

## **Classic Poetry Series**

**John Hay**

**- 96 poems -**

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## **John Hay (8 October 1838 – 1 July 1905)**

John Milton Hay was an American statesman, diplomat, author, journalist, and private secretary and assistant to Abraham Lincoln.

### Early Life

Hay was born in Salem, Indiana, of Scottish ancestry, the third son of Dr. Charles Hay and Helen Leonard from Middleboro, Massachusetts, who had come to Salem to live with her sister. He was raised in Warsaw, Illinois, and educated first at the private school of the Reverend Stephen Childs, an Episcopal clergyman. In 1851 John went to an academy at Pittsfield in Pike County, where he met an older student, John G. Nicolay, with whom he would later work as private secretary to Abraham Lincoln. In 1852 John Hay went to the college at Springfield, and in 1855 was sent to Brown University, where he joined Theta Delta Chi. At Brown, he developed an interest in poetry, and Hay became a part of Providence's literary circle which included Sarah Helen Whitman and Nora Perry. When he graduated, he was named Class Poet. He left Brown in 1858 before receiving his diploma and went home to Warsaw to study law with his uncle, Milton Hay.

### Lincoln's secretary

Abraham Lincoln's law office was next door to the law office of Milton Hay, John's uncle, and Lincoln thus became acquainted with John Hay. When Lincoln won election as president, his secretary, John G. Nicolay, recommended John Hay to Lincoln as assistant private secretary. Thus, at age 22 he began a lifelong career in government, except for a stint in journalism from 1870-78. Though technically a clerk in the Interior Department, he served as Lincoln's secretary until 1864. He lived in the northeast corner bedroom on the second floor of the White House, which he shared with his fellow secretary and Pittsfield Academy schoolmate, Nicolay.

For a few months, he served in the Union army under Generals David Hunter and Quincy Adams Gillmore. He rose to the rank of major and was later brevetted lieutenant colonel and colonel. Hay's diary and writings during the Civil War are basic historical sources. Some have credited Hay with being the real author of Lincoln's Letter to Mrs. Bixby, consoling her for the loss of her sons in the war.

Hay was present when Lincoln died after being shot at Ford's Theatre. Hay and Nicolay wrote a formal 10-volume biography of Lincoln (*Abraham Lincoln: A History*, 1890) and prepared an edition of his collected works.

Portions of Hay's diaries and letters from 1861-1870, published in the book

Lincoln and the Civil War, show Lincoln in a far more intimate light.

John Hay as a young man

Legal Career

In 1861, he was admitted to practice in the Supreme Court of Illinois.

Diplomatic Career

Between 1865 and 1870, he was secretary of legation at Paris (1865-7) and Madrid (1867-8), and chargé d'affaires at Vienna (1868-70). In 1878 he became assistant secretary of state in the Hayes administration. Hay was named U.S. ambassador to the United Kingdom in 1897 when William McKinley became President. Some of the recognition of the longstanding community of interests between that country and the United States was the result of Hay's stay there.

Journalism Career

In 1870 he left government and worked for 6 years as an editor for the New York Tribune under Whitelaw Reid .

Secretary of State

In August 1898, Hay was named by President McKinley as Secretary of State and helped negotiate the Treaty of Paris of 1898, which ended the Spanish-American War. Hay continued serving as Secretary of State after Theodore Roosevelt succeeded McKinley, serving until his own death in 1905. He established the Open Door policy in China.

Legacy

His contributions included the adoption of an Open Door Policy in China (announced on January 2, 1900) which may have been a contributing factor in the Boxer Rebellion, and the preparations for the Panama Canal. He negotiated the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty (1901), the Hay-Herran Treaty (1903), and the Hay-Bunau Varilla Treaty (1903), all of which were instrumental in clearing the way for the construction and use of the Canal. In all, he brought about more than 50 treaties, including the settlement of the Samoan dispute, as a result of which the United States secured Tutuila, with a harbor in the Pacific; a definitive Alaskan boundary treaty in 1903; the negotiation of reciprocity treaties with Argentina, France, Germany, Cuba, and the British West Indies; the negotiation of new treaties with Spain; and the negotiation of a treaty with Denmark for the cession of the Danish West India Islands.

In 1904, Hay was one of the first seven chosen for membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Hay is also known for his comment, written in a letter to President Theodore Roosevelt, describing the Spanish-American War as a "splendid little war".

Hay appears as a prominent character in Gore Vidal's historical novels *Lincoln and Empire* and in William Safire's historical novel *Freedom*. He appears, portrayed by John Huston, in the 1975 film *The Wind and the Lion*, a fictionalization of the Perdicaris Affair in Morocco in 1904. Steven Culp portrayed John ("Johnny") Hay in the 1988 miniseries *Lincoln*, based on Vidal's book. He is portrayed in the 1997 miniseries *Rough Riders* by actor and retired United States Marine R. Lee Ermeby.

After Roosevelt signed an executive order setting aside land in the Benguet region of the Philippines for a military reservation under the United States Army, Camp John Hay of Baguio City was established on October 25, 1903 and named in his honor. It was re-designated John Hay Air Base in 1955. The base was used for rest and recreation for U.S. military personnel and the dependents of U.S. military personnel in the Philippines as well as Department of Defense employees and their dependents. The 690-hectare

property was finally turned over to the Philippines 1991 upon the expiration of the R.P.-U.S. Bases Agreement.

Since 1997 it has been in the hands of a private developer, on a long term lease, which has transformed the property into a world class resort.

Hay was a close friend of Henry Brooks Adams, American historian and author. In 1884, architect Henry Hobson Richardson designed adjoining townhouses for Hay and Adams on Lafayette Square in Washington, D.C.. The houses were demolished in 1927 and the site is now occupied by the Hay-Adams Hotel.

Brown University's John Hay Library housed the entire library collection from its construction in 1910 until the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library was built in 1964. In 1971, when physical science materials were transferred to the new Sciences Library, the John Hay Library became exclusively a repository for the library's Special Collections.

Hay's New Hampshire estate has been conserved as part of the John Hay National Wildlife Refuge, the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests' John Hay Land Studies Center, and the Garden Conservancy's Fells Reservation. The Fells, a local nonprofit organization that has maintained and managed the John Hay Estate on Lake Sunapee for over a decade, acquired the northern half of the property from the US Fish and Wildlife Service on March 25, 2008.

Hay and Abraham Lincoln are depicted in a larger-than-life bronze sculpture by Mark Martino, entitled *A Learning Moment*, in the Sesquicentennial Plaza at Carthage College. Hay was an alumnus of the Illinois State University in Springfield (previously Hillsboro College), which later became Carthage College when it moved to Carthage, IL in 1870.

Hay was a correspondent member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters from 1900 until his death.

#### Personal Life

Hay married Clara Stone, a daughter of Amassa Stone of Cleveland, Ohio. They are buried together in Lake View Cemetery in Cleveland, Ohio. Their daughter Helen Julia Hay, a writer and poet, married Payne Whitney of the influential Whitney family; their children were U.S. ambassador John Hay Whitney and Joan Whitney Payson.

#### Trivia

Hay and Hillary Rodham Clinton are the only persons to have resided in the White House prior to becoming Secretary of State.

#### Works:

Abraham Lincoln: A History (with John G. Nicolay, 1890)  
The Bread-winners (1883)  
Castilian Days (1875)  
Pike County Ballads and Other Poems (1871)  
Poems (1890)

## A Challenge

The luminous pages of all story prove  
High love hath ending in heroic woe;  
Sharp-fanged and fell, dark death doth ever go  
In waiting for the wandering feet of love.  
And if that fate be shunned, love's footsteps move  
Down the dull slope that leads to regions low  
Where the thick pulse of ease and wont beats slow  
As in some dusk and poppy-haunted grove.  
Shall we accept, or shall we not defy,  
Entrenched in our fast love, this augury?  
Never shall I less than adore thee, Sweet!  
No use, my queen, shall dim thy radiant crown.  
And if, in envy, death shall strike me down,  
Let his dart find me here, kissing thy feet!

John Hay

## **A Dream of Bric-a-brac**

C.K. loquitur.

I dreamed I was in fair Nippon.  
Amid tea-fields I journeyed on,  
Reclined in my jinrikishaw;  
Across the rolling plains I saw  
The lordly Fusi-yama rise,  
His blue cone lost in bluer skies.

At last I bade my bearers stop  
Before what seemed a china-shop.  
I roused myself and entered in.  
A fearful joy, like some sweet sin,  
Pierced through my bosom as I gazed,  
Entranced, transported, and amazed.  
For all the house was but one room,  
And in its clear and grateful gloom,  
Filled with all odors strange and strong  
That to the wondrous East belong,

I saw above, around, below,  
A sight to make the warm heart glow,  
And leave the eager soul no lack,-  
An endless wealth of bric-a-brac.  
I saw bronze statues, old and rare,  
Fashioned by no mere mortal skill,  
With robes that fluttered in the air,  
Blown out by Art's eternal will;  
And delicate ivory netsukes,  
Richer in tone than Cheddar cheese,  
Of saints and hermits, cats and dogs,  
Grim warriors and ecstatic frogs.  
And here and there those wondrous masks,  
More living flesh than sandal-wood,  
Where the full soul in pleasure basks  
And dreams of love, the only good.  
The walls were all with pictures hung:  
Gay villas bright in rain-washed air,  
Trees to whose boughs brown monkeys clung,  
Outlineless dabs of fuzzy hair.

And all about the opulent shelves  
Littered with porcelain beyond price:  
Imari pots arrayed themselves  
Beside Ming dishes; grain-of-rice  
Vied with the Royal Satsuma,  
Proud of its sallow ivory beam;  
And Kaga's Thousand Hermits lay  
Tranced in some punch-bowl's golden gleam.  
Over bronze censers, black with age,  
The five-clawed dragons strife engage;  
A curled and insolent Dog of Foo

Sniffs at the smoke aspiring through.  
In what old days, in what far lands,  
What busy brains, what cunning hands,  
With what quaint speech, what alien thought,  
Strange fellow-men these marvels wrought!

As thus I mused, I was aware  
There grew before my eager eyes  
A little maid too bright and fair,  
Too strangely lovely for surprise.  
It seemed the beauty of the place  
Had suddenly become concrete,  
So full was she of Orient grace,  
From her slant eyes and burnished face  
Down to her little gold-bronze feet.

She was a girl of old Japan;  
Her small hand held a glided fan,  
Which scattered fragrance through the room;  
Her cheek was rich with pallid bloom,  
Her eye was dark with languid fire,  
Her red lips breathed a vague desire;  
Her teeth, of pearl inviolate,  
Sweetly proclaimed her maiden state.  
Her garb was stiff with brodered gold  
Twined with mysterious fold on fold,  
That gave no hint where, hidden well,  
Her dainty form might warmly dwell,  
A pearl within too large a shell.  
So quaint, so short, so lissome, she,  
It seemed as if it well might be  
Some jocose god, with sportive whirl,  
Had taken up a long lithe girl  
And tied a graceful knot in her.

I tried to speak, and found, oh, bliss!  
I needed no interpreter;  
I knew the Japanese for kiss,  
I had no other thought but this;  
And she, with smile and blush divine,  
Kind to my stammering prayer did seem;  
My thought was hers, and hers was mine,  
In the swift logic of my dream.  
My arms clung round her slender waist,  
Through gold and silk the form I traced,  
And glad as rain that follows drouth,  
I kissed and kissed her bright red mouth.

What ailed the girl? No loving sigh  
Heaved the round bosom; in her eye  
Trembled no tear; from her dear throat  
Bubbled a sweet and silvery note

Of girlish laughter, shrill and clear,  
That all the statues seemed to hear  
The bronzes tinkled laughter fine;  
I heard a chuckle argentine  
Ring from the silver images;  
Even the ivory netsukes  
Uttered in every silent pause  
Dry, bony laughs from tiny jaws;  
The painted monkeys on the wall  
Waked up with chatter impudent;  
Pottery, porcelain, bronze, and all  
Broke out in ghostly merriment,  
Faint as rain pattering on dry leaves,  
Or cricket's chirp on summer eves.

And suddenly upon my sight  
There grew a portent: left and right,  
On every side, as if the air  
Had taken substance then and there,  
In every sort of form and face,  
A throng of tourists filled the place.  
I saw a Frenchman's sneering shrug;  
A German countess, in one hand  
A sky-blue string which held a pug,  
With the other a fiery face she fanned;  
A Yankee with a soft felt hat;  
A Coptic priest from Ararat;  
An English girl with cheeks of rose;  
A Nihilist with Socratic nose;  
Paddy from Cork with baggage light  
And pockets stuffed with dynamite;  
A haughty Southern Readjuster  
Wrapped in his pride and linen duster;  
Two noisy New York stock-brokers  
And twenty British globe-trotters.

To my disgust and vast surprise  
They turned on me lack-lustre eyes,  
And each with dropped and wagging jaw  
Burst out into a wild guffaw:  
They laughed with huge mouths opened wide;  
They roared till each one held his side;  
They screamed and writhed with brutal glee,  
With fingers rudely stretched to me,-  
Till lo! at once the laughter died,  
The tourists faded into air;  
None but my fair maid lingered there,  
Who stood demurely by my side.  
"Who were your friends?" I asked the maid,  
Taking a tea-cup from its shelf.  
"This audience is disclosed," she said,  
"Whenever a man makes a fool of himself."

John Hay

## **A Haunted Room**

In the dim chamber whence but yesterday  
Passed my belovèd, filled with awe I stand;  
And haunting Loves fluttering on every hand  
Whisper her praises who is far away.  
A thousand delicate fancies glance and play  
On every object which her robes have fanned,  
And tenderest thoughts and hopes bloom and expand  
In the sweet memory of her beauty's ray.  
Ah! could that glass but hold the faintest trace  
Of all the loveliness once mirrored there,  
The clustering glory of the shadowy hair  
That framed so well the dear young angel face!  
But no, it shows my own face, full of care,  
And my heart is her beauty's dwelling-place.

John Hay

## **A Phylactery**

Wise men I hold those rakes of old  
Who, as we read in antique story,  
When lyres were struck and wine was poured,  
Set the white Death's Head on the board-  
Memento mori.

Love well! love truly! and love fast!  
True love evades the dilatory.  
Life's bloom flares like a meteor past;  
A joy so dazzling cannot last  
Memento mori.

Stop not to pluck the leaves of bay  
That greenly deck the path of glory,  
The wreath will wither if you stay,  
So pass along your earnest way  
Memento mori.

Hear but not heed, though wild and shrill,  
The cries of faction transitory;  
Cleave to your good, eschew your ill,  
A Hundred Years and all is still  
Memento mori.

When Old Age comes with muffled drums,  
That beat to sleep our tired life's story,  
On thoughts of dying, (Rest is good!)  
Like old snakes coiled i' the sun, we brood-  
Memento mori.

John Hay

## **A Prayer in Thessaly**

A lover prayed to Eros in this wise:-

Since my love loves not me, Eros! I pray  
That thou wilt take this torturing love away.  
But since she is so fair, still let mine eyes  
Unloving, joy in her, her beauty prize;  
Still let her clear voice ring as pure and gay  
To my calm heart as mating birds in May.  
The words went up the blue Thessalian skies.

But ere they reached the high god's golden seat,  
The lover to retract his prayer was fain:

Nay, let me keep the bitter with the sweet,  
Better than placid bliss is love's dear pain.  
My love I'll hold and cherish though it prove  
More blighting than the frowning brows of Jove.

John Hay

## A Triumph of Order

A squad of regular infantry  
In the Commune's closing days,  
Had captured a crowd of rebels  
By the wall of Pere-la-Chaise.

There were desperate men, wild women,  
And dark-eyed Amazon girls,  
And one little boy, with a peach-down cheek  
And yellow clustering curls.

The captain seized the little waif,  
And said, "What dost thou here?"  
"Sapristi, Citizen captain!  
I'm a Communist, my dear!"

"Very well! Then you die with the others!"  
"Very well! That's my affair;  
But first let me take to my mother,  
Who lives by the wine-shop there,

"My father's watch. You see it;  
A gay old thing, is it not?  
It would please the old lady to have it,  
Then I'll come back here, and be shot."

"That is the last we shall see of him,"  
The grizzled captain grinned,  
As the little man skimmed down the hill,  
Like a swallow down the wind.

For the joy of killing had lost its zest  
In the glut of those awful days,  
And Death writhed, gorged like a greedy snake,  
From the Arch to Père-la-Chaise.

But before the last platoon had fired,  
The child's shrill voice was heard;  
"Houp-là! the old girl made such a row  
I feared I should break my word."

Against the bullet-pitted wall  
He took his place with the rest,  
A button was lost from his ragged blouse,  
Which showed his soft white breast.

"Now blaze away, my children!  
With your little one-two-three!"  
The Chassepots tore the stout young heart,  
And saved Society.

John Hay

## **A Winter Night**

The winter wind is raving fierce and shrill  
And chides with angry moan the frosty skies,  
The white stars gaze with sleepless Gorgon eyes  
That freeze the earth in terror fixed and still.  
We reck not of the wild night's gloom and chill,  
Housed from its rage, dear friend; and fancy flies,  
Lured by the hand of beckoning memories,  
Back to those summer evenings on the hill  
Where we together watched the sun go down  
Beyond the gold-washed uplands, while his fires  
Touched into glittering life the vanes and spires  
Piercing the purpling mists that veiled the town.  
The wintry night thy voice and eyes beguile,  
Till wake the sleeping summers in thy smile.

John Hay

## A Woman's Love

A sentinel angel sitting high in glory  
Heard this shrill wail ring out from Purgatory:  
"Have mercy, mighty angel, hear my story!"

"I loved, and, blind with passionate love, I fell.  
Love brought me down to death, and death to Hell.  
For God is just, and death for sin is well.

"I do not rage against his high decree,  
Nor for myself do ask that grace shall be;  
But for my love on earth who mourns for me.

"Great Spirit! Let me see my love again  
And comfort him one hour, and I were fain  
To pay a thousand years of fire and pain."

Then said the pitying angel, "Nay, repent  
That wild vow! Look, the dial-finger's bent  
Down to the last hour of thy punishment!"

But still she wailed, "I pray thee, let me go!  
I cannot rise to peace and leave him so.  
Oh, let me soothe him in his bitter woe!"

The brazen gates ground sullenly ajar,  
And upward, joyous, like a rising star,  
She rose and vanished in the ether far.

But soon adown the dying sunset sailing,  
And like a wounded bird her pinions trailing,  
She fluttered back, with broken-hearted wailing.

She sobbed, "I found him by the summer sea  
Reclined, his head upon a maiden's knee,  
She curled his hair and kissed him. Woe is me!"

She wept, "Now let my punishment begin!  
I have been fond and foolish. Let me in  
To expiate my sorrow and my sin."

The angel answered, "Nay, sad soul, go higher!  
To be deceived in your true heart's desire  
Was bitterer than a thousand years of fire!"

John Hay

## Accidents

A vision seen by Plato the divine:  
Two shuddering souls come forward, waiting doom  
From Rhadamanthus in the nether gloom.  
One is a slave hunger has made him pine;  
One is a king his arms and jewels shine,  
Making strange splendor in the dismal room.  
"Hence!" cries the judge, "and strip them! Let them come  
With nought to show if they be coarse or fine."  
Of garb and body they are swift bereft:  
Such is hell's law nothing but soul is left.  
The slave, in virtue glorious, is held fit  
For those blest isles of peace where just kings go.  
The king, by vice deformed, is sent below  
To herd with base slaves in the wailing pit.

John Hay

## After You, Pilot

Dawn gilded over dunes of sand  
That border Mobile Bay  
The fleet, which under Farragut  
In expectation lay.  
For ere that rising sun should set,  
Full many a sailor bold  
Should perish, leaving but a name  
On history's page of gold.

Others have sung and yet shall sing  
Of Farragut's renown:  
How to the Hartford's maintop lashed  
He gained his conqueror's crown.  
Let others sing those deeds while we,  
In sorrow and in pride,  
Tell how one gallant gentleman  
With high decorum died.

The Admiral came across the bar  
With threescore flags in air,  
The Gulf's blue mirror never glassed  
A scene so sternly fair.  
Over his fleet of eighteen ships  
His dark eye proudly ran;  
And Craven in the monitor  
Tecumseh led the van.

Morgan and Gaines shot forth their fires  
From either bellowing shore;  
With deeper rage the fleet replied-  
One thunderous, volleying roar.  
But straight ahead bold Craven dashed  
Upon the swelling tide,  
To seek and smite the Tennessee,  
The foeman's hope and pride.

A noble quarry! Seeking her,  
Most worth his knightly steel,  
He recked not of the leaking death  
Beneath his gliding keel.

One moment in the conning tower  
He thought of loved ones dear-  
Then at the black foe's lowering bulk  
He bade his pilot steer.

A roar, a shock, a shuddering plunge!  
Full well did Craven know  
No mortal skill might save his ship  
Smit by that dastard blow.  
The doom impending shrieked and beat  
Its fatal wings so nigh

That only one might pass the stair  
And one must pause, and die.

"After you, Pilot," Craven said.  
O words of flawless fame!  
Out of that awful moment bloomed  
A pure, immortal name.  
The pilot passed, the hero stayed;  
Within that turret's round  
Met glorious death and endless life  
And faith by honor crowned.

The good ship plunged to ocean's ooze.  
Forth from the flood and fire  
Our reverence sees that gentle soul  
To kindred heaven aspire;  
And mark when Craven stands beneath  
God's hero-sheltering dome-  
The shade of Philip Sidney rise  
And bid him welcome home.

John Hay

## Atavism

O beautiful daughter of a mighty race!  
In thy fair features and thy radiant eyes  
Like bright clouds floating over brighter skies  
The shadows of a glorious past we trace.  
Framed in the oval of thy perfect face  
Flit the pale belles of bygone centuries;  
A hint of lawgivers and jurists lies  
In that pure brow where strength is wed with grace.  
And looking on thy profile's symmetry  
A world-famed face across my memory comes,  
'Neath the slouched hat a watching eagle's eye,  
Where down the dusty line goes riding by,  
With blare of trumpets and hoarse growl of drums,  
Tecumseh Sherman marching to the sea.

John Hay

## Banty Tim

Remarks of Sergeant Tilmon Joy to the White Man's Committee of Spunky Point, Illinois

I reckon I git your drift, gents,-  
You 'low the boy sha'n't stay;  
This is a white man's country;  
You're Dimocrats, you say;  
And whereas, and seein', and wherefore,  
The times bein' all out o' j'int,  
The nigger has got to mosey  
From the limits o' Spunky P'int!

Le's reason the thing a minute:  
I'm an old-fashioned Dimocrat too,  
Though I laid my politics out o' the way  
For to keep till the war was through.  
But I come back here, allowin'  
To vote as I used to do,  
Though it gravels me like the devil to train  
Along o' sich fools as you.

Now dog my cats ef I kin see,  
In all the light of the day,  
What you've got to do with the question  
Ef Tim shill go or stay.  
And funder than that I give notice,  
Ef one of you tetches the boy,  
He kin check his trunks to a warmer clime  
Than he'll find in Illanoy.

Why, blame your hearts, jest hear me!  
You know that ungodly day  
When our left struck Vicksburg Heights, how ripped  
And torn and tattered we lay.  
When the rest retreated I stayed behind,  
Fur reasons sufficient to me,  
With a rib caved in, and a leg on a strike,  
I sprawled on that cursed glacee.

Lord! how the hot sun went for us,  
And br'iled and blistered and burned!  
How the Rebel bullets whizzed round us  
When a cuss in his death-grip turned!  
Till along toward dusk I seen a thing  
I couldn't believe for a spell:  
That nigger that Tim was a-crawlin' to me  
Through that fire-proof, gilt-edged hell!

The Rebels seen him as quick as me,  
And the bullets buzzed like bees;  
But he jumped for me, and shouldered me,  
Though a shot brought him once to his knees;  
But he staggered up, and packed me off,

With a dozen stumbles and falls,  
Till safe in our lines he drapped us both,  
His black hide riddled with balls.

So, my gentle gazelles, thar's my answer,  
And here stays Banty Tim:  
He trumped Death's ace for me that day,  
And I'm not goin' back on him!  
You may rezoloot till the cows come home,  
But ef one of you tetches the boy,  
He'll wrastle his hash to-night in hell,  
Or my name's not Tilmon Joy.

John Hay

## Benoni Dunn

I sat on a worm fence talking  
With one of the Bear Creek boys,  
When all the woods were ringing  
With the blue jay's jubilant noise.  
Prairie and timber were glorious  
In the love of the hot young sun,  
But a philosophic gloom possessed  
The soul of Benoni Dunn.

"Nothin' in all this 'varsal yerth  
Is like what it ort to be,  
I've give up tryin' to see the nub  
It's too hefty a job fer me.  
The weaker a feller's stummick may be,  
The bigger his dinner, you bet,  
And the more he don't care a damn for cash,  
The richer he's sure to get.

"Thar's old Brads got a pretty young wife  
And the biggest house in Pike  
No chick nor child says he's sixty-two,  
But he's eighty-two more like.  
I'low God thinks it a derved good joke-  
The way he tries it on-  
To send a plenty of hazel-nuts  
To folks with their back teeth gone.

"I ort to be in Congress;  
I would ef I'd went to school.  
That's Colonel Scrubb our member  
He's jest a nateral fool.  
When he come here, Lord! he didn't know  
Peach blow from a dogwood blossom,  
And the derved galoot owned up to me  
That he never seed a 'possum!

"Everything works contráry-  
You never knows what to do:  
Ef I sow in wheat I'll wish it was corn  
Afore the fall is through.  
And talk about pleasure ef I was axed  
The thing that most I love,  
I'd say it's gingerbread and that  
I git the littlest uv.

"What is the use of livin'  
Where everything goes skew-haw,  
Where you starve ef you keep the Commandments,  
And hang ef you break the law.  
I've give up tryin' to see the nub  
Uv what we was meant to be;  
The more I study, the more I don't know-

It's too hefty a job fer me."

And this was the sum of the thinking  
Of tall Benoni Dunn,  
While gay in weeds his cornfield laughed  
In the light of the kindly sun.  
Ruminant thus he maundered,  
With a scowl on his tangled brow,  
With gaps in his fence, and hate in his heart,  
And rust on his idle plough.

John Hay

## Blondine

I wandered through a careless world  
Deceived when not deceiving,  
And never gave an idle heart  
The rapture of believing.  
The smiles, the sighs, the glancing eyes,  
Of many hundred comers  
Swept by me, light as rose-leaves blown  
From long-forgotten summers.

But never eyes so deep and bright  
And loyal in their seeming,  
And never smiles so full of light  
Have shone upon my dreaming.  
The looks and lips so gay and wise,  
The thousand charms that wreath them,  
Almost I dare believe that truth  
Is safely shrined beneath them.

Ah! do they shine, those eyes of thine,  
But for our own misleading?  
The fresh young smile, so pure and fine,  
Does it but mock our reading?  
Then faith is fled, and trust is dead,  
And unbelief grows duty,  
If fraud can wield the triple arm  
Of youth and wit and beauty.

John Hay

## **Boudoir Prophecies**

One day in the Tuileries,  
When a southwest Spanish breeze  
Brought scandalous news of the Queen,  
The fair proud Empress said,  
"My good friend loses her head;  
If matters go on this way,  
I shall see her shopping, some day,  
In the Boulevard des Capucines."

The saying swiftly went  
To the Place of the Orient,  
And the stout Queen sneered, "Ah, well!  
You are proud and prude, ma belle!  
But I think I will hazard a guess  
I shall see you one day playing chess  
With the Curé of Carabanchel."

Both ladies, though not over-wise,  
Were lucky in prophecies.  
For the Boulevard shopmen well  
Know the form of stout Isabel  
As she buys her modes de Paris;  
And after Sedan in despair  
The Empress prude and fair  
Went to visit Madame sa Mère  
In her villa at Carabanchel  
But the Queen was not there to see.

John Hay

## Centennial

A hundred times the bells of Brown  
Have rung to sleep the idle summers,  
And still to-day clangs clamoring down  
A greeting to the welcome comers.

And far, like waves of morning, pours  
Her call, in airy ripples breaking,  
And wanders to the farthest shores,  
Her children's drowsy hearts awaking.

The wild vibration floats along,  
O'er heart-strings tense its magic plying,  
And wakes in every breast its song  
Of love and gratitude undying.

My heart to meet the summons leaps  
At limit of its straining tether,  
Where the fresh western sunlight steeps  
In golden flame the prairie heather.

And others, happier, rise and fare  
To pass within the hallowed portal,  
And see the glory shining there  
Shrined in her steadfast eyes immortal.

What though their eyes be dim and dull,  
Their heads be white in reverend blossom;  
Our mother's smile is beautiful  
As when she bore them on her bosom!

Her heavenly forehead bears no line  
Of Time's iconoclastic fingers,  
But o'er her form the grace divine  
Of deathless youth and wisdom lingers.

We fade and pass, grow faint and old,  
Till youth and joy and hope are banished,  
And still her beauty seems to fold  
The sum of all the glory vanished.

As while Tithonus faltered on  
The threshold of the Olympian dawns,  
Aurora's front eternal shone  
With lustre of the myriad mornings.

So joys that slip like dead leaves down,  
And hopes burnt out that die in ashes,  
Rise restless from their graves to crown  
Our mother's brow with fadeless flashes.

And lives wrapped in tradition's mist  
These honored halls to-day are haunting,

And lips by lips long withered kissed  
The sagas of the past are chanting.

Scornful of absence's envious bar  
Brown smiles upon the mystic meeting  
Of those her sons, who, sundered far,  
In brotherhood of heart are greeting;

Her wayward children wandering on  
Where setting stars are lowly burning,  
But still in worship toward the dawn  
That gilds their souls' dear Mecca turning;

Or those who, armed for God's own fight,  
Stand by his word through fire and slaughter,  
Or bear our banner's starry light  
Far-flashing through the Gulf's blue water.

For where one strikes for light and truth  
The right to aid, the wrong redressing,  
The mother of his spirit's youth  
Sheds o'er his soul her silent blessing.

She gained her crown a gem of flame  
When Kneass fell dead in victory gory;  
New splendor blazed upon her name  
When Ives' young life went out in glory!

Thus bright forever may she keep  
Her fires of tolerant Freedom burning,  
Till War's red eyes are charmed to sleep  
And bells ring home the boys returning.

And may she shed her radiant truth  
In largess on ingenuous comers,  
And hold the bloom of gracious youth  
Through many a hundred tranquil summers!

John Hay

## Christine

Th3 beauty of the northern dawns,  
Their pure, pale light is thine;  
Yet all the dreams of tropic nights  
Within thy blue eyes shine.  
Not statelier in their prisoning seas  
The icebergs grandly move,  
But in thy smile is youth and joy,  
And in thy voice is love.

Thou art like Hecla's crest that stands  
So lonely, proud, and high,  
No earthly thing may come between  
Her summit and the sky.  
The sun in vain may strive to melt  
Her crown of virgin snow-  
But the great heart of the mountain glows  
With deathless fire below.

John Hay

## Compensation

Pindar, the Theban, sang to Hieron  
In Doric verse, rich as rough-hammered gold,  
The Immortals deal to men, now as of old,  
Two ill things for one good. These words, forth blown  
From such a trumpet, through the ages groan  
A note of misery. And yet I hold  
That though they deal us evils manifold  
We owe the High Powers gratitude alone.  
For one good may be worth a thousand ills;  
And all the sum of wretchedness that fills  
The travailing earth, the sea, the arching blue  
Cannot exceed the wealth of joy that lies  
In sweet, low words, in smiles and loving eyes  
Cannot compare with love, if love be true.

John Hay

## Distichs

I

Wisely a woman prefers to a lover a man who neglects her.  
This one may love her some day, some day the lover will not.

II

There are three species of creatures who when they seem coming are going,  
When they seem going they come: Diplomates, women, and crabs.

III

Pleasures too hastily tasted grow sweeter in fond recollection,  
As the pomegranate plucked green ripens far over the sea.

IV

As the meek beasts in the Garden came flocking for Adam to name them,  
Men for a title to-day crawl to the feet of a king.

V

What is a first love worth, except to prepare for a second?  
What does the second love bring? Only regret for the first.

VI

Health was wooed by the Romans in groves of the laurel and myrtle.  
Happy and long are the lives brightened by glory and love.

VII

Wine is like rain: when it falls on the mire it but makes it the fouler,  
But when it strikes the good soil wakes it to beauty and bloom.

VIII

Break not the rose; its fragrance and beauty are surely sufficient:  
Resting contented with these, never a thorn shall you feel.

IX

When you break up housekeeping, you learn the extent of your treasures;  
Till he begins to reform, no one can number his sins.

X

Maidens! why should you worry in choosing whom you shall marry?  
Choose whom you may, you will find you have got somebody else.

XI

Unto each man comes a day when his favorite sins all forsake him,  
And he complacently thinks he has forsaken his sins.

XII

Be not too anxious to gain your next-door neighbor's approval:  
Live your own life, and let him strive your approval to gain.

XIII

Who would succeed in the world should be wise in the use of his pronouns.  
Utter the You twenty times, where you once utter the I.

XIV

The best loved man or maid in the town would perish with anguish  
Could they hear all that their friends say in the course of a day.

XV

True luck consists not in holding the best of the cards at the table:  
Luckiest he who knows just when to rise and go home.

XVI

Pleasant enough it is to hear the world speak of your virtues;  
But in your secret heart 't is of your faults you are proud.

XVII

Try not to beat back the current, yet be not drowned in its waters;  
Speak with the speech of the world, think with the thoughts of the few.

XVIII

Make all good men your well-wishers, and then, in the years' steady sifting,  
Some of them turn into friends. Friends are the sun shine of life.

John Hay

## **Dreams**

I love a woman tenderly,  
But cannot know if she loves me.  
I press her hand, her lips I kiss,  
But still love's full assurance miss.  
Our waking life forever seems  
Cleft by a veil of doubt and dreams.

But love and night and sleep combine  
In dreams to make her wholly mine.  
A sure love lights her eyes' deep blue,  
Her hands and lips are warm and true.  
Always the fact unreal seems,  
And truth I find alone in dreams.

John Hay

## Ernst of Edelsheim

I'll tell the story, kissing  
This white hand for my pains:  
No sweeter heart, nor falser  
E'er filled such fine, blue veins.

I'll sing a song of true love,  
My Lilith dear! to you;  
Contraria contrariis  
The rule is old and true.

The happiest of all lovers  
Was Ernst of Edelsheim;  
And why he was the happiest,  
I'll tell you in my rhyme.

One summer night he wandered  
Within a lonely glade,  
And, couched in moss and moonlight,  
He found a sleeping maid.

The stars of midnight sifted  
Above her sands of gold;  
She seemed a slumbering statue,  
So fair and white and cold.

Fair and white and cold she lay  
Beneath the starry skies;  
Rosy was her waking  
Beneath the Ritter's eyes.

He won her drowsy fancy,  
He bore her to his towers,  
And swift with love and laughter  
Flew morning's purpled hours.

But when the thickening sunbeams  
Had drunk the gleaming dew,  
A misty cloud of sorrow  
Swept o'er her eyes' deep blue.

She hung upon the Ritter's neck,  
She wept with love and pain,  
She showered her sweet, warm kisses  
Like fragrant summer rain.

"I am no Christian soul," she sobbed,  
As in his arms she lay;  
"I'm half the day a woman,  
A serpent half the day.

"And when from yonder bell-tower  
Rings out the noonday chime,

Farewell! farewell forever,  
Sir Ernst of Edelsheim!"

"Ah! not farewell forever!"  
The Ritter wildly cried,  
"I will be saved or lost with thee,  
My lovely Will-Bride!"

Loud from the lordly bell-tower  
Rang out the noon of day,  
And from the bower of roses  
A serpent slid away.

But when the mid-watch moonlight  
Was shimmering through the grove,  
He clasped his bride thrice dowered  
With beauty and with love.

The happiest of all lovers  
Was Ernst of Edelsheim  
His true love was a serpent  
Only half the time!

John Hay

## **Eros Ephemeris**

Enough of thunderous passion  
That clouds life's weary way.  
Bid now in merrier fashion  
The jocund pulses play.  
Welcome the airy fancies  
That charm and pass away,  
The light loves,  
The bright loves,  
The loves that live a day.

Too rude for mortal bosoms  
The storms that rage for aye;  
Ask not from frost the blossoms  
That deck the laughing May.  
Bid welcome all the gay loves  
That wither if they stay,  
The sweet loves,  
The fleet loves,  
The loves that live a day.

John Hay

## **Esse Quam Videri**

The knightly legend of thy shield betrays  
The moral of thy life; a forecast wise,  
And that large honor that deceit defies,  
Inspired thy fathers in the eider days,  
Who decked thy scutcheon with that sturdy phrase,  
To be rather than seem . As eve's red skies  
Surpass the morning's rosy prophecies,  
Thy life to that proud boast its answer pays.  
Scorning thy faith and purpose to defend  
The ever-mutable multitude at last  
Will hail the power they did not comprehend,  
Thy fame will broaden through the centuries;  
As, storm and billowy tumult overpast,  
The moon rules calmly o'er the conquered seas.

John Hay

## Estrella

My love is like a planet in the sky  
Whereon a star-seer bends his reverent gaze,  
Waiting for those bright moments when its rays  
Flame out in beauty; then his raptured eye  
May trace its light and shadow; he may try  
To pluck in shreds its rainbow-tinted blaze;  
But still unknown and vague the planet stays  
Throned in the luminous blue, serene and high.  
I, though I love and wonder, may not know.  
Too lofty for me is that magic lore.  
A sacred mystery folds evermore  
The thoughts that make her deep eyes flash and glow,  
The meaning of that slow smile's dazzling shine,  
The sweet, proud lips no kisses can make mine.

John Hay

## **Euthanasia**

Take from my hand, dear love, these opening flowers.  
Afar from thee they grew, 'neath alien skies  
Their stems sought light and life in humble wise,  
Fed by the careless suns and vagrant showers.  
But now their fate obeys the rule of ours.  
They pass to airs made glorious by thine eyes.  
Smit with swift joy, they breathe, in fragrant sighs,  
Their souls out toward thee in their last glad hours,  
Paying leal tribute to a brighter bloom.  
Thus, and not other, is the giver's fate.  
Through years unblest by thee, a cheerless path,  
A checkered maze of common glare and gloom,  
He came to know in rapture deep though late  
How thou couldst brighten life and gentle death.

John Hay

## Expectation

Roll, on, O shining sun,  
To the far seas,  
Bring down, ye shades of eve,  
The soft, salt breeze!  
Shine out, O stars, and light  
My darling's pathway bright,  
As through the summer night  
She comes to me.

No beam of any star  
Can match her eyes;  
Her smile the bursting day  
In light outvies.  
Her voice the sweetest thing  
Heard by the raptured spring  
When waking wild-woods ring-  
She comes to me.

Ye stars, more swiftly wheel,  
O'er earth's still breast;  
More wildly plunge and reel  
In the dim west!  
The earth is lone and lorn,  
Till the glad day be born,  
Till with the happy morn  
She comes to me.

John Hay

## God's Vengeance

Saith the Lord, "Vengeance is mine;  
I will repay," saith the Lord;  
Ours be the anger divine,  
Lit by the flash of his word.

How shall his vengeance be done?  
How, when his purpose is clear?  
Must he come down from his throne?  
Hath he no instruments here?

Sleep not in imbecile trust  
Waiting for God to begin,  
While, growing strong in the dust,  
Rests the bruised serpent of sin.

Right and Wrong, both cannot live  
Death-grappled. Which shall we see?  
Strike! only Justice can give  
Safety to all that shall be.

Shame! to stand paltering thus,  
Tricked by the balancing odds;  
Strike! God is waiting for us!  
Strike! for the vengeance is God's.

John Hay

## Golyer

Ef the way a man lights out of this world  
Helps fix his heft for the other sp'ere,  
I reckon my old friend Golyer's Ben  
Will lay over lots of likelier men  
For one thing he done down here.

You did n't know Ben? He driv a stage  
On the line they called the Old Sou'-west;  
He wa'n't the best man that ever you seen,  
And he wa'n't so ungodly pizen mean,  
No better nor worse than the rest.

He was hard on women and rough on his friends;  
And he did n't have many, I'll let you know;  
He hated a dog and disgusted a cat,  
But he'd run off his legs for a motherless brat,  
And I guess there's many jess so.

I've seed my sheer of the run of things,  
I've hoofed it a many and many a miled,  
But I never seed nothing that could or can  
Jest git all the good from the heart of a man  
Like the hands of a little child.

Well! this young one I started to tell you about,  
His folks was all dead, I was fetchin' him through,  
He was just at the age that's loudest for boys,  
And he blowed such a horn with his sarchin' small voice,  
We called him "the Little Boy Blue."

He ketched a sight of Ben on the box,  
And you bet he bawled and kicked and howled,  
For to git 'long of Ben, and ride thar too;  
I tried to tell him it wouldn't do,  
When suddingly Golyer growled,

"What's the use of making the young one cry?  
Say, what's the use of being a fool?  
Sling the little one up here whar he can see,  
He won't git the snuffles a-ridin' with me,  
The night ain't any too cool."

The child hushed cryin' the minute he spoke;  
"Come up here, Major! don't let him slip."  
And jest as nice as a woman could do,  
He wropped his blanket around them two,  
And was off in the crack of a whip.

We rattled along an hour or so,  
Till we heerd a yell on the still night air.  
Did you ever hear an Apache yell?  
Well, ye needn't want to, this side of hell;

There's nothing more devilish there.

Caught in the shower of lead and flint  
We felt the old stage stagger and plunge;  
Then we heerd the voice and the whip of Ben,  
As he gethered his critters up again,  
And tore away with a lunge.

The passengers laughed. "Old Ben's all right,  
He's druv five year and never was struck."  
"Now if I 'd been thar, as sure as you live,  
They'd'a' plugged me with holes as thick as a sieve;  
It's the reg'lar Golyer luck."

Over hill and holler and ford and creek  
Jest like the hosses had wings, we tore;  
We got to Looney's, and Ben come in  
And laid down the baby and axed for his gin,  
And dropped in a heap on the floor.

Said he, "When they fired, I kivered the kid,  
Although I ain't pretty, I'm middlin' broad;  
And look! he ain't fazed by arrow nor ball,  
Thank God! my own carcase stopped them all."  
Then we seen his eye glaze, and his lower jaw fall,  
And he carried his thanks to God.

John Hay

## Helen's Star Stone

There was a red star stone, old poets feign,  
Hung on the neck of Helen, the most fair  
Of women, the world's wonder; gathering there,  
Dripped ever one bright drop of blood; like rain  
That ere it falls blows into mist again.  
The crimson gout melted to roseate air,  
And that divine white bosom, proudly bare,  
Of all the woe it cost bore never a stain.  
So you, serene and beauteous lady, rove  
'Mid throngs of luckless ones who gaze and die.  
And not a tremor of heartbreak, not a sigh  
Nor strangling sob of strong men whelmed in love  
Avals your calm heart by one beat to move  
Or dims the cloudless heaven of your eye.

John Hay

## How It Happened

I pray you, pardon me, Elsie,  
And smile that frown away  
That dims the light of your lovely face  
As a thunder-cloud the day.  
I really could not help it,  
Before I thought, 't was done,  
And those great gray eyes flashed bright and cold,  
Like an icicle in the sun.

I was thinking of the summers  
When we were boys and girls,  
And wandered in the blossoming woods,  
And the gay winds romped with your curls.  
And you seemed to me the same little girl  
I kissed in the alder-path,  
I kissed the little girl's lips, and alas!  
I have roused a woman's wrath.

There is not so much to pardon,--  
For why were your lips so red?  
The blond hair fell in a shower of gold  
From the proud, provoking head.  
And the beauty that flashed from the splendid eyes,  
And played round the tender mouth,  
Rushed over my soul like a warm sweet wind  
That blows from the fragrant south.

And where, after all, is the harm done?  
I believe we were made to be gay,  
And all of youth not given to love  
Is vainly squandered away.  
And strewn through life's low labors,  
Like gold in the desert sands,  
Are love's swift kisses and sighs and vows  
And the clasp of clinging hands.

And when you are old and lonely,  
In Memory's magic shine  
You will see on your thin and wasting hands,  
Like gems, these kisses of mine.  
And when you muse at evening  
At the sound of some vanished name,  
The ghost of my kisses shall touch your lips  
And kindle your heart to flame.

John Hay

## **In a Graveyard**

IN the dewy depths of the graveyard  
I lie in the tangled grass,  
And watch, in the sea of azure,  
The white cloud-islands pass.

The birds in the rustling branches  
Sing gayly overhead;  
Gray stones like sentinel spectres  
Are guarding the silent dead.

The early flowers sleep shaded  
In the cool green noonday glooms;  
The broken light falls shuddering  
On the cold white face of the tombs.

Without, the world is smiling  
In the infinite love of God,  
But the sunlight fails and falters  
When it falls on the churchyard sod.

On me the joyous rapture  
Of a heart's first love is shed,  
But it falls on my heart as coldly  
As sunlight on the dead.

John Hay

## **In the Firelight**

My dear wife sits beside the fire  
With folded hands and dreaming eyes,  
Watching the restless flames aspire,  
And wrapped in thralling memories.  
I mark the fitful firelight fling  
Its warm caresses on her brow,  
And kiss her hands' unmelting snow,  
And glisten on her wedding-ring.

The proud free head that crowns so well  
The neck superb, whose outlines glide  
Into the bosom's perfect swell  
Soft-billowed by its peaceful tide,  
The cheek's faint flush, the lip's red glow,  
The gracious charm her beauty wears,  
Fill my fond eyes with tender tears  
As in the days of long ago.

Days long ago, when in her eyes  
The only heaven I cared for lay,  
When from our thoughtless Paradise  
All care and toil dwelt far away;  
When Hope in wayward fancies throve,  
And rioted in secret sweets,  
Beguiled by Passion's dear deceits,  
The mysteries of maiden love.

One year had passed since first my sight  
Was gladdened by her girlish charms,  
When on a rapturous summer night  
I clasped her in possessing arms.  
And now ten years have rolled away,  
And left such blessings as their dower,  
I owe her tenfold at this hour  
The love that lit our wedding-day.

For now, vague-hovering o'er her form,  
My fancy sees, by love refined,  
A warmer and a dearer charm  
By wedlock's mystic hands intertwined,  
A golden coil of wifely cares  
That years have forged, the loving joy  
That guards the curly-headed boy  
Asleep an hour ago up stairs.

A fair young mother, pure as fair,  
A matron heart and virgin soul!  
The flickering light that crowns her hair  
Seems like a saintly aureole.  
A tender sense upon me falls  
That joy unmerited is mine,  
And in this pleasant twilight shine

My perfect bliss myself appalls.

Come back! my darling, strayed so far  
Into the realm of fantasy,-  
Let thy dear face shine like a star  
In love-light beaming over me.  
My melting soul is jealous, sweet,  
Of thy long silence' drear eclipse,  
Oh, kiss me back with living lips  
To life, love, lying at thy feet!

John Hay

## **Infinite Variety**

In my one love are many loves entwined;  
Each hour makes me unfaithful to the last;  
The beauty present dims the beauty past;  
Of her worst rivals is her self combined.  
When she is pale, in her dear cheek I find  
The fairest shade on earth was ever cast;  
And if she blush, that hue is not surpassed  
In roses ruffled by the wanton wind.  
Sometimes her sweet lips droop to a purpose sad;  
Then all my soul in loving sympathy  
Burns to dispel her sadness with a kiss;  
And when they flash and curve in laughter glad,  
Around the corners of her mouth I see  
A swarm of hovering loves, sporting in bliss.

John Hay

## Is She Here?

He came in victory's lambent flame  
'Mid myriad shouts and trumpets' blare,  
While the glad people's loud acclaim  
Made vocal all the summer air.

But while the cannon's thunder boomed  
Half-heard amid the loyal cry,  
And starry banners glowed and bloomed  
In beauty neath that western sky,

He from the highway turned apart  
And to a quiet nook drew near,  
The dearest pulses of his heart  
Beating the question, "Is she here?"

The glory well and hardly earned  
In civic toil and battle's fire  
Was all forgotten as he turned  
To meet his human heart's desire.

And light as dust lay in the scale  
The favor of a flattering world  
Weighed by that joy which cannot fail  
In love and faith and honor furled.

Like fire within the opal's heart,  
Like fragrance in the rose's breast,  
A sacred joy, serene, apart,  
The highest and the holiest.

John Hay

## Israel

When by Jabbok the patriarch waited  
To learn on the morrow his doom,  
And his dubious spirit debated  
In darkness and silence and gloom,  
There descended a Being with whom  
He wrestled in agony sore,  
With striving of heart and of brawn,  
And not for an instant forbore  
Till the east gave a threat of the dawn;  
And then, as the Awful One blessed him,  
To his lips and his spirit there came,  
Compelled by the doubts that oppressed him,  
The cry that through questioning ages  
Has been wrung from the hinds and the sages.  
"Tell me, I pray Thee, Thy name!"

Most fatal, most futile, of questions!  
Wherever the heart of man beats,  
In the spirit's most sacred retreats,  
It comes with its sombre suggestions,  
Unanswered forever and aye.  
The blessing may come and may stay,  
For the wrestler's heroic endeavor;  
But the question, unheeded forever,  
Dies out in the broadening day.

In the ages before our traditions,  
By the altars of dark superstitions,  
The imperious question has come;  
When the death-stricken victim lay sobbing  
At the feet of his slayer and priest,  
And his heart was laid smoking and throbbing  
To the sound of the cymbal and drum  
On the steps of the high Teocallis;  
When the delicate Greek at his feast  
Poured forth the red wine from his chalice  
With mocking and cynical prayer;  
When by Nile Egypt worshiping lay,  
And afar, through the rosy, flushed air  
The Memnon called out to the day;  
Where the Muezzin's cry floats from his spire:  
In the vaulted Cathedral's dim shades,  
Where the crushed hearts of thousands aspire  
Through art's highest miracles higher,  
This question of questions invades  
Each heart bowed in worship or shame;  
In the air where the censers are swinging,  
A voice, going up with the singing,  
Cries, "Tell me, I pray Thee, Thy name!"

No answer came back, not a word,  
To the patriarch there by the ford;

No answer has come through the ages  
To the poets, the seers, and the sages  
Who have sought in the secrets of science  
The name and the nature of God,  
Whether cursing in desperate defiance  
Or kissing his absolute rod.  
But the answer which was and shall be,  
"My name! Nay, what is it to thee?"

The search and the question are vain.  
By use of the strength that is in you,  
By wrestling of soul and of sinew  
The blessing of God you may gain.  
There are lights in the far-gleaming Heaven  
That never will shine on our eyes;  
To mortals it may not be given  
To range those inviolate skies.  
The mind, whether praying or scorning,  
That tempts those dread secrets shall fail;  
But strive through the night till the morning,  
And mightily shalt thou prevail.

John Hay

## Jim Bludso of the Prairie Belle

Wall, no! I can't tell whar he lives,  
Becase he don't live, you see;  
Leastways, he's got out of the habit  
Of livin' like you and me.  
Whar have you been for the last three year  
That you haven't heard folks tell  
How Jimmy Bludso passed in his cheeks  
The night of the Prairie Belle?

He were n't no saint, them engineers  
Is all pretty much alike,  
One wife in Natchez-under-the-Hill  
And another one here, in Pike;  
A keerless man in his talk was Jim,  
And an awkward hand in a row,  
But he never flunked, and he never lied,  
I reckon he never knowed how.

And this was all the religion he had,  
To treat his engine well;  
Never be passed on the river;  
To mind the pilot's bell;  
And if ever the Prairie Belle took fire,  
A thousand times he swore,  
He'd hold her nozzle agin the bank  
Till the last soul got ashore.

All boats has their day on the Mississip,  
And her day come at last,  
The Movastar was a better boat,  
But the Belle she wouldn't be passed.  
And so she come tearin' along that night  
The oldest craft on the line-  
With a nigger squat on her safety-valve,  
And her furnace crammed, rosin and pine.

The fire bust out as she clared the bar,  
And burnt a hole in the night,  
And quick as a flash she turned, and made  
For that willer-bank on the right.  
There was runnin' and cursin', but Jim yelled out,  
Over all the infernal roar,  
"I'll hold her nozzle agin the bank  
Till the last galoot's ashore."

Through the hot, black breath of the burnin' boat  
Jim Bludso's voice was heard,  
And they all had trust in his cussedness,  
And knowed he would keep his word.  
And, sure's you're born, they all got off  
Afore the smokestacks fell,-  
And Bludso's ghost went up alone

In the smoke of the Prairie Belle.

He were n't no saint, but at jedgment  
I'd run my chance with Jim,  
'Longside of some pious gentlemen  
That would n't shook hands with him.  
He seen his duty, a dead-sure thing,  
And went for it thar and then;  
And Christ ain't a-going to be too hard  
On a man that died for men.

John Hay

## Lagrimas

God send me tears!  
Loose the fierce band that binds my tired brain,  
Give me the melting heart of other years,  
And let me weep again!

Before me pass  
The shapes of things inexorably true.  
Gone is the sparkle of transforming dew  
From every blade of grass.

In life's high noon  
Aimless I stand, my promised task undone,  
And raise my hot eyes to the angry sun  
That will go down too soon.

Turned into gall  
Are the sweet joys of childhood's sunny reign;  
And memory is a torture, love a chain  
That binds my life in thrall.

And childhood's pain  
Could to me now the purest rapture yield;  
I pray for tears as in his parching field  
The husbandman for rain.

We pray in vain!  
The sullen sky flings down its blaze of brass;  
The joys of love all scorched and withering pass;  
I shall not weep again.

John Hay

## Liberty

What man is there so bold that he should say  
"Thus, and thus only, would I have the sea"?  
For whether lying calm and beautiful,  
Clasping the earth in love, and throwing back  
The smile of heaven from waves of amethyst;  
Or whether, freshened by the busy winds,  
It bears the trade and navies of the world  
To ends of use or stern activity;  
Or whether, lashed by tempests, it gives way  
To elemental fury, howls and roars  
At all its rocky barriers, in wild lust  
Of ruin drinks the blood of living things,  
And strews its wrecks o'er leagues of desolate shore,  
Always it is the sea, and men bow down  
Before its vast and varied majesty.

So all in vain will timorous ones essay  
To set the metes and bounds of Liberty.  
For Freedom is its own eternal law;  
It makes its own conditions, and in storm  
Or calm alike fulfills the unerring Will.  
Let us not then despise it when it lies  
Still as a sleeping lion, while a swarm  
Of gnat-like evils hover round its head;  
Nor doubt it when in mad, disjointed times  
It shakes the torch of terror, and its cry  
Shrills o'er the quaking earth, and in the flame  
Of riot and war we see its awful form  
Rise by the scaffold, where the crimson axe  
Rings down its grooves the knell of shuddering kings.  
Forever in thine eyes, O Liberty,  
Shines that high light whereby the world is saved,  
And though thou slay us, we will trust in thee!

John Hay

## **Lise-Amor**

How well my heart remembers  
Beside these camp-fire embers  
The eyes that smiled so far away,  
The joy that was November's.

Her voice to laughter moving,  
So merrily reproving,  
We wandered through the autumn woods  
And neither thought of loving.

The hills with light were glowing,  
The waves in joy were flowing,  
It was not to the clouded sun  
The day's delight was owing.

Though through the brown leaves straying,  
Our lives seemed gone a-Maying;  
We knew not Love was with us there,  
No look nor tone betraying.

How unbelief still misses  
The best of being's blisses!  
Our parting saw the first and last  
Of love's imagined kisses.

Now 'mid these scenes the drearest  
I dream of her, the dearest,  
Whose eyes outshine the Southern stars,  
So far, and yet the nearest.

And Love, so gayly taunted,  
Who died, no welcome granted,  
Comes to me now, a pallid ghost,  
By whom my life is haunted.

With bonds I may not sever,  
He binds my heart forever,  
And leads me where we murdered him,-  
The Hill beside the River.

Camp Shaw, Florida, February, 1864.

John Hay

## Little Breeches

I don't go much on religion,  
I never ain't had no show;  
But I've got a middlin' tight grip, sir,  
On the handful o' things I know.  
I don't pan out on the prophets  
And free-will, and that sort of thing,  
But I b'lieve in God and the angels,  
Ever sence one night last spring.

I come into town with some turnips,  
And my little Gabe come along,  
No four-year-old in the county  
Could beat him for pretty and strong,  
Peart and chipper and sassy,  
Always ready to swear and fight,  
And I'd larnt him to chaw terbacker  
Jest to keep his milk-teeth white.

The snow come down like a blanket  
As I passed by Taggart's store;  
I went in for a jug of molasses  
And left the team at the door.  
They scared at something and started,  
I heard one little squall,  
And hell-to-split over the prairie  
Went team, Little Breeches, and all.

Hell-to-split over the prairie!  
I was almost froze with skeer;  
But we roused up some torches,  
And sarched for 'em far and near.  
At last we struck hosses and wagon,  
Snowed under a soft white mound,  
Upsot, dead beat, but of little Gabe  
No hide nor hair was found.

And here all hope soured on me,  
Of my fellow-critter's aid,  
I jest flopped down on my marrow-bones,  
Crotch-deep in the snow, and prayed.  
By this, the torches was played out,  
And me and Isrul Parr  
Went off for some wood to a sheepfold  
That he said was somewhar thar.

We found it at last, and a little shed  
Where they shut up the lambs at night.  
We looked in and seen them huddled thar,  
So warm and sleepy and white;  
And thar sot Little Breeches and chirped,  
As peart as ever you see,  
"I want a chaw of terbacker,

And that's what's the matter of me."

How did he git thar? Angels.  
He could never have walked in that storm;  
They jest scooped down and toted him  
To whar it was safe and warm.  
And I think that saving a little child,  
And fotching him to his own,  
Is a derved sight better business  
Than loafing around the Throne.

John Hay

## Love and Music

I gazed upon my love while music smote  
The soft night air into glad harmony;  
Lapt on the ripples of a silver sea,  
I heard the bright tones rapturous dance and float.  
Hearing and sight were wed; each flattering note  
Meant some perfection of my love to me.  
Caressed by music, it was bliss to see  
Her form, white-robed, the jewel at her throat,  
Her glimmering hands, her dusky, perfumed hair,  
Her low, clear brow, her deep, proud, dreaming eyes,  
Bent kindly upon me, her worshiper;  
The dulcet, delicate sounds that shook the air-  
As if love's joy rained from the starlit skies  
Seemed all sweet, inarticulate thoughts of her.

John Hay

## Love's Dawn

In wandering through waste places of the world,  
I met my love and knew not she was mine.  
But soon a light more tender, more divine,  
Filled earth and heaven; richer cloud-curtains furled  
The west at eve; a softer flush impearled  
The gates of dawn; a note more pure and fine  
Rang in the thrush's song; a rarer shine  
Varnished the leaves by May's sweet sun uncurled.  
To me, who loved but knew not, all the air  
Trembled to shocks of far-off melodies,  
As all the summer's rustling thrills the trees  
When spring suns strike their boughs, asleep and bare.  
And then, one blessed day, I saw arise  
Love's morning, glorious, in her tranquil eyes.

John Hay

## Love's Doubt

't is love that blinds my heart and eyes,  
I sometimes say in doubting dreams,-  
The face that near me perfect seems  
Cold Memory paints in fainter dyes.

'T was but love's dazzled eyes I say  
That made her seem so strangely bright;  
The face I worshipped yesternight,  
I dread to meet it changed to-day.

As, when dies out some song's refrain,  
And leaves your eyes in happy tears,  
Awake the same fond idle fears,  
It cannot sound so sweet again.

You wait and say with vague annoy,  
"It will not sound so sweet again,"  
Until comes back the wild refrain  
That floods your soul with treble joy.

So when I see my love again  
Fades the unquiet doubt away,  
While shines her beauty like the day  
Over my happy heart and brain.

And in that face I see no more  
The fancied faults I idly dreamed,  
But all the charms that fairest seemed,  
I find them, fairer than before.

John Hay

## Love's Prayer

If Heaven would hear my prayer,  
My dearest wish would be,  
Thy sorrows not to share  
But take them all on me;  
If Heaven would hear my prayer.

I'd beg with prayers and sighs  
That never a tear might flow  
From out thy lovely eyes,  
If Heaven might grant it so;  
Mine be the tears and sighs.

No cloud thy brow should cover,  
But smiles each other chase  
From lips to eyes all over  
Thy sweet and sunny face;  
The clouds my heart should cover.

That all thy path be light  
Let darkness fall on me;  
If all thy days be bright,  
Mine black as night could be;  
My love would light my night.

For thou art more than life,  
And if our fate should set  
Life and my love at strife,  
How could I then forget  
I love thee more than life?

John Hay

## Matins

The trembling pulses of the dawn  
Fill with faint glow the violet skies,  
And on the moist, day-smitten lawn  
The peace of morning lies.

A blessed truce of woe and sin,  
A glad surcease of care's annoy;  
The waking world has pleasure in  
Its matin light and joy.

And all the joy that fills the air,  
And all the light that gilds the blue,  
I see it in your eyes and hair,  
I know it, love, in you.

O'er lips and eyes and golden floss  
There floats a charm I cannot reach,  
A glimpse of gain, a threat of loss,  
Beyond my subtlest speech.

The amethyst flush will fade above  
Into the dust-dim glare of noon:  
The love of youth, the youth of love,  
Will fade and pass as soon.

Kiss close, belov'd! for never yet  
Could love its bloom unchanging keep.  
There are no hearts but they forget,  
There are no eyes but sleep.

John Hay

## Miles Keogh's Horse

On the bluff of the Little Big-Horn,  
At the close of a woful day,  
Custer and his Three Hundred  
In death and silence lay.

Three Hundred to three Thousand!  
They had bravely fought and bled;  
For such is the will of Congress  
When the White man meets the Red.

The White men are ten millions,  
The thriftiest under the sun;  
The Reds are fifty thousand,  
And warriors every one.

So Custer and all his fighting men  
Lay under the evening skies,  
Staring up at the tranquil heaven  
With wide, accusing eyes.

And of all that stood at noonday  
In that fiery scorpion ring,  
Miles Keogh's horse at evening  
Was the only living thing.

Alone from that field of slaughter,  
Where lay the three hundred slain,  
The horse Comanche wandered,  
With Keogh's blood on his mane.

And Sturgis issued this order,  
Which future times shall read,  
While the love and honor of comrades  
Are the soul of the soldier's creed.

He said  
Let the horse Comanche  
Henceforth till he shall die,  
Be kindly cherished and cared for  
By the Seventh Cavalry.

He shall do no labor; he never shall know  
The touch of spur or rein;  
Nor shall his back be ever crossed  
By living rider again.

And at regimental formation  
Of the Seventh Cavalry,  
Comanche draped in mourning and led  
By a trooper of Company I,

Shall parade with the Regiment!

Thus it was  
Commanded and thus done,  
By order of General Sturgis, signed  
By Adjutant Garlington.

Even as the sword of Custer,  
In his disastrous fall,  
Flashed out a blaze that charmed the world  
And glorified his fall,

This order, issued amid the gloom  
That shrouds our army's name,  
When all foul beasts are free to rend  
And tear its honest fame,

Shall prove to a callous people  
That the sense of a soldier's worth,  
That the love of comrades, the honor of arms,  
Have not yet perished from earth.

John Hay

## Mount Tabor

On Tabor's height a glory came,  
And, shrined in clouds of lambent flame,  
The awestruck, hushed disciples saw  
Christ and the prophets of the law.  
Moses, whose grand and awful face  
Of Sinai's thunder bore the trace,  
And wise Elias, in his eyes  
The shade of Israel's prophecies,  
Stood in that wide, mysterious light,  
Than Syrian noons more purely bright,  
One on each hand, and high between  
Shone forth the godlike Nazarene.  
They bowed their heads in holy fright,  
No mortal eyes could bear the sight,  
And when they looked again, behold!  
The fiery clouds had backward rolled,  
And borne aloft in grandeur lonely,  
Nothing was left "save Jesus only."

Resplendent type of things to be!  
We read its mystery to-day  
With clearer eyes than even they,  
The fisher-saints of Galilee.  
We see the Christ stand out between  
The ancient law and faith serene,  
Spirit and letter; but above  
Spirit and letter both was Love.

Led by the hand of Jacob's God,  
Through wastes of eld a path was trod  
By which the savage world could move  
Upward through law and faith to love.  
And there in Tabor's harmless flame  
The crowning revelation came.  
The old world knelt in homage due,  
The prophets near in reverence drew,  
Law ceased its mission to fulfill,  
And Love was lord on Tabor's hill.

So now, while creeds perplex the mind  
And wranglings load the weary wind,  
When all the air is filled with words  
And texts that ring like clashing swords,  
Still, as for refuge, we may turn  
Where Tabor's shining glories burn,  
The soul of antique Israel gone,  
And nothing left but Christ alone.

John Hay

## My Castle in Spain

There was never a castle seen  
So fair as mine in Spain:  
It stands embowered in green,  
Crowning the gentle slope  
Of a hill by the Xenil's shore,  
And at eve its shade flaunts o'er  
The storied Vega plain,  
And its towers are hid in the mists of Hope;  
And I toil through years of pain  
Its glimmering gates to gain.

In visions wild and sweet  
Sometimes its courts I greet:  
Sometimes in joy its shining halls  
I tread with favored feet;  
But never my eyes in the light of day  
Were blest with its ivied walls,  
Where the marble white and the granite gray  
Turn gold alike when the sunbeams play,  
When the soft day dimly falls.

I know in its dusky rooms  
Are treasures rich and rare;  
The spoil of Eastern looms,  
And whatever of bright and fair  
Painters divine have caught and won  
From the vault of Italy's air:  
White gods in Phidian stone.  
People the haunted glooms;  
And the song of immortal singers  
Like a fragrant memory lingers,  
I know, in the echoing rooms.

But nothing of these, my soul!  
Nor castle, nor treasures, nor skies,  
Nor the waves of the river that roll  
With a cadence faint and sweet  
In peace by its marble feet  
Nothing of these is the goal  
For which my whole heart sighs.  
'T is the pearl gives worth to the shell  
The pearl I would die to gain;  
For there does my lady dwell,  
My love that I love so well  
The Queen whose gracious reign  
Makes glad my Castle in Spain.

Her face so pure and fair  
Sheds light in the shady places,  
And the spell of her girlish graces  
Holds charmed the happy air.  
A breath of purity

Forever before her flies,  
And ill things cease to be  
In the glance of her honest eyes.  
Around her pathway flutter,  
Where her dear feet wander free  
In youth's pure majesty,  
The wings of the vague desires;  
But the thought that love would utter  
In reverence expires.

Not yet! not yet shall I see  
That face which shines like a star  
O'er my storm-swept life afar,  
Transfigured with love for me.  
Toiling, forgetting, and learning  
With labor and vigils and prayers,  
Pure heart and resolute will,  
At last I shall climb the hill  
And breathe the enchanted airs  
Where the light of my life is burning  
Most lovely and fair and free,  
Where alone in her youth and beauty,  
And bound by her fate's sweet duty,  
Unconscious she waits for me.

John Hay

## Night in Venice

Love, in this summer night, do you recall  
Midnight, and Venice, and those skies of June  
Thick-sown with stars, when from the still lagoon  
We glided noiseless through the dim canal?  
A sense of some belated festival  
Hung round us, and our own hearts beat in tune  
With passionate memories that the young moon  
Lit up on dome and tower and palace wall.  
We dreamed what ghosts of vanished loves made part  
Of that sweet light and trembling, amorous air.  
I felt in those rich beams that kissed your hair,  
Those breezes, warm with bygone lovers' sighs-  
All the dead beauty of Venice in your eyes,  
All the old loves of Venice in my heart.

John Hay

## Northward

Under the high unclouded sun  
That makes the ship and shadow one,  
I sail away as from the fort  
Booms sullenly the noonday gun.

The odorous airs blow thin and fine,  
The sparkling waves like emeralds shine,  
The lustre of the coral reefs  
Gleams whitely through the tepid brine.

And glitters o'er the liquid miles  
The jewelled ring of verdant isles,  
Where generous Nature holds her court  
Of ripened bloom and sunny smiles.

Encinctured by the faithful seas  
Inviolate gardens lead the breeze,  
Where flaunt like giant-warders' plumes  
The pennants of the cocoa-trees.

Enthroned in light and bathed in balm,  
In lonely majesty the Palm  
Blesses the isles with waving hands,  
High-Priest of the eternal Calm.

Yet Northward with an equal mind  
I steer my course, and leave behind  
The rapture of the Southern skies,  
The wooing of the Southern wind.

For here o'er Nature's wanton bloom  
Falls far and near the shade of gloom,  
Cast from the hovering vulture-wings  
Of one dark thought of woe and doom.

I know that in the snow-white pines  
The brave Norse fire of freedom shines,  
And fain for this I leave the land  
Where endless summer pranks the vines.

O strong, free North, so wise and brave!  
O South, too lovely for a slave!  
Why read ye not the changeless truth,  
The free can conquer but to save?

May God upon these shining sands  
Send Love and Victory clasping hands,  
And Freedom's banners wave in peace  
Forever o'er the rescued lands!

And here, in that triumphant hour,  
Shall yielding Beauty wed with Power;

And blushing earth and smiling sea  
In dalliance deck the bridal bower.

Key West, 1864.

John Hay

## Obedience

The lady of my love bids me not love her.  
I can but bow obedient to her will;  
And so, henceforth, I love her not; but still  
I love the lustrous hair that glitters over  
Her proud young head; I love the smiles that hover  
About her mouth; the lights and shades that fill  
Her star-bright eyes; the low, rich tones that thrill  
Like thrush-songs gurgling from a vernal cover.  
I love the fluttering dimples in her cheek;  
Her cheek I love, its soft and tender bloom;  
I love her sweet lips and the words they speak,  
Words wise or witty, full of joy or doom.  
I love her shoes, her gloves, her dainty dress;  
And all they clasp, and cling to, and caress.

John Hay

## On Pitz Languard

I stand on the top of Pitz Languard,  
And heard three voices whispering low,  
Where the Alpine birds in their circling ward  
Made swift dark shadows upon the snow.

First Voice:

I loved a girl with truth and pain,  
She loved me not. When she said good-by  
She gave me a kiss to sting and stain  
My broken life to a rosy dye.

Second Voice:

I loved a woman with love well tried,  
And I swear I believe she loves me still.  
But it was not I who stood by her side  
When she answered the priest and said "I will."

Third Voice:

I loved two girls, one fond, one shy,  
And I never divined which one loved me.  
One married, and now, though I can't tell why,  
Of the four in the story I count but three.

The three weird voices whispered low  
Where the eagles swept in their circling ward;  
But only one shadow scarred the snow  
As I clambered down from Pitz Languard.

John Hay

## **On the Bluff**

O grandly flowing River!  
O silver-gliding River!  
Thy springing willows shiver  
In the sunset as of old;  
They shiver in the silence  
Of the willow-whitened islands,  
While the sun-bars and the sand-bars  
Fill air and wave with gold.

O gay, oblivious River!  
O sunset-kindled River!  
Do you remember ever  
The eyes and skies so blue  
On a summer day that shone here,  
When we were all alone here,  
And the blue eyes were too wise  
To speak the love they knew?

O stern impassive River!  
O still unanswering River!  
The shivering willows quiver  
As the night-winds moan and rave.  
From the past a voice is calling,  
From heaven a star is falling,  
And dew swells in the bluebells  
Above her hillside grave.

John Hay

## Peace

After Stuart Merrill

Trembling of purple banners in the fight,  
Wild neigh of horses in destruction's path,  
Howling of trumpets answering yells of wrath,  
Dim eyes where slowly fades the living light;  
And on the plains, the ghastly heaped up death  
O'er which the guns thunder their dull refrain;  
And summer is shamed and autumn grieves in rain,  
And carnage breathes abroad a hateful breath.  
Back! O thou nightmare of the tired world's rest!  
The Spring sees blooming at the mother's breast  
Pink mouths of babes with cooing laughter rife;  
While from the valley to the mountain springs,  
Amid the rustle of zephyrs and of wings,  
Sound, like young heart-beats, all the bells of Life.

John Hay

## Postum

Two thousand years these temples have been old.  
Yet were they not more lovely the first day,  
When o'er yon hills the young light blushed and lay  
Along the tapering columns, and eve's gold  
Over the Tyrrhene sea in glory rolled.  
By power of truth, by beauty's royal sway,  
While men, and creeds, and kingdoms pass away,  
Their gift to charm and awe they calmly hold.  
Beauty and truth! by that high grace divine  
They force the tribute of the vassal years;  
Clouds gloom, the blue wave dimples, the stars shine  
To make them fairer; even Time that tears  
And shames all other things, here can but bless  
And beautify this crumbling loveliness.

John Hay

## Quand Meme

I strove, like Israel, with my youth,  
And said, Till thou bestow  
Upon my life Love's joy and truth,  
I will not let thee go.

And sudden on my night there woke  
The trouble of the dawn;  
Out of the east the red light broke,  
To broaden on and on.

And now let death be far or nigh,  
Let fortune gloom or shine,  
I cannot all untimely die,  
For love, for love is mine.

My days are tuned to finer chords,  
And lit by higher suns;  
Through all my thoughts and all my words  
A purer purpose runs.

The blank page of my heart grows rife  
With wealth of tender lore;  
Her image, stamped upon my life,  
Gives value evermore.

She is so noble, firm, and true,  
I drink truth from her eyes,  
As violets gain the heaven's own blue  
In gazing at the skies.

No matter if my hands attain  
The golden crown or cross;  
Only to love is such a gain  
That losing is not loss.

And thus whatever fate betide  
Of rapture or of pain,  
If storm or sun the future hide,  
My love is not in vain.

So only thanks are on my lips;  
And through my love I see  
My earliest dreams, like freighted ships,  
Come sailing home to me.

John Hay

## Regardant

As I lay at your feet that afternoon,  
Little we spoke, you sat and mused,  
Humming a sweet old-fashioned tune,

And I worshipped you, with a sense confused  
Of the good time gone and the bad on the way,  
While my hungry eyes your face perused

To catch and brand on my soul for aye  
The subtle smile which had grown my doom.  
Drinking sweet poison hushed I lay

Till the sunset shimmered athwart the room.  
I rose to go. You stood so fair  
And dim in the dead day's tender gloom:

All at once, or ever I was aware,  
Flashed from you on me a warm strong wave  
Of passion and power; in the silence there

I fell on my knees, like a lover, or slave,  
With my wild hands clasping your slender waist:  
And my lips, with a sudden frenzy brave,

A madman's kiss on your girdle pressed,  
And I felt your calm heart's quickening beat,  
And your soft hands on me one instant rest.

And if God had loved me, how endlessly sweet  
Had he let my heart in its rapture burst,  
And throb its last at your firm small feet!

And when I was forth, I shuddered at first  
At my imminent bliss. As a soul in pain,  
Treading his desolate path accursed,

Looks back and dreams through his tears' dim rain  
That by Heaven's wide gate the angels smile,  
Relenting, and beckon him back again,

And goes on, thrice damned by that devil's wile,  
So sometimes burns in my weary brain  
The thought that you loved me all the while.

John Hay

## Religion and Doctrine

He stood before the Sanhedrim;  
The scowling rabbis gazed at him.  
He recked not of their praise or blame;  
There was no fear, there was no shame,  
For one upon whose dazzled eyes  
The whole world poured its vast surprise.  
The open heaven was far too near,  
His first day's light too sweet and clear,  
To let him waste his new-gained ken  
On the hate-clouded face of men.

But still they questioned, Who art thou?  
What hast thou been? What art thou now?  
Thou art not he who yesterday  
Sat here and begged beside the way;  
For he was blind.  
    And I am he;  
For I was blind, but now I see.

He told the story o'er and o'er;  
It was his full heart's only lore:  
A prophet on the Sabbath-day  
Had touched his sightless eyes with clay,  
And made him see who had been blind.  
Their words passed by him like the wind,  
Which raves and howls, but cannot shock  
The hundred-fathom-rooted rock.

Their threats and fury all went wide;  
They could not touch his Hebrew pride.  
Their sneers at Jesus and His band,  
Nameless and homeless in the land,  
Their boasts of Moses and his Lord,  
All could not change him by one word.

I know not what this man may be,  
Sinner or saint; but as for me,  
One thing I know, that I am he  
Who once was blind, and now I see.

They were all doctors of renown,  
The great men of a famous town,  
With deep brows, wrinkled, broad, and wise,  
Beneath their wide phylacteries;  
The wisdom of the East was theirs,  
And honor crowned their silver hairs.  
The man they jeered and laughed to scorn

Was unlearned, poor, and humbly born;  
But he knew better far than they  
What came to him that Sabbath-day;  
And what the Christ had done for him

He knew, and not the Sanhedrim.

John Hay

## Remorse

Sad is the thought of sunniest days  
Of love and rapture perished,  
And shine through memory's tearful haze  
The eyes once fondest cherished.  
Reproachful is the ghost of toys  
That charmed while life was wasted.  
But saddest is the thought of joys  
That never yet were tasted.

Sad is the vague and tender dream  
Of dead love's lingering kisses,  
To crushed hearts haloed by the gleam  
Of unreturning blisses;  
Deep mourns the soul in anguished pride  
For the pitiless death that won them,  
But the saddest wail is for lips that died  
With the virgin dew upon them.

John Hay

## **Reveille**

Fly, popped drowse, away!  
Across the marshes sweep,  
Chasing the fallen moon, the shadows gray;  
Make me not laggard, Sleep!

Against the morning move,  
Fronting the reddening miles!  
Touch the white eyelids of the girl I love,  
And fill her dreams with smiles.

John Hay

## **Sinai and Calvary**

There are two mountains hallowed  
By majesty sublime,  
Which rear their crests unconquered  
Above the floods of Time.  
Uncounted generations  
Have gazed on them with awe,  
The mountain of the Gospel,  
The mountain of the Law.

From Sinai's cloud of darkness  
The vivid lightnings play;  
They serve the God of vengeance,  
The Lord who shall repay.  
Each fault must bring its penance,  
Each sin the avenging blade,  
For God upholds in justice  
The laws that He hath made.

But Calvary stands to ransom  
The earth from utter loss,  
In shade than light more glorious,  
The shadow of the Cross.  
To heal a sick world's trouble,  
To soothe its woe and pain,  
On Calvary's sacred summit  
The Paschal Lamb was slain.

The boundless might of Heaven  
Its law in mercy furl'd,  
As once the bow of promise  
O'erarch'd a drowning world.  
The Law said, As you keep me,  
It shall be done to you;  
But Calvary prays, Forgive them;  
They know not what they do.

Almighty God! direct us  
To keep Thy perfect Law!  
O blessed Savior, help us  
Nearer to Thee to draw!  
Let Sinai's thunders aid us  
To guard our feet from sin;  
And Calvary's light inspire us  
The love of God to win.

John Hay

## **Sister Saint Luke**

She lived shut in by flowers and trees  
And shade of gentle bigotries.  
On this side lay the trackless sea,  
On that the great world's mystery;  
But all unseen and all unguessed  
They could not break upon her rest.  
The world's far splendors gleamed and flashed,  
Afar the wild seas foamed and dashed;  
But in her small, dull Paradise,  
Safe housed from rapture or surprise,  
Nor day nor night had power to fright  
The peace of God that filled her eyes.

John Hay

## Sleep

I bless the power of this charmed summer night,  
I bless its magic and its mystery,  
Which in ecstatic visions brings to me  
The worshiped presence of my soul's delight.  
Mine eyes are sealed, but on my clearer sight  
Her heaven-bright features shine more radiantly,  
Her sweet voice with a richer melody  
Enchants the dark, more luminous than light.  
I miss the sense of daylight's haunting ills,  
Bathed in this lambent tide of sleep and love;  
I only see one dazzling image beam,  
Shrined in a rosy universe of dream,  
Fairer than Dian bending tranced above  
The sleeping shepherd on the Latmian hills.

John Hay

## Sorrento

The mirthful gods who ruled o'er Greater Greece  
Created this fair land in some high mood  
Of frolic joy; the smiling heavens brood  
Over a scene soft-whelmed in jocund peace.  
Gay clamors, odorous breathings never cease  
From basking crag, lime grove, and olive wood;  
Swart fishers sing from out the sparkling flood  
Where once the syrens sang in luring ease.  
The curved beach swarms with brown-skinned boys and girls  
Dancing the tarantella on the sands,  
Their limbs dive with music's jollity;  
And ever, where the warm wave leaps and swirls  
With glad embrace clasping the bowery lands,  
Breaks the tumultuous laughter of the sea.

John Hay

## Student-Song

When Youth's warm heart beats high, my friend,  
And Youth's blue sky is bright,  
And shines in Youth's clear eye, my friend,  
Love's early dawning light,  
Let the free soul spurn care's control,  
And while the glad days shine,  
We'll use their beams for Youth's gay dreams  
Of Love and Song and Wine.

Let not the bigot's frown, my friend,  
O'ercast thy brow with gloom,  
For Autumn's sober brown, my friend,  
Shall follow Summer's bloom.  
Let smiles and sighs and loving eyes  
In changeful beauty shine,  
And shed their beams on Youth's gay dreams  
Of Love and Song and Wine.

For in the weary years, my friend,  
That stretched before us lie,  
There'll be enough of tears, my friend,  
To dim the brightest eye.  
So let them wait, and laugh at fate,  
While Youth's sweet moments shine,  
Till memory gleams with golden dreams  
Of Love and Song and Wine.

John Hay

## Sunrise in the Place de la Concorde

Paris, August, 1865

I stand at the break of day  
In the Champs Elysees.  
The tremulous shafts of dawning  
As they shoot o'er the Tuileries early,  
Strike Luxor's cold gray spire,  
And wild in the light of the morning  
With their marble manes on fire,  
Ramp the white Horses of Marly.

But the Place of Concord lies  
Dead hushed 'neath the ashy skies.  
And the Cities sit in council  
With sleep in their wide stone eyes.  
I see the mystic plain  
Where the army of spectres slain  
In the Emperor's life-long war  
March on with unsounding tread  
To trumpets whose voice is dead.

Their spectral chief still leads them,-  
The ghostly flash of his sword  
Like a comet through mist shines far,  
And the noiseless host is poured,  
For the gendarme never heeds them,  
Up the long dim road where thundered  
The army of Italy onward  
Through the great pale Arch of the Star!

The spectre army fades  
Far up the glimmering hill,  
But, vaguely lingering still,  
A group of shuddering shades  
Infects the pallid air,  
Growing dimmer as day invades  
The hush of the dusky square.  
There is one that seems a King,  
As if the ghost of a Crown  
Still shadowed his jail-bleached hair;

I can hear the guillotine ring,  
As its regicide note rang there,  
When he laid his tired life down  
And grew brave in his last despair.  
And a woman frail and fair  
Who weeps at leaving a world  
Of love and revel and sin  
In the vast Unknown to be hurled;  
(For life was wicked and sweet  
With kings at her small white feet!)  
And one, every inch a Queen,

In life and in death a Queen,  
Whose blood baptized the place,  
In the days of madness and fear,-  
Her shade has never a peer  
In majesty and grace.

Murdered and murderers swarm;  
Slayers that slew and were slain,  
Till the drenched place smoked with the rain  
That poured in a torrent warm,  
Till red as the Rider's of Edom  
Were splashed the white garments of Freedom  
With the wash of the horrible storm!

And Liberty's hands were not clean  
In the day of her pride unchained,  
Her royal hands were stained  
With the life of a King and Queen;  
And darker than that with the blood  
Of the nameless brave and good  
Whose blood in witness clings  
More damning than Queens' and Kings'.

Has she not paid it dearly?  
Chained, watching her chosen nation  
Grinding late and early  
In the mills of usurpation?  
Have not her holy tears  
Flowing through shameful years,  
Washed the stains from her tortured hands?  
We thought so when God's fresh breeze,  
Blowing over the sleeping lands,  
In 'Forty-Eight waked the world,  
And the Burgher-King was hurled  
From that palace behind the trees.

As Freedom with eyes aglow  
Smiled glad through her childbirth pain,  
How was the mother to know  
That her woe and travail were vain?  
A smirking servant smiled  
When she gave him her child to keep;  
Did she know he would strangle the child  
As it lay in his arms asleep?

Liberty's cruellest shame!  
She is stunned and speechless yet.  
In her grief and bloody sweat  
Shall we make her trust her blame?  
The treasure of 'Forty-Eight  
A lurking jail-bird stole,  
She can but watch and wait

As the swift sure seasons roll.

And when in God's good hour  
Comes the time of the brave and true,  
Freedom again shall rise  
With a blaze in her awful eyes  
That shall wither this robber-power  
As the sun now dries the dew.  
This Place shall roar with the voice  
Of the glad triumphant people,  
And the heavens be gay with the chimes  
Ringing with jubilant noise  
From every clamorous steeple  
The coming of better times.  
And the dawn of Freedom waking  
Shall fling its splendors far  
Like the day which now is breaking  
On the great pale Arch of the Star,  
And back o'er the town shall fly,  
While the joy-bells wild are ringing,  
To crown the Glory springing  
From the Column of July!

John Hay

## **Sweetest and Dearest**

Vain are all names  
To express what thou art,  
Gem, rose, or morning-star,  
Joy of my heart.  
Still do the fond old words  
Ring best and clearest  
Thou art my love, my own,  
Sweetest and dearest.

Every warm heart-beat chimes  
These words to me;  
Needless all others  
Between me and thee.  
In the deep silences  
One voice thou hearest  
'T is my heart calling thee  
Sweetest and dearest.

John Hay

## **Thanatos Athanatos**

(Deathless Death)

At eve when the brief wintry day is sped,  
I muse beside my fire's faint-flickering glare-  
Conscious of wrinkling face and whitening hair-  
Of those who, dying young, inherited  
The immortal youthfulness of the early dead.  
I think of Raphael's grand-seigneurial air;  
Of Shelley and Keats, with laurels fresh and fair  
Shining unwithered on each sacred head;  
And soldier boys who snatched death's starry prize,  
With sweet life radiant in their fearless eyes,  
The dreams of love upon their beardless lips,  
Bartering dull age for immortality;  
Their memories hold in death's unyielding fee  
The youth that thrilled them to the finger-tips.

John Hay

## The Advance Guard

In the dream of the Northern poets,  
The brave who in battle die  
Fight on in shadowy phalanx  
In the field of the upper sky;  
And as we read the sounding rhyme,  
The reverent fancy hears  
The ghostly ring of the viewless swords  
And the clash of the spectral spears.

We think with imperious questionings  
Of the brothers whom we have lost,  
And we strive to track in death's mystery  
The flight of each valiant ghost.  
The Northern myth comes back to us,  
And we feel, through our sorrow's night,  
That those young souls are striving still  
Somewhere for the truth and light.

It was not their time for rest and sleep;  
Their hearts beat high and strong;  
In their fresh veins the blood of youth  
Was singing its hot, sweet song.  
The open heaven bent over them,  
Mid flowers their lithe feet trod,  
Their lives lay vivid in light, and blest  
By the smiles of women and God.

Again they come! Again I hear  
The tread of that goodly band;  
I know the flash of Ellsworth's eye  
And the grasp of his hard, warm hand;  
And Putnam, and Shaw, of the lion-heart,  
And an eye like a Boston girl's;  
And I see the light of heaven which lay  
On Uiric Dahlgren's curls.

There is no power in the gloom of hell  
To quench those spirits' fire;  
There is no power in the bliss of heaven  
To bid them not aspire;  
But somewhere in the eternal plan  
That strength, that life survive,  
And like the files on Lookout's crest,  
Above death's clouds they strive.

A chosen corps, they are marching on  
In a wider field than ours;  
Those bright battalions still fulfill  
The scheme of the heavenly powers;  
And high brave thoughts float down to us,  
The echoes of that far fight,  
Like the flash of a distant picket's gun

Through the shades of the severing night.

No fear for them! In our lower field  
Let us keep our arms unstained,  
That at last we be worthy to stand with them  
On the shining heights they've gained.  
We shall meet and greet in closing ranks  
In Time's declining sun,  
When the bugles of God shall sound recall  
And the battle of life be won.

John Hay

## **The Crows at Washington**

Slow flapping to the setting sun  
By twos and threes, in wavering rows.  
As twilight shadows dimly close,  
The crows fly over Washington.

Under the crimson sunset sky  
Virginian woodlands leafless lie,  
In wintry torpor bleak and dun.  
Through the rich vault of heaven, which shines  
Like a warmed opal in the sun,  
With wide advance in broken lines  
The crows fly over Washington.

Over the Capitol's white dome,  
Across the obelisk soaring bare  
To prick the clouds, they travel home,  
Content and weary, winnowing  
With dusky vans the golden air,  
Which hints the coming of the spring,  
Though winter whitens Washington.

The dim, deep air, the level ray  
Of dying sunlight on their plumes,  
Give them a beauty not their own;  
Their hoarse notes fail and faint away;  
A rustling murmur floating down  
Blends sweetly with the thickening glooms;  
They touch with grace the fading day,  
Slow flying over Washington.

I stand and watch with clouded eyes  
These dim battalions move along;  
Out of the distance memory cries  
Of days when life and hope were strong,  
When love was prompt and wit was gay;  
Even then, at evening, as to-day,  
I watched, while twilight hovered dim  
Over Potomac's curving rim,  
This selfsame flight of homing crows  
Blotting the sunset's fading rose,  
Above the roofs of Washington.

John Hay

## The Curse of Hungary

King Saloman looked from his donjon bars,  
Where the Danube clamors through sedge and sand,  
And he cursed with a curse his revolting land,-  
With a king's deep curse of treason and wars.

He said: "May this false land know no truth!  
May the good hearts die and the bad ones flourish,  
And a greed of glory but live to nourish  
Envy and hate in its restless youth.

"In the barren soil may the ploughshare rust,  
While the sword grows bright with its fatal labor,  
And blackens between each man and neighbor  
The perilous cloud of a vague distrust!

"Be the noble idle, the peasant in thrall,  
And each to the other as unknown things,  
That with links of hatred and pride the kings  
May forge firm fetters through each for all!

"May a king wrong them as they wronged their king!  
May he wring their hearts as they wrung mine,  
Till they pour their blood for his revels like wine,  
And to women and monks their birthright fling!"

The mad king died; but the rushing river  
Still brawls by the spot where his donjon stands,  
And its swift waves sigh to the conscious sands  
That the curse of King Saloman works forever.

For flowing by Pressbourg they heard the cheers  
Ring out from the leal and cheated hearts  
That were caught and chained by Theresa's arts,-  
A man's cool head and a girl's hot tears!

And a star, scarce risen, they saw decline,  
Where Orsova's hills looked coldly down,  
As Kossuth buried the Iron Crown  
And fled in the dark to the Turkish line.

And latest they saw in the summer glare  
The Magyar nobles in pomp arrayed,  
To shout as they saw, with his unfleshed blade,  
A Hapsburg beating the harmless air.

But ever the same sad play they saw,  
The same weak worship of sword and crown,  
The noble crushing the humble down,  
And moulding Wrong to a monstrous Law.

The donjon stands by the turbid river,  
But Time is crumbling its battered towers;

And the slow light withers a despot's powers,  
And a mad king's curse is not forever!

John Hay

## The Enchanted Shirt

Fytte the First: wherein it shall be shown how the Truth is too mighty a Drug for such as be of feeble temper

The King was sick. His cheek was red  
And his eye was clear and bright;  
He ate and drank with a kingly zest,  
And peacefully snored at night.

But he said he was sick, and a king should know,  
And doctors came by the score.  
They did not cure him. He cut off their heads  
And sent to the schools for more.

At last two famous doctors came,  
And one was as poor as a rat,  
He had passed his life in studious toil,  
And never found time to grow fat.

The other had never looked in a book;  
His patients gave him no trouble,  
If they recovered they paid him well,  
If they died their heirs paid double.

Together they looked at the royal tongue,  
As the King on his couch reclined;  
In succession they thumped his august chest,  
But no trace of disease could find.

The old sage said, "You're as sound as a nut."  
"Hang him up," roared the King in a gale,  
In a ten-knot gale of royal rage;  
The other leech grew a shade pale;

But he pensively rubbed his sagacious nose,  
And thus his prescription ran,  
The King will be well, if he sleeps one night  
In the Shirt of a Happy Man.

Fytte the Second: tells of the search for the Shirt and how it was nigh found but was not, for reasons which are said or sung

Wide o'er the realm the couriers rode,  
And fast their horses ran,  
And many they saw, and to many they spoke,  
But they found no Happy Man.

They found poor men who would fain be rich,  
And rich who thought they were poor;  
And men who twisted their waists in stays,  
And women that shorthose wore.

They saw two men by the roadside sit,

And both bemoaned their lot;  
For one had buried his wife, he said,  
And the other one had not.

At last as they came to a village gate,  
A beggar lay whistling there;  
He whistled and sang and laughed and rolled  
On the grass in the soft June air.

The weary couriers paused and looked  
At the scamp so blithe and gay;  
And one of them said, "Heaven save you, friend!  
You seem to be happy to-day."

"Oh, yes, fair sirs," the rascal laughed,  
And his voice rang free and glad,  
"An idle man has so much to do  
That he never has time to be sad."

"This is our man," the courier said;  
"Our luck has led us aright.  
I will give you a hundred ducats, friend,  
For the loan of your shirt to-night."

The merry blackguard lay back on the grass,  
And laughed till his face was black;  
"I would do it, God wot," and he roared with the fun,  
"But I haven't a shirt to my back."

Fytte the Third: shewing how His Majesty the King came at last to sleep in a Happy  
Man his Shirt

Each day to the King the reports came in  
Of his unsuccessful spies,  
And the sad panorama of human woes  
Passed daily under his eyes.

And he grew ashamed of his useless life,  
And his maladies hatched in gloom;  
He opened his windows and let the air  
Of the free heaven into his room.

And out he went in the world and toiled  
In his own appointed way;  
And the people blessed him, the land was glad,  
And the King was well and gay.

John Hay

## The Law of Death

The song of Kilvani: fairest she  
In all the land of Savatthi.  
She had one child, as sweet and gay  
And dear to her as the light of day.  
She was so young, and he so fair,  
The same bright eyes and the same dark hair;  
To see them by the blossomy way,  
They seemed two children at their play.

There came a death-dart from the sky,  
Kilvani saw her darling die.  
The glimmering shade his eyes invades,  
Out of his cheek the red bloom fades;  
His warm heart feels the icy chill,  
The round limbs shudder, and are still.  
And yet Kilvani held him fast  
Long after life's last pulse was past,  
As if her kisses could restore  
The smile gone out forevermore.

But when she saw her child was dead,  
She scattered ashes on her head,  
And seized the small corpse, pale and sweet,  
And rushing wildly through the street,  
She sobbing fell at Buddha's feet.  
"Master, all-helpful, help me now!  
Here at thy feet I humbly bow;  
Have mercy, Buddha, help me now!"  
She groveled on the marble floor,  
And kissed the dead child o'er and o'er.  
And suddenly upon the air  
There fell the answer to her prayer:  
"Bring me to-night a lotus tied  
With thread from a house where none has died."

She rose, and laughed with thankful joy,  
Sure that the god would save the boy.  
She found a lotus by the stream;  
She plucked it from its noontime dream.  
And then from door to door she fared,  
To ask what house by Death was spared.  
Her heart grew cold to see the eyes  
Of all dilate with slow surprise:  
"Kilvani, thou hast lost thy head;  
Nothing can help a child that's dead.  
There stands not by the Ganges' side  
A house where none hath ever died."  
Thus, through the long and weary day,  
From every door she bore away  
Within her heart, and on her arm,  
A heavier load, a deeper harm.  
By gates of gold and ivory,

By wattled huts of poverty,  
The same refrain heard poor Kilvani,  
The living are few, the dead are many.

The evening came so still and fleet  
And overtook her hurrying feet.  
And, heartsick, by the sacred lane  
She fell, and prayed the god again.  
She sobbed and beat her bursting breast:  
"Ah, thou hast mocked me, Mightiest!  
Lo I have wandered far and wide;  
There stands no house where none hath died."  
And Buddha answered, in a tone  
Soft as a flute at twilight blown,  
But grand as heaven and strong as death  
To him who hears with ears of faith:  
"Child, thou art answered. Murmur not!  
Bow, and accept the common lot."

Kilvani heard with reverence meet,  
And laid her child at Buddha's feet.

John Hay

## **The Light of Love**

Each shining light above us  
Has its own peculiar grace;  
But every light of heaven  
Is in my darling's face.

For it is like the sunlight,  
So strong and pure and warm,  
That folds all good and happy things,  
And guards from gloom and harm.

And it is like the moonlight,  
So holy and so calm;  
The rapt peace of a summer night,  
When soft winds die in balm.

And it is like the starlight;  
For, love her as I may,  
She dwells still lofty and serene  
In mystery far away.

John Hay

## The Monks of Basle

I tore this weed from the rank, dark soil  
Where it grew in the monkish time,  
I trimmed it close and set it again  
In a border of modern rhyme.

I

Long years ago, when the Devil was loose  
And faith was sorely tried,  
Three monks of Basle went out to walk  
In the quiet eventide.

A breeze as pure as the breath of Heaven  
Blew fresh through the cloister-shades,  
A sky as glad as the smile of Heaven  
Blushed rose o'er the minster-glades.

But scorning the lures of summer and sense,  
The monks passed on in their walk;  
Their eyes were abased, their senses slept,  
Their souls were in their talk.

In the tough grim talk of the monkish days  
They hammered and slashed about,  
Dry husks of logic, old scraps of creed,  
And the cold gray dreams of doubt,

And whether Just or Justified  
Was the Church's mystic Head,  
And whether the Bread was changed to God,  
Or God became the Bread.

But of human hearts outside their walls  
They never paused to dream,  
And they never thought of the love of God  
That smiled in the twilight gleam.

II

As these three monks went bickering on  
By the foot of a spreading tree,  
Out from its heart of verdurous gloom  
A song burst wild and free,

A wordless carol of life and love,  
Of nature free and wild;  
And the three monks paused in the evening shade,  
Looked up at each other and smiled.

And tender and gay the bird sang on,  
And cooed and whistled and trilled,  
And the wasteful wealth of life and love

From his happy heart was spilled.

The song had power on the grim old monks  
In the light of the rosy skies;  
And as they listened the years rolled back,  
And tears came into their eyes.

The years rolled back and they were young,  
With the hearts and hopes of men,  
They plucked the daisies and kissed the girls  
Of dear dead summers again.

### III

But the eldest monk soon broke the spell;  
"T is sin and shame," quoth he,  
"To be turned from talk of holy things  
By a bird's cry from a tree.

"Perchance the Enemy of Souls  
Hath come to tempt us so.  
Let us try by the power of the Awful Word  
If it be he, or no!"

To Heaven the three monks raised their hands.  
"We charge thee, speak!" they said,  
"By His dread Name who shall one day come  
To judge the quick and the dead,

"Who art thou? Speak!" The bird laughed loud.  
"I am the Devil," he said.  
The monks on their faces fell, the bird  
Away through the twilight sped.

A horror fell on those holy men,  
(The faithful legends say,)  
And one by one from the face of earth  
They pined and vanished away.

### IV

So goes the tale of the monkish books,  
The moral who runs may read,  
He has no ears for Nature's voice  
Whose soul is the slave of creed.

Not all in vain with beauty and love  
Has God the world adorned;  
And he who Nature scorns and mocks,  
By Nature is mocked and scorned.

John Hay

## The Mystery of Gilgal

THE darkest, strangest mystery  
I ever read, or heern, or see,  
Is 'long of a drink at Taggart's Hall,  
Tom Taggart's of Gilgal.

I've heern the tale a thousand ways,  
But never could git through the maze  
That hangs around that queer day's doin's;  
But I'll tell the yarn to youans.

Tom Taggart stood behind his bar,  
The time was fall, the skies was fa'r,  
The neighbors round the counter drewed,  
And ca'mly drinked and jawed.

At last come Colonel Blood of Pike,  
And old Jedge Phinn, permiscus-like,  
And each, as he meandered in,  
Remarked, "A whisky-skin."

Tom mixed the beverage full and fa'r,  
And slammed it, smoking, on the bar.  
Some says three fingers, some says two,-  
I'll leave the choice to you.

Phinn to the drink put forth his hand;  
Blood drewed his knife, with accent bland,  
"I ax yer parding, Mister Phinn-  
Jest drap that whisky-skin."

No man high-toneder could be found  
Than old Jedge Phinn the country round.  
Says he, "Young man, the tribe of Phinns  
Knows their own whisky-skins!"

He went for his 'leven-inch bowie-knife:  
"I tries to foller a Christian life;  
But I'll drap a slice of liver or two,  
My bloomin' shrub, with you."

They carved in a way that all admired,  
Tell Blood drewed iron at last, and fired.  
It took Seth Bludso 'twixt the eyes,  
Which caused him great surprize.

Then coats went off, and all went in;  
Shots and bad language swelled the din;  
The short, sharp bark of Derringers,  
Like bull-pups, cheered the furse.

They piled the stiffs outside the door;  
They made, I reckon, a cord or more.

Girls went that winter, as a rule,  
Alone to spellin'-school.

I've sarched in vain, from Dan to Beer-  
Sheba, to make this mystery dear;  
But I end with hit as I did begin,  
"Who gotthe Whisky-skin?"

John Hay

## The Pledge at Spunky Point

A tale of earnest effort and human perfidy

It's all very well for preachin',  
But preachin' and practice don't gee:  
I've give the thing a fair trial,  
And you can't ring it in on me.  
So toddle along with your pledge, Squire,  
Ef that's what you want me to sign;  
Betwixt me and you, I've been thar,  
And I'll not take any in mine.

A year ago last Fo'th July  
A lot of the boys was here.  
We all got corned and signed the pledge  
For to drink no more that year.  
There was Tilmon Joy and Sheriff McPhail  
And me and Abner Fry,  
And Shelby's boy Leviticus  
And the Golyers, Luke and Cy.

And we anteed up a hundred  
In the hands of Deacon Kedge  
For to be divided the follerin' Fo'th  
'Mongst the boys that kep' the pledge.  
And we knowed each other so well, Squire,  
You may take my scalp for a fool,  
Ef every man when he signed his name  
Didn't feel cock-sure of the pool.

Fur a while it all went lovely;  
We put up a job next day  
Fur to make Joy b'lieve his wife was dead,  
And he went home middlin' gay;  
Then Abner Fry he killed a man  
And afore he was hung McPhail  
Jest bilked the widder outen her sheer  
By getting him slewed in jail.

But Chris'mas scooped the Sheriff,  
The egg-nogs gethered him in;  
And Shelby's boy Leviticus  
Was, New Year's, tight as sin;  
And along in March the Golyers  
Got so drunk that a fresh-biled owl  
Would'a' looked 'long-side o' them two young men,  
Like a sober temperance fowl.

Four months alone I walked the chalk,  
I thought my heart would break;  
And all them boys a-slappin' my back  
And axin', "What'll you take?"  
I never slep' without dreamin' dreams

Of Burbin, Peach, or Rye,  
But I chawed at my niggerhead and swore  
I'd rake that pool or die.

At last the Fo'th I humped myself  
Through chores and breakfast soon,  
Then scooted down to Taggart's store-  
For the pledge was off at noon;  
And all the boys was gethered thar,  
And each man hilt his glass  
Watchin' me and the clock quite solemn-like  
Fur to see the last minute pass.

The clock struck twelve! I raised the jug  
And took one lovin' pull  
I was holler clar from skull to boots,  
It seemed I couldn't git full.  
But I was roused by a fiendish laugh  
That might have raised the dead  
Them ornary sneaks had sot the clock  
A half an hour ahead!

"All right!" I squawked. "You've got me,  
Jest order your drinks agin,  
And we'll paddle up to the Deacon's  
And scoop the ante in."  
But when we got to Kedge's,  
What a sight was that we saw!  
The Deacon and Parson Skeeters  
In the tail of a game of Draw.

They had shook 'em the heft of the mornin',  
The Parson's luck was fa'r,  
And he raked, the minute we got thar,  
The last of our pool on a pa'r.  
So toddle along with your pledge, Squire,  
I 'low it's all very fine,  
But ez fur myself, I thank ye,  
I'll not take any in mine.

John Hay

## The Prairie

The skies are blue above my head,  
The prairie green below,  
And flickering o'er the tufted grass  
The shifting shadows go,  
Vague-sailing, where the feathery clouds  
Fleck white the tranquil skies,  
Black javelins darting where aloft  
The whirring pheasant flies.

A glimmering plain in drowsy trance  
The dim horizon bounds,  
Where all the air is resonant  
With sleepy summer sounds,  
The life that sings among the flowers,  
The lisping of the breeze,  
The hot cicala's sultry cry,  
The murmurous dream of bees.

The butterfly a flying flower  
Wheels swift in flashing rings,  
And flutters round his quiet kin,  
With brave flame-mottled wings.  
The wild Pinks burst in crimson fire,  
The Phlox' bright clusters shine,  
And Prairie-Cups are swinging free  
To spill their airy wine.

And lavishly beneath the sun,  
In liberal splendor rolled,  
The Fennel fills the dipping plain  
With floods of flowery gold;  
And widely weaves the Iron-Weed  
A woof of purple dyes  
Where Autumn's royal feet may tread  
When bankrupt Summer flies.

In verdurous tumult far away  
The prairie-billows gleam,  
Upon their crests in blessing rests  
The noontide's gracious beam.  
Low quivering vapors steaming dim  
The level splendors break  
Where languid Lilies deck the rim  
Of some land-circled lake.

Far in the East like low-hung clouds  
The waving woodlands lie;  
Far in the West the glowing plain  
Melts warmly in the sky.  
No accent wounds the reverent air,  
No footprint dints the sod,-  
Lone in the light the prairie lies,

Rapt in a dream of God.

Illinois, 1858.

John Hay

## **The Prayer of the Romands**

Not done, but near its ending,  
Is the work that our eyes desired;  
Not yet fulfilled, but near the goal,  
Is the hope that our worn hearts fired.  
And on the Alban Mountains,  
Where the blushes of dawn increase,  
We see the flash of the beautiful feet  
Of Freedom and of Peace!

How long were our fond dreams baffled!-  
Novara's sad mischance,  
The Kaiser's sword and fetter-lock,  
And the traitor stab of France;  
Till at last came glorious Venice,  
In storm and tempest home;  
And now God maddens the greedy kings,  
And gives to her people Rome.

Lame Lion of Caprera!  
Red-shirts of the lost campaigns!  
Not idly shed was the costly blood  
You poured from generous veins.  
For the shame of Aspromonte,  
And the stain of Mentana's sod,  
But forged the curse of kings that sprang  
From your breaking hearts to God!

We lift our souls to thee, O Lord  
Of Liberty and of Light!  
Let not earth's kings pollute the work  
That was done in their despite;  
Let not thy light be darkened  
In the shade of a sordid crown,  
Nor pampered swine devour the fruit  
Thou shook'st with an earthquake down!

Let the People come to their birthright,  
And crosier and crown pass away  
Like phantasms that flit o'er the marshes  
At the glance of the clean, white day.  
And then from the lava of Ætna  
To the ice of the Alps let there be  
One freedom, one faith without fetters,  
One republic in Italy free!

John Hay

## **The Stirrup Cup**

My short and happy day is done,  
The long and dreary night comes on;  
And at my door the Pale Horse stands,  
To carry me to unknown lands.

His whinny shrill, his pawing hoof,  
Sound dreadful as a gathering storm;  
And I must leave this sheltering roof,  
And joys of life so soft and warm.

Tender and warm the joys of life,  
Good friends, the faithful and the true;  
My rosy children and my wife,  
So sweet to kiss, so fair to view.

So sweet to kiss, so fair to view,  
The night comes down, the lights burn blue;  
And at my door the Pale Horse stands,  
To bear me forth to unknown lands.

John Hay

## **The Surrender of Spain**

I

Land of unconquered Pelayo! land of the Cid Campeador!  
Sea-girdled mother of men! Spain, name of glory and power;  
Cradle of world-grasping Emperors, grave of the reckless invader,  
How art thou fallen, my Spain! how art thou sunk at this hour!

II

Once thy magnanimous sons trod, victors, the portals of Asia,  
Once the Pacific waves rushed, joyful thy banners to see;  
For it was Trajan that carried the battle-flushed eagles to Dacia,  
Cortés that planted thy flag fast by the uttermost sea.

III

Hast thou forgotten those days illumined with glory and honor,  
When the far isles of the sea thrilled to the tread of Castile?  
When every land under Heaven was flecked by the shade of thy banner,  
When every beam of the sun flashed on thy conquering steel?

IV

Then through red fields of slaughter, through death and defeat and  
disaster,  
Still flared thy banner aloft, tattered, but free from a stain,  
Now to the upstart Savoyard thou bendest to beg for a master!  
How the red flush of her shame mars the proud beauty of Spain!

V

Has the red blood run cold that boiled by the Xenil and Darro?  
Are the high deeds of the sires sung to the children no more?  
On the dun hills of the North hast thou heard of no plough-boy  
Pizarro?  
Roams no young swine-herd Cortés hid by the Tagus' wild shore?

VI

Once again does Hispania bend low to the yoke of the stranger!  
Once again will she rise, flinging her gyves in the sea!  
Princeling of Piedmont! unwitting thou weddest with doubt and with  
danger,  
King over men who have learned all that it costs to be free.

John Hay

## **The Vision of Saint Peter**

To Peter by night the faithfulest came  
And said, "We appeal to thee!  
The life of the Church is in thy life;  
We pray thee to rise and flee.

"For the tyrant's hand is red with blood,  
And his arm is heavy with power;  
Thy head, the head of the Church, will fall,  
If thou tarry in Rome an hour."

Through the sleeping town Saint Peter passed  
To the wide Campagna plain;  
In the starry light of the Alban night  
He drew free breath again:

When across his path an awful form  
In luminous glory stood;  
His thorn-crowned brow, His hands and feet,  
Were wet with immortal blood.

The godlike sorrow which filled His eyes  
Seemed changed to a godlike wrath,  
As they turned on Peter, who cried aloud,  
And sank to his knees in the path.

"Lord of my life, my love, my soul!  
Say, what wilt Thou with me?"  
A voice replied, "I go to Rome  
To be crucified for thee."

The apostle sprang, all flushed, to his feet,  
The vision had passed away;  
The light still lay on the dewy plain,  
But the sky in the east was gray.

To the city walls Saint Peter turned,  
And his heart in his breast grew fire;  
In every vein the hot blood burned  
With the strength of one high desire.

And sturdily back he marched to his death  
Of terrible pain and shame;  
And never a shade of fear again  
To the stout apostle came.

John Hay

## **The White Flag**

I sent my love two roses, one  
As white as driven snow,  
And one a blushing royal red,  
A flaming Jacqueminot.

I meant to touch and test my fate;  
That night I should divine,  
The moment I should see my love,  
If her true heart were mine.

For if she holds me dear, I said,  
She'll wear my blushing rose;  
If not, she'll wear my cold Lamarque,  
As white as winter's snows.

My heart sank when I met her: sure  
I had been overbold,  
For on her breast my pale rose lay  
In virgin whiteness cold.

Yet with low words she greeted me,  
With smiles divinely tender;  
Upon her cheek the red rose dawned,  
The white rose meant surrender.

John Hay

## **They Will Be Done**

Not in dumb resignation  
We lift our hands on high,  
Not like the nerveless fatalist,  
Content to trust and die.  
Our faith springs like the eagle  
Who soars to meet the sun,  
And cries exulting unto Thee,  
O Lord, Thy Will be done!

When tyrant feet are trampling  
Upon the common weal,  
Thou dost not bid us bend and writhe  
Beneath the iron heel.  
In Thy name we assert our right  
By sword or tongue or pen,  
And even the headsman's axe may flash  
Thy message unto men.

Thy Will! It bids the weak be strong,  
It bids the strong be just;  
No lip to fawn, no hand to beg,  
No brow to seek the dust.  
Wherever man oppresses man  
Beneath Thy liberal sun,  
O Lord, be there Thine arm made bare,  
Thy righteous will be done.

John Hay

## **Through the Long Days**

Through the long days and years  
What will my loved one be,  
Parted from me?-  
Through the long days and years.

Always as then she was  
Loveliest, brightest, best,  
Blessing and blest,-  
Always as then she was.

Never on earth again  
Shall I before her stand,  
Touch lip or hand,-  
Never on earth again.

But while my darling lives  
Peaceful I journey on,  
Not quite alone,  
Not while my darling lives.

John Hay

## To Flora

When April woke the drowsy flowers,  
And vagrant odors thronged the breeze,  
And bluebirds wrangled in the bowers,  
And daisies flashed along the leas,  
And faint arbutus strove among  
Dead winter's leaf-strewn wreck to rise,  
And nature's sweetly jubilant song  
Went murmuring up the sunny skies,  
Into this cheerful world you came,  
And gained by right your vernal name.

I think the springs have changed of late,  
For "Arctics" are my daily wear,  
The skies are turned to cold gray slate,  
And zephyrs are but draughts of air;  
But you make up whate'er we lack,  
When we, too rarely, come together,  
More potent than the almanac,  
You bring the ideal April weather;  
When you are with us we defy  
The blustering air, the lowering sky;  
In spite of Winter's icy darts,  
We've spring and sunshine in our hearts.

In fine, upon this April day,  
This deep conundrum I will bring:  
Tell me the two good reasons, pray,  
I have, to say you are like spring?  
You give it up? Because we love you  
And see so very little of you.

John Hay

## To One Absent

Only a week ago, heaven bent so near  
It bartered greetings with the jocund earth,  
The sweet June day was lived with love and mirth,  
A world of verdure laughed in summer cheer.  
And when night came its charm was doubly dear;  
Under that opulent moon joy knew no dearth;  
All beautiful and gracious things had birth  
In your eyes' cherishing light; for you were here.  
Now all that glow of life is vanished; lorn  
The world lies under the cold gleam of morn.  
Withered and shrinking in the spectral blue  
Hangs the sad moon, a pale and shuddering ghost  
Of all that glory in your absence lost  
Fading and waning, love, for lack of you.

John Hay

## **To the Vesper Sparrow**

Sing the last word of the day!  
Voice of the sparrow belated!  
What hast thou seen by the way?  
What hast thou loved most or hated?  
Sadness to melody mated,  
What is the grudge thou wouldst pay?

Work, is it sadder than play?  
Sorrow or joy sooner sated?  
Dreams the sweet blossom of May  
To what dull fruitage 't is fated?  
When life and death are translated,  
Seems Death or Life the more gay?

Linger, shy singer, O stay!  
Though the swift night has abated  
Sky, lake, and woodland to gray.  
Long have we questioned and waited.  
Question and answer unmated  
Die with the vanishing day.

John Hay

## **To Theodore Roosevelt**

Son of a sire whose heart beat ever true  
To God, to country, and the fireside love  
To which returning, like a homing dove,  
From each high duty done, he gladly flew,  
Complete, yet touched by genius through and through,  
The lofty qualities that made him great,  
Loved in his home and priceless to the state,  
By Heaven's grace are garnered up in you.  
Be yours, we pray, the dauntless heart of youth,  
The eye to see the humor of the game,  
The scorn of lies, the large Batavian mirth;  
And, past the happy, fruitful years of fame,  
Of sport and work and battle for the truth,  
A home not all unlike your home on earth.

Christmas Eve, 1902.

John Hay

## Too Late

Had we but met in other days,  
Had we but loved in other ways,  
Another light and hope had shone  
On your life and my own.

In sweet but hopeless reveries  
I fancy how your wistful eyes  
Had saved me, had I known their power  
In fate's imperious hour;

How loving you, beloved of God,  
And following you, the path I trod  
Had led me, through your love and prayers,  
To God's love unawares:

And how our beings joined as one  
Had passed through checkered shade and sun,  
Until the earth our lives had given,  
With little change, to heaven.

God knows why this was not to be.  
You bloomed from childhood far from me,  
The sunshine of the favored place  
That knew your youth and grace.

And when your eyes, so fair and free,  
In fearless beauty beamed on me,  
I knew the fatal die was thrown,  
My choice in life was gone.

And still with wild and tender art  
Your child-love touched my torpid heart,  
Gilding the blackness where it fell,  
Like sunlight over hell.

In vain, in vain! my choice was gone!  
Better to struggle on alone  
Than blot your pure life's blameless shine  
With cloudy stains of mine.

A vague regret, a troubled prayer,  
And then the future vast and fair  
Will tempt your young and eager eyes  
With all its glad surprise.

And I shall watch you, safe and far,  
As some late traveller eyes a star  
Wheeling beyond his desert sands  
To gladden happier lands.

John Hay

## Twilight on Sandusky Marsh

Low in the west the moon's slim crescent swings.  
Across the marsh the vesper breezes bear  
The sounds of gloaming; from far cornfields fare  
The chittering blackbirds, whose ingathering brings  
The silken flutter of a myriad wings.  
The wild duck's cry floats down the thickening air  
As of one hunted, full of fear and care.  
Sad twilight comes with dubious whisperings.  
How changed from that exultant world which lay  
In the wide smile of noon! The evening's shiver  
Means the day's death; its thronging whispers blend  
With thoughts that haunt men when their lives must end.  
Another dawn may gild a fairer day,  
But this day, when it dies, is gone forever.

John Hay

## Two on the Terrace

Warm waves of lavish moonlight  
The Capitol enfold,  
As if a richer noon light  
Bathed its white walls with gold.  
The great bronze Freedom shining,  
Her crest in ether shringing,  
Peers eastward as divining  
The new day from the old.

Mark the mild planet pouring  
Her splendor o'er the ground;  
See the white obelisk soaring  
To pierce the blue profound.  
Beneath the still heavens beaming,  
The lighted town lies gleaming,  
In guarded slumber dreaming-  
A world without a sound.

No laughter and no sobbing  
From those dim roofs arise,  
The myriad pulses throbbing  
Are silent as the skies.  
To us their peace is given,  
The meed of spirits shriven;  
I see the wide, pure heaven  
Reflected in your eyes.

Ah love! a thousand æons  
Shall range their trooping years;  
The morning stars their pæans  
Shall sing to countless ears.  
These married States may sever,  
Strong Time this dome may shiver,  
But love shall last forever  
And lovers' hopes and fears.

So let us send our greeting,  
A wish for trust and bliss,  
To future lovers meeting  
On far-off nights like this,

Who, in these walls' undoing  
Perforce of Time's rough wooing,  
Amid the crumbling ruin  
Shall meet, clasp hands, and kiss.

John Hay

## Una

In the whole wide world there was but one,  
Others for others, but she was mine,  
The one fair woman beneath the sun.

From her gold-flax curls' most marvellous shine  
Down to the lithe and delicate feet  
There was not a curve nor a waving line

But moved in a harmony firm and sweet  
With all of passion my life could know.  
By knowledge perfect and faith complete

I was bound to her, as the planets go  
Adoring around their central star,  
Free, but united for weal or woe.

She was so near and Heaven so far-  
She grew my heaven and law and fate  
Rounding my life with a mystic bar

No thought beyond could violate.  
Our love to fulness in silence nursed  
Grew calm as morning, when through the gate

Of the glimmering East the sun has burst,  
With his hot life filling the waiting air.  
She kissed me once, that last and first

Of her maiden kisses was placid as prayer.  
Against all comers I sat with lance  
In rest, and, drunk with my joy, I sware

Defiance and scorn to the world's worst chance.  
In vain! for soon unhorsed I lay  
At the feet of the strong god Circumstance-

And never again shall break the day,  
And never again shall fall the night  
That shall light me, or shield me, on my way

To the presence of my sad soul's delight.  
Her dead love comes like a passionate ghost  
To mourn the Body it held so light,

And Fate, like a hound with a purpose lost,  
Goes round bewildered with shame and fright.

John Hay

## Vespers

My Star has vanished in the west,  
And with it dies the day,  
And all the rosy light of life  
Is fading into gray.

The sky is full of other stars,  
But none to me are dear;  
Their silvery light fills all the night,  
But still the world is drear.

Far in the west one tender flush  
The dim horizon stains,-  
A memory of hours that were,  
A hope that yet remains.

For, wheeling over many lands  
And brightly shining on,  
In happier days my Evening Star  
Will be my Star of Dawn.

John Hay

## When the Boys Come Home

There's a happy time coming,  
When the boys come home.  
There's a glorious day coming,  
When the boys come home.  
We will end the dreadful story  
Of this treason dark and gory  
In a sunburst of glory,  
When the boys come home.

The day will seem brighter  
When the boys come home,  
For our hearts will be lighter  
When the boys come home.  
Wives and sweethearts will press them  
In their arms and caress them,  
And pray God to bless them,  
When the boys come home.

The thinned ranks will be proudest  
When the boys come home,  
And their cheer will ring the loudest  
When the boys come home.  
The full ranks will be shattered,  
And the bright arms will be battered,  
And the battle-standards tattered,  
When the boys come home.

Their bayonets may be rusty,  
When the boys come home,  
And their uniforms dusty,  
When the boys come home.  
But all shall see the traces  
Of battle's royal graces,  
In the brown and bearded faces,  
When the boys come home.

Our love shall go to meet them,  
When the boys come home,  
To bless them and to greet them,  
When the boys come home;  
And the fame of their endeavor  
Time and change shall not dissever  
From the nation's heart forever,  
When the boys come home.

John Hay

## Words

When violets were springing  
And sunshine filled the day,  
And happy birds were singing  
The praises of the May,  
A word came to me, blighting  
The beauty of the scene,  
And in my heart was winter,  
Though all the trees were green.

Now down the blast go sailing  
The dead leaves, brown and sere;  
The forests are bewailing  
The dying of the year;  
A word comes to me, lighting  
With rapture all the air,  
And in my heart is summer,  
Though all the trees are bare.

John Hay