

IOUS POEMS

As far beneath his sojourning:
Mid power and wealth I sought,
But found no trace of him,
And all the costly offerings I had brought
With sudden rust and mould grew dim:
I found his tomb, indeed, where, by their
laws,
All must on stated days themselves im-
prison,
Mocking with bread a dead creed's grin-
ning jaws,
Witless how long the life had thence
arisen;
Due sacrifice to this they set apart,
Prizing it more than Christ's own living
heart.

So from my feet the dust
Of the proud World I shook;
Then came dear Love and shared with me
his crust,
And half my sorrow's burden took.
After the World's soft bed,
Its rich and dainty fare,
Like down seemed Love's coarse pillow to
my head,
His cheap food seemed as manna rare;
Fresh-trodden prints of bare and bleeding
feet,
Turned to the heedless city whence I
came,
Hard by I saw, and springs of worship
sweet
Gushed from my cleft heart smitten by
the same;
Love looked me in the face and spake no
words,
But straight I knew those footprints were
the Lord's.

I followed where they led,
And in a hovel rude,
With naught to fence the weather from
his head,
The King I sought for meekly stood;
A naked, hungry child
Clung round his gracious knee,
And a poor hunted slave looked up and
smiled
To bless the smile that set him free;
New miracles I saw his presence do,—
No more I knew the hovel bare and poor,
The gathered chips into a wood-pile grew.
The broken morsel swelled to goodly
store;

I knelt and wept: my Christ no more I seek,
His throne is with the outcast and the
weak.

THE PRESENT CRISIS

Dated December, 1844.

WHEN a deed is done for Freedom, through
the broad earth's aching breast
Runs a thrill of joy prophetic, trembling
on from east to west,
And the slave, where'er he cowers, feels
the soul within him climb
To the awful verge of manhood, as the
energy sublime
Of a century bursts full-blossomed on the
thorny stem of Time.

Through the walls of hut and palace shoots
the instantaneous throo,
When the travail of the Ages wrings
earth's systems to and fro;
At the birth of each new Era, with a recog-
nizing start,
Nation wildly looks at nation, standing
with mute lips apart,
And glad Truth's yet mightier man-child
leaps beneath the Future's heart.

So the Evil's triumph sendeth, with a
terror and a chill,
Under continent to continent, the sense of
coming ill,
And the slave, where'er he cowers, feels
his sympathies with God
In hot tear-drops ebbing earthward, to be
drunk up by the sod,
Till a corpse crawls round unburied, delv-
ing in the nobler clod.

For mankind are one in spirit, and an in-
stinct bears along,
Round the earth's electric circle, the swift
flash of right or wrong;
Whether conscious or unconscious, yet
Humanity's vast frame
Through its ocean-sundered fibres feels the
gush of joy or shame;—
In the gain or loss of one race all the rest
have equal claim.

Once to every man and nation comes the
moment to decide,

In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for
the good or evil side;
Some great cause, God's new Messiah,
offering each the bloom or blight,
Parts the goats upon the left hand, and the
sheep upon the right,
And the choice goes by forever 'twixt that
darkness and that light.

Hast thou chosen, O my people, on whose
party thou shalt stand,
Ere the Doom from its worn sandals shakes
the dust against our land?
Though the cause of Evil prosper, yet 'tis
Truth alone is strong,
And, albeit she wander outcast now, I see
around her throng
Troops of beautiful, tall angels, to enshield
her from all wrong.

Backward look across the ages and the
beacon-moments see,
That, like peaks of some sunk continent,
jut through Oblivion's sea;
Not an ear in court or market for the low
foreboding cry
Of those Crises, God's stern winnowers,
from whose feet earth's chaff must fly;
Never shows the choice momentous till the
judgment hath passed by.

Careless seems the great Avenger; history's
pages but record
One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt
old systems and the Word;
Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong for-
ever on the throne,—
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, be-
hind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping
watch above his own.

We see dimly in the Present what is small
and what is great,
Slow of faith how weak an arm may turn
the iron helm of fate,
But the soul is still oracular; amid the
market's din,
List the ominous stern whisper from the
Delphic cave within,—
"They enslave their children's children who
make compromise with sin."

Slavery, the earth-born Cyclops, fellest of
the giant brood,

Sons of brutish Force and Darkness, who
have drenched the earth with blood,
Famished in his self-made desert, blinded
by our purer day,
Grope in yet unblasted regions for his
miserable prey;—
Shall we guide his gory fingers where our
helpless children play?

Then to side with Truth is noble when we
share her wretched crust,
Ere her cause bring fame and profit, and
't is prosperous to be just;
Then it is the brave man chooses, while the
coward stands aside,
Doubting in his abject spirit, till his Lord
is crucified,
And the multitude make virtue of the faith
they had denied.

Count me o'er earth's chosen heroes,—
they were souls that stood alone,
While the men they agonized for hurled
the contumelious stone,
Stood serene, and down the future saw the
golden beam incline
To the side of perfect justice, mastered by
their faith divine,
By one man's plain truth to manhood and
to God's supreme design.

By the light of burning heretics Christ's
bleeding feet I track,
Toiling up new Calvaries ever with the
cross that turns not back,
And these mounts of anguish number how
each generation learned
One new word of that grand *Credo* which
in prophet-hearts hath burned
Since the first man stood God-conquered
with his face to heaven upturned.

For Humanity sweeps onward: where to-
day the martyr stands,
On the morrow crouches Judas with the
silver in his hands;
Far in front the cross stands ready and the
crackling fagots burn,
While the hooting mob of yesterday in
silent awe return
To glean up the scattered ashes into His-
tory's golden urn.

'T is as easy to be heroes as to sit the idle
slaves

Of a legendary virtue carved upon our
father's graves,
Worshippers of light ancestral make the
present light a crime;—
Was the Mayflower launched by cowards,
steered by men behind their time?
Turn those tracks toward Past or Future,
that make Plymouth Rock sublime?

They were men of present valor, stalwart
old iconoclasts,
Unconvinced by axe or gibbet that all vir-
tue was the Past's;
But we make their truth our falsehood,
thinking that hath made us free,
Hoarding it in mouldy parchments, while
our tender spirits flee
The rude grasp of that great Impulse which
drove them across the sea.

They have rights who dare maintain them;
we are traitors to our sires,
Smothering in their holy ashes Freedom's
new-lit altar-fires;
Shall we make their creed our jailer?
Shall we, in our haste to slay,
From the tombs of the old prophets steal
the funeral lamps away
To light up the martyr-fagots round the
prophets of to-day?

New occasions teach new duties; Time
makes ancient good uncouth;
They must upward still, and onward, who
would keep abreast of Truth;
Lo, before us gleam her camp-fires! we
ourselves must Pilgrims be,
Launch our Mayflower, and steer boldly
through the desperate winter sea,
Nor attempt the Future's portal with the
Past's blood-rusted key.

AN INDIAN-SUMMER REVERIE

The reader familiar with Lowell's life will
readily recognize the local references which
occur in this poem. To others it may be worth
while to point out that the village smithy is
the same as that commemorated by Long-
fellow, that Allston lived in the section of
Cambridge known as Cambridgeport, that some
of the old willows at the canoe's end still
stand, and that the group is the one which
gave the name to *Under the Willows*.

Some Pilgrim-stuff that hates all sham,
And he will print my ditty.

ON THE CAPTURE OF FUGITIVE SLAVES NEAR WASHINGTON

In a letter to Edward M. Davis written from Elmwood July 24, 1855, Lowell says: "I threw another dolorous and jarring blast in the *Courier* the other day, which you will probably see in the *Liberator* of this week or next. I was impelled to write by the account of the poor fugitives who were taken near Washington. I think it has done some good. At any rate, it has set two gentlemen together by the ears about Disunion, and they are hammering away at each other in the *Courier*." The blast was the following stanza:

LOOK on who will in apathy, and stifle they
who can,
The sympathies, the hopes, the words, that
make man truly man;
Let those whose hearts are dinged out up
with interest or with ease
Consent to hear with quiet pulse of loath-
some deeds like these!

I first drew in New England's air, and
from her hardy breast
Sucked in the tyrant-hating milk that will
not let me rest;
And if my words seem treason to the dul-
lard and the lame,
'T is but my Bay-State dialect, — our
fathers speak the same!

Shame on the costly mockery of piling
stone on stone
To those who won our liberty, the heroes
dead and gone,
While we look coldly on and see law-
shielded ruffians slay
The men who fain would win their own,
the heroes of to-day!

Are we pledged to craven silence? Oh,
fling it to the wind,
The parchment wall that bars us from the
least of human kind,
That makes us cringe and temporize, and
dumbly stand at rest,
While Phry's burning flood of words is red-
hot in the breast!

Then, "we break our fathers' promise, we
have nobler duties first;
The traitor to Humanity is the traitor most
accursed;
Man is more than Constitutions; better rot
beneath the sod,
Than be true to Church and State while we
are doubly false to God!

We owe allegiance to the State; but deeper,
truer more,
To the sympathies that God hath set within
our spirit's core;
Our country claims our fealty; we grant it
so, but then
Before Man made us citizens, great Nature
made us men.

He's true to God who's true to man;
whenever wrong is done,
To the humblest and the weakest, 'neath
the all-uboholding sun,
That wrong is also done to us; and they
are slaves most base,
Whose love of right is for themselves, and
not for all their race.

God works for all. Ye cannot hem the
hope of being free
With parallels of latitude, with mountain-
range or sea.
Put golden padlocks on Truth's lips, be
calous as ye will,
From soul to soul, o'er all the world, leaps
one electric thrill.

Chain down your slaves with ignorance, ye
cannot keep apart,
With all your craft of tyranny, the human
heart from heart:
When first the Pilgrims landed on the Bay
State's iron shore,
The word went forth that slavery should
one day be no more.

Out from the hand of bondage 't is decreed
our slaves shall go,
And signs to us are offered, as erst to Ph-
araoh:
If we are blind, their exodus, like Israel's
of yore,
Through a Red Sea is doomed to be, whose
surges are of gore.

THE GHOST-SEER

'T is ours to save our brethren, with peace
and love to win
Their darkened hearts from error, ere they
harden it to sin;
But if before his duty man with listless
spirit stands,
Erelong the Great Avenger takes the work
from out his hands.

TO THE DANDELION

Dear common flower, that grow'st be-
side the way,
Eringing the dusty road with harmless
gold,
First pledge of blithesome May,
Which children pluck, and, full of pride
uphold,
High-herald buccannery, o'erjoyed that
they
An Eldorado in the grass have found,
Which not the rich earth's ample
round
May match in wealth, thou art more dear
to me
Than all the prouder summer-blooms
may be.

Gold such as thine never drew the Span-
ish prow
Through the primalvash of Indian seas,
Nor wrinkled the loan brow
Of ages, to rob the lover's heart of ease;
'T is the Spring's largess, which she scat-
ters now
To rich and poor alike, with lavish hand,
Through most hearts never understand
To take it at God's value, but pass by
The offered wealth with unrewarded eye.

Thou art my tropics and mine Italy;
To look at thee smocks a warmer clime;
The eyes thou givest me
Are in the heart, and heed not space or
time:
Not in mid June the golden-ourrased
bee
Feels a more summer-like warm ravish-
ment

In the white lily's breezy tent,
His fragrant Sybaris, than I, when first
From the dark green thy yellow circles
burst.

Then think I of deep shadows on the
grass,
Of meadows where in sun the cattle graze,
Where, as the breezes pass,
The gleaming rushes lean a thousand ways,
Of leaves that dumber in a cloudy mass,
Or whiten in the wind, of waters blue
That from the distance sparkle through
Some woodland gap, and of a sky above,
Where one white cloud like a stray lamb
doth move.

My childhood's earliest thoughts are
linked with thee;
The sight of thee calls back the robin's
song,
Who, from the dark old tree
Beside the door, sang clearly all day long,
And I, secure in childish piety,
Listened as if I heard an angel sing
With news from heaven, which he
could bring
Fresh every day to my untainted ears
When birds and flowers and I were
happy peers.

How like a prodigal doth nature seem,
When thou, for all thy gold, so common art!
Thou teachest me to deem
More sacrificially of every human heart,
Since each reflects in joy its scanty gleam
Of heaven, and could some wondrous secret
show,
Did we but pay the love we owe,
And with a child's undoubting wisdom
look
On all these living pages of God's book.

THE GHOST-SEER

This poem was printed March 8, 1845, in the
Broadway Journal, edited by C. F. Briggs.
In a letter accompanying the poem, Lowell
confesses his dissatisfaction with the execution
as compared with the conception, and adds:
"Written in the metre which I have chosen it
is perhaps too long, but the plot would have
been sufficient for quite a long and elaborate poem
into which a good deal of reflection and ex-
perience might have been compressed."

Ye who, passing graves by night,
Glance not to the left or right,
Lest a spirit should arise,
Cold and white, to freeze your eyes,

Once to Every Man and Nation 149

James Russell Lowell

TON-Y-BOTEL

Welsh Hymn Melody

1. Once to ev - ery man and na - tion Comes the mo - ment to de - cide,
 2. By the light of burn - ing mar - tyrs, Je - sus' bleed - ing feet I track,
 3. Though the cause of e - vil pros - per, Yet 'tis truth a - lone is strong;

In the strife of truth with false - hood, For the good or e - vil side;
 Toil - ing up new Cal - varies ev - er With the cross that turns not back;
 Truth for - ev - er on the scaf - fold, Wrong for - ev - er on the throne,

Some great cause, God's new Mes - si - ah, Of - fering each the bloom or blight,
 New oc - ca - sions teach new du - ties, Time makes an - cient good un - couth;
 Yet that scaf - fold sways the fu - ture, And, be - hind the dim un - known,

And the choice goes by for - ev - er 'Twixt that dark - ness and that light.
 They must up - ward still and onward, Who would keep a - breast of truth.
 Stand - eth God with - in the shad - ow Keeping watch a - bove His own. A - MEN.