
Ruth Baldwin Chenery

Ruth Baldwin Chenery

prepared by her great-granddaughter
Jean Tangren Fitch Alexander

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Ruth Baldwin Holt Chenery is my father's mother's mother. I've collected together some of the bits of history that remain, and put them in this book, so that the pieces of the past that have been kept and remembered this long among us can be sent on down the generations.

The body of this work consists of two previously published books: Ruth Baldwin Chenery's own book of poetry, At Vesper Time, first published in 1917, by Knickerbocker Press; and, preceding that, a slim memorial volume published privately after her death by her son, Winthrop Holt Chenery. I have added some poems my mother recently found which Ruth Chenery wrote after her book was published. And some photographs of her and her family. And three sonnets I wrote yesterday.

More pictures of the family are to be found in the book Winthrop L. Chenery, a memoir about his father written by her son, Winthrop Holt Chenery, and printed by my father, Chester Fitch, Jr., a few years ago. That volume contains further stories about Ruth Baldwin Chenery, especialy glimpses of her in family life as wife and mother.

I feel a certain kinship with my great grandmother in that she, too was a lover of books, and a writer. Also, we both are people who tend to be very inspired by and appreciative of what we read. A large portion of Ruth Baldwin Chenery's book of poetry consists of peans to famous writers, and other well-known people, historical and contemporary. Some of her enthusiasms seem quaint to me, her odes to Gladstone, McKinley, Garfield, and the like. (Just now, pouring over the new batch of her poems, finding praises for such-and-such a cardinal ["Prince of the church!" thy. . .] etc., gave me some sympathy with her husband who once remarked, "Little wifey, I wish I had as much enthusiasm for anything as you seem to feel for everything!") Others of her poems, however, such as her evocation of Julia Ward Howe, have the power to move me even now. And though her patriotic verses may sound naive to our more cynical era, perhaps they also point to values we have lost sight of, an idealism that the world misses. However, I think nearly everyone's favorites are the poems that come from her daily life, her reflections on and of the world she knew.

. . . About Julia Ward Howe, my grandmother could remember as a little girl going with her mother to a meeting where the great woman spoke. She recalled the excitement as Julia Ward Howe entered the room, the sense that getting to see her was a very important event.

. . . There is a sequel to the matter of the Julia Ward Howe poem. A few years ago, a friend of mine was putting together a booklet of women's songs and writings for peace, and wanted to include Julia Ward Howe's "Mothers' Day Proclamation." In order to ask permission, she traced down J. W.H.'s great-granddaughter. When I learned of this, I sent her a copy of the poem, saying, "Here is something my great-grandmother wrote for your great-grandmother," and told her a little about the writer and the book it appeared in. She replied appreciatively, and said she had tucked it in the front of her copy of Julia Ward Howe's biography It was nice to be able to bring things full circle.

This is what I know about Ruth Baldwin Holt's story, besides what's written in the books:

Her mother was Deborah Jane Dame, of Greenland, New Hampshire, who was orphaned at an early age; both her parents were killed. She was taken in by strangers, and she "had to make herself useful," as Grandma put it.

When Deborah grew up, she maried Benjamin Shurtleff Holt, a man who loved to play practical jokes. "Anything for a joke." She did not appreciate them, and was thought not to have much of a sense of humor.

She lost two young children: a daughter, Virginia, and a son, Benjamin; and she saw at least two grow to adulthood, Ruth and Gustav. Ruth Baldwin Holt remembered her mother as strict and severe.

Deborah Jane Dame

Deborah Dame Holt with a child

(I would guess Ruth: compare the cover photo. And it was among Ruth's possessions.)

Ruth Baldwin Holt's sister, Virginia,
a photograph taken after her death

When Grandma was a little girl, she often rode her bicycle over to her grandmother's house for a visit. Though her mother thought of her own mother as strict and hard, perhaps she softened towards her granddaughter, for Grandma remembered liking to visit her.

But folk generally considered her very odd. "Odd, how?" I asked. "Well, for one thing, the tramp." There had once been a tramp who came to her door, to whom she gave work and food. He returned later, and convinced her to take him on as a handyman, for room and board. It worked out fine, though two or three times a year he'd disappear for a few days. He would never say where he'd gone or why. It was probably alcohol, people guessed, and wondered why she put up with him; but she seemed to think his good work the rest of the time was worth it.

Grandma didn't say in what other ways her grandmother was "strange."

Deborah evidently lived with her daughter's family in her later years. Ruth Baldwin Chenery's poem "The Wings of Night are Spread" speaks lovingly of looking in on her sleeping mother before she herself lies down.

Alice Ticknor Chenery, Ruth Baldwin Chenery's daughter and Deborah Dame Holt's granddaughter.

If little Ruth Baldwin Holt's mother was strict, so were the times she was growing up in. That is clear from the story Uncle Winthrop tells about her cousins' falling into disgrace for going out with their bare hands in their muffs. (They were supposed to have their hands covered with gloves or mitts, fingerless gloves.)

Ruth was bored by what passed for "education." Only one year at school, her last, when she was sixteen, excited her. But at least she had that, year, and also access to the world of culture and literature through the families of her best friend and her aunt. It sounds as if she was naturally brilliant; her powers of memorization as Uncle Winthrop recounts them are truly astounding. And writing, it seems, came easily to her; imagine finding oneself "thinking in sonnets."

I was also happy to learn that my great-grandmother was sympathetic to the movement to get women the vote, a campaign that by her time had extended over several generations. She lived to see it come about, and celebrate in verse.

The "Thursday Club" was a group of women who met together for over forty years; Ruth Baldwin Chenery was one of its founding members and always an ardent participant. Their purpose was to read and discuss ideas and literature. I don't know much about it, but I do know this: When this club met at my great-grandmother's house, which was frequently, they always drank tea from her set of twelve green-patterned Haviland cups and saucers. When my grandmother inherited them , only one cup was missing; the rest of the set was still in perfect condition.

If Ruth Baldwin Chenery was careful with her good dishes, she was also astute with her money and resources. It was due to her "imagination, enthusiasm and superior salesmanship" that the property she and her husband had managed to buy was gradually developed and sold, creating the money she passed on to her children and their descendants.

In the memoir he wrote about his father, Ruth's son, Winthrop Holt Chenery, wrote: "In a most extraordinary degree my parents were

mutually complementary. Each had everything the other lacked. My father was calm, deliberate, unimaginative, unapprehensive, unsuspicious, unhurried, undemonstrative, patient, selfless, retiring, not liable to take offense. My mother, on the other hand, in spite of her frail body and precarious health, was a smouldering volcano of pent up energy and ambition seeking an adequate outlet, yet too sensitive to brook the opposition which such a temperment must encounter in a slow moving world."

He also pictures her as insisting on "no shirt sleeves" so that her husband wore a coat indoors, winter and summer. And in other ways she was a stickler for propriety. I remember a bit of verse written by her husband about a family visit to Niagra Falls; he pokes gentle fun at her fussing over the children's clothes while the thundering magnificence of the falls proceeds unheeded. But if she missed it that time, there were plenty of other occasions on which she knew awe and wonder, as her poetry makes clear.

Too, there is this. Today my mother found for me an old envelope filled with her poems, typed, carbon-copied, or handwritten. In with them there was a short story, evidently intended for publication, as the word-count is listed at the top. It doesn't seem to me to be especially well-written, but it has a curious plot.: A family find themselves with money, and build an appropriately fancy house. But the women, a mother and daughter, both of whom have greying hair, find that it's impossible to keep the house in its unspoiled, pristine perfection, especially when the father tramps in sand onto the polished hardwood floor.

The women decide the family will eat in the kitchen, to save the dining room. Later an outdoor kitchen shed is built some feet from the house, in order to save the nice kitchen, and to keep cooking smells out of the house; mealtimes move out to the shed. After a while the family adds on a little sitting wing; they spend their time there, to spare the rest of the house. They only leave the shed at night, to climb to the attic where they sleep, presumably to save the bed

rooms. Their poorer neighbors in their modest, comfortable houses look on in pity. Even after the father dies, the mother and daughter go on living in the kitchen shed, embroidering fancy things to further enrich the great house.

The more I think about it, it seems an interesting satire, the house-as-museum way of living carried to its absurd and perfectly logical conclusion. It is not hard to imagine how this little fantasy hatched itself in Ruth Chenery's mind as she expended her energy keeping the big Belmont house, preserving the teacups unbroken.

I want to include a bit of her writing here that shows her gentle humor. This is from a letter she wrote to her son describing the dedication ceremony at the new Winthrop L. Chenery School, to which she, as the honored man's widow, was invited. At one point "Seven little boys, about six years old, perhaps, came up the steps and ranged themselves at the front of the stage. Each wore an immense letter, perhaps six by eight inches, C-H-E-N-E-R-Y.

"C stepped forward and said, 'I should like to be like Mr. Chenery, so kind and helpful.' H stepped forward and said, 'I should like to be like Mr. Chenery, so truthful and honest,' and then E stepped forward and told why he should like to be like Mr. Chenery (I don't vouch for the words, exactly).

"Then N stepped boldly forth, but alas! stage fright was on him and he couldn't think for the life of him why he should like to be like Mr. Chenery. It was almost painful, yet fascinating to see the deep anxiety of the other little boys, trying to prompt. They remembered perfectly why N had his ambition. But a sudden spurt of memory saved the situation and we were all let into his confidence."

Well, here is Ruth Baldwin Holt Chenery, letting us into her confidence. Her words, and the words of others about her, pictures, and objects, these are the traces of living she left us.

Jean Tangren Fitch Alexander
December, 1993

RUTH BALDWIN CHENERY

1848-1933

A Memorial Tribute Compiled and Edited by Her Son

WINTHROP HOLT CHENERY

PRIVATELY PRINTED · 1934

DEDICATION

To the members of the Belmont Thursday Club, past and present, I dedicate this little book. For more than forty years your Club was the object of my mother's constant solicitude and devotion. In the accomplishments of your group she felt an immense pride; to make your gatherings successful she spared neither time nor effort, and it was with profound regret that, yielding to the infirmities of age, she resigned the active presidency with which you had so long honored her.

To every activity that drew my mother's interest she gave herself whole-heartedly—her enthusiastic temperament would not let her do otherwise—but in no other activity did she find the real and abiding satisfaction that she gained from your Thursday assemblies.

In her later years when my mother lost immediate contact with most of her earlier interests and their direction passed into other hands, your Club came to mean more and more to her, until it dominated her intellectual and social horizon as nothing else ever had. At all times your Club was to her a never-failing source of inspiration and delight. It afforded her stimulating intellectual contacts as well as congenial tasks, and out of it had grown precious friendships. In her last years

it seemed the one thing left that could and did bring complete and enduring satisfaction to her active brain and ardent temperament.

W. H. C.

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FOREWORD

The two longer tributes to my mother's memory were read at a memorial meeting of the Belmont Thursday Club, held on October 5th, 1933.

Mrs. Castle's admirable tribute is printed almost exactly as she wrote it. I specially prize it for its intimate character, composed, as it was, for a group of close friends. Mrs. Castle, as most of the recipients of this volume already know, is the wife of William E. Castle, Professor of Zoology in Harvard University.

Mrs. Boucicault, the writer of the second tribute, is my mother's niece and namesake. Mrs. Boucicault resides in London, and is herself the author of several books.

The *Girlhood Recollections* formed part of a letter which I addressed to Mrs. Joseph O. Wellington, president of the Thursday Club and my mother's dearest friend. It was read at the same memorial meeting.

Because they were very precious to my mother, I have included the lines beginning, *We are here to-day and gone to-morrow*, composed by her brother, Gustavus C. Holt, and read by him at the funeral of a dear friend. At my mother's instance they were read both at my uncle's funeral and at her own.

From my mother's collected poems, "At Vesper Time," I have reprinted *The wings of night are spread*, quoted in part in Cousin Ruth Boucicault's tribute. The poem *Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett* is an example of my mother's handling of blank verse. She read it, I think, at a meeting of the Boston Browning Society, but I have no record of the date. I only know that it is one of her later productions—about 1929. *In Shaker Land* is undoubtedly her last work in verse.

To any of my mother's friends, receiving this book, who have not a copy of her published poems, "At Vesper Time," I shall be glad to send that work.

The beautiful photo-portrait which faces the title-page was made by Florence Claflin, niece of my mother's cousin, Howard Ticknor. Miss Claflin, an amateur, succeeded where several professionals had conspicuously failed.

I am deeply grateful to all whose sympathetic co-operation has made possible the compilation of this memorial.

WINTHROP HOLT CHENERY

Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri
October, 1934

THE TRIBUTE OF A FRIEND

Mrs. Chenery's formal education may be said to have ended with her attendance at Dr. Mack's school, but in reality her education continued almost to the last day of her life. She was one of those rare individuals who, without help from others, could plan and carry out any particular line of study she wished to pursue. Even during those times when, in later life, impaired eyesight prevented her from reading more than five minutes at a time, she somehow managed to read more, and better, things than almost any member of the Thursday Club. Nor was her culture supplemented by travel in foreign lands. She did, however, cross the United States more than once, finding in these experiences abiding satisfaction. A loved memory was the magnificent view of the mountains from her daughter's Oregon home. And the beauty of a fragile flower was as appealing to her as the grandeur of the mountains.

Mrs. Chenery's delicate, skilled fingers found expression in the making of her own clothes, for which the best materials were always chosen. Independent of the prevailing modes, she would fashion for herself becoming garments, made individualistic and exquisite with

trimmings of ribbons and laces. What a lovely picture she made on several social occasions, not long before her death, in gray silk crêpe, point lace, white gloves and violets!

Upon her marriage to Winthrop L. Chenery a home was established on Concord Avenue. It had been the intention of her husband to enter the law but during his preparation for this career a weakness of the eyes developed which prevented any further poring over law books. Eventually Mr. Chenery became one of the best known men of Belmont—respected, admired and loved for his many services to the community and countless services to individuals. Winthrop and Alice Chenery were born in the Concord Avenue home.

In 1886 the family moved into a new home on Common Street. Later this house was moved to a lot on Fairmont Street. In the large parlor of this house the Thursday Club frequently met. Some of us recall those delightful afternoons when Mrs. Chenery, in her own house, presided with unusual grace and dignity (and, on occasion, with firmness!) over the sessions of the Club, followed, in those less crowded days, by refreshments which invariably included some of "Annie's" baking-powder biscuits. At that time Mrs. Hunt, Mrs. Lincoln, Mrs. Ayer, the Misses Chenery,

Mrs. Jacob Hittinger—and our own Amy Bygrave—were the mainstays of the Club, Mrs. Horace Stone and Mrs. March being, as usual, "on the sofa."

At the time of the World War, her husband having died, Mrs. Chenery sold the Fairmont Street house and went to St. Louis to be with her son, Dr. Chenery, at that time head of the Department of Spanish in Washington University. I am of the opinion that very few New England women could leave the "cultured East" and find happiness, as did Mrs. Chenery, in the Middle West. There is no doubt but that she "shone" in St. Louis society. She *liked* the people with whom she came in contact because she had the imagination to understand them, differing as many of them must have from the Boston "norm." In fact, wherever she happened to be, East or West, Mrs. Chenery was happy in her relations with people, be they persons of distinction or humble men and women.

Some of us recall a farewell luncheon in Boston in honor of Mrs. Chenery, before she left for St. Louis. Her going away seemed like that of a mother taking leave of a family, some of whom were not yet grown up. She was missed the more because we were at that time passing through the perilous War days. But we tried, to a certain extent with success, to carry on the

Thursday Club without her leadership and that in spite of the turmoil of those days.

Later, when the War was over and her son had become associated with the Boston Public Library, Mrs. Chenery returned to Belmont and bought the large Common Street house, built about 1855 by Edward Whitney. There, in a dwelling beautifully spacious, she again took up the leadership of the Club, laying it down only when a growing deafness made it awkward for her to preside.

A critical illness in 1926 left Mrs. Chenery with diminished strength. Most reluctantly she gave up the Whitney house and with her son went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Webster on Oak Avenue. There, surrounded by her most cherished books, pictures, and articles of furniture, Mrs. Chenery passed in considerable comfort the last years, save one, of her life.

In the fall of 1927, Dr. Chenery was recalled to Washington University. It seemed best for Mrs. Chenery to remain in Belmont. Her few remaining *best friends* were here, but only those who have experienced in advanced years long separation from beloved children can know the price of the decision. But all of us know how bravely and unselfishly she bore the separation from son, daughter and grandchildren.

It was while with the Websters that she had her last visit with her daughter, Mrs. Fitch. A certain delicacy prevented her from speaking often of her grandchildren, but she yearned for them. To her intimate friends she often spoke of them and of her high hopes for their future. To her friends she would also speak of the precious memory of her husband, of his devotion, of his tender care of her, of how—but this is not the place to record such intimate confidences.

In spite of ever increasing deafness (quoting another, she used to say that she would attend the meetings of the Thursday Club as long as she could hear it thunder!), in spite of failing eyesight and loss of bodily vigor, Mrs. Chenery's interest in people, books, world affairs and the mysteries of life never seemed to wane. In August, 1932, she called the members of the Thursday Club together for friendly intercourse and to listen to an essay by Charles Lamb. She also wished to have read Bryant's "Thanatopsis" and for comparison the "New Thanatopsis," a poem in the current *Atlantic Monthly*. It was a typical occasion, Mrs. Chenery leading and stimulating the widely differing discussion, while modestly saving her own fearless, pithy comment for the last. Think of it—a woman well in the eighties bringing her friends together to think and talk un-

morbidly about the older and newer "thoughts upon death"! It was the last time that most of us saw her—happy, gracious, radiant.

In the last years of her life Mrs. Chenery was admittedly more interested in the Thursday Club than in any other outside activity. In earlier days she had been influential in the organization and building of All Saints' Church. Always leading a much sheltered life, she was, nevertheless, interested in all women, and for that, and other reasons, identified herself with the movement for woman's suffrage at a time when the cause was an unpopular one. She took an especial interest in the formation and development of the Belmont Woman's Club, although unable to share actively in its functioning. In Boston she found intellectual companionship in the Browning Society and the American Poetry Association.

There is some question as to whether Mrs. Chenery was the sole founder of the Thursday Club. It has been said that a group of women, led by Mrs. Hunt, invited Mrs. Chenery and others to read with them. But there can be no doubt that the group soon became known as the Thursday Club and that Mrs. Chenery immediately became one of its most ardent and influential members.

One canot help asking how it was that Mrs. Chenery became the exceptional and remarkable woman that she was. As in the case of all men and women heredity and environment must be taken into account. From her mother she probably inherited her sense of order, her "practicality," for she was ever the frugal housewife and successful business woman. Her taste for aesthetics and literature and a certain religious mysticism may have come from her father, in whose excellent library she read the classics as a young girl and to whom she often referred as having found consolation, during the later years of his life, in the faith of the Roman Catholic Church. She, herself, somewhat eclectic in her religious affiliations, found equal consolation in the Episcopal Church and the principles of Christian Science. It was her custom to read the New Testament daily—as an act of devotion, as well as for sheer joy in its magnificent language and spiritual uplift.

Mrs. Chenery was a "gentlewoman" to whom all the little amenities of life and gracious acts of refinement were of high importance. Mrs. Chenery was a proud woman, proud in the sense that Emerson was proud, proud in a feeling of self-respect. She had little patience with those who, great or small, belittled their abilities—such behavior seeming to her as affected modesty. One

of the outstanding traits of her personality was her loyalty to her friends. To me, she was a kind of mother who comforted me in sorrow, praised me on the least occasion, and gently corrected me when in error, thereby showing a loving interest rather than indifference.

Mrs. Chenery was blessed with a great sense of humor, and her feeling for the great and little tragedies of the world often caused her profound suffering. This ability to laugh with the world and cry with the world, together with her extraordinary memory and beauty of face and form, might easily have made her a great actress. We can never forget those occasions when she interpreted for us the light touch of Barrie, the humor and boldness in Shaw, the tragic in Ibsen and the deeps in "Faust." Her remarkable memory deserves more than mere mention. She, perhaps, never realized the greatness of the gift that enabled her to recall, at almost any time, almost any line of the best that has been written in the English tongue. But, alas, if, for any reason, the gift were lacking, Spartan discipline, self-imposed, was sure to follow—bread and water for the next meal!

Now and then throughout her life Mrs. Chenery wrote both prose and poetry. Much of the latter was published. Her book of poems, "At Vesper Time," probably contains the best from her pen. Here there is

wide range of subject matter—stately sonnets to Shakespeare, to Lincoln and many others, tender appreciations of women who have served mankind, understanding tributes to friends and dear ones no longer here, and best of all, in my opinion, the lovely portrayal of intimate home life. She used to say that she *thought* in sonnets, so easily did that form of expression come to her.

In the case of most people with oncoming years the horizon of the mind is narrowed. Not so with Mrs. Chenery. She made it a point to keep abreast of the latest thought in the fields of comparative religion, philosophy, morals, politics, sociology, and even the biological sciences—this in order that she might be *en rapport* with herpetology in which her eldest grandson is a specialist.

But the study of "literature of permanent value" was the great intellectual passion of Mrs. Chenery's life. We of the Thursday Club, of yesterday, today, and even tomorrow, shall remember her guiding influence. To sit at her feet and learn from her, and from one another, was a great privilege. In this connection she was given the unusual opportunity of inspiring a group of busy, eager women in their search for the best things of the mind—nothing short of the best would she willingly

tolerate. Ever did she remind the program committee that the Thursday Club convened for something more than mere amusement. There is no way of measuring the intellectual growth of the several members of the Thursday Club during the more than forty years of its activity. The Club's constant influence may be likened to the effect produced by the gentle dropping of a stone into a pool of quiet water—no splash, but ever widening circles of rippling water.

In Mrs. Chenery's lifetime the Club ranged over an amazing area in the field of literature; in point of time from the ancient Greeks to the present day. Our understanding of Europe and of our own country is deeper because of our wide study. We have come to know something of the world's greatest poets, essayists, novelists, dramatists, historians, moralists, philosophers.

And now our friend and guide is gone from mortal sight. Truly in the passing of Ruth Baldwin Chenery a force went out of that part of the world with which she came in contact. But her memory burns brightly in our hearts today, hearts bowed down with a sense of loss, but elate with the desire to carry on in the way she would have us go and full of joy in the thought of an imprisoned spirit set free.

CLARA BOSWORTH CASTLE

MY AUNT RUTH

THE TRIBUTE OF A NIECE

A very gentle and gracious soul has passed from our midst, and in her passing another link with the old New England is severed. She was a very part of its spirit of culture, of character, of toleration and liberality to all forms of thought, however they differed from her own, so that they were sincere. That was the great essential with her, and the thing she admired in others, entire sincerity, whether of writing or speaking or living.

If it be true, as many who have come back from the very brink of death have told us, that all of life passes in a flash before our inner sight, how much she had to review in that lightning look of the spirit! For hers had been a life extraordinarily rich in experience, though so quietly and deeply lived that few would have known it. There was in it little of sensational interest, but all the realities were present. Every human tie—parents, husband, children, relations, friends and neighbors, fellow citizens, country—was enhanced by her own ardent temperament. Rich gifts were hers because of her rich nature: her gift for poetry, for instance, because she so greatly admired the poets; her gift of music, from deep appreciation; her gift of being able to feel

friendship and love for all classes and races, because love and friendship were so essential a part of her own nature. She had the rare ability to infuse others with some of her enthusiasms. As a child of nine I remember how the "Idylls of the King" came alive for me, as she taught me to read them on summer mornings. She lent me her imagination to see again Geraint and Enid walking the old green ways, Launcelot and Elaine, the Quest of the Holy Grail, the great King Arthur; or on winter days to read Whittier's beautiful, intimate "Snowbound," and other poets of her own New England, so that now, after the passage of many years, the tones of her voice come back to me, clear and silvery.

But it was in the close relations of life that the real value and sweetness of her character were shown. What "honoring" of mother and father, what great love toward husband and devotion to children, what binding and beautiful affection toward her brother! There is a little story which shows this last. Her brother, a lad of sixteen, had bought her with his first week's earnings a pair of evening slippers to wear to a dance. It took all his earnings—every penny—and she wore them proudly, idealizing his unselfish gift. And when I, touched by the simple story, as she told it, said, "You must leave them to me when you have finished with

them," she answered gently, "Well I would, dear child, but I thought of wearing them at the end." So cherished, that little affectionate act of the young brother! How rare and beautiful such appreciation is!

In later years when the sum of life's joy and sorrow found expression in lovely poems of her own, I remember her saying, "It would be good to leave to the children a slender book of verse, wouldn't it?" And so the songs, "At Vesper Time," are dedicated to "To Winthrop and Alice." In that noble sonnet sequence to great and illustrious men and women, and in the poems of humbler every-day happenings, they must find an imperishable part of their mother. She was awed herself sometimes to think how poems were born. "Just think," she would say in her eager, almost child-like, way, "Out of nothing—something!" Ah, but it was not out of nothing, but out of an epitome of experience, a quintessence of all the best of life. Deeply she felt all public problems, as well as private ones, but her ardent patriotism did not dwarf her broad outlook. Just as she respected other people's religions, yet held true to her own, so she honored the attributes and gifts of other nations, while most honoring her "beloved Columbia."

how magnificent
Thy crown of throbbing stars, how eloquent

Thy speech that even aliens understand!
For thou dost stoop and take them by the hand,
Thy foster-children, for thy care is spent
Upon us all; and we are brothers blent
In one obedience, once thou shalt command.

Her praise was not easy to win, for her standards were high, but, if won, was given with prodigal generosity. She did not compromise with truth, but she had a compassionate explanation—or perhaps a humorous one—for people who did. Her "old trick of laughter" certainly endeared her to many; but her gift of sympathy made her dearer still.

Whether she wrote of public or private events, of great or little people, there is in her verse a quality of universality, of something larger than merely personal issues; as if she felt and knew the soul of things, not merely things themselves, as ordinary eyes see them. She seems to touch everyone's Faith, Hope, Love, Sorrow, Courage, with delicate hands that leave a healing balm. So, it would seem, a poet should do.

She belonged to her generation—a spacious and generous time that gave us so many great names in literature and life. It has passed; as our time, too, is passing. I see her going at the end of its heydey, as once she went

about her own house at night, the last awake, stopping at each door to make sure that all was well, and, reassured at each, saying: "Rest, O my heart, the wings of night are spread." Many will prefer others of her poems, but this one most brings her to me. And as I think of her at the end of that splendid period of which she was a part, her own words, written for others, satisfy my heart for herself: –

> What can I wish you better, dearest ones,
> Than balmy sleep after the eager day.
> Within my heart I fold ye all, and now
> Mine eyelids droop, my pillow waits for me,
> Sleep calls me, too; again, Goodnight, Goodnight;
> Rest, O my heart, the wings of night are spread.

Goodnight, sweet spirit, dearly loved.

RUTH BALDWIN HOLT BOUCICAULT

GIRLHOOD RECOLLECTIONS

My mother's many friends, I feel sure, will be glad to have me present a few memories of her early life. I wish that she herself had put in writing her own recollections of this period. I can do no more than piece together very imperfectly, as I remember them, certain things that she told me.

Ruth Baldwin Holt was born in Charlestown, Massachusetts, May 27th, 1848. Her father, Benjamin Shurtleff Holt, was a son of Benjamin Holt, the latter a Boston schoolmaster, a talented violinist, a founder and onetime president of the Haendel and Hayden Society. This Benjamin Holt, son of a like-named officer in the army of the Revolution, married Ruth Baldwin, daughter of the reverend Thomas Baldwin, long pastor of the Second Baptist Church in Boston and in his day an admired preacher and leader. Ruth Baldwin's mother was Ruth Huntington, a near relation of Samuel Huntington, Governor of Connecticut and signer of the Declaration of Independence.

My mother's earliest memories centered about a home in West Medford. Although she was not yet two years old when her brother Benjamin died, she preserved a vivid image of the child, as he ran up and down

gracious hostess patiently held out the heavy bowl. The diminutive fruit eluded capture and at last Mrs. DeShon, with just a touch of weariness in her finely modulated voice, said, "Take any one, dear."

A formative influence in my mother's girlhood was an intimacy of many years duration with Mabel Thayer. Old residents of Belmont remember the Thayer mansion in Waverley, north of the railroad. The Thayers were thoroughly representative of the aristocratic culture of mid-nineteenth century Boston and my mother always felt that the freedom of their house had been an important part of her education. William Roscoe Thayer, the historian, was Mabel's brother.

My mother's aunt, Emmeline Holt, married William Ticknor, founder of the Old Corner Bookstore, well-known publisher, and trusted friend of Hawthorne, Dickens and many others of almost equal fame. A frequent visitor at the Ticknors' book-filled house near Jamaica Pond, my mother early came in contact with the most "correct" people in Boston. And in the fifties of the last century, the leading people were correct indeed. The following anecdote, which my mother often related, will substantiate my assertion.

Calling at Aunt Emmeline's one day, mother found the two daughters of the house in dire disgrace. Their

conduct had scandalized the neighborhood and tarnished the family's good name. Aunt Emmeline's indignation knew no bounds. "Let such a shocking thing never happen again." The girls had, it seems—in these freer days one can speak of almost anything—the girls had gone out on a neighborhood errand with their *bare* hands thrust into their fur muffs.

We may smile at the rigid etiquette of an age that has utterly passed away, but the gentlewomen of that time, in the poise and grace of their bearing, in the elegant diction and refined modulation of their speech, in the exquisite courtesy and gentleness of their manners, surely had much that we of today painfully miss even in the most cultivated assemblies. And those who knew my mother will readily admit that not in vain did she form her manners on the models set her by the Ticknors, the Thayers, and their friends.

A good many years ago my mother, in some one of her many activities (I now forget which) had occasion to meet several times a very able woman from the Middle West. With characteristic frankness the Westerner remarked, "Before I came East I supposed all the women here would be like you, Mrs. Chenery, but they aren't—not any of them." "What do you suppose she meant?" my mother, truly puzzled, asked me. Without the

slightest hesitation, I replied, "Your fine, old-fashioned manners, of course."

My mother's recollections of school days were not pleasant. There were long walks to school that chilled her in winter and fatigued her in all seasons. There were bullying boys of whom she was mortally afraid. Schoolrooms were cold and draughty. She found the lessons boring and learned very little. Only one of her earlier teachers did she recall with pleasure—Mrs. Hamlin, a sister of Jacob Abbot, author of the then much admired "Rollo Books." The child was attracted by Mrs. Hamlin's gracious and distinguished bearing.

In only one subject did my mother excel—declamation. Already, as a child of twelve, her imagination was kindled by poetry. Once when the honorable School Committee came in a body to inspect the district school, little Ruth Holt was selected to "recite" a Poem. Just as the child stood up to begin, honorable committeemen began to whisper among themselves. Little Ruth waited for silence. The reverend Amos Smith, beloved and distinguished pastor of the First Congregational Church Unitarian, signaled to her to proceed. Little Ruth saw and understood the signal but chose to ignore it, calmly waiting until she had their full attention. Young as she was, she knew that her recitation was the school's most

telling exhibit and that the teacher was counting upon its effect.

When my mother was sixteen she had completed the curriculum of the public schools and was sent for one year as a day pupil to Dr. Mack's private school for girls, then located in the large house on Pleasant Street where in later years the Thursday Club were often the guests of Mrs. Hunt and Miss Robbins. My mother always believed that in this one year with Mr. and Mrs. Mack she learned more than in all the rest of her schooling. There it was that she acquired that zeal for *belles-lettres* which never deserted her. Then it was that she memorized the whole of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, fastening the book up over the kitchen sink while she did the family dishes.

Long afterwards it amused my mother to recall that there came to the Macks' school two sisters from a place, at that time, of almost legendary remoteness. These young ladies professed not to care for the clear drinking water of their new abode. It lacked the "richness" of the water to which they were accustomed. They had come from far away St. Louis, a city my mother was to know well in her advanced years, but, fortunately, when scientific treatment of the water supply had wholly eliminated the pristine "richness."

My grandmother, a stern, country-bred woman from New Hampshire, believed it improper, and perhaps even a little sinful, to read in the daytime. My poor mother, aching with the urge to read, was compelled to sit around and wait until lamplight came. But, on days when my grandmother went to Boston, she would read furiously all day, going without her lunch in order not to waste a single precious moment.

EPILOGUE

Throughout my mother's long life this was to become a dominant characteristic; she never wasted a single precious moment. She often remarked, "I get things done by not waiting for a convenient time." Handicapped by many years of semi-invalidism and always exceedingly frail, she somehow managed to do a great many things and to do them superlatively well.

My mother's extraordinary versatility was ever a source of astonishment even to the members of her family. Mrs. Castle has admirably described many of my mother's accomplishments, but has by no means exhausted the list. She was a devoted and solicitous wife and mother, a skillful nurse, a meticulous housekeeper, and even a shrewd business woman, yet she always found time for the social duties and amenities exacted

by the several groups to which she belonged. Not only was she a clever dressmaker, as Mrs. Castle relates, but she could replace a velvet or fur collar on a man's overcoat with all the *savoir-faire* of a professional tailor. The more difficult the task the more pleasure she found in it.

Her gift of expression was most unusual. Her punctilious courtesy and quick sympathy caused her to write thousands of letters, yet never did she have to wait a single moment for the exact word, the incisive phrase, or the subtle nuance. My father jestingly used to call her the "Complete Letter-Writer."

Mrs. Castle speaks of my mother's phenomenal memory. Because she, in her youth, had missed learning Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, my mother memorized the whole of that difficult poem when she was over eighty years of age. On one occasion in earlier life, she repeated, without a single error, a poem of thirty-two four-line stanzas after attentively reading it through just once!

Her versatility was equalled by her independence. Notwithstanding that, for the greater part of her life, her precarious health had forced her to lead a decidedly sheltered existence, she did not hesitate, at the age of eighty, to make entirely alone the long journey from the Atlantic to the Pacific Coast. She was unwilling to

have me meet her at Chicago; she would not even let my sister go to meet her in Portland, Oregon. With the knowledge that in the latter city she would be obliged to wait over from early morning until late in the evening, a hotel had been recommended. But inactivity never appealed to my mother. Instead of being driven to the designated hostelry for a day of rest and seclusion, as seemed fitting for an octogenarian after passing four days and nights in continuous travel, she elected to spend the forenoon on a sight-seeing car and the afternoon at a cinema.

Afterwards she took the keenest pleasure in recalling the experiences of that day. One that particularly delighted her was the way in which she and a cultured school teacher whom she met on the sight-seeing car rebuked, by their studied and pointed politeness, the rudeness of a fellow tourist who had been disposed to "hog" the view from his side of the car.

My mother's mental energy was astounding. She was never conscious of bodily fatigue until she had reached the point of complete exhaustion. Totally foreign to her was the mental inertia that makes any task, especially an unaccustomed one, so irksome to most of us. In overcoming difficulties she found only exhilaration and stimulus to intenser effort.

My mother's philanthropy was limitless. She denied herself not merely luxuries but even ordinary comforts and conveniences in order that she might have more with which to aid the objects of her most ardent sympathy. The sums that she saved by making her own clothes all went to swell her gifts to charity. To hire a taxicab seemed to her almost a mortal sin when she could take a street car and give the difference to someone in need. She could hardly understand that everyone does not give away a fifth of his income. The objects of her heartfelt solicitude were scattered everywhere—homes for incurables, negro schools in the South, educational projects for Kentucky mountaineers, Salvation Army rescue work, flood sufferers, city missions, superannuated servants, to mention only a few. Indeed it was hard for her to refuse any appeal that touched her sympathetic heart.

Ruth Baldwin Chenery died on the eighteenth day of September, 1933. In pursuance of her own request, her ashes were laid in her husband's grave in Mount Auburn Cemetery. *Requiescant in pace.*

WINTHROP HOLT CHENERY

WE ARE HERE TODAY AND GONE TOMORROW

We are here to-day, and gone to-morrow;
We are born, and flourish for a time,
Then fade away and disappear.
Yet, "There is no death,
What seems so is transition."
We are like the dust, blown by the wind,
Or the mist that hangs over the meadow in the morning,
Or the water of the brook that has passed,
Or the waves that rush on the shore,
Or the empty shell on the beach,
Or the shadow that flees before the sunshine,
Or the leaves that fall in the forest;
Each in a silent and mysterious way
Moves and passes on,
Yet lives again, somewhere, somehow.
We are here to-day, we are there to-morrow.

GUSTAVUS CROCKER HOLT

THE WINGS OF NIGHT ARE SPREAD

A light wind stirs, and night broods o'er the earth,
That seems at last to sink to sleep, and here,
Slumber more sweet than Hybla's honey lays
A spell on all my dearest and they dream,
Forgetting that the day will come again;
Rest, O my heart, the wings of night are spread.

I see thee, O my mother, full of years;
I mark the chiselled beauty of thy face,
The silken hair, parted like silver wings,
On the low brow, so lined with grief and care;
Thou lookst an agèd Queen, lying in state.
Rest thee, dear Heart, the wings of night are spread.

Gently I ope this door, lest I awake
The husband and the father from his rest;
Peaceful his brow, his stalwart frame relaxed,
One massive hand lies nerveless on his breast,
The hand that fends between the world and us.
Sleep, O Belovèd, thine and mine sleep too.

And at the children's doors I linger long:
Ye sleep to-night beneath your father's roof;
How know I what huge distance calls you forth
Within the coming years, what other hearths
Shall win you from us! Ye are ours to-night;
Rest, O my heart, the wings of night are spread.

What can I wish you better, dearest ones,
Than balmy sleep after the eager day;
Within my heart I fold ye all, and now
Mine eyelids droop, my pillow waits for me;
Sleep calls me, too. Again, Good-night, Good-night!
Rest, O my heart, the wings of night are spread.

RUTH BALDWIN CHENERY

ROBERT BROWNING AND ELIZABETH BARRETT

In London, more than eighty years ago,
A young man read with care and thoughtful frown
A book written from deeps of his own heart;
He read aloud, as to and fro he paced,
Then paused and asked: "Why do the critics scorn?
This page is like a script etched upon brass."
(Perhaps that 'My Last Duchess' met his eye.)
"And this one throbs like human life itself."
(Was that not Pippa's song reaching for souls?)
Then Browning shut his slighted book, half sad
And half defiant: "Let them all deride.
What matter! since I know my work is real
And run in moulds like Michael Angelo's own."
He opened idly then a newer book:
"Poems by Elizabeth Barrett. Who is she?
Perhaps that woman-poet, half recluse,
And yet a singer baring all her heart,
So Kenyon said, and wedded to her griefs,
Her early griefs, almost as with a vow."
He turned page after page, lost in the tale,
And came at last with rapt look to the lines:
"I read from Browning some Pomegranite which if cut

Deep down the middle, shows a heart within,
Blood-tinctured with a veined humanity."
Then Browning's cheek flushed dark with joy and
pride:
"This woman's praise makes all neglect and spite
A trivial whisper lost in endless space."

You know the rest; the poet saw her soon,
An exquisite, shy presence, yet all grace;
Rich, curling hair shadowed the pale-rose cheek
And Sibyl eyes returned him thought for thought,
Nor waited for the music of her voice.
Months passed and then, you know, the sonnet tells:
God bless the sacred confidence, his kiss
Fell on her hand and then her brow, and last—
Keep holy silence here—upon her lips.
Her old-time griefs were solaced then
And the man-poet, confident, elate,
Fully aware of his diviner gift,
Praised her in that all-golden phrase we know:
"My Morn of Poets," and we think he mused:
"God helping me, your name with mine shall live
As long as England lends her speech to song."

RUTH BALDWIN CHENERY

IN SHAKER LAND

We sped past forests where the light
  Was sifted down through shining leaves,
And lay in patterns dark or bright
  Such as a woodland fairy weaves—

We sped where undulating land
  Rolled softly to the distant hill,
And far beyond saw mountains stand
  In the blue haze, benign and still.

We sped past loads of yellow hay
  That moved as leisurely and slow,
As English wains through English lanes
  More than three hundred years ago!

And then, we halted in green fields,
  Lovely as those the Psalmist saw
When he dreamed dreams and drew aside
  From sterner pages of the Law.

And ancient houses swung their doors
  In open welcome and we walked

But lightly over olden floors,
  Where generations paused and talked

Of war and peace, of life and death,
  Scarce thinking of the time when they
Should climb the stair with failing breath
  To watch the sunset fade away.

Ah, see those waxen forms that stay
  In frozen silence, deeper yet
Than aught they knew in life's brief day.
  Look yet again, "lest we forget."

"Lest we forget" the calm and peace
  That came with simple lives so deep
In rustic lore, and that increase
  Of faith, before they fell asleep.

RUTH BALDWIN CHENERY

NOTE. This is my mother's last poem, written in July, 1932, only a few weeks before the onset of her last illness, and printed in a denominational paper of which I have no record. A number of copies were run off for distribution among friends. On the back of her personal copy, my mother wrote: "I dashed off these verses one evening after the ride to please Miss A—the dear blind lady at Concord."

W. H. C.

150 *copies printed for Winthrop Holt Chenery*

AT THE SPIRAL PRESS · NEW YORK

December · 1934

At Vesper Time

Poems

By

Ruth Baldwin Chenery

Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point.

PASCAL.

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1917

The Knickerbocker Press, New York

To

WINTHROP AND ALICE

CONTENTS

At Vesper Time

MAN

What though from something even base I sprang,
Some ape-like figure of a primal age,
Not even the strong thrall of heritage,
Could bind me, when a thrilling voice outrang;
"Go, cleave thy way, nor fear the serpent's fang,
Not even subtle Death; for thou shalt wage
A noble strife, and rise from stage to stage,
Till reason sway thee." So the summons rang!
And I obeyed; and woman at my side,
Her tresses blown against me, fared with me
At feast or famine, and upon her knees
Tended our young; and we, awed by the wide,
Star-lighted night, found God, and shaped our plea:
"Let mighty Love outlast the stars and seas!"

WOMAN

In that dark cave, I heard my firstling's cry,
And hushed him on my breast, until he came,
My lord the hunter, that could kill or tame
The wild things of the wood, that crouch or fly;
He snatched the fish from water, and could ply
His magic with a stone and bid a flame
Make his feast ready. Oh! in pride, not shame,
I gave the child to him; I knew not why.
And so down through the ages have I borne
This miracle of life, defying death,
So that my woman's love might take this form;
God of the star-lit Night! God of the Morn!
I have no joy like watching that light breath
Heave in the tiny chest, after the storm!

MARCUS AURELIUS

How strange it seems that thou shouldst speak
to us
Far down the centuries; and that thy voice,
August and bland, despite the tumult wild
Of warring years, should still go sounding on!
So may it sound forever! Like a bell
That calls to prayer, it bids us turn away
From smoothest sophistries that hem us in,
To gaze like thee, with mild and faithful eyes,
On Truth in her majestic purity.

WHEN BEATRICE LOOKED ON DANTE

When Beatrice looked on Dante from afar,
Down from the wide and smiling fields of heaven,
And she beheld him sitting with wan cheek
And brows austere, judging the souls of men,
Haling those great ones down to deepest hell,
And dooming with a curse that sorrowing pair
To whirl through the dim space an endless age,
I think she mused: "O Dante, much I grieve
That thou shouldst lade thyself with heavy cares,
That only the great heart of God may carry;
Oh, when I see thee weigh thy brother's soul
In thy frail balance, and with look intense
Mete out his weary doom and seal his fate,
But that I have forgotten how to weep,
My tears would fall!"

SAINT AUGUSTINE

Saint Augustine! above the sons of men
Of thine own time, thou seemest still to tower,
Strong and invincible; and yet the power
That made thee king among thy fellows, when
A will of adamant or fire-tipped pen
Was needed, lay slumbering through the flower
Of aimless, misspent youth, a wasted dower
Of golden days, never to come again.
When that diviner self within thee woke,
It cast the dreamer out, and unbeguiled,
Clear-sighted, thou didst leave the clod
And mire forever, and a prophet spoke
From out thy lips unto the world—defiled,
Thou hadst become a very son of God.

GLADSTONE

May 19, 1898

Gladstone is dead, and English hearts beat low
In their thick-peopled isles with sense of loss;
In thronging cities, and in dim retreats
Of cloistered scholars, falls alike the shade
Grief casts on kindred brows; and flashed afar,
The solemn message smites upon the soul
Of all of English blood on the wide earth—
With not less pain on homeward looking men
That serve in that broad empire of the East,
And them that build a younger England there,
Surged round by the Australian seas.
And we thine Anglo-Saxon kinsmen sigh,
And look with reverent eyes upon thy grief—
We, all unused to clang of arms, so fain
To sit and brood in peace, must lift the shield,
And draw the sword for them that strive in vain.
Gladstone, thou dost not know, but not the less
We gather comfort and remember yet
Thy ringing counsel, when the subtle Turk

Ground the Armenian faces in the dust.
"England," thou criedst, "redress this bloody
wrong;
Arise and act, or from the mother-tongue
Blot out the name of honor!"

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Died April 15, 1865

Go carve enduring marbles with his name,
Who bore the martyr's palm branch in his prime,
But let some deathless song preserve his fame,
When these shall crumble in the wastes of time.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

"New birth of our new soil, the first American."
LOWELL'S *Commemoration Ode.*

Great-hearted Man, how bold are they that dare
To wind a newer laurel for thy name,
To heap up praise upon thy full-grown fame,
Or round an aureole for thy silvered hair;
For one immortal ode beyond compare,
Recites thy worth in words of such acclaim,
That we no other praise have power to frame,
O, Bearer of a nation's grief and care.
But we that may not praise, may love thee yet,
As well as he that sang the verse sublime,
For thou wert ours, O Heart, the nation's stay,
Thou Sage and Martyr! see, our eyes are wet
With tears of grateful pride, that in our time
A man so god-like, walked our common way.

JAMES A. GARFIELD

Died September 19, 1881

Thou, too, O Martyr, unto thee shall rise
The incense, Praise shall offer to the few,
Who wait unwelcome Death, with fearless eyes,
When life is sweetest and when fame is new.

WILLIAM McKINLEY

Died September 14, 1901

And thou, O gentle and O knightly Soul!
No sudden treachery could draw thee down
To render hate for hate; thy dying dole
Of mercy is not least of thy renown.

EMERSON

Great men shall praise, with words that may
endure,
This Seer-Scholar, who from all the lore
Of ancient races drew the pith and strength,
And fused it with his own for human needs;
But if he hear their praise, will not his smile,
Wise and half-sad, forbid their eulogy?
Let his great thoughts enlarge a nation's life,
And let the virile music of his verse
Awake its slumbering purpose into deeds!
Be this his praise and immortality.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

Hawthorne, I would upon thy magic page
That men might linger long and, pond'ring, find
A knowledge that might help them with their kind,
And so be gentler for thy sake; the age
Doth need thy potent teaching, poet-sage.
Thou knewest all the tumult in the mind,
When the vexed soul is torn with motions blind
That beat against the will, in helpless rage.
The thoughts of children oped before thy look
Like snowy flowers that the Spring meadows star;
Thou knew'st how Vestals pray, and heard'st how loud
The heart of manhood beats, that cannot brook
To stand and wait, when Hope soars high and far,
Like some swift bird that seeks the dazzling cloud.

LONGFELLOW

Thy songs, belovèd Bard, are household words;
Our daily task hath been enriched by thee
With lovely phrases and the minstrelsy,
That sings despite the care that life engirds,
Of that green Arcady, and flocks and herds;
And that sweet Lady with the Lamp shall be
Our shining light; and blessèd they that see
A gospel in Saint Francis and the birds,
But in thy brook-like measures' limpid flow,
The singer finds his joy, and his despair,
So simple and so perfect is thine art;
And only poets like to thee may show
The sonnet's power to mount a spirit-stair,
And reach a height that overwhelms the heart.

SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare, thy mighty name hath power to fill
The mind with images of men that strive
Or love, or quarrel; and thou mak'st alive
Those gorgeous kings and queens of old, until
We seem the dream; thy midnight fairies still
Dance light, or steal the honey from the hive;
Deep forests see sweet Rosalind arrive,
With gesture gay, and laugh like mountain rill.
Thou art not England's Shakespeare, thou art ours—
The World's—forever young, defying age;
Poets are the proud trumpet of thy name,
And sun them at the zenith of thy powers;
Imperial Rome looms greater for thy page;
Cæsar will live the longer in thy fame.

WORDSWORTH

"The Poet, gentle creature,
Hath like the lover his unruly times,
His fits when he is neither sick nor well."
The Prelude.

Poet benign, with floating silver hair,
And mien so full of conscious dignity,
As one born to the realm of Poesy,
Sweeping the lyre to song that may compare
With Milton's own, when on the charmèd air
He breathed the sweet and solemn mystery
Of strains not all of earth, part heavenly,
Half music and half thought, in fusion rare,
But, O dear Poet, when the prose hours came,
You bade them welcome, and would not perceive
That the Pierian Spring had ceased to flow;
While Shelley murmured at thy Muse's fame,
Lo! all at once, thy sky-born thoughts would weave
New spells, and winds from high Parnassus blow.

KEATS

Thou Lover of all beauty, and so fain
To find it in a rosy Hebe-face;
Or in the revels on a Grecian vase;
Or where some haunting music must complain;
Or in Endymion, soaring to the plain
Where Phœbe floats in her immortal grace;
Or in the shadows of some wooded place,
Where Saturn might have kept his ancient reign.
And yet, although thy being could respond
So utterly to these, the joys of sense,
A deeper thought would all thy mind endue,
Finding an inner meaning far beyond;
Holding with Goethe, as we all must hence,
That "nothing but the beautiful is true."

CARLYLE

Heroic Carlyle, on thy furrowed brow,
Fame lays her cool hand in all tenderness;
She knows thee now, and gladly must confess
The greatness that could never cringe or bow
To power or place; and yet, that could allow
To merit, linked with place and power, no less
Than praise; Fame greets thee now and would redress
The old blind judgments she must disavow.
Thou couldst not look upon the storied past
As one unmoved; we feel thy man's heart beat
With scorn, or sympathy; but take thy rest;
Thou hast lived all too much in labors vast,
In searching out world-secrets; now how sweet
To sleep indeed; God's peace within thy breast.

TENNYSON

January 31, 1890

Poet, thy songs from out the years come down
Laden with music of the brook and lea,
With whispers of the leaves on woodland tree,
With notes of lark and mavis, sounds that crown
The Maytime, while their happy clamors drown
The murmurs of the distant, glimmering sea;
And myriad voices rise, with minstrelsy
Of Arthur's court, met in the forest brown.
And now, I hear to silver clarion blown
Thy lay of England's banner in the East;
But most thy lofty song of Love and Death
Hath stirred the pulse, and still its thrilling tone
Shall sound through forward time, a voice released,
And souls to be shall quicken at its breath.

ON TENNYSON'S "IN MEMORIAM"

Above the murmur of thy bitter sighs,
And those keen cries of grief wrung from the soul,
I hear the music of thy prelude roll
To that "Strong Son of God" the Heavenly-Wise;
In all thy musings under sombre skies,
And in thy longings, passionate with pain,
It sounds again in pathos of refrain,
More subtly than soft clouds of incense rise.
In all the tender hymning of thy love,
Thy splendid strivings after Faith that pries
Through Nature, weary of her stony face,
The rhythms of thy deep measures onward move
To that full harmony that underlies
The deepest mysteries of time and space.

TENNYSON ON HIS OWN "IN MEMORIAM"

"Ere these have clothed their branchy bowers
With fifty Mays, thy songs are vain."

The English Oaks have "clothed their branchy bowers"
For more than fifty Mays, and yet thy songs
Live on, O Poet, for to them belongs
Ascetic grace, as pure as Alpine flowers;
And that immortal grief of thine still showers
With blessing of immortal words, the throngs
That still their weeping, while their spirit longs
For faith like thine, that over doubt still towers.
The oaks shall wither, and their green shall be
An ancient memory, yet no eclipse
Shall fall upon thy noblest and thy best:
English as Nelson! with a soul as free,
Master of poesy, as he of ships,
Thy fame, like his, writ in the English breast!

DICKENS

Upon the beaten road of life we fare,
Sometimes in glorious sunshine, and again,
Gazing through the thick mist of tears; but men
Have found a friend in thee, one who will share
Their daily joys and sorrows, and will dare
To fling the gauntlet, and take up the pen,
Attacking coward wrong, in thieving den,
Or cruel school, or Pharisaic prayer.

But in thy gentler aspects, thou hast taught
How much of steadfast faith and love hold fast
Within the breasts of men, and thou hast shown
To us our foibles, not concealing aught;
We wince at first, then smile, and at the last,
Yield to Homeric laughter like thine own.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Hast thou forgotten, Master, all the play
Of the old magic in that busy brain,
That wove with subtle warp and woof, a train
Of fancies weird, or jocund as the day?
Hast thou forgotten all the mystic sway
Of Poesy, that sings a deep refrain,
For "love of lovely words?" Oh, all in vain!
No answer cometh, though we long delay.
Yet though these gracious gifts be overpast,
Thou canst not die; for greater far than these
Was that strong soul of thine that swept deceit
From out thy path, and turned thee first and last,
With faith that shamed the bigot, to the seas,
Or lands, where God might lead thy weary feet.

IBSEN

Like some old Viking, thou, that from the prow
Of his rude sea craft gazed across the main,
Choosing whom he should conquer; yet again
He lives in thee, and doth with power endow
To shake not lands, but souls, that can but bow
To thy stern buffetings, for thou art fain,
Like some relentless fate, scorning at pain,
To brand mankind upon the breast and brow.
Yet as thy fiords lie gleaming in the sun,
When the Norwegian summer spreads its bloom
After the winter, so ofttimes, thy page
Shimmers with a poetic beauty, won
From inspiration that casts out the gloom,
And sends forth rays to last from age to age.

ZOLA

Thy books, men say, are terrible and dark,
Thronging with sullen shapes of sin, that haunt
The chambers of the brain, with power to daunt
The stoutest heart; I know not, I but mark
Thy glorious deed, thy courage sheer and stark,
In that dread time, when Dreyfus, worn and gaunt,
Endured on that lone isle a nation's taunt,
Until life dwindled to a flickering spark.
Then, O thou great Accuser! then didst thou
Stand up in wrath, defying Martial Pride
And those smooth Clerics; in thy bold advance,
Hurling the truth, making a mighty vow
To spend thyself for him, and breast the tide
Of raging hate, to wipe a stain from France.

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

No page of drama, no, not Shakespeare's own,
Projects a bolder form and face than thine;
No prouder soul e'er heard the voice divine
Of Poesy, when in her trumpet tone
She calls to gallant deeds; but not alone
To arms she called, she waked that heart of thine
To deathless love, yet bade thee to resign
All hope; but breathing fervent line on line,
You won a lover's prayer, but not thine own—
And yet, ah yet, my noble Gascon! thou,
Hating the false, and scorning compromise,
Died'st playing out a part, nor let thine own
High nature, writ upon that suff'ring brow,
Claim its own due, till in that fierce surprise
Where hand to hand with Death, thou fought'st alone.

TO JOSEPH JEFFERSON

It must be sweet to feel thy power,
To know that thousands wait to greet
Thy coming, with the joyous shower
Of welcome thou dost always meet.

But when thou speakest, silence falls
On that great throng, that not one word
Of thine be wasted; mute the walls
That echoed when the greeting stirred

Then wave-like, laughter falls and flows,
And lightly care is blown away;
While all the spirit inly glows;
Life is forgotten in the play.

Ah then! the pathos of thine air,
The magic of thy voice, shall change
The subtle spell and waken there,
In deeper hearts, a tremor strange.

For one shall lift a deathless song,
And one shall poise his Hermes fair,
And one shall live to trample wrong,
And one shall offer wingèd prayer.

But thou, O Player, hast the grace
To touch and teach the human heart.
God's love be with thee and thy race,
And may it nevermore depart!

Then sweet indeed shall rest be found
Beneath thy trees and swaying vines,
Lulled by the wave and the dear sound
Of children's voices in the pines.

JEANNE D'ARC

A peasant maid! she led her flock of sheep
Along the sunny pastures to the stream,
Moving her lips in prayer as in a dream,
Wrapped in a mystery profound and deep,
Where heavenly voices call her to a steep
And rugged path, on which she sees a gleam
Of light ineffable; so shall it beam
When death shall close those virgin eyes in sleep.
But, oh, before that longed-for rest shall come,
What pleadings, what farewells, what fiery zeal,
What noise of armies, and what victor cries
Shall shake her soul! nor can betrayal numb
So great a faith, that for her country's weal
Spent in the martyr's flame its last low sighs.

LOUIS XVI

O hapless Louis! in thy veins there ran
The blood of sixty kings, yet France was loth
To do thee homage; court and people both
Fell from thee, and a dark, sinister ban
Lay on thy royal head, O wretched man!
Thou and thy fathers broke the kingly oath,
And cruel hunger made the people wroth,
And passion rose like flame the wind doth fan.
And yet, O blind and halting as thou wert,
Not knowing if to stay, or if to flee,
When danger did but threaten, at the last,
When the loud drums preceding thee proclaimed
Thy death at hand, his spirit lived in thee—
Saint Louis the Crusader was not shamed.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Thou never to the heart of France wast dear;
An alien woman from the Austrian stem
The people saw in thee; no deep-cut gem
That glittered on thy bosom, might appear
More cold to them than thou; with doubtful sneer
Mute masses at thy coming did contemn,
With silence, more than speech; and naught to them,
Thy sovereign grace, or thy most bitter tear
O Beauteous One to perish in thy prime!
But to the scaffold thou didst walk in pride,
Trampling the griefs that whitened ere the years,
Thy queenly head; sheer courage, like a tide,
Rose in thy breast, so high and so sublime,
Even yet our hearts dilate, too proud for tears.

CHARLOTTE CORDAY LOOKING UPON MARAT

O piteous Charlotte, who shall shrive
  Thy soul from this dark stain?
Wash off this plague-spot! lest it rive
  Asunder thought and brain!

For this is blood on thy slight hand,
  And on the milk-white fold
Across thy breast, and this blue band,
  That round thy hair was rolled.

Unknit thy brows from that dull stare,
  Fixed in a marble calm!
For he is dead, thy victim there,
  Beyond all help or harm.

Marat is dead! see the great hands
  Relax; the fierce head falls;
He neither hears nor understands,
  Though someone knocks and calls.

Knot up thy hair; it falls abroad,
A shower of golden brown,
Straighten thy bodice; have a care,
Ere they shall fling thee down,

And call thee "murd'ress," patriot maid;
They rage without the door!
It yields! but thou art not afraid—
Marat fears death no more.

O piteous Charlotte, on thy breast
Forever lies this brand:
"I am of those who dare to wrest
God's judgments from his hand."

EUGÉNIE DE GUÉRIN

Gentle and gracious Spirit, come again!
Be with us as we read thy pages rare.
While we fling by the great world's numbing care,
And on the casement beats the summer rain.
Unveil to us the mystic's joy and pain,
O pure and fervent soul, and let us share,
Though all unmeet, thy thought, thy wingèd prayer;
Humble and bless our spirits, cold and vain.
Blue skies of Languedoc arch high and deep,
As hand in hand with thee, through meadows fair,
Hearing thy vibrant voice, we seem to stray;
We shut the book and yet the illusion keep—
A woman fit to grace a court, or wear
The halo of a saint has passed our way.

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

Unto thy faithful heart the summons came
As unto John in Patmos, when so keen
The call came to thee, "Write what thou hast seen;
Go, waken men that slumber, to the blame
That dims the splendor of their country's name,
And makes of her a by-word, for I mean
To weigh them in the balance, and between
Their brows to set the signet of their shame."
O Woman-Seer! thou didst write a tale
That woke the stifled conscience, and drew forth
Indignant tears; and pity like a wave
Swept round the world, and in its trail
At last came justice, and the South and North
Saw God within the whirlwind come to save.

LUCY STONE

When twilight falls and all the silver grey
Invites to musing, then I ponder long
Upon life's power and meaning, and a song
Wells from the heart, grateful that such as they,
Strong men and women, faithful to the sway
Of hard, insistent service, moved along
Our foot-worn paths, ennobling all the throng
With lofty standards lifted to the day.
In that high company, a chosen one
Moved on serene in gracious womanhood;
Shriven from self, she had the seer's gaze
To foresee human needs, for not alone
By bread a race may live; she understood
That love with justice, love alone outweighs.

JULIA WARD HOWE

How often, when she entered, did we rise
And stand in waiting hundreds till she passed
Serenely to her place, from whence she cast
Such gracious looks on all around, from eyes
Undimmed as yet by age, so kind, so wise,
That awe mixed with our love, and when at last
Her low voice broke the silence, hearts beat fast,
Stirred by the solemn words we hoard and prize!
O Sibyl-eyes! O eloquent white hair!
Ye helped the burning message find its goal
In our true breasts; for not in easeful age
Wast thou content to dwell; thy brooding care
Yearned over all, O mother of the soul
That thou hast wakened to its heritage.

CHARLOTTE BRONTË

Thou, Charlotte Brontë, art more real to me
Than half the Juno-women that I meet;
Thy slender form and shy looks come to greet
Still once again, as in my girlhood free;
I seem to hear thee speak, to live with thee
In thy life-warm creations, that still beat
Even as with thy pulse; and at thy feet
I lay this leaf plucked from the laurel tree.
Thy virile Yorkshire men still stride the moor,
Or play the wizard, or make stormy love;
Thy women, made of fire and dew, still hold
Their wistful charm; however bleak and poor
Thy moorland home, it brought us wealth above
Thy dreams, dear Charlotte, or the miser's gold.

EMILY BRONTË

O, Spirit-maid, life ebbs and flows, and still
The wonder lasts, a girl's white soul could know
The urge of headlong passion, and the woe,
When man's fierce heart disdains both good and ill;
But even if you guessed it from the thrill
Of storied page, who gave you power to throw
Such glamor round it, that our hearts beat low,
Almost in fear, and all against our will?
The moors long waited for your footstep light,
That hardly crushed the heather where it fell;
They missed the vision of sweet maiden grace,
Rose-like, transparent cheek, and figure slight;
You came no more your eerie dreams to tell,
For Genius drew you to her own embrace.

CONSTANCE FENIMORE WOOLSON

In some green field of asphodel,
Beside a blue and placid stream,
Thou liest asleep, in lovely dream
Of music from some far-off bell.

When thou shalt waken from that sleep,
In the bright presence at thy side,
Behold an angel, come to guide
And lead thee up a flowery steep.

Oh, he shall discourse tenderly,
And shed a glory in his glance,
And thou shalt listen in a trance,
As we have listened unto thee.

Then he shall tell of mystic things,
While more majestic grows his face,
Till soaring into light and space,
He bears thee on with shining wings.

TO LADY GREGORY

Artist! no need hast thou of all the pride
Of storied castles, long-drawn galleries,
Hung with escutcheons, showing forth the rise
Of some great race from pictured knights that ride
Forever into battle, sword on side;
Nor yet these haughty ladies, from whose eyes
The light yet seems to sparkle, while their guise
Of nymph or shepherdess is all belied.
No gawds like these; a cabin poor and bare,
A table set with delf, a low peat fire,
A child, a vagrant with a voice of gold,
The tragic silence of a steep, worn stair,
A folk-song with old words that never tire—
Mid these, thy flower of genius doth unfold.

THE MADONNA OF THE CHAIR

To A. C. F.

Serene young mother, with thy rosy boy,
  Pressed to thy breast! thy meekly parted hair,
Thy tranquil eyes, thy look of softened joy,
  Remind me of that Holy Mother fair.

Thy graceful head down-bending to the child,
  In eloquence of tenderness and care,
Thy lovely level brows, thine aspect mild,
  Recall the dear Madonna of the Chair.

TO M. F. W. H.

1913

Within the measured sonnet's metred round,
Let me embalm thy memory aright,
Thy classic face, thine earnest eyes alight
With sympathy; the zeal that never found
A task too hard; thy loyalty as sound
As tempered steel; thy more than woman's might
To crush thy griefs far down and out of sight,
That thou in ministries might more abound.
What though to thee 'twere easier to lead
Than wait to follow? When so plain the path
Lay through the golden grain of some wide field
Ripe to the sickle, thou wert glad indeed
To lead the way; our love is aftermath
Of thine own life, the later harvest-yield.

TO E. M. L.

With light and graceful movements, and sweet eyes,
And hair that rippled to a classic coil,
In youth thou look'dst a being that might foil
The deep designs that Time might yet devise;
He wore thy strength with every test that tries,
With care, with grief, with ease, with earnest toil;
But that staunch woman-heart he could not spoil:
He could but make thee yet more brave and wise.
Thy buoyant mien hath vanished long ago;
Pain traces a light network on thy brow;
Thy beauty is but shadow-like and faint.
Yet, though the waning fires of life burn low,
Still to thine own, guide and protectress, thou!
We know not which to call thee, "friend," or "saint."

COURAGE

IN MEMORIAM—MAVIS H——

O Courage, let men joy in thy high heart,
That scorns at craven fear, and waves a hand
Of glad compliance, when by sea or land
War summons them; they fear no dart
Of lightning from the ships, and seek their part
Where danger is the surest; crave command
To fill some gap, and like a wall to stand
Facing a stormy death, and so depart.

But braver still than these, who match their powers
Against the fire and steel, when Honor calls
So loud in trumpet tones, are those, I deem,
That years cannot defeat with Pain; in hours
Of sullen night, no gloom or doubt appalls,
They smile at Death! oh, victory supreme!

A GREETING TO BROWNING LOVERS

Lovers of Robert Browning, could we praise
  Our Poet-Master in a dreamy verse,
  That born and steeped in music, might rehearse
His mighty genius, building phrase on phrase,

He scarce would thank us; for the victor bays
  Are green about his brow, and no reverse
  Can ever dim them: fame howe'er perverse,
No more can vex him with her long delays.

O, let us feel like him the joy of life;
  The throstle's singing and the hawthorne flower
Cheered his whole soul, and nothing mean or sad

Made him despair that man shall rise through strife;
  "God's in his heaven!" we will not flinch or cower,
So shall we make the Heart of Browning glad.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

I

Not from the "Portuguese," O Lady, nay,
Despite the languorous eyes, the oval face,
The heavy clustering hair, no southern race
Bare thee upon its stem, for the deep play
Of all thy rhythmic pulses did betray
An English-hearted woman, with no trace
Of Latin blood; yet more than Latin grace
Breathed in thy song, winging its upward way.
But English ivies, and the hollow sound
Of waves that lash the cliffs were not more dear
To thee, O singer, than dark olive trees,
Or fair Italian cities, clustering round
Blue shimmering bays where one must ever hear
Deep breathings of the ocean stretched at ease.

II

Though grace and beauty wove for thee a spell
So deep and constant, yet thou couldst not rest

In their enchantment, for within thy breast
There beat so high a heart that naught befell
Mankind, in palace or in prison cell,
And found thee passive; and thine interest
Was sometimes passion; for the burden pressed
On hapless childhood fell on thee as well.
But not in those weak tears that women shed
Didst thou show pity; no, not even for these,
And not for giant wrongs Italia bore;
But thou didst fuse thy soul in words that sped,
Fire-tipped and scathing, o'er a waste of seas,
To stir the heart of England to its core.

ON THE BRONZE CLASPED HANDS OF ROBERT AND ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

O, Poet-hands, so closely clasping there
In that mute, shining bronze, that shall outlast
Great centuries to be and, holding fast,
Reveal to stranger eyes a love more fair,
More even-weighted for each heart to share,
Than any classic poet of the past
Has sung to us, in mood however vast,
Teach then, as now, clasped hands, that love is prayer.
And when this bronze in farther ages still,
Lies ruined, low, shattered in golden dust,
Then shall the love it storied forth so long,
Smiling at Death and Time, move to fulfil
Its spacious task, moulding in joyous trust
Sublimer purpose in sublimer song.

SONNET ON BROWNING'S MASTERPIECE "THE RING AND THE BOOK"

O Ring, no slender, narrow circlet thou!
Enwrought thou liest firm and massive there,
Welded of virgin gold; some craftsman rare
Enriched thee thus, mayhap for marriage vow.

Old Yellow Book, the centuries allow
A thousand readers, and but one aware
Thou hadst a soul; when in that Florence square
* The wind of inspiration swept his brow:

Behold, O ye the Poet's voice awakes,
Another Ring, from gold was never mined,
To guard his Singer's "golden verse," he said;

Another Book, which tells that morning breaks,
With Phosphor-star of Truth, for humankind;
This Ring and Book, forever shall be wed.

* "A spirit laughs and leaps through every limb,
And lights my eye, and lifts me by the hair."

BROWNING SAID OF "THE RING AND THE BOOK:"

"It lives, if precious be the soul of man to man."

O thou Great Soul, with what a joyous beat
The heart still throbs at thine exultant cry,
For thou art not of those that would deny
To Genius, even thine own, the largess meet;
It was not thine to taste the lulling sweet
Of early praise; for long did men decry
The greatness of thy powers, but for reply,
At last, Fame cast her laurels at thy feet.
"If precious be the soul of man to man,
It lives"; what though the centuries forget
It's crowding details, as the English plod
Forever forward in Heaven's unknown plan:
"It lives"; its truth shall be immortal yet,
If precious be the soul of man to *God*.

THE MAGDALEN

He sat in Simon's house, a slighted guest,
No kiss upon his cheek, no ointment brought
To soothe the weary head, heavy with thought,
No water for the feet so soon to rest;
And then she came, the Magdalen, confessed
A sinner, and poured out the spikenard, bought
At so great price, upon his feet, and caught
Her breath in sobs that shook her grateful breast.
Then to the cynic Pharisee, Christ told,
With noble gestures, as when one commands,
The story of the debtors; all the feast
Delayed to hear the moving tale unfold;
Proud Simon drooped his head upon his hands,
When that stained woman rose, from sin released.

TO A WOMAN SEEN ON THE STREET

O thou marred face! and wast thou e'er
  Lighted with girlhood's smile,
Those heavy-lidded eyes, once fair,
  Before they knew this guile?

What can we say to thy maimed soul,
  O wreck of sisterhood?
Thy scornful smile accepts no dole;
  Hate is thy daily food.

We dare not judge thee, piteous one,
  We women safe in fold;
We know not how thy tears have run,
  From eyes now over-bold.

We only know thy straying feet
  Must sometime find the way,
For God knows nothing of defeat,
  In all that seems delay.

THE WINGS OF NIGHT ARE SPREAD

A light wind stirs, and night broods o'er the
earth,
That seems at last to sink to sleep, and here,
Slumber more sweet than Hybla's honey, lays
A spell on all my dearest and they dream,
Forgetting that the day will come again;
Rest, O my heart, the wings of night are spread.

I see thee, O my mother, full of years,
I mark the chiselled beauty of thy face,
The silken hair, parted like silver wings,
On the low brow so lined with grief and care,
Thou lookst an agèd Queen lying in state,
Rest thee, dear Heart, the wings of night are
spread.

Gently I ope this door, lest I awake
The husband and the father from his rest;
Peaceful his brow, his stalwart frame relaxed,
One massive hand lies nerveless on his breast,
The hand that fends between the world and us,
Sleep, O Belovèd, thine and mine sleep too.

And at the children's doors I linger long,
Ye sleep to-night beneath your father's roof;
How know I what huge distance calls you forth
Within the coming years, what other hearths
Shall win you from us! Ye are ours to-night;
Rest, O my heart, the wings of night are spread.

What can I wish thee better, dearest ones,
Than balmy sleep after the eager day;
Within my heart I fold ye all, and now
Mine eyelids droop, my pillow waits for me,
Sleep calls me, too; again, Good-night, Good-night;
Rest, O my heart, the wings of night are spread.

IN THE EVENING OF LIFE

Dearest, not far before us lies
  The parting of the ways,
As one by one, the sunset skies
  Close on these golden days.

I pray that I may be the one
  To 'scape a numbing woe;
To leave my task, though crudely done
  And fold my hands and go.

And yet, and yet, how could I bear
  To leave thee all the pain?
Ah me, to choose I may not dare,
  Though choosing is but vain.

* * * * * *

Be still, my heart! for he is called,
  The tender and the wise;
Hush! make no moan! but sit enthralled;
  He walks in Paradise.

SEARCHING FOR GOD

Illimitable Water, stretching dim,
To that far line where sky and ocean meet,
With tireless waves that hurry and retreat,
Dost thou know God? My sorrow seeketh him.

And thou, O Mountain, lifting to the sky,
Thy silent forests in the amber air,
That Springtime twilight sheds, divinely fair,
Dost thou know God? Grief longs for thy reply.

They did but answer, cautiously and slow,
"He made us, Mortal, therefore go in peace;
We know not sorrow, no, nor yet surcease;
Our task, to watch the ages come and go."

But, O the City Streets! the Human Tide!
The crowds of men and women, proud or mean,
Unlocked the sluices of a faith so keen,
I knew God there, I felt Him at my side!

"THY WILL BE DONE"

O grief-worn Son of God, upon thy head
The stars of night a pitying watch did keep,
While near at hand, but sunk in selfish sleep,
Thy friends lay prone, unheeding as the dead.
But when the yielding will within thee said:
"Thy will be done!" thou heardst the sweep
Of angel wings, and from the awful steep
Of sheer despair, thy feet were backward led;
So wast thou comforted; and yet, how hard—
Yea, even now, though thou hast shown the way—
To conquer grief, for us to smite the breast,
And trample self upon the barren shard,
And cry, "Thy will be done!" O blessèd they
Who can submit, for so shall they find rest.

THE LYRE

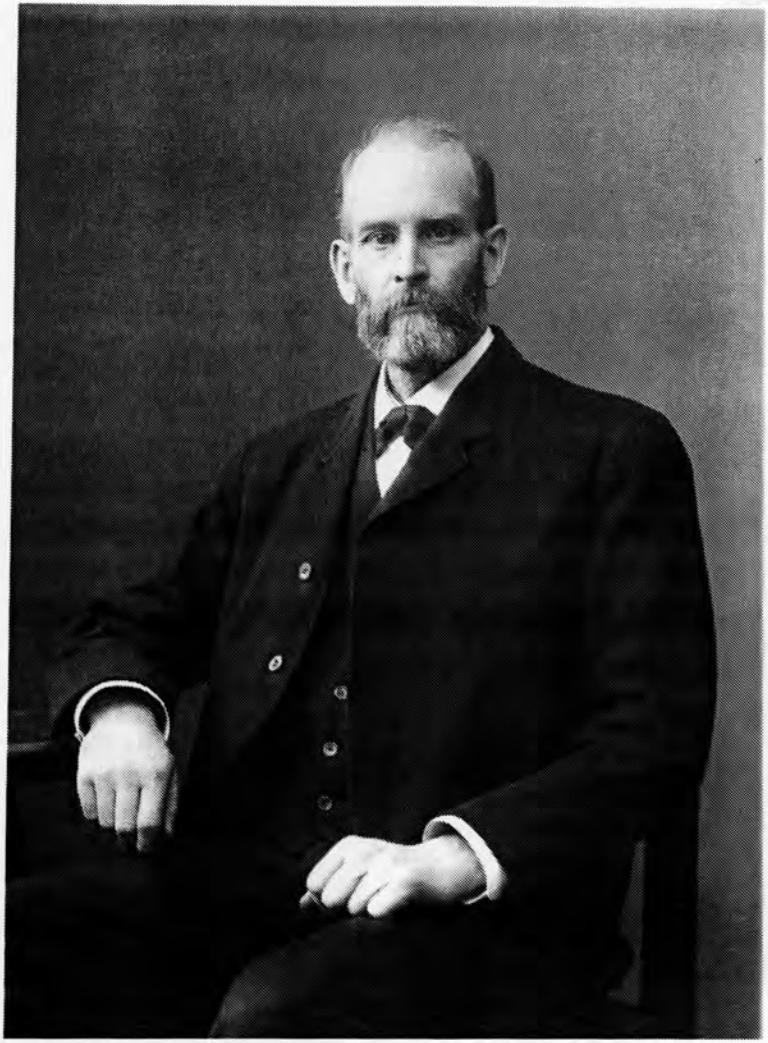
Now all the more, this slender lyre of mine,
Of so few strings and all so seldom used,
Its tone of late with sorrow interfused,
Shall still ring true and sing of things divine;
Of Truth that knows no change and no decline,
Of Faith that cannot falter or refuse,
Of Love that triumphs, though it seem to lose,
Of Hope that faints not while one star shall shine.
And when my lyre shall sing of these high themes,
My fingers shall not tremble on the strings,
For I have naught to do with coward fears;
Humility makes bold; and yet, meseems,
Although my life is fed from hidden springs,
I must have time to staunch these blinding tears.

THE FATHER-HEART

W. L. C.

1845–1915

His was the Father-Heart that blessed us then,
With that high nature of abounding cheer
And central strength, incapable of fear;
Not quailing at the death of well-loved men,
But living in a trust beyond the ken
Even of his own poised soul; and holding dear
Each man and woman; and forever clear
Of mean suspicion in his word and pen.
But we, his dearest, cannot well extol—
We fear to wound his sacred memory,
With lavish words, that seek to phrase
His charity and nobleness of soul;
For somehow, still, his gentle dignity,
With finger on his lip, forbids our praise.



MY TASKS

The years crowd on me, and the well-loved task
Slips from my hand, no longer needing me;
No longer children, leaning on my knee,
Tax wisdom with the questions that they ask;
No more in the warm sunshine may we bask,
And talk again of bird, and flower, and bee;
Nor read the poets, nor in history
See kingdoms crumbling, when the great unmask.
No more to thee, Belovèd, am I now,
Thine other eyesight, in advancing years,
For thou hast passed, and left me here alone;
But I am needed to fulfil a vow
The spirit makes, that though Faith yield to tears,
It shall not waver, or be overthrown.

THE HOME

November, 1915

The home, that through long years was dear to me,
Still lies all bathed in sunshine, as of old;
Yet silence makes the very walls seem cold,
That once responded to the minstrelsy,
Of flute-like voice and viol, that could free
The spirit from its cares; O, all untold
The worth of olden hours! as manifold
In gifts as fruit upon a lavish tree.
The father and the son, at twilight time,
Sat side by side and gravely talked,
Enwrapped in a companionship profound;
And then, the evening lamp, the book sublime,
When "gentle Shakespeare entered" and we walked
With Kings and Queens upon enchanted ground.

The Common Street house in Belmont. Grandma's room was in the upper righthand corner. Over towards the neighbors' house, you can just make out a small workshed, which was used by Grandma's father. She liked to play there. She remembers there was a big poster of the Statue of Liberty pinned up on one wall.

TRUTH

And what is Truth? It is the primal word
The morning stars sang in the heavenly space,
When on their axes rolled, they found their place,
As the vast universe in order stirred.

Truth is the naked fact, whispered unheard,
Or cried upon the housetop, with no trace
Of e'er so slight alloy, even for grace;
The martyrs died to keep it all unblurred.

And he who would to perfect truth attain,
Must be as single-hearted as a child,
Turning aside from lure of privilege,

Or passionate pursuit of any gain;
Of measured golden speech, serene and mild,
More potent than the sword of double-edge.

FAITH

Faith is the strength in which we dare to say:
O bitter Grief, thou shalt not break my heart,
For truly I am stronger than thou art;
Thou canst not altogether have thy way;
For if I cannot praise, I yet can pray,
And this will pour a balm upon thy smart,
And I will rule thee, since we may not part,
And thou shalt grow more tender, day by day.

Faith is the strength in which men dare to die,
Walking the fiery path the martyrs trod,
Seeking with joy their uttermost to give,
In a blind trust, nor ever asking why;
But unto us give greater strength, O God!
Give us the strength by which we dare to *live.*

BEYOND THE VEIL

RECOGNITION

Oh, then, after the "Is it thou?" "And thou?"
The clasping hands, the hush and eloquence
Of that first silence, in the rapt suspense!
No need of any spoken word or vow,
Leaning with cheek to cheek, and brow to brow;
Till thou, at last, "Before thou camest hence,
How fared it with thee in that world of sense?
Tell me; thou wilt forget, an hour from now."
Then I, "Belovèd, all was well, although
I felt an ache in every stretching field,
And my old trick of laughter was forgot;
All was not gloom, for all men seemed to know
And love thee; and their tearful praise did yield
Dew to my heart—although thou heardst it not."

SORROW ASLEEP

Sleep, Sorrow, cradled in my breast!
  Peace! do not wake! my foot is light,
And careful not to break thy rest;
  My woman's hand is fine and slight,
And it shall lie above thy nest,
  And brood and hush thee in the night.
Sleep, Sorrow, cradled in my breast!

THOU KNOWEST

"Thou knowest": this is sometimes all our
prayer;
Thou knowest: let us leave with Thee our care;
Thou knowest: all the bitterness of grief;
Thou knowest: the deep calm of Thy relief.

COMRADES

Sometime, I know this heart-deep verse I writ
To share mine own, without a thought of fear,
Will touch some unknown woman-soul and knit
Her heart to mine, as to a comrade dear.

IN THE TROLLEY CAR

The swart Italian in the trolley car,
  Hoarded his children in his arms and breast;
The mother, all unheeding, sat afar,
  Her splendid eyes were vague, her lips compressed.

One Raphael-boy slipped from his father's knee,
  Climbed to her side, and gently stroked her cheek,
She turned away, and would not hear his plea,
  She turned away, and would not even speak.

With trembling lips the child crept back again
  To the warm shelter of his father's breast;
We looked indignant pity, for till then
  We thought that mother-love bore every test.

We rose to go, the father-mother said,
  In deep, low tones, "Don' t'inka hard, you bet
The younges' was too-seeck, and he is *dead*,
  She will be alla right, when she forget."

When she forgets! "Great-Heart," hold closer yet
Thy precious brood and let it feel no lack!
Until her soul shall wake, but not forget,
When the warm tides of love come surging back.

IN A MUSIC HALL

Let us speak low, this place is dedicate
To thee, Euterpè, goddess of the lyre,
Thou that canst wake from dreams, and urge
with fire,
The drooping soul, to strive anew with fate.

Ah, sweet Euterpè, soften thou the pain
Of bitter losses, and of brooding care;
Then fling a joyous strain upon the air,
And youthful hearts shall dance to thy refrain.

MOUNT VICTORIA AT SUNRISE

LAKE LOUISE, ALBERTA

Victoria, Queen Mountain! all night long
The stars have looked upon thy state, and seen
Thy pure white mantle folded on thy breast,
And thy proud head lifting its snowy crown
Into the steel-cold heaven, as Sovereign there.
But lo! the starlight pales! Dawn cometh now!
A rosy veil spreads over thy white robes;
Again the sun begins his age-long suit,
And claims thy crown; but oh, how virginal
Art thou, O most austere, yet lovely one!
Thou wilt not own him Lord, Empress of Snows!
Thou art not lonely, no; thy sisters twain,
Deep-bosomed mountains, wait on either hand,
To do thee homage as the fairest one—
Dense-wooded at the base, their sunny slopes
Shimmer with velvet grass, although so stern
Their awful foreheads.
The wondrous crystal lake, lies at thy feet,
A liquid emerald, where thou and thine
May see the pictured image of thy loveliness.

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY AT SUNSET

St. Louis, October, 1914

Not Oxford's "dreaming spires," nor any pile
Where learning holds her treasures to her breast,
Excels thy grandeur, when the lavish West
Pours forth her crimson billows mile on mile.
O sunset glory! linger yet awhile,
And drench with color the long walls, and crest
The castellated towers with fire, and rest,
Ere night shall lead thee down her long defile.
Queen Mother!—so shall thy children call thee—
Sitting in state upon thy wind-swept hill,
Aware of waking fame, abide and grow;
Beckon thine own, and gather at thy knee
New generations, steadfast to fulfil
Thy lofty hopes, while sunsets come and go.

THE HATE OF HATE

Brave English, do ye not remember well
That aged Singer, whom we count so great,
Chanted the "scorn of scorn," the "hate of hate,"
Though this stern time, he could not then foretell?
Let "hate of hate," be as a warning bell,
Sounding till the vast tumult shall abate;
If it be true we half command our fate,
And half deserve, O Brothers, choose not hell.
The "hate of hate," high words for him who dares,
Huddled in the deep trenches, wet and cold,
Poising his gun upon the clayey sod,
And blenching not, when the grim shell outflares;
He grips his task—sheer duty keeps him bold—
He dares not *hate*, there in the sight of God!

6

CALL ME NOT YET

Call me not yet, from this Thy wayward world,
Not that I fear to leave the company
Of mountain heights, nor the serenity
Of new-waked morning, with her dews impearled,
Or fleets of homing ships, with sails unfurled,
Or present friends, or those of memory,
Or dearest kin, or poignant harmony;
Call me not yet from out Thy wayward world.
Call me not hence, until the warring hosts
Are hushed to peace; until the costly flesh,
Shaped in the womb of woman, is not cast
As waste upon a field of crowding ghosts;
Ah God! the charge is on, and men enmesh,
And crush, and shatter, and the hell-fires blast!

"ONLY THE BEST OF LIFE"

To G. C. H.

1851–1910

My Brother, dost thou turn on that far shore,
  Gazing as out to sea, back to our earth,
  And note the mad confusion, and the dearth
That straitens nations; and heard'st thou the roar
Of mighty shells, that mowed down men, and tore
  The front of Rheims, and crumpled age and birth,
  Into the clay? What then were Heaven worth!
Thy blessedness were marred forevermore.
Ah no, no murmur of this Titan-strife,
  Shall mar thy peace; thy memory, perhaps,
    Records no pain, and only conscious seems
Of noble friendships, and the best of life,
  Trust, love, warm-hearted laughter, and the lapse
    Of fruitful years, all-golden, as in dreams.

"THE LUSITANIA"

I

Go forth, O noble Ship, and bear along
A little world, hidden in thy deep breast,
Of men and women, babes to bosom pressed,
And children singing stray notes of a song;
For there are statesmen in that varied throng,
Writers and artists following their behest,
And there are lovers at life's topmost crest,
And many bronzèd sailors, tall and strong.
Our blessing on thee, O majestic Ship!
Take all these precious human lives to port,
For what are black and sudden storms to thee?
Thou wilt but smile, as at their childish sport,
So safe, so strong, thou feelst thyself to be.

II

O Ship, what aileth thee? What giant shock
Hath made thee quiver, and thy funnels veer
From their proud lines, to dip as if in fear?

And why do men pour forth, and call, and knock
At every door, and loose the boats, and block
The way of all return, and tie the gear
Of life-belts onto others, careless here
Of their own lives, these men of hero-stock?
And mothers clasp their babies in their arms,
While wide-eyed children cling about their knees.
No man or woman quails; fear has no room;
They are beyond the reach of all alarms;
The mighty ship is staggering in the seas,
And with a roaring plunge goes to her doom.

III

Farewell! farewell! deep ocean's oozy floor
Must pillow every head, for there they lie,
Done to their death; and yet, they cannot die—
In spite of surge, and all the deep uproar
Of sullen billows, they have reached the shore
Of all true hearts: we seem to hear them cry:
"Remember, oh remember, from the Sky
Our vengeance cometh; weep for us no more.'
And now we sing their praise, and tell how Fame
Had loved their names, could they with us have
stayed
A few more years to make some rich bequest—

Immortal deeds, or words set all aflame;
Done to their death; yet they had sovereign aid,
For Thou, Lord God, hast drawn them to thy breast.

RUSSIA

Colossal Russia, latest of the lands
To spurn the yoke! How long its weight has
pressed
Upon thy giant shoulders! Hast thou guessed
Thy strength at last, and broke the iron bands
The monarchs forged, as they were ropes of
sand?
Remember ye that Ivan! guard Thee, lest
His brood with subtle promise, may infest
The wav'ring soldiery he understands.

O, Russia of the steppes of flowers and wheat,
O Russia of the frozen plains and seas,
Russia of cities, and the bloody clod
Of those Siberian wastes; may no defeat,
Fall on thy banners rippling in the breeze,
That blows upon Thee from the hills of God!

AT LAST

I

At last, belovèd Country, oh, at last,
Thy grave words flouted, now gird on thy sword!
Else thou should'st seem but vassal to that lord
That strangles Belgium, and holds her fast,
That crushes Serbia, although aghast,
The world cries out: "No tyrant reigns afford
A tale of such black wrongs; no blood outpoured,
Cries out so loud to Heaven from the past!"

Columbia, O Belovèd, O sublime,
Colossal in thy patience as thy strength,
Thou canst endure no more; what, is the sea,
The highway of the nations through all time,
Forbidden thee, except the tether-length
The haughty war-lord now metes out to thee!

II

Our Country, O Columbia, how grand
  Thy woman-stature, how magnificent
  Thy crown of throbbing stars, how eloquent
Thy speech, that even aliens understand!
For thou dost stoop and take them by the hand,
  Thy foster-children, for thy care is spent
  Upon us all; and we are brothers blent
In one obedience, once thou shalt command.

Goddess and Mother! call unto us now,
  And we will answer with a mighty cry,
  From mountain unto mountain, sea to sea;
Send thy ships forth, thy hand upon each prow!
We are thy sons, proud so to live or die,
On some far field, as not unworthy Thee.

FURTHER POEMS

Being mostly verse written after the publication of her book in 1917

Ruth Baldwin Chenery

MONA LISA

You can't mean, Mona Lisa dear,
To patronize from sick-room wall;
I am the greater lady here
For everyone comes at my call.

I have no "wonder-coif," I fear,
Nor such a dazzling, snowy neck,
But no one minds you much, my dear,
And every one runs at my beck.

Don't bend your *grande dame* looks on me,
With famous, enigmatic smile;
Let artists rave! (They seem to be
In favor of your static style.)

Forget, great lady, all your state —
Forget for me your place in art —
Ah, now with love your eyes dilate;
I knew that smile belied your heart.

TO HELEN KELLER

Beloved, it is we who are the blind,
Who meet with careless eyes the morning light,
And idly watch the pageant of the night.
Where star and planet move in path assigned;
And we, too, are the deaf, so slow to find
A rapture from the song of bird in flight,
Or call of billows to a shore in sight;
But God hath sent thee to unseal our mind.

Teach us the secret of thine inner peace;
Let us share with thee, in thy silent joy,
Imagined color, and dreamed music's plea.

Or glorious words that live, though Poet cease;
Teach Faith like thine, perfect beyond alloy,
Then shall we truly see and hear with thee.

March 6, 1926

SUSAN B. ANTHONY

No blatant woman, thou, nor overbold,
For when thy far-off youth was yet in flower,
Good angels brought thee as thy woman's dower
Conscience, wit, and will: there was no need of gold.
The wrongs of woman found the great world cold,
But thy compassion grew from hour to hour,
And stirred and quickened all thy native power
To tireless effort, but as yet half-told.

Oh, when we think of thee protesting long,
With something of grave passion in thy mein,
Until that noble head was crowned with grey,
We bless thee for thine ardent words and strong;
Lover of men and women, we have seen
Those words become a gospel of today.

St. Louis, March 21, 1919
Women have finally gotten the vote [Ed].

ANNETTE

Under the well remembered roof we meet,
Where happy hours once sped as if on wings:
The air is perfumed with the blossoms sweet,
And in the elm the bluebird sings.

The books she loved and knew so passing well
Stand all unopened, in an order mute,
Poets that thrilled her like a deep-toned bell,
Or flung their lighter notes from stringed lute.

And thou, beloved friend, stoop from thy happy sphere,
Mingle with us, nor chide our earth's alloy;
We shall not fear to follow one so dear,
Where thou shalt beckon with that look of joy.

May 27, 1920

TO ANNETTE

Annette, above us wintery skies have bent,
And ocean winds have wailed in monotone,
While whirling snows about our path have blown,
Or freezing rains have made their chill descent.
But now hope wakes in every heart as Lent
Draws to a close; our longing thoughts are flown
To greet the Southern Spring, so soon our own;
With joy and tears our Easter shall be blent.

But thou, Annette, within a balmy clime
Where it is always Summer, breathest free,
Musing at times within the rose-grown bowers,
Thy voice like music of some lovely rhyme:
"I know these friends of mine remember me,
Aye, all the more when near the time of flowers."

April, 1923

IN MEMORIAM

Sarah Chenery Crosman

1818-1919

Brave and dear Saint, O take they rest at last,
Steeped in forgetfulness as soft and deep
As falls at dark on childhood's dreamless sleep,
Heedless alike of present and the past.
A hundred years with shine and shade have cast
Their burdens on thee, and their mighty sweep
Urged thee to words and deeds that still shall keep
Their olden fire, whatever time may blast.

So rest: yet thou shalt wake again and stray
In the "green pastures" of the Psalmist's dream,
Led by the sound of one remembered voice,
Silent for half thy lifetime. Go thy way,
Where the "still waters" in the distance gleam,
Conscious that evermore thou shalt rejoice.

THE OLD SHUYLER HOUSE AT ALBANY SPEAKS

Long windows look down from my lofty seat,
Into a sordid street bustling below,
Where once green lawns swept to the river's flow
And white-winged boats, anchored a shining fleet.

My walls have thrilled to fife and deep drum-beat,
Or vows of lovers, as they whispered low;
Gay officers and belles of long ago
There danced the minuet to harp-strings sweet.

No wonder I am proud, for Schuyler, here,
Has summoned Washington and Lafayette,
And shamed Burgoyne with hospitable care;
And Hamilton and high-bred Rensselaer,
All feasted with Colonial etiquette
After some war-like saint had offered prayer.

BELMONT

Belmont, they storied hills are outlined fair
Against the sky, thy lovely orchard vale
Is rich with homes, and the blythe Maytime gale
Wafts fragrant apple blossoms everywhere.
The oaks at Waverly were rooted there
When Norman William with his hand of mail
Siezed upon England, and they tell the tale
In leafy whispers to the listening air.

Thou, Belmont, art of ancient lineage,
Sprung from two river towns: in days long fled,
Here lived high-hearted men, yeoman and sage
Both hurried to defend where war drums led.
Their spirit lives in these brave youths we know
Who sprang to save the world from overthrow.

3/7/1921

JOHN CHENERY

John Chenery
mortally wounded in battle with Indians
at Northfield, died here the next day,
September 5, 1675.

Three hundred years have passed,
Yet thy remembered name
Shines on with those that last
Secure in patriot fame –

For what can man do more
Than freely give his all
Counting naught else before
His Country's sudden call –

Look on these men today,
If so it be God's plan,
And hear them proudly say
"Truly, here died a man!"

COLUMBIA SPEAKS

And who art thou, who liftest unto me
A gaze so arrogant? Seest thou the band
Of stars about my forehead? I am she
Who gave thee freedom and the promised land.

Capital – I know thee, O Imperial One,
I, too, have power, for millions spin,
Delve, reap for me, while in the sun
With glittering sails my ships come in.
Those swarming millions are no more
Than leaves that shrivel on the tree;
Than sands the waves fling to the shore
And draw again into the sea.

Columbia Speaks.
Avertest thou thy sullen brow from me?
I know thee, Labor, by thy hardened hand;
Look on my star-crown; I am she
Who gave thee freedom and the promised land.

Labor — Mother august: I know thee well;
But all my heart is dry as dust
That the wind parches; who can tell
Whether I still can love or trust?
I toil, that he may live at ease,
My lord and master; yet of clay
Such as mine own; and by degrees
I grow to hate him, day by day.

Columbia Speaks.

My Children, Brothers, though God's daughter, I,
I cannot force your will, ye shape your fate,
But sow not ye the whirlwind, lest it fly
And whelm ye both, and sweep ye from the gate.
To Capital.
Although thou feastest, know that soon or late
God's hand shall stay thee, and his voice inquire
"Where is thy brother, Scorner, he, thy mate,
Thy slave, hadst thou but thy desire?"

To Labor.
"And thou, O sullen Hater, know that sin
Though joined and wedded unto slavery,
Is sin the same; can'st thou above the din
Of ancient world-pain read this mystery?"

My Children, Brothers, I, thy Mother, yearn
In sorrow o'er ye both, so blind are ye;
(Mine eyes are shamed with tears) will ye not learn
To live like men deserving to be free?
Disdaining Pelf, disdaining Hate, draw near,
Speak face to face, just words and free from scorn.
Stretch hands across the gulf; have ye no fear?
God calls ye both, this is the Judgement morn.

In case you're wondering, "pelf" is not a misprint; it is a real word that means money, gain, booty. [Ed.]

THE PRODIGAL

O Thou, dear Christ, I love that Syrian tale
The best of all, where that crass, selfish youth
Cries out, "Give me mine own, and know forsooth
I must go far from hence!" The father pale,
In angry grief, with trembling hands that fail
Of their old strength, pierced by the serpent tooth
Of base ingratitude, with careful truth
Counts out the gold; no warning words avail.

At last, the famished youth, with bitter tears
Returns to bow his forehead to the ground,
Crying for pardon for the cruel wreck
Of all his father's hopes through the long years;
His father runs to meet him, clasps him round,
In loving arms, and falls upon his neck.

TO JOHN G. WHITTIER

No singer thou of idle lays,
That sweeps the lyre with perfect art,
And lifts a mellow voice in praise
Of living from the world apart.

No! rather thou didst strike the chord
To soundings passionate and strong,
And thy brave, tender soul had poured
Its solemn fullness in thy song.

Divinest freedom was thy theme,
From year to year yet better loved;
Freedom for all men was the dream
Which all thy heart and being moved.

"Give freedom to the cowering slave,
Lift up the toil-worn, heavy hands,
Crush not the soul Christ came to save,
Unshackle all the cruel bands."

And when men heard thy thrilling creed,
They called thee rash, they called thee blind,
They scorned thee in their word and deed,
And thought thee impotent in mind.

Yet to an earnest, thoughtful few
Thy words came like a prophecy.
They prayed and looked to find all true,
In the great days that were to be.

O, Quaker-poet, soul of steel,
In thy grand manhood's early prime
The nation's bells, with peal on peal,
Rang and proclaimed the Lord's own time.

Thy lofty hopes were then fulfilled,
And freedom bought, as with a price,
Not in the way thy soul had willed,
But with the costliest sacrifice.

O poet, now grown old, thy songs
Have done brave service to thine age,
In battling with the ancient wrongs
That dim our history's magic page.

We bless thee in thy winter days,
And thank thee for thy words of might.
More dear than art, more sweet than praise,
Has been thy burning love of right.

TO BROWNING
ON THE RING AND THE BOOK

Browning, not even he that men have named
The "myriad-minded" called from out the past
More life-like men and women, that have cast
A deeper spell: one knightly priest has shamed
A supine world; and who more justly fames
Than that great Pope, wearied with care so vast,
Head leaning on his hand, yet at the last
As God's interpreter, his words have flamed.
A Roman world almost two hundred years
Waited until thy kingly intellect
Should clothe its dry bones as with flesh and blood:
How has she taken tribute of our tears,
Tragic Pompilia, white as a saint-elect,
Her name writ high above time's ebb and flood.

March, 1925

Read at a meeting of the Boston Browning Society

The "miriad-minded" man was Shakespeare. [Ed.]

JAMES RUSSSELL LOWELL

Poet, thy well-strung harp yet seems to ring
And quiver, as if yet thy fingers strong
Drew forth a myriad melody of song.
Cheerful and brave as Springtide blossoming.
But once, when love and grief smote on the string,
Thy heart poured music that will last as long
As Lincoln's name and fame, for they belong
Together in a mutual hallowing.

But thou wert formed for gladness, and thy themes
The lightnings of thy wit irradiate;
We seem to hear thy mellow laughter now,
Statesman, and sage, and poet dreaming dreams,
Live in men's hearts! No marble can translate
All that was writ on thy Shakespearian brow.

TO RUDYARD KIPLING

Kipling, thy genius held our hearts in thrall
With tales of India, whose drums still beat,
While at the staff the proud flag droops with heat,
As British sentries pace about the wall.
We lavished praise upon thee that might call
The blood to any cheek, for praise is sweet,
When rank-and-file and lettered scholars meet
To own the glamor that beguiles them all.

Singer of the Recessional, that rang
Its august warning only just in time;
Thy later, slurring verse we must forget,
Though angered with an undeservèd pang,
For we and thou must dare thy prayer sublime,
Crying, "Lord of Hosts, be with us yet!"

October 25, 1922

THE POET

A thought almost too deep
For words like his to frame
Awoke him from his sleep,
Like light from whitest flame.

He told his thoughts to men,
They listened vague and cold,
But he knows now, as then,
That thought was virgin gold.

But then another thought
Dared brave the sullen dark,
Men praised the work he wrought;
He knew it failed the mark.

IN MEMORIAM

Rev. James A. Howe, D.D.

Beloved and Honored! When we saw thee pace
The shaded streets of our full-blossomed vale
That lies between the hills, none then could fail
To feel a thrill of pride to see thy face
Lighted with intellect, and mark the grace
Of polished accents, with the keen avail
Of ordered logic, moving as a tale
Unfolds, there thought and fitting words embrace.

Yet not for traits like these we held thee dear;
These were but gifts and graces. No, we felt
Something imperishably high and free,
Above us all — Faith, that made God so near,
And thee so kindly hearted, that we dwelt
On higher levels, all because of thee.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Great Rosevelt is not dead; he cannot die,
That stormy energy cannot be lost,
That love of truth that never counted cost,
If it might sear and wither up a lie,
Not lost, that manly heart, wrung with the cry
Of Belgian women, delving in the frost
To find their dead; and proud with tempest-tost
And gallant France, facing toward victory!

Oh, these are things immortal — Roosevelt lives!
His words and deeds will seem to gather power;
They did not bury these beneath the sod.
And that old Scripture that he loved now gives
A vision of him in the present hour,
For truly he, like Enoch, "walks with God."

St. Louis, Mo, February 14, 1919

WOODROW WILSON

The Nation's leader, thou, through that dark space
When over all the world a menace hung
Like a low cloud; when hosts on hosts were flung
On Belgian fields; at last was found no place
On sea or land that war might not deface.
"Force, and more force!" thine answer; and words wrung
From out thy very soul, and strewn among
The sullen nations burned their lasting trace.

Oh, tried by Fame, by Malice, lift thine head,
Silvered for us; bear as thou didst of old
A look of power, as one who held in trust
A people's hope; remember our great dead.
Live thou! and write, before thy hand be cold,
Their glorious deeds; let not their names be dust.

TO THE EMPRESS FREDERICK

June 15, 1888

Imperial Lady, Sorrow sits with thee,
And watches by thy couch, lest thou forget,
In the brief respite of an hour's dream,
That thou aret most bereft and desolate.
And leaning those sad brows upon thy hands,
Thou watchest through the night like one that waits
For a familiar voice that comes no more.
Then, dimmed with tender tears, thine eyes shall gaze,
As in a trance on England's misty shores,
And see that marriage morning, when thy hand
Rested in the warm clasp of that most gracious Prince.
Nor from that morning till this silence came,
Did that true hand touch thine less tenderly,
Nor once that high soul fall from thine ideal.
His regal manhood so ennobled him
That Caesar's laurel seems not to import —
Yes, rather those calm brows are girt about
With shining circle of the aureole.
Thou canst but weep, O Lady, knowing now
The silence and the void; yet lean thy soul
On mighty Christ, and he will change
To beauty even the ashes of thy grief.

PRIDE IN GRIEF

Oh, be not proud that grief has lasted long:
You say, ""Tis now five years and pain is keen
As at the first, and I have never seen
One happy hour, or listened to a song."
Oh, be not proud of grief; you do him wrong,
The kingly man you mourn, whose life has been
A living hope; who kept a golden mean
Of noble cheer that helped men to be strong.

Let grief plow up the heart, and you shall know,
So that you be not proud, the power of God —
No perfect joy can thus his love disclose;
Let grief plow up the heart, and He shall sow
And scatter seed, and all the mellowed sod,
Watered with tears, shall blossom as the rose.

March 7, 1922

WE KNOW THOU KNOWEST

We know Thou knowest, O Ineffable,
Thou seest the atom in the farthest star,
And hear'st the beat of sullen hearts that mar
Their own dim lives, yet, O Inscrutable,

Thou mights't have siezed upon the mind of man
And moulded it as 'twere a thing of clay:
How then would man be free, he has his way,
Yet even so, he but fulfills thy plan —

For always, always, moving on before,
Thy purpose moves, like a restless tide,
And man must follow, though he fling aside
Idols he meant to worship evermore.

IN MEMORIAM
Mary Colton Tadley

So falls the leaf from forest tree
All-gently through the golden air,
So seems it true, dear heart, of thee
Lying so lightly dreaming there.

So sleep, so dream, until the light
That broods on fields of Paradise
Shall waft among the mists of night
And flood with peace the morning skies.

How well and good for all thy days
Peace lived within thy tender eyes
And on thy life; to God be praise
For Peace, till stars forget to rise.

THE NEW YEAR

Breaking in glory from the sullen night,
Thou comest, glad New Year, with virgin snow
About thy path, and trumpet winds that blow
A sounding music through thy rosy light.
So come: and put all base-born wars to flight
And even those that seem to rise and grow
From righteous cause. Let welded nations show
An awful front, should any trust in might.

And let the Church remember all the blood,
Not yet atoned for, in past ages shed
For dogma; she spared neither sage nor clod.
Oh, let her mercy now be as a flood.
And while she feeds her flock with living bread,
She hears, "Be still, and know that I am God."

January 1, 1924

THINKING IN SONNETS

For R. B. C.

From
J. T. F. A.

December 21, 1993

i

Where the dancing and the meaning meet
In iambic rhythms down the page
In writ constructions of an earli'r age
That put pentameters into my feet

And bid my thought proceed in stately pace
As I go walking on this Solstice Day,
Inspired by your solemn wordly play,
Imagination, wrapped in English lace,

Builds and solves, in rigid scheme of rhymes,
A problem set, a mathematic game,
Or making lace: threads stretched upon a frame,
Held taut at different angles, changing times.

But, dear one, have you noticed? sonnets tend
To get a little ragged near the end.

ii

Thy austere rhyme-plans I'll depart, my dear,
To seek a simpler schedule, one that chimes
And clings a little closer to the ear
Than thy far-separate Petrarchic rhymes.

There "fair" and "brave" cannot be oversaid,
There brows are calm, or furrowed, or are crown'd
With laurels, or they need them not. The dread-
Ed foes must tremble at our trumpets' sound.

Thou art of thy time, as I am of mine:
Both of our world-views, I suppose, will seem
Incongrous to descendants, and our fine-
Est feelings flawed, sometimes, our thoughts extreme;
And still my heart learns of itself from thine,
And pacèd language decorates my dream.

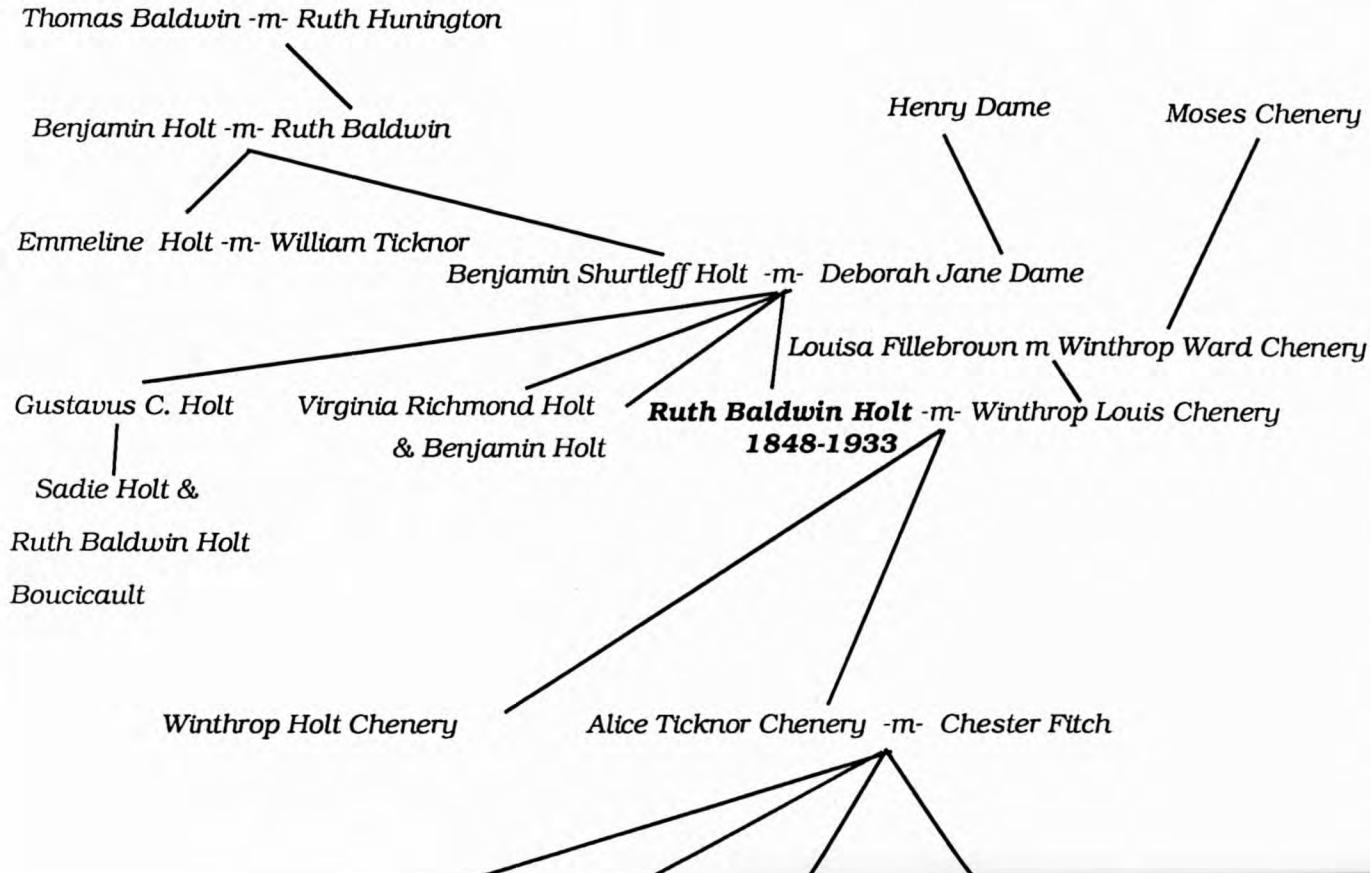
iii

Three generations hence, I praise your grace,
A great-granddaughter all unknown to you
Who duplicate my dear grandmother's face,
And find that I remember something new,

Or learn again: Behind the bars of form
There is a kind of freedom, born of art,
To so distract oneself with such brainstorm
One speaks the simple language of the heart.

There "thee"s and "thou"s are not
embarrassing,
But only make the statement that we feel,
The god-resemblance of another being,
The nearness that the daily words conceal.

Ancestor sister, comrade unto me,
Thanks for thy verse, Ruth Baldwin Chenery.


Thomas Baldwin -m- Ruth Hunington
Benjamin Holt -m- Ruth Baldwin
Henry Dame
Moses Chenery
Emmeline Holt -m- William Ticknor
Benjamin Shurtleff Holt -m- Deborah Jane Dame
Louisa Fillebrown m Winthrop Ward Chenery
Gustavus C. Holt
Virginia Richmond Holt & Benjamin Holt
Ruth Baldwin Holt 1848-1933
-m- Winthrop Louis Chenery
Sadie Holt & Ruth Baldwin Holt Boucicault
Winthrop Holt Chenery
Alice Ticknor Chenery -m- Chester Fitch

Margaret Blakie Fitch

-m- Gaeton Sturdevant

-m- A. 'Mac' McClay

Henry Sheldon Fitch

m. Virginia Preston

John Henry Fitch

-m- Sally Mallison

Mary Baldwin Fitch

Elizabeth Chenery Fitch

Alice Virginia Fitch

-m- Tony Echelle

Tyson Sheldon Echelle

Lena Marie Echelle

Chester William Fitch

-m- Deanna Smith

Benjamin Sheldon Fitch

Ruth Virginia Fitch

-m- Gordon H. Bryan

Paul Gordon Bryan

-m- Judith Oppenheim

Samuel Logan Bryan

Steven Raymond Bryan

-m- Karla Ostman

Jill Alice Bryan

Aria Theresa Bryan

Chester Fitch, Jr.

-m- Jessie Alice Tangren

Jean Tangren Fitch

-m- John von Ilseman Alexander

Marcella Cranston Alexander

David Chenery Fitch

-m- Connie Cummins

-m- Farideh Hakimi

Donald Sheldon Fitch

-m- Athena Stanley

Chester Michael Fitch

-m-.Irene Harris

Kimberly Alice Fitch