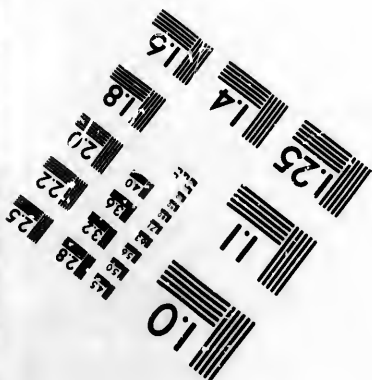
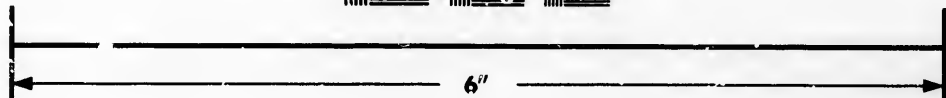
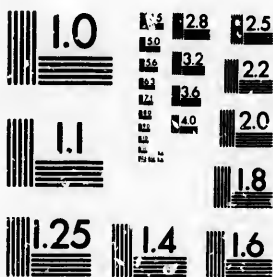


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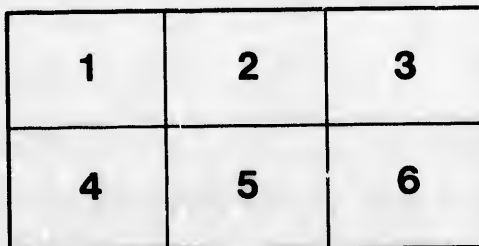
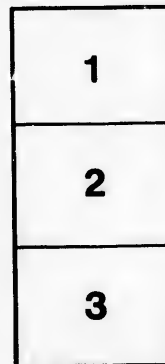
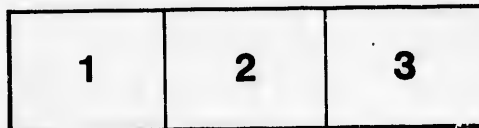
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THE AVATAR OF PEACE

AND

OTHER POEMS.

BY

S. J. MACKNIGHT.

BOSTON:

Printed and published by Shawmut Steam Printing Co., 120 Court St.

1896.

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THE AVATAR OF PEACE.

“The brazen throat of War had ceased to roar,”
And the armed times had vanished to the past.
The wolves of War had vanished, looking back
Over their shoulders with fierce hungry eyes,
War with his high-waved hand had bade farewell
And in departing had saluted Peace.
And the thin heaven, like a deep, cold sea
Had closed above him where had sunk his steps.
Then mighty Peace succeeded to his place,
A mighty monarch, thronged with ministrants,
And clothed with beauty high as with a robe,
Cinctured with power, clothed with splendid state,
And wearing proudly a bright-jewelled crown.

Peace made her reign eternal and uptook
A sceptre sapient which must dure for aye.
She entered by vast doors, whose lintel high
Seemed even among the stars of radiant light.
Among the heights, the hills, the mountains gray,
Among the lofty slopes, 'mong valleys green,
Among the sea-like plains and lands far-spread,
She took her seat, and made those lands her own.
A mighty, thrilling presence, that of peace—
A vast pervading presence, full of power,

A warder of the morning and the night,
A close companion of man's various ways,
A ruler of the noon-tide and the day,
And tribute-bearer of the circled year.

Eternal were those hills, and so was Peace
Eternal; they had stood for ages past,
For times unknowable to human thought.
In cycles of existence, gray and green,
Covered with woods, with myriad pines and firs,
With armies of grave trees pointing to heaven,
With marshalled hosts of woods, with verdant bowers,
With rocky sides, with landslips here and there
To mark some slight mutation—they had stood
For ages and for ages—aye and aye.

Among the valleys, when thou lookest up
Thou seest perhaps some tent, some twilight fire,
Some culinary kettle hung from poles,
Horses let loose to graze, men smoking pipes
Filled with the dried tobacco in their bowls,
Seated at ease, or 'mong their littered goods
Seeking things needful for their food and rest.
The patient steed slow paces, pausing long
Upon one tuft of verdure, then the next,
Then striding forth a little, shuffles on,
And in the distance lie the azure hills.
Oh! somnolent and restful are these scenes,
Unlike the bloody scenes of strife and war!
Eternal are the mountains in their past,
And seems the sovran Peace entwined with them,
Part of their being and to last for aye.
The casual smoke ascending from the fire
Seems as a sort of incense to this god.
The chirping grasshopper a chorister
Seems in the sanctuary of this god's fane.
The low of beast, the whirrings of the wind,
The beatings of some vagabond bird's wing
Seem sistrums for this worship. And the air
Which spreads about our heads, our very feet,
Which lives about the tent, the ox, the fire,

Which hugs the cedar, which wraps round the oak,
Which washes cattle's walls, and craggy rocks,
Which rides upon the backs of highest hills,
Which dwelleth in expanse from clouds to sods,
Which high above the clouds does still rejoice,
This air, this home of spirits, seems a part
Of this sweet deity whose strains I sing.

Then had the very clods, when Peace arrived
Become enamoured of her beauteous reign.
The various humblest flowers of the field
Gave forth their various perfumes in her praise.
The skies above seemed smiling on the earth
In sweet approval and in bonds of love.
The idle lily stood, the red rose hung,
The tangled grass bent with the rustling wind,
Great gifts of silence rested on the earth,
And the child's prattle was of War no more.

A POETICAL MEDITATION ON BRYANT'S THANATOPSIS.

The earth, so speaks the poet, is the grave
Of all those myriad legions who have passed
Through life into the portals gray of death.
Earth is the sepulchre, the beauteous home
Of those who have departed, and of those
Who shall depart to that same sepulchre.
The very elements that deck this earth
Compounded are from our frail human dust.
And so he sings, if one conceive a harp
To attend the movements of so grave a voice,
That when we face those portals we should come
Like who lie down to dreams and courteous sleep,
And wrap around them garments of repose.

Pain and disease, repulsiveness, decay
May be the ushers of that final state,
And disappointment with its potent harms
Or want, with its sharp flail may be the guide
That leads thee to these chambers; yet I deem
The author of our text does well to dull
And shroud these matters when he speaks of this;
To fix his eye on what of dignity
Of grandeur and of beauty the theme affords;
To fortify the mind against mean foes;
To nurture resignation; to endow
Death's hideous form with splendor and with peace.
So travel, he says, that when thou needs must join
The caravan that seeks the climes of death
Thou go not like the galley-slave much scourged
But pass within rather with chastened mirth.

Happy are they who 'mid the engrossing cares,
 The interests, ambitions, schemes, of life,
 Amid the noise, the turmoil, the distress
 Can find some consolation from a page
 Such as this poet's before us; who can find
 By walking to the fields, tasting the air
 A source of benediction; who can leave
 The pettiness of daily life behind,
 And rise to loftier and more wholesome views;
 Can hold communion with the long-gone past
 And with the vague-shown future yet to come:
 Who can combine those epochs into one;
 Who can absent themselves from present cares,
 And look on earth as being one mighty temple.
 The hills, he says, the rivers, valleys, brooks,
 The aged woods, the sighing ocean's waste,
 They are but portions of the tomb of man.
 The sun, the stars, the "infinite host of heaven"
 "Shine on the abodes of death." Yet from this thought
 He does not draw depression or despair.
 It yields him rather fragrance, comfort, hope,
 Beatitude, and solace, pleasure, peace,
 Like honey yielded from the gaping jaws
 Where, in a skeleton, bees built their nest.
 So shalt thou rest, he says; thou shalt lie down
 With patriarchs of the infant world, with kings,
 With hoary seers, with all the wise and good.
 And when the time shall come, thou shalt be joined
 Year after year by a long cavalcade.
 What if thou die unheeded? All will come—
 The gay, the sad, the phantom-chasing souls
 The old, the young; the strong, the weak will come;
 Their mirth and their employments they shall leave
 And make their bed beside thee. Thou shalt rest
 In the sweet bosom of this sombrous tomb.
 The flippant and the fickle may laugh on;
 Their chirrup soon is ended; enemies
 Can ne pursue us further; and that goal
 Is as an infinite ocean-main of peace.
 So travel, he says, that when thou needs must join
 That caravan, thou go not like the slave

But rather joyfully and full of faith
Approach thy grave like one lying down to sleep.

* * * * *



QUIXOTE'S HARANGUE ON THE GOLDEN AGE.

FROM CERVANTES.

O Sancho, since the sun declines,
And tumbles in yon purple west,
We shall ne village seek to-night;
The open skies have no affright;
Me likes the canopy of heaven,
To watch the wain-stars seven.

Our hopes now sinking with the sun
How opportune yon goat-herds' tents !
I do rejoice; cease thou to grieve.
How graciously they us receive !
We with these herdsmen spend the night.
With fame I them requite.

Lo yonder kettle where the smoke
Ascends towards the cerulean sky.
We eat; the wine-horn circles round;
From sheep-skins spread upon the ground
Our hunger is at length appeased,
And acorns finish off the feast.

Sit, Sancho, by your lord's right hand,
These herdsmen good shall see that squires
Of errant knights are not despised.
Ye herdsmen good be not surprised.
Sancho, the second skin of wine
Thou watchest with those eyes of thine.

Good herdsmen, the umbrageous oak,
King of the forested campaign,
We thank for these delicious seeds.
This acorn feast within me breeds
For high discourse a pregnant theme,
Of lofty thoughts a fruitful stream.

Know ye, O simple goat-herd souls,
A time was, called the Golden Age,
In fair days of remotest Eld.
Man's labour then was uncompelled.
Happy those days, happy those times,
Unvexed by any sordid crimes.

We read in authors most antique
How men lived then in habits meek
And simple; even the homely plough
Tore not our mother's breast as now
Who gave her boons without request
To those who then her soil possessed.

Happy those days, happy those times.
Thé mind, my friends, looks oft behind.
We wander through those courts of time:
Their influence, like a pleasant chime,
Transports us; eat your humble cheese;
We sit here, 'neath these shades, in ease.

Happy those days, happy those times,
Happy those golden days now gone.
What can we do but sit and grieve
As banished souls without reprieve?
Yet, herdsmen, do not grieve too much;
Let sad regret your minds but touch.

Happy those golden days, those times,
 A glimpse, as from some poet's page
 Or painter's canvas, fills my mind :
 I see the rough posts, tendril-twined,
 The rough roofs over-laid with bark
 Beneath some forest-shadow dark.

I see the youths, the maidens gay
 Clad only with a dress of leaves
 All goods were common ; travellers fared
 Unarmed and careless ; no man dared,
 Or wished to injure or defraud.
 Lone virgins roamed the country broad.

Contrast this with the modern world ;
 How greed and evil creep apace !
 The weak are robbed, the lawless seek
 To ruin ; where are found the meek ?
 The traveller wanders on his way
 Watchful of harm by night and day.

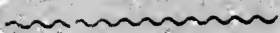
I see some lonely forest-sward,
 Bathed with the shades of sombre trees.
 The children of this solitude
 By low-roofed habitations rude
 Or in the open glades at ease
 Stand grouped in attitudes of peace.

Happy those golden days now gone ;
 That child-like innocence is fled.
 O, Sancho Panza, we must weep—
 Your eye-lids heavy are with sleep—
 Must weep that those days ne'er return,
 Howe'er our longing hearts may burn.

It seems as if some wizard's wand
 Had driven away those scenes of bliss—
 Had left behind but mire and clay.
 We find naught like it here to-day
 Around this savoury pot, these skins
 We weep. Day ceases. Night begins.

* * * * *

Happy those golden days now gone.
 As day deceases, night descends.
 The glorious stars come one by one.
 The moon informs that day is done.
 The peaceful ox lies down to rest
 'Neath the high mansions of the blest.



GONDEL.

FOUNDED ON POE'S "CITY IN THE SEA."

"Whither, wide-winged albatross,
 Sailing the dark seas across,
 Dost thou cleave thy airy path?"
 "Perhaps I fly, man, who can tell?
 To the city of Gondel."

* * * * *

Deep in a tract most desolate,
 On ocean's bosom most ingrate,
 Stands the tremendous tower of gray,
 Hewn four-square like a campanile,
 A great tower on a low flat isle.

Up soars this tower it seems for miles.
 Around it rise the other piles
 Of desolation and decay.
 The spacious isle from bound to bound
 Seems all one city, towered around.

Never the sun with even a glint
Gives of his light a slightest hint
To this poor island of the waste.
The sea is always hushed around.
The winds moan with a muffled sound.

Always the ocean belt is calm.
The winds bring on their wings no balm.
No smile bedecks those waters drear.
Deep in the ocean's heart do dwell
Those sad walls of the dread Gondel.

O city of abiding death,
About whose domes there comes no breath
Of life, no ministry of light,
About whose bournes there wash but seas
Of quietude though not of peace!

The mariner through weary leagues
Misses the object which he seeks.
He wallows through the troughe and foams.
He flounders through the East and West,
Nōr finds this island so unblest.

Deeply mysterious is the place
As if its form it would erase.
Perhaps the isle retreats or sinks
Whenever an approaching bark
Would fain the city's gray towers mark.

They wander thither through the waste,
But miss the island in their haste.
They let the gray towers pass astern.
O island of the distant sea
The steersman cannot come to thee!

THE GARDEN.

Within a venerable wall
There stood a garden, whose high trees
Rose here and there; a sweet expanse,
In whose retreats a nymph might dance;
Luxurious acres full of flowers;
Mazes and arbours, not too trim,
And fountains plashing o'er their brim.

There stood the bust of antique Pan
With other sculptares 'mong the flowers.
The ground was high; thou lockedst out
On hills and mountains round about;
And stately seats stood in the shade,
By level walks near alleys green.
Nought in this pleasaunce was there mean.

From the hill slopes the wall upclomb;
Thou sawest through breaks a city's towers.
The wall stopped not the butterfly,
Who holds the freedom of the sky;
And twittering birds stood in the trees
From high looked down upon the sods
Cybele, mother of the gods.

Much marble was there round the founts,
And floors mosaic near the seats.
The shapely trees stood round in crowds,
And high above did roam the clouds
Of a serene and happy sky.
The aged tree-tops lived among
Those heavens which seemed so fair and young.

Thou enteredst by the postern gate,
 Or by the mansion-house near by.
 Perhaps some wine might wait for thee
 Beneath the most ancestral tree,
 Or grapes grew in the genial air,
 Or incense from some brazier rose,
 Or sprinkled perfumes met the nose.

Textures of finest robes were there.
 The sloven passed not through those gates.
 The bee flew with his "honeyed thigh"
 Above, athwart, the passer-by.
 One found the alcoves 'neath the trees,
 One sauntered down the alleys green
 Or paused in glades that came between.

Time journeyed idly in that place.
 The hours slipped by with silk-shod feet.
 Companions in the cool recess
 Or round the fountain lounged, I guess.
 The story-teller smilingly
 Lingered upon his courteous theme,
 And watched the dial in the gleam.

Or the grave reader, lingering long
 Held in his lap some author's wit,
 And pondered musingly the leaves
 Bound in some book, like harvest sheaves,
 And slowly passed from sheaf to sheaf,
 He builded of his thoughts, I guess,
 Some castle-tower of idleness.

Brightly the sun shone on his youth.
 He watched the spaces of the sky.
 He and his friends rose and forsook
 This precinct; and if thou didst look
 Thou sawest their robes float in the wind.
 Loud laughter musically died
 To stillness as along they hied.

Oh in those golden hours of ease
 How in that fine-veined marble seat

The leaves gave shadow of their form.
In that blue sky there was no storm.
The friends perhaps retraced their steps
To where the curious fountains spurt,
And with the air in bead-drops flirt.

Also there fell in deep festoons
The long gay arms of creeping plants;
And from the wall a distant sea
Gleamed out afar it seems to me,
With undulating lands between;
And from the wall a slow descent
Led to the highway where all went.



AUTUMN.

O Autumn sere, whose string the wild wind whisketh
With sombre notes like harp Æolian,
The harpings of whose string are sadder than
Summer's loud song; whose visitings the wind
Toucheth with tremulations as it flies,
Or as it lurks, or the sad string o'er-frisketh!
Thou Autumn comest with thy gorgeous train;
Thy sheaves, thy woods, thy garnished plains arise.
Thy splendid azure beameth from thy skies.
To join thy song the bird his fleet wing risketh.
With glory thou adorn'st the wide champaign.
Bound in vermilion comes thy vesture-chain.

THE BEACH AT LYNN.

Forever raging, ceasing ne,
Drift on the billows of the sea,
And on the sands towards far Nahant
The raving waters rage and pant,
Foaming in ranks of three and four
Along this fair expanse of shore,
Bringing to thee thy waves, O Lynn,
Harmonious with old Ocean's din.
The white sails wander on the deep,
And on the far horizon creep.
The light-house rock, a citadel,
And warder of the bay may dwell
Serenely while the sun shines on,
And frown the ocean's depths upon.
Like rocks but mightier did the sage
Ulysses, in the storied page
Pass, when around his dark-hulled craft
The holy ocean's wavelets laughed;
When he to Circe's isle did roam,
And wandered by the Sirens' home.

ST. HELEN'S ISLAND, MONTREAL.

Ah, bring me to those sun-lit waves
Where Death's still river flows not by,
But where the smiling sun-god paves
The waters like his radiant sky.

Trifling may seem the frail canoe,
And low the slender islets green,
And wide the foaming waters blue
May glide their verdant banks between.

For aye they flow, forever run,
Forever thus fall on the ear;
For aye the foam-flakes greet the sun,
In seasons of the green or sere.

When June bedecks yon elmy bournes
Then too the river fairest flows;
Then as it breaks, the water mourns,
And chimingly along it goes.

NOVA SCOTIAN WOODS.

To-day mild summer's mildest sun
 Smiles in the upper air;
 And in the woods the sounds of leaves
 Scarce die on breezes dare;
 And through the woods which skirt its track
 Clangs on the railway-car;
 And calls her train the partridge hen
 'Neath sky-bournes blue and fair.

The feathered fowls rejoice the sky
 Whose winds their carols bear.
 The alder mazes round the road
 In dark green vistas glare.
 The seed-fluff from the high-stalked stem
 The wandering breezes tear,
 Wandering on grassy carpeting
 'Neath sky-lands blue and fair.

 MOONRISE AT HALIFAX.

Thou hast remembered, Luna, to appear
 At thy dread hour above yon sombrous isle
 Named of MacNab, nor hast forgot thy targe
 Of warfare, coloured with a lurid red.
 So should the poet's pen, with such bright hues,
 Dipped in thy carmine, or when thou ascend'st,
 Dipped in thy mellow gold, paint Nature's moods,
 Or man's more worthy actions, leaving those
 That are less worthy, to the black of night.
 The gray light of the eventide is here,
 On mast, and sea, and slowly-moving boat.
 The hour of night approaches; the dull sounds
 Of unseen wavelets murmur round our feet.
 The wharfman leaves his labour, and returns
 To land the day-long fisher of the deep.

