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EUGENIA PARHAM.

LONGING
AND OTHER POEMS

By
EUGENIA PARHAM.



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JENNINGS AND GRAHAM

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IN GRATEFUL AND LOVING REMEMBRANCE

I Dedicate

THIS LITTLE VOLUME TO
MY BEST FRIENDS—MY STUDENTS

STILL MOVED BY THE DOUBLE MOTIVE
OF WISHING TO IMPART A BEN-
EFIT AND LONGING TO WEAR
THEIR AFFECTION TO THE
END OF THE DAY

*Across the years that Time has spun,
And all the ways our feet have run
Since those old days in which we sat
And questioned much, of this and that
From poet, priest and seer and sage
Of many a clime and many an age,—
Through distance dim, by land and sea,
Dear faces still smile up at me,
Familiar, where all else is strange,
Unchanged, amid a world of change.*

*And smiling thus, they sweetly keep
My heart in touch with God's great, deep,
Round world, whose starry-purpled rim
Of hill and sky lead back to Him.
And when our journeyings here have passed
That far-off shore-line blue and vast,
I pray that these, my faces fair,
May greet me in that Otherwhere.*

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LONGING.

It lives in the blush of the rose,
It glides in the stream as it flows
Forever, forever away;
It surges and lashes and sweeps
Through ocean billows gray,
And dreams on the tide as it creeps
And ebbs in the land-locked bay.

It croons in the storm; it flits
In the lightning gleam, and sits
Snow-capped on the mountain crest;
It shines in the light of the star
And flames in the robin's breast;
Through all the silence vague and far
Goes on the ceaseless quest.

From the shades of our human despair,
It calls us to heights of prayer,

Past fear and doubt and dread ;
It wakes in the world-weary sigh,
A pæan of hope instead ;
It laughs in the baby's eye,
It smiles from the face of our dead.

Over all our changing way,
Through all our little day
From the sunrise to the sod ;
In the sorrow or joy that breaks
Under fortune's smile or its rod,
An infinite something still speaks
Our eternal kinship with God.

THE HEART'S PLEA.

Let 's quit this worry and care and fret
About the things that we can not get ;
And these old ambitions, let 's leave them,
 too,

And laugh and love as we used to do
Before we had pledged our better self
To the graceless striving for place and pelf.

Let 's lay our vain pretensions by—
The world 's not fooled, nor you, nor I ;
These make-believes of fancied show
Appease us not ; our hearts must know
The voiceless longing, the weary stress
Behind the rubbish we call success.

What 's wealth but a thing to cheat at last
The soul that enshrines and holds it fast ?
What gain in power, to strut and vaunt
Above our fellows ? All we want
Or e'er shall want from God or men
Is just to love—and be loved again.

UNCONQUERED.

Yes, I have fought and bled ;
Have fought oft times and lost ;
Have seen the field strewn with the up-
turned dead
Of what I loved the most.
I know how to relinquish all, and then
Unarmed to stand before the foe ;
The emptiness, the grief, the bitter pain
Of sure defeat, I know.
And though no victor's crown shall e'er be
mine,
Nor ever a laurel wreath,
I am no coward ; I do not fear to sign
With life or death :
Assured alone the cause is right,
I only ask to be allowed to stand
Among the common ranks of men,
And in the common struggle at the end
Fall, but to cheer the fight.

CHARITY.

We can not judge another's thought or way
By any guidance we have felt or known;
Time treads on all—we journey as we may,
In paths we have not chosen as our own.

We lift our eyes in widely differing sight,
Our hands we stretch in widely differing
need;

The thing that one sufficeth as a light,
May still another into darkness lead.

One stands secure, where nobler ones have
failed,
And falls where meaner ones have stood
secure;

The victories one triumphs in, entailed
Upon another some defeat as sure.

Our fallen brother, as we pass him by,
Is what we might have been—we can not
know

What virtues under all his vices lie,
Nor what the struggle that cost his over-
throw.

Each life has its full measure of unrest;
Grief gnaws alike through famine and
through fame.

Ah, World! well may we pity even the best,
And spare the worst our censure and our
blame.

THE PHILOSOPHER.

Keep courage, Old Man. No need
To whine
Nor repine
Because you have failed to succeed.
If the cloud 's in your sky,
And your world 's gone awry,
Do n't sit down and cry,
But just set your eye
On the goal and try
What power there may be in grit
To endure—to endure:
And Friend, be sure
Always to keep courage—do n't quit.

Just hold up your head, my Friend.
There 's a way
And a day

In which all these troubles will end.
With faith and a prayer
Honest labor to share,
Why, look up and dare
Misfortune and care
To drag a man down to the pit:
With God overhead,
Do n't be afraid,
But keep courage, Old Man, and do n't quit.

AUGUST.

The air is filled with soft, sweet-cadenced
sound

That trails and winds through every
shrub and tree,

And kisses with a clinging touch the lea,
As it were hymning praises to the ground
For its full offering of fruits new-found :

The farm-boy's halloo echoes far and free
Across the wood, his heart's wild melody ;
The lark's high song, attuned to all around,
Keys the rich orchestra of bird and bee
And flower and stream ; the breezes, thin
and rare,

Sway into rhythm, joining the minstrelsy
Of earth and sky ; the very Silence there,
But yesterday a low, unsounding sea,
Awakes and throbs divinest harmony.

BY THE EVENING FIRE.

O blessed rest! To feel the day
And its worn struggles slip away,
Its busy cares dimmed out of sight
By the ruddy gleam of my hearthstone
bright;

While I, within my armchair curled,
Unloose my soul—shut out the world—
And rest, and so rest on, content
To watch the pictured wonderment
Of bursting bud and flushing bloom
And fair face breaking through the gloom
Upon the wall, to smile and glow
And bring again the long-ago.

The long-ago! Who would forget?
Not you, who vain ambitions fret,
Nor you, who cringe for mammon's spoil;
Not you, who win your bread by toil?

Not I—nor they—whose better part
Is just the treasures of the heart :
And so to-night I list and lean
To catch the music glad between—
Hand-clasps and loves and laughter sweet,
The spell of words, the sound of feet,
The long, long light of tender eyes,
Glimpsing my two eternities.

The fire, a conjurer might be,
So deft it shifts the scenes for me—
A flowery lane, a meadow gay,
A strip of wood, a brook at play,
A flock of white clouds drifting by
Like hosts from out God's angelry,
And summers lapsed in singing joy
To match in heart a truant boy.
I see a footpath round a hill,
And children wandering at will
Where alders bloom and elm-trees throw
Their cool, deep shadows dark below,
Unmindful, till a dinner-horn
Divides the afternoon from morn.

The then and now, God's love-light blends
About me here. What storm He sends
Is but a part of that old day
With which He blessed my childhood's
 play;
For one is by me, very near,
Who shapes my dreams; and low and clear
I hear her voice, as soft she sings
My babe—and me—to better things;
O, well I know that that we love
Is what we make our heaven of,
And mine, however far or wide,
Is here around my fireside.

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS.

On the road to Emmaus,
Swift stumbling down the plain,
The lonely sunset marking
Our three-days' faith, now slain!
Back there in Jerusalem
The shadows darkly loom
On ruined hopes—on Calvary,
And aye the sealed tomb.

On the road to Emmaus—
What matters? Anywhere,
To hide away our sorrow
And our black despair.
The veil is rent in the temple;
And our eyes are hot and dry
With looking to voiceless heaven,
And vainly asking why.

We sang our hallelujah
In the purple-waking morn,
Then drained the dregs to the bitter
Ere ever the morrow was born :
And now in the dusk of evening
We come—outworn and late ;
Our unmanned hosts are scattered,
Our sacred is desecrate.

On the road to Emmaus—
Why, One has come to greet,
And journey down the night with us!
And sit with us at meat!
O gracious Guest! The Master
Has walked our way beside!—
Our grief is now our holy,
Our cross is glorified.

We may not sink in the byways
Or the vale of craven rest ;
But back to the thick of the human
With the strong ranks, breast to breast !
Away, again to the mountain!
Through the middle watch of the night ;
Thrice armed are we for battle—
Ours is no losing fight.

THE EGOIST.

And life at best
Is vague unrest,
A shadow ever moving ;
A little care,
A little prayer,
A little hopeless loving.

A breath of light
Blown through the night,
Intangible and fleeting ;
The sum of years
Is in our tears,
Our parting and our meeting.

And some sad day
We pause and say
We're tired of its keeping ;
A little sigh,
The world goes by,
And leaves us to our sleeping.

THE ALTRUIST.

A hail! Ahoy!
A burst of joy,
Triumphant through all striving;
To right a wrong,
To sing a song
Is guerdon for our living.

A trail of light
Struck through the bright,
High world of love's endeavor;
Away with tears!
There are no years,
Love only knows forever!

And some new day,
Beside the way
We catch a signal forward:
A little smile—
Good-bye, awhile—
Earth-clipt, we speed on starward!

ASLEEP.

(In the National Soldiers' Cemetery, near
Nashville.)

Here where the lingering sunbeams lightly
stray,
And soft winds softer murmur as they
blow,
And woodland echoes mellowed, fainter
grow,
And the blue skies, caressing bend and
sway,
As they were kissing earth in reverent way ;
Where dreamy shadows, quivering, come
and go
In dreamy lengths upon the graves below,
And round the silent marbles trembling
play ;

Where Nature loves through all the year
to set

Her sweetest thoughts ; where, 'neath her
magic hand

The flowers blossom and the frosts forget,
Lie the Nation's honored dead. O fallen
band,

Sleep well—in Blue or Gray! No soldier
yet

Has ever slept within a fairer land.

VOICES.

Listen, listen to the Earth,
Singing of her myriad birth,
Sighing of her myriad death,
Telling in each wave and breath
 Evermore how life doth press
Against all life with beating heart,
 Giving still some sweet redress
In the hope it would impart.

Yonder sounds the wood-dove's note
Lonely from his hidden cote ;
And the skylark, up among
Clouds of azure, trills his song
Like a burst of praise and prayer
 Pouring music everywhere.

Drowsily the cattle stray,
Browsing where the sunbeams play ;

Teeming fields of golden grain
Whispering of sun and rain ;
Woodlands crooning in the breeze,
Meadows calling to the bees,
All in chorus now rehearse
 The anthem of creation's past—
The mystery of the universe,
 That shall the universe outlast.

THE SILENT LAND.

O Silent Land!

Where liest thou—in what calm sphere,
So hushed away from listening mortal ear,
That faintest voice nor heart-throb echoes
back,

Nor softest footstep wakes along thy track
Of all the broken, human band
That once hath touched thy shadowy strand!

O Land! O Land!

Of all our sweetest dreams and songs!
Thy silentness our yearning but prolongs;
What peaceful barks to thee have drifted
o'er?

What stranded wrecks have dashed against
thy shore?

No answer! Never a white-ribbed sail
To signal back our eager hail.

Deep, Silent Land!

With thy distant, soul-strewn border-shore,
What longings and what hopes for ever-
more

Around thee cling! And simple faith must
still

The ancient pledge of God to man fulfill,
And trust that in the end a Hand
Will bring us to thy rest, O Land!

FATE.

I love you. No power in earth or heaven
Can blot that out. And though I say it nay
A thousand times through every passing
day,

A thousand times through every new night
given,

It still is true. As if a bolt were riven
Through that one thought, it flashes o'er the
way

Of all the universe: it seems to play
Through every tone of earth, by Nature
driven;

The flowers and the grasses at my feet,
The river's murmur and the ocean's beat
Speak but the same. All things, indeed,
have run

To these three words, "I love you," never
done,

But ever chanting on through space and
time;

It needs must be eternity's chief rhyme.

A HAPPY WOMAN.

“I shall be happy!” she said,
As she gathered the poppies white and red ;
“I will pull the blue grapes over the wall,
And sit in the shade and eat them all ;
And count the butterflies one by one,
As they fly along in the morning sun,—
I shall be happy!” she said.

“I shall be happy!” she said,
As they placed the orange-wreath on her
head ;
“Life will be lovely and love will be true,
I shall drink the wine without the rue ;
I will share my joy with the poor and sad,
And help to make the world more glad,—
I shall be happy!” she said.

“I shall be happy!” she said,

.

And they strewed white lilies over her—
dead.

They closed the eyes and smoothed the hair,
And one who stood there dropped a tear ;
They folded the hands on the quiet breast—
Poor empty hands—and what was the rest?
And she was happy! I said.

A DAY.

I come to you a gift from out God's past ;
Ancient of ancient, I shall forever last ;
And yet, as fleeting as a baby's dream,
To-morrow I shall be but what I seem—
A little shroud of being dimly done
Between a rising and a setting sun ;
A half-remembered melody of song,
A burst of joy that lasted none too long ;
A plighted faith, a broken vow, a sigh,
A fitful hour beneath the purple sky
Of pleasure ; or, maybe, a thousand years
Of splendid victory—of toil and tears
For duty's sake. Take me, I am yours to
use ;
All that men long for is mine, and you may
choose
Your destiny—to wear the kingly crown
That high endeavor wins, or play the clown,
And with your cap and bells and painted
face
Mimic the ring, the ignoble of your race.

INDIAN SUMMER.

The days come faint and sweet from out
their far,

Dim nowhere, slipping over earth as light
As dreams across the tired sleeper's sight,
And like them leaving shadowy forms that
are

But hints of soul-life hid behind the bar
Of conscious thought. The autumn forest
bright

Holds motionless its painted memories, quite
Content to lose no tint of sun or star
From all its past; while over wood and
heath

And shining river hangs a soft mist-wreath
Of silence vague; the clouds are still; and
high

Above is poised the hushed expanse of sky;
Sound drifts, and dies away—and every-
where

The world is quiet in a wordless prayer.

IN BOHEMIA.

Stragglers we, from the ranks of men,
Pausing to-day to rest—but then,
To-morrow some other spot as well,
May serve as a place in which to dwell;
We have bread to win, and an Art to hold,
And between these two there is little gold.

We are used to wandering—our attic eaves
Are changed as often as springtime leaves;
We like high life—select, you know,
To look down on the world below;
Not much to eat, not much to wear,
But so the better, not much to care.

We own the earth, the sea, and the sky,
And music and poetry dwell hard by;
The winds come to us in measured bars,
And our familiar friends are the stars;

For the rest, we dream we are monarchs—
see?

And to dream for the time is just to be.

We have our joys—our griefs, alas!
And griefs gnaw deep—but let that pass:
We look through tears into other eyes,
And read the sweetest of life's surprise,
And sorrows are soothed away in part
By the touch of a hand, the throb of a heart.

Oh a hand-touch! A heart-throb!—not un-
derstood.

The unexplained mystery of our best good—
Bids us grope in the darkness, believing
it light,
And trust the unseen as the surest of sight;
Bids us struggle in smiles, through doubt
and fear,—
And so we are happy, in Bohemia here.

NIGHT.

O, solemn, shadowy Thing!
Earth's mystery sublime!
Thou holdest beneath thy wing
The majesty of Time.

The music of the stars
Is struck by thee alone;
Creation's notes and bars
Attuned about thy throne!

Old Ocean's tidal-waves
Come at thy beck and call—
Some magic in thee laves
The mightiest of all.

To thee 't was given to see
The great event of earth—
Under thy stars and thee
Was cradled a Savior's birth!

The wonder-world of 'Thought
Unbends beneath thy power ;
Her grandest dreams are wrought
Within thy deepest hour.

Thy silence and thy dark,
Lonely companions twain,
The bounds of ages mark
In Heaven's divinest strain.

And yet, in heaven, they say
Thou shalt not ever be,
No night shall break the day
Of that eternity.

No Night! But face to face
With all the things that be!
Star-wheeling over space,
We then shall know and see!

A FOREST ROMANCE.

Sweet-William was a forester
With something of renown ;
In tangled wildwood, blithe and free,
He dwelt remote from town.

But still his heart kept longing
For a gentle floweret rare,
Who grew behind old trellised walls
In a city garden fair.

And so he went a-wooing
All on a bright spring day,
Dressed in his very Sunday-best,
This woodland prince of May.

He boldly scaled the frowning gate,
All dangers else defied,
And won the sweet Miss Violet
To be his sylvan bride.

And straightway she forsook her state,
To wander far with him
By hill and glen and forest glade
And winding river rim.

And still in quiet valleys,
On sun-kissed moorlands gray,
In brambly heaths, up purple peaks,
These happy lovers stray,

Telling to earth-born children,
From out the rime and dew,
How every spot is beautiful
If only love be true.

FAITH.

My times are in Thy hand, O Lord!
I know not how nor why,
Nor whence nor where; I trust Thy word
To guide me with Thine eye;
To lead me where still waters flow,
Or where the rocks are steep;
I'm safe to follow Thee, I know,
Though oceans round me sweep.

My times are in Thy hand, O Lord!
Whate'er of shade or shine
Thou givest me, I know Thy word
Of promised love is mine;
To make the bright but brighter still,
To bid the tempest cease,
And every depth of gloom to fill
With Thy mysterious peace.

My times are in Thy hand, O Lord,
To limit or extend;
'T is thine to wake the sleeping chord,
Or bid its music end;
'T is Thine to give, withhold or take,
As seemeth Thee the best—
I stretch out pleading hands—Oh make
Me trust Thee for the rest!

THE HEIGHTS BEYOND.

There are grander heights beyond, O
Friend!

Why pause we in the valley's trend?
Far through the distance of our way
I look to where the star-gleams play.

'T is true we 're tired—we scarce can smile,
We have journeyed such a weary while;
We have hurt our hearts and scarred our
hands

In toil God only understands.

We fain would rest; we long for dreams
In which our struggling vaguely seems;
We are loth to leave our hard-earned plain,
But there are grander heights to gain.

What mind we of our bruised feet?
Are not all noble things, and sweet,

High-set, that climbing in their quest
The best alone may win the best?

The little triumphs we have known,
The victories we lean upon
Were meaner failures, if we fail
Those grander heights above to scale.

Then up! though rugged be the steep,
And wild the winds that round us sweep!
To linger here were coward's ease—
There are grander heights, O Friend, than
these!

PARTING.

Soft, soft, O Light!
Fall soft to-night,
And touch earth with your sweetest kiss;
No other day
To us, always,
Can bring and be the same as this.

O, dim and far
As yonder star
The future stretches to our eyes;
Still hold us here,
We would not peer
Just yet into its strange surprise.

O Evening, sweet,
Still stay our feet;
Last, last a little longer yet;
In vain would be
Eternity,
Could we the thought of thee forget.

OCTOBER.

Now comes the Autumn's prime in splendid
dress,

Bespangled rich with chosen gems, more
dear,

Because mementoes of a vanished year
On which oblivion soon shall press ;
Flowers, rare with the breath of June, nor
less

In beauty than the brilliant summer's
clear,

Bright bloom, are scattered far and near,
As treasured relics of past loveliness ;

Upon the wooded hills some painter gay
Has left a thousand pictures of the time,

Wherein his fancy reveled in the May
Of its sweetest love-dream ; a pantomime
Of olden memories, fitful seems to play
About the earth, of every age and clime.

A CURL.

I sit with a bright, gold curl in my hand—
A gleam from the sunshine straying—
I press out the dainty silken strand
Whose owner is owned by another Land,
Where the sunlight forever is playing.

And I wonder why the voiceless thing
Has been treasured so long in my keep-
ing—

What unseen power in the tangled ring
I know not—but thro' it the angels sing,
And over it the world is weeping.

I sometimes have thought it was foolish to
hold

Such a scrap of the love of my loving,—
Just a hint of the form that the years enfold,
Now hushed away like a tale that is told,
Or a harp-string that broke in the prov-
ing.

But humanity, the same in whatever clime,
These still, faded relics is keeping;
Human hearts cannot change for the sake of
a rhyme,
Human love cannot die, though its dream
for all time
Beneath marble and moss may be sleep-
ing.

And I feel what it is to keep faith with the
past,
And faith in the beauty of heaven,
When I think how these curls are but chains
overcast
With the gold of a memory holding us
fast—
God's chains, that can never be riven!

THE TENNESSEE.

From laureled height and haunted glen,
Past vales and meads of flowers,
Our river, rippling on as when
It threaded Indian bowers,
Still tells of hearts that dwell beside
Its waters seaward tending,
Of love, outreaching far and wide,
And evermore unending.

It brings to us old heart-worn lays,
Quaint gems of song and story ;
Recalls the hymn of peaceful days
And the dirge of war-fields gory ;
It sings of many a romance true,
And many a deed of duty,
Of poet lives that never knew
The outward guise of beauty.

And murmurs on of hills and greens,
Through which its windings wandered,
Of waterfalls where crystal sheens
Like our young hopes are squandered.
Of forest cot and palace home,
And church-spire skyward pressing,
Of mountain-tops, whose awful gloom
Is bathed in heaven's caressing.

The miner's shout, the woodman's song,
The hunter's glad halloo,
Its silvery waters still prolong,
Its banks resound anew.

The fisher's boat floats lightly on
Beside the steamer plying;
The song and prayer of all, as one,
God's peace is prophesying.

Its gentleness rebukes our strife,
Its calmness stills our longing—
O Man, to man this little life
Is hardly worth the wronging;
Better the wealth of kindly hearts
Than gold of power's upbuilding,
The light of lowly homes, than marts
Of ambition's costly gilding.

And Thou, our Shining Stream, we ask,
Still let thy rhythmic measure
Beguile our hearts in every task
To make all duty pleasure ;
And journeying to the great white sea,
God grant, our lives possessing
Like Thine, the calm of Galilee,
Shall end like Thine in blessing.

WHO KEEPS THE CITY?

If lips but spake the thoughts that in the
heart

Lie folded close from human voice apart,
What freight of sorrow through the still
moonlight

Would break in sobs of grief, the peace of
night!

OVERRULED.

We look into to-morrow, and we dream
 We see its hours swift-winged with glad-
 voiced cheer
Of happiness long-sought, and faintly
 hear
The imagined sound of melodies, which
 seem
To float triumphant to our human realm ;
 But when the night has passed, unto our
 ear
Come tones faint-touched, from chords no
 mortal seer
Has heard ; and through the strange, new
 day there gleam
 Visions of things we had not planned nor
 known ;

New forms, new faces greet us where the
old

Were wont to be; and where yesterday
shone

Our dearest love-light, all is gray and cold;
Among the shadows of our dreams,
alone

We sit and read the tale to-day has told.

A SONG FOR THE BRAVE.

Aye, Puritan son, thou art true to thy blood!

With thy hand on thy blade, as thy father
of old,

Thou dost stand for the rights of the race,
as he stood,

As fearless, as bold.

What matter that weeds in thy furrow may
grow,

And rust on thy plow?

There be those that toil for God and men,
Even as thou.

What shalt thou reap? The anguish of
pain,—

A grave, no doubt, in a distant land,

Unwept, unsung, save the funeral strain
Of thy comrade band,

And the tears of her who gave thee birth
And fired thy heart
With the ancient courage of thy clan
To do thy part.

Ignoble the peace by cowards won!
When duty's call is heard on high,
Love's armies fear nor sword nor gun,
Though some should die!
Then hold the field, thou valiant van,
Thy bugle sound
Until its notes of freedom ring
The earth around!

GOING TO THE REUNION.

Lucy, bring my old gray coat,
And dust it up a bit;
I'm not as stout as I used to be,
But I think that it will fit.
The boys are goin' to make a raid
Up here on Louisville;
I kind o' want to join 'em,
And I've decided that I will.

Yes, it's gettin' pretty old—
Nearly forty years, I guess,
Since your mother cried and put it away
In that old cedar press.
Tom and Jim went with me—
It was mighty hard, you see,
For only one to kiss her,
When she'd said good-bye to three.

But Jim, you know, at Bull Run,
Stayed in the front all day—
At night, among the heaps o' dead,
Out on the field he lay.
And Tom and me, we still fought on—
I tell you, he was brave—
But the second day at Gettysburg
I helped to make his grave.

It was lonesome to me after that,
With both the boys gone;
But I had no time for grievin',
For Lee kept marchin' on.
I followed him for two more years,
Through battles thick and thin,
Till at last at Appomattox
Our ranks was clean hemmed in.

An' so we were told to surrender—
I reckon 't was just as well—
But if Lee had given the order
We 'd a fought till the last man fell.
They said we was whipped, but we was n't;
The truth is, we had no men;
We 'd worn 'em out a-whippin'
The Yankees over again.

And though we left Virginia
Red with battles that were done,
The North never had a victory
While Lee's men had a gun.
We talk about the "Lost Cause,"
But I do n't think it was lost;
For each side knows that what was gained
Was less than what it cost.

And now when I think about it
I have n't got any spite;
The North and the South both found at last
That might can't conquer right.
As brothers we've had our quarrels,
As brothers we'll have 'em yet;
But we've each learned to know the other
In a way we'll not forget.

So brush out the wrinkles, Lucy;
I'm goin' on dress parade;
I want to hear the roll-call
Once more of the old brigade.
There won't be many—the Earthworks
Are about all left unmanned,
For the General and most of his army
On Heaven's battlements stand.

THE SIGN-POST.

I stop and read with thoughtful eyes
The sign-post standing grim and gray ;
I read it once with strange surprise
That it should mark so long a way.

Twenty miles to L——. It seems
Not very distant ; yet I 've been
A weary way, and in my dreams
Full many a city I have seen.

I wonder where the children are
Who played with me that summer morn,
They must have wandered very far—
There are no footprints in the corn.

I mind me of a merry band
Who tracked the dust beside the road,
With trailing daisy-chain in hand—
Are they hid over in that wood?

Nay, I remember ; one by one

 Their questioning eyes the sign-post saw,
And one by one when play was done

 They followed nature's Westward law.

The children are all gone—ah, me!

 Their songs make music elsewhere ;
The daisy-chains are dead ; and we
 Can weave no others half so fair.

Well, well, we had not learned the truth

 Writ dimly 'neath that lettered sign ;
How could we know, so full of youth
 That twenty miles beyond that line,

Would take us far away from home

 Into the busy world,—but then
A million miles, howe'er we come
 Could never lead us home again?

THE CRICKET ON THE HEARTH.

Most constant of my trusted friends,
This small, black-coated fellow lends
Himself and voice, my hearth to cheer,
Through all the seasons of the year.
No hireling, he—he takes no wage
From me or mine, but blithe and sage
He dwells beneath my roof, content
To have no thought of tax or rent.

A squatter sovereign—his little world
Within my chimney ramparts curled,
Is world enough for him. No doubt
He has his problems to work out,
Problems ancient as the flood,
Domestic cares of clothes and food—
But when the twilight falls, his song
Across my hearth rights many a wrong.

His tender, reminiscent strain
Wakes sacred memories in my brain,

And stirs the smouldering back-log's light
Of an old fireside, where faces bright
With love are ranged. And clear and quick
I hear the knitting-needles click,
And laughter soft and voices dear
Now hushed away for many a year.

A socialist, by birth and fame:
Where Civilization stakes her claim,
And lifts her smoke-wreath to the sky
To mark her altar fires, hard by
His modest domicile he sets
And all his wanderings there forgets,
The while he chants the faithful hymn
That waked creation's twilight dim.

O tranced Singer! Small the need
Of pulpit-voice to forge thy creed—
The day in patient labor spent,
At evening, in thy low-pitched tent,
Whatever skies may flash or swell,
Cheerily thou sayest, "All is well."
If loud the storm, thy song the more
Breaks tranquil through its wildest roar.

BEREFT.

When suddenly there passes from your sight
And from the life around you some sweet
face

Which you have looked to as the ideal
grace

Of your best being, and the guiding light
Of each and every common day and night,
By which to measure your ambition's
pace,

Your soul's high aims, your hopes for
nobler ways,

Your love of truth, your purer sense of right
And better faith in men; and when missed
so,

You realize, that as the years unfold

You shall not meet it in the ebb and flow
Of all the human faces, nor behold

It in your loneliest hour, then you may
know

How great a void so small a world may
hold.

A MEMORY.

A tangle of mosses in shaded dells,
Where clear, cool water, gurgling wells,
And a silvery, wandering stream, deep-set
Where the rocks and grasses its rippings
 fret,
And green-hung hills and blue, bent skies
Folding the world in a sweet surprise,
And a rocking boat in the dancing spray—
Ah, whither? No matter—together, that
 day!

INSUFFICIENCY.

Life comes and goes,
Stands still, and flows
In smooth or ruffled measure;
We stretch out hands,
But iron bands
Hold back the longed-for treasure.

We grasp, we cling—
Some unseen thing
With strange and subtle power,
May make or mar,
May give or bar
Possession in the hour.

And well-planned days
In other ways
Than ours are ever tending;
The threads we spin
Are woven in
With undreamed patterns blending.

But baffled still
In wish and will,
Accepting or resigning,
We yet shall know
God wrought it so,
In over-love designing.

TEN.

Well, and so you are ten to-day?
Ten! And where is the baby, then, I pray?
Ten by your fingers and ten by your toes,
So that's the way our baby grows!

Why, only yesterday, it seems to me,
We were teaching the baby a, b, c;
And, "Th'ee little mice sat down to spin"—
O, my! how the thought of it makes me
grin.

There were tales that the baby loved to hear
As we sat in the twilight, very near
And grew quite still—for 't was dark, you
know,
And a great big owl might hollo, "to-
whoo!"

There were yellow-jackets and bumble-
bees

And a lot of things that lived up the trees,
And buzzed and screeched with a "chee,
chee, chee,"

That the baby was always wanting to see.

And an old brown toad that she liked to
chase

Every day about the place ;
And so she never wanted to stop,
For it made her laugh to see him hop.

She broke the poppies and roses red,
And showered the petals all over her head ;
She pulled the grapes and kept busy all day
At some sort of work that she thought was
play.

But that was long, O, long ago—
Ten, did you say? Why, it can't be so!
You 'd be gray-headed if that were true,
And I 'd be as old as Methuselah, too.

CONSOLATION.

(After "Black Mammy.")

'T ain't no use to be a-frettin'
'Bout de things that 's all gone wrong,
'Cause de Lord, He am a-settin'
In de heavens, good an' strong.

He ain't got no notion leavin'
Us wid all dese troubles here ;
So, honey, do n't you be a-grievin'
While de Lord am takin' kere.

Jes' you keep yo' face a-shinin'
An' your heart right strong and true,
An' you 'll see de silver linin'
Of dem dark clouds breakin' through.

You sho' do n't need to be a-weepin'
At dis ol' world's frownin' face ;
De Lord dat made it still am keepin'
Watch from out His same ol' place.

HIS LESSONS.

Learn your lesson, little boy!

Never mind the distant rim of the sky,
Stop dreaming of paths across the hills,
You shall go there by and by.

Learn your lesson, young man!

Flinch not at the thunderbolts overhead;
Far up the crags is a sunlit crest—
Hold steady the way you tread!

Learn your lesson, stalwart man!

Dark clouds are lowering on every side,
The mountains shake—the storm is on!
And the world is weary and wide.

Your lesson is done, old man!

You have fallen asleep on the fresh green
sod,
Dreamless at last in the rest that lies
Out on the hills of God!

OUR ROYALTY.

A day of majesty awaits us all,
Crowned and sceptered. The King doth
call!

Silent attendants bending low
At head and feet as they come and go.

Dignity seated upon the face,
A monarch's smile, a monarch's grace
Of calm repose and stately air,
The observed of all observers there.

Ladies in waiting, and gentlemen, too,
To do our bidding (though our biddings are
few);

Lords and lackies, with solemn face,
And footmen to hand us to our place.

A coach bedecked with nodding plume,
A procession, for which all else makes room,
And people to pause and stand aside
While we in our grandeur serenely ride.

HE CARES.

Does He care for me, that nights are long,
And days devoid of any song,
That toiling, struggling in life's path,
There beats on me the tempest's wrath?
Is it aught to Him—these falling tears,
That mark the passing of my years?

Does He care for me, that there lies hid
My sweetest face 'neath a coffin-lid?
That in the wilderness alone,
I meet temptation, battling on,
Or climbing in a weary quest,
Look vainly still for any rest?

Why should I ask, "Is it aught to Him?"
Those days in Galilee, so dim,
So full of toil, can He forget?—
Can memory lose Mount Olivet?
Can Heaven shut out that night when He
Knelt low in old Gethsemane?

CLEBURN AT CHICKAMAUGA.

The day was all but lost,
And a broken, tired host,
In the setting of the sun,
Looked across the dead and wounded
To a battle well-nigh rounded
Into defeat—when, lo! there run
Through cannon's roar, and shot and shell
A strange, weird sound—the Rebel yell!
And wilder woke the din and jar,
And louder clanged the notes of war
Through forest glade and river glen
At set of sun, when Cleburn's men
Charged at Chickamauga.

Onward they dashed to death!
Triumph in every breath—
The challenge of the brave.

The muttering furies of disaster
Hurled destruction fast and faster
 Into a mighty living grave;
Mangled horse and horseman heard,
The dying caught the shout, and stirred;
Then victory changed its front—and then—
The battle broke, when Cleburn's men
 Charged at Chickamauga!

Carnage reigned supreme;
 Red ran the mountain stream,
 And the sky with smoke hung black;
A dauntless foe belched forth his thunder,
While frenzied steel with steel clashed under
 And gave its deadly echoes back;
Unwavering lines of heroes paid
The patriot's debt to valor made,
And glory wept her thousands slain
On that dread field, when Cleburn's men
 Charged at Chickamauga.

Night's pitying darkness crept
 Over the vale where slept
A mingled mass of Blue and Gray

In a dreamless sleep forever,
Close beside the peaceful river
Winding onward to the sea.
Amid the solemn death-watch round,
A valiant army held the ground ;
Deep silence settled through the glen ;
And Fame, that night—and Cleburn's men
 Camped at Chickamauga!

IN THE SILENT CITY.

They are sleeping
Without keeping
Thought of vanished day or year,
Never dreaming
Of the seeming
Shadows lying 'round them here.

No one waketh,
No one breaketh
The deep silence spread around ;
Not a sorrow
Of to-morrow
Falls across their peace profound.

They remember
No December,
And no summer roses fleet ;
World-hearts throbbing,
World-hearts sobbing
Cannot break their slumbering sweet.

They shall never
More forever
Look in vain for faces gone,
Nor returning
With soul-yearning
Find loved places vacant—lone.

All their roving
And their loving
Now is over,—hushed for aye,
As a token
Of unbroken
Rest in a Land far away.

SATURDAY NIGHT.

The twilight falls. A thousand hurrying
feet

Tread rhythmic on the darkening street;

The restless tumult of the busy day,

Now softer, fainter, dies away,

As the world, grown weary of its worldly
quest,

Turns again homeward for love and rest;

While over all, caressing, bend and beam

The stars that looked on Eden's dream.

THE DREAMER.

Swiftly past the world of strife,
Far beyond the ills of life,
Past the cares that veil the day
And the fears that 'round it play,
The dreamer, restless now no more,
Pauses on an unseen shore.

Pauses, and amid the song
Of the souls that 'round him throng,
Catches there the low refrain
Of a gentler, truer strain
Than bard or poet ever sung,
Than ever thrilled on mortal tongue.

The music of the inner heart,
Where words and voices have no part;
Where never yet a note unstrung
Back on the soul its discord flung,

Where fair forms vanished, live again,
And joys, that will not break in pain.

Where love, unmindful of life's tears,
Lives magical, without life's years ;
Where hand-clasps never are undone,
And nothing 's lost that e'er was won,
And where the dreamer and the dream
Make real all the things that seem.

THE MAIN CHANCE.

The sky 's held up its rim a bit
To give the world more room,
An' I hear the jaybird chantin'
That the dogwood is in bloom.

I can see the redbud laughin'
At the ol' pine's solemn gloom;
It's time to go a-fishin'
For the dogwood is in bloom.

Never mind the corn-plantin'
Nor the mortgage on the home,
I'll take my chance for livin'
When the dogwood is in bloom.

Leave the plow in the furrer,
An' hang the gear in the shed;
Le's make off for the water—
An' trust the Lord for bread.

WHERE I FOUND HIM.

I could not find Him where I went,
In creed, or chant, or organ strain ;
I scanned the far-off firmament,
And worlds and suns in vain.

In vain where fortune showered her gift,
Where fame her laurel twined,
In vain where marble piles uplift
The hero's name enshrined.

But in the depths of lowly toil
Where Faith against Doubt held place,
And thorns and tears were the victor's spoil,
I met Him face to face.

EMANCIPATION-DAY.

(After Black Mammy.)

Ol' ma'ster sho' done lost his min'
'Bout dat procklermation!
Dat Mr. Lincum, what 's President,
Do n't run dis here plantation.

Come a-tellin' us dat we am free,
An' sturbin' all de quarter—
Nancy, 'f you do n' wash dem dishes up,
I 'll make you think you oughter!

Thomas, go git dat wood, right now,
'N stop dat hollerin' 'n bawlin'!
Jake, dem ho'ses got to be fed,
'N dem rails oughter to be maulin'.

No, I ain't gwine 'way fum dis place
'N leave dese chillun cryin',
What I wuz tol' to tek kere uv
When ol' Miss wus a-dyin'.

Dis place 'am goin' to rack an' ruin
While you niggers is foolin',
Need n't think 'cause Ma'se gone off to town
Nobody here is a-rulin'.

Jeff, fotch dat co'n an' put in de crib!
Calline, git to yo' weavin'!—
Hush, Honey, do n' you cry no mo',
Mammy ain't thinkin' 'bout leavin'!

THE OLD-FASHIONED MOTHER.

She had no gift of eloquence
With orators to vie,
She could not paint a daisy,
However she might try ;
No statue pose of marble
That ever she might rear,
No singer's song ineffable
Broke on her listening ear.

Naught knew she of the mysteries
Of logic or of rhyme,
Nor the voice of science ringing
Through the corridors of time ;
And all unskilled in learning,
Such as the schoolmen taught,
With just the grace of motherhood
Her homely tasks she wrought.

But hers was noble sculpture
As eye has looked upon,
And music sweet as the sweetest
That through old earth has run;
Forth from her roof-tree lowly,
Came sons and daughters brave
In the strength and joy of a beauty
That love and virtue gave.

And hers the voice that fired them
With home and freedom's name,
And hers the hand that held the torch
Which lighted them to fame.

.

O mother, of that olden time,
Lift up your face again,
And cheer to thoughts and deeds sublime,
Once more a world of men!

MY BIRTHDAY.

(August.)

So you are my birthday, come back? Well,
now,

What 's the matter with you, anyhow?

What makes your sunshine look so sad?

And your bird-songs—why, they once were
so glad,

They made me glad. And your flowers, too,
Are not bright at all! and your sky is not
blue!

I would not know you since you have come
back

If I did not look in the almanac;

You seem like some old December day

Slipped out by mistake—what's that you
say?

“I am changed? I am not the same?”

Why, indeed, you must have forgotten my
name.

I 'm the very same girl that used to play
And laugh and dance your hours away,
And sing old songs with a merry glee
From the swaying top of the cherry-tree ;
And do n't you remember my parasol
That I broke from the blossoming alder tall ?

And the children—daisy-crowned brow and
 head,
Making believe they were princes instead ?
And their voices ? Ah, Day ! that is why
 you are lone ;
You have lost their voices, their faces are
 gone !

O Day, you can never be glad any more
When the children are wandering the wide
 world o'er.

TWO LEGACIES.

Two sons from out two distant homes one
day
Went bravely forth, in life to win a way.

And one had wealth to shield him from
rough cares,
The other, poorer, took his mother's
prayers.

One found his way thick-strewn with roses
sweet,
The other trod on thorns with bleeding feet ;

One sought and found high honors at his
hand,
One fought to gain a place whereon to
stand.

One came at noon—wealth gone and roses
dead;

One climbed serene, with sunshine 'round
his head.

One fell before temptation—all disarmed;

One stood amid life's dangers, still un-
harméd.

MYSTERIES.

I wonder what shape Larroes are?
Nobody-else do n't seem to know;
They certainly can't live very far
From Meddlers—they catch 'em so!

I know how Meddlers look, 'cause I
Saw one once, when I waked in the night!
An' I jest pulled the cover up high,
An' shet my eyes right tight!

But the curiourest things of all, to me,
Is Boogers that stan' aroun' an' keep
Watchin' you, an' tryin' to see
If you mind your Ma, an' go to sleep!

THE BOYS IN GRAY.

A song for the ranks of the Boys in Gray!
And what shall it be—or sad, or gay?
No dirge, if you please, for boys like fun—
Ho! Music, there! Let the band play on!

REFRAIN.

And its “Forward, March! with a quick-
step light,
Before the gathering shades of night
Shall call a halt for the last bivouac
At the other end of the long, long track!”

They are marching by with that steady
tread,
The foeman was wont to hear and dread;
For battles won and battles lost,
They have paid to the uttermost farthing the
cost.

Now smiling they go through the fading
years

In laughter and love, not in sadness and
tears,

With the joy that the patriot only may know
Who has stood by his race in its hour of
woe.

Not theirs to chide, not theirs to weep,
But the brotherhood of men to keep,
As they hasten on to the westward plain,
Where reveille is calling the armies again.

Their swords are all sheathed and their guns
are at rest,

And the sunlight streams bright on each
silvery crest;

Away and away to the beautiful land,
They are tramping to join the old com-
mand.

Then hail to the leader! And hail to the
clan!

And hail to the rear guard, pressing close
on the van!

Our heroes of old—our heroes to-day!—
Three cheers, and all hail to the ranks in
Gray!

UNDER THE WILLOWS.

They drifted 'neath the willow boughs,—
Two children at their play,—
And laughed the while their sun-flecked
brows
Were kissed by dancing spray.

Their tiny boats, with oars thrown by,
Upon the tiny stream
Waked swish and swash and fainter sigh
And many a childish dream.

They broke the twigs along the way,
A crown for each bright head—
Ah! many a crown in after day
Was woven of thorns instead.

They played as children, man and wife,
And reared their castles fair,
And day by day they mimiced life,
Without its thought of care.

They loved each other as they grew,
But widening wave swept on ;
They said good-bye,—alas! these two—
And then their play was done.

And so along Time's surging stream
They stood at different prows—
And both forgot that childish dream
Beneath the willow boughs.

BESIDE THE WAY.

I watched a child upon the mead,
Among the flowers straying;
“What seekest thou, little one?” I said,
“O, nought,” said she, and shook her head,
“I ’m only just a-playing.”

In after years I met the maid
Upon life’s hill delaying;
“Art playing still?” “Why, no,” she said,
“Days darken, and the flowers are dead,
And I—I ’m just a-straying.”

HER MAJESTY,

QUEEN OF THE UNITED REALM, DEFENDER OF
THE FAITH, AND EMPRESS OF HOME.

Baby Mary, you have won my heart
With the witching ways of your baby art;
Your tiny fingers, with gentle skill,
Have power to lead me where they will;
I am ready to walk, stand still or go,
If your Baby Highness bid me so.

Baby Mary, you are wondrous wise;
There are curious volumes writ in your eyes
Of fairies and brownies and all such things
About which the poet dreams and sings,
And the hidden lore the magicians sought,
And the science profound, the philosophers
taught.

Baby Mary, you 're a tyrant, too;
You stamp your imperious little shoe,
And pull the grapes and break the flowers,
And make me waste my study hours
In hunting butterflies and bees
Among the clovers, as you please.

But, Baby Mary, you have just one grace,
Can rule the world and the human race;
It surpasses crowns and royal trains
And all the gold of Ophir's plains;
You must have found it somewhere above—
It is your sweet, compelling love.

INCOMPLETENESS.

December days come gloaming in the summer's dying gleams,
Playing with its lights and shadows, tossing
 ing over vanished dreams,
Twisting faded hopes and fancies into broken
 memory sheaves,
Painting buried forms and faces on the
 fallen autumn leaves.

Crooning over song and story, half-forgotten
 many a day,
Blowing into life dead ashes of the things
 long put away,
Thrilling into newer beauty hill and plain
 and meadow white,
Lying softly in the distance of our childhood's
 fairer sight.

And we, longing, ever wistful wonder where
the pathway lies
That breaks away from our poor vision at
the parting of the skies,
Wonder why the longing vainly—why these
dim forms half-revealed
Evermore come thronging round us, yet
are evermore concealed.

THE GRAY.

Ended the bivouac,
The battle done,
Folded the white tents
Away from the sun ;
Hushed the reveille,
The champ and the neigh,
Died out in the distance,
The din and the fray.

Furled the banner,
Silent the drum,
Peace-echoes forever
Keep guard where they come ;
Arms grounded—hearts softened,
Old comrades at last
Give greeting once more
For a battle-fought past.

Broken ranks? Ah, well! yes—
Speak it low, with a sigh,
A remnant of men
Who knew how to die!
Solemn and grand
In that old suit of gray,
They stand for our manhood,
Our heroes, always!

A FROZEN ROSE.

Ha! frozen Rose, why sittest thou there,
So stark and stiff, with that royal air?
A mockery, thou, of that sweeter state
Of thy kindred fair; thou camest too late.

The birds and the bees and the butterflies
Have long since hid from our stormy skies;
As to perfumed blossoms, not one is nigh,
Why, weeks ago they bade us good-bye!

And yet thou lookest majestic quite,
With that crown of icicles gleaming white;
No princess ever wore such gems.
Earthly hands never wrought such diadems.

But what are those glittering things to thee?
Better thine own bright rose-life free?
These jeweled trappings of splendor so cold,
Only the form of thy true self hold.

Not so! For there is thy heart, O Rose,
And its freight of fragrance, the wide world
knows!

No Season's blight, of storm or shine
Can rob thee of that heart of thine;
Under sapphire skies or the ice-king's sheen
Regal thou sittest in state, a queen.

A PRAYER.

O Lord, a world bow at Thy feet to-day,
All pleading for some gift from out Thy
hand;
I, too, come trembling, in Thy sight to
stand,
Content if I may touch Thy hem, and pray
One little glance upon my devious way;
Not mine to ask if I may understand
The path I tread: enough, 't is Thy com-
mand.
Not gold I beg, nor place, nor friends, nor
fame,
Not titled honors 'round a bauble name;
But, if in Thy great love, on one so low
Thou wilt a pitying blessing still bestow,
Over this strange, unresting soul of mine
Pour out Thy peace, O Lord—Thy peace
divine.



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