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DRIFT

FROM

YORK-HARBOR, MAINE.

By GEORGE HOUGHTON.

*“ Ever drifting, drifting, drifting
On the shifting
Currents of the restless heart ;
Till at length in books recorded,
They, like hoarded
Household words, no more depart.”*

DRIFT

FROM

YORK-HARBOR, MAINE.

BY
GEORGE HOUGHTON,

Author of "CHRISTMAS BOOKLET," 1872; "SONGS FROM OVER THE SEA," 1874;
"PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS," 1875; "ALBUM LEAVES," 1877.

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EVER drifting, drifting, drifting
On the shifting
Currents of the restless main ;
Till in sheltered coves, and reaches
Of sandy beaches,
All have found repose again.
So when storms of wild emotion
Strike the ocean
Of the poet's soul, ere long
From each cave and rocky fastness
In its vastness,
Floats some fragment of a song.

* * * *

From the strong Will, and the Endeavor
That forever
Wrestles with the tides of Fate ;
From the wreck of Hopes far-scattered,
Tempest-shattered,
Floating waste and desolate ;—
Ever drifting, drifting, drifting
On the shifting
Currents of the restless heart ;
Till at length in books recorded,
They, like hoarded
Household words, no more depart.

LONGFELLOW'S "*Sea-Weed*."

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ALONGSHORE.

ON Maine's rough coast-line where its rocky front
Frowns most forbiddingly, with sudden break
A small, blue river pours into the sea,
And widening forms a harbor, small but safe ;
Behind which, half concealed by buttonwoods,
The church-spire of Old-York lifts to the winds
Its weather-cock.

Below this spire, a town,
Where, truant from the city dials, come
The lazy hours to lose themselves in dreams
And sweet forgetfulness of summer heat ;
An idle sort of place, where all day long
It seems like evening with the day's work done,
Where men haste not, because there is no haste,
And toil but little, for they've little need ;
A restful corner, where the August breeze,
From softly listening, finger on the lip,
At length from listlessness falls fast asleep,
And there is no sound heard save now and then
A shrill cicada, hoisting of a sail,
Low thunder of a wagon on the bridge,
The dip of unseen oars, monotonous,
And softly breathing waves that doze below,
Too weak to more than turn themselves, complain,
And doze again.

Drift from York-Harbor, Maine.

Here I've a summer love
To loiter, these small noises in my ears,
And with far-looking eyes to drink the blue
Of the near mountain, and turn back the leaves
Of legends and dim-lettered histories
From older days, when York was still a maid,
And wore her maiden name. Sweet word it was;
The red-man gave it her, his chieftain's name,
Whom first the crooning west wind had baptised,
And still all nature knows her by that name,
Melodious with the murmur of sea waves
And waving boughs, for often in the night
I've heard the lonesome winds and hemlock trees
Calling together: "Ag-a-men-ti-cus!"
While the round mountain, where the legends say
Still sleeps the chieftain, glowed with changing lights,
As if the ghosts of long-departed tribes
Waved torches o'er their sachem's sacred dust.
I love to stray along the straggling town,
To peer into its cottages, low church,
And jail long tenantless, and raise the latch
That gives free access to that citadel,
The block-house, once the town's frail lease of hope
In days of discord. Following then the road
I wander beachward, past the fishers' huts,
A figure-head or horse-shoe 'bove each door,
Where men mend sails, and files of garrulous geese
Discuss the turn of tides or weather signs,
And solemnly file on.

Here, from this knoll
The sight of the blue ocean breaks on me,
Unflecked save by white sails; a tiny spire

Alongshore.

White like a sail, but still — Boone Island Light ;
And southward, like a cloud that may dissolve,
The Isles of Shoals, far glimmering.

Now the road,
With weakening steps, forgets to further stray,
And slumbers by the quiet of the route,
Leaving the outer world a wilderness,—
Forgets, or was it memory of the deed
Once done here that with milkweed choked the way,
Blanching the lips of the adventurer,
Who cried : “ Here and no further will I go ! ”
Look down, and on the bed-rock you will see
Dull streaks of crimson lichens ; on this spot,—
'T was long ago, but still the tale is new,
For blood-spots never lose their stain—dropped dead
York's first pale minister, a goodly man,
Whom ill a town could spare at any time,
Still less in those dark days. Here with one sigh,
He died, a hatchet buried in his brain,
Filled but a moment earlier with sweet thoughts ;
And here the murderer left his victim stripped,
And glorying in his shame ran to the church,
Decked in the pastoral garb, and at its door
Taunted the worshipers, as in twos and threes
They came by foot or horseback. Lying here,
No curse was read upon the open lips,
But in this trickling autograph of blood
The town's folk, outraged, traced the red-man's doom.

A half mile further on, by slender path,
That twists and angles 'mong a stunted growth
Of teazles and snarl-rooted junipers,

Drift from York-Harbor, Maine.

Striving to hide the leanness of the land,
We toil at length by an ascending grade
To a well-wooded height, where mid the rocks
The sheep find pasturage. Here on a hill
That southward slopes, close walled about by elms
And chestnuts warding off the winter winds,
A farmstead nestles, with its clustering group
Of barns, snug sheep-cots, and wide, fertile fields
Of ripening grain.

I love this old, red house,
Where many a summer night I've lain at ease,
Behind that upper window looking east,
And many an hour wished to ward off sleep,
Preferring the sweet melody of the waves,
More restful. Naked is the building's face
With not a vine upon it, but close by
Stand lilac bushes, where the birds build nests,
And from them carol when the day is new,
Saying, "Good-morrow!" — then a tall, drest elm,
That guards the grin'stone's place and helps to sift
The glare and fervor from the midday sun,
When from the meadow comes the glistening scythe
To cool its brilliance with a watery edge,
And tease the ear of the o'erheated day
With its keen rasp, far sounding. Here too stands
The well-sweep, leaning to look down and see
Within the depth below, a nether world
And nether well-sweep.

Just behind the house
There is an orchard, where a pear-tree drops
Delicious windfalls; many an early morn
I've hastened there to find them, pushed apart

Alongshore.

The rank grass, diamond tipped with dew, and peered
To catch their yellowing glimmer. There too smiles
A garden, fragrant with sweet-smelling herbs,
Where savory camomile and southernwood
Weave spells that bring the blush of childhood back ;
Where bloom bright four-o'clocks and bouncing-bets,
And hollyhocks, upon whose pink-white breasts
The bees cling pendant, drunk with over-feast ;
Where dying peonies, wading ankle-deep
In their own life-blood, totter to their doom,
And fiery sun-flowers lord it over all,
Staring a gorgeous stare.

Further behind
Stand rocks precipitous, where last at night
The sunshine lingers, but no herbage finds,
For winds, those gypsy campers, trample it,
Stealing the very sand. Upon its top,
Looms a dumb-beacon, landmark miles around,
And when the night-wind cries among the trees
It creaks and groans in mournful unison.
Here, when the sundown sets the west aflame,
The view is glorious. Far off to the north,
The jealous land sends out into the sea
A long, slim arm, and holds it in its hollow hand
A rocky isle — the Nubble, it is called —
Glad landfall unto many a hungry eye
That in those early days, before a sail
E'er whitened York's small harbor, strained to catch
Some token of the new, half-doubted world.
Then, circling like a sickle, toward us bends
A yellow beach, the Long Sands ; then black rocks,
Among which, like the gloomy lurking-place
Of some sea creature, darkens a huge cave,

Drift from York-Harbor, Maine.

In whose recesses when the tide-waves flux
A hollow murmur echoes, heard far off,
With sighs and breathings, strange, unspeakable,
That deepen as the night-hush settles down,—
A swashing, as of some unwholesome beast
Turning its clumsy shape from side to side,
A crushing, as of monster jaws that crunch
The ribs of mammals.

Nearer still, more rocks,
Piled orderless, among which stand exposed
The remnants of a vessel that the sea,
To prove the valor of its strong right hand,
Once tossed and wedged there. 'T was a furious night!
I slept in my snug chamber; waked, and heard
The rain upon my window, dashed in sheets,
With blasts that shook the very house, and waves
That seemed to rock the very hill itself
Under the house. I felt a growing dread;
I heard the men-folk stirring, and leaped up
To seek companionship; we heaped the hearth
With wood—though 'twas not winter—gathered 'round,
Telling weird tales of nights like unto this,
And what dread sights they sometimes left to shock
The waking daybreak. Sudden, at the blind,
Came knockings—and we started to our feet,
Clutching each other, 'till the unlatched door
Gaped open, and three haggard, wild-eyed men
In staggered, begging in the name of Christ:
“A draught of liquor, brothers, and a bed!
For we are dying!” From that wreck they came—
All that the waves had spared,—and when day dawned
The shore with their companions was far strewn.

Alongshore.

So to the stranger, loitering from the town
Or rowing roundabout, looks Norwood Farm.
So looks the nook in which I love to hide,
Forgetful of life's dull routine of chores,
Forgetful that life other duty has
Than to lie down in the cool shade of trees,
To drink the air and light as flowers do,
And rest completely. Here with half-shut eyes
I've dreamt light day-dreams, letting fancy fly
Whither it would, so that it flew not far,
To make return wing-weary. Some I've kept
As keepsakes, that they might revive again
The pictured dreams, but as I read them now,
I find, like pebbles picked at break of day
From shining beaches, some have lost their charm
With their lost sunshine.

Such from Norwood's Hill
The scenes on which its beacon daily frowns ;
And all about, on every side save one,
The narrow neck that links it with the world,
A tide of sunshine breaks with waves of warmth
On piebald hillslopes sprinkled with ripe crops,
Tossing the billowy fields of aftermath,—
A titan form o'er which the summer flings
A leopard's hide, that from its shoulder trails
Down sweeping to the carpet of the sea,—
A sea, white-capped, like ermine mantled throne,
On which this bold peninsular sits — king !

New York, November, 1878.

THE GATEWAY.

A VACATION EPISODE.

WE crossed the pasture-land together,
I knew that now my time drew near,
And hastened, longing for the moment,
Yet lingering, holding back in fear.

I wished the sunshine would not flicker
Across the river in my eyes ;
Then hers she shaded with her bonnet —
How could I talk through that disguise !

I wished the catbird would not whistle,
I paused till he grew tired and still ;
And then the frogs took up the music,
And lambs came bleating from the hill.

Now all was silent ; in the stubble
The crickets even held their peace ;
But yet I waited, wishing only
That all the crickets would not cease.

I saw the gateway as we neared it,
I shaped my mouth and formed the word,
When from her bonnet, bent demurely,
A little laugh I thought I heard.

The Gateway.

A ploughboy passing, smiled and nodded,
I bit my lip and blushed for shame ;
Then stooped to pick a blood-red berry,—
 'T was sour, and speechless I became.

I leaned upon the bars ; she fluttered
 A farewell signal back to me ;
I turned, I staggered from the roadway,—
 Gray fog came drifting from the sea.

YORK RIVER.

SMOOTH-COURSED and shining the river glides,
Neath slanting pollards it coyly hides,
And now o'er sand shallows slips and slides,—
 While the August sun burns westward.

On rock and shingle, slow turtles bask,
The fisher gapes drowsily over his task,
The far hill lifts a luminous mask,—
 And the August sun burns westward.

In the meadows, tall mowers tedder hay,
Brushing the wet from their brows away,
The locust's challenge breaks harsh on the day,—
 And the August sun burns westward.

GOOD MORNING!

SUNBEAMS, laughing, kiss the windows,
Murmuring, "Open, little eyes!
The fields are filled with flowers and birds,
The sky with butterflies!"

Raindrops patter on the windows,
Saying, "Sleep a little more;
The flowers are wet, the birds are hid,
And rain beats on the door."

Snow-flakes light upon the windows,
Flying slow and silently,
Just whisp'ring, "Hush! dont waken them
Till we have heaped up high."

Hailstones rattle on the windows,
Crying, "Keep the children in!
For Day and Darkness are at war,
Oh wait 'till Day shall win!"

Apple-blossoms on the windows
With their dainty fingers tap:
"Now all who love the world, awake!
The world wakes from its nap."

—*"Golden Rule."*

ANNIVERSARY HYMN.

TO THE KENDALL LITERARY ASSOCIATION.

THERE have been nobler days, my friends,
And ruddier skies than ours,
When men wrought deeds, but God the ends,
And faiths grew into powers.

There have been loftier stations too,
When youths wore souls of men,
Because they had great deeds to do,—
Greatness was goodness then.

And prouder destinies have been,
When truth was saved from harm,
Smitten, the miracles of sin
By man's God-muscle arm.

Yet epochs, stations, destinies
Are not mere births of time ;
Sublimely do what in us lies :
This is to be sublime !

—*Cambridge Chronicle.*

THE SUMMER STORM.

York-Harbor, August, 1872.

IN a scurry of clouds
Sudden day fell,
What ho! ye swallows!
All is not well.

With broken flights
They wheel through the sky,
And sea-gulls, wailing,
Go hurrying by.

Up to the bars
The cattle fare,
And cries from the sheep-cot
Fill all the air.

O'er the frightened sea
The storm-cloud leaps,
And its shadow behind
Like a garment sweeps.

The slant rain beats
The sea into froth,
The hoarse winds have left
Their home in the north.

High over the beach
Blows white foam-sleet,
On gray rock-walls
The green tides beat.

The Summer Storm.

The reef is drowned,
Boone Light is wiped out ;
“ It comes ! it comes ! ”
The women-folk shout.

Now all is blotted,
The world is no more,
But water and wind
And the sea's uproar.

—*Christmas Booklet.*

THE SHELL.

DEARLY do I love to listen,
Bent o'er this melodious shell ;
Precious the tales its pink lips utter,
Tales of winter waves they tell ;

Fairy tales I'd long forgotten,
Hopes of ever so long ago,—
But its answer to one question
Only is, “ Oh no ! Oh no ! ”

Nay, fair sea-shell, safe from tempests
And black sea-wrack drifting slow,
Do say yes to this one question !—
Sad it sighs back, “ No, Oh no ! ”

TO A BELLE OF SIX SUMMERS.

Well may eagles from the air
Drop to offer thee a feather;
Well may lambs lay off their fleece
To cloak thee from the weather.

Well may camels on their knees
Stoop and doff their wealth before thee,
And red foxes leave their holes
To wrap their warm hoods o'er thee.

Well may gold and coral shine
Thus to sit so close beside thee;
Well may the ermine on thy throat
Caress and strive to hide thee.

For thou givest day its sun ;
Pearl I ask not as we sever,—
In my heart is lodged thy smile,
And that I'll treasure ever.

THE BUILDING OF THE BRIDGE.

WORKING, working, hour by hour,
Through the morning's wind and dew,
Through warm sunshine, chilly shower,
Through the evening's dusky blue.

Stone by stone is plunged and fed
To life's river flowing wide ;
Twilight comes, the day is dead,
Labor must be lain aside.

Still no promise of repose
Peers to cheer the worker's face ;
Still the river darkly flows,
Not a ripple points the place.

Working thus, the slow months pass ;
Many the discouraged day ;
Journeyman we are,—Alas !
Few have faith to brook delay.

Many sigh : “ Such work is shame !
'Neath us hungry quicksands lie,
Do or not do—all 's the same,
And it 's best to sleep or die.”

Nay, my brothers, this we know :
God gives each his task to ply ;
If His will He plainly show,
Shall we dare to press the why ?

Drift from York-Harbor, Maine.

Working, working, year by year,
One shall see his life-work done,
While another as sincere
Thinks his only half begun.

Your share, may be, is not light !
There the depth may darker be,
There the sand may run less bright,
Or the tide more forcibly.

But take courage, strive the more !
Sure the end is ; never fear !
You, may be, chose nearer shore,
God replied, " I need you here."

Some must sound the channel's course,
Others clear the weedy way,
Some with grander will and force
Bear great loads day after day.

Some will see completion grand,
When proud Freedom spans the tide,
And ripe Progress, hand in hand
With Peace, shall walk world-wide.

THE WITCH OF YORK.

UP o'er the hill and broken wall
There crept a weird form, bent but tall ;
 And through our unlatched door
 She came unbidden, and before
The hearth-fire crouched and gazed upon us all.

Then no one spoke ; the chimney sighed ;
The cat mewed drearily and tried
 To go but could not ; dim
 The room became, and ghostly grim
The fear that fell on us and multiplied.

We heard the breeze steal through the pines,
We heard it shake from the twisted vines
 The bean-blows, and the west
 Sent up a hoarse growl of unrest,
As of some frightened beast that frets and whines.

Our songs became a sigh that the wind
Uplifted ; doubts ran through our mind,
 And doubt is fear, and fear
 Keen anguish— “ Say ! what draweth near ?
Shall our to-morrow cruel be, or kind ? ”

Drift from York-Harbor, Maine.

Now from her breast the creature drew
Her fate-pack ; moodily she blew
 And shuffled black with red ;
 Till Esther gaped and whispering said
To Robert, " One would think she thought she knew."

Whereat, the eyes of the woman-witch
First sparkled, then grew black as pitch ;
 We shivered at her look,
 Her ear-rings in the glamour shook,
And we could see her neck-cords writhe and twitch.

The low clouds huddled overhead
In black disorder ; on the shed
 We watched the sunshine beat
 Them back, then struggle and retreat :
" Come, woman, come ! 'twill soon be time for bed."

She passed the pack ; the maiden broke
It into three ; then Robert spoke :
 " Tell this, my sister's fate."
 The woman only answered, " Wait !"
And silent, fanned the fire into smoke.

The dim light lit the topmost card,
She looked upon it long and hard,
 Then through her grisly brow
 Glared upward at the girl—" Now, now,
Will I unlock my lips ; mind you each card !

The Witch of York.

“ Ace hearts, sole child, and of love’s bed ;
A spade twice next, both parents dead ;
 Black still again—beware !
 Though comely shaped, thy features fair,
Thy feet in snares I see, webs round thy head.

“ No sister thou !—black seven, no kin ;
A ha ! queen clover, treacherous then !
 Well may thy mouth turn pale,
 Within a deuce, beneath a sail
Thou fliest from some sorrow or some sin.

“ The second deal holds more ; still pain !
Within a *trés* behold thy stain
 A smoke to blur the skies,
 A fire kindled that thine eyes,
Though they dissolve, can quench not nor detain.

“ Black still and clover, in a one
A coffin ; now third deal, and done.
 Hearts six, and streaked with red,
 Within that space thy wooer dead ;
Hearts seven, to thee are left seven years to run.”

Aghast we stood ; she spoke no more,
But flung the cards across the floor,
 And up the chimney’s throat,
 With wind-rush and one thunder note,
She swept ;—we looked, and saw the buttoned door.

Drift from York-Harbor, Maine.

We heard the swallows cry and call,
Then late, the storm's long looked for brawl,
 And, louder than the last,
 Up through the yawning flue one blast
Sucked flame and fuel, cat and cards—and all!

THE COMING.

IT came with the early daybreak,—
 None abroad but the fisher boy,—
It came with a cry like anguish,
 But it was the cry of joy.

The robins knew of its coming,
 The blue-eyed violets knew:
The robins' song was sweeter,
 The violets sweeter blue.

There had come another singer,
 (The robins well might sing),
And another blue-eyed playmate
 Unto the flowers of spring.

SONG: THE CARPENTER.

I.

I'm sad, I'm sad, for the joy I had
Is wrecked like a craft in mid-sea,
It's strange, but at once all youth's glad hopes
Seem lost forever to me.

Oho! how slow the shavings go,
But let me do what I can,
For man, for man was meant for labor,
And labor was made for man.

II.

I'm glad, I'm glad, for the grief I had
Has blown like a cloud away;
My heart, my plane, let us laugh together,
For night has bloomed into day.

Hi, hi! how spry the shavings fly!
I'll work as well as I can,
For man, for man was meant for labor,
And labor was made for man.

Drift from York-Harbor, Maine.

III.

O, weary the hour that ushers toil,
And heavy the moan of the plane,
When labor is not the labor of love,
And can be never again.

Oho! how slow the shavings go,
But let us do what we can,
For man, for man was meant for labor,
And labor was made for man.

IV.

O, light is endeavor that hath a heart,
O, sweet those sunshiny days,
When every bird-call carols of hope,
And joy speaks a thousand ways.

Hi, hi! how spry the shavings fly!
I'll work as well as I can,
For man, for man was meant for labor,
And labor was made for man.

FLOOD-TIDE AND EBB-TIDE.

THE tide came laughing into the bay,
Two children were laughing on the sands,
So busily scooping one round well
With their four dimpled hands.

The ebb-tide through the rushes crawls,
On tiptoes slow it steals away,—
Bonnets are those the mother sees
Far out on the bay!

THE HUMBLE SINGER.

ONE surely could not say he failed;
He never, like an eagle, sailed
Against northwesterners; but he went
With easy wings on his sparrow's flight,
From limb to limb, through shade and light,
Circling his nest, and was content.

EVENING.

York-Harbor August, 1872.

A level sea,
A film of blue
Cov'ring the coast-line,
A sail or two ;

A ship asleep
On the sea's breast,
A blood-red ball
Low down in the west ;

A poplar perched
High on the hill,
Black 'gainst the crimson,
Stark and still.

Now fades the great ball—
It was the sun,—
And sky and ocean
Melt into one.

Now the mists, like a tide,
Slow lift and lift,
Till all the landscape
Is set adrift.

But one dim star
Burns through the night ;
Shall I tell who lit it ?
I think I might.

—“ *Christmas Booklet.*”

YESTERDAY.

WHILE King Carl at midnight feasted,
Sudden, springing from his chair,
With clenched hand he smote his forehead,
Wailing, "Lost! beyond repair!"

"Nay, my lord", his courtiers answered,
"Do but name your royal will,
Serried spears and flashing banners
Shall command the Meuse stand still!"

"Nay again!" the pale king stammered,
While still clanged the cloister bell,
"Lost, beyond all snares most cunning!
Hear'st thou not its goodbye knell?"

"All my bow-men and my cannon,
All my stallions and tall ships,
Powerless are to fetch or find it
When, as now, the treasure slips;

"All the marble in my quarries,
All my barley, sack on sack,
All my gold, and blood-red rubies,
Cannot buy the bounty back!"

LONGING.

A LOVE SONG.

I HEAR in the twitter of birds her song,
I hear her step in the rustling grass,
Her laugh on the evening breeze,—and I long
To see my Margaret pass.

I see her eyes in the sparkling dew,
Her hair in the tasseled corn, soft fanned,
Her form in the drifting cloud,—and I long
To hold my Margaret's hand.

I feel her pulse in the river's flow,
In the summer rain, that drips and drips,
Her breath on the perfumed breeze,—and I long
To taste my Margaret's lips!

—*The Galaxy*, 1876.

SILENCE.

On picture by F. S. Church, representing a mummy's head
contrasted with a rose in bloom.

LONG centuries since, those rosebud lips turned gray :
Behold them sealed with a rose-bloom of to-day :
The seal of Silence, lest they should undo,
And skeletons of the past come trooping through.

THE CHILD SONGSTRESS.

THE roses nod when she draws near,
Clouds blush, and courtesying disappear ;
Each lark and robin leaves its nest,
And trills and carols its very best.

But when she sings, the birds stop, all
The winds let their rough voices fall,
Or in the cedar clumps and brush,
With finger on the lip, breathe "Hush!"

THE BLACK BOARS.

THE Black Boars lie, a huddling pile,
Without York-Harbor half a mile,
And there, at ebbing of the tides,
They wallow, sunning their shaggy sides,
And pant and grumble all the while.

About them the flat sea is broke
Into a foam-cloud which, like smoke,
Lifts heavenward and then landward drifts
Across the meadow, where it sifts
Soft rain on the driver and his yoke.

"Wh-hoish ! my beauties !" Martin said,
"Cheer up, my pretty one ; courage, Ned !
Another hour is all I ask,
But we must haste to end our task,—
The Boars bode storm 'ere it 's time for bed."

Drift from York-Harbor, Maine.

Far up the river, 'bove the bridge,
Ruth caught their grunting, but a ridge
Of yellow sand-dunes hid the view ;
Blue sky she saw and sunshine, too,
That laughed on her flowering window-ledge.

Work-weary she arose, pushed back
Her girlish ringlets thick and black,
And looking 'neath her shading hands,
Saw down upon the river sands
Her Elsie's barrow and small track.

The tall clock told that it grew late ;
Once more she twirled her wheel of fate,—
The soft wool stretched and brake in two,
The kitten caught it as it flew,
And chiding her, Ruth sought the gate.

The sea lay motionless ; afar
White smacks were tacking toward the bar ;
Adown the hill filed home-bound herds ;
She watched a few fast-flying birds,
And following, missed the evening star.

With sudden creak of the weather-vane,
Wind-scuds, with gray squalls in their train,
Came flocking from the misty south,
Throwing a gloom o'er the harbor mouth,—
A half-felt fear throbb'd through her brain.

The Black Boars.

The river was still a line of light,
Unflecked save by one dory's flight,
That toward the darkened offing sped;
"Thank God!" the mother fondly said,
"It's none of mine steers that boat tonight!"

For suddenly it seemed to her
As if the Black Boars nearer were;
A sound of laughter wandered by,
And echoed back a low, sad cry,
That sighed in the poplars, now astir.

Now Martin from the meadow strode,
His oxen bent 'neath their clover load;
Big raindrops pattered on the barn,
From the spinning-wheel trailed tangled yarn,—
He called, then sauntered to the road.

Down dropped night's curtains; hand in hand
Roamed floods of the air and sea and land;
And by the lightning's fitful glows
Stalked from the sea huge, hooded rows
Of breakers, thundering up the strand.

Snarled, drifting lily-pads still told
An ebbing tide, and on it rolled
A boat, Ruth tugging at the oars,—
Too late she gave ear to the Boars,
And pierced the treachery they foretold.

Drift from York-Harbor, Maine.

Each wind-blast bore the name she cried ;
The wreckers from the shore descried
 Her ghostly figure, and were afraid,
 For to each other low they said :
“ The Boar-King claims tonight a bride ! ”

The pounding surf now sounds more near ;
Her straining eyes in the gloom austere
 Shape flitting pairs of eyeballs bright,
 And rude, rough hands from left and right
Her garments plucking, first wake fear.

The swamping boat now rolls, now flies,
A shuttlecock 'tween sea and skies ;
 And toppling dizzily in mid-air,
 She sees below the wild Boars' lair,
And looks straight into their bloodshot eyes.

Gray broke the drizzly dawn, and found
Full half the sleepless town's-folk bound
 Along the streaming ocean front,
 Some wading, some in skiff or punt,
Searching the sand and the meadows drowned.

Sad was the scene it came to show ;
Two shattered boats 'mong the Boars crushed low ;
 The father, stricken, found them there, --
 Like silkweed shone the tangled hair
That bound together their breasts of snow.

FOUR-LEAF CLOVER.

“If one finds a four-leaf clover,”
 (She said, sitting on the grass),
“He can wish whate’er he likes to,
 And that wish shall come to pass.”

“Do you say so?” Then down kneeling
 ’Mong the sorrel and cropt grass,
Looked I for a four-leaf clover,
 And for my wish to come to pass.

Long I searched there ’mong the sorrel,
 And beside me she searched too;
Now and then some commonplaces
 Broke the silence,—but it grew.

For my heart was full of yearning,
 And my mouth was full of words,
But I dared not give them utterance,—
 So I hearkened to the birds;

Drift from York-Harbor, Maine.

And kept looking, looking, looking,
While beside me she looked too,—
Two bent figures in the twilight,
Green hills paling into blue.

“Ha! I’ve found one!” “Yes, and wished for?”—
“You! and shall it be?” I cried.
Eyes cast down, she asked demurely,
“Hath the clover not replied?”

SHELTERING ARMS.

(To accompany drawing by F. S. Church, in *Harpers' Weekly*, representing a wayside shrine, in snow storm, with sparrows nestled under the arms of the Christ figure.)

In sunny weather, only a sapless tree,
With painted image pitiful to see;
But when frail Hope lies dead 'neath drifted snows,
And through the gloom gaunt Fear, embodied, blows,
A voice salutes the wanderer; “Come to Me!”
And 'neath His sheltering arms we find repose.

N I A G A R A . *

I.

Formed when the oceans were fashioned, when all the world was a workshop ;

Loud roared the furnace fires, and tall leapt the smoke from volcanoes,
Scooped were round bowls for lakes, and grooves for the sliding of rivers,
And, with a cunning hand, the mountains were linked together.

Then through the day-dawn, lurid with cloud, and rent by forked lightning,

Threatened beneath by earthquakes, above by the rattle of thunder,
Sudden the din was pierced by a voice, deep-lunged and portentous,—
Thy voice, Niagara, crying: “ Now is creation completed ! ”

II.

Millions of cup-like blossoms, brimming with dew and fresh raindrops,
Pour their tributes together to form one slow-trickling brooklet ;
Thousands of brooklets and rills, leaping down from their homes in the uplands,
Grow to a smooth, blue river, flowing in lordly silence.

Hundreds of smooth, blue rivers, sparkling across the prairies,
Darkening under forests of pine, deep drowning the marshes,
Cleaving apart, with their noiseless sledge, the rocks red with copper,
Steer at last to one common goal, and flow all together.

* NOTE.—The writer has here adopted the warp of hexameter, upon which he has spun a somewhat arbitrary woof.

Drift from York-Harbor, Maine.

Lo! to the northward glimmers the tide of the Mighty Sea Water,
White-capped, and sprinkled with foam, that tumbles its rolling breakers
Landward on beaches of sand, and in caverns hollow with thunder,
Landward where plovers frequent, with the wolf and the westering bison.

Four Sea Waters like this, a chain of green, inland oceans,
Pour into one their tides, ever yearning to seek the Atlantic,
Press to one narrow sluice their tribute of sunshine and silver,
Cry as they come: "Receive us, Niagara, Father of Waters!"

Such is the Iroquois god, the symbol of might and of plenty,
Shrine of the untutored warrior, filled with an unfathomed longing,
Seeking, in water and wind, still seeking in lightning and thunder,
Something to kneel to, something to pray to, something to worship.

Here, when the world was clothed with the yellow and gold of October,
Here, from their scattered camps, the moccasoned tribes came clustering,
Left in their tents their bows, forgot their brawls and dissensions,
Peacefully came, and stood by these banks, filled with feelings of wonder ;

Chose from their fairest virgins the fairest of all among them,
Fashioned a birchen canoe, and made a seat for the virgin,
Clothed her in white, and set her adrift to plunge down the chasm,
Saying: "Receive this our vow, O Niagara, Father of Waters!"

III.

I too once came, to bring my vow, my token of worship,
I too once stood on thy wooded banks, my heart filled with wonder,
I too would render some tribute, some gift of song and of harp-strings,
But 'neath the roll of thy chariot wheels, my weak voice was smothered.

Niagara.

Calling, thou seemest to murmur: "Come, and I will instruct thee!"
Willing I came, like a palmer of old with pike-staff and wallet,
Willing I lingered by thee, to go, and return on the morrow,
Coming again and again, but only to doubt the more deeply.

Idol I found thee, unfeeling, calling man only to mock him,
Talking to one that is weak of things that are vast and almighty,
Telling of things heaven-high to him that is not an eagle,
Telling of changeless things to a leaf that reddens to perish.

Like hand of death lain on mine, thy voice sent a chill through my being,
And after listening long, I turned away sad and disheartened,
Turned toward the distant fields, and ran, till stopping to listen,
Only dull undertones told that still thou wert calling and calling;

Wept and wished it were winter, that muffled in snows of December,
All the world might be filled with silence utterly soundless,—
Wished I might flee to the mountains, unsheltered, where riotous tempests
Might have no ruin, no twig, from which to beat out their music.

Then as I passed through a meadow, blooming with cowslips and daisies,
Heard the bumble of bees, and the delicate footsteps of robins,
That o'er the crispy leaves of the scrub-oak coverts went hopping,
Suddenly hope revived, and faith returned to my bosom.

IV.

Often, in later years, allured by thy strange fascination,
Often I've come again, with feet that would not turn backward,
Often sat at thy feet, and tested, with alchemist's fervor,
Whether, beneath thy dolorous fugue, Hope whispered one promise.

Drift from York-Harbor, Maine.

V.

Still, with the wonder of youth, I follow the flight of thy Rapids;
Sirens they seem, that lure to destruction, now lurking in shadows,
Skirting the level stillness of pools and treacherous shallows,
Smiling and dimple-mouthed, coquetting—now modest, now forward;

Chanting, and such the sweetness, the thrall of its weird incantation,
Hunger it wakes in each listener's soul, a feverish longing,
Thoughts all absorbent, a torment that stings and ever increases,
Burning desire to rush, bare breast, to thy perilous bosom.

Thus, in some midnight dark, when the storm of temptation lowers,
(So has the wind, in the beechen wood, confided the story),
Pine-trees, thrusting their way and trampling down one another,
Curious, lean and list, replying in unheard whispers,

Till of the secret possessed, which brings sure blight to the hearer,
(So has the wind, in the beechen wood, confided the story),
Faltering, they stagger brinkward, snatch at the roots of the grasses,
Cry—a pitiful cry of remorse,—and fall down in the darkness.

Art thou all pitiless then, a sorceress seeking new victims?
Is then the legend true, that each twelve-month thou demandest
That which thy rude devotee has long since ceased to surrender:
One bleeding human heart, as sacrifice on thine altar?

Butterflies I have watched, that leaving the red-top and clover,
Thinking thy voice the trees, thy froth the whiteness of daisies,
Sailed too closely, caught chilly drops on their pinions, grew dizzy,
Balanced, but vainly—and falling, their scarlet was blotted forever.

Niagara.

VI.

Still I come to thy Fall, as unto earth's grandest cathedral,
Head uncovered, hands down, and feet that falter beneath me ;
Hearing afar, o'er the rustling grass and the rush of the river,
Thy proud voice, like an organ's voice, and I tremble with weakness.

Tall above town and woods lifts thy steeple builded of sunshine,
Mystical spire, white like a cloud, upreaching toward heaven,
Till with white clouds it drifts, and with them mingles and mixes,
Catches the glow of the sunset, and dies with rose-tint and purple.

Slowly, through gothic aisles, I stroll to the steps of thine altar,
Slowly forget thy presence, though with each step I draw nearer,
Half forgetting thy voice, so far it sends thought awandering,
'Till, with a sudden ascent, thou standest full-face before me.

Who upon tiptoes straining, shall snare the flight of the comet !
Who in bright pigments match the luminous sun at midday !
Who dare picture in words the turbulence of the tempest !—
Seeing, I can but stand still, with finger on lip, and keep silent.

See! down toward us floats a curious tangle of something,
White and untillered floats, unto my dazed senses seeming
Like to a birchen canoe, a snow-clad virgin within it,
Hastening with martyr zeal to possess the unknown hereafter !

Slower and smoother her flight, until on the precipice pausing,
Just for a moment brief the dread of the change seems to thrill her,
Crossing herself, and seeming to shudder, she looks once above her,—
Sudden I catch my breath—turn cold,—and know all is over.

Drift from York-Harbor, Maine.

Stoop and look down! where this vision of fancy has vanished,
Torrents of streaming spray stream down the vertical 'scarpment,
Green and blue are shattered, and merge into the fury of snow-storms,
Cold like glaciers they drop, then smoke in a boiling vortex.

Stoop and look down! and read if you can, life's terrible riddle.
Nay! the secret of death, by death alone can be fathomed.
But o'er the mystery finished is hung the curtain Most Holy,
And on this curtain set the sign of redemption—a rainbow.

Is this God's symbol of hope, or merely man's hopeful invention?
Thou hast no answer to that, save this dull undertone echoing:
"Man of animate things the noblest, the most ignoble,
Kissing only to tempt, and spoiling whate'er he embraces!"

Is then thy rainbow the pledge of a promise renewed forever?
Or a bright sun-dog ferocious, mouthing the hope of the noonday,
Painting with threatening brilliance the fleecy clouds of midsummer,
Only to taunt life's mariner, lulled by the calm, with new danger?

Faith in thee I have none! I lift my eyes, and despairing
Set my teeth in defiance. Is Fate then the father of all things?
I but a moth, to be snatched by the current on which I am sailing,
Dragged by the eddies down to cold depths, to be blotted forever?

Why then this pilgrimage here? God knows 'twas no self-seeking
Gave us this restless life, and no self-will or rebellion
Gives us this fear to lie down, and rest forever in slumber!—
That is the will-of-the-wisp that thus far has slipped all seekers.

Niagara.

Weary with wondering, we climb to the hills nearest heaven,
Find only dreary mists, and air too meagre to nourish ;
Seeking the depths of the sea, we drop our plummet and feel them,
Draw them in empty, or smeared with clay, that melts and tells nothing ;

Forests we thread, wide prairies unfenced, and drenched morasses,
Strike, with the fervor of youth, to the heart of bleak wildernesses,
Turn every stone, in hopes to find some answer beneath them,—
Find only thorns, lean brambles, insects, and green, loathsome creatures.

Youth flitted by, we faint, then sink in the ruts of our fathers,
Cherish the old beliefs, and bury our own in our bosoms ;
Seek less and hunger less keenly, sorrow for self and others,
But with worry and work endeavor to choke life's meaning ;

Live on from morrow to morrow, care not what next is coming,
Suffer, complain of our loads, but catch at their strings as they leave us,
Let the song-birds escape, knowing not till they've flown and escaped us,
Bitterly weeping then, to watch them fade in blue distance ;

Struggle and cling to straws ; call, receiving no answer ;
Pray, but without any faith ; grow careless and laugh at our anguish ;
Sin, and with wine made drunken, scorn the dread of hereafter,—
And, because all seems hopeless, gladly knock at Death's doorway.

Better we had not been, for what is the end of such striving ?
Bubbles that glitter perchance one moment, and burst as they glitter !
Comets that cleave the night, and leave the night but the darker !
Smudge that bursts into flame, only in smoke to be smothered !

Drift from York-Harbor, Maine.

Out of the gifts of the spring, only that is beautiful counted
Which at day-dawn breaks bud, and dies ere the dew-drops have left it.
Is there no healthfuller clime where things that are fair never perish,
But in a life-giving air grow fairer with passing seasons?

Iroquois god, I admire, because thou art great and mighty,
Turn and gaze at thee, going, as on a marvellous picture,
Fear thee, thou art so strong,—but hate thee with hatred bitter,
Taunter of all who dabble thy foam, and think to discover.

VII.

Neath the Fall is a Valley, a Valley of death and of darkness,
Where the tide as it strives, seeks only the end to discover;
Who shall fathom its depths, or tell what wrecks they envelop!
Here life's remnants, drowned for the time, await resurrection.

Deep is the way and long the way, and lofty above it
Frowns upon either hand a precipice sheer or beetling,
Walls inaccessible, holding in exile the will-broken river,
Blighting all hope of return, should it yearn for the flowering pastures.

But from their brinks lean down and nod a few slender birches,
Pale at the depth and gloom of the far-reaching void beneath them;
There campanulas, too, which lurk wherever is danger,
Stoop with a smile of hope, reflecting the blue of the heavens.

Faster still flies the river, heaping its scum at the center,
Drags the tide from the shores and leaves them a hand-breadth under,
While, like a serpent of yellow, its spume Crooks down to the Whirlpool,
Trails with a zigzag motion down to the hideous Whirlpool.

Niagara.

VIII.

Here is the end of all, of all things the resurrection ;
Here the long valley crooks and the flight of the river is broken ;
Round is the cavern, and in at one side the wild river rushes,
Headlong it leaps, despairing, and beats on the stony barrier ;

Beats, and is tossed from wall to wall, then tries to recover,
Beats on another still, and round the circle is carried,
Tossed from hand to hand, 'till losing its onward motion,
Dizzily round it swirls, and forms the hideous Whirlpool.

High the rock-walls loom and give but a narrow outlet,
Higher still lean pines, that shut out the hope of daylight ;
And above all hangs a shadow, as if from the wings of a vulture,
Shedding o'er all below a gloom more spectral than midnight.

Up from the seething cauldron rises a curtain of vapor,
Clouds as of smoke, drift hither and thither, revealing, now hiding ;
While from the hollow depths, that hiss with the earth's central fervor,
Pour, in torrents black, its dregs of wreck and corruption.

Round sweeps the horrible maelstrom, and into its vortex slowly
Circles a broken boat, an oar, and things without number,
Striving, they shove one another, and seem to hurry, impatient
To measure the shadowy will-be, and be at rest from their torment.

Logs that have leapt the Falls and swum by the swift undercurrent,
Here are restored again, and wildly spring to the surface ;
Here like straws they are snapped, and then, as they grind together,
Chafing and splint'ring each other, wade in their deepening ruins ;

Drift from York-Harbor, Maine.

'Till, without hope, they stand on tiptoe, lips shriveled and speechless,
Seeing destruction before them that tightens its toils about them ;
Hollow the hell-hole gapes, hungrily it receives them,—
All that is left is an echoing sigh, and that is soon strangled.

IX.

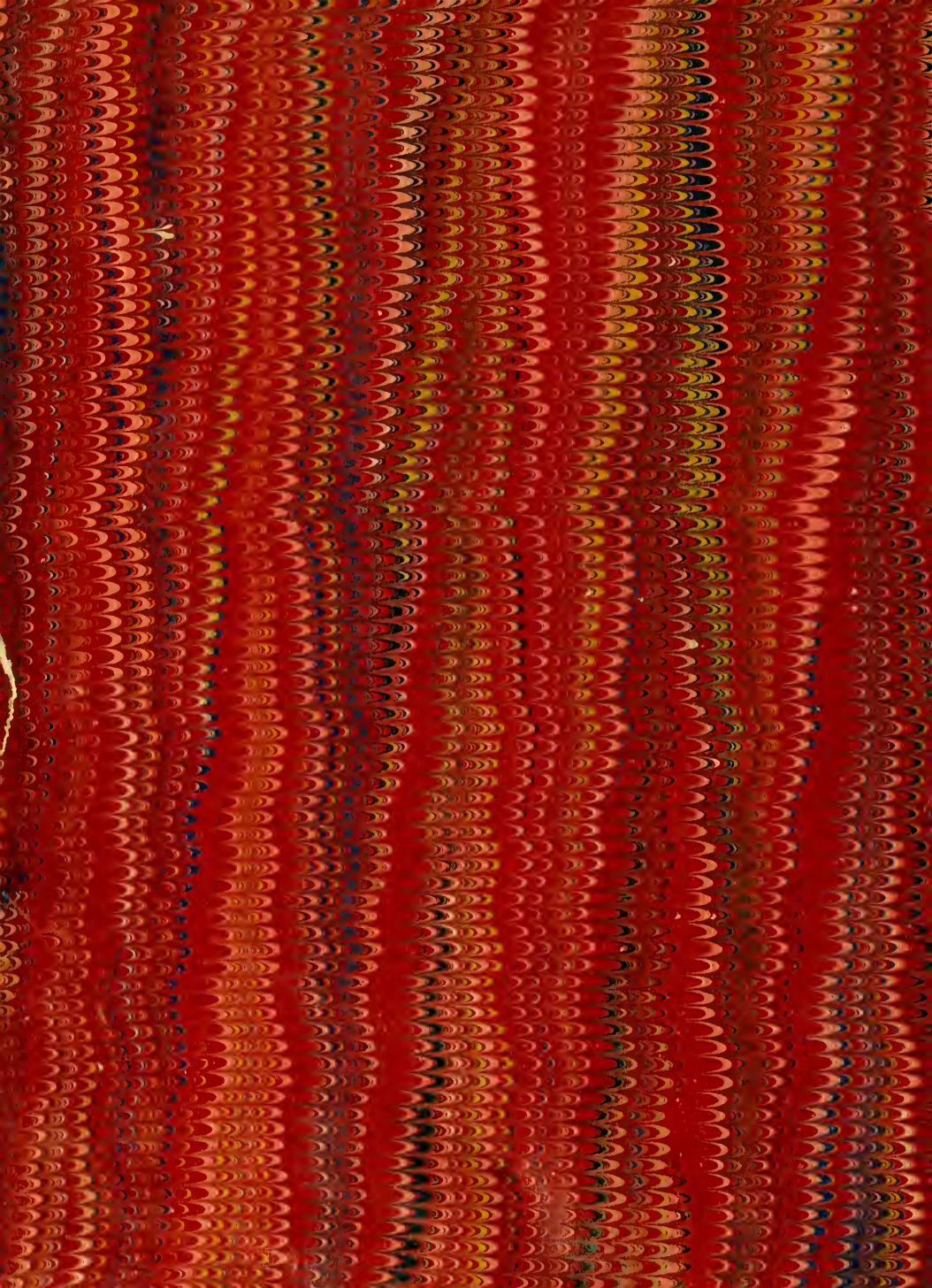
Is this the end of all?—death but a blotting forever?
Turning, a bird was beside me, and striking a delicate measure,
Low it sang,—a far-away song, as if for no listener,
Sung—'twas a broken song, and stopping, away it fluttered.

“ Seek within ! ” it sang, “ without is only reflection ;
Sinless are nature's forms, and therefore utterly soulless ;
Sin may debase thee, make thee servant of Fate and of Nature,—
Rise to thy proper height, and thou art creator of all things.

“ That alone is grand which is looked upon by the noble,
That alone is glad which eyes full of gladness discover ;
Winter is but a name for the darkness left in man's nature,
Storm but a symbol of sin in a soul that 's still unshriven.

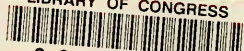
“ Be but thine own true self, as He who created hath purposed,
Then the rivers are thine, the winds, all forces of nature ;
Thine too the seasons, thine their fruits, which they wait to surrender,
Thine the years, and thine all time—everlasting and yearless ! ”







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