

Poetry

The King's Ring

Once in Persia reigned a king
Who upon his signet ring
Graved a maxim true and wise
Which, if held before his eyes,
Gave him counsel at a glance
Fit for every change and chance.
Solemn words; and these are they:
"Even this shall pass away."

Trains of camels through the sand
Brought him gems from Samarcand,
Fleets of galleys through the seas
Brought him pearls to match with these;
But he counted not his gain—
Treasures of the mine and main,
"What is wealth?" the king would say;
"Even this shall pass away."

In the revels of his court
At the zenith of the sport.
When the palms of all his guests
Burned with clapping at his jests,
He, amid his figs and wine,
Cried: "O loving friends of mine!
Pleasure comes, but not to stay,
"Even this shall pass away."

Fighting on a furious field
Once a javelin pierced his shield;
Soldiers with loud lament,
Bore him bleeding to his tent,
Groaning with his tortured side.
"Pain is hard to bear," he cried;
"But with patience day by day,
"Even this shall pass away."

Struck with palsy, sere and old,
Waiting at the gates of gold,
Spake he with his dying breath.
"Life is done, but what is death?"
Then, in answer to the king,
Fell a sunbeam on his ring,
Showing by a heavenly ray:
"Even this shall pass away."

Theodore Tilton.