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# LATER LYRICS



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Poems

Lyrics

Child Verse

Later Lyrics  
by  
John B. Tabb



John Lane  
at The Bodley Head  
London & New York  
M • CM • II

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To  
MY SISTER  
and  
In Memory of MRS. ARMISTEAD G. TAYLOR  
Who was to her a Sister in  
Affection unto Death



121892



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## TO A SONGSTER



LITTLE bird, I'd be  
A Poet like to thee,  
Singing my native song—  
Brief to the ear, but long  
To Love and Memory.



## ASPIRATION

I ENVY not the sun  
His lavish light ;  
    But O to be the one  
    Pale orb of night,  
In silence and alone  
Communing with mine own !

I envy not the rain  
    That freshens all  
The parching hill and plain ;  
    But O the small  
Night-dewdrop now to be,  
My noonday flower, for thee !

## OUTLINES

O FRAME me in thy love, as I  
The landscape in the branches low;  
That none beneath the bending sky  
Our sylvan secret know.

For 'tis of Life the mystery  
That, whereso'er its fibres run,  
In time or in eternity,  
The many shape the one.

## WAITING

**I** BIDE mine hour, when thou,  
Beloved, far away,  
As unto sleep shalt bow  
Submissive to my sway.

The clouds that, floating, seem  
Unpiloted and free,  
Obedient to the stream,  
Move onward to the sea ;

And under Love's control,  
Despite the opposing tide,  
The current of thy soul  
Is setting to my side.

A HEART-CRY

COME back to me! but not as now ye are,  
O friends afar!

For it were pain,

More keen than parting, so to meet again,

With all the change that Time, perchance, hath  
wrought

In form and thought,

To make us strangers in each other's eyes,

Save for long-cloistered sympathies.

## FROST

I LEFT my window wide, for Love  
To enter while I slept:  
The moon his homeward path above,  
Her midnight vigil kept.

But suddenly, as o'er a glass,  
A clouding vapour spread;  
The heavens were cold: and Love, alas,  
Before the dawn was dead.

## THE SHELL

SILENCE—a deeper sea—  
Now sunders thee  
Save from the primal tone—  
Thy mother's moan.

Within her waves, hadst thou  
No voice as now;  
A life of exile long  
Hath taught thee song.

✓  
MY CAPTIVE

I BROUGHT a Blossom home with me  
Beneath my roof to stay;  
But timorous and frail was she,  
And died before the day:  
She missed the measureless expanse  
Of heaven, and heaven her countenance.



## ECHO

AH, whither hath it flown ?  
Alas, the strain  
To Memory alone  
Shall live again !

Silence, wherever be  
Its place of rest,  
Keep thou for Love and me  
A neighbouring nest.

## SOOTHSAYERS

THE winds that, gipsy-wise, foretold  
The fortune of to-day,  
At twilight, with the gathered gold  
Of sunset, stole away:

And of their cloud accomplices  
That prophesied the rain,  
Upon the night-forsaken skies  
No vestiges remain.

## IDEALS

COULD Day demand a gift of Night,  
And Night the boon bestow,  
'T would be that heaven of star-delight  
Where Dreams departed go.

Could Night the gift demand, and Day  
The benefit confer,  
'T would be, upon his twilight way  
A lengthened hour with her.

## TRIBUTARIES

✓  
THE little streams that onward flow  
To mingle ere they meet the sea,  
Know not that Heaven hath willed it so  
Till one their waters be.

And, from their fountain heads apart,  
The lives that love hath led to me,  
Till heart was wedded unto heart,  
Knew not their destiny.

AN INTERPRETER

WHAT, O Eternity,  
Is Time to thee?—  
What to the boundless All  
My portion small?

Lift up thine eyes, my soul!  
Against the tidal roll  
    Stands many a stone,  
    Whereon the breakers thrown  
Are dashed to spray—  
    Else were the Ocean dumb.

So, in the way  
    Of tides eternal, thou  
    Abidest now ;  
And God himself doth come  
    A suppliant to thee,  
    Love's prisoned thought to free.

## CONSUMMATION

THE interval  
We both recall,  
To each was all—

A moment's space  
That time nor place  
Can e'er efface.

'Tis all our own—  
A secret known  
To us alone:

My life to thee,  
As thine to me,  
Eternity.

## DESERT-ORBS

THE world, they tell us, dwindles,  
When matched with other spheres ;  
And yet in all their amplitudes  
No place for human tears.

How sterile is the sunshine,  
How masculine the blue,  
That breeds no shadow, nor betrays  
A memory of dew!

## SLEEPLESSNESS

Sleep quiets all but me,  
A desert isle unsolaced by the sea—  
A Tantalus denied  
The draught wherewith all thirst is satisfied.



## ECLIPSE

**F**EAR not: the planet that bedims  
The moon's distorted face,  
Itself through cloudless ether swims  
The Sea of Space ;

And earthward many a distant wing  
Of spirits in the light  
A salutary shade may fling  
To mark its flight.

LIFE'S RAMAH

DAY after day,  
The Herod Morn  
Of Dreams doth slay  
The latest-born;  
And Love, like Rachel o'er her dead,  
Will not again be comforted.

## BEREFT

AS when her calf is taken, far and near  
The restless mother roves,  
So now my heart lows, wandering everywhere,  
To wake the voice it loves.  
O Distance, are the echoes backward thrown  
In mockery of pain ?  
Or doth remembered anguish of thine own  
Bring them to birth again ?

## ISOLATION

FAR off a solitary Peak  
The restless Waves behold.

“Thou hast attained the heaven we seek;

O teach us, self-controlled,

Thy constancy!” Alas, how bleak

The mountain top and cold!

TO SILENCE

WHY the warning finger-tip  
Pressed forever on thy lip?  
“To remind the pilgrim Sound  
That it moves on holy ground,  
In a breathing-space to be  
Hushed for all eternity.”



## LIFE'S REPETEND

**D**O ye forget the blossom-time ?  
Or tint for tint, as rhyme for rhyme.  
Would ye, O leaves, supply;  
To prove, as echo to the ear,  
That Near is Far, and Far is Near,  
In circling home to die ?

FOILED

AH, Death, thou art a lover,  
And with thy rival Life,  
For proud possession of her  
Didst wage perpetual strife,  
Till Fate adjudged thee victory;  
But Life's eternal spoil is she.

## STRANGERS

YE hills that sloping westward, see  
Alone the evening sky,

I come to you for sympathy.

“Alas!” they made reply,

“Your tears are for the morning bright  
That never here hath been.

We lie in shadow when the light

Upon her face is seen.”



## WOOD-GRAIN

THIS is the way that the sap-river ran  
From the root to the top of the tree—  
    Silent and dark,  
    Under the bark,  
Working a wonderful plan  
    That the leaves never know,  
    And the branches that grow  
On the brink of the tide never see.

DAY AND NIGHT

✓  
WHEN Day goes down to meet the Night,  
She welcomes him with many a light;  
When Night comes up to meet the Day,  
He drives her trooping stars away.

## BARGAINS

“WHAT have you in your basket?”  
I questioned Mother Sleep.

“Ah, many a golden casket  
Of jewel-dreams I keep  
At pastime prices for the friend  
Who’s half-an-hour or more to spend.”

## A HIDING-PLACE

WHERE lies the lidded Sleep  
Throughout the waking hours?  
Beelike, in the honeyed deep  
Of her favourite flowers,  
Where the drowsy drops distil  
Dreams, the coming night to fill,  
Or, to soothe the weary brain,  
Sweet forgetfulness of pain.

A SLEEPING-PLACE

WHEN into the Rose  
A ladybird goes  
And o'er her couch the petals close,  
Was ever bed  
So canopied  
For lids in maiden slumber wed ?

TO A STAR

AM I the only child awake  
Beneath thy midnight beams?  
If so, for gentle Slumber's sake,  
The brighter be their dreams!

But shouldst thou, travelling the deep,  
The silent angel see  
That puts the little ones to sleep,  
Bright star, remember me.

## THE COCK

**B**EFORE a clock was in the tower,  
Or e'er a watch was worn,  
I knew of night the passing hour,  
And prophesied the morn;  
To man of every age and clime,  
The oldest chronicler of Time.

## THE WIND

NOW, in his joy,  
A whistling Boy;  
Now, sombre and defiant,  
His every breath  
A threat of death,  
A blind, demented Giant.



THE MIST

**E**URYDICE eludes the dark  
To follow Orpheus, the Lark  
That leads her to the dawn  
    With rhapsodies of star delight,  
    Till, looking backward in his flight,  
He finds that she is gone.

## CLOUDS

**B**ORN of the waters are we,  
Clean of original stain;  
Fresh from the salt of the sea,  
Pure from the marsh and the plain.

Borne of the Breezes above,  
Whithersoever they go,  
Made in a mystical love,  
Mothers of Rain and of Snow.

## THE RAINBOW

WHAT fruit of all thy blossom shea  
Remaineth unto me?

“A dream, whereon thy Fancy fed,  
Shall spin anon her golden thread,  
And then, of fetters free,  
Arise with radiant pinions spread,  
To heights of Poesy.”

## SHEET-LIGHTNING

A GLANCE of love or jealousy,  
It flashes to and fro—

A swift sultanic majesty,  
Through Night's seraglio ;

Where many a starry favourite,

In reverence profound,

Awaits, with palpitating light,

A step without a sound.

## THE BUBBLE

A MOMENTARY miracle,  
Wherein Eternal Light,  
A child among His children still,  
Forgets the Infinite,  
Among His toys to multiply  
The larger bubble of the sky.

## THE TRUANT

L I STEN! 't is the Rain  
Coming home again;  
Not as when he went away,  
Silent, but in tears to say  
    He is sorry to have gone  
    With the Mist that lured him on;  
    And he promises anew  
    Nevermore the like to do.  
Alas! no sooner shines the sun  
Than the selfsame deed is done.

## THE RAIN-POOL

I AM too small for winds to mar  
My surface; but I hold a Star  
That teaches me, though low my lot,  
That highest Heaven forgets me not.

## THE TURNS OF THE WATER-COURSE

**I**T falls from heaven upon the hill,  
And hurries down to turn the mill  
    And grind the ripened grain;  
Then, duty done, it turns away,  
And like a spirit, turned to spray,  
    It turns to heaven again.



## THE RIVER

HOW far soe'er thy restless waters roll,  
Thou hast attained the sea.

So haply, now the current of the soul  
Hath touched eternity.

For backward to the fountainhead there flows  
A breath of tides to be—  
Of life beyond, wherein the present knows  
E'en now its destiny.

## MOUNT EVEREST

A S in the furnace fared the holy feet,  
Unblemished by the sevenfold fervour, so,  
Nearest the sun, cold-whitening in heat,  
Is thine eternal chastity of snow.

DARIEN

**T**HOU partest sea from restless lover-sea  
That, yearning, dream and wait  
The wedding of their waters, soon to be,  
When Science opes the gate.

IN THE MOUNTAINS OF VIRGINIA

NURTURED upon my mother's knee,  
From this her mountain-breast apart,  
Here nearer heaven I seem to be,  
And closer to her heart.

## DUST TO DUST

*“ In the centre of each snow-crystal or drop of rain is found a  
minute particle of dust.”*

**E**ARTH wedded, life atwain  
In heaven, were endless pain.  
Uplifted from the plain  
To realms of snow or rain,  
Of dust each lonely grain  
To dust will come again.

## FUGITIVES

**T**O-NIGHT, far inland from the sea,  
The winds, or flighted Legion, flee  
With wailings of distress ;  
While Cataracts from many a steep  
Plunge, headlong, foaming to the deep,  
To drown their restlessness.

Anon, where each has passed away,  
The shaken reed, the scattered spray.

## BETRAYAL

“WHOM I shall kiss,” I heard a Sunbeam say,  
“Take him and lead away!”

Then, with the Traitor's salutation, “*Hail!*”

He kissed the Dawn-Star pale.

## DAYBREAK

THOU hast not looked on Yesterday,  
Nor shalt To-morrow see ;

Upon thy solitary way  
Is none to pilot thee:—

Thou comest to thine own  
A stranger and alone.

And yet, alas, thy countenance  
To us familiar seems ;

The wonder of thy wakening glance,  
The vanishing of dreams,

Is like an old refrain  
From silence come again.



## THE DAWN-BURST

L O, now the dead volcano Night  
In silence cold

Throbs; and the prisoned lava, long controlled,  
Bursts forth in molten gold—

A torrent mightier far than rolled

From Ætna or Vesuvius of old,

Or ever prophet, on the sacred height

Of song, foretold.

## BRINK-SONG

A NOTE so near the dawn  
Too timid was to stay  
Till shadows all were gone,  
    But, dreamlike, sped away  
While paled the hesitating sky  
For Day to bloom or Night to die.

MATIN-SONG

ARISE! Arise!

ADawns not the day without thy wakening eyes;

The mist that on them lies

Delays the blossom of the eastern skies.

'Tis at their light alone the darkness flies,

And Night, despairing, dies;

Behold thine altar free for sacrifice!

Arise! Arise!

## MOON-SONG

VALE! 'Tis the maiden moon  
To the westward wending,  
There to sink, alas, too soon  
With her star attending.

Doth he linger o'er her dreams  
While her silvern taper teems?  
Sleep their dusk-divided beams  
One in beauty blending?

Vale! She hath drunken deep  
Of a draught forbidden!  
More than memory can weep  
Hath the darkness chidden.  
Sleepless Sorrow from the night  
Drives her forth, a phantom white,  
Withering beneath the blight  
Of a wound heart-hidden.

## SOIL-SONG

I GIVE what ne'er was mine—  
To every seed the power  
Of stem and leaf and flower,  
Of fruit or fragrance fine;

And take what others loathe—  
Of death the foulest forms,  
Wherewith to feed my worms,  
And thus the world reclothe.

## MEADOW FROGS

ERE yet the earliest warbler wakes  
Of coming spring to tell,

From every marsh a chorus breaks—

A choir invisible—

As though the blossoms underground

A breath of utterance had found.

Whence comes the liquid melody?

The summer clouds can bring

No fresher music from the sky

Than here the marshes sing.

Methinks the mists about to rise

Are chanting their rain prophecies.

## A SUNSET

WHAT means it, Lord? No Daniel  
In Nature's banquet-hall  
Appears, thy messenger, to spell  
The writing on the wall.

Is it the Babylonian doom,—  
A kingdom passed away,—  
A midnight monarch to assume  
The majesty of Day?

## THE ARCTIC

IS it a shroud or bridal veil  
That hides it from our sight,  
The lonely sepulchre of Day,  
Or banquet-hall of Night ?

Are those the lights of revelry  
That glimmer o'er the deep,  
Or flashes of a funeral pyre  
Above the corpse of Sleep ?

Beyond those peaks impregnable  
Of everlasting snow,  
One star—a steadfast beacon—burns  
To guard the coast below.

Whence come the ghostly galleons  
The pirate Sun to brave,  
And furl the shadowy flag of Death  
Above a warmer grave ?



## THE LISTENER

*(In a volume of Shelley)*

O F worship, far away,  
The Cloud unconscious lay;  
Nor stooped the Lark to hear  
His song's interpreter :—  
O Shelley, heedest thou  
Thy lover listening now ?

TO THE ROSE-TREE FROM OMAR'S  
GRAVE, PLANTED AT FITZGERALD'S

**A**LIKE from alien lips one music flows  
To flush the Orient Rose,  
Far-sundered spirits finding each in her  
His dream's interpreter.

TO VIOLET B. ON HER WEDDING-DAY

“SWEET it is for Love to live,”  
Thus a Blossom whispered me,  
“But for Love a life to give  
(Tell my sister Violet—  
For a blossom, too, is she)  
Sweeter yet.”

TO AN AMATEUR

LOVE thy Violin!

Let thy soul therein

Learn the Unity

Of the mystic Three,

When the string and bow—

Parted lovers—meet,

And in music know

Life in Love complete.

THE WANDERER

✓  
FOR one astray, behold  
The Master leaves the ninety and the nine,  
Nor rest till, love-controlled,  
The Discord moves in Harmony divine.



✓  
INFLUENCE

HE cannot as he came depart—  
The Wind that woos the Rose;  
Her fragrance whispers in his heart  
Wherever hence he goes.

## THE FAGOT

IF thou art fit to feed  
A dying flame,  
Supply the present need;  
Be this thine aim,  
And God, when sinks the light,  
Will give thy soul good-night.

## THE CONQUEROR

HE cloistered here a virgin Thought—  
His vow of Chastity,  
Whereto from year to year he brought  
First-fruit of victory.  
And here, his latest battle won  
Beneath her panoply,  
In death returns the champion  
Within her walls to lie.



IN THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

1st Spirit

I AM this moment freed from earth.

2d Spirit

And I a captive bound to birth.

Who art thou ?

1st Spirit

Flesh and blood to be

Cleave not closer unto thee.

2d Spirit

My father ?

1st Spirit

Yea.

A mingling breath

They drew. Then rival Life and Death,

As if rebuking Love's delay,

Drove each his fate-determined way.

“ CHANTICLEER ”

A CROWING, cuddling little Babe was he,  
A child for little children far or near.

When he stood and crowed upon his mother's knee,  
The morning echoed, “ Welcome, Chanticleer ! ”  
He was a crowing, cuddling little Babe !

When his mother wore, alas, her life away,  
He was wonder wide to see the children weep,  
But he crowed, and cuddled close enough to lay  
His head upon her heart, and went to sleep :—  
He was a cuddling, crowing little Babe !

God Himself was tender to him ; for, behold,  
An Angel in a dream ( the children said )  
Came and kissed him till his little cheek was cold ;  
So he never saw the tears the Twilight shed.  
He was a crowing, cuddling little Babe !

TO HER FIRST-BORN

LONG I waited, wondering  
How, so near my heart,  
Love another life could bring,  
    Made of mine a part,  
Nor let me, save in fancy, gaze  
Soul-centred, on the cloistered face!

But now, the mystery removed,  
    Thou liest on my breast,  
A form so fervently beloved,  
    So tenderly caressed,  
That as my spirit compassed thine,  
Thy soul the limit seems of mine.

So, life that vanishes anon,  
    Perchance about us lies,  
Too near for Love to look upon  
    With unanointed eyes,  
Till, past the interval of pain,  
We clasp the living form again.

THE LATEST-BORN

THE world had waited till thy soul  
From nothingness was needed here,  
To make upon the mystic scroll  
Of Life the context clear.

## CONSECRATION

THE Twilight to my Star,  
Her hoary head  
A Hope receding far,  
To Life re-led.

Apart and poor I lay;  
My fevered frame  
Slow withering away,  
When soft she came,

From comfort, to my care;  
And Pity sweet  
Subdued her, kneeling there,  
*To kiss my feet.*

A Magdalen adored  
Her God in Thee:—  
A greater love, O Lord,  
Anointed me.

## THE BIRTH OF A WORLD

A HIDDEN World,  
Unwombing, hurled  
From dark to light.  
And to the skies  
Its wondering eyes  
The livelong night  
Doth Science turn, with sighs  
When shadows take their flight.

Another birth—  
A soul to earth  
But newly come!  
Its destiny  
Eternity.  
With wonder dumb,  
The heavens look down to see  
Our faces turned therefrom.

## INSPIRATION

NO hint upon the hill-top shows  
The flush of climbing feet ;  
But where the heaven above it glows  
Triumphal glances meet,  
Anon to vanish in the plain,  
And leave the hill its heaven again.

No sign celestial hath the soul  
Its coming dreams to tell ;  
Unheralded the tidal roll  
Returns—a rhythmic swell,  
Anon with silence, as with sand,  
To strew the surf-forsaken strand.

## SPECTATORS

AROUND us, wheresoe'er we tread,  
The while our shadows pass them by,  
As in Bethsaida's porch the dead  
    With upturned faces lie,  
Dreading, perchance, the vanished light,  
    And Life's subsided fever-breath,  
As we the charnel-house of Night  
    Beyond the Vale of Death.



ADIEU

“FAREWELL!” the parting Day,  
Re-echoes, “Fare thee well!

I go the darkened way  
Whence none returns to tell  
Of those that thither stray,  
What fate befell.”

## THE ACORN

I AM the heir—the Acorn small,  
To whom as tributaries all,  
The root, the stem, the branches tall,  
Do homage round my castle wall.

And yet, obedient to the call  
Of Earth, through Death's opposing thrall—  
Of wealth a seeming prodigal—  
To Life's dominion must I fall.

## AUTUMN

**N**OW at the aged Year's decline,  
Behold the messenger divine  
With Love's celestial counter-sign—  
The sacrament of bread and wine.

## AUTUMN WIND

**I**T sings, and every flower and weed  
Bestows a tributary seed  
Of life again to live.  
I listen, but a sterile tear,  
Alas! no recompense to bear!  
Is all I have to give.

## WINTER TREES

LIKE champions of old,  
Their garments at their feet,  
Defiant of the cold,  
The wrestling winds they meet:  
Anon, if victors found,  
With vernal trophies crowned.

## ICE

**I** ONCE was water, and again  
My former self shall be;  
No keep of Cold  
May captive hold  
A spirit of the Sea.  
Beyond this prison wall of Pain,  
So echoless and chill,  
Despite his guardsmen Frost and Snow,  
Anon through Dimple-gate I go,  
To wander where I will.

DECEMBER SNOW

THIS is the mystic scroll  
Whereon a parting soul—  
The aged Year—  
His testament and will  
Records:—a secret till  
The Spring appear.

A QUERY

WAS it the Dawn that waked the bird  
With yonder spark ?  
Or had the sleeping darkness stirred  
Before the Lark ?

For either rival to declare  
The Winds are loth;  
And Blossoms, nodding everywhere,  
Affirm for both.



## RAIMENT

“HOW beautiful your *feathers* be!”  
The Redbird sang to the Tulip-tree,  
New garbed in autumn gold.  
“Alas!” the bending branches sighed,  
“They cannot like your *leaves* abide  
To keep us from the cold!”

## COME TRUE

“GOOD morrow!” breathed the Blossom.

“GOOD morrow!” flushed the Dawn.

“Where were you, dear, before the light?

For I was dreaming all the night

That we should meet anon,

To drink a dewdrop here to-day,

And then together pass away.”

THE YELLOW CROCUS

WERE you, little Monarch, crowned,  
Under ground ?

Or did the Daylight make you king  
Of the Spring ?

Ere your blossom-retinue  
Come to you,

I, before your Majesty,  
Bow the knee.

MOON-FLOWERS

THE Summer Night remembers  
The Morning Glories slain,  
And from the twilight embers  
Recalls their ghosts again.

## REFLECTION

WHERE closing water-lilies are  
I've sometimes seen the Evening Star,  
A-blossom just below,  
And I have wondered if there be  
No pools in heaven where souls may see  
How water-lilies grow.

## WILD FLOWERS

WE grow where none but God,  
Life's Gardener,

Upon the sterile sod  
Bestows His care.

Our morn and evening dew—  
The sacrament

That maketh all things new—  
From heaven is sent;

And thither, ne'er in vain,  
We look for aid,

To find the punctual rain  
Or sun or shade,

Appointed hour by hour  
To every need,

Alike of parent flower  
Or nursling seed;

Till, blossom-duty done,  
With parting smile,

We vanish, one by one,  
To sleep awhile.

PERIWINKLE

PERIWINKLE Magdalen,

Ever near the tomb,  
Weeps her hidden Lord again  
'Mid the twilight gloom;

Till the wonder of surprise  
Clears her overclouded eyes,  
And the Resurrection lies  
In each chalice-bloom.

A BLACKBERRY BUSH

BEHOLD, above the hidden root,  
How white the bloom, how black the fruit!  
Of Time, forever out of sight,  
How bright the day, how dark the night!



BARTIMEUS TO THE BIRD

HAD I no revelation but thy voice—  
No word but thine—

Still would my soul in certitude rejoice  
That love divine

Thy heart, his hidden instrument, employs,  
To waken mine.

IN THE NEST OF THE LARK

HERE the silentest of things  
Lowliest lies;

Where with palpitating wings,  
Swift to rise,

Wakes the soul that sweetest sings,

And the loftiest anthem brings  
From the skies.

## THE DOVE

O BIRD that seem'st in solitude  
O'er tearful memories to brood,

What sorrow hast thou known?  
Or is thy voice an oracle  
Interpreting the souls that tell  
No vision of their own?

Thy life, alas! is loneliness  
Wherein, with shadowy caress,  
Soft preludings of pain  
Tell that some captive of the heart  
Is preening, ready to depart,  
And ne'er to come again.

TWO SPARROWS

TO creatures upon earth,  
Our price one farthing worth:  
To everlasting Love,  
All price above.

## A PAIR OF SWALLOWS

TOGETHER first they plan a nest,  
And where and how to build it best,  
Ere *she* begins from day to day  
To count the eggs she has to lay.  
Then *he* must help her sit and watch  
Until the little household hatch,  
And then provide the fitting food  
To satisfy the hungry brood.

Soon they are bold enough to wing  
Short flights with endless twittering;  
And then, on pinions strong, prepare  
Long voyages in upper air.  
For Southward, swifter than the Snow  
From Ghostland speeding, must they go.

## ROBIN REDBREAST

WHEN Christ was taken from the rood,  
One thorn upon the ground,  
Still moistened with the Precious Blood,  
An early Robin found.  
And wove it crosswise in his nest,  
Where, lo, it reddened all his breast!

THE WHIP-POOR-WILL

FROM yonder wooded hill  
I hear the Whip-poor-will,  
Whose mate or wandering echo answers him  
Athwart the lowlands dim.

He calls not through the day;  
But when the shadows gray  
Across the sunset draw their lengthening veil,  
He tells his twilight tale.

What unforgotten wrong  
Haunts the ill-omened song?  
What scourge of Fate has left its loathèd mark  
Upon the cringing dark?

“ Whip! Whip-poor-will!”  
O sobbing voice, be still!  
Tell not again, O melancholy bird,  
The legend thou hast heard!

## PRECURSORS

THE little birds that hither bring  
The earliest messages of Spring,  
Seem, fountain-like, to overflow  
With music melted from the snow.

So sweet the tidings that they tell,  
The hidden buds begin to swell,  
Till suddenly, with lifted ears,  
The leafy multitude appears.



## OVERFLOW

**H**USH!

With sudden gush  
As from a fountain, sings in yonder bush  
The Hermit Thrush.

Hark!

Did ever Lark  
With swifter scintillations fling the spark  
That fires the dark?

Again,

Like April rain  
Of mist and sunshine mingled, moves the strain  
O'er hill and plain.

Strong

As love, O Song,  
In flame or torrent sweep through Life along,  
O'er grief and wrong.

IN THE NEST

**O** WORLD beneath the mother's wing,  
Secure from harm,  
The heart so near the sheltered thing  
To keep it warm!

No longer needed now the light  
Of heaven above—

The very darkness breathes a plight  
Of deeper love.

LAUGHTER

*“Et ridebit in die novissimo”*

WHEN wrought of Joy and Innocence,  
'Tis unto God it goes,  
A fragrance of the olive whence  
His “oil of gladness” flows.

## FAITH

**I**N every seed to breathe the flower,  
**I**n every drop of dew  
To reverence a cloistered star  
    Within the distant blue;  
To wait the promise of the bow,  
    Despite the cloud between,  
**I**s Faith—the fervid evidence  
    Of loveliness unseen.

## CONSCIENCE

I AM that Tamerlane,  
The Scourge of God;  
With me alone remain  
The sword and rod  
Wherewith in wrath throughout His world-domain,  
Doth Love, avenging, reign.

I am that Joseph bound  
And sold in vain;  
From dungeon darkness found  
To rise again,  
At God's right hand, whate'er of good redound,  
His sole vice-gerent crowned.

## A HAIRBREADTH

'T IS in the twinkle of escape  
That all our safety lies.  
Of danger—whatsoe'er the shape—  
The nearness naught implies:  
This side is life; that side, a breath  
Of deviation, instant death.

'T is in the *present* I am free  
The mental die to cast;  
The future yet of mastery  
Is palsied as the past;  
Between, the breathless balance still  
Awaits the hesitating will.

## MY OFFERING

HE asked me bread—the bread whereby alone  
The beggar Love could live:—

I gave a *stone*.

He asked me fish, and I, a Passion's slave  
(All that I had to give),

A *serpent* gave.

Then came his benediction: “Lo, in Me,

A *Stone* retributive,  
A *Serpent*, see!”

## THE HOUSEHOLDERS

ONE plucked the grape, and trod the wine,  
And headlong rushed the sotted swine  
To perish in the sea.

One blessed the cup, and poured the blood,  
And lo! about His banquet stood  
The brides of Chastity.



AT SEA

THY beauty fills each bubble-dome  
Upon the waters wide:  
So may it in Thy lowliest home—  
My bosom—Lord, abide.

ALL IN ALL

WE know Thee, each in part—  
A portion small;

But love thee, as thou art—

The All in all:

For Reason and the rays thereof  
Are starlight to the noon of Love.

## LEAF AND SOUL

### Leaf

LET go the Limb?  
My life in him  
Alone is found.  
Come night, come day,  
'Tis here I stay  
Above the sapless ground.

### Soul

Let go the warm  
Life-kindled form,  
And upward fly?  
Come joy, come pain,  
I here remain  
Despite the yearning sky.  
A sudden frost, and, lo!  
Both Leaf and Soul let go!

## BETHEL

A RUGGED stone,  
For centuries neglected and alone,  
Its destiny unknown.

The tides of Light  
Sped o'er it, and the breakers of the night,  
In alternating flight.

And it was wet  
With twilight dew—the sacramental sweat  
That mystic dreams beget.

Here Jacob lay,  
And saw the midnight vision drift away  
Before the darker day.

Upon the sod  
A pillow; then, by countless angels trod,  
A stepping-stone to God.

## CHRISTMAS EVE: SUNSET

ONCE more upon the western skies  
The "flaming sword" appears,  
And Eve again from Paradise  
Departs in twilight tears.

A backward look,—a memory  
O'ershadowing afar

A promise,—of her progeny  
The sole remaining star;

And dreams that waken in the gloom  
The glory of a morn

When, mothered in a Maiden's womb,  
The Son of God is born.



THE EXPECTED OF NATIONS

WHILE Shepherd Stars their nightly vigils keep  
Above the clouds of sleep,  
Long prophesied, behold the manchild, Morn,  
Again is born.

A CHRISTMAS CRADLE

LET my heart the cradle be  
Of Thy bleak Nativity!  
Tossed by wintry tempests wild,  
If it rock Thee, Holy Child,  
Then, as grows the outer din,  
Greater peace shall reign within.

THE CHRIST CHILD TO THE CHRIST-  
MAS LAMB

O LITTLE lamb,  
Behold I am  
So weak and small  
That even thou  
Canst pity now  
The God of all.



## THE ARGONAUTS

**T**O Bethlehem, to Bethlehem,  
The Magi move, and we with them,  
Along the selfsame road ;  
Still following the Star of Peace,  
To find at last the Golden Fleece—  
The spotless Lamb of God.

## THE BURTHEN OF THE ASS

ON Christmas night at Bethlehem  
When Shepherds came, I watched with them  
The Mother and the Child,  
Who, warned from Herod's wrath to flee,  
Were into Egypt borne by me,  
Beyond the desert wild.

And back again, at Herod's death,  
I brought them home to Nazareth ;  
And when unto His own,  
With loud Hosannas to His Name  
As King the Son of David came,  
My shoulders were His throne.

THE VIGIL OF GOOD FRIDAY

WHAT of the Night? 'T is dark,  
The fatal word

Awakes the warning bird,

For hark

(O Christ, is *Faith* forgot?)

“ *I know Him Not!* ”

What of the night? 'T is cold;

But throngs accurst

Deep-gorge their crimson thirst.

O Christ, again forsworn,

Is *Hope* forlorn?

What of the night? 'T is dead!

The darker day

Approaching, terror-gray

She fled.

O Christ! its perjury

*Love* weeps for Thee.

## RECOGNITION

WHEN Christ went up to Calvary,  
His crown upon His head,  
Each tree unto its fellow-tree  
In awful silence said:  
“ Behold the Gardener is He  
Of Eden and Gethsemane!”

STABAT

WHY, O my God, hast Thou forsaken me?  
Not so my Mother; for behold and see,  
She steadfast stands! O Father, shall it be  
That *she* abides, when Thou forsakest me?

HOLY SATURDAY

I CAME, O DEATH, to conquer thee,  
And overcome the Grave;  
But thou wast tenderer to me  
Than those I sought to save.  
Henceforth in benediction be,  
And teach mankind thy charity.

## EASTER LAMBS

OURS is the echoed cry  
Of helpless Innocents about to die.

Remembering them

In Ramah, for the Lamb of Bethlehem

Untimely slain,

We, when the paschal sacrifice is nigh,

Lament again.

## THE ASSUMPTION

BEHOLD! the mother bird  
The Fledgeling's voice hath heard !

He calls anew,

“ It was thy breast

That warmed the nest

From whence I flew.

Upon a loftier tree

Of life I wait for thee;

Rise, mother-dove, and come,

Thy Fledgeling calls thee home! ”



## THE GOOD SEED

THE Magi came to Bethlehem,  
The House of Bread, and following them,  
As they the Star, I too am led  
To Christ, the living House of Bread.

A pilgrim from the hour of birth,  
The night-cold bosom of the earth  
I traversed, heavenward journeying,  
A hidden prophecy of Spring  
My only guide, a lifted blade  
My only weapon, till the Shade,  
The latest to withstand me, lay  
Death-smitten at the door of Day.

O Light! O heavenly Warmth! to you  
My cup-bearers, I quaffed the dew,  
The pledge and sacramental sign  
Of Life that mingling first with mine—  
A sap-like inspiration—ran.  
To mingle with the life of man.

As leaped the Infant in the womb,  
At Mary's voice, e'en so to bloom  
    And ripeness, while the reapers sang,  
    My soul—their songs inspiring—sprang  
To meet the scythe, the flail, the stone  
Of sacrifice, whereby alone,  
    Through waves of palpitating flame,  
    The Bread upon the altar came.  
And here, O mystery of Love!  
Behold, from highest heaven above,  
    Through *Me*, the Son of God again,  
    A victim for the sons of men!

## THE BOY BISHOP

“A GAME, Marcellus!” “Well, what shall it be?”

Let’s play we’re Christians.” And with one accord

The Children grouped around their mimic lord,  
Marcellus, throned as Sovereign Pontiff. He

The part so often played in mockery,

With solemn rite enacted—word for word

Repeating as on each in turn he poured

The waters of a new Nativity.

Then burst the thunders of an edict. Rome

Trembled, and her gods offended frowned

Foreshadowing the hurricane to be.

Men faltered ; but among the faithful found—

The yeanelings of the flock—with martyrdom

Marcellus and his neophytes were crowned.

## ST. MARY OF EGYPT

**S**TRONG to suffer, strong to sin,  
Loving much, and much forgiven,  
In the desert realm a queen,

    Penance crowned, to cope with Heaven;  
Solitude alone could be  
Room enough for God and thee.

Long the vigil, stern the fast;  
    Morn with night's anointing, chill;  
Noon with passion overcast;  
    Night with phantoms fouler still;  
Prayer and penitential tears  
Battling with the lust of years.

Low upon the parching sand,  
    Shrivelled in the blight of day,  
As beneath a throbbing brand  
    Prone thy ghastly shadow lay,  
Till the manacles of hell  
From thy fevered spirit fell.

Then, O Queen of Solitude!  
Silence led thee as a bride,  
Clothed anew in maidenhood,  
To an altar purified,  
Lit with holy fire, to prove  
Self the sacrifice of Love.

## ST. AFRA TO THE FLAMES

HERE, on the prey of passion, famished Flames  
Feed here! Spare not your victim. Torture  
tames

The wanton flesh rebellious. Let the heat  
Of these your fierce caresses free the feet  
And loose the fettered pinions of desire.  
Delay not! Leap the barriers and fire  
The citadel, the heart. A flame is there  
To which your kiss is coldness. Clothe me fair,  
O Christ, with purple penance. Crown me queen  
Of agonies that cleave all mists between  
My God and me! Life's vintage drop by drop  
Fast fills the destined measure of my cup.  
Quaff, Lord, my potion! Pledge me, and thy breath  
Shall sweeten all the bitterness of death.

## TWILIGHT

LIKE Ruth, she follows when the reaper Day  
Lets fall the slender shadows in her way;  
Then—winnowing the darkness—home again,  
She counts her golden grain.

## POTTER'S FIELD

'T WAS purchased with His blood, this holy  
ground,

This place of refuge for the homeless dead;  
While He, alas! whereon to lay His head,  
In all the world no spot secluded found.



THE OLD PASTOR

HOW long, O Lord to wait  
Beside this open gate?

My sheep with many a lamb  
Have entered, and I am  
Alone, and it is late.

# Epigrams

NOTICE!

THE people read it as they pass:  
“On Penalty, keep off the Grass!”  
But from their graves, how long, alas,  
Will Memory keep off the grass?

## DECORATORS

*A*LL men the painter Youth engage ;  
And *some*, the famous sculptor, Age.

## DAVID AND GOLIATH

ONE word of well-directed wit—  
A pebble-jest, has often hit  
A boastful evil and prevailed  
Where many a nobler weapon failed.

## THE SHADOW

At sunrise he's a giant tall:  
At noon he's withered, lean, and small.  
At sunset he regains his height,  
And covers all the land at night.

THE FIRST EDITION

SIGHED the Book, "I am bound to be read,  
But tho' on the shelf others put me  
Till they know what the critics have said,  
My friends are the first that will cut me."

IN THE AUTHOR'S LIBRARY

TO see, when he is dead,  
The many books he *read*:  
And then again to note  
The many books he *wrote*—  
How some got in and some got out,  
'Tis very strange to think about.



## POE'S CRITICS

A CERTAIN tyrant to disgrace  
The more a rebel's resting-place,  
Compelled the people every one  
To hurl, in passing there, a stone;  
Which done, the rugged pile became  
A sepulchre to keep the name.

And thus it is with Edgar Poe;  
Each passing critic has his throw,  
Nor sees, defeating his intent,  
How lofty grows the monument.

## THE DIFFERENCE

UNC' SI, de Holy Bible say,  
In speakin' of de jus',  
Dat he do fall seben times a day;  
Now, how 's de sinner wuss?

“ Well, chile, de slip may come to all,  
But den de diff'ence foller;  
For, ef you watch him when he fall,  
De jus' man do not *waller*. ”









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