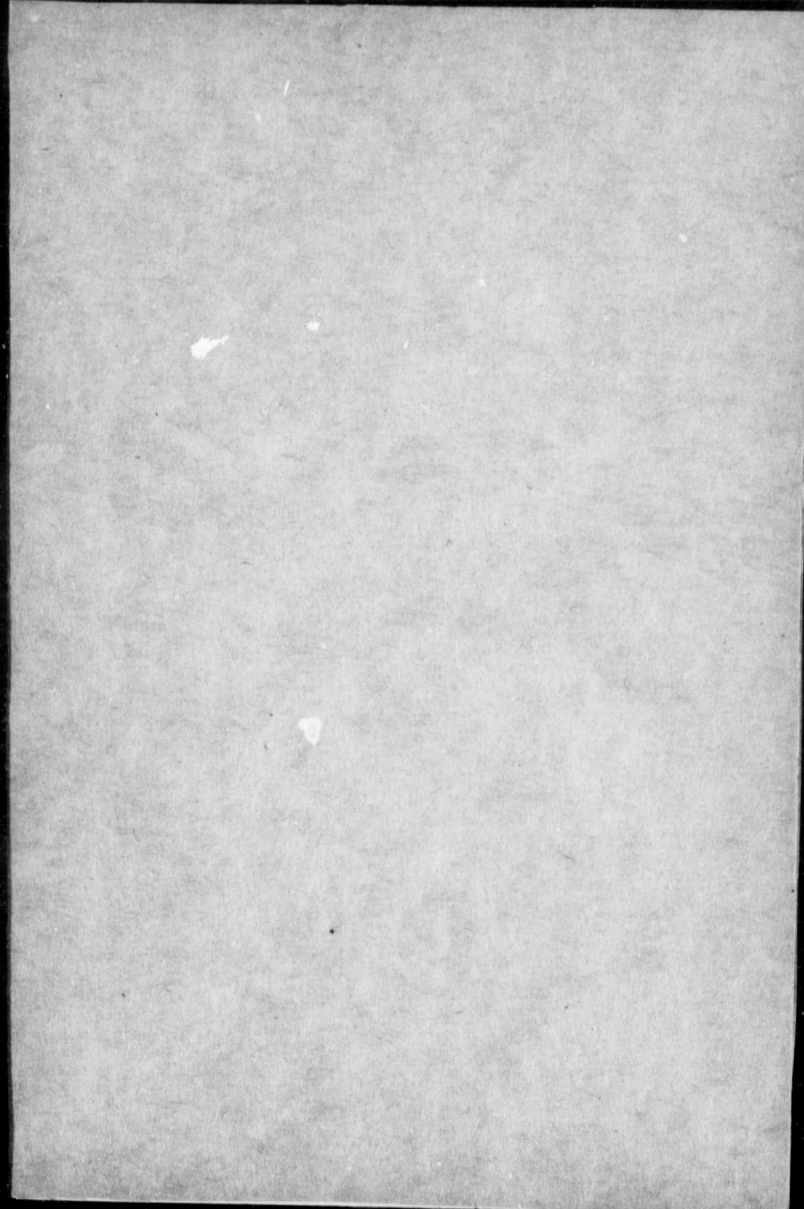


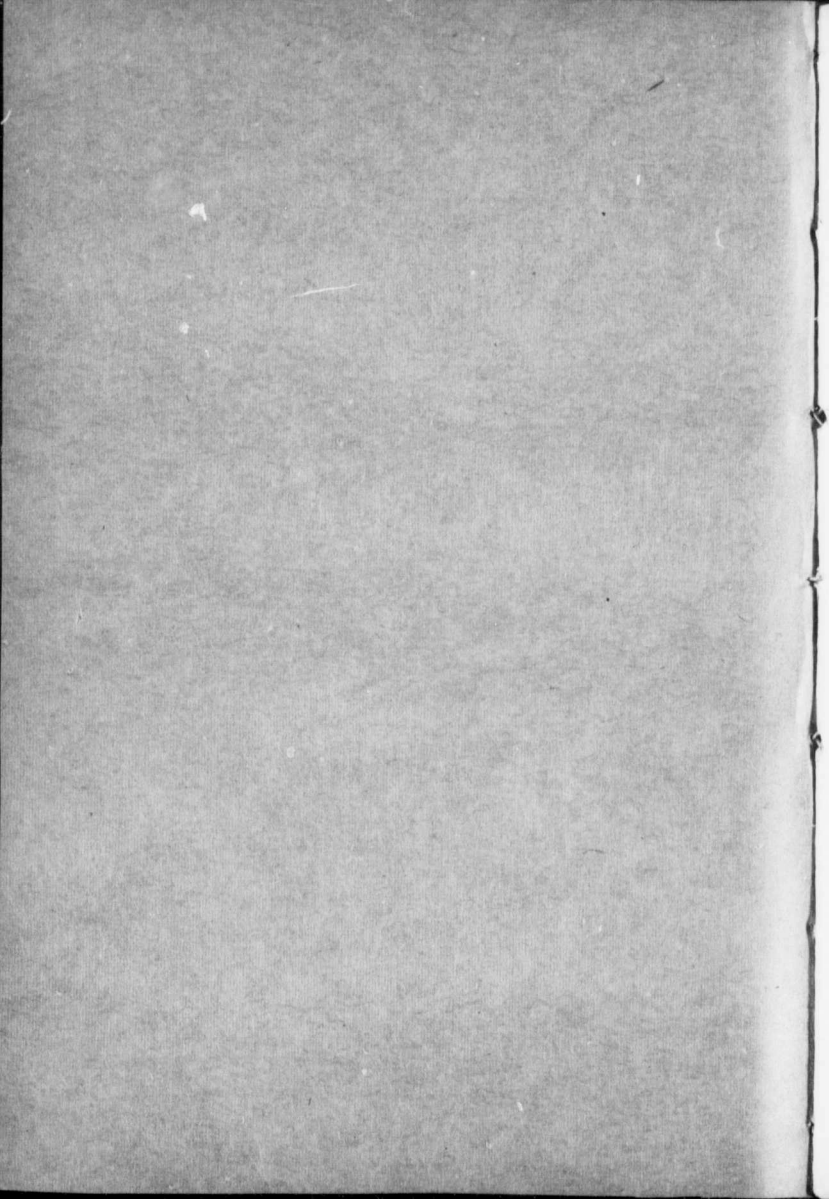
Advent Days

POEMS OF REMEMBRANCE



MARY SEYMOUR MCGEE





My dear Mrs. Walker -

with love and best wishes from
Mr. and Mrs. Masham.

Christmas
1902. }

Advent Days

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AND

Poems of Remembrance

BY

KATE SEYMOUR MACLEAN

*There's Pansies,—that's for thought,
There's Rosemary, for remembrance,
And Rue, but that's for sorrow.*

1902

THE JACKSON PRESS, KINGSTON

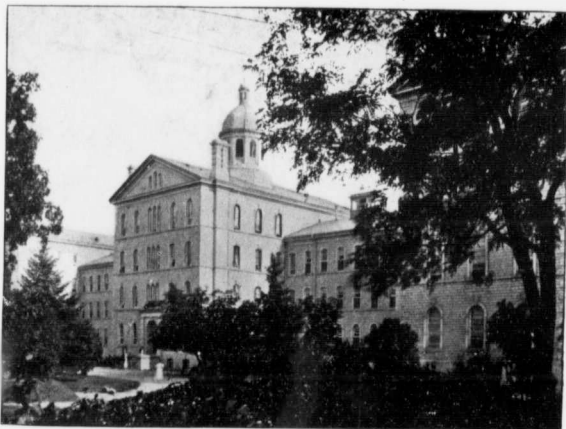
TABLE OF CONTENTS.

1. *Advent Days.*
2. *The First Snow-Fall.*
3. *The Building of the Ice-Bridge.*
4. *Premonitions.*
5. *June Roses.*
6. *Invocation.*
7. *The Old Gardener.*
8. *Sleep.*
9. *Thanksgiving.*
10. *Sunrise in the Hills.*
11. *The Solitary.*
12. *A Lighted Window.*
13. *The Lion of Lucerne.*
14. *In a Sick Room.*
15. *The Old Homestead.*
16. *Rosemary and Rue.*
17. *Suspiria.*
18. *Consolation.*
19. *The Chamber of Peace.*
20. *Even-Song.*

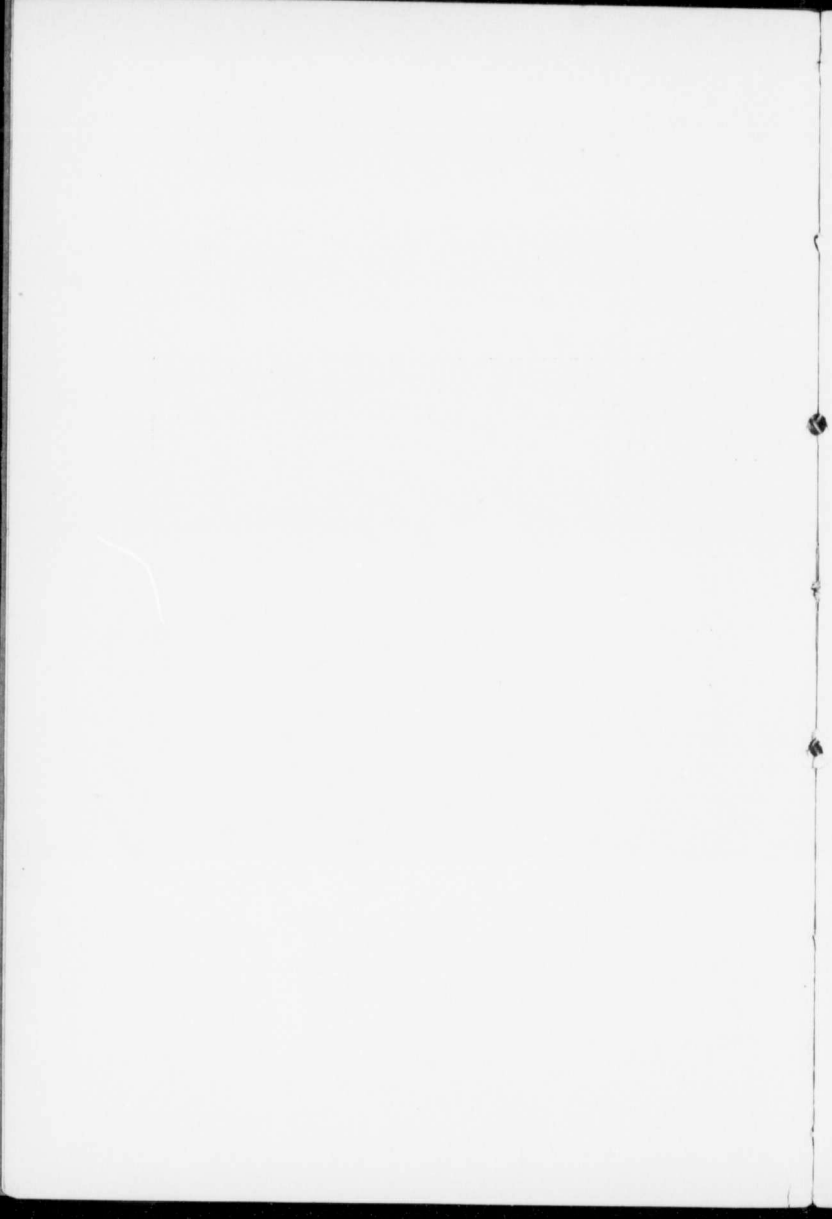
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ADVENT DAYS.

THE centuries grow old ; one after one
The circle rounds into the perfect orb,
Forging the silver links that backward run
Along the twilight slopes of hoary time,
(Which the past darkness cannot quite absorb).
To that first day of Eden's rosy prime,
When stars and seraphs, and the crystal spheres,
In the pure ether turning, sang the world's first morn.
In music still the slow-revolving years
Turn in their silver chain, unheard of men,
Bringing the birthday of the world again,—
Bringing the infant Christ which should be born.

Once more bright angels gather in the sky,
And the dull ear of night awakes to hear
The far-off sound of heavenly pinions furled,
And glad hosannas singing sweet and clear—
Peace, peace on Earth—glory to God on high,
In the new birth-song of the ransomed world.
O day sublime to which all other days
Flow down convergent since earth's days begun,
And all their separate and scattered rays,
Down the vast space, unmeasured of the sun—
The twilight of the ages --merge in one,
To kindle in these later alien skies
The white lamp of that earlier paradise !

THE FIRST SNOW-FALL.

LAST night the wind blew out of the south,
Sweet and warm as a babe's sweet mouth,
And the pasture lands and the stubble fields,
Were green with the herbage which Autumn yields.

Dull gold lay the lake in the westering sun,
And rose from the sunset clouds above,
And soft and grey when the day was done,
As the shimmering breast of a brooding dove.

But that was yesterday afternoon :
At night the fairies in silver shoon,
Sliver shoon and powdered hair,
Came slipping down through the frosty air.

And all through the hush of the purple night,
Out of each tiny powder puff,
They scattered the scintillant shining stuff,
And lo ! in the morning the world was white.

The firs were muffled in swan's-down hoods,
Like a tented army stretched the woods,
And cot and castle and hovel and hall,
And new-made grave, in its velvet pall,
The crystalline purity covered them all.

THE BUILDING OF THE ICE-BRIDGE.

WIND and tempest and rain,
Hail and the wintry blast
And the great rollers racing over the main
And the cloud rack following fast :—

Spin-drift and wind and foam
With the churning ice in the bay,
And the long long sweep from base to comb
Of the green waves plunging away.

Aye, struggle against the chain,
And shake your strong limbs free,
O riderless steeds of the flying mane,
The cavalry of the sea !

The caverns along the shore
That bristle with spear and lance,
Shudder and shrink with the trample and roar,
The thunder of your advance.

In vain your hoofs so fleet,
Your manes to the wild winds tossed,
A thousand invisible hands and feet,
The ranchmen of the frost,

The spearmen of night and cold,
To the boreal plainsmen kin,
Your heaving ranks shall silently fold,
And corral and fence ye in.

Hail and tempest and snow,
And no man follows the lead
To the unsunned pastures down below
Where the wild sea horses feed.

Spanned with its roof of glass,
And columned with malachite,
The windows are all of chrysoprase,
Like the winter sky at night.

But never a star looks through,
As the days and the seasons pass,
And never a steed looks up at the blue,
Cropping the lush sea-grass.

PREMONITIONS.

COULD you believe that in a few swift days
Of April sunshine and of April rain,
And wind and sleet that turns to rain again,
The pastures and the sheltered woodland ways
With sunny blossoms would be all ablaze ?

Among the twisted roots and rugged knees
Of ancient oaks and beeches, next the sun,
Pink-veined claytonias peep out one by one,
Where later on, wind-blown anemones,
Slender and sweet will tremble in the breeze.

One must go far afield to find the place
Where once hepaticas in starry crowds,
Rosy and violet as sunset clouds,
Each on its silver stem, swayed like a vase
O'er filled with perfume, bending in wild grace.

Wood violets, and the smooth and freckled blades
And golden-tawny disks of adder-tongue
Prick through the leafy mould,—and lightly hung
The bells of squirrel's-corn ring down the glades—
Babies and birds alone may hear the fine roulades.

In quiet pools after the warm spring rain
A lisp and whisper of a myriad throats,
Soft and incessant,—the high silver notes
Of blue birds, and the robin's bugle strain
Piping in all the fields for joy again.

Nay, but May needs nor verse nor prophecy,
Sure of her lovely folded miracle
That soon or late makes the world beautiful :
It were all one as who should stand and say,
Looking abroad on some bleak winter day,
"There will be flowers and birds in Arcady."

JUNE ROSES.

⊙ THE roses that were so sweet
In the gardens of long-past Junes !
No more under summer moons
Their dead leaves drift to my feet,
Like a haunting and tender repeat
In the music of sweet lost tunes,
Too gentle and vague for pain,
Too pensive and sad for delight,
Something elusive and bright
As the fragrance that follows the rain.

Strange that a thing so slight,
The ghost of a rose long dead
And withered and hidden from sight,
Should stir in its grave to-night,
And whisper a name unsaid,
A name unspoken for years,
That the lips could shape not for tears,
The tears that the hopeless shed, --
Should form out of shadow a face
So fair in its flower-like grace,
So sweet in its lovely repose, --
Our world, [for how little a space,]
Held once for its crowning rose.

O roses that were so sweet
In the Junes of a happier day,
Ye have passed—and can never repeat
The gladness of summers too fleet—
The love ye have taken away.

INVOCATION.

WINDS that have blown over desert sands,
Out of the east and the burning south,
That bring no dews to the thirsty lauds
Parched with more than a midsummer drouth,
Sink down again in the western main,
And leave us the rain—the welcome rain.

O clouds high piled like a fleece of wool
Bright and white in the molten skies,
Out of the wells so deep and cool
Where the icebergs drift and the seaman cries,
Stoop down and drain like a cup the main,
And give us the rain—the welcome rain.

All day let the trail of your soft robes drip
Over forest and field and bower,
All night let the earth with her thirsty lip
Drink and gladden and bless the shower,
And city and plain revived again,
Shall welcome the rain—the blessed rain.

The dry leaves rustle, the grasses fade,
The lily droops on the garden bed,
The birds sit silent and seek the shade,
And all the roadside flowers are dead.
Our hearts are fain for the patter again
On roof and pane of the blessed rain.

THE OLD GARDENER.

ALWAYS I saw him there
Among the flowery race,
The frost in his silver hair
And the wrinkles in his face :
The days are soft and fair,
And the plants that knew his care
Are green, and thrive apace,
I miss him from the place.

Early amid the dew,
And morning mists his feet
The fields and pastures knew,
And garden blossoms sweet,
The waste and wild lands grew
Golden with sun-kissed wheat,
And roses and pinks and rue
Sprang up his hands to greet.

He sowed the seeds and grain,
And watched in sun and rain
The daily miracle of birth and growing,—
Red peonies, and lilies blowing ;
Along the wall tall hollyhocks,
Blue periwinkles, purple stocks,
And all the homely flowers he knew,
Daisies, and starry asters grew,
And rows of ribbon-grasses set
With marigolds and mignonette.

The timid grass bird did not fly
From her low nest when he came by ;
The goldfinch and the throstle came,
And the oriole with his breast of flame
And year by year built in his trees :

Their curious bright eyes surveyed
Each sod uplifted by his spade ;
They gathered fearless round his knees,
And delved and foraged quite at ease,
Beside him unafraid.

Lillies and roses blow
Above his quiet head,
He will not hear nor know
In his low bed.
Something of love and grace
With that old kindly face
Is missing from the place
Since he ' is dead.

SLEEP.

⓪H, thou elusive angel, whose soft hand
Smooths out the wrinkles from the brow of care,
And folds the heavy lids on tired eyes :—
The stars are shining in the midnight skies,
Silence and peace are in the brooding air :—
Why tarriest thou in some enchanted land,
Of slumbering things that have no need of thee ?
The very leaves are sleeping on the tree,
And through the quiet of the night divine
I hear the breathing of the drowsy kine
Recumbent in close fields of dewy grass :—
The lulling sound of waves that strike and pass
The gray wet rocks along the shadowy shore,
Wave following wave;—I count them o'er and o'er,
The lispng plash, the sharp recoil at seven,
A moment's pause, and then the advance again,
As one might count the stars in sheer mid-heaven,
That flash out and retreat along that radiant plain.

And yet thou comest not, who hast upfurled
Thy robe of slumber round a sleeping world,
And drawn the star-strewn curtains of the night
About each dreamer, shutting out the light,
And hushed the strident voices of the day
For thy poor human children, wearied at their play.
Why com'st thou not to me, of all, awake,
Bringing the full cup of thy Lethe wine,
With poppies crowned, this eager thirst to slake,
And soothe the beating of this heart of mine.
The night wanes on :—the great world turns apace
Her forehead to the dawn ; and silver clear
The stars move on, each in its ordered place,
And a cool wind arises :—morn is near,—
Angel of sleep ! wilt thou not bend and hear !

THANKSGIVING.

(AL FRESCO.)

BOLO and interlude and chorus all together—
Robins in the rowan trees holding festival ;
Sparrows and thrushes, birds of sober feather
Gather for thanksgiving dinner in the fall.

Blow-ball and honeydew, chickweed and thistle
down
Furnish forth the larder when summer days are
long,
For goldfish and hummingbird, waxwing and cropple-
crown,
When catbird and purple finch fill the fields with
song.

Now the golden wheat fields are shorn and brown
with stubble,
And spider nets and dewdrops glisten in the sun,—
All the busy nest-building, and all the toil and
trouble
Feeding little eager mouths for the year is done.

Hip and haw and mullein-stalk are rifled of their
treasures,
Chickadees are piping where swung the oriole ;
Swallows on the housetop take preliminary measures
For the annual flitting toward the southern goal.

All the trees are burning in russet reds and yellows,
Purple blooms and umbers flaming banners flaunt ;
Crows in the fir-trees, shrewd loquacious fellows,
Solemnly discuss their usual autumn jaunt.

Sunny days grows shorter, and lengthened shadows
sober

Early veil the landscape, and bring the evening
cheer ;

And so the wide world bourgeons, and mellows in
October,

And brings the glad thanksgiving of the ripe round
year.

SUNRISE IN THE HILLS.

"As the morning spread upon the mountains."

INTO the morning land we ride,
Morning spread on the mountain tops,
Stand at gaze,—and the vision stops
Only at last where the level tide,
And the lengthened line of the foot-hills drops
To the far horizon's circle wide.

These are the gates to the mountain land,
These are the adamantine doors,
Built from the canon's rocky floors,
That silently open on either hand,
And silently close us in behind.
Here, where the eagle and the wind
Alone may winnow the steep expanse,
We climb and follow, ascending slow,
While the pines recede in a stately dance,
Row behind row in the gorge below,
Rank behind rank as we advance.

The sullen roar of the cataract,
Dull in the distance seems to die,
And the glacier's wide aerial tract
Falls like a river out of the sky ;
A lovely river of rose and pearl,
With cloud-hewn bridges of sapphire spanned,
And piers and arches of onyx and beryl,
For the pilgrim dwellers in sunrise land.

Billows of mist beneath are curled
Like the flags of a vanquished and flying foe,
(Spirits of evil may vanish so,)
As we behold from the mountain height
The meeting place of the day and night,
The finite, and the infinite,
The top and pinnacle of the world.

THE SOLITARY.

⓪H, Fir-tree standing aloof and remote from thy fellows,
Sombre and dark in the sunlight, and black in the twilight shadows,
Dusk are thy sad-colored robes, clothed to the foot ;
and the murmur
Stifled, and ever renewed like the hopeless sob of the mourner,—
Long, long indrawn sighs suppressed—the sound of thy lonely wailing—
The murmur of myriad leaves in a sylvan grief un-availing.

Here was the ancient forest where a thousand spires ascended,
Here were the leafy peaks where the lights of morning and evening blended,
Among whose giant boughs a roar like the sound of the ocean
Gathered and broke, and gathered again in the storm wind's rhythmic motion ;
Or under the stars at midnight whispered and talked together,
When all the balsamy air was sweet in the blossoming summer weather.

Sturdy and grand were the hill-side trees as the pines in the mountain canons,
Thy mates of the ancient forest—thy beautiful tall companions,—
But bleak is the desolate woodland, and shorn of its vernal glory,
And none are there to remember and tell it again in legend and song and story,—

For what the red man loved and left in its stately
pride undiminished
The camp of the wandering hunter fired, and the axe
of the woodman finished.

Oh, Fir-tree standing alone, the last of all thy fel-
lows,
Sombre and dark in the sunlight, and black in the
twilight shadows,
I hear thy muffled voice in the summer midnight
mourning,
For the dead and the departed for whom there is no
returning,—
The birds sing loud in the thickets, and June is
bright with flowers,
But for thee and me come never again the friends
that once were ours.

A LIGHTED WINDOW.

ACROSS the terraced garden wall
Faint lights, and fainter shadows fall,
The trees show in a tender gloom
From this high window over all.

The shaded lamp, the silent room,
Across the intervening space
Glimmers a star above the place,
Making the darkness less forlorn.

While one who sets a wistful face
Against the pane to watch for morn,
Whose thoughts are prayers, whose looks beseech,
Stretches warm hands, as if to reach.

And drag from those inexorable powers
That rule these tangled lives of ours,
On their far thrones, remote, serene,
Some cure divine for human pain.

Ah, why should tears and prayers be vain !
Still the grim fates advance between ;
Shadows divide us each from each,—
There is no voice, nor sign, nor speech,—

And the dumb night enfolds again
The terraced garden and the plain,
And the pale trees in tender gloom,
The shaded lamp, the silent room.

THE LION OF LUCERNE.

FAR up the ragged mountain side,
Beyond the city and the plain,
Above the blue lake's shimmering tide,
Couches the watcher of the slain.

Some master spirit long ago
Shaped the grand form, the mighty head,
The symbol of a nation's woe
In memory of ~~the~~ warrior's dead.

her

Carved from her granite cliffs and set
Midway between the earth and sky,
Where mountain storms and tempests fret
The names that live in history.

The clouds drift by that rocky nook,
The sunshine gilds the tawny main,
And the deep eyes where dwells the look
Of inextinguishable pain.

The Alps uplift their snowy peaks
Over the graves of legends hoar,
The muse of history faintly speaks
Above the age's rush and roar.

The glories of the past are gone,
Her heroes dead no more return ;
The genius of the race lives on
In the dead Lion of Lucerne.

IN A SICK ROOM.

THE voices of the common day—
The sparrow's chirp, the children's glee
Sound faint and strange and far away :
The squirrel in the hickory tree
Scolds shrilly from his perch, but we
Within this shaded silent room
Are in a world of tender gloom.

Outside the tide of life goes on,
But here, unmarked of moon or sun,
The days and nights—sunset and dawn
Mingle together, and are one,
Where speech and song are over and done.
A strange dim corner out of the way
From the world of work, and laughter and play.

For this still form, and this dear head,
These languid hands, these weary feet,
By sleep and silence comforted
From fevered pulses' weary beat,
And cooled with roses, dewy sweet—
This makes a world of gentle care,
And tender trouble seem sweet and fair.

O angel of the touch divine,
Whose white hands health and healing shed,
Give us of thy ambrosial wine,—
Fold thy strong wings beside this bed—
Stoop down and bless this drooping head,
And for the languor and the pain
Give health and life and joy again !

THE OLD HOMESTEAD.

THE old red farm house stands aloof
From the busy town and the hurrying throng;
The woodbine clambers along its roof,
And the sunshine weaves its luminous woof
In its shadowing elm trees all day long.

Here are the rooms where the children slept,
With the blossoming maples peeping in,
Here is the press where the toys were kept,
But where are the faces that laughed or wept,
And the voices that made such a merry din !

In the long elm branches the oriole swung,
The robin piped in the orchard near,
Over the meadow the bobolink hung,—
The spirit of gladness swayed and sung,
And the summer lasted the whole round year.

Here is the door to grandmother's room,—
Refuge for every childish woe,
And still there sleeps in its hallowed gloom
A haunting breath of the faint perfume
Of the sweet herbs gathered so long ago.

Savory, thyme and lavender,
Tied in bundles and shrunk and dry,
But fragrant still with the soul of her,—
The children's gentle comforter
In the olden days so long gone by.

The dear names carved on the old beech tree
Are hid under lices that time has drawn,—
Names that are now but a memory,
Friends of my youth to you and me,
Of the happy days and the loved ones gone.

The old red farm house stands alone,
In its shadowing trees as it stood of yore,
But the forms that moved, and the eyes that shone
Are sleeping under the churchyard stone,
Its ancient dwellers come no more.

ROSEMARY AND RUE.

THEY do not deem the dead can hear,
Or that the shut eyes can look through
This heavy rosemary and rue,
And see the candles shining clear
O'er faces that once held me dear,
And eyes that wept their last adieu
O'er this dead rosemary and rue.

My hands are crossed and still and cold ;
The straight folds fall from head to feet ;—
The wan white rose is deathly sweet
They gave to my relaxing hold.
The damps are chill with churchyard mould :
I only feel the fragrant dew
Of withered rosemary and rue.

The wind blows through the churchyard grass ;
I hear it when the nights are still ;
I hear the crickets chirping shrill,
I hear low words and laughter pass,
And gladness in that house, alas,
Where I have nothing more to do,
Under the rosemary and rue.

They think the dead cannot awake, —
[There's neither sleep nor waking here,
Nor hope, nor happiness, nor fear, —
My heart is still and will not break.]
The wheels of life go on the same, —
'Tis I am fallen from out the frame
Of living things, and am become
A name, a shadow, blind and dumb,
For whom no more the skies are blue,
Or the light sweet, or any hue,
Or scent of flower, or song of bird,
Or human voice hath any word,
But only rosemary and rue.

In that familiar home of mine
The guests are blithe,—the candles shine :—
 ‘It is the common lot’ they said,
 Remembrance rests not with the dead ;—
 We wept, and we are comforted.
Yea, so, sweet friends, grieve not,—and yet,
Without remembrance or regret
I would the dead too might forget,
Sleeping full sound beneath the yew,
 And the strewn rosemary and rue.

SUSPIRIA.

OVER and over the round globe turns, and the
months pass on, and the years,
And the bountiful spring returns, and the summer's
breath is sweet ;—

It is we whose faces are faded and changed, whose
cheeks are channel'd with tears.

Whose dancing steps from the fields are estranged
that we trod with our childish feet.

Only our eyes are heavy and dim, and see not the
glory of old,

Dull are our ears that the seraphim sang to in
years that are gone,

And knowledge slow gathered with pain turns to
bitter ashes and mould :—

Out of darkness to darkness again, and the curtain
that lifts not is drawn.

As the beast dieth, dieth the race,—is there any pre-
eminence there—

Each lying low in his place in the unpulsing bosom
of earth ?—

What hath he gained who hath spent the strength
of his manhood in care,—

Hath he found for his labour content, and of life
and of living the worth ?

The sun moves on in its path, and the moon draws
the affluent tide,

And human sorrow and wrath and endless endeavour
and crime

Are pebbles and shells on the shore that gleam and
are swept aside,

Swallowed and lost for evermore in the hungry
ocean of time.

CONSOLATION.

IF she should come to me when the spent day
With all its garish lights, and troubled noise is
And sit beside my bed, and gently lay [done,
Her thin cool hand upon my fevered one,—
Though something of the awe of that dread place—
The grave's long rest and sleep were round her clad,
I should not fear to look upon her face ;—
I should be glad—I should be only glad.

She might not speak to me, perhaps, nor tell,
Even if she would, of that divine repose,—
The meadows where He leads His flock to dwell
Beside the stream of life that gently flows,
Where there are neither sadness, tears or sighs,
Or pain, or sorrow, or discouragement,
But I should see the rest in her dear eyes,
The utter rest—and I should be content.

Nor should I feel my heart's warm pulses froze
With a strange fear, although the candle flame
Flare backward, and each picture in its frame
Stir, as if smitten by the wind that blows
Before the coming of the shrouded dead.
But I should murmur that beloved name,
And once more softly pillow my tired head
On that dear breast whose love is strong as death,
And as a child his mother comforteth—
Oh lost and dear, I should be comforted.

THE CHAMBER OF PEACE.

"And the pilgrims they laid in a fair upper chamber whose windows were toward the sun-rising, and the name of the Chamber was Peace."—Pilgrim's Progress.

HERE is an island of ease,
Here is a harbor from pain
Set in the midst of unrestful seas
That clamor around it in vain.
Here where labors and tumults cease,
Enter, and shut the door ;
The light is the light of the sunrise shore,
And the name of the chamber is peace.

After long patience and pain,
Spirit unvanquished so long,
Weary of heart, and of brain
And the mocking of sorrow with song,—
Here, at this door is thy final release :—
Enter, the stairway is steep
But the pillow is soft, and the slumber is deep,
And the name of the chamber is peace.

Still is the chamber and sweet,
White is the coverlet drawn,
Where tall lilies stand at the head and the feet,
And the windows look into the dawn.
Not here shall the noise of the battle increase
Nor thy heart be shaken again
By the sound of the struggle, the cry of the slain :—
Sleep !—the voices of daylight cease,
And the name of the chamber is peace.

EVEN-SONG.

⓪ TOIL worn hands, and tired eyes,
Which saw the faint gray dawn arise,
And watch the slow-descending sun,
Their daily task-work still undone, —
Take heart, to weariest days and long
Cometh at last the even-song.

And ye who wake to feel again
The burden of the same dull pain,
The loss renewed, the hopeless grief,
To which kind sleep brought short relief
When visions of the lost ones throng, —
Faith comes, and hope with even-song.

And ye whose desolate souls retain
The empty shrine, the ruined fane,
From whom life's young ideals are fled,
Why seek the living 'mid the dead ;
Come to this altar and be strong,
It shall be light at even-song.

Forgive us, Lord, for Thy dear Son
The evils of our lives foredone,
And bring us at life's eventide
Close, and still closer to Thy side,
With all life's mystery and wrong
Merged in the peace of even-song.

