FAR within the orient azure,
In the purple and the dew,
Lies the flowery land of pleasure
Which your early childhood knew.

In its dim and blue existence
There it lies, a dewy space,
In the bright forbidden distance
Memory only can retrace.

After this the fancy wanders
Over varied field and hill,
Where the swelling stream meanders
And forgets it was a rill.

Many a flower with odours baneful
Blooms enticingly thereby,
To whose influence, subtle, painful,
Later years shall testify.

In Youth's lovely, dangerous valley,
E'en the best directed feet
Oft may turn to stray and dally
Mid the bowers that chill and cheat.

But anon the flowers grow scantly
And to rougher pastures yield,
Where the ploughman and the planter
Must prepare the harvest-field.

On that boundary you are standing,
 'Twixt the blossoms and the clods,
To begin on this stern landing
 The great strife 'gainst fearful odds.

Where you strolled the sunny meadows,
 You must brave the rocks and storms;
Where you took alarm at shadows,
 You must combat solid forms.

Hills of snow and valleys torrid
 Lie beyond the boundary vast,
Where fond Life with anxious forehead
 Reads the future from the past.

Huge and rough as thunder-smitten,
 Rise the barriers of the gate,
With one sentence overwritten,—
 Simple letters full of fate.

On the arch through which you're speeding
There those two forbidding words
Still shall flame, as over Eden
Blazed the red exiling swords.

A lost realm recovered never—
With receding speed increased,
Barred and branded there forever
It shall glimmer in the east.

Youth is gone—a vanished glory—
And, with stern and earnest view,
Manhood needs take up the story,
And with valour bear it through.

All the world lies wide before you,
Where to choose the wrong or right;
And no future shall restore you
What you seize not now with might.

Let each act be the sure token
Of the nobler life ahead :—
Let each thought in truth be spoken,
Though the utterance strike you dead.

Spurn the small enticing by-way
Where Temptation sits apart :
Boldly tread the open highway
Leading to the golden mart.

Though the world smile on you blandly,
Let your friends be choice and few :
Choose your course, pursue it grandly,
And achieve what you pursue !

BEATRICE.

THOUGH others know thee by a fonder name,
I, in my heart, have christened thee anew;
And though thy beauty, in its native hue,
(Shedding the radiance of whence it came,)
May not bequeath to language its high claim,—
Thy smiling presence, like an angel's wing,
Fans all my soul of poesy to flame,—
Till, even in remembering, I must sing.
Such led the grand old Tuscan's longing eyes
Through all the crystal rounds of Paradise;
And, in my spirit's farthest journeying,
Thy smile of courage leads me up the skies,
Through realms of song, of beauty, and of bliss,—
And therefore have I named thee Beatrice!

HERO AND LEANDER.

IN MARBLE BY STEINHAUSER.

LONG had they dwelt within one breathless cell,

Two souls, by some mad Sycorax confined;

But, oh! the unmeant mercy of that spell

Which turned those arms to marble, while entwined

In all the passionate wo of tenderness,

And to the unknown depths of earth consigned,—

These radiant forms of Beauty's rare excess,

This monument of Love's own loveliness!

Unchronicled, the centuries rolled on,

And groves grew ancient on the prison-hill;

And men forgot their parent tongues anon,
And spoke a different language, as a rill
Wearing another channel from its source,
Makes a new song accordant with its course.
But suddenly the unexpectant sun
Beheld the swarthy labourers employ
Upon that hill their rude exhuming art,
Like shadowy hopes at some dull, ancient heart,
To free the spirit of long buried joy.
And now they grappled with the stubborn rocks,
Breaking the antique seals which time had set
Upon the earth's deep treasury, that locks
Within its inmost wards such marts as yet
The busy masons of the poet's brain
Have builded not. Anon the toiling ox
Dragged the white quarry to the peopled plain,
And Beauty's soul lay sepulchred unknown!
The crowd discerned it not, till there came one
Who heard the passionate breathings in the stone,

The wordless music of Love's overflow;
Who heard and pitied, and, like Prospero,
 Released the spirits from their living grave;
And when the breathless world beheld them—lo!
The soul of purity, around, above,
Hung in the tremulous air like heaven's own dove;
 And Fame pronounced the name of him who gave
A marble immortality to Love!

MY FRIEND.*

MY friend was a poet; by day and by night
He read me the songs which I heard with delight,—
His melodious dreams, so ethereal and fine!—
Such temples of air! filled with music and wine—
The wine of those flowers by Proserpine planted
In the world of the classics—those gardens enchanted!—
That I deemed him a spirit,—a God,—or so near it,
That I fancied no trail of the serpent of old
Could be found on a soul of such exquisite mould.

But, alas! in an hour of revel I took
The harp long concealed in the shade of a nook,

* The subject of this poem is entirely imaginary.

And recklessly struck a wild tune from its strings,
With the pride of a bird when it first feels its wings,
Hoping only to win from the critical set
The crumbs of applause which a tyro may get:
But the good-natured audience, more generous than just,
Filled the air with approval, that swelled to a gust.
I shrunk with affright at this undeserved fame,
And trembled and blushed to the forehead with shame;
And to shelter me then from the storm coming down,
I looked for my friend with the poet's great crown.
But where was he then?—in the midst of the throng,
Cursing *inward* the praise, *outward* damning the song!
And from that day henceforth in grandiloquous state
He proudly strode past me, his eyes full of hate!

Though we meet not as friends, but stand strangely
apart,—

When he passes a smile glows concealed in my heart;
And I think, though his eye meets me colder than frost,
'Tis only the shell of a friend I have lost:

For I know there's a soul in that envious clay
To smile on me still could it have its own way;
For the soul which gives beauty an utterance so fine,
Hath seasons at least of impulses divine.
And many a time how I laugh to myself
As I take down my friend from my library shelf,
Encased in the choicest morocco and gold,
To think all that's best of him lies in my hold!
Yes, there in my grasp his warm heart lies as calm
As of old his own hand ever lay in my palm:
There our souls in communion still mingle and blend,
So I smile at the foe whose best part is my friend!

WINTER.

Lo, Winter comes, and all his heralds blow
Their gusty trumpets, and his tents of snow
Usurp the fields from whence sad Autumn flies,—
Autumn, that finds a southern clime or dies.
The streams are dumb with wo,—the forest grieves,
Wailing the loss of all its summer leaves:
As some fond Rachel on her childless breast
Clasps her thin hands where once her young were prest;
Then flings her empty arms into the air,
And swells the gale with her convulsed despair!

THE BLIGHTED FLOWER.

WHY, gentle lady, why complain
At Scandal's ever flying breath?
'Gainst Virtue's cheek it blows in vain,
And thereon breathes itself to death.

The flower beneath the passing rain,
Untouched of canker or of blight,
Bows patiently, to rise again
With sweeter breath and fresher light.

But if the worm be hid beneath,
Or haply if the hot simoom,
Like some unlawful lover's breath,
Hath wooed that blossom to its doom,—

Then, wo is me, how poor and frail
Is Beauty in her fairest form!
Her brightness cannot stay the gale,
Her perfume cannot charm the storm.

But when the searching wind comes by,
And shakes each blossom by the stalk,
The tainted leaves asunder fly,
To wither down the garden walk;—

And ere one heated noon has sped,
They crisp and curl and pass from sight;
Or crumble 'neath some careless tread
As if they never had been bright.

THE DEATH OF THE VETERAN.

INSCRIBED TO MAJOR ANDERSON OF THE U. S. ARMY.

SINCE last we met, a throng has joined
The army of the years,
Trampling to dust our summer flowers,
Like conquering cavaliers.

Since last we met!—In those few words
There is a mournful beat,
Like throbbing of a muffled drum,
Or tread of funeral feet.

Since then, in war's high festival,
You've waved the clashing sword,—
While I have been a saddened guest
At Life's promiscuous board.

Since then, the young with mimic arms
Have grown to armed men;
And they may wear the veteran's hair
Before we meet again:—

Or though, ere that, our mighty Chief
Should grant our last release,
And Death conduct us to the camp
The far white camp of Peace,—

Yet here, in memory of those days,
Still cherished, though long spent,
I wake the martial harp before
The doorway of your tent.

THE DEATH OF THE VETERAN.

AN INCIDENT DURING THE MEXICAN WAR.

FROM hill to hill the "good news" ran
As swift as signal fires;
From shore to sea, from gulf to land,
And flashed along the wires:

And presently from wharf to wharf
The cannons made reply,
And in the city's crowded streets
Was heard the newsman's cry.

Bright grew the matron's face when I
The victory began ;
Pale waxed the young wife's cheek when she
Heard who had led the van ;

And struggling with the mists of age
Which veiled his eye and ear,
The grandsire raised his palsied hand
And feebly strove to hear.

And when I read the story, how
Amid the flying balls
The brave lieutenant bore the flag
And scaled the shattered walls ;

The matron and the young wife stood
Too terrified for tears,
While flamed the old man's cheek with red
It had not known for years.

But when I read, that as the flag
 In triumph o'er him flew,
How twenty bullets hewed his breast
 And cleaved it through and through,—

The mother heaved a short, deep groan,
 And sunk into her chair;
The wife fell on the matron's breast,
 And swooned in her despair.

And like a wounded, dying stag,
 Lodged in some old retreat,
That hears the still approaching hounds
 And staggers to his feet,—

The Veteran struggled from his chair
 And raised himself upright,—
His eye a moment kindled with
 Its long forgotten light;—

So firm he strode across the room,
So martial was his air,
You scarce had guessed that ninety years
Had whitened through his hair:—

Then from the wainscot took his sword
Where it had hung so long,
Memorial of many a field,
The weak against the strong,—

Of fields where Justice armed the few
With consecrated brands,
And lodged a nation's destiny
In their devoted hands:—

And, gazing on the blade, he said,
“Thou art as keen and bright
As when in those old trying times
We battled for the right;

As when we wintered in the snow
 Within the frozen gorge,
And from our starving ranks still hurled
 Defiance at King George:—

As when beside the Brandywine
 We fought the whole day through,
Till fields had changed their mantle
 And the river changed its hue:—

As when mid grinding gulfs of ice,
 Upon a Christmas night,
We crossed the roaring Delaware
 And put the foe to flight!

It may be this old arm of mine
 Is not as steady now
As when it drew against Burgoyne,
 Or cleaved the ranks of Howe;

The hand may tremble on the hilt,
The heart within is strong;
And God who strengthened once the right
Will not uphold the wrong.

What! have they ta'en the last support
That propped my honoured wall?
Shall the name become tradition
And the stately roof-tree fall?

Was't not enough that he who, through
The woods and tangled brakes,
Spread terror o'er the savage, from
The Gulf unto the lakes;

And who beside the bloody Thames
Left death where'er he sped,
Till the fate which he was hurling round
Recoiled upon his head?

Was't not enough? Speak thou, my friend:

Old comrade, thou wert there,
Who in the days aforetime drove
The Lion to his lair;

Twice drove him from our shore, and chased
The red wolf to his den!

Wast't not enough, but must I hear
The death-note sound again?

And has our banner waved abroad,
The martial trumpet pealed,
And foemen bristled on the plain,
And we not in the field?

Old sword, in this our winter,
Shall they call to us in vain,
Who reaped the crimson harvest
With a Washington and Wayne?

No! come, my trusty champion,
Till the field be cleared and won,
And the foe be left in prostrate ranks
To bleach beneath the sun!

Ho! now is't blood which stains you,
Or the shameful blush of rust?
Is it age which dims my vision,
Or the flying smoke and dust?

Is't the beating of my heart I hear,
Or calling drum at hand?
Or grows my steps unsteady,
Or does battle shake the land?

The drums grow loud and louder,
With the bugle's dreadful note:
The smoke-wreaths thicken round me,
And the dust is in my throat!

Hark, hark! I hear the order, and
It bids me mount the wall;
I know the General's voice!—and I
Obey him though I fall!

Yes, I will plant my country's flag
Upon the topmost stone,
For when her fate demands it,
What should I care for my own?

Now how the loud walls totter,—
Thicker,—darker grows the smoke,—
And all the air is turned to dust,—
I stumble, and I choke!

One solid thrust to plant the staff,—
There!—let the eagle soar!"
He cried, and reeling, clasped his breast,—
He fell—and breathed no more!

EVENING IN WINTER.

ROBED like an abbess

The snowy earth lies,

While the red sundown

Fades out of the skies.

Up walks the evening

Veiled like a nun,

Telling her starry beads

One by one.

Where like the billows

The shadowy hills lie,

Like a mast the great pine swings
Against the bright sky.

Down in the valley
The distant lights quiver,
Gilding the hard-frozen
Face of the river.

When o'er the hilltops
The moon pours her ray,
Like shadows the skaters
Skirr wildly away;
Whirling and gliding,
Like summer-clouds fleet,
They flash the white lightning
From glittering feet.

The icicles hang
On the front of the falls,
Like mute horns of silver
On shadowy walls;

Horns that the wild huntsman
Spring shall awake,
Down flinging the loud blast
Toward river and lake!

A PLEA FOR THE HOMELESS.

A CRY goes up amidst a prosperous nation,
And Hunger begs within a plenteous land!
Have ye not heard the voice of Desolation?
Have ye not seen the stretched and famished hand?
Have ye not felt the solemn obligation
To rise, and straightway answer the demand?

O happy mothers, in your homes protected,
Whose little ones may never ask for alms,
That voice is Childhood's! starving and neglected,
Pale Infancy implores with empty palms,—
The sad soul sitting in its eyes dejected,
No voice elates, no smile of pity calms.

Let those dear looks, so full of April splendour,
Those dimpled hands you clasp within your own,
That voice you love so, plead with accents tender,
For those who weep unguarded and alone,
For those dull eyes, those hands so weak and slender,
Those pallid lips, whose mirth is but a moan!

Sweet plants there are which bloom in sultry places,
By rude feet trampled in their early hour,
Which, when transplanted, are so full of graces,
They lend a charm to Flora's fairest bower;
O ye who pass, look down into their faces,
Displace the dust, and recognise the flower!

Lo, the example for our guidance given,—
In sacred light our duty stands revealed!
For ONE there was, who, in His great love, even
Noted the smallest lilies of the field,—
And blessing children, said, "Of such is heaven!"
His "suffer them to come," stands unrepealed!

O ye whose hearts, amid the worldly noises,
No cares can harden, and no self benumb,
Whose ears are open to these orphan voices,
Whose answering soul no avarice makes dumb,
The great RECORDER o'er your names rejoices,
For ye have truly suffered them to come!

THE CELESTIAL ARMY.

I STOOD by the open casement
And looked upon the night,
And saw the westward-going stars
Pass slowly out of sight.

Slowly the bright procession
Went down the gleaming arch,
And my soul discerned the music
Of their long triumphal march ;

Till the great celestial army,
 Stretching far beyond the poles,
Became the eternal symbol
 Of the mighty march of souls.

Onward, forever onward,
 Red Mars led down his clan ;
And the Moon, like a mailed maiden,
 Was riding in the van.

And some were bright in beauty,
 And some were faint and small,
But these might be in their great height
 The noblest of them all.

Downward, forever downward,
 Behind Earth's dusky shore
They passed into the unknown night,
 They passed, and were no more.

No more! Oh, say not so!

And downward is not just;

For the sight is weak and the sense is dim

That looks through heated dust.

The stars and the mailed moon,

Though they seem to fall and die,

Still sweep with their embattled lines

An endless reach of sky.

And though the hills of Death

May hide the bright array,

The marshalled brotherhood of souls

Still keeps its upward way.

Upward, forever upward,

I see their march sublime,

And hear the glorious music

Of the conquerors of Time.

And long let me remember,
That the palest, fainting one
May to diviner vision be
A bright and blazing sun.

Airs from Alpland.

TO

Marcus L. Ward, Esq.

To you, who, in the broad commercial plain,
Sittest where calm Passaic seeks the main,
I bring these mountain airs,—and wake once more
The minstrel harp you kindly heard of yore :
Beside your fire the heavenward hill would rear,
And give the pleasures of the mountaineer ;
Would wake the music of the marvellous pass,
And loose the avalanche's monster mass ;
Recall, had I such mastery o'er the strings,
From St. Bernard the tempest's wildest wings !
Assured the dreariest scene would soon depart
Before your glowing hearth and genial heart !



THE LISTENERS.

UNDER the vernal tents of shadowy trees,—
A druid depth of oaken solitude,
The home of wild flowers and the haunt of bees,
The native vale of many a minstrel brood,—
There ran a stream in its bewildering mood
Of song and silence and low whispering trance;
And streamlike paths went winding through the wood
From rock to glen, the temples of Romance,
And there were lawns where Mirth might lead her
wreathéd dance.

Upon a knoll o'ergrown with mosses sweet,
While dropt the sun adown the afternoon,
A group of maidens made their merry seat,—
June all around and in their hearts was June;
And on their flowery lips the mellow tune
Of early summer; and with fingers fair
Shaking the wingéd spoilers in their swoon
From honey-bells of blossoms bright and rare,
They wove their woodland wreaths and decked each
other's hair.

But when they saw me pass between the trees,
Slow making toward the streamlet's yellow sands,
“Come hither, thou new-comer from the seas,
And sing to us fresh songs of foreign lands!”
They cried, and placed a harp into my hands:
And straightway I went stumbling o'er the strings,
As best I could, to answer their demands,—
Like some poor bird that with his trembling wings
Beats at the caging wires, and to his mistress sings.

THE FAIR PILGRIM.

“ Upon her little palfrey white
Y^e maiden sitteth eke upright,—
Her hair is black as y^e midnight,
Her eyes also.

Her cheeks have snary dimples in,
And Cupid's thumb hath touched her chin,
And silken soft her lily skiu,—
Her lips like crimson rose-leaves bin
About her teeth of snow.”

TIME was when, with the unrestraint

Of an enamoured soul and hand,—

In lieu of these cold words, that faint

And waver like a willow wand

Before the vision I would paint,—

I would have seized the ready brush,

And, with the limner's clearer art,

Poured out the softer hues that flush
And flow within the painter's heart ;
Have shown you where she passed or stood,
Between the Alpine light and shade ;
Her stately form, her air subdued,
Her dark eye mellowing to the mood
That round her inmost spirit played.

I would have wrought the daylight through
To give what yet before me beams,
And ceased at eve but to renew
The impassioned labour in my dreams.

But this is past: life takes and gives,
And o'er the dust of hopes long gone
The vision brightens as it lives,
And mocks the hand that would have drawn.

Along those windings high and vast,
Through frequent sun and shade she stole,
And all the Alpine splendour passed
Into the chambers of her soul ;

For she was of that better clay

Which treads not oft this earthly stage:

Such charméd spirits lose their way

But once or twice into an age.

Her voice was one that thrills and clings

Forever in the hearer's bosom,—

As when a bee with flashing wings

Cleaves to the centre of a blossom,—

And with the mule-bells' measured chime

Her fancies rung themselves to rhyme.

SONG ON ST. BERNARD.

OH, it is a pleasure rare
Ever to be climbing so,
Winding upward through the air,
Till the cloud is left below!
Upward and forever round
On the stairway of the stream,
With the motion and the sound
Of processions in a dream:
While the world below all this
Lies a fathomless abyss.

Freedom singeth ever here,
Where her sandals print the snow,

And to her the pines are dear,
 Freely rocking to and fro;
Swinging oft like stately ships,
 Where the billowy tempests sport;
Or, as when the anchor slips
 Down the dreamy wave in port,
Standing silent as they list
Where the zephyrs furl the mist.

Here the well-springs drop their pearls,
 All to Freedom's music strung;
And the brooks, like mountain girls,
 Sing the songs of Freedom's tongue.
And the great hills, stern and staunch,
 Guard her valleys and her lakes,
And the rolling avalanche
 Blocks the path the invader makes,
While her eagle, like a flag,
Floats in triumph o'er the crag!

I HAVE looked on a face that has looked in my heart,
As deep as the moon ever fathoms a wave;
As uncomprehended it came to depart,
While a sense of its glory was all that it gave.

Where she passed the Alp blossoms grew pallid and
shrank,
As a taper in sunlight sinks faint and aghast;
And now o'er her path swims a terrible blank,
A gulf in the air where her beauty hath passed.

But her light in my heart, which no time can eclipse,
Seems to brighten and smile in the joy it confers;
And a voice which is shed from aerial lips
Breathes a music I know which can only be hers!

THE CHAMOIS HUNTER.

“THERE!—see you not upon the face
Of yonder far and dizzy height
A something with slow-moving pace,
Now faintly seen, now lost to sight?
And now again, with downward spring,
As if supported by a wing,
It drops, then scarcely seems to crawl
Along the smooth and shining wall.
Is it a bird? or beast whose lair
Is hid within some cavern there?”

Or some adventurer who hath striven
To scale that Babel wall to heaven?
In sooth, methinks, there never yawned
A passage to the world beyond
Of shorter access than now lies
Around that climber in the skies.”

Then spake the guide:—

“ Unless I err,
There is but one adventurer
From Basle unto Geneva’s lake,
From Neufchatel to Splügen pass,
Of all who freely scale the brow
Of ice that crowns the Mer-de-glace,
Or climbs the slippery Rosenlau,
Who dares that dreadful path to take.
Not him who sprang from ridge to ridge,
And passed us on the Devil’s Bridge,
And told you all that perilous tale
Which made your rosy cheeks grow pale.

Nor him who in the Grimsel sang
Among his fellows of the chase,
Until the laughing rafters rang
And scared all slumber from the place;
Or, if the weary traveller slept,
Through all his dream the chamois swept
There never yet was hunter born
So fierce of soul, so lithe of limb,
So fearless on the mountain's rim,
As Herman of the Wetterhorn.
He robbed the Jungfrau of her fame,
And put the chamois' flight to shame;
He takes the wild crag by the brow,
As boatman might his shallop-prow.
The avalanche he loves to dare,
To shout amid the wild uproar
Until the thundering vale is full,—
Then stands upon the ruins there,
Like some brave Spanish matadore
With foot upon the fallen bull!

“If all goes well as it should go,
Two toiling hours of steady pace
Must bring us to the ribs of snow
That lie around the broken base
Of that far height, and one hour more
Should find us at the convent door;
And there perchance will Herman be,
His shoulder laden with chamois,
His heart a mountain well of glee,
His voice an alpine gust of joy.”

Two hours they toiled with steady pace,
And they had gained that rocky base.
But when the winding line had earned
A jutting crag and partly turned,
A sharp and sudden rifle-crack
Broke through the thin and icy air,
Jarring the frozen silence there,
And rattled down the steep hill-side;

But ere the snow-cliffs gave it back,
A wounded chamois in their track
 Rolled bleeding, and there died!
The startled rider checked his rein;
 And the pedestrian stayed his pace:
With looks of wonder or of pain
 Each stared into the other's face.
And when the maid's first shock of fear
 In gentle tremblings passed away,
Her dark eye glistening with a tear,
 She gazed where the dead creature lay.

The graceful head,—the slender horns,—
 The eyes which Death seemed scarce to dull,
 So wildly sad,—so beautiful!
The polished hoofs,—the shining form,—
The limbs that had outsped the storm,
 Thrilled her with wonder and with wo,
Until she would have given a part
Of the dear life-blood of her heart

To wake once more that gentle eye
And bid the eagle's rival fly
Unto his native crags of snow.

Before their wonder all had passed
A voice came down the rising blast,—
A voice that gayly soared and fell
Along the wild winds' wandering swell;
A carol like a flying bird's—

Faint were the notes at first, and then
The sounds ran eddying into words
That sang of mirth and Meyringen.

SONG OF THE CHAMOIS HUNTER.

OH, brave may be those bands, perchance,
Who ride where tropic deserts glow,—
Who bring with lasso and with lance
The tiger to their saddle's prow:—
But I would climb the snowy track
Alone, as I have ever been,
And with a chamois on my back,
Descend to merry Meyringen.

Oh, they may sing of eyes of jet,
That melt in passion's dreamy glance,—

Of forms that to the castanet

Sway through the languor of the dance:—

But let me clasp some blue-eyed girl,

Whose arms impulsive clasp again;

And through a storm of music whirl

The dizzy waltz at Meyringen.

And they may sing, as oft they will,

Of joy beneath the southern vine,

And in luxurious banquets fill

Their goblets with the orient wine:—

But when the Alpland winter rolls

His tempests over hill and glen,

Let me sit mid the steaming bowls

That cheer the nights at Meyringen.

Brave men are there with hands adroit

At every game our land deems good,—

To wrestle, or to swing the quoit,

Or drain the bowl of brotherhood:—

And when the last wild chase is through,
We'll sit together, gray-haired men,
And, with the gay Lisette to brew,
Once more be young in Meyringen.

THE WARNING.

THE song was done; they raised their eyes,
And saw between them and the skies
A figure standing dark and mute
 That on a gleaming rifle leant,
And all his form from head to foot
 Was painted on the firmament.
So still he stood, the quickest eye
In its first gazing toward the sky
Glanced twice, before discerning if
The dusky shape were man or cliff.

At length, a voice—so high and loud
It seemed descending from the cloud—
Swept down along the swelling gale,
And made the stoutest hearer quail.
“I charge ye, on! I charge ye, speed!
And every gust proclaims the need.
By all the surest mountain signs,
By all the wailing of the winds,—
And by the sobbing of the pines,—
And by that avalanche which now
Gives warning through the vale below,—
By yonder rising cloud, whose wrath
Makes desperate the safest path,
I know the blast must soon perform
The bidding of the monarch storm.”

STORM ON ST. BERNARD.

OH, Heaven, it is a fearful thing
Beneath the tempest's beating wing
To struggle, like a stricken hare
When swoops the monarch bird of air ;
To breast the loud winds' fitful spasms,
To brave the cloud and shun the chasms,
Tossed like a fretted shallop-sail
Between the ocean and the gale.

Along the valley, loud and fleet,
The rising tempest leapt and roared,

And scaled the Alp, till from his seat
The throned Eternity of Snow
His frequent avalanches poured
In thunder to the storm below.

The laden tempest wildly broke
O'er roaring chasms and rattling cliffs,
And on the pathway piled the drifts;
And every gust was like a wolf,—
And there was one at every cloak,—
That, snarling, dragged toward the gulf.
The staggering mule scarce kept his pace,
With ears thrown back and shoulders bowed;
The surest guide could barely trace
The difference 'twixt earth and cloud;
And every form, from foot to face,
Was in a winding-sheet of snow:
The wind, 'twas like the voice of wo
That howled above their burial-place!

And now, to crown their fears, a roar
Like ocean battling with the shore,
Or like that sound which night and day
Breaks through Niagara's veil of spray,
From some great height within the cloud,

To some immeasured valley driven,
Swept down, and with a voice so loud

It seemed as it would shatter heaven!
The bravest quailed; it swept so near,

It made the ruddiest cheek to blanch,
While look replied to look in fear,

“The avalanche! The avalanche!”
It forced the foremost to recoil,
Before its sideward billows thrown,—
Who cried, “O God! Here ends our toil!
The path is overswept and gone!”

The night came down. The ghostly dark,
Made ghostlier by its sheet of snow,
Wailed round them its tempestuous wo,

Like Death's announcing courier! "Hark!
There, heard you not the alp-hound's bark?
And there again! and there! Ah, no,
'Tis but the blast that mocks us so!"

Then through the thick and blackening mist
Death glared on them, and breathed so near,
Some felt his breath grow almost warm,
The while he whispered in their ear

Of sleep that should out-dream the storm.
Then lower drooped their lids,—when, "List!
Now, heard you not the storm-bell ring?

And there again, and twice and thrice!
Ah, no, 'tis but the thundering
Of tempests on a crag of ice!"

Death smiled on them, and it seemed good
On such a mellow bed to lie:
The storm was like a lullaby,
And drowsy pleasure soothed their blood.

But still the sturdy, practised guide
His unremitting labour plied;
Now this one shook until he woke,
And closer wrapt the other's cloak,—
Still shouting with his utmost breath,
To startle back the hand of Death,
Brave words of cheer! “But, hark again,—
Between the blasts the sound is plain;
The storm, inhaling, lulls,—and hark!
It is—it is! the alp-dog's bark!
And on the tempest's passing swell—
The voice of cheer so long debarred—
There swings the Convent's guiding-bell,
The sacred bell of Saint Bernard!”

Then how they gained, though chilled and faint,
The Convent's hospitable door,
And breathed their blessing on the saint
Who guards the traveller as of yore,—

Were long to tell:—And then the night
And unhoused winter of the height,

Were rude for audience such as mine;
The harp, too, wakes to more delight,
The fingers take a freer flight,

When warmed between the fire and wine.
The storm around the fount of song
Has blown its blast so chill and long,
What marvel if it freeze or fail,
Or that its spray returns in hail!
Or, rather, round my muse's wings
The encumbering snow, though melting, clings
So thickly, she can scarce do more
Than flounder where she most would soar.

The hand benumbed, reviving, stings,
And with thick touches only brings

The harp-tones out by fits and spells,—
You needs must note how all the strings
Together jar like icicles!

Then heap the hearth and spread the board,
And let the glowing flasks be poured,
While I beside the roaring fire
Melt out the music of my lyre.

FANCIES IN THE FIRELIGHT,

IN THE CONVENT OF ST. BERNARD.

OH, it is a joy to gaze
Where the great logs lie ablaze;
Thus to list the garrulous flame
Muttering like some ancient dame;
And to hear the sap recount
Stories of its native mount,
Telling of the summer weather,
When the trees swayed all together,—

How the little birds would launch
Arrowy songs from branch to branch,
Till the leaves with pleasure glistened,
And each great bough hung and listened
To the song of thrush and linnet,
When securely lodged within it,
With all pleasant sounds that dally
Round the hill and in the valley;
Till each log and branch and splinter
On the ancient hearth of Winter
Can do naught but tell the story
Of its transient summer glory.

Oh, there's tranquil joy in gazing
Where these great logs lie ablazing,
While the wizard flame is sparkling,
The memorial shadows darkling
Swim the wall in strange mutation,
Till the marvelling contemplation

Feeds its wonder to repletion
With each firelight apparition.

There the ashen Alp appears,
And its glowing head uprears,
Like a warrior grim and bold,
With a helmet on of gold;
And a music goes and comes
Like the sound of distant drums.

O'er a line of serried lances
How the blazing banner dances,
While red pennons rise and fall
Over ancient Hannibal.

Lo, beneath a moon of fire,
Where the meteor sparks stream by her,
There I see the brotherhood
Which on sacred Grütli stood,

Pledging with crossed hands to stand
The defenders of the land.

And in that red ember fell
Gessler, with the dart of Tell!

Still they fall away, and, lo!
Other phantoms come and go,
Other banners wing the air,—
And the countless bayonets glare,
While around the steep way stir
Armies of the conqueror;
And the slow mule toiling on
Bears the world's Napoleon.

Now the transient flame that flashes
'Twixt the great logs and the ashes,
Sends a voice out from the middle
That my soul cannot unriddle,—

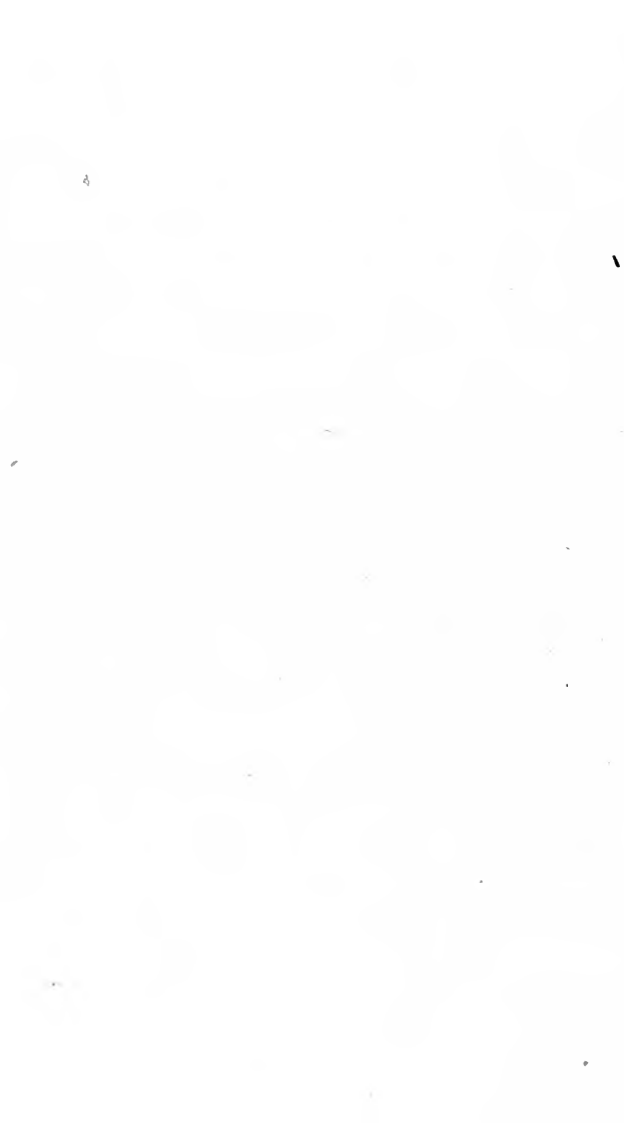
Till the fire above and under
Gnaws the stoutest wood asunder,
And the brands, in ruin blended,
Smoking, lie uncomprehended,—
While the dying embers blanch,
And the muffled avalanche,
Noiseless as the years descend,
Sweeps them to an ashen end.
Thus at last the great shall be,
And the slave shall lie with them,—
Piè Jesu Domine
Dona eis requiem!

THE END.









Sylvia.

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