

P O E M S

BY

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

SECOND SERIES.

CAMBRIDGE:
PUBLISHED BY GEORGE NICHOLS.

BOSTON:
B. B. MUSSEY AND COMPANY.

1848.

Generated at West Virginia University on 2021-02-16 14:33 GMT / <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mnc1/cu58319646>
Public Domain, Google-digitized / http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-goo

CONTENTS.



	PAGE
COLUMBUS	3
AN INCIDENT OF THE FIRE AT HAMBURG	17
THE EPITAPH	22
HUNGER AND COLD	25
THE LANDLORD	30
TO A PINE-TREE	33
SI DESCENDERO IN INFERNUM, ADES	36
TO THE PAST	39
TO THE FUTURE	43
HEBE	48
THE SEARCH	50
THE PRESENT CRISIS	53
SUMMER STORM	63
THE GROWTH OF THE LEGEND	68
A CONTRAST	73
EXTREME UNCTION	75
THE OAK	80

THE ROYAL PEDIGREE	83
ABOVE AND BELOW	87
THE CAPTIVE	90
THE BIRCH-TREE	96
AN INTERVIEW WITH MILES STANDISH	98
ON THE CAPTURE OF CERTAIN FUGITIVE SLAVES NEAR WASHINGTON	106
ON THE DEATH OF CHARLES T. TORREY	111
REMEMBERED MUSIC	114
SONG: TO M. L.	116
TO THE DANDELION	118
THE GHOST-SEER	121
THE MORNING-GLORY	131
STUDIES FOR TWO HEADS	135
ON A PORTRAIT OF DANTE BY GIOTTO	142
ON THE DEATH OF A FRIEND'S CHILD	145
ANTI-TEXAS	150
THE FALCONER	157
THE CHANGELING	160
AN INDIAN-SUMMER REVERIE	164
THE PIONEER	180
LONGING	183

. The poem called "The Morning-Glory," on page 131, it is proper to state, is by another hand.

THE PRESENT CRISIS.



WHEN a deed is done for Freedom, through the broad
earth's aching breast
Runs a thrill of joy prophetic, trembling on from east
to west,
And the slave, where'er he cowers, feels the soul
within him climb
To the awful verge of manhood, as the energy sub-
lime
Of a century bursts full-blossomed on the thorny stem
of Time.

Through the walls of hut and palace shoots the instan-
taneous throe,
When the travail of the Ages wrings earth's systems to
and fro ;
At the birth of each new Era, with a recognizing
start,
Nation wildly looks at nation, standing with mute lips
apart,
And glad Truth's yet mightier man-child leaps beneath
the Future's heart.

So the Evil's triumph sendeth, with a terror and a
chill,
Under continent to continent, the sense of coming
ill,
And the slave, where'er he cowers, feels his sympathies
with God
In hot tear-drops ebbing earthward, to be drunk up by
the sod,
Till a corpse crawls round unburied, delving in the
nobler clod.

For mankind are one in spirit, and an instinct bears
along,

Round the earth's electric circle, the swift flash of right
or wrong ;

Whether conscious or unconscious, yet Humanity's vast
frame

Through its ocean-sundered fibres feels the gush of joy
or shame ; —

In the gain or loss of one race all the rest have equal
claim.

Once to every man and nation comes the moment to
decide,

In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or
evil side ;

Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offering each
the bloom or blight,

Parts the goats upon the left hand, and the sheep upon
the right,

And the choice goes by for ever 'twixt that darkness
and that light.

Hast thou chosen, O my people, on whose party thou
shalt stand,
Ere the Doom from its worn sandals shakes the dust
against our land ?
Though the cause of Evil prosper, yet 't is Truth alone
is strong,
And, albeit she wander outcast now, I see around her
throng
Troops of beautiful, tall angels, to enshield her from all
wrong.

Backward look across the ages and the beacon-moments
see,
That, like peaks of some sunk continent, jut through
Oblivion's sea ;
Not an ear in court or market for the low foreboding
cry
Of those Crises, God's stern winnowers, from whose
feet earth's chaff must fly ;
Never shows the choice momentous till the judgment
hath passed by.

Careless seems the great Avenger ; history's pages but
record
One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old systems
and the Word ;
Truth for ever on the scaffold, Wrong for ever on the
throne, —
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim
unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above
his own.

We see dimly in the Present what is small and what is
great,
Slow of faith how weak an arm may turn the iron helm
of fate,
But the soul is still oracular ; amid the market's
din,
List the ominous stern whisper from the Delphic cave
within, —
“ They enslave their children's children who make com-
promise with sin.”

Slavery, the earthborn Cyclops, fellest of the giant
brood,
Sons of brutish Force and Darkness, who have drenched
the earth with blood,
Famished in his self-made desert, blinded by our purer
day,
Gropes in yet unblasted regions for his miserable
prey;—
Shall we guide his gory fingers where our helpless
children play?

Then to side with Truth is noble when we share her
wretched crust,
Ere her cause bring fame and profit, and 't is prosper-
ous to be just;
Then it is the brave man chooses, while the coward
stands aside,
Doubting in his abject spirit, till his Lord is cruci-
fied,
And the multitude make virtue of the faith they had
denied.

Count me o'er Earth's chosen heroes, — they were
souls that stood alone

While the men they agonized for hurled the contume-
lious stone,

Stood serene and down the future saw the golden beam
incline

To the side of perfect justice, mastered by their faith
divine,

By one man's plain truth to manhood and to God's
supreme design.

By the light of burning heretics Christ's bleeding feet
I track,

Toiling up new Calvaries ever with the cross that turns
not back,

And these mounts of anguish number how each genera-
tion learned

One new word of that grand *Credo* which in prophet-
hearts hath burned

Since the first man stood God-conquered with his face
to heaven upturned.

For Humanity sweeps onward : where to-day the mar-
tyr stands,
On the morrow crouches Judas with the silver in his
hands ;
Far in front the cross stands ready and the crackling
fagots burn,
While the hooting mob of yesterday in silent awe
return
To glean up the scattered ashes into History's golden
urn.

'T is as easy to be heroes as to sit the idle
slaves
Of a legendary virtue carved upon our fathers'
graves ;
Worshippers of light ancestral make the present light
a crime ;—
Was the Mayflower launched by cowards, steered by
men behind their time ?
Turn those tracks toward Past or Future, that make
Plymouth rock sublime ?

They were men of present valor, stalwart old iconoclasts,
Unconvinced by axe or gibbet that all virtue was the
Past's ;
But we make their truth our falsehood, thinking that
hath made us free,
Hoarding it in mouldy parchments, while our tender
spirits flee
The rude grasp of that great Impulse which drove them
across the sea.

They have rights who dare maintain them; we are
traitors to our sires,
Smothering in their holy ashes Freedom's new-lit altar-
fires ;
Shall we make their creed our jailer ? Shall we, in our
haste to slay,
From the tombs of the old prophets steal the funeral
lamps away
To light up the martyr-fagots round the prophets of
to-day ?

New occasions teach new duties ; Time makes ancient
good uncouth ;
They must upward still, and onward, who would keep
abreast of Truth ;
Lo, before us gleam her camp-fires ! we ourselves must
Pilgrims be,
Launch our Mayflower, and steer boldly through the
desperate winter sea,
Nor attempt the Future's portal with the Past's blood-
rusted key.