

THE BLUE AND THE GRAY
AND OTHER VERSES

FRANCIS M. FINCH

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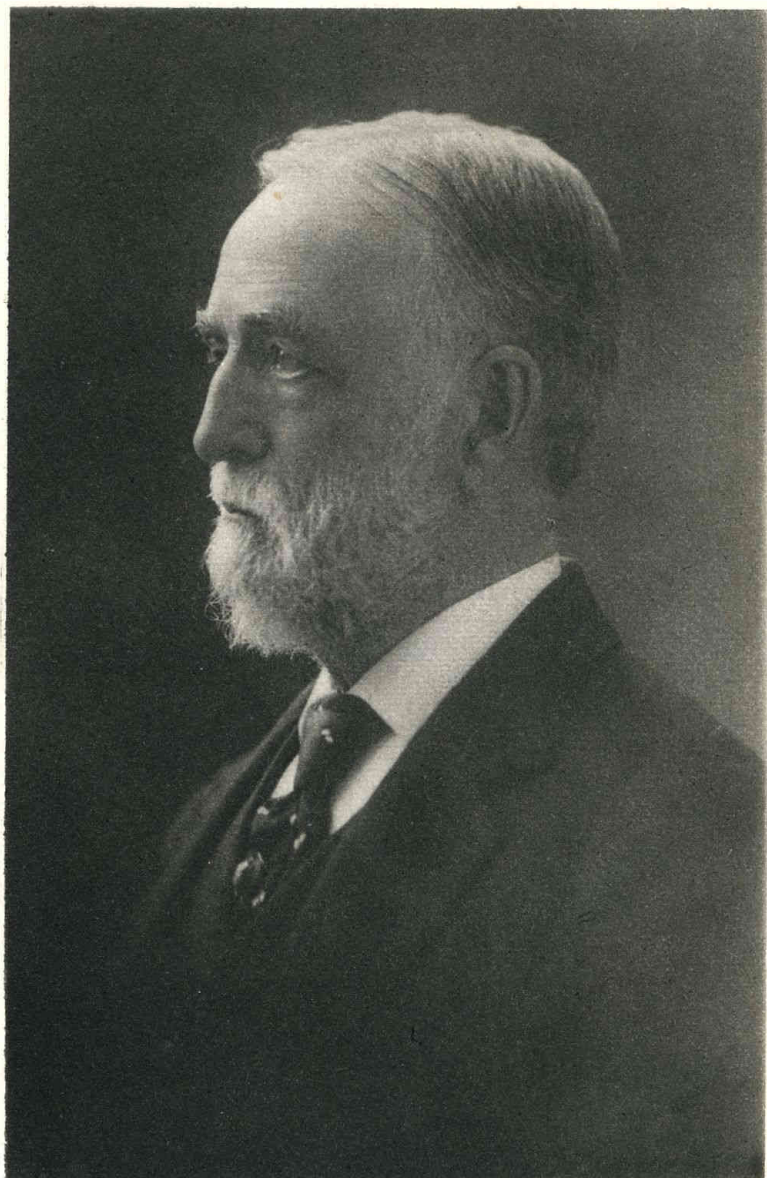
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THE BLUE AND THE GRAY AND OTHER VERSES

BY
FRANCIS M. FINCH

WITH PRELIMINARY WORD BY
ANDREW D. WHITE

AND A PORTRAIT OF
THE AUTHOR

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PRELIMINARY WORD

Sons of Yale who recall the middle years of the nineteenth century have, among their most vivid remembrances, the personality and influence of Francis Miles Finch. A thoughtful scholar in the class-room, a prizeman in the essay competitions, an influential editor of the Yale "*Lit.*," an impressive speaker in the Linonian, hail-fellow-well-met on the campus, sedate, impulsive, big-hearted, wise, witty, everywhere he was the ideal collegian.

But to the student mind his strongest appeal was made through his college songs. Many men of that time wrote verses, but the characteristic of Finch's songs was that they "got themselves sung": from that day to this they have held their own, expressing student sentiment not only under the elms of Yale, but in college towns throughout the land.

Having been graduated in 1849, he returned to the little town of Ithaca, where he was born, in the heart of the lake region of Western New York,—became a lawyer, and speedily distinguished himself in his profession. Noted also he soon became as a speaker in the political campaigns which preceded and followed the Civil War. He seemed to have none of the ordinary ambitions: he did his duty thoroughly wherever it was, but his heart was among his books and in his garden at his pleasant home, with its vistas over the rocky torrent in the foreground and Cayuga Lake with its hilly shores beyond.

Even in his early manhood he attracted attention by the clearness and strength of his legal arguments, and one of these, in the case of *Ruloff vs. The People*, won him wide recognition.

But while his heart rejoiced in his library and among his trees, it went forth in sympathy with all good and great things said and done in his time. A striking evidence of this is found in his poem "The Blue and the Gray." First published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, then caught up, North and South, and read over the graves of Unionists and Confederates with equal fervor, it is not too much to say that all the orations and sermons and appeals for the restoration of kindly feeling between the two sections have been far exceeded in real effect upon the national heart by this simple poem.

From his most cherished pursuits he was especially drawn for a time by the founding of Cornell University, of which he became one of the first trustees. In this capacity, his legal advice proved invaluable. His heart was in

the work. Between him and Ezra Cornell there had grown up a warm friendship, and at this period it bore most noble fruit.

In the complicated and trying questions which then arose on all sides of the new institution, his legal knowledge and logical acuteness, mingled with strong common sense, were precious. One secret of his force lay in his enthusiasm. His indignation at the attacks upon Mr. Cornell by the enemies of the university aroused him to fight strenuously and successfully in the courts, in the press, and in public meetings, while the music of the university chime, heard at dawn, noon, and nightfall above the ripple or roar of the adjacent waters, inspired him to write songs which have been sung by Cornell students from their first arrival—forty years ago—until the present hour.

At the opening of the university, being offered a Professorship of Rhetoric and Literature, he replied as follows:

“My whole life as a lawyer has been a battle against literary longings. I have kept the most earnest part of my nature in chains. I fear that I have done it so long as to make full liberty dangerous to me.”

Although never pressing his own claims upon his profession, he could not fail of promotion; his appointment and election to the highest court of the State of New York received universal approval, and his published opinions as a judge,—thoughtful, lucid, terse,—steadily increased his reputation.

At his resignation, after fifteen years upon the Court of Appeals, he was made Professor of the History of Law and Dean of the Law Faculty at Cornell, and then began new and excellent work which was warmly recognized by his students, and still more widely by his election, in 1899, to the presidency of the New York State Bar Association.

For eight years he remained in the discharge of his duties at the university, his recreation being found among the men and scenes immediately about him. So strong was his love for home life that nothing could induce him to visit other lands, or even to travel far in his own. It was a curious peculiarity that while he read much poetry he was especially fond of philosophical and metaphysical works: his enjoyment of a well-reasoned philosophical treatise was like that of a skilful player watching a closely-contested game of chess; but his main pleasure he found in the hills, the woods, the streams of the Cayuga region, and love for these inspired his verses.

From time to time his friends sought to gather these from song-books, magazines, and newspapers, and have them put into more permanent form. To this he generally showed himself indifferent, or even averse, but at last, not long before his death, which occurred in 1907, he consented to make the selection from them and to prepare the short preface to them now presented.

ANDREW D. WHITE.

ITHACA, N. Y., *October 23, 1908.*

PREFACE

Some words of explanation, if not due to the readers of this volume, are at least due to its Author. He is not trying to win for himself a place among the Poets of the world. If he had that ambition he would at least admit it to be hopeless. To deserve that rank one must give up his whole life to the effort, and make it his dominant work and occupation; although there are exceptional cases more remarkable because exceptional. But it will be obvious, both from the dates and character of the verses, that they have been only incidents along the line of a busy and laborious life devoted to a profession which in the main evinces a contemptuous dislike for poetry, and regards a taste for it as a weakness. There is no room for imagination in the arguments of the Bar or the opinions of the Bench. And so these verses must not claim for themselves more than belongs to them, or be measured by a standard which they do not challenge. Some of them have already made trial of the popular favor with results which have surprised nobody so much as the Author. He hopes for the rest as kindly a reception, and only wishes that they better deserved it.

And so, heeding the advice of friends for whose literary reputation and judgment he has a profound respect, the Author has decided, in the autumn of his life, to make an authoritative collection of his shorter poems, and launch them upon that sea of publication which wrecks much more than it saves. He will not resent criticism, for it will probably be deserved; nor be disappointed at neglect, for this is a workaday world; and to those who may sneer at a lawyer writing poetry he will only answer that he is not the first who has done so, and that much of the law of the ancient world was preserved and handed down in verse.

Since many of the events referred to go back to almost half a century, there have been added a few notes for the information of the young and to refresh the memories of the old.

With these few words this book of verses must be left to the fate that awaits it.

FRANCIS M. FINCH.

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THE BLUE AND THE GRAY

THE BLUE AND THE GRAY

By the flow of the inland river,
Whence the fleets of iron have fled,
Where the blades of the grave-grass quiver,
Asleep are the ranks of the dead:—
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the Judgment Day:—
Under the one, the Blue;
Under the other, the Gray.

These in the robings of glory,
Those in the gloom of defeat,
All with the battle-blood gory,
In the dusk of eternity meet:—
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the Judgment Day:—
Under the laurel, the Blue;
Under the willow, the Gray.

From the silence of sorrowful hours,
The desolate mourners go,
Lovingly laden with flowers,
Alike for the friend and the foe:—
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the Judgment Day:—
Under the roses, the Blue;
Under the lilies, the Gray.

So, with an equal splendor
The morning sun-rays fall,
With a touch impartially tender,
On the blossoms blooming for all:—
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the Judgment Day:—
Brodered with gold, the Blue;
Mellowed with gold, the Gray.

So, when the summer calleth,

On forest and field of grain,
With an equal murmur falleth
The cooling drip of the rain:—
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the Judgment Day:—
Wet with the rain, the Blue;
Wet with the rain, the Gray.

Sadly, but not with upbraiding,
The generous deed was done.
In the storms of the years that are fading
No braver battle was won:—
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the Judgment Day:—
Under the blossoms, the Blue;
Under the garlands, the Gray.

No more shall the war-cry sever,
Or the winding rivers be red:
They banish our anger forever
When they laurel the graves of our dead!
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the Judgment Day:—
Love and tears for the Blue;
Tears and love for the Gray.

TAGHKANIC

On the brow of the delicate streamlet,
In the folds of its forest hair,
I see the gems of a bridal,
The pearls of a peerless pair.

The rill of the shadowy woodland
Runs to the lake with a spring:
The Indian maid, Taghkanic,
Weds the Cayuga King.

In the shade of the murmuring maple
Wait, fair girl, at my side,
Till I lift your wondering lashes
On the dainty lace of the bride.

Nearer, your tremulous footsteps,
Yonder, the flash of your eye,
Through the break of the marginal leaflets,
Where the mist sails up to the sky.

You see it.—I know by the color
That tells me its rose-red tale:
You see in the frame of the forest
The lace of the bridal veil.

Over the rock it is floating.
Is it woven of diamonds or spray?
Of molten pearl, or of star-dust?—
Tell me the fabric, I pray.

You answer me only with dimples
Hid in a tinting of rose:
And the light of your own near bridal
Under your eyelid glows.

The Indian maid, Taghkanic,
Weds with the Sapphire King:
But a dearer and daintier bridal
The bloomings of June shall bring.

SMOKING SONG

Floating away, like the fountain's spray,
Or plume of a royal maiden,
The smoke wreaths rise to the blue of the skies
With blissful fragrance laden.

Then smoke away, till a golden ray
Lights up the dawn of the morrow,
For a cheerful cigar is shield and bar
To the blows of Care and Sorrow.

The leaf glows bright as gems alight
That burn in the braids of Beauty,
And nerves each heart for a hero's part
On the battle-plain of Duty.

Then smoke away till the roses play
In the white of the dawning morrow,
For a cheerful cigar leaves wound nor scar
From the warded stroke of Sorrow.

In the thoughtful gloom of his fireless room
Sits the child of song and story,
But his heart is warm with his pipe's red charm,
And his dreams are all of Glory.

Then smoke away till the ashen gray
Blushes out of the dawning morrow,
For a cheerful cigar is a hopeful star
In the sky of clouds and Sorrow.

By the blazing fire sits the wrinkled sire
With loyal faces round him,
And he smiles on all in the quaint old hall
As the curling wreaths surround him.

Then smoke away till the faded day
Grows young in the dawning morrow,
For a cheerful cigar will win in the war
Of Age with the host of Sorrow.

In the forests grand of our olden land,

When the savage conflict ended,
The Pipe of Peace with its fragrant fleece
Marked a home and hearth defended.
Then smoke away till the finished fray
Of the dusk with the conquering morrow,
For a cheerful cigar drives foes afar,
And splinters the spear of Sorrow.

The dark-eyed train of the maids of Spain
In the summer dance trip lightly,
And a dainty cigar, like the point of a star,
In the clasp of their lips burns brightly.
Then smoke away till the damsel gay
Wakes up to the songs of the morrow,
For a cheerful cigar not a dream will mar
Save those of Doubt and Sorrow.

Floating away, like the moon's pale ray,
Or bridal veil of a maiden,
The smoke wreaths rise to the blue of the skies
With peace and pleasure laden.
Then smoke away till a golden ray
Burns red in the bowl of the morrow,
For a cheerful cigar is shield and bar
To the blows of Care and Sorrow.

1848.

THE ORIOLE

Among my meadow stars and plumes,
Among the rosy morns of June,
With glint of gold and flash of flame,
A summer bird in beauty came,
With whirr of wing and trill of tune,
That shook the garden bells and blooms
And woke to life the breezy knoll;—
A yellow-throated Oriole.

Among my mingled deeds and dreams,
Among my swift and busy days,
With parted lip and tangled curl,
Flits in and out my baby girl,
The darling of my daily praise:
And so the gold and crimson gleams
On tress and cheek,—the little soul
I call in play, my Oriole.

A queenly day came down the hill
With fringe of frost and icy gems,
And robes alight with frozen dew,
And far the birds of summer flew;
Then capped with crystal diadems
My shining oaks grew lone and still,
And bleak and sad the chilly knoll
When fled afar the Oriole.

Alas!—and must a day of gloom
Come slowly down the frozen hill,
With heart of ice and hand of snow,
And upward bid my darling go?
Dear Lord, let mercy melt the chill,
The rosy bud blush into bloom,
And keep the charm of leaf and soul;
The summer and,—my Oriole!

AN ARGUMENT

The Good grow better; the Bad grow worse:—
That is the lesson of Heaven and Hell.
Our life, prolonged, is a boon or a curse,
As we live its period, ill, or well.

Who gives, loves giving with each new gift:
And Truth goes on from the seed to the bloom:
And Faith draws wider the blue cloud-rift
For the glow that goldens the dusk of the tomb.

But closer the hands of Avarice shut;
And Falsehood swarms till the branches teem;
And the hermit soul of an Arctic hut
Sees never a summer haze or gleam.

Unchanged, we pass by the harbor light;
Unchanged, drift out on the silent sea;
And find ourselves!—as the dawn grows bright,
Ourselves! and the same!—as the shadows flee.

I catch the glint of your doubt, my friend,
As we lie by the lulling drone of the Lake:—
That the sins of the body are slain at the end,
And the Soul to a purer life is awake.

But you pour the molten iron in sand:
It cools and hardens as life grows old.
Does it melt anew when you loosen the band,
Or change because you have broken the mold?

We fall just where in our lives we stood.
As here, so there, we are glad or sad.
And these grow happy because grow good,
And those get sorrow because grow bad.

This is the Heaven our reveries give,
And this is the Hell that our fears descry,
That the Good are forever permitted to live,
And the Bad are forever forbidden to die.

NATHAN HALE

To drum-beat and heart-beat
A soldier marches by:
There is color in his cheek,
There is courage in his eye:
Yet to drum-beat and heart-beat,
In a moment he must die.

By star-light and moon-light
He seeks the Briton's camp;
He hears the rustling flag,
And the armed sentry's tramp;
And the star-light and moon-light
His silent wanderings lamp.

With slow tread and still tread
He scans the tented line;
And he counts the battery guns
By the gaunt and shadowy pine,
And his slow tread and still tread
Gives no warning sign.

The dark wave, the plumed wave,—
It meets his eager glance,
And it sparkles 'neath the stars,
Like the glimmer of a lance:
A dark wave, a plumed wave
On an emerald expanse.

A sharp clang, a steel clang,
And terror in the sound!—
For the sentry, falcon-eyed,
In the camp a spy hath found!
With a sharp clang, a steel clang,
The patriot is bound!

With calm brow, steady brow,
He listens to his doom.

In his look there is no fear,
Nor a shadow-trace of gloom,
But with calm brow, and steady brow,
He robes him for the tomb;

In the long night, the still night,
He kneels upon the sod,
And the brutal guards withhold
E'en the solemn word of God!—
In the long night, the still night
He walks where Christ hath trod.

'Neath the blue morn, the sunny morn
He dies upon the tree!
And he mourns that he can lose
But one life for Liberty:—
And in the blue morn, the sunny morn,
His spirit-wings are free.

But his last words, his message words
They burn, lest friendly eye
Should read how proud and calm
A patriot could die,
With his last words, his dying words
A soldier's battle-cry!

From Fame-leaf and Angel-leaf,
From monument and urn,
The sad of Earth, the glad of Heaven
His tragic fate shall learn,
And on Fame-leaf and Angel-leaf
The name of *Hale* shall burn!

TWO LAKES OF THE WILDERNESS

Between two lakes of the Wilderness
Are lustrous lilies afloat
That rock to the lulling ripple
Of the breeze, or the passing boat.

Between these lakes of the Wilderness
Dark waters of amber pour,
But their gloom is illumined with crimson
By the roses that line the shore.

Strange in the heart of the Wilderness,
And the shade of its grand repose,
This death-like white of the lily,
This love-like red of the rose!

Between two lakes of the Wilderness—
The Future and shadowy Past,—
In ripple or statelier flowing,
Our current of life runs fast.

Between these lakes of the Wilderness
In pale, white beauty gleam
The upturned faces of children,
Dead—on the sorrowful stream.

Between these lakes of our Wilderness
All darkly the currents would move,
But for the glow on their fringes
Of the roses of Heavenly Love.

And we go thro' the lakes of our Wilderness,—
The moments but dips of the oar,
With the lilies of Death on the water,
But the roses of Love on the shore.

STRAY THOUGHTS

O! a warm glance, a sunny glance,
A warm glance of love, boys,
When lips blush, and eyes dance,
And stars shine above, boys.
When the heart burns, the cheek burns,
And dark tresses hide, boys,
The rose tint, the lily tint
Of mingled fear and pride, boys!

O! a kind word, a gentle word,
A kind word of love, boys,
From fair lips at eve heard,
Like murmur of a dove, boys;
When hearts beat a swift beat,
And dark lashes fall, boys,
And soft smiles, sunny smiles
Tremble over all, boys!

O, a rose blush, a timid blush,
A blossom of the peach, boys,
A bright glow, a warm flush,
The heart's silent speech, boys;
When day folds her white wing,
And stars run astray, boys,
When hearts glow, and cheeks glow,
And doubt has flown away, boys!

O! a bright smile, a loving smile,
A bright smile of truth, boys,
A sun-flash, a pleasant wile
To snare the heart of youth, boys!—
The bright smile, the warm glance,
The blush red as wine, boys,
The kind word at eve heard,—
Are they not divine, boys?

AURORA BAY

Lowly cottage and villa grand
Crown the curve of the crescent land;
Marble and roses adorn the shore.
Why do I love the waters more?
Drifting, drifting—ever astray
In the summer haze of Aurora Bay.

Green are the graceful hills, I know,
And white the turbulent cascade's flow;
But never for me can fade or fail
The green of the deep, the white of the sail,
As idly drifting—drifting away,
I dream in the haze of Aurora Bay.

And so in all the glide of my life
Others have won in the toil and strife.
For me no planet of fortune gleams,
And life is lost in the glamor of dreams;
And drifting—drifting—day by day
I sing in the haze of Aurora Bay.

Into the brown old barge, the grain
Drips to the tune of an April rain;
Pattering into the oaken hold
To change its amber berries to gold:
But drifting far from Wealth away
My gold is the haze of Aurora Bay.

Sliding along in its liquid grooves,
Plashing its shadows the Steamer moves,
Throbbing the sturdy song as it goes,
All that is noble is won by blows,
But drifting far; from toil astray
I rest in the haze of Aurora Bay.

Yonder I see on its circling lawn,
The home where Genius worked in the dawn.

Perhaps,—I seem to hear in the air,—
What one has done another may dare:
But then I drift from the hope away,
Content with the haze of Aurora Bay.

One that I met on a festival night
Flecks the vale with her robes of white;
Gathers a bud from a red rose tree:—
Ah, if she gathered that rose for me!
But alas! I drift from love astray
In the languid haze of Aurora Bay.

Clouds are blurring the light in the West:
Marches the storm with lance in rest:
Gallant the boat and tough the sail
That meets and baffles the wild lake's gale!
But still I drift while the lightnings play
In the fading haze of Aurora Bay.

Soon,—I hope when the leaves are brown,—
My boat and I will both go down.
Only a broken spar on the wave!
Only a ripple to mark a grave!
Yet drifting on to the end of day
I cling to the haze of Aurora Bay.

Earnest labor alone succeeds:
And only won by the might of deeds
Are blush of gold and the blooms of Fame,
The living grace and the deathless name,
But the dreamers dream their lives away
Each on his own Aurora Bay!

COMING, BOYS!

Hurry, Phil Sheridan!
Ride! Fly!
Race with the wind,
Out-gallop the river
To the columns thinned
And the lines in a shiver!
Ride! for the gleam of your fortunate star
Will blaze new hope o'er the valley afar:
Ride! 'Tis a rout of cannon and car
Like the drift in a storm of cordage and spar:
Ride! or the glory just born of the war
Will bleed with the bullet, or blush with a scar:
Sheridan, ride!
With blood on the spur,
And blood in the air,
Ride! ride!
With your helmless hair.

Coming is Sheridan,
Hot, wild!—
A speck on the hill,
A shadow far-flying,
Incarnated Will,
Disaster defying!
Coming! where threatens the cataract's roar,
And crossing his gallop the wild waves pour:
Coming! while blows of the lightning tore
The oak behind and the pine before:
Coming! though fiends from the fiery shore
Brigade in his path the furies of yore!
Sheridan comes!
With blood on the spur,
And death in the air,
Comes! comes!
With rage in his hair.

Hurry, O Sheridan!

Ride! Fly!
Rowel the steed
Till the wild hoofs rattle:
Yonder they bleed
In the storm of the battle.
Ride! or your flags in the valley will fall
Torn with the bayonet, riddled with ball:
Ride! or the ranks that have answered your call
Will famish and die in bondage and thrall:
Ride! or the smoke will wind in its pall
Gun, cannon and flag; hope, glory and all.
Sheridan, ride!
With blood on the spur,
And flame in the air,
Ride! Ride!
With your streaming hair.

Coming is Sheridan!
Halt!—Form!
His steed in a foam,
At the front he is riding,
The master at home
All the battle is guiding.
Halt!—and the fear and the terror are dead,
And they harden to heroes who hopelessly fled:
Form! and the front of the battle is spread
Where the blood of the moaning morn was shed:
Charge! and the foemen have bitterly bled
And the sun that was clouded sets splendid and red.
Sheridan, charge!
With blood on the spur,
And lead in the air,
Charge! Charge!
'Tis a banner, your hair.

Glory for Sheridan!
Name! Fame!
Bays for his brow
And stars for his shoulder:
Never we bow
To warrior bolder!

Fame! for the army he galloped to save
From the bar of the prison, the mold of the grave:
Fame! for the Nation whose banners he gave
New flashes of freedom from mountain to wave:
Fame! for the lesson the proud worlds crave
That “the land of the free” *is* “home of the brave.”

Sheridan, ride!
With gold on the spur,
And fame in the air,
Ride! Ride!
We laurel your hair!

ALICE

We do not know a Princess when we see her:
And—what Grand Duchess did you say was dead?—
How great the ransom set on captive head
By Death the Brigand? Could not diamonds free her?

But Alice!—Ah! we knew the wife and mother.
Her fair, sweet picture lights our simple homes,
Where forest glooms, or mountain river foams,
Or plumes of corn the prairie blossoms smother.

She loved her children and the common people.
The pearls we saw were charitable deeds.
For those we dress our Continent in weeds,
And toll the sobbing bell in rustic steeple.

A child obedient: pure and modest maiden:
Gentle and timid in white robes of bride:
Then patient nurse far, fevered brow beside,
And wise sweet wife with cares of loving laden.

O, yes!—We all knew *her*. In memory bowers
Of Mother-land, she was our foreign rose,
For her remembrance into tear-drops flows
As, sad, we frame her face in New World flowers.

INAUGURAL ODE

(Air: "Canadian Boat Song")

One comes:—one goes:—all hail!—adieu!—
If darkens the evening, the morn shines new!
Soon as one star glides down the night
Up-riseth another with lamp as bright!
Yale! brothers, Yale! rose-red or pale,
The light never fades from the skies of Yale.

One comes:—as comes the August morn
That ripens and flosses the waiting corn.
So may his summer of heart and brain
Fast ripen the seed into golden grain.
Yale! brothers, Yale! rose-red or pale,
The light never fades from the skies of Yale.

One goes.—God bless him!—Toil and time
He gave thro' the years with a faith sublime.
He takes from these familiar realms
More thanks than the leaves of the sorrowing elms.
Yale! brothers, Yale! rose-red or pale,
The light never fades from the skies of Yale.

Who comes; who goes; in sun; in shade;
On guard in her resolute lines arrayed,
Let all be armed when battle booms
And garland our Mother with victor-blooms!
Yale! brothers, Yale! In calm or gale
Thy banner be over us, dear old Yale!

EZRA CORNELL

The “chimes” are still. Alone,
As falls the year’s last leaf,
The great Bell’s monotone
Slow hymns our helpless grief.

From Slander’s driving sleet,
And Envy’s pitiless rain,
At rest, the aching feet!
At rest, the weary brain!

So calm, and grave, and still,
Men thought his silence, pride;
Nor guessed the truth until
Death told it as he died.

“True” as the steel to star:
With eye whose lifted lid
Let in all truth though far
In storm and darkness hid.

“Firm” as the oak’s tough grain,
Yet pliant to the prayer
Of Poverty or Pain,
As leaf to troubled air.

Untaught: and yet he drew
Best learning out of life;
More than the Scholars knew
With all their toil and strife.

The spires that crown the hill
To plainest Labor free,
Where all may learn who will,
His monument shall be!

Brave, kindly heart, adieu!
But with us live always
The patient face we knew,
And this Memorial Day!

THE PEARL-DIVER

They dive for pearls in the Southern seas,
And carry a knife for the throat of the shark,
And peril the sail in the perilous breeze
To bring the gem from its cell in the dark:—
Unlock the captive shut in the dark.

Down by the rock and the tangled weeds,
Where the gold and silver fins are afloat,
With a prayer and a plunge the diver speeds,
While his comrades wait in the silent boat:—
Faces are pale in the silent boat!

The moments are hours to those who tell
Their halting flight by throbs of the heart,
For a stain of blood, or gleam of a shell
They watch till the waters are torn apart:—
Thank God, that the waters are torn apart!

Are cut by a swift and vigorous blow,
As the swimmer comes to the coveted air,
And brings from the dangerous deeps below
Jewels that only a Queen may wear:—
Only the Queen of your heart may wear!

A Northern swimmer dove for a pearl
In a Southern sea wave-stained with blood.
No trace of his plunge but billows in whirl:
Not even a flag shone over the flood:—
Blackest of clouds shut down on the flood!

Rifle and bayonet, bullet and shell
Went with him deep in the clamorous tide,
For the shark of the Gulf he knew full well
Athwart his perilous wake would glide:—
To a sure death-blow would darkly glide!

Full forty miles the width of his track

Yet never a bubble for hope to glean,
Till, flung on the wave, ball-riddled and black,
The floating hat of a trooper was seen:—
No more of the swimmer was heard or seen!

Silent we stood in the boat of the State,
Waiting the story of death or of life;
Waiting the sun or the shadow of fate,
And the doubtful end of the unseen strife:—
Destiny hung on the unseen strife!

At last, at last, the waters were torn,
The dripping flags came up to the air;
Never a spear of its pennon was shorn;
Never a leader's saddle was bare:—
Thank God! no column or saddle was bare!

Up from the depths the diver brought
The pearl that had fallen in billows of blood;
Long gloomily lost and patiently sought,
Our drowning pearl in the covetous flood:—
The UNION!—saved from the fire and flood!

THE FOUR COLUMNS

What are these,—cold and white
In the wan and shivering light
 Of the icy moon,—
Fronting the fallen walls
Where stood the Capitol halls
 Last golden June?
What are they? What their story?
 O, moan of the ebbing waves!
They are ghosts of departed Glory
 On march to their open graves!

SIX YEARS OLD

A little squirrel running for nuts,
With mischievous jump and fur of blond,
Who finds the sweet that the acorn shuts,
Or berry beneath the cool fern frond,—
That is the baby—my daughter!

A little bird just out of the nest,
Trying the flutter of tenderest wings,
Doubting if bug or cherry is best,
And mocking the note the old bird sings,—
That is the mimic—my daughter.

A violet born of the summer rain
And parting its lips to the kisses of June,
With golden petals like gold of the grain
And a knowing nod at the rivulet's tune,—
That is the blossom—my daughter.

A little soul in a world of wo,
Waiting the lift of the curtained years,
Launching a boat for the river below,
Hoping for pleasure, certain of tears,—
That is the darling—my daughter.

THANKS

You made this festal morning dear,
And pulses grow to organ-swells.
O, hard to wait the silent year
That thanks might blend with Christmas bells.

Like song unheard of planet zone
A memory tunes this hallowed time,
And weaves its faithful monotone
With flying word and flitting chime.

It brightens hope; it tempers grief;
Its perfumes from the blossoms pour;
It haunts the very oaken leaf
That autumn rustles at my door.

O, near to you the tones that cheer,
And far from you the sorrow knells!
And yours as wanes each happy year
The thanks that blend with Christmas bells.

MY LITTLE SOLDIER

1873

I hear the bugles adown the street,
And hoof of horse and rattle of drum,
And rhythmic fall of marching feet,
And know the men and maidens come
To stripe with flag and star with flowers
The Soldier graves,—
O! faithful graves
Of those who gave the Flag its flowers!

I see them climb the shadowy hill,
And trace the bayonet flashes far,
By marble shaft and drip of the rill.
Grief goes in track of the ended war.
And now they drape with flag and flowers
The Soldier graves,—
O! numerous graves
Of those who gave the Flag its flowers.

They pass, as twilight glooms to dark,
A shaft, like young oak's vigorous grace;
A name cut deep in the marble bark:—
My little soldier's resting place.
All bare, all blank of flag and flowers:—
My Soldier's grave;
O! lonely grave!
No garlands here of flag and flowers.

Down in my dreams I hear anew
The marching beat of his boyish drum,
The stately trumpet charge he blew,
And sound of feet that—never come!
And here I wait the evening hours
By little grave,
Boy-soldier's grave,
Undraped with flag, unstarred with flowers.

He fought no battle of manly life:
He won no height with laboring breath:
He bore no scars of the world's hot strife:
He died—a child—but conquered—Death.
So worthy flag and worthy flowers,
My Soldier's grave,
O, sacred grave!
Who brings thee woven flag and flowers?

The bugle notes are dying afar,
And one by one the flags drop down:
As lights her lamp the evening star,
I weave memorial wreath and crown
I lay them here: this flag,—these flowers,—
On Soldier's grave,
My Soldier's grave:—
This flag, half-mast: this moan of flowers!

THE CHIMES

To the busy morning light,
To the slumbers of the night,
To the labor and the lessons of the hour,
 With a ringing rhythmic tone
 Over lake and valley blown
Call the voices, watching, waking, in the Tower.
Cling, clang, cling, the bells are ringing:
 Hope and help their chiming tells:
 Through the Cascadilla dell,
 'Neath the arches of Cornell,
 Float the melody and music of the bells.

By the water's foam and fall,
By the chasm castle wall,
By the laurel bank and glen of dreaming flower,
 Where the groves are dark and grand,
 Where the pines in column stand,
Come the voices, mellow voices, of the Tower.
Cling, clang, cling, the bells are ringing:
 Hope and help their chiming tells:
 Through the Cascadilla dell,
 'Neath the arches of Cornell,
 Float the welcome and the warning of the bells.

When the gentle hand that gave
Lies beneath the marbled grave,
And the daisies weep with drippings of the shower,
 O, believe us, brothers dear,
 In the shadows we shall hear
Guiding voices of our angel in the Tower.
Cling, clang, cling, the bells are ringing:
 Hope and help their chiming tells:
 Through the Cascadilla dell,
 'Neath the arches of Cornell,
 Go the tolling and the moaning of the bells.

Not afraid to dare and do,

Let us arm ourselves anew
With the truth that gives the weakest blow its power;
And arrayed in every fight
On the battle side of Right
Gather glory for our angel in the Tower.
Cling, clang, cling, the bells are ringing;
Hope and help their chiming tells:
Through the Cascadilla dell,
'Neath the arches of Cornell,
Go the glory and the gladness of the bells.

THE MISER

Clink—clink!

There's a ray of light thro' the window chink
That comes to play with my gold, I think.

I must bar it out to-morrow!

I'll have no sun-rays counting my store!
They come from a world that is hungry for more,
That spies for my coffers, and envies me sore:—
That I know to my sorrow!

Clink—clink!

The parson's eyes would glisten and blink,
Could he fatten his glance on my gold, I think.

I hate their pitiful praying!

Why do they whine of thorns and the rod,
And the Jew-lined path that their Saviour trod?
Gold,—pure gold,—is the only God
That is really worth obeying!

Clink—clink!

How the golden Eagles glow on the brink
Of the yellow pyramid, built, I think,
From the spoils of every People!
Say I frame me a church of my own, the while.
Moidore and sovereign will pave me the aisle,
Doubloons and ducats the gay roof tile,
And crowns run up for a steeple!

Clink—clink!

Across the way, but a chain and a link,
A spider hides in his web, I think,—
A leopard-sleek attorney!
He would cut men's throats serenely and cold,
If their artery blood ran molten gold!
He is traveling on to his Master's fold.—
Good speed to his sulphurous journey!

Clink—clink!

A beggar-girl stood on the parapet brink
Of the lonely bridge.—Quite crazy, I think!
And gazed on the moaning water.
She asked for a farthing: I gave her a curse.
She plunged:—and the city provided a hearse!
No matter.—It might have been terribly worse!
'Twas only a poor man's daughter!

Clink—clink!

A delicate eyelid flashed me a wink,
Yesterday;—close by the Park, I think;
What widow was it, I wonder!
Why smile upon me, grim, ugly and old?
If the fork of the lightning was woven of gold
They'd lasso each flash with a veil's white fold,
Despite the growl of the thunder!

Clink—clink!

They call my tenement block a sink
Of crime and poverty.—Scold, I think,
These slimy hypocrite teachers!
I only know if the rental is paid,
Nor care who starves;—old mother, or maid;
Who batters with club, or stabs with blade!
That I leave to the Preachers!

Clink—clink!

My beautiful gold, thy gleams I drink,
The only wine that is sweet, I think:
Outshining stars of even!
I love thee better than sun-brown hair,
Better than sick men June's warm air,
Better than angels the penitent's prayer,
Better,—aye, better than Heaven!

STORM,—THE KING

I am Storm,—the King!
I live in a fortress of fire and cloud.
You may hear my batteries, sharp and loud,
 In the summer night
When I and my lieges arm for the fight,
 And the birches moan,
 And the cedars groan
As they bend beneath the terrible spring
 Of Storm,—the King!

I am Storm,—the King!
My troops are the winds, and the hail and the rain;
My foes the lakes and the leaves, and the grain,
 The mail-clad oak
That gnarls his front to my charge and stroke,
 The ships on the sea,
 The blooms on the lea,
And they writhe and break as the war-guns ring
 Of Storm,—the King!

I am Storm,—the King!
My Marshals are four:—the swart Simoon,
Sirocco, Tornado, and swift Typhoon.
 My realm is the world,
Wherever a sail is spread or furled.
 My wide command
 Sweeps sea and land,
And doomed and dead who insult fling
 At Storm,—the King!

I am Storm,—the King!
I drove the sea o'er the Leyden dikes,
And fighting by side of the burgher pikes
 To the walls I bore
The “Ark of Delft” from the ocean shore,
 O'er vale and mead
 With pitiless speed

Till the Spaniard fled from the deluge ring
Of Storm,—the King!

I am Storm,—the King!
I saw an Armada set sail from Spain
To redden with blood a maiden's reign.
I met the host
With blow in the face on the island coast,
And tore proud deck
To splinters and wreck:
And the Saxon poets the praises sing
Of Storm,—the King!

I am Storm,—the King!
They built a tower of iron and stone,
And crowned its top with a flashing zone,
And laughed to scorn
The battle call of my bugle horn!
I buried it deep
In the sands asleep,
Where the surges rock, and the billows swing
Of Storm,—the King!

I am Storm,—the King!
They hire the heralds of lightning now
To warn that I march from the mountain's brow.
The cowards hide
In the guarded bay, or the haven wide:
But I toss them there
In the sultry air
Till they seem but stones from the deadly sling
Of Storm,—the King!

I am Storm,—the King!
I scour the earth, the sea, and the air,
And drag the writhing trees by the hair,
And chase for game
The desert dust, and the prairie flame,
The mountain snow,
And the Arctic floe;
And never is folded plume or wing

Of Storm,—the King!

“FORBID THEM NOT”

The children are God's rosebuds;
And He, I know,
Transplants one here and there
That it may grow
In richer soil and sweeter air.

The children are God's snow-flakes;
Whose tender white
He sometimes melts away
In rain of night
Or warmer lift of shining day.

The children are God's rubies:
Why wonder we
That for some diadem
We can not see
His loving hand should gather them?

And that is why they leave us.
O, mother tears
That fall on little graves!
Dispel your fears:
He does not waste:—He saves!

SONG OF THE ENGINE

With a clang!
With a clank and a clang!
With clamor, a clank and a clang!
With clatter and clamor, a clank and a clang!
With veins full of fire
And the artery steam
Roused to the pulse
Of a feverous dream,
With a gray plume trailing
Fleecy and pale
Like mist-boats sailing
To sea with the gale!
With the ring and the rattle
Of lever and wheel
And the blow and the battle
Of track and of steel!
With a tremulous spring
Like the launch of a wing
From the condor's cliff where the wild vines cling:—
An eagle of iron with sinews of steel
And blow of a pinion like avalanche peal,
With talons of flame and a blaze in the blood
I tunnel the mountain and compass the flood;
I startle the morning and shiver the noon
And splinter the radiant rays of the moon!
From pine and from granite to orange and palm,
From storms of sleet fury to zephyrs of balm,
From Alleghan summit to Michigan wave,
From the life of the East to the pioneer's grave;—
Dragging a train
As a flying prisoner drags his chain,
Climbing the grade,
Panting and sullen but undismayed!—
Then away to the prairie with antelope speed,
Belting the forest and skimming the mead,
Awaking the bear from his underwood lair
And startling the deer to a leap in the air;

Breaking the Indian's solitude rest,
Pushing the buffalo far to the west,
Skirting the current with spur and with thong
Where the drain of a continent thunders along,
 Mixing and mingling
 The races of men,
Bearing the Now
 In advance of the Then!—
Then ceasing the rattle
 Of lever and wheel,
And parting the battle
 Of track and steel,
And ending at last
 The roll and the race,
And checking the flight
 With gradual pace,
With clatter and clamor, a clank and a clang!
 With clamor, a clank and a clang!
 With a clank and a clang!
 With a clang!

BY THE LEFT FLANK

A shiver chills the Capital,
And through the State
Is coldly flying:
And Hope shot down with rifle ball
On breast of Fate
Is dying,—dying!
But drowning fear and stilling moan,
Rings out one cool and confident tone,—
By the left flank, march!
Flag and gun and drummer:
We'll fight it out on this line
If it takes the whole of summer!

A blinded blow in wilderness,
And line and rank
Are scarred and bleeding:
And Longstreet's craft and steadiness
His victor flank
Is leading,—leading!
But through the columns torn and blurred,
Is flung the one determined word,—
By the left flank, march!
Flag and gun and drummer:
We'll fight the foe on this line
Through all the bloody summer!

A charge at front of stern redoubt
Where sleet of fire
Is enfilading!
Can Hancock smoke the hornets out?
His lines retire,—
Are fading,—fading!
But over sing and thud of ball
Is heard anew the steady call,—
By the left flank, march!
Strike the tune, O, drummer!
Southward sweep the line,—

There's something left of summer.

About Cold Harbor smokes the toil
Of flashing guns
And fuse and hammer:
And through the stream of sad turmoil
An eddy runs
Of clamor, clamor!
But firmly grips the iron hand
And hard as grit the prompt command,—
By the left flank, march!
Drum us on, O, drummer!
Close up the broken lines;
'Tis almost end of summer.

A winter long of barricade;
Of grasp to close
The roads surrounding:
Of crafty mine and active spade,
And patient blows
Still pounding,—pounding!
But while despair in shadow flies
A breeze of courage clears the skies.—
By the left flank, march!
Work for you, O, drummer!
We'll fight it out on this line
If it takes a second summer.

At last the ranks in glory stand!
And far and scant
Dogmatic baying,
And tramping north the army bands
All jubilant
Are playing,—playing!
But as through night, so now by day
Same quiet leader points the way:—
Homeward, boys, we march,
Flag and gun and drummer:
We've fought it out on this line:
We've won our battle summer!

ST. MICHAEL'S BELLS

Last light of dim Palmetto strand,
Last faint adieu of dying land,
To distant sail that seaward swells,—
The golden ball above St. Michael's bells.

Old now, the quaint and stately tower,
And old, when girt with scarlet power,
Gay Tarleton rode the dangerous dells,
And Marion's foxes fled St. Michael's bells.

Long years ago, the City burned.
The crimson columns wheeled and turned
Till Home, and Hall, and Prison cells
Were ashen ruin round St. Michael's bells.

Saved!—By a miracle, they said.
But while they boast, far over-head,
An eddying brand the wind impels,
And fastens flame high o'er St. Michael's bells.

It flutters:—faint as dying gasp:—
Then gleams and glows with angry clasp.
Its brightening sparkle danger tells,
For who may dare to climb St. Michael's bells?

Who dares?—O, pale and palsied men,
O, helpless throng, look upward then!
Higher than flew Sir Henry's shells
Climbs one to save St. Michael's bells!

Slowly.—Aloft.—Far up the spire;
He hurls away the flake of fire!
Slowly descends.—Then break in yells
The thanks—and thanks—for saved St. Michael's bells.

They crowd to meet him. Shrill and high
With startled wonder, grows their cry.

“Black and a Slave!”—who thus excels:
But “Slave no more!” ring good St. Michael’s bells!

O, brothers proud, the lesson heed.
From you we learned our worthiest deed!
In vain your Southern pride rebels:
Be free! rang out your own St. Michael’s bells!

He bore our flag thro’ battle-fire!
He climbed the Nation’s blazing spire!
Your heart, O, South, your hate dispels:
Be free! be free! ring all Columbia’s bells.

GETTYSBURG

When the leaves were sere and crimson,
And crisp the morning air,
And wound the breath of autumn
Through the forest's golden hair,
On a field of death and silence,
Where a battle-storm had blown,
Came a Nation, clad in mourning,
With a monumental stone.

All around them lay the dead,
Underneath the flowers asleep;
All above them smiled the sky
Gilding warm the rocky steep,
And with words of shining glory
From a golden lip and tongue
They made the mountain sacred
Where the battle-bugles rung.

While the prayer is floating upward,
Sits apart an angel form
With a scroll like whitest fleece-cloud
That follows up the storm,
And she writes with diamond pencil
Each buried soldier's name:—
And the angel form is Justice,
And the angel pen is Fame!

THE BRONZE LIBERTY

I light my torch!—and hold it
Above the sea, beneath the sky,
While night and storm enfold it,
And throbbing ships go safely by.

I light my torch!—and glowing,
Flames up the old love born of war,
When France, with banners blowing,
Shared with us half of blood and scar.

I light my torch!—it scatters
Broad beams athwart the wondering Night,
Where bleeding and in tatters
The Right lies under heel of Might.

I light my torch!—it levels
A flaming spear at lust and greed
That rob for royal revels
The fire and crust of starving need.

I light my torch!—and shackles
Drop off in shame from serf and slave:
War-drums and rifle crackles
Give place to hearts that heal and save.

I light my torch!—and Power
That throttles free thought at its birth
Goes down, as crumbles tower
When hidden surges rock the earth.

I light my torch!—behold it!
France gave it twice to our dear land!
Though Night and Storm enfold it
Undying lifts our Freedom's hand!

HER EXPLANATION

HE

When you said no,—how could I know
Your no meant yes?
Did you mean stay, when you said go?
Now, love, confess!

SHE

You silly boy!—when tongue said no
The lips smiled yes.
When eyes said stay, what need to go?
Could you not guess?

ARIEL

The Poet paints an elfin face
In murmurous dream of summer night,
With step of mischief yet of grace
And filmy wings of marvelous flight.

He sparkles in a coral cup,
He girdles earth with instant span,
He calls the ocean spirits up,
And mocks the groveling Caliban.

What was the dream now wakes to act,
Strange light shines back on mystic Past,
The fancied girdle grows to fact,
We have our Ariel tamed and fast.

A spark electric crowns his head,
He rests his wings in bulb of fire,
The click of keys his dainty tread
And winding round the world a wire.

MY CREED

All sure results in one shy maxim lurk:—
There is no Genius in the world but—Work!

GENERAL ORDERS

1867

You will march against the Indians:—

So the cheerful order ran:—
Where the bubbles on the flood
Are but daily drops of blood,
Where the gleamings in the grass
Are the bones of those who pass:—
So the pleasant order ran,
Sent to Philip Sheridan.

You may go and fight the Indians!

So the mocking order ran,—
To the soldier who had won
At the setting of the sun
What the bloody morning lost
At a frightful battle-cost:—
So the sneering order ran,
Sent to Philip Sheridan.

Hurry west to the Missouri:—

So the stinging order ran;
Lest the cities in a flame
With the luster of his name
Take the rider and his steed
For the hour of coming need!—
So the hurried order ran,
Marked “Philip Sheridan.”

You will march against the Indians:—

So the People’s order ran!
Not the fierce and subtle Sioux
Flitting crafty forests through;
Not Pawnee, or thieving Crow
Wait your battle-march and blow;—
So the People’s word began,
Sent to Philip Sheridan.

But against the nearer Indians:—
So the People's order ran:
Greed of office and of gold,
Truth and Honor bought and sold,
Lust of power and of place
Banners folded in disgrace:
So the People's order ran,
Sent to Philip Sheridan.

You will march against the Indians!
So the People's order ran.—
Yours the Leader's flag and drum
In the years that are to come;
Yours the trust of all the State,
Sooner,—later;—we can wait!
So the People's order ran,
Marked "Philip Sheridan."

Ah!—we waited,—and we waited,
Till another order ran!
From the camp-fire of the stars
Where the drum of Angel wars
Beats eternally the call
For new armies; for us all.
And thus the order ran,
Sent to Philip Sheridan.

You will cross the river, General:—
So the final order ran:—
You will pass the gulf alone
Without sword, or bugle blown,
Without flag or uniform,
Be it night or calm or storm:—
So the final order ran,
Heard by Philip Sheridan.

You will join the troop of Heaven:—
So the solemn order ran:—
At the sands upon its shore
Waits for you an army-corps:
You will lead it:—ah, we know
How that army-corps will go!
So the hurried order ran,
Read to Philip Sheridan.

We await you at the outpost:—
So the end of order ran.—
And the soldier bowed his head
For his journey with the dead:—
Answered:—“Without flag or drum,
I am coming;—I have come.”
So the soldier’s answer ran,
Signed—Philip Sheridan.

THE PEOPLE TO THEIR LEADERS

(After Election for President. 1876)

Put up your drums!
Plan peace,—not war!
We do not choose to drag your battle-car:
We have no blood to spare!—
Take in your angry flags that beat the air
Like wings of fighting eagles: drown the brand
Whose flash may clang the fire-bells of the land,
And stop your dangerous drums!

Put up your drums!
Let Labor lead:—
Your flimsy fret give way to solid deed.
Another sound be ours!
The rain of gathered grain, like pour of showers;
The ring of hammer; throb of toiling steam;
The whirr of wheel at throat of busy stream;
Not beat of useless drums!

Put up your drums!
Law rules,—not Force!
Who wins, who loses laurel of the Course
Your flaming eyes may trace.
We have not staked the Nation on the race!
We do not mean to risk upon the strife
One orphan's tear, one gasp of wounded life!
Attention! Stop your drums!

Put up your drums!
O, shame! that now,
When hundred years have crowned our civic brow
Crazed partizans should dare
To wake the wolves of riot from their lair:
To frame in stormy failure Freedom's boast,
And line with separate wrecks our darkened coast!
For shame!—you men with drums!

Put up your drums!
Wan cheeks are wet
With tears that in sad eyes are gathering yet.
Our graves are new,—not old.
Grief has not lost an ache, nor love grown cold.
The rifles hardly have had time to rust,
And slowly hate is changed to olden trust.
We've had enough of drums!

Put up your drums!
The People speak!
They mean one law for all,—the strong,—the weak,—
And that one law obeyed!
They count no ballots with the soldier's blade.
They mean the struggle without shame shall cease,
And mark who threaten at the doors of Peace.
Beware! Put up your drums!

THE GUEST BOOK

Salve!

Welcome!—to Love in bloom!

As at new smile of June laughs back the flower,
As greets the thirsty grain sweet help of shower,
Welcome! Our hearts make room!

Mane!

No: do not leave us, pray!

The happy hours have been too swift and flying.
Must joy so soon find out that joy is dying?
O, no!—we bid you stay.

Vale!

Farewell! So pleasures flee.

Few sadder words on this sad earth are spoken:
There seem no links that keep their clasp unbroken.
Farewell!—if that must be!

ENGINE NO. 658

Don't be afraid!
If my muscles are steel and driven by fire,
And my temper is ugly when steam is up,
Yet I know my work by the tested tire,
And the velvety oil in the journal cup.
In the morning's blue
I'm to pull the President safely through!

Be careful, Page!
Keep hand on throttle! I'll mind your touch
As the needle yields to the magnet's sway,
I'm hot for a race; but, little or much,
As you give me the steam, the wheels shall obey.
I know what to do.—
I'm to pull the President safely through!

All ready?—
I'm off!—
I've got him behind me! flying at last
From the muck of the Capital north to the sea!
Huzza!—for I've got him! Page, hurry me fast
From the feverous heat to the winds that are free!
In the cool of the dew,
I, and the President,—we'll pull through!

Clear me the track!
Lie still at the siding while I sweep by.
Not a shriek of a whistle, nor roar of a train,
Nor clank of a coupling!—why? Want to learn why?
Don't you know my one passenger, brave thro' his pain?
Remember it,—you!
I'm pulling our patient President through!

Ho! City of Penn!
And farm and fair village and hamlet asleep!
Before you wake up in your wonder, I'm gone!
And nearer the beat of the measureless deep,

And nearer the surf-bell's cool monotone!
The waves are in view!—
I have almost pulled the President through!

Wind of the Sea!
I feel your breath on my forehead hot!
Waste never on me one murmur of thine;
Bear health and strength to the President's cot!
O, salt of the billows! O, balm of the brine!
Between us two
We hope to pull the President through!

Ah, Engineer!
You could not see:—but the track ran on!
With a golden rail and a noiseless car;
Up from the beaches of Elberon;
Up and beyond the zenith star!
Alas! not you,—
But the Angels—were pulling the President through!

THAT BREAKFAST

(As told by one of Dewey's gunners)

Hungry and tired we lay
In the lull of the morning's fray
When aloft the Admiral flew
Into the clearing blue
Signal for breakfast. All
Wondered at curious call
Braving the Luzon light,
But odd in the heart of a fight:—
 Very odd, we said.

For, into the maw of the bay
Whose shadows blinded our way,
Over torpedo shark
Hiding his teeth in the dark,
Under the island guns
Where treacherous current runs
We saw our cruisers wheel
Up to a gloom of steel
 Spotted with red.

Along a smoking curve
Without one hesitant nerve,
Through storm of the rifled shot
Grinding plates to a blot,
With eye out-speeding the ships
But will on the firm-set lips,
Smashing the obstinate decks,
Feeding the sea with wrecks,
 Our leader led.

Then up and down again
In sleet of the iron rain,
Hurling a ratting hail,
Ripping the resonant mail,
Till men grew faint and white

Under the black of the fight.—
Up to the mast-head went
Signal to halyard bent,
 “Breakfast!” it read.

Ah, what a laugh and a shout
From the grimy ships broke out!
“For us,”—with a cheer we said—
“Victory first, then bread!”
But the Admiral, he knows best.”
And we settled to food and rest
Till a signal flew at the main,—
“Let now for the braggarts of Spain
 Breakfast be spread.”

We spread it swiftly and well.
With a raw of steel on the shell,
With shrapnel cuts in a sheaf
Of our best Olympian beef,
With coffee of outpoured flame
And liberal platter of game,
And instead of the tropic dews
With fizz of the sparkling fuse
 The Dons were fed!

We gave them many a roast
And crisped their decks to a toast;
We tossed them hard-tack shot
And never a cracker forgot;
We wonder no Spaniard begs
For more of our eight-inch eggs;
Till over the table tips
And the food goes down with the ships
 In harbor bed!

Laugh at our breakfast,—you,—
Or scold at the flags we flew?
Sulk in the silk of your chair
As you skulked the flame in the air?
Anew you are trailing our track
With the usual stab in the back:
But spite of your clamor, shall reach

Our table to Orient beach
With wine and bread.

Wine of our freedom, sirs,
That blood of the Nation stirs;
Bread of intelligent toil
That grows from the generous soil;
The wine and the bread of Peace
When the beat of the drums shall cease
And war and guns retreat
For Commerce to draw the fleet
By a golden thread.

They may spatter the air with foam,
Our grumblers growling at home,
But the girdle of isles will grow
Into girdle of gems that glow
With the colors of harvest gold,
And purples the fruits unfold;
With the reds of the bountiful sun
Rosing what Courage has won
From Doubt and Dread!

Now we whose batteries played
And you who waited and prayed,
Let us all give thanks and rejoice,
With a thrill in the heart and the voice,
That our Nation, scorned in the past,
Has proved its manhood at last
And, swarming from garlanded towns,
With glory of gratitude crowns
Our Admiral's head!

WHERE MY WIFE SLEEPS

Silent and sad are the words
On the marble above her,
But the faithful blossoms and birds
Equally love her.

The flowers I plant creep slow
Into the grass above her,
Trying to find her below
And tell her they love her.

The birds sing tenderest songs
In the branches above her,—
How shall I measure my ways
To show that I love her?

I will love the good and the true
On the earth above her,
And the tender and faithful few
Who are glad that I love her.

They will not love me the less
That, kneeling above her,
I pray that the angels may bless
All the living who love her.

THE HOME-COMING OF THE OREGON

The Oregon!

Yes, there she comes, the Peerless!—lifting mast
With morn's blue wonder on its pennoned tip;
Rising with sunrise; homeward bound at last;
And stars greet stars of valorous battleship.
To Golden-Gate with almost lover's longing
The Nation wild and jubilant is thronging,
And, thunder-clad, a boom of welcome runs,
To those who fed the fires,
To those who aimed the guns.

The Oregon!

There came one morn a click from pulsing wire
Faint as the even-song in throat of bird,
And yet electric on its line of fire
With danger in the East. The great ship heard!
And tore adown the coast with screw blades throbbing
And steam-throat strained with choke of angry sobbing,
Then, wrapped in smoke, thro' blind Magellan runs
With men who drive the fires,
And men who train the guns.

The Oregon!

Now north, on-driven with hot coals of wrath,
While all our home nerves vibrate hope and fear!
Will the dark Spaniard bar her perilous path?
Must one fight six,—O, could we see and hear!
Not they disturbed who toward the battle guide her!
Not she the lithe and springing water-tiger!
On to the rescue day and night she runs,
With men who force the fires,
And men who load the guns.

The Oregon!

At last she rides among her sister ships
Where hides the Spaniard in his jungle bay,
Until one morn when from his lair he slips

And flies along a battle-flaming way
Till all his fleet with bursting shells are riven,
Till all save one on grinding beach are driven,
Till one, defiant, in the far front runs
With courage at his fires,
But blood upon his guns.

The Oregon!

Hurry, my Oregon! Crowd the Colon's wake!—
Aye, boys of the Brooklyn, see that racer rush!
Smashing the waves that into splinters break,
Or grind to snow beneath her angry crush!
She plunges on spurred hard by thonging master:
Her eight-inch shells alone can fly the faster.
War-hot her men as on the fighter runs
All red at furnace fires,
All black at smoking guns.

The Oregon!

She had some thought when victory was won,—
Rescued the sinking and sea-tombed the slain,—
Of that blue bay beneath a Cuban sun
Where sleeps the wreck of her poor sister Maine:
Twisted and torn, in mud of treachery sinking,
And yet to brutal past fair future linking.
Ah,—six for one!—she signals as she runs,
And southward smoke her fires
And go her confident guns.

The Oregon!

Now home she comes from Orient waters far;
Half round the world the girdle of her trail;
With glory braided in each stripe and star
And men that swarm in blue on sweep of rail.
For her loud welcome,—Queen of the western water!
For brains that built her and for nerve that fought her!
Glory for all as down her pennant runs,
For men who trim the fires,
For men who man the guns!

OCTOBER

None of your damsels fickle and fair;
Aprils of sunshine clouding to rain;
Crowned with the crocus just up to the air,
Or veiled with the snow-flakes falling again;
Summer in morning and winter at eve;
Smiling and frowning on lover and friend;
Whose voices seem ever a petulant weave
Of bird-songs and wind-cries down to the end.

None of your maidens the sea-sand knows;
Junes of the idle and languorous heat;
In lace of the lily and velvet of rose,
And bidding the world lie prone at their feet;
With nothing to do and nothings to say;
Just able to manage faint flutter of fan;
Butterfly blooms very sweet for a day
Though not for the life of a work-worn man.

But a stately matron shall wear my crown,
Clad in the glories she colors for me,
Whose children cling to the folds of her gown,
Grain of the harvest and fruit of the tree.
In a setting all golden her rubies glow red,
And her touch is sun-warm tho' the winter is near;
There is truth in her eyes and grace in her tread;
So welcome October, my Queen of the year!

CUBA,—CUBA!

A drowning man in an angry sea
With death at his throat cries gaspingly
For Ida,—Ida!

The girl at the lighthouse, lithe and slim,
Shoves off in her life-boat, taut and trim:

Shoves off in the tempest, scowling and black,
And piling waves in her dauntless track,

And dares the threat of the howling wind,—
A shriek ahead, and a shark behind!

The drowning man in the maddened sea,
With death at his throat cries hopefully
For Ida,—Ida!

She sees him now in an instant's glare
And winds her hands in his sinking hair.

She has him safe in her tossing boat,—
The bravest girl on the waves afloat!

And the baffled Death is alone in the dark
With his beaten brother, the hungry shark.

The drowning man in the stormy sea
Who cries for a life-boat gaspingly
Is Cuba,—Cuba!

And *Ours* the light on the headland shore,
The surest hand, and the nearest oar!

Shall we give him up to a death in the dark?
To the mercy and maw of Don, the shark?

O, fair Columbia! grapple and save
The drowning man from an imminent grave!

Thank God! a hand in the dripping hair!
At last!—a boat and a light in the air!
For Cuba,—Cuba!

GARIBALDI

King of Italy, open your doors!
Open your eyes!
Sweep the dance from your palace floors!
Italy dies!
Never can lute or laughter drown
The cry that haunts the dusk of the town.

Take our hero out of his chains!
Prayer and pitiful tears are done.
Heed the thought that thrills our veins:—
Italy, Italy! Grand and *One!*

Was it the frown of an Emperor made
Italy thus?
Victor Emmanuel! are you afraid?
Lean upon us!
Trust our tattered flags in the breeze
To stop the swarm of the Gallic bees!

Take our hero out of his chains!
Half his work is yet to be done.
Throned and crowned his purpose reigns.
Italy, Italy! Grand and *One!*

Have you forgotten the death and the dust
Borne in the past?
Or does the canker of royal rust
Win at the last?
Victor, our King, one breath of shame
Dims eternally name and fame!

Take our hero out of his chains!
Base the deed your cowards have done!
France may lose, but Liberty gains!
Italy, Italy! Grand and *One!*

Bar the red blood from its artery home

And palsy arrives.
The heart of the Nation is manacled Rome!
Off with the gyves!
Beggars no more,—we dare command!
Give sobbing Rome to the angry land.

Take our hero out of his chains!
Ere we speak with the plainer gun.
Quick!—or we sing to the battle strains
Italy, Italy! Grand and *One*!

See, O, King! the light in the West:—
Blaze of the dawn!
When they struck at America's breast
Blood was drawn!
Never again shall Terror drag
Into the dust that fearless flag!

Take our hero out of his chains!
Fight the battle they fought and won.
Yet the work of the Age remains!
Italy, Italy! Grand and *ONE*!

THE SONG AND THE SINGER

(Ashtabula, 1876)

The Love that is patient and pleadeth long
Was daily theme of the Singer's song.

The simple words and the winning tones
Went with the winds o'er seas and zones.

The Worker, rough, on the mountain slope,
Dug for the gold of a purer Hope.

The weary needle, in want and scorn,
Glowed with the light of a restful morn.

On the stones that girded the felon's cell
Last cry of the suffering Saviour fell.

The Sailor sang in the Arctic storm
The love that folded him, safe and warm.

And with every gasp of the dying was heard
Some memory faint of the Singer's word.

Musing, he sat on a homeward train;
And a song-bud opened in heart and brain.

"It is this,"—he said to the wife at his side,
Searching his Bible for theme and guide:

And he hummed it low to her faithful ear
Nor knew some angels were hovering near;

Nor saw them gather in wondering ring
As Princes await their Lord and King:

Nor heard them say as they lingered nigh,—
"The Song—and the Singer—are fit for the sky."

Then came quick crash of a crumbling bridge,
And flames that reddened the river's ridge!

Down in the gulf wide shatter of train,
Swift crackle of fire, low moaning of pain,

Death-cry of agony, sobbing and prayer;
Blood in the water and tears in the air;—

Then silence at last, when the flames have fled,
And help for the living, and search for the dead,

Till the stars shine sad in the sorrowful even!

.

But the Song and the Singer were both—in Heaven!

SCHOOL CHILDREN

Every day
I watch the stream go by!—
Brunette and blonde, red cheek and brown,
The step of thought, the romp of play,
These curls close cut, that tress astray,
Rough coat of boy, soft maiden gown:—
So every day
The children pass me by.

And yet to-day
The endless stream goes by.
They do not see me moving slow
With burden of my three-score years.
For them there seems nor grief nor tears!—
Why should I tell them what I know
As yet to-day
They gaily pass me by?

Some coming day
The stream will still go by:—
But I shall be with other stream
That pours into the Master's school,
Where Love makes mild each rigorous rule
And watchful eyes with mercy beam!
And so that day,
A child, I shall pass by!

SUN-SPOTS

We see them through the lucent lens
That brings the glow-orb's glory near,
And shows us yawning black of dens
Whose mystery hides in deeps of sphere,
Till curious doubt or guess astray
Athwart our clouds of wonder play.

They seem to bring us wreck of storms
And blaze of vast volcano fires;
War-rush of grim gigantic forms
With flanking winds that topple spires;
Or click of thick and vicious hail
Like olden arrows rained on mail.

Mayhap, sometimes when open wide,
These gates of onyx rimmed with flame
Warn earth of war's incoming tide,
Red-crested surf of blood and shame,
Or, winding through each vain defense,
Death-coil of creeping Pestilence.

I do not know. Do you—or you?
Yet turning leaves of olden years
One sees that when earth-graves are few
Scarce spot of gloom on disk appears,
But when runs death o'er sea and land
Gather in groups the black gulf-band.

And so, at times, each lack of glow
To me seems yawn of prison gate,
Black road to some vast realm of woe
Where fiends and flames lost souls await,
And deep in depths fire-domed beneath
Sound weep and wail and gnash of teeth.

Seems path that sorrowing Dante trod
Through realms of unrepented sin,

Where Pluto swings avenging rod
And Charon crosses, rowing in
Boat-loads of ghosts all wan and white
With death and dark of starless night:

Walled in with walls of swirling flame,
Shut in by gates with bars of blaze,
Sad wreck of human sin and shame,
Gray ghosts of spent and wasted days!—
What wonder that their path of doom
On glow of Sun shows black of gloom!

But, in more hopeful mood, I scan
The Eden tale of Genesis,
And wonder if the scarlet ban
Of flaming sword guards realm of bliss
At end of pathway blossoming,
Where souls and angels live and sing.

A Heaven in very heart of Sun!
But reached by road of darkness,—road
Whose shadows into splendors run
And lead to gates of blest abode
Where wings and crowns greet saintly eyes
And bloom all blooms of Paradise:

Vast home of God the Father, whose
Fire-flash of crown frames Corona,
Who sowed through arch of quivering blues
Star-seeds that grow and glow by Law—
Obedient lamps to light our way
Through dark of night to blaze of day.

Or which, or neither, One or naught?
We can not tell, but this we know:
The tale in flaming letters taught,
Of future bliss or gathering woe,
Discloses to poor human sense
The truth of God's omnipotence.

NUMBER FOURTEEN

Yes!—This is where my husband hives,
Each in her separate, sacred cell,
His honey-bees;—his swarm of wives!
You see how full, and crowded well:—
A kind of subdivided hell!
Where daily torture wrings the heart,
Where falsehood blinds the innocent eyes,
And joints of truth pried wide apart
Yet almost perfect seem, so hinged and wired with lies!

You like the prospect?—well;—the sky
Is blue enough. The mountains stand,
With white hair blowing lone and high,
As grave as in some better land.
With bridge of sunbeams rills are spanned;
And in the west the crimson bloom
That flowers up from grave of Sun
Tries hard to rose this vale of doom,
And into mold of grace its social horror run!

Off yonder, on horizon line,
Where great white tent of mist appears,
Lies Salt Lake with its bitter brine.
Its springs are not our woman tears!
O, if they were, the hemispheres
Would prove too small for boundless lake,
Full up to overflow of brim,
Our floods of bitterness would make,
In which no Joy might live; no shining Hope could swim!

Through all the year, great drifts of snow
Lie in the cañons, cold and white;
And down the circling mountains go
Bleak winds that gather in their flight
From ice and crag of stormy height
The fragrant balm of pine and fir,
As if to cool and heal the crime

That lets no hand of rescue stir,
But plies its craft and fraud through all the weary Time!

They tell me precious stones are found:
The emerald's green of summer lawn,
The red and flame of rubies round,
Smooth agates streaked with blue of dawn,
Or mottled like the coat of fawn,
And here and there a sardonyx;
But never once the flawless pearl
That sinless mother loves to fix
On pure and artless brow of pure and joyous girl!

The land, I hear, is rich with ores;
All silver white is many a vein,
And artery golden yellow pours,
Or red of copper shows its stain.
On slant of slope or flat of plain
The various marbles pale or glow,
Foam-white, or warm with color waves.
Know not their names. I only know
They mark in all the world no sadder group of graves!

On crags flit by the antelope:
On foot-hills graze the mountain sheep.
The adder coils like sailor's rope,
And green and gray the lizards creep.
The cougar crouches on the steep,
Or cat-like through the rushes crawls
For spring at loiterer by the way:
But scarcely more the brute appals
Than men that glide devout but ruin while they pray!

They dare to pray!—Approach the *Lord*
With soft, and sleek, and unctuous prayer,
As if was left no flaming sword
To guard and cleanse the Eden air;
As if the Angel hand was bare
That keeps the gate of Paradise,
And swung no bolt of righteous law:
As if the Heaven above the skies

Were smutched with blackest sin sad seraph ever saw!

Your pardon, if I seem too hard!—
But few and far are tears I shed.
Their earlier rain I late regard
As those who long since left their dead.
My girlish grief and pain have fled,
Or frozen into solid ice
Above the wreck of stranded Life,
And hopes long drowned in seas of Vice,
And strangled maiden dreams sunk dead in weeds of strife!

Perhaps my tongue has acid grown;
And temper flames up hot and swift
As powder flashed: and voice's tone
Is rough and rasping as the drift
Of glacier through the chasm rift,
Or avalanche that grinds and grates
Its thunderous way down mountain side.
Would you be calm if snarling Fates
Had made you fourteenth wife,—mere fractional part of bride?

I know the rose has faded out
Of cheek and lip. Poor hair is gray;
And graceful form grown coarse and stout.
The tender smiles have gone astray,
As flit the birds from frost away.
Deep wrinkles seam my weary face,
Like trough of waves on tossing sea;
And gone is all the youthful grace.
I scarcely know myself.—Is this sad ruin—me?

O, swiftly grew the grief and change,
As wide as from the tropic blooms
To crags of snowy Wasatch range:
As dark as from the midnight glooms:
As unrelenting as dusk tombs
That hide the faces we adored.
My peace was wrecked with storms of pain,
And every hope young heart had stored
Bent torn, as blossom stalks down swept by angry rain!

Sometimes, I try to be content,
And weed the nettles from my thought.
I go with head devoutly bent
To Temple where God's will is taught,
And latest Revelation brought
By apostolic telegraph:
And half believe the crafty creed,
And half revere the Prophet's staff,
And so confuse with good the bad of treacherous deed!

And for one moment almost—pray.
But fit of passing holiness
Is blown with gust of scorn away:
And trace of sudden tenderness
Dies out in sharp and bitter guess
Which lamb of all the younger flock
Lies sweet behind the saintly prayer,
And what will be the latest shock,
And who next convert “sealed,” and is she dark or fair!

And so the chill of unbelief
And hate of canting hypocrite
And choke and sob of hidden grief
Alternate with the fever fit
Of faith imbibed from Golden writ
Traced by the very hand of God,
And lurking fear of bodiless hand
Armed with the swift flagellant rod
That smites with tireless blow who spurn revealed command.

O, fool!—that took the tale as truth!—
I did not dream it could be lie.
It wove its threads through all my youth,
And when sleek Elder turned his eye
From thirteen safely hived,—and I
Was told that Heaven was made secure
By solemn “seal” to holy saint,
By days of service calm and pure,
I deemed such life divine, without least earthly taint.

I thought it some religious rite:—
I found it only hateful lust!
They hailed me Bride of Heaven at night
Enrolled among the saved and just.
I fell asleep in faith and trust,
But woke mere slave and concubine!—
With all my dream of holy life
And duty done with faith divine
Swept out in drudge of trull, and shame of fourteenth wife!

If God be none but Mormon God
Then welcome Death and deepest hell!—
Beholding path my feet have trod,
O, you!—unbound by damning spell,
Who see the grief in which I fell,
Smite out the Curse with sword of Law!
Sweep out the sin! burn out the sore!
Save Nation's fame from Mormon maw,
And spread clean truth and life from sweetened shore to shore!

THE BLINDING LEAVES

Through all the summer days
I could not see the lake for screen of leaves
That hid the glow and haze
Of golden billows tossed like harvest sheaves.

I knew where slept its blue
Burnished by sun and rippled by the rain,
But could not catch its hue
Through lucent glitter of my window-pane.

For, roofing all the shore,
Where sang the music of the southern breeze,
And down to shining floor
Was drawn a curtain of the barrier trees.

Trim spruce patrolled the beach,
Tall lift of pine, the hemlock's emerald cone,
Gnarled oak's imperial reach
Gray with old moss or girt with tendril zone.

These all shut in from me
The level splendor shyly hiding there,
And so I could not see
If foul with storm or sunnily smooth and fair.

But now the curtain lifts,
And fall the yellow leaves in rustling rain:
As wind of winter drifts
Through branches bare and writhing in their pain.

At last I see, I see,
The blue lake sleeping in the bronze-dark arms
Of circling hills, but free
To moon that silvers and to sun that warms.

I trace it on and far
To where at end its peaceful colors die

With fade of setting star,
And drowns wave-blue in blue of hovering sky.

And that is life, my dear!—
We do not see beyond the barrier screen
Of daily joy and tear,
Of work that worries and of love serene:

Of friends and foes; of fame
That burns, then blackens with its fitful blaze;
Of toil for bread; of blame
That trails to death the envied steps of praise.

But falls the screen at last,
As snows of winter crown the desolate head.
Toil, hate and love are past;
The fame has faded and the friends are dead.

So drifts the screen away
Which hides blue distance where clean souls may be
And sweet, lost children play.
The blinding leaves have fallen and—I see!

THE COMING POET

Oh, when and who,—the Poet new,—
Whose verses troop—a Tropic throng—
To end our winter bare of song
And warm our blue veins through and through!

Perhaps will flash out star new-lit!
I can not tell how that may be:
Old eyes are dim and can not see
What name on wonder-scroll is writ.

But yet the world has need of him,
For Life is growing coarse and cold
With endless drip of corn and gold
And rush of steel from molten brim:

With eyes that see but glare of greed
And spy for Power in glint of spray,
In green of lawn seek brown of hay,
In poppy blaze its opiate seed.

Yet there be those who dare to sing,
Like you and I,—dear dreamer friends,—
But we?—we have no flight that blends
With sweep of strong world-eagle's wing.

Be sure we know our vassal place,
Nor lift vain hopes to Poet's crown;
For one such Royalty would drown
A Red Sea host of rhyming race.

We play but casual interludes.—
Yet not misled by popular praise
That welcomes drawl of Proverb lays,
Or drone of Rydal platitudes.

Not that at least. For such as these
Who snatch at laurel quite unwon
Our lips to rebel challenge run,

And never bend our obstinate knees.

True Poet, singing, *something* sings.—

Who give for gems poor sham of beads,
Put froth of words for soul of deeds
Forge nothing though beat anvil rings,

These reach no gate of brain or heart,
Cage notes that hint no trace of tune,
Hang tinsel flags on horns of moon,
And desecrate the shrines of Art.

There is no Poetry in words!—
Such are but wire the lightning rides,
Highway magnetic whereon glides
Electric flock of carrier birds.

They are but clouds of evening sky
That lie on hill-tops gray and dun
Till warm in west the setting Sun
Flings dash of color wide and high.

They are but separate palette stains
That brush of artist blends with care,
Till on his canvas white and bare
Some sweet Madonna, sinless, reigns.

The poet-power lies in the thought,
That burns beneath the color lines
And up through all the blooming shines
And glorifies the lesson taught.

That Thought all One, and lucent clear;
Not draggled deep in sweet of phrase,
But plain in all its coil of ways,
And bounded clean as sphere or tear.

If Guido paints for altar-side
The Cross,—the soldiers,—faces pale,—
Yet sum of all the thronged detail
Is Christ alone,—Him crucified!

If through June air wing-hum is heard

And Oriole flashes flame or gold,
Or lilies variant hues unfold,
Yet always lily, always bird!

If locks of gold young longings stir,
Blue eyes, blush cheek, ear's dainty tip,
Pure snow of brow, red pout of lip,
Yet thrall of all is One,—is Her.

If tragic drama gathers hate
And love and fear, whole passion brood,
Yet mob of mimic multitude
In one black crash must culminate.

And so pure song of coming day
Will round some pivot-thought revolve,
And dare perhaps to clear or solve
Our tangled part in Mystery play.

But he who comes,—our perfect bard,—
To plant such thought in barren Time
And wed our work to grace of rhyme
Will find his Kingdom frozen hard.

From few, a welcome lean and slim,
From masses, beat of stinging rain,
From Press, the gift of smutch and stain;
And this the cordial spiced for him.

That mind poetic seldom thinks;
Hath nought of reason; only rhythm;
Can frame no solemn syllogism;
Can forge no chain of logic links.

A pity?—Yes.—But in this day
Earth needs the solid brawn that swings
Great ax or sledge,—hard-handed Kings
That cut through forest sun-lit way.

Yet may not Toiler sing along
His daily task of hand and brain,
And catch for lilt of summer strain
Robert of Lincoln's woodland song?

May not the great bell swung in spire
 With bang and clang mix melody,
 Some tender tone of moaning sea,
And vibrate prayer as well as fire?

If Capitol sits mutely grand
 And massive wall for Cæsar waits,
 May not white statues guard its gates
And lift the grace of warning hand?

But, Sirs,—Song strikes far heavier blow!—
 Wiends ax on line with Pioneer,
 Swings blow of sledge in curve of cheer,
And goes where brawn dares not to go.

What if it frames some bugle strain
 Whose swelling war-note blasts a throne;
 Or sounds refrain from northern zone
Whose march of music breaks a chain!

What if it builds some stately hymn
 That leads the Cross around the world;
 Or ties a tone to flag unfurled
That sweeps the seas from rim to rim!

What if wrecked Forum glows at line
 Whose ring awakes numb heart of Rome;
 Or strain flung on from dome to dome
Guards safe with watch-song roll of Rhine!

What if some blind bard lifts dusk veil
 Which hides the arch of Great White Throne;
 Or harp of Hebrew twines earth-moan
With clang of Gabriel's golden mail!

What if all Law that rules our day
 Was rocked in cradle-couch of Verse;
 And through unfold of primal curse
Some Greek song lamps our hesitant way!

Ah!—Grace *may be* with Power blent,
 Curled pearl of steam shut engine in.
 Come, perfect Poem, next of kin

To clean and solid argument.

A difference?—Yes. But this alone:

One works its truth out gravely slow,
Adds link to link with ache of blow,
Or lifts to column groan of stone.

The other sees same truth in flash
And photographs the truth it sees,
Or sends swift search-light down the breeze
Unmasking rocks where breakers dash.

It hints a thought it does not tell,
Half hides it in wise Virgin's lamp,
Or Bethlehem star of shepherd's camp,
Or mystic fold of parable.

Nor need such robing lessen Force.—
Does color-flash mar thunder shock,
Will vein of silver soften rock,
Or river's fringe delay its course?

The planet orbs swing arcs of power:
May not their disks with splendor shine?
Round throne of Queen curves army's line:
May not she wear some grace of flower?

Does mast of ship put weakness on
When wave and wind go crashing by,
Because it tossed green plume to sky
As mountain pine of Oregon?

If with cropped hair and surly phlegm
The Roundhead wields a victor spear,
May not his match be Cavalier
With Margaret's glove on polished helm?

What if the Age be grimed with dirt
Of mine and mill; smut-dark with toil,
And delving deep for sullen spoil
By bonds of rock resistant girl!

Must Steel and Iron rule the lands?—

The one has run to sword and gun:
The other pierced the martyred Son,
And nailed the blessed and bleeding hands.

Shall sordid aims usurp the throne,
Plow every field where blossoms start,
With brutal shears clip locks of Art,
And set for Genius burial stone?

Must Faith and Love and Truth disarm?
The Useful flout the Beautiful;
Slave-men at oar of galley pull,
Nor taste the freedom sailed in storm?

And so for Poet place and praise!
Fair end of pestilent scoff and sneer:
His shining pathway swept and clear
For clang of chariot down the days!

We need his song to cleanse the air;
Some heart-uplift of messenger,
Some strain inspired may still or stir
The torture throb or numb of Care.

Whose verse may color plodding scene
Of dust and dig and mortar-muds,
As on the brown of winter buds
March dares a touch of coming green.

His song no mist of flocculent strain
To hide the clear-cut shine of stars:
No tangled maze of music bars
That blend with pleasure pangs of pain:

No luscious drift of words unblest
That dance in couplets steaming warm,
Lift veil from every shrinking charm,
And leer at lace of shuddering breast:

No seer-song transcendental swirl
Of mystic words in vortex flung,
With arch of solemn fog o'erhung,
That round some theme eccentric whirl.

No, none of these. God grant it!—none!
For he who comes must win the crown
By voice concurrent handed down
From Shakespeare on to Tennyson.

Must come, no sham of Laureate gold,
No glass that apes clean diamond flare,
But purest light from mountain lair
Where God in silence left the mold.

Must come throat-full of Nature-hymns,
Wind voices, hum of bees, bird trills,
The ripple talk of leaves and rills,
Storm-sob in thrash of forest limbs:

With eyes to fathom inmost soul,
That drill to sands where tears are born
And gush or drip; that soar to morn
Where rising hopes their reds unroll.

Must gather all of fragrance up,
The sweet that down rose-coral slips,
The nectrous cling of loving lips,
And give it us in golden cup.

With pity for the hunger stress
That warps astray, but bolt of blow
For Guilt in gauds: becoming so
Mixed weave of wrath and tenderness.

Must win all Knowledge stored away
In classic grove, in scholar's lamp,
In dust of Tribes' migrating tramp,
In widest range of Cosmic sway.

Must common hope of gain refuse
And spare the wealth base-born of strife,
And tie the whole of soul and life
To girdle-gold of resolute Muse.

Must have Beliefs, oak-rooted, deep,
Whose cling no tempest rage can tear;
And Courage framed to find and dare

Curved cobra crest, slim tiger leap.

Must come as morn comes, bringing light,
Must come as night comes, bringing rest,
As still as bird droops down to nest,
As strong as storm swoops down from height.

Must come as wave of lifted main
Whose flood sweeps out all human bars
With Sun for glow-mate, torch of stars,
All love in heart, all life in brain!

Perhaps will grow from Avon urns,
Or where great arch of Abbey broods,
From moan of Missolonghi woods,
Or heather-cradled rest of Burns:

From slope where blossoms Goethe's grave,
Or Roman maid for Tasso weeps,
From cypress shade where Browning sleeps,
Or songless shore of western wave.

But come he will: some day; somewhere!
In distant tremor far I feel
The ring and rush of flying wheel;—
Almost his footstep on the stair.

Will rise above the lyric rows
Whose songs are many, triumphs few,
As over beds of pansy blue
Some royal dahlia grows and glows.

With fount of love and hope unsealed,
Will pour its flood from wealth of spring,
Set wheel adrip, make hammer sing,
And follow furrow round the field.

All secrets hid in cells of heart,
Each drop of blood in maid or man,
Each jar of nerves where tears began,
Will be of him some natural part.

Will wind their way through web of song

In sinuous threads from click of reel,
Till glories dance or sorrows kneel
The world and ways of Life along.

And he will climb to vacant throne,
And lift to brow the waiting crown,
While slowly step old barons down
Whose songs and hopes are all gray-grown.

Step down the old, step down the young:
The first with fall of hesitant tread
And backward bend of drooping head
At fade of earliest laurel flung.

The last with look of half-disdain,
And rebel flush of gathering doubt,
Till rings the Master's clarion out,
And seals with song his right to reign.

Whoe'er he be,—God-builed,—strong,—
The minstrel Prince of coming days,
For him immortal crown of bays,
For him the realm of future Song!

TWILIGHT

1849-1899

The sun droops down behind the hill,
And comes the Twilight dim and still,
Cooling hot red of cloud and sky,
And toning Day's long song and cry
Of Joy and Grief to murmurs low
That through the gathering Silence go,—
And now comes sleep.

The wind has fallen; lies along
Green meadow slopes where grasses throng,
And only dreams forgotten storms.
Back to oak-hollow flit the swarms
Of laden bees, and Night unbars
Her steel-blue cage; lets out the stars
To watch our sleep.

The violets curl in drowsy beds,
The roses slant their slumberous heads;
Birds flit to rest of darkening dells,
And vines of lattice shut their bells.
But while all Nature silent grows
The tireless River seaward flows,
Not yet asleep.

And so thro' Twilight—come at last—
Our lives slip onward, river-fast,
To sea or sands of hovering Night.
If step is slow or blurred the sight
Yet all the various work is done,
And on the peaceful hours may run
To rest and sleep.

We sit and muse with folded hands
While Memory weaves in myriad strands
The toil of living, rest of dead:

Forgotten walls of crumbling red,
Grim chapel bare as stranded shell
And every morn stern clang of bell
That ended sleep.

The sand-walks smooth with glide of feet;
Gaunt rail of fence on verge of street;
Moss-damp of spout at which we knelt
With lips athirst; green girdling belt
Of solemn elms; thin lift of spire
Where benches ache and lessons tire,
But never sleep.

All gone!—Ah, well,—we too must go,
For somewhere ends the River's flow!
Meanwhile the blessed Twilight folds
Its robes about us,—grays and golds
Of peaceful sunsets,—hush of air,
Calm end of sorrow, toil and care,—
Approach of sleep.

The children climb up patient knee,
And children's children too, may-be.
They mix brown curls with white of hair
And seek with tease and innocent dare
To make us playmates; heed no sigh
Of sad refusal: wonder why
So much we sleep.

At least the Twilight brings repose
And love of friends. We have no foes.
All bud or branch of hate is dead:
No lance of rivalry is sped:
No rush or crush of life remains:
No throb of heart, no ache of brains,
But only sleep.

All laid away or folded down:
Sword-buckled belt, judicial gown,
White lawn of knot at sermon throats,
Electric tape, Professor's notes,
Case-spotted brief of wrangling Bar,

Tired Poet's song of girl or star,—
Left only—sleep!

Falls surgeon's knife from tremulous hand;
No night-bell jangles scared demand;
The lord of travel leaves his rail;
Lone decks of yacht furl idle sail;
And under growing burdens bent
Steps down some wearied President,
In hope of sleep.

And so we welcome Twilight rest.
The work all done; the lonesome crest
Of life's hill reached; the bleeding griefs
Scarred over; golden child-beliefs
Of Harp or Trumpet turned to Faith,
Simple but firm, in Him who saith
He giveth sleep.

And now Song ends. Perhaps the last:
But through the Twilight, darkening fast,
The fresh boy-brotherhood will shine
Among the gathering lights Divine,
Till voice falls faint and lips grow pale,
And fade away dim towers of Yale
In Death's long sleep.

NOTES

THE BLUE AND THE GRAY

This poem was first printed in the *Atlantic Monthly* in September, 1867. It will be found in Vol. XX, p. 369. It was preceded by an extract from the *New York Tribune*, of which this is a copy.

“The women of Columbus, Miss., animated by nobler sentiments than are many of their sisters, have shown themselves impartial in their offerings made to the memory of the dead. They strewed flowers alike on the graves of the Confederate and National soldiers.”

The poem met with much hostility. The feelings engendered by the war were yet predominant, and the lesson of brotherhood had not been learned.

Rossiter Johnson, in his “Famous Single and Fugitive Poems,” copies in a note an answer by James M. Dalzell, of the 116th Ohio Volunteers, which is bitter and unforgiving, and takes issue with the sentiment of charity, and yet has a very vigorous swing to its verses. Time, however, has mellowed even the veterans.

TAGHKANIC

These verses appear in “Scenery of Ithaca,” published in 1866. The waterfall is 215 feet high, and breaks into fine spray. The stream empties into Cayuga Lake. The proper spelling of the name was said by Hon. Wm. H. Bogart, who was distinguished both as a journalist and for his knowledge of Indian antiquities, to be Taghkanic, and to mean “The Great Fall in the Woods.”

SMOKING SONG

The Smoking Song was a college-boy performance written in 1848, and first printed in 1849, in Vol. XIV of the *Yale Literary Magazine*. It has sometimes been confused with a poem which floated on the surface of the Press entitled “My Last Cigar.” I did not write that, and though the subjects are the same, the two bear no resemblance to each other.

NATHAN HALE

This poem was first written and read at a centennial celebration of the Linonian Society of Yale College, in 1853. It formed an episode in a much

longer poem, and was suggested by the fact that in the Linonian library were found records in the handwriting of Hale, and books which were his gift. The orator of the day was Hon. Wm. M. Evarts, and among the officers were Hon. Andrew D. White, late ambassador to Germany, and ex-President Timothy Dwight, two of whom are yet living.

COMING BOYS

Written in 1879, and formed part of a poem entitled “Songs of the Guns,” read at a re-union of the Army of the Potomac, held in Albany, in June of that year. I knew at the time that T. Buchanan Read had written a poem entitled “Sheridan’s Ride,” but I had not seen it, and ventured to treat the theme in my own way. The credit of first seeing the poetic possibilities of the theme must belong to him, though the two poems are altogether different.

ALICE

Alice, second daughter of Queen Victoria, married in 1862 to Prince Louis of Hesse. Her death occasioned many American eulogies.

INAUGURAL ODE

Sung at the inauguration of President Porter, and the retirement of President Woolsey, at Yale.

THE CHIMES

Written to the air which became familiar during the Civil War, of “Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, the Boys are Marching.” It was sung in acknowledgment of the chime of bells given to Cornell University by Miss Jennie McGraw.

GENERAL ORDERS

General Sheridan, as commander of the Fifth Military District, having headquarters at New Orleans, exercised his authority to aid reconstruction on the lines dictated by the laws of Congress. President Andrew Johnson was rapidly changing his position, and on the 17th of August, 1867, removed Sheridan from his command, and assigned him to the Department of the Missouri. This was done in the face of a protest from General Grant, and it was the common belief that Johnson was afraid of Sheridan’s popularity.

ENGINE NO. 658

It will be recalled that after the shooting of President Garfield he lingered long between life and death. It was deemed advisable to remove him from Washington to the seashore, and a special train was prepared and given a right of way over the lines. Very full accounts were given of the journey, including the number of the engine and the name of the conductor.

TWILIGHT

Read at the fiftieth anniversary of the graduation of the Class of 1849 from Yale College.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Mis-spelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *The Blue and the Gray and Other Verses* by Francis M. Finch]