

POEMS

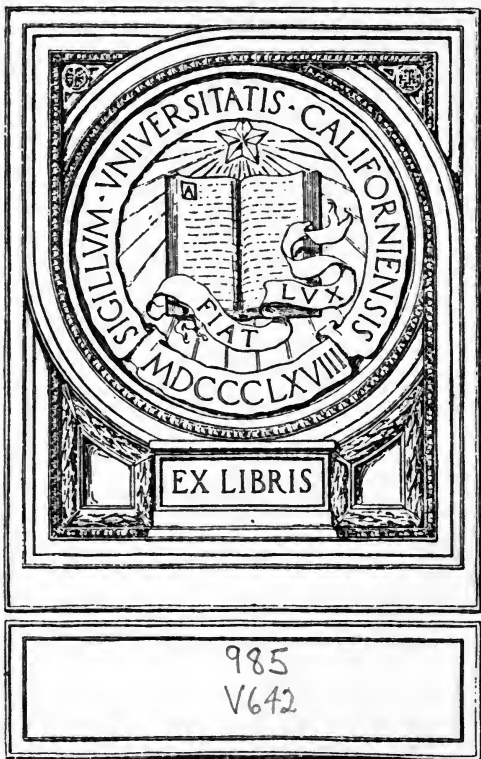
^FRANCES FULLER VICTOR^

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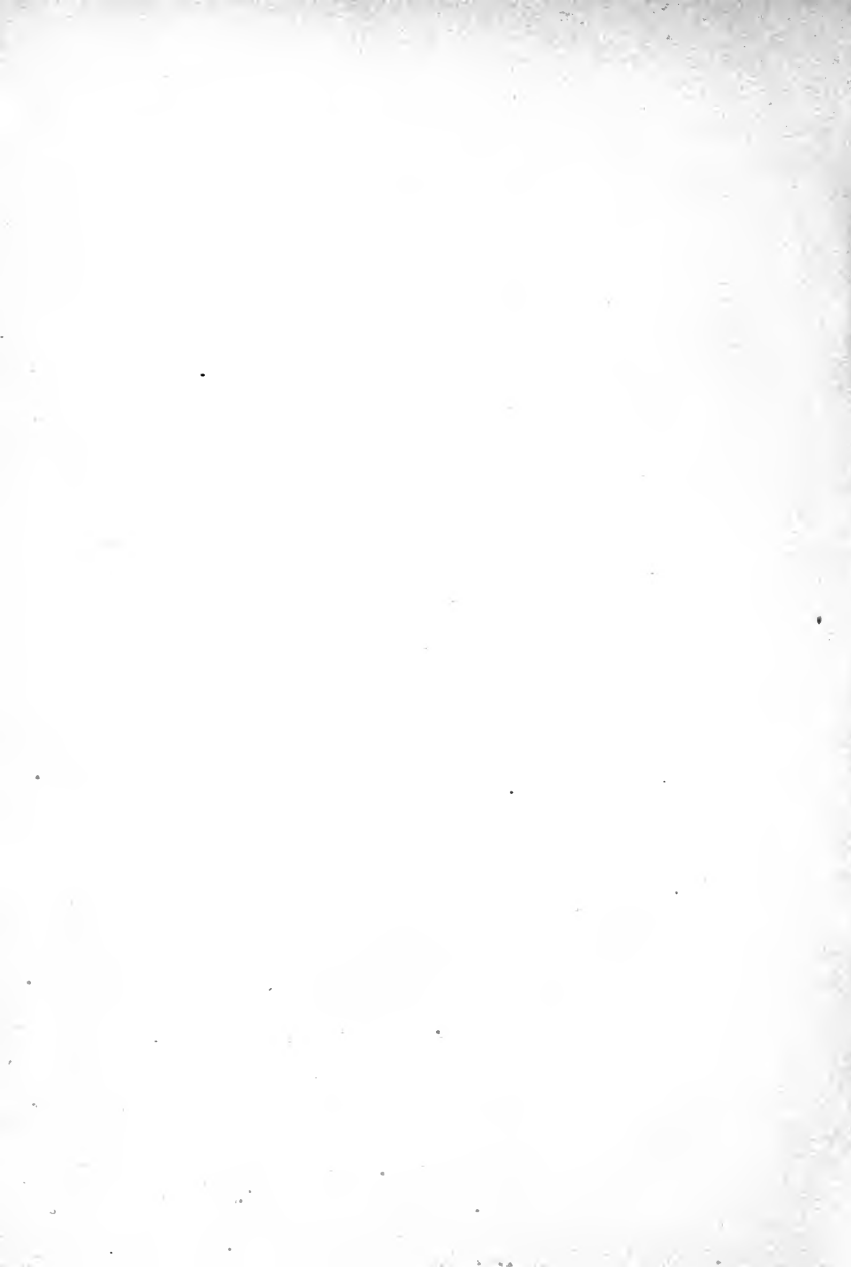


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UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA



POEMS



BY

FRANCES FULLER VICTOR



AUTHOR'S EDITION

1900.

[San Francisco.]

THE
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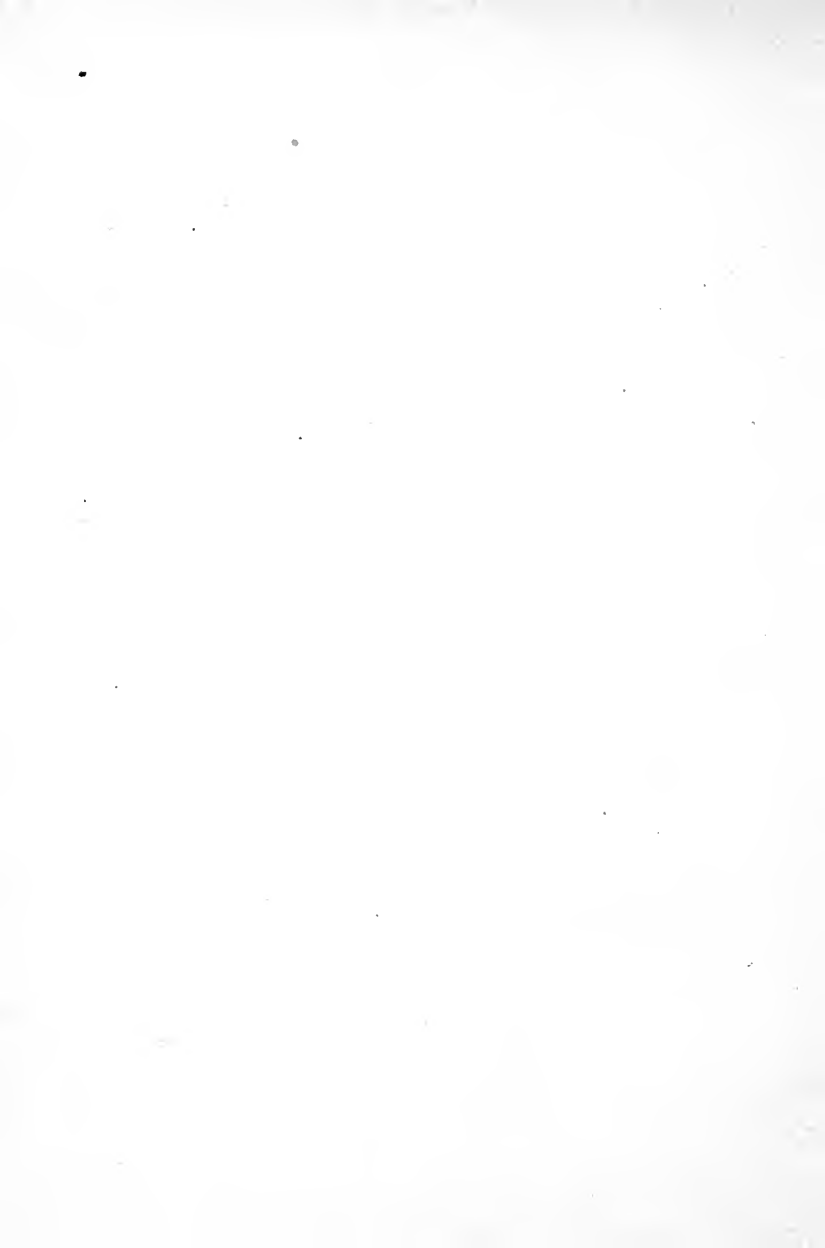
1900

MAIN

*But when the question arose whether
he was not only a lyrist but a poet, we
are obliged to confess that he is plainly
a contemporary, and not an eternal man.*

—EMERSON.

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LINES TO A VASE.

Thou art a dainty dream
Of Eastern art,
To make a sorrow seem
Of joy a part.

Within thy graceful curves
What hopes were urned!—
The ashes of lost loves
Once passioned-burned.

'Tis thus the Poet's heart
Entombs desire,
And seals from life apart
Promethean fire.

Behind his well-turned phrase,
His studied lines,
Hidden as in a vase
His soul's soul pines.

MUSIC.

Music's first anthem was the song the stars
Chanted together when God said "Amen"
To the earth's morning loveliness. It jars
All sentience to its depths now, even as then.

THE POST-BOY'S SONG.

The night is wild, and the road is long,
The scudding clouds fly fast,
The swift wind sings a dreary song
And the trees creak in the blast;
The moon is down in the tossing sea,
The stars shed not a ray,
The lightning flashes frightfully,
But I must on my way.

Like a shuttle thrown by the hand of fate
Forward and back I go
Bearing a thread to the desolate
To darken his web of woe,
A brighter thread to the glad of heart,
And a mingled one for all,
Yet the dark and light I cannot part,
Nor alter their hues at all.

Full many a hundred times have I
Gone o'er it in the dark,
'Till my faithful steeds can well descry
Each long familiar mark,
Withal should peril come tonight
God have us in his care,
For all alone, and without light
The boldest well beware.

Now, on, my steeds; the lightning's flash
An instant gilds our way;
But steady! by that fearful crash
The heavens seem rent away.
Soho, here comes the blast anew,
And a pelting flood of rain;
Steady! a sea seems bursting through
A rift in some upper main.

'Tis a terrible night, a dreary hour,
But who will remember to pray
That the care of the storm-controlling power
Be over the post-boy's way?
The wayward wanderer from his home,
The sailor upon the sea,
Have prayers to bless them where they roam—
Who thinketh to pray for me?

The storm has passed. Up swims the moon
Like a stately ship at sea;
Now on, my steeds! this brilliant noon
Of a night so black shall be
A scene for us. Toss high your heads,
And merrily speed away,
We shall startle the sleepers in their beds
Before the dawn of day.

Like a shutter thrown by the hand of fate
Forward and back I go,
Bearing a thread to the desolate
To darken his web of woe,
A brighter thread to the glad of heart,
And a mingled one for all.
But the dark and light I cannot part,
Nor alter their hues at all.

Wooster, Ohio, 1849.

SOUVENIR.

You ask me, "Do you think of me?"
Dear, thoughts of thee are like this river,
Which pours itself into the sea,
Yet empties its own channel never.

All other thoughts are like these sail
Drifting the river's surface over;
They veer about with every gale—
The river keeps its course forever.

So deep and still, so strong and true,
The current of my soul sets thee-ward,
Thy river I, my ocean you,
And all myself am running seaward.

'T WAS JUNE, NOT I.

“Come out into the garden, Maud,”
In whispered tones young Percy said;
He but repeated what he'd read
That afternoon, with soft applaud;
A snatch, which for my same name's sake,
He'd caught, out of the sweet, soft song,
A lover for his love did make,
In half despite of some fond wrong:
And more he quoted, just to show
How still the rhymes ran in his head,
With visions of the roses red
That on the poet's pen did grow.

The poet's spell was in our blood;
The spell of June was in the air;
We felt, more than we understood,
The charm of being young and fair.
Where everything is fair and young—
As on June eves doth fitly seem:
The Earth herself lay in among
The misty, azure fields of space,
A bride, whose startled blushes glow
Less flame-like through the shrouds of lace
That sweeter all her beauties show.

We walked and talked beneath the trees—
Bird-haunted, flowering trees of June—
The roses purpled in the moon,
We breathed their fragrance on the breeze.
Young Percy's voice is turned to clear
Deep tones, as if his heart were deep;
This night it fluttered on my ear
As young birds flutter in their sleep.
My own voice faltered when I said
How very sweet such hours must be
With one we love. At that word he
Shook like the aspen overhead.

"Must be!" he drew me from the shade,
To read my face to show his own:
"Say are, Dear Maud!"—my tongue was stayed;
My pliant limbs seemed turned to stone.

He held my hands I could not move,
The nerveless palms together prest,
And clasped them tightly to his breast,
While in my heart the question strove.
The fire-flies flashed like wandering stars—
I thought some sprang from out his eyes—
Surely some spirit makes or mars
At will our earthly destinies.
"Speak, Maud!" At length I turned away;
He must have thought it woman's fear;

For, whispering softly in my ear
Such gentle thanks as might allay
Love's tender shame, left on my brow,
And on each hand, a warm light kiss—
I feel them burn there even now—
But all my fetters fell at this.

I answered like an injured queen:
Its our own defense when we're surprised—
The way our weakness is disguised;
I said things that I could not mean,
Or ought not—since it was a lie
That love had not been in my mind;
'Twas in the air I breathed; the sky
Shone love, and murmured it the wind.
It had absorbed my soul with bliss;
My blood ran love in every vein,
And to have been beloved again
Were heavenly—so I thought till this
Unlooked-for answer to the prayer
My heart was making with its might.
Thus challenged, caught in sudden snare,
Like two clouds meeting on a height
And, pausing first in short strange lull,
Then bursting into awful storm,
Opposing feelings multiform,
Struggled in silence, and then, full

Of our blind woman-wrath, broke forth
In stinging hail of sharp-edged ice,
As freezing as the polar north,
Yet maddening. O, the poor mean vice
We women have been taught to call
By virtue's name: the holy scorn
We feel for lovers left love-lorn
By our own coldness, or by the wall
Of other love twixt them and us;
The tempest past, I paused. He stood
Silent,—and yet “Ungenerous!”
Was hurled back, plainer than ere could
His lips have said it, by his eyes
Fire-flashing, and his pale, set face,
Beautiful and unmarred by trace
Of aught save pain and pained surprise.
I quailed at last before that gaze,
And even faintly owned my wrong;
I said, “I spoke in such amaze
I could not choose words that belong
To such occasions.” Here he smiled,
To cover one low, quick-drawn sigh:
“June even disturb us differently,”
He said, at length; “and I, beguiled
By something in the air did do
My lady Maud unmeant offense;

And, what is stranger far, she too,
Under the baleful influence
Of this fair heaven"—he raised his eyes,
And gestured proudly toward the stars—
"Has done me wrong. Wrong, lady, mars
God's purpose, written on these skies,
Painted and uttered in this scene,
Acknowledged in each secret heart.
We both are wrong, you say; 'twould mean
That we, too, should be wide apart—
And so adieu!"—with this he went.

I sat down whitening in the moon,
With heat as of a desert noon,
Sending its fever vehement
Across my brow, and through my frame:
The fever of a wild regret—
A vain regret without a name,
In which both love and loathing met.
Was this the same enchanted air
I breathed one little hour ago?
Did all these purple roses blow
But yesternorn, so sweet, so fair?
Was it this eve that some one said
"Come out into the garden, Maud?"
And while the sleepy birds o'erhead
Chirped out to know who walked abroad,

Did we admire the plumey flowers
On the wide-branched catalpa trees,
And locusts; scenting all the breeze,
And call the balm-trees our bird-towers?
Did we recall the "black bat Night,"
That flew before young Maud walked forth—
And say this Night's wings were too bright
For bats—being feathered, from its birth,
Like butterflies with powdered gold—
Still talking on, from gay to grave,
And trembling lest some sudden wave
Of the soul's deep, grown over-bold,
Should sweep the barriers of reserve,
And whelm us in tumultuous floods
Of unknown power? What did unnerve
Our frames, as if we walked with gods,
Unless they, meaning to destroy,
Had made us mad with a false heaven,
Or drunk with wine and honey given
Only for immortals to enjoy?

Alas, I only knew that late
I'd seemed in an enchanted sphere;
That now I felt the web of fate
Close round me with a mortal fear.
If only once the gods invite
To banquets that are crowned with roses,

After which the celestial closes
Are barred to us; if in despite
Of such high favor, arrogant
We blindly choose to bide our time,
Rejecting Heaven's, and ignorant
What we have spurned, attempt to climb
To heavenly places at our will,
Finding no path thereto but one,
Nemesis-guarded, where atone
To heaven, all such as hopeful still,
Press toward the mount, yet find it strewn
With corpses, perished by the way,
Of those who Fate did importune
Too rashly, or her will gainsay;
If I have been thrust out from heaven
This night, for insolent disdain
Of putting a young god in pain,
How shall I hope to be forgiven?
Yet let me not be judged as one
Who mocks at any high behest,
My fault being that I kept the throne
Of a Jove vacant in my breast,
And when Apollo claimed the place
I was too loyal to my Jove,
Unmindful the how the masks of love
Transfigure all things to our face.

Ah, well! if I have lost to fate
The greatest boon that heaven disposes,
And closed upon myself the gate
To fields of bliss, 'tis on these roses,
On this intoxicating air,
The witching influence of the moon,
The poet's rhymes that went in tune
To the night's voices low and rare—
To all that goes to make such hours
Like hasheesh-dreams. These did defy,
With contrary fate-compelling power
The intended bliss;—'twas June, not I.

Lancaster. Ohic, 1860.

LINES WRITTEN IN AN ALBUM.

The highest use of happy love is this,
To make us loving to the loveless ones;
Willing, indeed, to halve our meed of bliss;
If our sweet plenty others' want atones;
Of love's abundance may God give thee store,
To spend in love's sweet charities, Lenore.

A PAGAN REVERIE.

Tell me, Mother Nature! tender yet stern mother!
In what nomenclature (fittlier than another)
Can I laud and praise thee, entreat and implore thee;
Ask thee what thy ways be, question yet adore thee?

Over me thy heaven bends its royal arches;
Through its vault the seven planets keep their marches;
Rising, shining, setting, with no change or turning;
Never once forgetting—wasted not with burning.

On and on, unceasing, move the constellations,
Lessening nor increasing since the birth of nations;
Sun and moon unfailing keep their times and seasons,—
But man, unavailing, pleads to thee for reasons

Why the great dumb mountains, why the ocean hoary,
Even the babbling fountains, older are than story,
And his life's duration's but a few short marches
Of the constellations through the heavenly arches!

Even the oaks of Mamre, and the palms of Kedar,
(Praising thee with psalmistry), and the stately cedar,
Through the cycling ages, stunted not are growing,
While the holiest sages have not time for knowing.

Mother whom we cherish, savage while so tender,
Do the lilies perish mourning their lost splendor?
Does the diamond shimmer brightlier that eternal
Time makes nothing dimmer of its light supernal?

Do the treasures hidden in earth's rocky bosom,
Cry to men unbidden that they come and loose them?
Is the dew of dawntide sad because the Summer
Kissed to death the fawn-eyed Spring, the earlier comer?

Would the golden vapors trooping over heaven,
Quench the starry tapers of the sunless even?
When the arrowy lightnings smite the rocks asunder,
Do they shrink with frightenings from the bellowing thunder?

Inconceivable Nature! these, thy inert creatures,
With their sphinx-like stature, are of man the teachers;
Silent, secret, passive, endless as the ages—
'Gainst their forces massive fruitlessly he rages.

Winds and waves misuse him, buffet and destroy him;
Thorns and pebbles bruise him, heat and cold annoy him;
Sting of insect maddens, snarl of beast affrights him;
Shade of forest saddens, breath of flowers delights him.

O thou great, mysterious mother of all mystery
At thy lips imperious man entreats his history—
Whence he came—and whither is his spirit fleeing:
Ere it wandered hither had it other being:

Will its subtle essence, passing through death's portal,
Put on nobler presence in a life immortal?
Or is man but matter, that a touch ungentle,
Back again may shatter to forms elemental?

Can mere atoms question how they feel sensation?
Or dust make suggestion of its own creation?
Yet if man were better than his base conditions,
Could things baser fetter his sublime ambitions?

What unknown conjunction of the pure etherial,
With the form and function of the gross material,
Gives the product mortal? whose immortal yearning
Brings him to the portal of celestial learning:

To the portal gleaming, where the waiting sphinxes,
Humoring his dreaming, give him what he thinks is
Key to the arcana—plausible equation
Of the problems many in his incarnation.

Pitiful delusion!—in no nomenclature—
Maugre its profusion—O ambiguous nature!
Can man find expression of his own relation
To the great procession of facts in creation?

Fruitless speculating! none may lift the curtain
From the antedating ages and uncertain
When what is, was not, and tides of pristine being
Beat on shores forgot, and all, as now, unseeing

Whence impelled, or whither, or by what volition;
Borne now here, now thither, in blind inaction.
Out of this abysmal, nebulous dim distance,
Haunted by a dismal, phantomic existence,

Issued man?—a creature without inspiration,
Gross of form and feature, dull of inclination?
Or was his primordial self a something higher?
Fresh from test and ordeal of elemental fire?

Were there ages golden when the world was younger,
When the giants olden knew not toil nor hunger?
When no pain nor malice marred joy's full completeness,
And life's honeyed chalice rapt the soul with sweetness?

When the restless river of time loved to linger;
Ere flesh felt the quiver of death's dissolving finger;
When man's intuition led without deflection,
To a sure fruition, and a full perfection?

Individual man is ever new created;
And his being's plan is, loosely predicated
On the circumstances of his sole condition,
Colored by the fancies borrowed from tradition.

His creation gives him clue to nothing older;
Naked, life receives him—wondering beholder
Of the world about him—and ere aught is certain,
Time and mystery flout him, and death drops the curtain.

Man, the dreamer, groping after what he should be,
Cheers himself with hoping to be what he would be;
When he hopes no longer, with self-adulation,
Fancies he was stronger at his first creation:

Else—in him inhering powers of intellection—
Death, by interfering with his mind's perfection,
Itself gives security to restore life's treasure,
Freed from all impurity, and in endless measure.

Thou, O Nature, knowest, yet no word is spoken.
Time, that ever flowest, presses on unbroken.
All in vain the sages toil with proof and question—
The immemorial ages give no least suggestion.

Portland, Or., 1876.

A JUNE SONG.

O song-birds from the east,
And sea-birds from the west,
And great birds of the shining wing,
That in the northlands nest,
Come, sing to my red, red rose,
And my lilies saintly white,
To my golden poppies sing
Your throatful of delight;
Lilt on the swinging boughs

Of my accacia trees,
And pour your music out upon
The perfume-laden breeze.
Come, songsters of the wood,
And put my heart in tune
To the flowers and the sun
Of this happy land of June.

Cry out, O brave, bright birds
That soar, and swoop and swing
Above the sapphire sea
In a wild wassailing;
Drop down and flick the foam,
As the arrow flies when sped;
Laugh at your startled prey;
And scream to your mates o'erhead;
Be drunken with the joy
Of the sparkling air and brine,
With the glory of the day,
Its shadows and its shine;
With the color and the warmth
Of this June-land by the sea,
That you whirl above in play,
And you scream unto in glee.

Cry, O pilots of the air,
Leading to the lonely meads
By the quiet lakes and cold,
To the land of grass and reeds,
Twixt the northern mountains set
Like a picture in a frame,
In among the headlands bold;
Where the weird northlights flame,
Flashing through the evening sky;
Where the days are still and long,
And the hours are brief that roll—
Filled with murmurs of the song
Sung by cataracts and pines
To the fiercely glowing stars
Swinging round the northern pole—
Back the midnight's ebon bars.

O, winged creatures all,
Of the land or of the sea,
Of the west, or east, or south,
Bird or butterfly or bee,
Or the eagle of the crags,
Breathing of this air divine
Blowing from its maker's mouth,
Quickening the blood like wine,
Sing and cry unto this land,
To this sunland by the sea,

To the sea that bounds this shore
In a summer symphony—
Topaz wave and amber sand—
To this sapphire sea and sky,
To the mountains towering o'er
Vales where shimmering harvests lie:
To this joyous land and free,
To my flowers, and to my heart,
Sing a jocund jubilee—
June is sweet, and life is short.

San Francisco, Cal., 1896.

PASSING BY HELICON.

My steps are turned away,
Yet my eyes linger still,
On their beloved hill,
In one long, last survey:
Gazing through tears that multiply the view,
Their passionate adieu.

O joy-empurpled height,
Down whose enchanted sides
The rosy mist now glides,
How can I lose thy sight?
How can my eyes turn where my feet must go,
Trailing their way in woe?

Gone is my strength of heart;
The roses that I brought
From thy dear bowers, and thought
To keep, since we must part—
Thy thornless roses, sweeter until now,
Than round Hymettus' brow.

The golden-vested bees
Find sweetest sweetness in—
Such odors dwelt within
The moist red hearts of these—
Alas, no longer give out blissful breath,
But odors rank with death.

Their dewiness is dank,
It chills my pallid arms,
Once blushing 'neath their charms,
And their green stems hang lank,
Stricken with leprosy, and fair no more,
But withered to the core.

Vain thought, to bear along
Into this torrid track,
Whence no one turneth back
With his first wanderer's song
Yet on his lips, thy odors and thy dews,
To deck these dwarfed yews.

No more within thy vales,
Beside thy plashing wells,
Where sweet Euterpe dwells
With songs of nightingales,
And sounds of flutes that make pale Silence glow,
Shall I their rapture know.

Farewell, ye stately palms
Clashing your cymbal tones
In thro' the mystic moans
Of pines at solemn psalms;
Ye myrtles, singing Love's inspired song,
We part, and part for long.

Farewell, majestic peaks
Whereon my 'listering soul
Hath trembled to the roll
Of thunders that Jove wreaks—
And calm Minerva's oracles hath heard
All more than now unstirred.

Adieu, ye beds of bloom;
No more shall zephyr bring
To me, upon its wing,
Your loveliest perfume;
No more upon your pure, immortal dyes,
Shall rest my happy eyes.

I pass by; at thy foot
 O mount of my delight,
 Ere yet from out thy sight,
I drop my voiceless lute:
Relentless Nemesis my doom hath sent—
 This cruel banishment.

THE OLD MAN'S FAVORITE.

Do you ask where she has fled—
 Lucy with the laughing eyes?
Should I tell you "she is dead,"
 You would mimic tears and sighs,
 And pretend a sad surprise.

Yesterday when you were here
 She was sitting on your knee,
Whispering stories in your ear
 With an air of mystery
 And a roguish glance at me.

Lucy's heart was always light,
 Light and free as plumed bird;
When she glanced within our sight,
 Or her merry voice we heard,
 Music in our hearts was stirred.

Ask you still where Lucy hides?
I will tell you by-and-by;
Look you where the river glides
In whose depths the shadows lie
Mingled, of the earth and sky.

Lucy always loved that spot;
There her favorite flowers grew—
Violet, forget-me-not,
Iris, with its gold and blue,
Bending under beads of dew.

Oft on the old rustic bridge
Framed of supple boughs entwined,
Hanging from each margin's ridge,
Swinging softly in the wind,
Lucy carelessly reclined.

Once she told me, while her eyes
Filled with tears of childish bliss,
That she could see Paradise
From her rocking resting-place,
Mirrored in the river's face:

That she saw the tall trees wave,
Bright-winged birds among the bowers,
And a river that did lave
Banks o'ergrown with wondrous flowers,
And a sky more fair than ours.

Then she asked with such a smile
As a seraph's face might wear,
If she watched a long, long while,
She should see her mother there,
Walking in the groves so fair?
When, to answer her, I said
She should see mamma in heaven,
Lightly to the bridge she sped
As if wings to her were given,
And—but look, you see 'tis riven.

Ah, you start!—your look is wild!—
Calm yourself, old man, I pray;
Lucy was no earthly child,
And 'tis well she's gone away
To her Paradise so gay.

TO M——

Do thy chamber windows open east,
Beloved, as did ours of old?
And do you stand when day has ceased,
Withdrawn through evening's porch of gold
And watch the fading flush above
The hills on which the wan moon leans,
Remembering the girlish love
That blest this hour in other scenes?

A SUMMER DAY.

Fade not, sweet day!
Another hour like this—
So full of tranquil bliss—
May never come my way,
I walk in paths so shadowed and so cold;
But stay thou, darling hour,
Nor stint thy gracious power
To smile away the clouds that me enfold;
Oh, stay! when thou art gone,
I shall be lost and lone.

Lost, lone, and sad;
And troubled more and more,
By the dark ways, and sore,
In which my feet are led;—
Alas my heart, it was not always so;
Therefore, O happy day,
Haste not to fade away,
Nor let pale night chill all thy tender glow—
Thy rosy mists, that steep
The violet hills to sleep—

Thy airs of gold,
That over all the plain,
And fields of ripened grain,
A shimmering glory hold,—

The soft fatigue-dress of the drowsy sun,
 Dreaming, as one who goes
 To peace, and sweet repose,
After a battle hardly fought, and won;
 Even so, my heart, today,
 Dream all thy fears away.

O happy tears,
 That everywhere I gaze,
 Jewel the golden maze,
 Flow on, till earth appears
Worthy the soft perfection of this scene:
 Beat, heart, more soft and low,
 Creep, hurrying blood, more slow,
Waste not one throb, to lose me the serene,
 Deep, satisfying bliss
 Of such an hour as this

How like our dream,
 Of that delightful rest
 God keepest for the blest,
 This lovely peace doth seem:
Perchance, my heart, He sent this gracious day,
 That when the dark and cold,
 Thy doubtful steps enfold,
Thou may'st remember, and press on thy way,
 Nor faint midway the gloom
 That lies this side the tomb.

All, all in vain
Sweet day, do I entreat
To stay thy winged feet;
The gloom, the cold, the pain,
Gather me back as thou dost pale and fade;
Yet in my heart I make
A chamber for thy sake,
And keep thy picture in warm color laid:
Thy memory, happy day,
Thou can'st not take away.

St. Helens, Or., 1868.

THE POPPIES OF WA-II-LAT-PU.

Between the zones of ice and sun,
Between the east seas and the west,
Where boundless prairies stretch, where run
Great rivers, born about the crest
Of heaven-piercing mountains, hoar
With centuries of unguessed time,
Within whose murky gorges roar
Vast cataracts, whose awful chime
Shakes the tall spires of rock o'erhead,
Where pines hang shivering with dread:

Note.—The first white women to cross the continent and settle in Oregon territory were Mrs. Narcissa Prentiss Whitman and Mrs. Eliza Hart Spalding, who with their husbands, Dr. Marcus Whitman and Rev. H. H. Spalding, founded the missions of Waiilatpu and Lapwai, in 1836. Dr. and Mrs. Whitman, with eleven others, fell victims to the fury of the Cayuse Indians of the Umatilla valley in November, 1847. The Protestant missions east of the Cascade mountains were broken up by this tragedy, and never resumed. Various theories of the cause of the massacre are entertained, but my subject deals only with poetical incidents, and is designed as a slight tribute to the memory of a heroic woman, whose name must go down in history as the pioneer of women pioneers in the territory north of the Columbia river.

Where tropic trees flaunt gaudy vines,
Where northern firs stand dark and stern;
By desert springs, in night-black mines,
Where sun-scorched sand-plains blind and burn;
From the Atlantic's rocky rim
To the Pacific's steel-bound shore,
We trace the trails, time cannot dim,
The men of destiny have trod before,
Leading an empire on a line
Stretching from flashing brine to brine.

There is no place they have not been,
The men of deeds and destiny;
No spot so wild they have not seen,
And measured it with dauntless eye.
They in a common danger shared,
Nor shrunk from toil, nor want nor pain,
But sternly every peril dared,
Just to be heroes, scorning gain.
We, trembling, listen to the tale
That turns the hardiest hearer pale.

Constrained to question why, and when,
And how at first the impulse came
Which parted these from other men,
Leaving us often scarce a name
For history's page. Yet these are they
By whom the race unseen is led;

Who blaze through untrod wilds the way
 Successive generations tread,
Asking no more than this, to be
 Lords of themselves, in all things free.

Here is a rose. It grew above
 A grave in that fair tropic isle
The poets name the home of love—
 Paul et Virginie. One can smile,
Remembering that idyl sweet
 Of youthful passion, tender, pure,
For though it ends in death, 'tis meet
 Such gentle souls should not endure;
Their fragile natures, soft and warm,
 Are bruised to death in life's first storm.

Here is a relic some one brought
 From the far South Pacific seas;
A souvenir of a battle fought
 For freedom by the Tahitese.
The story stirs indignant blood,
 For wrongs inflicted on a race;
Yet here, a lack of brotherhood,
 A feeling of the lowlier place
In nature's plan for such as these,
 Dulls our indignant sympathies.

“They are not fitted to survive,”
We say. “Why pain ourselves to feel
The battle-throes in which they strive?
Fate has decreed. Mistaken zeal
Would meddle where it cannot mend,
And lengthen woes it cannot cure;
A champion may be not a friend;
Enough for us that we endure
The heat and burden of the day,
In our own lives, in our own way.”

There is a pang that strikes us through—
When strong great natures bend and break—
Or when the earnest and the true
Are martyrs for their conscience sake.
That gives a sense of wasteful loss,
From which we feel a sharp recoil,
A protest against crownless cross,
'Gainst hopes misplaced and fruitless toil;
A verdict, by our hearts, that we
Censure the ways of destiny.

Our protest gives the lonely trail,
Or spring that bears some wanderer's name,
The spell of an Arabian tale,
Linking it to heroic fame.
For dauntless daring led the way,

And hope's strong magnet drew them on;
What hopes they were no man can say,
But we enjoy what they have won.
We pass in safety where they found
Only the dark and bloody ground.

Between the Rockies' peaks of snow
And blue Columbia rolling free,
From Washington to Mexico,
From the Sierras to the sea,
Our footsteps press historic ground,
Albeit often all unknown.
Storms level soon the simple mound,
Time crumbles e'en the lettered stone;
The wilderness the secret keeps
Of him who in its bosom sleeps.

Not always. If perchance a seed
The wanderer brought from home, should share
The earth with him, and being freed,
And fertilized, spring up more fair
Than its fair ancestors at home,
And spread, and cover all that spot
With the sad story, writ in bloom,
So that it could not be forgot—
'Twould match this tale I'm telling you—
The Poppies of Wa-ii-lat-pu!

Long years ago I chanced to meet
 Upon Nebraska's borderland,
A gentle woman, pale and sweet,
 Who held within a slender hand
Some crimson poppies. Such, I thought,
 Would well become her bronze-brown hair,
In which a glint of sunshine caught
 Brightened the silver lurking there;
A low-voiced woman, fair to see,
 Gifted with grace and courtesy.

We talked of flowers. I careless said
 That poppies were no loves of mine;
I liked them for their brilliant red,
 Like sunlight through a vase of wine,
But was content that they should lie
 Relieved against her soft dark dress;
They pleased right well my artist eye,
 But failed to touch me ne'ertheless.
She smiled: "They sweetness lack, 'tis true,
 But they appeal to me, from you.

As homely, tried, and constant friends,
 Or kindred we have always known;
It is their homeliness that lends
 A grace we else might fail to own.
They grew beside my mother's door,

And bloomed despite my careless feet;
They spread the grassy orchard o'er,
And blossomed gaily 'mong the wheat—
We never for their brightness paid—
I love these careless things," she said.

At this I quoted Robbie Burns
To prove her careless favorites frail;
And thus we bandied words by turns,
Barren of import to this tale,
Till memories that were long-time dead
Revived at touch of loving hands.
"The sisters of these flowers," she said,
"Are blooming in far-distant lands—
In earth the sun last looks upon,
Where rolls the rock-vexed Oregon."

"Ah!" then I asked to know the rest—
What fate had plumed her poppy seeds,
To bear them to that wondrous West,
Where hardly winged fancy leads—
So long the distance, strange the road.
"Their wings were tender woman hands,
And gentle feet, that heavenward trode
In toiling to those savage lands."
"And she who owned them?" "With her blood
She sealed her Christian womanhood."

“Her blood!” I thrilled with sudden pain,
As one myself in dread of death,
While she resumed the tale again,
With saddened mein and bated breath.
Yet there was much that caught my ear,
Like martial airs blown over sea,
And stirred my soul in spite of fear
With waves of joyful poesy;—
The theme was grand, the story laid
In colors Homer might have spread.

’Tis told in history now; but hear
The tale her poppies brought to mind:
“ ’Twas in the springtime of the year,
And twenty years ago, I find
On looking back. My boy was then
A babe—a lovely babe in truth—
This year he takes his place with men—
Thus time glides by and steals our youth.
Yes, twenty years ago today,
I gave those poppy seeds away.

“Our post was on the Papillion,
That feeds the Platte—a half day’s ride
Beyond the Council Bluffs, among
Smooth hills that closed on every side
The view of other hills and vales,

Each one as all its fellows green,
Alternating with dimpling dales,
And meadows silvered with the sheen
Of rippling grass, that like the sea
In billowy swells moved bright and free.

“From out this emerald waste there came
One soft spring eve, two women dear,
Who ran to me, and called my name,
And kissed my cheek, with many a tear,
As we had sisters been, whose ways
Long parted, here together drew;
I gave the loving Father praise
Who brought them every danger through,
And granted me to see a face
Once more of my own sex and race.”

“One moment: tell me why were you
Apart from others of your kind.”

“The church appointed us to view
The wilderness, and somewhere find
A spot to found a mission. Here
We fixed our post; and here we taught
The blessed word from year to year.”

“And found your teaching come to naught?”
“Ah, who shall say? We kept the faith;
Fought the good fight, for life or death.”

“And those who came your heart to cheer?”

“Were young wives, with their husbands bound
To Oregon, on a frontier

Beyond our West, and only found
By months of toilsome travel, spent

In cold and heat, in rain and sun,
By day on horse, by night in tent,

A journey each day new begun—
For they must keep fast by the train
Escorting them across the plain.”

“The train?” “Ah, yes. St. Louis, then,

Was but a post on the frontier;
Recruiting camp for mountain men;
French in its aspect, quaint and queer,
Of long, low houses, white and neat,
With corridors on every side;

The people sitting in the street,
Beneath the shadows cool and wide,
While hunters, in half Indian dress,
Made picturesque the quietness:

“A traders’ depot and exchange,
Where fleets of bateaux, from Orleans,
Brought hunting outfits, and the strange,
Barbaric gauds in which the queens
Of mountain wigwags took delight:

Fine scarlet blankets, bells, and beads,
Gay ribbons, jingling anklets, bright,
Soft silken kerchiefs for their heads,
With arms designed for their lords' use,
And white men's unrestrained abuse.

“These bateaux, with their pulsing oars,
That 'gainst a mighty current beat;
That glided betwixt murmurous shores,
And moved with plashings low and sweet,
Were then the river craft that plied
Between St. Louis and Bellevue,
Bringing each year, their freight beside,
Such travelers as the mountains drew—
Artists, and students, those who find
In wildest wastes food for the mind.

“To meet them came long laden trains,
Mules, Indian ponies, packed with spoil
Of dammed-up streams, and marshy plains
Made populous by the beavers' toil;
With skins of otter, and the hides
Of the great hump-backed buffalo;
White traders, and their dusky brides,
Decked out with gay barbaric show,
And half-caste babes, whose bold black eyes
Ne'er shrank in terror or surprise.”

“And so,” I said, “they joined a train
Of Indian traders and their wives?
I own it draws me like a chain,
The romance of these barbarous lives.
I think I should have done as they,
And gone out to the mighty West.
But with the motive? Who shall say?
We each pursue our special quest:
Perchance I am not of the stuff
Men take for stormsails.” “’Tis enough

That they were,” sighed she. “Yes, like you,
They counted life naught, duty all;
But zeal may be mistaken, too.
Did they not follow at the call
Of wife-love, more than God-love strong
In most of us?” She spake: “No tongue
Could have convinced them they were wrong,
Though it with prophecies had rung
Eloquent as Isaiah’s page:
No; for they felt a holy rage,

“Such as the prophets might have known,
To conquer by their Christian faith,
And by the sword of Christ alone
To win their way, for life or death.
The voice that called on them to go

And teach the word to all the earth,
Was not to them a sound of woe,
But rather one of holy mirth:
'Rejoice,' it said, 'for victories won
In name of my beloved son.' "

" 'God moves in a mysterious way,' "
I murmured, with a hidden thought:
"To hear his voice was to obey;
But they mistook the message brought."
Then: "Tell me who those women were,
Their names, their looks, their natures tell;
For they were goddesses, and bear
Homeric armor passing well.
First of their race and sex to stand
Alone unharmed in that far land."

She told me all. How both were good,
Sweet Christian women, full of love,
An honor to pure womanhood;
But one had graciousness above
Her serious sister, and her name,
A fittingly descriptive one—
Narcissa—from a flower came,
As she suggested flower and sun;
A stately blonde, with golden hair,
And blue eyes 'neath a forehead fair.

The other was of graver type,
Dark-haired, and slight, of quiet mien;
Her spirit showing strong, and ripe
For action on whatever scene
Her duty placed her; asking not,
And caring nothing for applause;
Herself, and self-love, all forgot
In service of the Master's cause,
With such devotion and restraint
As in past ages made the saint.

"They could not tarry. But a day
We had them with us. While they staid,
We talked each fleeting hour away,
Nor any pause in labor made,
But worked the while we talked. I strove
To add such comforts to their store,
Too small at most, as anxious love
Suggested, pained to do no more:
And, added to more real needs,
My little gift of poppy seeds."

"You knew they bloomed?" I asked. "In time
A message came. She praised their hue
And said they loved that soil and clime,
And with a rich luxuriance grew
Unknown to us. They made her walk

About her humble garden sweet
With homeward thoughts and homeward talk;
They drew the little restless feet
Of her girl-babe, who crowed and played,
Delighted with the show they made."

"And then? What then?" "They passed to where
Columbia's waters foam and flow,
And parted company. I spare
The sickening tale. Enough to know
They with their husbands went among
The restless wild men of the plains,
And taught that love returned for wrong
Will bring reward in priceless gains;
Taught, with alternate hopes and fears,
Their Christian faith for ten long years.

"Then came the end. The wild men tired
Of straining after thoughts too high
For their low level, and conspired
To blot all out, and all deny.
Narcissa Whitman fell. She whom
I told you of, whose poppies grew,
And pleased her baby with their bloom,
Fell drenched in blood—her husband, too.
Wolves tore her dainty flesh, and bare
Her bones lay, in her long fair hair."

Years passed. Fate placed my feet upon
The self-same way those women trode;
On me the prairie sunshine shone,
With eager steps I pressed the road
Which they, first of my sex and race
To pass the Rockies' stony wall,
Had honored, passing to their place
Among the immortals. I recall
The wonder that I felt to find
The deepened ruts with roses lined.

Alas, not marked by these alone,
The weary way from shore to shore;
But a white line of bleaching bone
Of worn-out oxen stretched before,
With lonely wayside graves. 'Twas thus
That first I learned the fearful price
The nation gave to dower us
With this fair land; the sacrifice
Of hecatombs of beasts and men,
By weariness, want, and foes in ambush slain.

This by the way. I stood, in time,
By Walla Walla's gentle stream,
In Wa-ii-lat-pu's vale, where crime
Struck down a good man, and his dream.
But, ah, no sign of that career

Begun so bravely; not a trace
Of her, the woman pioneer
Of all the great Northwest; no place
Bore mark, or sign, except a mound—
A nameless heap of this so hallowed ground;

And not far off some gnarled trees,
That might have borne imperfect fruit:—
I turned my reverent steps to these,
As honoring every branch, and root,
On which I gazed with misty eyes;
Then down the little valley glanced,
And lo, oh exquisite surprise!
Her blood-red poppies waved and danced
O'er all the meadow, bright and gay,
As when they pleased her babe at play.

“These are your monument,” I cried,
“O noble woman, foully slain!
Blooming with every summer-tide,
And needing only sun and rain.
Here in this wilderness they spread
Your story new, from year to year,
As your dear blood as crimson red,
As deathless as your virtues dear.
Here in this vale of Wa-ii-lat-pu
Each wandering zephyr speaks of you.

The waving grass, the brookside grove,
The tangled thickets of wild rose,
And bending birch, that droops above
The bed where Walla Walla flows;
The glorious morns, the sultry noons,
The blazoned sunsets of the plains,
The starry nights, and white-fire moons,
The golden fields of ripening grains,
That prove this land, in God's great plan,
The last, best heritage of man!

Yours was the first of womanhood
Whose eyes beheld, whose mind could reach
The heights where beauty, use and good,
Stood beckoning; who longed to teach
An untaught and unteachable race,
To see, seize and enjoy. What though
You failed of purpose? We still trace
The God-word thought, and feel and know
Your life's deep lesson, brought to view
In the red poppies of Wa-ii-lat-pu.

Walla Walla, 1877.

A LYRIC OF LIFE.

Said one to me: "I seem to be
Like a bird blown out to sea,
In the hurricane's wild track—
Lost, wing-weary, beating back
Vainly toward a fading shore,
It shall rest on nevermore."

Said I: "Betide, some good ships ride,
Over all the waters wide;
Spread your wings upon the blast,
Let it bear you far and fast—
In some sea serene and blue,
Succor-ships are waiting you."

This soul then said: "Would I were dead,
Billows rolling o'er my head;
Those that sail the ships will cast
Storm-waifs back into the blast;
Omens evil will they call
What the hurricane lets fall."

For my reply: "Beneath the sky
Countless isles of beauty lie:
Waifs upon the ocean thrown,
After tossings long and lone,
To those blessed shores have come,
Finding there love, heaven, and home."

This soul to me: "The seething sea,
Tossing hungry under me,
I fear to trust; the ships I fear;
I see no isle of beauty near;
The sun is blotted out—no more
'Twill shine for me on any shore."

Once more I said: "Be not afraid;
Yield to the storm without a dread;
For the tree, by tempests torn
From its native soil, is borne
Green, to where its ripened fruit
Gives a sturdy forest root.

"That which we lose, we think we choose,
Oft, from slavery to use.
Shocks that break our chains, tho' rude,
Open paths to highest good:
Wise, my sister soul, is she
Who takes of life the proffered key."

LOVE.

Love robs the "dread unknown" of any dread;
"We live in deeds, not years, not years," the poet
said;
And loving deeds in widening cycles move
Until they climb to God, the fount of love.

BEAUTIFUL SOUL.

Stay, Soul Beautiful, stay, oh, stay!

Listen again to my crying, dear;
Pause even while pursuing your way
To your home in heaven's most shining sphere.

Beautiful Soul, how came you so fair?

Did God when He made you leave out sin,—
With so little of earth and so much of air
That the dust fell away from the spirit within?

As a drop of dew in its delicate sphere

Holds imprisoned a globe of the morning light,
And exhaling frees to the amosphere
The molecule of sun it has stayed in its flight,

So you lived in your beautiful body, Sweet,

And shone through its white and dainty mould;
So you passed away from world's toil and heat
To the glory that gathered you in its fold.

And I? Will my soul when it is free

Discover the print of your spirit feet,
And follow and find? O ecstasy,
To come where you are, my Sweet, my Sweet!

Drop down along your shimmering way

The golden dust of your shining wings,
And haste not too much, but pause and stay
While my soul essays its journeyings,

For, dearest Dear, you must not forget,
Because you're in heaven, and I on earth,
The sweet love bond that binds us yet,
And what to me is its meaning and worth:

It means that no matter where you may be—
But I know where you are there must be bliss—
To no other heaven can my spirit flee,
Beautiful Soul, but only to this.

And perhaps were it not that you are there,
For me to desire, and seek, and gain,
O my Sweet, my Sweet, I should fail to dare
The heights you would help me to attain.

Leave me, along the wondrous way,
Some token my soul may understand;
From your lambent vesture part a ray,
Or loosen within your shining hand

Some radiant blossoms to fall along
Your ariel path, like stars new born;
Tune the motionless ether to a song;
Or breathe through it fragrance like the morn:

But O, Soul Beautiful, on your way
In and out 'mong the spheres of light,
Be sure that I am not left to stray,
When to seek you, and find you I take my flight.

I'll come as a perfume, a color, a thought,
And touch you with fingers more light than a look,
'Till you tremble and thrill, and I know you have caught
The remembrance of earth, and the love you forsook

I will surely follow, through doubt and fear,
To sit at your feet in your bowers of bliss;
Beautiful Soul, my dearest Dear,
Fly not too far, lest the way I miss.

For the universe is long and wide,
And your elements so ethereal fine,
If by any chance I should pass aside.
My heaven would be lost in seeking thine.

TO MY VALENTINE.

Vexed with the day's long toil of thought,
I fly to where it cometh not;
I ope my door—a fine perfume
Pervades the quiet of my room.
A glance—I cry out with delight
“The Saint! the Saint!” O blessed sprite,
Thrice welcome when you come with flowers
To sweeten my reposeful hours!

February 14, 1888.

ASPASIA.

O, ye Athenians, drunken with self-praise,
What dreams I had of you, beside the sea,
In far Miletus, while the golden days
Slid into silver nights, so sweet to me;
For then I dreamed my day-dreams sweetly o'er,
Fancying the touch of Pallas on my brow—
Libations of both heart and wine did pour,
And offered up my being with my vow.

'Twas thus to Athens my heart drew at last—
My life, my soul, myself. Ah, well, I learn
To love and loathe the bonds that hold me fast,
Your captive and your conqueror in turn;
Am I not shamed to match my charms with those
Of fair boy-beauties? gentled for your love
To match the freshness of the morning rose,
And lisp in murmurs like the cooing dove?

O, men of Athens, by the purple sea
In far Miletus, when I dreamed of you,
Watching the winged ships that invited me
To follow their white track upon the blue;
'Twas the desire to mate my lofty soul
That drew me ever like a viewless chain
Toward Homer's land of heroes, 'till I stole
Away from home and dreams, to you and pain.

I brought you beauty—but your boys invade
My woman's realm of love with girlish airs;
I brought high gifts, and powers to persuade,
To charm, to teach, with your philosophers.
But knowledge is man's realm alone, you hold,
And I who am your equal am cast down
Level with those who sell themselves for gold—
A crownless queen—a woman of the town.

Ye vain Athenians, know this, that I
By your hard laws am only made more free;
Your unloved dames may sit at home and cry,
But, being unwed, I meet you openly,
A foreigner, you cannot wed with me;
But I can win your hearts and sway your will,
And make your free wives envious to see
What power Aspasia wields, Milesian still.

Who would not be beloved of Pericles?
I could have had all Athens at my feet,
And have them for my flatterers, when I please,
Yet, one great man's great love is far more sweet.
He is my proper mate as I am his—
You see my young dreams were not all in vain—
And I have tasted of ineffable bliss,
If I am stung at times with fiery pain.

It is not that I long to be a wife
By your Athenian laws, and sit at home
Behind a lattice, prisoner for life,
With my lord left at liberty to roam;
Nor is it that I crave the right to be
At the symposium or the Agora known;
My grievance is, that your proud dames to me
Come to be taught, in secret and alone.

They fear—what do they fear? Is't me or you?
Am I not pure as any of them all?
But your laws are against me; and 'tis true,
If fame is lowering, I have had a fall.
O, selfish men of Athens, shall the world
Remember you, and pass my glory by?
Nay, 'til from their proud heights your names are hurled,
Mine shall blaze with them on your Grecian sky.

Am I then boastful? It is half in scorn
Of caring for your love, or for your praise,
As women do, and must. Had I been born
In this proud Athens, I had spent my days
In jealousy of boys, and stolen hours
With some Milesian, of a questioned place,
Learning of her the use of woman's powers
Usurped by men of this patrician race.

Alas, I would I were a child again,
 Steeped in dream languors by the purple sea,
And Athens but the vision it was then,
 Its great men good, its noble women free—
That I on some winged ship should strive to fly
 To reach this goal, and founder and go down.
O, impious thought! how could I wish to die,
 With all that I have felt and learned unknown?

Nay, I am glad to be to future times
 As much Athenian as is Pericles;
Proud to be named by men of other climes
 The friend and pupil of great Socrates.
What is the gossip of the city dames
 Behind their lattices to one like me?
More glorious than their high patrician names
 I hold my privilege of being free!

And yet I would that they were free as I;
 It angers me that women are so weak,
Looking askance when ere they pass me by
 Lest on a chance their lords should see us speak;
And coming next day to an audience
 In hope of learning to resemble me:
They wish, they tell me, to learn eloquence—
 The lesson they should learn is liberty.

O, Athens, city of the beautiful,
Home of all art, all elegance, all grace,
Whose orators and poets sway the soul
As the winds move the sea's unstable face;
O, wondrous city, nurse and home of mind,
This is my oracle to you this day—
No generous growth from starved roots will you find,
But fruitless blossoms weakening to decay.

You take my meaning? Sappho is no more,
And no more Sapphos will be, in your time;
The tree is dead on one side that before
Ran with such burning sap of love and rhyme.
Your glorious city is the utmost flower
Of a one-sided culture, that will spend
Itself upon itself, 'till, hour by hour,
It runs its sources dry, and so must end.

That race is doomed behind whose lattices
Its once free women are constrained to peer
Upon the world of men with vacant eyes:
It was not so in Homer's time, I hear.
But Eastern slaves have eaten of your store,
Till in your homes all eating bread are slaves;
They're built into your walls, beside your door,
And bend beneath your lofty architraves.

A woman of the race that looks upon
The sculptured emblems of captivity
Shall bear a slave or tyrant for a son,
And none shall know the worth of liberty.
Am I seditious? Nay, then, I will keep
My lesson for your dames when next they steal
On tip-toe to an audience. Pray sleep
Securely, and dream well: we wish your weal.

Why, what vain prattle? But my heart is sore
With thinking of the emptiness of things,
And these Athenians, treacherous to the core,
Who hung on Pericles with flatterings.
I would, indeed, I were a little child,
Resting my tired limbs on the sunny sands
In far Miletus, where the airs blow mild,
And countless looms throb under busy hands.

The busy hand must calm the busy thought,
And labor cool the passions of the hour;
To the tired weaver, when his web is wrought,
What signifies the party last in power?
But here in Athens, 'twixt philosophers
Who reason on the nature of the soul,
And all the vain array of orators,
Who strive to hold the people in control;

Between the poets, artists, critics, all,
Who form a faction, or who found a school,
We weave Penelope's web with hearts of gall,
And my poor brain is oft the weary tool.
Yet do I choose this life. What is to me
Peace or good fame, away from all of these,
But living death? I do choose liberty,
And leave to Athens' dames their soulless ease.

The time shall come, when Athens is no more,
And you and all your gods have passed away,
That other men, upon another shore,
Shall from your errors learn a better way.
To them eternal justice will reveal
Eternal truth, and in its better light
All that your legal falsehoods now conceal
Will stand forth clearly in the whole world's sight.

ON SAN FRANCISCO BAY.

O perfect day, O sunlit Bay,
Whene'er our souls are called to sail
The sunless strait where shadows wait,
May we emerge into a vale
Where Angel Islands guard the gate!

San Francisco, September 1896.

AUTUMN IN THE HILLS.

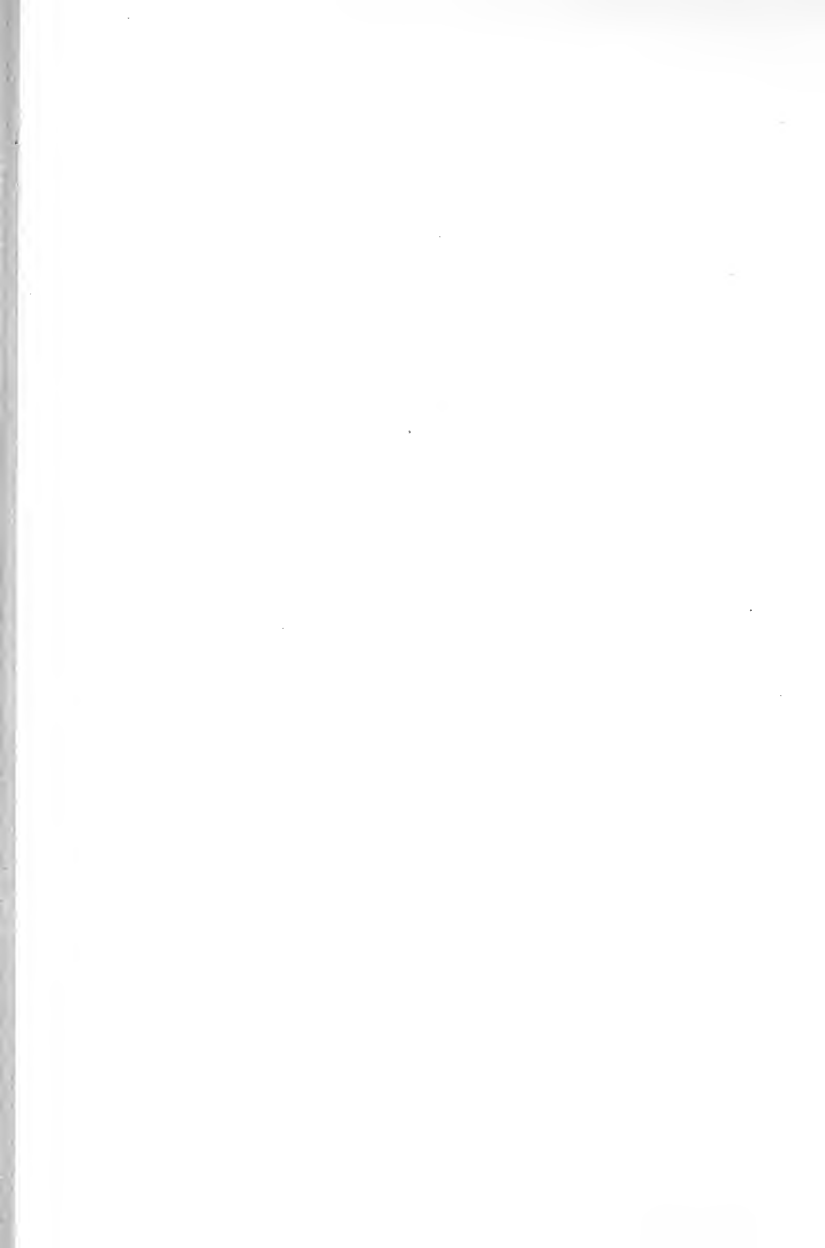
November came that day,
And all the air was gray
With delicate mists, blown down
From hilltops by the south wind's balmy breath;
And all the oaks were brown
As Egypt's kings in death.
The maple's crown of gold
Laid tarnished on the wold;
The alder, and the ash, the aspen and the willow,
Wore tattered suits of yellow.

The soft October rains
Had left some scarlet stains
Of color on the landscape's neutral ground;
Those fine ephemeral things,
The winged notes of sound,
That sing the "Harvest Home"
Of ripe Autumn in the gloam
Of the deep and bosky woods, in the field and by the ri
Sang that day their best endeavor.

I said: "In what sweet place
Shall we meet, face to face,
Her loveliest self to see—
Meet Nature, at her sad autumnal rites,
And learn the mystery
Of her unnamed delights?"



*When you said, "Let us go
Where the late violets blow
Under dead oak leaves hiding?"*



Then you said: "Let us go
Where the late violets blow
In hollows of the hills, under dead oak leaves hiding;—
We'll find she's there abiding."

Do we recall that day?
Has its grace passed away—
Its tenderest, dream-like tone,
Like one of Turner's landscapes limned on air—
Has its fine perfume flown
And left the memory bare?
Not so; its charm is still
Over wood, vale and hill—
The ferny odor sweet, the humming insect chorus,
The spirit that before us

Enticed us with delights
To the blue, breezy heights.
O, beautiful hills that stand
Serene 'twixt earth and heaven, with the grace
Of both to make you grand,—
Your loveliness leaves place
For nothing fairer, fair,
And complete beyond compare,
O, lovely purple hills! O, first day of November,
Be sure that I remember.

LINES TO A LUMP OF VIRGIN GOLD.

Dull, yellow, heavy, lusterless—
With less of radiance than the burnished tress,
Crumpled on Beauty's forehead; clodish, cold,
Kneaded together with the common mold;
Worn by sharp contact with the fretted edges
Of ancient drifts, or prisoned in deep ledges;
Hidden within some mountain's rugged breast
From man's desire and quest—
Would thou couldst speak and tell the mystery
That shrines thy history!

Yet 'tis of little consequence,
Today, to know how thou wert made, or whence
Earthquake and flood have brought thee; thou art here,
At once the master that men love and fear;
Whom they have sought by many strange devices,
In ancient riverbeds; in interstices
Of hardest quartz; upon the wave-wet strand,
Where curls the tawny sand;
By mountain torrents hurried to the main,
And thence hurled back again:—

Yes, suffered, dared, and patiently
Offered up everything, O gold, to thee—
Home, wife and children, native soil, and all
That once they deemed life's sweetest, at thy call;

Fled over burning plains; in deserts fainted;
Wearied for months at sea—yet ever painted
Thee as the shining Mecca, that to gain
Invalidated pain,
Cured the sick soul—made nugatory evil
Of man or devil.

Alas, and well-a-day! we know
What idle dreams were these that fooled men so.
On yonder hillside sleep in nameless graves,
To which they went untended, the poor slaves
Of fruitless toil; the victims of a fever
Called homesickness—no remedy found ever;
Or slain by vices that grow rankly where
Men madly do and dare,
In alternations of high hope and deep abysses
Of recklessnesses.

Painfully, and by violence,
Even as heaven is taken, thou wert dragged whence
Nature had hidden thee—whose face is worn
With anxious furrows, and her bosom torn
In the hard strife—and ever yet there lingers
Upon these hills work for the effacing fingers
Of time, the healer, who makes all things seem
A half forgotten dream;
Who smooths deep furrows and lone graves together,
By touch of wind and weather.

Thou heavy, lusterless, dull clod,
Digged from the earth like a base, common sod,
I wonder at thee, and thy power to hold
The world in bond to thee, thou yellow gold.
Yet do I sadly own thy fascination,
And would I gladly show my estimation
By giving house-room to thee, if thou'lt come
And cumber up my home;—
I'd even promise not to call attention
To these things that I mention.

“The King can do no wrong,” and thou
Art King indeed to most of us, I trow.
Thou'rt an enchanter, at whose sovereign will
All that there is of progress, learning, skill,
Of beauty, culture, grace—and I might even
Include religion, though that flouts at heaven—
Comes at thy bidding, flies before thy loss—
And yet men call thee dross—
If thou art dross, then I mistaken be
Of thy identity.

Ah, solid, weighty, beautiful!
How could I first have said that thou wert dull?
How could have wondered that men willingly
Gave up their homes, and toiled and died for thee?
Theirs was the martyrdom in which was planted
A glorious state, by precious memories haunted;

Ours is the comfort, ease, the power, and fame
Of an exalted name;
Theirs was the struggle of a proud ambition—
Ours the full fruition.

Thou, yellow nugget, wert the star
That drew these willing votaries from afar,
'Twere wrong to call thee lusterless or base,
That lighted onward all the human race.
Emblem thou art, in every song or story,
Of highest excellence and brightest glory;
Thou crown'st the angels, and enthronest Him
Who made the cherubim.
My reverent thought, indeed, is not withholden,
O nugget golden!

SUNSET AT THE MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA.

There sinks the sun; like cavalier of old,
 Servant of crafty Spain,
He flaunts his banner, barred with blood and gold,
 Wide o'er the western main;
A thousand spear-heads glint beyond the trees
 In columns bright and long,
While kindling fancy hears upon the breeze
 The swell of shout and song.

And yet, not here Spain's gay, adventurous host,
Dipped sword or planted cross;
The treasures guarded by this rock-bound coast,
Counted them gain nor loss.
The blue Columbia, sired by the eternal hills,
And wedded with the sea,
O'er golden sands, tithes from a thousand rills,
Rolled in lone majesty—

Through deep ravine, through burning, barren plain,
Through wild and rocky strait,
Through forests dark, and mountains rent in twain,
Toward the sunset gate,
While curious eyes, keen with the lust of gold,
Caught not the informing gleam,
These mighty breakers age on age have rolled
To meet this mighty stream.

Age after age these noble hills have kept,
The same majestic lines:
Age after age the horizon's edge been swept
By fringe of pointed pines.
Summers and Winters circling came and went,
Bringing no change of scene;
Unresting, and unhasting, and unspent,
Dwelt nature here serene.

Till God's own time to plant of Freedom's seed,
In this selected soil,
Denied forever unto blood and greed,
But blest to honest toil.
There sinks the sun! Gay Cavalier no more,
His banners trail the sea,
And all his legions shining on the shore
Fade into mystery.

The swelling tide laps on the shingly beach,
Like any starving thing,
And hungry breakers, white with wrath, upreach,
In a vain clamoring.
The shadows fall; just level with mine eye
Sweet Hesper stands and shines,
And shines beneath an arc of golden sky,
Pinked round with pointed pines.

A noble scene, all breadth, deep tone and power,
Suggesting glorious themes,
Shaming the idler who would fill the hour
With unsubstantial dreams.
Be mine the dreams prophetic, shadowing forth
The things that yet shall be,
As through this gate the treasures of the North
Flow outward to the sea.

Astoria, Or., 1865.

PALO SANTO.

In the deep woods of Mexico,
Where screams the painted paroquet,
And mocking-birds flit to and fro
With borrowed notes they half forget;
Where brilliant flowers and noxinoes vines
Are mingled in a firm embrace,
And the same gaudy plant entwines
Some reptile of a poisonous race;
Where spreads the itos' icy shade,
Benumbing, even in summer's heat,
The thoughtless traveler who hath laid
Himself to noonday slumbers sweet;

Where skulks unseen the beast of prey,
The native robber glares and hides,
And treacherous death keeps watch alway
On him who flies, or he who bides:
In these deep tropic woods there grows
A tree, whose tall and silvery bole
Above the dusky forest shows,
As shining as a saintly soul
Among the souls of sinful men,
Lifting its milk-white flowers to heaven,
And breathing incense out, as when
The passing saints of earth are shriven.

The skulking robber drops his eyes,
And signs himself with holy cross,
If, far between him and the skies,
He sees its pearly blossoms toss.
The wanderer halts to gaze upon
The lovely vision, far or near,
And smiles and sighs to think of one
He wishes for the moment here.
The Mexic native fears not fang
Of poisonous serpent, vine, or bee,
If he may soothe the baleful pang
With juices of this "holy tree."

How do we all, in life's wild ways,
Which oft we traverse lost and lone,
Need that which heavenward draws the gaze,
Some Palo Santo of our own!

THE PASSING OF ALICE.

In the city, hot and breathless city,
At her open casement wide and high,
With a face that moves our hearts to pity,
Leans pale Alice, gazing on the sky;
Gazing out above the housetops dreary,

Where the countless chimneys crowd the view,
Seeking with a wistful look and weary
Through the smoke, a glimpse of heaven's blue.

Sighing " 'Tis June; I see the pleasant meadows
'Round my home lie peaceful in the sun;
Fleecy clouds flit overhead, and shadows
Chase the wind-blown dimples as they run
Down the ripening hay-fields, and the clover
Nods its honied blossoms in the breeze;
Sun-steeped sweetnesses exhale, and over
Cups of nectar drone the laden bees.

Down the lane the locust trees are shining,
White with scented plumes, too sickly sweet,
Dainty eglantine, the fences twining,
Sheds its fragrance to the quiet street;
In the elms that meet above our dwelling
Orioles swing, singing to their young—
Happy birds, whose pretty throats are swelling
With the joy of their home-coming song.

List! I hear the children's voices singing
Roundelays, as they bring home the kine,
Sweet-breathed heifers 'round whose necks are clinging
Garlands of some flowering wayside vine;
Hear my mother, as they laugh and linger,

Call each name—her rosary of pearls—
See her touch each one with gentle finger,
This one's cheek, and that one's sunny curls;

Hear my father's mellow tones commingling
With the sounds a-field, the click of hoes,
The clashing of the corn-blades, the ear-tingling,
Faint-growing shots along the bristling rows.
Oh, the free, fair haven of my childhood!
Oh, the sweet, sure love that never failed!
Oh, the pure, bright fancies dreamed in wildwood
Ere the dews of life's young morn exhaled!

Is this summer? I am cold and weary.
June? I see the pleasant fields no more.
Home? The landscape wintry is and dreary,
And no mother meets me at the door."—
Ah, her eyes are closed upon these shadows;
Hushed for her the birds' song, the bees' drone;
As her white feet touch the heavenly meadows,
Sweet with asphodel, she finds her own.

PALMA.

What tellest thou to heaven,
Thou royal tropic tree?
At morn or noon or even,
Proud dweller by the sea,
What is thy song to heaven?

The homesick heart that fainted
In torrid sun and air,
With peace becomes acquainted
Beholding thee so fair—
With joy becomes acquainted:

And charms itself with fancies
About thy kingly race,
With gay and wild romances
That mimic thee in grace
Of supple, glorious fancies.

I feel thou art not tender,
Scion of sun and sea—
The wild-bird does not render
To thee its minstrelsy—
Fearing thou art not tender:

But calm, serene and saintly,
As highborn things should be,

Who, if they love us faintly,
Make us love reverently,
Because they are so saintly.

To be loved without loving,
O proud and princely palm,
Is to fancy our ship moving
With the ocean at dead calm—
The joy of love is loving.

Because the sun did sire thee,
The ocean nurse thy youth,
Because the stars desire thee,
The warm winds whisper truth,
Shall nothing ever fire thee?

What is thy tale to heaven
In the sultry tropic noon?
What whisperest thou at even
To the dusky Indian moon—
Has she sins to be forgiven?

Keep all her secrets, loyal
As only great souls are—
As only souls most royal,
To the flower or to the star
Alike are purely loyal.

O Palma, if thou hearest,
Thou proud and princely tree,
Thou knowest that my Dearest
Is emblemed forth in thee—
My kingly Palm, my Dearest.

I am his Moon admiring,
His wooing Wind, his Star;
And I glory in desiring
My Palm-tree from afar—
Glad as happier lovers are,
Am happy in desiring.

Acapulco, Mexico, 1863.

EDITH.

“A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden to the eye,”
Sang Wordsworth of that English girl
Who pleased the poet's eye.
I sing of one, a garden rose,
Grown in a freer air
As modest as the violet
And many times more fair.

TO THE BLUE NEMOPHELA.

Dear dainty bloom, with disk of blue
Right joyfully I welcome you!
Unlike the scented garden sweets
Round which each painted insect flits,
You stir my thoughts to pleasant dreams
Of summer shade and murmurous streams.
I hail thee, flower of heavenly hue!
All that is modest, chaste and true
Peers from thy pretty, upturned face—
Is breathed in thy unstudied grace.
I gaze on thee, and fancies start
To sudden blossom in my heart.
Years all too quickly troop along,
Named some for sorrow, some for song;
Ever the summer's heat we dread;
Winter brings storms upon our head;
Yet spring returns, and in her smile
Earth hath forgot her wreck and toil:
Sweet child of spring, a joy always,
Right welcome, blue Nemophela!

Alameda, Cal., 1885.

NEVADA.

Sphinx, down whose rugged face
The sliding centuries their furrows cleave
By sun, and frost, and cloudburst, scarce to leave
Perceptible a trace
Of age or sorrow;
Faint hints of yesterdays with no tomorrow;—
My mind regards thee with a questioning eye,
To know thy secret, high.

If Theban mystery,
With head of woman, soaring, birdlike wings
And serpent's tail on lion's trunk, were things
Puzzling in history;
And men invented
For it an origin which represented
Chimera and a monster double-headed,
By myths Phenician wedded—

Their issue being this—
This most chimerical and wondrous thing,
From whose dumb mouth not even the gods could w
Truth, nor anthithesis:
Then what I think is,
This creature—being chief among men's sphinxes—
Is eloquent, and overflows with story,
Beside thy silence hoary!

Nevada, desert, waste,
Mighty, and inhospitable, and stern;
Hiding a meaning over which we yearn
 In eager, panting haste,
 Grasping and losing,
Still being deluded ever by our choosing,
Answer us Sphinx: What is thy meaning double
 But endless toil and trouble?

Inscrutable, men strive
To rend thy secret from thy rocky breast;
Breaking their hearts, and periling heaven's rest
 For hopes that cannot thrive;
 Whilst unrelenting,
From thy unlovely throne, and unrepenting,
Thou sittest, basking in a fervid sun,
 Seeing or hearing none.

I sit beneath thy stars,
The shallop moon beached on a bank of clouds,
And see thy mountains wrapped in shadowy shrouds,
 Glad that the darkness bars
 The day's suggestion—
The endless repetition of one question;
Glad that thy stony face I cannot see,
 Nevada—Mystery!

Shermantown, Nev., 1869.

CHILDHOOD.

A child of scarcely seven years,
Light-haired, and fair as any lily,
With pure eyes ready in their tears
At chiding words, or glances chilly,
And sudden smiles, as inly bright
As lamps through alabaster shining,
With ready mirth, and fancies light,
Dashed with strange dreams of child-divining;
A child in all infantile grace,
With paradise still pictured in her face.

A curious, eager, questioning child,
Whose logic leads to naive conclusions,
Her little knowledge reconciled
To truth amid some odd confusions,
Yet credulous, and loving much
The problems hardest for her reason,
Placing her lovely faith on such,
And deeming disbelief a treason;
Doubting that which she can disprove,
And wisely trusting all the rest to love.

Such graces dwell beside your hearth,
And bless you in a priceless pleasure,
Leaving no sweeter spot on earth
Than that which holds your household treasure.

No entertainment ever yet
Had half the exquisite completeness—
The gladness without one regret,
You gather from your darling's sweetness;
An angel sits beside the hearth
Where e'er an innocent child is found on earth.

TO MRS. ———.

I have not found the meaning out
That lies in wrong, and pain and strife;
I know not why we grope through grief,
Tear-blind, to touch the higher life.

In my unconscious viens there runs,
Perchance, some old ancestral taint;
In Eve I sinned. Poor Eve and I!
We each may utter one complaint—

One and the same—for knowledge came
Too late to save her paradise;
And I my paradise have lost
Forsooth because I am not wise.

O, vain traditions, small the aid
We women gather from your lore;
Why, when the world was lost, did death
Not come our children's birth before?

It had been better to have died
Sole prey of death, and ended so,
Than to have dragged through endless time
One long, unbroken trail of woe.

To suffer, yet not expiate;
To die at last yet not atone;
To mourn our heirship to a guilt
Erased by innocent blood alone!

You lift your hands in shocked surprise,
You say enough I have not prayed;
Can prayer go back through centuries
And change the web of fate one braid?

Nay, own the truth, and say that we
Are but the bonded slaves of doom,
Unconscious to the cradle came,
Unwilling must go to the tomb.

I wait to find the meaning out
That lies beyond the bitter end;
Comfort yourself with wearying heaven,
I find no comfort, O my friend.

BY THE SEA.

Blue is the mist on the mountains,
White is the fog on the sea,
Ruby and gold is the sunset—
And Bertha is waiting for me.

Down on the lonesome sand beach,
Her eyes as blue as the mist,
Her brow as white as the sea-fog—
Bertha, whose lips I have kissed.

Bertha, whose lips are like rubies,
Whose hair is like coiled gold,
Whose sweet, rare smile is tenderer
Than any legend of old.

One morn, one noon, one sunset,
Must pass before we meet;
O wind and sail bear steady on,
And bring me to her feet.

The morn rose pale and sullen,
The noon was still and dun;
Across the storm at sunset,
Came the boom of a signal-gun.

Who treads the lonesome sand beach,
With wet, disordered hair,
With garments tangled with seaweed,
And cheeks more pale than fair?

O blue-eyed, white-browed maiden,
He will keep love's tryst no more;
His ship sailed safely into port—
But on the heavenward shore.

Santa Cruz., Cal., 1864.

A GOLDEN WEDDING.

Down the vista of the years
Bright with joy, or dim with tears,
Turning back our gaze,
Not a shadow falls between
You and I in all that scene
Of life's checkered ways.
Kindly by the Father led,
Since the day that we were wed
Years have fluttered by,
Silently as leaves that fall
By the sunny garden wall
When the roses die.

Los Angeles, 1887.

WAITING.

I cannot wean my wayward heart from waiting,
Though the steps watched for never come anear;
The wearying want clings to it unabating—
The fruitless wish for presences once dear.

No fairer eve e'er blessed a poet's vision,
No softer airs e'er kissed a fevered brow,
No scene more truly could be called Elysian,
Than this which holds my gaze enchanted now.

And yet I pine;—this beautiful completeness
Is incomplete, to my desiring heart;
'Tis Beauty's form, without her soul of sweetness—
The pure, but chiseled loveliness of art.

There is no longer pleasure in emotion.
I envy those dead souls no touch can thrill,
Who—"painted ships upon a painted ocean,"—
Seem to be moved, yet are forever still.

Where are they fled?—they whose delightful voices,
Whose very footsteps had a charmed fall:
No more, no more their sound my heart rejoices,
Change, death, and distance part me now from all.

And this fair evening, with remembrance teeming,
Pierces my soul with every sharp regret;
The sweetest beauty saddens to my seeming,
Since all that's fair forbids me to forget.

Eyes that have gazed upon yon silver crescent,
'Till filled with light, then turned to gaze in mine,
Lips that could clothe a fancy evanescent,
In words whose magic thrilled the brain like wine:

Hands that have wreathed June's roses in my tresses,
And gathered violets to deck my breast,
Where are ye now? I miss your dear caresses—
I miss the lips, the eyes, that made me blest.

Lonely I sit and watch the fitful burning
Of prairie fires, far off, through gathering gloom;
While the young moon, and one bright star returning
Down the blue solitude, leave Night their room.

Gone is the glimmer of the silent river,
Hushed is the wind that op'ed the leaves today;
Alone through silence falls the crystal shiver
Of the sweet starlight, on its earthward way.

And yet I wait, how vainly, for a token—
A sigh, a touch, a whisper from the past;
Alas, I listen for a word unspoken,
And wait for arms that have embraced their last.

I wish no more, as once I wished, each feeling
To grow immortal in my happy breast;
Since not to feel will leave no wounds for healing—
The pulse that thrills not has no need of rest.

As the conviction sinks into my spirit
That my quick heart is doomed to death in life
Or that these pangs must pierce and never sear it,
I am abandoned to despairing strife.

To the lost life, alas, no more returning,
In this to come no semblance of the past—
Only to wait—hoping this ceaseless yearning
May 'ere long end—and peace may come at last.

Omaha, Neb., 1857.

THE PASSING OF THE YEAR.

Worn and poor
The old year came to Eternity's door.
Once when his limbs were young and strong
From that shining portal came he forth,
Led by the sound of shout and song
To the festive halls of jubilant earth:
Now, his allotted cycle o'er,
He waited, spent, by the Golden Door.

Faint and far, faint and far,
Surging up soft between sun and star,
Strains of revelry smote his ear,
Musical murmurs from lyre and lute,
Rising in choruses grand and clear,
Sinking in cadences almost mute,
Vexing the ear of him who sate
Wearied beside the Shining Gate.

Sad and low,
Flowed in an undertone of woe.
Wailing among the moons it came,
Sobbing in echoes against the stars,
Smothered behind some comet's flame,
Lost in the wind of the warlike Mars,
Mingling, ever and anon,
With the music's swell a sigh or moan.

“As in a glass
Let the earth once before me pass,”
The Old Year said; and space untold
Vanished 'till nothing came between,
Folded away, crystal and gold,
Nor azure air did intervene—
“As in a glass” he saw the earth
Decking a bier, and waiting a birth.

“You crown me dead,” the Old Year said,
“Before my parting hour is sped,
O fickle, false and reckless world!
Time to Eternity may not haste;
Not ’til the last Hour’s wing is furled
Within the gate my reign is passed:
O Earth! O World! fair, false and vain,
I grieve not at my closing reign.”

Yet spirit-sore
The dead King noted a palace door;
He saw the gay crowd gather in,
He scanned the face of each passerby,
Snowiest soul and heart of sin,
Tried and untried humanity,
Age and Youth, Pleasure and Pain,
Braided at chance in a motley skein.

“Ill betide
Ye thankless ones!” the Old Year cried:
“Have I not given you night and day,
Over and over, score upon score,
Wherein to live, and love, and pray,
And suck the ripe world to its rotten core?
Yet do ye reek if my reign be done?
Ere I pass ye crown the newer one.
At ball and rout ye dance and shout,

Shutting men's cries of suffering out
That startle the white-tressed Silences
Musing beside the fount of light
In the eternal space, to press
Their roses, each a nebula bright,
More closely to their lips serene,
While ye wear this unconscious mien!"

"Even so,"

The revelers said, "We'll have naught of woe;
Why should we mourn who have our fill?
Enough if the poor and hungry cry.
We from our plenty cast at will
Some crumbs to make their wet eyelids dry;
But to the rich the world is fair,
Why should we grovel in tears and prayer?"

In her innocent bliss
A fair bride said, with sweet earnestness,
"For the dear Year am I truly sad,
Since in its happy and hopeful days
Every brief hour my heart was glad,
And blessings were strewn in all my ways:
Will it be so forevermore?
Will the New Years bring of love new store?"

Youth and maid,
Of their conscious blushes half afraid,
Shunning each other's tell-tale eyes,
Yet cherishing hopes too fond to own,
Sped the Old Year with secret sighs,
And smiled that his time was overflown;
Should they not hear each other say
"Dear Love!" ere the New Year passed away?

"Oh, haste on!
The Year or the pleasure is dead that is gone,"
Boasted the man of pomp and power:
"That which we hold is alone the good,
Give me new pleasures for every hour,
And grieve over past joys ye who would:
Joys that are fled are poor, I wis,
Give me forever the newest bliss."

"Wish me joy,"
Girl Beauty cried, with glances coy:
"In the New Year a woman I.
I'll then have jewels in my hair,
And such rare webs as princes buy
Be none too choice for me to wear:
I'll queen it as a beauty should
And not be won before I'm wooed."

Sighed a student in the motley crowd;

“‘Poor and proud, poor and proud,’ ”

“I heard her whisper that aside.

O fatal fairness aping heaven

When earthly most! I’ll not deride.

God knows that were all good gifts given

To me as lavishly as rain,

I’d bring them to her feet again.”

“Here are the fools we use for tools,

Bending their passion ere it cools

To any need,” the Cynic said;

“So, I will give him gold, and he

Shall sell me brain as it were bread.

His very soul I’ll hold in fee

For baubles that shall buy the hand

Of the coldest woman in the land.”

Spirit-sore

The Old Year cared to see no more;

While as he turned he heard a moan;

Frosty and keen was the wintry night,

Prone on the city’s paving-stone

Unwatched, unwept, a piteous sight

Starved and dying a poor wretch lay,

Through the blast he heard him dying say:

“O Old Year,
From sightless eyes you force this tear:
Sorrows you’ve heaped upon head,
Losses you’ve gathered to drive me wild,
All that I lived for, loved, are dead,
Brother and sister, wife and child,
I, too, am perishing as well,
I shall share the toll of your passing bell.”

Grieved and sad
For the sins and woes the Human had,
The Old Year strove to avert his eyes;
But fly or turn wherever he would
On his vexed ear smote the mingled cries
Of revel and new-made widowhood,
Of grief that would not be comforted,
With the loved and beautiful lying dead.

Evermore, every hour,
Rising from hovel, hall and bower,
Swelling the strain of discontent,
Gurgled the hopeless prayer for alms,
Rung out the wild oath impotent;
Echoed by some brief walls of calms
Straining the listener’s shrinking ear
Like silence when thunderbolts are near.

Across that calm, like gales of balm
Some low, sweet household voices ran,
Thrilling, like flute notes straying out
From land to sea some stormy night,
The ear that listens for the shout
Of drowning boatman lost to sight,
And died away again so soon
The pulseless air seemed fallen in a swoon.

Once, pure and clear,
Clarion strains fell on the ear:
The preacher rent the soulless creeds,
And pierced men's hearts with arrowy words,
Yet failed to stir them to good deeds—
Their new-fledged thoughts, like July birds,
Soared on the air and glanced away
Before the eloquent voice could stay.

“ 'Tis very sad, the man is mad,”
The men and women gaily said
As they laughing tread their homeward road,
Talking of other holidays;
Of last year how it rained or snowed,
Who went abroad, who wed a blaze
Of diamonds with his sickly bride,
On certain days—and who had died.

“Would I were dead
And vexed no more,” the Old Year said;
“In vain may the preacher pray and warn,
The tinkling cymbals in your ears
Turn every gracious word to scorn;
Ye care not for the orphan’s tears,
Your sides are fed and your bodies clad;
Is there anything heaven itself could add?”

And then he sighed as one who died
With a great wish unsatisfied;
Around him like a wintry sea
Whose waves were nations, surged the world,
Stormy, unstable, constantly
Upheaved to be again down-hurled.
Here struggled some for freedom; here
Oppression rode in high career.

In hot debate
Men wrestled while the hours waxed late,
Contending with the watchful zeal
Of gladiators trained to die;
Yet not for life, nor country’s weal,
But that their names might hang on high
As men who loved themselves, indeed,
And robbed the state to satisfy their need.

Heads of snow and eyes aglow
With fires that youth might blush to know;
And brows whose youthful fairness shamed
The desperate thoughts that strove within,
While each his cause exultant named
As purest that the world had seen—
All names they had to tickle honest ears—
Reform, and Rights, and sweet Philanthropy's cares.

“Well-a-day! well-a-day!”
The Old Year strove to put away
Sight and sound of the reckless earth.
But soft! from out a cottage door
Stole strains of neither grief nor mirth,
And on his dying ear did pour—
“Give us, O God,” the singers said,
As good a year as this one dead!”

Pealing loud from sod to cloud
Earth's bells rang out in a chorus proud;
Great waves of music shook the air
From organs pulsing with the sound;
Hushed was the voice of sob and prayer
As Time touched the eternal bound;
To the dead monarch earth was dimmed,
And the golden portals brighter gleamed.

Sad no more
The Old Year reached the Golden Door
Just as the Hours with crystal clang
Aside the shining portals bent,
And murmuring 'mong the spheres there rang
The chorus of earth's acknowledgment.
One had passed out of the Golden Door,
And one had gone in forevermore.

HE AND SHE.

Under the pines sat a young man and maiden:
"Love," said he, "life is sweet, think'st thou not so?"
Sweet were her eyes, full of pictures of Aidenn—
"Life," said she, "love is sweet; no more I know."

Into the wide world the maid and her lover
Wandered by pathways that sundered them far;
From pine groves to palm groves he flitted, a rover,
She tended his roses, and watched for his star.

Oft he said softly, while melting eyes glistened,
"Sweet is my life, love, with you ever near";
Morning and evening she waited and listened
For a voice and a footstep that never came near.

Fainting at last on her threshold she found him;
"Life is but ashes and bitter," he sighed.
She, with her tender arms folded about him,
Whispered, "But love is still sweet"—and so died.

Sprague River, Or., 1873.

THE PLAYER.

He played as one walks in his sleep,
Unconscious of the heights he dares,
Un-souled, and treading unawares
The edges of a dangerous deep.

I listened in an ecstasy
To music loved but long forgot,
And stealing softly to the spot
Gazed on the player wonderingly.

I saw his fingers touch the keys
With skill no master ever taught,
While all my being, lost in thought,
Vibrated to his harmonies.

I saw—it was no idle dream—
A formless Presence glide and glance
Behind the keys, a radiance
That on the ivory lit a gleam.

Ah, then I knew whence came the skill
That touched with flame the instrument,
And to his dreamy fingering lent
A power beyond the player's will.

The old, old songs she loved so well,
By her pure soul interpreted,
With all the poet meant and said—
Thence came the player's wondrous spell.

AUTUMNALIA.

The crimson color lays
As bright as beauty's blush along the West,
And a warm golden haze,
Promising sheafs of ripe autumnal days
To crown the old year's crest,
Hangs in mid air, a half-pellucid maze,
Through which the sun at set,
Grown round and rosy, looks with Bacchian blush,
For an old wine-god meet,
Whose brows are dripping with the grape-blood sweet,
As if his southern flush
Rejoiced him, in his northern-zoned retreat.

The amber-colored air
Musical is with hum of tiny things
Held idly struggling there,
As if the golden mists entangled were
About the viewless wings,
That beat out music on their gilded snare.

If but a leaf, all gay
With Autumn's gorgeous coloring, doth fall,
Along its fluttering way
A shrill alarum wakes a sharp dismay,
And, answering to the call,
The insect chorus swells and dies away

With a fine piping noise,
As if some younger singing motes cried out,
As do mischievous boys,
Startling their playmates with a pained voice,
Or sudden thrilling shout,
Followed by laughter, full of little joys.

Perchance a lurking breeze
Springs, just awakened to its wayward play,
Tossing the sober trees
Into a frolic maze of ecstasies,
And snatching at the gay
Banners of Autumn, strews them where it please.

The sunset colors glow
A second time in flame from out wood,
As bright and warm as though
The vanished clouds had fallen, and lodged below
Among the treetops, hued
With all the colors of heaven's signal-bow.

The fitful breezes die
Into a gentle whisper, and then sleep;
And sweetly, mournfully,
Starting to sight, in the transparent sky,
Lone in the upper deep,
Sad Hesper pours its beams upon the eye;
And for one little hour,

Holds audience with the lesser lights of heaven,
Then to its western bower
Descends in sudden darkness, as the flower
That at the fall of even
Shuts its bright eye, and yields to slumber's power.

Soon, with a dusky face,
Pensive and proud as an East Indian queen,
And with a solemn grace,
The moon ascends, and takes her royal place
In the fair evening scene,
While all the reverential stars, apace,
Take up their march through the cool fields of space,
And wed in the sweet day with night serene.

Ann Arbor, Mich., 1852.

POETRY.

The world's first singers sang heroic deeds
Of gods and men upon their flutelike reeds;
Sang to the chorded shell and tinkling lyre
Of themes that touched the Olympian heights with fire,
And made men godlike with divine desire.

A REPRIMAND.

Behold my soul—she sits so far above you
Your wildest dream has never glanced so high,
Yet in the old time when you said “I love you,”
How fairly we seemed mated, eye to eye.
How long we dallied on in flowery meadows,
By languid lakes of sweetly sinuous dreams,
Steeped in enchanted mists, beguiled by shadows,
Casting life’s flowers upon loitering streams,
My memory owns, and yours—mine with deep
shame—
Yours with a sigh that life is not the same.

What parted us to leave you in the valley,
And send me struggling to the mountain top;
Too weak for duty, even love failed to rally
The manhood that should float your pinions up.
On my spent feet are many cruel bruises,
My limbs are wasted with their heavy toil,
But I have learned adversity’s sweet uses,
And brought my soul up pure through every soil;
Have I no right to scorn the man’s dead power
That leaves you far beneath me at this hour?

Scorn you I do, while pitying even more
The ignoble weakness of a strength debased
Do I yet mourn the faith that died of yore,
The trust by timorous treachery effaced?
Through all, and over all my soul mounts free
To heights of peace you cannot hope to gain,
Sings to the stars its mountain minstrelsy,
And smiles down proudly on your murky plain;
'Tis vain to invite you—yet come up, come up,
Conquer your way toward the mountain top.

VERSES FOR M—

The river on the east
Ripples its azure flood within my sight,
And, darting from the west,
Are sunset arrows feathered with red light;
The northern wind has hung
His wintry harp upon some giant pine,
And the pale stars among
I see the stars I love to name as mine,
But toward the south I turn my eager eyes—
Beyond its flushed horizon my heart lies.

The snow-clad isles of ice
Launched by wild Boreas from a northern shore
Journey the way my eyes
Turn with an envious longing evermore,
Smiling back to the sky
Its own pink blush, and, floating out of sight,
Bear south the softest dye
Of northern heavens to fade in southern night—
My eyes but look the way my joys are gone,
And the ice islands travel not alone.
The untrod fields of snow
Glow with the rosy dye of parting day,
And fancy asks if so
The snow is stained with sunset far away,
And if some face, like mine,
Its forehead pressed against the window pane,
Peers northward with the shine
Of the pole star reflected in eyes' rain;
“Ah yes,” my heart says, “it is surely so,”
And like a bound bird flutters hard to go.

Port Huron, Mich., 1852.

AH ME!

I say to my heart, "Be still!
Beat not against my breast
With all this fierce unrest;
I am ill, I am ill,—
Fainting, sinking in the fire
Of a passionate desire
That consumes my thought and will."

I say to my soul, "In vain
You beat your restless wings
'Gainst the cruel bars of things
That imprison and restrain;
Turn your eyes away, be strong,
Captive shall you be not long,
But your prisens rent in twain."

That life should be, ah me!
Longing, and never joy;
Paltry pleasures that cloy,
And writhings to be free;
Faintings, cryings to the sky,
"My God, O let me die,"
When it should sweetest be.
Ah me!

OATHS ARE BUT WORDS.

“Oaths are but words,” the Spaniards said,
“And words but air”; and so they broke
Both word and oath, as I have read.

In truth I think that words are air,
And scarcely worthy to be spoke
'Twixt friend and friend whose hearts we share.

Far sweeter language speaks the eye,
And truer than the pliant tongue;
And by this we are friends for aye.

I see your gentle heart, and you
Are sure that mine is kind and strong
And each believes the other true.

What need is there for me to say,
“Remember me in times to come?”
You will remember, come what may.

And I—I have no pledge to give,
My lips when I would speak are dumb,
But you will trust, nor I deceive.

PARTED LOVE.

When we parted in our youth,
Parted not to meet again,
Did you doubt my love or truth,
Doubt my passion or my pain?

Have you never on your breast
Felt my kisses as of yore,
And awaked from blissful rest
To be sadder evermore?

Through the long and weary years
Have you never felt my hand
Brush away the bitter tears
Duty, will, could not command?

Love, I doubt you not, and you
Surely feel my presence near,
Through the years have I been true,
Through the years have you been dear.



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