

Classic Poetry Series

Henry Abbey

- 40 poems -

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Henry Abbey (11 July 1842 - 7 June 1911)

Henry Abbey was an American poet who is best remembered for the poem, What do we plant when we plant a tree? He is also known for The Bedouin's Rebuke.

Style

In much of his work, Abbey displays traditional characteristics of the nineteenth century American poetic approach. He uses inversions and has fluid feel; his style takes notable influence from that of English poet [James Henry Leigh Hunt](http://www.poemhunter.com/james-henry-leigh-hunt/). The Bedouin's Rebuke can be compared to Hunt's Abou Ben Adhem, which employs similar metric flow. Abbey was fond of simple subject matter, such as remorse or happiness; his poetry often forms an anecdote or short story which builds in intensity, reaches a climactic struggle between two opposing entities, and then ends in an implied moral. His poetry is reminiscent of the Romantic Era, with particular influence from [Shelley](http://www.poemhunter.com/percy-bysshe-shelley/) and [Coleridge](http://www.poemhunter.com/samuel-taylor-coleridge/). He remains relatively well known with the poetry-reading public, as well as a respected figure in literary circles.

Works:

- * May Dreams (1862)
 - * Ralph and other Poems (1866)
 - * Stories in Verse (1869)
 - * Ballads of Good Deeds (1872)
 - * Poems (1879)
 - * The City of Success and other Poems (1883)
 - * Dream of Love (1910)

Agnes Hatot

When might made right in days of chivalry,
Hatot and Ringsdale, over claims of land,
Darkened their lives with stormy enmity,
And for their cause agreed this test to stand:
To fight steel-clad till either's blood made wet
The soil disputed; and a time was set.

But Hatot sickened when the day drew near,
And strength lay racked that once had been his boast.
Then Agnes, his fair daughter, for the fear
That in proud honor he would suffer most,
Resolved to do the battle in his name,
And leave no foothold for the tread of Shame.

She, at the gray, first coming of the day,
Shook off still sleep, and from her window gazed.
The west was curtained with night's dark delay;
A cold and waning moon in silence raised
It's bent and wasted finger o'er the vale,
And seemed sad Death that beckoned, wan and pale.

But Hope sails by the rugged coasts of Fear;
For while awakened birds sang round her eaves,
Our Agnes armed herself with knightly gear
Of rattling hauberk and of jointed greaves;
Withal she put on valor, that to feel
Does more for victory than battle-steel.

She had a sea of hair, whose odor sweet,
And golden softness, in a moonless tide
Ran rippling toward the white coast of her feet;
But as beneath a cloud the sea may hide,
Son in her visored, burnished helmet, there,
Under the cloud-like plume, was hid her hair.

Bearing the mighty lance, sharp-spiked and long,
She at the sill bestrode her restless steed.
Her kneeling soul prayed God to make her strong,
And prayer is nearest path to every need.
She clattered on the bridge, and on apace,
And met dread Ringsdale at the hour and place.

They clash in onslaught; steel to steel replies;
The champ'd bit foams; rider and ridden fight.
Each feels the grim and brutal instinct rise
That in forefront of havoc takes delight.
The lightning of the lances flashed and ran,
Until, at last, the maid unhorsed the man.

Then on her steed, she, bright-eyed, flushed, and glad,
Her helmet lifted in the sylvan air;

And from the iron concealment that it had,
The noiseless ocean of her languid hair
Broke in disheveled waves: the cross and heart,
Jewels that latched her vest, she drew apart.

'Lo, it is Agnes, even I!' she said,
'Who with my trusty lance have thrust thee down!
For hate of shame the fray I hazarded;
And yet, not me the victory should crown,
But God, the Merciful, who helps the right,
And lent me strength to conquer in the fight.'

Henry Abbey

Along the Nile

To G. W. C.

We journey up the storied Nile;
The timeless water seems to smile;
The slow and swarthy boatman sings;
The dahabëah spreads her wings;
We catch the breeze and sail away,
Along the dawning of the day,
Along the East, wherein the morn
Of life and truth was gladly born.

We sail along the past, and see
Great Thebes with Karnak at her knee.
To Isis and Osiris rise
The prayers and smoke of sacrifice.
'Mid rites of priests and pomp of kings
Again the seated Memnon sings.
We watch the palms along the shore,
And dream of what is here no more.

The gliding Cleopatran Nile,
With glossy windings, mile on mile,
Suggests the asp: in coils compact
It hisses-at the cataract.
Thence on again we sail, and strand
Upon the yellow Nubian sand,
Near Aboo Simbel's rock-hewn fane,
Which smiles at time with calm disdain.

Who cut the stone joy none can tell;
He did his work, like Nature, well.
At one with Nature, godlike, these
Bland faces of great Rameses.
'T is seemly that the noble mind
Somewhat of permanence may find,
Whereon with patience, may be wrought
A clear expression of its thought.

The artist labors while he may,
But finds at best too brief the day;
And, tho' his works outlast the time
And nation that they make sublime,
He feels and sees that Nature knows
Nothing of time in what she does,
But has a leisure infinite
Wherein to do her work aright.

The Nile of virtue overflows
The fruitful lands through which it goes.
It little cares for smile or slight,
But in its deeds takes sole delight,
And in them puts its highest sense,
Unmindful of the recompense;

Contented calmly to pursue
Whatever work it finds to do.

Howadji, with sweet dreams full fraught,
We trace this Nile through human thought.
Remains of ancient grandeur stand
Along the shores on either hand.
Like pyramids, against the skies
Loom up the old philosophies,
And the Greek king, who wandered long,
Smiles from uncrumbling rock of song.

Henry Abbey

Autumn Ballad

How mild and fair the day, dear love! and in these garden ways
The lingering dahlias to the sun their hopeless faces raise.
The buckwheat and the barley, once so bonny and so blithe,
Fall before the rhythmic labor of the cradler's gleaming scythe.

Behold the grapes and all the fruits that Autumn gives today,
As robed in red and gold, she rules, the Empress of Decay!
Out to the orchard come with me, among the apple trees;
No dragon guards the laden boughs of our Hesperides.

This golden pear, my darling, that I hold up to your mouth,
Is a hanging-nest of sweetness; but the birds are winging south.
The purses of the chestnuts, by the chilly-fingered Frost,
Were opened in his frolic, and their triple hoards are lost.

Last night you heard the tempest, love-the wind-entangled pines,
The spraying waves, the sobbing sky that lowered in gloomy lines;
The storm was like a hopeless soul, that stood beside the sea,
And wept in dismal rain and moaned for what could never be

Henry Abbey

Bellerophon

There lives a creature of a dreamer's brain,
That strove by charms, and with the aid of ghosts,
Of making gold to find the secret out;
That drew a wide ring round his crucible,
And, while the spirits worked at alchemy,
He, to beat back vast, adverse ghosts essayed.
But soon, within the circle he had drawn,
Was set a monstrous Foot, so large, his face
Was level with the instep: all in vain
His puny efforts to drive back the Foot.

Oh, hard for him who, having once let in
On the charm'd circle of the golden good
The first advance of error, strives to oust
The evil, and make clear the round again.
Not often will the giant Foot retreat.

And I behink me him who, in the past,
Before Christ's passion ransom'd man from sin,
And in a land that did not know of God
Forced back the Foot of one remorseful crime,
Walked silently beneath the silent stars,
And gave his heart to cogitation thus:

'Anteia, wife to Proitos, tempted me:
She, in the palace where the fountains are,
Met me at twilight as she walked alone,
Clad with uncinctured robe, adorned with gems,
Perfumed with all the spices of the East.
She made her arms a wreath about my neck,
And, lifting both her small, gold-sandal'd feet,
Hung her full weight on me; her mouth's closed bud,
Thrilled by the ardent summer of desire,
Butst into honey'd flower against my lips.
With warm cheek pressed to mine, she, in my ear,
Exhaled the poison whisper of her love.

'I drew back scornfully surprised, and hissed
Between set teeth a menace at all sin.
She left me thus, and went to him, her liege,
And with the broken fragments of her speech-
Bits of the jar that could not hold her tears-
She let it fall that I had wronged her much.

'In swift, deep wrath the fierce king called for me,
And on a tablet writing fatal words,
With them he sent me forth beyond his realm
To Lykia, to the king thereof, who met,
And, by the stream of Xanthos, welcomed me.
Nine days of feasting passed, and on the tenth
The tablet was unsealed, its purport known-

And its base appetite is gorged today.

'Th' unconquerable Chimaira first I slew.
She was in front a lion, and behind
A serpent, and was in the middle a goat.
Her breath was blazing fire, with which, in rage,
She burned the drought-parched forests in her path.
And her, by winged alliance with the horse,
I slew, indeed, and gave to rigid death.
I overcame the far-famed Solymi,
I smote the man-opposing Amazons,
I turned to naught the well-armed ambushade,
And made illustrious my bitter name.

'But what if I had yielded to the queen,
And from the king had stolen that which she,
Tho' offering, had yet no right to give?
I hold, the soul is like a piece of cloth
That, being stained, can be made clean no more-
That nothing can erase the stain of sin.

'Picture that I, having passed safely through
The darkness that is seen by dying eyes,
Have reached the light beyond, and see the gods
In synod throned, and hear Zeus speak and say:

"We serve no law, yet bind the steadfast earth
And all the ways of men in chains of law
Harmonious with good and linked thereto.
The blinded mortal lured to break one chain
Makes discord, stains the fabric of his soul,
And brings dire retribution headlong down.'

'Then I, in meek abasement kneeling there
Upon the low, first step of Zeus's throne,
Hold up my shameful soul, a piece of cloth
Through fault of Queen Anteia doubly stained,
And say:

"O Zeus, accept this humble gift!
Thou wroughtest it: the texture is as fine
As the loose wool of clouds, or the worm's silk.
These blots and stains are most like roses strewn.'

'His calmness rippled by slight breeze of scorn,
The great cloud-gatherer would answer me:

"O fool! and blind, to mock the mighty gods;
For, on the mystic texture of the soul,
Only a noble deed shows like a flower.'

'Well, whoso wills shall ever have his way,

And what was right, that I had willed to do.
So, haply, I on Pegasus shall scale
White-crowned Olympus to the brazen halls,
If I may keep the path of righteousness
That the strong gods ordained.'

Thus mused he then,
Unmindful that great zeal for any good
Begets a narrowness that leads to ill.
The heaven-sent gad-fly stings the flying horse,
And hurls the rider back to common ground.

Henry Abbey

By Hudson's Tide

What pleasant dreams, what memories, rise,
When filled with care, or pricked in pride,
I wander down in solitude
And reach the beach by Hudson's tide!
The thick-boughed hemlocks mock my sigh;
The azure heaven is filled with smiles;
The water, lispings at my feet,
From weary thought my heart beguiles,
By Hudson's tide.

I watch a slow-wing'd water-fowl
Pursue her finny quest, and bear
The gasping silver of her prey
Far up th' untrodden heights of air.
In quiet depths I note the course
Of dreamy clouds against the sky,
And see a flock of wild-ducks float,
Like water-lilies nearer by,
On Hudson's tide.

The mullein lifts, along the bank,
Its velvet spires of yellow bloom;
And there a darting humming-bird
Gleams in the cedars' verdant gloom.
By basins of the brook that flings
Its dewy diamonds far below
Into the ripples' pigmy hands,
Sweet maiden-hair and cresses grow,
By Hudson's tide.

I wander on the pebbled beach,
And think of boyhood's careless hours
When, in my boat, I used to float
Along the bank and gather flowers;
Or catch the wind, and swiftly dash
Across the white-caps in their play,
And feel their wet resistance break
Against the prow in pearly spray,
On Hudson's tide.

And once, in those lost days, I lay
Becalmed with limp and drowsy sail,
And drifted where Esopus Isle
Mid-stream reclines along the vale;
He slowly rose, and stood erect,
His giant body all of stone,
And cast his eyes, as from the skies,
On me that drifted there alone
On Hudson's tide.

Only his feet were lost to view,
And cleft the current ebbing down;

His lofty headdress, plumed with trees,
Touched the blue zenith with its crown.
The river's self was but his bow
That lay neglected on the ground;
Like down, or fur, the soft leaves were,
That, as a blanket, wrapped him round,
On Hudson's tide.

I had not been surprised if he
Had mounted on some thunder-cloud
And rushed at Ontiora's knee,
With sudden war-whoop sharp and loud.
But he was mild, and blandly smiled,
And spoke with accents sweet and low.
His words with kindness glanced and fell,
And seemed like music or the flow
Of Hudson's tide.

'Enjoy the river and thy days,'
He said, 'nor heed what others say.
What matters either blame or praise,
If one in peace pursue his way?
The river heeds not; heed not thou:
Cut deep the channel of thy life.
Thou hast a fair exemplar there:
With what serene indifference rife
Is Hudson's tide!

How level lies its changeful floor,
Broad-sweeping to the distant sea!
What Titan grandeur marks the shore!
What beauty covers rock and tree!
What ample bays and branching streams,
What curves abrupt for glad surprise!
And how supreme the Artist is
Who paints it all for loving eyes
By Hudson's tide!

I woke; and since, long years have passed;
By Hudson's tide my days go by:
Its varied beauty fills my heart.
Of fairer scenes what need have I?
And when my boat of life and thought
Shall quit the harbor of my breast,
And seek the silent, unknown sea,
I trust this dust in peace shall rest
By Hudson's tide.

Henry Abbey

Donald

O white, white, light moon, that sailest in the sky,
Look down upon the whirling world, for thou art up so high,
And tell me where my Donald is who sailed across the sea,
And make a path of silver light to lead him back to me.
O white, white, bright moon, thy cheek is coldly fair;

A little cloud beside thee seems thy wildly floating hair;
And if thou wouldst not have me wan, and pale, and cold like thee,
Go, make a mighty tide to draw my Donald back to me.
O light, white, bright moon, that dost so fondly shine,
There is not a lily in the world but hides its face from thine:

I too shall go and hide my face close in the dust from thee,
Unless with light and tide thou bring my Donald back to me.
I too shall go and hide my face close in the dust from thee,
Unless with light and tide thou bring my Donald back to me.

Henry Abbey

Eleusinia

The sun-bronzed Arabs, living at the base
Of Karnak's mighty ruin, see in it
The work of no man's hand. They cannot think
Its lofty beauty and majestic form,
So awe-begetting, even in decay,
Are the unaided deed of their own kind.
But, as most men are wont, when sharply faced
By problems that they do not understand,
The squalid Arabs, quite too ignorant
To seek in natural causes for a key,
Exalt their case to the miraculous
And supernatural, and so believe
That monstrous genii, in antiquity,
To please the holder of some magic ring,
Built Karnak in a night!

All governments,
Books, customs, buildings, railways, ships, and all
The stark realities that men have made,
Are but imagination's utterances.
The invisible speaks in the visible,
And over all, the high, far-reaching thoughts
Of great imaginations domineer.
First of the Magi, Zoroaster yet
Colors the Western theosophic mind,
Besides the minds of Asian myriads.
Nor have his genii lost hold on men;
But are an explanation, in the East,
Of architectural victories, which appear
Beyond the power of human hands to win.

But we, of higher credence, think not so.
Of larger literature and ampler range,
We know the same full-browed intelligence,
The same Masonic wisdom, that upreared
High-girdled Babylon and purple Tyre
And built the Temple of King Solomon,
Built also the sepulchral Pyramids,
Build Philæ, hundred-gated Thebes, and all
Those works stupendous, whose calm grandeur yet
Shows the departed glory of the Nile.

It scarce seems longer past than yesterday
That men undid the brazen clamps which held
Upon its pedestal the Obelisk-
That ray-like shaft, which Thutmes raised at On
To grace the Temple of the Setting Sun-
And found Masonic emblems there bestowed.
Such useful emblems have been found withal
In prehistoric ruins Mexican.
If other clue were needed to connect
Our modern Craft with builders of the past,

We have the evidence of what we know,-
That nothing can be operative long
And not be speculative too; for Use
Is more than manual. Intelligence
Must see the ideal in the real, and clothe
Upon the impalpable and naked truth
The palpable resemblance; it must needs
Behold in all that is material,
External, the express embodiment,
Or signature, of far more lasting things,
Which are internal, spiritual.

Swedenborg,
Upon the other worlds of heaven and hell,
His ideality imposed, and strove
To picture them, the universe and God,
Using the splendid words of holy writ
As signs and tokens of the mysteries
That, in imagination, he beheld.
But not so far the wise Freemason dares.
In square and compasses, in setting-maul,
And in the other stated working-tools
Used by the Craft, he sees an ideal use.
To him they are the emblems of such things
As have been found alike in every soul
And make the world fraternal.

Symbolism
Is the rich blood and life of Masonry.
A symbol is the solid link between
The real and the ideal. It must be
That man himself, the crown of earthly things,
Made in his Maker's image, is the true,
The only symbol of the Power Divine.
It follows that sublime Freemasonry
And heaven-born, strong-pinioned Poetry
Are one at heart; for, whatsoever be
Sincere, commensurate, symbolical,
Is native of the Muse-her work. To think
In symbols is imagination's house.
So the fast hold which Masonry has kept
Upon the minds of men for centuries-
For long millenniums-is, in truth, the same
As that of Poetry. For Poetry
Drank from the fountain of immortal youth,
Then rose in beauty, like the Morning Star,
And lit the holy, intellectual fire,
Guide of our faith and practice, that is laid
Upon Masonic altars.

When expressed
In buildings she is seen, as in the tree

The hamadryad, we but change her name,
And Architecture nominate the Muse.
But the broad tenets, on whose soil is based
Our Ancient Order, are a fertile land,
And all the arts and sciences alike
Find in it healthful sustenance, and, nursed
In genial sunshine and condensate dew,
Burst into bloom and yield abundant fruits.

Henry Abbey

Emmanuel

In the New World, the hemisphere unknown
When, Hebrew-wise, Moriah uttered praise-
In a new land of liberty and hope,
Of golden harvests and of bread, fresh fields-
In the new Promised Land-we dedicate,
We consecrate this House of Righteousness.
Be in our hearts, Shekinah!

In all this land there is no king but God.
He is our God, and we have built to Him.
To men of every creed, who serve his law,
We make the doors of this that we have built,
As wide with welcome as are freedom's doors,
As open and as tolerant as they.
Be in our hearts, Shekinah!

Of us the Branch to whom the nations bow.
In us is testimony and the root
Whence sprang the palmy, Messianic New.
The New is of the Old to which we cling.
Not to destroy the New we plant the Old,
But that the Old may flourish with the New.
Be in our hearts, Shekinah!

The end we know not; but we wander on,
Down the regretful wilderness of time.
Nations have risen and dissolved away;
But we remain, and are together bound
As are the glad, innumerable suns,
The blazing jewels in the Almighty's crown.
Be in our hearts, Shekinah!

Here may we ever worship as we will,
With strong simplicity and manly trust.
Here may the wistful aspiration, prayer,
Fire the neglected voices of the soul.
And may Jehovah this, his temple give
The rapture of cherubic wheels and wings.
Be in our hearts, Shekinah!

Henry Abbey

Faith's Vista

When from the vaulted wonder of the sky
The curtain of the light is drawn aside,
And I behold the stars in all their wide
Significance and glorious mystery,
Assured that those more distant orbs are suns
Round which innumerable worlds revolve,—
My faith grows strong, my day-born doubts dissolve,
And death, that dread annulment which life shuns,
Or fain would shun, becomes to life the way,
The thoroughfare to greater worlds on high,
The bridge from star to star. Seek how we may,
There is no other road across the sky;
And, looking up, I hear star-voices say:
"You could not reach us if you did not die."

Henry Abbey

Fanciebat

As thoughts possess the fashion of the mood
That gave them birth, so every deed we do,
Partakes of our inborn disquietude
That spurns the old and reaches toward the new.
The noblest works of human art and pride
Show that their makers were not satisfied.

For, looking down the ladder of our deeds,
The rounds seem slender. All past work appears
Unto the doer faulty. The heart bleeds,
And pale Regret turns weltering in tears,
To think how poor our best has been, how vain,
Beside the excellence we would attain.

Henry Abbey

Flos Morti

Maiden, whom I so briefly knew
That unto me thou art a dream,
A lovely vision lost to view
Across the dark, relentless stream,

They bring thee final gifts, and one,
A broken lyre of fragrance deep,
Is symbol of thy life, undone
By that cold hand whose clasp gives sleep.

They bring thee flowers, who wert a flower
Above the lily and the rose.
The fading tribute of an hour
I also bring to thy repose.

This flower of rhyme, this petaled song,
I give to death, I bring to thee
Whose soul was raised and borne along
By mystic tides of poësy.

Thou wert thyself a poem true,
A lasting joy to know and read;
The manuscript is torn in two;
The rhythmic strain is mute indeed.

So oft, through flowery paths of song,
Sweet angels led thy thoughts to range
The immaterial world along,
That heaven can not to thee be strange.

For not to verse wert thou impelled
By love for praise; but by the stir
Of voices that within thee welled,
And by the strength of character.

O loveliness with eyes like night!
We should not call thee to return
From out the darkness that is light,
To where our lamps of being burn.

For long and thankless is the path
Wherein thy tender feet were set;
Thou shalt not know the briers it hath
On heights beclouded with regret.

On thee Old Age shall lay no hand,
Friends shall not turn from thee away,
Nor shall Temptation near thee stand,
Or Disappointment say thee nay.

From Life thou took'st thy rose of youth,
Which at the beaker's brim was hung;

And in the Heart of love and truth
Thou shalt abide, forever young.

Not less with us thou still shalt dwell;
For it is beautiful to be
Enshrined in hearts that love thee well,
A blest and grateful memory.

Henry Abbey

In Memory of General Grant

WHITE wings of commerce sailing far,
Hot steam that drives the weltering wheel,
Tamed lightning speeding on the wire,
Iron postman on the way of steel,—
These, circling all the world, have told
The loss that makes us desolate;
For we give back to dust this day
The God-sent man who saved the state.

When black the sky and dire with war,
When every heart was wrung with fear,
He rose serene, and took his place,
The great occasion's mighty peer.
He smote armed opposition down,
He bade the storm and darkness cease,
And o'er the long-distracted land
Shone out the smiling sun of peace.

The famous captains of the past
March in review before the mind:
Some fought for glory, some for gold,
But most to yoke and rule mankind.
Not so the captain dead to-day,
For whom our half-mast banners wave:
He fought to keep the Union whole,
And break the shackles of the slave.

A silent man, in friendship true,
He made point-blank his certain aim,
And, born a stranger to defeat,
To steadfast purpose linked his name:
For while the angry flood of war
Surged down between its gloomy banks
He followed duty, with the mien
Of but a soldier in the ranks.

How well he wore white honor's flower,
The gratitude and praise of men,
As General, as President,
And then as simple citizen!
He was a hero to the end:
The dark rebellion raised by Death
Against the Powers of Life and Light,
He battled hard, with failing breath.

O hero of Fort Donelson,
And wooded Shiloh's frightful strife!
Sleep on! for honor loves the tomb
More than the garish ways of life.
Sleep on! sleep on! Thy wondrous life
Is freedom's most illustrious page;
And fame shall loudly sound thy praise

In every clime, to every age.

Henry Abbey

Invocation to the Sun

O Sun, toward which the earth's uneven face
Turns ever round, strong Emperor of Day,
To thee I bring my tribute of large praise;
And yet not I; but that which in me is,
The life in life, conscience, suggester, muse.

Not as to Quetzalcoatl came of old
Fane-climbing worshipers with trump and drum,
And human victims bared for sacrifice
On dizzy Aztec altars; nor, indeed,
As to Apollo of the golden hair
And fiery chariot, who darted war
Against the lords and following of Night,
Come I, O Sun, to thee.

Nor like the Gheber throngs
Who on the eastern shore of ocean bow,
Kissing the trail of thy departing robes,
Do I, to thy down-going, offer prayer.

I, worshipper no less, but not of thee,
Rising at cool-breathed, night-releasing dawn,
Thank the unseen All-Giver for thy day,
And see in thee a ray-strung instrument
Swept by His hand for harmonies of life.

Not I alone salute thy springing beam;
The mountains do thee homage first of all,
And hinder, with their bold and rocky brows,
Thy swift, protracted ray.

Thou callest up
The blooming new from out the withered old,
And givest consciousness to soulless things.
Thou sendest forth the lightning-arrowed cloud;
And the coy breeze, a wordless whisperer,
Doth interchange the breath of man and tree.
Thou dost invite the robin from the south;
Thou whitenest the harvest for our need;
Thou fillest out the youthful cheeks of fruit
With sappy wholesomeness, and dost, at last,
Print one broad sunset on autumnal woods-
In rubricated letters making known
A sad and sylvan moral of decay.

To tread where populations that are dust
Eked out their changeful lives, and left behind
Little beyond a ruin and a name,
Men trust the brief forbearance of the sea;
But thou, above, silent, immutable,
Art long familiar with the scenes they seek,
And hast beheld all times and nations fade.

Tho' like the leaves the generations die,
And tho' the ages in the past recede,
Spun by this pendulous swift wheel of earth
In its fixed orbit by thy influence,
Thou makest man endure; he ceases not;
But stands with steadfast feet upon all time;
Nor shall he cease while yet tomorrow holds
Its one remove away.

Our yesterdays
Are like a lonely and a ruined land
Wherein a breeze of recollection sighs-
A fading land to which is no return.

Uncertainly we bode the life to come,
Yet deem we stand upon the topmost height
Material; but this, that thinks and dreams-
This many-tided vaster sea within-
Baffles itself, and knows not what it is,
Save that its being is enlinked with thine.

And thou, O Sun, dost look on many worlds-
On eight-mooned Saturn with his shining rings,
On Jupiter, On Venus, pearl of dusk-
Thou dost behold thy worlds, and lay on them
Thy ray's restoring finger: they receive
Their sight, and go rejoicing on their way,
Changing, we think, thy light and heat to life.
But we, bound down, shut in on one small star,
Shall not know fully of those other spheres
Until the soul, up-drawn by rays Divine,
Out of this seed-like body blooms on high.

Henry Abbey

Low Tide

Along the cliff I walk in silence,
While over the blue of the waves below,
The white birds gleam in the sun like silver
And ships in the offing come and go,
And the tide is low.

Oh! it was here that in golden weather,
Under the cliff and close to the sea,
A pledge was given that made me master
Of all that ever was dear to me;
And the tide was low.

Only a little year fled after;
Wedded we came to our tryst once more,
And saw the deep, like a bird imprisoned
Beating its wings at its bars, the shore;
And the tide was low.

Now I walk alone by the filmy breakers-
A voice is hushed I can never forget;
On my saddened sea dead calm has fallen,
My ships are harbored, my sun is set;
And the tide is low.

Henry Abbey

Mary Magdalene

All night I cried in agony
Of grief and bitter loss,
And wept for Him whom they had nailed
Against the shameful cross.

But in the morning, in the dark,
Before the east was gray,
I hastened to the sepulcher
Wherein the body lay.

The stone was rolled away I found;
And filled with fear and woe,
I straight to His disciples ran,
Thereof to let them know.

I said, 'The body of the Lord
Is not within the tomb;
For they have taken him away
Unnoticed in the gloom.

'Where have they laid him? who can tell?
Alas! we know not where.'
The words were slower than my tears
To utter my despair.

Then two disciples, coming forth,
With hurried footsteps sped,
Till, at the garden sepulcher,
They found as I had said.

They saw the door-stone rolled away,
The empty tomb and wide,
The linen face-cloth folded up
And grave-clothes laid aside.

The morn was cold; I heeded not,
With sorrow wrapped about;
Till both were gone to tell the rest,
I stood and wept without.

Then stooping down and looking in,
I saw two angels there,
Whose faces shone with love and joy,
And were divinely fair.

In white effulgence garmented,
That showed the hewn rock's grain,
One at the head, one at the feet,
Sat where my Lord had lain.

To look on them I was afraid,
Their splendor was so great:

They said to me, 'Why weepst thou?'
In tones compassionate.

'I weep,' I said, 'for that my Lord
Is taken hence away,
And that, alas! I do not know
Where he is laid today.'

I sadly rose, and turning back,
Beheld One standing by,
And knew the lily of the dawn
Unfolded in the sky.

But in the pale, uncertain light,
Too blind with tears to see,
I thought it was the gardener
There at the tomb with me.

It soothed me much, the day before,
To say it in my mind,
That in a garden they had laid
The Flower of all mankind.

Until Thy fragrance fell on me,
A thrall to sin was I;
O Flower of Peace! O Flower of Grace!
Thy love is liberty!

But they had taken him away,
Who is of sin the price;
I held the gift that I had brought,
Of perfume, oil, and spice.

I had not staid to braid my hair,
And, in the early breeze,
The long, black luster, damp with tears,
Down fluttered to my knees.

I dimly saw the gardener;
In grief I bowed my head;
'Why weepst thou? whom seekest thou?'
He softly, gently said.

'O sir, if thou have borne him hence,'
I eagerly replied,
'Tell me where thou hast laid my Lord,
Whom they have crucified,

'And I will take him thence away;
Oh, tell me where he lies!'
'Mary!' he said-I knew the voice,
And turned in glad surprise.

For he was not the gardener
That I advanced to greet;
I cried, 'Rabboni!' joyfully,
And knelt at Jesus' feet.

Henry Abbey

Moro

Now, through the crowded amphitheater,
Sounded a herald flourish loud and clear.
A breeze of expectation seemed to stir.
The unkempt sunnyside sent up a cheer.
With wicked-looking horns and sullen mien,
The black bull, Moro, entered on the scene.

This was the bull of which the placards said,
A maiden would subdue his utmost rage,
Unless, in the attempt, her blood were shed.
Did not all Cadiz know the formal page?
And Moro greeted, with a thundrous roar,
The ruthless, living hill he lowered before.

And once by his tormentors he was met:
Capas before him shook their teasing cloth;
Banderilleros in his shoulders set
Their cruel darts; and when he rushed, right wroth,
Upon a yellow challenge waved with jeers,
The picadores pricked him with their spears.

Against the nearest picador he turned
And lifted horse and rider from the ground.
Thus three good horses had he gored, and spurned
Infuriate, when quietly around
Withdrew the fighters, proud of courage shown,
And left the bull, in his fierce rage, alone.

Then fell a rill of music, pearl on pearl,
And straightway into the arena sprang
A tawny, Andalusian peasant-girl,
Pretty and breathing charm; she sweetly sang,
Advancing toward the bull with fearless joy,
Then, pausing, ceased and cried, 'Moro! Ya voy!'

Of glad Espara she, and she had fed,
Petted and cared for Moro happy years.
But when of late she heard it lightly said
That he must grace th' arena, full of tears
She sought authority and gained the right
To save his life, if in this wise she might.

Amidst the wide, hushed amphitheater,
At the first piping of the bird-like voice,
Moro had quelled his fury, and seeing her,
The girl, his friend, he seemed quite to rejoice.
And when beside him she had come to stand,
With his mute tongue he licked her loving hand.

Her voice and presence soothing every smart,
He knelt before her as she stroked his head.
She, bending over, soon removed each dart,

With tearful pity; then, joy-garlanded,
Her arm around his neck, and all elate,
She, smiling, led him toward the torril's gate.

Henry Abbey

On A Great Warrior

When all the sky was wild and dark,
When every heart was wrung with fear,
He rose serene, and took his place,
The great occasion's mighty peer.
He smote armed opposition down,
He bade the storm and darkness cease,
And o'er the long-distracted land
Shone out the smiling sun of peace.

The famous captains of the past
March in review before the mind;
Some fought for glory, some for gold,
But most to yoke and rule mankind.
Not so the captain, great of soul,
At peace within the granite grave;
He fought to keep the Union whole,
And break the shackles of the slaves.

A silent man, in friendship true,
He made point-blank his certain aim,
And, born a stranger to defeat,
To steadfast purpose linked his name.
He followed duty with the mien
Of but a soldier in the ranks,
This God-sent man that saved the State,
And conquered its victorious thanks.

How well he wore white honor's flower,
The gratitude and praise of men,
As General, as President,
And then as simple citizen!
He was a hero to the end!
The dark rebellion raised by death
Against the powers of life and light,
He battled hard, with failing breath.

O hero of Fort Donelson,
And wooded Shiloh's frightful strife!
Sleep on! for honor loves the tomb
More than the garish ways of life.
Sleep on! sleep on! Thy wondrous days
Fill freedom's most illustrious page.
Long-mem'ried Fame shall sound thy praise
In every clime, in every age.

Henry Abbey

Ontiora

Moons on moons ago,
In the sleep, or night, of the moon,
When evil spirits have power,
The monster, Ontiora,
Came down in the dreadful gloom.
The monster came stalking abroad,
On his way to the sea for a bath,
For a bath in the salt, gray sea.

In Ontiora's breast
Was the eyrie of the winds,
Eagles of measureless wing,
Whose screeching, furious swoop
Startled the sleeping dens.
His hair was darkness unbound,
Thick, and not mooned nor starred.
His head was plumed with rays
Plucked from the sunken sun.

To him the forests of oak,
Of maple, hemlock, and pine,
Were as grass that a bear treads down.
He trod them down as he came,
As he came from his white-peak'd tent,
At whose door, ere he started abroad,
He drew a flintless arrow
Across the sky's strip'd bow,
And shot at the evening star.

He came like a frowning cloud,
That fills and blackens the west.
He was wroth at the bright-plumed sun,
And his pale-faced wife, the moon,
With their twinkling children, the stars;
But he hated the red-men all,
The Iroquois, fearless and proud,
The Mohegans, stately and brave,
And trod them down in despite,
As a storm treads down the maize.
He trod the red-men down,
Or drove them out of the land
As winter drives the birds.

When near the King of Rivers,
The river of many moods,
To Ontiora thundered
Manitou out of a cloud.
Between the fountains crystal
And the waters that reach to the sky,
Manitou, Spirit of Good,
To the man-shaped monster spoke:
'You shall not go to the sea,

But be into mountains changed,
And wail in the blast, and weep
For the red-men you have slain.
You shall lie on your giant back
While the river rises and falls,
And the tide of years on years
Flows in from a boundless sea.'

Then Ontiora replied:
'I yield to the heavy doom;
Yet what am I but a type
Of a people who are to come?
Who as with a bow will shoot
And bring the stars to their feet,
And drive the red-man forth
To the Land of the Setting Sun.'

So Ontiora wild,
By eternal silence touched,
Fell backward in a swoon,
And was changed into lofty hills,
The Mountains of the Sky.

This is the pleasant sense
Of Ontiora's name,
'The Mountains of the Sky.'
His bones are rocks and crags,
His flesh is rising ground,
His blood is the sap of trees.

On his back with one knee raised,
He lies with his face to the sky,
A monstrous human shape
In the Catskills high and grand.
And from the valley below,
Where the slow tide ebbs and flows,
You can mark his knee and breast,
His forehead beetling and vast,
His nose and retreating chin.
But his eyes, they say, are lakes,
Whose tears flow down in streams
That seam and wrinkle his cheeks,
For the fate he endures, and for shame
Of the evil he did, as he stalked
In the vanquished and hopeless moon,
Moons on moons ago.

Henry Abbey

Science and the Soul

I sought, in sleep, to find the mountain-lands
Where Science, in her hall of wonder, dwells.
When I had come to where the building stands,
I found refreshing streams, delightful dells,
Invigorating air, and saw, on high,
Turret and dome against the boundless sky.

Out of her busy palace then she stepped,
And kindly greeted me, as there I stood
Doubting my right, and whether I had slept.
'Welcome,' she said, 'and whatsoe'er of good
You find in me, you have full leave to take
For warp and woof of verses that you make.'

That these, her words, for more than me were meant,
I felt, and thanked her as seemed fitting then;
While, in her looks, I saw that she was sent
To lighten work and knit together men;
And that with patience such as hers could be,
The coral mason builds the isles at sea.

Servant of Use, upon that mountain wise
Was the plain title she was proud to own,
And, clearer than her penetrating eyes,
The light of Progress on her forehead shone.
Her smile the lips' sharp coldness half betrayed,
As if a wreath upon a sword were laid.

But now, about her palace everywhere,
She led my steps, and often by her side
A lion and a nimble greyhound were.
The swifter to a leash of wire she tied,
And made a messenger of good and ill;
The stronger with white breath performed her will.

She traced the lapse of awful seas of time
On fossil limestone and on glinting ore;
Described wild wonders of the Arctic clime,
And of all lands her willing slaves explore;
Opening large laboratories to my view,
She showed me much that she had skill to do.

Then, down a marble stairway, to her bower
Was led the gracious way. 'And here,' said she,
'I meditate beyond the midnight hour;
Invent for peace and war, for land and sea;
Read the round sky's star-lettered page, or grope
In the abysses of the microscope.'

But, while she spoke, there stood another near-
The fairest one that ever I beheld;
I fancied her the creature of some sphere

Whence all of mist and shadow are dispelled.
Her voice was low and gentle, and her grace
Vied with the beauty of her thoughtful face.

A clear, unwaning light around her shone-
A ray of splendor from a loving Source-
A light like sunshine, that, when it is gone,
Leaves darkness, but sheds glory on its course;
Yet, in my dream, her footstep made me start,
It was so like the beating of my heart.

I turned to Science, for small doubt had I
That she best knew her whom I deemed so fair,
And asked, 'Who is she, that so heedfully
Waits on you here, and is like sunny air?
In her all beauty dwells, while from her shine
Truth, hope, and love, with effluence divine.'

Then Science answered me, severe and cold:
'She is Time's brittle toy: the praise of men
Has dazed her wit, and made her vain and bold.
With subtle flattery of tongue and pen,
They title her the Soul; I count it blame,
And call her Life, but seek a better name.

'Alone, in her gray-celled abode, she dwells,
Of fateful circumstance the fettered thrall,
The psychic sum of forces of her cells,
Molecular and manifold in all;
But æons passed ere Nature could express
This carbon-rooted flower of consciousness.

'Life, from the common mother, everywhere
Springs into being under sun and dew;
And it may be that she who is so fair
From deep-sea ooze to this perfection grew,
Evolving slowly on, from type to type,
Until, at last, the earth for man was ripe.

'But like a low-born child, whose fancy's page
Illuminated glows, she fondly dreams
That hers is other, nobler parentage;
That, from a Source Supreme, her being streams;
But, when I ask for proof, she can not give
One word, to me, of knowledge positive.

'Wherefore, regretfully I turn away,
In no wise profited, to let her muse
On her delusion, now grown old and gray.
It is a vain mirage that she pursues-
Some image of herself, against the sky,
To which she yearns on golden wings to fly.'

What time I left that palace high and wide,
She followed me, whom I had thought so fair,
To guide me down the devious mountain-side,
Speaking with that of sorrow in her air
That made me grieve, and soon a tear I shed
To think that here she is so limited.

'Oh, I am life and more, I am the Soul,'
She said, 'and, in the human heart and brain,
Sit throned and prisoned while the brief years roll,
Lifted with hope that I shall live again;
That when I cross the flood, with me shall be
The swift-winged carrier-dove of memory.

'I shall have triumph over time and space,
For I am infinite and more than they.
In vain has Science searched my dwelling-place;
For, delve in nature's secrets as she may
For deeper knowledge, she can never know
Of what I am, nor whither I shall go.'

Henry Abbey

The Age of Good

I had a vision of mankind to be:
I saw no grated windows, heard no roar
From iron mouths of war on land and sea;
Ambition broke the sway of peace no more.
Out of the chaos of ill-will had come
Cosmos, the Age of Good, Millennium!

The lowly hero had of praise his meed,
And loving-kindnesses joined roof to roof.
The poor were few, and to their daily need
Abundance ministered: men bore reproof;
On crags of self-denial sought to cull
Rare flowers to deck their doors hospitable.

The very bells rang out the Golden Rule,
For hearts were loath to give their fellows pain,
The man was chosen chief who, brave and cool,
Was king in act and thought: wise power is plain
And likes not pomp and show; he seemed to be
The least in all that true democracy.

O Thou, the Christ, the Sower of the seed,
Pluck out the narrowness, the greed for pelf:
Pluck out all tares; the time let come, and speed,
When each will love his neighbor as himself!
The hopes of man, our dreams of higher good,
Are based on Thee; we are Thy brotherhood.

Henry Abbey

The Bedouin's Rebuke

Neeber, a Bedouin of noble heart,
That from good men received of praise the fee,
Owned a brave horse, with which he would not part,
Because from death he once had run him free.
The man and beast were friends, and it is vice
To sell our friend or friendship for a price.

The horse was black and strong, his step was proud,
His neck was arched, his ears alert for sound,
His speed the tempest's, and his mane a cloud;
His hoofs woke thunder from the desert ground;
His eyes flashed lightning from their inmost core:
Victor of Distance was the name he bore.

Daher, a Bedouin of another tribe,
Had often wished to buy this famous beast;
And as he smoked, and heard his friends describe
Its comely parts and powers, the wish increased;
But Neeber said the horse should not be sold,
Tho' offered wealth in camels and in gold.

Then Daher put on rags, and stained his face,
And went to wait for Neeber, seeming lame.
Him soon he saw approach at daring pace
Upon the envied horse, and as he came
He cried to him: 'For three days on this spot
Have I lain starving-pity me my lot.'

And, seeing Neeber stop, said on, 'I die-
My strength is gone!' Down Neeber sprang,
And raised him gently with a pitying sigh,
And set him on his horse: a laugh outrang,
And Daher shouted as he plunged his spurs,
'Fair price refused, one sells at last for burrs.'

'Stay! stay!' cried Neeber; Daher paused to hear:
'Since God has willed that you my beast should take,
I wish you joy; but tell no man, for fear
Another who was really starved might make
Appeal in vain; for some, remembering me,
Would fail to do an act of charity.'

Sharper than steel to Daher seemed remorse!
He quickly turned, and, springing to the ground,
With head bowed low brought Neeber back his horse;
Then, falling on his peaceful beast, he wound
His arms about his neck to make amends,
And ever afterward the two were friends.

Henry Abbey

The Drawbridge Keeper

Drecker, a drawbridge keeper, opened wide
The dangerous gate to let the vessel through;
His little son was standing by his side,
Above Passaic River deep and blue,
While in the distance, like a moan of pain,
Was heard the whistle of the coming train.

At once brave Drecker worked to swing it back,
The gate-like bridge that seems a gate of death;
Nearer and nearer, on the slender track,
Came the swift engine, puffing its white breath.
Then, with a shriek, the loving father saw
His darling boy fall headlong from the draw!

Either at once down in the stream to spring
And save his son, and let the living freight
Rush on to death, or to his work to cling,
And leave his boy unhelped to meet his fate-
Which should he do? Were you as he was tried,
Would not your love outweigh all else beside?

And yet the child to him was full as dear
As yours may be to you-the light of eyes,
A presence like a brighter atmosphere,
The household star that shone in love's mild skies-
Yet, side by side with duty stern and grim,
Even his child became as naught to him.

For Drecker, being great of soul and true,
Held to his work and did not aid his boy,
Who, in the deep, dark water, sank from view.
Then from the father's life went forth all joy;
But, as he fell back pallid from his pain,
Across the bridge in safety shot the train.

And yet the man was poor, and in his breast
Flowed no ancestral blood of king or lord;
True greatness needs no title and no crest
To win from men just honor and reward!
Nobility is not of rank, but mind,
And is inborn and common in our kind.

He is most noble whose humanity
Is least corrupted: to be just and good
The birthright of the lowest born may be.
Say what we can, we are one brotherhood,
And, rich or poor, or famous or unknown,
True hearts are noble, and true hearts alone.

Henry Abbey

The Fisher-Maidens

Normandy.

We two are fisher-maidens, and we dwell beside the sea
Where the surf is ever rolling, where the winds are blowing free;
And we loved a youth, the bravest that had ever drawn the seine,
And for comeliness and honor he was fit to wed a queen.

We loved him, and we hated one another for his love
That he never showed for either. Could he toss it like a glove?
But one day the sails were hoisted, and he left the loving shore,
And we saw him in the beauty and the pride of life no more.

For the tempest broke upon him as at night he ventured back:
All the sea was frothy madness, all the sky was wild and black;
But we combed the drifted sea-weed from the sable of his hair,
And the day that he was buried seemed too much for us to bear.

We two are fisher-maidens, and we hold each other dear;
We are wedded by a sorrow, we are very fond and near;
For the love we lost unites us-is a bond between us twain,
And in tears we clasp each other in the nights of wind and rain.

Henry Abbey

The French Marshall

McMahon up the street of Paris came,
In triumph from Magenta. Every one
Had heard and praised the fearless marshal's name,
And gloried in the deeds that he had done.
Crowds packed the walks, and at each separate glass
A face was set to see the hero pass.

Grand music lifted in the morning air
Its eloquent voice. Loud-mouthed bells were rung,
Guns boomed till echoes welcomed everywhere;
On buildings and in streets proud flags were hung,
Half like the flags of brain-silk wrought with gold,
That hang on Shakespeare's pages, fold on fold.

But while the marshal up the street made way,
There came a little girl clothed all in white,
Bringing in happy hands a large bouquet;
Her flower-sweet face seemed fragrant with delight.
Well pleased, the soldier, dark and fierce at need,
Raised up the child before him on his steed.

The pearly necklace of her loving arms
She bound on him, and laid her Spring-like head
Against the Autumn of his cheek, with charms
Of smile and mien; while to his shoulder fled
Her gold loose hair with flowers like jewels set,
And made thereon a wonderous epaulet.

He seemed more like an angel than a man,
As, father-like, he paid back each caress;
Better than all his deeds in war's red van,
Appeared this simple act of tenderness.
The people cried "Huzza!" and did not pause
Until the town seemed shaken with applause.

So, from this hour, the general became
The boast of the enthusiastic crowd;
Each gave some flower of praise to deck his fame;
They knew him brave—though often cold and proud;
But looked not for the kindness undefiled
That he had beamed upon the loving child.

O cynic, deem no more the world all base,
And scoff no more with either tongue or pen;
You do not see the face behind the face.
If God exists, there must be noble men;
And many, who to us seem hard and cold,
Have sunshine in their hearts as pure as gold.

Henry Abbey

The King and the Naiad

When the wrongs of peace grow mighty,
They beget the wrong of war,
Whose wild night, with deeds immortal,
Sparkles brightly, star on star.

'O king, to health restore us;
We are besieged by thirst.
There are two foes before us;
The unseen foe is worst.

'Lest thirst's sharp arrows slaughter,
Yield to the open foe,
And lead us to the water,
Tho' it in thralldom flow.'

Thus to Soüs, King of Sparta,
With parched lips his soldiers cried,
When Arcadian besiegers
Hemmed them in on every side.

In the dry and stony stronghold
Was no dropp of water found;
But a brook, beyond the rampart,
Lightly danced along the ground.

Lofty Soüs bade a soulder
Wave a truce, and, with the foe,
Made a compact strong as granite,
With one rift where hope might grow.

Sparta will yield up her conquests,
She her claims to them will sink,
If her king and all his army
From the nearest fountain drink.

To these terms they made their pledges,
Whom dry thirst gave fearful odds,
And, to witness what they signed to,
Loudly called upon their gods.

In a deep, cool glen, appareled
In green boughs, which swayed above,
To the sunlight rose the waters,
Soft as eyes that beam with love.

Hither came the adversaries;
And the Spartans, as by whips,
Were ondriven to the kisses
Of the liquid Naiad lips.

As each fever-throated fighter,
Bending low his waving crest,

Stooped to quaff his land's dishonor,
Him the troubled king addressed:

'If thou wilt not drink, but conquer
This temptation of the spring,
I will give to thee my kingdom,
And thou shalt be crowned its king!'

Heedless of him were his soldiers;
Thirst they gave a higher rank;
By the choking captain maddened,
All, with panic faces, drank.

It appeared not heavy water,
But divine air, cool and thin,
Which they, freed from stifling torture,
Now were deeply breathing in.

Lastly stooped thirst-burdened Soüs
To the treason of the spring;
But he turned, and would not drink it,
Being absolutely king.

Rising, as his face he sprinkled,
With his men he marched away,
Scornful of the daunted captors
Who in vain might say him nay.

He would yield not up his conquests,
For himself and all his men
Had not drank the sparkling pleasure
That allured them to the glen.

Henry Abbey

The Long Regret

Two angels stood without The City's gate
And down beside the wall where ran a stream,
And palms hung over, and the day was mild.

These angels' chosen duty was to aid
Weak comers to The City from our world.
For when they saw a spirit down the void
Mounting on weary, nigh exhausted wings,
They flew to it and helped it to The Gate.
So, often in communion with the souls
That from this life depart, these angels learned
Much of our world, which, to their sight, was like
A glowing topaz far below in space.
Beside the jasper wall where fell a stream,
And palms waved over and the light was soft,
I marveled much to hear the angels speak.
For both were weary of the long regret
That, tho' the Christ is worshiped in the world,
And tho' his name is great and spread abroad,
There are so few obedient to his will.
Still extant are the sins that wrought his death.
The envy of the chief priests and the scribes,
The avarice of false Iscariot,
The slander of the blatant multitude,
The lack of manhood, the servility
Of Pontius Pilate, these four sins, and more,
Continue unabated as the seas.
Old, savage error in the blood survives,
Ignores the truth and sullies its domain.
Of those who hopefully avow the faith,
Few for their enemies pray, or aught forgive,
Or with fair favors unkind acts return.
And fewer still judge not lest they be judged;
For most fling wide uncharities of speech,
Warped prejudice all false, or calumny.
Many evil with evil resist, nor fear
To punish those who wrong them, as if God
Were not a jealous God, and had forgot
That vengeance is his fixed, essential right
And his alone.

Both voices swelled and chimed
All variously and like cathedral bells.
Then the swift angels, with white wings outspread,
Plunged down th' abrupt, interminable gulf.
They disappeared, but soon to sight returned,
And I beheld a ray of love divine
Illumine their calm faces, as each bore
A rescued spirit Godward to The Gate.

Henry Abbey

The Patriot's Courage

When our free land's great captain, Washington,
Was colonel in Virginia, ere the war
He led for Independence had begun,
A passing cloud obscured his rising star:
His sometimes frightful passions woke, and they,
Then unbroke coursers, had their fiery way.

For while between opposing factions there
The bloodless battle by the ballot rolled,
Into one's pride whom he had found unfair
He plunged a speech-wrought weapon, keen and cold;
And the hurt voter, with a blow unmeet,
Stretched his insulter senseless at his feet.

Forth hied the dread news, waxing as it went,
Fed by the food it gave to every tongue;
Uprose, wild-eyed, the wrathful regiment,
And idle swords and flintlocks were unhung,
And marshaled to the drum, whose speedy call
Was like the beating of the hearts of all.

When grief has rage soft pity turns to stone.
These loved their leader as they loved their land;
Aslant, like shining rain, their muskets shone,
And harsh the voice of vengeance pealed command:
'All foully slain our colonel lies, struck down!
On, comrades! Give no quarter! Burn the town!'

Meanwhile, the stricken was made whole again,
And, hurried by the townsfolk, rode to meet
The armed, excited torrent of fierce men
Advancing toward the small, elect'ral street;
And gladly holden in their wond'ring sight,
They pressed around him with unfeigned delight.

But vengeance is so inconsiderate,
Shorn of excuse it yet pursues its prey;
And all the soldiers, filled with gathered hate,
Were willed to leave black ruin on their way.
He charged them, lest the love he bore should cease,
To bate their wrath, and turn again in peace.

So they went back; and slowly he returned,
Chastising his quick passions ruthlessly;
For who, that with a foolish rage has burned,
Knows blame as bitter as his own may be?
But when red morn rolled up its splendid wheel,
Joy followed close on Sorrow's fleeing heel.

For then betimes, a lark-blithe letter flew
Out of a heart where kindness brooded warm;
But to the voter's short and narrow view

It was the white-winged augury of storm;
It asked a meeting only, yet he heard
Of challenge and of duel in the word.

For who could know that one would be so bold
To face and brave the time?-in that it meant
That each his honor on his sword should hold?
The voter straightway to the other went,
And Washington, with courage strong and grand,
Held forth his prudent and heroic hand.

And in his love of truth, sublime and glad,
To him who struck him down he made amends:
'If with the satisfaction you have had
You are content, oh, let us then be friends!
For, looking back on our affray with shame,
I feel that I alone have been to blame.'

Henry Abbey

The Picture

A widow by her landlord was oppressed
To pay at once her backward coin of rent;
For he, cursed by the wealth that should have blessed,
Forgot that he, too, in a tenement
Dwelt, with unpaid arrear; and surely he,
More than a widow, lived in poverty.

For they alone are rich who have obtained
The love of God, for which no gold can pay.
Blind to the peaceful joy he might have gained,
The craven landlord, on a winter's day
That pierced with cold and wind-thrust snow and sleet,
Drove forth the widow to the roofless street.

Her clinging son, with elfin prattle, sought
To charm away her grief; yet, in his heart,
By the indignant pencil of his thought,
The shameful scene was drawn in every part.
There lived the widow's tears, and hard and base
Stood out the likeness of the landlord's face.

Like breaking waves, year after year rolled up,
And in their tide the widow's son became
A truthful painter, in whose life's bright cup
A thankful world dissolved the pearl of fame.
Then, with his brush, which spoke in every hue,
The picture in his heart he strongly drew.

Near to the landlord's home the painting hung,
As at his threshold, in a public place;
To view it came the townsfolk, old and young,
And said, 'This is our neighbor's ruthless face,
And this the cruel deed that he has done
To the poor widow and her artist son.'

The landlord brought temptations coined and vast,
And would have given half the wealthy town,
To lay the brush-raised specter of his past:
No gold availed; the specter would not down;
But haunted him thereafter till he died,
In looks and words and deeds, on every side.

Henry Abbey

The Roman Sentinel

Death or dishonor, which is best to taste?
A Roman sentinel in Pompeii,
When God's hot anger laid that city waste,
Answered the question, and resolved to die.
His duty was, upon his post to bide
Till the relief came, let what might betide.

He stood forgotten by the fleeing guard,
Choosing that part which is the bitterest still,
His face with its fixed purpose cold and hard,
Cut in the resolute granite of his will.
"Better," he said "to die, than live in shame;
Death wreathes fresh flowers round a brave man's name."

Life is the wave's deep whisper on the shore,
Of a great sea beyond. The sentry saw
That day the light in broad sails hoisted o'er
The drifting boat of dawn; nor dreamed the flaw,
The puff called death, would blow him with them by
Out to the boundless sea beyond the sky.

The sentry watched the mountain's fire-gashed cheeks,
And saw come up the sand's entombing shower.
The storm darts out its red tongue when it speaks,
And fierce Vesuvius, in that wild hour,
Put forth its tongue of flame, and spoke the word
Of hatred to the city from the Lord.

The gloom of seventeen centuries skulked away,
And standing in a marble niche was found
A skeleton in armor all decay;
The soulless skull was by a helmet crowned,
Cleaving thereon with mingled rust and sand,
And a long spear was in the crumbling hand.

In Pompeii are beasts of stone with wings,
Paved streets with marble temples on each side,
Baths, houses, paintings, monuments of kings;
But the arched gate whereat the sentry died,
The rusted spear, and helmet with no crest,
Are better far to see than all the rest.

O heart, whatever lot to thee God gives,
Be strong, and swerve not from a blameless way;
Dishonor hurts the soul that ever lives,
Death hurts the body that is kin with clay.
Though Duty's face is stern, her path is best:
They sweetly sleep who die upon her breast.

Henry Abbey

The Singer's Alms

In Lyons, in the mart of that French town,
Years since, a woman, leading a fair child,
Craved a small alms of one who, walking down
The thoroughfare, caught the child's glance, and smiled
To see, behind its eyes, a noble soul.
He paused, but found he had no coin to dole.

His guardian angel warned him not to lose
This chance of pearl to do another good;
So as he waited, sorry to refuse
The asked-for penny, there aside he stood,
And with his hat held as by limb the nest
He covered his kind face, and sang his best.

The sky was blue above, and all the lane
Of commerce where the singer stood was filled,
And many paused, and, listening, paused again,
To hear the voice that through and through them thrilled.
I think the guardian angel helped along
That cry for pity woven in a song.

The singer stood between the beggars there,
Before a church, and, overhead, the spire,
A slim, perpetual finger in the air
Held toward heaven, land of the heart's desire,
As if an angel, pointing up, had said,
'Yonder a crown awaits this singer's head.'

The hat of its stamped brood was emptied soon
Into the woman's lap, who drenched with tears
Her kiss upon the hand of help: 't was noon,
And noon in her glad heart drove forth her fears.
The singer, pleased, passed on, and softly thought,
'Men will not know by whom this deed was wrought.'

But when at night he came upon the stage,
Cheer after cheer went up from that wide throng,
And flowers rained on him: naught could assuage
The tumult of the welcome, save the song
The he had sweetly sung, with covered face,
For the two beggars in the market-place.

Henry Abbey

The Statue

All bold, great actions that are seen too near,
Look rash and foolish to unthinking eyes;
But at a distance they at once appear
In their true grandeur: so let us be wise,
And not too soon our neighbor's deed malign,
Lest what seems crude should prove to be divine.

In Athens, when all learning center'd there,
Men reared a column of surpassing height
In honor of Minerva, wise and fair;
And on the top, which dwindled to the sight,
A statue of the goddess was to stand,
That wisdom might be known to all the land.

And he who, with the beauty in his heart,
Seeking in faultless work immortal youth,
Would mold this statue with the finest art,
Making the wintry marble glow with truth,
Should gain the prize: two sculptors sought the fame-
The prize they craved was an enduring name.

Alcamenes soon carved his little best;
But Phidias, beneath a dazzling thought
That like a bright sun in a cloudless west
Lighted his wide, great soul, with pure love wrought
A statue, and its changeless face of stone
With calm, far-sighted wisdom towered and shone.

Then to be judged the labors were unveiled;
But, at the marble thought, that by degrees
Of hardship Phidias cut, the people railed.
'The lines are coarse, the form too large,' said these;
'And he who sends this rough result of haste
Sends scorn, and offers insult to our taste.'

Alcamenes' praised work was lifted high
Upon the column, ready for the prize;
But it appeared too small against the sky,
And lacked proportion to uplooking eyes;
So it was quickly lowered and put aside,
And the scorned thought was mounted to be tried.

Surprise swept o'er the faces of the crowd,
And changed them as a sudden breeze may change
A field of fickle grass, and long and loud
The mingled shouts to see a sight so strange.
The statue stood completed in its place,
Each coarse line melted to a line of grace.

Henry Abbey

The Storm

The pale day died in the rain tonight,
And its hurrying ghost, the wind, goes by:
The mountains loom in their silent night,
And darkly frown at the sea and sky.

The petrel wings close to his surging home,
And stabs with a shriek the shuddering night:
The mad wave beckons with hands of foam
Dipped in the blood of the sea-tower's light.

So, in my heart, is a storm tonight,
Storm and tumult that will not cease;
And my soul, in bitterness, longs for the light,
For the waking bird and the dawn of peace.

Henry Abbey

The Sunken City

I walked beside a quiet sea,
At starlight, while the west was gray
And clear, though faint and far away;
Through the stilled water, forth me,
Voices of bells came dreamily;
No breeze more manifest than they.

Some say a thousand years ago
There throve a city on an isle
Beyond the headland, mile on mile,
Which, in a night of fear and woe,
Sank in the glassy depth below—
Sank tower and dwelling, beam and tile.

And now, when twinkling skies are clear,
Withing the sunken city there,
The sad ghosts ring their past despair
Out on the mermen's atmosphere—
Ring loudly all, that life may hear
Dead sadness stir the ample air.

To me this city is not strange;
I feel familiar with each gate,
Each tower and street unfortunate,
And, wheresoe'er I dwell or range,
Its mem'ry-picture does not change,
Limned by its stern destroyer, Fate.

Its labarums, on roof and mast,
Swam in the light with silken arms,
No wrathful wars, nor dread alarms,
The streeted splendor overcast;
But, on a throne of gems amassed,
Sat Pleasure with Circean charma.

Yet came the hour of loss and fear.
The city sank, tower, wall, and mart,
Its brittle site was rent apart,
And all went down that once was dear;
But oft, in loneliness, I hear
Its sunken bells ring in my heart.

I beat no note of vain regret.
My hope-wrought city of To-be.
Youth seen, upon the future's sea,
Has vanished, and its sun is set;
But broader and diviner yet,
The city of Reality.

For, though its ways be paved with stone,
And hard and rough to toiling feet,
And though, in the accustomed street,

No blazoned garniture is known,
By Fate, God's hand, His will is shown,
And love makes humble service sweet.

Henry Abbey

The Troubadour

So many poets die ere they are known,
I pray you, hear me kindly for their sake.
Not of the harp, but of the soul alone,
Is the deep music all true minstrels make:
Hear my soul's music, and I will beguile,
With string and song, your festival awhile.

The stranger, looking on a merry scene
Where unknown faces shine with love and joy,
Feels that he is a stranger: on this green
That fronts the castle, seeing your employ,
My heart sank desolate; yet came I near,
For welcome should be found at all good cheer.

Provence my home, and fancy not, I pray,
That in Provence no lords save Love abide;
For there Neglect, that, coming down the way,
Or priest, or Levite takes the other side,
Neglect, false neighbor, flung at me the scoff:
'Honor is cold, but loves true worth-far off!'

Love is the key-note of the universe-
The theme, the melody; though poorly decked,
Masters, I ask but little of your purse,
For love, not gold, is best to heal neglect.
Love yields true fame when love is widely sown;
Bloom, flower of love!-lest I, too, die unknown.

Henry Abbey

To a Blue Hepatica

A flake of light-blue sky,
Perched on the top of a slender stem,
Like a bird with his azure wings outspread,
Here, at my feet, as I wandered by,
I found thee, wilding gem!
And the dead leaves rustled to my tread
In the weird and aged wood.

I understood
As it were thy glance.
It was like a dance
Of glad surprise
In those sweet, blue eyes,
Which thou and heaven above
Dost 'mind me of.

I thought of winter gone,
When the brief sun shone,
Nor abated aught th' intolerant cold,
Which would yield no place,
On the white earth's face,
To thy beauty, O flower! But the mold,
Rich and black, under fallen leaves
Held thee safe as garnered sheaves.
Strange, that a tender flower like thee,
Against the rude and eager stress
Of Winter's frosty selfishness,
In forefront of revolt should'st be!

And yet, rathe flower divine,
On whom I almost trod,
I take thee for a sign.
With peace thou art endued,
Petaled beatitude
And little child of God!

I, too, rebel against the old-
Against the drear, insensate cold
Of selfish customs manifold;
And I say that every kindly deed
Is a flower like thee in the wilderness,
And makes for peace, and will sow the seed
Of other deeds to help and bless.
When these are common-when strikes that hour,
Of Time the dower-
The world shall see life truly free-
The endless Summer that is to be,
The ripened fruit, the light, the power
Of democracy!

Spirits of peace are in the air,
And gleams of Springtime everywhere!

Henry Abbey

To Baffle Time

To baffle time, whose tooth has never rest,
And make the counted line, from page to page,
Compact, fulfilled of what is apt and best,
And vibrant with the keynote of the age,
This is my aim; and even aims are things;
They give men value who have won no place.
We pass for what we would be, by some grace,
And our ambitions make us seem like kings.
But never yet has destiny's clear star
For aimless feet shed light upon the way.
So have I hope, since purpose sees no bar,
To write immortally some lyric day,
As Lovelace did when he informed the lay
Inspired by Lucasta and by war.

Henry Abbey

Trailing Arbutus

In spring when branches of woodbine
Hung leafless over the rocks,
And fleecy snow in the hollows
Lay in unshepherded flocks,

By the road where dead leaves rustled,
Or damply matted the ground,
While over me lifted the robin
His honey'd passion of sound,

I came upon trailing arbutus
Blooming in modesty sweet,
And gathered store of its riches
Offered and spread at my feet.

It grew under leaves, as if seeking
No hint of itself to disclose,
And out of its pink-white petals
A delicate perfume rose.

As faint as the fond remembrance
Of joy that was only dreamed,
And like a divine suggestion
The scent of the flower seemed.

I sought for love on the highway,
For love unselfish and pure,
And found it in good deeds blooming,
Tho' often in haunts obscure.

Often in leaves by the wayside,
But touched with a heavenly glow,
And with self-sacrifice fragrant
The flowers of great love grow.

O lovely and lowly arbutus!
As year unto year succeeds,
Be thou the laurel and emblem
Of noble, unselfish deeds!

Henry Abbey

What Do We Plant?

What do we plant when we plant the tree?
We plant the ship, which will cross the sea.
We plant the mast to carry the sails;
We plant the planks to withstand the gales -
The keel, the keelson, the beam, the knee;
We plant the ship when we plant the tree.

What do we plant when we plant the tree?
We plant the houses for you and me.
We plant the rafters, the shingles, the floors,
We plant the studding, the lath, the doors,
The beams and siding, all parts that be;
We plant the house when we plant the tree.

What do we plant when we plant the tree?
A thousand things that we daily see;
We plant the spire that out-towers the crag,
We plant the staff for our country's flag,
We plant the shade, from the hot sun free;
We plant all these when we plant the tree.

Henry Abbey

While the Days Go By

I shall not say, our life is all in vain,
For peace may cheer the desolated hearth;
But well I know that, on this weary earth,
Round each joy-island is a sea of pain-
And the days go by.

We watch our hopes, far flickering in the night,
Once radiant torches, lighted in our youth,
To guide, through years, to some broad morn of truth;
But these go out and leave us with no light-
And the days go by.

We see the clouds of summer go and come,
And thirsty verdure praying them to give:
We cry, 'O Nature, tell us why we live!'
She smiles with beauty, but her lips are numb-
And the days go by.

Yet what are we? We breathe, we love, we cease:
Too soon our little orbits change and fall:
We are Fate's children, very tired; and all
Are homeless strangers, craving rest and peace-
And the days go by.

I only ask to drink experience deep;
And, in the sad, sweet goblet of my years,
To find love poured with all its smiles and tears,
And quaffing this, I too shall sweetly sleep-
While the days go by.

Henry Abbey

Winter Days

Now comes the graybeard of the north:
The forests bare their rugged breasts
To every wind that wanders forth,
And, in their arms, the lonely nests
That housed the birdlings months ago
Are egged with flakes of drifted snow.

No more the robin pipes his lay
To greet the flushed advance of morn;
He sings in valleys far away;
His heart is with the south to-day;
He cannot shrill among the corn;
For all the hay and corn are down
And garnered; and the withered leaf,
Against the branches bare and brown,
Rattles; and all the days are brief.

An icy hand is on the land;
The cloudy sky is sad and gray;
But through the misty sorrow streams,
Outspreading wide, a golden ray.
And on the brook that cuts the plain
A diamond wonder is aglow,
Fairer than that which, long ago,
De Rohan staked a name to gain.

Henry Abbey