

A shade on every friendship, as a cloud
Floats past the sun and dims the flowering fields.
Oft have I wondered at the woodland stream
That dances on, through dappled-lighted woods,
O'er mossy pebbles glinting in the sun,
Like eyes of merry children round the fire,
And never seems to think that it must tread
The misty fen, where every flower grows rank
Amid the lazy ooze, and sink at last
Beneath the boundless sea. O happy they,
Who thus go laughing on from year to year,
And never know the mystery of being,
And never start and shudder at the dream
That they and all mankind are dreaming—Life,
And strive to wake, but fall back helplessly;
Who fancy sunlight, when the sky is dark,
And never know that time, like India's snake,
Enwraps us with his gaudy-colored folds
Of changing seasons, till his dread embrace
Has crushed out life; who live, and laugh, and weep,
And tread the dust of myriads under foot,
And see men die around them, yet whose life,
The demon form that stalks beside my path,
The consciousness of never-ending change,
Has never darkened, as it darkens mine,
Beneath the shadow of the wings of Death.

March, 1882.