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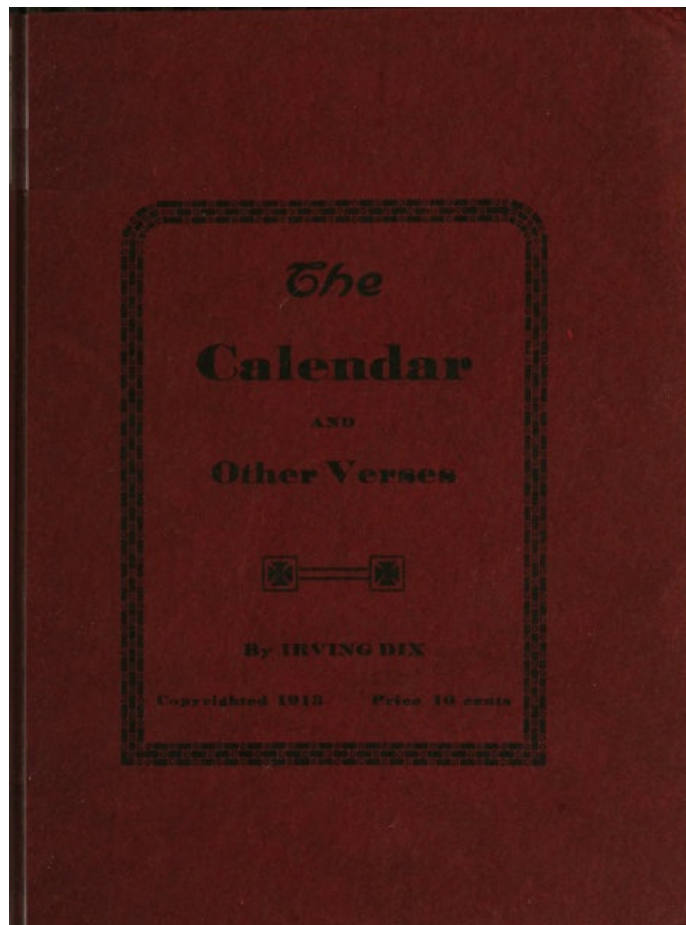
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE CALENDAR, AND OTHER VERSES ***

Transcriber's Note:

Every effort has been made to replicate this text as faithfully as possible. Some changes have been made. They are listed at the end of the text.



The Calendar and Other Verses by

Irving Sidney Dix

To Robert Meaker

[Pg 2]

Dear boy, ten summers—ten swift summers now
Have come and gone since last I said good-bye,
Ten idle, wasted summers gone, and how
I hardly know, so swift the seasons fly:
So swift the seasons come, so swift they go,
That scare it seems one brief, one little day,
Since boyish voices bid us come and play:
And little girls did seem to lure us so.

O Robert!—Robert!—If in Paradise
These idle words of mine can penetrate,
Thou knowest, then, that tears have wet mine eyes,
Thou knowest that I felt thy ruthless fate;
And yet, dear boy, I sometimes feel that thou
Art happier there than I who mourn thee now.

I. S. D.

Written in 1912.

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Foreword

[Pg 4]

About a year ago, having collected all those poems and verses which I considered of any value, I took a certain pride in the thought that I might soon bring under one roof these imaginary children of mine, so that they might be sheltered in time of storm, as it were, from the cold, and oftentimes unfeeling world of commerce but where friends of poetry, who had met with some of my stray children of verse in public journals, might meet with them again, if they desired, with other friendly faces around one common fireside.

But I found that the expense incident to such a venture was so great that unless a large number of copies were sold I would be involved in a larger debt than I cared to contract. Then the plan of securing sufficient advance subscriptions to meet part of the expense of a first edition occurred to me, thereby following the method of Tennyson, Robert Burns and others, of whose example I needed not to be ashamed, but other work prevented me, and still prevents me, from carrying out this plan.

So lest those friends who have shown an interest in my verses should think that I have turned aside from the Path of Poetry, I herewith offer "The Calendar and Other Verses," as evidence of my love for and interest in the greatest of all the arts, hoping that the time may come when I shall be able to present a more worthy offering to the Muses and perhaps justify the kind words that have recently appeared in regards to the author of "The Quiet Life"—A Plain Poem of the

Shehawken, Pa.

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The Calendar AN IDYLL OF THE HILLS

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Part 1

JANUARY

Come walk a mile with me—"Tis January;
The knee-deep snow lies heavy on the ground
And hark!—the icy winds—how swift they hurry
Over the fields with melancholy sound;
And save these winds or some forsaken raven,
Winging its way along yon frozen hill,
Nature is hush'd—her dormant image graven
In marble masks on woodland, lake and rill.

And look!—the trees their naked trunks are swaying,
As bitterly each blast goes howling by,
And hark!—the music in the hemlocks playing,
Like some lost spirit banished from the sky,
And see the smoke from yonder chimney curling,
Hugs the broad roofs, deep-burden'd with the snow,
While clouds of snow are round the low eaves whirling.
How cold it is!—Come, let us homeward go
There will we find the cheerful fire still burning,
There ruddy warmth will make our faces glow,
And there kind hearts will welcome our returning;
Come!—let us hasten through the drifts of snow.

FEBRUARY.

Come walk a mile with me—"Tis February;
The sun is creeping slowly toward the North,
And every breeze to-day seems blithe and merry,
And prophets of the Spring are waking forth—
The hungry ground-hog casts a thin, gray shadow
Beside his open villa, dark and cold,
And the starv'd hare surveys the icy meadow,
And chipmonks chatter in the leafless wold.

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And hark!—the blue-jay's fife is sounding shrilly,
And merry chickadees are piping loud,
E'en though the bitter North-wind's breath is chilly,
And the great trees are low before him bow'd;
And see!—the Lady of the South is creeping
Higher and higher—"Tis the hour of noon,
And sad-eyed Winter by yon brook is weeping,—
Yon little brook that sings a pleasant tune.
Yet, as the sun is with the day declining,
Swift, darkening clouds are gathering in the West,
Where the snow-fairies are again designing
Another robe for Nature's barren breast.

MARCH.

Come walk a mile with me—"Tis March and windy,
And Winter's dying breath comes hard and fast,

And hark!—the storm, like death-bells of a Sunday,
Tolls the sad knell upon the icy blast;
Louder and louder now the winds are wailing,
Faster and faster wings the frozen snow,
Darker and darker the cold clouds are sailing,
As the March-storm goes hurrying to and fro.

But see!—the sun above the clouds is creeping,
And look!—soft flakes are falling, one by one,
And Winter, pale in death, lies gently sleeping,
While Spring awakes e'er half the day is done.
And soon the sun, like some great hearth is burning,
Melting the ghosts of Winter on the hills,
And hark!—the robin from the South returning,
Joins the glad music of the murmuring rills,
And now the farmer-boy, whose heart is leaping,
Gathers the sap that sings a merry song,
While the blue-birds sweet melodies are keeping,
And noisy squirrels leap the trees among.

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APRIL.

Come walk a mile with me—"Tis April weather;
A voice like Spring is calling: Let us go
Where violets are blooming on the heather,
And song-birds bend the branches to and fro;
For everywhere the very ground is springing,
And everywhere the grass is getting green—
How can I now—how can I keep from singing
When all the world is like a fairy scene!

The buds in all the trees, are ripe for bursting,
And fleecy catkins flutter everywhere,
And every little flower seems a-thirsting
For something sweet and beautiful and fair.
But look!—to Westward—see!—an April shower
Sudden has gathered, darkening the sun,
Yet wait!—beside me lifts a gentle flower,
That lights my pathway, blossoming alone;
And hark!—O hark, the meadow-lark is singing,
Greeting the storm from yon tall maple tree,
While, like a herald in its homeward winging,
Wheels a lone flicker o'er the darkening lea.

MAY

Come walk a mile with me—"Tis merry May-time;
The little lambs are gamboling on the green,—
Nature is glad—it is her hour of playtime,
And now, or never, her true heart is seen;
The butterflies are floating down from heaven,
And humming-birds again are on the wing,—
And the kind swallows, seventy times seven,
Fill all the air with merry murmuring.

And see the lilacs by yon cottage blooming!—
How sweet the air is!—sweetness everywhere,
For look!—rich apple-blossoms are perfuming
This little lane that leads to woodlands fair,—
Here honeysuckle-bells are softly swinging,
And pink azaleas perfume all the wood,
And, in the trees, the vireos are singing
Incessantly their songs of solitude,
While round the hill, as slow our steps are wending,
We hear a sweet Voice calling,—"Come, O come!"
For see!—the sun is in the West decending,
And happy hearts are waiting us at home.

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JUNE

Come walk a mile with me—"Tis June,—fair June-day,
And Nature smiles—her magic hands are still,
For not a ripple stirs yon lake at noon-day,
And not a breeze disturbs this woody hill;

But hark!—what idle dreamer there is drumming?
It is—it is a pheasant calling—"Come!"
And listen!—like a low voice sweetly humming
Is heard the brook within its forest home.

But wait!—We cannot wait—"Twill soon be Summer,
So let us now enjoy these days of June,
For hear ye not that late, but welcome comer,
Robert-of-Lincoln carroling his tune;
And see ye not yon oriole high swinging
His basket from that tall and leafy tree—
O Comrade, Comrade!—Time is swiftly winging,—
'Twill not be always June with you and me;
Spring-time is passing—Summer is a-coming,
And soon fair Autumn with her idle dreams,
And then cold Winter, her White hands benumbing
The icy lakes and silent, woodland streams!

O Comrade!—Comrade!—let us not be weary,
But pick life's pretty blossoms while they bloom,
Forgetting every prospect, sad or dreary,
Avoiding every lane that leads to gloom!
For see!—each flower lifts a golden chalice
Inviting us to drink—Shall we pass by,
With faces sad, nor enter this fair palace
That June has rear'd us 'neath a cloudless sky?

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PART TWO.

JULY.

Come walk a mile with me—"Tis July weather;
The western sun is burning round and bright,
And not a breeze disturbs yon tiny feather
From a young swallow loosen'd in its flight;
But hark!—in yonder broad and sunlit meadow
The sound of busy mowers fill the air,
While from a tree that casts a pleasing shadow,
Is heard the locust piping shrilly there.

And see, how strong men lift the scented grasses!
And how they pile the wagons with the hay!
How fast the rake, with rolling burden, passes!
How regular the long, round winrows lay!
And see!—the sun—the great round sun is setting,
Like a red rose upon the distant hill,
Till all the earth seems tenderly forgetting
Day's dying light on meadow, lake and rill;
But come!—for darkness soon will gather round us,
And we must pass through yonder woodlands there;
And then white fields of buckwheat will surround us,
And then—then—home we shall together share.

AUGUST

Come walk a mile with me—"Tis August. Listen!
The meadow-quail is whistling merrily,
And see!—the dew-drops, like great diamonds, glisten
On grass and shrub and bush and bending tree;
And everywhere is peace and joy and plenty,
For everywhere this morning we may go
One seed of Spring has well returned its twenty,
Till Autumn's face with goodness is aglow.

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Yes, oaten fields are white and ripe for reaping,
And green things paling in the garden there
Tell us too well that Summer is a-sleeping,
And harvest-time is on us unaware;
The early apples even now are falling,
The tassel'd corn, the fields of ripening rye,
The purpling grape—all, all are sadly calling
That Summer's glory, too, must fade and die.
But hark!—what sound is that!—it seems like thunder,
And yet 'tis but the wind, within the trees,—

The far-off wind, fresh-filled with nameless wonder,—
A prophesy of Autumn's freshening breeze.

SEPTEMBER

Come walk a mile with me—"Tis sweet September;
And quietly the clouds are gliding by,
And silent runs the brook that, you remember,
We pass'd last Spring—it now is dumb and dry,
And overhead, the first red leaf is falling,
And, underfoot, the flowers are fading fast,
While in the air I hear a strange, sad calling
That tells me Summer is forever past.

And yet how peaceful seems the face of Heaven,
How calm the earth is—Nature is at rest,
And all the hopes that unto Spring were given,
Folds Autumn now in silence to her breast;
The birds are singing, yet not half so sweetly
As when they sung their song at opening Spring,
And flowers are blooming, yet not so completely
As when the birds were first upon the wing;
And I am singing—but the fading glory
Of Autumn-time subdues my idle song,
For what is Autumn but the sweet sad story
Of leaves that fade and lives that last not long.

OCTOBER

Come walk a mile with me—"Tis now October;
And yet the fields put forth fresh blades of green.
Lest the advancing days shall seem to sober,
And prophesy too plainly the unseen;
For Nature loves to lead us forward blindly,—
Giving a glory to the fading leaf!
Yet were it worse if, speaking less unkindly,
Nature should plainly tell us life is brief.

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The flowers, too, are fading—and are dying,
The leaves are falling, and incessantly,
And on the hills great flocks of crows are crying,
And the blue-jays once more are calling me;
But Winter!—Winter soon, too soon, is coming,
For see!—see there,—the frost is on the grass!
And the wild-bee—I hear no more its humming
As once I did, wherever I might pass;
And robin—he is gone, and all the singing
Of all the sweet birds now no more I hear,
While the dry leaves, to barren branches clinging,
Full plainly speak the passing of the year.

NOVEMBER

Come walk a mile with me—November!—Faintly
The long, blue hills lift to the eastern sky;
'Tis Indian-summer now—this day seems saintly,
Like some good martyr e'er he goes to die;
The skies are cloudless; not a breeze is blowing,
And silent is each bare and leafless form;
The brooks—how quiet!—I like not their flowing,
For oh,—it is the calm before the storm.

Yes, yes—e'en now—to Westward—look! a figure
Is sudden forming, stretching forth a wand,
Shaping a shape as of some giant, bigger
Than any fabled thing from Fairyland;
Higher and higher that strange shape is lifting,
Swifter and swifter its fleet heralds run,
Wider and wider its white breath is drifting
As lower sinks the slow descending sun;
And now—the storm!—the storm is on us. Hurry!
Yet see!—the myriad snow-flakes—see them come!
O Comrade!—See!—it is young Winter's flurry—
And yet 'tis but the storm that drives us home.

Come walk a mile with me—"Tis dark December;
 The cold, rough winds are never, never still;
 O for the days of Spring I well remember!
 O for the flowers that blossomed on the hill!—
 And wish you not that you,—you too were playing
 Upon the hillside, building castles there,
 Dreaming sweet dreams, as when we went a-Maying,
 Midst singing birds and blossoms sweet and fair?

But hark, the wind!—and see, the falling snow-flakes!
 How thick they come—how beautiful they seem!
 Yet I am weary—weary of the snow-flakes—
 O Comrade!—tell me,—is it all a dream;
 O Comrade!—Comrade!—Winter is upon us;
 Our hopes, like snow-flakes, now are falling fast,
 Our dreams are broken—God have mercy on us!—
 We must not perish in the wintry blast—
 For see, O see!—the sun,—the sun is shining!
 'Tis noon, and lo!—yon glorious orb of day
 Is turning backward, a New-year designing—
 So shall all Winters turn to Spring away.

And so shall Winter be an emblem only
 Of the dark days that meet us, one and all,
 Making our little lives seem sad and lonely,
 Until the New-Year answers to our call,
 Until another Spring renewing Nature;
 Renews our hopes that were so desolate
 Giving us faith that not one living creature
 Is blindly born to blindly meet its fate.

NIAGARA

Almighty organ of America,
 E'er mortal man thy voice did hear
 Thy notes, full clear,
 Rose with voluptuous music on the air,
 Till angels, wondering, hesitated there,
 And rude barbarians fell in fear
 Beside thy god-like amphitheatre.

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Thus, when thy ancient spirit touch'd those keys,
 Those smoothly polished keys,
 Those swift and mighty keys
 A powerful yet a pleasing note was found
 That gave to Silence round
 A song whereof no mortal heard a sound,
 But which did Heaven please
 Through the long centuries,
 And unto these.

Then, when the red-men's blue-eyed brother came
 Beside this shrine, thy temple here to claim,
 Humbled was he,
 Such glory here to see;
 Thy awful music's note
 Upon his spirit smote
 Subduing stronger passions of the mind,
 Until, like prisoners, suffering there confined,
 Those gentler melodies
 Within his bosom there,
 Ascended with thy voice to heav'n
 In one triumphant prayer.

Then louder, ye organ of America,
 Still louder sound thy anthems on the sky;
 And thou, Niagara, e'er thy spirit die,
 Wake!—wake the courts of Heaven with thy lay,
 Till the dear angels learn like thee to pray
 For all the world to-day;

Yet louder, ye organ of America,
Still louder, let thy Spirit from those keys,—
Those smoothly polished keys,
Those swift and heavy keys,—
Strike, with inspiring fingers,
Heaven-and-earth's triumphant harmonies.

FAIRIES OF THE FROST

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When the Frost-spirit, with her icy wand,
Strikes the cold Northwind, bringing frost and snow,
She sends her Fairies through the frozen land
To deck with sculpture all the world below;
Soon every bank, so lately green with grass,
Like streets of marble to the margin lies,
And here and there, wherever one may pass,
Frail, fairy structures magic-like arise;
The slender willows, bow'd in artless grief,
Appear in white, as pledge of Winter's care,
And every idle reed and clinging leaf
Have spirits, full as bright, beside them there;
While pine and hemlock, shorn of all their green,
Stand out like sculptur'd Druids of the wood;
And the small beeches, hovering between,
Seem children of some banish'd brotherhood;
The broken stumps become as kingly chairs,
The fallen logs, great pillars, round and white,
And the dead branches, Oriental stairs
That lead to rooms all glittering with light;
Each mossy knoll becomes a marble mound,
Th' unlettered stones, all artless works of art,
And e'en the brooklets in the forest round
Are set with diamonds dear to Nature's heart.

THE RIVERMEN.

When, in the days gone by, down the Delaware
The high Spring-floods, with an angry roar
Were running like breakers far up the shore,
Then the riverman by his chimney-seat
Would feel his stout heart strangely beat—
So 'twas ho! for the raft and the river again,
The raft and the river for rivermen.

When the creeks flow'd wild round the Delaware,
And the sky showed blue through the sharp Spring air,
And the rafts were waiting the raftmen there,
Then these rivermen were ill-content
Until their backs to the oars were bent—
So 'twas ho! for the raft and the river again,
The raft and the river for rivermen.

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When, in days gone by, down the Delaware
Those great rafts tethered against the shore,
Were loosed like chafing steeds once more,
Then out of the valleys, and off the hills
The raftmen came flocking with school-boy wills—
And 'twas ho! for the raft and the river again,
The raft and the river for rivermen.

THE SCHOOL OF LIFE

Life is a school, and all that tread the earth
Are pupils in it. Its lessons all should learn,
And few there be who escape them—and they are fools.
At birth this school begins, at death it ends,

And many terms there be,—and faithful teachers
Not a few. Necessity is one;
For e'en the babe when first it feels the cool
And earthly air, and sees the light of day,
Shrinks from their touch, and cries aloud—herewith
It doth begin to learn the alphabet
Of life. Then hunger comes; and so to ease
Itself the babe doth learn to love the things
That give it life. Thus hour by hour, and day
By day it gathers knowledge at the school
But knows it not—even as wiser men,
Of knowledge full, know scarcely what they do.

And months pass by—the babe becomes a child,
Eager to learn, to imitate, to know,
Lisping the lessons of a higher grade,
Repeating words of wisdom, gems of truth
That others think the little thing should know;
Until at length in childish innocence
It leaves the kindergarten of the world,
And knocks upon the door of adult life,
And enters there, flushed with the lulling sense
Of something new. The playthings are forgot;
The little bells no longer please the ear,
The little books no longer feed the mind,
The little seats no longer suit the child,
The little friends no longer stir the soul,
For it hath learned the alphabet of life,
And put aside the primer once for all.
There is a longing now for deeper life
That fills the heart to overflow—there is
A tumult now within the swollen veins,
When, for the first, they feel a larger life
In unison close beating to its own—
There is a hatred of authority
And of restraint—a satisfaction now
As of a soul enamoured with itself,
A soul insolvent on the rising tide
Of pure existence, with such a stubbornness
As mocks advice and takes a happy pace,
Securer of its own security.

And like the waters of a swollen stream,
That leaves its early channels far behind,
Youth ventures into unknown paths, full fed
By surging hopes, by sudden, deep desires,
By wild ambitions and a thousand things,
Unnamed and nameless—rivulets of life
That ever empty in this stirring stream.
Now would the student leave his school, and play
Among the hills, or in the valley's shade,—
Now would the scholar chafe at books
And knowledge and authority—rough banks
That, like a dyke, hold in life's mighty stream
Until the floods of Springtime can abate,
And in a clearer, safer channel course again.

So, with life's lessons still unlearned
Full many a scholar e'en would graduate
With highest honors, and in his pride
And surety of knowledge be a god
To give advice to those who should advise;
Forth full of wisdom would he quickly go,
And even issue take with all the world,
But when this truant-fever runs its course,
This hey-day of existence has its turn,
Back to the school the skulking scholar comes,
Like a whipped cur, and willing to be taught
By those same teachers he so lately spurn'd,
And left for larger things.

For manhood now
Is here—the errors and the follies, everyone,
By the wise student surely now are seen,
And in the book of life he reads with ready eye
The rules and lessons, and considers well

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His bold instructors,—Want,—Adversity,—
And Disappointment, with her heavy hand;
The whip of Scorn, and Sorrow's bitter book,
And Sickness' long and tedious term,
And all the various teachers of the school.
And if perchance these lessons be forgot,
These, his instructors, will rehearse him well,
Lest he forget in later life these things,
And be a dullard in the school of schools,
A freshman wise in his own foolishness.

So manhood comes—and so it surely goes,
From grade to grade and term to term,
With all the questions and perplexing rules,
And devious methods of the Master-mind,
Who holds the key to all the questionings,
Yet leaves the student to himself alone,
Half puzzled by the figures on the dial
That tell the hour when he shall graduate
Above earth's petty problems, and shall hold
A clearance to that life which is to come,
And whereunto he graduates, perchance,
A better man.

A better man—if not,
So shall he go again in that same grade
Where like a laggard half-asleep in school,
He wakes to find himself a scholar still,
With all the vexing problems yet unsolved,
Which, in his idleness and lust of life,
Were left until the morrow, and the sun
To usher in another dreamless day.
So manhood comes—and so it surely goes,
Till those who here have studied to become
Proficient in the lessons of this life,
Shall be excused from school, and left to play
By running brooks and hills that shout for joy,
And living waters wild in their delight.

So is it meet that all should labor now
To learn these lessons well, so, when the day
Of graduation comes, a Voice will say:—
Well-done; perfect in life, perfect in death;
Receive thy rich reward, for thou hast found—
Perfection is the only key to Heaven.

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A VISIT FROM THE CRICKET

I.

Thou shrill-voiced cricket there
In yonder corner,
Thou remindest me
Of joys departed, and of fair
And fallen summer. O little mourner,
Cease thy pensive fluting,
Lest a flood of melancholy,
Sad as thine,
That to my heart is suiting,
Encompass me—it is unholy
Thus to pine
For fallen joys or days departed,
E'en though thou art so broken-hearted,
For moments are divine.

II.

Silent art thou?—thanks to thee,
O little cricket
Underneath my chair;
Thanks to thee—yet would I see
Thy shadow less—out to yon thicket!

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There let thy dull repining
Drive where the winds are driven,
Nor deign to bring
Thy sorrows back—let such be given
To those in shades reclining
Who love to sing,
With thee, of dear departed Summer,
And hear again her sad funereal drummer,
Thou little, mournful thing.

III.

One moment stay—why comest thou
With doleful ditty
Unbidden to my room;
Wee, dusky mourner, do not go,
But say—what is it claims thy pity,
And sets thee telling, telling
Such a solemn story
So to me,
As if there knelling, knelling
Of some departed glory
Dear to thee?
O sad musician, put aside thy fiddle,
And admit life is a riddle,
And Heaven holds the key.

IV.

Thou mindest not; for hark!—again
Resounds thy racket
Shriller than before;
Singst thou this sad strain
As if befitting to thy ebon jacket,
With carvings curious,
And a color glossy,
Like old wine—
Tiny thing, be not so furious
And unneedful noisy;
Cease to pine
For something fled—for joys or hopes departed,
Or thou wilt make the angels broken-hearted,
O mourner most divine.

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IN PRAISE OF INEZ.

Sweet Inez, would that I might pledge
My thoughts to thee with line on line,
And prove, if tender words can prove,
That all my tender thoughts are thine.

Would that my feeble pen might pluck
From the green fields of poetry,
Some flower, sweet girl, wherewith to deck
Thy name so near, so dear to me.

Would that my hand might gather here
From the sweet fields of tender thought,
Some blossom, fragrant as the rose,
Some lily, lovely as I ought.

But why should I commit a sin
By wishing any flower for thee;
Thou art more beautiful, I know,
Than all the flowers of poetry.

What shall I then with thee compare,
To make a true comparison—
The dawning day, the dying light,
The rising or the setting sun?

At morn I see the early sun

Appear with glory in her eye,
 But looking there, I think of thee,
 And thinking of thee, for thee sigh.

At noon I see that fervid orb
 Proclaim the sultry hour of day,
 But looking there, I think of thee,
 And thinking of thee, turn away.

At length I see that same bright sun
 Descend below the western blue,
 Yet looking there, I think of thee,
 And thinking of thee love thee, too.

Fade then, ye flowers of the field,
 And sink, ye dying beams of light,
 But let, O let my Inez be
 Forever present to my sight.

THE CRIME OF CHRISTMASTIME.

I.

Two thousand years!—two thousand years
 Since Mary, with a mother's fears,
 Brought forth for all humanities
 The Christian of the centuries;
 And now men turn from toil away
 To celebrate his natal day
 By feasting happy hours away
 And giving gifts with lavish hand,
 Throughout the length of every land;—
 A noble custom nobly born
 In Bethlehem one holy morn,
 But intermingling with the good,
 A pagan custom long has stood,
 As you and I and all may see—
 This war against the greenwood tree,
 This robbing of posterity,—
 Until the burden of my rhyme
 Is of this crime of Christmastime.

II.

[Pg 24]

The skies are white with soft moonlight;
 In Christian lands the lamps burn bright,
 In splendor gleaming from the walls
 Of parlors and of festive halls;
 Or yet, amid some snow-white choir,
 Sweet maidens sing the world's desire,
 Till, answering in low refrain,
 The people all repeat the strain
 Of "peace on earth, to men good-will,"
 When sudden all the hall is still.

Then tender music, soft and low,
 Heavenward seems to float and flow,
 But—mid these glittering lights, O see
 The stately form of greenwood tree!
 Whose graceful arms are drooping wide
 As grieving this fair Christmastide.

III.

The hills are white with lovely light,
 And everywhere the stars burn bright
 In splendor gleaming on the wood,
 Where once, in loyal familyhood,
 The evergreens together stood,
 But—now no vespers, sweet or low,
 In happy measures upward flow,
 For there—by Heaven's lights, O see

The absence of the greenwood tree!
Whose noble form once waiving wide,
This melancholy waste did hide.

IV.

Yet here and there a lonely tree
Still sounds a mournful melody,
And answering, in low refrain,
The winds repeat the solemn strain,
Until the hills conscious of harm,
Awaken in a wild alarm,
Until, with trumpets to the sky,
They echo up to Heaven the cry:—
Ye Forests, rouse—shake off thy shroud,
And sound a protest, long and loud;
Ye Mountains, speak, and Heaven, chide
This carelessness of Christmastide—
And Man, thou prodigal of Time,
Bestir thyself—and heed my rhyme,
And curb this crime of Christmastime.

[Pg 25]

THE MINER.

Beyond the beams of brightening day
A lonely miner, moving slow
Along a darkly winding way,
Is daily seen to go,
Where shines no sun or cheerful ray
To make those gloomy caverns gay.

For there no glorious morning light
Is burning in a cloudless sky
And there no banners flaming bright,
Are lifted heaven-high,
But that lone miner, far from sight,
Treads boundless realms of boundless night.

There neither brook nor lovely lawn
Allures the miner's weary eye,
For, having caught one glimpse of dawn,
With many an anxious sigh,
Those precious lights are left in pawn
To be by fainter hearts withdrawn.

Nor tender leaf nor fragrant flower
Dare penetrate that fearful gloom,
Where, low beneath a crumbling tower,
Or dark, resounding room,
Yon miner, in some evil hour,
A ruined prisoner may cower.

[Pg 26]

Yet, while the day is speeding on,
Far from those skies that shine so clear,
Far from the glory of the sun
And happy birds that cheer—
Hark!—through those echoing caves, anon
The hammer's merry monotone.

There, far from every happy sound
Of blithesome bird or cheerful song,
In yonder solitudes profound,
The miner, all day long,
Hears his own music echo round
Those deep-voiced caverns underground.

There, in that gloom which doth affright
Faint-hearted, sky-enamoured men,
The miner, with his little light,
Hews out a hollow den,
And seems to find some keen delight
Where others see but noisesome night.

Thus many a heart, along life's way,
Must labor where no cheerful sun
Of golden hopes or pleasures gay,
Shines till the day is done,
For where the deepest shadows play
The purest hearts are led astray.

Yet some, unseen by careless Fate,
Know naught of gloom or sorrow here.
But happily, with hearts elate,
They walk a charmed sphere,
And lightly laugh, or lightly prate
Of lonely souls left desolate.

So are we miners, great and small,
By sunny slope or lower gloom,
And day by day we hear a call
As from the distant tomb,
But, when the evening shadows fall,
The lights of home will gleam for all.

LOVE OF COUNTRY.

[Pg 27]

Love of country is the life of war;
Love not your country then,
If loving it should lead you into war;
Oh do not be deceived—Love is broader,—
Love is broader than a wheatfield,
Love is broader than a landscape;
Do not be misled—love the world;
Begin at home—love your birthplace,
Then your county, then your state,
Then your country, then the countries
Of your brothers and sisters, who look
So much like you—like hands, like feet,
Like ears, like eyes, like lips; like sorrows,
Like hopes, like joys; like body, mind
And spirit, for the spirit of one man
Differeth not from the spirit of another,
Or high or low, or rich or poor, being
The same yesterday, to-day and forever.

Love of country is the life of war;
Love not your country then,
If loving it should lead you into war—
Should lead you into hatred
Of your neighbor's country—lead you
To strike down even unto death
Your brother who so resembles you,
Made in your image, and in the likeness
Of the living God.

THE SINKING OF THE TITANIC

Titanic!—rightly named, sir"—says the captain of the ship,
"And the safest of all vessels—now mark her maiden trip,"
And all think as the captain thinks—all her two thousand souls
As steadily out o'er the sea the stately vessel rolls.

[Pg 28]

For she is shod with iron and her frame is built of oak,
And stout hearts man the vessel, wherefore the captain spoke;
And with naught for pleasure lacking, so stately and so fair,
She seems a floating palace—fit for angels living there.
So "farewell," says merry England, "farewell" says each green isle,
"And blessings for this noble ship on her initial trial,
And praise be to her makers, and good-will to her crew,
And safety to her passengers"—take this as our adieu.

O there were pleasant partings as the vessel sail'd away,

And there was joy in every heart that pleasant April day,
And there were happy thoughts of home—of meeting kith and kin,
For the stately vessel soon would be her harbor safe within.

And so blue the sky above them and so blue the wave beneath,
That all,—all thought of living and no one thought of death,
As, hour by hour, the vessel left England far behind,
And, hour by hour, the ship sped on as speeds an ocean wind.

And when night came, with fond good-nights the floating city slept,
Yet ever o'er the rolling waves the mighty vessel swept,
And no one thought of danger—until with thunderous roar,
The great ship struck the rock-like ice, and shook from floor to floor.

Then there was breaking timbers, and bulging plates of steel,
And noise of great commotion along that vessel's keel—
Then there were cries of anguish, and curses from rough men,
And earnest prayers for safety—O prayers for safety then.

For women wept in terror, and stout men drop'd a tear,
And the shouting and the tumult was maddening to hear,
Yet there amidst that seething the life-boats, one by one,
Were set adrift at midnight—where cold sea-rivers run.

[Pg 29]

Then, on that fated vessel, the thousand waited there
In hope some sea-born sister would snatch them from despair,
But no ship came to aid her, and, in the dead of night,
The noble ship Titanic sank suddenly from sight.

O midway in old ocean, in her darkest, deepest gloom,
A thousand brave hearts bravely went down to meet their doom,—
And what a tragic picture!—Oh, what a solemn sight
Upon that fated vessel with the stars still shining bright!

Then there was time for thinking—O time enough to spare,
And there was time for cursing and time enough for pray'r,—
Time,—time for retrospection, and time enough to die,
Time, time for life's great tragedy—and time to reason why.

That was the greatest battle that ever yet was fought;
That was the greatest picture on any canvas wrought;
That was the greatest lesson that mortal man can teach;
That was the greatest sermon that priests of earth can preach.

Yet no one fought that battle with saber or with gun,
And no one saw that picture, save those brave hearts alone,
And no one read that lesson there written in the dark,
And no one heard that sermon that went straight to its mark.

Nor shall we know their story, the saddest of the sea,
Or shall we learn the sequel, the sorrow yet to be,
But long shall we remember how brave men bravely died
For some poor, lowly woman with a baby at her side.

And when the world gets scorning the greatest of the great,
When poverty sits cursing the man of large estate,
O then let men remember, how, in that awful hour,
The wealth of all the world was powerless in its power.

WAR AND PEACE.

[Pg 30]

War is hell!—war is hell!—
This is what the war-men yell
Yet they love to be in hell,
Love to hear the iron hail
Strike, till even strong men quail;
Love the dying soldier's knell,
Ringing shot and shrieking shell,
Love to hear the battle-cry,
Love to see men fight and die
With the struggle in their eye—
War is hell—war is hell,—
This is what the war-men yell.

War is wrong—war is wrong;
This the burden of my song:
War is wrong—war is wrong—
Sound the pean, human tongue;
Let the message far be flung—
Sound it, sound it heaven-high,
Sound it to the starry sky,
And Heaven, repeat the echoing,
Till all the earth of peace shall sing.

Peace loves day, but war loves night;
Peace loves calmness, war—to fight
In the wrong or in the right;
Peace the hungry man gives bread,
War would give a stone instead;
Peace is honest—not so war,
Crying—any way is fair;
Peace loves life—War loves the dead
With a halo overhead;
Peace pleads justice—War cries might
In the wrong or in the right;
Peace pleads—love your fellow-man,
War cries—kill him if you can;
Peace no evil thing would slight,
Yet while daring dares not fight,
Knowing might makes nothing right;
Peace means liberty and life,
War means enmity and strife;
Peace means plenty, peace means power,
War means—hell, and would devour
All who do not trust its power;
Peace means joy and love tomorrow,
War means hatred, death and sorrow;
Peace says—Bless you—men are brothers,
War says—Damn you, and all others.

[Pg 31]

War is hell, war is hell!—
This is what the war-men yell;
War is wrong, war is wrong—
This the burden of my song;
War is wrong, war is wrong,
There never was a just one,
 Never;
There never was a just one,
 Never.
True as two from two leaves none,
True as days are never done,
True as rivers downward run,
True as heaven holds the sun,—
War is wrong, war is wrong,
There never was a just one,
 Never;
There never was a just one,
 Never—
Sound the message, human tongue,
Sound it, sound it heaven-high,
Sound it to the starry sky,
And Heaven, repeat the echoing
Till all the earth of peace shall sing.

PEACE AND WAR.

Blest is that man who first cries peace,
But curst is he who first cries war,
For war is murder. It must cease
Forever and from everywhere.

TO ANDREW CARNEGIE.

[Pg 32]

philanthropist, far-sighted millionaire,
Lover of prose and friend of poetry,



What needs my pen in furtherance declare
 Thou art also a friend of liberty,—
 Thou art, indeed, a very Prince of Peace,
 Who, conscious of the uselessness of war,
 Believest man's red carnage soon should cease,
 And nations now for nobler things prepare:
 What needs my pen in furtherance recite
 Thy kindly interest in the weal of man—
 Yet, lacking need, I nothing lose to write,
 But rather gain in praising as I can,
 For, if thy wealth the world sweet peace may give,
 Perhaps my lines in praise of peace may live.

Press of



Munn's Review

Transcriber's notes:

The index entries for "The Miner" and "Love of Country" have been moved from after "The Sinking of the Titanic".

In "The Miner" a stanza break was inserted before the line "Nor tender leaf nor fragrant flower".

The following is a list of other changes made to the original. The first line is the original line, the second the corrected one.

And prohesy too plainly the unseen;
 And prophesy too plainly the unseen;

As mocks advce and takes a happy pace,
 As mocks advice and takes a happy pace,

These, his instructors, will reherse him well,
 These, his instructors, will rehearse him well,

Ringing shot and shreiking shell,
 Ringing shot and shrieking shell,

Thou are also a friend of liberty,—
 Thou art also a friend of liberty,—

Believeth man's red carnage soon should cease,
Believest man's red carnage soon should cease,

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