



THE POEMS

OF

Travels & Sketches
ROBERT LOWELL,

AUTHOR OF "THE NEW PRIEST IN CONCEPTION BAY."

A NEW EDITION

(WITH MANY NEW POEMS.)



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To

JOSEPH GREEN COGSWELL, LL. D.,

THE FIRST HEAD OF ROUND-HILL SCHOOL,

TO WHOM THE BOY BROUGHT HIS LESSONS WITH MUCH

REVERENCE AND LOVE AND WITHOUT FEAR,

THE MAN OFFERS THIS BOOK AS

FEARLESSLY AND WITH

NO LESS LOVE AND

REVERENCE.

JULY 31, 1863.

HAVING from childhood met, now and then, and listened to the Muse of Numbers, the writer offers here a few of the few things that he has learned, at different times, from her, and hopes that they may not be thought too many.

Lest the dates, put to most of them, should be thought to have been occasioned by a conceit or affectation, it is right to say that they are owing to a friend's discovery of a remarkable chance-likeness between one of these, printed years ago, and a recent poem in a Magazine. One being dated, some others, at least, must be so; and in the end, most of these pieces have had the time at which they were written, given, after them. The general reader will be kind enough to pass over these dates as harmless; some friends may even find a slight interest in them.*

* Some persons may need to be told that, where more than one date is given, the piece was left (forgotten, perhaps) altogether, between; then found and carried on.

March, 1860.

CONTENTS.



	PAGE
ANTHEM-CAROL FOR CHRISTMAS	7
THE DELPHIAN CHILDREN'S LOST HOPE	9
A HOUSE ON THE YELLOW SAND	20
THE WARNED ONE	22
THE DAYS OF SIN	23
THE LITTLE YEARS	26
OUR INLAND SUMMER-NIGHTFALL	29
A CHRISTMAS HYMN	35
TURNING LOVE AWAY	36
A WALK AMONG MEMORY'S GRAVES	39
A DREAM OF JUDGMENT JUST AT HAND	46
A SONG FOR CHRISTMAS	56
THE PAINTER'S PROBATION. PART I.	58
THAT DEAD	65
THE CHRIST FORGOTTEN IN OUR DAYS	67
THE PITYING CHRIST	71
NEWFOUNDLAND	72
TO THE MUSE	74
TO MY FRIEND LONG SUNDERED	76
THE CRY OF THE WRONGED	80
A CHRISTMAS SERMON	83
BEFORE MORNS	90
THE PALMER AT THE WAYSIDE	92
THE BISHOP BOUND	94
THE PRIEST THAT MUST BE	96
A COMMUNING WITH GOD BEFORE ORDINATION	101

	PAGE
THE RELIEF OF LUCKNOW	104
THE PAST THAT IS NOT OURS	109
DIRGE TO A SOUL DEPARTING	111
THE MAIDEN OUTSIDE THE WORLD	117
THE YEAR IS GONE!	119
A ROBIN'S SONG	123
BÜRGER'S LENORE	124
THE BARREN FIELD	136
CHRIST'S LEGACY	139
A DIRGE	142
A BURIAL-HYMN	146
TO GOD, MOST HIGH	147
LOVE DISPOSED OF	149
TO MY OLD PARISHIONERS	151
JOHN HAYES'S LAST VOYAGE	155
THE TEMPTER AT THE SIDE	157
A RHYME READ BY TWO LOVERS	161
THE BRAVE OLD SHIP, THE ORIENT . . .	171

SONGS OF OUR HOLY WAR.

A HYMN FOR THE HOST	181
NEW ENGLAND ARMING	183
THE MEN OF THE CUMBERLAND	186
NEW ORLEANS WON BACK	189
A CALL OF TRUE MEN	193
THIS DAY, COUNTRYMEN	195
MY TOWNSMEN FOR THE WAR	197
THE FAILURE AT FREDERICKSBURG . . .	201
PRAYER IN THE FIGHT (KÖRNER) . . .	203
OUR LAND BEYOND THE WAR	205

BÜRGER'S LENORE.

LENORA rose at morning-red,
From bitter dreams awaking :
“ Art faithless, William, or art dead,
So long thy love forsaking ? ”
He went with royal Frederic's might,
To battle in Prague's famous fight :
But from the war-field gory
No post has brought his story.

The King and Empress, tired, at last,
Of arms so vainly wielded,
Alike aside their rage have cast,
And to a truce have yielded.
Now each glad host with sing-song rang,
With beating drum and cling and clang ;
And, decked with many a garland,
Came homeward from the far land.

And over all, all over all,
From street and lane and alley,

Shout old and young their jubel-call,
And round the home-march rally.
Praise God! the child and goodwife cried;
Welcome! said many a longing bride;
But, for Lenore, no meeting:
No kiss, or tender greeting.

Each way she flew, the ranks all through,
But, though all names were spoken,
No one that came her lover knew,
And no one could give token.
And when the hosts passed onward were,
She tore her glossy, raven hair;
Upon the greensward sinking,
With bitter woe past thinking.

The mother kneeled upon her knee;
“God, pity my poor daughter!
My darling child, what is’t with thee?”
And in her arms she caught her.
“Ah, mother, mother, gone is gone!
Now let the world and all be gone! *
No pity dwells in Heaven:
Woe! woe! my heart is riven!”

* Wherever a final word is repeated, the original has the same construction.

“ Help, God ! oh, help ! look gently on !
Child, child ! oh, say, ‘ Our Father ! ’
What God does, that is sure well done :
God, judge not ; spare us rather ! ”
“ O mother, mother, mockery !
God has not, sure, well-done to me.
My prayers, ah ! what passed they for ?
Now nought is left to pray for ! ”

“ Help, God ! whoe’er the Father knows,
Knows He the children loveth ;
The Holy Sacrament such woes
As thine, my child, removeth.”
“ O mother, mother, little vent
My woe would find in sacrament.
No sacrament can solder
Forms that in death-damps moulder.”

“ Hear, child ! How if the perjured one,
When long in far Hungáry,
Had all his ties of troth undone,
Some newer love to marry ?
Fling off his heart, my child ! by sin
In the long game he cannot win ;
When soul and body sever,
This deed shall sting forever ”

“ O mother, mother, gone is gone !
Forsaken is forsaken ;
Death, death ! Come death, and I have won !
Why did I ever waken ?
Go out, forever out, my light !
Die out, die out, in woe and night !
No pity dwells in Heaven ;
Woe ! woe ! my soul is riven ! ”

“ Help, God ! To judgment enter not :
The poor child's heart is broken :
She utters, now, she knows not what :
Oh, count not what is spoken !
My child, forget this world's distress,
And think on God, and blessedness :
So to thy heart forsaken
A spouse shall yet be taken.”

“ O mother ! What is blessedness ?
Oh ! what is hell, my mother ?
With him, with him, is blessedness ;
And hell without him, mother.
Go out, forever out, my light !
Die out, die out, in woe and night !
Without him, earth and heaven
In misery were even.”

Thus mad despair within her brain,
And in her veins all revelled,
Till e'en at God's all-gracious reign,
Her impious scorn she levelled.
She wrung her hands and beat her breast
Until the sun went down to rest :
Till up to heaven's high chamber
The golden stars 'gan clamber.

And then without, hark ! tramp, tramp, tramp !
A horse's footsteps sounded ;
Then on the steps, with heavy stamp,
The clanking rider bounded.
And hark ! and hark ! the door-bell ring,
All gently, softly, cling-ling-ling.
Then, through the door-leaves uttered,
Just these quick questions fluttered :

“Holla ! holla ! undo, my child !
Wak'st thou, my love, or sleepest ?
Has time thy love for me beguiled ?
And smilest thou, or weapest ?”
“Ah, William ! Thou, so late at night ?
I've wept and waked, in weary plight ;
Oh ! bitter woe I've tasted.
Whence hast^a thou hither hasted ?”

“Near midnight ’t is, we saddle steed ;
From Boehmen I rode hither :
Ere I could mount, ’t was late indeed,
And we go back together.”

“O William, first a moment stay :
The blast roars through the hawthorn spray,
Come to my arms, heart-dearest !
Here no cold wind thou fearest.”

“Through hawthorn spray let fierce blasts roar,
And ravage, helter-skelter !
The wild steed paws, and clinks the spur ;
I dare not here seek shelter.
Come, dress thee : spring and swing, with
 speed,
Behind me, here, upon my steed.
A hundred miles I take thee,
This day my bride to make thee.”

“Alas ! a hundred miles would’st thou
Bear me, *this day*, to bridal ?
Hark, hark ! the clock is clanging now ;
Eleven struck : ’T is idle !”

“Look far ; look near ; the moon shines
 clear ;

We and the dead ride fast, my dear ;

I gage, ere night's at highest,
Thou in thy bride-bed liest."

"Say on, where is thy chamber, dear?
What bride-bed dost thou tender?"

"Still, cool and small; far, far from here;
Six wide boards and two slender."

"Hast room for me?" "For thee and me:
Come, dress thee: mount; I stay for thee.
The marriage-guests have waited:
We must not be belated."

Fairly she dressed her, sprang and swung
Herself to horse behind him;
Fast to the well-loved rider clung,
And with white arms entwined him.
Then hurtling off, with leap and bound,
At whistling speed they scoured the ground,
Till horse and rider panted,
And sparks and dust far slanted.

On this and on the other hand,
How flew the plains and ridges;
Hillock and rock and meadow-land;
How thundered all the bridges!
"My love, dost fear? The moon shines clear:

Hurrah! The dead ride fast, my dear!

My love, dost fear the dead men?"

"Ah, no! yet leave the dead men!"

What clang and song swept there along,

Where the foul ravens flaunted?

Hark! death-bell clang! Hark! funeral-song!

"Bear on the dead!" is chanted.

And nearer drew a funeral-train:

Coffin and bier came on, amain:

Their song the dark quire pitches

Like the frogs' cry in ditches.

"Nay, bury after midnight-tide,

With clang and song and weeping:

I bear me home my fair young bride:

Come to our merry-keeping.

Come clerk! come here! your quire all bring,

Come all, the bridal-song to sing,

Come, priest, the blessing say us

Ere we in bride-bed lay us."

Ceased clang and song; the bier was gone:

They came as they were bidden,

And, hurry-scurry, trampled on

Fast as the steed was ridden.

And ever on, with leap and bound,
At whistling speed they scoured the ground;
Both horse and rider panted,
And sparks and dust far slanted.

How flew, on right, how flew, on left,
Hills, trees, and hedged spaces!
How flew, on left and right and left,
Towns, cities, dwelling-places!
“My love, dost fear? The moon shines
clear:
Hurrah! The dead ride well, my dear;
My love, dost fear the dead men?”
“Ah! let them rest, the dead men!”

See there! see there! On gallows-height,
Dance round the wheel's curst swivel,
Half-seen within the moon's pale light,
Spectres, in airy revel.
“Sasa! ye spectres. Here! come here!
Come, spectres, come, and follow near,
Our wedding reels to number
Ere we lie down to slumber.”

And lo! the spectres, rush, rush, rush!
Behind the wild train hurtle,

As whirls the storm-wind's sudden gush
Through withered leaves of myrtle.
And on and on, with leap and bound,
At whistling speed they scoured the ground ;
Both horse and rider panted,
And sparks and dust far slanted.

How flew the scenes in moonlight spread !
How into farness flitted !
And how, their places overhead,
The sky and planets quitted !
“ My love, dost fear ? The moon shines
clear ;
Hurrah ! The dead ride well, my dear ;
My love, dost fear the dead men ? ”
“ Ah, woe ! Let rest the dead men ! ”

“ Steed, steed ! methinks the cock crows
there ;
Soon will the sands be wasted ;
Steed, steed ! I scent the morning air ;
Haste, as thou hast not hasted !
'T is o'er, 't is o'er ! Our course is o'er !
The chamber stands with open door ;
The dead ride wondrous races :
Here, here, we find our places.”

Against an iron churchyard door,
The furious courser battered :
Its clamps fell loose, the shock before,
And post and bar were shattered.
Its clanking leaves wide open flew,
And o'er the graves the train swept through.
Gravestones were seen to glimmer
Round in the moon's pale shimmer.

See, see ! An instant scarce can flit,
Ere, hoo ! a fearful wonder !
The rider's flesh, all bit by bit,
Like cinders fell asunder.
Like kernel bare, without the hull,
His head became a naked skull ;
His body shrunk and narrow,
With hour-glass and with arrow.

Snorted the steed, and madly reared ;
Fierce fiery flashes spurted ;
Then hey ! sank down and disappeared,
And she lay there deserted.
A howl, a howl from out the lift !
A yell from forth each grave's deep rift !
Lenora's spirit shivers :
'Twixt death and life it quivers.

Now featly danced, in moonlight-glance,
All round about in mazes,
The spectre-forms a fetter-dance,
And howled in such-like phrases;
“Be meek, though heart should break in
twain,
Nor dare thy God in heaven arraign.
Thy dust to this still city!
God show thy soul his pity!”

June, 1846.