

PHELIM THE BLIND

AND OTHER VERSES

By

ANNIE MARGARET PIKE.

HR

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I48 P35

Annie Margaret Pike.

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WITH A FOREWORD BY
ALFRED PERCEVAL GRAVES

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foreword.

JESSAMINE STARS.

When boisterous March comes brawling in
And wakes the drowsed Earth with his din,
 Around my westward gazing window
Riots the yellow jessamine.

Like her, as prodigally bold
To flaunt their leafless, griefless gold,
 There are who burst, with young impatience
Poesy's filmy flower-bud fold.

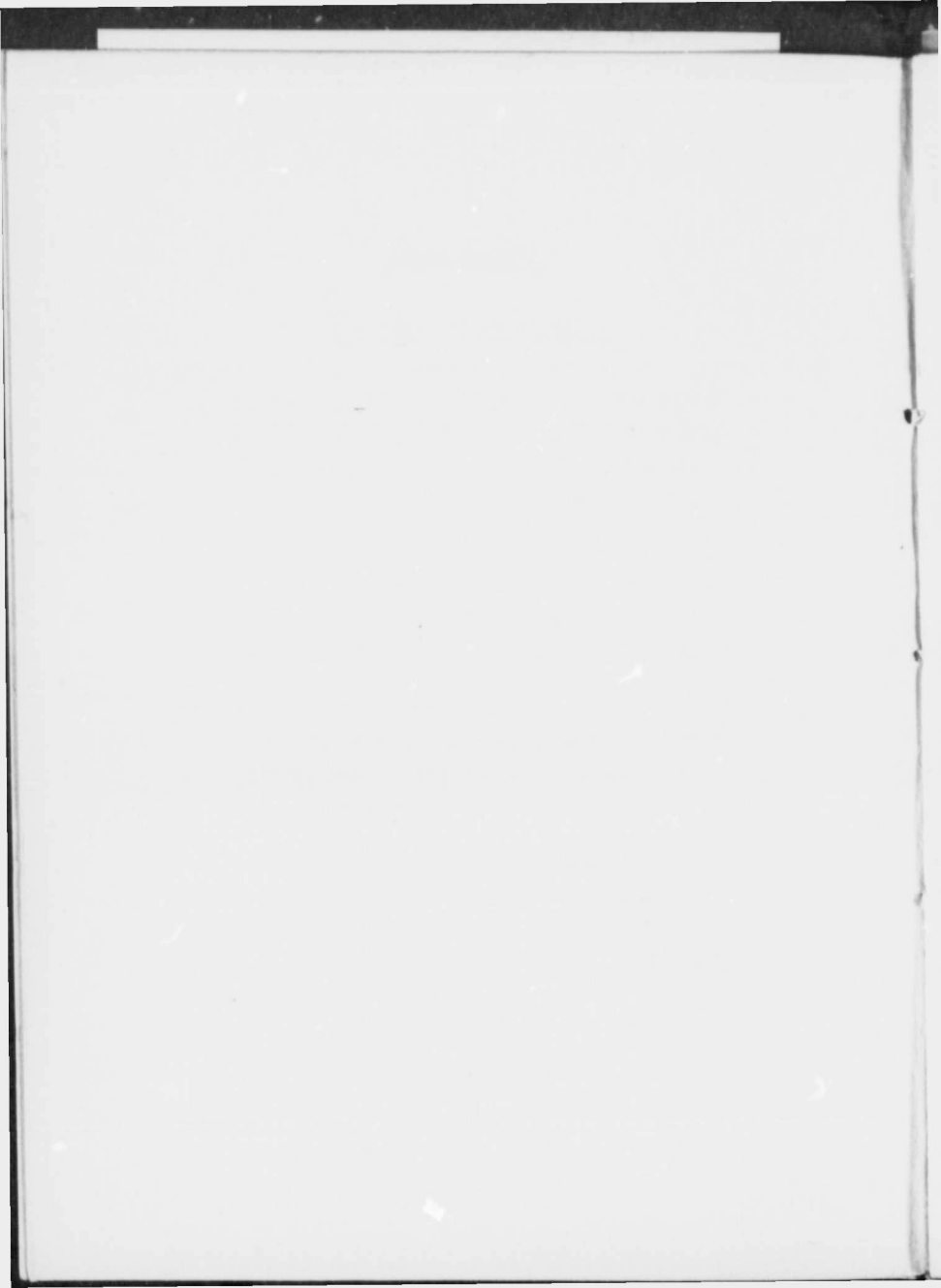
Not such thy blooms—with spendthrift haste
Speeding their garish gold to waste—
 But rather those by my orient casement,
White star-clusters by green leaves laced.

Stars whose soft reproving eyes
Make even warring chiefs turn wise—
 Stars of sweet white Mother Wisdom,
Jessamine stars out of Irish skies.

ALFRED PERCEVAL GRAVES.

London,

June 25th, 1913.



Preface.

The verses in this booklet have been printed from time to time during the past eight years in magazines and papers published in such widely distant places as England and California, Ireland and Oregon, Pennsylvania and Colorado and Canada.

They are not arranged with any regard to the dates at which they were written, nor is any claim to the exhibition of literary merit made for them

The writer has received many kindly expressions of appreciation from those to whom some message of cheer has been conveyed, and this leads her to hope that by offering the verses in this collected form added openings for any usefulness they possess may be found for them.

The characters of Phelim the Blind, Cormac the Kinsman of Finn, and Dermot the Black-browed are purely imaginary.

ANNIE MARGARET PIKE.

Vancouver,
British Columbia,

1913.

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LOVE PERVADETH ALL

Waving grass upon the hill,
 Velvet moss beside the rill,
 Modest shell upon the shore,
 Azure space where strong wings soar ;
 These to eyes grown keen to see,
 Outward emblems are of thee,
 All creating Will !

Slow soft sigh of snowflakes falling,
 Springtime's clear resistless calling,
 Summer streamlets gently flowing,
 Autumn leaf-rain, golden, glowing ;
 These to ears attuned by Thee,
 Chant in holy harmony,
 Love pervadeth all.

NOVEMBER

Gray and russet and gold,
 Gray of the rain-filled sky,
 Gray of the city pathway,
 A gray old world and a sigh !

Russet and gray and gold,
 Russet of bare damp trees,
 Russet of empty flower beds,
 The world's less gray for these !

Gold and russet and gray,
 Gold of the poplar's leaves,
 Gold of the street lamps' glitter,
 Surely the gray deceives !

THE BALLAD OF PHELM THE BLIND

" A chieftain whose eye shames the eagle's '
 (Thus doth the legend run),
 " And with scorn hears a thrice-given warning,
 Darkened shall walk in the sun."

* * * *

This is the ballad of Phelim,
 The son of O'Connor Dhu.
 In wrestling, or racing, or sword-play,
 The vanquished his prowess rue.

" Phelim, son of O'Connor !
 What if the weird be thine ?
 Shun thou the pass of Glencullen,
 Last of an ancient line ! "

Stout was the heart of the chieftain,
 Ne'er had it known alarm ;
 So he scoffed at the sigh of the wind sprites,
 As he glanced at his strong right arm.

Cheerless in bog girdled crannogues*
 Cowered the cailas† base ;
 But nought cared he for their sorrows,
 He of the Ard-righ's race,

Loud through the doon of Ardmenagh,
 Nightly the revels rang ;
 Drumbeat re-echoed to bagpipe
 Chorus to crotal's‡ clang.

Hard by the seat of the chieftain,
 Stood with his drinking horn,
 Blue-eyed and slight of stature,
 Seumas the lowly born.

" Phelim, son of O'Connor !
 Now is the day of grace.
 Dark looms the pass of Glencullen,
 Drear the appointed place.

" Hunger may madden the strongest,
 Want make demons of men.
 Wilt thou not shelter the homeless,
 Dying forlorn in the glen ?

* Crannogues = dwellings made of wood and built on piles in shallow lakes.

† Cailas = retainers. Base cailas were similar to the Saxon ceorls and the Norman villeins.

‡ Crotal = a closed, pear-shaped bell with a loose ball in it.

“ Lord of the moor and the mountain !
 Chief of O'Connor's clan !
 Wilt thou not listen to Seumas ?
 Hate is an ill flame to fan.”

Cold was the heart of the chieftain,
 And fierce was his storm of rage,
 As, deaf to the twice given warning,
 He turned from his faithful page.

“ Blind of soul ! Son of O'Connor !
 This is the night of doom !
 A bolt in the sure hand of Justice,
 Lurks in the lowering gloom.”

So spake the low voice of conscience,
 In the heart of the chieftain proud,
 While o'erhead in the murky blackness,
 Hung the waiting thunder-cloud.

But Phelim strode through the tempest,
 Deaf to the warnings three ;—
 And he fell in the pass of Glencullen,
 Fell, like a blasted tree.

* * * *

Now from the doon of Ardmenagh,
 Phelim the blind and the old,
 Ruleth the clan in his darkness,
 Dreeth the weird as foretold.

Close to his chieftain is Seumas,
 A counsellor kind and wise,
 Called by the clansmen of Phelim,
 "Seumas, the chieftain's eyes."

And the ogham stone of Glencullen
 Bears the legend for all to read,
 How the heart of the darkened chieftain
 From the blindness of pride was freed.

And how Phelim, son of O'Connor,
 Saw, though he learned it late,
 That in ale-house, § and glen, and crannogue,
 Love is far better than hate.

MOTHER AND CHILD.

Warm little hand in my hand,
 Music of pattering feet,
 Eyes that are bright as the day !
 TIME of his march I would cheat.
 Warm little hand in my hand,
 Can we not bid him—Stand ! ?

Warm little hand in my hand !
 That were as foolish as fond,

§ Ale-house = the one large room of a house of the period.

Feet must be taught how to step,
 Stepping to music respond.
 Then, when aside I must stand,
 Dim-eyed, I'll open my hand ;

And, while the blinding tears start,
 List to the feet's buoyant tread
 Keeping in time with Life's march ;
 God now their guide in my stead,
 But you and I must not part,
 Heart that once beat 'neath my heart !

STRENGTHEN WEAK HANDS.

" Strengthen ye the weak hands. . . Say
 to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong,
 fear not. Behold your God ! " (Isa. xxxv.
 3, 4, R.V. margin.)

Hast seen a vision of Right and of Truth,
 As thou wendest life's foe-beset way ?
 Then sing it in words that are simple and strong.
 It will help in the battle with shams and with
 wrong,
 And the blows of some fighter sore pressed in
 the throng
 Will be surer for hope that has come with the
 song,
 And he'll know that God winneth the day.

Knowest thou hearts that are fearful and sad,
 Dwelling far from the mansions of Hope ?
 Then tell them of strength from the Infinite One,
 Of a joy that is more than the light of the sun,
 And of death as the gate of a new life begun,
 When the old, like a race, has been faithfully run ;
 And they'll enter the doorway of Hope.

Wouldst thou the vision should bless thee
 again,
 As thou gropest along the dark way ?
 Then see that the thoughts that are inmost
 are pure,
 And that heed to the prompting of duty is sure,
 And the terrors of darkness thy soul will endure,
 Of the coveted vision's returning secure,
 As the dawning light heralds the day.

A CHOKED SPRING.

Where there abideth love and understanding,
 Fair gracious lives like summer flowers grow,
 And, like the brooks that broaden into rivers,
 Carry refreshment wheresoe'er they go ;
 But if beside thee precious plants are drooping,
 Scan well thy heart lest it should arid be ;
 Perchance some stone hath choked the
 fountain's outflow,
 'Twere worth thy while to set the waters free.

THE BALLAD OF CORMAC, THE KINSMAN
OF FINN.

Said Cormac the kinsman of Finn,

“ From tumults and wars I would rest,
I would plough, and would sow, and would reap,
I would watch o’er my kine and my sheep,

In the beckoning Isles of the West.”
But his heart nourished hatred within
For his kinsman and overlord, Finn.

He travelled to Westward three days,

Till he came to a fair-seeming Isle.
“ In this verdure-clad isle of the sea,
I will build me a dwelling,” said he,
“ Its charm shall my sadness beguile,
And here I will live out my days.”

A whisper breathed low in the trees,
And was echoed from hill side and shore,
“ In the pastures and folds of the deep,
Repose Cormac’s kine and his sheep,
And see them he shall nevermore.”
So the whisper died low in the trees
And the caves of the soft rippling seas.

Then Cormac with sorrow set sail,

And he sailed for a month and a day,
Till he came to the bleak barren strand
Of a crag-girt and desolate land ;
And he said, “ I will rest for a day,
Then once more to the West I will sail.”

A moaning was borne on the breeze,
 As of Spirits in duress and pain.
 "There can be no freedom, no resting,
 Where Hate-birds are nourished and nesting.
 Turn thou back for thy voyage is vain."
 So the moaning swept past on the breeze,
 And was lost in the cold leaden seas.

Said Cormac the kinsman of Finn,
 "I have nourished my hatred too long.
 To the East I will turn while I may,
 And set sail at the dawn of the day,
 Giving heed to the spirits' sad song.
 I will conquer the hatred within
 For my kinsman and overlord, Finn."

Lo! sea birds have carried the word
 To the wind of the far shining West;
 And the wind gave the word to the sea,
 "Let us waft the boat home speedily.
 In repentance the man shall be blest.
 Lo! the sea birds have brought me his word."

So Cormac returned to his place
 In the halls of his overlord, Finn;
 And many a minstrel and bard
 Shall his fair name and memory guard
 In the songs and the ballads of Finn,
 As they tell of his valour and grace
 Since Hate to Allegiance gave place.

AN ANALOGY.

Dost thou think the sun has vanished from the
 overarching spaces,
 As thou standest gazing skyward in the city's
 sunless places ?
 Seek the nearest summit to thee, leave the
 smoke-cloud far below ;
 See the orb of day eternal, changeless in
 effulgent glow.

Dost thou think that God has left thee isolated
 in Creation, [probation ?
 Because feeble is thy vision in the time of thy
 Like the light His love enfolds thee ; trust its
 universal might. [blackest night.
 Morning never yet hath failèd to ensue the

MARCH IN A CALIFORNIAN VALLEY.

Purple and green in the golden light the velvet
 foothills lie ;
 Above them age-old mountains hold grave
 converse with the sky.
 An orchard ocean gleams beneath, with blooms
 for wavelets white,
 And countless stars like beacons shine through
 long dark hours of night.
 No sounding surf on deadly rocks the valley
 dwellers hear,
 But mating songs of joyous birds with grace-
 notes charm the ear ; [the year.
 A symphony triumphant of the Springtime of

TO EPICTETUS.

I.—GREETING.

Oh, Epictetus, slave and crownless king,
 We greet thy shade, thou scorner of vain show !
 And, standing in thy sunset's afterglow
 A humble pæan in thine honour sing.
 To wing thy words let some enchanter bring
 A harp whose tones are musical and low
 As brooks that hidden in far valleys flow,
 And with his skilful hand attune each string,*
 Thus men, who otherwise thy thoughts might
 lose
 In maze of words, vague, or now obsolete,
 May turn to thee, and thereby strengthened,
 choose
 A brave philosophy with hope replete,
 And may not, careless, thy wise aid refuse
 In wresting victor's crown from stern defeat.

II. THE PARADOX.

A slave, a king ! What paradox is here !
 Yet, judge the figure on the plane of thought,
 And if its deeper meaning has been caught,
 Two truths revealed within it shall appear.
 As slave, the outer man had much to fear
 From cruel master. His a bondage fraught
 With hardships to drive weaker men distraught
 Till, madly bold, they seize the vengeful spear.

* Since writing the above I have learned of Mr. T. W. Rolleston's
 "The Book of Epictetus," Harrap & Co., London.

But in self-government this man was schooled,
 And in the realms within, a king he reigned.
 For pastime, he rare gems of wisdom tooled,
 Rough settings moulded, ornament disdained.
 With thoughts for subjects, peacefully he ruled,
 And no repining mood his soul profaned.

III. THE MANUAL.

The pupil Arrian, love-guided, wrought
 A manual, from whose dim pages shine
 Precepts, like rays of some bright orb divine,
 In lessons which to him the master taught.
 Think not that truth shall come to man unsought ;

He must in sweat of labour work the mine ;
 The gold in his heart's furnace-heat refine
 Ere it to serviceable state be brought ;
 So, to a lofty edifice complete,

On a foundation sure, his house may rise
 In nice proportion, dignified, and meet
 To shield his treasures duly from the eyes
 Of foes that follow him with subtle feet
 To thwart the purpose of his high emprise.

IV. THE TEACHER.

In Phrygia born, in Rome a hapless slave,
 Epirus knew him freed, a teacher wise ;
 And men of insight saw in his deep eyes
 The steadfastness a noble purpose gave.

From folly, aye and worse, he sought to save
 The youths who came to him in learners'
 guise

As to a fount whose source unfathomed lies,
 To drink pure words of wisdom strong and brave.
 The Stoics' strictest rule of life he taught,

And we, with equal calm, may face all ill,
 Humbly rejoice in victories well fought,

If victory some right desire fulfil,
 And strive, or watchful stand, content with
 aught

Our God decrees, so we but work His will.

AFTER "CARMEL."

(1 Kings xix. 4.)

The hero of Mount Carmel's fiery test
 Alone against a multitude had stood,
 Till burned were altar, offering, and wood,
 And God's great power was on His foes impressed.
 A hero yesterday ! To-day distressed,
 Weary of life, despairing of all good,
 He prays for death ; so hope-bereft his mood !
 By healing sleep God answers his request.

Who hath ^S not known some dread and awful
 hour,

When darkness, python-like, with fold on fold,

By slow degrees deprived the soul of power,
 And checked the upward breath with clogging
 cold ?
 Elijah sought his God in that dark hour,
 And, lo, the hideous blackness backward
 rolled !

NOT BLIND.

Some say that Love is blind.
 A libel, to my mind.
 I hold that sight most keen
 Conferred on him that hath been
 And that where we see nought to praise,
 His vision pierces through the haze.

He hails the " then " as " now,"
 With ripe ears decks the plough.
 To him each dull gray stone
 Is not a stone alone,
 But sparkling gem in durance vile
 Cabined, and cramped, and hid awhile.

I can but think he springs,
 On tireless shining wings,
 From the Creator's heart,
 Of his great love a part,
 And clear-eyed sees in dimmest soul
 The spark that, fanned, shall light the whole.

TO A RAINBOW.

(An Acrostic of the Spectrum.)

Rainbow on the cloud's breast lying,
 Emblem thou of Hope undying,
 Dark thoughts vanish, thee espying.

On to noble deeds inciting,
 Rough or smooth the path thou'rt lighting,
 Aye to higher heights inviting.
 Nought but peace thou art implying,
 Gloom and doubt of good, belying,
 Empty dread alway decrying.

Years are powerless in their gliding,
 E'er to sap thy arch abiding,
 Lightsome strength in thee residing.
 Lowly, thou on Earth art standing,
 O'er it to high heaven expanding,
 With thy sign black clouds disbanding.

Gay, from meads ethereal straying,
 Radiant elves with raindrops playing,
 Every Springtime send us maying,
 Every Summertime to haying,
 Now advancing, now delaying.

Blue in tend'rest tint thou'rt showing,
 Like speedwells blue of earthly sowing,
 Under shelt'ring hedgrows growing,
 Each one safe when winds are blowing.

In the lake's clear mirror shining,
 Newly with it thou'rt combining,
 Dainty scroll-work in designing,
 Iridescent gems enshrining,
 Gold and pearls in chains entwining ;
 Opal arc with arc aligning.

Vales and hills thy curves relaying,
 In soft hues themselves arraying,
 Omnipresent Will obeying,
 Like thee, Iris undismaying,
 Every foolish fear allaying,
 Teach the psalm all Nature's saying.

THE SAD DARK QUEEN.

(Ireland.)

Sad dark queen of the storm-tossed seas !
 Nought but lives will such wrath appease,
 Hopeless struggles of drowning men,
 Fatherless bairns in the lonely glen.

Oh, dreamland !

Oh, homeland !

Thy sorrows none can tell.

Pale gray ghost of the rain-blurred seas !
 Who can fathom thy mysteries ?

Spectres loom through thy baffling fogs.
 Leprechauns lurk in thy brown peat bogs.

Oh, dreamland !

Oh, homeland !

Thine is a magic spell.

Laughing isle of the sun-kissed seas !
 Gently fanned by the passing breeze.
 Softly lulled by the lapping waves.
 The fairies dwell in thy ocean caves.

Oh, dreamland !

Oh homeland !

Thy children love thee well.

DERMOT THE BLACK-BROWED.

Dermot the black-browed
 Stood at the well side,
 Well of St. Colum.
 " Saint with the dove's name
 Quench anger's fierce flame
 With this blest water ! "
 So prayed the chieftain.

Hung he a gold cup
 There at the well side,
 Vowing a cross too.
 Then turning homeward,
 Treadeth where greensward,
 Worn bare by pilgrims,
 Mateth with high road.

With the dawn rose he ;
 Called to his mastiff ;
 Strode down the hill side ;
 Anger still scorched him.
 Lo ! at the sea's rim
 Spies he O'Donnell,
 Cause of his anger.

Chieftain and mastiff
 Glare on the foeman.
 One blow will fell him,—
 Why pause with arm raised ?
 Are man and dog crazed ?
 See they a vision,
 There at the sea's rim ?

Hovers a white dove
 Over O'Donnell,
 Then flying sunward,
 One with the dawn light
 Passes from earth's sight.
 " Saint with the dove's name,
 This is thy answer ! "

There on the cliff's edge
 Meet the two chieftains,
 Foemen no longer.
 Hand grasp meets hand grasp.
 Clasp they as friends clasp ;
 Calm eye meets calm eye ;
 Anger is vanquished.

Now, at the well side,
 Well of St. Colum,
 Standeth a stone cross.
 In letters seven,
 Password of heaven,
 Deep there is graven
 The one word "Forgive."

PIONEERS.

All must be pioneers who would be free !
 Trails of old thoughts but backward lead the
 soul ;
 Follow them not, but forward turn thy face !
 Grasp axe in hand ; enter the forest dim.
 Is brushwood thick ? Make for thyself a path.
 Dost fear the thorns ? He heedless grows and
 slack
 Who treads the well-worn ways. Do muscles
 ache ?
 Better an ache than atrophy. Reward ?
 The stars shall smile to thee through parting
 boughs,
 Birds sing for thee. Thou'lt hear the low-toned
 hum
 Of lesser life. The aromatic pine
 And pungent herb shall blend their scents for
 thee.
 Then be a pioneer ! Think the new thought !
 Weigh it awhile, and act with courage firm,
 All must be pioneers who would be free !

THE CABIN BY THE BOG.

There's the white bog cotton, and the sundew's
 dainty cup,
 And the mosses dewy green.
 There are lapwings in the marshes with their
 sentries duly set,
 And their plaintive piping "keen."*

Oh the bleak, brown bogland, and the sobbing,
 sighing wind,
 And the gray sky brooding low,
 And the lonely little cabin with its roof of
 dripping thatch.
 And the peat fire's welcome glow.

Oh! the children's laughter as they play
 around the door!
 Oh, the gleams of sunshine rare!
 Oh! the patience of the dwellers in that
 little white-walled hut!
 Oh, the griefs and joys they share!

Surely God, all loving, with pity will regard
 them,
 And His blessing richly give
 On their simple earnest goodness and their
 childlike trust in Him,
 And the toil-filled lives they live.

* In Ireland the lapwing's cry is said to resemble the "keen," or lament for the dead.

There's the white bog cotton, and the sundew's
dainty cup,
And the mosses dewy green.
There are lapwings in the marshes with their
sentries duly set,
And their piping plaintive "keen."

ACORNS.

" Oh, tell me where you look for them, the green
and shining acorns ? "

" A-lying in the wild wood beneath the tall
oak tree ; "

" And what do you do with them when you've
gathered up a lapful ? "

" Come with me to the wild wood and you
shall quickly see.

" Look! I gather up a lapful of green and
shining acorns,

And I take them to the goblins' grove as you
shall see,

And I lay them down and leave them until
the stars are shining,

And then I hide me swiftly behind the largest
tree.

" And I watch the merry brownies, who softly
 in the starlight
 Alight beside my treasure and fold their silver
 wings,
 Till the king in robes of state waves his wand
 and breaks the silence,
 And each takes up an acorn and tunefully he
 sings :—

' Forest tree,
 Grow from thee !
 And may Earth,
 Mother mild,
 Bless her child.' "

" And whither do they carry them, those
 silver-wingèd elfmen ? "

" Away to barren places with n'er a shady tree ;
 And they plant them there, and watch them,
 and water them with dewdrops,
 And shade them from the winter winds as you
 shall see.

" And little children go and play beneath the
 growing oak trees,
 And all are gay and gladsome, and not a wee
 one grieves ;
 And old folk come at sundown and rest from
 toil and labour,
 And think the fairies' laughter is but the
 rustling leaves."

" Oh, right heartily I thank thee, fair maiden of
 the greenwood,
 And I'll come and gather acorns beneath the
 tall oak tree,
 And I'll take them out by starlight and leave
 them for the brownies,
 And standing by the goblins' oak may I the
 fairies see."

NOW

" Now is the accepted time,"
 No one need despair ;
 " Now is the accepted time,"
 Here and everywhere.
 God in love discerning
 Waits to own and bless
 Every soul returning
 From sin's wilderness.

" Now is the accepted time,"
 Message full of hope ;
 " Now is the accepted time,"
 Give the words full scope ;
 Ring it down the ages,
 Hymn it in the home,
 Gild it on the pages
 Of the Sacred Tome.

THE VOICE AND THE POET.

"And thou would'st be a poet, gentle heart?"

"Aye," said the youth. "It is my keen
desire

To flood the world with song in every part,
And be the master of a magic lyre."

"Thy wish is granted," said the Voice, and
sighed,

"A poet be, and earn a poet's meed;
Yet martyrdom to poesy's allied,
If one would of the art be lord indeed.

"The poet sings, but first must live his song,—
True-hearted be, if he would sing of Truth;
A liberator, if he censure Wrong,
Merciful, just, endued with manly ruth.

"And if upon his canvas of sweet sound,
He, a word-painter, limn some shape of woe,
Some horrid form; he must himself confound,
And for a space into its likeness grow.

"The fear of Death he voices, and behold
His own face blanches, and his eye grows
dim.

He needs must drain emotion's chalice old,
Whose sweet and bitter draught o'erflows
the brim.

" A child with children he ; a man with men ;
 At one with sage or dullard, knave or saint ;
 Nor heart of woman shall outstand his ken,
 Though ~~fr~~acked with anguish, or with
 sorrow faint.

" Thus shall each figure on his canvas live ;
 Yet, e'en while painting, he must not belie
 His individual self, but ever give,
 When conscience speaks, a reverent reply.

" But not all dark the path his feet must tread.
 Not mournful themes alone inspire his lays.
 The moon and stars will oft shine overhead,
 The sun's warm beams illume the summer
 days ;

" Life then to him seems decked in rainbow robe,
 And for a season common clay seems gold.
 He hears the music of the circling globe,
 And owns a youth that never shall grow old.

" The spirits of the woods, the wind, the sea,
 The flowers, the birds, and all the things that
 live
 Shall whisper him in sweetest melody,
 And to his eager lyre enchantment give.

" And dost thou still indulge thy dream
 sublime ? "

" Aye," said the youth. " A poet I will be,
 Though I must share the sorrows of all Time,
 Joy overflows into eternity."

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