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Title: Katydid's Poems

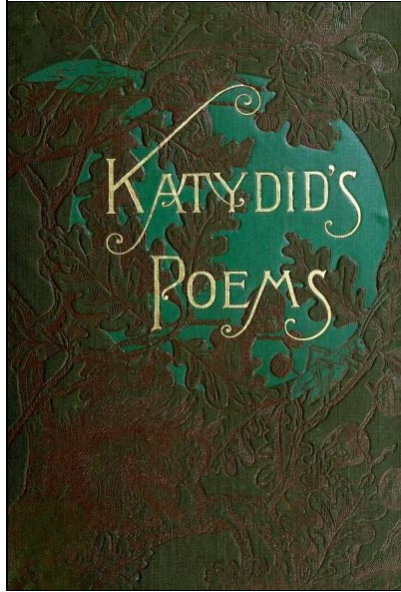
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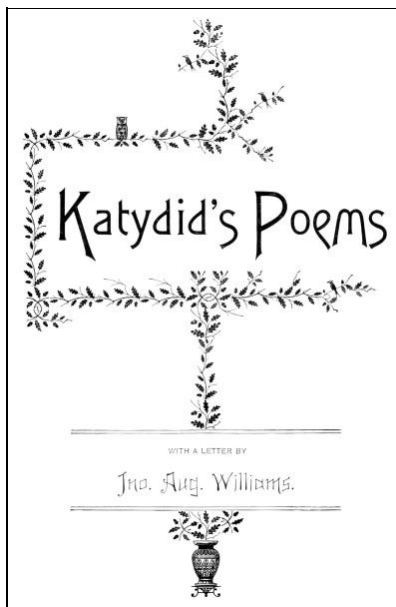
*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK KATYDID'S POEMS ***



Katydid's Poem



Katydid.



Katydid's Poems

WITH A LETTER BY
Jno. Aug. Williams.

ENTERED ACCORDING TO ACT OF CONGRESS, IN THE YEAR 1887, BY
MRS. J. I. MCKINNEY ("KATYDID")
IN THE OFFICE OF THE LIBRARIAN AT WASHINGTON.

PRINTED BY THE COURIER-JOURNAL JOB PRINTING COMPANY.

Dedicated

Dedicated
TO
J. I. MCKINNEY.

To him whose every word is one of praise,
Who loves to linger where my thoughts have been,
And who delights in all my rhyming ways,
I offer first these efforts of my pen.

LETTER TO KATYDID.

LETTER TO KATYDID.

DEAR KATYDID:

I am more pleased with your lines than when I first read them; they are intensely womanly, natural, musical and sweet—they are absolutely free from affectation, only the restraint of rhyme and measure seem to deprive your muse of perfect freedom and grace. There is also a delicacy of thought and fancy, and of purity of sentiment that pervades the whole like the sweetest perfume.

No one can listen to your "Chirpings" and feel like touching the bough from which you sing with a rude, critical hand; he would rather listen through the live-long night to the end of your song.

I remember well your first attempt at rhyme while a girl here at school; even then, there was a pleasing promise of a beautiful and useful pen; and I am glad that you have found time and opportunity to improve your early gift. I am glad, too, that you have been persuaded to give some of your sweet little poems to the press; the tender, the true, and the pure of heart will read them with delight.

Affectionately your friend,
Jno. Aug. Williams

DAUGHTER'S COLLEGE,
Harrodsburg, Ky.



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To a Katydid.

To a Katydid.

LITTLE friend among the tree-tops,
 Chanting low your vesper hymns,
 Never tiring,
 Me inspiring,
 Seated 'neath the swaying limbs,
 Do you know your plaintive calling,
 When the summer dew is falling,
 Echoes sweeter through my brain
 Than any soft, harmonic strain?

Others call you an intruder,
 Say discordant notes you know;
 Or that sadness,
 More than gladness,
 From your little heart doth flow;
 And that you awake from sleeping
 Thoughts in quiet they were keeping,
 Faithless love, or ill-laid schemes,
 Hopes unanchored—broken dreams.

No such phantoms to my vision
 Doth your lullaby impart,
 But sweet faces,
 No tear traces,
 Smile as joyous in my heart,
 As when first at mother's knee
 Learned I your sweet mystery.
 I defend you with my praises,
 For your song my soul upraises.

Do you wonder that at twilight
 Always by my cottage door
 I am seated?
 You've repeated
 Oft'ner still those tunes of yore;
 And I love them, love your scanning
 And your noisy tree-top planning;
 Though you struggle with a rhyme,
 In due season comes the chime.

Oft I fancy when your neighbors,
 In some secret thicket hid,
 Are debating,
 Underrating
 What that little maiden did,
 That above their clam'rous singing
 I can hear your accents ringing,
 Like a voice that must defend
 From abuse some time-loved friend.

Though the nightingale and swallow
 Through the poet's measures sing,
 No reflection
 Of dejection
 Petrifies or palls your wing.
 In the calm and holy moonlight,
 On and on with hours of midnight,
 In the darkness, in the rain,
 Still you whisper your refrain.

Dream I not of fame or fortune,
 Only this I inward crave,
 Sweet assurance,
 Long endurance,
 Of a love beyond the grave.
 Should my songs die out and perish,
 You'll my name repeat and cherish;
 Though all trace is lost of me,
 Still you'll call from tree to tree,

KATYDID.

A Day-Dream

A Day-Dream.

I'M looking in a mirror, Belle,
 The mirror of our past;

And many a bright reflection, Belle,
Into its depth is cast;
Reflections that are calm and clear,
And O! to us so very dear.

I see a village—old Kirksville—
Its long and narrow street,
And as it climbs upon the hill,
How many friends I meet!
And, Belle, your face smiles out to me—
The sweetest face that I can see.

There is my home hid 'mong the trees
Back of the village street,
A welcome rushes on the breeze,
And restless grow my feet;
My heart leaps forward, and I view
The dearest spot I ever knew.

Home! home again! and, children, we
Skip through the pastures green;
Your eyes of blue I plainly see—
"The sweetest ever seen;"
And on your cheek the rosy tinge;
And curls of gold your temples fringe.

And see the dogs we used to pet;
Down through the lawn they run;
Not many passing by, forget
Their bark, or fail to shun
Old Carlo of the greyhound race,
And Lion with his vicious face.

Yet us they follow to the hedge,
Where hours with them we've played;
And to the pond, along whose edge,
Barefooted, we would wade.
Decorum could not cramp the brain,
And Love unlocked his golden chain.

We climb upon my father's barn,
Hide in the straw and hay;
We watch aunt "Silvy" spinning yarn
In the old-fashioned way.
She tells us tales by candle light,
That fill our hearts with wild delight.

A shadow falls; I lose your face;
Lost is the fairy-tale;
And just before my eyes I trace
A kind of airy veil;
A network that is strangely planned,
Held by the Present's cunning hand.

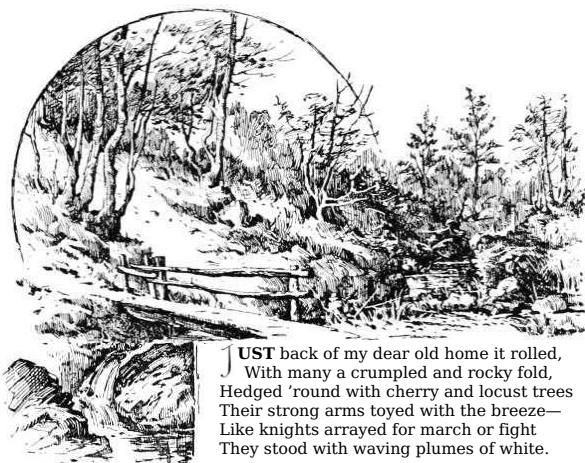
The shadow now has passed away;
I glance the meshes through,
And find strange children there at play
Beside your knee; one, two—
The little faces both foretell
A happy future for you, Belle.

Long, long I gaze. That pretty view
Dissolves away in air,
And still I'm looking, Belle, for you,
And still I'm standing there;
I strive your image to retrace—
All, all has vanished but my face.

And closing 'round me as before,
I see a figured wall,
A carpet blue upon the floor,
And sunlight over all.
Bewildered, yet entranced I seem,
And 'waken from a sweet day-dream.

The Old Ravine.

The Old Ravine.



JUST back of my dear old home it rolled,
With many a crumpled and rocky fold,
Hedged 'round with cherry and locust trees
Their strong arms toyed with the breeze—
Like knights arrayed for march or fight
They stood with waving plumes of white.

And O! that valley's inmost room
Was a mass of ivy and violet bloom;
The larkspur shook from its purple crest
A dew-drop down on the lily's breast;
The blue-bell dozed on the rivulet's brink,
And the myrtle leaned o'er the edge to drink.

Even now, as I write, through the open door
I catch a sound of the cataract's roar,
And see the girls just out from school
Knee-deep in the ravine's limpid pool;
And the boys, ah, me! how plain can I see
Them stealing the bark from the slippery tree.

The door slams back, it is scarce apart;
With steady eye and fluttering heart,
I watch the girls up the valley turn,
In search of peppermint and fern;
And the boys are waving their caps to me,
As they stand in that ragged and torn old tree.

In some wild way, I never knew how,
I climbed to the swing on that elm tree's bough;
Was twitt'ring a song as I used to do,
And counting the clouds in the sky's soft blue,
When the girls came out from the valley's shade,
And earth into heaven seemed then to fade.

'Twas the Eden of old, and I was a child
(I have thought of it since and often have smiled);
Sitting there in the swing, with the girls at my feet,
And the boys overhead—my joy was complete;
What a mockery, then, to awaken and part
With the happy illusion—how hollow my heart!

Some Day You'll Wish for Me.

FOR ——— ———

Some Day You'll Wish for Me.

FOR — — —

☞ **SOME** day, my darling, when the rose has died,
That on your pathway throws its petals sweet,
When the sharp thorn is springing near your side
And nettles pierce the mould beneath your feet,
You'll wish for me.

Some day, my darling, when the crystal cup
Of Beauty shattered lies, and spilled its wine;
When Pleasure's urn denies your lips one sup,
And you drink deep of Disappointment's brine,
You'll wish for me.

Some day the wreath will wilt upon your head;
You'll smell the bud and find a worm within.
Some day, my darling, when your friends have fled,
And strangers mock your frequent tears, ah! then
You'll wish for me.

Some day, my darling, when Death's dews fall cold
Upon your brow, you'll gladly let me come—
When dreams present the shroud that must enfold
Your limbs, and your sweet lips grow chill and dumb,
You'll wish for me.

You'll long for him whose hands were oft denied
To pluck a rose lest they the bush pollute—
Yet he would come and stand a slave aside.
To grasp the bramble and the thorn uproot,
If you but wished for him.

He'd kiss your limbs the hidden briar had torn,
And bathe the wounds with Pity's saddest tear;
He'd close your eyes that ne'er till death had worn
For him one look of love, and at your bier
He'd kneel and pray

For strength to watch you hidden from his sight,
For strength to turn aside and leave you there
Clasped in the arms of everlasting night;
And yet, my darling, not as great despair
He'd feel than now.

To Hallie.

WRITTEN FOR ———

To Hallie.
WRITTEN FOR — — —

AD and cheerless stands the homestead
In its grandeur as of old;
'Tis a casket—lost, the jewel;
'Tis a mine without its gold.

Once a sunbeam at the doorway
Gilded room and gladdened hall;
Making life a golden summer,
Full of joy for each and all.

But the sunshine that has vanished
Ne'er can brighten o'er us more,
Though I bow in meek submission
Yet my heart is sad and sore.

I have lost my life's sweet treasure,
Earth holds nothing dear for me;
"Upward, onward," be my motto,
Onward, upward, still to thee.

Hallie! be my guarding angel,
Teach my footsteps not to stray;
Spread your sainted wings above me,
Lead me in "the narrow way,"

So that you can come and meet me—
Waft me heavenward on your breast,
"Where the wicked cease from troubling,
And the weary are at rest."

I've Asked You to Forget Me.

I've Asked You to Forget Me.

I'VE asked you to forget me,
To let our happy past
Ne'er be recalled; for ah! it was
Too sweet, too bright! to last.

But yet you say that you're my friend,
And still as fond and true;
While I ne'er care to see thy face,
Or have one thought of you.

Then ne'er again recall those days
When roguish Cupid played
At twining garlands 'round our hearts
Only to wilt and fade;

For I have with a steady hand,
Not heeding Love's sweet art,
Unwound them from their resting place
And freed your faithless heart.

Little Blanche.

Little Blanche.

ATHER up the broken playthings,
Scattered on the nursery floor;
Blanche is gone!—her little fingers
Ne'er will fondle with them more.

Hide away the dolls, the dishes—
Precious treasures! O! so dear!
Lay aside the little dresses—
In each fold a mother's tear.

God hath given—God hath taken,
Though it rends the heart in twain,
He but sends his frowns upon us,
To give back his smiles again.

She hath gone to 'wait your coming,
Smiling where the angels stand;
Lingering there at heaven's gateway,
That she first may clasp your hand.



The Little Front Gate.

The Little Front Gate.

A WAY from the world and its bustle,
When the daylight grows pleasant and late;
In our own cosy cot, I am waiting
For the slam of the little front gate.

The birds at the doorway are singing,
The roses their beauty debate;
But I sit here alone, and I listen
For the slam of the little front gate.

Sometimes, ere the shadows of twilight
Send the roving bird home to its mate,
I list for a hurrying footstep,
And the slam of the little front gate.

O! you who are burdened with sorrow,
And believe that life is but fate,
Learn from me there is joy in waiting
For the slam of the little front gate.

Drifting.

Drifting.

SCOTTA, you are drifting from me,
O'er the billows of life's tide;
You and I have sailed together,
With our frail barks side by side.

You are drifting with the current,
But my feeble oar is light,
Too light to follow; and, in anguish,
I must watch you drift from sight.

Drifting, gliding, moving onward,
Tide and sky seem one deep blue;
All in vain my eyes are yearning,
You have drifted from my view.

But there's yet a broader current,
Where our meeting barks will land;
You and I still bound together,
Heart to heart, and hand to hand.

Looking Back.

Looking Back.

HE opened a little worn package,
Scarred yellow by Time's ruthless hand;
Disclosing a bundle of letters
Tied up with a pale ribbon band.

"These," she said, "are like leaves from a fernery,
Long pressed in a book with a flower;
And the memories wafted up from them,
Like perfume that follows a shower.

"With no wormwood or gall in the essence,
Few tares in life's garden were sown;
The clouds partly hiding the sunshine,
Some weeds with the blossoms have grown.

"But we loved"—here she held out a picture;
A tear-drop was dimming her eye,
As a cloud will o'ershadow the landscape,
Or shut out a star in the sky.

I took up a ring and a locket,
Set deep with a ruby and pearl;
The clasp was all tarnished and broken,
And tear-stained the face of the girl,

Whose eyes were awake in Hope's morning,
Love kindled their depths with his spark—
Even then, from the red velvet lining,
They glowed like a gem in the dark.

I turned to the sad little figure,
Round the package the faded cord tied;

Pressed my lips to her cheek—ah, how sadly
The roses had bloomed there and died.

Long we sat in the lingering twilight,
Looking back o'er the vanishing years;
She sobbed out her grief on my bosom,
And moistened my brow with her tears.

What comfort in words could I offer?
There was more in a soul-telling glance;
For each heart hath its season of springtime,
Each heart hath a buried romance.

Scotta.

Scotta.

I saw her last night in a vision
(How often she comes when I dream!)
Through the garden of Heaven she loitered,
Then stood by a clear, placid stream.

And out of the heart of the river
A bunch of white lilies she drew,
I scarce could discern from the blossoms
Her fingers, so waxen their hue.

But her face wore the same quiet features,
And her smile was enhancing the light
That fell on this friend of my bosom,
This angel robed softly in white.

I longed to reach upward and touch her,
To ask why the flowers she twined;
Wondered often for whom was the garland,
And the crown with the lily buds lined.

So I cried and my voice soared onward
Farther than sight could extend—
"For whom are you weaving this chaplet?
Speak, Scotta! sweet spirit and friend."

"O! tell me just why from the portals
Of Heaven you've wandered away,
And sit here alone by the river
Wreathing these lilies to-day."

Her lips parted, as if for an answer—
Then a cluster of cherubim, came—
They hovered about this sweet seraph,
And whispered in concert *a name*.

It resounded along Heaven's archway,
But soft on my ear that word fell,
Soft as her accents of friendship,
Soft as a Sabbath eve bell.

And the dewdrops and spray of the river
On the garlands to crystals had turned,
The crown she embedded with snow-drops,
One jewel there glittered and burned.

Its luster was brilliant and sunlike,
As burnished as those in the throne,
But the name that her own gentle fingers
Had carved there, ah! me, was—*my own*.

And what if Life's thorns pressed my temples
Or sorrow to midnight turns day,
I will press on alone through the darkness,
Believing her hand leads the way.

I will traverse the chill "Swamp of Cypress"
Where the "Rivers of Death" slowly wind;
For she'll beckon me over with garlands,
And the crown with the lily buds lined.

The Lover and Flower.

The Lover and Flower.

I found it, one day, in a pretty shade
Which a vine and a maple together made;
'Twas blooming away in a dress of white,
With eyes of a blue transparent light.
I knelt at its shrine,
And this heart of mine
Drank in the fragrance as one drinks wine.

Then I said, "Sweet flower, this cooling shade
With the summer weather will dim and fade,
There's a place in my heart—a cozy room—
Where you may nestle and grow and bloom."

Thus I wooed the flower,
In this shady bower,
And lovers we were that self-same hour.

I carried it home, I pruned it with care,
I gave it the sun and the morning air.
The honey bees came its dew to sip,
But I drove them away with pouting lip;
For I loved my flower,
And with jealous power
I banished the bees from our curtained bower.

A butterfly came on wings of lace,
And tried to fan my blossom's face;
But I brushed it away with cruel hands,
And tore from its wings the velvet bands;
Then I kissed my flower;
But a summer shower
Burst from the clouds with mesmeric power.

Then the pale little blossom heaved a sigh,
And opened a blue and timid eye
To thank the cloud as it did in the shade,
Which the vine and the maple together made;
But my heart would rebel;
I could not quell
Its raging fire—it seemed from hell.

I slammed the shutters with curses of doom;
I made it dark as a dungeon room,
Then I hurried away like a thief in the night;
But I strolled again in the warm sunlight,
And another flower
From Fashion's own bower
I culled, and nursed it only an hour.

It proved but a weed with a gaudy bloom,
And a poisonous odor filled my room.
So I turned once more to my wildwood flower,
That I locked in my heart that sinful hour,
When the angel of love,
To its mansion above,
Had fluttered away like a wounded dove.

How softly I turned the key in my heart;
One moment I faltered—the door swung apart—
A faint, sweet essence, like heliotrope bloom,
Was sick'ning my senses; I moved through the room
With a staggering tread,
With a brain reeling head,
And swooned there—a *murd'rer*—my flower was—*dead*.



My Cloud—To Scotta.

My Cloud—To Scotta.

THERE'S a cloud on my life's horizon
Of wonderful shape and hue,
Like the feathery down of a snow-drift
'Tis dimpled with changeful blue.
I gaze on its shadowy outline
And drink in the calm of the skies,
Till I fancy it floats out of heaven,
As an angel in disguise.

No slumbering storm in its bosom,
No hint of the lightning's glare,
Only a feast for the heart and soul
Is this treasure of the air;
For I know from its silvery edges,
And glimpses of hidden gold,
That a picture of rare tranquility
Its tender depths enfold.

Else whence is this mystic feeling
Of peace that's stealing o'er me?
Like the magic of summer moonlight
Enchanting a restless sea.
O! heavenly cloud! why are you
So calm? so angelic you seem,
My spirit escapes in its longing—
I am lost in a beautiful dream.

Up, up on the wings of a swallow
Piercing the heaven's deep blue,
O'er meadow and mount I am rising,
And floating, sweet spirit, to you;
Onward, in trance I am wafted,
Now into the cloudlet above;
And a face smiles out from its drapery,
And ah! 'tis a face that I love.

The Decision.

The Decision.

A dispute once arose in a bee-hive
As to which of the little brown bees
Could gather the sweetest nectar
From blossoms or budding trees.

The queen tried in vain to discover
Some method the riot to quell;
But a challenge for war had been sounded,
And threatened was each honey cell.

So she spoke in a voice most persuasive—
“He shall sit on my throne for an hour,
Who brings from the store-house of nature,
The juice of the sweetest-lipped flower.”

Away flew the brown little workers,
Away out of sight o'er the hill;
Then backward and forward they flitted,
The honey-cups eager to fill.

One famished the heart of a lily,
And drank from its milky bud;
One opened the vein of a rose leaf,
And licked up the crimson blood.

To a poppy-bed still one hurried,
On a downy cot he crept,
But all-day in the silken blankets,
Unconscious there he slept.

Another flew off to the meadow,
And punctured the daisy's cap;
A swarm had encompassed a fountain,
Where gurgled the sugar-tree sap.

A fourth and a fifth to a mansion
Had followed a bridal pair;
One strangled the bud on her bosom,
One mangled the wreath on her hair.

But the sixth one paused at a cottage,
Where a sick girl sleeping lay;
And there by the open window,
Blossomed a hyacinth spray.

A youth stood near in the shadows,
And watching the dreamer's face,
A tear rolled down from his eyelid
And fell on the hyacinth vase.

It was only the work of a moment
For a busy bee to do,
To flavor affections tear-drop
With the extract, “flower-dew.”

So he gathered this precious honey,
And, polishing up his sting,
He flitted out of the window,
With gold dust under his wing.

Such a night in the little bee-hive
Before was never known;
For the hyacinth's rich moist pollen
Had paved the way to the throne.



Autumn.

Autumn.

WHO is it that paints the woodlands
Like a gorgeous gown of gold;
Dropping, here and there, a ripple
Of vermilion in each fold?
Who is it that calls the robins
And the blackbirds into bands;
Pointing them with flaming fingers,
To the sunny, Southern lands?

What has scorched the tender blossoms?

In our yards they're dying now.
Do you know who kissed the apple
Till it reddened on the bough?
Why so mute the little streamlet?
Down the hill it used to leap;
Now I faintly hear it sobbing—
Sobbing out like one in sleep.

Leaden clouds lay on the heavens,
Like a burden on the heart;
And the winds together whisper,
Sad as loved ones ere they part.
Then anon a dreamy dullness
Hovers over sky and earth;
Ah! my soul reflects the sadness,
And I seek my friendly hearth.

You who love the Indian summer,
So renowned by pen and art,
Go, and revel in the gloaming,
While so sadly pants my heart.
But I can not watch the leaflets,
On the whirlwind as they ride,
For just so a hectic river
Bore my darling from my side.

A Sister's Love.

TO IDA.

A Sister's Love.

TO IDA.

HE knelt beside her brother's grave,
The day was near its close;
And where the cool, tall grasses wave,
She lay a fresh-cut rose.
Then, from a silver waiter near,
She drew a wreath of white,
Besprinkled with the twilight's tear,
O'ershaded with the night,
And placed them on the green-kept mound.
I watched her kneeling there,
Her face bent on the sacred ground,
In attitude of prayer;
And while a bird sang soft his hymn,
Down-looking from above,
We saw unveiled a picture dim—
A statue true of love.

In Memory of Fannie Johnson White.

In Memory of Fannie Johnson White.

IF I could blend into my verse
That soft and slumb'rous haze,
So faintly resting on the rose
Before the autumn days
Have chilled its heart, and numbed the leaves,
And drunk the precious dew,
Then could I melodize in song,
Her life so pure and true.

Or could I weave into this song
Her smile, so rich and rare,
That found its way to every heart,
And left its halo there—
Then earth would not seem desolate,
Or days be lone or long,
Since she would sweetly live again
In verse, and smile in song.

All this is vain! both pen and voice,
Too weak to speak her worth;
Though memory writes in words of gold,
Her beauteous deeds on earth.
Heaven claimed our flower—there we may bloom,
If we the watchword keep:
"Whatsoever thou shall sow,
That also thou shall reap."

The Heliotrope's Soliloquy.

TO MRS. T. R. WALTON.

The Heliotrope's Soliloquy. TO MRS. T. R. WALTON.

LET others bring from foreign shore
The glittering gem, the shining ore,
Rare trophies from the coral caves,
And hidden wealth of ocean waves,
To grace the bridal hall.

You floral queens! You roses white!
Bathed in the moonbeam's yellow light,
You'll smile in many a quaint design,
And help the banquet room to line—
But not the diadem.

My starry flowers—this purple heath—
She'll gather for that trailing wreath;
For my faint breath of rare perfume
Is only for the bridal room—
The bride—the bridal crown.

To watch with me her trembling sigh,
The golden pansy's modest eye
Shall only glance from out my bower,
With me proclaim the nuptial hour,
And seal the holy bond.

A Problem.

A Problem.

MY heart is perplexed, though I've tried to discover
An answer to solve what it is that I miss,
Though I've questioned myself more than twenty times over,
There seems no reply to a question like this.
My friends meet me gladly with words kindly spoken,
Salutations of praises and sometimes a kiss,
And looks sent along with a sweet flower token.
I find in my room—there is something I miss.

The blaze up the chimney this evening is talking,
The wind and the shutter hum sad an old tune,
A cloud o'er the heavens is leisurely walking,
A few early snowflakes are vexing the moon.
Pale Luna! your countenance seemeth too sober,
But why should I murmur or wonder at this?
The flame of the woodland died out with October,
The birds, too, are gone—there is something I miss.

I stir down the embers, and here in the firelight
I read the home paper a late train has brought,
And into the lives of the absent an insight
I take; do they ever of me have a thought?
How strange the words sound when no answer is given,
Ah! the tone of a friend would to-night insure bliss,
And the faces of loved ones would seem like a heaven
Of angels, alas! there is something I miss.

Will it always be thus? Is this one missing measure
To cripple my verse and sadden my song?
What a joy it is to regain a lost treasure
And in the heart's casket the setting make strong.
But I have grown weary these figures of trying;
I wonder if others make failures like this?
A smile? Ah, you solved then the truth underlying
This problem, and *know* what it is that I miss.

MADISONVILLE, Ky.



My Palace.

I built me a little palace,
Somewhere in the ether land,
Wherein my soul might revel
And rest at my command.
The spot, a royal summit,
I let my will select,
And Fancy came inspecting
With Thought, the architect.

We went down to the quarry
For the foundation rock,
And purchased hewn and polished
Love's marble corner block.
For years we toiled together,
And one day warm and sweet
I woke and found my palace
Before me and complete.

It was a gorgeous building—
The window lights of red
Came from the sunset's furnace,
Or Northern light instead.
Each peak, each tower and turret
The sunlight's love had won,
And straight there came a voice
From heaven and said "well done."

I planted a grove beyond it,
And hedged up the terraced yard,
And I dug a groove so a brooklet
Could play on the level sward.
I wanted a flower to cheer me,
And off on a breezy slope
I scattered the seed of roses
And the purple heliotrope.

I peopled the rooms with volumes
Of men with talents rare,
Who climbed upon Fame's spire
And waved their banners there.
I purchased the costliest paintings,
And swung them from the walls;
And music, like harps of heaven,
Resounded throughout the halls.

I gave a royal banquet,
The nuptial feast was spread,
And then, when all was ready,
There Love and I were wed.
But when the guests departed,
A rap came on the door,
And a gaunt figure faced me
I ne'er had seen before.

"My name," she said, "is Envy;
I wish to stop with you;
Your dwelling just completed,
The inmates must be few."
Her breath, like fumes of sulphur,
Into my face was blown,
And like a demon's curses
Was her departing tone.

The night came on, and fingers
Tapped on the beveled glass,
A face looked in the window
With eyes that shone like brass;
But Love beheld the visage,
And o'er the window drew
A shade that shut Suspicion
Forever from my view.

And then a pond'rous knocking
Bombarded at the door,
And like an earthquake's tremor
Upheaved the palace floor.
I glanced into the key-hole,
And, like the brand of Cain,
I saw on Slander's forehead
A dark and bloody stain.

I barred the palace entrance,
And turning in the hall
We faced another figure
More dreadful than them all;
He said: "My name is Ruin—
Unbidden here I stand,
To curse your happy homestead
And desolate your land.

"The lichen I have sprinkled
Upon your crumbling tower,
The ivy and the myrtle
Shall choke each blooming flower."
And then he smote the castle,
It trembled to its base,
And fell? No, no—I shouted
And laughed out in his face:

"You can not wreck our palace,
Love is the corner stone,
And we are master workmen,"
I said, in jocund tone.
He seized his trailing garments,
Departed with a groan,
And love and I together
Were once more left alone.

Next day as they debated
What course to next pursue,
I heard a sweet voice calling—
Love said the tone he knew.
The step, low as a mother's
Upon the nursery floor,
Was like advancing music
That halted at our door.

As when a fairy's castle
Yields to a magic key,
Our door swung on the hinges
The guest was—*Sympathy*.
"Come in, our worthy sister,"
I heard Love then repeat;
"For happiness without you
Could never be complete."

And while we sat together,
Weaving our garland sweet,
For many a bridal altar,
For many a burial sheet,
We heard another footstep;
And, like an angel sent,
There came and smiled upon us
The face we loved—*Content*.

The circle was completed—
My palace stands sublime
Still on that cloudland summit,
And laughs at threats of Time.
No curses thunder o'er us,
No heavy rains can fall;
For heaven's open window
Slants sunshine over all.

Death of Summer.

Death of Summer.

☞ **SUMMER'S** dying, close the shutters,
Make the light subdued and sweet,
The last accent that she utters
I'll record here at her feet.
See, the pulses quiver faintly,
But her heart, alas! 'tis still;
See how pale she lies and saintly,
Feel her hands, they're white and chill.

Close the eyes made sad from weeping,
Smooth the tangles from her head,
Leave her like an angel sleeping,
Friends are here to view the dead.
See, the rose a tear is dropping
As she leans above her face,
At the door the lily stopping,
Finds her handkerchief of lace.

There the two like sisters sorrow,
As above the corse they bend,
Planning for the sad to-morrow—
For the burial of a friend.
Then the daisy from the mountain,
That in mourning shawl was dressed,
Brought a snowdrop from the fountain,
Lay it on the summer's breast.

To the pillow crept the lilacs,
But the flowers at her throat
Were the heliotrope and smilax—
This was gained by casting vote—
And the jasmine sought her fingers,
While the fuschias kissed her hair;
At her lip a violet lingers
To deny them, who would dare?

Then the autumn's sunny treasure
Came the sturdy golden rod,

For the coffin took the measure,
For the grave removed the sod.
Long and mournful the procession
That I watched across the hill,
For to you I'll make confession,
Autumn doth my spirit kill.

Drives me from the scene of sadness
While on poison nature feeds;
Decks her out in robes of gladness
To conceal the heart that bleeds;
At the summer's grave there lingers
None more sad to drop a tear
Than the friend whose trembling fingers
Write this in memoriam here.

Spring and Summer.

Spring and Summer.

I heard a footstep on the hill,
The little brook began to trill,
I looked—a sweet and childlike face,
Reflected like a blooming vase,
Was smiling from the water clear,
With buttercups behind her ear.

A flock of swallows hove in sight,
On came the summer clad in white,
With sunshine falling from her hair
Upon her shoulders white and bare,
And pressing through the tangled grass,
A daisy rose to watch her pass.



Under the Snow.

Under the Snow.

WHAT have you hidden down under the snow,
So dear that you weep when the northern blasts blow?
Why your face pressed to the cold window pane,
Longing to mingle your tears with the rain—
Is there something down under the snow?

Is it only a blossom, a summer's delight,
That is freezing and dying this cold, bitter night?
That is only a fancy, the floweret is warm,
And the drift has enfolded it safe from the storm—
Is there something yet under the snow?

Something near to the heart down under the snow,
That has robbed the wan cheek of its once carmine glow,
That has stolen the beam of the eye—tears instead
Bespeak how in anguish the sore heart hath bled
For a little child under the snow.

For a dear little prattler that littered the floor,
And laughed as he tumbled your work o'er and o'er
For a little gold head that made sunny the room,
Now bright'ning the darkness and chill of the tomb,
That is dreaming out under the snow.

Only resting awhile in garments all white,
Away from the blackness and sin of to-night;
Away from the vice and the wrong of the street,
Not heeding the song of the rain or the sleet,
Still sleeping down under the snow.

How many a mother her darling would lay
In the last, narrow home—hide her treasure away—
If only to know its soul was at rest
With an innocent heart in an innocent breast,
Far, far down under the snow!

The Prettiest Girl in Town.

|| **A**VE you e'er seen her, this beautiful girl
With that classical head and complexion of pearl?
So pale and enchanting that sometimes I deem
Her a sweet revelation as when in a dream,
Through wild variations of trouble and fear,
You suddenly feel that an angel is near.
Now guess, if you can, without half of that frown,
For to me she's the prettiest girl in the town.

The poets all sing of these quaint Highland girls
With enchanting dimples and loose tangled curls;
Or they weave a love-tale from her budding lip's glow
While chasing the reindeer o'er mountains of snow;
This is only the skill of a well tintured pen,
Dipped in Romance's cup for the praises of men,
Who value this maid in the coarse homespun gown
Something less than the prettiest girl in the town.

You must all have watched the calm light of her eyes,
And ethereal figure with heavy drawn sighs;
Pondered often in secret of some magic gift
To win you this face—so like a snowdrift—
I would whisper a secret: On Valentine's day,
With Cupid commune in a sly, cunning way,
Else only in dreams she is thine; for a crown
Could not purchase the prettiest girl in the town.



I am Musing To-Night.

I am Musing To-Night.

I am musing to-night in the fire-light's glow,
And watching the pictures that come and go;
Like dissolving views on a magic screen
Is the witchery of this changing scene;
Though half I'm dreaming, though half awake,
I fear to move lest the spell I break,
Lest my fairy castles will break and fall,
And down will tumble each beautiful wall.

Thus still in a stupor I sit and gaze
At the glowing embers and wanton blaze;
I am smiling at Fancy; she tries in vain
To lure me along with the mad'ning train
That follow her footsteps—that to her cling,
As flowers that garland the steps of spring;
In moody silence I sit apart,
Till memory conquers my sullen heart.

Sweet Memory! sprite of my golden past!
Your tinselled veil o'er me is cast;
Subdued I yield like one enchained,
And yet my freedom is only feigned;
Back through the aisles of years that are gone,
A willing captive you lead me on,
Where I gleaned unbidden the joys of youth
While the world was blossoming with love and truth.

Before my heart could interpret a sigh,
Or a tear-drop's shadow creep into my eye,
Ere I'd missed from the circle of friendship's chain
The link once lost that we ne'er regain,
The future to me was a vast expanse,
Its depth I could solve at a single glance,
Knew not of the troubles that torture the soul
Hidden away in its sober fold.

Yet, to-night, as I dream in the gathering gloom,
Only friends that are dear softly enter my room,
Those who gladdened my life in its season of pain,
Like a gleam of the sunshine along with the rain;
These, *these* are the guests that encircle my hearth,
Who come gliding like spirits back to the earth.
What communion we hold only those ever know
Who sit musing alone in the fire-light's glow.

A Curl.

TO-NIGHT, as I turned back the pages
Of a book Time had fingered before,
And whose leaves held the odor of ages,
And the imprints of much usage wore,
A little brown curl I discovered,
That fell from the book to the floor.

Had I sinned? Heaven grant me its pardon.
Did a lover's sad tear the page spot?
Who pressed there that gem of the garden—
The sweet flower, "forget-me-not?"
It lay as if carved on a grave-stone,
And all of its sweetness forgot.

I held the curl up to the lamplight,
And watching the gleam of its gold,
There I heard with the rush of the midnight,
A sad little story it told;
But I promised the sacred old volume
Its secret I would not unfold.

But I would that the world knew its sorrow,
The story I must not reveal;
But go to your book case to-morrow,
And each to your own heart appeal;
And you'll know why the tattered old volume
The little curl tries to conceal.

Somebody's Face.

TO M. A. B.

Somebody's Face.

TO M. A. B.

THE blossoms are gone from the garden,
But 'tis not of them I would speak;
I want a sweet rose for my verses
Like one that's in somebody's cheek.
A red rose to kiss and to fondle,
Whose leaves will not wither or die—
To gladden each moment and banish
The winter thoughts out of the sky.

I want a low ripple of music
To flow through these lines of my choice,
Like a zephyr that moved through the summer,
Now dwelling in somebody's voice;
A song that will be full of fragrance
So sweet that its magic of words
Will bring back the balm of the June time,
Its memories glad, and the birds.

The skies are so sunless and dreary,
Unless I can find a deep blue
To mix with the clouds of November
They'll still wear the dark, sober hue;
But memory shows a bright heaven
Reflected in somebody's eye,
And, thinking to-day of its beauty,
The grey becomes blue in the sky.

My dear little friend of the summer,
Did you think in the meshes of song
Your sweet, rosy face would be tangled
By a memory cunning and strong?
That the eyes looking now on this pattern
Would find it so easy to trace?
And delight as I do in its beauty—
The beauty of somebody's face?

Good-bye, Maggie.

Good-bye, Maggie.

GOOD-BYE, Maggie, I must leave you,
Far away from you I roam,
Far away from friends and loved ones,
And your pretty cottage home.
O'er my soul a twilight gathers,
That is deep'ning into night,
But from out the shadowy distance
Shines a soft, familiar light.

It is memory's beacon lantern,
O'er it arching is your name;
Round it recollections cluster,

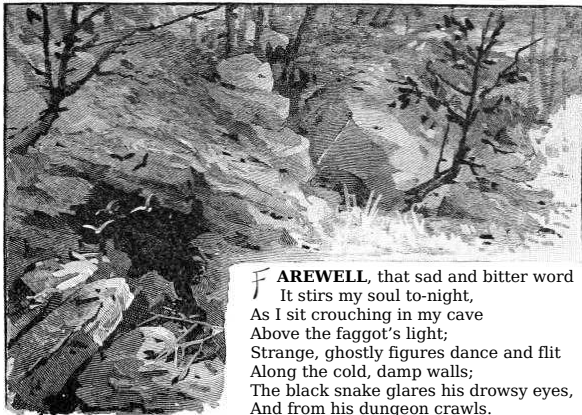
As the moth about the flame.
Though the future tries to cheat us,
Throwing many miles between,
Brighter burns the little taper
As the distance intervenes.

Good-bye, Maggie, will you miss me?
Absence conquers many a heart,
Plucks the roses from the garland,
Tears the evergreen apart;
Enters at the open lattice,
As a guest unbidden not,
Draws the curtain o'er the window,
Writes upon the door—"Forgot."

Oh! what mean these idle sayings,
And whence come these idle fears?
As I fold you to my bosom
On my face I feel your tears;
Tears—they are a silent language
That interpret best the heart,
And I love you for them, darling—
Good-bye, Maggie, we must part.

The Hermit's Farewell.

The Hermit's Farewell.



FAREWELL, that sad and bitter word
It stirs my soul to-night,
As I sit crouching in my cave
Above the faggot's light;
Strange, ghostly figures dance and flit
Along the cold, damp walls;
The black snake glares his drowsy eyes,
And from his dungeon crawls.

The toad croaks near my humble fire,
Is loth to hop away,
And knows that ne'er again for him
Will I in ambush lay;
The bats flit idly to and fro,
The mice romp through my cell,
And e'en the wind that moans without
Repeats that word—farewell.

I move, and think 'tis some weird dream
Then mutter "'tis my brain;"
For here around my throbbing brow
Seems clamped a heavy chain,
And like a prisoner doomed to die
To-morrow at the stake,
I count the hours as they fly,
And dread the morning's break.

For friends will come to lead me forth,
Through frescoed hall and room,
To homes where kindred ties await;
I fear the hermit's doom.
They've tempted me—I fain would rest
Here on the dungeon mould,
Than dream on beds where curtains swing
With sunbeams in each fold.

For beasts and birds and creeping things
Have owned me as their guest,
When man would turn me from his door
With cruel word or jest;
And as I served my scanty meal,
In supplicating lays,
The cricket and the katydid
Would join my evening praise.

God pitied me, my loneliness
He made a sweet content;
I found companions in the stars
That from the heavens bent;
His flowers were friends, the golden rod
Smiled in its yellow hood,
A sentinel about my door
The purple thistle stood.

But look! the morning's amber hue
Steals on the Easter skies,
Farewell! farewell! when Death has closed
These dim and longing eyes,
In peace to slumber here entombed,
Will be the boon I crave,
And those who spurned The Hermit's home
Shall shun The Hermit's grave.

A Window I Love.

A Window I Love.

HERE'S an old-fashioned building somewhere in the town
That looks on a noisy street,
And no matter how often I pass up and down,
At the window sweet faces I meet.
Little faces that lit'rally beam on the street,
Untutored in Life's trying school,
That seem fashioned, my friends, as if just to repeat
For our lesson the sweet, golden rule.

Of't they give us a smile, when a frown we return
A kiss prompts the pout of their lip,
And though we go by with a step proud and stern,
How lightly beside us they trip!
Catching the leaves that drift in at the door,
Those pretty leaves rusted with rain,
That sigh with our hearts when the summer is o'er,
And that seem to wear traces of pain.

There is many a window with drapings of lace,
Where the clematis bloom is entwined,
Where the moss seems a part of the urn and the vase,
Where the awning with satin is lined,
Where Wealth sits aloof—garments dripping with pearls
Like a Mermaid's—sole god of the sphere,
But the faces I love with their billows of curls
You must ne'er think of looking for here.

For the window I love has no hangings of plush,
Neither festooned as if for display,
And yet I have seen it at evening's soft hush
Decked out in a wond'rous array
Of cambrics and calicoes, sashes and curls,
Little aprons and many a toy—
More plainly to speak—there are three little girls,
And the king of the house is a boy.

How I love to halt here! With a satisfied look,
I have watched Corinne smoothing a curl,
I have seen little Richard lean over his book,
I have heard Mary singing with Pearl.
And O! I have thanked them again and again
For the problems of patience and love
That they solve unawares for my less practiced brain
When I pause by the window I love.

Richmond, Ky.

Thistle Down.

Thistle Down.

I saw a little child one day
Blowing some thistle down away.
How light they flew! The wings of thought
Grew weary as their course was sought,
And e'en the boy, with heart as light,
Sighed when he failed to trace their flight;
But as by chance, out of the air,
One fell upon his sunny hair.

I saw the tiny sail unfurl,
And faintly fan a slender curl.
A fairy's boat it seemed to be,
And yet a pirate sailed the sea,
And anchored on a golden wave
That hid no evil deed—no grave.
That thought! Did Heaven foresee the doom?
From off his curl I shook the bloom.

I know not where it chanced to fall,
In garden, park, or castle wall;
A desert's sand may scorch its root,
A crystal brook it may pollute;
A different course from mine it took,
And I the path at once forsook.
I only know that summer day,
Far from the child 'twas blown away.

Bitter Memories.

TO REV. H. T. WILSON.

Bitter Memories. TO REV. H. T. WILSON.

A picture is haunting my memory to-night,
While I dose in the warmth of an early fire-light.
As we strive to remove from the soul an old strain,
Thus the outline I've tried to erase from my brain;
But a specter stands near with sepulchral face.
And over my hearthstone the same scene doth trace—
She colors the landscape and scoffs at my tears,
As I gaze on the wreck of scarce twenty-one years.

'Twas the home of my boyhood. In ruins it stood,
And autumn had saddened the meadow and wood;
The old locust grove, where the crows used to build,
The plowshare and harrow together had tilled.
Not a sprig of broomsedge did the hillside adorn,
But here and there stacked was the newly shocked corn.
Not a wild flower bloomed—through my heart ran a chill,
As I bowed by the spring at the foot of the hill.

No trickle of water fell soft on my ear—
Unless 'twas the sound of a swift falling tear—
For Time in his raving had paused here to drink,
And I found only dregs as I gasped on the brink.
Long I stood, and I gazed like one in a trance,
And I shuddered as toward me the specter advanced;
Did the chill of her hand then my heart penetrate?
Dead, it seemed, as I leaned on the old garden gate.

Where the sweet-william bloomed on the old fashioned walk,
Towered and flourished the rank mullein stalk,
Where the raspberry vines purpled over the fence,
The iron weed stood just as proud as a prince;
But where was the summer-house under whose shade
I had gathered the grapes and my sisters had played?
"Where, oh! where," I exclaimed (too unnerved then to fear),
"Are the joys of my youth?" "Gone," was hissed in my ear.

As the blind lead the blind it seemed I was lead
Over stubble and thorns till my feet ached and bled.
Then we stood by a door that had rotted apart—
Here the thistle had broken its soft, downy heart—
I glanced toward the mantel, an owl hooted there,
And a rat made its nest in my mother's old chair,
"Oh! God," I repeated, "'tis too hard to bear,"
And I knelt on the threshold in low, fervent prayer.
* * * * *

"Why, papa," a little voice called soft and clear,
As she climbed on my knee and kissed off a tear,
"What a long nap you've had; why mamma's at tea,
Now, papa, wake up and come on with me."
"My darling!" I whispered, and pressed to my face
A cheek that was soft as a billow of lace.
"What if the old home can not weather the storms
When a foretaste of Heaven I hold in my arms."

September 7, 1885.

An Acrostic.

An Acrostic.

D AUGHTERS' college! Muse, come nearer,
And assist my feeble rhyme.
Undertaking nothing dearer,
Greater, nothing showeth time.
Here's the spot where you, awaking,
Taught my infant mind to think;
Even as the morning breaking,
Richer grows to red from pink.
Searched you with me for the treasures,
Culled the blossoms half unblown,
Opened them within my measures,
Letting each bloom as my own.
Lifted to my sight a heaven,
E'en while lying on your breast—
Graciously for it I've striven,
Ever hoping for the best.

My Angel Visitor.

TO J. T. C.

My Angel Visitor.

TO J. T. C.

WE talked together in the twilight gloom,
Her friend and mine of scenes and times long past;
And in the shadows of the quiet room,
It seemed to me an angel form was cast.

I saw, and yet my friend seemed not to see
The face familiar, with the gentle eyes,
Whose presence sanctified the past for me,
And made for him a glorious paradise.

I felt the pressure of a vanished hand
Upon my own, and heard a soft robe sweep—
The same has floated from the spirit-land,
And often trailed the chamber where I sleep.

I strove to break the spell that bound his heart,
That held his spirit as a bondsman tied,
When like a rose that shakes its leaves apart,
Her garments rustled close his chair beside.

And yet he knew it not. The angel face
Bent close above his own. So doth the moon
Sometimes, unseen, bend from her heavenly place,
To kiss a flower that falls asleep too soon.

"Awake, my friend," I said, "too soon you sleep;
An angel figure stands beside your chair,
And I alone the sacred vigil keep."
But as he woke, she vanished into air.

"O, friend of mine, and friend of hers," I cried,
"A hallowed presence is so soon forgot.
She walked on earth an angel by your side,
The same as now, and yet you knew it not."

Keep a Bright Face, Darling.

Keep a Bright Face, Darling.

KEEP a bright face, darling,
Though the task is hard,
Life holds up before you
Many a bright-faced card.

Though the clouds have gathered
And darkened all the way,
Rainbows o'er you arching
Tinge the skies of gray.

You have said what sunshine
Leaked in with the rain
Only brought new sorrow,
Brought but grief and pain.

Keep a bright face, darling,
Set your scales anew,
Weigh again the sunshine
And the raindrops, too.

And you'll find your measure
Hitherto was wrong,
Keep a bright face, darling,
And on your lips a song.

Heaven decrees our burdens,
And our faith God tries;
But a broken spirit
He can not despise.

Keep a bright face, darling—
Even while I write,
In the fields of midnight
Blossom stars of light.

Though the morning cometh
With a streak of gray,
'Tis a hint of sunshine
And a perfect day.

Journey slow and patient
With a purpose strong,
Keep a bright face, darling,
On your lips a song.

My Neighbor's Mill,

TO M. BARLOW.

My Neighbor's Mill. TO M. BARLOW.

I love to sit here at the window-sill
When the sun falls asleep in the West,
And watch the gray Twilight walk over the hill
In garments of night partly dressed,
And see, through the rooms of my neighbor's mill,
How she creeps like an unbidden guest.

I love the low hum of the numberless wheels—
They echo the heart-beats of time,
Each unto my pen its purpose reveals,
Like the magic of meter and rhyme;
Or, as to the soul that in penitence kneels,
Doth the sound of a slow vesper chime.

We have been friends together, this old mill and I,
Yes, friends that are true, tried, and strong;
If over us gather a gray winter sky
We faced it sometimes with a song,
Or braved it in silence, scarce knowing why,
As together we labored along.

I fancy sometimes as I sit here alone
With the calm of the night in my heart,
When from the low roof the pigeons have flown,
And the stars their sweet stories impart,
That this mill unto me in a strange undertone
Is speaking as heart unto heart.

That it bids me look into the granary room
Where the yellow wheat is packed;
And anon to glance in with the sundown's bloom
Where the snowy flour is sacked,
So I look—and it seems in the deepening gloom
There clouds upon clouds are stacked.

What else do I scan through the moonlight's lace
That scallops the window panes;
Why, the dear old miller's honest face,
He's counting his losses and gains,
And methinks on his visage I can trace
A look that my own heart pains.

Ah! think of the thousands his bounty feeds—
We beggars encircle his door,
While he scatters alike his bundle of seeds
To the humble, the rich, and the poor.
Sure there's a reward for such generous deeds,
A reward that is brighter than ore!

But the lights have gone out of my neighbor's mill,
And pale grows the red in the West;
The Night has crept up to my own window-sill
And pillowed my head on her breast,
While over the way—how peaceful and still!
The old mill's asleep and at rest.



Dripping Springs.

TO MY BROTHER—D. G. SLAUGHTER

Dripping Springs. TO MY BROTHER—D. G. SLAUGHTER.

SOMETHING moves my pen; its former chime
I fain would drop, and gladly lose the rhyme
That lights my verse as ore lights up a mine,
If on my canvas I could curve and line
These quiet hills, and for an hour could say
I'd caught the warmth that on the landscape lay,
And that I dreamed as artists sometimes dream
Who blend their smiles with meadow, mound, and stream;
I am indeed a child worn out at play,
And weary of my game I long to stray
To other haunts, to other heights unknown,
And claim that Raphael's brush as half my own.
Alas! forsaken by my Muse I turn
And backward glance—she beckons my return—
She floods the old familiar fields with light,
She bids me pause, take up my pen and—write.

'Tis scarce yet dawn, the leaves awake,
And in my brow the raindrops shake
The only remnant of the cloud
That pealed last night with thunder loud;

The only hint that here with flowers
Come sometimes shadows, sometimes showers.
The morning is a dream of bliss,
The breeze not unlike Love's first kiss.

My soul expands—I drink the dew,
It gives my veins a deeper hue,
I halt where like a singing rill
The spring comes dripping o'er the hill.

I fill my cup again, again,
I drink for all—good health to men—
I hear the rising bell's faint sound,
The porter makes his usual round.

And black-eyed Easter trips along
The kitchen porch with smile and song,
We find a poem in her churn,
An essence in her coffee urn;

We note the pale dyspeptic's cheek
Is growing rosy, round, and sleek;
His torpid stomach forced to fast,
Here soon partakes the rich repast.

Breakfast over, 'round the springs
The guests assemble—some in swings—
And those of a romantic turn
Stroll two and two in search of fern.

For them the woods have more than speech,
A calm that to the heart doth reach,
That perfect peace of mind and soul
The sacred Book to us hath told.

I deem that morning holds more charms
Than day hides elsewhere in her arms;
But when she folds her shadowy tent,
And stars laugh in the firmament,

A newer phase doth nature take,
And in the heart new joys awake.
Some love the ball-room's din and glare
As soft they trip some favorite air,

Some love to lounge about the spring,
Some frequent spots where hammocks swing,
And others saunter to the pool
Their tired limbs to bathe and cool.

But give me just the shady rook
That o'er the dripping spring doth look,
And let me watch the bright lamps flash,
And let me listen to the splash

Of the old spring that drips and drips,
To cool and cure the fever lips.
Who could forget the landlord's vim
Or cottage rooms so neat and trim?

Who would not leave the city's glare,
The heat, the dust, and stifling air—
Who would not part with all his wealth
To gain at Dripping Springs his health?

In Memoriam.

In Memoriam.

THEY tell me she is dead, that we no more
Upon her quiet face can rest our eyes,
Yet long we for it, as a weary bird
Longs all in vain to rest upon a cloud
That heavenward floats. And yet there's solace still
In musing on her faith so strong and pure,
That recognized, through pain, God's every wish,
And dreaded not to taste death's cup if so
By Him decreed.

I was not there to hold
Her hand; it chilled within the orphan's palm
Until by angels clasp'd. I could not twine
The flowers she so much loved about her shroud,
Or speak a word of comfort to the friends
That sobbed, and kissed the lips grown strangely cold,
That never parted but to speak in praise
When others tried to censure; but my heart
Beats sad to-day the measures of my verse,
And tear-drops fall.

So falls the autumn rain
Upon her grave, and drifting are the leaves
Upon the mound that loving friends have raised
In memory of her, whose spirit rests
To-day with God.



The Old Orchard Trees.

The Old Orchard Trees.

WHY cut them away? The dear old trees,
They never did aught of harm,
But scattered their perfume out to the breeze,
And sheltered the birds from the storm.

For an age they have stood on the town's outer meads,
The skirmish and battle have braved;
Alike they have gazed on the war's bloody deeds,
And the white flag of peace as it waved.

But you cut them away! my pleading is vain!
In their shade moves the carpenter's hands,
I watched him to-day as he leveled his plane,
And he spoke of the architect's plans.

Then a wave of distress in my heart flowed anew,
For dearly I love each old tree;
Ah me! many secrets are hidden from you
That the apple trees whispered to me.

I used to go by, and the sweet morning air,
Like incense, arose from the spot,
It would crowd from my heart some pain gnawing there,
While the world with its cares was forgot.

Here, I've heard the first news of the blue bird and dove,
And the round, silver note of the thrush,
A concert, with sweet variations of love,
Seemed pouring from tree and from bush.

I walked there to-day; as an accent profane
That falls on the heart and the ear,
I heard the harsh echo of hammer and plane,
And the pant of a mill in the rear.

So I muffled my face with the veil that I wore—
Time, that moment of pain can't appease;
Unless like the birds from the scene I can soar,
And like them, forget the old trees.

On the Hill-top Grow the Daisies.

TO CARRIE ROGERS.

On the Hill-top Grow the Daisies. TO CARRIE ROGERS.

I chanced to stroll not long ago
To a green valley that you know;
For everything about the town
Was strange, and on me seemed to frown,
And so I wandered off alone,
To seek the friends from youth I'd known.
The brook came dashing down the hill,
The same old song to hum and trill;
With glances shy and kisses sweet,
It wound its ribbon at my feet,
And laughed aloud at my delight—
It was indeed a comic sight
To see me o'er the brooklet bend,
And greet again an old time friend.

So thus I sat, perhaps an hour,
Until I spied a human flower;
A little maid it seemed to be
With steps directed straight to me.
Her dress was pink, her bonnet white.
Her eyes were blue, and round, and bright,
Some daisies in her hand she held
But where they came from—would she tell?
Were questions that my eyes portrayed,
And she the answer quickly made.
"Upon the hill-top high they grow,
The path is there by which you go,
But if you get them you must climb,"
She said, unconscious of the rhyme.

I glanced along the rocky ledge;
The daisies nodded o'er the edge,
And just as far as I could see
They waved their ruffled caps to me.
Bright eyes that never had grown old
Their heart's content to me foretold,
And I resolved the path to try
That seemed to end so near the sky;
And so I started up alone,
A way that seemed with mosses sown.
A pond'rous clod rolled on the track,
A briar reached and pulled me back,
A lizzard on the pathway played,
And half way up I paused—afraid.

"Keep on," the little girl replied,
"A better path is near your side."

She pulled the thorn from off my gown,
I heard the clod go plunging down,
And then she clasped with mine her hand,
And led me up to "daisy-land."
The hours we spent together there
Were hallowed as the hours of prayer,
And when she left me in the vale
The sunlight suddenly grew pale;
But she had taught me this strange truth,
Forgot, or never learned in youth,
It seems a little song in rhyme,
"To reach the daisies, you must climb."

Bardstown, Ky.

Ella Lee.

Ella Lee.

WHERE is Ella? Ella Lee?
How I've missed her childish glee.
Missed her step so light and airy,
Missed the darling little fairy.
She was nimble as a fawn,
Lovely as the blush of dawn,
And her voice sweet as the rill
Gliding down the grassy hill.
Where is she, I've missed her so,
Surely some one ought to know.

I have called her in the crowd,
Called her soft and called her loud,
Called her sad and called her sweet,
In the house and on the street.
Yet she does not seem to hear,
Though I've called her far and near.
Hark! I hear a blackbird's note,
And he wears a brand new coat;
Surely some sweet word he brings,
On his iridescent wings.

Let me hail him by this tree.
Listen! now he sings to me,
Tells me, in his honest way,
That our darling's gone away.
Far, so far away she roams,
Into other hearts and homes,
Ah! the budding little flower
Sweetens every empty hour,
Making earth a dream of bliss
By the magic of her kiss.

Though she fled like a sunbeam,
Still I hold a treasured dream,
And were she to skip to-day,
In her easy, childish way,
To the playground of my heart,
Childhood's gate would fly apart,
And she'd find the violet's face,
Smiling still in memory's vase;
Green and fresh the springtime sod,
That her dainty feet had trod.



What is the West Wind Saying.

What is the West Wind Saying.

□! What is the west wind saying!
It whispers so strange in my ear,
As if some sad message delaying,
From friends who are absent and dear.
It laughs with the leaves on the tree-tops,
And bows as the cloudlets go by,
And plays with the flowers
For hours and hours,
Yet for me has only a sigh.

O! what is the west wind singing?
'Tis rocking the birds in the nest,
And over the world it is flinging
The emblems of quiet and rest.
New comfort it brings to the mother,
And hushes the babe on her knee,
Singing softly to her
And the tired laborer,
Yet sadly and strangely to me.

O! what is the west wind showing?
New faces look strangely in mine,
Stranger tints in the sunset are glowing,
Somber shadings of amber and wine.
Far away the blue hills seem to beckon
Me back to a sweet cottage home,
Where the rose and the vine
'Round the door-way entwine—
Alas! that from them I must roam!

O! what is the west wind asking?
Why question a stranger like me?
If a friend, why so perfect the masking?
Your counterpart glad would I see.
Ah, a friend in disguise! what is sweeter,
Come, let us together commune,
If you bring but a kiss
From the loved ones I miss,
I can ask of you no greater boon.

To a Mountain Stream.

To a Mountain Stream.

↳ **LAD** as childish laughter
From a childish throng,
Sweet as bird voice after
Daybreak is your song.

Racing down the mountain
On your shining feet,
Waltzing at the fountain
To its love song sweet.

On and on you travel,
Leaving me behind,
Like a silken ravel
With the weeds you wind.

Laughing at distresses;
Braving battles, too;
Who your trouble guesses,
And your sorrow—who?

Tell me as you hurry
Through the stubble field,
Why not stop to worry—
But no frown's revealed.

Sometime you must weary
Of this constant strife;
When the clouds are dreary,
Tire you not of life?

Of the dead leaves drifted
On your saddened face,
And the snow flakes sifted
From the cloudland place?

Yet you ne'er repineth,
But alike content
With the sun that shineth,
And the rainstorm sent.

Teach me half the beauty
That your heart must know,
And through fields of duty
Like you, will I go.

Pen Pictures.

(WRITTEN DURING A SNOW-STORM.)

Pen Pictures.

(WRITTEN DURING A SNOW-STORM.)

I love the snow flakes in the air,
When from the heavens they downward dart;
I love to watch them sailing there,
Like thoughts freed from a poet's heart,
Uncertain which, the earth or sky,
Should claim their last abiding place;
And yet I watch them drifting by,
And strive to join the airy race.

The railway cars like spirits glide
Through many a mountain's haunted tomb,
Above the river's solemn tide,
Along the ravine's chilly room;
On, on, through cedar groves we wind,
That yesterday a zephyr wooed;
To-day they stand with heads inclined,
A sad and stricken multitude.

The sky bends low with heavy clouds,
And from the long slope of a hill,
The pines look down in spotless shrouds
Upon a valley whiter still.
A tiny stream runs breathless by,
Affrighted at the ghostly sight;
The sun sleeps in the western sky,
And twilight deepens into night.

The train glides on. Each mountain scene
Is like a panoramic view,
Though oft I toward the window lean,
To scan some object that I knew.
I see a log hut in the vale,
And rustic children glad and warm;
A mother's face, forlorn and pale,
Looks out upon the winter storm.

The little cascade down the glen
Is falling like a mourner's tears;
The wind shrieks by, and from his den
Jack Frost hangs out his icy spears,
Defying e'en the piling drift;
And while the Winter King he warns,
Lo! through a cloud above the cliff,
The young moon shakes her silver horns.

Orion next his rage revealed,
As if he, too, the insult felt;
He raises high his club and shield,
And swings his bright sword from his belt;
And like a demon downward driven,
The howling wind his dungeon seeks;
For nature sees the hosts of heaven
Resent her cold and heartless freaks.

The storm grew still, and I could see
The clouds above the cliff disband,
E'en as the wave on Galilee
Grew docile at the Lord's command;
And as I shake from off my pen
The ink that stamped these pictures chill,
I seem to hear those words again
Breathed softly o'er me, "Peace, be still."

January, 1886.



To Mother.

To Mother.

I heard a song last night, mother,
A song you used to sing,
When like a little bird, mother,
With weak and unfledged wing,
I played about your flowing gown
Contented with your smile,
Though all the world should cast a frown
Upon your happy child.

The song I heard last night, mother,
Came floating through the door
As if some angel voice, mother,
Had sung it oft before;
But, O! I missed the patient pause,
The low accustomed tone,
I turned away heart-sick—because
The voice was not your own.

Those dear old songs you used to sing,
That made my heart-beats rhyme,
Have bubbled up from memory's spring,
Ah! many and many a time.
When thirsty or with thought oppressed,
When tired of the sunshine,
When longing for the shade and rest,
I hear those songs of thine.

They're just as low and sweet to-day
As when I heard them first;
And though I am so far away,
The field glass though reversed,
Holds still a picture that I love,
Three faces—four with mine—
Another looks from heaven above,
A little face—like thine.

The Broken Heart.

TO MISS F. B.

The Broken Heart. TO MISS F. B.

He brought me a heart one morning,
Brought me a heart to mend;
And he said (I shall never forget it)
"Twas broken by your friend."

"The wound will grow deeper and wider,"
He said in a sadder tone,
"Unless you devise some method
To place it against her own."

Then I crept away to my chamber,
But a thought, like a silver stream,
Kept trickling along the wayside
That bordered my restless dream.

So I hid this heart in a lily,
When the dawn began to break—
In a beautiful water lily,
That grew on the rim of a lake.

Yes, down on a snowy pillow,
In a cradle warm and deep,
I laid the little foundling,
And a ripple rocked it to sleep.

The dawn came up with blushes,
And shook from her gown the dew;
And I heard the song of the skylark,
As into the clouds he flew.

But the heart dreamed on in the lily
And I went at the close of day,
And found that my little treasure
Was chilled by the foam and spray.

So I warmed it upon my bosom,
Then cradled it back on the wave;
But I feared that the lily's offspring
Was doomed to a watery grave.

So I watched till the daylight vanished
Through the sunset's purple bars,
Till the night climbed over the willows,
And lit up the moon and stars.

I thought I heard your footstep,
And low in the reeds and grass
I crouched, that there, unnoticed,
I might behold you pass.

You came in your regal beauty,
And, bright as the weird fire flies
That illumined the waving rushes,
I saw your glorious eyes.

You kneeled on the mossy margin—
I counted the lilies there;
Two buds and a creamy blossom
Were fastened in your hair.

Another was drawn from the water,
And, pushing the reeds apart,
I saw 'twas the very lily
Wherein I had hidden the heart.

You pinned it low down on your bodice,
Half hidden it lay in the lace,
And you passed by—"a two-fold existence,"
A new light enriching your face.

And though I am absent and distant,
Methinks I can still hear the tone
Of a heart that, with happy emotion,
Is beating, aye! close to your own.



A Year Ago.

IN MEMORY OF MY DEAR FRIEND, SCOTTA P. PROCTOR.

A Year Ago. IN MEMORY OF MY DEAR FRIEND, SCOTTA P. PROCTOR.

A year ago I held in mine her hand,
And felt the pulses quicken and dissolve,

While o'er her face a light from heaven's own land
Seemed all the mystery of death to solve.

She raised her weary eyes to mine and sighed—
Sighed as a flow'r o'er which the storm clouds bend
When long the promised sunlight is denied,
And cold and heavy rains from heaven descend.

She tried to speak; I knelt beside her bed,
That one last wish she might to me impart;
A whisper came, and then the spirit fled
Like some sweet thought long prisoned in the heart.

A year ago I twined the lilies white
About her shroud, and with the coffin's lace,
For she had loved them; all the long, long night
They press their waxen lips upon her face.

I heard the funeral bell toll sad and long—
My heart reverberates to-day the sound—
And then there came a prayer—a pause—a song,
And blossoms next were heaped upon a mound.

I turned aside and homeward bent my way;
Alas! the face I loved so long—not there—
Sweet memories arose to gild my day,
But sadder ones to mock my heart's despair.

Where is she now? you think the grave can hide
A friend so true within its dungeon deep?
Ah! no; she walketh ever by my side,
And watches o'er me when I chance to sleep.

We stroll abroad oft at the twilight's hour
To memory's garden. Under memory's tree
She pulls the silver mask from many a flower,
And reads its tender secrets all to me.

She guides my pen along uncertain heights,
Where unattended I could never go;
The candle of success she often lights
When the flame flickers and the wick burns low.

She leads me to the grave and says, "Not here,
But there," and points me to the heavenly gate;
And when upon my cheek there falls a tear
(For sometimes yet my heart grows desolate),

I feel upon my face her own soft hand,
And glimpses of her robe sometimes have seen.
O, happy thought! how strong is friendship's band,
When out of heaven an angel friend can lean.

A year ago! sad, sad that parting day,
And sadder still, the last, the long adieu.
Death called the angel of my heart away—
And now she opens heaven to my view.

May 16, 1886.

A Christmas Peep.

A Christmas Peep.

I passed a toy window,
And many pretty things
Old Santa Claus had labeled,
And tied with silken strings.

A kite was bought for Jimmie,
A little stove for Kate,
A doll for Capitola,
For Charlie a new slate.

A silver knife for father,
For mother, dear, a fan,
And the prettiest little fiddle
Was bought for baby Dan.

Hang up your little stockings,
And keep the fireside bright,
Old Santa Claus is coming,
His sleigh is out to-night.

Ten dollars worth of candy
Was emptied in his sleigh,
And peanuts by the barrel,
To be eaten Christmas day.

His lap was full of toys,
Little drums and little ships,
Little buggies, little ponies,
And little riding whips.

The baby dolls were sleeping
In their cradles snug,
But the others all were peeping
From underneath his rug.

Old Santa was so happy,
That as he drove along
He jingled ever sleigh bell,
And sang a Christmas song.

So don't forget him, children,
He's on the way to night,
Hang up your little stockings,



Winnie's Christmas Eve.

Winnie's Christmas Eve.

FOR little Winnie had plodded the street,
Up and down through the rain and sleet,
Singing her innocent songs all day,
In a sweet and merry childish way;
Asking sometimes for the night a bed,
A bowl of milk, or a crust of bread.

She had sung on the corners and city square,
But no one had time to remember her there;
Numbers had passed her who never before
Failed to toss in her basket a penny or more.
It is Christmas; their hearts are so happy and light—
But poor little Winnie's forgotten to-night.

Chilly and rayless the sky seems to frown,
The clouds, too, are shaking the soft snow-flakes down;
Over her pretty face, waltzing they fall
Into her bonnet and folds of the shawl;
Think of it, fathers, with firesides warm,
Poor little Winnie is out in the storm.

Backward and forward the tired feet go,
From her lips little ripples of music still flow.
Homeless and hungry, still begging for bread,
Receiving a curse and reproaches instead;
Shiv'ring with fear in the pitiless light,
Poor little Winnie is starving to-night.

Alone in the street, yet the little lips move,
Trying to echo those accents of love.
Ah! think of that, mothers! those syllables sweet
Of your darlings, how fondly the same you repeat!
You are trying so faithful to lead them aright
When poor little Winnie is freezing to-night.

See her! How slowly she's moving along—
Her lips are too icy to echo the song.
How changed are her features! How feeble! how weak!
A pallor creeps over her forehead and cheek—
Perhaps it is only the flickering light,
Ah! no; little Winnie is dying to-night.

The revel is over in parlor and park,
The bonfire vanished, the street is so dark;
The snow-flakes are falling in many a heap,
The city is quiet, at rest, and asleep;
But there in the shadows, scarce out of sight,
Little Winnie lies dead in a snow-drift to-night.

My Heart's Little Room.

TO LIZZIE, DORA, AND GRACE.

My Heart's Little Room. TO LIZZIE, DORA, AND GRACE.

HERE'S a dear little chamber somewhere in my heart
That opens to only you three;
Though many have tried to unfasten the door,
They picked at the lock till their fingers were sore,
For to file it apart
Vainly proved every art,
And in vain have they sought for the key.

Many times I go into this quaint little room,
The pictures to change or adjust;
I see your sweet faces grouped there with my own,
And I wonder that I feel so strangely alone;
But about through the room
I move briskly the broom,
And sweep from the corners the dust.

The windows I throw open wide to the air
To let in the breeze and the light;
I watch the sunbeams in their mischievous way
Creep into the curtains, like children at play,
And while I am there
I have no thought of care,
For the room is so warm and so bright.

And oft I look up from the balcony's brink

To a sky that shows many a hue;
A vine clammers thickly the window above,
Where my birds sing together their rhythm of love;
My thoughts with them link
For I sit here and think
And all of my song is for you.

Ah! some day I know you will come back to me
To rest in this queer little room;
And that's why so tidy and clean it is kept,
The air always fragrant, the floor always swept,
For I long here to see
My sweet roses three,
As from buds into blossoms they bloom.

Then come when you may, be the sky black or blue,
The lock will unclasp as of yore;
For (unless Death should come introspecting my heart,
And break down its barriers and wrench them apart),
A friend that is true
Will be watching for you,
Ever waiting to unbar the door.



The Three Muses.

The Three Muses.

METHOUGHT three muses in disguise
As angels tapped upon my door,
And a dim light from paradise
Fell on the instruments they bore.
One held a zithern in her hand
And lightly swept the throbbing strings;
And, O! it seemed a fairy land
Was stirred by unexpected wings.

I held my breath and prayed that night
Would be extended into day,
But with the thought came morning's light,
And low the echo died away.
An artist's canvas, pink with dawn,
The second angel turned to me,
Her brush strayed o'er a grassy lawn
And dotted here and there a tree.

All blooming in immortal dyes,
With streamlets winding clear and blue,
Where, looking from the far off skies,
The clouds were mirrored to my view.
But when the sun blazed from the sky,
And on the painted landscape shone,
I heard the artist angel sigh,
And when I looked she, too, had flown.

The scratching of a pen I heard
And saw a face demure and sweet
With inspiration. Every word
I begged the angel to repeat.
A thousand zephyrs fanned the air,
Tuned low with hum of birds and bees,
No need of zithern music where
Æolian harps were in the trees.

No need of artists to rehearse
Upon the canvas nature, when
I saw the world revolve in verse
Upon the axis of the pen.
"Be thou eternally my guide,
Teach me your mystic pen to use!
O! linger ever near," I cried,
"Musician, artist, poet—muse!"

A Recollection.

A Recollection.

IN my heart there is a fragrance not of bursting buds or bloom,
But a faint delicious essence floats as out of memory's room.

Like a zephyr blown from heaven some sweet message to impart,
Comes a fragile recollection down the by-path to my heart.

Fragile did I say? So fragile that the lace-wrought butterfly
Would not tilt its wings to bear it back from earth into the sky.

Yet perplexed as to its mission down the pathway I retreat,
Hark! an echo in the distance, as of silver-slipped feet.

Why should I evade its coming, when 'tis such a little thing?
Just a tiny recollection that my thoughts have given wing.

Soon, too soon, 'twill overtake me, see! 'tis gaining on me fast—
In my soul the rose leaves quiver—withered rose leaves of the past.

It is useless to dissemble, further fleeing is in vain,
'Round my heart I feel the tight'ning of a slender silken chain.

All the past spreads out around me, as if by the Hand above,
So I turn, and find I'm standing face to face with my first love.



Don't Question Him Why.

Don't Question Him Why.

DON'T question him why if at times you can trace
A sorrowful something that looks from his face;
Though it shadows his brow as a raincloud the sky,
Look on it and wonder—don't question him why.

If he steal from your side when the twilight descends,
And wander away from old comrades and friends,
To rest unobserved in some shady retreat,
Where the past and the present seem always to meet,

Don't follow him there; let the stars overhead
Their better and holier sympathy shed—
And should an old love-light illumine his eye,
Though you bask in its splendor—don't question him why.

For, out of the past that is shrouded away,
Looks a face omnipresent, unseen by the day.
A face like no other—a face in the sky
To be looked at and worshipped, but not questioned why.

Should his lips meet your own with an indifferent grace
That hurries the bloom to your averted face,
Though Doubt is a sentinel stationed near by,
Beware of his bayonet—don't question why.

You may ask if you choose as he moves through the dance,
If 'tis Beauty or Passion that cowers his glance,
But question him not, O! ask him not why
There awoke in his bosom that deep-seated sigh.

Should he turn from the ball-room sometime with disgust
And shake from his sandals its memory and dust,
To bare a sick heart with its fevers of sin,
Beg heaven to filter a dewdrop within,

But question him not, for a word like a spark
Would quicken the pulses reduced by the dark;
Leave, leave him alone with his sorrow and God,
And let Silence spread o'er his heart's grave the sod.

Why ?

Why?

WHY is it that I keep her glove—
Poor little phantom of lost love—
Why was it that I wore her ring,
And love the songs she used to sing,
And treasure under lock and key,
The letters she has written me?
Why?

Why is it that where'er I go,
As footsteps follow in the snow,
As low and light, she seems to glide
Along the highway at my side?
Yet, when my arms seek to embrace
Her form, then vanishes her face.
Why?

Why is it that no other tone
Falls on my ear as did her own?
No other hand so soft and white,
No other eye so warm and bright—
Though other lips I since have pressed,
I something missed—the truth you've guessed.
Why?

A Sunset Longing.

TO F. S. H.

A Sunset Longing.

TO F. S. H.

WHAT meaneth this unrest within my heart,
And why do I sit here alone and sigh?
The sunset throws its garnished doors apart,
And palace halls are opened in the sky—
I gaze upon the gold strewn in the west,
A miser, of his jewels dispossessed.

I have played in the sunset's crimson rain,
And felt its saffron torch wave o'er my brow,
That heated to excess my maddened brain,
And threw a halo 'round my heart—but now,
Like some poor bird far from its kindred sky,
I look into the sunset—look and sigh.

I have no friend to lean upon my heart,
Ah! how I miss the pressure of thy hand,
And thy dear voice seems of the past a part;
Thy figure like a shade from shadow-land.
I think I would be happy if you came
And touched my hand, or softly called my name.

If I could look into your face to-night,
And search the deep mines of your pensive eyes,
Sure, I would find there a responsive light,
To dissipate from out my heart the sighs;
And then I know my lips would lose their scorn,
And in my soul a new impulse be born.

If we could wander off far from the crowd
Among the hills—our voices there unheard—
Where once our hearts in unison beat loud,
To the sweet song of some wild mountain bird,
I think the twilight vail would lose its gloom,
That shrouds to-night the windows of my room.

Perhaps 'tis wrong that I should sadden you
With these rain-droppings that my heart-clouds shed;
Gladly would I distill a drop of dew
Down deep into your flower-like heart instead.
Some other night, if separation's sky
Should clearer grow, dear absent one, I'll try.



Journeys.

Journeys.

How many, many journeys
I have taken in a day!
Journeys short and journeys long,
Journeys right and journeys wrong;
Often pausing on the way,
Themes so grand my thoughts delay—
Themes suggesting instant song—
Lofty, good,
Scarce understood,
Dying ere I knew their worth,
As an infant dies at birth.

Oh! the melancholy journeys
That on earth my eyes have seen!
Over cemeteries vast,
Like a spirit I have passed,
Where the helmet and canteen
Cankered near a grave-stone lean,
Where the warrior's sword was cast;
And the mould,
So shallow rolled,
That the eagle from on high
Dropped his penetrating eye.

Oh! the mad, exciting journey!
Floating down the sunset's tide,
Where there is no sign of sail,
Neither any promised gale.
Flames about on every side,
Every hope from me denied.
Even the clouds I can not hail;
As they drift,
Their cinders sift
On the water where they float,
Like a freighted, burning boat.

Oh! the sweet, yet lonesome journey
That I always take alone!
Back into the vanished past,
Where the sunshine runneth fast.
There the rose is open blown,
There I hear a loving tone,
There no twilight shades are cast;

But complete
And very sweet
Is the dawn, when, like a child,
Love looked in my heart and smiled.

Oh! the happy, happy journey,
With my loved one near my side!
Open stands the prison room;
We forget its chilly tomb.
Over fields of grain we glide,
Over rivers broad we ride,
Drinking up the earth's perfume;
Like a thought
The muses taught—
Onward o'er the world we fly,
Like twin clouds born of the sky.

Oh! the swift, inspiring journey,
Far away in unknown space!
Where my castles stand complete,
And the gardens full and sweet;
Where the moonlight weaves its lace,
And a friend's is every face,
And this land, need I repeat,
Is of dreams?
Here crystal streams
Lose their way, as from the throne,
In this country all my own.

Oh! the elevating journey!
Toward the zenith now I bend,
Far above the mundane sphere,
Stars like mighty worlds appear.
Losing sight of home and friends,
Higher still the path ascends.
Heaven is dawning very near;
But I pause,
Alas! because
To a mortal such as I,
Heaven an entrance must deny.

The Lost Poem.

The Lost Poem.

LONG ago beside my window, with an open manuscript,
I sat looking on a forest that with gold and brown was tipped,
Heeding nothing save the sighing of my own heart and the trees,
When into the open lattice like a whisper came the breeze.

Lingered at my lips a moment, past my temple then it crept,
And from out of my listless fingers an unfinished poem swept:
"Stop!" I cried unto a footman that was passing on the street,
"I will give you thirty shillings if you'll bring me back that sheet."

But he gazed into the heavens as he would upon a kite,
And I watched it sally upward, fading faster from my sight;
Then I said unto a swallow that flew by on rapid wing,
"Open wide I'll throw the granary if my poem back you'll bring."

But he only flew the faster, and was soon beyond my sight;
And the daylight vanished from me, and to mock me sent the night.
O! there's naught can daunt a spirit when the inner heart's afire,
And the darkness sent upon me only did my aim inspire.

So I sought an humble dwelling, to a fortune-teller went,
And I tarried with the gipsy till the night was almost spent,
But I left her door disheartened; for she only said to me:
"Take this, search, and when you've found it, send or fetch again the key."

"But," said I, "'tis lost in nature, in the sky or hills among,"
And the key back in her shanty with an angry word I flung;
For prophetic seemed her language, and my purposes were mocked,
If henceforth the heart of nature, Fate against my own had locked.

"Take it, search," again she muttered, as I started to depart;
"And be careful how you use it; for it fits the human heart."
In her hand I dropped a coin, and before the eye of day
Peeped from out the morning's cradle I was far upon my way.

Like the breath of early roses, like the whisper of a bird,
From a little maiden passing, a sweet laugh methought I heard.
"She has found it," I repeated, "there's no use for any key."
Said the pretty little damsel, "My heart's open, don't you see?"

Yes, I saw, and there were treasures such as kings would love to own,
Who would sacrifice to gain them e'en a jeweled crown and throne—
Buds and blossoms, song and laughter, humming-birds and butterflies,
Singing brooks and sparkling fountains there, and peaceful were the skies.

But the poem it was missing; so I journeyed slow along,
Till I heard a mother singing to her babe a cradle song;
And I tried to get permission in her heart to fit the key,
But the lullaby continued: "Do not interrupt," said she.

Next I hailed a youth that passed me, and his face was wond'rous fair,
And I searched long through his heart's book, but the poem was not there;
"It is lost!" I cried with sorrow, as Despair held out her cup,
And I quaffed the bitter liquid, and the idle search gave up.

* * * * *
Years have passed, and just this morning I was called beside a bed,
Where the sheet lay still and sober over an old lover spread;
Sad and pallid were his features, clever, too, Death's new disguise,
But I read the old, old secret, even in his half-closed eyes.

Then a thought—"The key," I whispered, lest I should be overheard,
And I sought the heart, unlocked it; found my poem—every word.

Oft revised it was, and polished, wore the features, too, of Fame;
And I read with strange emotion, just below inscribed my name.

O, it was a trying moment! If the poem I should claim,
I could mount upon the ladder to the topmost round of fame;
But my evil spirit yielded; for I could not rob the dead,
So I locked the sacred prison, and above it bowed my head.
Rather would I find engraven in a steadfast heart my name,
Than in shining words enroll it high upon the tower of fame.



A Maple Leaf.

TO M. B. S.

A Maple Leaf. TO M. B. S.

LANCING o'er a childish volume where sweet thoughts like blossoms lay,
There between two oft read pages, a pressed wreath I found to-day.
Golden-rod and aster flowers lay with bloom all crushed and dead,
But a maple leaf among them still retained its gold and red.

In my hand I took the treasure, held it up before my face,
And the sunlight, then declining, solved its geometric grace.
Many a road and by-path meeting proved the interwoven veins;
And a forest rose before me, flaming like my window panes.

As a vision that is pictured by an angel in the night,
Soon a figure, sometime vanished, rose to my exultant sight.
Like a goddess of enchantment, there she stood beneath the trees,
And her face was like a lily, and her eyes like summer seas.

Then I thought, "For me she's waiting"—so I glanced off to the right,
For I feared it all a fancy, but I found my home in sight;
Heard the town-clock slowly striking, and the same familiar bells,
Saw the court-house and the churches, and "The Summit," where she dwells.

So I then no longer doubted, down a meadow path I strolled,
Leading off into the woodland that had stole the sunset's gold.
Overhead the birds were flying, but a black winged happy throng
Paused; for we had been old comrades and they sang a farewell song.

But the thoughts that followed after, though the birds away had flown,
Were so happy, for she met me, linked her arm within my own.
Up and down the path we wandered, gathering leaves and grasses gray,
Until darkness drove the twilight o'er the hill where fled the day.

Darkness! and her face had vanished, all alone I seemed to stand,
But I heard her step departing, and I grasped again her hand.
Held it tight, and tighter pressing, in a happy strange belief,
Till I 'woke, and found that dreaming I had crushed my treasured leaf.

A Gallop With Santa Claus.

A Gallop With Santa Claus.

I was thinking last night of the children
Far away in a home that I know,
Of the dear little girls at the window,
And the boys out at play in the snow;
Of the stockings hung up at the chimney,
Of the little hearts hopeful and glad;
And thus I kept thinking and thinking,
Until I grew homesick and sad.

So I turned my eyes out on the landscape,
As my thoughts were unwilling to go,
And I saw 'round the curve of a hillock
Three ponies come, white as the snow;
A sleigh next appeared and a driver,
Oh! my heart beat so fast then—because,
As he drew up the reins at the door-step,
I found it was old Santa Claus.

Such shaking of hands and such greetings
I fear I shall nevermore see;
For every big doll in his wagon
Was looking and laughing at me.
"No minutes to lose," said old Santa,
"I've hundreds of miles yet to go.
Will you please to partake of my journey,
And gallop with me o'er the snow?"

No sooner than said I was seated,
All 'round me he folded the fur.
He made a loose rein for the ponies,
And urged them with whip and with spur.
Away and away o'er the country
We flew like the glances of light,

Down streets that were blazing with bonfires,
On, on through the snow and the night.

Then all of a sudden he halted
In front of a house old and dark.
There was no friendly ray at the window,
And on the hearth-stone not a spark.
But he entered, and, by a dim lantern
That swung from his new scarlet cap,
I saw the sad face of a woman
Asleep, and a babe on her lap.

And two pretty faces beside her,
A pillow of straw almost hid,
But the little hands looked as if frozen
That lay on the patched cover-lid.
A snow-cloud had sifted its samples,
Of eider-down over their feet,
And a star, looking in through the shingles,
Was spreading o'er them a bright sheet.

Old Santa had lost not a moment.
A cedar tree suddenly sprung
Into life just in front of the children,
With pop-corn and bright ribbons strung.
Some tiny wax candles were lighted,
To chase off the thoughts of the night;
And the dollies had met in the tree-top
To dance in their dresses of white.

A kite that could climb into cloud-land
Hung low, and a new picture-book;
A street-car "wound up" for its journey,
And a little boat built for the brook.
Oh! all kinds of candy he left them
That ever I tasted, or you;
And under the tree there were apples
And peanuts—a bucket or two.

He built them a fire, and dresses
Were left, made of flannel so warm;
And, with many nice greetings and wishes,
We galloped away through the storm.
Away, and away sped the ponies,
So fast that none could o'ertake—
So fast (it was told me this morning),
We looked like a winged snow-flake.

But soon at a homestead we halted,
Old Santa said I must alight,
To see if the children were sleeping,
And leave them whatever was right.
So I crept to the casement—it opened,
And I saw what I ne'er shall forget—
Those darlings there slumbering sweetly,
The thoughts of the night-fall had met.

We gave them all kinds of nice presents,
What they were, it is useless to say;
For they've found them and now are rejoicing,
And happy this glad holiday.
So children, be kind to each other,
Be gentle and loving—because
I may be invited next Christmas
To gallop with old Santa Claus.

Home Memories.

Home Memories.

I am thinking of a cottage
Where the roses used to bloom,
How they talked beside the pavement
In low whispers of perfume,
Or climbed up beside the window
To look in my little room.

I am thinking of the door-way
Where the vine I used to train,
That snowed down its flaky petals
With a pleasant summer rain;
Where I used to sit and listen
To the old mill's low refrain.

I'm thinking of the sunflower, too,
That towered above the gate;
Of the friends who called me hither
When the day was cool and late.
Ah! those hours seem so distant
And the year, an ancient date.

I am thinking of the grape-vine
Where the crippled robin fed,
How he lingered there each morning
'Till fresh crumbs for him were spread.
Is he feeding there this summer
From a stranger's hand, instead?

I am thinking of the children
Who crept to the little yard,
Begging me to grant permission
That they play upon the sward.
Could I bar them from the entry?
Thus might Heaven me discard.

I am thinking of a morning

That wrung from my heart a sigh,
When I kissed warm lips that trembled,
With a tear-drop in my eye;
While I closed our cottage windows
And pronounced the word—good-bye.



Sunshine and Shadow.

Sunshine and Shadow.



I passed a pretty cottage place,
A rose looked from the door
And smiled so sweetly in my face
I paused the house before.
The honeysuckle from the wall
Threw down a welcome tear,
The breeze came rushing through the hall
And whispered, "Tarry here,

"For all within is peace and love;"
So through the curtain's lace
I glanced the reckless words to prove,
And saw a lover's face
Bent close above two eyes of blue.
Why should I dim their day?

Across the pane the blind I drew,
And softly crept away.

I went again, one summer eve;
The rose blushed at the door
But smiled as sweetly to receive
Me as it did before;
The breeze came out as joyously,
And lingered at my side,
And murmured: "Tarry now and see
Our happy groom and bride."

"O, no!" I said, "some other day
I'll call the pair to see."
But as I turned to go away
They both looked out at me.
O! what a light of hope and love
Their features then o'erspread;
And a shekinah from above
Seemed on the cottage shed.

Years crept away. When next I came
Before that open door,
A little child pronounced my name
That golden tresses wore.
"Will you come in?" she gladly cried,
And opened wide the gate.
"My little one," I slow replied,
"The day is low and late.

"To-morrow when the sun is bright,
I'll come and play with you;
Too chilly now, the falling night,
Too damp the evening dew."
And so I did. I often trod
Along the side yard there;
And found that fresher grew the sod,
The sky more bright and fair.

I once had said that every rose
Held just a briar or two,
And every river as it flows
A dark wave with the blue;
But 'twas not thus I found it here,
The world that night I'd tell
That I had found a sky so clear
That rain drops never fell.

Thus musing on that sweet child's face
That night I could not sleep,
A shadow seemed the light to chase
As storms the ocean sweep;
And when the stars forsook the sky
And birds their matins sang
I strolled again the cottage by
And loud the door-bell rang.

The rose had dropped its leaves and died,
I heard within a sob.
What did it mean? The winds replied
"Crape hangs upon the knob."
Softly I raised the window's lace—
The little child was dead—
I threw a flower across her face,
And from the cottage fled.

I never will go back again

Or push the blinds apart—
I sought a sunshine for my pen,
Found shadows for my heart.

Only a Fern Leaf.

TO H. M.

Only a Fern Leaf. TO H. M.

ONLY a fern leaf, darling,
Yellow and dry with age,
Only a date recorded
Down at the ending page.

Only a breath from the mountain,
A song with the summer wed;
Only the voice of a fountain,
Only a dream that is dead.

Only a faded morning,
With a shadow falling through,
Only a hint of warning—
A cloud in the far off blue.

Only a word of parting
Under a starlit sky;
Only a tear that is starting,
A long and a last good bye.

Only a face of sorrow
Turned to a vanished year—
Only a fern leaf, darling,
Glued to the pages here.



A Dream.

TO MY FATHER.

A Dream. TO MY FATHER.

LISTEN, father, while I tell you of a dream I had last night;
For it was so sweet my childhood home was painted in my sight.
'Twas the same old frame house, father, hidden by the same old trees,
Apple, cherry, quince and locust, talking in the same old breeze.

On the walk I found the cowslip, stolen from "The Old Ravine,"
And the blue-bell, and the columbine—how near my heart they lean.
Roses, red as any furnace flame, about me seemed to grow.
Roses pink as maiden blushes, roses pure and white as snow.

All around the yard I wandered, oh! so long I can not tell,
Then I paused beneath the apple tree and drank from the old well.
Through my veins I felt the water coursing like a happy thought,
And a thousand recollections to my memory then it brought.

Recollections rushing to me swifter than an angel's wing,
Recollections slipping from me as a pearl slips from a string.
Recollections that transfigured me into a little child,
And the halo shed around me was my father's happy smile.

It was such a pretty picture Fancy held before my view,
I will turn the magic lantern so that you may see it, too.
It is springtime and the sugar trees have pitched their shady tent,
Tiny leaves like tiny parasols reach toward the firmament.

Restless swings a childish figure to and fro upon the gate,
Some one's coming down the highway—'tis for him she there doth wait.
Ah! you recognize the picture, I can tell it by your smile;
You have recognized the sugar trees, and recognized your child.

Through the pasture now we're strolling, looking down the avenue,
See you not another picture? Yes; the figures there are two.
Mother sits upon the portico her knitting in her hand,
And my brother talks beside her of that wild and Western land

Where he raced his Indian ponies and lassoed the buffaloes
Oh, it is a perfect wonderland!—this country that he knows.
But we will not interrupt them; for they do so happy seem—
So we turn aside and leave them wandering on as in a dream.

Then I led you up the hillside and we sat upon the "mound."
Oh! there never was before or since so pretty a view spread 'round.

Just below, the tranquil water of the clear pond seemed to win
Every cloud that floated over, and the heavens lay within.

Then the meadow, where the clover bloomed, and where you stacked the hay,
Like a field within a picture book, before us there it lay;
Then beyond, the barn and orchard, and the valley that I love—
Oh! it all seemed like a painting let down by the Hand above.

But a thought came rushing to me of a fairy that you know;
For she lived there in the valley and her name it was Echo.
So I laughed and called unto her just as loud as I could call,
But the voice that she threw back to me was not a child's at all.

No; it was a woman's voice; I awoke then with a start,
And I found the king beside me that dethroned you in my heart.
Then a tear fell on the pillow, not a briny, bitter tear,
Why? you ask—because the dream was gone that I have copied here.

Those Soft Airs She Played.

TO M. B. S.

Those Soft Airs She Played.

TO M. B. S.

THOSE soft airs she played—through my mem'ry they glide
Like a cloud-shadow crossing the plain;
The sun follows often, the wind at his side,
Then a whisper that never the roses denied,
And a sound like a light fall of rain.

Grander music she plays—music weird and sublime,
Thunder toned, like the sound of the sea,
That rolleth away like the surges of time;
But, to quicken my thoughts and to sweeten my rhyme,
She always played soft airs for me.

Faint whispers that blend with the deep forest's sound,
From which a wild fawn would not flee,
And sweet as the brook that the summer has found,
When singing its song soft and glad underground,
And carrying its heart to the sea....

A movement then mingles like those that are heard
When the trees toss their shade to the eaves;
A pause and a tremble, as of a sweet word,
Or the dream-haunted wing of a night-hidden bird
That is shaking the dew from the leaves.

Then silence, that even a word would profane—
Silence, holding some thoughts heaven-born,
That only her fingers a moment can chain;
Up, up to the skies they have wandered again,
Like a prayer holy spoken at morn.

Those soft airs she played in the dim lighted room,
With her heart in the past far away—
Ah, what would I give if to-night, through the gloom,
Along with the budding and bursting of bloom,
They now past my window would stray.

Alas! vain the thought, and as vain sounds the sigh,
Long distance my wish has delayed;
But we sit in the twilight—my mem'ry and I—
And listen and linger, we scarcely know why,
Unless for those soft airs she played.



To Albert.

To Albert.

THOU art going from us, Albert,
Going far away from me,
Where I can not hear thy prattle,
And thy face I can not see.

Back into the Southern country,
Thou art going—there to roam,
Where my heart began its singing—
In the old Kentucky home.

Lonely all the days will linger,
When I miss your little face;
Shadows gray, from out the hours,

All the sunbeams soon will chase.
Dim will seem the sunny window,
Where the pansy blossom grows,
And no restless little fingers
Will disturb the opening rose.
Soon the playthings will be missing,
Soon they gathered up must be—
Thou art going from us, Albert,
Going far away from me.
Soon the little boy that vexed me,
When I tried to read and write,
Will be gone. No one will listen
When I sing my songs at night.
Soon the halls will lose their echo,
And the yard grow silent, too,
And the pretty face will vanish,
With those wondrous eyes of blue.
So good-bye, my little darling;
All these tears have been for thee—
Thou art going from us, Albert,
Going far away from me.

The Reunion of the Flowers.

The Reunion of the Flowers.

A few of the springtime flowers,
And the summer blossoms sweet,
Agreed, at the early autumn,
In a locust grove to meet,
And there to hold communion,
By the light of the setting sun,
And each relate or mention
Some kind act they had done.
And he whose deed was noblest
Should, at the close of day,
Be colonel of the regiment,
And lead the ranks away.
So, one by one I watched them
Assemble where the trees
Had lowered their limbs to listen
And halted every breeze.
A Rose in the richest satin,
With a bud to her bonnet tied,
Was first to break the silence
That reigned on every side.
"I lived with a lovely lady,
In a handsome house of brick,
And went with her each morning,
To wait upon the sick.
"I've leaned beside the pillows,
Where wounded soldiers lay,
And I wept at the funeral service,
Of an orphan child to-day."
"I bloomed in an humble garden,
Where an old man used to look,"
Said the Johnquil, "ere the snow-drift
His window-sill forsook."
"A poor bee shivered homeward
One night," the Tulip said,
"Fell through my scarlet curtains,
And died upon my bed."
"I looked in at a window,
And made two lovers kiss,"
The Pansy owned, and laughing
Said it was not amiss.
"I went into a palace,"
The Lily then replied,
"And held the veil that evening
Of a happy-hearted bride."
"I sweetened the room of a poet,
And o'er his coffin wept,"
The Heliotrope low whispered,
And back in the shadows crept.
"O, that was very noble,"
Exclaimed the Golden-rod,
"I tried to gather the sunshine
And hold it up to God.
"To make the world less sober,
To make the heart less sad,
Was all the mission, brethren,
Your humble servant had."
* * * * *
In the ranks of that floral army
That marched at the close of day,
That sunny-featured blossom
Was the one that led the way.



Children of the Brain.

Children of the Brain.

☐ UR thoughts—the children of the brain—
Are born for us some good to gain,
And if we rear them just and right,
They'll seek the day instead of night.
Long in the harvest field they'll work—
Brave laborers that do not shirk,
And they will reap just what we sow,
As written you will find below.

* * * * *
I sent them forth into the world,
Some thoughts that long my heart impearled.
Their countenance was of a light
That beamed upon me through the night.
The features were like mine, perchance,
With part of heaven hid in the glance;
And the apparel that they wore
My fingers long had labored o'er.

A vine ran through the tunic's hem
That wilted not though broke the stem,
And all the undergarments showed
The time and care on them bestowed.
Some of the moonbeams took a place
Within the frill about the face;
And, stars that bright as Lyra glowed,
The overdress and mantle showed.

The sandals that encased the feet
Were fashioned for a journey fleet,
And pinions, like a sail unfurled,
I saw outspread before the world,
With promises to come again
And glorify the parent pen.
I tore apart the silken skein
And let them drift from out my brain.

Where are they tarrying to-night?
I see, around a fireside bright,
One looking in a friendly face.
How tender seems the warm embrace!
Now close, close to this loved one's lip
'Tis held, and for companionship
Is nestling down into the heart,
And of the same becomes a part.

Some beckon me across the seas,
Are favored by a foreign breeze,
Are traveling where I can not go,
Are learning what I ne'er shall know,
Are praised, perhaps, with offered funds,
While with them glad the newsboy runs;
Are welcomed in some palace home,
And ne'er allowed henceforth to roam.

The one that I had loved the best
A journey took into the West,
And by a friend it chanced to meet
Sent home a prairie flower sweet.
Two stronger ones, the North that sought,
Some words of love back home have brought;
They brighten up the lonesome hearth,
And praise the pen that gave them birth.

And one crept down in Cupid's coat
To read a dainty perfumed note,
And afterward came back to tell
How sweetly rang the wedding bell.
Another, with as brave a face,
Had with a rival run a race;
It did its best, to gain had tried,
But came back home, alas! and died.

The tenderest one, perhaps, of all,
Upon a critic chanced to call;
He hooted at the homespun gown,
And bent his bitter, blackest frown
Upon the waif, and read its fate
Where winter winds could congregate.
I thought I heard its funeral bell,
But where the grave is I'll not tell.

I do not know the others' fate,
A pauper's grave may them await.
The fabric that my hands embossed,
While Fancy figured high the cost,
May trail, to-night, some filthy street
Where sin and shame together meet,
And the loved strains from my heart's lyre
Be sung around an outcast's fire.

They may attain a higher sphere,
Where flows the penitential tear,
And point the wanderers they find
Upon the paths that heavenward wind.
God grant their mission may be such!
That all sad hearts they'll lightly touch,
And spread upon the ugly wound
A balm to make them whole and sound.

A Lily of the Valley.

A Lily of the Valley.

JUST a breath of fragrance
On the breeze—alas!
A lily of the valley
Dying in the grass.

Just a recollection
Followed with a sigh;
Just a teardrop dripping
Down the cheek, and why?

May 16, 1887.



Lines to the Old Year.

Lines to the Old Year.

FAREWELL, Old Year, the shades are growing deep,
Thou art dethroned and vanishes your power;
I sit alone with folded hands and weep,
While close the minutes chase our parting hour.

Your lips are dumb, and with a feeble hand
You turn the pages of the year's great book,
While my wet cheeks are with an odor fanned,
Like that the summer breeze from violets shook.

I gaze into the volume. Undiscerned
Some scenes advance, like phantoms hurry by,
And thoughts look from the leaves now swifter turned
As meaningless as would a stranger's eye.

I meet familiar names in Death's long list,
I pass new graves where tears have thawed the snows,
I search my heart lest something I have missed,
But in its garden find no dying rose.

Thou hast been kind to me; no marble urn
Chills the warm pulses of my heart to night,
And from the thought my pen doth gladly turn
To offer homage ere you take your flight.

Bright recollections thou hast left instead,
That twinkle in the firmament of thought,
And lover-like I sit and gaze o'erhead
Upon the starry gems thy hand has wrought.

Far down the by-path of a summer dream,
Glad voices call and fingers beckon me—
An oar dips music from a moonlit stream,
Where in thy prime I sailed, Old Year, with thee

And now, e'en in the shadow of thy hearse,
Ungarland save with fated mistletoe,
While midnight fiends the hours call like a curse,
You clasp my hand and smiling on me—go.

Farewell! A friend thou'st been to me, and I
Shall wander through the burial ground of years,
And often with an introspective eye
Search out thy grave and water it with tears.

Why I Smile.

Why I Smile.

I smile because the world is fair;
Because the sky is blue.
Because I find, no matter where
I go, a friend that's true.

I smile because the earth is green,
The sun so near and bright,
Because the days that o'er us lean
Are full of warmth and light.

I smile as past the yards I go,
Though strange and new the place,
The violets seem my step to know,

And look up in my face.

I smile to hear the robin's note.
He comes so newly dressed,
A love song throbbing in his throat,
A rose pinned on his breast.

And so the truth I'll not disown,
Because the spring is nigh;
My heart has somewhat better grown,
And I forget to sigh.

Mt. Vernon, Ill.



My Phantom Ships.

My Phantom Ships.

I heard the plunging of the sea
Like a wild steed pursuing me,
And dark and frothy was the main;
But suddenly a checking rein
Seemed drawn, and panting on the shore,
I heard the billows' frightful roar.

My dream betook a different hue,
Caught from the ocean's changeful blue.
A door was opened in my heart,
From which I saw each fear depart,
And there from some far, happy isle,
The sea breeze came as would a smile

Oh! it was sweet to wander there,
The sky o'erhanging still and bare.
A cloud, in some soft raiment dressed,
Leaned like a bride upon the west;
The sea-gulls floated on the breeze
Like blossoms blown from April trees.

The wind just kissed by summer's mouth
Walked like a lover from the South;
And jewels from a sunbeam's hand
Were sprinkled on the snowy sand;
The breakers ran along the beach,
And scattered shells within my reach.

I stooped and held one to my ear,
And listened as to voices dear;
And then methought far, far away,
Where purple mists made dim the day,
I saw the motion of a ship
That from the heavens seemed to slip.

On, on it came with fluttering sail,
Strong blew the steady ocean gale.
The waves were running thick and high,
And kept the ship close to the sky;
It seemed a picture on the sea,
"A picture," thought I, "can it be?"

But from the waves the wind withdrew
And brought the sailors close to view.
The pilot pointed to the shore,
And then to gems and shining ore
Piled up against the good ship's side
That leaned so brave upon the tide.

Oh! there were silks of colors soft,
And plumes that proudly waved aloft;
And there were jewels, bags of gold,
From caves o'er which the water rolled,
And coral crowns—gifts of the sea—
And all of this for whom? *For me.*

With open arms to meet the ship
I ran, and proudly curled my lip.
No one should know from whence it came,
And none should share my wealth and fame.
My gowns of silk with me should roam,
My gold I'd closet at my home.

Ah, me! I knew not what I thought.
The ship was by a whirlwind caught.
It staggered out upon the sea—
I heard the sailors cursing me;
A flash fell from the lowering night,
And down the brave ship sank from sight.

* * * * *
I walk again upon the sands
With aching heart and empty hands.
Sometimes a piece of broken mast
Upon the tide goes sailing past;
And, where the sun so friendly shone,
A shadow on the sand has grown.

A strange and half-distracted dream
Comes just behind the sea-gull's scream.
The sinking ship again I see,
The sailors hurl their oaths at me,
And like an echo from the grave
Is the sad song of wind and wave.

But somewhere, under bluer skies,
Another ship in harbor lies.
Its flags are flying free and fast,
The sails are white, and strong the mast.
'Tis loaded, too, with precious freight,
And for the same I stand and wait.

When it comes home I'll happy be,
And all share my joy with me.
My wines at other feasts I'll pour,
The sorrowful shall smile—yea, more,
The poor shall not be turned away,
And one and all shall bless the day.

PABLO BEACH, FLA., January, 1887.

The Weight of a Word.

The Weight of a Word.

|| **A**VE you ever thought of the weight of a word
That falls in the heart like the song of a bird,
That gladdens the springtime of memory and youth
And garlands with cedar the banner of Truth,
That moistens the harvesting spot of the brain
Like dew-drops that fall on the meadow of grain
Or that shrivels the germ and destroys the fruit
And lies like a worm at the lifeless root?

I saw a farmer at break of day
Hoeing his corn in a careful way;
An enemy came with a drouth in his eye,
Discouraged the worker and hurried by.
The keen-edged blade of the faithful hoe
Dulled on the earth in the long corn row;
The weeds sprung up and their feathers tossed
Over the field and the crop was—*lost*.

A sailor launched on an angry bay
When the heavens entombed the face of day
The wind arose like a beast in pain,
And shook on the billows his yellow name,
The storm beat down as if cursed the cloud,
And the waves held up a dripping shroud—
But, hark! o'er the waters that wildly raved
Came a word of cheer and he was—*saved*.

A poet passed with a song of God
Hid in his heart like a gem in a clod.
His lips were framed to pronounce the thought,
And the music of rhythm its magic wrought;
Feeble at first was the happy trill,
Low was the echo that answered the hill,
But a jealous friend spoke near his side,
And on his lips the sweet song—*died*.

A woman paused where a chandelier
Threw in the darkness its poisoned spear;
Weary and footsore from journeying long,
She had strayed unawares from the right to the wrong.
Angels were beck'ning her back from the den,
Hell and its demons were beck'ning her in;
The tone of an urchin, like one who forgives,
Drew her back and in heaven *that* sweet word—*lives*.

Words! Words! They are little, yet mighty and brave;
They rescue a nation, an empire save;
They close up the gaps in a fresh bleeding heart
That sickness and sorrow have severed apart,
They fall on the path, like a ray of the sun,
Where the shadows of death lay so heavy upon;
They lighten the earth over our blessed dead,
A word that will comfort, oh! leave not unsaid.



An Apology.

TO J. D. N.

An Apology. TO J. D. N.

MY pen is mournful—you ask why
When all the time my face is glad,
And though contentment lights my eye,
You say my verse is strangely sad;

So serious that e'en the strain
You can detect, as on the pane
You know the patter in the night,
Although the cloud is hid from sight.

You asked me once to change my tone,
"To trim my pen for gayer verse,"
And, laughing, said 'twas like a moan
That followed close behind a hearse.
My muse was saddened at the stroke,
And in my heart new chords awoke,
Chords that vibrate like the bell
That tolled one day a funeral knell.

I would not have them otherwise;
I claim my caged bird's song more sweet
Because 'tis sad, than one which tries
The echo merrier to repeat.
How quickly I would turn aside,
And soon forget a boist'rous tide,
To hear the brooklet, sad and low,
Sing in a minor key I know.

I'll not attempt Hood's humorous style,
I do not crave John Gilpin's ride.
It was my custom, when a child,
To linger at my mother's side
When she would sing "The Old Church Yard,"
That told how soft and green its sward.
"The angels that watched 'round the tomb"
Crept, as she sang, into our room.

'Tis said the clown will never jest
When folded is the showman's tent;
That she who pathos renders best
Has loudest laugh in merriment.
Thus, *vice versa* is the theme,
Or, "all things are not what they seem."
Sadness to Joy is as a twin,
One rules without, one rules within.

My life is full of love and joy,
My heart-strings, though, with sadness tuned.
Then do not ask me to destroy
The mournful measures; it would wound
My Muse—the playmate of my youth—
Who taught me early many a truth
From others' woes, and bid me think
While she supplied the pen and ink.

Speak Kindly.

Speak Kindly.

☞ **PEAK** kindly in the morning,
When you are leaving home,
And give the day a lighter heart
Into the week to roam.
Leave kind words as mementoes
To be handled and caressed,
And watch the noon-time hour arrive
In gold and tinsel dressed.

Speak kindly in the evening!
When on the walk is heard
A tired footstep that you know,
Speak one refreshing word,
And see the glad light springing
From the heart into the eye,
As sometimes from behind a cloud
A star leaps to the sky.

Speak kindly to the children
That crowd around your chair,
The tender lips that lean on yours
Kiss, smooth the flaxen hair;
Some day a room that's lonesome
The little ones may own,
And home be empty as the nest
From which the birds have flown.

Speak kindly to the stranger
Who passes through the town,
A loving word is light of weight—
Not so would prove a frown.
One is a precious jewel
The heart would grasp in sleep,
The other like a demon's gift
The memory loathes to keep.

Speak kindly to the sorrowful
Who stand beside the dead,
The heart can lean against a word
Though thorny seems the bed.
And oh, to those discouraged
Who faint upon the way,
Stop, stop—if just a moment—
And something kindly say.

Speak kindly to the fallen ones,
Your voice may help them rise;
A word right-spoken oft unclasps
The gate beyond the skies.
Speak kindly, and the future
You'll find God looking through!



Those Willing Hands.

IN MEMORY OF MISS FANNIE STEVENS.

Those Willing Hands IN MEMORY OF MISS FANNIE STEVENS.

THOSE willing hands—they're still to-night—
The life has from them fled;
They're folded from the longing sight,
So cold and pale and dead.
The busy veins have idle grown,
Like a long famished rill,
That once in such an eager tone
Called soft from hill to hill.

Dear hands, I've felt their pressure oft,
In a sad time gone by;
They moved about the years as soft
As clouds move through the sky.
They screened the rainstorm from my heart,
And let the moonlight in,
And showed, while shadows fell athwart,
Tracks where the sun had been.

They were such willing, willing hands,
They stilled the mournful tear,
Unwound the pattern of God's plans,
And made his problems clear.
They did not reach to high-grown bowers,
Where rarest blossoms bloom;
But culled the blessed, purer flowers,
And bore them to the tomb.

Poor hands—they are so still and white,
The rose that shared their rest
Is shrinking from the long, dark night,
And falling on her breast.
The wreath is wilted on the mound
Where long the sunshine stands,
But angels have the sleeper found,
And clasped those willing hands.

Look Into the Past.

Look Into the Past.

LOOK into the past—there are pictures
Detaining the sunshine of May,
All aquirer with light they turn to the sight,
Like a flower that faces the day.
How restful the hillsides and shady!
The brook like a song passeth by,
And the trespassing moon floats about through noon,
Like a bubble blown up in the sky.

Look into the past! It is happy;
Its voices are voices of youth;
There is no idle jest to disturb the heart's rest,
And its banners wear mottoes of truth;
Look back at the glad, happy faces
That walk with our childhood abreast,
And show me to-day, though it be miles away,
A spot that can offer such rest.

Say not that the years long escaping,
Show graves of a cankering joy.
Because we have found that new pleasures abound,
Must we cast off our first childish toy?
Because some old love has disturbed us,
And filled a lost hour full of gloom,
Are we never to go, when the sun lieth low,
And stand by the neglected tomb?

A Little Face.

TO "C."

A Little Face. TO "C."

A little face to look at,
A little face to kiss;
Is there anything, I wonder,
That's half so sweet as this?

A little cheek to dimple
When smiles begin to grow
A little mouth betraying
Which way the kisses go.

A slender little ringlet,
A rosy little ear;
A little chin to quiver
When falls the little tear.

A little face to look at,
A little face to kiss;
Is there anything, I wonder,
That's half so sweet as this?

A little hand so fragile
All through the night to hold
Two little feet so tender
To tuck in from the cold.

Two eyes to watch the sunbeam
That with the shadow plays—
A darling little baby
To kiss and love always.

The Canary and Rose.

The Canary and Rose.

A lovely tea rose, in a new autumn gown,
Looked in at the window one day,
And said with a scorn:
"Tis a beautiful morn;
But ugly enough is your lay.
Do you never grow weary of singing your songs
Shut up in that prison of brass?
I do not admire
Your out of tune lyre,
And none seem to listen who pass.

"Last night as I beaded my bodice with dew,
And shook the perfume from the lace,
There came to the fence
Such a beautiful prince,
And said, looking into my face:
"Too lovely thou art to live here so obscure
To-morrow with me thou shalt roam."
So he's coming to-day,
And will bear me away
The queen of his heart and his home."

Now, the dear little songster was pruning her wing
That had borrowed the sun's yellow ray,
And shaking a note
In her quivering throat,
Replied in an indifferent way:
"My songs will not trouble you long. I discern
This breeze is forerunning a storm,
And should he delay
(This prince) on the way,
You must seek other quarters more warm."

"Do you think," said the rose, with a tremulous tone,
"The rain would disfigure my face?"
But e'en as she spoke
In the sky there awoke
A wind that demolished the vase.

With features all pale and distorted she cried,
Still clinging up close to the glass.
"Cry for help." Said the bird,
"They will hear not a word,
For none seem to listen who pass."

There's a moral concealed in the little bird's throat
That never her song will disclose;
But oft when the cloud
For the sun makes a shroud
She thinks of the beautiful rose,
Who died with a coronet touching her brow,
Crushed from sight by the hurrying throng,
And she smiles at a prince,
Who yet leans on the fence
And hears nothing else but her song.

A Sigh or a Tear.

A Sigh or a Tear.

A sigh or a tear
Is all you may fear,
As you watch the sweet-faced summer go,
And the throng of memories that you know.
A sigh for the star that stood in the West,
Now sinking down with the sun to rest,
For the smiles that live in an absent face
Like the blossoms of love in the heart's clear vase.

A sigh or a tear
Is all you may fear.

A sigh or a tear
Is all you may fear
When you sit in the dusk with a new cigar,
And touch some chord on the old guitar.
A tear for the girl that was good and true,
For the songs of love—the letters, too,

And the ribbon around the roses tied
That long ago in the drawer died.

A sigh or a tear
Is all you may fear.

A sigh or a tear
Is all you may fear
When you raise the lid to the little chest
And find what a mother's heart loves best,
A broken toy, a half-worn shoe,
Some little dresses of pink and blue,
The blocks that builded such marvelous towers,
A golden curl, and some withered flowers.

A sigh or a tear
Is all you may fear.

A sigh or a tear
Is all you may fear
When you gaze in the tomb of the dear dead past,
Where the shadows of sunshine yet are cast.
A sigh for the rose, though bleached and dried,
That close to the loved one lived and died,
For the voice that is still—once dear to thee—
For the face that is gone—ah me! ah me!

A sigh or a tear
Is all you may fear.



Snow-Flakes.

Snow-Flakes.

SEE the early snow-flakes!
Softly they descend,
Like an orchard blossom
Scattered by the wind.

Here and there they're flying
Over all the trees,
High above them swarming
Like white-winged bees.

Faster still they're whirling,
Dancing into sight,
Like a troop of fairies
When the moon is light.

Tripping down the highway
In a reckless gait,
Falling like a feather
Without sound or weight.

On the distant churchyard
Over graves unkept,
Where the leaves have drifted
And the clouds have wept.

Little band of angels
Doing only good,
Making white the meadow
And the lonely wood.

Greeting with light kisses
All they chance to meet,
Leaving shining footprints
All about the street.

Little winter children
Full of life and fun—
Oh! I love the snow-flakes,
Love them every one.



A Footprint.

A Footprint.

A sweet song spoke to me one day,
Behind a prayer that passed my way,
Yet neither would for me delay
 The upward flight.
I searched and found a footprint where
The song had tarried; but the prayer
Had left no trace on earth or air.

Straight from the heart it went to God
The song remained to smooth the clod,
And lay a flower upon the sod.

 O, envied right!
If but one song of mine could chase
Some sorrow from the heart and face
I know in Heaven 'twould find a place.



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