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Baum Henry Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac Crane
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Burroughs Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Curtis Homer Tolstoy Thoreau Twain
Potter Darwin Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Hesse Harte
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**Reminiscent Poems , from Poems
of Nature, Poems Subjective and
Reminiscent and Religious Poems
Volume II., the Works of Whittier**

John Greenleaf Whittier

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POEMS SUBJECTIVE AND REMINISCENT MEMORIES

A beautiful and happy girl,
With step as light as summer air,
Eyes glad with smiles, and brow of pearl,
Shadowed by many a careless curl
Of unconfined and flowing hair;
A seeming child in everything,
Save thoughtful brow and ripening charms,
As Nature wears the smile of Spring
When sinking into Summer's arms.

A mind rejoicing in the light
Which melted through its graceful bower,
Leaf after leaf, dew-moist and bright,
And stainless in its holy white,
Unfolding like a morning flower
A heart, which, like a fine-toned lute,
With every breath of feeling woke,
And, even when the tongue was mute,
From eye and lip in music spoke.

How thrills once more the lengthening chain
Of memory, at the thought of thee!
Old hopes which long in dust have lain
Old dreams, come thronging back again,
And boyhood lives again in me;
I feel its glow upon my cheek,
Its fulness of the heart is mine,
As when I leaned to hear thee speak,
Or raised my doubtful eye to thine.

I hear again thy low replies,
I feel thy arm within my own,
And timidly again uprise
The fringed lids of hazel eyes,

With soft brown tresses overblown.
Ah! memories of sweet summer eves,
Of moonlit wave and willowy way,
Of stars and flowers, and dewy leaves,
And smiles and tones more dear than they!

Ere this, thy quiet eye hath smiled
My picture of thy youth to see,
When, half a woman, half a child,
Thy very artlessness beguiled,
And folly's self seemed wise in thee;
I too can smile, when o'er that hour
The lights of memory backward stream,
Yet feel the while that manhood's power
Is vainer than my boyhood's dream.

Years have passed on, and left their trace,
Of graver care and deeper thought;
And unto me the calm, cold face
Of manhood, and to thee the grace
Of woman's pensive beauty brought.
More wide, perchance, for blame than praise,
The school-boy's humble name has flown;
Thine, in the green and quiet ways
Of unobtrusive goodness known.

And wider yet in thought and deed
Diverge our pathways, one in youth;
Thine the Genevan's sternest creed,
While answers to my spirit's need
The Derby dalesman's simple truth.
For thee, the priestly rite and prayer,
And holy day, and solemn psalm;
For me, the silent reverence where
My brethren gather, slow and calm.

Yet hath thy spirit left on me
An impress Time has worn not out,
And something of myself in thee,
A shadow from the past, I see,
Lingering, even yet, thy way about;
Not wholly can the heart unlearn
That lesson of its better hours,
Not yet has Time's dull footstep worn
To common dust that path of flowers.

Thus, while at times before our eyes
The shadows melt, and fall apart,
And, smiling through them, round us lies
The warm light of our morning skies, —
The Indian Summer of the heart!
In secret sympathies of mind,
In founts of feeling which retain
Their pure, fresh flow, we yet may find
Our early dreams not wholly vain
1841.

RAPHAEL.

Suggested by the portrait of Raphael, at the age of fifteen.

I shall not soon forget that sight
The glow of Autumn's westering day,
A hazy warmth, a dreamy light,
On Raphael's picture lay.

It was a simple print I saw,
The fair face of a musing boy;
Yet, while I gazed, a sense of awe
Seemed blending with my joy.

A simple print, — the graceful flow
Of boyhood's soft and wavy hair,
And fresh young lip and cheek, and brow
Unmarked and clear, were there.

Yet through its sweet and calm repose
I saw the inward spirit shine;
It was as if before me rose
The white veil of a shrine.

As if, as Gothland's sage has told,
The hidden life, the man within,
Dissevered from its frame and mould,
By mortal eye were seen.

Was it the lifting of that eye,
The waving of that pictured hand?
Loose as a cloud-wreath on the sky,
I saw the walls expand.

The narrow room had vanished,—space,
Broad, luminous, remained alone,
Through which all hues and shapes of grace
And beauty looked or shone.

Around the mighty master came
The marvels which his pencil wrought,
Those miracles of power whose fame
Is wide as human thought.

There drooped thy more than mortal face,
O Mother, beautiful and mild
Enfolding in one dear embrace
Thy Saviour and thy Child!

The rapt brow of the Desert John;
The awful glory of that day
When all the Father's brightness shone
Through manhood's veil of clay.

And, midst gray prophet forms, and wild
Dark visions of the days of old,
How sweetly woman's beauty smiled
Through locks of brown and gold!

There Fornarina's fair young face
Once more upon her lover shone,
Whose model of an angel's grace
He borrowed from her own.

Slow passed that vision from my view,
But not the lesson which it taught;
The soft, calm shadows which it threw
Still rested on my thought:

The truth, that painter, bard, and sage,
Even in Earth's cold and changeful clime,
Plant for their deathless heritage
The fruits and flowers of time.

We shape ourselves the joy or fear
Of which the coming life is made,
And fill our Future's atmosphere
With sunshine or with shade.

The tissue of the Life to be
We weave with colors all our own,
And in the field of Destiny
We reap as we have sown.

Still shall the soul around it call
The shadows which it gathered here,
And, painted on the eternal wall,
The Past shall reappear.

Think ye the notes of holy song
On Milton's tuneful ear have died?
Think ye that Raphael's angel throng
Has vanished from his side?

Oh no! — We live our life again;
Or warmly touched, or coldly dim,
The pictures of the Past remain, —
Man's works shall follow him!
1842.

EGO.

WRITTEN IN THE ALBUM OF A FRIEND.

On page of thine I cannot trace
The cold and heartless commonplace,
A statue's fixed and marble grace.

For ever as these lines I penned,
Still with the thought of thee will blend
That of some loved and common friend,

Who in life's desert track has made
His pilgrim tent with mine, or strayed
Beneath the same remembered shade.

And hence my pen unfettered moves
In freedom which the heart approves,
The negligence which friendship loves.

And wilt thou prize my poor gift less
For simple air and rustic dress,
And sign of haste and carelessness?

Oh, more than specious counterfeit
Of sentiment or studied wit,
A heart like thine should value it.

Yet half I fear my gift will be
Unto thy book, if not to thee,
Of more than doubtful courtesy.

A banished name from Fashion's sphere,
A lay unheard of Beauty's ear,
Forbid, disowned, — what do they here?

Upon my ear not all in vain
Came the sad captive's clanking chain,
The groaning from his bed of pain.

And sadder still, I saw the woe
Which only wounded spirits know
When Pride's strong footsteps o'er them go.

Spurned not alone in walks abroad,
But from the temples of the Lord
Thrust out apart, like things abhorred.

Deep as I felt, and stern and strong,
In words which Prudence smothered long,
My soul spoke out against the wrong;

Not mine alone the task to speak
Of comfort to the poor and weak,
And dry the tear on Sorrow's cheek;

But, mingled in the conflict warm,
To pour the fiery breath of storm
Through the harsh trumpet of Reform;

To brave Opinion's settled frown,
From ermined robe and saintly gown,
While wrestling revered Error down.

Founts gushed beside my pilgrim way,
Cool shadows on the greensward lay,

Flowers swung upon the bending spray.

And, broad and bright, on either hand,
Stretched the green slopes of Fairy-land,
With Hope's eternal sunbow spanned;

Whence voices called me like the flow,
Which on the listener's ear will grow,
Of forest streamlets soft and low.

And gentle eyes, which still retain
Their picture on the heart and brain,
Smiled, beckoning from that path of pain.

In vain! nor dream, nor rest, nor pause
Remain for him who round him draws
The battered mail of Freedom's cause.

From youthful hopes, from each green spot
Of young Romance, and gentle Thought,
Where storm and tumult enter not;

From each fair altar, where belong
The offerings Love requires of Song
In homage to her bright-eyed throng;

With soul and strength, with heart and hand,
I turned to Freedom's struggling band,
To the sad Helots of our land.

What marvel then that Fame should turn
Her notes of praise to those of scorn;
Her gifts reclaimed, her smiles withdrawn?

What matters it? a few years more,
Life's surge so restless heretofore
Shall break upon the unknown shore!

In that far land shall disappear
The shadows which we follow here,
The mist-wreaths of our atmosphere!

Before no work of mortal hand,
Of human will or strength expand
The pearl gates of the Better Land;

Alone in that great love which gave
Life to the sleeper of the grave,
Resteth the power to seek and save.

Yet, if the spirit gazing through
The vista of the past can view
One deed to Heaven and virtue true;

If through the wreck of wasted powers,
Of garlands wreathed from Folly's bowers,
Of idle aims and misspent hours,

The eye can note one sacred spot
By Pride and Self profaned not,
A green place in the waste of thought,

Where deed or word hath rendered less
The sum of human wretchedness,
And Gratitude looks forth to bless;

The simple burst of tenderest feeling
From sad hearts worn by evil-dealing,

For blessing on the hand of healing;

Better than Glory's pomp will be
That green and blessed spot to me,
A palm-shade in Eternity!

Something of Time which may invite
The purified and spiritual sight
To rest on with a calm delight.

And when the summer winds shall sweep
With their light wings my place of sleep,
And mosses round my headstone creep;

If still, as Freedom's rallying sign,
Upon the young heart's altars shine
The very fires they caught from mine;

If words my lips once uttered still,
In the calm faith and steadfast will
Of other hearts, their work fulfil;

Perchance with joy the soul may learn
These tokens, and its eye discern
The fires which on those altars burn;

A marvellous joy that even then,
The spirit hath its life again,
In the strong hearts of mortal men.

Take, lady, then, the gift I bring,
No gay and graceful offering,
No flower-smile of the laughing spring.

Midst the green buds of Youth's fresh May,
With Fancy's leaf-enwoven bay,
My sad and sombre gift I lay.

And if it deepens in thy mind
A sense of suffering human-kind,—
The outcast and the spirit-blind;

Oppressed and spoiled on every side,
By Prejudice, and Scorn, and Pride,
Life's common courtesies denied;

Sad mothers mourning o'er their trust,
Children by want and misery nursed,
Tasting life's bitter cup at first;

If to their strong appeals which come
From fireless hearth, and crowded room,
And the close alley's noisome gloom,—

Though dark the hands upraised to thee
In mute beseeching agony,
Thou lend'st thy woman's sympathy;

Not vainly on thy gentle shrine,
Where Love, and Mirth, and Friendship twine
Their varied gifts, I offer mine.
1843.