

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

COLLECTED POEMS
AND TRANSLATIONS

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Good-Bye

Good-bye, proud world! I'm going home:
 Thou art not my friend, and I'm not thine.
 Long through thy weary crowds I roam;
 A river-ark on the ocean brine,
 Long I've been tossed like the driven foam;
 But now, proud world! I'm going home.

Good-bye to Flattery's fawning face;
 To Grandeur with his wise grimace;
 To upstart Wealth's averted eye;
 To supple Office, low and high;
 To crowded halls, to court and street;
 To frozen hearts and hasting feet;
 To those who go, and those who come;
 Good-bye, proud world! I'm going home.

I am going to my own hearth-stone,
 Bosomed in yon green hills alone,—
 A secret nook in a pleasant land,
 Whose groves the frolic fairies planned;
 Where arches green, the livelong day,
 Echo the blackbird's roundelay,
 And vulgar feet have never trod
 A spot that is sacred to thought and God.

O, when I am safe in my sylvan home,
 I tread on the pride of Greece and Rome;
 And when I am stretched beneath the pines,
 Where the evening star so holy shines,
 I laugh at the lore and the pride of man,
 At the sophist schools, and the learned clan;
 For what are they all, in their high conceit,
 When man in the bush with God may meet?

The Rhodora:

On Being Asked, Whence Is the Flower?

In May, when sea-winds pierced our solitudes,
 I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,
 Spreading its leafless blooms in a damp nook,
 To please the desert and the sluggish brook.
 The purple petals, fallen in the pool,
 Made the black water with their beauty gay;
 Here might the red-bird come his plumes to cool,
 And court the flower that cheapens his array.
 Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why
 This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,
 Tell them, dear, that if eyes were made for seeing,
 Then Beauty is its own excuse for being:
 Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!
 I never thought to ask, I never knew;
 But, in my simple ignorance, suppose
 The self-same Power that brought me there brought you.

The Humble-Bee

Burly, dozing, humble-bee,
 Where thou art is clime for me.
 Let them sail for Porto Rique,
 Far-off heats through seas to seek;
 I will follow thee alone,
 Thou animated torrid-zone!
 Zigzag steerer, desert cheerer,
 Let me chase thy waving lines;
 Keep me nearer, me thy hearer,
 Singing over shrubs and vines.

Insect lover of the sun,
 Joy of thy dominion!
 Sailor of the atmosphere;
 Swimmer through the waves of air;

Voyager of light and noon;
 Epicurean of June;
 Wait, I prithee, till I come
 Within carshot of thy hum,—
 All without is martyrdom.

When the south wind, in May days,
 With a net of shining haze
 Silvers the horizon wall,
 And, with softness touching all,
 Tints the human countenance
 With a color of romance,
 And, infusing subtle heats,
 Turns the sod to violets,
 Thou, in sunny solitudes,
 Rover of the underwoods,
 The green silence dost displace
 With thy mellow, breezy bass.

Hot midsummer's petted crone,
 Sweet to me thy drowsy tone
 Tells of countless sunny hours,
 Long days, and solid banks of flowers;
 Of gulfs of sweetness without bound
 In Indian wildernesses found;
 Of Syrian peace, immortal leisure,
 Firmest cheer, and bird-like pleasure.

Aught unsavory or unclean
 Hath my insect never seen;
 But violets and bilberry bells,
 Maple-sap, and daffodels,
 Grass with green flag half-mast high,
 Succory to match the sky,
 Columbine with horn of honey,
 Scented fern, and agrimony,
 Clover, catchfly, adder's tongue,
 And brier roses, dwelt among;
 All beside was unknown waste,
 All was picture as he passed.

Wiser far than human seer,
 Yellow-breeched philosopher!
 Seeing only what is fair,
 Sipping only what is sweet,
 Thou dost mock at fate and care,
 Leave the chaff, and take the wheat.
 When the fierce north-western blast
 Cools sea and land so far and fast,
 Thou already slumberest deep;
 Woe and want thou canst outsleep;
 Want and woe, which torture us,
 Thy sleep makes ridiculous.

Berrying

'May be true what I had heard,—
 Earth's a howling wilderness,
 Truculent with fraud and force,'
 Said I, strolling through the pastures,
 And along the river-side.
 Caught among the blackberry vines,
 Feeding on the Ethiops sweet,
 Pleasant fancies overtook me.
 I said, 'What influence me preferred,
 Elect, to dreams thus beautiful?'
 The vines replied, 'And didst thou deem
 No wisdom to our berries went?'