

Poems of Youth and Early Manhood

Poems, 1847

May-Day and Other Pieces

Elements and Mottoes

Quatrains

Fragments

Uncollected Poems

Translations

The Poems

Essays. First Series

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Representative Men

Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson

Poems, Essays, Letters: Self-Reliance, The Over-Soul, Circles, The Poet, Experience, Nature and other Illustrated

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THE BELL

I love thy music, mellow bell,
I love thine iron chime,
To life or death, to heaven or hell,
Which calls the sons of Time.

Thy voice upon the deep
The home-bound sea-boy hails,
It charms his cares to sleep,
It cheers him as he sails.

To house of God and heavenly joys
Thy summons called our sires,

And good men thought thy sacred voice
Disarmed the thunder's fires.

And soon thy music, sad death-bell,
Shall lift its notes once more,
And mix my requiem with the wind
That sweeps my native shore.
1823.

THOUGHT

I am not poor, but I am proud,
Of one inalienable right,
Above the envy of the crowd, -
Thought's holy light.

Better it is than gems or gold,
And oh! it cannot die,
But thought will glow when the sun grows cold,
And mix with Deity.
BOSTON, 1823.



PRAYER

When success exalts thy lot,
God for thy virtue lays a plot:
And all thy life is for thy own,
Then for mankind's instruction shown;
And though thy knees were never bent,
To Heaven thy hourly prayers are sent,
And whether formed for good or ill,
Are registered and answered still.
1826 [?].

I bear in youth the sad infirmities
That use to undo the limb and sense of age;

It hath pleased Heaven to break the dream of bliss
Which lit my onward way with bright presage,
And my unserviceable limbs forego.

The sweet delight I found in fields and farms,
On windy hills, whose tops with morning glow,
And lakes, smooth mirrors of Aurora's charms.
Yet I think on them in the silent night,
Still breaks that morn, though dim, to Memory's

eye,

And the firm soul does the pale train defy
Of grim Disease, that would her peace affright.
Please God, I'll wrap me in mine innocence,
And bid each awful Muse drive the damned

harpies hence.

CAMBRIDGE, 1827.

Be of good cheer, brave spirit; steadfastly
Serve that low whisper thou hast served; for

know,

God hath a select family of sons
Now scattered wide thro' earth, and each alone,
Who are thy spiritual kindred, and each one
By constant service to, that inward law,
Is weaving the sublime proportions
Of a true monarch's soul. Beauty and strength,
The riches of a spotless memory,
The eloquence of truth, the wisdom got
By searching of a clear and loving eye
That seeth as God seeth. These are their gifts,

And Time, who keeps God's word, brings on the
day

To seal the marriage of these minds with thine,
Thine everlasting lovers. Ye shall be
The salt of all the elements, world of the world.

TO-DAY

I rake no confined clay, nor publish wide
The resurrection of departed pride.
Safe in their ancient crannies, dark and deep,
Let kings and conquerors, saints and soldiers
sleep -

Late in the world, – too late perchance for fame,
Just late enough to reap abundant blame, -
I choose a novel theme, a bold abuse
Of critic charters, an unlaurelled Muse.

Old mouldy men and books and names and lands
Disgust my reason and defile my hands.
I had as lief respect an ancient shoe,
As love old things *for age* , and hate the new.
I spurn the Past, my mind disdains its nod,
Nor kneels in homage to so mean a God.
I laugh at those who, while they gape and gaze,
The bald antiquity of China praise.
Youth is (whatever cynic tubs pretend)
The fault that boys and nations soonest mend.

1824.

FAME

Ah Fate, cannot a man
Be wise without a beard?
East, West, from Beer to Dan,
Say, was it never heard
That wisdom might in youth be gotten,
Or wit be ripe before 't was rotten?

He pays too high a price
For knowledge and for fame
Who sells his sinews to be wise,
His teeth and bones to buy a name,
And crawls through life a paralytic
To earn the praise of bard and critic.

Were it not better done,
To dine and sleep through forty years;
Be loved by few; be feared by none;
Laugh life away; have wine for tears;
And take the mortal leap undaunted,
Content that all we asked was granted?

But Fate will not permit
The seed of gods to die,
Nor suffer sense to win from wit

Its guerdon in the sky,
Nor let us hide, whate'er our pleasure,
The world's light underneath a measure.

Go then, sad youth, and shine;
Go, sacrifice to Fame;
Put youth, joy, health upon the shrine,
And life to fan the flame;
Being for Seeming bravely barter
And die to Fame a happy martyr.
1824.

THE SUMMONS

A sterner errand to the silken troop
Has quenched the uneasy blush that warmed my
cheek;
I am commissioned in my day of joy
To leave my woods and streams and the sweet
sloth
Of prayer and song that were my dear delight,
To leave the rudeness of my woodland life,
Sweet twilight walks and midnight solitude
And kind acquaintance with the morning stars
And the glad hey-day of my household hours,
The innocent mirth which sweetens daily bread,
Railing in love to those who rail again,
By mind's industry sharpening the love of life -

Books, Muses, Study, fireside, friends and love,
I loved ye with true love, so fare ye well!

I was a boy; boyhood slid gayly by
And the impatient years that trod on it
Taught me new lessons in the lore of life.
I've learned the sum of that sad history
All woman-born do know, that hoped-for days,
Days that come dancing on fraught with delights,
Dash our blown hopes as they limp heavily by.
But I, the bantling of a country Muse,
Abandon all those toys with speed to obey
The King whose meek ambassador I go.
1826.

THE RIVER

And I behold once more
My old familiar haunts; here the blue river,
The same blue wonder that my infant eye
Admired, sage doubting whence the traveller
came, -
Whence brought his sunny bubbles ere he washed
The fragrant flag-roots in my father's fields,
And where thereafter in the world he went.
Look, here he is, unaltered, save that now
He hath broke his banks and flooded all the vales
With his redundant waves.

Here is the rock where, yet a simple child,
I caught with bended pin my earliest fish,
Much triumphing, – and these the fields
Over whose flowers I chased the butterfly
A blooming hunter of a fairy fine.
And hark! where overhead the ancient crows
Hold their sour conversation in the sky: -
These are the same, but I am not the same,
But wiser than I was, and wise enough
Not to regret the changes, tho' they cost
Me many a sigh. Oh, call not Nature dumb;
These trees and stones are audible to me,
These idle flowers, that tremble in the wind,
I understand their faery syllables,
And all their sad significance. The wind,
That rustles down the well-known forest road -
It hath a sound more eloquent than speech.
The stream, the trees, the grass, the sighing wind,
All of them utter sounds of 'monishment
And grave parental love.
They are not of our race, they seem to say,
And yet have knowledge of our moral race,
And somewhat of majestic sympathy,
Something of pity for the puny clay,
That holds and boasts the immeasurable mind.
I feel as I were welcome to these trees
After long months of weary wandering,
Acknowledged by their hospitable boughs;