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and
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SNOW-BOUND: AMONG THE HILLS:
SONGS OF LABOR: AND
OTHER POEMS

BY

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

WITH BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH AND
EXPLANATORY NOTES

HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
Boston: 4 Park Street; New York: 11 East Seventeenth Street
Chicago: 28 Lakeside Building
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
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JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER, of Quaker birth in Puritan surroundings, was born at the homestead near Haverhill, Massachusetts, December 17, 1807. He has described his home and his boyish life in Snow-Bound, and the house visited thus by the storm is still standing. It is open to visitors, and there may be seen the kitchen just as it was when "the warm hearth seemed blazing free." At the secluded farm he lived, knowing the delights of the barefoot boy, and knowing also the bitter winds and frosty ground of a New England winter. He worked upon the farm and went to the district school. His father had a few religious books, and above all the Bible, and the schoolmaster once read aloud some poems of Burns in the Whittier kitchen, and left the book in the hands of the listening boy.

The homely manual labor upon which he was employed was in part the foundation of that deep interest which the poet never ceased to take in the toil and plain fortunes of the people. Throughout his poetry runs this golden thread of sympathy with honorable labor and enforced poverty, and many poems are directly inspired by it. His out-door life let him into some of the secrets of nature, and Burns gave him the hint how to
find poetry in common things. But above all the Bible was the treasury from which he drew a store of fine English and a deep sense of the nearness of God to man.

While he was at work with his father he sent poems to neighboring newspapers and began to attract attention by his verses. A new academy was to be opened at Haverhill when he was nineteen years old, and the editor of the Haverhill paper offered to give him a home while he studied there. He had no money with which to pay for his schooling, but he learned quickly how to make a cheap kind of slipper, and was so industrious that in a few months he had earned enough to pay his expenses at the academy for six months. So closely did he calculate that at the beginning of the term he reckoned that he should have twenty-five cents left over at the end of the term, and so it proved. He paid his way and had just a quarter of a dollar left over. It was the rule of his life never to buy anything till he had the money in hand to pay for it, and though he was pinched for means and had a hard struggle up to middle life he never was in debt.

After a year or so at the academy he had the opportunity to be editor of a Boston weekly paper, and afterward edited for a while a paper in Hartford. He was much interested in politics and when a young man was talked of for Congress. But at this time, when he was apparently at the beginning of a career as a public man, he threw away his chance by allying himself with the anti-slavery agitators, who for many years were denounced by both the great political parties and used their influence chiefly outside of the parties. When Whittier threw himself into this cause, however, he found his voice. Before he had been writing smooth, agreeable poetry
which was much like other poetry of the day and had no great distinction; but now he was set on fire by his indignation at the great wrong done by slavery, and he began to pour out verses which were like a trumpet blast. Not only so, but singing these real war songs he learned the very art of poetry, and then all his love for nature and man and God found expression in beautiful poems which had nothing to do with slavery. No American writer, unless Irving be excepted, has done so much to throw a graceful veil of poetry and legend over the country of his daily life. Essex county in Massachusetts and the beaches lying between Newburyport and Portsmouth blossom with flowers of Whittier's planting; the region approaching the White Mountains is warm with the color he has thrown on hill and lake and forest. He has made rare use of the homely stories he heard in his childhood or learned afterward from familiar intercourse with country people; and he has himself used invention delicately and in harmony with the spirit of the New England coast. Although of a body of men who in earlier days had been persecuted by the Puritans of New England, his generous mind did not fail to detect all the good that was in the stern creed and life of the persecutors, and to bring it forward into the light of his poetry.

In a number of his poems he drew his material from the relation held between the Indians and the settlers. His sympathy was always with the persecuted and oppressed, and so while historically he found an object of pity and a subject for national self-reproach in the Indian, his profoundest compassion and most stirring indignation were called out by African slavery. It is not too much to say that in the slow development of public sentiment
Whittier's steady song was one of the most powerful advocates that the slave had, all the more powerful that it was free from malignity or unjust accusation.

His fondness for a story has led him to use the ballad form in many cases, such as Mabel Martin, Skipper Ireson's Ride and Mary Garvin. The catholic mind of this writer and his instinct for discovering the pure moral in human action are disclosed by a number of poems, drawn from a wide range of historical fact, dealing with a great variety of religious faiths and circumstances of life, but always pointing to some sweet and strong truth of the divine life. Of such are The Brother of Mercy, The Gift of Tritemius, The Two Rabbins, and others. Whittier's Poetical Works are contained in four volumes, but have also been brought together into one substantial one, entitled The Cambridge Whittier. His Prose Works are comprised in three volumes; they consist mainly of his contributions to journals and of Leaves from Margaret Smith's Journal, a fictitious diary of a visitor to New England in 1678.

He died at Hampton Falls, New Hampshire, September 7, 1892, in the eighty-fifth year of his age.
SNOW-BOUND: A WINTER IDYL.

TO THE MEMORY OF THE HOUSEHOLD IT DESCRIBES

THIS POEM IS DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR.

The inmates of the family at the Whittier homestead who are referred to in the poem were my father, mother, my brother and two sisters, and my uncle and aunt, both unmarried. In addition, there was the district school master, who boarded with us. The "not unfeared, half-welcome guest" was Harriet Livermore, daughter of Judge Livermore, of New Hampshire, a young woman of fine natural ability, enthusiastic, eccentric, with slight control over her violent temper, which sometimes made her religious profession doubtful. She was equally ready to exhort in school-house prayer-meetings and dance in a Washington ball-room, while her father was a member of Congress. She early embraced the doctrine of the Second Advent, and felt it her duty to proclaim the Lord's speedy coming. With this message she crossed the Atlantic and spent the greater part of a long life in travelling over Europe and Asia. She lived some time with Lady Hester Stanhope, a woman as fantastic and mentally strained as herself, on the slope of Mt. Lebanon, but finally quarrelled with her in regard to two white horses with red marks on their backs which suggested the idea of saddles, on which her titled hostess expected to ride into Jerusalem with the Lord. A friend of mine found her, when quite an old woman, wandering in Syria with a tribe of Arabs, who with the Oriental
notion that madness is inspiration accepted her as their prophetess and leader. At the time referred to in *Snow-Bound* she was boarding at the Rocks Village, about two miles from us.

In my boyhood, in our lonely farm-house, we had scanty sources of information; few books and only a small weekly newspaper. Our only annual was the Almanac. Under such circumstances story-telling was a necessary resource in the long winter evenings. My father when a young man had traversed the wilderness to Canada, and could tell us of his adventures with Indians and wild beasts, and of his sojourn in the French villages. My uncle was ready with his record of hunting and fishing, and, it must be confessed, with stories which he at least half believed, of witchcraft and apparitions. My mother, who was born in the Indian-haunted region of Somersworth, New Hampshire, between Dover and Portsmouth, told us of the inroads of the savages, and the narrow escape of her ancestors. She described strange people who lived on the Piscataqua and Cocheco, among whom was Bantam the sorcerer. I have in my possession the wizard’s "conjuring book," which he solemnly opened when consulted. It is a copy of Cornelius Agrippa's *Magic*, printed in 1651, dedicated to Doctor Robert Child, who, like Michael Scott, had learned

"the art of glammorie
In Padua beyond the sea,"

and who is famous in the annals of Massachusetts, where he was at one time a resident, as the first man who dared petition the General Court for liberty of conscience. The full title of the book is *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*: by Henry Cornelius Agrippa, Knight, Doctor of both Laws, Counsellor to Caesar's Sacred Majesty and Judge of the Prerogative Court.
"As the Spirits of Darkness be stronger in the dark, so good Spirits which be Angels of Light are augmented not only by the Divine light of the Sun, but also by our common Wood Fire: and as the Celestial Fire drives away dark spirits, so also this our Fire of Wood doth the same."—Cor. Agrippa, Occult Philosophy, Book I. ch v.

"Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,  
Arrives the snow; and, driving o'er the fields,  
Seems nowhere to alight; the whited air  
Hides hills and woods, the river and the heaven,  
And veils the farm-house at the garden's end.  
The sled and traveller stopped, the courier's feet  
Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit  
Around the radiant fireplace, inclosed  
In a tumultuous privacy of storm."

EMERSON, The Snow-Storm.

The sun that brief December day  
Rose cheerless over hills of gray,  
And, darkly circled, gave at noon  
A sadder light than waning moon.

Slow tracing down the thickening sky  
Its mute and ominous prophecy,  
A portent seeming less than threat,  
It sank from sight before it set.  
A chill no coat, however stout,  

Of homespun stuff could quite shut out,  
A hard, dull bitterness of cold,  
That checked, mid-vein, the circling race
Of life-blood in the sharpened face,
The coming of the snow-storm told.

The wind blew east; we heard the roar
Of Ocean on his wintry shore,
And felt the strong pulse throb-bing there
Beat with low rhythm our inland air.

Meanwhile we did our nightly chores,—
Brought in the wood from out of doors,
Littered the stalls, and from the mows
Raked down the herd’s-grass for the cows:
Heard the horse whinnying for his corn;
And, sharply clashing horn on horn,

Impatient down the stanchion rows
The cattle shake their walnut bows;
While, peering from his early perch
Upon the scaffold’s pole of birch,
The cock his crested helmet bent

And down his querulous challenge sent.
Unwarmed by any sunset light
The gray day darkened into night,
A night made hoary with the swarm
And whirl-dance of the blinding storm,

As zigzag wavering to and fro
Crossed and recrossed the wingéd snow:
And ere the early bedtime came
The white drift piled the window-frame,
And through the glass the clothes-line posts

Looked in like tall and sheeted ghosts.

So all night long the storm roared on:
The morning broke without a sun;
In tiny spherule traced with lines
SNOW-BOUND.

Of Nature's geometric signs,

In starry flake and pellicle
All day the hoary meteor fell;
And, when the second morning shone,
We looked upon a world unknown,
On nothing we could call our own.

Around the glistening wonder bent
The blue walls of the firmament,
No cloud above, no earth below,—
A universe of sky and snow!
The old familiar sights of ours

Took marvellous shapes; strange domes and towers
Rose up where sty or corn-crib stood,
Or garden-wall, or belt of wood;
A smooth white mound the brush-pile showed,
A fenceless drift what once was road;

The bridle-post an old man sat
With loose-flung coat and high cocked hat;
The well-curb had a Chinese roof;
And even the long sweep, high aloof,
In its slant splendor, seemed to tell

Of Pisa's leaning miracle.

A prompt, decisive man, no breath
Our father wasted: "Boys, a path!"
Well pleased, (for when did farmer boy
Count such a summons less than joy?)

65. The Leaning Tower of Pisa, in Italy, which inclines from the perpendicular a little more than six feet in eighty, is a campanile, or bell-tower, built of white marble, very beautiful, but so famous for its singular deflection from perpendicularity as to be known almost wholly as a curiosity. Opinions differ as to the leaning being the result of accident or design, but the better judgment makes it an effect of the character of the soil on which it is built. The Cathedral to which it belongs has suffered so much from a similar cause that there is not a vertical line in it.
Our buskins on our feet we drew; 
With mittened hands, and caps drawn low,
To guard our necks and ears from snow,
We cut the solid whiteness through.
And, where the drift was deepest, made

A tunnel walled and overlaid
With dazzling crystal: we had read
Of rare Aladdin’s wondrous cave,
And to our own his name we gave,
With many a wish the luck were ours
To test his lamp's supernal powers.

We reached the barn with merry din,
And roused the imprisoned brutes within.
The old horse thrust his long head out,
And grave with wonder gazed about;

The cock his lusty greeting said,
And forth his speckled harem led;
The oxen lashed their tails, and hooked,
And mild reproach of hunger looked;
The hornéd patriarch of the sheep,

Like Egypt's Amun roused from sleep,
Shook his sage head with gesture mute,
And emphasized with stamp of foot.

All day the gusty north-wind bore
The loosening drift its breath before;

Low circling round its southern zone,
The sun through dazzling snow-mist shone.
No church-bell lent its Christian tone
To the savage air, no social smoke
Curled over woods of snow-hung oak.

90. Amun, or Ammon, was an Egyptian being, representing an attribute of Deity under the form of a ram.
A solitude made more intense
By dreary-voiced elements,
The shrieking of the mindless wind,
The moaning tree-boughs swaying blind,
And on the glass the unmeaning beat

Of ghostly finger-tips of sleet.
Beyond the circle of our hearth
No welcome sound of toil or mirth
Unbound the spell, and testified
Of human life and thought outside.

We minded that the sharpest ear
The buried brooklet could not hear,
The music of whose liquid lip
Had been to us companionship,
And, in our lonely life, had grown
To have an almost human tone.

As night drew on, and, from the crest
Of wooded knolls that ridged the west,
The sun, a snow-blown traveller, sank
From sight beneath the smothering bank,

We piled with care our nightly stack
Of wood against the chimney-back,—
The oaken log, green, huge, and thick,
And on its top the stout back-stick;
The knotty forestick laid apart,

And filled between with curious art
The ragged brush; then, hovering near,
We watched the first red blaze appear,
Heard the sharp crackle, caught the gleam
On whitewashed wall and sagging beam,

Until the old, rude-furnished room
Burst, flower-like, into rosy bloom;
While radiant with a mimic flame
Outside the sparkling drift became,
And through the bare-boughed lilac-tree

Our own warm hearth seemed blazing free.
The crane and pendent trammels showed,
The Turk's heads on the andirons glowed;
While childish fancy, prompt to tell
The meaning of the miracle,

Whispered the old rhyme: "Under the tree,
When fire outdoors burns merrily,
There the witches are making tea."

The moon above the eastern wood
Shone at its full; the hill-range stood

Transfigured in the silver flood,
Its blown snows flashing cold and keen,
Dead white, save where some sharp ravine
Took shadow, or the sombre green
Of hemlocks turned to pitchy black

Against the whiteness of their back.
For such a world and such a night
Most fitting that unwarming light,
Which only seemed where'er it fell
To make the coldness visible.

Shut in from all the world without,
We sat the clean-winged hearth about,
Content to let the north-wind roar
In baffled rage at pane and door,
While the red logs before us beat

The frost-line back with tropic heat;
And ever, when a louder blast
Shook beam and rafter as it passed,
THE WHITTIER HOME.

The above picture is copied from a photograph of the kitchen in the Whittier homestead at East Haverhill, Mass., so graphically described in "Snow-Bound." The room on the right, opening from the kitchen, is the chamber in which the poet was born. The homestead is now owned by a Whittier Memorial Association, and, being open to the public, is visited by thousands of persons annually.
The merrier up its roaring draught
The great throat of the chimney laughed,

165 The house-dog on his paws outspread
Laid to the fire his drowsy head,
The cat's dark silhouette on the wall
A couchant tiger's seemed to fall;
And, for the winter fireside meet,

170 Between the andirons' straddling feet,
The mug of cider simmered slow,
The apples sputtered in a row,
And, close at hand, the basket stood
With nuts from brown October's wood.

175 What matter how the night behaved?
What matter how the north-wind raved?
Blow high, blow low, not all its snow
Could quench our hearth-fire's ruddy glow.
O Time and Change! — with hair as gray

180 As was my sire's that winter day,
How strange it seems, with so much gone
Of life and love, to still live on!
Ah, brother! only I and thou
Are left of all that circle now, —

185 The dear home faces whereupon
That fitful firelight paled and shone.
Henceforward, listen as we will,
The voices of that hearth are still;
Look where we may, the wide earth o'er,

190 Those lighted faces smile no more.
We tread the paths their feet have worn,
We sit beneath their orchard trees,
We hear, like them, the hum of bees
And rustle of the bladed corn;
We turn the pages that they read,
Their written words we linger o'er,
But in the sun they cast no shade,
No voice is heard, no sign is made,
No step is on the conscious floor!
Yet Love will dream and Faith will trust
(Since He who knows our need is just)
That somehow, somewhere, meet we must.
Alas for him who never sees
The stars shine through his cypress-trees!
Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
Nor looks to see the breaking day
Across the mournful marbles play!
Who hath not learned, in hours of faith,
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That Life is ever lord of Death,
And Love can never lose its own!

We sped the time with stories old,
Wrought puzzles out, and riddles told,
Or stammered from our school-book lore
"The chief of Gambia's golden shore."
How often since, when all the land
Was clay in Slavery's shaping hand,
As if a trumpet called, I've heard
Dame Mercy Warren's rousing word:
"Does not the voice of reason cry,
Claim the first right which Nature gave,
From the red scourge of bondage fly,
Nor deign to live a burdened slave!"

219. Mrs. Mercy Warren was the wife of James Warren, a prominent patriot at the beginning of the Revolution. Her poetry was read in an age that had in America little to read under that name; her society was sought by the best men.
Our father rode again his ride
On Memphremagog's wooded side;
Sat down again to moose and samp
In trapper's hut and Indian camp;
Lived o'er the old idyllic ease
Beneath St. François' hemlock-trees;
Again for him the moonlight shone
On Norman cap and bodiced zone;
Again he heard the violin play
Which led the village dance away,
And mingled in its merry whirl
The grandam and the laughing girl.
Or, nearer home, our steps he led
Where Salisbury's level marshes spread
  Mile-wide as flies the laden bee;
Where merry mowers, hale and strong,
Swept, scythe on scythe, their swaths along
  The low green prairies of the sea.
We shared the fishing off Boar's Head,
  And round the rocky Isles of Shoals
  The hake-broil on the driftwood coals;
The chowder on the sand-beach made,
Dipped by the hungry, steaming hot,
With spoons of clam-shell from the pot.
We heard the tales of witchcraft old,
And dream and sign and marvel told
To sleepy listeners as they lay
Stretched idly on the salted hay,
Adrift along the winding shores,
  When favoring breezes deigned to blow
  The square sail of the gundalow,
And idle lay the useless oars.
Our mother, while she turned her wheel
Or run the new-knit stocking-heel,
Told how the Indian hordes came down
At midnight on Cochecho town,

And how her own great-uncle bore
His cruel scalp-mark to fourscore.
Recalling, in her fitting phrase,
So rich and picturesque and free
(The common unrhymed poetry)

Of simple life and country ways),
The story of her early days,—
She made us welcome to her home;
Old hearths grew wide to give us room;
We stole with her a frightened look

At the gray wizard's conjuring-book,
The fame whereof went far and wide
Through all the simple country-side;
We heard the hawks at twilight play,
The boat-horn on Piscataqua,

The loon's weird laughter far away;
We fished her little trout-brook, knew
What flowers in wood and meadow grew,
What sunny hillsides autumn-brown
She climbed to shake the ripe nuts down,

Saw where in sheltered cove and bay
The ducks' black squadron anchored lay,
And heard the wild geese calling loud
Beneath the gray November cloud.

Then, haply, with a look more grave,

And soberer tone, some tale she gave
From painful Sewel's ancient tome,
Beloved in every Quaker home,
Of faith fire-winged by martyrdom,
Or Chalkley's Journal, old and quaint,—

Gentlest of skippers, rare sea-saint! —
Who, when the dreary calms prevailed,
And water-butt and bread-cask failed,
And cruel, hungry eyes pursued
His portly presence, mad for food,

With dark hints muttered under breath
Of casting lots for life or death,
Offered, if Heaven withheld supplies,
To be himself the sacrifice.

Then, suddenly, as if to save
The good man from his living grave,

seemed to have as good an opinion of the book as Whittier. In his essay
*A Quakers' Meeting* in *Essays of Elia*, he says: "Reader, if you are not ac-
quainted with it, I would recommend to you, above all church-narratives, to
read Sewel's *History of the Quakers*. . . . It is far more edifying and affecting
than anything you will read of Wesley or his colleagues."

289. Thomas Chalkley was an Englishman of Quaker parentage, born in
1675, who travelled extensively as a preacher, and finally made his home in
Philadelphia. He died in 1749; his *Journal* was first published in 1747. His
own narrative of the incident which the poet relates is as follows: "To stop
their murmuring, I told them they should not need to cast lots, which was
usual in such cases, which of us should die first, for I would freely offer up my
life to do them good. One said, 'God bless you! I will not eat any of you.'
Another said, 'He would die before he would eat any of me;' and so said
several. I can truly say, on that occasion, at that time, my life was not dear
to me, and that I was serious and ingenuous in my proposition: and as I was
leaning over the side of the vessel, thoughtfully considering my proposal to
the company, and looking in my mind to Him that made me, a very large dol-
phin came up towards the top or surface of the water, and looked me in the
face; and I called the people to put a hook into the sea, and take him, for
here is one come to redeem me (I said to them). And they put a hook into
the sea, and the fish readily took it, and they caught him. He was longer
than myself. I think he was about six feet long, and the largest that ever I
saw. This plainly showed us that we ought not to distrust the providence of
the Almighty. The people were quieted by this act of Providence, and
murmured no more. We caught enough to eat plentifully of, till we got into
the capes of Delaware."
A ripple on the water grew,
A school of porpoise flashed in view.
"Take, eat," he said, "and be content;
These fishes in my stead are sent
305 By Him who gave the tangled ram
To spare the child of Abraham."

Our uncle, innocent of books,
Was rich in lore of fields and brooks,
The ancient teachers never dumb
310 Of Nature's unhoused lyceum.
In moons and tides and weather wise,
He read the clouds as prophecies,
And foul or fair could well divine,
By many an occult hint and sign,
315 Holding the cunning-warded keys
To all the woodcraft mysteries;
Himself to Nature's heart so near
That all her voices in his ear
Of beast or bird had meanings clear,
320 Like Apollonius of old,
Who knew the tales the sparrows told,
Or Hermes, who interpreted
What the sage cranes of Nilus said;
A simple, guileless, childlike man,
325 Content to live where life began;
Strong only on his native grounds,

310. The measure requires the accent lyce/um, but in stricter use the accent lyce/um.
320. A philosopher born in the first century of the Christian era, of whom many strange stories were told, especially regarding his converse with birds and animals.
322. Hermes Trismegistus, a celebrated Egyptian priest and philosopher, to whom was attributed the revival of geometry, arithmetic, and art among the Egyptians. He was little later than Apollonius.
The little world of sights and sounds
Whose girdle was the parish bounds,
Whereof his fondly partial pride
The common features magnified,
As Surrey hills to mountains grew
In White of Selborne’s loving view,—
He told how teal and loon he shot,
And how the eagle’s eggs he got,
The feats on pond and river done,
The prodigies of rod and gun;
Till, warming with the tales he told,
Forgotten was the outside cold,
The bitter wind unheeded blew,
From ripening corn the pigeons flew,
The partridge drummed i’ the wood, the mink
Went fishing down the river-brink.
In fields with bean or clover gay,
The woodchuck, like a hermit gray,
Peered from the doorway of his cell;
The muskrat plied the mason’s trade,
And tier by tier his mud-walls laid;
And from the shagbark overhead
The grizzled squirrel dropped his shell.

Next, the dear aunt, whose smile of cheer
And voice in dreams I see and hear,—
The sweetest woman ever Fate
Perverse denied a household mate,
Who, lonely, homeless, not the less
Found peace in love’s unselfishness,

332. Gilbert White, of Selborne, England, was a clergymen who wrote the Natural History of Selborne, a minute, affectionate, and charming description of what could be seen as it were from his own doorstep. The accuracy of his observation and the delightfulness of his manner have kept the book a classic.
And welcome whereso'er she went,
A calm and gracious element,
Whose presence seemed the sweet income
And womanly atmosphere of home,—

Called up her girlhood memories,
The huskings and the apple-bees,
The sleigh-rides and the summer sails,
Weaving through all the poor details
And homespun warp of circumstance

A golden woof-thread of romance.
For well she kept her genial mood
And simple faith of maidenhood;
Before her still a cloud-land lay,
The mirage loomed across her way;

The morning dew, that dried so soon
With others, glistened at her noon;
Through years of toil and soil and care,
From glossy tress to thin gray hair,
All unprofaned she held apart

The virgin fancies of the heart.
Be shame to him of woman born
Who had for such but thought of scorn.

(There, too, our elder sister plied
Her evening task the stand beside)

A full, rich nature, free to trust,
Truthful and almost sternly just,
Impulsive, earnest, prompt to act,
And make her generous thought a fact,
Keeping with many a light disguise

The secret of self-sacrifice.
O heart sore-tried! thou hast the best
That Heaven itself could give thee,—rest,
Rest from all bitter thoughts and things!
How many a poor one's blessing went
With thee beneath the low green tent
Whose curtain never outward swings!

As one who held herself a part
Of all she saw, and let her heart
Against the household bosom lean,

Upon the motley-braided mat
Our youngest and our dearest sat,
Lifting her large, sweet, asking eyes,
Now bathed within the fadeless green
And holy peace of Paradise.

Oh, looking from some heavenly hill,
Or from the shade of saintly palms,
Or silver reach of river calms,
Do those large eyes behold me still?
With me one little year ago:

The chill weight of the winter snow
For months upon her grave has lain;
And now, when summer south-winds blow
And brier and harebell bloom again,
I tread the pleasant paths we trod,

I see the violet-sprinkled sod,
Whereon she leaned, too frail and weak
The hillside flowers she loved to seek,
Yet following me where'er I went
With dark eyes full of love's content.

The birds are glad; the brier-rose fills
The air with sweetness; all the hills
Stretch green to June's unclouded sky;

398. Th' unfading green would be harsher but more correct since the termination less is added to nouns and not to verbs.
But still I wait with ear and eye
For something gone which should be nigh,
A loss in all familiar things,
In flower that blooms, and bird that sings.
And yet, dear heart! remembering thee,
Am I not richer than of old?
Safe in thy immortality,
What change can reach the wealth I hold?
What chance can mar the pearl and gold
Thy love hath left in trust with me?
And while in life's late afternoon,
Where cool and long the shadows grow,
I walk to meet the night that soon
Shall shape and shadow overflow,
I cannot feel that thou art far,
Since near at need the angels are;
And when the sunset gates unbar,
Shall I not see thee waiting stand,
And, white against the evening star,
The welcome of thy beckoning hand?

Brisk wielder of the birch and rule,
The master of the district school
Held at the fire his favored place;
Its warm glow lit a laughing face
Fresh-hued and fair, where scarce appeared
The uncertain prophecy of beard,
He teased the mitten-blinded cat,
Played cross-pins on my uncle's hat,
Sang songs, and told us what befalls
In classic Dartmouth's college halls.
Born the wild Northern hills among,
From whence his yeoman father wrung.
SNOW-BOUND.

450 By patient toil subsistence scant,
Not competence and yet not want,
He early gained the power to pay
His cheerful, self-reliant way;
Could doff at ease his scholar's gown

455 To peddle wares from town to town;
Or through the long vacation's reach
In lonely lowland districts teach,
Where all the droll experience found
At stranger hearths in boarding round,

460 The moonlit skater's keen delight,
The sleigh-drive through the frosty night,
The rustic party, with its rough
Accompaniment of blind-man’s-buff,
And whirling plate, and forfeits paid,

465 His winter task a pastime made.
Happy the snow-locked homes wherein
He tuned his merry violin,
Or played the athlete in the barn,
Or held the good dame's winding yarn,

470 Or mirth-provoking versions told
Of classic legends rare and old,
Wherein the scenes of Greece and Rome
Had all the commonplace of home,
And little seemed at best the odds

475 'Twixt Yankee pedlers and old gods;
Where Pindus-born Araxes took
The guise of any grist-mill brook,
And dread Olympus at his will
Became a huckleberry hill.

476. Pindus is the mountain chain which, running from north to south, nearly bisects Greece. Five rivers take their rise from the central peak, the Aös, the Arachthus, the Haliacmon, the Penëus, and the Achelöüs.
A careless boy that night he seemed;
But at his desk he had the look
And air of one who wisely schemed,
And hostage from the future took
In trained thought and lore of book.
Large-brained, clear-eyed,—of such as he
Shall Freedom's young apostles be,
Who, following in War's bloody trail,
Shall every lingering wrong assail;
All chains from limb and spirit strike,
Uplift the black and white alike;
Scatter before their swift advance
The darkness and the ignorance,
The pride, the lust, the squalid sloth,
Which nurtured Treason's monstrous growth,
Made murder pastime, and the hell
Of prison-torture possible;
The cruel lie of caste refute,
Old forms remould, and substitute
For Slavery's lash the freeman's will,
For blind routine, wise-handed skill;
A school-house plant on every hill,
Stretching in radiate nerve-lines thence
The quick wires of intelligence;
Till North and South together brought
Shall own the same electric thought,
In peace a common flag salute,
And, side by side in labor's free
And unresentful rivalry,
Harvest the fields wherein they fought.

Another guest that winter night
Flashed back from lustrous eyes the light.
SNOW-BOUND.

Unmarked by time, and yet not young,
The honeyed music of her tongue
And words of meekness scarcely told

A nature passionate and bold,
Strong; self-concentred, spurning guide,
Its milder features dwarfed beside
Her unbent will's majestic pride.

She sat among us, at the best,

A not unf feared, half-welcome guest,
Rebuking with her cultured phrase
Our homeliness of words and ways.

A certain pard-like, treacherous grace
Swayed the lithe limbs and dropped the lash,

Lent the white teeth their dazzling flash;
And under low brows, black with night,
Rayed out at times a dangerous light;

The sharp heat-lightnings of her face
Presaging ill to him whom Fate

Condemned to share her love or hate.

A woman tropical, intense
In thought and act, in soul and sense,
She blended in a like degree

The vixen and the devotee,

Revealing with each freak or feint

The temper of Petruchio's Kate,
The raptures of Siena's saint.
Her tapering hand and rounded wrist
Had facile power to form a fist;

The warm, dark languish of her eyes
Was never safe from wrath's surprise.

536. See Shakespeare's comedy of the Taming of the Shrew.
537. St. Catherine of Siena, who is represented as having wonderful visions. She made a vow of silence for three years.
Brows saintly calm and lips devout
Knew every change of scowl and pout;
And the sweet voice had notes more high
And shrill for social battle-cry.
Since then what old cathedral town
Has missed her pilgrim staff and gown,
What convent-gate has held its lock
Against the challenge of her knock!
Through Smyrna's plague-hushed thoroughfares,
Up sea-set Malta's rocky stairs,
Gray olive slopes of hills that hem
Thy tombs and shrines, Jerusalem,
Or startling on her desert throne
The crazy Queen of Lebanon
With claims fantastic as her own,
Her tireless feet have held their way;
And still, unrestful, bowed, and gray,
She watches under Eastern skies,
With hope each day renewed and fresh,
The Lord's quick coming in the flesh,
Whereof she dreams and prophesies!

Where'er her troubled path may be,
The Lord's sweet pity with her go!

555. An interesting account of Lady Hester Stanhope, an English gentlewoman who led a singular life on Mount Lebanon in Syria, will be found in Kinglake's Eothen, chapter viii.
562. This not un-feared, half-welcome guest was Miss Harriet Livermore, daughter of Judge Livermore of New Hampshire. She was a woman of fine powers, but wayward, wild, and enthusiastic. She went on an independent mission to the Western Indians, whom she, in common with some others, believed to be remnants of the lost tribes of Israel. At the time of this narrative she was about twenty-eight years old, but much of her life afterward was spent in the Orient. She was at one time the companion and friend of Lady Hester Stanhope, but finally quarreled with her about the use of the holy horses kept in the stable in waiting for the Lord's ride to Jerusalem at the second advent.
The outward wayward life we see,

        The hidden springs we may not know.

Nor is it given us to discern

What threads the fatal sisters spun,

Through what ancestral years has run

The sorrow with the woman born,

What forged her cruel chain of moods,

What set her feet in solitudes,

And held the love within her mute,

What mingled madness in the blood,

A lifelong discord and annoy,

Water of tears with oil of joy,

And hid within the folded bud

Perversities of flower and fruit.

It is not ours to separate

The tangled skein of will and fate,

To show what metes and bounds should stand

Upon the soul's debatable land,

And between choice and Providence

Divide the circle of events;

But He who knows our frame is just,

Merciful and compassionate,

And full of sweet assurances

And hope for all the language is,

That He remembereth we are dust!

At last the great logs, crumbling low,

Sent out a dull and duller glow,

The bull's-eye watch that hung in view,

Ticking its weary circuit through,

Pointed with mutely-warning sign

Its black hand to the hour of nine.

That sign the pleasant circle broke:
My uncle ceased his pipe to smoke,
Knocked from its bowl the refuse gray,
And laid it tenderly away,
Then roused himself to safely cover
The dull red brand with ashes over.
And while, with care, our mother laid
The work aside, her steps she stayed
One moment, seeking to express
Her grateful sense of happiness
For food and shelter, warmth and health,
And love's contentment more than wealth,
With simple wishes (not the weak,
Vain prayers which no fulfilment seek,
But such as warm the generous heart,
O'er-prompt to do with Heaven its part)
That none might lack, that bitter night,
For bread and clothing, warmth and light.

Within our beds awhile we heard
The wind that round the gables roared,
With now and then a ruder shock,
Which made our very bedsteads rock.
We heard the loosened clapboards tost,
The board-nails snapping in the frost;
And on us, through the unplastered wall,
Felt the lightsifted snow-flakes fall,
But sleep stole on, as sleep will do
When hearts are light and life is new;
Faint and more faint the murmurs grew,
Till in the summer-land of dreams
They softened to the sound of streams,
Low stir of leaves, and dip of oars,
And lapsing waves on quiet shores.
Next morn we wakened with the shout of merry voices high and clear;
And saw the teamsters drawing near to break the drifted highways out.
Down the long hillside treading slow we saw the half-buried oxen go,
Shaking the snow from heads uptost, their straining nostrils white with frost.
Before our door the straggling train drew up, an added team to gain.
The elders threshed their hands a-cold, passed, with the cider-mug, their jokes
From lip to lip; the younger folks down the loose snow-banks, wrestling, rolled,
Then toiled again the cavalcade.
O'er windy hill, through clogged ravine, and woodland paths that wound between
Low drooping pine-boughs winter-weighed.
From every barn a team afoot,
At every house a new recruit,
Where, drawn by Nature's subtlest law,
Haply the watchful young men saw sweet doorway pictures of the curls
And curious eyes of merry girls,
Lifting their hands in mock defence against the snow-balls' compliments,
And reading in each missive tossed the charm which Eden never lost.

We heard once more the sleigh-bells' sound;
And, following where the teamsters led,
The wise old Doctor went his round,

659. The wise old Doctor was Dr. Weld of Haverhill, an able man, who died at the age of ninety-six.
Just pausing at our door to say,
In the brief autocratic way
Of one who, prompt at Duty's call,
Was free to urge her claim on all,
That some poor neighbor sick abed
At night our mother's aid would need.
For, one in generous thought and deed,
What mattered in the sufferer's sight
The Quaker matron's inward light,
The Doctor's mail of Calvin's creed?
All hearts confess the saints elect
Who, twain in faith, in love agree,
And melt not in an acid sect
The Christian pearl of charity!

So days went on: a week had passed
Since the great world was heard from last.
The Almanac we studied o'er,
Read and reread our little store
Of books and pamphlets, scarce a score;
One harmless novel, mostly hid
From younger eyes, a book forbid,
And poetry, (or good or bad,
A single book was all we had,)
Where Ellwood's meek, drab-skirted Muse,
A stranger to the heathen Nine,
Sang, with a somewhat nasal whine,
The wars of David and the Jews.

683. Thomas Ellwood, one of the Society of Friends, a contemporary and friend of Milton, and the suggestor of Paradise Regained, wrote an epic poem in five books, called Davideis, the life of King David of Israel. He wrote the book, we are told, for his own diversion, so it was not necessary that others should be diverted by it. Ellwood's autobiography, a quaint and delightful book, has recently been issued in Howells's series of Choice Autobiography.
At last the floundering carrier bore
The village paper to our door.
Lo! broadening outward as we read,
To warmer zones the horizon spread;
In panoramic length unrolled
We saw the marvels that it told.
Before us passed the painted Creeks,
And daft McGregor on his raids

In Costa Rica's everglades.
And up Taygetus winding slow
Rode Ypsilanti's Mainote Greeks,
A Turk's head at each saddle bow!
Welcome to us its week-old news,

Its corner for the rustic Muse,
Its monthly gauge of snow and rain,
Its record, mingling in a breath
The wedding knell and dirge of death;
Jest, anecdote, and love-lorn tale,

The latest culprit sent to jail;
Its hue and cry of stolen and lost,
Its vendue sales and goods at cost,
And traffic calling loud for gain.
We felt the stir of hall and street,

The pulse of life that round us beat;
The chill embargo of the snow
Was melted in the genial glow;
Wide swung again our ice-locked door,
And all the world was ours once more!

693. Referring to the removal of the Creek Indians from Georgia to beyond the Mississippi.
694. In 1822 Sir Gregor McGregor, a Scotchman, began an ineffectual attempt to establish a colony in Costa Rica.
697. Taygetus is a mountain on the Gulf of Messenia in Greece, and near by is the district of Maina, noted for its robbers and pirates. It was from these mountaineers that Ypsilanti, a Greek patriot, drew his cavalry in the struggle with Turkey which resulted in the independence of Greece.
Clasp, Angel of the backward look
And folded wings of ashen gray
And voice of echoes far away,
The brazen covers of thy book;
The weird palimpsest old and vast,
Wherein thou hid'st the spectral past;
Where, closely mingling, pale and glow
The characters of joy and woe;
The monographs of outlived years,
Or smile-illumed or dim with tears,
Green hills of life that slope to death,
And haunts of home, whose vistaed trees
Shade off to mournful cypresses
With the white amaranths underneath.
Even while I look, I can but heed
The restless sands' incessant fall,
Importunate hours that hours succeed,
Each clamorous with its own sharp need,
And duty keeping pace with all.
Shut down and clasp the heavy lids;
I hear again the voice that bids
The dreamer leave his dream midway
For larger hopes and graver fears:
Life greatens in these later years,
The century's aloe flowers to-day!

Yet, haply, in some lull of life,
Some Truce of God which breaks its strife,
The worldling’s eyes shall gather dew,
Dreaming in throngful city ways
Of winter joys his boyhood knew;

And dear and early friends — the few
Who yet remain — shall pause to view
These Flemish pictures of old days;
Sit with me by the homestead hearth,
And stretch the hands of memory forth

To warm them at the wood-fire’s blaze!
And thanks untraced to lips unknown
Shall greet me like the odors blown
From unseen meadows newly mown,
Or lilies floating in some pond,

Wood-fringed, the wayside gaze beyond;
The traveller owns the grateful sense
Of sweetness near, he knows not whence,
And, pausing, takes with forehead bare
The benediction of the air.

747. The Flemish school of painting was chiefly occupied with homely interiors.
II.

AMONG THE HILLS.

PRELUDE.

Along the roadside, like the flowers of gold
That tawny Incas for their gardens wrought,
Heavy with sunshine droops the golden-rod,
And the red pennons of the cardinal-flowers
Hang motionless upon their upright staves.
The sky is hot and hazy, and the wind,
Wing-weary with its long flight from the south,
Unfelt; yet, closely scanned, yon maple leaf
With faintest motion, as one stirs in dreams,
Confesses it. The locust by the wall
Stabs the noon-silence with his sharp alarm.
A single hay-cart down the dusty road
Creaks slowly, with its driver fast asleep
On the load’s top. Against the neighboring hill,
Huddled along the stone wall’s shady side,
The sheep show white, as if a snowdrift still
Defied the dog-star. Through the open door
A drowsy smell of flowers—gray heliotrope,
And white sweet clover, and shy mignonette—
Comes faintly in, and silent chorus lends
To the pervading symphony of peace.

2. The Incas were the kings of the ancient Peruvians. At Yucay, their
favorite residence, the gardens, according to Prescott, contained “forms of
vegetable life skilfully imitated in gold and silver.” See History of the Con-
guest of Peru, i. 120.
No time is this for hands long over-worn
To task their strength: and (unto Him be praise
Who giveth quietness!) the stress and strain

25 Of years that did the work of centuries
Have ceased, and we can draw our breath once more
Freely and full. So, as yon harvesters
Make glad their noon ing underneath the elms
With tale and riddle and old snatch of song,

I lay aside grave themes, and idly turn
The leaves of memory's sketch-book, dreaming o'er
Old summer pictures of the quiet hills,
And human life, as quiet, at their feet.

And yet not idly all. A farmer's son,

Proud of field-lore and harvest craft; and feeling
All their fine possibilities, how rich
And restful even poverty and toil
Become when beauty, harmony, and love
Sit at their humble hearth as angels sat

40 At evening in the patriarch's tent, when man
Makes labor noble, and his farmer's frock
The symbol of a Christian chivalry,
Tender and just and generous to her
Who clothes with grace all duty; still, I know

Too well the picture has another side.
How wearily the grind of toil goes on
Where love is wanting; how the eye and ear
And heart are starved amidst the plenitude
Of nature, and how hard and colorless

Is life without an atmosphere. I look
Across the lapse of half a century,
And call to mind old homesteads, where no flower

26. The volume in which this poem stands first, and to which it gives the name, was published in the fall of 1868.
Told that the spring had come, but evil weeds,
Nightshade and rough-leaved burdock, in the place
55
Of the sweet doorway greeting of the rose
And honeysuckle, where the house walls seemed
Blistering in sun, without a tree or vine
To cast the tremulous shadow of its leaves
Across the curtailless windows from whose panes
Fluttered the signal rags of shiftlessness;
Within, the cluttered kitchen floor, unwashed
(Broom-clean I think they called it); the best room
Stifling with cellar damp, shut from the air
In hot midsummer, bookless, pictureless
60
Save the inevitable sampler hung
Over the fireplace, or a mourning piece,
A green-haired woman, peony-cheeked, beneath
Impossible willows; the wide-throated hearth
Bristling with faded pine-boughs half concealing
The piled-up rubbish at the chimney’s back;
And, in sad keeping with all things about them,
Shrill, querulous women, sour and sullen men,
Untidy, loveless, old before their time,
With scarce a human interest save their own
65
Monotonous round of small economies,
Or the poor scandal of the neighborhood;
Blind to the beauty everywhere revealed,
Treading the May-flowers with regardless feet;
For them the song-sparrow and the bobolink
Sang not, nor winds made music in the leaves;
70
For them in vain October’s holocaust
Burned, gold and crimson, over all the hills,
The sacramental mystery of the woods.
Church-goers, fearful of the unseen Powers,
But grumbling over pulpit-tax and pew-rent,
Saving, as shrewd economists, their souls
And winter pork with the least possible outlay
Of salt and sanctity; in daily life
Showing as little actual comprehension
Of Christian charity and love and duty,
As if the Sermon on the Mount had been
Outdated like a last year's almanac:
Rich in broad woodlands and in half-tilled fields,
And yet so pinched and bare and comfortless,
The veriest straggler limping on his rounds,
The sun and air his sole inheritance,
Laughed at poverty that paid its taxes,
And hugged his rags in self-complacency!

Not such should be the homesteads of a land
Where whoso wisely wills and acts may dwell
As king and lawgiver, in broad-aced state,
With beauty, art, taste, culture, books, to make
His hour of leisure richer than a life
Of fourscore to the barons of old time,
Our yeoman should be equal to his home,
Set in the fair, green valleys, purple walled,
A man to match his mountains, not to creep
Dwarfed and abased below them. I would fain
In this light way (of which I needs must own
With the knife-grinder of whom Canning sings,
"Story, God bless you! I have none to tell you!")
Invite the eye to see and heart to feel

110. The Anti-Jacobin was a periodical published in England in 1797-98, to ridicule democratic opinions, and in it Canning, who afterward became premier of England, wrote many light verses and jeux d'esprit, among them a humorous poem called the Needy Knife-Grinder, in burlesque of a poem by Southey. The knife-grinder is anxiously appealed to to tell his story of wrong and injustice, but answers as here:—

"Story, God bless you! I've none to tell."
The beauty and the joy within their reach,—
Home, and home loves, and the beatitudes
Of nature free to all. Haply in years
That wait to take the places of our own,
Heard where some breezy balcony looks down
On happy homes, or where the lake in the moon
Sleeps dreaming of the mountains, fair as Ruth,

In the old Hebrew pastoral, at the feet
Of Boaz, even this simple lay of mine
May seem the burden of a prophecy,
Finding its late fulfilment in a change
Slow as the oak's growth, lifting manhood up
Through broader culture, finer manners, love,
And reverence, to the level of the hills.

O Golden Age, whose light is of the dawn,
And not of sunset, forward, not behind,
Flood the new heavens and earth, and with thee bring

All the old virtues, whatsoever things
Are pure and honest and of good repute,
But add thereto whatever bard has sung
Or seer has told of when in trance and dream
They saw the Happy Isles of prophecy!

Let Justice hold her scale, and Truth divide
Between the right and wrong; but give the heart
The freedom of its fair inheritance;
Let the poor prisoner, cramped and starved so long,
At Nature's table feast his ear and eye

134. The Fortunate Isles, or Isles of the Blest, were imaginary islands in the West, in classic mythology, set in a sea which was warmed by the rays of the declining sun. Hither the favorites of the gods were borne and dwelt in endless joy.
With joy and wonder; let all harmonies
Of sound, form, color, motion, wait upon
The princely guest, whether in soft attire
Of leisure clad, or the coarse flock of toil,
And, lending life to the dead form of faith,
Give human nature reverence for the sake
Of One who bore it, making it divine
With the ineffable tenderness of God;
Let common need, the brotherhood of prayer,
The heirship of an unknown destiny,
The unsolved mystery round about us, make
A man more precious than the gold of Ophir.
Sacred, inviolate, unto whom all things
Should minister, as outward types and signs
Of the eternal beauty which fulfils
The one great purpose of creation, Love,
The sole necessity of Earth and Heaven!

AMONG THE HILLS.

For weeks the clouds had raked the hills
And vexed the vales with raining,
And all the woods were sad with mist,
And all the brooks complaining.

At last, a sudden night-storm tore
The mountain veils asunder,
And swept the valleys clean before
The besom of the thunder.

Through Sandwich notch the west-wind sang
Good morrow to the cotter;

165. Sandwich Notch, Chocorua Mountain, Ossipee Lake, and the Bearcamp River are all striking features of the scenery in that part of New Hampshire.
And once again Chocorua's horn
Of shadow pierced the water.

Above his broad lake Ossipee,
Once more the sunshine wearing,
Stood, tracing on that silver shield
His grim armorial bearing.

Clear drawn against the hard blue sky
The peaks had winter's keenness;
And, close on autumn's frost, the vales
Had more than June's fresh greenness.

Again the sodden forest floors
With golden lights were checkered,
Once more rejoicing leaves in wind
And sunshine danced and flickered.

It was as if the summer's late
Atoning for its sadness
Had borrowed every season's charm
To end its days in gladness.

I call to mind those banded vales
Of shadow and of shining,
Through which, my hostess at my side,
I drove in day's declining.

We held our sideling way above
The river's whitening shallows,

which lies just at the entrance of the White Mountain region. Many of Whittier's most graceful poems are drawn from the suggestions of this country, where he has been wont to spend his summer months of late, and a mountain near West Ossipee has received his name.
By homesteads old, with wide-flung barns
Swept through and through by swallows,—

By maple orchards, belts of pine
And larches climbing darkly
The mountain slopes, and, over all,
The great peaks rising starkly.

You should have seen that long hill-range
With gaps of brightness riven,—
How through each pass and hollow streamed
The purpling lights of heaven,—

Rivers of gold-mist flowing down
From far celestial fountains,—
The great sun flaming through the rifts
Beyond the wall of mountains!

We paused at last where home-bound cows
Brought down the pasture's treasure,
And in the barn the rhythmic flails
Beat out a harvest measure.

We heard the night hawk's sullen plunge,
The crow his tree-mates calling:
The shadows lengthening down the slopes
About our feet were falling,

And through them smote the level sun
In broken lines of splendor,
Touched the gray rocks and made the green
Of the shorn grass more tender.
The maples bending o'er the gate,
Their arch of leaves just tinted
With yellow warmth, the golden glow
Of coming autumn hinted.

Keen white between the farm-house showed,
And smiled on porch and trellis
The fair democracy of flowers
That equals cot and palace.

And weaving garlands for her dog,
'Twixt chidings and caresses,
A human flower of childhood shook
The sunshine from her tresses.

On either hand we saw the signs
Of fancy and of shrewdness,
Where taste had wound its arms of vines
Round thrift's uncomely rudeness.

The sun-brown farmer in his frock
Shook hands, and called to Mary:
Bare-armed, as Juno might, she came,
White-aproned from her dairy.

Her air, her smile, her motions, told
Of womanly completeness;
A music as of household songs
Was in her voice of sweetness.

Not beautiful in curve and line,
But something more and better,
AMONG THE HILLS.

The secret charm eluding art,
   Its spirit, not its letter; —

245 An inborn grace that nothing lacked
   Of culture or appliance, —
The warmth of genial courtesy,
   The calm of self-reliance.

Before her queenly womanhood
250 How dared our hostess utter
   The paltry errand of her need
   To buy her fresh-churned butter?

She led the way with housewife pride,
   Her goodly store disclosing,
255 Full tenderly the golden balls
   With practised hands disposing.

Then, while along the western hills
   We watched the changeful glory
   Of sunset, on our homeward way,
260 I heard her simple story.

The early crickets sang; the stream
   Plashed through my friend's narration:
   Her rustic patois of the hills
   Lost in my free translation.

265 "More wise," she said, "than those who swarm
   Our hills in middle summer,
She came, when June's first roses blow,
   To greet the early comer."
"From school and ball and rout she came,
The city's fair, pale daughter,
To drink the wine of mountain air
Beside the Bearcamp Water.

"Her step grew firmer on the hills
That watch our homesteads over;
On cheek and lip, from summer fields,
She caught the bloom of clover.

"For health comes sparkling in the streams
From cool Chocorua stealing:
There's iron in our Northern winds;
Our pines are trees of healing.

"She sat beneath the broad-armed elms
That skirt the mowing-meadow,
And watched the gentle west-wind weave
The grass with shine and shadow.

"Beside her, from the summer heat
To share her grateful screening,
With forehead bared, the farmer stood,
Upon his pitchfork leaning.

"Framed in its damp, dark locks, his face
Had nothing mean or common,—
Strong, manly, true, the tenderness
And pride beloved of woman.

"She looked up, glowing with the health
The country air had brought her,
And, laughing, said: 'You lack a wife,
Your mother lacks a daughter.

"To mend your frock and bake your bread
You do not need a lady:
Be sure among these brown old homes
Is some one waiting ready,—

"Some fair, sweet girl, with skilful hand
And cheerful heart for treasure,
Who never played with ivory keys,
Or danced the polka's measure.'

'He bent his black brows to a frown,
He set his white teeth tightly.
'Tis well,' he said, 'for one like you
To choose for me so lightly.'

'You think, because my life is rude
I take no note of sweetness:
I tell you love has naught to do
With meetness or unmeetness.

Itself its best excuse, it asks
No leave of pride or fashion
When silken zone or homespun frock
It stirs with throbs of passion.

'You think me deaf and blind: you bring
Your winning graces hither
As free as if from cradle-time
We two had played together.
"'You tempt me with your laughing eyes,  
Your cheek of sundown's blushes,  
A motion as of waving grain,  
A music as of thrushes.

325 "'The plaything of your summer sport,  
The spells you weave around me  
You cannot at your will undo,  
Nor leave me as you found me.

"'You go as lightly as you came,  
Your life is well without me;  
What care you that these hills will close  
Like prison-walls about me?

"'No mood is mine to seek a wife,  
Or daughter for my mother:  
Who loves you loses in that love  
All power to love another!

"'I dare your pity or your scorn,  
With pride your own exceeding;  
I fling my heart into your lap  
Without a word of pleading.'

"She looked up in his face of pain  
So archly, yet so tender:  
'And if I lend you mine,' she said,  
'Will you forgive the lender?

345 "'Nor frock nor tan can hide the man;  
And see you not, my farmer,
How weak and fond a woman waits  
Behind this silken armor?

"'I love you: on that love alone,
And not my worth, presuming,
Will you not trust for summer fruit
The tree in May-day blooming?'

"Alone the hangbird overhead,
His hair-swung cradle straining,
Looked down to see love's miracle,—
The giving that is gaining.

"And so the farmer found a wife,
His mother found a daughter:
There looks no happier home than hers
On pleasant Bearcamp Water.

"Flowers spring to blossom where she walks
The careful ways of duty;
Our hard, stiff lines of life with her
Are flowing curves of beauty.

"Our homes are cheerier for her sake,
Our door-yards brighter blooming,
And all about the social air
Is sweeter for her coming.

"Unspoken homilies of peace
Her daily life is preaching;
The still refreshment of the dew
Is her unconscious teaching.
"And never tenderer hand than hers
Unknits the brow of ailing;
Her garments to the sick man's ear
Have music in their trailing.

"And when, in pleasant harvest moons,
The youthful huskers gather,
Or sleigh-drives on the mountain ways
Defy the winter weather,—

"In sugar-camps, when south and warm
The winds of March are blowing,
And sweetly from its thawing veins
The maple's blood is flowing,—

"In summer, where some lilied pond
Its virgin zone is bearing,
Or where the ruddy autumn fire
Lights up the apple-paring,—

"The coarseness of a ruder time
Her finer mirth displaces,
A subtler sense of pleasure fills
Each rustic sport she graces.

"Her presence lends its warmth and health
To all who come before it.
If woman lost us Eden, such
As she alone restore it.

"For larger life and wiser aims
The farmer is her debtor;
Among the hills, who holds to his another's heart
Must needs be worse or better.

"Through her his civic service shows
A purer-toned ambition;
No double consciousness divides
The man and politician.

"In party's doubtful ways he trusts
Her instincts to determine;
At the loud polls, the thought of her
Recalls Christ's Mountain Sermon.

"He owns her logic of the heart,
And wisdom of unreason,
Supplying, while he doubts and weighs,
The needed word in season.

"He sees with pride her richer thought,
Her fancy's freer ranges;
And love thus deepened to respect
Is proof against all changes.

"And if she walks at ease in ways
His feet are slow to travel,
And if she reads with cultured eyes
What his may scarce unravel,

"Still clearer, for her keener sight
Of beauty and of wonder,
He learns the meaning of the hills
He dwelt from childhood under."
"And higher, warmed with summer lights,
   Or winter-crowned and hoary,
The ridged horizon lifts for him
   Its inner veils of glory.

"He has his own free, bookless lore,
The lessons nature taught him,
The wisdom which the woods and hills
   And toiling men have brought him:

"The steady force of will whereby
   Her flexile grace seems sweeter;
The sturdy counterpoise which makes
   Her woman's life completer:

"A latent fire of soul which lacks
   No breath of love to fan it;
And wit, that, like his native brooks,
   Plays over solid granite.

"How dwarfed against his manliness
   She sees the poor pretension,
The wants, the aims, the follies, born
   Of fashion and convention!

"How life behind its accidents
   Stands strong and self-sustaining;
The human fact transcending all
   The losing and the gaining.

"And so, in grateful interchange
   Of teacher and of hearer,
AMONG THE HILLS.

Their lives their true distinctness keep
While daily drawing nearer.

"And if the husband or the wife
In home's strong light discovers
Such slight defaults as failed to meet
The blinded eyes of lovers,

"Why need we care to ask? — who dreams
Without their thorns of roses,
Or wonders that the truest steel
The readiest spark discloses?

"For still in mutual sufferance lies
The secret of true living:
Love scarce is love that never knows
The sweetness of forgiving.

"We send the Squire to General Court,
He takes his young wife thither;
No prouder man election day
Rides through the sweet June weather.

"He sees with eyes of manly trust
All hearts to her inclining;
Not less for him his household light
That others share its shining."

Thus, while my hostess spake, there grew
Before me, warmer tinted
And outlined with a tenderer grace,
The picture that she hinted.
The sunset smouldered as we drove
   Beneath the deep hill-shadows.
Below us wreaths of white fog walked
   Like ghosts the haunted meadows.

Sounding the summer night, the stars
   Dropped down their golden plummets;
The pale arc of the Northern lights
   Rose o'er the mountain summits,—

Until, at last, beneath its bridge,
   We heard the Bearcamp flowing,
And saw across the mapled lawn
   The welcome home-lights glowing;—

And, musing on the tale I heard,
   'T were well, thought I, if often
To rugged farm-life came the gift
   To harmonize and soften;—

If more and more we found the troth
   Of fact and fancy plighted,
And culture's charm and labor's strength
   In rural homes united,—

The simple life, the homely hearth,
   With beauty's sphere surrounding,
And blessing toil where toil abounds
   With graces more abounding.
III.

SONGS OF LABOR.

The Songs of Labor were written in 1845 and 1846, and printed first in magazines. They reflect the working life of New England at that time before the great changes were wrought which have nearly put an end to some of the forms of labor, the praises of which here are sung. The Songs were collected into a volume entitled, Songs of Labor and other Poems, in 1850, and the following Dedication was then prefixed.

DEDICATION.

I WOULD the gift I offer here
Might graces from thy favor take,
And, seen through Friendship's atmosphere,
On softened lines and coloring, wear
The unaccustomed light of beauty, for thy sake.

Few leaves of Fancy's spring remain:
But what I have I give to thee,
The o'er-sunned bloom of summer's plain,
And paler flowers, the latter rain
Calls from the westering slope of life's autumnal lea.

Above the fallen groves of green,
Where youth's enchanted forest stood,
Dry root and mossèd trunk between,
A sober after-growth is seen,
15 As springs the pine where falls the gay-leafed maple wood!

Yet birds will sing, and breezes play
Their leaf-harps in the sombre tree;
And through the bleak and wintry day
It keeps its steady green alway,—
20 So, even my after-thoughts may have a charm for thee.

Art's perfect forms no moral need,
And beauty is its own excuse;
But for the dull and flowerless weed
Some healing virtue still must plead,
25 And the rough ore must find its honors in its use.

So haply these, my simple lays
Of homely toil, may serve to show
The orchard bloom and tasselled maize
That skirt and gladden duty's ways,
30 The unsung beauty hid life's common things below.

Haply from them the toiler, bent
Above his forge or plough, may gain
A manlier spirit of content,
And feel that life is wisest spent
35 Where the strong working hand makes strong the working brain.

22. "For the idea of this line," says Mr. Whittier, "I am indebted to Emerson in his inimitable sonnet to the Rhodora:—
"'If eyes were made for seeing,
Then Beauty is its own excuse for being.'"
The doom which to the guilty pair
Without the walls of Eden came,
Transforming sinless ease to care
And rugged toil, no more shall bear
The burden of old crime, or mark of primal shame.

A blessing now, a curse no more;
Since He, whose name we breathe with awe,
The coarse mechanic vesture wore,
A poor man toiling with the poor,
In labor, as in prayer, fulfilling the same law.

THE SHOEMAKERS.

Ho! workers of the old time styled
The Gentle Craft of Leather!
Young brothers of the ancient guild,
Stand forth once more together!
Call out again your long array,
In the olden merry manner!
Once more, on gay St. Crispin's day,
Fling out your blazoned banner!

Rap, rap! upon the well-worn stone
How falls the polished hammer!
Rap, rap! the measured sound has grown
A quick and merry clamor.
Now shape the sole! now deftly curl
The glossy vamp around it,

52. October 25. St. Crispin and his brother Crispinian were said to be martyrs of the third century who while preaching the gospel had made their living by shoemaking.
And bless the while the bright-eyed girl
Whose gentle fingers bound it!

For you, along the Spanish main
A hundred keels are ploughing;
For you, the Indian on the plain
His lasso-coil is throwing;
For you, deep glens with hemlock dark
The woodman’s fire is lighting;
For you, upon the oak’s gray bark,
The woodman’s axe is smiting.

For you, from Carolina’s pine
The rosin-gum is stealing;
For you, the dark-eyed Florentine
Her silken skein is reeling;
For you, the dizzy goatherd roams
His rugged Alpine ledges;
For you, round all her shepherd homes,
Bloom England’s thorny hedges.

The foremost still, by day or night,
On moated mound or heather,
Where’er the need of trampled right
Brought toiling men together;
Where the free burghers from the wall
Defied the mail-clad master,
Than yours, at Freedom’s trumpet-call,
No craftsman rallied faster.

62. A name given to the northern coast of South America when it was taken possession of by the Spaniards.
72. So associated was Florence, Italy, in the minds of people with the manufacture of sewing silk, that when the industry was set up in the neighborhood of Northampton, Mass., the factory village took the name of Florence.
SONGS OF LABOR.

Let foplings sneer, let fools deride,
Ye heed no idle sceler;
Free hands and hearts are still your pride,
And duty done, your honor.

Ye dare to trust, for honest fame,
The jury Time empanels,
And leave to truth each noble name
Which glorifies your annals.

Thy songs, Hans Sachs, are living yet,
In strong and hearty German;
And Bloomfield's lay, and Gifford's wit,
And patriot fame of Sherman;
Still from his book, a mystic seer,
The soul of Behman teaches,
And England's priestcraft shakes to hear
Of Fox's leathern breeches.

The foot is yours; where'er it falls,
It treads your well-wrought leather
On earthen floor, in marble halls,
On carpet, or on heather.

Still there the sweetest charm is found
Of matron grace or vestal's,
As Hebe's foot bore nectar round
Among the old celestials!

95. See Longfellow's poem, Nuremberg, for a reference to Hans Sachs, the cobbler poet.
96. Robert Bloomfield, an English poet, author of The Farmer's Boy, was bred a shoemaker, as was William Gifford, a wit and satirist, and first editor of the Quarterly Review, but Gifford hated his craft bitterly.
97. Roger Sherman, one of the signers, was at one time a shoemaker in New Milford, Connecticut.
99. Jacob Behman, or Boehme, a German visionary of the 17th century.
101. George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, or Quakers as they are more commonly called.
110 Rap, rap! your stout and rough brogan,
   With footsteps slow and weary,
May wander where the sky's blue span
   Shuts down upon the prairie.
On Beauty's foot your slippers glance,
   By Saratoga's fountains,
Or twinkle down the summer dance
   Beneath the Crystal Mountains!

The red brick to the mason's hand,
   The brown earth to the tiller's,
120 The shoe in yours shall wealth command,
   Like fairy Cinderella's!
As they who shunned the household maid
   Beheld the crown upon her,
So all shall see your toil repaid
   With hearth and home and honor.

Then let the toast be freely quaffed,
   In water cool and brimming,—
"All honor to the good old Craft,
   Its merry men and women!"
130 Call out again your long array,
   In the old time's pleasant manner:
Once more, on gay St. Crispin's day,
   Fling out his blazoned banner!

THE FISHERMEN.

HURRAH! the seaward breezes
135 Sweep down the bay amain;
SONGS OF LABOR.

Heave up, my lads, the anchor!
Run up the sail again!
Leave to the lubber landsmen
The rail-car and the steed;
The stars of heaven shall guide us,
The breath of heaven shall speed.

From the hill-top looks the steeple,
And the light-house from the sand;
And the scattered pines are waving
Their farewell from the land.
One glance, my lads, behind us,
For the homes we leave one sigh,
Ere we take the change and chances
Of the ocean and the sky.

Now, brothers, for the icebergs
Of frozen Labrador,
Floating spectral in the moonshine,
Along the low, black shore!
Where like snow the gannet’s feathers
On Brador’s rocks are shed,
And the noisy murr are flying,
Like black scuds, overhead;

Where in mist the rock is hiding,
And the sharp reef lurks below,
And the white squall smites in summer,
And the autumn tempests blow;
Where through gray and rolling vapor,
From evening unto morn,
A thousand boats are hailing,
Horn answering unto horn.
Hurrah! for the Red Island,
    With the white cross on its crown!
Hurrah! for Meccatina,
    And its mountains bare and brown!

Where the Caribou's tall antlers
    O'er the dwarf-wood freely toss,
And the footstep of the Mickmack
    Has no sound upon the moss.

There we 'll drop our lines, and gather
    Old Ocean’s treasures in,
Where'er the mottled mackerel
    Turns up a steel-dark fin.
The sea’s our field of harvest,
    Its scaly tribes our grain;

We 'll reap the teeming waters
    As at home they reap the plain!

Our wet hands spread the carpet,
    And light the hearth of home;
From our fish, as in the old time,
    The silver coin shall come.

As the demon fled the chamber
    Where the fish of Tobit lay,
So ours from all our dwellings
    Shall frighten Want away.

Though the mist upon our jackets
    In the bitter air congeals,
And our lines wind stiff and slowly
    From off the frozen reels;

See the story in the Book of Tobit, one of the Apocrypha.
Though the fog be dark around us,
And the storm blow high and loud,
We will whistle down the wild wind,
And laugh beneath the cloud!

In the darkness as in daylight,
On the water as on land,
God's eye is looking on us,
And beneath us is His hand!
Death will find us soon or later,
On the deck or in the cot;
And we cannot meet him better

Than in working out our lot.

Hurrah! hurrah! the west-wind
Comes freshening down the bay,
The rising sails are filling;
Give way, my lads, give way!

Leave the coward landsman clinging
To the dull earth, like a weed;
The stars of heaven shall guide us,
The breath of heaven shall speed!

THE LUMBERMEN.

Wildly round our woodland quarters
Sad-voiced Autumn grieves;
Thickly down these swelling waters
Float his fallen leaves.
Through the tall and naked timber,
Column-like and old,
Gleam the sunsets of November,
From their skies of gold.

O'er us, to the southland heading,
Screams the gray wild-goose;
On the night-frost sounds the treading
Of the brindled moose.
Noiseless creeping, while we're sleeping,
Frost his task-work plies;
Soon, his icy bridges heaping,
Shall our log-piles rise.

When, with sounds of smothered thunder,
On some night of rain,
Lake and river break asunder
Winter's weakened chain,
Down the wild March flood shall bear them
To the saw-mill's wheel,
Or where Steam, the slave, shall tear them
With his teeth of steel.

Be it starlight, be it moonlight,
In these vales below,
When the earliest beams of sunlight
Streak the mountain's snow,
Crisps the hoar-frost, keen and early,
To our hurrying feet,
And the forest echoes clearly
All our blows repeat.

Where the crystal Ambijejis
Stretches broad and clear,
And Millnoket's pine-black ridges
Hide the browsing deer:
Where, through lakes and wide morasses,
Or through rocky walls,
Swift and strong, Penobscot passes
White with foamy falls;

Where through clouds, are glimpses given
Of Katahdin's sides,—
Rock and forest piled to heaven,
Torn and ploughed by slides!
Far below, the Indian trapping,
In the sunshine warm;
Far above, the snow-cloud wrapping
Half the peak in storm!

Where are mossy carpets better
Than the Persian weaves,
And than Eastern perfumes sweeter
Seem the fading leaves;
And a music mild and solemn,
From the pine-tree's height,
Rolls its vast and sea-like volume
On the wind of night;

Make we here our camp of winter;
And, through sleet and snow,
Pitchy knot and beechen splinter
On our hearth shall glow.
Here, with mirth to lighten duty,
We shall lack alone
Woman's smile and girlhood's beauty,
Childhood's lisping tone.

But their hearth is brighter burning
For our toil to-day;
And the welcome of returning
    Shall our loss repay,
When, like seamen from the waters,
    From the woods we come,
Greeting sisters, wives, and daughters,

Angels of our home!

Not for us the measured ringing
    From the village spire,
Not for us the Sabbath singing
    Of the sweet-voiced choir:
Ours the old, majestic temple,
    Where God's brightness shines
Down the dome so grand and ample,
    Propped by lofty pines!

Through each branch-enwoven skylight,
    Speaks He in the breeze,
As of old beneath the twilight
    Of lost Eden's trees!
For His ear, the inward feeling
    Needs no outward tongue;
He can see the spirit kneeling
    While the axe is swung.

Heeding truth alone, and turning
    From the false and dim,
Lamp of toil or altar burning
    Are alike to Him.
Strike, then, comrades! Trade is waiting
    On our rugged toil;
Far ships waiting for the freighting
    Of our woodland spoil!
SONGS OF LABOR.

Ships, whose traffic links these highlands,
Bleak and cold, of ours,
With the citron-planted islands
Of a clime of flowers;
To our frosts the tribute bringing
Of eternal heats;
In our lap of winter flinging
Tropic fruits and sweets.

Cheerily, on the axe of labor,
Let the sunbeams dance,
Better than the flash of sabre
Or the gleam of lance!
Strike! With every blow is given
Freer sun and sky,
And the long-hid earth to heaven
Looks, with wondering eye!

Loud behind us grow the murmurs
Of the age to come;
Clang of smiths, and tread of farmers,
Bearing harvest home!
Here her virgin lap with treasures
Shall the green earth fill;
Waving wheat and golden maize-ears
Crown each beechen hill.

Keep who will the city's alleys,
Take the smooth-shorn plain;
Give to us the cedarn valleys,
Rocks and hills of Maine!
In our North-land, wild and woody,
Let us still have part:
Rugged nurse and mother sturdy,
Hold us to thy heart!

Oh, our free hearts beat the warmer
For thy breath of snow;
And our tread is all the firmer
For thy rocks below.
Freedom, hand in hand with labor,
Walketh strong and brave;
On the forehead of his neighbor
No man writeth Slave!

Lo, the day breaks! old Katahdin's
Pine-trees show its fires,
While from these dim forest gardens
Rise their blackened spires.
Up, my comrades! up and doing!
Manhood's rugged play
Still renewing, bravely hewing
Through the world our way!

THE SHIP-BUILDERS.

The sky is ruddy in the east,
The earth is gray below,
And, spectral in the river-mist,
The ship's white timbers show.
Then let the sounds of measured stroke
And grating saw begin;
The broad-axe to the gnarled oak,
The mallet to the pin!
SONGS OF LABOR.

Hark! roars the bellows, blast on blast,
The sooty smithy jars,
And fire-sparks, rising far and fast,
Are fading with the stars.

All day for us the smith shall stand
Beside that flashing forge;
All day for us his heavy hand
The groaning anvil scourge.

From far-off hills, the panting team
For us is toiling near;
For us the raftsmen down the stream
Their island barges steer.
Rings out for us the axe-man's stroke
In forests old and still;

For us the century-circled oak
Falls crashing down his hill.

Up! up! in nobler toil than ours
No craftsmen bear a part:
We make of Nature's giant powers
The slaves of human Art.
Lay rib to rib and beam to beam,
And drive the treenails free;
Nor faithless joint nor yawning seam
Shall tempt the searching sea!

Where'er the keel of our good ship
The sea's rough field shall plough;
Where'er her tossing spars shall drip
With salt-spray caught below;
That ship must heed her master's beck,
Her helm obey his hand,
And seamen tread her reeling deck
As if they trod the land.

Her oaken ribs the vulture-beak
Of Northern ice may peel;

The sunken rock and coral peak
May grate along her keel;

And know we well the painted shell
We give to wind and wave,

Must float, the sailor’s citadel,
Or sink, the sailor’s grave!

Ho! strike away the bars and blocks,
And set the good ship free!

Why lingers on these dusty rocks
The young bride of the sea?

Look! how she moves adown the grooves,
In graceful beauty now!

How lowly on the breast she loves
Sinks down her virgin prow!

God bless her! wheresoe’er the breeze

Her snowy wing shall fan,

Aside the frozen Hebrides,

Or sultry Hindostan!

Where’er, in mart or on the main,

With peaceful flag unfurled,

She helps to wind the silken chain

Of commerce round the world!

Speed on the ship! But let her bear

No merchandise of sin,

No groaning cargo of despair

Her roomy hold within;
SONGS OF LABOR.

No Lethean drug for Eastern lands,
Nor poison-draught for ours;
But honest fruits of toiling hands
And Nature's sun and showers.

430 Be hers the Prairie's golden grain,
The Desert's golden sand,
The clustered fruits of sunny Spain,
The spice of Morning-land!
Her pathway on the open main
435 May blessings follow free,
And glad hearts welcome back again
Her white sails from the sea!

THE DROVERS.

THROUGH heat and cold, and shower and sun,
Still onward cheerily driving!
440 There's life alone in duty done,
And rest alone in striving.
But see! the day is closing cool,
The woods are dim before us;
The white fog of the wayside pool
445 Is creeping slowly o'er us.

The night is falling, comrades mine,
Our footsore beasts are weary,
And through yon elms the tavern sign
Looks out upon us cheery.
450 The landlord beckons from his door,
His beechen fire is glowing;
These ample barns, with feed in store,
Are filled to overflowing.
From many a valley frowned across
By brows of rugged mountains;
From hillsides where, through spongy moss,
Gush out the river fountains;
From quiet farm-fields, green and low,
And bright with blooming clover;
From vales of corn the wandering crow
No richer hovers over;

Day after day our way has been
O'er many a hill and hollow;
By lake and stream, by wood and glen,
Our stately drove we follow.
Through dust-clouds rising thick and dun,
A smoke of battle o'er us,
Their white horns glisten in the sun,
Like plumes and crests before us.

We see them slowly climb the hill,
As slow behind it sinking;
Or, thronging close, from roadside rill,
Or sunny lakelet, drinking.
Now crowding in the narrow road,
In thick and struggling masses,
They glare upon the teamster's load,
Or rattling coach that passes.

Anon, with toss of horn and tail,
And paw of hoof, and bellow,
They leap some farmer's broken pale,
O'er meadow-close or fallow.
Forth comes the startled goodman; forth
Wife, children, house-dog, sally,
Till once more on their dusty path
The baffled truants rally.

We drive no starvelings, scraggy grown,
Loose-legged, and ribbed and bony,
Like those who grind their noses down
On pastures bare and stony, —
Lank oxen, rough as Indian dogs,
And cows too lean for shadows,
Disputing feebly with the frogs
The crop of saw-grass meadows!

In our good drove, so sleek and fair,
No bones of leanness rattle,
No tottering hide-bound ghosts are there,
Or Pharaoh's evil cattle.
Each stately beeve bespeaks the hand
That fed him unrepining;
The fatness of a goodly land
In each dun hide is shining.

We've sought them where, in warmest nooks,
The freshest feed is growing,
By sweetest springs and clearest brooks
Through honeysuckle flowing;
Wherever hillsides, sloping south,
Are bright with early grasses,
Or, tracking green the lowland's drouth,
The mountain streamlet passes.

But now the day is closing cool,
The woods are dim before us,
The white fog of the wayside pool
Is creeping slowly o'er us.
The cricket to the frog's bassoon
His shrillest time is keeping;
The sickle of yon setting moon
The meadow-mist is reaping.

The night is falling, comrades mine,
Our footsore beasts are weary,
And through yon elms the tavern sign
Looks out upon us cheery.
To-morrow, eastward with our charge
We'll go to meet the dawning,
Ere yet the pines of Kearsarge
Have seen the sun of morning.

When snow-flakes o'er the frozen earth,
Instead of birds, are flitting;
When children throng the glowing hearth,
And quiet wives are knitting;
While in the firelight strong and clear
Young eyes of pleasure glisten,
To tales of all we see and hear
The ears of home shall listen.

By many a Northern lake and hill,
From many a mountain pasture,
Shall fancy play the Drover still,
And speed the long night faster.
Then let us on, through shower and sun,
And heat and cold, be driving;
There's life alone in duty done,
And rest alone in striving.
THE HUSKERS.

It was late in mild October, and the long autumnal rain
Had left the summer harvest-fields all green with grass again;
The first sharp frost had fallen, leaving all the woodlands gay
With the hues of summer's rainbow, or the meadow-flowers of May.

Through a thin, dry mist, that morning, the sun rose broad and red,
At first a rayless disk of fire, he brightened as he sped;
Yet, even his noontide glory fell chastened and subdued,
On the cornfields and the orchards, and softly pictured wood.

And all that quiet afternoon, slow sloping to the night,
He wove with golden shuttle the haze with yellow light;
Slanting through the painted beeches, he glorified the hill;
And, beneath it, pond and meadow lay brighter, greener still.

And shouting boys in woodland haunts caught glimpses of that sky,
Flecked by the many-tinted leaves, and laughed, they knew not why,
And school-girls gay with aster-flowers, beside the meadow brooks,
Mingled the glow of autumn with the sunshine of sweet looks.

From spire and barn looked westerly the patient weathercocks;
But even the birches on the hill stood motionless as rocks.

No sound was in the woodlands, save the squirrel's dropping shell,
And the yellow leaves among the boughs, low rustling as they fell.

The summer grains were harvested; the stubble-fields lay dry,
Where June winds rolled, in light and shade, the pale green waves of rye;
But still, on gentle hill-slopes, in valleys fringed with wood,

Ungathered, bleaching in the sun, the heavy corn crop stood.

Bent low, by autumn's wind and rain, through husks that, dry and sere,
Unfolded from their ripened charge, shone out the yellow ear;
Beneath, the turnip lay concealed, in many a verdant fold,
And glistened in the slanting light the pumpkin's sphere of gold.
There wrought the busy harvesters; and many a
creaking wain
Bore slowly to the long barn-floor its load of husk
and grain;
Till broad and red, as when he rose, the sun sank
down, at last,
And like a merry guest's farewell, the day in bright-
ess passed.

And lo! as through the western pines, on meadow,
stream, and pond,
Flamed the red radiance of a sky, set all afire be-
yond,
Slowly o'er the eastern sea-bluffs a milder glory
shone,
And the sunset and the moonrise were mingled into
one!

As thus into the quiet night the twilight lapsed
away,
And deeper in the brightening moon the tranquil
shadows lay;
From many a brown old farm-house, and hamlet
without name,
Their milking and their home-tasks done, the merry
huskers came.

Swung o'er the heaped-up harvest, from pitchforks
in the mow,
Shone dimly down the lanterns on the pleasant scene
below;
The growing pile of husks behind, the golden ears before,
And laughing eyes and busy hands and brown cheeks glistening o'er.

Half hidden, in a quiet nook, serene of look and heart,
Talking their old times over, the old men sat apart;
While up and down the unhusked pile, or nestling in its shade,
At hide-and-seek, with laugh and shout, the happy children played.

Urged by the good host's daughter, a maiden young and fair,
Lifting to light her sweet blue eyes and pride of soft brown hair,
The master of the village school, sleek of hair and smooth of tongue,
To the quaint tune of some old psalm, a husking-ballad sung.

THE CORN-SONG.

Heap high the farmer's wintry hoard!
Heap high the golden corn!
No richer gift has Autumn poured
From out her lavish horn!

Let other lands, exulting, glean
The apple from the pine,
The orange from its glossy green,
The cluster from the vine;
SONGS OF LABOR.

We better love the hardy gift
   Our rugged vales bestow,
To cheer us when the storm shall drift
   Our harvest-fields with snow.

Through vales of grass and meads of flowers
   Our ploughs their furrows made,
While on the hills the sun and showers
   Of changeful April played.

We dropped the seed o'er hill and plain
   Beneath the sun of May,
And frightened from our sprouting grain
   The robber crows away.

All through the long, bright days of June
   Its leaves grew green and fair,
And waved in hot midsummer's noon
   Its soft and yellow hair.

And now, with Autumn's moonlit eves,
   Its harvest-time has come,
We pluck away the frosted leaves,
   And bear the treasure home.

There, when the snows about us drift,
   And winter winds are cold,
Fair hands the broken grain shall sift,
   And knead its meal of gold.

Let vapid idlers loll in silk
   Around their costly board;
Give us the bowl of samp and milk,
   By homespun beauty poured!
Where'er the wide old kitchen hearth
    Sends up its smoky curls,
Who will not thank the kindly earth,
    And bless our farmer girls!

Then shame on all the proud and vain,
    Whose folly laughs to scorn
The blessing of our hardy grain,
    Our wealth of golden corn!

Let earth withhold her goodly root,
    Let mildew blight the rye,
Give to the worm the orchard's fruit,
    The wheat-field to the fly:

But let the good old crop adorn
    The hills our fathers trod;
Still let us, for His golden corn,
    Send up our thanks to God!
IV.

SELECTED POEMS.

THE BAREFOOT BOY.

Blessings on thee, little man,
Barefoot boy, with cheek of tan!
With thy turned-up pantaloons,
And thy merry whistled tunes;
With thy red lip, redder still
Kissed by strawberries on the hill;
With the sunshine on thy face,
Through thy torn brim's jaunty grace;
From my heart I give thee joy,—

I was once a barefoot boy!
Prince thou art,—the grown-up man
Only is republican.
Let the million-dollared ride!
Barefoot, trudging at his side,

Thou hast more than he can buy
In the reach of ear and eye,—
Outward sunshine, inward joy:
Blessings on thee, barefoot boy!

Oh for boyhood's painless play,
Sleep that wakes in laughing day,
Health that mocks the doctor's rules,
Knowledge never learned of schools,
Of the wild bee's morning chase,
Of the wild-flower's time and place,
Flight of fowl and habitue
Of the tenants of the wood;
How the tortoise bears his shell,
How the woodchuck digs his cell,
And the ground-mole sinks his well:
How the robin feeds her young,
How the oriole's nest is hung;
Where the whitest lilies blow,
Where the freshest berries grow,
Where the ground-nut trails its vine,
Where the wood-grape's clusters shine;
Of the black wasp's cunning way,
Mason of his walls of clay,
And the architectural plans
Of gray hornet artisans!
For, eschewing books and tasks,
Nature answers all he asks;
Hand in hand with her he walks,
Face to face with her he talks,
Part and parcel of her joy,—
Blessings on the barefoot boy!

Oh for boyhood's time of June,
Crowding years in one brief moon,
When all things I heard or saw,
Me, their master, waited for.
I was rich in flowers and trees,
Humming-birds and honey-bees;
For my sport the squirrel played,
Plied the snouted mole his spade;
For my taste the blackberry cone
Purpled over hedge and stone;
Laughed the brook for my delight
Through the day and through the night,
Whispering at the garden wall,
Talked with me from fall to fall;
Mine the sand-rimmed pickerel pond,
Mine the walnut slopes beyond,
Mine on bending orchard trees,
Apples of Hesperides!
Still as my horizon grew,
Larger grew my riches too;
All the world I saw or knew
Seemed a complex Chinese toy,
Fashioned for a barefoot boy!

Oh for festal dainties spread,
Like my bowl of milk and bread;
Pewter spoon and bowl of wood,
On the door-stone, gray and rude!
O’er me, like a regal tent,
Cloudy-ribbed, the sunset bent,
Purple-curtained, fringed with gold,
Looped in many a wind-swung fold;
While for music came the play
Of the pied frogs’ orchestra;
And, to light the noisy choir,
Lit the fly his lamp of fire.
I was monarch: pomp and joy
Waited on the barefoot boy!

Cheerily, then, my little man,
Live and laugh, as boyhood can!
Though the flinty slopes be hard,
Stubble-speared the new-mown sward,
Every morn shall lead thee through
Fresh baptisms of the dew;
Every evening from thy feet
Shall the cool wind kiss the heat:
All too soon these feet must hide
In the prison cells of pride,
Lose the freedom of the sod,
Like a colt's for work be shod,
Made to tread the mills of toil,
Up and down in ceaseless moil:
Happy if their track be found
Never on forbidden ground;
Happy if they sink not in
Quick and treacherous sands of sin.
Ah! that thou couldst know thy joy,
Ere it passes, barefoot boy!

HOW THE ROBIN CAME.

AN ALGONQUIN LEGEND.

Happy young friends, sit by me,
Under May's blown apple-tree,
While these home-birds in and out
Through the blossoms flit about.
Hear a story, strange and old,
By the wild red Indians told,
How the robin came to be:
Once a great chief left his son,—
Well-beloved, his only one,—
When the boy was well-nigh grown,
In the trial-lodge alone.
Left for tortures long and slow
Youths like him must undergo,
Who their pride of manhood test,
Lacking water, food, and rest.

Seven days the fast he kept,
Seven nights he never slept.
Then the young boy, wrung with pain,
Weak from nature's overstrain,

Faltering, moaned a low complaint:
"Spare me, father, for I faint!"
But the chieftain, haughty-eyed,
Hid his pity in his pride.
"You shall be a hunter good,
Knowing never lack of food:
You shall be a warrior great,
Wise as fox and strong as bear;
Many scalps your belt shall wear,
If with patient heart you wait
Bravely till your task is done.
Better you should starving die
Than that boy and squaw should cry
Shame upon your father's son!"

When next morn the sun's first rays
Glistened on the hemlock sprays,
Straight that lodge the old chief sought,
And boiled samp and moose meat brought.
"Rise and eat, my son!" he said.
Lo, he found the poor boy dead!
As with grief his grave they made,
And his bow beside him laid,
Pipe, and knife, and wampum-braid,
On the lodge-top overhead,
Preening smooth its breast of red 
And the brown coat that it wore, 
Sat a bird, unknown before. 
And as if with human tongue, 
"Mourn me not," it said, or sung; 
"I, a bird, am still your son, 
Happier than if hunter fleet, 
Or a brave, before your feet 
Laying scalps in battle won. 
Friend of man, my song shall cheer 
Lodge and corn-land; hovering near, 
To each wigwam I shall bring 
Tidings of the coming spring; 
Every child my voice shall know 
In the moon of melting snow, 
When the maple's red bud swells, 
And the wind-flower lifts its bells. 
As their fond companion 
Men shall henceforth own your son, 
And my song shall testify 
That of human kin am I."
Thus the Indian legend saith 
How, at first, the robin came 
With a sweeter life and death, 
Bird for boy, and still the same. 
If my young friends doubt that this 
Is the robin's genesis, 
Not in vain is still the myth 
If a truth be found therewith: 
Unto gentleness belong 
Gifts unknown to pride and wrong; 
Happier far than hate is praise, — 
He who sings than he who slays.
TELLING THE BEES.

[A remarkable custom, brought from the Old Country, formerly prevailed in the rural districts of New England. On the death of a member of the family, the bees were at once informed of the event, and their hives dressed in mourning. This ceremonial was supposed to be necessary to prevent the swarms from leaving their hives and seeking a new home. The scene is minutely that of the Whittier homestead.]

Here is the place; right over the hill
Runs the path I took;
You can see the gap in the old wall still,
And the stepping-stones in the shallow brook.

There is the house, with the gate red-barred,
And the poplars tall;
And the barn's brown length, and the cattle-yard,
And the white horns tossing above the wall.

There are the beehives ranged in the sun;
And down by the brink
Of the brook are her poor flowers, weed o'errun,
Pansy and daffodil, rose and pink.

A year has gone, as the tortoise goes,
Heavy and slow;
And the same rose blows, and the same sun glows,
And the same brook sings of a year ago.

There's the same sweet clover-smell in the breeze;
And the June sun warm
Tangles his wings of fire in the trees,
Setting, as then, over Fernside farm.
I mind me how with a lover's care
From my Sunday coat
I brushed off the burrs, and smoothed my hair,
And cooled at the brookside my brow and throat.

Since we parted, a month had passed, —
To love, a year;
Down through the beeches I looked at last
On the little red gate and the well-sweep near.

I can see it all now, — the slantwise rain
Of light through the leaves,
The sundown's blaze on her window-pane,
The bloom of her roses under the eaves.

Just the same as a month before, —
The house and the trees,
The barn's brown gable, the vine by the door, —
Nothing changed but the hives of bees.

Before them, under the garden wall,
Forward and back,
Went drearily singing the chore-girl small,
Draping each hive with a shred of black.

Trembling, I listened: the summer sun
Had the chill of snow;
For I knew she was telling the bees of one
Gone on the journey we all must go!

Then I said to myself, "My Mary weeps
For the dead to-day:"
Haply her blind old grandsire sleeps
    The fret and the pain of his age away."

But her dog whined low; on the doorway sill,
50  With his cane to his chin,
The old man sat; and the chore-girl still
    Sung to the bees stealing out and in.

And the song she was singing ever since
    In my ear sounds on: —
55  "Stay at home, pretty bees, fly not hence!
    Mistress Mary is dead and gone!"

SWEET FERN.

The subtle power in perfume found
    Nor priest nor sibyl vainly learned;
On Grecian shrine or Aztec mound
    No censer idly burned.

That power the old-time worships knew,
    The Corybantes’ frenzied dance,
The Pythian priestess swooning through
    The wonderland of trance.

And Nature holds, in wood and field,
10  Her thousand sunlit censers still;
To spells of flower and shrub we yield
    Against or with our will.

I climbed a hill path strange and new
    With slow feet, pausing at each turn;
A sudden waft of west wind blew
   The breath of the sweet fern.

That fragrance from my vision swept
   The alien landscape; in its stead,
Up fairer hills of youth I stepped,
  As light of heart as tread.

I saw my boyhood's lakelet shine
   Once more through rifts of woodland shade;
I knew my river's winding line
   By morning mist betrayed.

25 With me June's freshness, lapsing brook,
   Murmurs of leaf and bee, the call
Of birds, and one in voice and look
   In keeping with them all.

A fern beside the way we went
  She plucked, and, smiling, held it up,
While from her hand the wild, sweet scent
   I drank as from a cup.

O potent witchery of smell!
   The dust-dry leaves to life return,
And she who plucked them owns the spell
   And lifts her ghostly fern.

Or sense or spirit? Who shall say
   What touch the chord of memory thrills?
It passed, and left the August day
  Ablaze on lonely hills.
THE POOR VOTER ON ELECTION DAY.

The proudest now is but my peer,
The highest not more high;
To-day, of all the weary year,
A king of men am I.

To-day alike are great and small,
The nameless and the known;
My palace is the people's hall,
The ballot-box my throne!

Who serves to-day upon the list
Beside the served shall stand;
Alike the brown and wrinkled fist,
The gloved and dainty hand!
The rich is level with the poor,
The weak is strong to-day;
And sleekest broadcloth counts no more
Than homespun frock of gray.

To-day let pomp and vain pretence
My stubborn right abide;
I set a plain man's common sense
Against the pedant's pride.
To-day shall simple manhood try
The strength of gold and land;
The wide world has not wealth to buy
The power in my right hand!

While there's a grief to seek redress,
Or balance to adjust,
Where weighs our living manhood less
Than Mammon's vilest dust,—
While there's a right to need my vote,
A wrong to sweep away,
Up! clouted knee and ragged coat!
A man's a man to-day!

THE HILL-TOP.

The burly driver at my side,
We slowly climbed the hill,
Whose summit, in the hot noontide,
Seemed rising, rising still.
At last, our short noon-shadows hid
The top-stone, bare and brown,
From whence, like Gizeh's pyramid,
The rough mass slanted down.

I felt the cool breath of the North;
Between me and the sun,
O'er deep, still lake, and ridgy earth,
I saw the cloud-shades run.
Before me, stretched for glistening miles,
Lay mountain-girdled Squam;
Like green-winged birds, the leafy isles
Upon its bosom swam.

And, glimmering through the sun-haze warm,
Far as the eye could roam,
Dark billows of an earthquake storm
Beflecked with clouds like foam,
Their vales in misty shadow deep,
Their rugged peaks in shine,

7. Gizeh's pyramid is one of the great pyramids on the banks of the Nile near Cairo.
14. Squam or Asquam lake, at the base of the White Hills.
I saw the mountain ranges sweep
The horizon's northern line.

There towered Chocorua's peak; and west
Moosehillock's woods were seen,
With many a nameless slide-scarred crest
And pine-dark gorge between.
Beyond them, like a sun-rimmed cloud,
The great Notch mountains shone,
Watched over by the solemn-browed
And awful face of stone!

"A good look-off!" the driver spake:
"About this time last year,
I drove a party to the Lake,
And stopped, at evening, here.
'Twas duskish down below; but all
These hills stood in the sun,
Till, dipped behind yon purple wall,
He left them, one by one.

"A lady, who, from Thornton hill,
Had held her place outside,
And, as a pleasant woman will,
Had cheered the long, dull ride,
Besought me, with so sweet a smile,
That — though I hate delays —
I could not choose but rest awhile, —
(These women have such ways!)

"On yonder mossy ledge she sat,
Her sketch upon her knees,

26. The nearer Indian form is Moosilauke.
32. See Hawthorne's story of The Great Stone Face.
A stray brown lock beneath her hat
Unrolling in the breeze;
Her sweet face, in the sunset light
Upraised and glorified,

I never saw a prettier sight
In all my mountain ride.

"As good as fair; it seemed her joy
To comfort and to give;
My poor, sick wife, and cripple boy,
Will bless her while they live!"
The tremor in the driver's tone
His manhood did not shame:
"I dare say, sir, you may have known"—
He named a well-known name.

Then sank the pyramidal mounds,
The blue lake fled away;
For mountain-scope a parlor's bounds,
A lighted hearth for day!
From lonely years and weary miles
The shadows fell apart;
Kind voices cheered, sweet human smiles
Shone warm into my heart.

We journeyed on; but earth and sky
Had power to charm no more;
Still dreamed my inward-turning eye
The dream of memory o'er.
Ah! human kindness, human love,—
To few who seek denied;
Too late we learn to prize above
The whole round world beside!
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