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Volume II., The Works of Whittier: Poems of Nature, Poems Subjective  
and Reminiscent, Religious Poems  
#13 in our series by John Greenleaf Whittier

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Title: The Frost Spirit and Others from Poems of Nature,  
Poems Subjective and Reminiscent and Religious Poems  
Volume II., The Works of Whittier

Author: John Greenleaf Whittier

Release Date: Dec, 2005 [EBook #9568]  
[Yes, we are more than one year ahead of schedule]  
[This file was first posted on October 2, 2003]

Edition: 10

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

**\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK, THE FROST SPIRIT, ETC. \*\*\***

This eBook was produced by David Widger [widger@cecomet.net]

POEMS OF NATURE

POEMS SUBJECTIVE AND REMINISCENT

RELIGIOUS POEMS

BY

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

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POEMS OF NATURE

THE FROST SPIRIT

He comes,--he comes,--the Frost Spirit comes  
You may trace his footsteps now  
On the naked woods and the blasted fields and the  
brown hill's withered brow.  
He has smitten the leaves of the gray old trees  
where their pleasant green came forth,  
And the winds, which follow wherever he goes,  
have shaken them down to earth.

He comes,--he comes,--the Frost Spirit comes!  
from the frozen Labrador,  
From the icy bridge of the Northern seas, which  
the white bear wanders o'er,  
Where the fisherman's sail is stiff with ice, and the  
luckless forms below  
In the sunless cold of the lingering night into  
marble statues grow

He comes,--he comes,--the Frost Spirit comes  
on the rushing Northern blast,  
And the dark Norwegian pines have bowed as his  
fearful breath went past.  
With an unscorched wing he has hurried on,  
where the fires of Hecla glow  
On the darkly beautiful sky above and the ancient  
ice below.

He comes,--he comes,--the Frost Spirit comes  
and the quiet lake shall feel  
The torpid touch of his glazing breath, and ring to  
the skater's heel;  
And the streams which danced on the broken  
rocks, or sang to the leaning grass,  
Shall bow again to their winter chain, and in  
mournful silence pass.  
He comes,--he comes,--the Frost Spirit comes!  
Let us meet him as we may,  
And turn with the light of the parlor-fire his evil

power away;  
And gather closer the circle round, when that  
fire-light dances high,  
And laugh at the shriek of the baffled Fiend as  
his sounding wing goes by!  
1830.

#### THE MERRIMAC.

"The Indians speak of a beautiful river, far to the south,  
which they call Merrimac."--SIEUR. DE MONTS, 1604.

Stream of my fathers! sweetly still  
The sunset rays thy valley fill;  
Poured slantwise down the long defile,  
Wave, wood, and spire beneath them smile.  
I see the winding Powow fold  
The green hill in its belt of gold,  
And following down its wavy line,  
Its sparkling waters blend with thine.  
There 's not a tree upon thy side,  
Nor rock, which thy returning tide  
As yet hath left abrupt and stark  
Above thy evening water-mark;  
No calm cove with its rocky hem,  
No isle whose emerald swells begin  
Thy broad, smooth current; not a sail  
Bowed to the freshening ocean gale;  
No small boat with its busy oars,  
Nor gray wall sloping to thy shores;  
Nor farm-house with its maple shade,  
Or rigid poplar colonnade,  
But lies distinct and full in sight,  
Beneath this gush of sunset light.  
Centuries ago, that harbor-bar,  
Stretching its length of foam afar,  
And Salisbury's beach of shining sand,  
And yonder island's wave-smoothed strand,  
Saw the adventurer's tiny sail,  
Flit, stooping from the eastern gale;  
And o'er these woods and waters broke  
The cheer from Britain's hearts of oak,  
As brightly on the voyager's eye,  
Weary of forest, sea, and sky,  
Breaking the dull continuous wood,  
The Merrimac rolled down his flood;  
Mingling that clear pellucid brook,  
Which channels vast Agiochook  
When spring-time's sun and shower unlock  
The frozen fountains of the rock,  
And more abundant waters given

From that pure lake, "The Smile of Heaven,"  
Tributes from vale and mountain-side,--  
With ocean's dark, eternal tide!

On yonder rocky cape, which braves  
The stormy challenge of the waves,  
Midst tangled vine and dwarfish wood,  
The hardy Anglo-Saxon stood,  
Planting upon the topmost crag  
The staff of England's battle-flag;  
And, while from out its heavy fold  
Saint George's crimson cross unrolled,  
Midst roll of drum and trumpet blare,  
And weapons brandishing in air,  
He gave to that lone promontory  
The sweetest name in all his story;  
Of her, the flower of Islam's daughters,  
Whose harems look on Stamboul's waters,--  
Who, when the chance of war had bound  
The Moslem chain his limbs around,  
Wreathed o'er with silk that iron chain,  
Soothed with her smiles his hours of pain,  
And fondly to her youthful slave  
A dearer gift than freedom gave.

But look! the yellow light no more  
Streams down on wave and verdant shore;  
And clearly on the calm air swells  
The twilight voice of distant bells.  
From Ocean's bosom, white and thin,  
The mists come slowly rolling in;  
Hills, woods, the river's rocky rim,  
Amidst the sea--like vapor swim,  
While yonder lonely coast-light, set  
Within its wave-washed minaret,  
Half quenched, a beamless star and pale,  
Shines dimly through its cloudy veil!

Home of my fathers!--I have stood  
Where Hudson rolled his lordly flood  
Seen sunrise rest and sunset fade  
Along his frowning Palisade;  
Looked down the Appalachian peak  
On Juniata's silver streak;  
Have seen along his valley gleam  
The Mohawk's softly winding stream;  
The level light of sunset shine  
Through broad Potomac's hem of pine;  
And autumn's rainbow-tinted banner  
Hang lightly o'er the Susquehanna;  
Yet wheresoe'er his step might be,  
Thy wandering child looked back to thee!  
Heard in his dreams thy river's sound

Of murmuring on its pebbly bound,  
The unforgotten swell and roar  
Of waves on thy familiar shore;  
And saw, amidst the curtained gloom  
And quiet of his lonely room,  
Thy sunset scenes before him pass;  
As, in Agrippa's magic glass,  
The loved and lost arose to view,  
Remembered groves in greenness grew,  
Bathed still in childhood's morning dew,  
Along whose bowers of beauty swept  
Whatever Memory's mourners wept,  
Sweet faces, which the charnel kept,  
Young, gentle eyes, which long had slept;  
And while the gazer leaned to trace,  
More near, some dear familiar face,  
He wept to find the vision flown,--  
A phantom and a dream alone!  
1841.

#### HAMPTON BEACH

The sunlight glitters keen and bright,  
Where, miles away,  
Lies stretching to my dazzled sight  
A luminous belt, a misty light,  
Beyond the dark pine bluffs and wastes of sandy gray.

The tremulous shadow of the Sea!  
Against its ground  
Of silvery light, rock, hill, and tree,  
Still as a picture, clear and free,  
With varying outline mark the coast for miles around.

On--on--we tread with loose-flung rein  
Our seaward way,  
Through dark-green fields and blossoming grain,  
Where the wild brier-rose skirts the lane,  
And bends above our heads the flowering locust spray.

Ha! like a kind hand on my brow  
Comes this fresh breeze,  
Cooling its dull and feverish glow,  
While through my being seems to flow  
The breath of a new life, the healing of the seas!

Now rest we, where this grassy mound  
His feet hath set  
In the great waters, which have bound  
His granite ankles greenly round  
With long and tangled moss, and weeds with cool spray wet.



Good-by to Pain and Care! I take  
Mine ease to-day  
Here where these sunny waters break,  
And ripples this keen breeze, I shake  
All burdens from the heart, all weary thoughts away.

I draw a freer breath, I seem  
Like all I see--  
Waves in the sun, the white-winged gleam  
Of sea-birds in the slanting beam,  
And far-off sails which flit before the south-wind free.

So when Time's veil shall fall asunder,  
The soul may know  
No fearful change, nor sudden wonder,  
Nor sink the weight of mystery under,  
But with the upward rise, and with the vastness grow.

And all we shrink from now may seem  
No new revealing;  
Familiar as our childhood's stream,  
Or pleasant memory of a dream  
The loved and cherished Past upon the new life stealing.

Serene and mild the untried light  
May have its dawning;  
And, as in summer's northern night  
The evening and the dawn unite,  
The sunset hues of Time blend with the soul's new morning.

I sit alone; in foam and spray  
Wave after wave  
Breaks on the rocks which, stern and gray,  
Shoulder the broken tide away,  
Or murmurs hoarse and strong through mossy cleft and cave.

What heed I of the dusty land  
And noisy town?  
I see the mighty deep expand  
From its white line of glimmering sand  
To where the blue of heaven on bluer waves shuts down!

In listless quietude of mind,  
I yield to all  
The change of cloud and wave and wind  
And passive on the flood reclined,  
I wander with the waves, and with them rise and fall.

But look, thou dreamer! wave and shore  
In shadow lie;  
The night-wind warns me back once more  
To where, my native hill-tops o'er,

Bends like an arch of fire the glowing sunset sky.

So then, beach, bluff, and wave, farewell!

I bear with me

No token stone nor glittering shell,

But long and oft shall Memory tell

Of this brief thoughtful hour of musing by the Sea.

1843.

#### A DREAM OF SUMMER.

Bland as the morning breath of June

The southwest breezes play;

And, through its haze, the winter noon

Seems warm as summer's day.

The snow-plumed Angel of the North

Has dropped his icy spear;

Again the mossy earth looks forth,

Again the streams gush clear.

The fox his hillside cell forsakes,

The muskrat leaves his nook,

The bluebird in the meadow brakes

Is singing with the brook.

"Bear up, O Mother Nature!" cry

Bird, breeze, and streamlet free;

"Our winter voices prophesy

Of summer days to thee!"

So, in those winters of the soul,

By bitter blasts and drear

O'erswept from Memory's frozen pole,

Will sunny days appear.

Reviving Hope and Faith, they show

The soul its living powers,

And how beneath the winter's snow

Lie germs of summer flowers!

The Night is mother of the Day,

The Winter of the Spring,

And ever upon old Decay

The greenest mosses cling.

Behind the cloud the starlight lurks,

Through showers the sunbeams fall;

For God, who loveth all His works,

Has left His hope with all!

4th 1st month, 1847.

## THE LAKESIDE

The shadows round the inland sea  
Are deepening into night;  
Slow up the slopes of Ossipee  
They chase the lessening light.  
Tired of the long day's blinding heat,  
I rest my languid eye,  
Lake of the Hills! where, cool and sweet,  
Thy sunset waters lie!

Along the sky, in wavy lines,  
O'er isle and reach and bay,  
Green-belted with eternal pines,  
The mountains stretch away.  
Below, the maple masses sleep  
Where shore with water blends,  
While midway on the tranquil deep  
The evening light descends.

So seemed it when yon hill's red crown,  
Of old, the Indian trod,  
And, through the sunset air, looked down  
Upon the Smile of God.  
To him of light and shade the laws  
No forest skeptic taught;  
Their living and eternal Cause  
His truer instinct sought.

He saw these mountains in the light  
Which now across them shines;  
This lake, in summer sunset bright,  
Walled round with sombering pines.  
God near him seemed; from earth and skies  
His loving voice he beard,  
As, face to face, in Paradise,  
Man stood before the Lord.

Thanks, O our Father! that, like him,  
Thy tender love I see,  
In radiant hill and woodland dim,  
And tinted sunset sea.  
For not in mockery dost Thou fill  
Our earth with light and grace;  
Thou hid'st no dark and cruel will  
Behind Thy smiling face!  
1849.

## AUTUMN THOUGHTS

Gone hath the Spring, with all its flowers,

And gone the Summer's pomp and show,  
And Autumn, in his leafless bowers,  
Is waiting for the Winter's snow.

I said to Earth, so cold and gray,  
"An emblem of myself thou art."  
"Not so," the Earth did seem to say,  
"For Spring shall warm my frozen heart."  
I soothe my wintry sleep with dreams  
Of warmer sun and softer rain,  
And wait to hear the sound of streams  
And songs of merry birds again.

But thou, from whom the Spring hath gone,  
For whom the flowers no longer blow,  
Who standest blighted and forlorn,  
Like Autumn waiting for the snow;

No hope is thine of sunnier hours,  
Thy Winter shall no more depart;  
No Spring revive thy wasted flowers,  
Nor Summer warm thy frozen heart.  
1849.

#### ON RECEIVING AN EAGLE'S QUILL FROM LAKE SUPERIOR.

All day the darkness and the cold  
Upon my heart have lain,  
Like shadows on the winter sky,  
Like frost upon the pane;

But now my torpid fancy wakes,  
And, on thy Eagle's plume,  
Rides forth, like Sindbad on his bird,  
Or witch upon her broom!

Below me roar the rocking pines,  
Before me spreads the lake  
Whose long and solemn-sounding waves  
Against the sunset break.

I hear the wild Rice-Eater thresh  
The grain he has not sown;  
I see, with flashing scythe of fire,  
The prairie harvest mown!

I hear the far-off voyager's horn;  
I see the Yankee's trail,--  
His foot on every mountain-pass,  
On every stream his sail.

By forest, lake, and waterfall,  
I see his pedler show;  
The mighty mingling with the mean,  
The lofty with the low.

He's whittling by St. Mary's Falls,  
Upon his loaded wain;  
He's measuring o'er the Pictured Rocks,  
With eager eyes of gain.

I hear the mattock in the mine,  
The axe-stroke in the dell,  
The clamor from the Indian lodge,  
The Jesuit chapel bell!

I see the swarthy trappers come  
From Mississippi's springs;  
And war-chiefs with their painted brows,  
And crests of eagle wings.

Behind the scared squaw's birch canoe,  
The steamer smokes and raves;  
And city lots are staked for sale  
Above old Indian graves.

I hear the tread of pioneers  
Of nations yet to be;  
The first low wash of waves, where soon  
Shall roll a human sea.

The rudiments of empire here  
Are plastic yet and warm;  
The chaos of a mighty world  
Is rounding into form!

Each rude and jostling fragment soon  
Its fitting place shall find,--  
The raw material of a State,  
Its muscle and its mind!

And, westering still, the star which leads  
The New World in its train  
Has tipped with fire the icy spears  
Of many a mountain chain.

The snowy cones of Oregon  
Are kindling on its way;  
And California's golden sands  
Gleam brighter in its ray!

Then blessings on thy eagle quill,  
As, wandering far and wide,  
I thank thee for this twilight dream

And Fancy's airy ride!

Yet, welcomer than regal plumes,  
Which Western trappers find,  
Thy free and pleasant thoughts, chance sown,  
Like feathers on the wind.

Thy symbol be the mountain-bird,  
Whose glistening quill I hold;  
Thy home the ample air of hope,  
And memory's sunset gold!

In thee, let joy with duty join,  
And strength unite with love,  
The eagle's pinions folding round  
The warm heart of the dove!

So, when in darkness sleeps the vale  
Where still the blind bird clings  
The sunshine of the upper sky  
Shall glitter on thy wings!  
1849.

APRIL.

"The spring comes slowly up this way."  
Christabel.

'T is the noon of the spring-time, yet never a bird  
In the wind-shaken elm or the maple is heard;  
For green meadow-grasses wide levels of snow,  
And blowing of drifts where the crocus should blow;  
Where wind-flower and violet, amber and white,  
On south-sloping brooksides should smile in the light,  
O'er the cold winter-beds of their late-waking roots  
The frosty flake eddies, the ice-crystal shoots;  
And, longing for light, under wind-driven heaps,  
Round the boles of the pine-wood the ground-laurel creeps,  
Unkissed of the sunshine, unbaptized of showers,  
With buds scarcely swelled, which should burst into flowers  
We wait for thy coming, sweet wind of the south!  
For the touch of thy light wings, the kiss of thy mouth;  
For the yearly evangel thou bearest from God,  
Resurrection and life to the graves of the sod!  
Up our long river-valley, for days, have not ceased  
The wail and the shriek of the bitter northeast,  
Raw and chill, as if winnowed through ices and snow,  
All the way from the land of the wild Esquimau,  
Until all our dreams of the land of the blest,  
Like that red hunter's, turn to the sunny southwest.  
O soul of the spring-time, its light and its breath,

Bring warmth to this coldness, bring life to this death;  
Renew the great miracle; let us behold  
The stone from the mouth of the sepulchre rolled,  
And Nature, like Lazarus, rise, as of old!  
Let our faith, which in darkness and coldness has lain,  
Revive with the warmth and the brightness again,  
And in blooming of flower and budding of tree  
The symbols and types of our destiny see;  
The life of the spring-time, the life of the whole,  
And, as sun to the sleeping earth, love to the soul!  
1852.

## PICTURES

I.  
Light, warmth, and sprouting greenness, and o'er all  
Blue, stainless, steel-bright ether, raining down  
Tranquillity upon the deep-hushed town,  
The freshening meadows, and the hillsides brown;  
Voice of the west-wind from the hills of pine,  
And the brimmed river from its distant fall,  
Low hum of bees, and joyous interlude  
Of bird-songs in the streamlet-skirting wood,--  
Heralds and prophecies of sound and sight,  
Blessed forerunners of the warmth and light,  
Attendant angels to the house of prayer,  
With reverent footsteps keeping pace with mine,--  
Once more, through God's great love, with you I share  
A morn of resurrection sweet and fair  
As that which saw, of old, in Palestine,  
Immortal Love uprising in fresh bloom  
From the dark night and winter of the tomb!  
2d, 5th mo., 1852.

II.  
White with its sun-bleached dust, the pathway winds  
Before me; dust is on the shrunken grass,  
And on the trees beneath whose boughs I pass;  
Frail screen against the Hunter of the sky,  
Who, glaring on me with his lidless eye,  
While mounting with his dog-star high and higher  
Ambushed in light intolerable, unbinds  
The burnished quiver of his shafts of fire.  
Between me and the hot fields of his South  
A tremulous glow, as from a furnace-mouth,  
Glimmers and swims before my dazzled sight,  
As if the burning arrows of his ire  
Broke as they fell, and shattered into light;  
Yet on my cheek I feel the western wind,  
And hear it telling to the orchard trees,  
And to the faint and flower-forsaken bees,

Tales of fair meadows, green with constant streams,  
And mountains rising blue and cool behind,  
Where in moist dells the purple orchis gleams,  
And starred with white the virgin's bower is twined.  
So the o'erwearied pilgrim, as he fares  
Along life's summer waste, at times is fanned,  
Even at noontide, by the cool, sweet airs  
Of a serener and a holier land,  
Fresh as the morn, and as the dewfall bland.  
Breath of the blessed Heaven for which we pray,  
Blow from the eternal hills! make glad our earthly way!  
8th mo., 1852.

## SUMMER BY THE LAKESIDE

### LAKE WINNIPESAUKEE.

#### I. NOON.

White clouds, whose shadows haunt the deep,  
Light mists, whose soft embraces keep  
The sunshine on the hills asleep!

O isles of calm! O dark, still wood!  
And stiller skies that overbrood  
Your rest with deeper quietude!

O shapes and hues, dim beckoning, through  
Yon mountain gaps, my longing view  
Beyond the purple and the blue,

To stiller sea and greener land,  
And softer lights and airs more bland,  
And skies,--the hollow of God's hand!

Transfused through you, O mountain friends!  
With mine your solemn spirit blends,  
And life no more hath separate ends.

I read each misty mountain sign,  
I know the voice of wave and pine,  
And I am yours, and ye are mine.

Life's burdens fall, its discords cease,  
I lapse into the glad release  
Of Nature's own exceeding peace.

O welcome calm of heart and mind!  
As falls yon fir-tree's loosened rind  
To leave a tenderer growth behind,

So fall the weary years away;



A child again, my head I lay  
Upon the lap of this sweet day.

This western wind hath Lethean powers,  
Yon noonday cloud nepenthe showers,  
The lake is white with lotus-flowers!

Even Duty's voice is faint and low,  
And slumberous Conscience, waking slow,  
Forgets her blotted scroll to show.

The Shadow which pursues us all,  
Whose ever-nearing steps appall,  
Whose voice we hear behind us call,--

That Shadow blends with mountain gray,  
It speaks but what the light waves say,--  
Death walks apart from Fear to-day!

Rocked on her breast, these pines and I  
Alike on Nature's love rely;  
And equal seems to live or die.

Assured that He whose presence fills  
With light the spaces of these hills  
No evil to His creatures wills,

The simple faith remains, that He  
Will do, whatever that may be,  
The best alike for man and tree.

What mosses over one shall grow,  
What light and life the other know,  
Unanxious, leaving Him to show.

## II. EVENING.

Yon mountain's side is black with night,  
While, broad-orbed, o'er its gleaming crown  
The moon, slow-rounding into sight,  
On the hushed inland sea looks down.

How start to light the clustering isles,  
Each silver-hemmed! How sharply show  
The shadows of their rocky piles,  
And tree-tops in the wave below!

How far and strange the mountains seem,  
Dim-looming through the pale, still light  
The vague, vast grouping of a dream,  
They stretch into the solemn night.

Beneath, lake, wood, and peopled vale,

Hushed by that presence grand and grave,  
Are silent, save the cricket's wail,  
And low response of leaf and wave.

Fair scenes! whereto the Day and Night  
Make rival love, I leave ye soon,  
What time before the eastern light  
The pale ghost of the setting moon

Shall hide behind yon rocky spines,  
And the young archer, Morn, shall break  
His arrows on the mountain pines,  
And, golden-sandalled, walk the lake!

Farewell! around this smiling bay  
Gay-hearted Health, and Life in bloom,  
With lighter steps than mine, may stray  
In radiant summers yet to come.

But none shall more regretful leave  
These waters and these hills than I  
Or, distant, fonder dream how e'er  
Or dawn is painting wave and sky;

How rising moons shine sad and mild  
On wooded isle and silvering bay;  
Or setting suns beyond the piled  
And purple mountains lead the day;

Nor laughing girl, nor bearding boy,  
Nor full-pulsed manhood, lingering here,  
Shall add, to life's abounding joy,  
The charmed repose to suffering dear.

Still waits kind Nature to impart  
Her choicest gifts to such as gain  
An entrance to her loving heart  
Through the sharp discipline of pain.

Forever from the Hand that takes  
One blessing from us others fall;  
And, soon or late, our Father makes  
His perfect recompense to all!

Oh, watched by Silence and the Night,  
And folded in the strong embrace  
Of the great mountains, with the light  
Of the sweet heavens upon thy face,

Lake of the Northland! keep thy dower  
Of beauty still, and while above  
Thy solemn mountains speak of power,  
Be thou the mirror of God's love.

1853.

#### THE FRUIT-GIFT.

Last night, just as the tints of autumn's sky  
Of sunset faded from our hills and streams,  
I sat, vague listening, lapped in twilight dreams,  
To the leaf's rustle, and the cricket's cry.

Then, like that basket, flush with summer fruit,  
Dropped by the angels at the Prophet's foot,  
Came, unannounced, a gift of clustered sweetness,  
Full-orbed, and glowing with the prisoned beams  
Of summery suns, and rounded to completeness  
By kisses of the south-wind and the dew.  
Thrilled with a glad surprise, methought I knew  
The pleasure of the homeward-turning Jew,  
When Eshcol's clusters on his shoulders lay,  
Dropping their sweetness on his desert way.

I said, "This fruit beseems no world of sin.  
Its parent vine, rooted in Paradise,  
O'ercrept the wall, and never paid the price  
Of the great mischief,--an ambrosial tree,  
Eden's exotic, somehow smuggled in,  
To keep the thorns and thistles company."  
Perchance our frail, sad mother plucked in haste  
A single vine-slip as she passed the gate,  
Where the dread sword alternate paled and burned,  
And the stern angel, pitying her fate,  
Forgave the lovely trespasser, and turned  
Aside his face of fire; and thus the waste  
And fallen world hath yet its annual taste  
Of primal good, to prove of sin the cost,  
And show by one gleaned ear the mighty harvest lost.  
1854.

#### FLOWERS IN WINTER

##### PAINTED UPON A PORTE LIVRE.

How strange to greet, this frosty morn,  
In graceful counterfeit of flowers,  
These children of the meadows, born  
Of sunshine and of showers!

How well the conscious wood retains  
The pictures of its flower-sown home,  
The lights and shades, the purple stains,

And golden hues of bloom!

It was a happy thought to bring  
To the dark season's frost and rime  
This painted memory of spring,  
This dream of summer-time.

Our hearts are lighter for its sake,  
Our fancy's age renews its youth,  
And dim-remembered fictions take  
The guise of--present truth.

A wizard of the Merrimac,--  
So old ancestral legends say,  
Could call green leaf and blossom back  
To frosted stem and spray.

The dry logs of the cottage wall,  
Beneath his touch, put out their leaves  
The clay-bound swallow, at his call,  
Played round the icy eaves.

The settler saw his oaken flail  
Take bud, and bloom before his eyes;  
From frozen pools he saw the pale,  
Sweet summer lilies rise.

To their old homes, by man profaned,  
Came the sad dryads, exiled long,  
And through their leafy tongues complained  
Of household use and wrong.

The beechen platter sprouted wild,  
The pipkin wore its old-time green  
The cradle o'er the sleeping child  
Became a leafy screen.

Haply our gentle friend hath met,  
While wandering in her sylvan quest,  
Haunting his native woodlands yet,  
That Druid of the West;

And, while the dew on leaf and flower  
Glistened in moonlight clear and still,  
Learned the dusk wizard's spell of power,  
And caught his trick of skill.

But welcome, be it new or old,  
The gift which makes the day more bright,  
And paints, upon the ground of cold  
And darkness, warmth and light.

Without is neither gold nor green;

Within, for birds, the birch-logs sing;  
Yet, summer-like, we sit between  
The autumn and the spring.

The one, with bridal blush of rose,  
And sweetest breath of woodland balm,  
And one whose matron lips unclosed  
In smiles of saintly calm.

Fill soft and deep, O winter snow!  
The sweet azalea's oaken dells,  
And hide the bank where roses blow,  
And swing the azure bells!

O'erlay the amber violet's leaves,  
The purple aster's brookside home,  
Guard all the flowers her pencil gives  
A life beyond their bloom.

And she, when spring comes round again,  
By greening slope and singing flood  
Shall wander, seeking, not in vain,  
Her darlings of the wood.  
1855.

## THE MAYFLOWERS

The trailing arbutus, or mayflower, grows abundantly in the vicinity of Plymouth, and was the first flower that greeted the Pilgrims after their fearful winter. The name mayflower was familiar in England, as the application of it to the historic vessel shows, but it was applied by the English, and still is, to the hawthorn. Its use in New England in connection with the Pilgrims dates from a very early day, some claiming that the first Pilgrims so used it, in affectionate memory of the vessel and its English flower association.

Sad Mayflower! watched by winter stars,  
And nursed by winter gales,  
With petals of the sleeted spars,  
And leaves of frozen sails!

What had she in those dreary hours,  
Within her ice-rimmed bay,  
In common with the wild-wood flowers,  
The first sweet smiles of May?

Yet, "God be praised!" the Pilgrim said,  
Who saw the blossoms peer  
Above the brown leaves, dry and dead,  
"Behold our Mayflower here!"

"God wills it: here our rest shall be,  
Our years of wandering o'er;  
For us the Mayflower of the sea  
Shall spread her sails no more."

O sacred flowers of faith and hope,  
As sweetly now as then  
Ye bloom on many a birchen slope,  
In many a pine-dark glen.

Behind the sea-wall's rugged length,  
Unchanged, your leaves unfold,  
Like love behind the manly strength  
Of the brave hearts of old.

So live the fathers in their sons,  
Their sturdy faith be ours,  
And ours the love that overruns  
Its rocky strength with flowers!

The Pilgrim's wild and wintry day  
Its shadow round us draws;  
The Mayflower of his stormy bay,  
Our Freedom's struggling cause.

But warmer suns ere long shall bring  
To life the frozen sod;  
And through dead leaves of hope shall spring  
Afresh the flowers of God!  
1856.

#### THE LAST WALK IN AUTUMN.

I.  
O'er the bare woods, whose outstretched hands  
Plead with the leaden heavens in vain,  
I see, beyond the valley lands,  
The sea's long level dim with rain.  
Around me all things, stark and dumb,  
Seem praying for the snows to come,  
And, for the summer bloom and greenness gone,  
With winter's sunset lights and dazzling morn atone.

II.  
Along the river's summer walk,  
The withered tufts of asters nod;  
And trembles on its arid stalk  
The boar plume of the golden-rod.  
And on a ground of sombre fir,  
And azure-studded juniper,

The silver birch its buds of purple shows,  
And scarlet berries tell where bloomed the sweet wild-rose!

III.

With mingled sound of horns and bells,  
A far-heard clang, the wild geese fly,  
Storm-sent, from Arctic moors and fells,  
Like a great arrow through the sky,  
Two dusky lines converged in one,  
Chasing the southward-flying sun;  
While the brave snow-bird and the hardy jay  
Call to them from the pines, as if to bid them stay.

IV.

I passed this way a year ago  
The wind blew south; the noon of day  
Was warm as June's; and save that snow  
Flecked the low mountains far away,  
And that the vernal-seeming breeze  
Mocked faded grass and leafless trees,  
I might have dreamed of summer as I lay,  
Watching the fallen leaves with the soft wind at play.

V.

Since then, the winter blasts have piled  
The white pagodas of the snow  
On these rough slopes, and, strong and wild,  
Yon river, in its overflow  
Of spring-time rain and sun, set free,  
Crashed with its ices to the sea;  
And over these gray fields, then green and gold,  
The summer corn has waved, the thunder's organ rolled.

VI.

Rich gift of God! A year of time  
What pomp of rise and shut of day,  
What hues wherewith our Northern clime  
Makes autumn's dropping woodlands gay,  
What airs outblown from ferny dells,  
And clover-bloom and sweetbrier smells,  
What songs of brooks and birds, what fruits and flowers,  
Green woods and moonlit snows, have in its round been ours!

VII.

I know not how, in other lands,  
The changing seasons come and go;  
What splendors fall on Syrian sands,  
What purple lights on Alpine snow!  
Nor how the pomp of sunrise waits  
On Venice at her watery gates;  
A dream alone to me is Arno's vale,  
And the Alhambra's halls are but a traveller's tale.

VIII.

Yet, on life's current, he who drifts  
Is one with him who rows or sails  
And he who wanders widest lifts  
No more of beauty's jealous veils  
Than he who from his doorway sees  
The miracle of flowers and trees,  
Feels the warm Orient in the noontide air,  
And from cloud minarets hears the sunset call to prayer!

IX.

The eye may well be glad that looks  
Where Pharpar's fountains rise and fall;  
But he who sees his native brooks  
Laugh in the sun, has seen them all.  
The marble palaces of Ind  
Rise round him in the snow and wind;  
From his lone sweetbrier Persian Hafiz smiles,  
And Rome's cathedral awe is in his woodland aisles.

X.

And thus it is my fancy blends  
The near at hand and far and rare;  
And while the same horizon bends  
Above the silver-sprinkled hair  
Which flashed the light of morning skies  
On childhood's wonder-lifted eyes,  
Within its round of sea and sky and field,  
Earth wheels with all her zones, the Kosmos stands revealed.

XI.

And thus the sick man on his bed,  
The toiler to his task-work bound,  
Behold their prison-walls outspread,  
Their clipped horizon widen round!  
While freedom-giving fancy waits,  
Like Peter's angel at the gates,  
The power is theirs to baffle care and pain,  
To bring the lost world back, and make it theirs again!

XII.

What lack of goodly company,  
When masters of the ancient lyre  
Obey my call, and trace for me  
Their words of mingled tears and fire!  
I talk with Bacon, grave and wise,  
I read the world with Pascal's eyes;  
And priest and sage, with solemn brows austere,  
And poets, garland-bound, the Lords of Thought, draw near.

XIII.

Methinks, O friend, I hear thee say,  
"In vain the human heart we mock;



Bring living guests who love the day,  
Not ghosts who fly at crow of cock!  
The herbs we share with flesh and blood  
Are better than ambrosial food  
With laurelled shades." I grant it, nothing loath,  
But doubly blest is he who can partake of both.

XIV.

He who might Plato's banquet grace,  
Have I not seen before me sit,  
And watched his puritanic face,  
With more than Eastern wisdom lit?  
Shrewd mystic! who, upon the back  
Of his Poor Richard's Almanac,  
Writing the Sufi's song, the Gentoo's dream,  
Links Manu's age of thought to Fulton's age of steam!

XV.

Here too, of answering love secure,  
Have I not welcomed to my hearth  
The gentle pilgrim troubadour,  
Whose songs have girdled half the earth;  
Whose pages, like the magic mat  
Whereon the Eastern lover sat,  
Have borne me over Rhine-land's purple vines,  
And Nubia's tawny sands, and Phrygia's mountain pines!

XVI.

And he, who to the lettered wealth  
Of ages adds the lore unpriced,  
The wisdom and the moral health,  
The ethics of the school of Christ;  
The statesman to his holy trust,  
As the Athenian archon, just,  
Struck down, exiled like him for truth alone,  
Has he not graced my home with beauty all his own?

XVII.

What greetings smile, what farewells wave,  
What loved ones enter and depart!  
The good, the beautiful, the brave,  
The Heaven-lent treasures of the heart!  
How conscious seems the frozen sod  
And beechen slope whereon they trod  
The oak-leaves rustle, and the dry grass bends  
Beneath the shadowy feet of lost or absent friends.

XVIII.

Then ask not why to these bleak hills  
I cling, as clings the tufted moss,  
To bear the winter's lingering chills,  
The mocking spring's perpetual loss.  
I dream of lands where summer smiles,

And soft winds blow from spicy isles,  
But scarce would Ceylon's breath of flowers be sweet,  
Could I not feel thy soil, New England, at my feet!

XIX.

At times I long for gentler skies,  
And bathe in dreams of softer air,  
But homesick tears would fill the eyes  
That saw the Cross without the Bear.  
The pine must whisper to the palm,  
The north-wind break the tropic calm;  
And with the dreamy languor of the Line,  
The North's keen virtue blend, and strength to beauty join.

XX.

Better to stem with heart and hand  
The roaring tide of life, than lie,  
Unmindful, on its flowery strand,  
Of God's occasions drifting by  
Better with naked nerve to bear  
The needles of this goading air,  
Than, in the lap of sensual ease, forego  
The godlike power to do, the godlike aim to know.

XXI.

Home of my heart! to me more fair  
Than gay Versailles or Windsor's halls,  
The painted, shingly town-house where  
The freeman's vote for Freedom falls!  
The simple roof where prayer is made,  
Than Gothic groin and colonnade;  
The living temple of the heart of man,  
Than Rome's sky-mocking vault, or many-spired Milan!

XXII.

More dear thy equal village schools,  
Where rich and poor the Bible read,  
Than classic halls where Priestcraft rules,  
And Learning wears the chains of Creed;  
Thy glad Thanksgiving, gathering in  
The scattered sheaves of home and kin,  
Than the mad license ushering Lenten pains,  
Or holidays of slaves who laugh and dance in chains.

XXIII.

And sweet homes nestle in these dales,  
And perch along these wooded swells;  
And, blest beyond Arcadian vales,  
They hear the sound of Sabbath bells!  
Here dwells no perfect man sublime,  
Nor woman winged before her time,  
But with the faults and follies of the race,  
Old home-bred virtues hold their not unhonored place.

XXIV.

Here manhood struggles for the sake  
Of mother, sister, daughter, wife,  
The graces and the loves which make  
The music of the march of life;  
And woman, in her daily round  
Of duty, walks on holy ground.  
No unpaid menial tills the soil, nor here  
Is the bad lesson learned at human rights to sneer.

XXV.

Then let the icy north-wind blow  
The trumpets of the coming storm,  
To arrowy sleet and blinding snow  
Yon slanting lines of rain transform.  
Young hearts shall hail the drifted cold,  
As gayly as I did of old;  
And I, who watch them through the frosty pane,  
Unenvious, live in them my boyhood o'er again.

XXVI.

And I will trust that He who heeds  
The life that hides in mead and wold,  
Who hangs yon alder's crimson beads,  
And stains these mosses green and gold,  
Will still, as He hath done, incline  
His gracious care to me and mine;  
Grant what we ask aright, from wrong debar,  
And, as the earth grows dark, make brighter every star!

XXVII.

I have not seen, I may not see,  
My hopes for man take form in fact,  
But God will give the victory  
In due time; in that faith I act.  
And lie who sees the future sure,  
The baffling present may endure,  
And bless, meanwhile, the unseen Hand that leads  
The heart's desires beyond the halting step of deeds.

XXVIII.

And thou, my song, I send thee forth,  
Where harsher songs of mine have flown;  
Go, find a place at home and hearth  
Where'er thy singer's name is known;  
Revive for him the kindly thought  
Of friends; and they who love him not,  
Touched by some strain of thine, perchance may take  
The hand he proffers all, and thank him for thy sake.  
1857.

## THE FIRST FLOWERS

For ages on our river borders,  
These tassels in their tawny bloom,  
And willowy studs of downy silver,  
Have prophesied of Spring to come.

For ages have the unbound waters  
Smiled on them from their pebbly hem,  
And the clear carol of the robin  
And song of bluebird welcomed them.

But never yet from smiling river,  
Or song of early bird, have they  
Been greeted with a gladder welcome  
Than whispers from my heart to-day.

They break the spell of cold and darkness,  
The weary watch of sleepless pain;  
And from my heart, as from the river,  
The ice of winter melts again.

Thanks, Mary! for this wild-wood token  
Of Freya's footsteps drawing near;  
Almost, as in the rune of Asgard,  
The growing of the grass I hear.

It is as if the pine-trees called me  
From ceiled room and silent books,  
To see the dance of woodland shadows,  
And hear the song of April brooks!

As in the old Teutonic ballad  
Of Odenwald live bird and tree,  
Together live in bloom and music,  
I blend in song thy flowers and thee.

Earth's rocky tablets bear forever  
The dint of rain and small bird's track  
Who knows but that my idle verses  
May leave some trace by Merrimac!

The bird that trod the mellow layers  
Of the young earth is sought in vain;  
The cloud is gone that wove the sandstone,  
From God's design, with threads of rain!

So, when this fluid age we live in  
Shall stiffen round my careless rhyme,  
Who made the vagrant tracks may puzzle  
The savants of the coming time;

And, following out their dim suggestions,  
Some idly-curious hand may draw  
My doubtful portraiture, as Cuvier  
Drew fish and bird from fin and claw.

And maidens in the far-off twilights,  
Singing my words to breeze and stream,  
Shall wonder if the old-time Mary  
Were real, or the rhymers' dream!  
1st 3d mo., 1857.

#### THE OLD BURYING-GROUND.

Our vales are sweet with fern and rose,  
Our hills are maple-crowned;  
But not from them our fathers chose  
The village burying-ground.

The dreariest spot in all the land  
To Death they set apart;  
With scanty grace from Nature's hand,  
And none from that of Art.

A winding wall of mossy stone,  
Frost-flung and broken, lines  
A lonesome acre thinly grown  
With grass and wandering vines.

Without the wall a birch-tree shows  
Its drooped and tasselled head;  
Within, a stag-horned sumach grows,  
Fern-leafed, with spikes of red.

There, sheep that graze the neighboring plain  
Like white ghosts come and go,  
The farm-horse drags his fetlock chain,  
The cow-bell tinkles slow.

Low moans the river from its bed,  
The distant pines reply;  
Like mourners shrinking from the dead,  
They stand apart and sigh.

Unshaded smites the summer sun,  
Unchecked the winter blast;  
The school-girl learns the place to shun,  
With glances backward cast.

For thus our fathers testified,  
That he might read who ran,  
The emptiness of human pride,

The nothingness of man.

They dared not plant the grave with flowers,  
Nor dress the funeral sod,  
Where, with a love as deep as ours,  
They left their dead with God.

The hard and thorny path they kept  
From beauty turned aside;  
Nor missed they over those who slept  
The grace to life denied.

Yet still the wilding flowers would blow,  
The golden leaves would fall,  
The seasons come, the seasons go,  
And God be good to all.

Above the graves the' blackberry hung  
In bloom and green its wreath,  
And harebells swung as if they rung  
The chimes of peace beneath.

The beauty Nature loves to share,  
The gifts she hath for all,  
The common light, the common air,  
O'ercrept the graveyard's wall.

It knew the glow of eventide,  
The sunrise and the noon,  
And glorified and sanctified  
It slept beneath the moon.

With flowers or snow-flakes for its sod,  
Around the seasons ran,  
And evermore the love of God  
Rebuked the fear of man.

We dwell with fears on either hand,  
Within a daily strife,  
And spectral problems waiting stand  
Before the gates of life.

The doubts we vainly seek to solve,  
The truths we know, are one;  
The known and nameless stars revolve  
Around the Central Sun.

And if we reap as we have sown,  
And take the dole we deal,  
The law of pain is love alone,  
The wounding is to heal.

Unharm'd from change to change we glide,

We fall as in our dreams;  
The far-off terror at our side  
A smiling angel seems.

Secure on God's all-tender heart  
Alike rest great and small;  
Why fear to lose our little part,  
When He is pledged for all?

O fearful heart and troubled brain  
Take hope and strength from this,--  
That Nature never hints in vain,  
Nor prophesies amiss.

Her wild birds sing the same sweet stave,  
Her lights and airs are given  
Alike to playground and the grave;  
And over both is Heaven.  
1858

#### THE PALM-TREE.

Is it the palm, the cocoa-palm,  
On the Indian Sea, by the isles of balm?  
Or is it a ship in the breezeless calm?

A ship whose keel is of palm beneath,  
Whose ribs of palm have a palm-bark sheath,  
And a rudder of palm it steereth with.

Branches of palm are its spars and rails,  
Fibres of palm are its woven sails,  
And the rope is of palm that idly trails!

What does the good ship bear so well?  
The cocoa-nut with its stony shell,  
And the milky sap of its inner cell.

What are its jars, so smooth and fine,  
But hollowed nuts, filled with oil and wine,  
And the cabbage that ripens under the Line?

Who smokes his nargileh, cool and calm?  
The master, whose cunning and skill could charm  
Cargo and ship from the bounteous palm.

In the cabin he sits on a palm-mat soft,  
From a beaker of palm his drink is quaffed,  
And a palm-thatch shields from the sun aloft!

His dress is woven of palmy strands,

And he holds a palm-leaf scroll in his hands,  
Traced with the Prophet's wise commands!

The turban folded about his head  
Was daintily wrought of the palm-leaf braid,  
And the fan that cools him of palm was made.

Of threads of palm was the carpet spun  
Whereon he kneels when the day is done,  
And the foreheads of Islam are bowed as one!

To him the palm is a gift divine,  
Wherein all uses of man combine,--  
House, and raiment, and food, and wine!

And, in the hour of his great release,  
His need of the palm shall only cease  
With the shroud wherein he lieth in peace.

"Allah il Allah!" he sings his psalm,  
On the Indian Sea, by the isles of balm;  
"Thanks to Allah who gives the palm!"  
1858.

#### THE RIVER PATH.

No bird-song floated down the hill,  
The tangled bank below was still;

No rustle from the birchen stem,  
No ripple from the water's hem.

The dusk of twilight round us grew,  
We felt the falling of the dew;

For, from us, ere the day was done,  
The wooded hills shut out the sun.

But on the river's farther side  
We saw the hill-tops glorified,--

A tender glow, exceeding fair,  
A dream of day without its glare.

With us the damp, the chill, the gloom  
With them the sunset's rosy bloom;

While dark, through willowy vistas seen,  
The river rolled in shade between.

From out the darkness where we trod,



We gazed upon those bills of God,

Whose light seemed not of moon or sun.

We spake not, but our thought was one.

We paused, as if from that bright shore

Beckoned our dear ones gone before;

And stilled our beating hearts to hear

The voices lost to mortal ear!

Sudden our pathway turned from night;

The hills swung open to the light;

Through their green gates the sunshine showed,

A long, slant splendor downward flowed.

Down glade and glen and bank it rolled;

It bridged the shaded stream with gold;

And, borne on piers of mist, allied

The shadowy with the sunlit side!

"So," prayed we, "when our feet draw near

The river dark, with mortal fear,

"And the night cometh chill with dew,

O Father! let Thy light break through!

"So let the hills of doubt divide,

So bridge with faith the sunless tide!

"So let the eyes that fail on earth

On Thy eternal hills look forth;

"And in Thy beckoning angels know

The dear ones whom we loved below!"

1880.

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By John Greenleaf Whittier

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