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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A BOOK OF EPIGRAMS ***

A BOOK OF EPIGRAMS

GATHERED BY
RALPH A. LYON

EVANSTON
WILLIAM S. LORD
1902

[1]

EPIGRAMS

POETRY

She comes like the hushed beauty of the night,
But sees too deep for laughter;
Her touch is a vibration and a light
From worlds before and after.

[Charles E. Markham

POETRY

Poetry? Can I define it, you inquire?
Yes; by your pleasure,
Poetry is Thought, in princeliest attire,
Treading a measure.

[Duffield Osborne

[2]

THE YEAR'S MINSTRELSY

Spring, the low prelude of a lordlier song;
Summer, a music without hint of death:
Autumn, a cadence lingeringly long:
Winter, a pause;—the Minstrel-Year takes breath.

[William Watson

THE SUN

All the World's bravery that delights our eyes,
Is but thy several liveries;
Thou the rich dye on them bestow'st,
Thy nimble Pencil paints this landscape as thou go'st.

[Abraham Cowley

[3]

FAREWELL

I strove with none, for none was worth my strife.
Nature I loved, and next to nature, art.
I warm'd both hands before the fire of life:
It sinks; and I am ready to depart.

[Walter Savage Landor

LIFE

As a shaft that is sped from a bow unseen to an unseen mark,
As a bird that gleams in the firelight, and hurries from dark to dark,
As the face of the stranger who smiled as we passed in the crowded street,—
Our life is a glimmer, a flutter, a memory, fading, yet sweet!

[William Cranston Lawton

[4]

EPIGRAM ON THE DEATH OF EDWARD FORBES.

Nature, a jealous mistress, laid him low.
He woo'd and won her; and, by love made bold,
She showed him more than mortal man should know,
Then slew him lest her secret should be told.

[Sydney Dobell

ON LONGFELLOW'S DEATH

No puissant singer he, whose silence grieves
To-day the great West's tender heart and strong;
No singer vast of voice: yet one who leaves
His native air the sweeter for his song.

[William Watson

[5]

DANIEL WEBSTER

We have no high cathedral for his rest,
Dim with proud banners and the dust of years;
All we can give him is New England's breast
To lay his head on—and his country's tears.

[Thomas William Parsons

EUGENE FIELD

Fades his calm face beyond our mortal ken,
Lost in the light of lovelier realms above;
He left sweet memories in the hearts of men
And climbed to God on little children's love.

[Frank L. Stanton

[6]

THE DEBTOR CHRIST

Quid Mihi Et Tibi

What, woman, is my debt to thee,
That I should not deny

The boon thou dost demand of me?
"I gave thee power to die."

[John B. Tabb

TWO SPIRITS

A spirit above and a spirit below,
A spirit of joy and a spirit of woe;
The spirit above is the spirit divine,
The spirit below is the spirit of wine.

[Anonymous

[7]

ON A SUN-DIAL

With warning hand I mark Time's rapid flight
From life's glad morning to its solemn night;
Yet, through the dear God's love, I also show
There's Light above me by the Shade below.

[John Greenleaf Whittier

BORROWING

From the French

Some of your hurts you have cured,
And the sharpest you still have survived,
But what torments of grief you endured
From evils which never arrived!

[Ralph Waldo Emerson

[8]

YOUTH

The Tear, down Childhood's cheek that flows,
Is like the dew-drop on the Rose;
When next the Summer breeze comes by,
And waves the bush, the Flower is dry.

[Sir Walter Scott

MY TROUBLES

I wrote down my troubles every day;
And after a few short years,
When I turned to the heartaches passed away,
I read them with smiles, not tears.

[John Boyle O'Reilly

[9]

SENSIBILITY

The soul of Music slumbers in the shell,
Till waked and kindled by the Master's spell;
And feeling Hearts—touch them but lightly—pour
A thousand melodies unheard before!

[Samuel Rogers

IS LOVE SO BLIND

The records of ancient times declare
That hapless Love is blind,
Yet many's the virtue, sweet and rare,

That only Love can find.

[Henry W. Allport

[10]

SYMPATHY

What gem hath dropp'd and sparkles o'er his chain?
The Tear most sacred, shed for other's pain,
That starts at once—bright—pure—from Pity's mine,
Already polish'd by the Hand Divine.

[Lord Byron

GRIEF

What cannot be preserved when Fortune takes,
Patience her injury a mockery makes.
The robb'd, that smiles, steals something from the Thief;
He robs himself, that spend a bootless Grief.

[William Shakespeare

[11]

OPPORTUNITY

It is a hag whom Life denies his kiss
As he rides questward in knight-errant wise;
Only when he hath passed her is it his
To know too late the Fairy in disguise.

[Madison Cawein

COMPETITION

The race is won! As victor I am hailed
With deafening cheers from eager throats; and yet
Gladder the victory could I forget
The strained, white faces of the men who failed.

[Julia Shayer

[12]

SLANDER

Oh! many a shaft, at random sent,
Finds mark the archer little meant;
And many a Word, at random spoken,
May soothe or wound a Heart that's broken.

[Sir Walter Scott

VICE

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

[Alexander Pope

[13]

TALKING

Words learn'd by rote, a Parrot may rehearse,
But talking is not always to converse;
Not more distinct from Harmony divine,
The constant creaking of a Country Sign.

[William Cowper

THINKERS, PAST AND PRESENT

God, by the earlier sceptic, was exiled;
The later is more lenient grown and mild:
He sanctions God, provided you agree
To any other other name for deity.

[William Watson

[14]

THE COOK WELL DONE

Why call me a bloodthirsty, gluttonous sinner
For pounding my chef when my peace he subverts?
If I can't thrash my cook when he gets a poor dinner,
Pray how shall the scamp ever get his desserts?

[Martial

"U" AND "I"

The difference between you and me
Is this, dear—more's the pity—
You're summering in the mountains,
I'm simmering in the city!

[Ogden Ward

[15]

THE FIVE DOUBLE U'S

Winsomeness, wardrobe, words of eloquence,
Wisdom, and wealth, bring men to consequence.
That's something which a man in vain pursues
Who is not blest with these five w's.^[1]

[From the Sanskrit (Tr. by Chas. R. Lanman)

^[1]The Sanskrit word for each of these five things begins with w.

WEALTH

Can wealth give Happiness? look round, and see
What gay distress! what splendid misery!
Whatever Fortune lavishly can pour,
The mind annihilates, and calls for more.

[Edward Young

[16]

EQUITY—?

The meanest man I ever saw
Allus kep' inside o' the law;
And ten-times better fellers I've knowed
The blame gran' jury's sent over the road.

[James Whitcomb Riley

A WHOLLY UNSCHOLASTIC OPINION

Plain hoss-sense in poetry-writin'
Would jest knock sentiment a-kitin'!
Mostly poets is all star-gazing'
And moanin' and groanin' and paraphrasin'!

[James Whitcomb Riley

[17]

GOLDEN ROD

It is the twilight of the year
And through her wondrous wide abode
The autumn goes, all silently,
To light her lamps along the road.

[Charles Hanson Towne

GRACE

Thou canst not move thy staff in air,
Or dip thy paddle in the lake,
But it carves the bow of beauty there,
And the ripples in rhyme the oar forsake.

[Ralph Waldo Emerson

[18]

FROM THE FRENCH

Says Marmontel, The secret's mine
Of Racine's art-of-verse divine.
To do thee justice, Marmontel,
Never was secret kept so well.

[William Watson

TWO POETS

A peacock's-tail-like splendour hath this Muse,
With eyes that see not throng'd, and gorgeous hues.
The swan's white grace that other wears instead,
Stately with stem-like throat and flower-like head.

[William Watson

[19]

TOMORROW

'Tis so far fetch'd, this morrow, that I fear
'Twill be both very old and very dear.
Tomorrow I will live, the fool doth say,
Why e'en to-day's too late, the wise lived yesterday.

[Anonymous

QUATRAIN

Fear not the menace of the By-and-by;
To-day is ours, tomorrow Fate must give;
Stretch out your hands and eat, although ye die—
Better to die than never once to live.

[Richard Hovey

[20]

ON MODERN STATESMEN

Midas, they say, possess'd the art of old,
Of turning whatso'er he touch'd to gold.
This modern statesmen can reverse with ease;
Touch them with gold, they'll turn to what you please.

[Anonymous

ON FOLLY

The world of fools has such a store,
That he who would not see an ass
Must bide at home and bolt his door,

And break his looking-glass.

[From the French of La Monnoye

[21]

ON THE ENBANKMENT

The impassive stony Sphinx kissed by the amorous moon;
The little coster-girl, a Covent Garden rose;
Three thousand years apart! And yet alike for once in this—
Tonight, each has a secret she will not disclose.

[William Theodore Peters

LOVE

That happy minglement of Hearts,
Where, changed as chemic compounds are,
Each with its own Existence parts,
To find a new one, happier far!

[Thomas Moore

[22]

LOVE

A mighty Pain to Love it is,
And 'tis a Pain that Pain to miss;
But of all Pains, the greatest Pain
It is to Love, and Love in vain.

[Abraham Cowley

ON WOMEN AND HYMEN

Whether tall men, or short men, are best,
Or bold men, or modest and shy men,
I can't say, but I this can protest,
All the fair are in favour of Hy-men.

[Anonymous

[23]

PETER AND HIS WIFE

After such years of dissension and strife,
Some wonder that Peter should weep for his wife;
But his tears on her grave are nothing surprising,—
He's laying her dust, for fear of its rising.

[Thomas Hood

WHICH WAY DID HE GO?

(An Obituary)

His earthly warfare now is o'er
And closed his life sublime;
From this cold world he vanished for
A brighter, warmer clime.

[Frank L. Stanton

[24]

WAR'S GLORIOUS ART

One to destroy is murder by the law,
And gibbets keep the lifted hand in awe:
To murder thousands takes a spacious name,
War's Glorious art, and gives immortal Fame.

ETERNITY

The One remains, the many change and pass;
 Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
 Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
 Stains the white radiance of Eternity.

[Percy Bysshe Shelley

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