

Poems From Battle Pieces

THE PORTENT

1859

Hanging from the beam,
 Slowly swaying (such the law),
Gaunt the shadow on your green,
 Shenandoah!
The cut is on the crown
(Lo, John Brown),
And the stabs shall heal no more.

Hidden in the cap
 Is the anguish none can draw;
So your future veils its face,
 Shenandoah!
But the streaming beard is shown
(Weird John Brown),
The meteor of the war.

FROM THE CONFLICT OF CONVICTIONS

1860-1

The Ancient of Days forever is young,
Forever the scheme of Nature thrives;
I know a wind in purpose strong--
It spins against the way it drives.
What if the gulfs their slimed foundations
bare?
So deep must the stones be hurled
Whereon the throes of ages rear
The final empire and the happier world.

Power unanointed may come--
Dominion (unsought by the free)
And the Iron Dome,
Stronger for stress and strain,
Fling her huge shadow athwart the main;
But the Founders' dream shall flee.
Age after age has been,
(From man's changeless heart their way they
win);
And death be busy with all who strive--
Death, with silent negative.

Yea and Nay--

Each hath his say;

But God He keeps the middle way.

None was by

When He spread the sky;

Wisdom is vain, and prophecy.

THE MARCH INTO VIRGINIA

Ending in the First Manassas

July, 1861

Did all the lets and bars appear

To every just or larger end,

Whence should come the trust and cheer?

Youth must its ignorant impulse lend--

Age finds place in the rear.

All wars are boyish, and are fought by boys,

The champions and enthusiasts of the state:

Turbid ardors and vain joys

Not barrenly abate--

Stimulants to the power mature,

Preparatives of fate.

Who here forecasteth the event?

What heart but spurns at precedent

And warnings of the wise,

Contemned foreclosures of surprise?

The banners play, the bugles call,

The air is blue and prodigal.

No berrying party, pleasure-wooded,

No picnic party in the May,

Ever went less loth than they

Into that leafy neighborhood.

In Bacchic glee they file toward Fate,
Moloch's uninitiate;
Expectancy, and glad surmise
Of battle's unknown mysteries.
All they feel is this: 't is glory,
A rapture sharp, though transitory,
Yet lasting in belaureled story.
So they gayly go to fight,
Chatting left and laughing right.

But some who this blithe mood present,
As on in lightsome files they fare,
Shall die experienced ere three days are
spent--

Perish, enlightened by the vollied glare;
Or shame survive, and, like to adamant,
The throe of Second Manassas share.

BALL'S BLUFF

A Reverie

October, 1861

One noonday, at my window in the town,

I saw a sight--saddest that eyes can see--

Young soldiers marching lustily

Unto the wars,

With fifes, and flags in mottoed pageantry;

While all the porches, walks, and doors

Were rich with ladies cheering royally.

They moved like Juny morning on the wave,

Their hearts were fresh as clover in its prime

(It was the breezy summer time),

Life throbbed so strong,

How should they dream that Death in a rosy

clime

Would come to thin their shining throng?

Youth feels immortal, like the gods sublime.

Weeks passed; and at my window, leaving

bed,

By night I mused, of easeful sleep bereft,

On those 'brave boys (Ah War! thy theft);

Some marching feet

Found pause at last by cliffs Potomac cleft;

Wakeful I mused, while in the street

Far footfalls died away till none were left.

THE STONE FLEET

An Old Sailor's Lament

December, 1861

I have a feeling for those ships,
Each worn and ancient one,
With great bluff bows, and broad in the beam:
Ay, it was unkindly done.
But so they serve the Obsolete--
Even so, Stone Fleet!

You'll say I'm doting; do you think
I scudded round the Horn in one--
The Tenedos, a glorious
Good old craft as ever run--
Sunk (how all unmeet!)
With the Old Stone Fleet.

An India ship of fame was she,
Spices and shawls and fans she bore;
A whaler when the wrinkles came--
Turned off! till, spent and poor,
Her bones were sold (escheat)!
Ah! Stone Fleet.

Four were erst patrician keels

(Names attest what families be),
The Kensington, and Richmond too,
Leonidas, and Lee:

But now they have their seat
With the Old Stone Fleet.

To scuttle them--a pirate deed--
Sack them, and dismast;
They sunk so slow, they died so hard,
But gurgling dropped at last.
Their ghosts in gales repeat
Woe's us, Stone Fleet!

And all for naught. The waters pass--
Currents will have their way;
Nature is nobody's ally; 'tis well;
The harbor is bettered--will stay.
A failure, and complete,
Was your Old Stone Fleet.

THE TEMERAIRE

Supposed to have been suggested to an Englishman of
the old order by the fight of the Monitor and Merrimac

The gloomy hulls in armor grim,
Like clouds o'er moors have met,
And prove that oak, and iron, and man
Are tough in fibre yet.

But Splendors wane. The sea-fight yields
No front of old display;
The garniture, emblazonment,
And heraldry all decay.

Towering afar in parting light,
The fleets like Albion's forelands shine--
The full-sailed fleets, the shrouded show
Of Ships-of-the-Line.

The fighting Temeraire,
Built of a thousand trees,
Lunging out her lightnings,
And beetling o'er the seas--
O Ship, how brave and fair,
That fought so oft and well,

On open decks you manned the gun
 Armorial.
What cheerings did you share,
 Impulsive in the van,
When down upon leagued France and
 Spain
We English ran--
The freshet at your bowsprit
 Like the foam upon the can.
Bickering, your colors
 Licked up the Spanish air,
You flapped with flames of battle-flags--
 Your challenge, Temeraire!
The rear ones of our fleet
 They yearned to share your place,
Still vying with the Victory
Throughout that earnest race--
The Victory, whose Admiral,
 With orders nobly won,
Shone in the globe of the battle glow--
 The angel in that sun.
Parallel in story,
 Lo, the stately pair,
As late in grapple ranging,
 The foe between them there--

When four great hulls lay tiered,
And the fiery tempest cleared,
And your prizes twain appeared,
 Temeraire!

But Trafalgar is over now,
 The quarter-deck undone;
The carved and castled navies fire
 Their evening-gun.
O, Titan Temeraire,
 Your stern-lights fade away;
Your bulwarks to the years must yield,
 And heart-of-oak decay.
A pigmy steam-tug tows you,
 Gigantic, to the shore--
Dismantled of your guns and spars,
 And sweeping wings of war.
The rivets clinch the iron clads,
 Men learn a deadlier lore;
But Fame has nailed your battle-flags--
 Your ghost it sails before:
O, the navies old and oaken,
 O, the Temeraire no more!

A UTILITARIAN VIEW OF THE MONITOR'S FIGHT

Plain be the phrase, yet apt the verse,
More ponderous than nimble;
For since grimed War here laid aside
His Orient pomp, 'twould ill befit
Overmuch to ply
The rhyme's barbaric cymbal.

Hail to victory without the gaud
Of glory; zeal that needs no fans
Of banners; plain mechanic power
Plied cogently in War now placed--
Where War belongs--
Among the trades and artisans.

Yet this was battle, and intense--
Beyond the strife of fleets heroic;
Deadlier, closer, calm 'mid storm;
No passion; all went on by crank,
Pivot, and screw,
And calculations of caloric.

Needless to dwell; the story's known.
The ringing of those plates on plates

Still ringeth round the world--

The clangor of that blacksmiths' fray.

The anvil-din

Resounds this message from the Fates:

War shall yet be, and to the end;

But war-paint shows the streaks of weather;

War yet shall be, but warriors

Are now but operatives; War's made

Less grand than Peace,

And a singe runs through lace and feather.

MALVERN HILL

July, 1862

Ye elms that wave on Malvern Hill

In prime of morn and May,

Recall ye how McClellan's men

Here stood at bay?

While deep within yon forest dim

Our rigid comrades lay--

Some with the cartridge in their mouth,

Others with fixed arms lifted South--

Invoking so--

The cypress glades? Ah wilds of woe!

The spires of Richmond, late beheld

Through rifts in musket-haze,

Were closed from view in clouds of dust

On leaf-walled ways,

Where streamed our wagons in caravan;

And the Seven Nights and Days

Of march and fast, retreat and fight,

Pinched our grimed faces to ghastly plight--

Does the elm wood

Recall the haggard beards of blood?

The battle-smoked flag, with stars eclipsed,

We followed (it never fell!--
In silence husbanded our strength--
Received their yell;
Till on this slope we patient turned
With cannon ordered well;
Reverse we proved was not defeat;
But ah, the sod what thousands meet!--
Does Malvern Wood
Bethink itself, and muse and brood?
We elms of Malvern Hill
Remember everything;
But sap the twig will fill:
Wag the world how it will,
Leaves must be green in Spring.

STONEWALL JACKSON

Mortally wounded at Chancellorsville

May, 1863

THE Man who fiercest charged in fight,

Whose sword and prayer were long--

Stonewall!

Even him who stoutly stood for Wrong,

How can we praise? Yet coming days

Shall not forget him with this song.

Dead is the Man whose Cause is dead,

Vainly he died and set his seal--

Stonewall!

Earnest in error, as we feel;

True to the thing he deemed was due,

True as John Brown or steel.

Relentlessly he routed us;

But we relent, for he is low--

Stonewall!

Justly his fame we outlaw; so

We drop a tear on the bold Virginian's bier,

Because no wreath we owe.

THE HOUSE-TOP

July, 1863

A Night Piece

No sleep. The sultriness pervades the air
And binds the brain--a dense oppression, such
As tawny tigers feel in matted shades,
Vexing their blood and making apt for ravage.
Beneath the stars the rofy desert spreads
Vacant as Libya. All is hushed near by.
Yet fitfully from far breaks a mixed surf
Of muffled sound, the Atheist roar of riot.
Yonder, where parching Sirius set in drought,
Balefully glares red Arson--there--and
there.

The Town is taken by its rats--ship-rats
And rats of the wharves. All civil charms
And priestly spells which late held hearts in
awe--

Fear-bound, subjected to a better sway
Than sway of self; these like a dream dissolve,
And man rebounds whole aeons back in
nature.

Hail to the low dull rumble, dull and dead,

And ponderous drag that shakes the wall.
Wise Draco comes, deep in the midnight roll
Of black artillery; he comes, though late;
In code corroborating Calvin's creed
And cynic tyrannies of honest kings;
He comes, nor parlies; and the Town,
 redeemed,
Gives thanks devout; nor, being thankful,
 heeds
The grimy slur on the Republic's faith
 implied,
Which holds that Man is naturally good,
And--more--is Nature's Roman, never to be
 scourged.

CHATTANOOGA

November, 1863

A kindling impulse seized the host
Inspired by heaven's elastic air;
Their hearts outran their General's plan,
Though Grant commanded there--
Grant, who without reserve can dare;
And, "Well, go on and do your will,"
He said, and measured the mountain then:
So master-riders fling the rein--
But you must know your men.

On yester-morn in grayish mist,
Armies like ghosts on hills had fought,
And rolled from the cloud their thunders loud
The Cumberlands far had caught:
To-day the sunlit steeps are sought.
Grant stood on cliffs whence all was plain,
And smoked as one who feels no cares;
But mastered nervousness intense
Alone such calmness wears.

The summit-cannon plunge their flame
Sheer down the primal wall,
But up and up each linking troop

In stretching festoons crawl--
Nor fire a shot. Such men appall
The foe, though brave. He, from the brink,
Looks far along the breadth of slope,
And sees two miles of dark dots creep,
And knows they mean the cope.

He sees them creep. Yet here and there
Half hid 'mid leafless groves they go;
As men who ply through traceries high
Of turreted marbles show--
So dwindle these to eyes below.
But fronting shot and flanking shell
Sliver and rive the inwoven ways;
High tops of oaks and high hearts fall,
But never the climbing stays.

From right to left, from left to right
They roll the rallying cheer--
Vie with each other, brother with brother,
Who shall the first appear--
What color-bearer with colors clear
In sharp relief, like sky-drawn Grant,
Whose cigar must now be near the stump--
While in solicitude his back
Heaps slowly to a hump.

Near and more near; till now the flags
Run like a catching flame;
And one flares highest, to peril nighest--
He means to make a name:
Salvos! they give him his fame.
The staff is caught, and next the rush,
And then the leap where death has led;
Flag answered flag along the crest,
And swarms of rebels fled.

But some who gained the envied Alp,
And--eager, ardent, earnest there--
Dropped into Death's wide-open arms,
Quelled on the wing like eagles struck in
air--
Forever they slumber young and fair,
The smile upon them as they died;
Their end attained, that end a height:
Life was to these a dream fulfilled,
And death a starry night.

ON THE PHOTOGRAPH OF A CORPS COMMANDER

Ay, man is manly. Here you see
The warrior-carriage of the head,
And brave dilation of the frame;
And lighting all, the soul that led
In Spottsylvania's charge to victory,
Which justifies his fame.

A cheering picture. It is good
To look upon a Chief like this,
In whom the spirit moulds the form.
Here favoring Nature, oft remiss,
With eagle mien expressive has endued
A man to kindle strains that warm.

Trace back his lineage, and his sires,
Yeoman or noble, you shall find
Enrolled with men of Agincourt,
Heroes who shared great Harry's mind.
Down to us come the knightly Norman fires,
And front the Templars bore.

Nothing can lift the heart of man
Like manhood in a fellow-man.
The thought of heaven's great King afar

But humbles us--too weak to scan;
But manly greatness men can span,
And feel the bonds that draw.

THE SWAMP ANGEL

There is a coal-black Angel
 With a thick Afric lip,
And he dwells (like the hunted and harried)
 In a swamp where the green frogs dip.
But his face is against a City
 Which is over a bay of the sea,
And he breathes with a breath that is
 blastment,
And dooms by a far decree.

By night there is fear in the City,
 Through the darkness a star soareth on;
There's a scream that screams up to the zenith,
 Then the poise of a meteor lone--
Lighting far the pale fright of the faces,
 And downward the coming is seen;
Then the rush, and the burst, and the havoc,
 And wails and shrieks between.

It comes like the thief in the gloaming;
 It comes, and none may foretell
The place of the coming--the glaring;
 They live in a sleepless spell
That wizens, and withers, and whitens;

It ages the young, and the bloom
Of the maiden is ashes of roses--
The Swamp Angel broods in his gloom.

Swift is his messengers' going,
But slowly he saps their halls,
As if by delay deluding.

They move from their crumbling walls
Farther and farther away;
But the Angel sends after and after,
By night with the flame of his ray--
By night with the voice of his screaming--
Sends after them, stone by stone,
And farther walls fall, farther portals,
And weed follows weed through the Town.

Is this the proud City? the scorner
Which never would yield the ground?
Which mocked at the coal-black Angel?
The cup of despair goes round.
Vainly he calls upon Michael
(The white man's seraph was he,)
For Michael has fled from his tower
To the Angel over the sea.
Who weeps for the woeful City
Let him weep for our guilty kind;

Who joys at her wild despairing--
Christ, the Forgiver, convert his mind.

SHERIDAN AT CEDAR CREEK

October, 1864

Shoe the steed with silver

That bore him to the fray,

When he heard the guns at dawning--

Miles away;

When he heard them calling, calling--

Mount! nor stay:

Quick, or all is lost;

They've surprised and stormed the post,

They push your routed host--

Gallop! retrieve the day.

House the horse in ermine--

For the foam-flake blew

White through the red October;

He thundered into view;

They cheered him in the looming.

Horseman and horse they knew.

The turn of the tide began,

The rally of bugles ran,

He swung his hat in the van;

The electric hoof-spark flew.

Wreath the steed and lead him--

For the charge he led
Touched and turned the cypress
Into amaranths for the head
Of Philip, king of riders,
Who raised them from the dead.
The camp (at dawning lost),
By eve, recovered--forced,
Rang with laughter of the host
At belated Early fled.

Shroud the horse in sable--
For the mounds they heap!
There is firing in the Valley,
And yet no strife they keep;
It is the parting volley,
It is the pathos deep.
There is glory for the brave
Who lead, and nobly save,
But no knowledge in the grave
Where the nameless followers sleep.

IN THE PRISON PEN

1864

Listless he eyes the palisades
And sentries in the glare;
'Tis barren as a pelican-beach
But his world is ended there.

Nothing to do; and vacant hands
Bring on the idiot-pain;
He tries to think--to recollect,
But the blur is on his brain.

Around him swarm the plaining ghosts
Like those on Virgil's shore--
A wilderness of faces dim,
And pale ones gashed and hoar.

A smiting sun. No shed, no tree;
He totters to his lair--
A den that sick hands dug in earth
Ere famine wasted there,

Or, dropping in his place, he swoons,
Walled in by throngs that press,
Till forth from the throngs they bear
him dead--
Dead in his meagreness.

THE COLLEGE COLONEL

He rides at their head;

A crutch by his saddle just slants in view,

One slung arm is in splints, you see,

Yet he guides his strong steed--how
coldly too.

He brings his regiment home--

Not as they filed two years before,

But a remnant half-tattered, and battered,
and worn,

Like castaway sailors, who--stunned

By the surf's loud roar,

Their mates dragged back and seen no
more--

Again and again breast the surge,

And at last crawl, spent, to shore.

A still rigidity and pale--

An Indian aloofness lones his brow;

He has lived a thousand years

Compressed in battle's pains and prayers,

Marches and watches slow.

There are welcoming shouts, and flags;
Old men off hat to the Boy,
Wreaths from gay balconies fall at his feet,
But to him--there comes alloy.

It is not that a leg is lost,
It is not that an arm is maimed,
It is not that the fever has racked--
Self he has long disclaimed.

But all through the Seven Days' Fight,
And deep in the Wilderness grim,
And in the field-hospital tent,
And Petersburg crater, and dim
Lean brooding in Libby, there came--
Ah heaven!--what truth to him.

THE MARTYR

Indicative of the passion of the people on the
15th of April, 1865

Goon Friday was the day

Of the prodigy and crime,

When they killed him in his pity,

When they killed him in his prime

Of clemency and calm--

When with yearning he was filled

To redeem the evil-willed,

And, though conqueror, be kind;

But they killed him in his kindness,

In their madness and their blindness,

And they killed him from behind.

There is sobbing of the strong,

And a pall upon the land;

But the People in their weeping

Bare the iron hand;

Beware the People weeping

When they bare the iron hand.

He lieth in his blood--

The father in his face;

They have killed him, the Forgiver--

The Avenger takes his place,
The Avenger wisely stern,
Who in righteousness shall do
What the heavens call him to,
And the parricides remand;
For they killed him in his kindness,
In their madness and their blindness,
And his blood is on their hand.

There is sobbing of the strong,
And a pall upon the land;
But the People in their weeping
Bare the iron hand:
Beware the People weeping
When they bare the iron hand.

REBEL COLOR-BEARERS AT SHILOH

A plea against the vindictive cry raised by civilians
shortly after the surrender at Appomattox

The color-bearers facing death
White in the whirling sulphurous wreath,
Stand boldly out before the line;
Right and left their glances go,
Proud of each other, glorying in their show;
Their battle-flags about them blow,
And fold them as in flame divine:
Such living robes are only seen
Round martyrs burning on the green--
And martyrs for the Wrong have been.

Perish their Cause! but mark the men--
Mark the planted statues, then
Draw trigger on them if you can.

The leader of a patriot-band
Even so could view rebels who so could stand;
And this when peril pressed him sore,
Left aidless in the shivered front of war--
Skulkers behind, defiant foes before,
And fighting with a broken brand.
The challenge in that courage rare--

Courage defenseless, proudly bare--
Never could tempt him; he could dare
Strike up the leveled rifle there.

Sunday at Shiloh, and the day
When Stonewall charged--McClellan's
 crimson May,
And Chickamauga's wave of death,
And of the Wilderness the cypress wreath--
 All these have passed away.

The life in the veins of Treason lags,
Her daring color-bearers drop their flags,
And yield. Now shall we fire?

 Can poor spite be?
Shall nobleness in victory less aspire
Than in reverse? Spare Spleen her ire,
 And think how Grant met Lee.

AURORA BOREALIS

Commemorative of the Dissolution of armies at the Peace

May, 1865

What power disbands the Northern Lights

After their steely play?

The lonely watcher feels an awe

Of Nature's sway,

As when appearing,

He marked their flashed uprearing

In the cold gloom--

Retreatings and advancings,

(Like dallyings of doom),

Transitions and enhancings,

And bloody ray.

The phantom-host has faded quite,

Splendor and Terror gone

Portent or promise--and gives way

To pale, meek Dawn;

The coming, going,

Alike in wonder showing--

Alike the God,

Decreeing and commanding

The million blades that glowed,

The muster and disbanding--

Midnight and Morn.

THE RELEASED REBEL PRISONER

June, 1865

Armies he's seen--the herds of war,
But never such swarms of men
As now in the Nineveh of the North--
How mad the Rebellion then!

And yet but dimly he divines
The depth of that deceit,
And superstition of vast pride
Humbled to such defeat.

Seductive shone the Chiefs in arms--
His steel the nearest magnet drew;
Wreathed with its kind, the Gulf-weed drives--
'Tis Nature's wrong they rue.

His face is hidden in his beard,
But his heart peers out at eye--
And such a heart! like a mountain-pool
Where no man passes by.

He thinks of Hill--a brave soul gone;
And Ashby dead in pale disdain;
And Stuart with the Rupert-plume,

Whose blue eye never shall laugh again.

He hears the drum; he sees our boys
From his wasted fields return;
Ladies feast them on strawberries,
And even to kiss them yearn.

He marks them bronzed, in soldier-trim,
The rifle proudly borne;
They bear it for an heirloom home,
And he--disarmed--jail-worn.

Home, home--his heart is full of it;
But home he never shall see,
Even should he stand upon the spot:
'Tis gone!--where his brothers be.

The cypress-moss from tree to tree
Hangs in his Southern land;
As weird, from thought to thought of his
Run memories hand in hand.

And so he lingers--lingers on
In the City of the Foe--
His cousins and his countrymen
Who see him listless go.

"FORMERLY A SLAVE"

An idealized Portrait, by E. Vedder, in the Spring
Exhibition of the National Academy, 1865

The sufferance of her race is shown,
And retrospect of life,
Which now too late deliverance dawns upon;
Yet is she not at strife.

Her children's children they shall know
The good withheld from her;
And so her reverie takes prophetic cheer--
In spirit she sees the stir.

Far down the depth of thousand years,
And marks the revel shine;
Her dusky face is lit with sober light,
Sibylline, yet benign.

ON THE SLAIN COLLEGIANS

Youth is the time when hearts are large,
And stirring wars
Appeal to the spirit which appeals in turn
To the blade it draws.
If woman incite, and duty show
(Though made the mask of Cain),
Or whether it be Truth's sacred cause,
Who can aloof remain
That shares youth's ardor, uncooled by the
snow
Of wisdom or sordid gain?

The liberal arts and nurture sweet
Which give his gentleness to man--
Train him to honor, lend him grace
Through bright examples meet--
That culture which makes never wan
With underminings deep, but holds
The surface still, its fitting place,
And so gives sunniness to the face
And bravery to the heart; what troops
Of generous boys in happiness thus bred--
Saturnians through life's Tempe led,
Went from the North and came from the

South,
With golden mottoes in the mouth,
To lie down midway on a bloody bed.

Woe for the homes of the North,
And woe for the seats of the South:
All who felt life's spring in prime,
And were swept by the wind of their place and
time--
All lavish hearts, on whichever side,
Of birth urbane or courage high,
Armed them for the stirring wars--
Armed them--some to die.
Apollo-like in pride.
Each would slay his Python--caught
The maxims in his temple taught--
Aflame with sympathies whose blaze
Perforce enwrapped him--social laws,
Friendship and kin, and by-gone days--
Vows, kisses--every heart unmoors,
And launches into the seas of wars.
What could they else--North or South?
Each went forth with blessings given
By priests and mothers in the name of Heaven;
And honor in both was chief.
Warred one for Right, and one for Wrong?

So be it; but they both were young--
Each grape to his cluster clung,
All their elegies are sung.
The anguish of maternal hearts
Must search for balm divine;
But well the striplings bore their fated parts
(The heavens all parts assign)--
Never felt life's care or cloy.
Each bloomed and died an unabated Boy;
Nor dreamed what death was--thought it mere
Sliding into some vernal sphere.
They knew the joy, but leaped the grief,
Like plants that flower ere comes the leaf--
Which storms lay low in kindly doom,
And kill them in their flush of bloom.

AMERICA

I

Where the wings of a sunny Dome expand

I saw a Banner in gladsome air--

Starry, like Berenice's Hair--

Afloat in broadened bravery there;

With undulating long-drawn flow,

As tolled Brazilian billows go

Voluminously o'er the Line.

The Land reposed in peace below;

 The children in their glee

Were folded to the exulting heart

 Of young Maternity.

II

Later, and it streamed in fight

 When tempest mingled with the fray,

And over the spear-point of the shaft

 I saw the ambiguous lightning play.

Valor with Valor strove, and died:

Fierce was Despair, and cruel was Pride;

And the lorn Mother speechless stood,

Pale at the fury of her brood.

III

Yet later, and the silk did wind
Her fair cold form;
Little availed the shining shroud,
Though ruddy in hue, to cheer or warm.
A watcher looked upon her low, and said--
She sleeps, but sleeps, she is not dead.
But in that sleeps contortion showed
The terror of the vision there--
A silent vision unavowed,
Revealing earth's foundation bare,
And Gorgon in her hidden place.
It was a thing of fear to see
So foul a dream upon so fair a face,
And the dreamer lying in that starry shroud.

IV

But from the trance she sudden broke--
The trance, or death into promoted life;
At her feet a shivered yoke,
And in her aspect turned to heaven
No trace of passion or of strife--
A clear calm look. It spake of pain,
But such as purifies from stain--
Sharp pangs that never come again--
And triumph repressed by knowledge meet,
Power dedicate, and hope grown wise,

And youth matured for age's seat--
Law on her brow and empire in her eyes.
So she, with graver air and lifted flag;
While the shadow, chased by light,
Fled along the far-drawn height,
And left her on the crag.

INSCRIPTION

For Graves at Pea Ridge, Arkansas

Let none misgive we died amiss

When here we strove in furious fight:

Furious it was; nathless was this

Better than tranquil plight,

And tame surrender of the Cause

Hallowed by hearts and by the laws.

We here who warred for Man and Right,

The choice of warring never laid with us.

There we were ruled by the traitor's choice.

Nor long we stood to trim and poise,

But marched and fell--victorious!

THE FORTITUDE OF THE NORTH

Under the Disaster of the Second Manassas

They take no shame for dark defeat

While prizing yet each victory won,

Who fight for the Right through all retreat,

Nor pause until their work is done.

The Cape-of-Storms is proof to every throe;

Vainly against that foreland beat

Wild winds aloft and wilder waves below:

The black cliffs gleam through rents in sleet

When the livid Antarctic storm-clouds glow.

THE MOUND BY THE LAKE

The grass shall never forget this grave.
When homeward footing it in the sun
 After the weary ride by rail,
The stripling soldiers passed her door,
 Wounded perchance, or wan and pale,
She left her household work undone--
Duly the wayside table spread,
 With evergreens shaded, to regale
Each travel-spent and grateful one.
So warm her heart--childless--unwed,
Who like a mother comforted.

ON THE SLAIN AT CHICKAMAUGA

Happy are they and charmed in life

Who through long wars arrive unscarred

At peace. To such the wreath be given,

If they unfalteringly have striven--

In honor, as in limb, unmarred.

Let cheerful praise be rife,

And let them live their years at ease,

Musing on brothers who victorious died--

Loved mates whose memory shall ever please.

And yet mischance is honorable too--

Seeming defeat in conflict justified

Whose end to closing eyes is hid from view.

The will, that never can relent--

The aim, survivor of the bafflement,

Make this memorial due.

AN UNINSCRIBED MONUMENT

On one of the Battle-fields of the Wilderness

Silence and solitude may hint

(Whose home is in yon piney wood)

What I, though tableted, could never tell--

The din which here befell,

And striving of the multitude.

The iron cones and spheres of death

Set round me in their rust,

These, too, if just,

Shall speak with more than animated breath.

Thou who beholdest, if thy thought,

Not narrowed down to personal cheer,

Take in the import of the quiet here--

The after-quiet--the calm full fraught;

Thou too wilt silent stand--

Silent as I, and lonesome as the land.

ON THE GRAVE OF A YOUNG CAVALRY OFFICER
KILLED IN THE VALLEY OF VIRGINIA

Beauty and youth, with manners sweet, and
friends--

Gold, yet a mind not unenriched had he
Whom here low violets veil from eyes.

But all these gifts transcended be:
His happier fortune in this mound you see.

A REQUIEM

For Soldiers lost in Ocean Transports

When, after storms that woodlands rue,
 To valleys comes atoning dawn,
The robins blithe their orchard-sports renew;
 And meadow-larks, no more withdrawn
Caroling fly in the languid blue;
The while, from many a hid recess,
Alert to partake the blessedness,
The pouring mites their airy dance pursue.
 So, after ocean's ghastly gales,
When laughing light of hoyden morning
 breaks,
 Every finny hider wakes--
From vaults profound swims up with
 glittering scales;
Through the delightful sea he sails,
With shoals of shining tiny things
Frolic on every wave that flings
 Against the prow its showery spray;
All creatures joying in the morn,
Save them forever from joyance torn,
 Whose bark was lost where now the
 dolphins play;
Save them that by the fabled shore,

Down the pale stream are washed away,
Far to the reef of bones are borne;
And never revisits them the light,
Nor sight of long-sought land and pilot more;
Nor heed they now the lone bird's flight
Round the lone spar where mid-sea surges
pour.

COMMEMORATIVE OF A NAVAL VICTORY

Sailors there are of the gentlest breed,
Yet strong, like every goodly thing;
The discipline of arms refines,
And the wave gives tempering.
The damasked blade its beam can fling;
It lends the last grave grace:
The hawk, the hound, and sworded nobleman
In Titian's picture for a king,
Are of hunter or warrior race.

In social halls a favored guest
In years that follow victory won,
How sweet to feel your festal fame
In woman's glance instinctive thrown:
Repose is yours--your deed is known,
It musks the amber wine;
It lives, and sheds a light from storied days
Rich as October sunsets brown,
Which make the barren place to shine.

But seldom the laurel wreath is seen
Unmixed with pensive pansies dark;
There's a light and a shadow on every man
Who at last attains his lifted mark--

Nursing through night the ethereal spark.
Elate he never can be;
He feels that spirit which glad had hailed his
worth,
Sleep in oblivion.--The shark
Glides white through the phosphorus sea.

A MEDITATION

How often in the years that close,
When truce had stilled the sieging gun,
The soldiers, mounting on their works,
With mutual curious glance have run
From face to face along the fronting show,
And kinsman spied, or friend--even in a foe.

What thoughts conflicting then were shared,
While sacred tenderness perforce
Welled from the heart and wet the eye;
And something of a strange remorse
Rebelled against the sanctioned sin of blood,
And Christian wars of natural brotherhood.

Then stirred the god within the breast--
The witness that is man's at birth;
A deep misgiving undermined
Each plea and subterfuge of earth;
They felt in that rapt pause, with warning rife,
Horror and anguish for the civil strife.

Of North or South they reeked not then,
Warm passion cursed the cause of war:
Can Africa pay back this blood

Spilt on Potomac's shore?
Yet doubts, as pangs, were vain the strife
to stay,
And hands that fain had clasped again
could slay.

How frequent in the camp was seen
The herald from the hostile one,
A guest and frank companion there
When the proud formal talk was done;
The pipe of peace was smoked even 'mid the
war,
And fields in Mexico again fought o'er.

In Western battle long they lay
So near opposed in trench or pit,
That foeman unto foeman called
As men who screened in tavern sit:
"You bravely fight" each to the other said--
"Toss us a biscuit!" o'er the wall it sped.

And pale on those same slopes, a boy--
A stormer, bled in noon-day glare;
No aid the Blue-coats then could bring,
He cried to them who nearest were,
And out there came 'mid howling shot and shell

A daring foe who him befriended well.

Mark the great Captains on both sides,

The soldiers with the broad renown--

They all were messmates on the Hudson's

marge,

Beneath one roof they laid them down;

And, free from hate in many an after pass,

Strove as in school-boy rivalry of the class.

A darker side there is; but doubt

In Nature's charity hovers there:

If men for new agreement yearn,

Then old upbraiding best forbear:

"The South's the sinner!" Well, so let it be;

But shall the North sin worse, and stand the

Pharisee?

O, now that brave men yield the sword,

Mine be the manful soldier-view;

By how much more they boldly warred,

By so much more is mercy due:

When Vicksburg fell, and the moody files

marched out,

Silent the victors stood, scorning to raise a

shout.