

Fugitive Poetry

Willis, Nathaniel Parker, 1806-1867

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FUGITIVE POETRY: BY N.P. WILLIS.

"If, however, I can, by lucky chance, in these days of evil, rub out one wrinkle from the brow of care, or beguile the heavy heart of one moment of sorrow; if I can, now and then, penetrate the gathering film of misanthropy, prompt a benevolent view of human nature, and make my reader more in good humor with his fellow beings and himself, surely, surely, I shall not then have written entirely in vain."

Washington Irving.

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY PEIRCE AND WILLIAMS.
1829.

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DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, *to wit*:

DISTRICT CLERK'S OFFICE.

Be it remembered, that on the eleventh day of September, A.D. 1829, in the fifty-fourth year of the Independence of the United States of America, Peirce and Williams, of the said district, have deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof they claim as proprietors in the words following, *to wit*:

"Fugitive Poetry: By N.P. Willis.

""If, however, I can, by lucky chance, in these days of evil, rub out one wrinkle from the brow of care, or beguile the heart of one moment of sorrow; if I can, now and then, penetrate the gathering film of misanthropy, prompt a benevolent view of human nature, and make my reader more in good humor with his fellow beings, and himself, surely, surely, I shall not then have written entirely in vain.'" *Washington Irving.*"

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JNO. W. DAVIS, } *Clerk of the District*
of Massachusetts.

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TO
GEORGE JAMES PUMPELLE,
MY BEST AND MOST VALUED FRIEND,
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
BY THE AUTHOR.

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FUGITIVE POETRY.

THE SHUNAMITE.[\[A\]](#)

It was a sultry day of summer time.
The sun pour'd down upon the ripen'd grain
With quivering heat, and the suspended leaves
Hung motionless. The cattle on the hills
Stood still, and the divided flock were all
Laying their nostrils to the cooling roots,
And the sky look'd like silver, and it seem'd
As if the air had fainted, and the pulse
Of nature had run down, and ceas'd to beat.
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'Haste thee, my child!' the Syrian mother said,
'Thy father is athirst'—and from the depths
Of the cool well under the leaning tree,
She drew refreshing water, and with thoughts
Of God's sweet goodness stirring at her heart,
She bless'd her beautiful boy, and to his way
Committed him. And he went lightly on,
With his soft hands press'd closely to the cool
Stone vessel, and his little naked feet
Lifted with watchful care, and o'er the hills,
And thro' the light green hollows, where the lambs
Go for the tender grass, he kept his way,
Wiling its distance with his simple thoughts,
Till, in the wilderness of sheaves, with brows
Throbbing with heat, he set his burden down.

Childhood is restless ever, and the boy
Stay'd not within the shadow of the tree,
But with a joyous industry went forth
Into the reapers' places, and bound up
His tiny sheaves, and plaited cunningly
The pliant withs out of the shining straw,
Cheering their labor on, till they forgot
The very weariness of their stooping toil
In the beguiling of his earnest mirth.

Presently he was silent, and his eye
Closed as with dizzy pain, and with his hand
Press'd hard upon his forehead, and his breast
Heaving with the suppression of a cry,
He uttered a faint murmur, and fell back
Upon the loosen'd sheaf, insensible.
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They bore him to his mother, and he lay
Upon her knees till noon—and then he died!
She had watch'd every breath, and kept her hand
Soft on his forehead, and gaz'd in upon
The dreamy languor of his listless eye,
And she had laid back all his sunny curls,
And kiss'd his delicate lip, and lifted him
Into her bosom, till her heart grew strong—
His beauty was so unlike death! She leaned
Over him now, that she might catch the low
Sweet music of his breath, that she had learn'd
To love when he was slumbering at her side
In his unconscious infancy—
—"So still!
'Tis a soft sleep! How beautiful he lies,
With his fair forehead, and the rosy veins
Playing so freshly in his sunny cheek!
How could they say that he would die! Oh God!
I could not lose him! I have treasured all
His childhood in my heart, and even now,
As he has slept, my memory has been there,
Counting like ingots all his winning ways—
His unforgotten sweetness—
—"Yet so still!—
How like this breathless slumber is to death!
I could believe that in that bosom now
There were no pulse—it beats so languidly!
I cannot see it stir; but his red lip!—
Death would not be so very beautiful!
And that half smile—would death have left *that* there?
—And should I not have felt that he would die?
And have I not wept over him?—and prayed
Morning and night for him?—and *could* he die?
—No—God will keep him. He will be my pride
Many long years to come, and this fair hair
Will darken like his father's, and his eye
Be of a deeper blue when he is grown;
And he will be so tall, and I shall look
With such a pride upon him!—*He* to die!"
And the fond mother lifted his soft curls,
And smiled, as if 'twere mockery to think
That such fair things could perish—
—Suddenly
Her hand shrunk from him, and the color fled
From her fix'd lip, and her supporting knees
Were shook beneath her child. Her hand had touch'd
His forehead, as she dallied with his hair—
And it was cold—like clay!—slow—very slow
Came the misgiving that her child was dead.
She sat a moment and her eyes were clos'd
In a still prayer for strength, and then she took

His little hand and press'd it earnestly—
And put her lip to his—and look'd again
Fearfully on him—and then, bending low,
She whisper'd in his ear, "My son!—My son!"
And as the echo died, and not a sound
Broke on the stillness, and he lay there still,
Motionless on her knee—the truth *would* come!
And with a sharp, quick cry, as if her heart
Were crush'd, she lifted him and held him close
Into her bosom—with a mother's thought—
As if death had no power to touch him there!
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The man of God came forth, and led the child
Unto his mother, and went on his way.
And he was there—her beautiful—her own—
Living and smiling on her—with his arms
Folded about her neck, and his warm breath
Breathing upon her lips, and in her ear
The music of his gentle voice once more!

Oh for a burning word that would express
The measure of a mother's holy joy,
When God has given back to her her child
From death's dark portal! It surpasseth words.

[\[A\]](#) 2 Kings, iv. 18-37.
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SCENE IN GETHSEMANE.

The moon was shining yet. The Orient's brow,
Set with the morning star, was not yet dim;
And the deep silence which subdues the breath
Like a strong feeling, hung upon the world
As sleep upon the pulses of a child.
'Twas the last watch of night. Gethsemane,
With its bath'd leaves of silver, seem'd dissolv'd
In visible stillness, and as Jesus' voice
With its bewildering sweetness met the ear
Of his disciples, it vibrated on
Like the first whisper in a silent world.
They came on slowly. Heaviness oppress'd
The Saviour's heart, and when the kindnesses
Of his deep love were pour'd, he felt the need
Of near communion, for his gift of strength
Was wasted by the spirit's weariness.
He left them there, and went a little on,
And in the depth of that hush'd silentness,
Alone with God, he fell upon his face,
And as his heart was broken with the rush
Of his surpassing agony, and death,
Wrung to him from a dying universe,
Were mightier than the Son of man could bear,
He gave his sorrows way, and in the deep
Prostration of his soul, breathed out the prayer,

Father, if it be possible with thee,
Let this cup pass from me." Oh, how a word,
[Pg 14] Like the forc'd drop before the fountain breaks,
Stilleth the press of human agony!
The Saviour felt its quiet in his soul;
And though his strength was weakness, and the light
Which led him on till now was sorely dim,
He breathed a new submission—"Not my will,
But thine be done, oh Father!" As he spoke,
Voices were heard in heaven, and music stole
Out from the chambers of the vaulted sky,
As if the stars were swept like instruments.
No cloud was visible, but radiant wings
Were coming with a silvery rush to earth,
And as the Saviour rose, a glorious one,
With an illumin'd forehead, and the light
Whose fountain is the mystery of God
Encalm'd within his eye, bow'd down to him,
And nerv'd him with a ministry of strength.
It was enough—and with his godlike brow
Re-written, of his Father's messenger,
With meekness, whose divinity is more
Than power and glory, he return'd again
To his disciples, and awak'd their sleep,
For "he that should betray him was at hand."

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CONTEMPLATION.

"They are all up—the innumerable stars—
And hold their place in heaven. My eyes have been
Searching the pearly depths through which they spring
Like beautiful creations, till I feel
As if it were a new and perfect world,
Waiting in silence for the word of God
To breathe it into motion. There they stand,
Shining in order, like a living hymn
Written in light, awaking at the breath
Of the celestial dawn, and praising Him
Who made them, with the harmony of spheres.
I would I had an angel's ear to list
That melody! I would that I might float
Up in that boundless element, and feel
Its ravishing vibrations, like a pulse
Beating in heaven! My spirit is athirst
For music—rarer music! I would bathe
My soul in a serener atmosphere
Than this! I long to mingle with the flock
Led by the "living waters," and lie down
In the "green pastures" of the better land!
When wilt thou break, dull fetter! When shall I
Gather my wings; and, like a rushing thought,
Stretch onward, star by star, up into heaven!"

[Pg 16]

Thus mused Alethe. She was one to whom
Life had been like the witching of a dream,

Of an untroubled sweetness. She was born
Of a high race, and laid upon the knee,
With her soft eye perusing listlessly
The fretted roof, or, on Mosaic floors,
Grasped at the tessellated squares, inwrought
With metals curiously. Her childhood pass'd
Like faery—amid fountains and green haunts—
Trying her little feet upon a lawn
Of velvet evenness, and hiding flowers
In her sweet bosom, as it were a fair
And pearly altar to crush incense on.
Her youth—oh! that was queenly! She was like
A dream of poetry that may not be
Written or told—exceeding beautiful!
And so came worshippers; and rank bow'd down,
And breathed upon her heart, as with a breath
Of pride, and bound her forehead gorgeously
With dazzling scorn, and gave unto her step
A majesty as if she trod the sea,
And the proud waves, unbidden, lifted her.
And so she grew to woman—her mere look
Strong as a monarch's signet, and her hand
The ambition of a kingdom.

From all this
Turn'd her high heart away! She had a mind,
Deep and immortal, and it would not feed
On pageantry. She thirsted for a spring
Of a serener element, and drank
Philosophy, and for a little while
She was allay'd—till, presently, it turn'd
Bitter within her, and her spirit grew
Faint for undying waters.
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Then she came
To the pure fount of God—and is athirst
No more—save when the "fever of the world"
Falleth upon her, she will go, sometimes,
Out in the starlight quietness, and breathe
A holy aspiration after heaven!

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SKETCH OF A SCHOOLFELLOW.

He sat by me in school. His face is now
Vividly in my mind, as if he went
From me but yesterday—its pleasant smile
And the rich, joyous laughter of his eye,
And the free play of his unhaughty lip,
So redolent of his heart! He was not fair,
Nor singular, nor over-fond of books,
And never melancholy when alone.
He was the heartiest in the ring, the last
Home from the summer's wanderings, and the first
Over the threshold when the school was done.
All of us loved him. We shall speak his name

In the far years to come, and think of him
When we have lost life's simplest passages,
And pray for him—forgetting he is dead—
Life was in him so passing beautiful!
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His childhood had been wasted in the close
And airless city. He had never thought
That the blue sky was ample, or the stars
Many in heaven, or the chainless wind
Of a medicinal freshness. He had learn'd
Perilous tricks of manhood, and his hand
Was ready, and his confidence in himself
Bold as a quarreller's. Then he came away
To the unshelter'd hills, and brought an eye
New as a babe's to nature, and an ear
As ignorant of its music. He was sad.
The broad hill sides seem'd desolate, and the woods
Gloomy and dim, and the perpetual sound
Of wind and waters and unquiet leaves
Like the monotony of a dirge. He pined
For the familiar things until his heart
Sicken'd for home!—and so he stole away
To the most silent places, and lay down
To weep upon the mosses of the slopes,
And follow'd listlessly the silver streams,
Till he found out the unsunn'd shadowings,
And the green openings to the sky, and grew
Fond of them all insensibly. He found
Sweet company in the brooks, and loved to sit
And bathe his fingers wantonly, and feel
The wind upon his forehead; and the leaves
Took a beguiling whisper to his ear,
And the bird-voices music, and the blast
Swept like an instrument the sounding trees.
His heart went back to its simplicity
As the stirr'd waters in the night grow pure—
Sadness and silence and the dim-lit woods
Won on his love so well—and he forgot
His pride and his assumingness, and lost
The mimicry of the man, and so unlearn'd
His very character till he became
As diffident as a girl.
'Tis very strange
How nature sometimes wins upon a child.
Th' experience of the world is not on him,
And poetry has not upon his brain
Left a mock thirst for solitude, nor love
Writ on his forehead the effeminate shame
[Pg 20] Which hideth from men's eyes. He has a full,
Shadowless heart, and it is always toned
More merrily than the chastened voice of winds
And waters—yet he often, in his mirth,
Stops by the running brooks, and suddenly
Loiters, he knows not why, and at the sight
Of the spread meadows and the lifted hills
Feels an unquiet pleasure, and forgets
To listen for his fellows. He will grow
Fond of the early star, and lie awake

Gazing with many thoughts upon the moon,
And lose himself in the deep chamber'd sky
With his untaught philosophies. It breeds
Sadness in older hearts, but not in his;
And he goes merrier to his play, and shouts
Louder the joyous call—but it will sink
Into his memory like his mother's prayer,
For after years to brood on.
Cheerful thoughts
Came to the homesick boy as he became
Wakeful to beauty in the summer's change,
And he came oftener to our noisy play,
Cheering us on with his delightful shout
Over the hills, and giving interest
With his keen spirit to the boyish game.
We loved him for his carelessness of himself,
And his perpetual mirth, and tho' he stole
Sometimes away into the woods alone,
And wandered unaccompanied when the night
Was beautiful, he was our idol still,
And we have not forgotten him, tho' time
Has blotted many a pleasant memory
Of boyhood out, and we are wearing old
With the unplayfulness of this grown up world.

[Pg 21]

IDLENESS.

The rain is playing its soft pleasant tune
Fitfully on the skylight, and the shade
Of the fast flying clouds across my book
Passes with delicate change. My merry fire
Sings cheerfully to itself; my musing cat
Purrs as she wakes from her unquiet sleep,
And looks into my face as if she felt
Like me the gentle influence of the rain.
Here have I sat since morn, reading sometimes,
And sometimes listening to the faster fall
Of the large drops, or rising with the stir
Of an unbidden thought, have walked awhile
With the slow steps of indolence, my room,
And then sat down composedly again
To my quaint book of olden poetry.
It is a kind of idleness, I know;
And I am said to be an idle man—
And it is very true. I love to go
Out in the pleasant sun, and let my eye
Rest on the human faces that pass by,
Each with its gay or busy interest;
And then I muse upon their lot, and read
Many a lesson in their changeful cast,
And so grow kind of heart, as if the sight
Of human beings were humanity.
And I am better after it, and go
More gratefully to my rest, and feel a love
Stirring my heart to every living thing,
And my low prayer has more humility,

And I sink lightlier to my dreams—and this,
'Tis very true, is only idleness!
[Pg 22]

I love to go and mingle with the young
In the gay festal room—when every heart
Is beating faster than the merry tune,
And their blue eyes are restless, and their lips
Parted with eager joy, and their round cheeks
Flushed with the beautiful motion of the dance.
'Tis sweet, in the becoming light of lamps,
To watch a brow half shaded, or a curl
Playing upon a neck capriciously,
Or, unobserved, to watch in its delight,
The earnest countenance of a child. I love
To look upon such things, and I can go
Back to my solitude, and dream bright dreams
For their fast coming years, and speak of them
Earnestly in my prayer, till I am glad
With a benevolent joy—and this, I know,
To the world's eye, is only idleness!
[Pg 23]

And when the clouds pass suddenly away,
And the blue sky is like a newer world,
And the sweet growing things—forest and flower,
Humble and beautiful alike—are all
Breathing up odors to the very heaven—
Or when the frost has yielded to the sun
In the rich autumn, and the filmy mist
Lies like a silver lining on the sky,
And the clear air exhilarates, and life
Simply, is luxury—and when the hush
Of twilight, like a gentle sleep, steals on,
And the birds settle to their nests, and stars
Spring in the upper sky, and there is not
A sound that is not low and musical—
At all these pleasant seasons I go out
With my first impulse guiding me, and take
Woodpath, or stream, or sunny mountain side,
And, in my recklessness of heart, stray on,
Glad with the birds, and silent with the leaves,
And happy with the fair and blessed world—
And this, 'tis true, is only idleness!

And I should love to go up to the sky,
And course the heaven like stars, and float away
Upon the gliding clouds that have no stay
In their swift journey—and 'twould be a joy
To walk the chambers of the deep, and tread
The pearls of its untrodden floor, and know
The tribes of its unfathomable depths—
Dwellers beneath the pressure of a sea!
And I should love to issue with the wind
On a strong errand, and o'ersweep the earth,
With its broad continents and islands green,
Like to the passing of a presence on!—
And this, 'tis true, were only idleness!

[Pg 24]

ON THE DEATH OF EDWARD PAYSON, D.D.

A servant of the living God is dead!
His errand hath been well and early done,
And early hath he gone to his reward.
He shall come no more forth, but to his sleep
Hath silently lain down, and so shall rest.

Would ye bewail our brother? He hath gone
To Abraham's bosom. He shall no more thirst,
Nor hunger, but forever in the eye,
Holy and meek, of Jesus, he may look,
Unchided, and untempted, and unstained.
Would ye bewail our brother? He hath gone
To sit down with the prophets by the clear
And crystal waters; he hath gone to list
Isaiah's harp and David's, and to walk
With Enoch, and Elijah, and the host
Of the just men made perfect. He shall bow
At Gabriel's Hallelujah, and unfold
The scroll of the Apocalypse with John,
And talk of Christ with Mary, and go back
To the last supper, and the garden prayer
With the belov'd disciple. He shall hear
The story of the Incarnation told
By Simeon, and the Triune mystery
Burning upon the fervent lips of Paul.
He shall have wings of glory, and shall soar
To the remoter firmaments, and read
The order and the harmony of stars;
And, in the might of knowledge, he shall bow
In the deep pauses of Archangel harps,
And humble as the Seraphim, shall cry—
Who by his searching, finds thee out, Oh God!
[Pg 25]

There shall he meet his children who have gone
Before him, and as other years roll on,
And his loved flock go up to him, his hand
Again shall lead them gently to the Lamb,
And bring them to the living waters there.

Is it so good to die! and shall we mourn
That he is taken early to his rest?
Tell me! Oh mourner for the man of God!
Shall we bewail our brother that he died?

[Pg 26]

THE TRI-PORTRAIT.

'Twas a rich night in June. The air was all
Fragrance and balm, and the wet leaves were stirred
By the soft fingers of the southern wind,
And caught the light capriciously, like wings
Haunting the greenwood with a silvery sheen.

The stars might not be numbered, and the moon
Exceeding beautiful, went up in heaven,
And took her place in silence, and a hush,
Like the deep Sabbath of the night, came down
And rested upon nature. I was out
With three sweet sisters wandering, and my thoughts
Took color of the moonlight, and of them,
And I was calm and happy. Their deep tones,
Low in the stillness, and by that soft air
Melted to reediness, bore out, like song,
The language of high feelings, and I felt
How excellent is woman when she gives
To the fine pulses of her spirit way.
One was a noble being, with a brow
Ample and pure, and on it her black hair
Was parted, like a raven's wing on snow.
Her tone was low and sweet, and in her smile
You read intense affections. Her moist eye
Had a most rare benignity; her mouth,
Bland and unshadowed sweetness; and her face
Was full of that mild dignity that gives
A holiness to woman. She was one
Whose virtues blossom daily, and pour out
A fragrance upon all who in her path
Have a blest fellowship. I longed to be
Her brother, that her hand might lie upon
My forehead, and her gentle voice allay
The fever that is at my heart sometimes.
[Pg 27]

There was a second sister who might witch
An angel from his hymn. I cannot tell
The secret of her beauty. It is more
Than her slight penciled lip, and her arch eye
Laughing beneath its lashes, as if life
Were nothing but a merry mask; 'tis more
Than motion, though she moveth like a fay;
Or music, though her voice is like a reed
Blown by a low south wind; or cunning grace,
Though all she does is beautiful; or thought,
Or fancy, or a delicate sense, though mind
Is her best gift, and poetry her world,
And she will see strange beauty in a flower
As by a subtle vision. I care not
To know how she bewitches; 'tis enough
For me that I can listen to her voice
And dream rare dreams of music, or converse
Upon unwrit philosophy, till I
Am wildered beneath thoughts I cannot bound
And the red lip that breathes them.
On my arm
Leaned an unshadowed girl, who scarcely yet
Had numbered fourteen summers. I know not
How I shall draw her picture—the young heart
Has such a restlessness of change, and each
Of its wild moods so lovely! I can see
[Pg 28] Her figure in its rounded beauty now,
With her half-flying step, her clustering hair
Bathing a neck like Hebe's, and her face

By a glad heart made radiant. She was full
Of the romance of girlhood. The fair world
Was like an unmarred Eden to her eye,
And every sound was music, and the tint
Of every cloud a silent poetry.
Light to thy path, bright creature! I would charm
Thy being if I could, that it should be
Ever as now thou dreamest, and flow on
Thus innocent and beautiful to heaven!
We walked beneath the full and mellow moon
Till the late stars had risen. It was not
In silence, though we did not seem to break
The hush with our low voices; but our thoughts
Stirred deeply at their sources; and when night
Divided us, I slumbered with a peace
Floating about my heart, which only comes
From high communion. I shall never see
That silver moon again without a crowd
Of gentle memories, and a silent prayer,
That when the night of life shall oversteal
Your sky, ye lovely sisters! there may be
A light as beautiful to lead you on.

[Pg 29]

JANUARY 1, 1828.

Fleetly hath past the year. The seasons came
Duly as they are wont—the gentle Spring,
And the delicious Summer, and the cool,
Rich Autumn, with the nodding of the grain,
And Winter, like an old and hoary man,
Frosty and stiff—and so are chronicled.
We have read gladness in the new green leaf,
And in the first blown violets; we have drunk
Cool water from the rock, and in the shade
Sunk to the noon-tide slumber;—we have eat
The mellow fruitage of the bending tree,
And girded to our pleasant wanderings
When the cool wind came freshly from the hills;
And when the tinting of the Autumn leaves
Had faded from its glory, we have sat
By the good fires of Winter, and rejoiced
Over the fulness of the gathered sheaf.
"God hath been very good!" 'Tis He whose hand
Moulded the sunny hills, and hollowed out
The shelter of the valleys, and doth keep
The fountains in their secret places cool;
And it is He who leadeth up the sun,
And ordereth the starry influences,
And tempereth the keenness of the frost—
And therefore, in the plenty of the feast,
And in the lifting of the cup, let HIM
Have praises for the well-completed year.

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JANUARY 1, 1829.

Winter is come again. The sweet south west
Is a forgotten wind, and the strong earth
Has laid aside its mantle to be bound
By the frost fetter. There is not a sound
Save of the skaiter's heel, and there is laid
An icy finger on the lip of streams,
And the clear icicle hangs cold and still,
And the snow-fall is noiseless as a thought.
Spring has a rushing sound, and Summer sends
Many sweet voices with its odors out,
And Autumn rustleth its decaying robe
With a complaining whisper. Winter's dumb!
God made his ministry a silent one,
And he has given him a foot of steel
And an unlovely aspect, and a breath
Sharp to the senses—and we know that He
Tempereth well, and hath a meaning hid
Under the shadow of his hand. Look up!
And it shall be interpreted—Your home
Hath a temptation now. There is no voice
Of waters with beguiling for your ear,
And the cool forest and the meadows green
Witch not your feet away; and in the dells
There are no violets, and upon the hills
There are no sunny places to lie down.
You must go in, and by your cheerful fire
Wait for the offices of love, and hear
[Pg 31] Accents of human tenderness, and feast
Your eye upon the beauty of the young.
It is a season for the quiet thought,
And the still reckoning with thyself. The year
Gives back the spirits of its dead, and time
Whispers the history of its vanished hours;
And the heart, calling its affections up,
Counteth its wasted ingots. Life stands still
And settles like a fountain, and the eye
Sees clearly through its depths, and noteth all
That stirred its troubled waters. It is well
That Winter with the dying year should come!

[Pg 32]

PSYCHE,

BEFORE THE TRIBUNAL OF VENUS.

Lift up thine eyes, sweet Psyche! What is she
That those soft fringes timidly should fall
Before her, and thy spiritual brow
Be shadowed as her presence were a cloud?
A loftier gift is thine than she can give—
That queen of beauty. She may mould the brow
To perfectness, and give unto the form
A beautiful proportion; she may stain
The eye with a celestial blue—the cheek

With carmine of the sunset; she may breathe
Grace into every motion, like the play
Of the least visible tissue of a cloud;
She may give all that is within her own
Bright cestus—and one silent look of thine,
Like stronger magic, will outcharm it all.

Ay, for the soul is better than its frame,
The spirit than its temple. What's the brow,
Or the eye's lustre, or the step of air,
Or color, but the beautiful links that chain
The mind from its rare element? There lies
A talisman in intellect which yields
Celestial music, when the master hand
Touches it cunningly. It sleeps beneath
The outward semblance, and to common sight
[Pg 33] Is an invisible and hidden thing;
But when the lip is faded, and the cheek
Robbed of its daintiness, and when the form
Witches the sense no more, and human love
Falters in its idolatry, this spell
Will hold its strength unbroken, and go on
Stealing anew the affections.

Marvel not
That Love leans sadly on his bended bow.
He hath found out the loveliness of mind,
And he is spoilt for beauty. So 'twill be
Ever—the glory of the human form
Is but a perishing thing, and Love will droop
When its brief grace hath faded; but the mind
Perisheth not, and when the outward charm
Hath had its brief existence, it awakes,
And is the lovelier that it slept so long—
Like wells that by the wasting of their flow
Have had their deeper fountains broken up.

[Pg 34]

ON SEEING A BEAUTIFUL BOY AT PLAY.

Down the green slope he bounded. Raven curls
From his white shoulders by the winds were swept,
And the clear color of his sunny cheek
Was bright with motion. Through his open lips
Shone visibly a delicate line of pearl,
Like a white vein within a rosy shell,
And his dark eye's clear brilliance, as it lay
Beneath his lashes, like a drop of dew
Hid in the moss, stole out as covertly
As starlight from the edging of a cloud.
I never saw a boy so beautiful.
His step was like the stooping of a bird,
And his limbs melted into grace like things
Shaped by the wind of summer. He was like
A painter's fine conception—such an one
As he would have of Ganymede, and weep
Upon his pallet that he could not win
The vision to his easel. Who could paint

The young and shadowless spirit? Who could chain
The visible gladness of a heart that lives,
Like a glad fountain, in the eye of light,
With an unbreathing pencil? Nature's gift
Has nothing that is like it. Sun and stream,
And the new leaves of June, and the young lark
That flees away into the depths of heaven,
Lost in his own wild music, and the breath
Of springtime, and the summer eve, and noon
In the cool autumn, are like fingers swept
Over sweet-toned affections—but the joy
That enters to the spirit of a child
Is deep as his young heart: his very breath,
The simple sense of being, is enough
To ravish him, and like a thrilling touch
He feels each moment of his life go by.
[Pg 35]

Beautiful, beautiful childhood! with a joy
That like a robe is palpable, and flung
Out by your every motion! delicate bud
Of the immortal flower that will unfold
And come to its maturity in heaven!
I weep your earthly glory. 'Tis a light
Lent to the new born spirit that goes out
With the first idle wind. It is the leaf
Fresh flung upon the river, that will dance
Upon the wave that stealeth out its life,
Then sink of its own heaviness. The face
Of the delightful earth will to your eye
Grow dim; the fragrance of the many flowers
Be noticed not, and the beguiling voice
Of nature in her gentleness will be
To manhood's senseless ear inaudible.
I sigh to look upon thy face, young boy!

[Pg 36]

A CHILD'S FIRST IMPRESSION OF A STAR.

She had been told that God made all the stars
That twinkled up in heaven, and now she stood
Watching the coming of the twilight on,
As if it were a new and perfect world,
And this were its first eve. How beautiful
Must be the work of nature to a child
In its first fresh impression! Laura stood
By the low window, with the silken lash
Of her soft eye upraised, and her sweet mouth
Half parted with the new and strange delight
Of beauty that she could not comprehend,
And had not seen before. The purple folds
Of the low sunset clouds, and the blue sky
That look'd so still and delicate above,
Fill'd her young heart with gladness, and the eve
Stole on with its deep shadows, and she still
Stood looking at the west with that half smile,
As if a pleasant thought were at her heart.

Presently, in the edge of the last tint
Of sunset, where the blue was melted in
To the faint golden mellowness, a star
Stood suddenly. A laugh of wild delight
Burst from her lips, and putting up her hands,
Her simple thought broke forth expressively—
"Father! dear Father! God has made a star!"

[Pg 37]

DEDICATION HYMN.

The perfect world by Adam trod,
Was the first temple—built by God—
His fiat laid the corner stone,
And heav'd its pillars, one by one.

He hung its starry roof on high—
The broad illimitable sky;
He spread its pavement, green and bright,
And curtain'd it with morning light.

The mountains in their places stood—
The sea—the sky—and "all was good;"
And, when its first pure praises rang,
The "morning stars together sang."

Lord! 'tis not ours to make the sea
And earth and sky a house for thee;
But in thy sight our off'ring stands—
A humbler temple, "made with hands."

[Pg 38]

THE BAPTISM.

She stood up in the meekness of a heart
Resting on God, and held her fair young child
Upon her bosom, with its gentle eyes
Folded in sleep, as if its soul had gone
To whisper the baptismal vow in Heaven.
The prayer went up devoutly, and the lips
Of the good man glowed fervently with faith
That it would be, even as he had pray'd,
And the sweet child be gather'd to the fold
Of Jesus. As the holy words went on
Her lips mov'd silently, and tears, fast tears
Stole from beneath her lashes, and upon
The forehead of the beautiful child lay soft
With the baptismal water. Then I thought
That, to the eye of God, that mother's tears
Would be a deeper covenant, which sin
And the temptations of the world, and death
Would leave unbroken, and that she would know
In the clear light of heaven, how very strong
The prayer which press'd them from her heart had been
In leading its young spirit up to God.

THE TABLE OF EMERALD.

Deep, it is said, under yonder pyramid, has for ages lain concealed the Table of Emerald, on which the thrice-great Hermes engraved, before the flood, the secret of Alchemy that gives gold at will.

Epicurean.

That 'Emerald Green of the Pyramid'—
Were I where it is laid,
I'd ask no king for his heavy crown,
As its hidden words were said.
The pomp and the glitter of worldly pride
Should fetter my moments not,
And the natural thought of an open mind,
Should govern alone my lot.

Would I feast all day? revel all night?
Laugh with a weary heart?
Would I sleep away the breezy morn?
And wake till the stars depart?
Would I gain no knowledge, and search no deep
For the wisdom that sages knew?
Would I run to waste with a human mind—
To its noble trust untrue?
[Pg 40]

Oh! knew I the depth of that 'Emerald Green,'
And knew I the spell of gold,
I would never poison a fresh young heart
With the taint of customs old.
I would bind no wreath to my forehead free
In whose shadow a thought would die,
Nor drink from the cup of revelry,
The ruin my gold would buy.

But I'd break the fetters of care worn things,
And be spirit and fancy free,
My mind should go up where it longs to go,
And the limitless wind outflee.
I'd climb to the eyries of eagle men
Till the stars became a scroll;
And pour right on, like the even sea,
In the strength of a governed soul.

Ambition! Ambition! I've laughed to scorn
Thy robe and thy gleaming sword;
I would follow sooner a woman's eye,
Or the spell of a gentle word;
But come with the glory of human mind,
And the light of the scholar's brow,
And my heart shall be taught forgetfulness,
And alone at thy altar bow.

There was one dark eye—it hath passed away!
There was one deep tone—'tis not!
Could I see it now—could I hear it now,
Ye were all too well forgot.

My heart brought up, from its chambers deep,
The sum of its earthly love;
But it might not—could not—buy like Heaven,
And she stole to her rest above.
[Pg 41]

That first deep love I have taken back,
In my rayless heart to hide;
With the tear it brought for a burning seal,
'Twill there forever bide.
I may stretch on now to a nobler ken,
I may live in my thoughts of flame—
The tie is broken that kept me back,
And my spirit is on, for fame!

But alas! I am dreaming as if I knew
The spell of the tablet green;
I forgot how like to a broken reed,
Is the lot on which I lean.
There is nothing true of my idle dream,
But the wreck of my early love;
And my mind is coined for my daily bread,
And how can it soar above?

[Pg 42]

THE ANNOYER.

Sogna il guerriér le schiere,
Le sel ve il cacciatór;
E sogna il pescatór;
Le reti, e l' amo. *Metastatio.*

Love knoweth every form of air,
And every shape of earth,
And comes, unbidden, everywhere,
Like thought's mysterious birth.
The moonlight sea and the sunset sky
Are written with Love's words,
And you hear his voice unceasingly,
Like song in the time of birds.

He peeps into the warrior's heart
From the tip of a stooping plume,
And the serried spears, and the many men
May not deny him room.
He'll come to his tent in the weary night,
And be busy in his dream;
And he'll float to his eye in morning light
Like a fay on a silver beam.

[Pg 43]

He hears the sound of the hunter's gun,
And rides on the echo back,
And sighs in his ear like a stirring leaf,
And flits in his woodland track.
The shade of the wood, and the sheen of the river,
The cloud, and the open sky—

He will haunt them all with his subtle quiver,
Like the light of your very eye.

The fisher hangs over the leaning boat,
And ponders the silver sea,
For Love is under the surface hid,
And a spell of thought has he.
He heaves the wave like a bosom sweet,
And speaks in the ripple low,
Till the bait is gone from the crafty line,
And the hook hangs bare below.

He blurs the print of the scholar's book,
And intrudes in the maiden's prayer.
And profanes the cell of the holy man,
In the shape of a lady fair.
In the darkest night, and the bright daylight,
In earth, and sea, and sky,
In every home of human thought,
Will Love be lurking nigh.

[Pg 44]

STARLIGHT.

The evening star will twinkle presently.
The last small bird is silent, and the bee
Has gone into his hive, and the shut flowers
Are bending as if sleeping on the stem,
And all sweet living things are slumbering
In the deep hush of nature's resting time.
The faded West looks deep, as if its blue
Were searchable, and even as I look,
The twilight hath stole over it, and made
Its liquid eye apparent, and above
To the far-stretching zenith, and around,
As if they waited on her like a queen,
Have stole out the innumerable stars
To twinkle like intelligence in heaven.
Is it not beautiful, my fair Adel?
Fit for the young affections to come out
And bathe in like an element! How well
The night is made for tenderness—so still
That the low whisper, scarcely audible,
Is heard like music, and so deeply pure
That the fond thought is chastened as it springs
And on the lip made holy. I have won
Thy heart, my gentle girl! but it hath been
When that soft eye was on me, and the love
I told beneath the evening influence
Shall be as constant as its gentle star.

[Pg 45]

LASSITUDE.

I will throw by my book. The weariness

Of too much study presses on my brain,
And thought's close fetter binds upon my brow
Like a distraction, and I must give o'er.
Morning hath seen me here, and noon, and eve;
And midnight with its deep and solemn hush
Has look'd upon my labors, and the dawn,
With its sweet voices, and its tempting breath
Has driven me to rest—and I can bear
The burden of such weariness no more.
I have foregone society, and fled
From a sweet sister's fondness, and from all
A home's alluring blandishments, and now
When I am thirsting for them, and my heart
Would leap at the approaches of their kind
And gentle offices, they are not here,
And I must feel that I am all alone.
Oh, for the fame of this forgetful world
How much we suffer! Were it *all* for this—
Were nothing but the empty praise of men
The guerdon of this sedentary toil—
Were this world's perishable honors *all*—
I'd bound from its confinement as a hart
Leaps from its hunters—but I know, that when
My name shall be forgotten, and my frame
Rests from its labors, I shall find above
A work for the capacities I win,
And, as I discipline my spirit here,
My lyre shall have a nobler sweep in Heaven.

[Pg 46]

"ROARING BROOK:"—Cheshire, Con.

It was a mountain stream that with the leap
Of its impatient waters had worn out
A channel in the rock, and wash'd away
The earth that had upheld the tall old trees,
Till it was darken'd with the shadowy arch
Of the o'er-leaning branches. Here and there
It loiter'd in a broad and limpid pool
That circled round demurely, and anon
Sprung violently over where the rock
Fell suddenly, and bore its bubbles on,
Till they were broken by the hanging moss,
As anger with a gentle word grows calm.
In spring-time, when the snows were coming down,
And in the flooding of the Autumn rains,
No foot might enter there—but in the hot
And thirsty summer, when the fountains slept,
You could go its channel in the shade,
To the far sources, with a brow as cool
As in the grotto of the anchorite.
Here when an idle student have I come,
And in a hollow of the rock lain down
And mus'd until the eventide, or read
Some fine old Poet till my nook became
A haunt of faery, or the busy flow
Of water to my spell-bewilder'd ear

Seem'd like the din of some gay tournament.
Pleasant have been such hours, and tho' the wise
[Pg 47] Have said that I was indolent, and they
Who taught me have reprov'd me that I play'd
The truant in the leafy month of June,
I deem it true philosophy in him
Whose spirit must be temper'd of the world,
To loiter with these wayside comforters.

[Pg 48]

THE DECLARATION.

'Twas late, and the gay company was gone,
And light lay soft on the deserted room
From alabaster vases, and a scent
Of orange leaves, and sweet verbenas came
Through the unshutter'd window on the air,
And the rich pictures with their dark old tints
Hung like a twilight landscape, and all things
Seem'd hush'd into a slumber. Isabel,
The dark eyed, spiritual Isabel
Was leaning on her harp, and I had staid
To whisper what I could not when the crowd
Hung on her look like worshippers. I knelt,
And with the fervor of a lip unused
To the cool breath of reason, told my love.
There was no answer, and I took the hand
That rested on the strings, and pressed a kiss
Upon it unforbidden—and again
Besought her, that this silent evidence
That I was not indifferent to her heart,
Might have the seal of one sweet syllable.
I kissed the small white fingers as I spoke,
And she withdrew them gently, and upraised
Her forehead from its resting place, and looked
Earnestly on me—She had been asleep!

[Pg 49]

ISABEL.

They said that I was strange. I could not bear
Confinement, and I lov'd to feel the wind
Blowing upon my forehead, and when morn
Came like an inspiration from the East,
And the cool earth, awaking like a star
In a new element, sent out its voice,
And tempted me with music, and the breath
Of a delicious perfume, and the dye
Of the rich forests and the pastures green,
To come out and be glad—I would not stay
To bind my gushing spirit with a book.

Fourteen bright summers—and my heart had grown
Impatient in its loneliness, and yearn'd

For something that was like itself, to love.
She came—the stately Isabel—as proud
And beautiful, and gentle as my dream;
And with my wealth of feeling, lov'd I her.
Older by years, and wiser of the world,
She was in thought my equal, and we rang'd
The pleasant wood together, and sat down
Impassion'd with the same delicious sweep
Of water, and I pour'd into her ear
My passion and my hoarded thoughts like one,
Till I forgot that there was any world
But Isabel and nature. She was pleas'd
And flatter'd with my wild and earnest love,
[Pg 50] And suffer'd my delirious words to burn
Upon my lip unchided. It was new
To be so worshipped like a deity
By a pure heart from nature, and she gave
Her tenderness its way, and when I kiss'd
Her fingers till I thought I was in Heaven,
She gaz'd upon me silently, and wept.

I have seen eighteen summers—and the child
Of stately Isabel hath learn'd to come
And win me from my sadness. I have school'd
My feelings to affection for that child,
And I can see his father fondle him,
And give him to his mother with a kiss
Upon her holy forehead—and be calm!

[Pg 51]

MERE ACCIDENT.

It was a shady nook that I had found
Deep in the greenwood. A delicious stream
Ran softly by it on a bed of grass,
And to the border leant a sloping bank
Of moss as delicate as Tempe e'er
Spread for the sleep of Io. Overhead
The spreading larch was woven with the fir,
And as the summer wind stole listlessly,
And dallied with the tree tops, they would part
And let in sprinklings of the sunny light,
Studding the moss like silver; and again
Returning to their places, there would come
A murmur from the touched and stirring leaves,
That like a far-off instrument, beguiled
Your mood into the idleness of sleep.

Here did I win thee, Viola! We came—
Thou knowest how carelessly—and never thought
Love lived in such a wilderness; and thou—
I had a cousin's kindness for thy lip,
And in the meshes of thy chesnut hair
I loved to hide my fingers—that was all!
And when I saw thy figure on the grass,
And thy straw bonnet flung aside, I thought

A fairy would be pretty, painted so
Upon a ground of green—but that was all!
[Pg 52]

And when thou playfully wouldst bathe thy foot,
And the clear water of the stream ran off
And left the white skin polished, why, I thought
It looked like ivory—but that was all!
And when thou wouldst be serious, and I
Was serious too, and thy mere fairy's hand
Lay carelessly in mine, and just for thought
I mused upon thy innocence and gaz'd
Upon the pure transparence of thy brow—
I pressed thy fingers half unconsciously,
And fell in love. Was *that* all, Viola?

[Pg 53]

THE EARL'S MINSTREL.

I had a passion when I was a child
For a most pleasant idleness. In June,
When the thick masses of the leaves were stirr'd
With a just audible murmur, and the streams
Fainted in their cool places to a low
Unnotic'd tinkle, and the reapers hung
Their sickles in the trees and went to sleep,
Then might you find me in an antique chair
Cushion'd with cunning luxury, which stood
In the old study corner, by a nook
Crowded with volumes of the old romance;
And there, the long and quiet summer day,
Lay I with half clos'd eyelids, turning o'er
Leaf after leaf, until the twilight blurr'd
Their singular and time-stain'd characters.
'Twas a forgetful lore, and it is blent
With dreams that in my fitful slumber came,
And is remember'd faintly. But to-day
With the strange waywardness of human thought,
A story has come back to me which I
Had long forgotten, and I tell it now
Because it hath a savour that I find
But seldom in the temper of the world.
[Pg 54]

Angelo turn'd away. He was a poor
Unhonor'd minstrel, and he might not breathe
Love to the daughter of an Earl. She rais'd
Proudly her beautiful head, and shook away
From her clear temples the luxuriant hair,
And told him it would ever please her well
To listen to his minstrelsy, but love
Was for a loftier lip—and then the tear
Stole to her flashing eye, for as she spoke
There rose up a remembrance of his keen,
Unstooping spirit, and his noble heart
Given her like a sacrifice, and she held
Her hand for him to kiss, and said, "Farewell!

Think of me, Angelo!" and so pass'd on.

The color to his forehead mounted high,
And his thin lip curl'd haughtily, and then
As if his mood had chang'd, he bow'd his head
Low on his bosom, and remain'd awhile
Lost in his bitter thoughts—and then again
He lifted to its height his slender form,
And his moist eye grew clear, and his hand pass'd
Rapidly o'er his instrument while thus
He gave his spirit voice:—

[Pg 55]It did not need that alter'd look,
Nor that uplifted brow—
I had not ask'd thy haughty love,
Were I as proud as now.
My love was like a beating heart—
Unbidden and unstayed;
And had I known but half its power,
It had not been betray'd.

I did not seek thy titled hand;
I thought not of thy name;
I only granted utterance
To one wild thought of flame.
I did not dream thou couldst be mine,
Or I a thought to thee—
I only knew my lip must let
Some burning thought go free.

I lov'd thee for thy high born grace,
Thy deep and lustrous eye,
For the sweet meaning of thy brow,
And for thy bearing high;
I lov'd thee for thy stainless truth,
Thy thirst for higher things;
For all that to our common lot
A better temper brings—

And are they not all thine? still thine?
Is not thy heart as true?
Holds not thy step its noble grace—
Thy cheek its dainty hue?
And have I not an ear to hear—
A cloudless eye to see—
And a thirst for beautiful human thought,
That first was stirr'd with thee?

Then why should I turn from thee now?
Why should not I love on—
Dreaming of thee by night, by day,
As I have ever done?
My service shall be still as leal,
My love as quenchless burn
It shames me of my selfish thought
That dream'd of a return!
[Pg 56]

He married her! Perhaps it spoils the tale—
But she had listen'd to his song, unseen,

And kept it in her heart, and, by and by,
When Angelo did service for his king,
And was prefer'd to honor, she betray'd
Her secret in some delicate way that I
Do not remember, and so ends the tale.

[Pg 57]

THE SERENADE.

Innocent dreams be thine! The silver night
Is a fit curtain for thy lovely sleep.
The stars keep watch above thee, and the moon
Sits like a brooding spirit up in Heaven,
Ruling the night's deep influences, and life
Hath a hushed pulse, and the suspended leaves
Sleep with their whisperings as if the dew
Were a soft finger on the lip of sound.
Innocent dreams be thine! thy heart sends up
Its thoughts of purity like pearly bells
Rising in crystal fountains, and the sin
That thou hast seen by day, will, like a shade,
Pass from thy memory, as if the pure
Had an unconscious ministry by night.

Midnight—and now for music! Would I were
A sound that I might steal upon thy dreams,
And, like the breathing of my flute, distil
Sweetly upon thy senses. Softly, boy!
Breathe the low cadences as if the words
Fainted upon thy lip—I would not break
Her slumber quite—but only, as she dreams,
Witch the lull'd sense till she believes she hears
Celestial melody:—

[Pg 58]

SONG.

"Sleep, like a lover, woo thee,
Isabel!
And golden dreams come to thee,
Like a spell
By some sweet angel drawn!
Noiseless hands shall seal thy slumber,
Setting stars its moments number,
So, sleep thou on!

The night above thee broodeth,
Hushed and deep;
But no dark thought intrudeth
On the sleep
Which folds thy senses now.
Gentle spirits float around thee,
Gentle rest hath softly bound thee,
For pure art thou!

And now thy spirit fleeth

On rare wings,
And fancy's vision seeth
Holy things
In its high atmosphere.
Music strange thy sense unsealeth,
And a voice to thee revealeth
What angels hear.
[Pg 59]

Thou'lt wake when morning breaketh,
Pure and calm;
As one who mourns, awaketh
When the balm
Of peace hath on him fell.
Purer thoughts shall stir within thee,
Softer cords to virtue win thee—
Farewell! Farewell!"

[Pg 60]

HERO.

Claudio. Know you any Hero?
Hero. None my lord! *As You Like it.*

Gentle and modest Hero! I can see
Her delicate figure, and her soft blue eye,
Like a warm vision—lovely as she stood,
Veiled in the presence of young Claudio.
Modesty bows her head, and that young heart
That would endure all suffering for the love
It hideth, is as tremulous as the leaf
Forsaken of the Summer. She hath flung
Her all upon the venture of her vow,
And in her trust leans meekly, like a flower
By the still river tempted from its stem,
And on its bosom floating.
Once again
I see her, and she standeth in her pride,
With her soft eye enkindled, and her lip
Curled with its sweet resentment, like a line
Of lifeless coral. She hath heard the voice
That was her music utter it, and still
To her affection faithful, she hath turned
And questioned in her innocent unbelief,
"Is my lord well, that he should speak so wide?"—
How did they look upon that open brow,
And not read purity? Alas for truth!
It hath so many counterfeits. The words,
[Pg 61] That to a child were written legibly,
Are by the wise mistaken, and when light
Hath made the brow transparent, and the face
Is like an angel's—virtue is so fair—
They read it like an over-blotted leaf,
And break the heart that wrote it.

[Pg 62]

APRIL.

A violet by a mossy stone,
Half hidden from the eye,
Fair as a star, when only one,
Is shining in the sky. *Wordsworth*

I have found violets. April hath come on,
And the cool winds feel softer, and the rain
Falls in the beaded drops of summer time.
You may hear birds at morning, and at eve
The tame dove lingers till the twilight falls,
Cooing upon the eaves, and drawing in
His beautiful bright neck, and from the hills,
A murmur like the hoarseness of the sea
Tells the release of waters, and the earth
Sends up a pleasant smell, and the dry leaves
Are lifted by the grass—and so I know
That Nature, with her delicate ear, hath heard
The dropping of the velvet foot of Spring.
Smell of my violets! I found them where
The liquid South stole o'er them, on a bank
That lean'd to running water. There's to me
A daintiness about these early flowers
That touches me like poetry. They blow
With such a simple loveliness among
The common herbs of pasture, and breathe out
Their lives so unobtrusively, like hearts
Whose beatings are too gentle for the world.
[Pg 63] I love to go in the capricious days
Of April and hunt violets; when the rain
Is in the blue cups trembling, and they nod
So gracefully to the kisses of the wind.
It may be deem'd unmanly, but the wise
Read nature like the manuscript of heaven
And call the flowers its poetry. Go out!
Ye spirits of habitual unrest,
And read it when the "fever of the world"
Hath made your hearts impatient, and, if life
Hath yet one spring unpoison'd, it will be
Like a beguiling music to its flow,
And you will no more wonder that I love
To hunt for violets in the April time.

[Pg 64]

TO A BRIDE.

Pass thou on! for the vow is said
That is never broken;
The hand of blessing hath, trembling, laid
On snowy forehead and simple braid,
And the word is spoken
By lips that never their words betray'd.

Pass thou on! for thy human all
Is richly given,

And the voice that claim'd its holy thrall
Must be sweeter for life than music's fall,
And, this side Heaven,
Thy lip may never that trust recal.

Pass thou on! yet many an eye
Will droop and glisten;
And the hushing heart in vain will try
To still its pulse as thy step goes by
And we "vainly listen
For thy voice of witching melody."

Pass thou on! yet a sister's tone
In its sweetness lingers,
Like some twin echo sent back alone,
Or the bird's soft note when its mate hath flown,
And a sister's fingers
Will again o'er the thrilling harp be thrown.
[Pg 65]

And our eyes will rest on their foreheads fair,
And our hearts awaken
Whenever we come where their voices are—
But oh, we shall think how musical were,
Ere of thee forsaken,
The mingled voices we listed there.

Pass on! there is not of our blessings one
That may not perish—
Like visiting angels whose errand is done,
They are never at rest till their home is won,
And we may not cherish
The beautiful gift of *thy* light—Pass on!

[Pg 66]

TWENTY-TWO.

I'm twenty-two—I'm twenty-two—
They gaily give me joy,
As if I should be glad to hear
That I was less a boy.
They do not know how carelessly
Their words have given pain,
To one whose heart would leap to be
A happy boy again.

I had a light and careless heart
When this brief year began,
And then I pray'd that I might be
A grave and perfect man.
The world was like a blessed dream
Of joyous coming years—
I did not know its manliness
Was but to wake in tears.

A change has on my spirit come,
I am forever sad;
The light has all departed now

My early feelings had;
I used to love the morning grey,
The twilight's quiet deep,
But now like shadows on the sea,
Upon my thoughts they creep.
[Pg 67]

And love was like a holy star,
When this brief year was young,
And my whole worship of the sky
On one sweet ray was flung;
But worldly things have come between,
And shut it from my sight,
And though the star shines purely yet,
I mourn its hidden light.

And fame! I bent to it the knee,
And bow'd to it my brow,
And it is like a coal upon
My living spirit now—
But when I pray'd for burning fire
To touch the soul I bow'd,
I did not know the lightning flash
Would come in such a cloud.

Ye give me joy! Is it because
Another year has fled?—
That I am farther from my youth,
And nearer to the dead?
Is it because my cares have come?—
My happy boyhood o'er?—
Because the visions I have lov'd
Will visit me no more?

Oh, tell me not that ye are glad!
I cannot smile it back;
I've found no flower, and seen no light
On manhood's weary track.
My love is deep—ambition deep—
And heart and mind *will* on—
But love is fainting by the way,
And fame consumes ere won.

[Pg 68]

ON A PICTURE OF CHILDREN PLAYING.

BY FISHER.

I love to look on a scene like this,
Of wild and careless play,
And persuade myself that I am not old
And my locks are not yet gray;
For it stirs the blood in old man's heart,
And makes his pulses fly,
To catch the thrill of a happy voice,
And the light of a pleasant eye.

I have walked the world for fourscore years,

And they say that I am old;
That my heart is ripe for the reaper, Death,
And my years are well nigh told.
It is very true—it is very true—
I'm old, and 'I bide my time'—
But my heart will leap at a scene like this,
And I half renew my prime.

Play on! play on! I am with you there,
In the midst of your merry ring;
I can feel the thrill of the daring jump,
And the rush of the breathless swing.
I hide with you in the fragrant hay,
And I whoop the smothered call,
And my feet slip up on the seedy floor,
And I care not for the fall.

[Pg 69]

I am willing to die when my time shall come,
And I shall be glad to go;
For the world, at best, is a weary place,
And my pulse is getting low;
But the grave is dark, and the heart will fail
In treading its gloomy way;
And it wiles my heart from its dreariness,
To see the young so gay.

[Pg 70]

TO A SLEEPING BOY.

Sleep on! Sleep on! beguiling
The hours with happy rest.
Sleep!—by that dreamy smiling,
I know that thou art blest.
Thy mother over thee hath leant
To guard thee from annoy,
And the angel of the innocent
Was in that dream, my boy!

The tinting of the summer rose
Is on that pillowed cheek,
And the quietness of summer thought
Has made thy forehead meek.
And yet that little ample brow,
And arching lip, are fraught
With pledges of high manliness,
And promises of thought.

Thy polished limbs are rounded out
As is the Autumn fruit,
And full and reedy is the voice
That slumber hath made mute.
And, looking on thy perfect form—
Hearing thy pleasant tone—
I almost weep for joy, my son,
To know thee for my own.

[Pg 71]

Sleep on! thine eye seems looking thro'
The half transparent lid,
As if its free and radiant glance
Impatiently were hid;
But ever as I kneel to pray,
And in my fulness weep,
I thank the Giver of my child
For that pure gift of sleep—
I half believe they take thee, then,
Back to a better world again.

And so, sleep on! If thou hast worn
An angel's shining wing,
The watch that I have loved to keep
Hath been a blessed thing.
And if thy spirit hath been here,
With spotless thoughts alone—
A mother's silent ministry
Is still a holy one;
And I will pray that there may be
A shining wing in wait for thee.

[Pg 72]

SONNET. WINTER.

The frozen ground looks gray. 'Twill shut the snow
Out from its bosom, and the flakes will fall
Softly and lie upon it. The hushed flow
Of the ice-covered waters, and the call
Of the cold driver to his oxen slow,
And the complaining of the gust, are all
That I can hear of music—would that I
With the green summer like a leaf might die?
So will a man grow gray, and on his head
The snow of years lie visibly, and so
Will come a frost when his green years have fled,
And his chilled pulses sluggishly will flow,
And his deep voice be shaken—would that I
In the green summer of my youth might die!

[Pg 73]

SONNET.

Storm had been on the hills. The day had worn
As if a sleep upon the hours had crept;
And the dark clouds that gather'd at the morn
In dull, impenetrable masses slept,
And the wept leaves hung droopingly, and all
Was like the mournful aspect of a pall.
Suddenly on the horizon's edge, a blue
And delicate line, as of a pencil, lay,
And, as it wider and intenser grew,
The darkness removed silently away,
And, with the splendor of a God, broke through

The perfect glory of departing day—
So, when his stormy pilgrimage is o'er,
Will light upon the dying Christian pour.

[Pg 74]

SONNET.

Elegance floats about thee like a dress,
Melting the airy motion of thy form
Into one swaying grace, and loveliness,
Like a rich tint that makes a picture warm,
Is lurking in the chesnut of thy tress,
Enriching it, as moonlight after storm
Mingles dark shadows into gentleness.
A beauty that bewilders like a spell
Reigns in thine eye's clear hazel, and thy brow
So pure in vein'd transparency doth tell
How spiritually beautiful art thou—
A temple where angelic love might dwell.
Life in thy presence were a thing to keep,
Like a gay dreamer clinging to his sleep.

[Pg 75]

SONNET.

Beautiful robin! with thy feathers red
Contrasting sweetly with the soft green tree,
Making thy little flights as thou art led
By things that tempt a simple one like thee—
I would that thou couldst warble me to tears
As lightly as the birds of other years.
Idly to lie beneath an April sun,
Pressing the perfume from the tender grass;
To watch a joyous rivulet leap on
With the clear tinkle of a music glass,
And as I saw the early robin pass,
To hear him thro' his little compass run—
Hath been a joy that I shall no more know
Before I to my better portion go.

[Pg 76]

SONNET.

Exquisite Laura! with thy pouting lip,
And the arch smile that makes me constant so—
Tempting me still like a dull bee to sip
The flower I should have left so long ago—
Beautiful Laura! who art just so fair
That I can think thee lovely when alone,
And still art not so wonderfully rare
That I could never find a prettier one—
Spirited Laura! laughing, weeping, crying

In the same breath, and gravest with the gay—
So wild, that Cupid ever shoots thee flying,
And knows his archery is thrown away—
Inconstant as I am, I cannot yet
Break thy sweet fetter, exquisite coquette!

[Pg 77]

SONNET.

There was a beautiful spirit in her air,
As of a fay at revel. Hidden springs,
Too delicate for knowledge, should be there,
Moving her gently like invisible wings;
And then her lip out-blushing the red fruit
That bursts with ripeness in the Autumn time,
And the arch eye you would not swear was mute,
And the clear cheek, as of a purer clime,
And the low tone, soft as a pleasant flute
Sent over water with the vesper chime;
And then her forehead with its loose, dark curl,
And the bewildering smile that made her mouth
Like a torn rose-leaf moistened of the South—
She has an angel's gifts—the radiant girl!

[Pg 78]

ANDRE'S REQUEST.

It is not the fear of death
That damps my brow;
It is not for another breath
I ask thee now;
I can die with a lip unstirr'd
And a quiet heart—
Let but this prayer be heard
Ere I depart.

I can give up my mother's look—
My sister's kiss;
I can think of love—yet brook
A death like this!
I can give up the young fame
I burn'd to win—
All—but the spotless name
I glory in!

Thine is the power to give,
Thine to deny,
Joy for the hour I live—
Calmness to die.
By all the brave should cherish,
By my dying breath,
I ask that I may perish
With a soldier's death!

[Pg 79]

DISCRIMINATION.

I used to love a radiant girl—
Her lips were like a rose leaf torn;
Her heart was as free as a floating curl,
Or a breeze at morn;
Her step as light as a Peri's daughter,
And her eye as soft as gliding water.

Witching thoughts like things half hid
Lurk'd beneath her silken lashes,
And a modest droop of the veined lid
Oft hid their flashes—
But to me the charm was more complete
As the blush stole up its fringe to meet.

Paint me love as a honey bee!
Rosy mouths are things to sip;
Nothing was ever so sweet to me
As Marion's lip—
Till I learned that a deeper magic lies
In kissing the lids of her closed eyes.

Her sweet brow I seldom touch,
Save to part her raven hair;
Her bright cheek I gaze on much,
Her white hand is fair;
But none of these—I've tried them all—
Is like kissing her eyes as the lashes fall.

[Pg 80]

THE SOLITARY.

Alone! alone! How drear it is
Always to be alone!
In such a depth of wilderness,
The only thinking one!
The waters in their path rejoice,
The trees together sleep—
But I have not one silver voice
Upon my ear to creep!

The sun upon the silent hills
His mesh of beauty weaves,
There's music in the laughing rills
And in the whispering leaves.
The red deer like the breezes fly
To meet the bounding roe,
But I have not a human sigh
To cheer me as I go.

I've hated men—I hate them now—
But, since they are not here,
I thirst for the familiar brow—
Thirst for the stealing tear.
And I should love to see the one,

And feel the other creep,
And then again I'd be alone
Amid the forest deep.
[Pg 81]

I thought that I should love my hound,
And hear my cracking gun
Till I forgot the thrilling sound
Of voices—one by one.
I thought that in the leafy hush
Of nature, they would die;
But, as the hindered waters rush,
Resisted feelings fly

I'm weary of my lonely hut
And of its blasted tree,
The very lake is like my lot,
So silent constantly.
I've lived amid the forest gloom
Until I almost fear—
When will the thrilling voices come
My spirit thirsts to hear?

[Pg 82]

ON THE DEATH OF MISS FANNY V. APTHORP.

'Tis difficult to feel that she is dead.
Her presence, like the shadow of a wing
That is just given to the upward sky,
Lingers upon us. We can hear her voice,
And for her step we listen, and the eye
Looks for her wonted coming with a strange,
Forgetful earnestness. We cannot feel
That she will no more come—that from her cheek
The delicate flush has faded, and the light
Dead in her soft dark eye, and on her lip,
That was so exquisitely pure, the dew
Of the damp grave has fallen! Who, so lov'd,
Is left among the living? Who hath walk'd
The world with such a winning loveliness,
And on its bright, brief journey, gather'd up
Such treasures of affection? She was lov'd
Only as idols are. She was the pride
Of her familiar sphere—the daily joy
Of all who on her gracefulness might gaze,
And, in the light and music of her way,
Have a companion's portion. Who could feel,
While looking upon beauty such as hers,
That it would ever perish! It is like
The melting of a star into the sky
While you are gazing on it, or a dream
In its most ravishing sweetness rudely broken.

[Pg 83]

A PORTRAIT.

She was not very beautiful, if it be beauty's test
To match a classic model when perfectly at rest;
And she did not look bewitchingly, if witchery it be,
To have a forehead and a lip transparent as the sea.

The fashion of her gracefulness was not a follow'd rule,
And her effervescent sprightliness was never learnt at school;
And her words were all peculiar, like the fairy's who 'spoke pearls,'
And her tone was ever sweetest midst the cadences of girls.

Said I she was not beautiful? Her eyes upon your sight
Broke with the lambent purity of planetary light,
And an intellectual beauty, like a light within a vase,
Touched every line with glory of her animated face.

Her mind with sweets was laden, like a morning breath in June,
And her thoughts awoke in harmony, like dreamings of a tune,
And you heard her words like voices that o'er the waters creep,
Or like a serenader's lute that mingles with your sleep.

She had an earnest intellect—a perfect thirst of mind,
And a heart by elevated thoughts and poetry refin'd,
And she saw a subtle tint or shade with every careless look,
And the hidden links of nature were familiar as a book.

She's made of those rare elements that now and then appear,
As if remov'd by accident unto a lesser sphere,
Forever reaching up, and on, to life's sublimer things,
As if they had been used to track the universe with wings.

[Pg 84]

MAY.

Oh the merry May has pleasant hours,
And dreamily they glide,
As if they floated like the leaves
Upon a silver tide.
The trees are full of crimson buds,
And the woods are full of birds,
And the waters flow to music
Like a tune with pleasant words.

The verdure of the meadow-land
Is creeping to the hills,
The sweet, blue-bosom'd violets
Are blowing by the rills;
The lilac has a load of balm
For every wind that stirs,
And the larch stands green and beautiful
Amid the sombre firs.

There's perfume upon every wind—
Music in every tree—
Dews for the moisture-loving flowers—
Sweets for the sucking bee;
The sick come forth for the healing South,
The young are gathering flowers;
And life is a tale of poetry,

That is told by golden hours.

[Pg 85]

If 'tis not a true philosophy,
That the spirit when set free
Still lingers about its olden home,
In the flower and the tree,
It is very strange that our pulses thrill
At the tint of a voiceless thing,
And our hearts yearn so with tenderness
In the beautiful time of Spring.

[Pg 86]

ON SEEING THROUGH A DISTANT WINDOW A BELLE COMPLETING HER TOILET FOR A BALL.

'Tis well—'tis well—that clustering shade
Is on thy forehead sweetly laid;
And that light curl that slumbers by
Makes deeper yet thy depth of eye;
And that white rose that decks thy hair
Just wins the eye to linger there,
Yet makes it not to note the less
The beauty of that raven tress.

Thy coral necklace?—ear-rings too?
Nay—nay—not them—no darker hue
Than thy white bosom be to-night
On that fair neck the bar of light,
Or hide the veins that faintly glow
And wander in its living snow.

What!—yet another? can it be
That neck needs ornament to thee?—
Yet not thy jewels!—they are bright,
But that dark eye has softer light,
And tho' each gem had been a star,
Thy simple self were lovelier far—
Yet stay!—that string of matchless pearl?
Nay—wear it—wear it—radiant girl!
For ocean's best of pure and white
Should only be thy foil to-night.

[Pg 87]

Aye, turn thee round! 'tis lovely all—
Thou'lt have no peer at that gay ball!
And that proud toss!—it makes thee smile
To see how deep is thine own wile;
And that slow look that seems to stray
As each sweet feature made it stay—
And that small finger, lightly laid
On dimpled cheek and glossy braid,
As if to know that all they seem
Is really there, and not a dream—
I wish I knew the gentle thought
By all this living beauty wrought!
I wish I knew if that sweet brow,

That neck on which thou gazest now—
If thy rich lip and brilliant face—
Thy perfect figure's breezy grace—
If these are half the spell to thee
That will, this night, bewilder me!

[Pg 88]

TO A BELLE.

All that thou art, I thrillingly
And sensibly do feel;
For my eye doth see, and my ear doth hear,
And my heart is not of steel;
I meet thee in the festal hall—
I turn thee in the dance—
And I wait, as would a worshipper,
The giving of thy glance.

Thy beauty is as undenied
As the beauty of a star;
And thy heart beats just as equally,
Whate'er thy praises are;
And so long without a parallel
Thy loveliness hath shone,
That, follow'd like the tided moon,
Thou mov'st as calmly on.

Thy worth I, for myself, have seen—
I know that thou art leal;
Leal to a woman's gentleness,
And thine own spirit's weal;
Thy thoughts are deeper than a dream,
And holier than gay;
And thy mind is a harp of gentle strings,
Where angel fingers play.

[Pg 89]

I know all this—I feel all this—
And my heart believes it true;
And my fancy hath often borne me on,
As a lover's fancies do;
And I have a heart, that is strong and deep,
And would love with its human all,
And it waits for a fetter that's sweet to wear,
And would bound to a silken thrall.

But it loves not thee.—It would sooner bind
Its thoughts to the open sky;
It would worship as soon a familiar star,
That is bright to every eye.
'Twere to love the wind that is sweet to all—
The wave of the beautiful sea—
'Twere to hope for all the light in Heaven,
To hope for the love of thee.

But wert thou lowly—yet leal as now;
Rich but in thine own mind;

Humble—in all but the queenly brow;
And to thine own glory blind—
Were the world to prove but a faithless thing,
And worshippers leave thy shrine—
My love were, then, but a gift for thee,
And my strong deep heart were thine.

[Pg 90]

A PORTRAIT.

She's beautiful! Her raven curls
Have broken hearts in envious girls—
And then they sleep in contrast so,
Like raven feathers upon snow,
And bathe her neck—and shade the bright
Dark eye from which they catch the light,
As if their graceful loops were made
To keep that glorious eye in shade,
And holier make its tranquil spell,
Like waters in a shaded well.

I cannot rhyme about that eye—
I've match'd it with a midnight sky—
I've said 'twas deep, and dark, and wild,
Expressive, liquid, witching, mild—
But the jewell'd star, and the living air
Have nothing in them half so fair.

She's noble—noble—one to keep
Embalm'd for dreams of fever'd sleep—
An eye for nature—taste refin'd,
Perception swift, and ballanc'd mind,—
And more than all, a gift of thought
To such a spirit-fineness wrought,
That on my ear her language fell,
As if each word dissolv'd a spell.

[Pg 91]

Yet I half hate her. She has all
That would ensure an angel's fall—
But there's a cool collected look,
As if her pulses beat by book—
A measure'd tone, a cold reply,
A management of voice and eye,
A calm, possess'd, authentic air,
That leaves a doubt of softness there,
'Till—look and worship as I may—
My fever'd thoughts will pass away.

And when she lifts her fringing lashes,
And her dark eye like star-light flashes—
And when she plays her quiet wile
Of that calm look, and measur'd smile,
I go away like one who's heard
In some fine scene the prompter's word,
And make a vow to break her chain,
And keep it—till we meet again.

ERRATA.—[16](#)th page, 10th line from top, "as *if* it were" for "as it were." Same page 11th line from top "incense" for "insense." [46](#)th page, 11th line from the bottom, "go its channel" for "go *up* its channel." Page [60](#), 2nd line, "As you like it," for "Much ado about Nothing." In the table of Contents "A Portrait," page [90](#), is omitted.

Transcriber's notes:

Original spelling retain'd.

Errata not corrected.

The Table of Contents is also missing a reference to Sonnet. Winter Page [72](#).

Typographical errors corrected.

[86](#) to night corrected to to-night.