

THE POETICAL
WORKS OF OLIVER
WENDELL HOLMES -

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OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES*

THE POETICAL WORKS
OF

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OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES
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CONTENTS:

VERSES FROM THE OLDEST PORTFO-
LIO FIRST VERSES: TRANSLATION FROM
THE THE MEETING OF THE DRYADS

THE MYSTERIOUS VISITOR THE TOAD-
STOOL THE SPECTRE PIG TO A CAGED
LION THE STAR AND THE WATER-LILY
ILLUSTRATION OF A PICTURE: "A SPAN-
ISH GIRL REVERIE" A ROMAN AQUE-
DUCT FROM A BACHELOR'S PRIVATE
JOURNAL LA GRISETTE OUR YANKEE
GIRLS L'INCONNUE STANZAS LINES BY
A CLERK THE PHILOSOPHER TO HIS

LOVE THE POET'S LOT TO A BLANK
SHEET OF PAPER TO THE PORTRAIT
OF "A GENTLEMAN" IN THE ATHENAEUM
GALLERY THE BALLAD OF THE OYS-
TERMAN A NOONTIDE LYRIC THE HOT
SEASON A PORTRAIT AN EVENING THOUGHT.
WRITTEN AT SEA THE WASP AND THE
HORNET "QUI VIVE?"
VERSES FROM THE OLDEST PORT-

FOLIO

FROM THE "COLLEGIAN," 1830, ILLUSTRATED ANNUALS, ETC.

Nescit vox missa reverti.—Horat. Ars Poetica. Ab his qua non adjuvant quam mollissime oportet pedem referre.—Quintilian, L. VI. C. 4.

These verses have always been printed in my collected poems, and as the best of

them may bear a single reading, I allow them to appear, but in a less conspicuous position than the other productions. A chick, before his shell is off his back, is hardly a fair subject for severe criticism. If one has written anything worth preserving, his first efforts may be objects of interest and curiosity. Other young authors may take encouragement from seeing how tame, how

feeble, how commonplace were the rudimentary attempts of the half-fledged poet. If the boy or youth had anything in him, there will probably be some sign of it in the midst of his imitative mediocrities and ambitious failures. These "first verses" of mine, written before I was sixteen, have little beyond a common academy boy's ordinary performance. Yet a kindly critic said there was

one line which showed a poetical quality:—
"The boiling ocean trembled into calm."

One of these poems—the reader may guess which—won fair words from Thackeray. The Spectre Pig was a wicked suggestion which came into my head after reading Dana's Buccaneer. Nobody seemed to find it out, and I never mentioned it to the venerable poet, who might not have been pleased with

the parody. This is enough to say of these
unvalued copies of verses.

FIRST VERSES

PHILLIPS ACADEMY, ANDOVER, MASS.,
1824 OR 1825

TRANSLATION FROM THE ENEID,
BOOK I.

THE god looked out upon the troubled
deep Waked into tumult from its placid sleep;

The flame of anger kindles in his eye As the
wild waves ascend the lowering sky; He lifts
his head above their awful height And to
the distant fleet directs his sight, Now borne
aloft upon the billow's crest, Struck by the
bolt or by the winds oppressed, And well
he knew that Juno's vengeful ire Frowned
from those clouds and sparkled in that fire.
On rapid pinions as they whistled by He

calls swift Zephyrus and Eurus nigh Is this
your glory in a noble line To leave your
confines and to ravage mine? Whom I—but
let these troubled waves subside— Another
tempest and I'll quell your pride! Go—
bear our message to your master's ear, That
wide as ocean I am despot here; Let him
sit monarch in his barren caves, I wield the
trident and control the waves He said, and

as the gathered vapors break The swelling
ocean seemed a peaceful lake; To lift their
ships the graceful nymphs essayed And the
strong trident lent its powerful aid; The
dangerous banks are sunk beneath the main,
And the light chariot skims the unruffled
plain. As when sedition fires the public
mind, And maddening fury leads the rabble
blind, The blazing torch lights up the dread

alarm, Rage points the steel and fury nerves
the arm, Then, if some reverend Sage ap-
pear in sight, They stand—they gaze, and
check their headlong flight,— He turns the
current of each wandering breast And hushes
every passion into rest,— Thus by the power
of his imperial arm The boiling ocean trem-
bled into calm; With flowing reins the fa-
ther sped his way And smiled serene upon

rekindled day.

THE MEETING OF THE DRYADS

Written after a general pruning of the trees around Harvard College. A little poem, on a similar occasion, may be found in the works of Swift, from which, perhaps, the idea was borrowed; although I was as much surprised as amused to meet with it some time after writing the following lines.

IT was not many centuries since, When,
gathered on the moonlit green, Beneath the
Tree of Liberty, A ring of weeping sprites
was seen.

The freshman's lamp had long been dim,
The voice of busy day was mute, And tor-
tured Melody had ceased Her sufferings on
the evening flute.

They met not as they once had met, To

laugh o'er many a jocund tale But every
pulse was beating low, And every cheek was
cold and pale.

There rose a fair but faded one, Who
oft had cheered them with her song; She
waved a mutilated arm, And silence held
the listening throng.

"Sweet friends," the gentle nymph be-
gan, "From opening bud to withering leaf,

One common lot has bound us all, In every
change of joy and grief.

”While all around has felt decay, We
rose in ever-living prime, With broader shade
and fresher green, Beneath the crumbling
step of Time.

”When often by our feet has past Some
biped, Nature’s walking whim, Say, have
we trimmed one awkward shape, Or lopped

away one crooked limb?

"Go on, fair Science; soon to thee Shall.
Nature yield her idle boast; Her vulgar fin-
gers formed a tree, But thou halt trained it
to a post.

"Go, paint the birch's silver rind, And
quilt the peach with softer down; Up with
the willow's trailing threads, Off with the
sunflower's radiant crown!

"Go, plant the lily on the shore, And
set the rose among the waves, And bid the
tropic bud unbind Its silken zone in arctic
caves;

"Bring bellows for the panting winds,
Hang up a lantern by the moon, And give
the nightingale a fife, And lend the eagle a
balloon!

"I cannot smile,—the tide of scorn, That

rolled through every bleeding vein, Comes
kindling fiercer as it flows Back to its burn-
ing source again.

”Again in every quivering leaf That mo-
ment’s agony I feel, When limbs, that spurned
the northern blast, Shrunk from the sacri-
legious steel.

”A curse upon the wretch who dared To
crop us with his felon saw! May every fruit

his lip shall taste Lie like a bullet in his
maw.

”In every julep that he drinks, May gout,
and bile, and headache be; And when he
strives to calm his pain, May colic mingle
with his tea.

”May nightshade cluster round his path,
And thistles shoot, and brambles cling; May
blistering ivy scorch his veins, And dog-

wood burn, and nettles sting.

"On him may never shadow fall, When
fever racks his throbbing brow, And his last
shilling buy a rope To hang him on my high-
est bough!"

She spoke;—the morning's herald beam
Sprang from the bosom of the sea, And ev-
ery mangled sprite returned In sadness to
her wounded tree.

THE MYSTERIOUS VISITOR

THERE was a sound of hurrying feet, A
tramp on echoing stairs, There was a rush
along the aisles,– It was the hour of prayers.

And on, like Ocean's midnight wave, The
current rolled along, When, suddenly, a stranger
form Was seen amidst the throng.

He was a dark and swarthy man, That
uninvited guest; A faded coat of bottle-green

Was buttoned round his breast.

There was not one among them all
Could say from whence he came; Nor beardless
boy, nor ancient man, Could tell that stranger's
name.

All silent as the sheeted dead, In spite
of sneer and frown, Fast by a gray-haired
senior's side He sat him boldly down.

There was a look of horror flashed From

out the tutor's eyes; When all around him
rose to pray, The stranger did not rise!

A murmur broke along the crowd, The
prayer was at an end; With ringing heels
and measured tread, A hundred forms de-
scend.

Through sounding aisle, o'er grating stair,
The long procession poured, Till all were
gathered on the seats Around the Commons

board.

That fearful stranger! down he sat, Unasked,
yet undismayed; And on his lip a rising
smile Of scorn or pleasure played.

He took his hat and hung it up, With
slow but earnest air; He stripped his coat
from off his back, And placed it on a chair.

Then from his nearest neighbor's side A
knife and plate he drew; And, reaching out

his hand again, He took his teacup too.

How fled the sugar from the bowl How
sunk the azure cream! They vanished like
the shapes that float Upon a summer's dream.

A long, long draught,—an outstretched
hand,— And crackers, toast, and tea, They
faded from the stranger's touch, Like dew
upon the sea.

Then clouds were dark on many a brow,

Fear sat upon their souls, And, in a bitter
agony, They clasped their buttered rolls.

A whisper trembled through the crowd,
Who could the stranger be? And some were
silent, for they thought A cannibal was he.

What if the creature should arise,– For
he was stout and tall,– And swallow down a
sophomore, Coat, crow's-foot, cap, and all!

All sullenly the stranger rose; They sat

in mute despair; He took his hat from off
the peg, His coat from off the chair.

Four freshmen fainted on the seat, Six
swooned upon the floor; Yet on the fearful
being passed, And shut the chapel door.

There is full many a starving man, That
walks in bottle green, But never more that
hungry one In Commons hall was seen.

Yet often at the sunset hour, When tolls

the evening bell, The freshman lingers on
the steps, That frightful tale to tell.

THE TOADSTOOL

THERE 's a thing that grows by the
fainting flower, And springs in the shade of
the lady's bower; The lily shrinks, and the
rose turns pale, When they feel its breath
in the summer gale, And the tulip curls
its leaves in pride, And the blue-eyed vi-

olet starts aside; But the lily may flaunt,
and the tulip stare, For what does the hon-
est toadstool care? She does not glow in
a painted vest, And she never blooms on
the maiden's breast; But she comes, as the
saintly sisters do, In a modest suit of a
Quaker hue. And, when the stars in the
evening skies Are weeping dew from their
gentle eyes, The toad comes out from his

hermit cell, The tale of his faithful love to
tell.

Oh, there is light in her lover's glance,
That flies to her heart like a silver lance;
His breeches are made of spotted skin, His
jacket 'is tight, and his pumps are thin; In
a cloudless night you may hear his song,
As its pensive melody floats along, And, if
you will look by the moonlight fair, The

trembling form of the toad is there.

And he twines his arms round her slender stem, In the shade of her velvet diadem;
But she turns away in her maiden shame,
And will not breathe on the kindling flame;
He sings at her feet through the live-long night,
And creeps to his cave at the break of light;
And whenever he comes to the air above,
His throat is swelling with baffled

love.

THE SPECTRE PIG
A BALLAD

IT was the stalwart butcher man, That
knit his swarthy brow, And said the gentle
Pig must die, And sealed it with a vow.

And oh! it was the gentle Pig Lay stretched
upon the ground, And ah! it was the cruel
knife His little heart that found.

They took him then, those wicked men,
They trailed him all along; They put a stick
between his lips, And through his heels a
thong;

And round and round an oaken beam A
hempen cord they flung, And, like a mighty
pendulum, All solemnly he swung!

Now say thy prayers, thou sinful man,
And think what thou hast done, And read

thy catechism well, Thou bloody-minded one;
For if his sprite should walk by night, It
better were for thee, That thou wert moul-
dering in the ground, Or bleaching in the
sea.

It was the savage butcher then, That
made a mock of sin, And swore a very wicked
oath, He did not care a pin.

It was the butcher's youngest son,– His

voice was broke with sighs, And with his
pocket-handkerchief He wiped his little eyes;
All young and ignornt was he, But inno-
cent and mild, And, in his soft simplicity,
Out spoke the tender child :-

"Oh, father, father, list to me; The Pig
is deadly sick, And men have hung him by
his heels, And fed him with a stick."

It was the bloody butcher then, That

laughed as he would die, Yet did he soothe
the sorrowing child, And bid him not to
cry;—

”Oh, Nathan, Nathan, what’s a Pig, That
thou shouldst weep and wail? Come, bear
thee like a butcher’s child, And thou shalt
have his tail!”

It was the butcher’s daughter then, So
slender and so fair, That sobbed as it her

heart would break, And tore her yellow hair;
And thus she spoke in thrilling tone,—
Fast fell the tear-drops big:— "Ah! woe is
me! Alas! Alas! The Pig! The Pig! The
Pig!

Then did her wicked father's lips Make
merry with her woe, And call her many a
naughty name, Because she whimpered so.

Ye need not weep, ye gentle ones, In

vain your tears are shed, Ye cannot wash his
crimson hand, Ye cannot soothe the dead.

The bright sun folded on his breast His
robes of rosy flame, And softly over all the
west The shades of evening came.

He slept, and troops of murdered Pigs
Were busy with his dreams; Loud rang their
wild, unearthly shrieks, Wide yawned their
mortal seams.

The clock struck twelve; the Dead hath
heard; He opened both his eyes, And sul-
lenly he shook his tail To lash the feeding
flies.

One quiver of the hempen cord,— One
struggle and one bound,— With stiffened limb
and leaden eye, The Pig was on the ground
And straight towards the sleeper's house
His fearful way he wended; And hooting

owl and hovering bat On midnight wing at-
tended.

Back flew the bolt, up rose the latch,
And open swung the door, And little minc-
ing feet were heard Pat, pat along the floor.

Two hoofs upon the sanded floor, And
two upon the bed; And they are breathing
side by side, The living and the dead!

"Now wake, now wake, thou butcher man!

What makes thy cheek so pale? Take hold!
take hold! thou dost not fear To clasp a
spectre's tail?"

Untwisted every winding coil; The shud-
dering wretch took hold, All like an icicle it
seemed, So tapering and so cold.

"Thou com'st with me, thou butcher man!"—
He strives to loose his grasp, But, faster
than the clinging vine, Those twining spi-

als clasp;

And open, open swung the door, And,
fleeter than the wind, The shadowy spectre
swept before, The butcher trailed behind.

Fast fled the darkness of the night, And
morn rose faint and dim; They called full
loud, they knocked full long, They did not
waken him.

Straight, straight towards that oaken beam,

A trampled pathway ran; A ghastly shape
was swinging there,— It was the butcher man.

TO A CAGED LION

Poor conquered monarch! though that
haughty glance Still speaks thy courage un-
subdued by time, And in the grandeur of
thy sullen tread Lives the proud spirit of
thy burning clime;— Fettered by things that
shudder at thy roar, Torn from thy pathless

wilds to pace this narrow floor!

Thou wast the victor, and all nature
shrunk Before the thunders of thine aw-
ful wrath; The steel-armed hunter viewed
thee from afar, Fearless and trackless in thy
lonely path! The famished tiger closed his
flaming eye, And crouched and panted as
thy step went by!

Thou art the vanquished, and insulting

man Bars thy broad bosom as a sparrow's
wing; His nerveless arms thine iron sinews
bind, And lead in chains the desert's fallen
king; Are these the beings that have dared
to twine Their feeble threads around those
limbs of thine?

So must it be; the weaker, wiser race,
That wields the tempest and that rides the
sea, Even in the stillness of thy solitude

Must teach the lesson of its power to thee;
And thou, the terror of the trembling wild,
Must bow thy savage strength, the mockery
of a child!

THE STAR AND THE WATER-LILY

THE sun stepped down from his golden
throne. And lay in the silent sea, And the
Lily had folded her satin leaves, For a sleepy
thing was she; What is the Lily dreaming

of? Why crisp the waters blue? See, see,
she is lifting her varnished lid! Her white
leaves are glistening through!

The Rose is cooling his burning cheek
In the lap of the breathless tide;— The Lily
hath sisters fresh and fair, That would lie
by the Rose's side; He would love her better
than all the rest, And he would be fond and
true;— But the Lily unfolded her weary lids,

And looked at the sky so blue.

Remember, remember, thou silly one,
How fast will thy summer glide, And wilt
thou wither a virgin pale, Or flourish a bloom-
ing bride? Oh, the Rose is old, and thorny,
and cold, And he lives on earth," said she;
"But the Star is fair and he lives in the air,
And he shall my bridegroom be."

But what if the stormy cloud should come,

And ruffle the silver sea? Would he turn
his eye from the distant sky, To smile on a
thing like thee? Oh no, fair Lily, he will not
send One ray from his far-off throne; The
winds shall blow and the waves shall flow,
And thou wilt be left alone.

There is not a leaf on the mountain-top,
Nor a drop of evening dew, Nor a golden
sand on the sparkling shore, Nor a pearl in

the waters blue, That he has not cheered
with his fickle smile, And warmed with his
faithless beam,— And will he be true to a
pallid flower, That floats on the quiet stream?

Alas for the Lily! she would not heed,
But turned to the skies afar, And bared
her breast to the trembling ray That shot
from the rising star; The cloud came over
the darkened sky, And over the waters wide

She looked in vain through the beating rain,
And sank in the stormy tide.

ILLUSTRATION OF A PICTURE

"A SPANISH GIRL IN REVERIE,"

SHE twirled the string of golden beads,
That round her neck was hung,— My grand-
sire's gift; the good old man Loved girls
when he was young; And, bending lightly
o'er the cord, And turning half away, With

something like a youthful sigh, Thus spoke
the maiden gray:-

”Well, one may trail her silken robe, And
bind her locks with pearls, And one may
wreathe the woodland rose Among her float-
ing curls; And one may tread the dewy grass,
And one the marble floor, Nor half-hid bo-
som heave the less, Nor broidered corset
more!

"Some years ago, a dark-eyed girl Was
sitting in the shade,— There's something brings
her to my mind In that young dreaming
maid,— And in her hand she held a flower, A
flower, whose speaking hue Said, in the lan-
guage of the heart, 'Believe the giver true.'

"And, as she looked upon its leaves, The
maiden made a vow To wear it when the
bridal wreath Was woven for her brow; She

watched the flower, as, day by day, The
leaflets curled and died; But he who gave
it never came To claim her for his bride.

"Oh, many a summer's morning glow
Has lent the rose its ray, And many a win-
ter's drifting snow Has swept its bloom away;
But she has kept that faithless pledge To
this, her winter hour, And keeps it still, her-
self alone, And wasted like the flower."

Her pale lip quivered, and the light Gleamed
in her moistening eyes;— I asked her how
she liked the tints In those Castilian skies?
"She thought them misty,—'t was perhaps
Because she stood too near;" She turned
away, and as she turned I saw her wipe a
tear.

A ROMAN AQUEDUCT

THE sun-browned girl, whose limbs re-

cline When noon her languid hand has laid
Hot on the green flakes of the pine, Beneath
its narrow disk of shade;

As, through the flickering noontide glare,
She gazes on the rainbow chain Of arches,
lifting once in air The rivers of the Roman's
plain;—

Say, does her wandering eye recall The
mountain-current's icy wave,— Or for the

dead one tear let fall, Whose founts are broken
by their grave?

From stone to stone the ivy weaves Her
braided tracery's winding veil, And lacing
stalks and tangled leaves Nod heavy in the
drowsy gale.

And lightly floats the pendent vine, That
swings beneath her slender bow, Arch an-
swering arch,—whose rounded line Seems mir-

rored in the wreath below.

How patient Nature smiles at Fame! The
weeds, that strewed the victor's way, Feed
on his dust to shroud his name, Green where
his proudest towers decay.

See, through that channel, empty now,
The scanty rain its tribute pours,— Which
cooled the lip and laved the brow Of con-
querors from a hundred shores.

Thus bending o'er the nation's bier, Whose
wants the captive earth supplied, The dew
of Memory's passing tear Falls on the arches
of her pride!

FROM A BACHELOR'S PRIVATE JOUR-
NAL

SWEET Mary, I have never breathed
The love it were in vain to name; Though
round my heart a serpent wreathed, I smiled,

or strove to smile, the same.

Once more the pulse of Nature glows
With faster throb and fresher fire, While
music round her pathway flows, Like echoes
from a hidden lyre.

And is there none with me to share The
glories of the earth and sky? The eagle
through the pathless air Is followed by one
burning eye.

Ah no! the cradled flowers may wake,
Again may flow the frozen sea, From every
cloud a star may break,— There conies no
second spring to me.

Go,—ere the painted toys of youth Are
crushed beneath the tread of years; Ere vi-
sions have been chilled to truth, And hopes
are washed away in tears.

Go,—for I will not bid thee weep,— Too

soon my sorrows will be thine, And evening's
troubled air shall sweep The incense from
the broken shrine.

If Heaven can hear the dying tone Of
chords that soon will cease to thrill, The
prayer that Heaven has heard alone May
bless thee when those chords are still.

LA GRISETTE

As Clemence! when I saw thee last Trip

down the Rue de Seine, And turning, when
thy form had past, I said, "We meet again,"—
I dreamed not in that idle glance Thy lat-
est image came, And only left to memory's
trance A shadow and a name.

The few strange words my lips had taught
Thy timid voice to speak, Their gentler signs,
which often brought Fresh roses to thy cheek,
The trailing of thy long loose hair Bent o'er

my couch of pain, All, all returned, more
sweet, more fair; Oh, had we met again!

I walked where saint and virgin keep
The vigil lights of Heaven, I knew that thou
hadst woes to weep, And sins to be forgiven;
I watched where Genevieve was laid, I knelt
by Mary's shrine, Beside me low, soft voices
prayed; Alas! but where was thine?

And when the morning sun was bright,

When wind and wave were calm, And flamed,
in thousand-tinted light, The rose of Notre
Dame, I wandered through the haunts of
men, From Boulevard to Quai, Till, frown-
ing o'er Saint Etienne, The Pantheon's shadow
lay.

In vain, in vain; we meet no more, Nor
dream what fates befall; And long upon the
stranger's shore My voice on thee may call,

When years have clothed the line in moss
That tells thy name and days, And with-
ered, on thy simple cross, The wreaths of
Pere-la-Chaise!

OUR YANKEE GIRLS

LET greener lands and bluer skies, If
such the wide earth shows, With fairer cheeks
and brighter eyes, Match us the star and
rose; The winds that lift the Georgian's veil,

Or wave Circassia's curls, Waft to their shores
the sultan's sail,— Who buys our Yankee
girls?

The gay grisette, whose fingers touch
Love's thousand chords so well; The dark
Italian, loving much, But more than one
can tell; And England's fair-haired, blue-
eyed dame, Who binds her brow with pearls;—
Ye who have seen them, can they shame

Our own sweet Yankee girls?

And what if court or castle vaunt Its
children loftier born?— Who heeds the silken
tassel's flaunt Beside the golden corn? They
ask not for the dainty toil Of ribboned knights
and earls, The daughters of the virgin soil,
Our freeborn Yankee girls!

By every hill whose stately pines Wave
their dark arms above The home where some

fair being shines, To warm the wilds with
love, From barest rock to bleakest shore
Where farthest sail unfurls, That stars and
stripes are streaming o'er,– God bless our
Yankee girls!

L'INCONNUE

Is thy name Mary, maiden fair? Such
should, methinks, its music be; The sweet-
est name that mortals bear Were best be-

fitting thee; And she to whom it once was
given, Was half of earth and half of heaven.

I hear thy voice, I see thy smile, I look
upon thy folded hair; Ah! while we dream
not they beguile, Our hearts are in the snare;
And she who chains a wild bird's wing Must
start not if her captive sing.

So, lady, take the leaf that falls, To all
but thee unseen, unknown; When evening

shades thy silent walls, Then read it all alone;
In stillness read, in darkness seal, Forget,
despise, but not reveal!

STANZAS

STRANGE! that one lightly whispered
tone Is far, far sweeter unto me, Than all
the sounds that kiss the earth, Or breathe
along the sea; But, lady, when thy voice I
greet, Not heavenly music seems so sweet.

I look upon the fair blue skies, And naught
but empty air I see; But when I turn me to
thin eyes, It seemeth unto me Ten thousand
angels spread their wings Within those lit-
tle azure rings.

The lily bath the softest leaf That ever
western breeze bath fanned, But thou shalt
have the tender flower, So I may take thy
hand; That little hand to me doth yield

More joy than all the broidered field.

O lady! there be many things That seem
right fair, below, above; But sure not one
among them all Is half so sweet as love;—
Let us not pay our vows alone, But join
two altars both in one.

LINES BY A CLERK

OH! I did love her dearly, And gave her
toys and rings, And I thought she meant

sincerely, When she took my pretty things.
But her heart has grown as icy As a fountain in the fall, And her love, that was so spicy, It did not last at all.

I gave her once a locket, It was filled with my own hair, And she put it in her pocket With very special care. But a jeweller has got it,– He offered it to me,– And another that is not it Around her neck I see.

For my cooings and my billings I do not
now complain, But my dollars and my shillings
Will never come again; They were earned
with toil and sorrow, But I never told her
that, And now I have to borrow, And want
another hat.

Think, think, thou cruel Emma, When
thou shalt hear my woe, And know my sad
dilemma, That thou hast made it so. See,

see my beaver rusty, Look, look upon this
hole, This coat is dim and dusty; Oh let it
rend thy soul!

Before the gates of fashion I daily bent
my knee, But I sought the shrine of passion,
And found my idol,—thee. Though never
love intenser Had bowed a soul before it,
Thine eye was on the censer, And not the
hand that bore it.

THE PHILOSOPHER TO HIS LOVE

DEAREST, a look is but a ray Reflected
in a certain way; A word, whatever tone
it wear, Is but a trembling wave of air; A
touch, obedience to a clause In nature's pure
material laws.

The very flowers that bend and meet,
In sweetening others, grow more sweet; The
clouds by day, the stars by night, Inweave

their floating locks of light; The rainbow,
Heaven's own forehead's braid, Is but the
embrace of sun and shade.

Oh! in the hour when I shall feel Those
shadows round my senses steal, When gen-
tle eyes are weeping o'er The clay that feels
their tears no more, Then let thy spirit with
me be, Or some sweet angel, likest thee!

How few that love us have we found!

How wide the world that girds them round
Like mountain streams we meet and part,
Each living in the other's heart, Our course
unknown, our hope to be Yet mingled in
the distant sea.

But Ocean coils and heaves in vain, Bound
in the subtle moonbeam's chain; And love
and hope do but obey Some cold, capricious
planet's ray, Which lights and leads the tide

it charms To Death's dark caves and icy
arms.

Alas! one narrow line is drawn, That
links our sunset with our dawn; In mist
and shade life's morning rose, And clouds
are round it at its close; But ah! no twi-
light beam ascends To whisper where that
evening ends.

THE POET'S LOT

WHAT is a poet's love?— To write a girl
a sonnet, To get a ring, or some such thing,
And fustianize upon it.

What is a poet's fame?— Sad hints about
his reason, And sadder praise from garreteers,
To be returned in season.

Where go the poet's lines?— Answer, ye
evening tapers! Ye auburn locks, ye golden
curls, Speak from your folded papers!

Child of the ploughshare, smile; Boy of
the counter, grieve not, Though muses round
thy trundle-bed Their broidered tissue weave
not.

The poet's future holds No civic wreath
above him; Nor slated roof, nor varnished
chaise, Nor wife nor child to love him.

Maid of the village inn, Who workest
woe on satin, (The grass in black, the graves

in green, The epitaph in Latin,)

Trust not to them who say, In stanzas,
they adore thee; Oh rather sleep in church-
yard clay, With urn and cherub o'er thee!

TO A BLANK SHEET OF PAPER

WAN-VISAGED thing! thy virgin leaf
To me looks more than deadly pale, Un-
knowing what may stain thee yet,— A poem
or a tale.

Who can thy unborn meaning scan? Can
Seer or Sibyl read thee now? No,—seek to
trace the fate of man Writ on his infant
brow.

Love may light on thy snowy cheek, And
shake his Eden-breathing plumes; Then shalt
thou tell how Lelia smiles, Or Angelina blooms.

Satire may lift his bearded lance, Fore-
stalling Time's slow-moving scythe, And,

scattered on thy little field, Disjointed bards
may writhe.

Perchance a vision of the night, Some
grizzled spectre, gaunt and thin, Or sheeted
corpse, may stalk along, Or skeleton may
grin

If it should be in pensive hour Some
sorrow-moving theme I try, Ah, maiden, how
thy tears will fall, For all I doom to die!

But if in merry mood I touch Thy leaves,
then shall the sight of thee Sow smiles as
thick on rosy lips As ripples on the sea.

The Weekly press shall gladly stoop To
bind thee up among its sheaves; The Daily
steal thy shining ore, To gild its leaden leaves.

Thou hast no tongue, yet thou canst
speak, Till distant shores shall hear the sound;
Thou hast no life, yet thou canst breathe

Fresh life on all around.

Thou art the arena of the wise, The
noiseless battle-ground of fame; The sky
where halos may be wreathed Around the
humblest name.

Take, then, this treasure to thy trust, To
win some idle reader's smile, Then fade and
moulder in the dust, Or swell some bonfire's
pile.

TO THE PORTRAIT OF "A GENTLE-
MAN"

IN THE ATHENIEUM GALLERY

IT may be so,—perhaps thou hast A warm
and loving heart; I will not blame thee for
thy face, Poor devil as thou art.

That thing thou fondly deem'st a nose,
Unsightly though it be,— In spite of all the
cold world's scorn, It may be much to thee.

Those eyes,—among thine elder friends
Perhaps they pass for blue,— No matter,—if
a man can see, What more have eyes to do?

Thy mouth,—that fissure in thy face, By
something like a chin,— May be a very useful
place To put thy victual in.

I know thou hast a wife at home, I know
thou hast a child, By that subdued, domes-
tic smile Upon thy features mild.

That wife sits fearless by thy side, That
cherub on thy knee; They do not shudder
at thy looks, They do not shrink from thee.

Above thy mantel is a hook,– A portrait
once was there; It was thine only ornament,–
Alas! that hook is bare.

She begged thee not to let it go, She
begged thee all in vain; She wept,–and breathed
a trembling prayer To meet it safe again.

It was a bitter sight to see That picture
torn away; It was a solemn thought to think
What all her friends would say!

And often in her calmer hours, And in
her happy dreams, Upon its long-deserted
hook The absent portrait seems.

Thy wretched infant turns his head In
melancholy wise, And looks to meet the
placid stare Of those unbending eyes.

I never saw thee, lovely one,— Perchance
I never may; It is not often that we cross
Such people in our way;

But if we meet in distant years, Or on
some foreign shore, Sure I can take my Bible
oath, I've seen that face before.

THE BALLAD OF THE OYSTERMAN

IT was a tall young oysterman lived by
the river-side, His shop was just upon the

bank, his boat was on the tide; The daughter of a fisherman, that was so straight and slim, Lived over on the other bank, right opposite to him.

It was the pensive oysterman that saw a lovely maid, Upon a moonlight evening, a sitting in the shade; He saw her wave her handkerchief, as much as if to say, "I 'm wide awake, young oysterman, and all the

folks away.”

Then up arose the oysterman, and to himself said he, ”I guess I ’ll leave the skiff at home, for fear that folks should see I read it in the story-book, that, for to kiss his dear, Leander swam the Hellespont,—and I will swim this here.”

And he has leaped into the waves, and crossed the shining stream, And he has clam-

bered up the bank, all in the moonlight
gleam; Oh there were kisses sweet as dew,
and words as soft as rain,— But they have
heard her father's step, and in he leaps again!

Out spoke the ancient fisherman,—”Oh,
what was that, my daughter?” ”’T was noth-
ing but a pebble, sir, I threw into the wa-
ter.” ”And what is that, pray tell me, love,
that paddles off so fast?” ”It's nothing but

a porpoise, sir, that 's been a swimming past."

Out spoke the ancient fisherman,—"Now bring me my harpoon! I'll get into my fishing-boat, and fix the fellow soon." Down fell that pretty innocent, as falls a snow-white lamb, Her hair drooped round her pallid cheeks, like sea-weed on a clam.

Alas for those two loving ones! she waked

not from her swoond, And he was taken
with the cramp, and in the waves was drowned;
But Fate has metamorphosed them, in pity
of their woe, And now they keep an oyster-
shop for mermaids down below.

A NOONTIDE LYRIC

THE dinner-bell, the dinner-bell Is ring-
ing loud and clear; Through hill and plain,
through street and lane, It echoes far and
100

near; From curtained hall and whitewashed
stall, Wherever men can hide, Like bursting
waves from ocean caves, They float upon
the tide.

I smell the smell of roasted meat! I hear
the hissing fry The beggars know where they
can go, But where, oh where shall I? At
twelve o'clock men took my hand, At two
they only stare, And eye me with a fearful

look, As if I were a bear!

The poet lays his laurels down, And hastens to his greens; The happy tailor quits his goose, To riot on his beans; The weary cobbler snaps his thread, The printer leaves his pi; His very devil hath a home, But what, oh what have I?

Methinks I hear an angel voice, That softly seems to say "Pale stranger, all may

yet be well, Then wipe thy tears away; Erect
thy head, and cock thy hat, And follow me
afar, And thou shalt have a jolly meal, And
charge it at the bar.”

I hear the voice! I go! I go! Prepare
your meat and wine! They little heed their
future need Who pay not when they dine.
Give me to-day the rosy bowl, Give me one
golden dream,— To-morrow kick away the

stool, And dangle from the beam!

THE HOT SEASON

THE folks, that on the first of May Wore
winter coats and hose, Began to say, the
first of June, "Good Lord! how hot it grows!"
At last two Fahrenheits blew up, And killed
two children small, And one barometer shot
dead A tutor with its ball!

Now all day long the locusts sang Among

the leafless trees; Three new hotels warped
inside out, The pumps could only wheeze;
And ripe old wine, that twenty years Had
cobwebbed o'er in vain, Came spouting through
the rotten corks Like Joly's best champagne

The Worcester locomotives did Their trip
in half an hour; The Lowell cars ran forty
miles Before they checked the power; Roll
brimstone soon became a drug, And loco-

focos fell; All asked for ice, but everywhere
Saltpetre was to sell.

Plump men of mornings ordered tights,
But, ere the scorching noons, Their candle-
moulds had grown as loose As Cossack pan-
taloons! The dogs ran mad,—men could not
try If water they would choose; A horse fell
dead,—he only left Four red-hot, rusty shoes!

But soon the people could not bear The

slightest hint of fire; Allusions to caloric
drew A flood of savage ire;

The leaves on heat were all torn out
From every book at school, And many black-
guards kicked and caned, Because they said,
"Keep cool!"

The gas-light companies were mobbed,
The bakers all were shot, The penny press
began to talk Of lynching Doctor Nott; And

all about the warehouse steps Were angry
men in droves, Crashing and splintering through
the doors To smash the patent stoves!

The abolition men and maids Were tanned
to such a hue, You scarce could tell them
from their friends, Unless their eyes were
blue; And, when I left, society Had burst
its ancient guards, And Brattle Street and
Temple Place Were interchanging cards

A PORTRAIT

A STILL, sweet, placid, moonlight face,
And slightly nonchalant, Which seems to
claim a middle place Between one's love and
aunt, Where childhood's star has left a ray
In woman's sunniest sky, As morning dew
and blushing day On fruit and blossom lie.

And yet,—and yet I cannot love Those
lovely lines on steel; They beam too much of

heaven above, Earth's darker shades to feel;
Perchance some early weeds of care Around
my heart have grown, And brows unfur-
rowed seem not fair, Because they mock my
own.

Alas! when Eden's gates were sealed,
How oft some sheltered flower Breathed o'er
the wanderers of the field, Like their own
bridal bower; Yet, saddened by its loveli-

ness, And humbled by its pride, Earth's
fairest child they could not bless, It mocked
them when they sighed.

AN EVENING THOUGHT
WRITTEN AT SEA

IF sometimes in the dark blue eye, Or in
the deep red wine, Or soothed by gentlest
melody, Still warms this heart of mine, Yet
something colder in the blood, And calmer

in the brain, Have whispered that my youth's
bright flood Ebbs, not to flow again.

If by Helvetia's azure lake, Or Arno's
yellow stream, Each star of memory could
awake, As in my first young dream, I know
that when mine eye shall greet The hillsides
bleak and bare, That gird my home, it will
not meet My childhood's sunsets there.

Oh, when love's first, sweet, stolen kiss

Burned on my boyish brow, Was that young
forehead worn as this? Was that flushed
cheek as now? Were that wild pulse and
throbbing heart Like these, which vainly
strive, In thankless strains of soulless art,
To dream themselves alive?

Alas! the morning dew is gone, Gone
ere the full of day; Life's iron fetter still
is on, Its wreaths all torn away; Happy if

still some casual hour Can warm the fading
shrine, Too soon to chill beyond the power
Of love, or song, or wine!

THE WASP AND THE HORNET

THE two proud sisters of the sea, In
glory and in doom!— Well may the eternal
waters be Their broad, unsculptured tomb!
The wind that rings along the wave, The
clear, unshadowed sun, Are torch and trum-

pet o'er the brave, Whose last green wreath
is won!

No stranger-hand their banners furled,
No victor's shout they heard; Unseen, above
them ocean curled, Safe by his own pale
bird; The gnashing billows heaved and fell;
Wild shrieked the midnight gale; Far, far
beneath the morning swell Were pennon,
spar, and sail.

The land of Freedom! Sea and shore Are
guarded now, as when Her ebbing waves to
victory bore Fair barks and gallant men;
Oh, many a ship of prouder name May wave
her starry fold, Nor trail, with deeper light
of fame, The paths they swept of old!

"QUI VIVE?"

"Qui vive?" The sentry's musket rings,
The channelled bayonet gleams; High o'er

him, like a raven's wings The broad tri-
colored banner flings Its shadow, rustling
as it swings Pale in the moonlight beams;
Pass on! while steel-clad sentries keep Their
vigil o'er the monarch's sleep, Thy bare,
unguarded breast Asks not the unbroken,
bristling zone That girds yon sceptred trem-
bler's throne;— Pass on, and take thy rest!
"Qui vive?" How oft the midnight air

That startling cry has borne! How oft the
evening breeze has fanned The banner of
this haughty land, O'er mountain snow and
desert sand, Ere yet its folds were torn!
Through Jena's carnage flying red, Or toss-
ing o'er Marengo's dead, Or curling on the
towers Where Austria's eagle quivers yet,
And suns the ruffled plumage, wet With
battle's crimson showers!

"Qui vive?" And is the sentry's cry,—
The sleepless soldier's hand,— Are these—
the painted folds that fly And lift their em-
blems, printed high On morning mist and
sunset sky— The guardians of a land? No!
If the patriot's pulses sleep, How vain the
watch that hirelings keep, The idle flag that
waves, When Conquest, with his iron heel,
Treads down the standards and the steel

That belt the soil of slaves!

NOTES.

Page 6. "They're as safe as Dan'l Malcolm." The following epitaph is still to be read on a tall grave-stone standing as yet undisturbed among the transplanted monuments of the dead in Copp's Hill Burial-Ground, one of the three city cemeteries which have been desecrated and ruined within

my own remembrance :-

"Here lies buried in a Stone Grave 10 feet deep, Cap' DANIEL MALCOLM Merch' Who departed this Life October 23d, 1769, Aged 44 years, a true son of Liberty, a Friend to the Publick, an Enemy to oppression, and one of the foremost in opposing the Revenue Acts on America."

Page 62. This broad-browed youth. Ben-

jamin Robbins Curtis.

Page 62. The stripling smooth of face
and slight. George Tyler Bigelow.