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POEMS

BY

JAMES COMLEY.

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PREFACE.

THE verses in this little selection, many of which reflect experiences and incidents familiar to the writer, were not designed for publication.

A specially prepared volume of them, in manuscript, (together with a MS. selection of the Author's published and unpublished Musical compositions), was graciously accepted by Her Majesty the Queen, in 1884.

Having reference to the wishes of many friends, and to the assistance which it is hoped their sale will afford the writer in his age and suffering, they are now respectfully submitted to the public.

It need not be pointed out that they lack the adorning excellencies of a cultured hand.

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POEMS.

LITTLE NED.

A child was weeping o'er a grave,
Calling, with drooping head,—
“Sweet mother! O my mother dear!
“Come back with Little Ned.”

No other accents left her lips,
No other words she said,
But “Mother! O my mother dear!
“Come back with Little Ned.”

In pity of a sight so sad,
Where sad ones laid their dead,
I paus'd beside her at the grave—
The grave of Little Ned.

I ask'd her had she brother else,
Besides the brother dead;
She meekly sobb'd a mournful “yes,
“But not a Brother Ned.”

I quickly all her suff'ring scann'd,
And all her sorrows read,
And heard, with deep emotion told,
Her tale of Little Ned.

She said—“When mother's baby came,
“We had an extra bed,
“And Dick was put to sleep with Tom,
“And I with Little Ned.”

“'Twas rather early when we woke,
“And I was dress'd and led
“To mother's room, where baby was,
“And so was Little Ned.”

“My father put the breakfast then,
“And this was what he said,—
“Be careful not to make a noise,
“And look to Little Ned.”

" My mother she was very ill,
 " And had to keep her bed ;
 " She couldn't put the place to rights,
 " Nor dress her Little Ned."

" A neighbour came to tidy up
 " And do the work instead ;
 " She brought a pretty toy for me,
 " And one for Little Ned."

" By mother's bed she said her pray'rs,
 " And mother's bible read ;
 " Then held me up for mother's kiss,
 " And lifted Little Ned."

" And then she told me to be good,
 " And not go near the bed,
 " But keep away outside the house,
 " And play with Little Ned."

" At night we heard a bitter cry,
 " And trampling over head,
 " And father never spoke, but sat
 " And nurs'd his Little Ned."

" I heard him, in the morning, say
 " His darling Jane was dead ;
 " That mother's lips had ceas'd for aye
 " To bless her Little Ned."

" The pretty babe no longer lay
 " With mother on the bed ;
 " And mother neither spoke to me,
 " Nor kiss'd her Little Ned."

" The coffin came, and Tom and Dick
 " Were each by father led ;
 " While Uncle Ben took hold of me,
 " And carried Little Ned."

" And here they put poor mother down —
 " Down in this damp, cold bed,
 " And left her lying, all alone,
 " Without her Little Ned."

" The journey home was wet and cold,
 " We'd nothing over-head,
 " And I'd a fever after that,
 " And so had Little Ned."

" I very soon got over it,
 " But, ere a month had fled,
 " They came and dug the grave again,
 " And buried Little Ned."

" Of course it's very hard to bear ;
 " And that's what father said :—
 " ' How very cruel death must be
 " To take our Little Ned.' "

" He says that we must trust in God,
 " Who hung'ring ravens fed ;
 " Who took dear mother's cares away,
 " And cares for Little Ned ; "

" Whose Angels come, with dove-like wings,
 " To fetch us when we're dead,
 " And waft us up where mother is,
 " And where they've carried Ned."

" O sir, if angels really come
 " To take us when we're dead,
 " I hope the same will carry me
 " That carried Little Ned."

" For then I'll tell them how I've cried,
 " And how my heart has bled,
 " And beg them, when they reach the place,
 " To put me down with Ned."

" And then I'll never cry again,
 " But sing and smile instead ;
 " For ever stay where mother is,
 " And cling to Little Ned."

My tears no longer bore control ;
 I turned away my head,
 And wept for that afflicted child—
 For her and Little Ned.

Beside the grave I gently knelt,
 And, looking upward, said,—
 “Sustain, O God, this drooping lamb,
 “That mourns her Little Ned.”

“Protect her while her tender feet
 “The flints of time shall tread ;
 “Nor let eternity divide
 “Her soul from Little Ned.”

“But grant that when the trump shall speak,
 “She, rising from the dead,
 “May feel her mother’s blest embrace,
 “And soar with Little Ned.”

Then, when, from looking upward thus,
 While thus the prayer was said,
 My streaming eyes flow’d back to her
 Whose life was Little Ned,

A flow’r, all-fragrant, on the grave
 Had laid its with’ring head ;
 The lips were dumb that “Mother !” call’d—
 That begg’d for Little Ned.

But soft and sweet as Angels breathe,
 And far above my head,
 Her voice I heard, and hear it still,
 Pronouncing “Little Ned.”

For Heav’n had sent the Angel down,
 Who back to Heav’n had fled,
 And bade the mother’s clasped one, there,
 Embrace her Little Ned.

NELLIE.

There came, from heaven, a gift for me
 That bore the name of Nellie ;
 I gave my thanks on bended knee—
 My thanks to heaven for Nellie.

The bliss that love’s young morning sips,
 Was mine when clasping Nellie ;
 And Angels’ kisses, on her lips,
 I kiss’d when kissing Nellie.

Within my soul’s most guarded shrine
 I placed my little Nellie ;
 And felt her heart’s warm beat in mine,
 As if myself were Nellie.

Her hand in mine its love did lay,
 When I gave mine to Nellie ;
 And round my neck her arms would stay,
 While mine enfolded Nellie.

Her eyes on mine would pour the light
 That came from heaven with Nellie ;
 And darkness fled the darkest night,
 When my bright star was Nellie.

Her voice to music lent the strain
 That sweetness gave to Nellie ;
 And ne’er was heard the sad refrain,
 When echoes answer’d Nellie.

Her gentle spirit calm’d the strife
 That cross’d the path of Nellie ;
 And friendship’s dead came back to life,
 Where love and life were Nellie.

Her fragrant breath perfumed the flowers
 I pluck’d and gave to Nellie ;
 And all day long came gladsome hours,
 When all day long was Nellie.

So all through life, and all through death,
 I’ll sing the name of Nellie ;
 And then, in Heaven, with holier breath,
 Sing, evermore, with Nellie.

SPRING.

Spring is a damsel surpassingly fair,
With blossoming gems in her golden hair ;
And the light that was born of an Eden sky,
Dwells in the bliss of her beaming eye.

All that of loveliness heaven could spare,
Thron'd on her brow, groweth lovelier there ;
And winds that have tasted her peerless lips,
Add wealth to the cup whence the dew-drop sips.

Swiftly, before her, unkindness flies ;
Winter surrenders, and nakedness dies ;
Caught by her foot-print the sun-beam is led
Where Verdure's lost harmonies rise from the dead.

Hers are the keys that unprison the showers
Which bathe in the thirst of the soon-fading flowers,
Or nourish the buds that are bursting with bliss,
As they thrill to the warmth of the damsel's deep kiss.

Music, enchanted, awakes at her voice ;
The songs that were frozen dissolve and rejoice ;
And death-serving Silence in loneliness lies,
While many-tongued melody leaps to the skies.

Spring spreads the canvas on which are display'd
Fair Flora's chaste daughters in meekness array'd ;
And hers the young tints that in multitudes meet,
In clustering sweetness, to lie at her feet.

For her come the minstrels on ecstasy's wings ;
To her chants the thrush, and the nightingale sings,
The lark, searching heav'n, maketh richer his lays,
And a wide-stretching orchestra echoes with praise.

Wrapp'd in her skirts are the robes we behold
When Summer comes forth in her vesture of gold ;
And those worn by Autumn, who garners the store
That banishes hunger from Industry's door.

Life-giving gladness, with faith-helping hand,
She flings, in profusion, o'er ocean and land ;
All Nature baptizing, its worship she gains,
And captive Idolatry blesseth her chains.

Meekest of maidens, Virginity's child ;
Gentle as dawn, yet untamably wild ;
Birth of all sweetness which fragrance can bring,
Come, let me crown thee, bright, beautiful spring !

BABY'S EPITAPH.

It seem'd as if the Angels, ere they left it,
Of all its mortal craving so bereft it,
That when, tow'rd heaven, it saw those bright ones rise,
It fled, at once, and joined them in the skies.

THE BLISS OF BYGONE DAYS.

O let me on some sunny bank
My youthful hours recall ;
And bind about my wintry brow
A garland of them all.

O take me back, sweet memory,
To all those dear delights
That gave their charm to early days,
And cheer'd their kindred nights.
Yes, lead my withering spirit back
To still-remember'd bowers,
To rippling streams, green lanes and woods,
And meadows clad with flowers.

'Twere likest heaven once more to taste
The summer-evening's glee,
Be sporting in the moon-lit hours,
Just as I used to be.

For those were times of topmost bliss,
And I was careless then ;
'Twas well I spent them merrily ;
They'll never come again.

I SIGH ALONE FOR THEE.

When o'er the Summer's golden day
 The Zephyr spreads its wings,
 And Warblers tune the sweetest lay
 That answering echo sings ;
 When fragrance fills the am'rous air,
 And Heav'n's blue paths I see,
 Then, fairest of the passing fair,
 I sigh alone for thee.

When light'nings cleave the trembling sky,
 And thunder shakes the earth ;
 When tempests bid the pine trees lie
 Where forests gave them birth ;
 When ruins voice invites despair
 To tempt the gale struck sea,
 Then, fairest of the passing fair,
 I sigh alone for thee.

Thron'd on my heart for evermore
 Thine image will remain ;
 Thee, thee alone will I adore
 Till death itself be slain ;
 For thee alone my soul shall pine,
 While earth's dim lights I see,
 And where the stars for ever shine
 I'll sigh alone for thee.

LONGING FOR DEATH.

A cloud, o'er the star of my day,
 Has all its unkindness cast ;
 Its morning was taken away,
 Its noon into nothing has pass'd.
 Dull solitude sits at my door,
 And loneliness lies by my side ;
 Companionship knows me no more,
 But only the place where it died.

Worn patience, the intimate friend
 Whose nursing my spirit sustain'd,
 No longer assistance can lend,
 For she has a paradise gain'd.

No longer the dream I pursue
 That painted a prospect so fair ;
 The journey I ne'er shall pursue,
 But give myself up to despair.

An Angel I long to embrace,
 In whispers invites me to fly ;
 I know 'tis an Angel of grace,
 For he tells me 'tis better to die.

So the flickering lamp I dismiss,
 That lent my devotion its aid,
 Since Hope, with its vision of bliss
 Is now in the sepulchre laid.

And all that the hand has caress'd,
 And all that the soul has ador'd,
 And all that spirit has blest,
 Is now in abandonment stor'd.

Sweet slumber has taken my fears ;
 I've buried the last of my sighs ;
 Resignation is drinking my tears,
 And silence is wiping mine eyes.

So now I am ready to start,
 And wait but the summoning knell ;
 The sound that, in breaking my heart,
 Shall ring the eternal " Farewell !"

THE AUTUMN LEAVES.

Ye are changing, ye are changing,
 And your summer smile is gone ;
 While a hand is disarranging
 All the beauty ye had on :
 And the hunger of a sorrow
 Ye had never known before,
 Leaves but little for to-morrow
 Of the gladness that ye wore.

Ye are fading, ye are fading,
 Into sickness and decay ;
 And your shatter'd bloom is wading
 In the tide that ebbs away :
 On your golden-tinted vesture
 Falls the desecrating breath,
 While a paralysing gesture
 Marks the purposes of death.

Ye are falling, ye are falling,
 Like the thunder-shaken rain ;
 And a thousand voices calling,
 Bid you back to earth again—
 To the voiceless isolation
 Where forgotten things are spread ;
 Where a boundless desolation
 Marks the dwellings of the dead.

Ye are speaking, ye are speaking ;
 They're prophetic words I hear ;
 And their meaning I am seeking
 Through a vision-shaping tear :
 But I falter as I reach it—
 For the leaves, that round me lie,
 In their pale expressions preach it,
 Saying, "You must also die."

But I know I shall not perish
 In corruption's dismal deep ;
 For a promise I shall cherish
 When at last I fall asleep ;
 And I know that He will cheer me
 Who shall fix my fading eyes ;
 And that angels, ever near me,
 Will convey me to the skies.

THE MISSION OF MUSIC.

There is a preacher whose transcendent theme,
 Lighting its lamp from Nature's first born beam,
 Inspired the lips of heaven's melodious lyre,
 And cloth'd earth, air, and sea with vocal fire.

No clime is known where mortals have not heard,
 And felt the rapture of that preacher's word ;
 No far off sky, nor deeply hidden mine,
 But bears an impress of its power divine.

The waves of ocean learn the inspiring lay,
 And placid streams the alluring wand obey ;
 While all things living leap to catch the sound,
 And death itself 'mid listeners is found.

The morning's greeting and the evening's kiss,
 Owe to this preacher their supernal bliss ;
 Day writes it down how listening ones are blest,
 And night how sweetly it conducts to rest.

Without this preacher temples rise in vain,
 And vesture'd priests o'er dead vocations reign ;
 Altars and censers lack the hallowing fire,
 And prayers and offerings in their birth expire.

O soul enrapturing music, life of love ,
 Thou thrice enthroned sovereign, crown'd above ;
 Source of all sweetness that from heaven has flown,
 And every comfort earth's rent heart has known,

Omnipotent I hail Thee, for, to me,
 Jehovah's worthiest name is melody ;
 Therefore the God whom heav'n's vast hosts adore
 In music I will bless for evermore.

THE LONGEST DAY.

'Tis not the day that comes in June,
 With far-extending hours ;
 'Tis not the day that plants its noon
 Amid the regal flow'r's ;
 'Tis not the earlier start from sleep,
 Nor pond'ring time's delay,
 Nor yet the ev'ning's farthest leap
 That makes the longest day.

Tis when suspense the pain prolongs,
 While tears distress the eye ;
 When fainting hope forgets her songs,
 And fears refuse to fly ;
 When disappointments madd'ning goad
 Makes heart-wounds all the way,
 And grim despair completes the load,
Then comes the longest day.

'T WILL BE BETTER BY-AND-BYE.

Sad was I, my pathway dreary :
 Pain had made me wan and weary ;
 Mingled woes oppress'd me sore,
 As their gath'ring weight I bore,
 When an angel (such my deeming,
 For her eyes had heav'nly beaming),
 Whisper'd—as I heav'd a sigh—
 “T will be better by-and-bye.”

While all else was calmly sleeping,
 My long nights were spent with weeping ;
 And the dawn's immensity
 Brought no cheering ray for me ;
 But the angel, not unheeding,
 Knowing that my heart was bleeding,
 Said—while paus'd her pitying eye—
 “T will be better by-and-bye.”

New-born hours, with pace distressing,
 Each day came, but brought no blessing,
 Holding lamps like spell-bound eyes,
 Curs'd outside a paradise :
 But the angel (such her mission),
 Driving back the near perdition,
 Breath'd, as breathes the Elysian sky—
 “T will be better by-and-bye.”

Day by day, those words repeating,
 I have seen the clouds retreating ;
 And though, still, few stars appear,
 I have checked the rising tear :
 For kind echoes, round me falling,
 Tell me there's an angel calling,
 Sweetly as the moments fly—
 “T will be better by-and-bye.”

Well I know my steps are tending
 Where my days will soon be ending—
 Where this frame, engirt with rust,
 Shall be crumbled into dust ;
 Yet will I shake off my sadness,
 And put on the garb of gladness,
 For those words are fixed on high—
 “T will be better by-and-bye.”

TO SPRING.

We are longing for the gladness
 Which thy welcome coming brings,
 For a heavy load of sadness
 Needs thy sorrow lifting wings ;
 The winter has been wasting,
 Prithee come and bid it go,
 For many still are tasting
 Its distressing cup of woe.

We are longing for the morning
 When, descending ev'ry hill,
 The gold of thy adorning
 Shall acclaiming valleys fill ;
 When Hope, fresh anchors making,
 Shall out-ride consuming fear,
 And Faith, from slumbers waking,
 Leap for joy to find thee here.

We are longing for the flowers
 Which thy busy hand supplies,
 And the music that in showers
 Will be falling from the skies ;
 For the sunbeam that shall open
 All the buds they maidens bring,
 When the merry bells have spoken
 That shall hail thee, lovely spring !

Come and bless the waiting weeper
 Who hath sown his precious grain,
 So that, by-and-bye, the reaper
 May take home the sheaves again—
 That when, Autumn's footsteps tracing,
 Winter's cold again shall come,
 Ample barns, thy gifts embracing,
 Shall make glad the reapers home.

Come and make the dwellings brighter
 Where affliction spreads its gloom ;
 Make for those a burden lighter
 Who have dear one's in the tomb ;
 Banish want and pain and sorrow ;
 Give new life where hopes are dead ;
 Bless, O bless, our ev'ry morrow,
 Loading it with daily bread.

Come with loving, gentle tending
 That, where now contentions reign,
 Strifes may have their speedy ending,
 And sweet Peace be crown'd again.
 Teach our lips the grateful measure
 Which thy holier children sing,
 Then we'll raise the cup of pleasure,
 Drinking to reviving spring.

THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.

O why were many weeping ;
 And wherefore did they kneel,
 While sobs, the tears o'er-leaping,
 Prolong'd the vain appeal ?

O why, confictions hiding,
 Did many turn away,
 And, while their weakness chiding,
 So bow the head that day ?

The close-drawn blind is telling ;
 The sable garbs declare,
 While yon church bell is knelling,
 How death was cruel there.

A damsel sweet as morning,
 And fair as Eden's bloom,
 The funeral grief adorning,
 Is waiting for the tomb.

Her bridal-wreath she beareth,
 And many a flow'r beside ;
 The ring *he* gave she weareth,
 And waiteth where he died.

Her lips, with kisses laden ;
 Her hand by wealth caress'd,
 And all that peerless maiden,
 Have gain'd a deathless rest.

And where no hope is blighted,
 On love's untortur'd shore,
 Her pulse, with his united,
 Shall beat for evermore.

THE BEGGAR-WOMAN'S DEATH BED.

Faster, to its depths below,
Faster fell the stifling snow ;
Fiercer, as its howlings pass'd,
Fiercer blew the bitter blast.

Swifter, chaf'd by many a goad,
Fled the steed which darkness rode ;
Heavier, as they crush'd the light,
Roll'd the death-clogg'd wheels of night.

Colder, in that fearful storm,
Grew a woman's wasted form ;
Gasping, as it fenc'd with death,
Gasping for sustaining breath.

" Beggar " branded, spurn'd, and starv'd ;
Ruin's form by hunger carv'd ;
Fate's inexorable plea,
Shap'd in helpless misery,

Long she struggled, long she cried,
Many a pleading tear she dried,
While her kindred, passing by,
Left the homeless one to die.

Feeble, to unpitying skies,
Hand in hand went pray'rs and sighs ;
Hand in hand, and feebler they,
Hope and patience fought their way.

Still she crav'd, in Heaven's dear name,
Still from Heaven no answer came ;
While to each yet feebler sigh,
Only blackness gave reply.

Thinly veil'd, with rav'nous maw,
Grim Despair that sad one saw ;
Saw, and strove to pass him by ;
Struggled, fought, but could not fly.

On the snow's unkindly bed,
Sank the cold one's weary head ;
Frozen, to the frozen bound,
Ice its twin-companion found.

Then, half dead and half interr'd,
Music's voice that sad one heard,
Blending strains that solac'd her,
Calling from the sepulchre.

" Come to me O soul distress'd—
" Come to me, and sweetly rest ;
" Come where care and trouble sleep,
" And the wretched cease to weep.

" Come where pains are swept away,
" Come where agonies decay ;
" Where the helpless and oppress'd
" Leave their griefs on Mercy's breast ;

" Come where cold neglect retires ;
" Come where wasting want expires,
" Where lean hunger lifeless lies,
" And where thirst, exhausted, dies.

" Come where Shame and Terror hide ;
" Come where sins are cast aside,
" Where no strifes have e'er been sown,
" Nor a discord ever known.

" Come where waits the gentle Dove,
" Native of the land of love,
" That shall guide, through distant skies,
" Thy sad soul to Paradise."

Then the minstrel ceased to play,
Then the chanting died away ;
And, o'er-mastered by the storm,
Speechless lay that wasted form.

Then sweet Slumber sooth'd her sighs,
Press'd her lips and clos'd her eyes,
Lull'd the throbbings of her breast,
Stay'd her tears, and bade them rest.

Hands unseen her shroud complete,
 Made from Winter's winding sheet ;
 While from out the storm there fell
 Murm'ring of the passing bell.

Thus, without one earthly friend,
 Thus she reached her journey's end ;
 Thus, with Angels by her side,
 Wrapp'd in snow, the beggar died.

WHAT IT IS TO DIE.

The soldier sinks amid the surf
 That goads the crimson'd wave,
 And finds, beneath the gory turf,
 A slaughter'd hero's grave.
 His valour by renown is blest ;
 His hand is held by fame ;
 His worth is his memorial's guest,
 And honour carves his name ;
 Yet, tho' by murd'rous tort'rings fed,
 Each mortal wound profusely bled
 Till every rip'ning pain had fled
 In one convulsive sigh ;
 And tho' the vanquish'd warrior bore,
 On shatter'd shell and sunder'd core,
 The blows, till blows could do no more ;
 Yet that was not *to die*.

The maiden's bloom dejection steals,
 And then her steps incline
 To shores on which the sand reveals
 The tracks of deep decline :
 With silent sadness hope remains,
 But slumbers oft and long,
 While patience yields to sick'ning pains,
 And mem'ries loose their song :

On hungry shadows hourly fed
 (Which never leave a doom'd one's bed
 Till every flatt'ring dream has fled),
 She bends her faded eye ;
 And while the lov'd ones round her weep,
 And sad farewells from silence leap,
 She lights a smile and falls asleep :
 But *this* is not *to die*.

The widow mourns a severing day,
 And bears a widow's grief ;
 Her cherish'd lambs are torn away
 From fondlings all too brief ;
 The gladsome hour now calls no more
 Her waiting cup to fill ;
 The light that lent her wings to soar,
 Now leads her down the hill :
 Around her draws the chilling shade,
 As friendship's form begins to fade ;
 And fear employs the keenest blade
 The wealth of dread can buy ;
 Lean penury becomes her guest ;
 With famish'd want she takes her rest
 And sinks, at last, by woes oppress'd :
 But this is not *to die*.

The old man walks, with slow decay,
 Adown the darksome road
 Where falt'ring memories grope their way
 To slumber's last abode ;
 His voice expression's forms forget ;
 His ear neglects the call ;
 His orbs, without their glimmering, set ;
 His withered branches fall :
 A freezing hand the brain unseats ;
 No journeyings, now, the breath repeats ;
 The languid heart no longer beats,
 Dead pulses round it lie :
 The damp which unseen breath supplies,
 O'er every crumbling feature lies,
 And rust the chain of life unties :
 But this is not *to die*.

To reach the point where friendship tires,
 And truth exhausts her store ;
 Where long-confiding faith expires,
 And hope revives no more ;
 Where cold ingratitude supplies
 The keen and with'ring blast ;
 Where only darkness onward lies,
 And trustings look their last ;
 To note wh're purjur'd promise hides ;
 To mark the steed sham virtue rides ;
 To see where falsewood's word abides,
 And smiles their treach'ry buy ;
 To pass, unslain, where thousands fell ;
 To hear, each day, the churlish bell
 That will not ring the long'd-for knell
That's what it is to die.

A NEW YEAR'S GREETING.

(Addressed to a blind young man who had been basely treated).

The year that has fled—the old year that is dead—
 Let it go, with its burden of sorrow,
 And let me commend, to a suffering friend,
 The one that proclaims a glad morrow.
 I am not unheeding ; I know thou art bleeding ;
 Thy bruises are many, the gashes are deep ;
 And I do not disdain, when I hear thee complain,
 But give thee the tears that would help thee to weep.
 Yet let it not seem—for thy life never deem
 That thy case has outliv'd its redressing,
 Through the big briny tear, see a joy-crowning year,
 With its brightness, its balm, and its blessing.
 The birds will be singing, the woods will be ringing :
 The sun with an anthem shall rise ;
 The lips of the light shall dismiss the dark night,
 While melodies fall from the skies.

Fling the record away, and forget the dark day
 When false grew the friend thou did'st cherish ;
 Where forgetfulness walks, and oblivion stalks,
 Let his name and his memory perish.

Thy spirit lift up, drink from hope's cheering cup,
 Scatter sorrow and banish despair ;
 Lay thy tears in the grave, bid thy purpose be brave,
 While I pledge thee a happy new year.

HOME.

Say, what is home, that word so cherish'd here,
 Where dawn brings grief, and sun-set leaves the tear ?
 Is it an echo, on life's ocean toss'd —
 The echo of an angel's whisper, lost ?

Is it a passing thought, scarce half express'd ;
 A dream, from which the dreamer wakes distress'd ;
 The grave of music, where the ear has found
 The broken fragments of an empty sound ?

A home on earth ! a grasp that nought retained ;
 A look of gladness that was only feign'd ;
 A vaunted Eden where distempers bloom,
 And palace walls conceal the loathsome tomb.

To one " Sweet Home " alone the poet's lyre
 Pours from its tuneful strings the vocal fire ;
 And minstrel choirs that catch the inspiring ode,
 Give every chord to songs of love's abode —

To home, to heaven, one end of many ways—
 Whose ever-open gates are built with praise ;
 One end of many journeys, Mansions blest,
 Whose entrance gives the homeless endless rest.

Home ! sweet, sweet home ! let man and angel sing ;
 With home ! sweet home ! let all creation ring,
 Till home, sweet home, that source of boundless grace,
 Shall clasp and shelter all the human race.

IN MEMORIAM CHARLES DICKENS.

To day there's not a home in all the land,
 From royal palace where the stricken Queen,
 With sovereign homage, bows her loyal head
 And gives the day to most imperial grief,
 Down to the little cabin by the moor,
 On which the chilling death-shade has not fall'n.
 Charles Dickens was the universal friend—
 The ever-welcome guest ; for he had carved
 The music of his name on every heart.
 We loved him as a brother born for all :
 No circle clos'd that was not round him drawn,
 'Twas he, with weeping, taught us holier tears,
 Who scatter'd in the sunshine of his path
 The seeds that grew and multiplied our smiles.
 'Twas his translating hand that gave a tongue—
 Thrice heavenly in its ever-potent power—
 To all our keen and many-coloured woes.
 He found a path for pity when she stood
 Opposed by cold indifference ; and he led
 The vindicating angel by the hand
 Whose flaming sword, against oppressions power,
 Sustain'd the helpless victim's trampled claim.
 Nor less than worthy of a preacher's tongue
 His homilies : No sanctimonious whines,
 No sickening cant, no sour, ungenerous creed,
 No purse-enlarging "Shiboleth" e'er marr'd
 The consecrated office of his lips.
 He spake as by that spirit he was taught
 Which mov'd, at sundry times in divers ways,
 By holy men of old, this laggard world :
 In what set form or fashion matters not ;
 He served his generation, and was just ;
 His words were words of life that have been bound
 In volumes that shall keep his cherished name,
 And all the adorning titles he has won,
 Enshrin'd in honours lasting as the stars.
 O, he was worthy of an angel's love !

And that same stroke, which, reaching every ray,
 Brought, all at once, his golden glory down—
 That shatter'd its meridian and dissolved,
 In death's dark deep, this heav'n-illumin'd lamp—
 O, that same stroke, like inspiration's thrill,
 When, lightning-like, it speaks to all at once,
 Shall stimulate our pulses and excite
 A beat so deathless in our loyal hearts
 That its vitality shall seize the slain—
 Shall disentomb death's thrice-illustrious prey—
 And fix his dwelling, mid inferior flames,
 Where love and homage lift their loftiest throne.
 Charles Dickens is no more. What that may mean,
 Or what can fill the deep and hungry void
 His exit leaves ; what skilful hand can heal
 The nation's wound will not be soon resolv'd.
 We do not weep as when we put away
 The daily gathering of inferior dust :
 We only feel how passing strange it is
 That one so loving, so allied with life,
 Without the intimation of intent,
 A parting word or intervening pause,
 Should give the glory of his gifted hand,
 With all its wealth, to grasping, "dusty death."
 O never more, sweet sorrow-tuning muse ;
 O never, never more shall flow for him
 Thy many-streaming fount ! O never more
 Shall clam'rous echo echo sweetly back
 The music of his most harmonious lays !
 O never shall the sound again be heard
 Of that sweet harp which flung from every string
 And gifted them with never-wearying wings,
 A thousand heavenly strains ! O never more
 Shall panting expectation quench its thirst
 From goblets overflowing with delight,
 And all supplied by him ; For death and he,
 (Supreme permission being first obtained),
 With sullen silence have a bargain made
 That must not be disturb'd.

We therefore acquiesce ;
 His loving lips we press,
 Nor find their sweetness less
 Than when in flower :
 His hallow'd hand we kiss,
 And gather up what bliss
 Bereavement leaves in this
 Dividing hour :
 In dust his dust we lay ;
 His ashes with the clay ;
 With earth we fold away
 His earthly care ;
 We lift our chasten'd eyes,
 From where his body lies,
 To heav'n's unclouded skies,
 And love him there.

THE CASTLE OF DESPAIR.

Just at the point where hope no longer leads
 And fear, with straining gaze, her anguish pleads ;
 Where tracks of disappointment, thickly spread,
 Are footprints over-cross'd by frantic dread ;
 Where many a project, born to dreams of bliss—
 Dreams that had stray'd from other worlds to this—
 Is rudely slain by fierce, unpitied fate,
 Ere crown'd success can open wide the gate,
 An angry channel, deep and broad as night,
 (Scarce reach'd by rays of most adventurous light),
 With hindring curves pursues, and turns aside
 The pathway marked for expectations guide.
 Anon its waters, gathering up their force,
 Beyond obstructing walls reshape their course,
 Till, deeply merg'd, or else by sunderings cross'd,
 The tantalising path at length is lost.
 No guide attends, where, far as thought can reach,
 Foil'd purpose wanders o'er the boundless beach ;
 Nor where endurance, long by courage led,

Finds worn out perseverance cold and dead.
 But where a cavern's depths reveal a gloom
 Like only that which dwells within the tomb,
 A wailing echo pale exhaustion leads—
 The echo that abandonment precedes.
 Within that cavern, vast as Chaos' dream,
 (Where motion sleeps, and silence reigns supreme),
 In numbers unexpress'd by words or signs,
 And fancy's utmost phrase but half defines,
 There sit, for ever, cold, and mute as death,
 And each one pausing on a half-drawn breath,
 Delusions victims whom enticements led,
 While onward, still, the goal more swiftly fled.
 Before their gaze—a ghastly, spell-bound stare
 That poises walls in unsubstantial air—
 The dream-born canvass yields to fancy's plea,
 And lifts a scene that mocks their misery.
 No search but theirs the faintest lines can trace
 Of all that structure which their orbs embrace ;
 Nor mark how darkness, taught by ocean's roar,
 Inscribes, all round its base, "For evermore."
 But they can see, with portal strongly barr'd,
 And everlasting thunders keeping guard,
 How vast its walls, how lost in clouds its height,
 And where its gables blend with farthest night.
 And ever, and for ever, fixed as fate ;
 Or Heaven's decrees, or Hell's wide open gate,
 The pile their dreams have rear'd will still be there,
 Its name unchang'd— "The Castle of Despair."

THE SHEFFIELD CATASTROPHE, 1864.

The sun had gone down, and the storm had gone by ;
 The moon was unveil'd in the star-sprinkled sky,
 Her silver-clad beams from the firmament fell
 On the beautiful river, the beautiful dell.
 The murm'rings were hush'd in the toil-bearer's cot ;
 For the toiler, when sleeping, remembers them not ;
 And mansions, uplifted from poverty's care,
 Gave respite, in slumber to sorrowers there.

But brief was the brightness that gladden'd the eye ;
 Strange clouds flung a gloom o'er that glittering sky ;
 And the terrified moon-beams betook them to flight ;
 While the stars, rudely startled, extinguished their light.

For the demon that marshall'd the fierce tempest blast,
 When the sea mark'd the gulph where the fiend feasted last,
 Has enter'd the valley, and speeds on his way
 Tow'rd the ill-fated homes of his slumbering prey.

(O, danger ! so silent, so secret, so sure ;
 O ruin ! so restless, yet calm and secure,
 Thy footsteps are heard not, thy form is unseen,
 While the grave and thy victim thou standest between).

And he comes where the vale is sustaining with toil,
 Deep, sullen, pent waters, and, eager for spoil,
 Rends asunder its hold with a blast of his breath,
 And then goads the wild waves with the trident of death.

Like a terrified steed broken loose from the chase,
 Or as thunderbolts leap from the caverns of space,
 Neither heeding the helpless nor fearing the strong,
 Bearing down all before it, the torrent rolls on.

Ere the sleeper is warn'd by the water's loud roar,
 Destruction advances and enters his door ;
 With no time for consciousness—all in one breath
 He is sleeping, awaking, and silent in death.

The shriek of despair, when half-uttered, is o'er ;
 Who, gasping for help, ere he speaks is no more ;
 Who leap from the danger, or fear-stricken stay,
 Sink at once in the deluge that hurls them away.

The pulse that was warming, the word that was nigh ;
 The tear that was forming, the half-lifted sigh,
 The thought and the anguish, the hope and the fear,
 The past and the present, all—all disappear.

The bosom by virtue and purity blest,
 The conscience in chains and the spirit distress'd ;
 The young and the hopeful, the ruin'd and grey,
 The helping and helpless are hurried away.

The love that had grappled with many a woe,
 And succour'd the sinking when death was the foe ;
 The arm that was mighty, the heart that was brave,
 Are as tow in the grasp of the dream-troubled wave.

Nor guilt, nor the breast that repulses its foes ;
 Nor beauty, nor sex, nor the sufferer's woes,
 Are spar'd by the demon-spel, death-ride wave—
 The sweeping destruction—the horrible grave.

For when the cold moon again gleam'd on the vale,
 And the stars round about her stood trembling and pale,
 Desolations in wildest confusion were spread,
 And those waters, exhausted, lay still with the dead.

EZEKIEL'S VISION.

By the hand of the Spirit the Prophet was led
 Where a valley encompass'd the bones of the dead—
 Unsepulchred refuse from battle's red plain—
 The *debris* of glory—the bones of the slain.

And the valley he enter'd, the bones he beheld ;
 Round about them he mov'd, by the spirit impell'd ;
 He saw they were many—the Golgotha deep—
 Where thousands on thousands were piled in their sleep.

“ Son of Man,” said the Spirit, “ O Prophet,” he cries,
 “ Can these from their death-fastened slumbers arise—
 “ These bones that in wasting abandonment lie ? ”
 “ Thou knowest, O Lord,” is the prophet's reply.

“ Son of Man,” said the Spirit, “ O Prophet, proclaim :—
 “ Hear the word of the Lord, O ye bones of the slain ;
 “ The Holy hath spoken, Jehovah hath said
 “ Your breath shall return, ye shall rise from the dead ;

“ I will bind you together, your sinews restore ;
 “ With skin I will cover your flesh, as before ;
 “ And then shall ye know, by the strength of His word,
 “ That God is your Sov'reign, Jehovah your Lord.”

So the prophet proclaim'd as the Spirit required,
 His tongue was anointed, his lips were inspired,
 And echoes repeated the words that he spoke,
 Till the bones from their death-fasten'd slumbers awoke.

Like the clatter of arms 'mid the din of a gale,
The noise of confusion broke forth in the vale ;
Each bone to its fellow instinctively fled,
As it sprang from the depths of its battle-made bed.

And the prophet beheld as the sinews appeared—
As the flesh and the skin, at his bidding adhered,
Though pulses yet were not, nor life-stirring breath ;
For still were those vanquish'd ones loyal to death.

“ Son of Man,” said the Spirit, “ the mandate send forth
“ To the east, to the west, to the south, to the north,
“ Where the bones in the slaughter-fed valley have lain,
“ Bid the winds come together and breathe on the slain.”

As the prophet obey'd, lo! the heavens were stirr'd ;
The swift-winged winds in the valley were heard ;
And from Golgotha's depths, in an instant, arose
An exceeding great army prepared for its foes.

“ Son of Man,” said the Spirit, “ these bones are the name
“ Of a people whose children are cover'd with shame—
“ The perishing children of Jacob, who say
“ Our hope is cut off, God hath cast us away ;

“ Therefore prophesy, saying, O captives oppress'd,
“ The God of your fathers will yet give you rest ;
“ Your graves He will open, the prisoners release,
“ And bring them to Zion, the mountain of peace.

“ He will give you His Spirit, your country restore ;
“ Oppression and famine shall waste you no more ;
“ He will cause you to flourish, and help you to raise,
“ From desolate ruins, a temple of praise.

“ And then shall ye know, when your sepulchres rend,
“ That God is your Father, that He is your Friend ;
“ Coming forth from your graves, ye shall bow to His word ;
“ Confess to Jehovah, and worship the Lord.

“ And from harps that were dumb when the desolate wept,
“ And from timbrels and lutes that in banishment slept,
“ And from trumpets and cymbals the anthem shall rise,
“ When a nation's thanksgiving ascends to the skies !”

ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP.

—
Soon as dawn has risen
From her melting prison,
And the sunbeam hies,
Waking as it flies,
Whither, through the air,
Full of morning prayer,
Sounds their chariots lend,
As the psalms ascend,
Mounting, all athirst ;
Striving to be first,
Like unbridled fire,
Higher still, and higher—
Countless creatures mark
How the soaring lark,
Straight from off the sod,
Leaps at once to God.

Soon the service ends,
And the lark descends ;
While the morning rings
To the joy she sings :
Then, beside the nest
Where her yearnings rest,
Still short hymns are sung
While she feeds her young ;
And, as moments glide
Which the hours divide,
Or as labour stays
Worship's longer lays,
Canticles are heard
Leaping from the bird,
Swelling, as they rise,
Till they fill the skies.

And companions lend,
 Where Orisons blend,
 Strains of holiest praise
 Winged saints can raise :
 For the warbling race,
 Blest with deathless grace,
 All the live-long day
 Trill devotion's lay :
 Where their mingling choirs
 Worthiest faith inspires,
 Work and worship ride,
 Always, side by side :
 Sabbaths pour their oil
 On the wheels of toil,
 And employment, blest,
 Crowns the day of rest.

VEGETABLE CONSCIOUSNESS.

O say not the plant, all unthinking, proceeds
 On its path of existence by wisdom design'd ;
 That the proud, soaring cedar unconsciously feeds ;
 That the buds, with no cravings, are voiceless and blind ;

That the leaves on the branches ne'er mingle their songs
 With the strains which the forest-harps flings from their
 That the brambles ne'er listen while echo prolongs [strings ;
 The music which nature from paradise brings.

The sociable ivy's encircling embrace,
 Or the grasp of the ardent, benovolent vine,
 Should all such misleading impressions erase,
 And teach us to worthily learn the Divine.

The meek little daisy that greeted the morn,
 And fondly and freely the noon-beam caress'd,
 Will blush when the night-bringing libertines fawn,
 And carefully cover her innocent breast.

The vale-scenting lily will only retain
 The fragrance that Eve, when in paradise, blest ;
 Nor suffer a tint on her cheek to remain,
 But that which the snow-flake let fall from its breast.

The liver-work knows that the sun-beam would smite
 A framework like hers, all for tenderness made ;
 She therefore avoids the fierce, vanquishing light,
 And peacefully dwells in the solacing shade.

And the shrewd scarlet-runner, or e'er she receives
 The death-meaning thrust of the sun's fiercest ray,
 Will turn on its foe the keen edge of its leaves,
 Cleave asunder the danger, and cast it away.

The violet and primrose prefer a retreat
 Where nature a grateful seclusion supplies ;
 While cowslips and daffodils, not so discreet,
 Their loveliness bare to the gaze of the skies.

So sensitive born, and so slenderly strung,
 Are the nerves that to some timid plants have been lent,
 That a sound on their branches may scarcely be hung.
 Ere all that was vital seems instantly spent.

Then say not that reason declines to reside
 In the kingdom where many-crown'd loveliness reigns ;
 But vaunting conceit with mean prejudice hide,
 And blindfolded ignorance banish in chains.

For all breathing creatures, whate'er be their dress,
 Their mode of existence, employment or name,
 The wisdom of God in their teachings express ;
 Acknowledge one Father, and worship the same.

O JESU SWEET SAVIOUR.

O Jesu, sweet Saviour, Thou fountain of love,
 Whose blest ones on lost ones look down from above ;
 Thou Sovereign of mercy, O send one to me—
 An angel to bless me and bring me to Thee.

O Jesu, sweet Saviour, whose infinite name
For my deep transgression was loaded with shame,
O cease to remember how dreadful my sin :
I come to beg mercy, O bid me come in.

O Jesu, sweet Saviour, once chill'd by despair,
When trembling Gethsemane echo'd Thy prayer ;
Scarce daring Hope's whisper in faith to repeat,
I sink, self-abandon'd, and lie at Thy feet.

O Jesu, sweet Saviour, once crimson'd with gore,
Whose nail-prints and spear-gash the crown'd ones adore,
All wounded behold me, as helpless I lie,
O stay Thou the bleeding, nor leave me to die.

O Jesu, sweet Saviour, once bath'd in the flood
That pour'd forth its waters as Thou did'st Thy blood,
O wash me, I pray Thee, in Golgotha's tide—
In streams that gave life when Emanuel died.

I AM WEARY, O JESU.

I am weary, O Jesu, and fainting with fear,
For the darkness pursues me, and dangers are near ;
Unprotected, unshelter'd, I cry, Lord, to Thee :
"Son of David, have mercy, have mercy on me."

I am friendless, O Jesu, I journey alone,
My bed the bleak mountain, my pillow a stone :
Where no voice is calling, nor path can I see,
"Son of David, have mercy, have mercy on me."

I am hungry, O Jesu, for famine's lean hand,
Pioneer'd by destruction, has emptied the land.
Thou Thyself did'st once hunger, let that be my plea,
"Son of David, have mercy, have mercy on me."

"I am thirsting, O Jesu, no stream can I find ;
On before lies the desert, and death comes behind ;
By the thirst Thou did'st suffer when nail'd to the tree,
"Son of David, have mercy, have mercy on me."

am naked, O Jesu, the sky is o'ercast,
And a storm rides apace on the night-bringing blast ;
By Thy mercy to those who ungarmented Thee,
"Son of David, have mercy, have mercy on me."

I am sinking, O Jesu, cold sweat on my brow
Tells my soul it is death that is grasping me now ;
By the cry Thou did'st utter when death came to Thee,
"Son of David, have mercy, have mercy on me."

THE 95TH PSALM.

O come let us bring, in the praises we sing,
A song of thanksgiving, and joyfully raise,
To God our salvation—the Lord of creation—
Before His bright presence an anthem of praise.
Valleys, mountains, and hills His Omnipotence fills ;
All gods fall before Him, the kings of all lands ;
O'er the ocean He reigns, puts its billows in chains,
And lifteth its fathomless depths in His hands.

O come let us bow, let us kneel to Him now ;
At His feet let us gather and worshipping fall :
For Israel He leadeth, His people He feedeth,
And lives the preserver and Saviour of all.
O be it our choice to give heed to His voice,
Nor wantonly vex Him with hardness of heart,
As in the temptation—that great provocation—
When Vengeance went forth with its death-dealing dart.
Let the wilderness tell of the thousands who fell,
Of the sons of our fathers who anger'd Him sore—
Generations long dead, who to judgment were led,
And who tasted the manna of mercy no more ;
Who, for forty long years, never suffered the tears
Of contrition to fall on a penitent breast,
Till the wrath of the Lord thunder'd forth in His word,
And scatter'd and slew them in sight of His rest.

IN MEMORIAM—LORD BEACONSFIELD.

The Lord of Hughenden has pass'd away,
 And death has lighted up his crowning day ;
 Bereavement's voice proclaims him peerless now,
 And valliant foes before him bravely bow.

He has not fall'n within that barren span
 Which gives the world not one remember'd man ;
 Where Counsellors ne'er catch th' inspiring fire,
 And monarchs born of emptiness expire.

All was not over when the crumbling rust
 Fell From his soul and sought the hallowing dust ;
 When silence bade his lips their toils forsake,
 And thought its everlasting farewell take.

His onward-reaching glance o'er-leap'd the gate
 Where times unripe designs pursue their fate ;
 His wisdom, steer'd by an unwavering hand,
 Re-built the greatness of a tottering land.

Far down the future shall his name be sung
 Who taught the aged and inspired the young ;
 Whose pure devotion made a sovereign blest,
 And gave her people concord peace and rest.

But now, sore wounded by bereavement's goad,
 An empire bends awhile beneath its load,
 And all the world unites a grief to share,
 Too much for one afflicted land to bear.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

Thou loving Father, ever near,
 Unchangeably the same,
 In heaven, Thy dwelling place, and here,
 Thrice hallow'd be Thy name.

"Thy Kingdom come" to every land ;
 Thy sovereign will be done,
 Till heaven and earth join hand in hand,
 And God and man be one.

"Give us this day our daily bread ;"
 Our trespasses forgive ;
 That we the heaven-ward path may tread,
 And, clothed in pardon, live.

Forgiveness on our hearts engrave ;
 Thine image, there, renew,
 That we, when suppliant brothers crave,
 May learn to pardon too.

Conduct us where temptation's power
 Is conquered by Thy grace ;
 And help us, in the evil hour,
 Thy guiding steps to trace ;

For kingdom, throne, and realm are Thine ;
 All might belongs to Thee ;
 The glory, power, and grace divine,
 And endless majesty. Amen.

