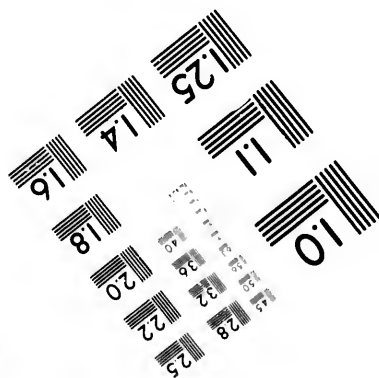
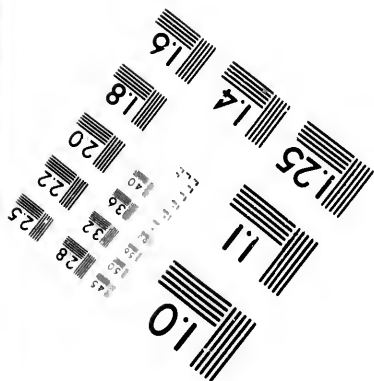
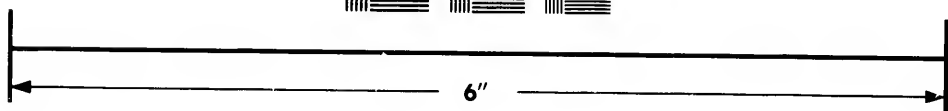
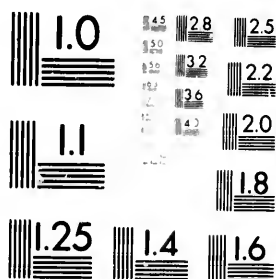


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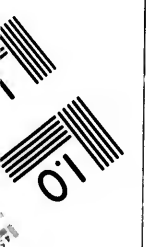
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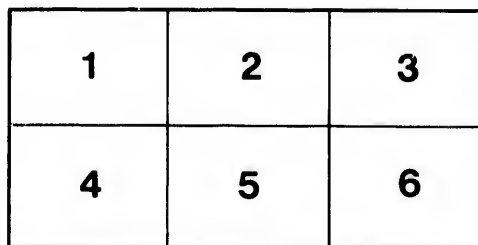
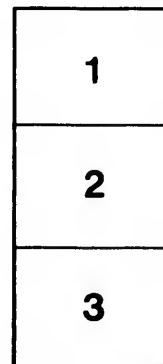
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God
and
The
Doubter.

At Partridge Island
Sunset on Nerepis River
And other Verses

By

"R. Belmont"

St. John, N. B.

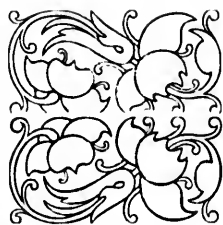
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“ Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out.
There lives more faith in honest doubt
Believe me, than in half the creeds.”



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God and the Doubter.

TPON His high arched crystal throne the Father sat :
On either side before a book of many leaves
A white robed figure stood. One bore a look of grief,
Yet tinged with hope. Th' other, no depth of bitter pain
Had known, and beams of light shone from him far around.

The sad-faced one, with drooping head and folded wings,
Caught the soft sliding of the restless, thronging feet
Of all the souls that hurried up the crowded aisles ;
The sorrow of their fate dwelt in his steadfast eyes ;
Dark shadows lingered on his grave, majestic face,
O'er which gleamed rays of Hope that made him beautiful.
The other, glad, as if for praising he were born,
Lifted his shining face, and, far beyond the throng,
Saw that future life on broadening steps attains
An equal, common goal for all humanity.
His pen, of purest pearl with gleaming diamond point,
Lay firmly poised within his clasping, thoughtful hand,
To write the names of those who sought and doubted not.
The covers of his book were ivory, creamy white,
And sapphires lay encrusted on the edge thereof :
Within, the leaves all marvellously golden, showed,
In tiny lambent flames, the names that he had writ ;

Indelible 'gainst Time they stood — eternal fires!
But he, the sad-faced one, held with a patient touch
A rod of sombre agate, pointed, gleaming red.
His larger book showed heavy ebon polished sides.
With lines of gold that burned along the thickened edge:
Within, the pages white as billowed mountain clouds,
Displayed long lists of black and red; whilst some there were
In mingled gruesome tints, that showed where sullen hues
And shades of lives had left their stains upon the page.
His fingers leaned not lovingly upon the rod
Of sombre colors; oft, when gliding spirits came
And spoke their names, they seemed reluctantly to write,
As if quite loth to do their God appointed task.
Then on his face one saw a light flash quickly up;
Like waves that play, caressing, on the curving beach,
So spread that light of love. as if the human whole
Were garnered by this angel's soul unto itself.
Oft was it thus, and spirits crowding near, wond'ring
And thankful for the upraised surer face of him
Who held the pearl, could scarcely see that other form,
Whose sterner task was often conquered by his love.

* * * * *

As when through branching pine or silvered poplar leaves
The south wind breathing, fills the wooded, lofty aisles
With gentle rustling, so there came a murm'rous sound.
A soul, with steadfast eyes and upturned beaming face,
Amidst the parted waves of other souls, came slow.

The mother of this soul for many earthly years
Had, jointly with the father, thoughtful care bestowed.
Such influence had this on the gentle trusting child
That she had grown to sweet perfection; now her soul,
With naught of stain, moved slowly to its shining home.
Her name was whispered; then it fell within the book
Of gold, and glowed with light from diamond-pointed pen.
Then came a sigh, as when the restless moving deep
Sends forth a note of strange and saddest melancholy.
He, of the agate-colored bar, with Hope half hid,
Looked down the crowded aisles and saw the moving form
Of one whom Earth called doubter. Slow, with downcast eyes,
This soul moved up and on till near the angel forms.
His name is said, — Both pens are lifted as to write;
The pearl tint gleams and wavers o'er the golden page;
The agate bar lies poised — th' expectant sign to see.
Then, through the vaulted, star-set roof and columned arch
There came a vibrant sound that thrilled the waiting throng —
'Twas such a note that held Elijah's fearing heart.
" And did you not believe in my great love, my son? "
The angels closed their mighty books of Good and Ill,
And with bowed heads at this, the Father's, holy voice,
Stood half amazed and glad. Hope, that had faintly dawned
To him who wrote within the ebon covered lids,
Now shone, a great full-orbèd star of longing joy.
The mute, expectant souls that lay beyond the aisles
In ranks of thousands, gazed upon the newer light

Of his uplifted face, and breathed a glad "Amen."
He saw the age of blind belief and creeds sink down,
And in the new horizon brightly gleamed the star
Of Faith in God and love for all humanity.

* * * * *

"My Father, O my Father," spoke the questioned soul,
"I could not walk Thy court 'till I had learned the way.
I trusted Thee, and trusting, could not doubt Thy love.
I knew these 'altar stairs' led up. I tried to climb.
Some proffered aid, but I did doubt the book they gave.
It told of cruel wars and deeds by Thy command
That made me shudder— Well I knew Thou gav'st it not.
Beneath the ordered stars that rolled in ceaseless flight
I wrestled with the well-taught prayers and creeds of youth.
Within the silent pulses of the darkened wood
I fought severest battle. Thou, my Father, know'st
How close the prayer I used to babble as a child
Enwrapped its trustful love around my youthful heart.
I could not take eternal hope and future life
From books. — No, I must feel it, everlasting, — true.
And thus beneath the measures of Thy power and skill—
Those pendant spheres that gleam around me in this space,
I sought for Thee.
Ofttimes my tired soul would weary of the search,
And groping, fall upon itself, exhausted, faint.—
Amid the dropping, pointed stars, I'd gaze and gaze,
As if my spirit, searching, wandered out to Thee.

Perhaps it did—for moments came of joy too great
To last more than a minute's space of breathing awe,
And that was fullest rest, completed faith in Thee.
I tried to go the easier path the church had taught.
But could not iterate the cruel words they said
Were Thy just anger.

In all the wondrous woods, the sea and stars, I saw
The mystery of death and life. I knew not how
These many complex things were so ordained and made,
But knew they were in kindness sent, and not in hate.
And so I did put back the book reached out by those
Who called it 'lamp' and 'light,' and sanctified by Thee;
And said, 'I doubt the book you preach, but not His love.'
Yet ever through the days, my childish lesson cried
Within my breast; I stumbled, but, upheld by Thee,
I groped yet blindly up the stairway, here, above,—
And now I know, my God, that Thou indeed art Love."

* * * * *

The angels raised their heads (their joyful shining eyes
Mutely expectant caught the message mutely sent)
And moved like glinting sunrays down the breathless aisle;
They clustered round the form of him who just had spoke;
Their spreading, sunny wings arched o'er the doubting soul;
And thus the three passed slowly through the moving sea
Of spirits crowding all the spaces of the hall.
Into the light that compasses the Father's throne
The doubting God-taught soul had safely found his own.



"THE LEDGES,"

Bay Shore, St. John, N. B

At Partridge Island.

AT night, when from a deep sea, slimy ledge,
The moving tide creeps slowly to the edge
Of some vast rock, whose mighty bulk hangs o'er
A sounding cave, the depths reveal a shore
Of furrowed sand, where colors gleam like eyes
Of freshly dew dipped stars from azure skies.
Shadows of trees slant on the moving deep,
And ever midst the lanes of light, they keep
Their darkened arms as if enwrapped in silent sleep.

In swaying locks of amber, green and gold,
The seaweeds lift, and from their rocky hold
Stream out into the bands of silver light.
Within the sounding cave, eternal night
Holds court from sun to sun; no Protean horn
Along its walls e'er winds a note forlorn.
Far off the ever lifting, ceaseless seas
Fill the great void with gentle harmonies,
Prompting the soul to sweet yet sad soliloquies.

Low Tide at Bay Shore.

WHEN, out beyond the rocky, bouldered shore
The tide creeps slowly to its ocean bed,
And rests a space before it turns again
To test its strength on rock and shifting sand,
'Tis then I love to wander on the beach
And steal the secret of the sea shell's home :
Watch the pink seaferns in their safe retreat
And wonder at their color and their form.
The jutting ledge fronts on a shore of sand ;
The sea lies faint a hundred yards away
And utters now no signal of its strength:
The great, round rocks with seaweed covered tops
And roughened sides of barnacle's gray mail,
Sphinx like, recall, half buried in the drift,
The riddle of their past and future lot.
The sand all ridged and hard with patting waves,
Presents a course for Atalanta's feet.
I slip along the edge, where darkened caves
Three hours ago were booming with the seas
That rolled tumultuous up against their sides.
Close to the amber, seaweed-crested top
Of one huge ledge, an emerald basin lies ;
Fringed with the purple, waving, moss-like ferns
It ever keeps its seagreen purity.
Its sanded depths reveal the seafern forms

Whose arms trail darkly green from rocky sides.
The mussel shells lie thick along the edge ;
Held to the light their color seems dull gray,
But dropped within the clearness of the pool
They undulate in falling, and reflect
The pink and purple of the finest pearl.
Like jewels on the sanded depths they lie
And shoot forth rainbow tints between the lanes
Of pendant ferns, and purple trailing dulse.
The crested ledge with grim and shaggy front,
And roughened majesty of sea-worn pride,
Holds in its arms this harmony of hue.
So lies in many rough and rigid hearts
A tender grace that needs the casting pearl
And straightway that which seemed so dull and gray
Beams with the colors of awakening day.

Light and Love.

Every boat has its errand,
And carries light on its sail ;
Every life has its message
Of joy or burdening wail.

The light on the boat-sail dies
With the sinking of the sun ;
But human love-light lingers
Long after the years are done.



" SUNSET ON THE NEREPIIS."

Sunset on Nerepis River.

THE sun sinks down in his glory
And purples the clustering hills.
The shadow from Douglas Mountain
The calm of the Nerepis fills.

Over the crest of the Eagle,
Deep gathering mists are afloat,
Their cold, white arms, outspreading,
Hush the redbreast's liquid note.

The silver thread of the river
Still winds its way to the fall,
Leaving the emerald meadows
For the rock whither eagles call.

Th' anemones pink white petals
Curve upward with close of day,—
Violets, yellow and blue and white.
In slumbering clusters lay.

Night that had hid in the fir tree
Moves silently over the field ;
Its sable wings rest on the flowers,
Which drowsily fold and yield

To the pointed shadows creeping
Over river and hill and bank,—
They fold their petals in silence
And wait in their modest rank.

Wait till the dews of the night air,
With breath from the distant bay,
Enwrap them with pearly dew drops,
And night yields its throne to the day.

The gate of the sunset is still
Enveloped with crimson and gold,—
Purple and black and deep purple
Lay the cloud banks fold upon fold.

Along clear lanes of shell tint
Near a shore of a vaster sea,
Float isles joining earth and heaven
In a wonderful harmony.

And just where the horizon ends
In a rim of fiery red,
A final radiance shooting,
Repeats that the day is dead.

The day is dead, but the gladness
Of the spirit within me cries,
This is a day of rejoicing,
And its perfumes ever shall rise

To sweeten the path of sorrow
That all of us have to tread,
And to ease that bitter anguish
When they tell me my friend "is dead."

My friend has journeyed beyond me,
Leaving her trust as a guide,
And ever that strong trust clasping
I walk to the fast flowing tide.

And oft when the western horizon
Is rimmed with its flame of red,
I think of that Nerepis Valley,
And that day which never is dead.

Westfield Woods.

In dewy banks the May buds lie ;
The ragged vine trails up the hill,
The spruce and fir dark arms entwine
O'er clefts where shadows linger chill.

The yellow seal 'twixt lily leaves
Shoots up its long and thick green stalk,
Wind flowers whiten mossy dells
Whilst you and I in reverence walk.

Faint rustling of dead leaves repeat
Whispers of the last year's glory ;
Not yet the petals of the rose,—
No asters tell the harvest story.

The hare-bell keeps its tender grace
Of swaying blue till later on ;
Twin flowers hold their fairy bells
Of sea-shell pink till June has gone.

Alders hang out their russet green,—
White poplars sway their red-capped flowers
Before their rounded leaves are seen.
May clouds have brought refreshing showers

Which start the buds on maple trees,
Whilst gnarled and twisted ashen arms
Unfurl their solemn purple balls,
Dark index of the later charms.

Looking Backward.

Memory, like moss,
Wraps itself round the roughened trunks of Time,
Whose branches cross
And interweave the merry wedding chime

Of early days,
With sadder tolling of our riper age.
Stray, slanting rays
Of Hope creep slowly on life's darkened page.

Within these shades
We walk through columned arches to the goal,
Where darkness fades
Before the flood that lifts the trusting soul.

Memory's soft hands
Cast a fine halo o'er the knotted path,
Her trailing strands
Enshrine the Father's love, and not His wrath.

The spectral shrouds
That held us long in doubt, now turn and change
To sunset clouds,
Where rests our Faith in sight of broader range.

Memory's key
Of finer gold unlocks the battered gate
Of mystery.
We turn, and o'er the narrow path of fate
We gaze, and see
'Twas God's decree.

The Vengeance of La Tour.

IN the Spring of 1645, Sieur D'Aulnay Charnisay sailed from Port Royal, N. S., now known as Annapolis, and appeared before Fort St. John, at the mouth of the St. John River.

At the time of Charnisay's arrival, Charles de La Tour was in Boston; his wife, Marie de La Tour, was left in charge of Fort St. John, with fifty men for a garrison. The Fort was steadily besieged for three days.

On Easter Sunday, when the heroic defenders were not thinking of an attack, Charnisay's troops, through the connivance of a Swiss soldier (one of the garrison), scaled the walls and were on the eve of victory when the spirited defence of the garrison, stimulated by Lady La Tour, caused them to retreat again for the fourth time.

Reduced in numbers, and with part of their walls broken down, the garrison and its brave commander decided to capitulate on the terms offered by Charnisay, which were that the whole garrison would be allowed to depart unmolested.

It is said that as soon as Charnisay got possession of Fort St. John, and saw the meagreness of the defences and the small number of its defenders, he at once imprisoned the garrison, and either shot or hung them all.

The intrepid and dauntless Lady de La Tour, at sight of this treachery and cruelty, must have turned upon Charnisay and told him of his baseness, calling down upon him the vengeance of her husband.

“ Oh Christ, that I were spared this awful sight!
What fiend is he, who, blacker than black night,
Commits such crime? O, treacherous Charnisay!
Now breaks my heart, in horror at this day!
When final fate shall on thee trembling call,
And thou dost enter the great judgment hall
To know thy lot —

Then, on thy fall, the whole Satanic brood
That watch for thee, will seize the hellish food
Of thy black soul, and, midst the raging flame,
Purge it of blood but get no drop of shame.
Live on, thou ever-shifting vengeful eyes,—
Thy knightly life, 'tis but a book of lies.
Oh, may the avenging power of fate
So stamp my words upon thy withered soul,
No jot or tittle ever shall abate.
Live thou, and reach thy Royal fort : the goal
Attained this day, now flees thy varying sight ;
For soon a sterner foe, with certain tread,
Will in thy parchèd soul stir up such fright
That thou wilt shriek for pity, and in dread
Wilt call upon the Christ. E'en as the blood
Of this dead garrison will drown your soul.
That Christ Himself turn not to stay the flood,
So will the rush of Fundy's tide enroll
And wrap thee round.
Useless thy sword, thy strength of no avail,
Thy craft in vain ; no lies will save thee now —
The rocks alone will hear thy weakening wail,
Ghosts of the murdered ones thy spirits cow,
In vain thy hands clutch at the slippery kelp,
The far-off breakers dash with sullen roar,
No soul to pity, not a hand to help,
Thy lifeless form lies spurned upon the shore.

Thou living dead man, know thy fate is sure,
And Fundy's wave wreaks vengeance for La Tour.
Soil not my name.
I feel my life-blood burst its narrow space,
And know that I must die,— it grows apace
This feeling here.
This, from your hated bondage makes me free.—
My fortress gone — this death means Liberty."

Lady La Tour died within a few days after the surrender of her Fort,
and some time afterwards, about 1647, Charnisay was drowned at a
point between Digby and Annapolis.

The Flowers' I Love.

(From the French of L. Collet.)

Oh, dewy flowers!
Bedimmed by showers
Of early May!
Your petals bear
The perfumed air
Of spring's glad day.

Your garlands yield
To hill and field
A brilliant glow;
On meadow bank
In modest rank
Marguerites blow.

The fringed bluet
With frail aigrette
Tells harvest story;
O'er rock and dells
Climb rose pink bells
Of morning glory.

The "bees' delight,"
With jasmine white,
Trails glossy green;
O'er path inclining,
Its pink buds shining,
Sways eglantine.

Periwinkle's star
Droops from afar,
O'er cypress dreaming;
Clear brooks that glide,
See close beside
Narcissi gleaming.

Oh, dewy flowers!
Bedimmed by showers
Of early May!
Your petals bear
The perfumed air
Of spring's glad day.

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