

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **Bronson Alcott**

**- poems -**

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## **Bartol**

POET of the Pulpit, whose full-chorded lyre  
Startles the churches from their slumbers late,  
Discoursing music, mixed with lofty ire  
At wrangling factions in the restless state,  
Till tingles with thy note each listening ear,—  
Then household charities by the friendly fire  
Of home, soothe all to fellowship and good cheer!  
No sin escapes thy fervent eloquence,  
Yet, touching with compassion the true word,  
Thou leavest the trembling culprit's dark offence  
To the mediation of his gracious Lord.  
To noble thought and deep dost thou dispense  
Due meed of praise, strict in thy just award.  
Can other pulpits with this preacher cope?  
I glory in thy genius, and take hope!

Bronson Alcott

## Channing

CHANNING! my Mentor whilst my thought was young,  
And I the votary of fair liberty,—  
How hung I then upon thy glowing tongue,  
And thought of love and truth as one with thee!  
Thou wast the inspirer of a nobler life,  
When I with error waged unequal strife,  
And from its coils thy teaching set me free.  
Be ye, his followers, to his leading true,  
Nor privilege covet, nor the wider sway;  
But hold right onward in his loftier way,  
As best becomes, and is his rightful due.  
If learning 's yours,—gifts God doth least esteem,—  
Beyond all gifts was his transcendent view:  
O realize his Pentecostal dream!

Bronson Alcott

## Emerson

MISFORTUNE to have lived not knowing thee!  
'T were not high living, nor to noblest end,  
Who, dwelling near, learned not sincerity,  
Rich friendship's ornament that still doth lend  
To life its consequence and propriety.  
Thy fellowship was my culture, noble friend:  
By the hand thou took'st me, and did'st condescend  
To bring me straightway into thy fair guild;  
And life-long hath it been high compliment  
By that to have been known, and thy friend styled,  
Given to rare thought and to good learning bent;  
Whilst in my straits an angel on me smiled.  
Permit me, then, thus honored, still to be  
A scholar in thy university.

Bronson Alcott

## Garrison

FREEDOM'S first champion in our fettered land!  
Nor politician nor base citizen  
Could gibbet thee, nor silence, nor withstand.  
Thy trenchant and emancipating pen  
The patriot Lincoln snatched with steady hand,  
Writing his name and thine on parchment white,  
'Midst war's resistless and ensanguined flood;  
Then held that proclamation high in sight  
Before his fratricidal country men,—  
"Freedom henceforth throughout the land for all,"—  
And sealed the instrument with his own blood,  
Bowing his mighty strength for slavery's fall;  
Whilst thou, stanch friend of largest liberty,  
Survived,—its ruin and our peace to see.

Bronson Alcott

## Hawthorne

ROMANCER, far more coy than that coy sex!  
Perchance some stroke of magic thee befell,  
Ere thy baronial keep the Muse did vex,  
Nor grant deliverance from enchanted spell,  
But tease thee all the while and sore perplex,  
Till thou that wizard tale shouldst fairly tell,  
Better than poets in thy own clear prose.  
Painter of sin in its deep scarlet dyes,  
Thy doomsday pencil Justice doth expose,  
Hearing and judging at the dread assize;  
New England's guilt blazoning before all eyes,  
No other chronicler than thee she chose.  
Magician deathless! dost thou vigil keep,  
Whilst 'neath our pines thou feignest deathlike sleep?

Bronson Alcott

## Margaret Fuller

THOU, Sibyl rapt! whose sympathetic soul  
Infused the myst'ries thy tongue failed to tell;  
Though from thy lips the marvellous accents fell,  
And weird wise meanings o'er the senses stole,  
Through those rare cadences, with winsome spell;  
Yet even in such refrainings of thy voice  
There struggled up a wailing undertone,  
That spoke thee victim of the Sisters' choice,—  
Charming all others, dwelling still alone.  
They left thee thus disconsolate to roam,  
And scorned thy dear, devoted life to spare.  
Around the storm-tost vessel sinking there  
The wild waves chant thy dirge and welcome home;  
Survives alone thy sex's valiant plea,  
And the great heart that loved the brave and free.

Bronson Alcott

## Sonnet 16

WHEN I remember with what buoyant heart,  
Midst war's alarms and woes of civil strife,  
In youthful eagerness, thou didst depart,  
At peril of thy safety, peace, and life,  
To nurse the wounded soldier, swathe the dead --  
How piercéd soon by fever's poisoned dart,  
And brought unconscious home, with wildered head --  
Thou, ever since, mid languor and dull pain,  
To conquer fortune, cherish kindred dear,  
Hast with grave studies vexed a sprightly brain,  
In myriad households kindled love and cheer;  
Ne'er from thyself by Fame's loud trump beguiled,  
Sounding in this and the farther hemisphere: --  
I press thee to my heart, as Duty's faithful child.

Bronson Alcott

## Thoreau

WHO nearer Nature's life would truly come  
Must nearest come to him of whom I speak;  
He all kinds knew,—the vocal and the dumb;  
Masterful in genius was he, and unique,  
Patient, sagacious, tender, frolicsome.  
This Concord Pan would oft his whistle take,  
And forth from wood and fen, field, hill, and lake,  
Trooping around him in their several guise,  
The shy inhabitants their haunts forsake:  
Then he, like Æsop, man would satirize,  
Hold up the image wild to clearest view  
Of undiscerning manhood's puzzled eyes,  
And mocking say, "Lo! mirrors here for you:  
Be true as these, if ye would be more wise."

Bronson Alcott

## Wendell Phillips

PEOPLE'S ATTORNEY, servant of the Right!  
Pleader for all shades of the solar ray,  
Complexions dusky, yellow, red, or white;  
Who, in thy country's and thy time's despite,  
Hast only questioned, What will Duty say?  
And followed swiftly in her narrow way:  
Tipped is thy tongue with golden eloquence,  
All honeyed accents fall from off thy lips,—  
Each eager listener his full measure sips,  
Yet runs to waste the sparkling opulence,—  
The scorn of bigots, and the worldling's flout.  
If Time long held thy merit in suspense,  
Hastening repentant now, with pen devout,  
Impartial History dare not leave thee out.

Bronson Alcott