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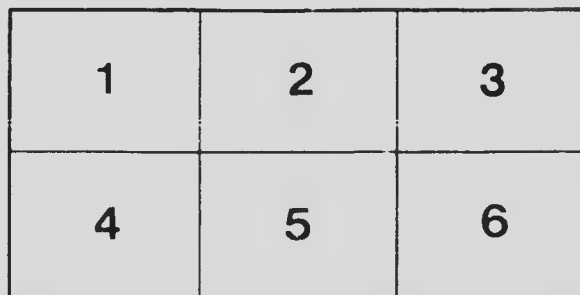
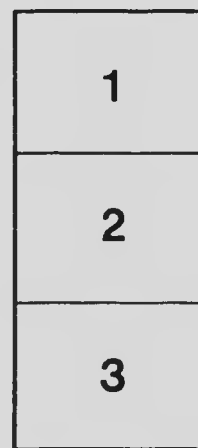
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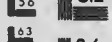
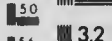
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EDITED WITH NOTES BY

JOHN JEFFRIES, B.A.

ENGLISH SPECIALIST, JARVIS COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE,  
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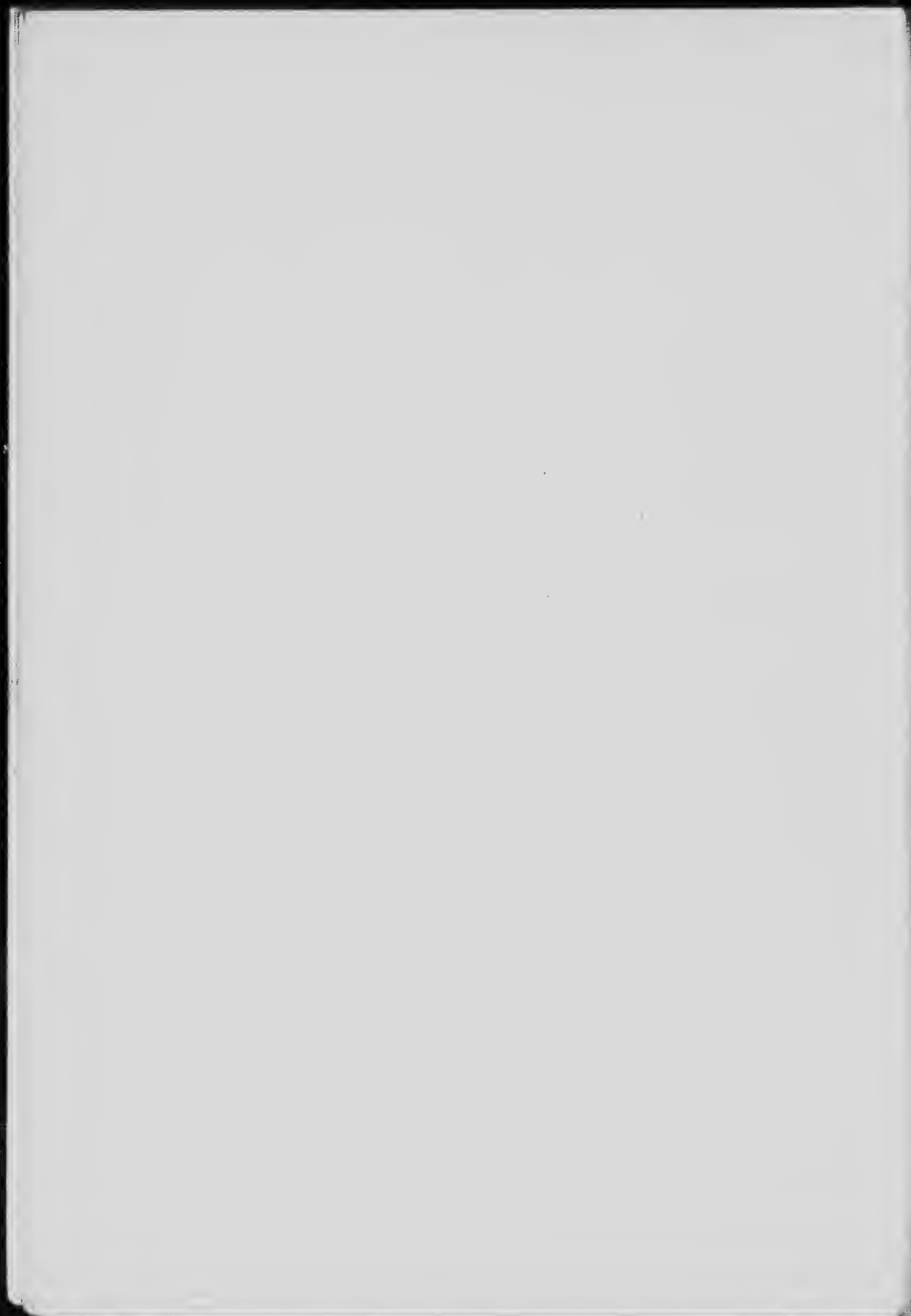
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SOHRAB AND RUSTUM



## INTRODUCTION

### LIFE OF ARNOLD

MATTHEW ARNOLD, poet and critic, was born at Laleham, on the Thames, December 24, 1822. His father was Dr. Thomas Arnold, who became the famous headmaster of Rugby and a distinguished historian of Rome. In 1828 the Arnolds removed from Laleham to Rugby, and in 1833 they made their summer home in Westmoreland, in the shadow of the hills and near the margin of the streams and lakes so dear to Wordsworth. Young Arnold received most of his earlier education at Rugby, the character of whose school-life has been described, to the delight of many boys, in *Tom Brown's School Days*. In 1841 he went to Oxford University, having been elected the previous year to an open scholarship at Balliol College. There, as at school, he showed marked ability, winning a scholarship and also the Newdigate prize for English verse. His university life must have been a pleasant one, for there he was associated with such men as Thomas Hughes, John Shairp, the Froudes, Bishop Fraser, Dean Church, John Henry Newman, and most intimately with Arthur Hugh Clough, whose untimely death he mourned in *Thyrsis*. In 1844 he graduated with honors, and next year he was elected a fellow of Oriel College. He taught for a short time at Rugby. In 1847 he became private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, and remained

so until 1851, when he was appointed an inspector of schools. From that time he was chiefly engaged in educational work, serving most efficiently as inspector and commissioner for more than thirty-five years. In connection with these duties, he frequently travelled on the continent, to study aims and methods of various school systems, with the view of revising and improving that of his own country. He visited the United States and Canada twice, and delivered several important lectures on literary and educational subjects. He died suddenly of heart disease at Liverpool on April 15, 1888. He was buried at Laleham, the place of his birth.

Arnold's first volume of poetry, published in 1849, was entitled *The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems*; the second, in 1852, *Empedocles on Etna, and Other Poems*; and the third, in 1853, *Poems*, made up mainly of those already published. Thereafter he added but little to his poetic work. His first important volume of prose was issued in 1865, under the title of *Essays in Criticism*. This was followed by a number of prose discourses, for he was a constant writer up to the time of his death. His collected works of all kinds, exclusive of his letters, comprise eleven volumes.

It is in his letters that we find revealed most clearly and fully Arnold's personality, concerning which George E. Woodberry has written: "Few who did not know Arnold could have been prepared for the revelation of a nature so true, so amiable, so dutiful. In every relation of private life he is shown to have been a man of exceptional constancy and plainness. The letters are mainly home letters; but a few friendships also yielded up their hoard, and thus the circle of private life is made complete. Every one must take delight



in the mental association with Arnold in the scenes of his existence, thus daily exposed, and in his family affections. A nature warm to its own, kindly to all, cheerful, fond of sport and fun, and always fed from pure fountains, and with it a character so founded upon the rock, so humbly serviceable, so continuing in power and grace, must wake in all the responses of happy appreciation, and leave the charm of memory."

### SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

**Composition and Publication.** — *Sohrab and Rustum* appeared in the volume of verse published by Arnold in 1853. In a letter to Mrs. Foster, dated April, 1853, he said: —

"I am occupied with a thing that gives me more pleasure than anything I have ever done yet, which is a good sign, but whether I shall not ultimately spoil it by being obliged to strike it off in fragments instead of at one heat, I cannot quite say." In a letter to his mother, May, 1853, he wrote: "All my spare time has been spent on a poem which I have just finished, and which I think by far the best thing I have yet done, and I think it will be generally liked; though one can never be sure of this. I have had the greatest pleasure in composing it, a rare thing with me, and, as I think, a good test of the pleasure what you write is likely to afford to others."

**Source of the Poem.** — *Sohrab and Rustum* records an episode found in the story of the exploits of Persian kings and heroes recounted in the great Persian epic, the *Sháh Náme*, written by Firdausi towards the end of the tenth century. This latter poem purports to narrate the achievements of the heroes of Persia during

a period of thirty-six centuries. It is to Persian literature what the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are to the Greek, and the *Æneid* to the Latin. It was gathered from the traditions of the country, and describes the most romantic and marvellous adventures with a vividness and a wealth of color peculiar to oriental writings. The chief hero of the *Sháh Námeih* is the strong and valorous Rustum; and the most dramatic of his adventures is the one recorded in Arnold's poem.

Rustum was the son of Zal, champion of Seistan, a district of Persia. While a mere child, he killed a raging elephant. After succeeding to the place of his father and choosing his famous steed Ruksh (or Raksh), he performed prodigious feats in defence of his kings and native country. He found a spring in a burning desert, slew a dragon eighty feet long, killed an enchantress, and achieved other similar triumphs. While hunting, on a certain occasion, in the hostile land of Turan, he lost his faithful steed, and during his search for it he was received with honor by the king of Samengán, a neighboring Turanian city. At the royal palace he met the beautiful princess Takmineh, and married her. Being summoned home before the birth of his son, Rustum left for him a bracelet by which he was to be able to recognize him. When Sohrab, the son, was born, his mother, fearing that the child might be taken away to Iran, pretended that it was a daughter. Sohrab grew up unknown to his father, and became a great warrior. On learning that his father was the renowned Rustum, he became ambitious to see him and to help make him King of Persia. He collected a large army and set out in search of him. His purpose was to fight his way against the Persians until Rustum should be sent against him, when he

would make himself known to his father and form an alliance with him. The hostile armies met on the shore of the Oxus River. At this point Arnold's poem begins.

**Critical Comments.** — Mr. Andrew Lang's appreciation of *Sohrab and Rustum* may be seen in the following critique: "*Sohrab and Rustum*, the tale of the fatal combat which the old Persian chief and his unknown son wage against each other, approaches more nearly, I think, to the spirit and manner of Homer than does anything else in our English literature. The strong, plain blank verse is almost a substitute for the hexameter. The story is told with Homer's pellucid simplicity, with his deep and clear-sighted sympathy with all conditions of men, with his delight in nature as man's friend and life-long companion. The spirit of the narrative, too, is Homeric, and the fall of the young warrior, in the pride of his beauty and strength, his death, assuaged by resignation to fate and by consciousness of a courageous strife, are subjects of the sort that often moved the singer of the *Iliad* to his most moving strains. The similes are, in spirit, directly borrowed from Homer. The Ionian compares Nausicaa, the princess of Phæacia, to a tall palm-tree growing by Apollo's shrine. And Sohrab is compared to

“Some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight,  
Which in a queen's secluded garden throws  
Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,  
By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound.”

Another appreciative critic has said: "Arnold has illustrated with remarkable success his ideas of that unity which gratifies the poetical sense, and has approached very close to his Greek models in his epic or narrative poem of *Sohrab and Rustum*. Here we have a

theme which is intensely tragic, and which challenges our sympathy at once. A young hero, in search of his warrior father, whom he has never seen, meets him in deadly single combat between the lines of contending armies; but it is only after he has received a mortal wound by his father's hand, that the relationship is discovered. The accessories are in keeping with the wildness of the main incident. The weird shapes of the Tartar hordes and of the Iranian hosts, awaiting the event of the combat, are dimly seen on the edge of the desert through the mists of the Oxus; while, in sharp contrast with the passions and anguish awakened in the tragedy enacted on its banks, the mighty river maintains its calm and majestic flow out 'into the frosty starlight,' and typifies the inexorableness of fate. The treatment, in smooth and simple verse, is strictly subordinated and adapted to the action of the theme, and the whole is admirably calculated to impart that totality of impression which Mr. Arnold and the Greeks esteemed so highly. It has been said of this poem that it is 'the nearest analogue in English to the rapidity of action, plainness of thought, plainness of diction, and nobleness of Homer.' "

---

The *Sháh Náme* of Firdausi, translated by James Atkinson, which contains a full account of the adventures of Rostum, is published by Routledge & Son, London, in *Sir John Lubbock's Hundred Books*.

## SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

AND the first gray of morning fill'd the east,  
And the fog rose out of the Oxus<sup>1</sup> stream.  
But all the Tartar<sup>2</sup> camp along the stream  
Was hush'd, and still the men were plung'd in sleep;  
5 Sohrab alone, he slept not; all night long  
He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed;  
But when the gray dawn stole into his tent,  
He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,  
And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent,  
10 And went abroad into the cold wet fog,  
Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's<sup>3</sup> tent.  
Through the black Tartar tents he pass'd, which  
stood  
Clustering like beehives on the low flat strand  
Of Oxus, where the summer floods o'erflow  
15 When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere<sup>4</sup>;

---

<sup>1</sup> *Oxus*. The principal river of Central Asia, 1400 miles in length, and emptying into the Sea of Aral. It separates Turan from Iran, or the Persian Empire.

<sup>2</sup> *Tartar*. The Tartars, or Black Tartars, fierce Turanian tribes, who, on being overthrown in China, moved westwards and founded an empire which stretched from the Oxus to the desert of Shamo.

<sup>3</sup> *Peran-Wisa* (Pē'rān-Wē'sä). A Turanian chief, and the commander of King Afrasiab's Tartar forces.

<sup>4</sup> *Pamere*. The Pamir is an extensive plateau region, 13,000 feet high, in Central Asia, north-east of Afghanistan. The Oxus River has its source in this plateau.

Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er that low  
strand,  
And to a hillock came, a little back  
From the stream's brink — the spot where first a  
boat,  
Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the land.  
20 The men of former times had crown'd the top  
With a clay fort; but that was fall'n, and now  
The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,  
A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.  
And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood  
25 Upon the thick piled carpets in the tent,  
And found the old man sleeping on his bed  
Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.  
And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step  
Was dull'd; for he slept light, an old man's sleep;  
30 And he rose quickly on one arm, and said: —  
“Who art thou? for it is not yet clear dawn.  
Speak! is there news, or any night alarm?”  
But Sohrab came to the bedside, and said: —  
“Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa! it is I.  
35 The sun is not yet risen, and the foe  
Sleep; but I sleep not; all night long I lie  
Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.  
For so did King Afrasiab<sup>1</sup> bid me seek  
Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,  
40 In Samarcand,<sup>2</sup> before the army march'd;  
And I will tell thee what my heart desires.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Afrasiab* (Afrä'siäb). King of the Tartars, who carried on a long struggle between Turan and Iran. The ground of the war was the obligation to blood-revenge for the death of an Iranian by a Turanian.

<sup>2</sup> *Samarcand*. A city of Turkestan, still important and belonging to Russia.

Thou know'st if, since from Ader-baijan<sup>1</sup> first  
 I came among the Tartars and bore arms,  
 I have still served Afrasiab well, and shown,  
 45 At my boy's years, the courage of a man.  
 This too thou know'st, that while I still bear on  
 The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,  
 And beat the Persians back on every field,  
 I seek one man, one man, and one alone —  
 50 Rustum, my father; who I hoped should greet,  
 Should one day greet, upon some well-fought field,  
 His not unworthy, not inglorious son.  
 So I long hoped, but him I never find.  
 Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask.  
 55 Let the two armies rest to-day; but I  
 Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords  
 To meet me, man to man; if I prevail,  
 Rustum will surely hear it; if I fall —  
 Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin.  
 60 Dim is the rumor of a common fight,  
 Where host meets host, and many names are sunk;  
 But of a single combat fame speaks clear."  
 He spoke; and Peran-Wisa took the hand  
 Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and said: —  
 65 "O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine!  
 Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,  
 And share the battle's common chance with us  
 Who love thee, but must press forever first,  
 In single fight incurring single risk,  
 70 To find a father thou hast never seen?  
 That were far best, my son, to stay with us  
 Unmurmuring; in our tents, while it is war,  
 And when 'tis truce, then in Afrasiab's towns.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ader-baijan* (*Azer-bi'yän*). A province of north-western Persia, on the Turanian frontier.

But, if this one desire indeed rules all,  
 75 To seek out Rustum — seek him not through fight!  
 Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,  
 O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son!  
 But far hence seek him, for he is not here.  
 For now it is not as when I was young,  
 80 When Rustum was in front of every fray;  
 But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,  
 In Seistan,<sup>1</sup> with Zal,<sup>2</sup> his father old.  
 Whether that<sup>3</sup> his own mighty strength at last  
 Feels the abhorr'd approaches of old age,  
 85 Or in<sup>4</sup> some quarrel with the Persian King,<sup>5</sup>  
 There go! — Thou wilt not? Yet my heart forbodes  
 Danger or death awaits thee on this field.  
 Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost  
 To us; fain therefore send thee hence, in peace  
 90 To seek thy father, not seek single fights  
 In vain; — but who can keep the lion's cub  
 From ravening, and who govern Rustum's son?  
 Go, I will grant thee what thy heart desires."  
 So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand, and left  
 95 His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay;

---

<sup>1</sup> *Seistan* (Sā-ēs-tān'). A region partly in modern eastern Persia and partly in south-western Afghanistan. It was so divided by British arbitration in 1872. The territory was held by Rustum's family, feudatory to the Persian kings.

<sup>2</sup> *Zal* (Zāl). According to the *Shāh Nāmeḥ*, Zal was born with snow-white hair. This so displeased his father, Sām, that the child was exposed to death on the Elburz Mountains. He was miraculously preserved by a griffin, and was afterwards reclaimed by his repentant father. He later married the Princess Rudā'-beh of Seistan, and became the father of Rustum.

<sup>3</sup> *Whether that*. Either because.

<sup>4</sup> *Or in*. Or on account of.

<sup>5</sup> *Persian King*. For his name see line 223.



And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat  
 He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet,  
 And threw a white cloak round him, and he took  
 In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword;  
 100 And on his head he set his sheepskin cap,  
 Black, glossy, curl'd, the fleece of Kara-Kul<sup>1</sup>;  
 And raised the curtain of his tent, and call'd  
 His herald to his side, and went abroad.  
 The sun by this had risen, and clear'd the fog  
 105 From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands.  
 And from their tents the Tartar horsemen filed  
 Into the open plain; so Haman bade —  
 Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa ruled  
 The host, and still was in his lusty prime.  
 110 From their black tents, long files of horse, they  
 stream'd;

As when some gray November morn the files,  
 In marching order spread, of long-neck'd cranes  
 Stream over Casbin<sup>2</sup> and the southern slopes  
 Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,<sup>3</sup>  
 115 Or some froze<sup>4</sup> Caspian reed bed, southward bound  
 For the warm Persian seaboard — so they stream'd.  
 The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,  
 First, with black sheepskin caps and with long spears;  
 Large men, large steeds; who from Bokhara<sup>5</sup> come

<sup>1</sup> *Kara-Kul*. A district south-west of Bokhara, noted for its pasturage.

<sup>2</sup> *Casbin* (Käz-bin). A city of Persia, on the main route to Europe. The Elburz Mountains are just north of the city.

<sup>3</sup> *Aralian estuaries*. The Aral Sea is a brackish inland body of water, without any outlet, into which the Oxus and the Sir rivers empty.

<sup>4</sup> *Froze*. Frozen.

<sup>5</sup> *Bokhara*. Bokhara and Khiva are states of central Asia, in the vicinity of the Oxus River and the Aral Sea.

- 120 And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.<sup>1</sup>  
 Next, the more temperate Toorkmuns<sup>2</sup> of the south,  
 The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,  
 And those from Attruck<sup>3</sup> and the Caspian sands;  
 Light men and on light steeds, who only drink
- 125 The acrid milk of camels, and their wells.  
 And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came  
 From far, and a more doubtful service own'd;  
 The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks  
 Of the Jaxartes,<sup>4</sup> men with scanty beards
- 130 And close-set skullcaps; and those wilder hordes  
 Who roam o'er Kipchak<sup>5</sup> and the northern waste,  
 Kalmucks<sup>6</sup> and unkempt Kuzzaks,<sup>7</sup> tribes who stray  
 Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,<sup>8</sup>  
 Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere;
- 135 These all filed out from camp into the plain.  
 And on the other side the Persians form'd; —  
 First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seem'd,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Milk of mares.* An intoxicating liquor made from mares' or camels' milk fermented and distilled. It is called Koumiss, and is much used by the Tartars.

<sup>2</sup> *Toorkmuns.* A branch of the Turkish race found chiefly in Persia and Afghanistan.

<sup>3</sup> *Attruck.* A river in northern Persia emptying into the Caspian Sea.

<sup>4</sup> *Jaxartes.* A river rising in the Pamere plateau and flowing into the Aral Sea. It is called the Sir, or Sihon River.

<sup>5</sup> *Kipchak.* A kingdom on the Oxus River.

<sup>6</sup> *Kalmucks.* Mongolian tribes of western Siberia.

<sup>7</sup> *Kuzzaks.* Now generally called Cossacks, a military people inhabiting the steppes of Russia and, in lesser numbers, parts of Asia. As light cavalry they form an important part of the Russian army, and are used chiefly in skirmishing operations and in the protection of frontiers. The word means "Riders."

<sup>8</sup> *Kirghizzes.* A nomadic people dwelling in south-eastern Russia, western Siberia, and western China.

The Ilyats of Khorassan<sup>1</sup>; and behind,  
 The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,  
 140 Marshal'd battalions bright in burnish'd steel.  
 But Peran-Wisa with his herald came,  
 Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,  
 And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.  
 And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw  
 145 That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,  
 He took his spear, and to the front he came,  
 And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them where they  
 stood.

And the old Tartar came upon the sand  
 Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said. - -  
 150 "Ferood. and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear!  
 Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.  
 But choose a champion from the Persian lords  
 To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man."  
 As, in the country, on a morn in June,  
 155 When the dew glistens on the pearled ears,  
 A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy —  
 So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,  
 A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran  
 Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they loved.  
 160 But as a troop of peddlers, from Cabool,<sup>2</sup>  
 Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,<sup>3</sup>  
 That vast sky-neighboring mountain of milk snow;  
 Crossing so high, that, as they mount, they pass  
 Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,

<sup>1</sup> *Khorassan*. A province of north-eastern Persia, bordering on Asiatic Russia on the north and Afghanistan on the east. It is largely a desert. The word means: "The Land of the Sun."

<sup>2</sup> *Cabool*. The capital of Afghanistan, noted as a commercial and strategic centre.

<sup>3</sup> *Indian Caucasus*. The Hindu Kush Mountains.

- 165 Chok'd by the air, and scarce can they themselves  
 . Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulber-  
 ries —  
 In single file they move, and stop their breath,  
 For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging  
 snows —  
 So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.
- 170 And to Ferood his brother chiefs came up  
 To counsel; Gudurz and Zoarrah came,  
 And Feraburz, who ruled the Persian host  
 Second, and was the uncle of the King;  
 These came and counselled, and then Gudurz said: —
- 175 “Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up,  
 Yet champion have we none to match this youth.  
 He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.  
 But Rustum came last night; aloof he sits  
 And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart.
- 180 Him will I seek, and carry to his ear  
 The Tartar challenge, and this young man's name.  
 Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.  
 Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up.”
- So spake he; and Ferood stood forth and cried: —
- 185 “Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said!  
 Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man.”
- He spake: and Peran-Wisa turr'd, and strode  
 Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.  
 But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,  
 190 And cross'd the camp which lay behind, and reach'd,  
 Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.  
 Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,  
 Just pitch'd; the high pavilion in the midst  
 Was Rustum's, and his men lay camp'd around.
- 195 And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found  
 Rustum; his morning meal was done, but still

- The table stood before him, charged with food —  
 A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,  
 And dark-green melons; and there Rustum sate  
 200 Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist,  
 And play'd with it; but Gudurz came and stood  
 Before him; and he look'd, and saw him stand,  
 And with a cry sprang up and dropp'd the bird,  
 And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said: —  
 205 "Welcome! these eyes could see no better sight.  
 What news? but sit down first, and eat and drink."  
 But Gudurz stood in the tent door, and said: —  
 "Not now! a time will come to eat and drink,  
 But not to-day; to-day has other needs.  
 210 The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze;  
 For from the Tartars is a challenge brought  
 To pick a champion from the Persian lords  
 To fight their champion — and thou know'st his  
 name —  
 Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.  
 215 O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's!  
 He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart;  
 And he is young, and Iran's chiefs are old,  
 Or else too weak; and all eyes turn to thee.  
 Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose!"  
 220 He spoke; but Rustum answer'd with a smile: —  
 "Go to! if Iran's chiefs are old, then I  
 Am older; if the young are weak, the King  
 Errs strangely; for the King, for Kai Khosroo,<sup>1</sup>  
 Himself is young, and honors younger men,  
 225 And lets the aged molder to their graves.  
 Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young —  
 The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.

<sup>1</sup> *Kai Khosroo* (Ki-khus-rou'). The third Iranian king, who succeeded to the throne of Persia during the sixth century B.C.

For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame?  
 For would that I myself had such a son,  
 230 And not that one slight helpless girl<sup>1</sup> I have —  
 A son so famed, so brave, to send to war,  
 And I to tarry with the snow-hair'd Zal,  
 My father, whom the robber Afghans vex,  
 And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,  
 235 And he has none to guard his weak old age.  
 There would I go, and hang my armor up,  
 And with my great name fence that weak old man,  
 And spend the goodly treasures I have got,  
 And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,  
 240 And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings,  
 And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no  
 more."

He spoke, and smiled; and Gudurz made reply: —  
 "What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,  
 When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks  
 245 Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks,  
 Hidest thy face? Take heed lest men should say:  
 'Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,  
 And shuns to peril it with younger men.'"

And, greatly moved, then Rustum made reply: —  
 250 "O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words?  
 Thou knowest better words than this to say.  
 What is one more, one less, obscure or famed,  
 Valiant or craven, young or old, to me?  
 Are not they mortal, am not I myself?  
 255 But who for men of naught would do great deeds?  
 Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame!  
 But I will fight unknown, a. l in plain arms<sup>2</sup>;

<sup>1</sup> *Helpless girl.* See lines 607-611.

<sup>2</sup> *Plain arms.* Unemblazoned with mottoes and devices.  
 Compare Tennyson's *Lancelot and Elaine*, lines 190-194.

Let not men say of Rustum, he was match'd  
In single fight with any mortal man."

260 He spoke, and frown'd; and Gudurz turn'd, and  
ran

Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy —  
Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.

But Rustum strode to his tent door, and call'd  
His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,

265 And clad himself in steel; the arms he chose  
Were plain, and on his shield was no device,

Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,

And, from the fluted spine atop, a plume

Of horsehair waved, a scarlet horsehair plume.

270 So arm'd, he issued forth; and Ruksh, his horse,

Follow'd him like a faithful hound at heel —

Ruksh, whose renown was noised through all the  
earth,

The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once

Did in Bokhara by the river find

275 A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,

And rear'd him; a bright bay, with lofty crest,

Dight<sup>1</sup> with a saddlecloth of broider'd green

Crusted with gold, and on the ground were work'd

All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know.

280 So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd

The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd.

And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts

Hail'd; but the Tartars knew not who he was.

And dear as the wet diver to the eyes

285 Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,

By sandy Bahrein,<sup>2</sup> in the Persian Gulf,

<sup>1</sup> *Dight*. Adorned.

<sup>2</sup> *Bahreir*. (Bä'-rân'). A group of islands in the Persian Gulf, near the coast of Arabia, celebrated for their pearl fisheries.

- Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,  
 Having made up his tale <sup>1</sup> of precious pearls,  
 Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands —  
 290 So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.  
     And Rustum to the Persian front advanced,  
     And Sohrab arm'd in Haman's tent, and came.  
     And as afield the reapers cut a swath  
     Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,  
 295 And on each side are squares of standing corn,  
     And in the midst a stubble, short and bare —  
     So on each side were squares of men, with spears  
     Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand.  
     And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast  
 300 His eyes toward the Tartar tents, and saw  
     Sohrab come forth, and eyed him as he came.  
     As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,  
     Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge  
     Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire —  
 305 At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn,  
     When the frost flowers the whiten'd window-panes—  
     And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts  
     Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustum eyed  
     The unknown adventurous youth, who from afar  
 310 Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth  
     All the most valiant chiefs; long he perused  
     His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.  
     For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd;  
     Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and  
     straight,  
 315 Which in a queen's secluded garden throws  
     Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,  
     By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound —  
     So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd.

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<sup>1</sup> Tale. Number.



And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul  
 320 As he beheld him coming; and he stood,  
 And beckon'd to him with his hand, and said: —  
 "O thou young man, the air of heaven is soft,  
 And warm, and pleasant; but the grave is cold!  
 Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.  
 325 Behold me! I am vast, and clad in iron,  
 And tried<sup>1</sup>; and I have stood on many a field  
 Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe —  
 Never was that field lost, or that foe saved.  
 O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death?  
 330 Be govern'd<sup>2</sup>! quit the Tartar host, and come  
 To Iran, and be as my son to me,  
 And fight beneath my banner till I die!  
 There are no youths in Iran brave as thou."  
 So he spake, mildly; Sohrab heard his voice,  
 335 The mighty voice of Rustum, and he saw  
 His giant figure planted on the sand,  
 Sole, like some single tower, which a chief  
 Hath builded on the waste in former years  
 Against the robbers; and he saw that head,  
 340 Streak'd with its first gray hairs; — hope fill'd his  
 soul,  
 And he ran forward and embraced his knees,  
 And clasp'd his hand within his own, and said: —  
 "Oh, by thy father's head! by thine own soul!  
 Art thou not Rustum? speak! art thou not he?"  
 345 But Rustum eyed askance the kneeling youth,  
 And turn'd away, and spake to his own soul: —  
 "Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean!  
 False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.  
 For if I now confess this thing he asks,  
 350 And hide it not, but say: 'Rustum is here!'

<sup>1</sup> *Tried.* Experienced.

<sup>2</sup> *Govern'd.* Advised.

He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,  
 But he will find some pretext not to fight,  
 And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts,  
 A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.  
 355 And on a feast tide,<sup>1</sup> in Afrasiab's hall,  
 In Samarcand, he will arise and cry:  
 'I challenged once, when the two armies camp'd  
 Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords  
 To cope with me in single fight; but they  
 360 Shrank, only Rustum dared; then he and I  
 Changed gifts, and went on equal terms away.'  
 So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud;  
 Then were the chiefs of Iran shamed through me."  
 And then he turn'd, and sternly spake aloud:—  
 365 "Rise! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus  
 Of Rustum? I am here, whom thou hast call'd  
 By challenge forth; make good thy vaunt, or yield!  
 Is it with Rustum only thou wouldst fight?  
 Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and flee!  
 370 For well I know, that did great Rustum stand  
 Before thy face this day, and were reveal'd,  
 There would be then no talk of fighting more.  
 But being what I am, I tell thee this—  
 Do thou record it in thine inmost soul:  
 375 Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt and yield,  
 Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds  
 Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer floods,  
 Oxus in summer wash them all away."  
 He spoke; and Sohrab answer'd, on his feet:—  
 380 "Art thou so fierce? Thou wilt not fright me so!  
 I am no girl, to be made pale by words.  
 Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand  
 Here on this field, there were no fighting then.

<sup>1</sup> *Feast tide.* The occasion of a feast. Cf. Christmas-tide.

But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.  
 385 Begin! thou art more vast, more dread than I,  
 And thou art proved, I know, and I am young —  
 But yet success sways with the breath of heaven.  
 And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure  
 Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.  
 390 For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,  
 Poised on the top of a huge wave of fate,  
 Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.  
 And whether it will heave us up to land,  
 Or whether it will roll us out to sea,  
 395 Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,  
 We know not, and no search will make us know;  
 Only the event will teach us in its hour.”  
 He spoke, and Rustum answer'd not, but hurl'd  
 His spear; down from the shoulder, down it came,  
 400 As on some partridge in the corn a hawk,  
 That long has tower'd in the airy clouds,  
 Drops like a plummet; Sohrab saw it come,  
 And sprang aside, quick as a flash; the spear  
 Hiss'd, and went quivering down into the sand,  
 405 Which it sent flying wide; — then Sohrab threw  
 In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield; sharp rang,  
 The iron plates rang sharp, but turn'd the spear.  
 And Rustum seized his club, which none but he  
 Could wield; an unlopp'd trunk it was, and huge,  
 410 Still rough — like those which men in treeless plains  
 To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,  
 Hyphasis or Hydaspes,<sup>1</sup> when, high up  
 By their dark springs, the wind in winter time  
 Hath made in Himalayan forests wrack,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hyphasis or Hydaspes.* Ancient names of two great rivers in the Punjab, northern India.

<sup>2</sup> *Wrack.* Wreck, or ruin.

- 415 And strewn the channels with torn boughs — so huge  
The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck  
One stroke; but again Sohrab sprang aside,  
Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came  
Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand.
- 420 And Rustum follow'd his own blow, and fell  
To his knees, and with his fingers clutch'd the sand;  
And now might Sohrab have unsheathed his sword,  
And pierced the mighty Rustum while he lay  
Dizzy, and on his knees, and choked with sand;
- 425 But he look'd on, and smiled, nor bared his sword,  
But courteously drew back, and spoke, and said: —  
“Thou strik'st too hard! that club of thine will  
float  
Upon the summer floods, and not my bones.  
But rise, and be not wroth! not wroth am I;
- 430 No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul.  
Thou say'st, thou art not Rustum; be it so!  
Who art thou then, that canst so touch my soul?  
Boy as I am, I have seen battles too —  
Have waded foremost in their bloody waves,
- 435 And heard their hollow roar of dying men;  
But never was my heart thus touch'd before.  
Are they from Heaven, these softenings of the heart?  
O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven!  
Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears,
- 440 And make a truce, and sit upon this sand,  
And pledge each other in red wine, like friends,  
And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's deeds.  
There are enough foes in the Persian host,  
Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang;
- 445 Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou  
Mayst fight; fight *them*, when they confront thy  
spear!

But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and me!"

He ceased, but while he spake, Rustum had risen,  
 And stood erect, trembling with rage; his club  
 450 He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear,  
 Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right hand  
 Blazed bright and baleful, like that autumn star,<sup>1</sup>  
 The baleful sign of fevers; dust had soil'd .  
 His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering arms.  
 455 His breast heaved, his lips foam'd, and twice his  
 voice

Was choked with rage; at last these words broke  
 way: —

"Girl! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands!  
 Curl'd minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words!  
 Fight, let me hear thy hateful voice no more!  
 460 Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now  
 With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to  
 dance;

But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance  
 Of battle, and with me, who make no play  
 Of war; I fight it out, and hand to hand.  
 465 Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine!  
 Remember all thy valor; try thy feints  
 And cunning! all the pity I had is gone;  
 Because thou hast shamed me before both the hosts  
 With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's wiles."

470 He spoke, and Sohrab kindled at his taunts,  
 And he too drew his sword; at once they rush'd  
 Together, as two eagles on one prey  
 Come rushing down together from the clouds,

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<sup>1</sup> *Autumn star.* The reference is probably to Sirius, a very white star, the brightest in the heavens. It is popularly known as the dog-star. Its rising and setting with the sun has given rise to the name of the period called dog-days.

- One from the east, one from the west; their shields  
 475 Dash'd with a clang together, and a din  
 Rose, such as that the sinewy woodcutters  
 Make often in the forest's heart at morn,  
 Of hewing axes, crashing trees — such blows  
 Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd.  
 480 And you would say that sun and stars took part  
 In that unnatural <sup>1</sup> conflict; for a cloud  
 Grew suddenly in heaven, and dark'd the sun  
 Over the fighters' heads; and a wind rose  
 Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,  
 485 And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair.  
 In gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and they alone;  
 For both the on-looking hosts on either hand  
 Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,  
 And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.  
 490 But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes  
 And laboring breath; first Rustum struck the shield  
 Which Sohrab held stiff out; the steel-spiked spear  
 Rent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach the skin,  
 And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry groan.  
 495 Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm,  
 Nor clove its steel quite through; but all the crest  
 He shore away, and that proud horsehair plume,  
 Never till now defiled, sank to the dust;  
 And Rustum bow'd his head; but then the gloom  
 500 Grew blacker, thunder rumbled in the air,  
 And lightnings rent the cloud; and Ruksh, the  
 horse,  
 Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry; —  
 No horse's cry was that, most like the roar  
 Of some pain'd desert lion, who all day  
 505 Hath trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Unnatural.* Because it was between father and son.

And comes at night to die upon the sand.  
The two hosts heard that cry, and quaked for fear,  
And Oxus curdled as it cross'd his stream.  
But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but rush'd on,  
510 And struck again; and again Rustum bow'd  
His head; but this time all the blade, like glass,  
Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,  
And in the hand the hilt remain'd alone.  
Then Rustum raised his head; his dreadful eyes  
515 Glared, and he shook on high his menacing spear,  
And shouted: "Rustum!" — Sohrab heard that  
shout,  
And shrank amazed: back he recoil'd one step,  
And scann'd with blinking eyes the advancing form;  
And then he stood bewilder'd, and he dropp'd  
520 His covering shield, and the spear pierced his side.  
He reel'd, and, staggering back, sank to the ground;  
And then the gloom dispersed, and the wind fell,  
And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all  
The cloud; and the two armies saw the pair —  
525 Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,  
And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.  
Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began: —  
"Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill  
A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,  
530 And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent;  
Or else that the great Rustum would come down  
Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move  
His heart to take a gift, and let thee go;  
And then that all the Tartar host would praise  
535 Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame,  
To glad thy father in his weak old age.  
Fool, thou art slain, and by an unknown man!  
Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be

'Than to thy friends, and to thy father old."  
 540 And, with a fearless mien, Sohrab replied: —  
 "Unknown thou art; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.  
 Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man!  
 No! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.  
 For were I match'd with ten such men as thee,  
 545 And I were that which till to-day I was,  
 They should be lying here, I standing there.  
 But that beloved name unnerved my arm —  
 That name, and something, I confess, in thee,  
 Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield  
 550 Fall; and thy spear transfix'd an unarm'd foe.  
 And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.  
 But hear thou this, fierce man, tremble to hear:  
 The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death!  
 My father, whom I seek through all the world,  
 555 He shall avenge my death, and punish thee!"  
 As when some hunter in the spring hath found  
 A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,  
 Upon the craggy isle of a hill lake,  
 And pierced her with an arrow as she rose,  
 560 And follow'd her to find her where she fell  
 Far off: — anon her mate comes winging back  
 From hunting, and a great way off deseries  
 His huddling young left sole<sup>1</sup>; at that, he checks  
 His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps  
 565 Circles above his eyry, with loud screams  
 Chiding his mate back to her nest; but she  
 Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,  
 In some far stony gorge out of his ken,  
 A heap of fluttering feathers — never more  
 570 Shall the lake glass her, flying over it;  
 Never the black and dripping precipices

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<sup>1</sup> *Sole.* Alone.



Echo her stormy scream as she sails by —  
 As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss,  
 So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood  
 575 Over his dying son, and knew him not.  
 But, with a cold incredulous voice, he said: —  
 "What prate is this of fathers and revenge?  
 The mighty Rustum never had a son."  
 And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied: —  
 580 "Ah yes, he had! and that lost son am I.  
 Surely the news will one day reach his ear,  
 Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,  
 Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here;  
 And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap  
 585 To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.  
 Fierce man, bethink thee, for an only son!  
 What will that grief, what will that vengeance be?  
 Oh, could I live till I that grief had seen!  
 Yet him I pity not so much, but her,  
 590 My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells  
 With that old king, her father, who grows gray  
 With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.  
 Her most I pity, who no more will see  
 Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,  
 595 With spoils and honor, when the war is done.  
 But a dark rumor will be bruited up,<sup>1</sup>  
 From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear:  
 And then will that defenceless woman learn  
 That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more,  
 600 But that in battle with a nameless foe,  
 By the far-distant Oxus, he is slain."  
 He spoke; and as he ceased, he wept aloud,  
 Thinking of her he left, and his own death.  
 He spoke; but Rustum listen'd, plunged in thought.

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<sup>1</sup> *Bruited up.* Noised abroad.

- 605 Nor did he yet believe it was his son  
 Who spoke, although he call'd back names he knew;  
 For he had had sure tidings that the babe,  
 Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,  
 Had been a puny girl, no boy at all —
- 610 So that sad mother sent him word, for fear  
 Rustum should seek the boy, to train in arms.  
 And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,  
 By a false boast, the style <sup>1</sup> of Rustum's son;  
 Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.
- 615 So deem'd he: yet he listen'd, plunged in thought;  
 And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide  
 Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore  
 At the full moon; tears gather'd in his eyes;  
 For he remember'd his own early youth,
- 620 And all its bounding rapture; as, at dawn,  
 The shepherd from his mountain lodge descries  
 A far, bright city, smitten by the sun,  
 Through many rolling clouds — so Rustum saw  
 His youth; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom;
- 625 And that old king,<sup>2</sup> her father, who loved well  
 His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child  
 With joy; and all the pleasant life they led,  
 They three, in that long-distant summer time —  
 The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
- 630 And hound, and morn on those delightful hills  
 In Ader-baijan. And he saw that youth,  
 Of age and looks to be his own dear son,  
 Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,  
 Like some rich hyacinth which by the scythe
- 635 Of an unskilful gardener has been cut,  
 Mowing the garden grassplots near its bed,

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<sup>1</sup> *Style.* Name.

<sup>2</sup> *King.* The king of Samengán. See page 10.

And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,  
 On the mown, dying grass — so Sohrab lay,  
 Lovely in death, upon the common sand.

640 And Rustum gazed on him with grief, and said: —

“O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son  
 Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have  
 loved!

Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men  
 Have told thee false — thou art not Rustum's son.

645 For Rustum had no son; one child he had —  
 But one — a girl; who with her mother now  
 Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us —  
 Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war.”

But Sohrab answer'd him in wrath; for now  
 650 The anguish of the deep-fix'd spear grew fierce,  
 And he desired to draw forth the steel,  
 And let the blood flow free, and so to die —  
 But first he would convince his stubborn foe;  
 And, rising sternly on one arm, he said: —

655 “Man, who art thou who dost deny my words?  
 Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,

And falsehood, while I lived, was far from mine.  
 I tell thee, prick'd upon this arm<sup>1</sup> I bear  
 That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,  
 660 That she might prick it on the babe she bore.”

He spoke; and all the blood left Rustum's cheeks,  
 And his knees totter'd, and he smote his hand  
 Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,  
 That the hard iron corselet clank'd aloud;  
 665 And to his heart he press'd the other hand,  
 And in a hollow voice he spake, and said: —

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<sup>1</sup> *Arm.* Arnold makes the means of identification the design of a griffin pricked on Sohrab's arm. In the original story, the son wore an onyx stone as an amulet.

“Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie!  
If thou show this, then art thou Rustum's son.”

Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loosed  
670 His belt, and near the shoulder bared his arm,  
And show'd a sign in faint vermilion points  
Prick'd; as a cunning workman, in Peking,  
Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,  
An emperor's gift — at early morn he paints,  
675 And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp  
Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands —  
So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd  
On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal.  
It was that griffin,<sup>1</sup> which of old rear'd Zal,  
680 Rustum's great father, whom they left to die,  
A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks;  
Him that kind creature found, and rear'd and  
loved —

Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.  
And Sohrab bared that image on his arm,  
685 And himself scann'd it long with mournful eyes,  
And then he touch'd it with his hand, and said: —  
“How say'st thou? Is that sign the proper sign  
Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's?”

He spoke; but Rustum gazed, and gazed, and stood  
690 Speechless; and then he utter'd one sharp cry:  
“O boy — thy father!” — and his voice choked  
there.

And then a dark cloud pass'd before his eyes.  
And his head swam, and he sank down to earth.  
But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and cast  
695 His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips,  
And with fond faltering fingers stroked his cheeks,

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<sup>1</sup> *Griffin*. A mythical animal; in the fore part representing an eagle, in the hinder part, a lion.

Trying to call him back to life; and life  
Came back to Rustum, and he oped his eyes,  
And they stood wide with horror; and he seized  
700 In both his hands the dust which lay around,  
And threw it on his head, and smirch'd his hair, —  
His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms;  
And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast  
And his sobs choked him; and he clutch'd his  
sword,  
705 To draw it, and forever let life out.  
But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,  
And with a soothing voice he spake, and said: —  
“Father, forbear! for I but meet to-day  
The doom which at my birth was written down  
710 In heaven, and thou art heaven's unconscious hand.  
Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,  
When first I saw thee; and thy heart spoke too,  
I know it! but fate trod those promptings down  
Under its iron heel; fate, fate engaged  
715 The strife, and hurl'd me on my father's spear.  
But let us speak no more of this! I find  
My father; let me feel that I have found!  
Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take  
My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,  
720 And wash them with thy tears, and say: ‘My son!’  
Quick! quick! for number'd are my sands of life,  
And swift; for like the lightning to this field  
I came, and like the wind I go away —  
Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.  
725 But it was writ in heaven that this should be.”  
So said he, and his voice released the heart  
Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth; he cast  
His arms round his son's neck, and wept aloud,  
And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both the hosts,

- 730 When they saw Rustum's grief; and Ruksh, the  
horse,  
With his head bowing to the ground and mane  
Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe  
First to the one then to the other moved  
His head, as if inquiring what their grief  
735 Might mean, and from his dark, compassionate eyes,  
The big warm tears roll'd down, and caked<sup>1</sup> the  
sand.  
But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said: —  
“Ruksh, now thou grieveest; but, O Ruksh, thy  
feet  
Should first have rotted on their nimble joints,  
740 Or ere they brought thy master to this field!”  
But Sohrab look'd upon the horse, and said: —  
“Is this, then, Ruksh? How often, in past days,  
My mother told me of thee, thou brave steed,  
My terrible father's terrible horse! and said,  
745 That I should one day find thy lord and thee.  
Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane!  
O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I;  
For thou hast gone where I shall never go,  
And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home.  
750 And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,  
And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake  
Of Zirrah; and the aged Zal himself  
Has often stroked thy neck, and given thee food,  
Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,  
755 And said: ‘O Ruksh! bear Rustum well,’ — but I  
Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd face,  
Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,  
Nor slaked my thirst at the clear Helmund stream;

---

<sup>1</sup> *Caked.* Hardened into cakes.

But lodged among my father's foes, and seen  
 760 Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand,  
 Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,  
 And the black Toorkmun tents; and only drunk  
 The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,  
 Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,  
 765 The northern Sir<sup>1</sup>; and this great Oxus stream,  
 The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die."  
 Then, with a heavy groan, Rustum bewail'd: —  
 "Oh, that its waves were flowing over me!  
 Oh, that I saw its grains of yellow silt  
 770 Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head!"  
 But, with a grave, mild voice, Sohrab replied: —  
 "Desire not that, my father! thou must live.  
 For some are born to do great deeds, and live,  
 As some are born to be obscured, and die.  
 775 Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,  
 And reap a second glory in thine age;  
 Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.  
 But come! thou seest this great host of men  
 Which follow me; I pray thee, slay not these!  
 780 Let me entreat for them; what have they done?  
 They follow'd me, my hope, my fame, my state:  
 Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.  
 But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,  
 But carry me with thee to Seistan.  
 785 And place me on a bed, and mourn for me,  
 Thou, and the snow-hair'd Zal, and all thy friends.  
 And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,  
 And heap a stately mound above my bones,  
 And plant a far-seen pillar over all.  
 790 That so the passing horseman on the waste

<sup>1</sup> *Sir*. The Sir Daria, or Jaxartes. See page 18, note 4.

May see my tomb a great way off, and cry :  
'Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,  
Whom his great father did in ignorance kill !'  
And I be not forgotten in my grave."

- 795 And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied : —  
"Fear not ! as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,  
So shall it be ; for I will burn my tents,  
And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me,  
And carry thee away to Seistan,
- 800 And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee,  
With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends.  
And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,  
And heap a stately mound above thy bones,  
And plant a far-seen pillar over all,
- 805 And men shall not forget thee in thy grave.  
And I will spare thy host ; yea, let them go !  
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace !  
What should I do with slaying any more ?  
For would that all that I have ever slain
- 810 Might be once more alive ; my bitterest foes,  
And they who were call'd champions in their time,  
And through whose death I won that fame I have —  
And I were nothing but a common man,  
A poor, mean soldier, and without renown,
- 815 So thou mightest live too, my son, my son !  
Or rather would that I, even I myself,  
Might now be lying on this bloody sand,  
Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,  
Not thou of mine ! and I might die, not thou ;
- 820 And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan ;  
And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine ;  
And say : 'O son, I weep thee not too sore,  
For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine end !'  
But now in blood and battles was my youth,



825 And full of blood and battles is my age,  
And I shall never end this life of blood."

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied: —

"A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful man!

But thou shalt yet have peace; only not now,

830 Not yet! but thou shalt have it on that day<sup>1</sup>

When thou shalt sail in a high-masted ship,

Thou and the other peers of Kai Khosroo,

Returning home over the salt blue sea,

From laying thy dear master in his grave."

835 And Rustum gazed in Sohrab's face, and said: —

"Soon be that day, my son, and deep that sea!

Till then, if fate so wills, let me endure."

He spoke; and Sohrab smiled on him, and took

The spear, and drew it from his side, and eased

840 His wound's imperious anguish; but the blood

Came welling from the open gash, and life

Flow'd with the stream; — all down his cold white

side

The crimson torrent ran, dim now and soil'd,

Like the soil'd tissue of white violets

845 Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank,

By children whom their nurses call with haste

Indoors from the sun's eye; his head droop'd low,

His limbs grew slack; motionless, white, he lay —

White, with eyes closed; only when heavy gasps,

---

<sup>1</sup> *That day.* It would appear that this prediction was not fulfilled. According to tradition, Rustum's death was the result of a ruse practised by a half-brother, Shughad, who lured him into a hunting-park in which had been dug concealed trenches filled with javelins. Ruksh sank into one of these. Rustum was wounded unto death; but before he died was able to pierce with an arrow the treacherous Shughad. Kai Khosroo did indeed disappear in this way, but, according to the *Sháh Námech*, Rustum was not among those who perished.

- 850 Deep heavy gasps quivering through all his frame,  
 Convulsed him back to life, he open'd them,  
 And fix'd them feebly on his father's face;  
 Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from his limbs  
 Unwillingly the spirit fled away,
- 855 Regretting the warm mansion which it left,  
 And youth, and bloom, and this delightful world.  
 So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead;  
 And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak  
 Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.
- 860 As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd  
 By Jemshid in Persepolis,<sup>1</sup> to bear  
 His house, now 'mid their broken flights of steps  
 Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side —  
 So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.
- 865 And night came down over the solemn waste,  
 And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,  
 And darken'd all; and a cold fog, with night,  
 Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,  
 As of a great assembly loosed, and fires
- 870 Began to twinkle through the fog; for now  
 Both armies moved to camp, and took their meal;  
 The Persians took it on the open sands  
 Southward, the Tartars by the river marge;  
 And Rustum and his son were left alone.
- 875 But the majestic river floated on,  
 Out of the mist and hum of that low land,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Persepolis*. An ancient capital of the Persian Empire. "On its site are found the ruins of enormous buildings, and conspicuous among them the huge black granite pillars, some of which are still standing. These remains go by the name of 'Takhti Jamshid,' which translated is 'the throne of Jamshid, or Jemshid,' a mythical king."

Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,  
 Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasmian<sup>1</sup> waste,  
 Under the solitary moon; — he flow'd  
 880 Right for the polar star,<sup>2</sup> past Orgunjè,<sup>3</sup>  
 Brimming, and bright, and large; then sands begin  
 To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,  
 And split his currents; that for many a league  
 The shorn and parcel'd Oxus strains along  
 885 Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles —  
 Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had  
 In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,  
 A foil'd circuitous wanderer — till at last  
 The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide  
 890 His luminous home<sup>4</sup> of waters opens, bright  
 And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars<sup>5</sup>  
 Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

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<sup>1</sup> *Chorasmian.* Chorasmia is a region of Turkestan; at one time the seat of a powerful empire, but now much reduced.

<sup>2</sup> *Star.* Due north.

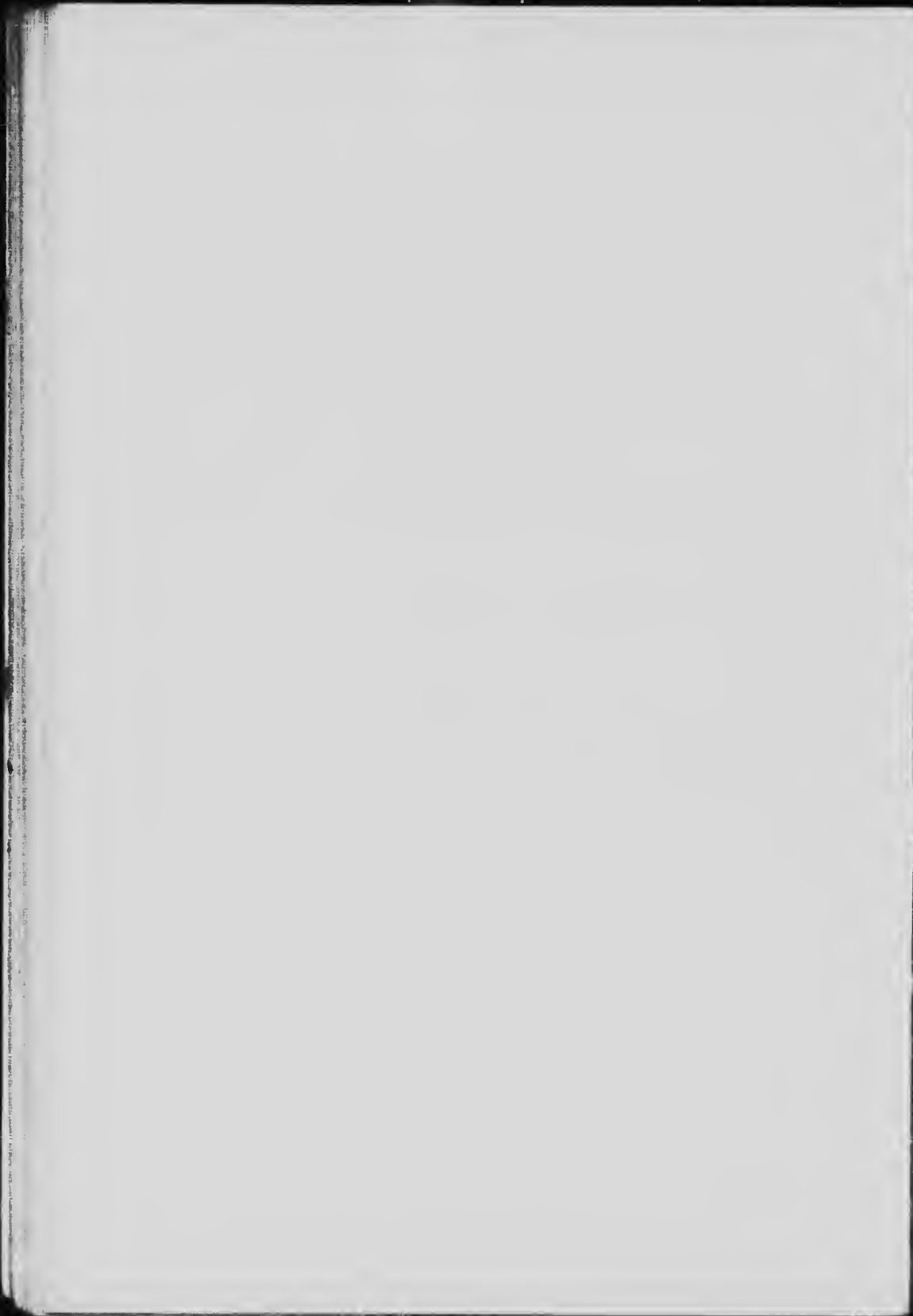
<sup>3</sup> *Orgunjè.* A village on the Oxus, about seventy miles from Khiva.

<sup>4</sup> *Home.* The Aral Sea.

<sup>5</sup> *New-bathed stars.* The stars, when they appear above the horizon, seem to emerge from the sea.



CHRISTABEL



## INTRODUCTION

### LIFE OF COLERIDGE

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, poet and philosopher, was born at Ottery St. Mary, in Devonshire, October 21, 1772. His father was the Rev. John Coleridge, vicar of the parish, and master of its grammar school, an amiable, simple-minded, and somewhat eccentric scholar, to whom it is not difficult to trace some of the peculiarities of his son. Even in childhood the future poet showed oddity. Being of a precocious, imaginative, and timorous nature, he did not mingle with other boys, did not take any interest in their sports, but read unceasingly. At the age of six he had already read several books, including *Robinson Crusoe*. Then he became deeply interested in the romantic tales of the *Arabian Nights' Entertainment*, the reading of which produced such an effect upon his mind that his father found it necessary to burn the book. At school he outstripped all children of his age. He even began to write poetry before he was ten. "Alas!" he said of himself, "I had all the simplicity, all the docility of the little child, but none of the child's habits. I never thought as a child, never had the language of a child."

On the death of his father in 1781 he was sent up to London to be educated at Christ's Hospital, a school of six or seven hundred boys, about one-third being the sons of clergymen. Charles Lamb was a pupil in attendance at the same time. The discipline was so severe and the life so uncongenial that the boy was once

on the point of running away to learn shoemaking from a friendly cobbler. Yet his school days in London were not all cloudy. He not only made several invaluable friends, but he also carried off the highest honors the school afforded.

In 1791 Coleridge entered Cambridge just as Wordsworth was leaving. In his first year he won a gold medal for a Greek ode. But his interest in his studies soon waned. He preferred to be joined in his room by his undergraduate friends, to discuss poetry, philosophy, religion, and politics. France was now in the throes of revolution, and the great struggle for freedom had not yet by its atrocities alienated the sympathy of many warm friends in England. Suddenly Coleridge left Cambridge for London. The reason for this step nobody seemed to know. When discovered, he was enlisted in a regiment of dragoons under the name of Silas Tomkyn Comberbach. His discharge was obtained by his friends, and he returned to his Alma Mater. In 1794 he again left, without his degree. Perhaps the most important incident of his university life was his meeting with Southey. Their acquaintance quickly ripened into intimate friendship. In 1795 Coleridge married Miss Sarah Fricker, and a month later Southey was wedded to her sister Edith.

In 1796 Coleridge took up his residence at Nether Stowey, Somersetshire. Very soon after, Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy came to live at Alfoxden, three miles away. Out of this proximity of homes there grew a stimulating friendship that meant much for the two poets and a great deal for English literature. It was just at this time, and apparently under the stimulus of this intimacy, that Coleridge wrote most of the poetry for which he is held famous. Here belong *The Ancient*



*Mariner, Kubla Khan, Christabel, France: an Ode,* and others of less worth.

On returning in 1800 from a visit to the continent, he joined Southey and Wordsworth in the Lake Country. He was now fast becoming a slave to the opium habit. He did not remain anywhere for any length of time, but travelled about from place to place, earning a precarious livelihood. From 1804, when he went to Malta, he was practically separated from his family. In 1816 he went to London, where he found an asylum for the remaining years of his life with a surgeon named Gillman, who undertook to cure him of opium-eating. Here he wrote *Youth and Age, Work without Hope*, and several important prose works. He died on July 25, 1834.

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**Composition.** — While Coleridge and Wordsworth were living close to each other in 1797, the former at Nether Stowey, the latter at Alfoxden, three miles distant, they planned writing a volume of poems conjointly. Concerning this purpose Coleridge wrote in his *Biographia Literaria*: —

“ . . . The thought suggested itself that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence arrived at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. . . . For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life. . . . In this idea originated the plan of the *Lyrical Ballads*, in which it was agreed that my

endeavors should be directed to poems and characters supernatural, or at least to romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. . . . With this view I wrote *The Ancient Mariner*, and was preparing, among other poems, *The Dark Ladie* and *Christabel*."

The volume thus referred to appeared in 1798 under the title of *Lyrical Ballads*. *Christabel* was not included. In fact, it was first printed in a pamphlet in 1816 with the following Preface: —

"The first part of the following poem was written in the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety-seven, at Stowey, in the county of Somerset. The second part, after my return from Germany, in the year one thousand eight hundred, at Keswick, Cumberland. Since the latter date, my poetic powers have been, till very lately, in a state of suspended animation. But as, in my very first conception of the tale, I had the whole present to my mind, with the wholeness, no less than with the liveliness of a vision, I trust that I shall be able to embody in verse the three parts yet to come, in the course of the present year. . . .

"I have only to add, that the metre of *Christabel* is not, properly speaking, irregular, though it may seem so from its being founded on a new principle; namely, that of counting in each line the accents, not the syllables. Though the latter may vary from seven to twelve, yet in each line the accents will be found to be only four. Nevertheless this occasional variation in number of syllables is not introduced wantonly, or for the mere ends of convenience, but in correspondence

with some transition, in the nature of the imagery or passion."

The expectation expressed in the closing lines of the first paragraph of the Preface was not realized. In 1820 Coleridge wrote: "If I should finish *Christabel*, I shall certainly extend it and give it new characters and a greater number of incidents. This the 'reading public' require, and this is the reason that Sir W. Scott's poems tho' so loosely written are pleasing, and interest us by their picturesqueness. If a genial recurrence of the ray divine should occur for a few weeks, I shall certainly attempt it. I had the whole of the two cantos in my mind before I began it; certainly the first canto is more perfect, has more of the true, wild weird spirit than the last."

The poet's final utterance on the matter was the following: "The reason of my not finishing *Christabel* is not that I don't know how to do it — for I have, as I always had, the whole plan entire from beginning to end in my mind; but I fear I could not carry on with equal success the execution of the idea, an extremely subtle and difficult one."

Touching the difficulty of the idea the *Quarterly Review* said: "The thing attempted in *Christabel* is the most difficult of execution in the whole field of romance — witchery by daylight — and the success is complete."

In Gillman's *Life of Coleridge* the following synopsis of the proposed conclusion is reported: —

"The following relation was to have occupied a third and fourth canto, and to have closed the tale. Over the mountains the Bard, as directed by Sir Leoline, hastes with his disciple; but in consequence of one of those inundations, supposed to be common to this country, the spot only where the castle once stood as

discovered, the edifice itself being washed away. He determines to return. Geraldine, being acquainted with all that is passing, like the weird sisters in *Macbeth*, vanishes. Reappearing, however, she awaits the return of the Bard, exciting in the meantime, by her wily arts, all the anger she could rouse in the Baron's breast, as well as that jealousy of which he is described to have been susceptible. The old Bard and the youth at length arrive, and therefore she can no longer personate the character of Geraldine, the daughter of Lord Roland de Vaux, but changes her appearance to that of the accepted though absent lover of Christabel. Now ensues a courtship most distressing to Christabel, who feels, she knows not why, great disgust for her once-favored knight. This coldness is very painful to the Baron, who has no more conception than herself of the supernatural transformation. She at last yields to her father's entreaties, and consents to approach the altar with this hated suitor. The real lover, returning, enters at this moment, and produces the ring which she had once given him in sign of her betrothment. Thus defeated, the supernatural being, Geraldine, disappears. As predicted, the castle bell tolls, the mother's voice is heard, and to the exceeding great joy of the parties, the rightful marriage takes place, after which follows a reconciliation and explanation between the father and daughter."

**Critical Comments.** — The following criticism is taken from an excellent article written by George E. Woodberry: —

"Coleridge fell heir, by the accidents of time and the revolutions of taste, to the ballad style, its simplicity, directness, and narrative power; he also was most attracted to the machinery of the supernatural, the

weird, the terrible, almost to the grotesque and horrid: . . . his subtle mind, his fine senses, his peculiar susceptibility to the mystic and shadowy in nature, — as shown by his preference of the moonlight, dreamy, or night aspects of real nature, to its brilliant beauties in the waking world, — gave him ease and finesse in the handling of such subject-matter; and he lived late enough to know that all this eerie side of human experience and imaginative capacity, inherited from primeval ages but by no means yet deprived of plausibility, could be effectively used only as an allegoric or scenic setting of what should be truth to the ethical sense. . . . In *Christabel*, on the other hand, the moral substance is not apparent: the place filled by the moral ideas which are the centres of the narrative in *The Ancient Mariner* is taken here by emotional situations; but the supernaturalism is practically the same in both poems, and in both is associated with that mystery of the animal world to man, most concentrated and vivid in the fascination ascribed traditionally to the snake, which is the animal motive in *Christabel* as the goodness of the albatross in *The Ancient Mariner*. In these poems the good and the bad omens that ancient augurers minded are made again dominant over men's imagination. Such are the signal and unique elements in these poems, which have besides that wealth of beauty in detail, of fine diction, of liquid melody, of sentiment, thought, and image, which belong only to poetry of the highest order, and which are too obvious to require any comment."

Mr. Stopford Brooke in *The Golden Book of Coleridge* has a fine appreciation of the poem: "I defy the whole body of critics to analyse the music of the first part of *Christabel*. It belongs to the imagination as much as

the vision of the poem itself. It is almost a pity—save for a few passages—that the second part was ever written afterwards. The ineffable element has fled from it. The subject presented itself, when first conceived, to Coleridge as a whole. He saw it from beginning to end. It was then he should have written it all, while he still lived in the dim country of the creatures who are neither of earth nor of heaven, while he still possessed the faery music. Short was that time; and so fine and rare were the sound and the thought of the examples we have of its arch-faery poetry, that he never seems to have been able to finish them. He, with his ear, and with his imagination, (which lasted in feeling, but had lost its shaping power), knew better than any one that he could not recover the immeasurable hour when he wrote these things, or when they wrote themselves, when

‘he on honey-dew had fed,  
And drunk the milk of Paradise.’ ”

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### PART I

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,  
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock,  
Tu—whit! —— Tu—whoo!  
And hark, again! the crowing cock,  
5 How drowsily it crew.

Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,  
Hath a toothless mastiff, which  
From her kennel beneath the rock  
Maketh answer to the clock,  
10 Four for the quarters, and twelve for the hour;  
Ever and aye, by shine and shower,  
Sixteen short howls, not overloud;  
Some say, she sees my lady's shroud.

Is the night chilly and dark?  
15 The night is chilly, but not dark.  
The thin gray cloud is spread on high,<sup>1</sup>  
It covers but not hides the sky.  
The moon is behind, and at the full;  
And yet she looks both small and dull,  
20 The night is chill, the cloud is gray:  
'Tis a month before the month of May,  
And the Spring comes slowly up this way.

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<sup>1</sup> *Spread on high.* Cf. Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journal* entry of January 31, 1798: "Set forward to Stowey at half-past five. When we left home the moon immensely large, the sky scattered over with clouds. These soon closed in, contracting the dimensions of the moon without concealing her."

The lovely lady, Christabel,  
 Whom her father loves so well,  
 25 What makes her in the wood so late,  
 A furlong from the castle gate? .  
 She had dreams all yesternight  
 Of her own betrothèd knight;  
 And she in the midnight wood will pray  
 30 For the weal of her lover that's far away.

She stole along, she nothing spoke,  
 The sighs she heaved were soft and low,  
 And naught was green upon the oak  
 But moss and rarest mistletoe:  
 35 She kneels beneath the huge oak tree,  
 And in silence prayeth she.

The lady sprang up suddenly,  
 The lovely lady, Christabel!  
 It moaned as near, as near can be,  
 40 But what it is she cannot tell. —  
 On the other side it seems to be,  
 Of the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree.

The night is chill; the forest bare;  
 Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?  
 45 There is not wind enough in the air  
 To move away the ringlet curl  
 From the lovely lady's cheek —  
 There is not wind enough to twirl  
 The one red leaf, the last of its clan,<sup>1</sup>  
 50 That dances as often as dance it can,

<sup>1</sup> *Last of its clan.* Cf. the entry of March 7, 1798, in Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journal*: "William and I drank tea at Coleridge's. A cloudy sky. Observed nothing particularly interesting — the distant prospect obscured. One only leaf upon the top of a tree — the sole remaining leaf — danced round and round like a rag blown by the wind."



Hanging so light, and hanging so high,  
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Hush, beating heart of Christabel!  
Jesu Maria, shield her well!  
55 She folded her arms beneath her cloak,  
And stole to the other side of the oak.  
What sees she there?

There she sees a damsel bright,  
Drest in a silken robe of white,  
60 That shadowy in the moonlight shone:  
The neck that made that white robe wan,  
Her stately neck, and arms were bare;  
Her blue-veined feet unsandall'd were,  
And wildly glittered here and there  
65 The gems entangled in her hair.  
I guess, 'twas frightful there to see  
A lady so richly clad as she —  
Beautiful exceedingly!

“Mary mother, save me now!”  
70 (Said Christabel,) “And who art thou?”

The lady strange made answer meet,  
And her voice was faint and sweet: —  
“Have pity on my sore distress,  
I scarce can speak for weariness:”

75 “Stretch forth thy hand, and have no fear!”  
Said Christabel, “How camest thou here?”  
And the lady, whose voice was faint and sweet,  
Did thus pursue her answer meet: —

“My sire is of a noble line,  
80 And my name is Geraldine:

Five warriors seized me yestermorn,  
 Me, even me, a maid forlorn :  
 They choked my cries with force and fright,  
 And tied me on a palfrey white.  
 85 The palfrey was as fleet as wind,  
 And they rode furiously behind.  
 They spurred amain, their steeds were white :  
 And once we crossed the shade of night.  
 As sure as Heaven shall rescue me,  
 90 I have no thought what men they be ;  
 Nor do I know how long it is  
 (For I have lain entranced iwis<sup>1</sup>)  
 Since one, the tallest of the five,  
 Took me from the palfrey's back,  
 95 A weary woman, scarce alive.  
 Some muttered words his comrades spoke :  
 He placed me underneath this oak ;  
 He swore they would return with haste ;  
 Whither they went I cannot tell —  
 100 I thought I heard, some minutes past,  
 Sounds as of a castle bell.  
 Stretch forth thy hand (thus ended she.)  
 And help a wretched maid to flee."

Then Christabel stretched forth her hand,  
 105 And comforted fair Geraldine :  
 "Oh well, bright dame ! may you command  
 The service of Sir Leoline ;  
 And gladly our stout chivalry  
 Will he send forth, and friends withal,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Iwis*. An old adverb meaning "certainly." Through a mistaken notion it is sometimes written "I wis," meaning "I know."

<sup>2</sup> *Withal*. As well.

110 To guide and guard you safe and free  
Home to your noble father's hall."

She rose: and forth with steps they passed  
That strove to be, and were not, fast.  
Her gracious stars the lady blest,  
115 And thus spake on sweet Christabel:  
"All our household are at rest,  
The hall as silent as the cell;  
Sir Leoline is weak in health,  
And may not well awakened be,  
120 But we will move as if in stealth,  
And I beseech your courtesy,  
This night, to share your couch with me."

They crossed the moat, and Christabel  
Took the key that fitted well;  
125 A little door she opened straight.  
All in the middle of the gate;  
The gate that was ironed within and without,  
Where an army in battle array had marched out.  
The lady sank, belike through pain,  
130 And Christabel with might and main  
Lifted her up, a weary weight,  
Over the threshold<sup>1</sup> of the gate:  
Then the lady rose again,  
And moved, as she were not in pain.

135 So free from danger, free from fear,  
They crossed the court: right glad they were.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Over the threshold.* A popular belief respecting evil spirits was that they could not enter an inhabited house unless invited, nay, dragged over the threshold. See Sir Walter Scott's *The Abbot*, Chapter xv.

And Christabel devoutly cried  
 To the lady by her side :  
 " Praise we the Virgin all divine  
 140 Who hath rescued thee from thy distress !"  
 " Alas, alas !" said Geraldine,  
 " I cannot speak for weariness."  
 So free from danger, free from fear,  
 They crossed the court : right glad they were.

145 Outside her kennel the mastiff old  
 Lay fast asleep, in moonshine cold.  
 The mastiff old did not awake,  
 Yet she an angry moan did make !  
 And what can ail the mastiff bitch ?  
 150 Never till now she uttered yell  
 Beneath the eye of Christabel.  
 Perhaps it is the owlet's scritch :  
 For what can ail the mastiff bitch ?

They passed the hall, that echoes still,  
 155 Pass as lightly as you will !  
 The brands were flat, the brands were dying,  
 Amid their own white ashes lying ;  
 But when the lady passed, there came  
 A tongue of light, a fit of flame ;  
 160 And Christabel saw the lady's eye,  
 And nothing else saw she thereby,  
 Save the boss of the shield of Sir Lecline tall,  
 Which hung in a murky old niche in the wall.  
 " Oh softly tread," said Christabel,  
 165 " My father seldom sleepeth well."

Sweet Christabel her feet doth bare,  
 And jealous of the listening air,  
 They steal their way from stair to stair,

Now in glimmer, and now in gloom,  
170 And now they pass the Baron's room,  
As still as death, with stifled breath!  
And now have reached her chamber door;  
And now doth Geraldine press down  
The rushes of the chamber floor.

175 The moon shines dim in the open air,  
And not a moonbeam enters here.  
But they without its light can see  
The chamber carved so curiously,  
Carved with figures strange and sweet,  
180 All made out of the carver's brain,  
For a lady's chamber meet:  
The lamp with twofold silver chain  
Is fastened to an angle feet.  
The silver lamp burns dead and dim;  
185 But Christabel the lamp will trim.  
She trimmed the lamp, and made it bright,  
And left it swinging to and fro,  
While Geraldine, in wretched plight,  
Sank down upon the floor below.

190 "O weary lady, Geraldine,  
I pray you, drink this cordial wine!  
It is a wine of virtuous powers;  
My mother made it of wild flowers."

"And will your mother pity me,  
195 Who am a maiden most forlorn?"  
Christabel answered — "Woe is me!  
She died the hour that I was born.  
I have heard the gray-haired friar tell,  
How on her death-bed she did say,

200 That she should hear the castle-bell  
 Strike twelve upon my wedding-day.  
 O mother dear! that thou wert here!"  
 "I would," said Geraldine, "she were!"

But soon with altered voice, said she —  
 205 "Off, wandering mother! Peak and pine<sup>1</sup>!  
 I have power to bid thee flee."  
 Alas! what ails poor Geraldine?  
 Why stares she with unsettled eye?  
 Can she the bodiless dead espy?  
 210 And why with hollow voice cries she,  
 "Off, woman, off! this hour is mine —  
 Though thou her guardian spirit be,  
 Off, woman, off! 'tis given to me."

Then Christabel knelt by the lady's side,  
 215 And raised to heaven her eyes so blue —  
 "Alas!" said she, "this ghastly ride —  
 Dear lady! it hath wildered you!"  
 The lady wiped her moist cold brow,  
 And faintly said, "'Tis over now!"

220 Again the wild-flower wine she drank:  
 Her fair large eyes 'gan glitter bright,  
 And from the floor whereon she sank,  
 The lofty lady stood upright;  
 She was most beautiful to see,  
 225 Like a lady of a far countrée.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Peak and pine*. Cf. an utterance of one of the witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Act I, Scene 3:—

"Weary se'nights nine times nine  
 Shall he dwindle, peak and pine."

And thus the lofty lady spake —  
“ All they, who live in the upper sky,  
Do love you, holy Christabel!  
And you love them, and for their sake  
230 And for the good which me befell,  
Even I in my degree will try,  
Fair maiden, to requite you well.  
But now unrobe yourself; for I  
Must pray, ere yet in bed I lie.”

235 Quoth Christabel, “ So let it be ! ”  
And as the lady bade, did she.  
Her gentle limbs did she undress,  
And lay down in her loveliness.

But through her brain of weal and woe  
240 So many thoughts moved to and fro,  
That vain it were her lids to close:  
So half-way from the bed she rose,  
And on her elbow did recline  
To look at the lady Geraldine.

245 Beneath the lamp the lady bowed,  
And slowly rolled her eyes around;  
Then drawing in her breath aloud,  
Like one that shuddered, she unbound  
The cincture from beneath her breast:  
250 Her silken robe, and inner vest,  
Dropt to her feet, and full in view,  
Behold! her bosom and half her side —  
A sight to dream of, not to tell!  
Oh shield her! shield sweet Christabel!

255 Yet Geraldine nor speaks nor stirs;  
Ah! what a stricken look was hers!

Deep from within she seems half-way  
 To lift some weight with sick assay,  
 And eyes the maid and seeks delay;  
 260 Then suddenly, as one defied,  
 Collects herself in scorn and pride,  
 And lay down by the maiden's side! —  
 And in her arms the maid she took,  
     Ah well-a-day!  
 265 And with low voice and doleful look  
     These words did say:  
     " In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell,  
     Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel!  
     Thou knowest to-night, and wilt know to-morrow,  
 270 This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow;  
     But vainly thou warrest,  
     For this is alone in  
     Thy power to declare,  
     That in the dim forest  
 275 Thou heard'st a low moaning,  
     And found'st a bright lady, surpassingly fair:  
     And didst bring her home with thee in love and in  
     charity,  
     To shield her and shelter her from the damp air."

## THE CONCLUSION TO PART I

It was a lovely sight to see  
 280 The lady Christabel, when she  
     Was praying at the old oak tree.  
     Amid the jagged shadows  
     Of mossy leafless boughs,  
     Kneeling in the moonlight,  
 285 To make her gentle vows;



Her slender palms together prest,  
 Heaving sometimes on her breast;  
 Her face resigned to bliss or bale<sup>1</sup> —  
 Her face, oh call it fair not pale,  
 290 And both blue eyes more bright than clear,  
 Each about to have a tear.

With open eyes (ah woe is me!)  
 Asleep, and dreaming fearfully,  
 Fearfully dreaming, yet iwis,  
 295 Dreaming that alone, which is —  
 O sorrow and shame! Can this be she,  
 The lady, who knelt at the old oak tree?  
 And lo! the worker of these harms,  
 That holds the maiden in her arms,  
 300 Seems to slumber still and mild,  
 As a mother with her child.

A star hath set, a star hath risen,  
 O Geraldine! since arms of thine  
 Have been the lovely lady's prison.  
 305 O Geraldine! one hour was thine —  
 Thou'st had thy will! By tairn<sup>2</sup> and rill,  
 The night-birds all that hour were still.  
 But now they are jubilant anew,  
 From cliff and tower, tu—whoo! tu—whoo!  
 310 Tu—whoo! tu—whoo! from wood and fell!  
 And see! the lady Christabel  
 Gathers herself from out her trance;  
 Her limbs relax, her countenance  
 Grows sad and soft; the smooth thin lids  
 315 Close o'er her eyes; and tears she sheds —

<sup>1</sup> *Bale*. Misery.

<sup>2</sup> *Tairn*. A small mountain lake or pool.

Large tears that leave the lashes bright!  
 And oft the while she seems to smile  
 As infants at a sudden light!  
 Yea, she doth smile, and she doth weep,  
 320 Like a youthful hermitess,  
 Beauteous in a wilderness,  
 Who, praying always, prays in sleep.  
 And, if she move unquietly,  
 Perchance, 'tis but the blood so free,  
 325 Comes back and tingles in her feet.  
 No doubt she hath a vision sweet.  
 What if her guardian spirit 'twere?  
 What if she knew her mother near?  
 But this she knows, in joys and woes,  
 330 That saints will aid if men will call:  
 For the blue sky bends over all!

## PART II

Each matin bell, the Baron saith,  
 Knells us back to a world of death.  
 These words Sir Leoline first said,  
 335 When he rose and found his lady dead;  
 These words Sir Leoline will say,  
 Many a morn to his dying day!

And hence the custom and law began,  
 That still at dawn the sacristan,  
 340 Who duly pulls the heavy bell,  
 Five and forty beads must tell  
 Between each stroke — a warning knell,  
 Which not a soul can choose but hear  
 From Bratha Head to Wyndermere.

345 Saith Bracy the bard, So let it knell!  
 And let the drowsy sacristan

- Still count as slowly as he can!  
There is no lack of such, I ween,  
As well fill up the space between.  
350 In Langdale Pike and Witch's lair,  
And Dungeon-ghyll so foully rent,  
With ropes of rock and bells of air  
Three sinful sextons' ghosts are pent,  
Who all give back, one after t'other,  
355 The death-note to their living brother;  
And oft too, by the knell offended,  
Just as their one! two! three! is ended,  
The devil mocks the doleful tale  
With a merry peal from Borodale.
- 360 The air is still! through mist and cloud  
That merry peal comes ringing loud;  
And Geraldine shakes off her dread,  
And rises lightly from the bed;  
Puts on her silken vestments white,  
365 And tricks her hair in lovely plight,  
And nothing doubting of her spell  
Awakens the lady Christabel.  
"Sleep you, sweet lady Christabel?  
I trust that you have rested well."
- 370 And Christabel awoke and spied  
The same who lay down by her side —  
Oh rather say, the same whom she  
Raised up beneath the old oak tree!  
Nay, fairer yet; and yet more fair!  
375 For she belike hath drunken deep  
Of all the blessedness of sleep!  
And while she spake, her looks, her air  
Such gentle thankfulness declare,

That (so it seemed) her girded vests  
 380 Grew tight beneath her heaving breasts.  
 "Sure I have sinned!" said Christabel,  
 "Now heaven be praised if all be well!"  
 And in low faltering tones, yet sweet,  
 Did she the lofty lady greet,  
 385 With such perplexity of mind  
 As dreams too lively leave behind.

So quickly she rose, and quickly arrayed  
 Her maiden limbs, and having prayed  
 That He, who on the cross did groan,  
 390 Might wash away her sins unknown,  
 She forthwith led fair Geraldine  
 To meet her sire, Sir Leoline.

The lovely maid and lady tall  
 Are pacing both into the hall,  
 395 And pacing on through page and groom,  
 Enter the Baron's presence-room.

The Baron rose, and while he prest  
 His gentle daughter to his breast,  
 With cheerful wonder in his eyes  
 400 The lady Geraldine espies,  
 And gave such welcome to the same,  
 As might beseem so bright a dame!

But when he heard the lady's tale,  
 And when she told her father's name,  
 405 Why waxed Sir Leoline so pale,  
 Murmuring o'er the name again,  
 Lord Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine<sup>1</sup>?

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<sup>1</sup> *Tryermaine*. The geographical names of the poem are taken from the Lake Country of England, and thus give local color to the story. See page 49.

Alas! they had been friends in youth<sup>1</sup>;  
 But whispering tongues can poison truth;  
 410 And constancy lives in realms above;  
 And life is thorny; and youth is vain;  
 And to be wroth with one we love  
 Doth work like madness in the brain.  
 And thus it chanced, as I divine,  
 415 With Roland and Sir Leoline.  
 Each spake words of high disdain  
 And insult to his heart's best brother:  
 They parted — ne'er to meet again!  
 But never either found another  
 420 To free the hollow heart from paining —  
 They stood aloof, the scars remaining,  
 Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;  
 A dreary sea now flows between; —  
 But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,  
 425 Shall wholly do away, I ween,  
 The marks of that which once hath been.

Sir Leoline, a moment's space,  
 Stood gazing on the damsel's face:  
 And the youthful Lord of Tryermaine  
 430 Came back upon his heart again.

Oh then the Baron forgot his age,  
 His noble heart swelled high with rage;  
 He swore by the wounds in Jesu's side,  
 He would proclaim it far and wide

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<sup>1</sup> *Friends in youth.* Campbell's notes contain the following remark: "Lines 408-426, perhaps because they bring us out of the surrounding fairyland, are the most famous in *Christabel*; even the *Edinburgh* reviewer could see they were fine." Coleridge himself said that they were the best and sweetest lines he ever wrote.

- 435 With trump and solemn heraldry,  
That they who thus had wronged the dame,  
Were base as spotted infamy!  
"And if they dare deny the same,  
My herald shall appoint a week,  
440 And let the recreant traitors seek  
My tourney court -- that there and then  
I may dislodge their reptile souls  
From the bodies and forms of men!"  
He spake: his eye in lightning rolls!  
445 For the lady was ruthlessly seized; and he kenned  
In the beautiful lady the child of his friend!

- And now the tears were on his face,  
And fondly in his arms he took  
Fair Geraldine, who met the embrace,  
450 Prolonging it with joyous look.  
Which when she viewed, a vision fell  
Upon the soul of Christabel,  
The vision of fear, the touch and pain!  
She shrunk and shuddered, and saw again --  
455 (Ah, woe is me! Was it for thee,  
Thou gentle maid! such sights to see?)  
Again she saw that bosom old,  
Again she felt that bosom cold,  
And drew in her breath with a hissing sound:  
460 Whereat the Knight turned wildly round,  
And nothing saw but his own sweet maid  
With eyes upraised, as one that prayed.

- The touch, the sight, had passed away,  
And in its stead that vision blest,  
465 Which comforted her after-rest  
While in the lady's arms she lay,  
Had put a rapture in her breast,

And on her lips and o'er her eyes  
Spread smiles like light!

With new surprise,

470 "What ails then my beloved child?"

The Baron said — His daughter mild  
Made answer, "All will yet be well!"

I ween,<sup>1</sup> she had no power to tell  
Aught else: so mighty was the spell.

475 Yet he, who saw this Geraldine,  
Had deemed her sure a thing divine.  
Such sorrow with such grace she blended,  
As if she feared she had offended  
Sweet Christabel, that gentle maid!

480 And with such lowly tones she prayed,  
She might be sent without delay  
Home to her father's mansion.

"Nay!

Nay, by my soul!" said Leoline.

"Ho! Bracy, the bard, the charge be thine!

485 Go thou, with music sweet and loud,  
And take two steeds with trappings proud,  
And take the youth whom thou lov'st best  
To bear thy harp, and learn thy song,  
And clothe you both in solemn vest,

490 And over the mountains haste along,  
Lest wandering folk, that are abroad,  
Detain you on the valley road.

And when he has crossed the Irthing flood.

My merry bard! he hastes, he hastes

495 Up Knorren Moor, through Halegarth Wood,

And reaches soon that castle good.

Which stands and threatens Scotland's wastes.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ween.* Think.

" Bard Bracy! bard Bracy! your horses are fleet,  
 Ye must ride up the hall, your music so sweet  
 500 More loud than your horses' echoing feet!  
 And loud and loud to Lord Roland! call,  
 Thy daughter is safe in Langdale hall!  
 Thy beautiful daughter is safe and free —  
 Sir Leoline greets thee thus through me.  
 505 He bids thee come without delay  
 With all thy numerous array;  
 And take thy lovely daughter home:  
 And he will meet thee on the way  
 With all his numerous array  
 510 White with their panting palfreys' foam:  
 And by mine honor! I will say,  
 That I repent me of the day  
 When I spake words of fierce disdain  
 To Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine! —  
 515 — For since that evil hour hath flown,  
 Many a summer's sun hath shone;  
 Yet ne'er found I a friend again  
 Like Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine."

The lady fell, and clasped his knees,  
 520 Her face upraised, her eyes o'erflowing;  
 And Bracy replied, with faltering voice,  
 His gracious hail<sup>1</sup> on all bestowing! —  
 "Thy words, thou sire of Christabel,  
 Are sweeter than my harp can tell;  
 525 Yet might I gain a boon of thee.  
 This day my journey should not be,  
 So strange a dream hath come to me;  
 That I had vowed with music loud

---

<sup>1</sup> *Hail.* Greeting.



To clear yon wood from thing unblest,  
 530 Warned by a vision in my rest!  
 For in my sleep I saw that dove,  
 That gentle bird, whom thou dost love,  
 And call'st by thy own daughter's name —  
 Sir Leoline! I saw the same  
 535 Fluttering, and uttering fearful moan,  
 Among the green herbs in the forest alone.  
 Which when I saw and when I heard,  
 I wonder'd what might ail the bird;  
 For nothing near it could I see,  
 540 Save the grass and green herbs underneath the old  
 tree.

“ And in my dream methought I went  
 To search out what might there be found;  
 And what the sweet bird's trouble meant,  
 That thus lay fluttering on the ground.  
 545 I went and peered, and could descry  
 No cause for her distressful cry;  
 But yet for her dear lady's sake  
 I stooped, methought, the dove to take,  
 When lo! I saw a bright green snake  
 550 Coiled around its wings and neck,  
 Green as the herbs on which it couched,  
 Close by the dove's its head it crouched;  
 And with the dove it heaves and stirs,  
 Swelling its neck as she swelled hers!  
 555 I woke; it was the midnight hour,  
 The clock was echoing in the tower;  
 But though my slumber was gone by,  
 This dream it would not pass away —  
 It seems to live upon my eye!  
 560 And thence I vowed this selfsame day,

With music strong and saintly song  
To wander through the forest bare,  
Lest aught unholy loiter there."

Thus Bracy said: the Baron, the while,  
565 Half-listening heard him with a smile;  
Then turned to Lady Geraldine,  
His eyes made up of wonder and love;  
And said in courtly accents fine,  
"Sweet maid, Lord Roland's beauteous dove,  
570 With arms more strong than harp or song,  
Thy sire and I will crush the snake!"  
He kissed her forehead as he spake,  
And Geraldine, in maiden wise,<sup>1</sup>  
Casting down her large bright eyes,  
575 With blushing cheek and courtesy fine  
She turned her from Sir Leoline;  
Softly gathering up her train,  
That o'er her right arm fell again;  
And folded her arms across her chest,  
580 And couched her head upon her breast,  
And looked askance at Christabel —  
Jesu Maria, shield her well!

A snake's small eye blinks dull and shy,  
And the lady's eyes they shrunk in her head,  
585 Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye,  
And with somewhat of malice, and more of dread,  
At Christabel she looked askance! —  
One moment — and the sight was fled!  
But Christabel in dizzy trance  
590 Stumbling on the unsteady ground

---

<sup>1</sup> *Wise. Manner.*

Shuddered aloud, with a hissing sound ;  
And Geraldine again turned round,  
And like a thing that sought relief,  
Full of wonder and full of grief,  
595 She rolled her large bright eyes divine  
Wildly on Sir Leoline.

The maid, alas ! her thoughts are gone,  
She nothing sees — no sight but one !  
The maid, devoid of guile and sin,  
600 I know not how, in fearful wise  
So deeply had she drunken in  
That look, those shrunken serpent eyes,  
That all her features were resigned  
To this sole image in her mind ;  
605 And passively did imitate  
That look of dull and treacherous hate !  
And thus she stood in dizzy trance,  
Still picturing that look askance  
With forced unconscious sympathy  
610 Full before her father's view —  
As far as such a look could be,  
In eyes so innocent and blue !  
And when the trance was o'er, the maid  
Paused awhile, and inly prayed :  
615 Then falling at the Baron's feet,  
“ By my mother's soul do I entreat  
That thou this woman send away ! ”  
She said : and more she could not say :  
For what she knew she could not tell,  
620 O'ermastered by the mighty spell.

Why is thy cheek so wan and wild,  
Sir Leoline ? Thy only child

- Lies at thy feet, thy joy, thy pride,  
 So fair, so innocent, so mild;  
 625 The same, for whom thy lady died!  
 Oh by the pangs of her dear mother  
 Think thou no evil of thy child!  
 For her, and thee, and for no other,  
 She prayed the moment ere she died:  
 630 Prayed that the babe for whom she died,  
 Might prove her dear lord's joy and pride!  
 That prayer her deadly pangs beguiled,  
                   Sir Leoline!  
 And wouldst thou wrong thy only child,  
 635                   Her child and thine?

- Within the Baron's heart and brain  
 If thoughts, like these, had any share,  
 They only swelled his rage and pain,  
 And did but work confusion there.  
 640 His heart was cleft with pain and rage,  
 His cheeks they quivered, his eyes were wild  
 Dishonored thus in his old age;  
 Dishonored by his only child,  
 And all his hospitality  
 645 To the insulted daughter of his friend  
 By more than woman's jealousy  
 Brought thus to a disgraceful end —  
 He rolled his eye with stern regard  
 Upon the gentle minstrel bard,  
 650 And said in tones abrupt, austere —  
 "Why, Bracy! dost thou loiter here?  
 I bade thee hence!" The bard obeyed;  
 And turning from his own sweet maid,  
 The aged knight, Sir Leoline,  
 655 Led forth the lady Geraldine!

THE CONCLUSION TO PART II<sup>1</sup>

A little child, a limber elf,  
Singing, dancing to itself,  
A fairy thing with red round cheeks,  
That always finds, and never seeks,  
660 Makes such a vision to the sight  
As fills a father's eyes with light ;  
And pleasures flow in so thick and fast  
Upon his heart, that he at last  
Must needs express his love's excess  
665 With words of unmeant bitterness.<sup>2</sup>  
Perhaps 'tis pretty to force together  
Thoughts so all unlike each other ;  
To mutter and mock a broken charm,  
To dally with wrong that does no harm.  
670 Perhaps 'tis tender too and pretty  
At each wild word to feel within  
A sweet recoil of love and pity.  
And what, if in a world of sin  
(O sorrow and shame should this be true !)  
675 Such giddiness of heart and brain  
Comes seldom save from rage and pain,  
So talks as it 's most used to do.

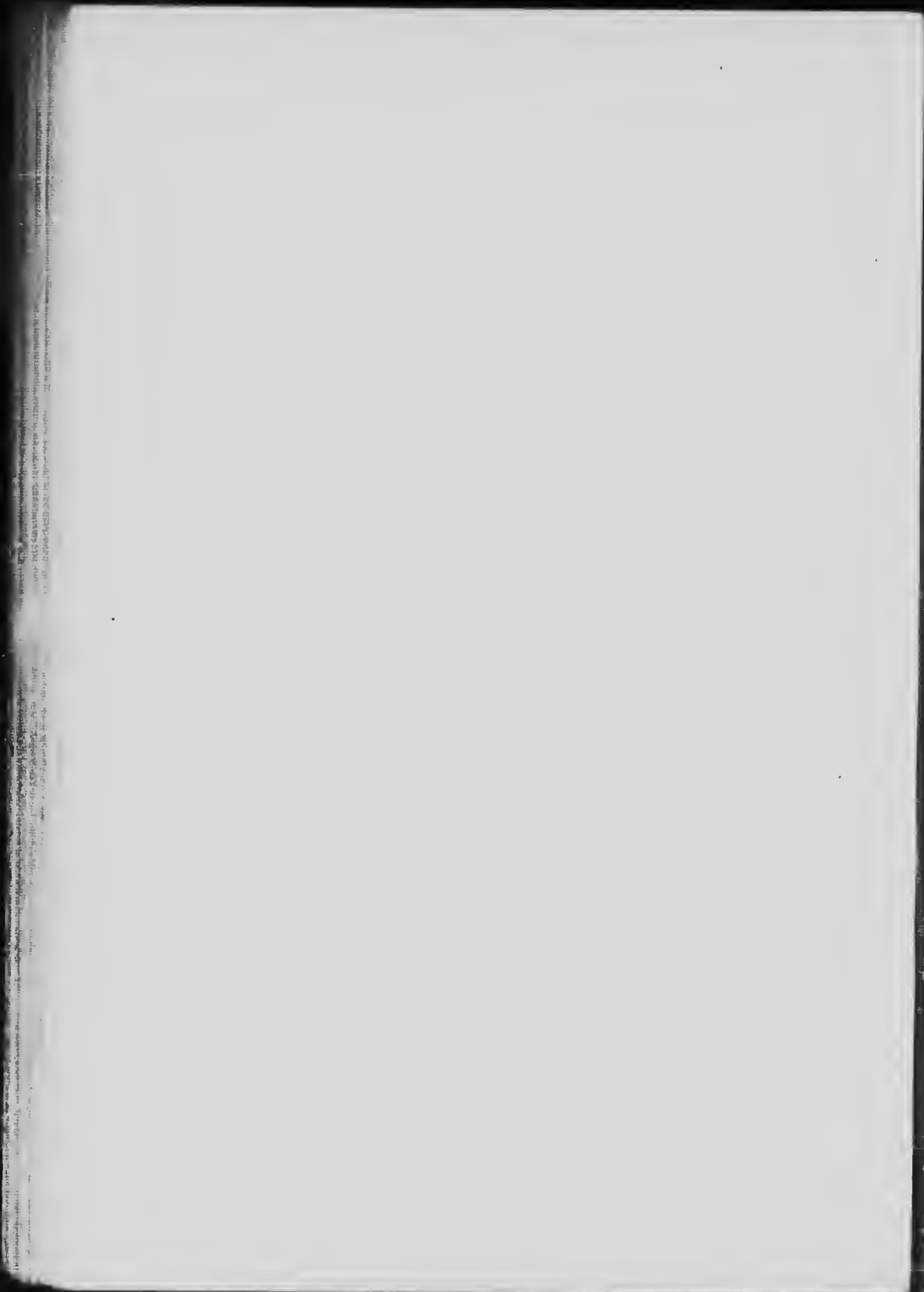
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<sup>1</sup> Campbell thinks it highly improbable that this "conclusion" was composed for *Christabel*. The lines were sent to Southey in a letter of May 6, 1801, and were probably written about that time.

<sup>2</sup> *Unmeant bitterness*. Such words as "rogues," "rascals," "little varlets," addressed playfully and endearingly to children.



THE DESERTED VILLAGE





## INTRODUCTION

### LIFE OF GOLDSMITH

OLIVER GOLDSMITH was born in 1728 in the village of Pallas, County of Longford, Ireland. He was the fifth of seven children of the Rev. Charles Goldsmith, a poor curate of the Established Church. Two years after his birth his father became rector of Kilkenny West, and moved to the village of Lissoy, in the county of Westmeath. Here Oliver spent his childhood, and here, no doubt, he received those impressions ascribed to "Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain." In 1734 he began to attend the village school, taught by Thomas Byrne, an old soldier of Queen Anne, who occupied much of his time in entertaining his pupils with legends of ghosts, banshees, and the like, and with stories of adventures in which he himself and his chivalrous leader, the Earl of Peterborough, figured as heroes.

In 1744 Goldsmith entered Trinity College, Dublin, as a sizar. His tutor, it is said, was harsh and unsympathetic. Oliver was little interested in his studies, preferring to lounge about the college-gate, play his flute, or write songs for the Dublin ballad-singers and then steal out at night to hear them sung. He defiantly broke the college rules, going so far on one occasion as to give in his rooms a ball and supper to some gay young men and women from the city. His enraged master unexpectedly pounced upon the unlucky sizar in the very midst of the affair, knocked him down, and dispersed the guests. Incensed at such treatment,

Oliver sold his books and ran away; but, on the earnest solicitation of his brother Henry, he returned, and in 1749 he took his B. A. degree.

After three or four years of idleness, Goldsmith, with a small purse made up by his friends, went to study medicine at Edinburgh, and later at Leyden. Here, as at Dublin, his convivial talents made themselves more noticeable than his industry. In 1755, being without money, he set out on a walking tour, travelling through France, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, observing human nature from many points of view and accumulating impressions subsequently embodied in his works. After two years of roaming he reached London, shabbily attired and without either money or friends. Three years more he spent aimlessly, and then, at last, he entered the field of his life-work, a field to which nature had undoubtedly called him, and in which he won for himself undisputed fame. His most ambitious and best-known works are the following: *The Citizen of the World*, *The Life of Beau Nash*, *The Traveller*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *The Good-natured Man*, *The Deserted Village*, and *She Stoops to Conquer*.

In 1774, in his forty-sixth year, Goldsmith died, in the Middle Temple, of a nervous fever brought on by overwork and financial worry. He was privately buried in the ground of the Temple Church, just off Fleet Street, and there may still be seen a plain gray stone bearing the simple inscription "Here lies Oliver Goldsmith." His memory is honored by a tablet in the Temple Church and a medallion in the south transept of Westminster Abbey. Of him Sir Walter Scott said: "The wreath of Goldsmith is unsullied; he wrote to exalt virtue and expose vice; and he accomplished his task in a manner which raises him to the highest rank among British authors."

## THE DESERTED VILLAGE

**Composition.** — *The Deserted Village* was published in May, 1774. It is a companion poem of *The Traveller* written five or six years before. In the earlier poem Goldsmith had deplored the increase of riches and of luxuries and the consequent miseries of the poor. So deeply convinced was he of the importance of this social problem that he desired to return to the subject. He wished to impress his readers with the fact that the accumulation of wealth is injurious to the best interests of a people, that national prosperity does not mean the spread of opulence and the display of pomp.

“ Have we not seen, round Britain’s peopled shore,  
Her useful sons exchange’d for useless ore ?  
Seen all her triumphs but destruction haste,  
Like flaring tapers brightening as they waste,  
Seen opulence, her grandeur to maintain,  
Lead stern depopulation in her train,  
And over fields where scatter’d hamlets rose,  
In barren, solitary pomp repose ?  
Have we not seen, at pleasure’s lordly call,  
The smiling, long-frequented village fall ?  
Beheld the duteous son, the sire decay’d,  
The modest matron, and the blushing maid,  
Forc’d from their homes, a melancholy train,  
To traverse climes beyond the western main ;  
Where wild Oswego spreads her swamps around,  
And Niagara stuns with thundering sound ? ”

In these lines of *The Traveller* Goldsmith lamented grave national evils, and in *The Deserted Village* he renewed his attack on the system that made them

possible. His method in the later poem was to draw a contrast between two widely different conditions in one and the same locality.

“ Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn !  
Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn.”

The death of his brother Henry in 1768, no doubt, served as an immediate stimulus to complete the work of denunciation he had already begun, for now he felt more than ever estranged from the pleasant haunts of earlier years. His protest against the social wrongs of his day becomes at times malignant and bitter. He inveighs most vigorously and virulently against the injustice, greed, and cruelty of the pampered rich.

“ O Luxury ! thou eurst by Heaven’s decree,  
How ill exchang’d are things like these for thee ! ”

Not a little of *The Deserted Village* is touchingly sad. It contains the reflections, upon the happy days of his youth, of a man who had seen much of a hard, cold world. It breathes out his tender recollection of the simple and innocent delights of humble, happy folk, and his keen disappointment in being denied the privilege of returning to die amid the scenes of his childhood.

“ In all my wanderings round this world of care,  
In all my griefs — and God has given my share —  
I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown,  
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down ;  
To husband out life’s taper at the close,  
And keep the flame from wasting by repose ;  
I still had hopes — for pride attends us still —  
Amidst the swains to show my book-learn’d skill,

Around my fire an evening group to draw,  
And tell of all I felt, and all I saw ;  
And, as a hare, whom hounds and horns pursue,  
Pants to the place from whence at first she flew,  
I still had hopes, my long vexations past,  
Here to return, — and die at home at last."

But the lines that have most endeared the poem to thousands of readers are those delightful sketches of some of the village characters and scenes. They are so vivid and lifelike, so heart-touching, yet at times subtly humorous, that their charm cannot be resisted. The first two hundred and fifty lines of the poem are the most widely known, and undoubtedly afford to most people the greatest enjoyment.

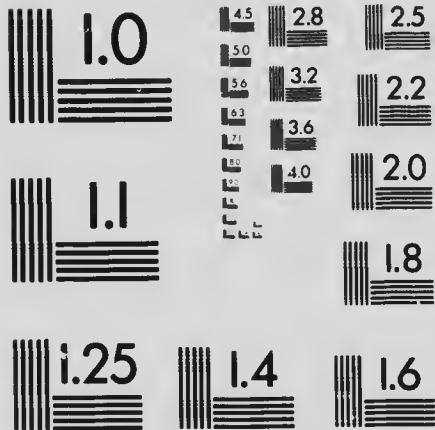
The verse of *The Deserted Village* is easy and musical, the language refined and apposite, the construction simple and natural. A peculiar felicity marks every line, "the nice selection of just the word or phrase, richest in association, redolent of tradition, harmonious, classically proper, but still natural, true, and apt."

**Critical Comments.** — Washington Irving has the following appreciative comment on the poem: "Although criticism has allotted the highest rank to *The Traveller*, there is no doubt that *The Deserted Village* is the most popular and favorite poem of the two. Perhaps no poetical piece of equal length has been more universally read by all classes, or has more frequently supplied extracts for apt quotation. It abounds with couplets and single lines, so simply beautiful in sentiment, so musical in cadence, and so perfect in expression that the ear is delighted to retain them for their melody; the mind treasures them for their truth, while their tone of tender melancholy indelibly engraves them on



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the heart. The characteristic of our author's poetry is a prevailing simplicity, which conceals all the artifices of versification; but it is not confined to his expression alone, for it pervades every feature of the poem. His delineation of rural scenery; his village portraits, his moral, political, and classical allusions, while marked by singular fidelity, chasteness, and elegance, are all chiefly distinguished for this pleasing and natural character. The finishing is exquisitely delicate, without being overwrought; and with the feelings of tenderness and melancholy which run through the poem, there is occasionally mixed up a slight tincture of pleasantry, which gives an additional interest to the whole. *The Deserted Village* is written in the same style and measure with *The Traveller*, and may in some degree be considered a suite of that poem, pursuing some of the views and illustrating in their results some of the principles there laid down. But the poet is here more intimately interested in his subject. The case is taken from his own experience, the scenery drawn from his own home, and the application especially intended for his own country."



## THE DESERTED VILLAGE

SWEET Auburn <sup>1</sup>! loveliest village of the plain,  
Where health and plenty cheer'd the laboring  
swain,  
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,  
And parting summer's lingering blooms delay'd;  
5 Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,  
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,  
How often have I loiter'd o'er thy green,  
Where humble happiness endear'd each scene!  
How often have I paus'd on every charm,  
10 The shelter'd cot, the cultivated farm,  
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,  
The decent <sup>2</sup> church that topt the neighboring hill,  
The hawthorn bush with seats beneath the shade,  
For talking age and whispering lovers made!  
15 How often have I blest the coming day,  
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,  
And all the village train, from labor free,  
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree;  
While many a pastime circled <sup>3</sup> in the shade,  
20 The young contending as the old survey'd;  
And many a gambol frolick'd o'er the ground,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Auburn.* Auburn is usually identified with Goldsmith's native village, Lissoy, in Ireland; but the picture is in many respects, no doubt, ideal.

<sup>2</sup> *Decent.* Becoming in its appearance.

<sup>3</sup> *Circled.* The games required that the players should be formed into circles.

And sleights of art and feats of strength went  
 round<sup>1</sup>;  
 And still, as each repeated pleasure tir'd,  
 Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspir'd;  
 25 The dancing pair that simply sought renown,  
 By holding out, to tire each other down;  
 The swain mistrustless of his smutted face,  
 While secret laughter titter'd round the place;  
 The bashful virgin's sidelong looks of love,  
 30 The matron's glance that would those looks reprove:  
 These were thy charms, sweet village! sports like  
 these,  
 With sweet succession, taught e'en toil to please;  
 These round thy bowers their cheerful influence  
 shed,  
 These were thy charms, — but all these charms are fled.  
 35 Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn!  
 Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;  
 Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand<sup>2</sup> is seen,  
 And desolation saddens all thy green:  
 One only master grasps the whole domain,  
 40 And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain.  
 No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,  
 But chok'd with sedges works its weedy way;  
 Along thy glades, a solitary guest,  
 The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest;  
 45 Amidst thy desert-walks the lapwing flies,  
 And tires their echoes with unvaried cries.

<sup>1</sup> *Went round.* The performers took turns.

<sup>2</sup> *Tyrant's hand.* It is supposed that the poet here refers to General Robert Napier, who is said to have purchased a large tract of land including Lissoy, and to have forced many families to leave their homes in order that he might make the improvements he desired. See lines 275–286.

Sunk are thy bowers in shapeless ruin all,  
 And the long grass o'ertops the mouldering wall;  
 And, trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand  
 50 Far, far away thy children leave the land.

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
 Where wealth accumulates, and men decay:  
 Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;  
 A breath can make them, as a breath has made:<sup>1</sup>  
 55 But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,  
 When once destroy'd, can never be supplied.

A time there was, ere England's griefs began,  
 When every rood of ground maintain'd its man;  
 For him light labor spread her wholesome store,  
 60 Just gave what life requir'd, but gave no more;  
 His best companions, innocence and health;  
 And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.

But times are alter'd; trade's unfeeling train  
 Usurp the land, and dispossess the swain;  
 65 Along the lawn, where scatter'd hamlets rose,  
 Unwieldy wealth and cumbrous pomp repose;  
 And every want to opulence allied,  
 And every pang that folly pays to pride.  
 Those gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,  
 70 Those calm desires that ask'd but little room,  
 Those healthful sports that grac'd the peaceful  
     scene,  
 Liv'd in each look, and brighten'd all the green:  
 These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,  
 And rural mirth and manners are no more.

---

<sup>1</sup> *A breath has made.* Cf. :—

“Princes and lords are but the breath of kings.”

—BURNS, *Cotter's Saturday Night*.

75 Sweet Auburn! parent of the blissful hour,  
 Thy glades forlorn confess the tyrant's power.  
 Here, as I take my solitary rounds  
 Amidst thy tangling walks and ruin'd grounds,  
 And, many a year elaps'd, return to view  
 80 Where once the cottage stood, the hawthorn grew,  
 Remembrance wakes, with all her busy train,  
 Swells at my breast, and turns the past to pain.

In all my wanderings round this world of care,  
 In all my griefs — and God has given my share —  
 85 I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown,  
 Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;  
 To husband out life's taper at the close,  
 And keep the flame from wasting by repose;  
 I still had hopes — for pride attends us still —  
 90 Amidst the swains to show my book-learn'd skill,  
 Around my fire an evening group to draw,  
 And tell of all I felt, and all I saw;  
 And, as a hare, whom hounds and horns pursue,  
 Pants to the place from whence at first she flew,  
 95 I still had hopes, my long vexations past,  
 Here to return, — and die at home at last.

O blest retirement! friend to life's decline,  
 Retreat from care, that never must be mine,  
 How blest is he who crowns in shades like these  
 100 A youth of labor with an age of ease;  
 Who quits a world where strong temptations try,  
 And, since 'tis hard to combat, learns to fly!  
 For him no wretches, born to work and weep,  
 Explore the mine, or tempt the dangerous deep;  
 105 No surly porter stands in guilty state,  
 To spurn imploring famine from the gate:

But on he moves to meet his latter end,  
 Angels around befriending virtue's friend;  
 Bends to the grave with unperceiv'd decay,  
 110 While resignation gently slopes the way<sup>1</sup>;  
 And, all his prospects brightening to the last,  
 His heaven commences ere the world be past.

Sweet was the sound, when oft at evening's close  
 Up yonder hill the village murmur rose.  
 115 There, as I pass'd with careless steps and slow,  
 The mingling notes came soften'd from below:  
 The swain responsive as the milkmaid sung,  
 The sober herd that low'd to meet their young;  
 The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool;  
 120 The playful children just let loose from school;  
 The watch-dog's voice that bay'd the whispering  
     wind,  
 And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind<sup>2</sup>:  
 These all in sweet confusion sought the shade,  
 And fill'd each pause the nightingale had made.  
 125 But now the sounds of population fail,  
 No cheerful murmurs fluctuate<sup>3</sup> in the gale,  
 No busy steps the grass-grown footway tread,  
 But all the bloomy flush of life is fled.  
 All but yon widow'd, solitary thing  
 130 That feebly bends beside the plashy spring;  
 She, wretched matron,<sup>4</sup> — forc'd in age, for bread,  
 To strip the brook with mantling cresses spread,

<sup>1</sup> *Slopes the way.* Sir Joshua Reynolds, to whom this poem was dedicated, repaid the compliment by painting a fine picture of "Resignation," and dedicating it to Goldsmith.

<sup>2</sup> *Vacant mind.* Free from care.

<sup>3</sup> *Fluctuate.* Rise and fall.

<sup>4</sup> *Wretched matron.* Identified with Catherine Geraghty, a poor widow of Lissoy.

To pick her wintry fagot from the thorn,  
 To seek her nightly shed, and weep till morn —  
 135 She only left of all the harmless train,  
 The sad historian <sup>1</sup> of the pensive plain.

Near yonder copse, where once the garden smil'd,  
 And still where many a garden flower grows wild,  
 There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,  
 140 The village preacher's <sup>2</sup> modest mansion rose.  
 A man he was to all the country dear,  
 And passing <sup>3</sup> rich with forty pounds a year.  
 Remote from towns he ran his godly race,  
 Nor e'er had chang'd, nor wish'd to change, his  
 place;

145 Unpractis'd he to fawn, or seek for power,  
 By doctrines fashion'd to the varying hour;  
 Far other aims his heart had learn'd to prize,  
 More skill'd to raise the wretched than to rise.  
 His house was known to all the vagrant train,  
 150 He chid their wanderings, but reliev'd their pain;  
 The long-remember'd beggar was his guest,  
 Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;  
 The ruin'd spendthrift, now no longer proud,  
 Claim'd kindred there, and had his claims allow'd;

155 The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,  
 Sate by his fire, and talk'd the night away;  
 Wept o'er his wounds, or, tales of sorrow done,  
 Shoulder'd his crutch, and show'd how fields were  
 won.

Pleas'd with his guests, the good man learn'd to glow,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Historian.* Her condition tells the sad story of the village.

<sup>2</sup> *Village preacher.* A copy, it is said, of Goldsmith's brother Henry, as well as of his father, the Rev. Charles Goldsmith.

<sup>3</sup> *Passing.* Surpassing.

160 And quite forgot their vices in their woe;  
 Careless their merits or their faults to scan,  
 His pity gave ere charity began.<sup>1</sup>

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,  
 And e'en his failings lean'd to virtue's side:  
 165 But in his duty prompt at every call,  
 He watch'd and wept, he pray'd and felt for all.  
 And as a bird each fond endearment tries  
 To tempt its new-fledg'd offspring to the skies,  
 He tried each art, reprov'd each dull delay,  
 170 Allur'd to brighter worlds, and led the way.

Beside the bed where parting life was laid,  
 And sorrow, guilt, and pain, by turns dismay'd,  
 The reverend champion stood. At his control,  
 Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul;  
 175 Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,  
 And his last faltering accents whisper'd praise.

At church, with meek and unaffected grace,  
 His looks adorn'd the venerable place;  
 Truth from his lips prevail'd with double sway,  
 180 And fools, who came to scoff, remain'd to pray.  
 The service past, around the pious man,  
 With steady zeal, each honest rustic ran;  
 Even children follow'd, with endearing wile,  
 And pluck'd his gown, to share the good man's  
 smile.  
 185 His ready smile a parent's warmth exprest,  
 Their welfare pleas'd him, and their cares distrest;  
 To them his heart, his love, his griefs, were given,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Charity began.* His generous, sympathetic nature predisposed him to charitable acts.

But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven:  
 As some tall cliff <sup>1</sup> that lifts its awful form,  
 190 Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,  
 Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,  
 Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way  
 With blossom'd turze unprofitably gay,<sup>2</sup>  
 195 There, in his noisy mansion, skill'd to rule,  
 The village master <sup>3</sup> taught his little school.  
 A man severe he was, and stern to view;  
 I knew him well, and every truant knew:  
 Well had the boding tremblers learn'd to trace  
 200 The day's disasters in his morning face;  
 Full well they laugh'd, with counterfeited glee,  
 At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;  
 Full well the busy whisper, circling round,  
 Convey'd the dismal tidings when he frown'd.  
 205 Yet he was kind, or, if severe in aught,  
 The love he bore to learning was in fault.  
 The village all declar'd how much he knew;  
 'Twas certain he could write, and cipher too;  
 Lands he could measure, terms and tides <sup>4</sup> presage,

---

<sup>1</sup> *As some tall cliff . . . head.* "Perhaps the sublimest simile that English poetry can boast."—GILBERT WAKEFIELD.

<sup>2</sup> *Unprofitably gay.* Cf.:—

"Perhaps it was a bower beneath whose leaves  
 The violets of five seasons reappear  
 And fade, unseen by any human eye."

— WORDSWORTH, *Nutting*.

<sup>3</sup> *Village master.* Goldsmith's teacher was Thomas Byrne.

<sup>4</sup> *Terms and tides.* Terms were the times that the law courts would sit and colleges would open. Tides were days and periods of time in the ecclesiastical year; as Eastertide, Whitsuntide, etc.



- 210 And even the story ran that he could gauge<sup>1</sup>;  
 In arguing, too, the parson own'd his skill,  
 For even though vanquish'd he could argue still;  
 While words of learned length and thundering sound  
 Amaz'd the gazing rustics rang'd around;  
 215 And still they gaz'd, and still the wonder grew  
 That one small head could carry all he knew.

- But past is all his fame. The very spot,  
 Where many a time he triumph'd, is forgot.  
 Near yonder thorn, that lifts its head on high,  
 220 Where once the sign-post caught the passing eye,  
 Low lies that house where nut-brown draughts in-  
 spir'd,  
 Where gray-beard mirth and smiling toil retir'd,  
 Where village statesmen talk'd with looks pro-  
 found,  
 And news much older than their ale went round.  
 225 Imagination fondly stoops to trace  
 The parlor splendors of that festive place:  
 The whitewash'd wall, the nicely sanded floor,  
 The varnish'd clock that click'd behind the door;  
 The chest contriv'd a double debt to pay,  
 230 A bed by night, a chest of drawers by day;  
 The pictures plac'd for ornament and use,  
 The twelve good rules,<sup>2</sup> the royal game of goose<sup>3</sup>;

---

<sup>1</sup> *Gauge*. Measure contents of vessels.

<sup>2</sup> *Twelve good rules*. Said to have been found in the study of the unfortunate Charles I. They were: 1. Urge no healths. 2. Profane no divine ordinances. 3. Touch no state matters. 4. Reveal no secrets. 5. Pick no quarrels. 6. Make no companions. 7. Maintain no ill opinion. 8. Keep no bad company. 9. Encourage no vice. 10. Make no long meals. 11. Repeat no grievances. 12. Lay no wagers.

<sup>3</sup> *Royal game of goose*. The game is played by two persons with dice on a board with sixty-two compartments.

The hearth, except when winter chill'd the day,  
 With aspen boughs, and flowers, and fennel gay,  
 235 While broken teacups, wisely kept for show,  
 Rang'd o'er the chimney, glisten'd in a row.

Vain, transitory splendors! could not all  
 Reprieve the tottering mansion from its fall?  
 Obscure it sinks, nor shall it more impart  
 240 An hour's importance to the poor man's heart.  
 Thither no more the peasant shall repair  
 To sweet oblivion of his daily care;  
 No more the farmer's news, the barber's tale,  
 No more the woodman's<sup>1</sup> ballad shall prevail;  
 245 No more the smith his dusky brow shall clear,  
 Relax his ponderous strength, and lean to hear;  
 The host himself no longer shall be found  
 Careful to see the mantling bliss go round;  
 Nor the coy maid, half willing to be prest,  
 250 Shall kiss the cup to pass it to the rest.

Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,  
 These simple blessings of the lowly train;  
 To me more dear, congenial to my heart,  
 One native charm, than all the gloss of art.  
 255 Spontaneous joys, where nature has its play,  
 The soul adopts, and owns their first-born sway;  
 Lightly they frolic o'er the vacant mind,  
 Unenvied, unmolested, unconfin'd.  
 But the long pomp,<sup>2</sup> the midnight masquerade,  
 260 With all the freaks of wanton wealth array'd, —  
 In these, ere triflers half their wish obtain,  
 The toiling pleasure sickens into pain;

---

<sup>1</sup> *Woodman.* Hunter.

<sup>2</sup> *The long pomp.* A splendid procession.

And even while fashion's brightest arts decoy,  
The heart, distrusting, asks if this be joy.

- 265 Ye friends to truth, ye statesmen, who survey  
The rich man's joys increase, the poor's decay,  
'Tis yours to judge how wide the limits stand  
Between a splendid and a happy land.  
Proud swells the tide with loads of freighted ore,  
270 And shouting Folly hails them from her shore;  
Hoards e'en beyond the miser's wish abound,  
And rich men flock from all the world around.  
Yet count our gains: this wealth is but a name,  
That leaves our useful products still the same.  
275 Not so the loss. The man of wealth and pride  
Takes up a space that many poor supplied;  
Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,  
Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds:  
The robe that wraps his limbs in silken sloth  
280 Has robb'd the neighboring fields of half their  
growth;  
His seat, where solitary sports are seen,  
Indignant spurns the cottage from the green;  
Around the world each needful product flies,  
For all the luxuries the world supplies.  
285 While thus the land, adorn'd for pleasure, all  
In barren splendor feebly waits the fall.

As some fair female, unadorn'd and plain,  
Secure to please while youth confirms her reign,  
Slight's every borrow'd charm that dress supplies,  
290 Nor shares with art the triumph of her eyes;  
But when those charms are past, for charms are  
frail,  
When time advances, and when lovers fail,

She then shines forth, solicitous to bless,<sup>1</sup>  
 In all the glaring impotence of dress:  
 295 Thus fares the land, by luxury betray'd,  
 In nature's simplest charms at first array'd;  
 But, verging to decline, its splendors rise,  
 Its vistas strike, its palaces surprise;  
 While, scourged by famine from the smiling land,  
 300 The mournful peasant leads his humble band;  
 And while he sinks, without one arm to save,  
 The country blooms — a garden and a grave.

Where then, ah! where shall poverty reside,  
 To 'scape the pressure of contiguous pride?  
 305 If to some common's fenceless limits stray'd,  
 He drives his flock to pick the scanty blade,  
 Those fenceless fields the sons of wealth divide,  
 And even the bare-worn common is denied.  
 If to the city sped, what waits him there?  
 310 To see profusion that he must not share;  
 To see ten thousand baneful arts combin'd,  
 To pamper luxury, and thin mankind;  
 To see those joys the sons of pleasure know  
 Extorted from his fellow-creature's woe.  
 315 Here, while the courtier glitters in brocade,  
 There the pale artist<sup>2</sup> plies the sickly trade;  
 Here, while the proud their long-drawn pomps display,  
 There the black gibbet glooms beside the way.  
 The dome where Pleasure holds her midnight reign,  
 320 Here, richly deck'd, admits the gorgeous train;  
 Tumultuous grandeur crowds the blazing square,  
 The rattling chariots clash, the torches glare.

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<sup>1</sup> *To bless.* To please.

<sup>2</sup> *Artist.* Artisan.

Sure scenes like these no troubles e'er annoy!  
 Sure these denote one universal joy!  
 325 Are these thy serious thoughts? Ah! turn thine  
       eyes  
 Where the poor houseless shivering female lies.  
 She once, perhaps, in village plenty blest,  
 Has wept at tales of innocence distress;  
 Her modest looks the cottage might adorn,  
 330 Sweet as the primrose peep beneath the thorn;  
 Now lost to all — her friends, her virtue fled —  
 Near her betrayer's door she lays her head,  
 And, pinch'd with cold, and shrinking from the  
       shower,  
 With heavy heart deplores that luckless hour,  
 335 When idly first, ambitious of the town,  
 She left her wheel,<sup>1</sup> and robes of country brown.

Do thine, sweet Auburn, thine, the loveliest train,  
 Do thy fair tribes participate her pain?  
 Even now, perhaps, by cold and hunger led,  
 340 At proud men's doors they ask a little bread.

Ah, no! To distant climes, a dreary scene,  
 Where half the convex world intrudes between,  
 Through torrid tracts with fainting steps they go,  
 Where wild Altama<sup>2</sup> murmurs to their woe.  
 345 Far different there from all that charm'd before,  
 The various terrors of that horrid shore<sup>3</sup>:  
 Those blazing suns that dart a downward ray,  
 And fiercely shed intolerable day;

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<sup>1</sup> *Wheel.* Her spinning-wheel.

<sup>2</sup> *Altama.* A river of Georgia, flowing into the Atlantic.

<sup>3</sup> *Horrid shore.* Goldsmith seems to have made rather free use of his imagination in this description of Georgia.

Those matted woods where birds forget to sing,  
350 But silent bats in drowsy clusters cling;  
Those pois'nous fields with rank luxuriance crown'd  
Where the dark scorpion gathers death around;  
Where at each step the stranger fears to wake  
The rattling terrors of the vengeful snake;  
355 Where crouching tigers wait their hapless prey  
And savage men more murderous still than they;  
While oft in whirls the mad tornado flies,  
Mingling the ravag'd landscape with the skies.  
Fair different these from every former scene,  
360 The cooling brook, the grassy-vested green,  
The breezy covert of the warbling grove,  
That only shelter'd thefts of harmless love.

Good Heaven! what sorrows gloom'd that part-  
ing day  
That call'd them from their native walks away;  
365 When the poor exiles, every pleasure past,  
Hung round the bowers, and fondly look'd their  
last,  
And took a long farewell, and wish'd in vain  
For seats like these beyond the western main;  
And, shuddering still to face the distant deep,  
370 Return'd and wept, and still return'd to weep!  
The good old sire the first prepar'd to go  
To new-found worlds, and wept for others' woe;  
But for himself, in conscious virtue brave,  
He only wish'd for worlds beyond the grave.

375 His lovely daughter, lovelier in her tears,  
The fond companion of his helpless years,  
Silent went next, neglectful of her charms,  
And left a lover's for a father's arms.

With louder plaints the mother spoke her woes,  
380 And bless'd the cot where every pleasure rose;  
And kiss'd her thoughtless babes with many a  
tear  
And clasp'd them close, in sorrow doubly dear;  
Whilst her fond husband strove to lend relief  
In all the silent manliness of grief.

385 O Luxury! thou curst by Heaven's decree,  
How ill exchang'd are things like these for thee!  
How do thy potions, with insidious joy,  
Diffuse their pleasures only to destroy!  
Kingdoms by thee, to sickly greatness grown,  
390 Boast of a florid vigor not their own.  
At every draught more large and large they grow,  
A bloated mass of rank, unwieldy woe;  
Till sapp'd their strength, and every part unsound  
Down, down they sink, and spread a ruin round.

395 Even now the devastation is begun,  
And half the business of destruction done;  
Even now, methinks, as pondering here I stand,  
I see the rural Virtues leave the land.  
Down where yon anchoring vessel spreads the sail,  
400 That idly waiting flaps with every gale,  
Downward they move, a melancholy band,  
Pass from the shore, and darken all the strand.  
Contented Toil, and hospitable Care,  
And kind connubial Tenderness, are there;  
405 And Piety with wishes plac'd above,  
And steady Loyalty, and faithful Love.  
And thou, sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid,  
Still first to fly where sensual joys invade;  
Unfit, in these degenerate times of shame,

- 410 To catch the heart, or trike for honest fame;  
Dear charming nymph, neglected and decried,  
My shame in crowds, my solitary pride;  
Thou source of all my bliss and all my woe,  
That found'st me poor at first and keep'st me so;
- 415 Thou guide, by which the rambler arts excel,  
Thou nurse of every virtue, fare thee well!  
Farewell! and oh! where'er thy voice be tried,  
On Torno's <sup>1</sup> cliffs, or Pambamarca's <sup>2</sup> side,  
Whether where equinoctial <sup>3</sup> fervors glow,
- 420 Or winter wraps the polar world in snow,  
Still let thy voice, prevailing over time,  
Redress the rigors of the inclement clime;  
Aid slighted truth with thy persuasive strain  
Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain;
- 425 Teach him, that states of native strength possesst,  
Though very poor, may still be very blest;  
That trade's proud empire hastes to swift decay,  
As ocean sweeps the labor'd mole away;  
While self-dependent <sup>4</sup> power can time defy,
- 430 As rocks resist the billows and the sky.

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<sup>1</sup> *Torno*. Probably the little lake of Torno, or Tornea, in northern Sweden. There are a town and a river of the same name.

<sup>2</sup> *Pambamarca*. A mountain in Ecuador, South America.

<sup>3</sup> *Equinoctial*. Equatorial.

<sup>4</sup> *Self-dependent*. Independent of foreign trade.



SNOW-BOUND

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## INTRODUCTION

### LIFE OF WHITTIER

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER was born at Haverhill, Massachusetts, on December 17, 1807. His parents belonged to the society of Friends, or Quakers, and were not in easy circumstances. Until nineteen years of age the son, who worked on his father's farm, enjoyed only such educational advantages as were afforded by the district school, which he was permitted to attend a few weeks each winter, and by a scanty family library of about thirty volumes. He had already done some writing, and two of his early poems, published in the *Free Press* of Newburyport, had been quite favorably received. In 1827 and 1828 he spent two terms of six months each in an academy newly opened in Haverhill, paying his own expenses there out of small earnings obtained by making slippers, teaching a district school, and helping a merchant keep his books. At the age of twenty-one he entered a Boston printing-office, where for one year and a half he edited a political paper and a temperance journal. With nearly five hundred dollars saved, he returned home to take charge of his father's farm. There he continued to study and to write, and by his publications became increasingly known and respected. He took a lively interest in public matters, and in 1835 he was elected a member of the Massachusetts legislature. In 1836 he sold the farm and removed with his mother and his sister to the village of Amesbury.

For some years Whittier had become seriously inter-

ested in the movement for the abolition of slavery. He had dealt the great evil an effective blow in a pamphlet entitled *Justice and Expediency*. Owing to his keen political insight, his unquenchable spirit, and his growing influence as a writer, he was soon recognized as one of the leaders of the abolition cause, and he entered with spirit into the inevitable conflict between the Northern and Southern States over the question of slavery. He was editor for a short time of the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, and in various ways did a great deal to create a strong sentiment hostile to the iniquities of the traffic in human souls. His health, however, was so delicate that he was obliged to carry on his educational work under serious disadvantages. From 1840 it was necessary that he should engage in no occupation that involved much stress or exertion. He continued to write in the quietness of his home to the very end of a long and busy life. He died at Hampton Falls, New Hampshire, September 8, 1892.

Whittier's spirit was clearly that of the reformer. As a boy he wrote that he would rather have "the memory of a Howard, a Wilberforce, or a Clarkson, than the undying fame of a Byron." And yet the permanence of his fame does not rest on his political or antislavery verse. The fierce conflict to which it contributed has long since passed, and with the struggle the deep interest it awakened. A more important part of his poetry is his religious poems. They concern matters that will engage the attention of men for all time. His early training in a religious home, his life of spiritual earnestness, his pure and gentle nature, and his ample leisure for meditation, all made him peculiarly fit and effective to express a sincere and liberal religious sentiment. His profound interest in things spiritual gave a distinctly

religious character to much of his work, and showed itse. Again and again throughout his life.

But it is probably by reason of his poems on country life that Whittier is so favorably known. Almost his whole life of eighty-four years was passed quietly and frugally in one county of one state. His sympathy was strongly on the side of the country and its ways, and a favorite topic with him was the joys of childhood on a farm. His delightful reminiscences of the time he spent in his Haverhill home added much to the enjoyment of his later years, and when they were told in verse, they found a ready hearing in thousands who still labored in the fields, or looked back with keen delight to the meadows and streams of boyhood days.

### SNOW-BOUND

*Snow-Bound* is a song of the joys of childhood in the country. It tells us in a simple, direct, and interesting manner of some of its author's personal experiences during his early years on the Haverhill farm. It makes quite clear to us that he was far from unhappy amid disadvantages and limitations that would be considered by many boys to-day as irksome.

The house associated with the poem is the one in which the poet was born, and which had already been the home of several generations of Whittiers, having been built before the close of the seventeenth century. After his death it was bought to be preserved as a memorial, and its chief room was restored to the appearance it bore when he was a lad.

*Snow-Bound* contains portraits of those who were dearest to Whittier in his childhood. There we learn of his father, "a prompt, decisive man;" of his mother,

the "Quaker matron," a most beautiful personality; and of his two sisters and his brother. It further portrays an uncle and an aunt, who lived with the family, one of his district schoolmasters, and "another guest." These sketches are instinct with life, and breathe out the poet's deep human insight and sympathy.

The poem is, without doubt, a true picture of the conditions that obtained in midwinter on and about the old homestead. It is bright with the keen joy young Whittier felt while attending to the cattle in the barn, or making paths outside, or quietly observing the beautiful effects of landscape. It is suffused with happy, tender feeling, as it relates the stories heard about the familiar hearth, and with a lofty Christian spirit, as it declares the poet's implicit faith in the goodness of God and a rich immortality.

The poem was written in the summer of 1865. Its appearance met with instant favor, and not only won for Whittier the deep affections of his countrymen, but greatly strengthened their respect for him as a voice bearing an important message, setting forth clearly our duty in relation to God and man, and pointing to an un failing and always accessible source of true happiness and national prosperity. Its sympathetic perusal cannot but afford enjoyment and profit to all, but more especially to those who can turn back the wheel of memory to happy days spent along the lanes or amid the pastures of the farm. To such at least it will awaken memories "that are of the very essence of poetry."

The following dedicatory preface was attached to the first edition of the poem: "The inmates of the family at the Whittier homestead who are referred to in the

poem were my father, mother, my brother, and two sisters, and my uncle and aunt, both unmarried. In addition, there was the district schoolmaster, who boarded with us. The 'not unfeared, half-welcome guest' was Harriet Livermore, daughter of Judge Livermore, of New Hampshire, a young woman of fine natural ability, enthusiastic, eccentric, with slight control over her violent temper, which sometimes made her religious profession doubtful. She was equally ready to exhort in schoolhouse prayer-meetings and dance in a Washington ballroom, while her father was a member of Congress. She early embraced the doctrine of the Second Advent, and felt it her duty to proclaim the Lord's speedy coming. With this message she crossed the Atlantic and spent the greater part of a long life in travelling over Europe and Asia. She lived some time with Lady Hester Stanhope, a woman as fantastic and mentally strained as herself, on the slope of Mt. Lebanon, but finally quarrelled with her in regard to two white horses with red marks on their backs which suggested the idea of saddles, on which her titled hostess expected to ride into Jerusalem with the Lord. A friend of mine found her, when quite an old woman, wandering in Syria with a tribe of Arabs, who, with the Oriental notion that madness is inspiration, accepted her as their prophetess and leader. At the time referred to in *Snow-Bound* she was boarding at the Rocks Village, about two miles from us.

"In my boyhood, in our lonely farm-house, we had scanty sources of information, — few books and only a small weekly newspaper. Our only annual was the almanac. Under such circumstances story-telling was a necessary resource in the long winter evenings. My father when a young man had traversed the wilderness

to Canada, and could tell us of his adventures with Indians and wild beasts, and of his sojourn in the French villages. My uncle was ready with his record of hunting and fishing, and, it must be confessed, with stories, which he at least half believed, of witchcraft and apparitions. My mother, who was born in the Indian-haunted region of Somersworth, New Hampshire, between Dover and Portsmouth, told us of the inroads of the savages, and the narrow escape of her ancestors. She described strange people who lived on the Piscataqua and Cochecho, among whom was Bantam the sorcerer. I have in my possession the wizard's 'conjuring book,' which he solemnly opened when consulted. It is a copy of Cornelius Agrippa's *Magic*, printed in 1651, dedicated to Dr. Robert Child, who, like Michael Scott, had learned

"the art of glamorie  
In Padua beyond the sea,'

and who is famous in the annals of Massachusetts, where he was at one time a resident, as the first man who dared petition the General Court for liberty of conscience. The full title of the book is *Three Books of Occult Philosophy: by Henry Cornelius Agrippa, Knight, Doctor of both Laws, Counsellor to Cæsar's Sacred Majesty and Judge of the Prerogative Court.*"



## SNOW-BOUND

### A WINTER IDYL

THE sun that brief December day  
Rose cheerless over hills of gray,  
And, darkly circled, gave at noon  
A sadder light than waning moon.  
5 Slow tracing down the thickening sky  
Its mute and ominous prophecy,  
A portent seeming less than threat,  
It sank from sight before it set.  
A chill no coat, however stout,  
10 Of homespun stuff could quite shut out,  
A hard, dull bitterness of cold,  
That checked, mid-vein, the circling race  
Of life-blood in the sharpened face,  
The coming of the snow-storm told.  
15 The wind blew east; we heard the roar  
Of Ocean on his wintry shore,  
And felt the strong pulse throbbing there  
Beat with low rhythm our inland air.

Meanwhile we did our nightly chores, —  
20 Brought in the wood from out of doors,  
Littered the stalls, and from the mows  
Raked down the herd's-grass for the cows;  
Heard the horse whinnying for his corn;

And, sharply clashing horn on horn,  
25 Impatient down the stanchion rows  
The cattle shake their walnut bows;  
While, peering from his early perch  
Upon the scaffold's pole of birch,  
The cock his crested helmet bent  
30 And down his querulous challenge sent.  
Unwarmed by any sunset light  
The gray day darkened into night,  
A night made hoary with the swarm  
And whirl-dance of the blinding storm,  
35 As zigzag wavering to and fro  
Crossed and recrossed the wingèd snow:  
And ere the early bedtime came  
The white drift piled the window-frame,  
And through the glass the clothes-line posts  
40 Looked in like tall and sheeted ghosts.

So all night long the storm roared on:  
The morning broke without a sun;  
In tiny spherule<sup>1</sup> traced with lines  
Of Nature's geometric signs,  
45 In starry flake and pellicle  
All day the hoary meteor fell;  
And, when the second morning shone,  
We looked upon a world unknown,  
On nothing we could call our own.  
50 Around the glistening wonder bent  
The blue walls of the firmament,  
No cloud above, no earth below, —  
A universe of sky and snow!

---

<sup>1</sup> *Spherule*. A small spherical body.

Note many examples in the poem of the poet's minute and accurate observation of nature.

The old familiar sights of ours  
55 Took marvellous shapes; strange domes and towers  
Rose up where sty or corn-crib stood,  
Or garden-wall or belt of wood;  
A smooth white mound the brush-pile showed,  
A fenceless drift what once was road;  
60 The bridle-post an old man sat  
With loose-flung coat and high cocked hat;  
The well-curb had a Chinese roof;  
And even the long sweep, high aloof,  
In its slant splendor seemed to tell  
65 Of Pisa's leaning miracle.<sup>1</sup>

A prompt, decisive man, no breath  
Our father wasted: "Boys, a path!"  
Well pleased, (for when did farmer boy  
Count such a summons less than joy?)  
70 Our buskins on our feet we drew;  
With mittened hands, and caps drawn low,  
To guard our necks and ears from snow,  
We cut the solid whiteness through;  
And, where the drift was deepest, made  
75 A tunnel walled and overlaid  
With dazzling crystal: we had read  
Of rare Aladdin's<sup>2</sup> wondrous cave,  
And to our own his name we gave,  
With many a wish the luck were ours  
80 To test his lamp's supernal powers.

<sup>1</sup> *Pisa's leaning miracle.* The Campanile, or Leaning Tower of Pisa, in Italy, associated with the Cathedral. It is 181 feet high, 51½ feet in diameter at the base, and inclines 13 feet, 8 inches towards the south. About half of the sinking took place during its construction.

<sup>2</sup> *Aladdin.* The reference is, of course, to the story of Aladdin, in *The Arabian Nights' Entertainment.*

- We reached the barn with merry din,  
 And roused the prisoned brutes within.  
 The old horse thrust his long head out,  
 And grave with wonder gazed about;  
 85 The cock his lusty greeting said,  
 And forth his speckled harem led;  
 The oxen lashed their tails, and hooked,  
 And mild reproach of hunger looked;  
 The hornèd patriarch of the sheep,  
 90 Like Egypt's Amun <sup>1</sup> roused from sleep,  
 Shook his sage head with gesture mute,  
 And emphasized with stamp of foot.
- All day the gusty north-wind bore  
 The loosening drift its breath before;  
 95 Low circling round its southern zone,  
 The sun through dazzling snow-mist shone.  
 No church-bell lent its Christian tone  
 To the savage air, no social smoke  
 Curled over woods of snow-hung oak.
- 100 A solitude made more intense  
 By dreary-voicèd elements,  
 The shrieking of the mindless wind,  
 The moaning tree-boughs swaying blind,  
 And on the glass the unmeaning beat  
 105 Of ghostly finger-tips of sleet.  
 Beyond the circle of our hearth  
 No welcome sound of toil or mirth  
 Unbound the spell, and testified  
 Of human life and thought outside.
- 110 We minded that the sharpest ear  
 The buried brooklet could not hear,

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<sup>1</sup> *Amun*. An Egyptian deity, represented as a being with a ram's head and a human body.

The music of whose liquid lip  
 Had been to us companionship,  
 And, in our lonely life, had grown  
 115 To have an almost human tone.

As night drew on, and, from the crest  
 Of wooded knolls that ridged the west,  
 The sun, a snow-blown traveller, sank  
 From sight beneath the smothering bank,  
 120 We piled with care our nightly stack  
 Of wood against the chimney-back, —  
 The oaken log, green, huge, and thick,  
 And on its top the stout back-stick;  
 The knotty forestick laid apart,  
 125 And filled between with curious art  
 The ragged brush; then, hovering near,  
 We watched the first red blaze appear,  
 Heard the sharp crackle, caught the gleam  
 On whitewashed wall and sagging beam,  
 130 Until the old, rude-furnished room  
 Burst, flower-like, into rosy bloom;  
 While radiant with a mimic flame  
 Outside the sparkling drift became,  
 And through the bare-boughed lilac-tree  
 135 Our own warm hearth seemed blazing free.  
 The crane and pendent trammels showed,  
 The Turk's heads on the andirons glowed;  
 While childish fancy, prompt to tell  
 The meaning of the miracle,  
 140 Whispered the old rhyme: "*Under the tree  
 When fire outdoors burns merrily,  
 There the witches are making tea.*"

The moon above the eastern wood  
 Shone at its full; the hill-range stood

- 145 Transfigured in the silver flood,  
Its blown snows flashing cold and keen,  
Dead white, save where some sharp ravine  
Took shadow, or the sombre green  
Of hemlocks turned to pitchy black
- 150 Against the whiteness of their back.  
For such a world and such a night  
Most fitting that unwarming light,  
Which only seemed where'er it fell  
To make the coldness visible.
- 155 Shut in from all the world without,  
We sat the clean-winged hearth about,  
Content to let the north-wind roar  
In baffled rage at pane and door  
While the red logs before us beat
- 160 The frost-line back with tropic heat;  
And ever, when a louder blast  
Shook beam and rafter as it passed,  
The merrier up its roaring draught  
The great throat of the chimney laughed,
- 165 The house-dog on his paws outspread  
Laid to the fire his drowsy head,  
The cat's dark silhouette on the wall  
A couchant tiger's seemed to fall;  
And, for the winter fireside meet,
- 170 Between the andirons' straddling feet,  
The mug of cider simmered slow,  
The apples sputtered in a row,  
And, close at hand, the basket stood  
With nuts from brown October's wood.
- 175 What matter how the night behaved?  
What matter how the north-wind raved?  
Blow high, blow low, not all its snow

Could quench our hearth-fire's ruddy glow.  
O Time and Change! — with hair as gray  
180 As was my sire's that winter day,  
How strange it seems, with so much gone  
Of life and love, to still live on!  
Ah, brother! only I and thou  
Are left of all that circle now, —  
185 The dear home faces whereupon  
That fitful firelight paled and shone.  
Henceforward, listen as we will,  
The voices of that hearth are still;  
Look where we may, the wide earth o'er,  
190 Those lighted faces smile no more.  
We tread the paths their feet have worn,  
We sit beneath their orchard trees,  
We hear, like them, the hum of bees  
And rustle of the bladed corn;  
195 We turn the pages that they read,  
Their written words we linger o'er,  
But in the sun they cast no shade,  
No voice is heard, no sign is made,  
No step is on the conscious floor!  
200 Yet Love will dream and Faith will trust  
(Since He who knows our need is just)  
That somehow, somewhere, meet we must.  
Alas for him who never sees  
The stars shine through his cypress-trees!  
205 Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,  
Nor looks to see the breaking day  
Across the mournful marbles play!  
Who hath not learned, in hours of faith,  
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,  
210 That Life is ever lord of Death,  
And Love can never lose its own!

We sped the time with stories old,  
 Wrought puzzles out, and riddles told,  
 Or stammered from our school-book lore  
 215 "The chief of Gambia's <sup>1</sup> golden shore."  
 How often since, when all the land  
 Was clay in Slavery's shaping hand,  
 As if a far-blown trumpet stirred  
 The languorous, sin-sick air, I heard  
 220 "Does not the voice of reason cry,  
     Claim the first right which Nature gave,  
     From the red scourge of bondage fly  
     Nor deign to live a burdened slave!"  
 Our father rode again his ride  
 225 On Memphremagog's <sup>2</sup> wooded side;  
 Sat down again to moose and samp <sup>3</sup>  
 In trapper's hut and Indian camp;  
 Lived o'er the old idyllic ease  
 Beneath St. François' hemlock trees;  
 230 Again for him the moonlight shone  
 On Norman cap and bodiced zone;  
 Again he heard the violin play  
 Which led the village dance away,  
 And mingled in its merry whirl  
 235 The grandam and the laughing girl.  
 Or, nearer home, our steps he led  
 Where Salisbury's level marshes spread  
     Mile-wide as flies the laden bee;

<sup>1</sup> *Gambia*. A river of Senegambia, in West Africa, flowing into the Atlantic.

The quotations of lines 215 and 220-223 are taken from a poem by Mrs. S. W. Morton entitled *The African Chief*. The poem was probably met by Whittier in a school reader of his youth.

<sup>2</sup> *Memphremagog*. A lake between Vermont and Quebec.

<sup>3</sup> *Samp*. In the United States, food composed of maize, boiled and mixed with milk. See page 109.



- Where merry mowers, hale and strong,  
 240 Swept, scythe on scythe, their swaths along  
     The low green prairies of the sea.  
 We shared the fishing off Boar's Head,  
     And round the rocky Isles of Shoals  
     The hake <sup>1</sup>-broil on the driftwood coals;  
 245 The chowder <sup>2</sup> on the sand-beach made,  
     Dipped by the hungry, steaming hot,  
     With spoons of clam-shell from the pot.  
 We heard the tales of witchcraft old,  
     And dream and sign and marvel told  
 250 To sleepy listeners as they lay  
     Stretched idly on the salted hay,  
     Adrift along the winding shores,  
     When favoring breezes deigned to blow  
     The square sail of the gundalow,  
 255 And idle lay the useless oars.  
 Our mother, while she turned her wheel  
     Or run the new-knit stocking-heel,  
     Told how the Indian hordes came down  
     At midnight on Cochecho town,<sup>3</sup>  
 260 And how her own great-uncle bore  
     His cruel scalp-mark to fourscore.  
 Recalling, in her fitting phrase,  
     So rich and picturesque and free  
     (The common unrhymed poetry  
 265 Of simple life and country ways),  
     The story of her early days, —  
     She made us welcome to her home;  
     Old hearths grew wide to give us room;

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<sup>1</sup> *Hake*. A fish of the cod family.

<sup>2</sup> *Chowder*. A dish made of fresh fish or clams, biscuit, onions, etc., stewed together.

<sup>3</sup> *Cochecho town*. Dover, in New Hampshire.

We stole with her a frightened look  
 270 At the gray wizard's conjuring-book,  
 The fame whereof went far and wide  
 Through all the simple country-side;  
 We heard the hawks at twilight play,  
 The boat-horn on Piscataqua,<sup>1</sup>  
 275 The loon's weird laughter far away;  
 We fished her little trout-brook, knew  
 What flowers in wood and meadow grew,  
 What sunny hillsides autumn-brown  
 She climbed to shake the ripe nuts down,  
 280 Saw where in sheltered cove and bay  
 The ducks' black squadron anchored lay,  
 And heard the wild geese calling loud  
 Beneath the gray November cloud.  
 Then, haply, with a look more grave,  
 285 And soberer tone, some tale she gave  
 From painful Sewel's ancient tome,<sup>2</sup>  
 Beloved in every Quaker home,  
 Of faith fire-winged by martyrdom,  
 Or Chalkley's<sup>3</sup> Journal, old and quaint, —  
 290 Gentlest of skippers, rare sea-saint! —  
 Who, when the dreary calms prevailed,  
 And water-butt and bread-cask failed,  
 And cruel, hungry eyes pursued  
 His portly presence, mad for food,  
 295 With dark hints muttered under breath

<sup>1</sup> *Piscataqua*. A river in New Hampshire, flowing into the Atlantic three miles south-east of Portsmouth.

<sup>2</sup> *Sewel's tome*. For an appreciative reference to Sewel's *History of the Quakers*, see Lamb's "A Quakers' Meeting" in the *Essays of Elia*.

<sup>3</sup> *Chalkley*. Thomas Chalkley was born in London in 1675 and died in the West Indies in 1749. He was an itinerant preacher of the Society of Friends.

The old familiar sights of ours  
 55 Took marvellous shapes; strange domes and towers  
     Rose up where sty or corn-crib stood,  
     Or garden-wall or belt of wood;  
     A smooth white mound the brush-pile showed,  
     A fenceless drift what once was road;  
 60 The bridle-post an old man sat  
     With loose-flung coat and high cocked hat;  
     The well-curb had a Chinese roof;  
     And even the long sweep, high aloof,  
     In its slant splendor, seemed to tell  
 65 Of Pisa's leaning miracle.<sup>1</sup>

A prompt, decisive man, no breath  
 Our father wasted: "Boys, a path!"  
 Well pleased, (for when did farmer boy  
 Count such a summons less than joy?)  
 70 Our buskins on our feet we drew;  
     With mittened hands, and caps drawn low,  
     To guard our necks and ears from snow,  
     We cut the solid whiteness through;  
     And, where the drift was deepest, made  
 75 A tunnel walled and overlaid  
     With dazzling crystal: we had read  
     Of rare Aladdin's<sup>2</sup> wondrous cave,  
     And to our own his name we gave,  
     With many a wish the luck were ours  
 80 To test his lamp's supernal powers.

<sup>1</sup> *Pisa's leaning miracle.* The Campanile, or Leaning Tower of Pisa, in Italy, associated with the Cathedral. It is 181 feet high, 51½ feet in diameter at the base, and inclines 13 feet, 8 inches towards the south. About half of the sinking took place during its construction.

<sup>2</sup> *Aladdin.* The reference is, of course, to the story of Aladdin, in *The Arabian Nights' Entertainment.*

We reached the barn with merry din,  
 And roused the prisoned brutes within.  
 The old horse thrust his long head out,  
 And grave with wonder gazed about;  
 85 The cock his lusty greeting said,  
 And forth his speckled harem led;  
 The oxen lashed their tails, and hooked,  
 And mild reproach of hunger looked;  
 The hornèd patriarch of the sheep,  
 90 Like Egypt's Amun<sup>1</sup> roused from sleep,  
 Shook his sage head with gesture mute,  
 And emphasized with stamp of foot.

All day the gusty north-wind bore  
 The loosening drift its breath before;  
 95 Low circling round its southern zone,  
 The sun through dazzling snow-mist shone.  
 No church-bell lent its Christian tone  
 To the savage air, no social smoke  
 Curled over woods of snow-hung oak.  
 100 A solitude made more intense  
 By dreary-voicèd elements,  
 The shrieking of the mindless wind,  
 The moaning tree-boughs swaying blind,  
 And on the glass the unmeaning beat  
 105 Of ghostly finger-tips of sleet.  
 Beyond the circle of our hearth  
 No welcome sound of toil or mirth  
 Unbound the spell, and testified  
 Of human life and thought outside.  
 110 We minded that the sharpest ear  
 The buried brooklet could not hear,

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<sup>1</sup> *Amun*. An Egyptian deity, represented as a being with a ram's head and a human body.

The music of whose liquid lip  
Had been to us companionship,  
And, in our lonely life, had grown  
115 To have an almost human tone.

As night drew on, and, from the crest  
Of wooded knolls that ridged the west,  
The sun, a snow-blown traveller, sank  
From sight beneath the smothering bank,  
120 We piled with care our nightly stack  
Of wood against the chimney-back, —  
The oaken log, green, huge, and thick,  
And on its top the stout back-stick;  
The knotty forestick laid apart,  
125 And filled between with curious art  
The ragged brush; then, hovering near,  
We watched the first red blaze appear,  
Heard the sharp crackle, caught the gleam  
On whitewashed wall and sagging beam,  
130 Until the old, rude-furnished room  
Burst, flower-like, into rosy bloom;  
While radiant with a mimic flame  
Outside the sparkling drift became,  
And through the bare-boughed lilac-tree  
135 Our own warm hearth seemed blazing free.  
The crane and pendent trammels showed,  
The Turk's heads on the andirons glowed;  
While childish fancy, prompt to tell  
The meaning of the miracle,  
140 Whispered the old rhyme: "*Under the tree  
When fire outdoors burns merrily,  
There the witches are making tea.*"

The moon above the eastern wood  
Shone at its full; the hill-range stood

- 145 Transfigured in the silver flood,  
Its blown snows flashing cold and keen,  
Dead white, save where some sharp ravine  
Took shadow, or the sombre green  
Of hemlocks turned to pitchy black
- 150 Against the whiteness of their back.  
For such a world and such a night  
Most fitting that unwarming light,  
Which only seemed where'er it fell  
To make the coldness visible.
- 155 Shut in from all the world without,  
We sat the clean-winged hearth about,  
Content to let the north-wind roar  
In baffled rage at pane and door,  
While the red logs before us beat
- 160 The frost-line back with tropic heat;  
And ever, when a louder blast  
Shook beam and rafter as it passed,  
The merrier up its roaring draught  
The great throat of the chimney laughed,
- 165 The house-dog on his paws outspread  
Laid to the fire his drowsy head,  
The cat's dark silhouette on the wall  
A couchant tiger's seemed to fall;  
And, for the winter fireside meet,
- 170 Between the andirons' straddling feet,  
The mug of cider simmered slow,  
The apples sputtered in a row,  
And, close at hand, the basket stood  
With nuts from brown October's wood.
- 175 What matter how the night behaved?  
What matter how the north-wind raved?  
Blow high, blow low, not all its snow

Could quench our hearth-fire's ruddy glow.  
O Time and Change! — with hair as gray  
180 As was my sire's that winter day,  
How strange it seems, with so much gone  
Of life and love, to still live on!  
Ah, brother! only I and thou  
Are left of all that circle now, —  
185 The dear home faces whereupon  
That fitful firelight paled and shone.  
Henceforward, listen as we will,  
The voices of that hearth are still;  
Look where we may, the wide earth o'er,  
190 Those lighted faces smile no more.  
We tread the paths their feet have worn,  
We sit beneath their orchard trees,  
We hear, like them, the hum of bees  
And rustle of the bladed corn;  
195 We turn the pages that they read,  
Their written words we linger o'er,  
But in the sun they cast no shade,  
No voice is heard, no sign is made,  
No step is on the conscious floor!  
200 Yet Love will dream and Faith will trust  
(Since He who knows our need is just)  
That somehow, somewhere, meet we must.  
Alas for him who never sees  
The stars shine through his cypress-trees!  
205 Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,  
Nor looks to see the breaking day  
Across the mournful marbles play!  
Who hath not learned, in hours of faith,  
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,  
210 That Life is ever lord of DEATH,  
And Love can never lose its own!

We sped the time with stories old,  
 Wrought puzzles out, and riddles told,  
 Or stammered from our school-book lore  
 215 "The chief of Gambia's <sup>1</sup> golden shore."  
 How often since, when all the land  
 Was clay in Slavery's shaping hand,  
 As if a far-blown trumpet stirred  
 The languorous, sin-sick air, I heard  
 220 "Does not the voice of reason cry,  
       Claim the first right which Nature gave,  
       From the red scourge of bondage fly  
       Nor deign to live a burdened slave!"  
 Our father rode again his ride  
 225 On Memphremagog's <sup>2</sup> wooded side;  
 Sat down again to moose and samp <sup>3</sup>  
 In trapper's hut and Indian camp;  
 Lived o'er the old idyllic ease  
 Beneath St. François' hemlock trees;  
 230 Again for him the moonlight shone  
 On Norman cap and bodiced zone;  
 Again he heard the violin play  
 Which led the village dance away,  
 And mingled in its merry whirl  
 235 The grandam and the laughing girl.  
 Or, nearer home, our steps he led  
 Where Salisbury's level marshes spread  
       Mile-wide as flies the laden bee;

<sup>1</sup> *Gambia*. A river of Senegambia, in West Africa, flowing into the Atlantic.

The quotations of lines 215 and 220-223 are taken from a poem by Mrs. S. W. Morton entitled *The African Chief*. The poem was probably met by Whittier in a school reader of his youth.

<sup>2</sup> *Memphremagog*. A lake between Vermont and Quebec.

<sup>3</sup> *Samp*. In the United States, food composed of maize, boiled and mixed with milk. See page 109.



Where merry mowers, hale and strong,  
240 Swept, scythe on scythe, their swaths along  
    The low green prairies of the sea.  
We shared the fishing off Boar's Head,  
    And round the rocky Isles of Shoals  
    The hake <sup>1</sup>-broil on the driftwood coals;  
245 'The chowder <sup>2</sup> on the sand-beach made,  
Dipped by the hungry, steaming hot,  
With spoons of clam-shell from the pot.  
We heard the tales of witchcraft old,  
And dream and sign and marvel told  
250 To sleepy listeners as they lay  
Stretched idly on the salted hay,  
Adrift along the winding shores,  
    When favoring breezes deigned to blow  
    The square sail of the gundalow,  
255 And idle lay the useless oars.  
Our mother, while she turned her wheel  
Or run the new-knit stocking-heel,  
Told how the Indian hordes came down  
At midnight on Cochecho town,<sup>3</sup>  
260 And how her own great-uncle bore  
His cruel scalp-mark to fourscore.  
Recalling, in her fitting phrase,  
    So rich and picturesque and free  
    (The common unrhymed poetry  
265 Of simple life and country ways),  
The story of her early days, —  
She made us welcome to her home;  
Old hearths grew wide to give us room;

---

<sup>1</sup> *Hake*. A fish of the cod family.

<sup>2</sup> *Chowder*. A dish made of fresh fish or clams, biscuit, onions, etc., stewed together.

<sup>3</sup> *Cochecho town*. Dover, in New Hampshire.

We stole with her a frightened look  
 270 At the gray wizard's conjuring-book,  
 The fame whereof went far and wide  
 Through all the simple country-side;  
 We heard the hawks at twilight play,  
 The boat-horn on Piscataqua,<sup>1</sup>  
 275 The loon's weird laughter far away;  
 We fished her little trout-brook, knew  
 What flowers in wood and meadow grew,  
 What sunny hillsides autumn-brown  
 She climbed to shake the ripe nuts down,  
 280 Saw where in sheltered cove and bay  
 The ducks' black squadron anchored lay,  
 And heard the wild geese calling loud  
 Beneath the gray November cloud.  
 Then, haply, with a look more grave,  
 285 And soberer tone, some tale she gave  
 From painful Sewel's ancient tome,<sup>2</sup>  
 Beloved in every Quaker home,  
 Of faith fire-winged by martyrdom,  
 Or Chalkley's<sup>3</sup> Journal, old and quaint —  
 290 Gentlest of skippers, rare sea-saint! —  
 Who, when the dreary calms prevailed,  
 And water-butt and bread-cask failed,  
 And cruel, hungry eyes pursued  
 His portly presence, mad for food,  
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<sup>1</sup> *Piscataqua*. A river in New Hampshire, flowing into the Atlantic three miles south-east of Portsmouth.

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<sup>3</sup> *Chalkley*. Thomas Chalkley was born in London in 1675 and died in the West Indies in 1749. He was an itinerant preacher of the Society of Friends.

Of casting lots for life or death,  
 Offered, if Heaven withheld supplies,  
 To be himself the sacrifice.  
 Then, suddenly, as if to save  
 300 The good man from his living grave,  
 A ripple on the water grew,  
 A school of porpoise flashed in view.  
 "Take, eat," he said, "and be content;  
 These fishes in my stead are sent  
 305 By Him who gave the tangled ram  
 To spare the child of Abraham."<sup>1</sup>

Our uncle,<sup>2</sup> innocent of books,  
 Was rich in lore of fields and brooks,  
 The ancient teachers never dumb  
 310 Of Nature's unboxed lyceum.<sup>3</sup>  
 In moons and tides and weather wise,  
 He read the clouds as prophecies,  
 And foul or fair could well divine,  
 By many an occult hint and sign,  
 315 Holding the cunning-warded keys  
 To all the woodcraft mysteries;  
 Himself to Nature's heart so near  
 That all her voices in his ear  
 Of beast or bird had meanings clear,  
 320 Like Apollonius<sup>4</sup> of old,

<sup>1</sup> *Child of Abraham.* See *Genesis* xxii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Uncle.* His uncle Moses, a bachelor, who lived with the Whittiers.

<sup>3</sup> *Lyceum.* Generally pronounced "lī-sē'-um." The Lyceum was a building in ancient Athens in which Aristotle taught; hence, a building appropriate to instruction by lectures.

<sup>4</sup> *Apollonius.* Surnamed "Thyaneus," from his birth-place. A Pythagorean philosopher and reputed magician and wonder-worker, whose life and supposed miracles caused much wonder in the ancient world.

Who knew the tales the sparrows told,  
 Or Hermes,<sup>1</sup> who interpreted  
 What the sage Hermes of Nilus said;  
 A simple, guileless, childlike man,  
 325 Content to live where life began;  
 Strong only on his native grounds,  
 The little world of sights and sounds  
 Whose girdle was the parish bounds,  
 Whereof his fondly partial pride  
 330 The common features magnified,  
 As Surrey hills to mountains grew  
 In White<sup>2</sup> of Selborne's loving view, —  
 He told how teal and loon he shot,  
 And how the eagle's eggs he got,  
 335 The feats on pond and river done,  
 The prodigies of rod and gun;  
 Till, warming with the tales he told,  
 Forgotten was the outside cold,  
 The bitter wind unheeded blew,  
 340 From ripening corn the pigeons flew,  
 The partridge drummed i' the wood. the mink  
 Went fishing down the river-brink.  
 In fields with bean or clover gay,  
 The woodchuck, like a hermit gray,  
 345 Peered from the doorway of his cell;  
 The muskrat plied the mason's trade,  
 And tier by tier his mud-walls laid;  
 And from the shagbark overhead  
 The grizzled squirrel dropped his shell.

<sup>1</sup> *Hermes*. An Egyptian priest and philosopher, the reputed author of forty-two encyclopædic works on Egypt.

<sup>2</sup> *White*. Gilbert White, born at Selborne, in England, 1720; an English naturalist, famous for his *Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne*.

350 Next, the dear aunt,<sup>1</sup> whose smile of cheer  
 And voice in dreams I see and hear, —  
 The sweetest woman ever Fate  
 Perverse denied a household mate,  
 Who, lonely, homeless, not the less  
 355 Found peace in love's unselfishness,  
 And welcome whereso'er she went.  
 A calm and gracious element,  
 Whose presence seemed the sweet income  
 And womanly atmosphere of home, —  
 360 Called up her girlhood memories,  
 The huskings and the apple-bees,  
 The sleigh-rides and the summer sails,  
 Weaving through all the poor details  
 And homespun warp of circumstance  
 365 A golden woof-thread of romance.  
 For well she kept her genial mood  
 And simple faith of maidenhood;  
 Before her still a cloud-land lay,  
 The mirage loomed across her way;  
 370 The morning dew, that dried so soon  
 With others, glistened at her noon;  
 Through years of toil and soil and care,  
 From glossy tress to thin gray hair,  
 All unprofaned she held apart  
 375 The virgin fancies of the heart.  
 Be shame to him of woman born  
 Who had for such but thought of scorn.

There, too, our elder sister plied  
 Her evening task the stand beside;  
 380 A full, rich nature, free to trust,  
 Truthful and almost sternly just,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Aunt.* Aunt Mercy, who made her home with the Whittiers.

Impulsive, earnest, prompt to act,  
 And make her generous thought a fact,  
 Keeping with many a light disguise  
 385 The secret of self-sacrifice.  
 O heart sore-tried! thou hast the best  
 That Heaven itself could give thee, — rest,  
 Rest from all bitter thoughts and things!  
 How many a poor one's blessing went  
 390 With thee beneath the low green tent  
 Whose curtain never outward swings!  
  
 As one who held herself a part  
 Of all she saw, and let her heart  
 Against the household bosom lean,  
 395 Upon the motley-braided mat  
 Our youngest and our dearest sat,  
 Lifting her large, sweet, asking eyes,  
 Now bathed within the fadeless green  
 And holy peace of Paradise.  
 400 Oh, looking from some heavenly hill,  
 Or from the shade of saintly palms,  
 Or silver reach of river calms,  
 Do those large eyes behold me still?  
 With me one little year ago: —  
 405 The chill weight of the winter snow  
 For months upon her grave has lain;  
 And now, when summer south-winds blow  
 And brier and harebell bloom again,  
 I tread the pleasant paths we trod,  
 410 I see the violet-sprinkled sod,  
 Whereon she 'leaned, too frail and weak  
 The hillside flowers she loved to seek,  
 Yet following me where'er I went  
 With dark eyes full of love's content.

- 415 The birds are glad; the brier-rose fills  
 The air with sweetness; all the hills  
 Stretch green to June's unclouded sky;  
 But still I wait with ear and eye  
 For something gone which should be nigh,  
 420 A loss in all familiar things,  
 In flower that blooms, and bird that sings.  
 And yet, dear heart! remembering thee,  
 Am I not richer than of old?  
 Safe in thy immortality,  
 425 What change can reach the wealth I hold?  
 What chance can mar the pearl and gold  
 Thy love hath left in trust with me?  
 And while in life's late afternoon,  
 Where cool and long the shadows grow,  
 430 I walk to meet the night that soon  
 Shall shape and shadow overflow,  
 I cannot feel that thou art far,  
 Since near at need the angels are;  
 And when the sunset gates unbar,  
 435 Shall I not see thee waiting stand,  
 And, white against the evening star,  
 The welcome of thy beckoning hand?

Brisk wielder of the birch and rule,  
 The master <sup>1</sup> of the district school  
 440 Held at the fire his favored place;  
 Its warm glow lit a laughing face  
 Fresh-hued and fair, where scarce appeared  
 The uncertain prophecy of beard.  
 He teased the mitten-blinded cat,

---

<sup>1</sup> *The master.* The district schoolmaster here referred to was George Haskell. He subsequently became a physician, but devoted his life to the practical study of social questions.

- 445      Played cross-pins on my uncle's hat,  
             Sang songs, and told us what befalls  
             In classic Dartmouth's college halls.  
             Born the wild Northern hills among,  
             From whence his yeoman father wrung
- 450      By patient toil subsistence scant,  
             Not competence and yet not want,  
             He early gained the power to pay  
             His cheerful, self-reliant way;  
             Could doff at ease his scholar's gown
- 455      To peddle wares from town to town;  
             Or through the long vacation's reach  
             In lonely lowland districts teach,  
             Where all the droll experience found  
             At stranger hearths in boarding round,
- 460      The moonlit skater's keen delight,  
             The sleigh-drive through the frosty night,  
             The rustic party, with its rough  
             Accompaniment of blind-man's-buff,  
             And whirling plate, and forfeits paid,
- 465      His winter task a pastime made.  
             Happy the snow-locked homes wherein  
             He tuned his merry violin,  
             Or played the athlete in the barn,  
             Or held the good dame's winding yarn,
- 470      Or mirth-provoking versions told  
             Of classic legends rare and old,  
             Wherein the scenes of Greece and Rome  
             Had all the commonplace of home,  
             And little seemed at best the odds
- 475      'Twixt Yankee peddlers and old gods;  
             Where Pindus <sup>1</sup>-born Arachthus <sup>2</sup> took

---

<sup>1</sup> *Pindus*. A mountain chain in Greece.

<sup>2</sup> *Arachthus*. A river that rises in the Pindus range.



The guise of any grist-mill brook,  
 And dread Olympus<sup>1</sup> at his will  
 Became a huckleberry hill.  
 480 A careless boy that night he seemed;  
     But at his desk he had the look  
 And air of one who wisely schemed,  
     And hostage from the future took  
     In trainèd thought and lore of book.  
 485 Large-brained, clear-eyed, — of such as he  
 Shall Freedom's young apostles be,  
 Who, following in War's bloody trail,  
 Shall every lingering wrong assail;  
 All chains from limb and spirit strike,  
 490 Uplift the black and white alike;  
 Scatter before their swift advance  
 The darkness and the ignorance,  
 The pride, the lust, the squalid sloth,  
 Which nurtured Treason's monstrous growth,  
 495 Made murder pastime, and the hell  
 Of prison-torture possible;  
 The cruel lie of caste refute,  
 Old forms remould, and substitute  
 For Slavery's lash the freeman's will,  
 500 For blind routine, wise-handed skill;  
 A school-house plant on every hill,  
 Stretching in radiate nerve-lines thence  
 The quick wires of intelligence;  
 Till North and South<sup>2</sup> together brought  
 505 Shall own the same electric thought,  
 In peace a common flag salute,  
 And, side by side in labor's free

---

<sup>1</sup> *Olympus*. A mountain in Greece, the fabled dwelling-place of the ancient gods.

<sup>2</sup> *North and South*. See page 106.

And unresentful rivalry,  
Harvest the fields wherein they fought.

- 510 Another guest <sup>1</sup> that winter night  
Flashed back from lustrous eyes the light.  
Unmarked by time, and yet not young,  
The honeyed music of her tongue  
And words of weakness scarcely told
- 515 A nature passionate and bold,  
Strong, self-concentred, spurning guide,  
Its milder features dwarfed beside  
Her unbent will's majestic pride.  
She sat among us, at the best,
- 520 A not unfeared, half-welcome guest,  
Rebuking with her cultured phrase  
Our homeliness of words and ways.  
A certain pard-like, treacherous grace  
Swayed the lithe limbs and dropped the lash,
- 525 Lent the white teeth their dazzling flash;  
And under low brows, black with night,  
Rayed out at times a dangerous light;  
The sharp heat-lightnings of her face  
Presaging ill to him whom Fate
- 530 Condemned to share her love or hate.  
A woman tropical, intense  
In thought and act, in soul and sense,  
She blended in a like degree  
The vixen and the devotee,
- 535 Revealing with each freak or feint  
The temper of Petruchio's Kate,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Another guest. Harriet Livermore. See page 109.

<sup>2</sup> Petruchio's Kate. In Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, Petruchio is the rough wooer and tamer of Kate. He subdues her by meeting turbulence with turbulence.

- The raptures of Siena's saint.<sup>1</sup>  
 Her tapering hand and rounded wrist  
 Had facile power to form a fist;  
 540 The warm, dark languish of her eyes  
 Was never safe from wrath's surprise.  
 Brows saintly calm and lips devout  
 Knew every change of scowl and pout;  
 And the sweet voice had notes more high  
 545 And shrill for social battle-cry.  
 Since then what old cathedral town  
 Has missed her pilgrim staff and gown,  
 What convent-gate has held its lock  
 Against the challenge of her knock!  
 550 Through Smyrna's plague-hushed thoroughfares,  
 Up sea-set Malta's rocky stairs,  
 Gray olive slopes of hills that hem  
 Thy tombs and shrines, Jerusalem,  
 Or startling on her desert throne  
 555 The crazy Queen of Lebanon<sup>2</sup>  
 With claims fantastic as her own,  
 Her tireless feet have held their way;  
 And still, unrestful, bowed, and gray,  
 She watches under Eastern skies,  
 560 With hope each day renewed and fresh,  
 The Lord's quick coming in the flesh,  
 Whereof she dreams and prophesies!

---

<sup>1</sup> *Siena's saint.* Saint Catherine of Siena, who was permitted to enjoy wonderful visions.

<sup>2</sup> *Queen of Lebanon.* Lady Hester Stanhope, a niece of William Pitt, to whom she acted for some time as secretary. The death of her uncle in 1806 strangely affected her mind. In 1810 she abandoned England, and took up her residence on Mount Lebanon, where she lived for many years, regarded as a queen by the wondering natives. She died in 1839. See page 109.

- Where'er her troubled path may be,  
The Lord's sweet pity with her go!  
565 The outward wayward life we see,  
The hidden springs we may not know.  
Nor is it given us to discern  
What threads the fatal sisters<sup>1</sup> spun,  
Through what ancestral years has run  
570 The sorrow with the woman born,  
What forged her cruel chain of moods,  
What set her feet in solitudes,  
And held the love within her mute,  
What mingled madness in the blood,  
575 A lifelong discord and annoy,  
Water of tears with oil of joy,  
And hid within the folded bud  
Perversities of flower and fruit.  
It is not ours to separate  
580 The tangled skein of will and fate,  
To show what metes and bounds should stand  
Upon the soul's debatable land,  
And between choice and Providence  
Divide the circle of events;  
585 But He who knows our frame is just,  
Merciful and compassionate,  
And full of sweet assurances  
And hope for all the language is,  
That He remembereth we are dust!
- 590 At last the great logs, crumbling low,  
Sent out a dull and duller glow,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Fatal sisters.* The Parcae or Fates of the ancient Greeks: Clotho who held the distaff; Lachesis who spun the events of life; and Atropos who, with a pair of scissors, cut the thread of existence.

The bull's-eye watch that hung in view,  
Ticking its weary circuit through,  
Pointed with mutely-warning sign  
595 Its black hand to the hour of nine.  
That sign the pleasant circle broke :  
My uncle ceased his pipe to smoke,  
Knocked from its bowl the refuse gray,  
And laid it tenderly away,  
600 Then roused himself to safely cover  
The dull red brand with ashes over.  
And while, with care, our mother laid  
The work aside, her steps she stayed  
One moment, seeking to express  
605 Her grateful sense of happiness  
For food and shelter, warmth and health,  
And love's contentment more than wealth,  
With simple wishes (not the weak,  
Vain prayers which no fulfilment seek,  
610 But such as warm the generous heart,  
O'er-prompt to do with Heaven its part)  
That none might lack, that bitter night,  
For bread and clothing, warmth and light.

Within our beds awhile we heard  
615 The wind that round the gables roared,  
With now and then a ruder shock,  
Which made our very bedsteads rock.  
We heard the loosened clapboards tost,  
The board-nails snapping in the frost ;  
620 And on us, through the unplastered wall,  
Felt the lightsifted snow-flakes fall ;  
But sleep stole on, as sleep will do  
When hearts are light and life is new ;  
Faint and more faint the murmurs grew,

- 625 Till in the summer-land of dreams  
They softened to the sound of streams,  
Low stir of leaves, and dip of oars,  
And lapsing waves on quiet shores.
- Next morn we wakened with the shout  
630 Of merry voices high and clear;  
And saw the teamsters drawing near  
To break the drifted highways out.  
Down the long hillside treading slow  
We saw the half-buried oxen go,  
635 Shaking the snow from heads uptost,  
Their straining nostrils white with frost.  
Before our door the straggling train  
Drew up, an added team to gain.  
The elders threshed their hands a-cold,  
640 Passed, with the cider-mug, their jokes  
From lip to lip; the younger folks  
Down the loose snow-banks, wrestling, rolled,  
Then toiled again the cavalcade  
O'er windy hill, through clogged ravine,  
645 And woodland paths that wound between  
Low-drooping pine-boughs winter-weighed.  
From every barn a team afoot,  
At every house a new recruit,  
Where, drawn by Nature's subtlest law,  
650 Haply the watchful young men saw  
Sweet doorway pictures of the curls  
And curious eyes of merry girls,  
Lifting their hands in mock defence  
Against the snow-balls' compliments,  
655 And reading in each missive tost  
The charm which Eden never lost.
- We heard once more the sleigh-bells' sound;

And, following where the teamsters led,  
 The wise old Doctor <sup>1</sup> went his round,  
 660 Just pausing at our door to say,  
 In the brief autocratic way  
 Of one who, prompt at Duty's call,  
 Was free to urge her claim on all,  
 That some poor neighbor sick abed  
 665 At night our mother's aid would need.  
 For, one in generous thought and deed,  
 What mattered in the sufferer's sight  
 The Quaker matron's inward light,  
 The Doctor's mail of Calvin's creed?  
 670 All hearts confess the saints elect  
 Who, twain in faith, in love agree,  
 And melt not in an acid sect  
 The Christian pearl of charity!

So days went on: a week had passed  
 675 Since the great world was heard from last.  
 The Almanac we studied o'er,  
 Read and reread our little store  
 Of books and pamphlets scarce a score;  
 One harmless novel, mostly hid  
 680 From younger eyes, a book forbid,  
 And poetry, (or good or bad,  
 A single book was all we had,)  
 Where Ellwood's <sup>2</sup> meek, drab-skirted Muse,  
 A stranger to the heathen Nine,<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Doctor.* Dr. Weld of Haverhill, who died at the age of ninety-six.

<sup>2</sup> *Ellwood.* Thomas Ellwood, an English Quaker, and friend of John Milton. He wrote an epic in five books, entitled  *Davideis*, the life of David, king of Israel.

<sup>3</sup> *Heathen Nine.* The nine Muses of the Greeks, divinities who presided over poetry, music, dancing, and all the liberal arts. They were the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne (Memory).

685 Sang, with a somewhat nasal whine,  
 The wars of David and the Jews.  
 At last the floundering carrier bore  
 The village paper to our door.  
 Lo! broadening outward as we read,  
 To warmer zones the horizon spread;  
 690 In panoramic length unrolled  
 We saw the marvel that it told.  
 Before us passed the painted Creeks,<sup>1</sup>  
 And daft McGregor<sup>2</sup> on his raids  
 695 In Costa Rica's everglades.  
 And up Taygetus<sup>3</sup> winding slow  
 Rode Ypsilanti's<sup>4</sup> Mainote Greeks,  
 A Turk's head at each saddle bow!  
 Welcome to us its week-old news,  
 700 Its corner for the rustic Muse,  
 Its monthly gauge of snow and rain,  
 Its record, mingling in a breath  
 The wedding bell and dirge of death;  
 Jest, anecdote, and love-lorn tale,  
 705 The latest culprit sent to jail;  
 Its hue and cry of stolen and lost,  
 Its vendue sales<sup>5</sup> and goods at cost,  
 And traffic calling loud for gain.  
 We felt the stir of hall and street,  
 710 The pulse of life that round us beat;

<sup>1</sup> *Creeks*. The Creek Indians, who removed from Georgia to beyond the Mississippi.

<sup>2</sup> *McGregor*. Sir George McGregor, who made an unsuccessful attempt in 1822 to establish a colony in Costa Rica.

<sup>3</sup> *Taygetus*. The highest mountain range in southern Greece.

<sup>4</sup> *Ypsilanti*. A Greek patriot, who fought against Turkey in the struggle for the independence of Greece. He drew his cavalry from the district of Maina, near Taygetus.

<sup>5</sup> *Vendue sales*. Auction sales.



The chill embargo of the snow  
 Was melted in the genial glow;  
 Wide swung again our ice-locked door,  
 And all the world was ours once more!

- 715 Clasp, Angel of the backward look  
       And folded wings of ashen gray  
       And voice of echoes far away,  
       The brazen covers of thy book;  
 The weird palimpsest <sup>1</sup> old and vast,  
 720 Wherein thou hid'st the spectral past;  
 Where, closely mingling, pale and glow  
 The characters of joy and woe;  
 The monographs of outlived years,  
 Or smile-illumed or dim with tears,  
 725     Green hills of life that slope to death,  
       And haunts of home, whose vistaed trees  
       Shade off to mournful cypresses <sup>2</sup>  
       With the white amaranths underneath.  
       Even while I look, I can but heed  
 730     The restless sands' incessant fall,  
       Importunate hours that hours succeed,  
       Each clamorous with its own sharp need,  
       And duty keeping pace with all.  
       Shut down and clasp the heavy lids;  
 735 I hear again the voice that bids  
       The dreamer leave his dream midway  
       For larger hopes and graver fears:

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<sup>1</sup> *Palimpsest.* A parchment from which one writing has been erased to make room for another, often leaving the first faintly visible.

<sup>2</sup> *Mournful cypresses.* The cypress is the emblem of mourning for the dead, cypress branches having been anciently used at funerals.

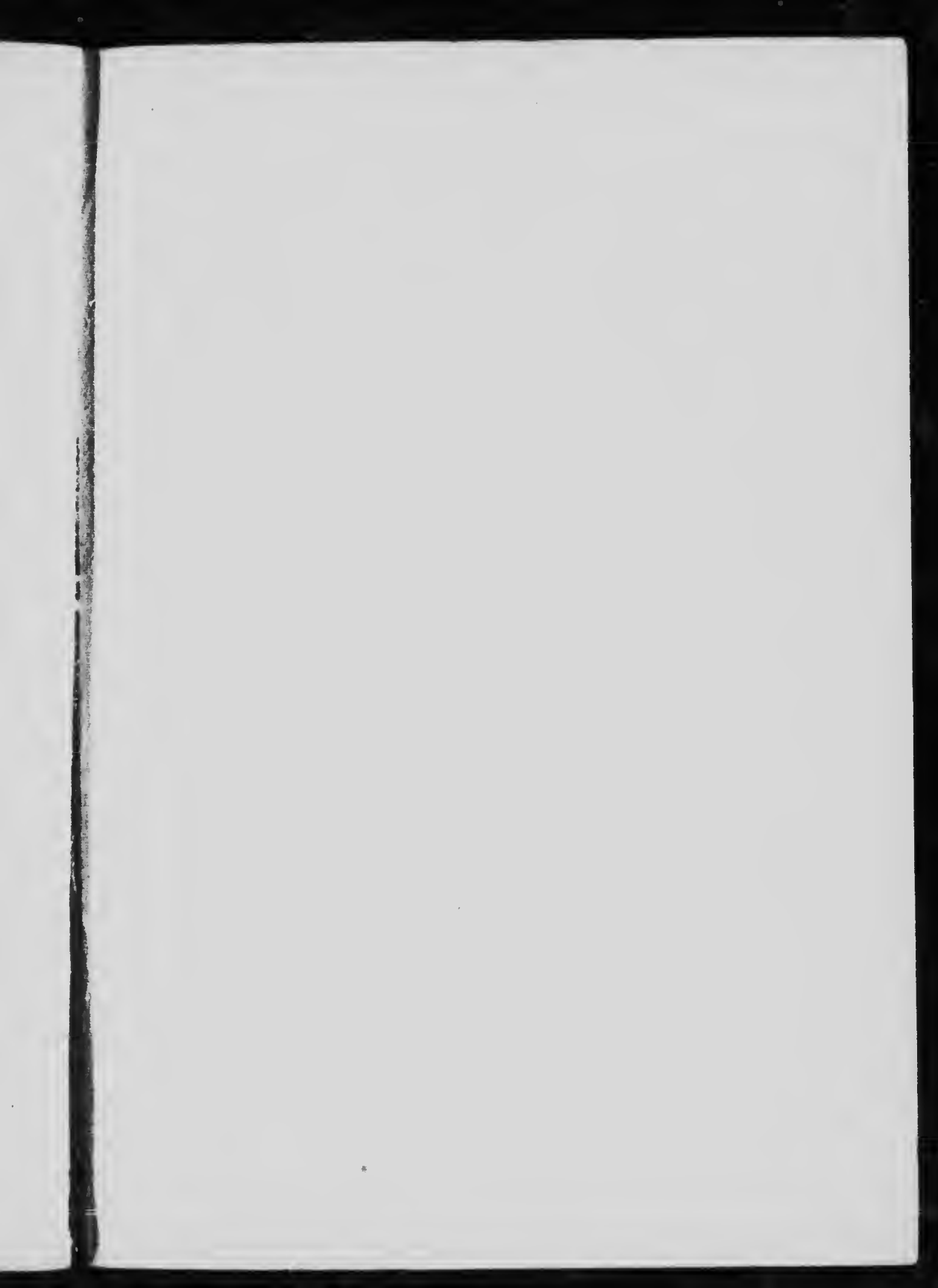
Life greatens in these later years,  
The century's aloe flowers to-day!

- 740 Yet, haply, in some lull of life,  
Some Truce of God<sup>1</sup> which breaks its strife,  
The worldling's eyes shall gather dew,  
Dreaming in throngful city ways  
Of winter joys his boyhood knew;
- 745 And dear and early friends — the few  
Who yet remain — shall pause to view  
These Flemish pictures<sup>2</sup> of old days;  
Sit with me by the homestead hearth,  
And stretch the hands of memory forth
- 750 To warm them at the wood-fire's blaze!  
And thanks untraced to lips unknown  
Shall greet me like the odors blown  
From unseen meadows newly mown,  
Or lilies floating in some pond,
- 755 Wood-fringed, the wayside gaze beyond;  
The traveller owns the grateful sense  
Of sweetness near, he knows not whence,  
And, pausing, takes with forehead bare  
The benediction of the air.

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<sup>1</sup> *Truce of God.* A suspension of private feuds observed, chiefly in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, in France, Italy, England, and elsewhere. The terms of such a truce usually provided that the feuds should cease on all the more important church festivals and fasts, or from Thursday evening to Monday morning, or during Lent. The practice was introduced by the Church to mitigate the evils of private war.

<sup>2</sup> *Flemish pictures.* The Flemish school of painters dealt largely with the homely scenes of life.





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