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Title: Songs Ysame

Author: Albion Fellows Bacon

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Release date: March 3, 2012 [EBook #39032]

Most recently updated: January 8, 2021

Language: English

Credits: Produced by David Edwards, Emmy and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <https://www.pgdp.net> (This file was produced from images generously made available by The Internet Archive)

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SONGS YSAME ***



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SONGS YSAME

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**GOLDEN TREASURY OF AMERICAN
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SONGS YSAME.

By ANNIE FELLOWS JOHNSTON and ALBION FELLOWS BACON.

OUT OF THE HEART.

Edited by J. W. CHADWICK.



L. C. PAGE AND COMPANY, Publishers

(INCORPORATED)

196 Summer Street, Boston

[iii]



Motherhood

[iv]

SONGS YSAME

BY
ANNIE FELLOWS JOHNSTON
AND
ALBION FELLOWS BACON



BOSTON
L. C. PAGE AND COMPANY
(INCORPORATED)
MDCCCXCVII

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[v]

(INCORPORATED)

Colonial Press:
Electrotyped and Printed by C. H. Simonds & Co.
Boston, Mass., U. S. A.

TO

[vi]

Our Mother
MARY ERSKINE FELLOWS

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[x]

PRELUDE.

[xiii]

*WE cannot sing of life, whose years are brief,
Nor sad heart-stories tell, who know no grief,
Nor write of shipwrecks on the seas of Fate,
Whose ship from out the harbor sailed but late.
But we may sing of fair and sunny days,
Of Love that walks in peace through quiet ways;
And unto him who turns the page to see
Our simple story, haply it may be
As when in some mild day in early spring,*

*One through the budding woods goes wandering;
And finds, where late the snow has blown across,
Beneath the leaves, a violet in the moss.
1887. A. F. B.*

***N**OW I can sing of life, whose days are brief,
For I have walked close hand in hand with grief.
And I may tell of shipwrecked hopes, since mine
Sank just outside the happy harbor line.
But still my song is of those sunny days
When Love was with me in those quiet ways.
And unto him who turns the page to see
That day's short story, haply it may be,
The joy of those old memories he feels:
As one who through the wintry twilight steals,
And sees, across the chilly wastes of snow,
The darkened sunset's rosy afterglow.
1892. A. F. J.*

[xiv]

PART I.

[17]

SONGS YSAME

The Lighting of the Candles.

WHENCE came the ember
That touched our young souls' candles first with light;
In shadowy years, too distant to remember,
Where childhood merges backward into night?

I know not, but the halo of those tapers
Has ever since around all nature shone;
And we have looked at life through golden vapors
Because of that one ember touch alone.

At Early Candle-Lighting.

[18]

THOSE, who have heard the whispered breath
Of Nature's secret "Shibboleth,"
And learned the pass-word to unroll
The veil that hides her inmost soul,
May follow; but this by-path leads
Through mullein stalks and jimson-weeds.
And he who scorning treads them down
Would deem but poor and common-place
Those whom he'll meet in homespun gown.
But they who lovingly retrace
Their steps to scenes I dream about,
Will find the latch-string hanging out.
With them I claim companionship,
And for them burn my tallow-dip,
At early candle-lighting.

To these low hills, around which cling
My fondest thoughts, I would not bring
An alien eye long used to sights
Among the snow-crowned Alpine heights.
An eagle does not bend its wing
To low-built nests where robins sing.

[19]

Between the fence's zigzag rails,
The stranger sees the road that trails
Its winding way into the dark,
Fern-scented woods. He does not mark
The old log cabin at the end
As I, or hail it as a friend,
Or catch, when daylight's last rays wane,
The glimmer through its narrow pane
Of early candle-lighting.

As anglers sit and half in dream
Dip lazy lines into the stream,
And watch the swimming life below,
So I watch pictures come and go.
And in the flame, Alladin-wise,
See genii of the past arise.
If it be so that common things
Can fledge your fancy with fast wings;
If you the language can translate
Of lowly life, and make it great,
And can the beauty understand
That dignifies a toil-worn hand,
Look in this halo, and see how
The homely seems transfigured now
At early candle-lighting.

[20]

A fire-place where the great logs roar
And shine across the puncheon floor,
And through the chinked walls, here and there,
The snow steals, and the frosty air.
Meager and bare the furnishings,
But hospitality that kings
Might well dispense, transmutes to gold,
The welcome given young and old.
Plain and uncouth in speech and dress,
But richly clad in kindness,
The neighbors gather, one by one,
At rustic rout when day is done.
Vanish all else in this soft light,—
The past is ours again tonight;
'Tis early candle-lighting.

Oh, well-remembered scenes like these:
The candy-pullings, husking-bees—
The evenings when the quilting frames
Were laid aside for romping games;
The singing school! The spelling match!
My hand still lingers on the latch,
I fain would wider swing the door
And enter with the guests once more.
Though into ashes long ago
That fire faded, still the glow
That warmed the hearts around it met,
Immortal, burns within me yet.
Still to that cabin in the wood
I turn for highest types of good
At early candle-lighting.

[21]

How fast the scenes come flocking to
My mind, as white sheep jostle through
The gap, when pasture bars are down,
And pass into the twilight brown.
Grandmother's face and snowy cap,
The knitting work upon her lap,
The creaking, high-backed rocking-chair;
The spinning-wheel, the big loom where
The shuttle carried song and thread;
The valance on the high, white bed
Whose folds the lavender still keep.
Oh! nowhere else such dreamless sleep
On tired eyes its deep spell lays,
As that which came in those old days
At early candle-lighting.

A kitchen lit by one dim light,

And 'round the table in affright,
A group of children telling tales.
Outside, the wind—a banshee—wails.
Even the shadows, that they throw
Upon the walls, to giants grow.
The hailstones 'gainst the window panes
Fall with the noise of clanking chains,
Till, glancing back, they almost feel
Black shapes from out the corners steal,
And, climbing to the loft o'erhead,
The witches follow them to bed.
The low flame flickers. Snuff the wick!
For ghosts and goblins crowd so thick
At early candle-lighting.

[22]

An orchard path that tramping feet
For half a century have beat;
Here to the fields at sun-up went
The reapers. Here, on errands sent,
Small bare-feet loitered, loath to go.
Here apple-boughs dropped blooming snow,
Through garden borders gaily set
With touch-me-nots and bouncing Bet;
Here passed at dusk the harvester
With quickened step and pulse astir
At sight of some one's fluttering gown,
Who stood with sunbonnet pulled down
And called the cows. Ah, in a glance
One reads that simple, old romance
At early candle-lighting.

[23]

One picture more. A winter day
Just done, and supper cleared away.
The romping children quiet grow,
And in the reverent silence, slow
The old man turns the sacred page,
Guide of his life and staff of age.
And then, the while my eyes grow dim,
The mother's voice begins a hymn:
*"Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer
That calls me from a world of care!"*
What wonder from those cabins rude
Came lives of stalwart rectitude,
When hearth-stones were the altars where
Arose the vestal flame of prayer
At early candle-lighting.

No crumbling castle walls are ours,
No ruined battlements and towers.
Our history, on callow wings,
Soared not in time of feudal kings;
No strolling minstrel's roundelay
Tells of past glory in decay,
But rugged life of pioneer
Has passed away among us here;
And as the ivy tendrils grow
About the ancient turrets, so
The influence of its sturdy truth
Shall live in never-ending youth,
When simple customs of its day
Have, long-forgotten, passed away
With early candle-lighting.

[24]

Bob White.

[25]

JUST now, beyond the turmoil and the din
Of crowded streets that city walls shut in,
I heard the whistle of a quail begin:
"Bob White! Bob White!"
So faintly and far away falling
It seemed that a dream voice was calling

"Bob White! Bob White!"
How the old sights and sounds come thronging
And thrill me with a sudden longing!

Through quiet country lanes the sunset shines.
Fence corners where the wild rose climbs and twines,
And blooms in tangled black-berry vines,

"Bob White! Bob White!"
I envy yon home-going swallow,
Oh, but swiftly to rise and follow—
Follow its flight,
Follow it back with happy flying,
Where green-clad hills are calmly lying.

[26]

Wheat fields whose golden silences are stirred
By whirring insect wings, and naught is heard
But plaintive callings of that one sweet word,

"Bob White! Bob White!"
And a smell of the clover growing
In the meadow lands ripe for mowing,
All red and white.

Over the shady creek comes sailing,
Past willows in the water trailing.

Tired heart, 'tis but in dreams I turn my feet,
Again to wander in the ripening wheat
And hear the whistle of the quail repeat

"Bob White! Bob White!"
But oh! there is joy in the knowing
That somewhere green pastures are growing,
Though out of sight.
And the light on those church spires dying,
On the old home meadow is lying.

Grandfather.

[27]

HOW broad and deep was the fireplace old,
And the great hearth-stone how wide!
There was always room for the old man's chair
By the cosy chimney side,
And all the children that cared to crowd
At his knee in the evening-tide.

Room for all of the homeless ones
Who had nowhere else to go;
They might bask at ease in the grateful warmth
And sun in the cheerful glow,
For Grandfather's heart was as wide and warm
As the old fireplace, I know.

And he always found at his well-spread board
Just room for another chair;
There was always rest for another head
On the pillow of his care;
There was always place for another name
In his trustful morning prayer.

[28]

Oh, crowded world with your jostling throngs!
How narrow you grow, and small;
How cold, like a shadow across the heart,
Your selfishness seems to fall,
When I think of that fireplace warm and wide,
And the welcome awaiting all.

The Old Church.

[29]

CLOSE to the road it stood among the trees,
The old, bare church, with windows small and high,

And open doors that gave, on meeting day,
A welcome to the careless passer by.

Its straight, uncushioned seats, how hard they seemed!
What penance-doing form they always wore
To little heads that could not reach the text,
And little feet that could not reach the floor.

What wonder that we hailed with strong delight
The buzzing wasp, slow sailing down the aisle,
Or, sunk in sin, beguiled the constant fly
From weary heads, to make our neighbors smile.

How softly from the churchyard came the breeze
That stirred the cedar boughs with scented wings,
And gently fanned the sleeper's heated brow
Or fluttered Grandma Barlow's bonnet strings.

[30]

With half-shut eyes, across the pulpit bent,
The preacher droned in soothing tones about
Some theme, that like the narrow windows high,
Took in the sky, but left terrestrials out.

Good, worthy man, his work on earth is done;
His place is lost, the old church passed away;
And with them, when they went, there must have gone
That sweet, bright calm, my childhood's Sabbath day.

An Old-Time Pedagogue.

[31]

SLOWLY adown the village street
With groping cane and faltering feet,
He goes each day through cold or heat—
Old Daddy Hight.
His hair is scant upon his head,
His eyes are dim, his nose is red,
And yet, his mien is stern and dread—
Old Daddy Hight.

The village lads his form descry
While yet afar, and boldly cry—
(For bears are scarce and rods are high)
"Old Daddy Hight!"
But when their fathers meet his glance,
They nod and smile and look askance.
He taught them once the Modoc dance—
Old Daddy Hight.

How long we cling to servitude,
How long we keep the schoolboy's mood!
Still seems with awful power endued—
Old Daddy Hight.
They feel a cringing of the knee,
Those fathers, yet, whene'er they see
Adown the walk pace solemnly—
Old Daddy Hight.

[32]

Wide is his fame, of how he taught,
And how he flogged, and reckoned naught
The toils and pains that knowledge bought—
Old Daddy Hight.
He had no lack of "ways and means"
To track the loiterers on the greens;
He scorned all counterfeits and screens—
Old Daddy Hight.

Oh, dire the day that brewed mishap!
That brought to luckless back his strap,
To hanging head his Dunce's cap—
Old Daddy Hight.
No blotted page dared meet his eye;
The owner quaked and wished to die,

When rod in hand, with wrath strode by—
Old Daddy Hight.

He helped them up the thorny steep
Of wisdom's path with pain to creep,
With vigilance that might not sleep—
Old Daddy Hight.

Now, down his life's long, slow decline,
He walks alone at eighty-nine—
The last of his illustrious line—
Old Daddy Hight.

[33]

Her Title-Deeds.

[34]

INSIDE the cottage door she sits,
Just where the sunlight, softest there,
Slants down on snowy kerchief's bands,
On folded hands and silvered hair.

The garden pale her world shuts in,
A simple world made sweet with thyme,
Where life, soft lulled by droning bees,
Flows to the mill-stream's lapsing rhyme.

Poor are her cottage walls, and bare;
Too mean and small to harbor pride,
Yet with a musing gaze she sees
Her broad domains extending wide.

Green slopes of hills, and waving fields,
With blooming hedges set between,
Through shifting veils of tender mist,
Smile, half revealed, a mingled scene.

[35]

All hers, for lovingly she holds
A yellow packet in her hand,
Whose ancient, faded script proclaims
Her title to this spreading land.

Old letters! On the trembling page
Drop unawares, unheeded tears.
These are her title-deeds, her lands
Spread through the realms of by-gone years.

INTERLUDES.

[39]

Voices of the Old, Old Days.

OH, voices of the old, old days,
Speak once again to me,
I walk alone the old, old ways
And miss your melody.
To-night I close my tired eyes
And hear the rain drip slow,
And dream a hand is on my brow
That pressed it long ago.

My thoughts stray through the lonely night
Until I seem to see
Home faces, in the firelight,
That always smiled on me.
Those shadows dancing on the walls
Are not by embers cast,
They are the forms my heart recalls
From out the happy past.

Forgotten is the gathering gloom,
The night's deep loneliness,
As round me in the silent room
With noiseless tread they press.
Though in the dark the rain sobs on,
I heed its sound no more;
For voices of the old, old days
Are calling as of yore.

[40]

Silent Keys.

[41]

AS we would touch with soft caress the brow
Of one who dreams, the spell of sleep to break,
Across the yellowed keys I sweep my hand,
The old, remembered music to awake;
But something drops from out those melodies—
There are some silent keys.

So is it when I call to those I loved,
Who blessed my life with tender care and fond:
So is it with those early dreams and hopes,
Some voices answer and some notes respond,
But in the chords that I would strike, like these,
There are some silent keys.

Heart, dost thou hear not in those pauses fall
A still, small voice that speaks to thee of peace?
What though some hopes may fail, some dreams be lost,
Though sometimes happy music break and cease.
We might miss part of heaven's minstrelsies
But for these silent keys.

PART II.

[43]

Retrospection.

THE grandsire, in the chimney corner, takes
The almanac from its accustomed place,
And while the kettle swings upon the crane,
And firelight flickers on his wrinkled face,
Reviews the slow procession of the months;
And sees again upon the hills of green
The gypsy Springtime pitch her airy tent
Among the blossoms. Then the silver sheen
Of harvest moon shines down on rustling corn
Until the hazy air of Autumn thrills
With sound of woodman's ax and hunter's horn,
And darker shadows climb the russet hills.

But while he ponders on the open page,
The last sand in the hour-glass slips away.
The end seems near of his long pilgrimage,
And he would call the fleeting year to stay.
But passing on, she goes—a sweet-faced nun—
To take within the Convent of the Past
The veil of silence. Then the gates swing shut,
And Time, the grim old warden, bolts them fast.
No more can come again those halcyon days
The Year took with it to its dim-lit cell;
But often at the bars they stand and gaze,
When through the heart rings memory's matin-bell.

[46]

Echoes From Erin.

[47]

A CROSS old Purple Mountain I hear a bugle call,
And down the rocks, like water, the echoes leap and fall.
One note alone can startle the voices of the peaks,
And waken songs of Erin, whene'er the bugle speaks.
They call and call and call,
Until the voices all
Ring down the dusky hollows and in the distance fall.

Methinks, like Purple Mountain, the past will sometimes rise,
And memory's call awaken its echoing replies.
Within the tower of Shandon again the bells will sway,
And follow, with their ringing, the Lee upon its way,
And chime and chime and chime,
Where ivy tendrils climb,
Till bells and river mingle to sound the silvery rhyme.

[48]

Again the daisied grasses beside the castle walls
Will stir with softest sighing, to hear the wind's footfalls;
And through the moss-grown abbey, along Killarney's shore,
The melodies of Erin will echo evermore,
And roll and roll and roll,
Till spirit hands shall toll
The music of the uplands unto the listening soul.
Killarney, Ireland.

An Alpine Valley.

[49]

O H, happy valley at the mountain's feet,
If half your happiness you could but know!
Though over you a shadow always falls,
And far above you rise those heights of snow,
So far, your yearning love you may not speak
With rosy flush like some high sister peak,
Yet you may clasp its feet in fond embrace,
And gaze up in its face.

And sometimes down its slopes a wind will come
And bring a sudden, noiseless sweep of snow,
Like a soft greeting from those summits sent
To comfort you below.

What more? Love may not ask too great a boon.
Enough to be so near, though cast so low.
Think that a sea had rolled between you twain
If careless fortune had decreed it so,
And you could only lie and look across
To distant cloudy heights and know your loss,
And see some favored valley, fair and sweet,
Heap flowers at its feet.
Cham, Switzerland.

Through an Amber Pane.

[50]

B Y some strange alchemy that turns to gold
The light that drops from gray and leaden skies,
Though heavy mists the outer world enfold,
'Tis always sunshine where Napoleon lies.
No more an exile by an alien sea,
Forgetful of the banishment and bane;
Now lies he there, in kingly dignity,
His tomb a Mecca shrine beside the Seine.
And there the pilgrim hears the story told,
How Paris placed above her hero, dead,
A window that should turn to yellow gold
The light that on his resting place is shed.
So on him falls, though summers wane,

The sunshine of that amber pane.

By some strange miracle, maybe divine,
The sunlight falls upon the buried past
And turns its water into sparkling wine,
And gilds the coin its coffers have amassed.
Could it have been those long-lost halcyon days
Trailed not a cloud across our April sky?
Faltered we not along those untried ways?
Grew we not weary as the days went by?
Ah, yes! But unreturning feet forget
Rough places trodden in the long ago,
Rememb'ring only paths with flowers beset,
While pressing onward, wearily and slow.
For Memory's windows but retain
The sunshine of an amber pane.

[51]

The little white, wind-blown anemone
By one round dewdrop may be fully filled,
And by some light-winged, passing honey-bee
Its cup of crystal water may be spilled.
So does the child heart hold its happiness:
A drop will fill it to its rosy rim.
It is not that these later days bring less,
That joy so rarely rises to the brim;
It is because the heart has deeper grown.
A fuller knowledge must its thirst assuage.
Perhaps we would not deem those pleasures flown
As bright as those which star the present age,
Had not upon them long years lain
The sunshine of an amber pane.

The dust of dim forgetfulness piles fast
Upon the chains that thrall'd us yesterday.
So will it be when this day, too, is past,
And in its arms we've seen it bear away
The cares that brooded in the tired brain;
The work that weighted down the weary hand;
The high hopes that we struggled to attain;
The problems that we could not understand.
Washed of its stain, bereft of any sting,
Seen through the window of the Memory,
Perchance, a gentler grace to it may cling
Than we may now think possible to see.
For skies will gleam, though gray with rain,
Like sunshine through that amber pane.

[52]

We may not stand on Patmos, and look through
The star-hinged portals where the great pearls gleam.
No brush that unveiled beauty ever drew,
Save one, that caught its shadow in a dream.
So lest we falter, faithless and afraid,
The Merciful, remembering we are dust,
Reveals not heaven for which our hearts have prayed,
But by a token teaches us to trust;
And day by day allows us to look through
The window of the Memory, broad and vast,
(Till jasper minarets rise into view)
Upon the happy heaven of the past;
And gives, till purer light we gain,
The sunshine of that amber pane.

At a Tenement Window.

[53]

SOMETIMES my needle stops with half-drawn thread
(Not often though, each moment's waste means bread,
And missing stitches leave the little mouths unfed).
I look down on the dingy court below:
A tuft of grass is all it has to show,—
A broken pump, where thirsty children go.
Above, there shines a bit of sky, so small
That it might be a passing blue-bird's wing.

One tree leans up against the high brick wall,
And there the sparrows twitter of the spring,
Until they waken in my heart a cry
Of hunger, that no bread can satisfy.

Always before, when Maytime took her way
Across the fields, I followed close. To-day
I can but dream of all her bright array.
My work drops down. Across the sill I lean,
And long with bitter longing, for unseen
Rain-freshened paths, where budding woods grow green.

[54]

The water trickles from the pump below
Upon the stones. With eyes half shut, I hear
It falling in a pool where rushes grow,
And feel a cooling presence drawing near.
And now the sparrows chirp again. No, hark!—
A singing as of some far meadow lark.

It is the same old miracle applied
Unto myself, that on the mountain-side
The few small loaves and fishes multiplied.
Behold, how strange and sweet the mystery!
The birds, the broken pump, the gnarled tree,
Have brought the fullness of the spring to me.

For in the leaves that rustle by the wall
All forests find a tongue. And so that grass
Can, with its struggling tuft of green, recall
Wide, bloom-filled meadows where the cattle pass.
How it can be, but dimly I divine.
These crumbs, God given, make the whole loaf mine.

A Song.

[55]

"Home-keeping hearts are happiest."—LONGFELLOW.

THERE will be distant journeyings enough
To reach that Land beyond the ether's sea,
To satisfy the veriest roaming heart,—
Let me stay home with thee!

There will be new companionships enough
In that bright spirit-life. Why should we flee
So soon to alien hearts and stranger scenes?
I would stay home with thee.

The heart grows homesick, thinking of the change
When these familiar things no more shall be;
When e'en the thought of them, perchance, shall fade,—
Let me stay home with thee.

I would imprint upon my mind each scene,
Each meadow path, and stream, and orchard-tree,
Beloved since childhood, holy with our hopes,
Sweet with the thoughts of thee.

[56]

And each dear household place, let me learn all
By heart, where I am wont thy form to see.
Who knows what things shall pass? If I may share
A hearth in heaven with thee?

Eclipse.

[57]

GOD keep us from the sordid mood
That shrinks to self-infinitude,
That sees no thing as good or grand,
That answers not the hour's demand,
And throws o'er Heaven's splendors furled

In the Dark.

[58]

HERE in the dark I lie, and watch the stars
That through the soft gloom shine like tear-bright eyes
Behind a mourner's veil. The darkness seems
Almost a vapor, palpable and dense,
In which my room's familiar outlines melt,
And all seems one black pall that folds me round.
Only a mirror glimmers through the dusk,
And on the wall a dim, uncertain square
Shows where a portrait hangs. Ah, even so
Beloved faces fade into the past
And naught remains except a space of light
To show us where they were.

How still it seems!

The busy clock, whose tell-tale talk was drowned
By Day's uproarious voices, calls aloud,
Undaunted by the dark, the flight of time,
And through the halls its tones ring drearily.
The breeze on tiptoe seems to tread, as though
It were afraid to rouse the drowsy leaves.
The long, dim street is quiet. Nothing breaks
The dream of Night, asleep on Nature's breast.
Hark! Some one passes. On the pavement stones
Each stealthy step gives back a muffled sound,
Till the last foot-fall seems in distance drowned.
So Death might pass, bent on his mission dread,
A down the silent street, and none might know
What hour he passed or what he bore away.
Ah, sadder thought! So Life goes, unawares,
Noiseless and swift and resolutely on,
While the dumb world lies folded in the gloom,
Unconscious and uncaring in its sleep.
And towards the west, the stars, all silently
Like golden sands in God's great hour-glass, glide
And fall into the nether crystal globe.

[59]

Felipa, Wife of Columbus.

[60]

MORE than the compass to the mariner,
Wast thou, Felipa, to his dauntless soul.
Through adverse winds that threatened wreck, and nights
Of rayless gloom, thou pointed ever to
The North Star of his great ambition. He
Who once has lost an Eden, or has gained
A paradise by Eve's sweet influence,
Alone can know how strong a spell lies in
The witchery of a woman's beckoning hand.
And thou didst draw him, tide-like, higher still,
Felipa, whispering the lessons learned
From thy courageous father, till the flood
Of his ambition burst all barriers
And swept him onward to his longed-for goal.

Before the jewels of a Spanish queen
Built fleets to waft him on his untried way,
Thou gavest thy wealth of wifely sympathy
To build the lofty purpose of his soul.
And now the centuries have cycled by,
Till thou art all-forgotten by the throng
That lauds the great Pathfinder of the deep.
It matters not in that infinitude
Of space, where thou dost guide thy spirit-bark
To undiscovered lands, supremely fair.
If to this little planet thou couldst turn
And voyage, wraithlike, to its cloud-hung rim,

[61]

Thou wouldst not care for praise. And if, perchance,
Some hand held out to thee a laurel bough,
Thou wouldst not claim one leaf, but fondly turn
To lay thy tribute, also, at his feet.

'Twixt Creek and Bay.

[62]

'T WIXT creek and bay
We whisper to our white sails "stay!
Oh, Life, a little while delay!
'Twixt creek and bay."

So loath to go
From these calm shallows that we know,
We fain would stay the year's swift flow,
Nor onward go

To banks more wide,
Where seaward drawings of the tide
Impel to deeper depths untried,
Where Life grows wide.

'Twixt creek and bay—
The morning deepens into day,
And richer freight we bear, always,
When in the bay.

When Youth is Gone.

[63]

H OW can we know when youth is gone,—
When age has surely come at last?
There is no marked meridian
Through which we sail, and feel when past.

A keener air our faces strike,
A chiller current swifter run;
They meet and glide like tide with tide,
Our youth and age, when youth is done.

The Fickle Heart.

[64]

C ANST tell me, thou inconstant heart,
What like unto thou art?
A gypsy wandering up and down
Through April's green and Autumn's brown,
Until the year is spent;
And then, when hills are white with snow,
And brooks, ice-bound, have ceased to flow,
No place to pitch his tent.

Banditti.

[65]

U PON Life's lonely highway, robber bands
Of grim-faced years seize with relentless hands
Each traveler, and wrest from out his grasp
The treasures that he fain would closer clasp.
None can escape. Each year demands its toll,
Till robbed of youth, we grope toward the goal,
Halting and blind, of all but life bereft,
And death claims that—the only boon that's left.

The Silent Brotherhood.

[66]

ON through the cloisters of eternity
The years, like monks, in slow procession pass,
Telling their rosary beads, the golden days,
With penance prayers of dark and dismal nights.
Hooded and cowled, with silence on they pass,
Nor will they pause until their vesper rings
A solemn curfew at the sunset hour,
When all the fires of life are buried low,
And all the worlds drop down upon their knees,
To say a last mass ere the death of Time.

Spendthrift.

[67]

HE was a king one time,
And they wrapped the ermine around him,
And the bells rang out when they crowned him,
Rang with a joyful chime.

And he sat on a throne!
The wealth that a world could offer
Was heaped in the New Year's coffer,
For the world was his own.

He was a spendthrift though,
And the coins of his lavish giving
Were the golden moments of living,—
Coins that he squandered so.

He is a beggar now.
In the night and the storm he lingers,
No gold in his prodigal fingers,—
King with the uncrowned brow.

[68]

Nothing to call his own!
His fortune scattered behind him;
Death empty-handed shall find him,—
A New Year takes his throne.

Lost.

[69]

CHILDHOOD flits by with flowers in both its hands,—
We know not why it leaves, nor when it goes;
But suddenly we miss some subtle grace,
As perfume passes from a fading rose;
We scarce divine, yet somehow faintly feel
In the soft air a far-blown breath of snows.

Straying afar, unheeded and alone
Upon life's highway 'mid the busy throng,
Swept in its eager, restless race along
To the great future, unexplored, unknown,
The little child is lost. And when with haste
The wanderer's footsteps through the streets are traced,
They find a man with features pale and stern,
But the lost child will nevermore return.

The Robber.

[70]

DO you know why Time flies by so slow
When we are sad and old?
Why he turns and waits as if loath to go
On his journey cold?
Because from our coffer of hope and youth,

Where we kept life's gold,
He has stolen our treasures all, in sooth,
From their sacred hold.
He who came with a gift in hand
Was a robber bold.
He whose greeting was smooth and bland
Was a wolf in the fold.
And this is the reason that he goes by,
When we're worn and old,
So slowly, because he can scarcely fly
With his weight of gold.

My Carol.

[71]

TIS the time when holly berries
Grow red as the Yule-log's glow,
And hearth and hall are decked by all
With the green of the mistletoe.
Time when the joy of giving
Is felt at each fireside,
And wings seek rest in the old home nest,
For the time is Christmas-tide.

Though only a carol singer
With nothing of gold in store,
And little to bring as an offering,
I stand outside your door.
Open! This blessed morning
Peace be to thee and thine!
Here to you all I gaily call
A greeting from me and mine.

Haply it may awaken
Some joy that so long ago,
On the frosty dawn of a Christmas gone,
You found in your stocking toe.
Though but an old, old carol,
It bears love's myrrh and gold,
And the frankincense of a joy intense
That the angel hosts foretold.

[72]

Carol.

[73]

***L**isten! The heralds proclaim Him!
Follow! A star leads the way!
Oh, joy, in the City of David
The Christ-child reigns to-day!*

Igreet you this blessed morning.
Peace be to thee and thine!
To the dear ones here be Christmas cheer,
And the love of me and mine.

"In This Cradle Life of Ours."

[74]

THE world swings slowly back and forth,
From dawn to dusk, from dusk to dawn,
And we forget the hand that rocks,
But, cradle-like, the world swings on.

A little while to stir and fret,
Or sob with trembling lip
Because the sunbeams we would grasp
Through helpless fingers slip.

A little while to moan, and start
From fevered dreams, and weep,
For still the cradle sways and swings
Until we fall asleep.

The broad earth's pillow is so soft
To weary heads, and who can tell
But through that sleep sound lullabies
Of the white angel, Israfel?

Here and There.

[75]

HOW must they sing, those angel choirs,
Who breathe Heaven's pure, sweet air!
They need but waft it from their lips
To make it music rare.

Here on these chill, damp plains below,
Where stifling vapors rise,
We draw the heavy air of earth,
And breathe it out in sighs.

The Milky Way.

[76]

UP the steep heights whereon God's citadel
Is set, the prayers of mortals to that bourne,
For ages toiling, in the adamant,
Across the sky a glittering path have worn.

INTERLUDE.

[79]

Interlude.

WITHIN the pauses of the anthem falls a hush,
And the deep organ's solemn voice goes on alone
In a low undertone,
As rain comes sometimes with a sudden sweeping rush,
And then is still, save that it slowly drips and falls
From leaves at intervals.
So memory sings alone
Between the busy hours when comes a lull,
And naught is audible
But its low undertone.
So darkness drops between the days, an interlude
When night's low sighing stirs the sleepy solitude.
So, when the little cycle of this life is rounded,
Before the spirit enters into life unbounded,
It waits to hear, with bated breath,
The solemn interlude of death.

PART III.

[83]

"Oh, Dreary Day!"

OH, dreary day, that had so late a dawn!
Oh, dreary day, so long, though early gone!
Fold thy gray mantle round thy form and go
To find the lost sun, while Night comes on,
Across the plain, with silent step and slow.

I weary of thy dark, unsmiling mood,
I weary of thy dull disquietude,
And thy complaining voice that tells of pain,
Not with the tempest's trumpet, but subdued
In broken sentences of falling rain.

Now, soft as household spirit, comes the Night
And draws the curtains, fanning still more bright
The cheerful fire, while for her gentle sake
The tapers burst in bloom with yellow light,
Like evening primroses just kissed awake.

May-Time.

[84]

THE Spring steals through the city streets,
Silent and shrinking, half afraid,
As if there came, from woods and fields,
Some timid, bashful, country maid.

The lofty houses coldly frown,
And coldly stares the stony street;
But here and there from out a cleft
There springs a flower to kiss her feet.

And here and there a crocus smiles
A friendly greeting, or a spray
Of blooming lilacs, fresh and sweet,
Leans down and nods across her way.

Till, reassured, she smiles and sings,
And on she passes, glad and fleet,
And little children at their play
Look up to catch her glances sweet.

Is it her robe's soft fluttering
That gently fans the passer by?
He only feels the freshened air,
Nor knows the gracious presence nigh.

[85]

But some sweet influence he feels,
That charms care's gloomy shade away,
And pours into his wakened heart
The golden gladness of the May.

So, like an angel visitant,
She glides among the haunts of men,
And faint hearts bound, and sad eyes smile,
Because the Spring has come again.

Spring's Cophetua.

[86]

SHE came with garments scant and poor and thin,
And white feet gleaming bare;
With pallid smiles where April tears had been,
And snowflakes on her hair.

Oh, never—Winter thought—such gentle look
In all the land was seen!
From his gray locks the diadem he took
And crowned her as his queen.

And now, in silken robes and gems arrayed,

Fair Spring reigns in his stead.
Upon his throne she sits, the beggar maid—
"Cophetua" is dead.

Winter Beauty.

[87]

WHEN I go through the meadows brown,
Where stand the tall weeds, sere and dead,
Think you I find no beauty there,
Since Summer through the fields has fled?

The edges of the frozen stream,
Whose quiet waters late were crossed
By shadows of the bending fern,
Are fair with fringes of the frost.

Wherever cowslips crowded thick,
Or banks of buttercups would be,
A host of airy forms in white,
Like ghosts of flowers returned, I see.

It may be clustered flakes of snow,
Or frozen dew still glistening there,
But still it seems as if there came
A rare, strange odor through the air.

October.

[88]

ACROSS the stubble fields the lazy breezes pass,
From Autumn orchards sloping southward in the sun,
Where dropping from the low-hung branches, one by one,
The apples hide in tangles of the wind-blown grass.
A warm, sweet scent of mellow fruit fills all the air,
And faintly over hills and hollows comes the cry
Of some shrill bluejay, and his mate's far-off reply.
Like Ruth, the winds will go a-gleaning, by and by,
And garner in the leaves till all the woods are bare.

But now my boyhood's love has come again to me,
October—in her royal red and gold arrayed!
She comes with glowing cheeks, my dusky Indian maid,
And all the world seems bright because so bright is she.
Unto her lips the wild grapes hold their spicy wine.
Persimmons, sweet and golden with an early frost,
Drop at her feet; and where the narrow creek has crossed
The woods, and in the ferns and flag its way has lost,
Blood-red the corals of the dog-wood berries shine.

[89]

And thus she comes, my Love I loved when I was young!
We wander for a little while across the hills,
And, as of old, her sunny presence warms and fills
My heart. But like a lute with one string left unstrung,
When I would sing again the song of other years,
Something is lost. The harmony is incomplete.
And though the same old melody I still repeat,
One alto note of joy is gone that made it sweet,
And something trembles in the Autumn haze like tears.

At Twilight.

[90]

A TINY bird flits through the twilight brown,
When sunset dreams make all the garden fair,
Whose soft notes fall into the quiet air
Like olive leaves on waters smooth dropped down.
Emblems of rest, when floods of care do cease,

Into my heart, as well, they fall and float,
An olive leaf each faint and dreamy note—
I recognize their sign, and feel at peace.

The Prophet.

[91]

DARKNESS and silence, such as only fall
At midnight, wrap the sleeping hamlets all;
No life in all the dim world seems to be.
Then suddenly,
Across the hills, far off and faint, I hear
Sound through the dark, as through a dream, the call
(How strange it seems!) of some bold chanticleer.

(Half in my sleep I hear that clarion ring,
With distant calls, like echoes, answering;
And, as at war's alarum, soldiers leap
From guarded sleep
And seize their arms, and hasten from their tents,
So, at this sound, my drowsy senses spring,
Alert to man the mind's dark battlements.)

To tell night's mid-hour tolls no startled bell;
Only thy voice is heard, brave sentinel,
Who, like the ancient watchman on the towers,
Calls forth the hours,
And to the wistful questioners, who see
No gleam through pain's long vigil, dost foretell
"The morning cometh," oft and cheerily.

[92]

How canst thou know when, weary with his race,
The Day turns back, his pathway to retrace?
Canst thou the maiden Dawn's light footsteps hear,
Approaching near?
Or dost thou stand in converse with the skies,
And know what time she leaves her hiding-place
By joyful flashes of their starry eyes?

Thou art a prophet, like to those of old,
Who in the darkness sat, but firm and bold
Looked with undaunted eyes towards the dim
Horizon's rim,
And thrilled with faith of waiting ages born,
That soon from out the Night's strong prisonhold,
Should burst the golden glory of the Morn.

The Potter's Field.

[93]

JUST outside of the noisy town,
Half through thicket and wood revealed,
Hemmed about by a wall of stone,
Wide it lieth, the Potter's Field.

Brambles wander across the grass,
Vines creep over the broken wall,
Bindweeds blossom, and here and there
Stands a waif of the forest tall.

There no columns of gleaming white
Mark the dust that is sacred still;
Swings the gate on its rusty hinge—
All may enter and roam at will.

Who should hinder the ruthless hand,
Who protect from a vagrant's tread?
Guard the urns of the rich and great—
No one cares for the pauper dead!

Outlawed felon and sinless child
All find room in the Potter's Field.
There lies a Judas who sold his Lord,
Here a Mary, His pity healed.

[94]

Who could know of the shame and sin
Safely under the sod concealed?
Weary burdens of want and grief,
Laid away in the Potter's Field.

Who could guess?—for as swift and light
O'er it the feet of the seasons go;
Summer hides it with grace of flowers,
Winter spreads it with folds of snow.

Rains weep over the lonely mound,
Sunlight lingers, and swift shades pass;
Tender hands of the gentle wind
Smooth the knots of the tangled grass.

What though hallowed by Death alone,
Rest unbroken the sod doth yield;
Peace is here, for His constant watch
God doth set o'er the Potter's Field.

Left Out.

[95]

WELL he knew that his clothes were poor:
He was common, he humbly thought;
Child as he was, he could understand
Why he was slighted and never sought.

Yet could he help it,—his mother gone,—
Help the weight of his father's shame?
Hardest sentence of childish law:
Blaming innocence not to blame.

It was hard when the children played
All together, to be left out,—
Stand aside, with a stinging sense
That 'twas he that they laughed about.

Thoughtless children, they felt no wrong,—
Pushed him out of the ring at play.
No one heard how his voice was choked,
No one cared when he stole away.

No one saw how he crept at last
Through the gate and the grasses deep,
Past the wall to a lonely grave
Where his mother was laid asleep.

[96]

Could she feel in her narrow bed,
Wee, cold hands, as they groped about—
Feel the tears that were dropped because
Even her grave had left him out?

"Our Father."

[97]

IHAVE no part with all the great, proud world:
It cares not how I live, nor when I die;
But every lily smiling in the field,
And every tiny sparrow darting by,
Claims kinship with me, mortal though they be,—
The One who cares for them doth care for me.

A Madrigal.

[98]

WOODBINE.

THE wild bee clings to it
Most fond and long.
The wild bird sings to it
Its sweetest song.
The wild breeze brings to it
A life more strong.

So all things lend to thee
Some charm, some grace.
The world's a friend to thee,
In love's embrace.
All hearts do bend to thee,
In thy queen's place.

The Time o' Day.

[99]

IF I should look for the time o' day
On the rose's dial red,
I would think it was just the sunrise hour,
From the flush of its petals spread.

And if I would tell by the lily-bell,
I would think it was calm, white noon;
And the violet's blue would tell by its hue
Of the evening coming soon.

But when I would know by my lady's face,
I am all perplexed the while;
For it's always starlight by her eyes,
And sunlight by her smile.

Trailing Arbutus.

[100]

THERE may be hearts that lie so deep
'Neath griefs and cares that weigh like drifted snow,
That love seems chilled in endless sleep,
And budding hopes may never dare to grow.
Yet under all, some memory
Trails its arbutus flowers of tender thought,—
All buried in the snow maybe,
Still with the sweetest fragrance fraught.

A Mood.

[101]

SOMETHING has made the world so changed,
Something is lost from field and sky,
And the earth and sun are sadly estranged,
And the songs of Nature seemed turned to a cry.
Yet I heard my blithe little neighbor tell
How fair is the spring to see.
Ah, well,—
Perhaps the change is in me.

Something has gone from your smile, sweetheart;
Something I miss from your look, your tone.
Though you stand quite near, we are still apart,
You may clasp me close, but I feel alone.
Yet over and over your love you tell,
And as you say, it must be.
Ah, well,—

The Legend of the Pansies.

[102]

ONE night in Fairyland, when all the court
Held carnival to welcome in the June,
And to the wind-harp's music, flying feet
Were dancing on the rose leaves night had strewn;
The naughty Puck crept up the castle stair,
And called the sleeping princes from their bed;
And with their royal pages following,
Away the tricky little fairies sped.
Mounted on snowy night-moths, off they raced,
Startling the gnomes, asleep within the shade
Of gloomy forests, with their merry cries,
As at forbidden games all night they played.
But when at sunrise blew an elfin horn,
Mischievous Puck was nowhere to be seen,
The disobedient princes stood forlorn;
Like dew-drops fell their tears on grasses green.
For fairy children, not within the bounds
Of Queen Titania's realm at morning's dawn,
Change into blooming flowers where they stand,
And bloom there till the summer time is gone.

Now, where the little princes played all night
In robes of royal purple and of gold,
The flowers we call pansies sprang in sight,
And round them stood the little pages bold,
In liveries of yellow, blue, and white;
While upward through the east the great sun rolled.
Then some, repentant, sadly drooped their heads;
Some turned their saucy faces to the sky;
But now they all alike must wait the day
When they can bid the summer time good-by.
Sometimes, when bees upon their busy rounds
Stop to deliver some sweet message sent
From Fairyland, the thoughtful faces smile
And seem to grow a little more content.
When cooling shadows creep along the grass,
And mother birds are twittering lullabies
To sleepy nestlings, then the south winds pass,
And close with fingers soft the pansies' eyes.
Upon the wings of dreams they're borne along
To loving arms that rock them all the night,
And fairy voices soothe their sleep with song,
Till they are waked by kisses of the light.

[103]

The Tower of Babel.

[104]

ONCE, many centuries ago,
Men tried to build a tower so high
That rising upward, round on round,
Its pinnacle should reach the sky.

And as they toiled and built and dreamed and planned,
What hopes went upward with the rising stone!
That daring feet ere long should mount and stand
Upon the golden stairway to the throne.

And then a dire confusion fell
Upon the workers, building there.
Men called and shouted each to each
With strange, uncomprehended speech,
And what it meant no one could tell;
So they left building in despair.

Yet in their hearts still lived the hope that they

Might scale the ramparts of the sky some day.

Sometimes our souls expand and glow
With holy visions bright and pure;
But when from these deep vales below
We proudly try to climb and reach
With clumsy masonry of speech,
And rounds of rhyme that shall endure,
That sky-born thing, that heavenly theme,
Touched only by a prayer or dream,
A swift confusion o'er us flies,
And sudden chills our hands benumb.
Our minds are blurred, our tongues are dumb,
The vision fades away and dies.

[105]

Yet still we dream that song some day may be
Rung through the arches of Eternity.

The Old Bell.

[106]

THE vines have grown so thick and twined so strong,
With clinging hold, about the bell that swings
In the old tower, that now it never rings.
No one has heard its voice for seasons long.

Sit by me on the broken belfry stair,
And I will tell the simple tale to you
Of those whose graves through yonder arch you view,
Scattered about the churchyard, here and there.

Ah me! How closely memory's tendrils twine
About the heart, and choke the words that spring.
It only throbs, the touch half-answering,
Like this old bell, held speechless by the vine.

The Sea.

[107]

FOREVER, like a heart that knows no peace,
Like one who wanders weary to and fro
About the earth, but finds no resting-place,
The sweeping tides of ocean ebb and flow.

Like a discarded lover who entreats
For favor still, and will not be denied,
Up to the beach, with soft, caressing touch
And tearful broken whispers, steals the tide.

But still repulsed, it slow and sad withdraws,
Yet at the dear one's feet its treasures lays,
And turns again, to wail its sorrows out
Through all the hopeless nights and dreary days.

Married.

[108]

IT is such a little while
From the time the fledgling tries
To tip from the edge of the nest to the bough,
Then lifts its wings and flies.

Till it sits in its own wee nest,
Surprised out of growth or ken,
And half-way feels that in some strange way
It is learning to fly again.

Motherhood.

[109]

FOR two dear heads of bronze and amber,
For baby eyes of blue and brown,
For two who cling, and kiss, and clamber,
And on my shoulder nestle down.

All little hearts are dearer to me,
All little faces sweet and bright,
All childish tears and woes undo me,
And I would heal them all to-night.

Sufficiency.

[110]

THE bird that sings one only strain,
To tell his passion o'er and o'er,
Can feel as much of joy or pain
As if he knew a thousand more.

And thou, sweet maid, whose gentle thought
In smiles or tears finds present vent,
What feeling could thy soul be taught,
Or who has words more eloquent?

Ophelia.

[111]

CALM dost thou lie in wave-swept resting-place.
No more the glances of the haughty Dane
Can fill thy gentle breast with longing vain.
The waves that stilled thy heart have drowned thy pain,
And washed the sorrow from thy sweet, pale face,
Ophelia.

Thine be the violets, but his the rue.
Though hope should sleep, and deep regret should wake,
Thy clasped hand from Death's he could not take;
The spell on those mute lips he could not break.
What more with life and love hast thou to do,
Ophelia?

Requiem.

[112]

SLEEP, thou, whom Care so long oppressed.
Care whispers by thy couch no more.
Kind Death has shut the outer door;
None can disturb thee,—sleep and rest.

Thy hands are folded on thy breast
That throbs with Life's deep pain no more.
Though Love waits grieving by thy door,
He cannot enter,—sleep and rest.

Elizabeth.

[113]

ELIZABETH,
Thou comest a refreshing breath
From meadows green, where morning stays,
To those who bear the noon-tide blaze.

Elizabeth,
Thou couldst look in the eyes of Death,
Undaunted, did he promise thee

Some bright new scene of mirth or glee.
I cannot think that time will gray
That sun-bright head, nor bear away
One dimple in those rose-cheeks hid;
Sure he were daring if he did.

Elinor.

[114]

IN that shadow-land, where the Sisters three
Are weaving the web of destiny,
There floated once through the fateful gloom
A thread of sunshine, that gleamed upon
The thread of a life from the distaff drawn,
And mingling, they passed to the busy loom.
The wondering Parcea looked and smiled,
As the light grew into the soul of a child,
And in and out and through devious ways,
They wove it in with the woof of days.
But they said on earth (who knew not the Fates)
"As the lily's chalice holds the dew,
So in her heart, at the morning's gates,
She caught the sunshine, when she came through."

On a Fly-Leaf of "Flute and Violin."

[115]

A MASTER-HAND hath swept
Life's violin and flute.
For him they laughed and wept
When others found them mute.

From his high altitude
He catches, fine and clear,
The notes that might elude
A less discerning ear.

Transposing to a lower key
The dream-song that he hears,
He sets his heavenly melody
To human smiles and tears.

Inspiration.

[116]

THE singer walks by wood and rill,
By town and stately river,
And varied scenes his vision fill,
And make his pulses quiver.

But when his song comes borne across
On winds from dreamland blowing,
We cannot tell what mystic touch
Has set his chimes a-going.

We hear the robins in his rhyme,
We see the orchards drifted
With crests of bloom that glimmer white
When mists of tears are lifted.

A hundred tunes seem intertwined
To mingle in his singing,
When but a single rose, perhaps,
Has set his fancy winging.

[117]

On a Fly-Leaf of Irving.

WELCOME art thou, O singer!
If thou dost know a song
That makes the long eve shorter
Because its joys are long.
Welcome art thou, tale-bearer,
If thou canst bear away
Part of the cares that burden
The dull and dreary day.

On a Fly-Leaf of Riley's "Afterwhiles."

[118]

UNTO him alone who strays
Sometimes through the yesterdays,
Lingering long in wood and field,
Is the meaning all revealed
Of these songs. Adown the rhymes
Runs a path to bygone times;
But 'tis found by those alone,
Who the fresh green hills have known,
And have felt the tender mood
Of the country solitude;
Who through lanes of pink peach blooms
Used to see the lilac's plumes
Nodding welcome by the door
Where the home-folks come no more.
Blest the singer, then, who leads
Back again through clover meads,
'Til old scenes we seem to see,
Fair as once they used to be.
Who can call from years long gone,
Friends we trusted, leaned upon;
For whose sake we learned to bless
Toilworn hands and homespun dress.
As he sings of them, and thus
Wafts the pure air back to us
Of the fields, there comes again
Childhood's faith in God and man.

[119]

Chiaro-Oscuro.

[120]

SOMEHOW I love to look at the picture I made of her,
Work of an idle time, the summer of life's long year;
For as I stand and gaze, dreaming of those lost days,
Almost it seems to me I can see her sitting here.

That is the way she sat, with her head a trifle raised,
Looking thoughtfully out at a scene I could never see.
Delicate color of rose dawning and dying down,
Flushing the rare sweet face as she listened or spoke to me.

Whitest light of the sky I showered on her upturned brow,
Gathered the darkest shades and brushed them into her hair,
Thinking the while I worked of the law that always sends
The deepest shadows to follow the high lights everywhere.
Now as I sit and gaze at the dream on the canvas caught,
Sadly the thought comes back, to torture with unbelief—
Why must it always be that the strong white light of love
Is followed forevermore by the deepest shadow of grief?

[121]

When She Came Home.

[122]

"**W**hen she comes home again, a thousand ways
I fashion to myself the tenderness
Of my glad welcome."

RILEY.

"**W**HEN she comes home," I thought with throbbing heart,
That danced a measure to my mind's refrain.
Again from out the door I leaned and looked,
Where she should come along the leafy lane.
And then she came.—I heard the measured sound
Of slow, oncoming feet, whose heavy tread
Seemed trampling out my life. I saw her face.
Then through my brain a sudden numbness spread.
The earth seemed spun away, the sun was gone,
And time, and place, and thought. There was no thing
In all the universe, save one who lay
So still and cold and white, unanswering
Save by a graven smile my broken moan.
She had come home, yet there I knelt *alone*.

A Resolve.

[123]

THE fields of thought are plowed so deep,
So carefully are tilled,
That all the granaries of the world
With plenteous store are filled.
Unless I deeper plow and sow,
What sheaf, then, can I bring?
So like the black-bird in the field,
I'll eat the wheat and sing.

Stranded.

[124]

WE found a wreck cast up on the shore,
Battered and bruised, and scarred and rent,
And I spoke aloud, "Here was worthless work,
And a barque unfit to the sea was sent."

But he said, my friend, in his gentle mood,
"Nay, none may say but the barque was good,
For none can tell of the seas it sailed,
Of the waves it braved and the storms withstood."

Then we spoke no more, but I mutely mused
And thought, oh, heart and oh, life of man
That we find wrecked! we may never know
How brave you were when your course began.

At Last.

[125]

WHAT will you give me, O World, O World!
If I run in the race and win?
Will you give me a fame that can never fade,
Will you give me a crown that will never rust,
Can you save my soul from the pall of sin,
Can you keep my heart from the dust?

What will you give me, O Earth, O Earth!
If I fight in the fray and win?
More than you gave those kings, who lay
Ages past in forgotten clay?
Can you give me more than the grave shuts in,
Or the years can bear away?

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust,
Fame will fade and crowns will rust.

Give me, O Earth, but your true embrace,
When the battle is lost or won.
Hide me away from the day's white face,
From the eye of the dazzling sun.
So I may lay my head on your breast,
Forget the struggle and be at rest;
Forget the laurels that fade away,
The love that lasts but a wild, brief day;
Forget it all, on your bosom pressed,
Forever at rest—at rest!

[126]

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