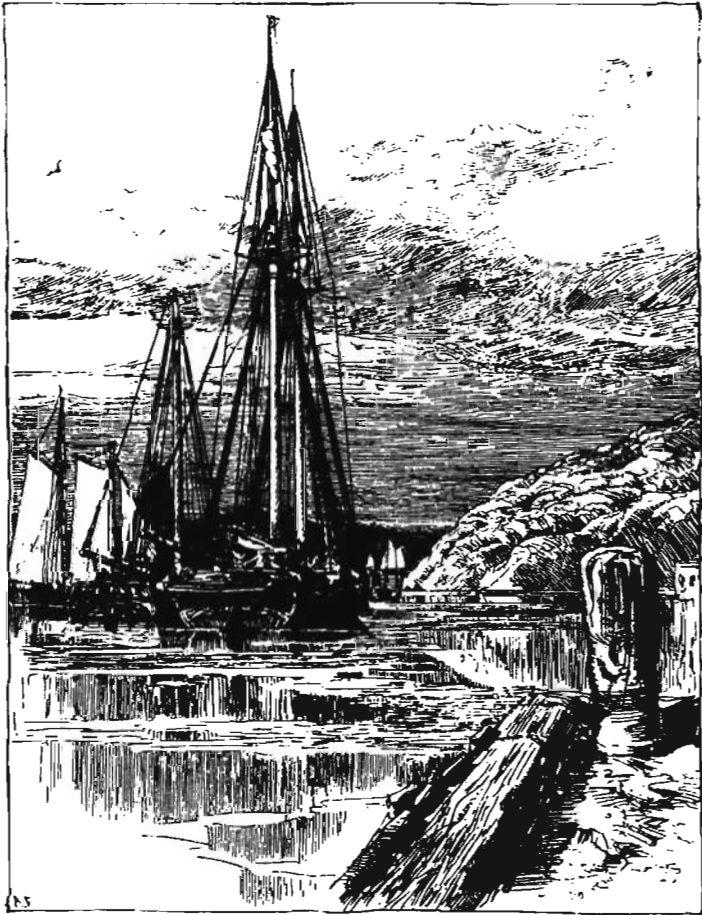


# River Water



# River Water

—To E.S., who, although she would  
not have approved of the poetry,  
might have been amused by the poems

An apology may be in order to explain this desultory collection of often desultory poems. Mainly, it was made for the pleasure of it, from the vulgar commercialism of “Climbing Up the Mountain” to the fastidious preciosity of “The Culprit Fay.” The composition of the poems stretches over a period of more than a hundred years; “The Culprit Fay” was written in 1819, “River Water” in 1931. It will be quickly clear that consistency, neither in subject nor in “poetic quality,” has been a principle in choosing the poems.

What the poems do have in common is that all were written with the Hudson River and its communities in mind. We do not often hear in these poems the authentic voice which can coalesce personal experience with a sense of a place and a time. The language is often enough false, silly, culturally inflated, or sentimental; the forms are generally predictable. Yet in the range of sensibilities and accomplishments represented here we may pinch out a glimpse into the life of the region. There *was* a not altogether happy work life behind the sentimentalizing doggerel of “The New York Central Pay Car.” It *was* a grim moment which induced the acquiescent piety of the “Epitaph on a Drowned Boy.” Surely “The Summer Girl” is a Poughkeepsie manifestation of a phenomenon that has another existence in Henry James’s *Daisy Miller*. These effusions, juxtaposed here to the cultural appropriation in “Pan in the Catskills” and the romantic transformations in “Catterskill Falls,” must tell us something of cultural as well as class stratification. We may not be able quite to grasp it exactly, but something of the “life” and the “region” is tantalizingly present. And there are moments.

The poems have been arranged in such a way that the progress is more or less up the river, beginning in its lower reaches, and extending beyond the Catskills. The names of the poets and the sources of the poems follow the selection.

—W.W.

THE  
CULPRIT FAY



Wrapped in musing stands the sprite :  
'Tis the middle wane of night ;  
    His task is hard, his way is far,  
But he must do his errand right  
    Ere dawning mounts her beamy car,  
And rolls her chariot wheels of light ;  
And vain are the spells of fairy-land,  
He must work with a human hand.

XVIII.

He cast a saddened look around,  
But he felt new joy his bosom swell,  
When, glittering on the shadowed ground,  
He saw a purple mussel-shell;  
Thither he ran, and he bent him low,  
He heaved at the stern and he heaved at  
the bow,  
And he pushed her over the yielding sand,  
Till he came to the verge of the haunted  
land.  
She was as lovely a pleasure-boat  
As ever fairy had paddled in,  
For she glowed with purple paint with-  
out,  
And shone with silvery pearl within;  
A sculler's notch in the stern he made,  
An oar he shaped of the bootle blade;  
Then sprung to his seat with a lightsome  
leap,  
And launched afar, on the calm, blue  
deep.

XIX.

The imps of the river yell and rave ;  
They had no power above the wave,  
But they heaved the billow before the  
    prow,  
And they struck her keel with jerk and  
    blow,  
    Till the gunwale bent to the rocking  
    tide.  
She wimpled about to the pale moon-  
    beam,  
Like a feather that floats on a wind-  
    tossed stream ;  
And momentarily athwart her track  
The quarl upreared his island back,  
And the fluttering scallop behind would  
    float,  
And patter the water about the boat ;  
But he bailed her out with his colen-bell,  
    And he kept her trimmed with a wary  
    tread,  
While on every side like lightning fell  
    The heavy strokes of his bootle-blade.

---

xx.

Onward still he held his way,  
Till he came where the column of moon-  
shine lay,  
And saw beneath the surface dim  
The brown-backed sturgeon slowly swim;  
Around him were the goblin train—  
But he sculled with all his might and  
main.  
And followed wherever the sturgeon led,  
Till he saw him upward point his head;  
Then he dropped his paddle-blade,  
And held his colen-goblet up  
To catch the drop in its crimson cup.

xxi.

With sweeping tail and quivering fin,  
Through the wave the sturgeon flew,  
And, like the heaven-shot javelin,  
He sprung above the waters blue.  
Instant as the star-fall light  
He plunged him in the deep again,  
But left an arch of silver bright,  
The rainbow of the moony main.

It was a strange and lovely sight  
To see the puny goblin there ;  
He seemed an angel form of light,  
With azure wing and sunny hair,  
Throned on a cloud of purple fair,  
Circled with blue and edged with white,  
And sitting at the fall of even  
Beneath the bow of summer heaven.

XXII.

A moment, and its lustre fell ;  
But ere it met the billow blue,  
He caught within his crimson bell  
A droplet of its sparkling dew—  
Joy to thee, Fay! thy task is done,  
Thy wings are pure, for the gem is won—  
Cheerly ply thy dripping oar,  
And haste away to the elfin shore.

XXIII.

He turns, and, lo! on either side  
The ripples on his path divide ;  
And the track o'er which his boat must  
pass

Is smooth as a sheet of polished glass.  
Around, their limbs the sea-nymphs lave,  
    With snowy arms half swelling out,  
While on the glossed and gleamy wave  
    Their sea-green ringlets loosely float ;  
They swim around with smile and song ;  
    They press the bark with pearly hand,  
And gently urge her course along,  
    Toward the beach of speckled sand ;  
And, as he lightly leaped to land,  
They bade adieu with nod and bow,  
    Then gaily kissed each little hand,  
And dropped in the crystal deep below.

XXIV.

A moment stayed the fairy there ;  
He kissed the beach and breathed a prayer . . . .





## THE HUDSON.

### MORNING.

GRAY streaks of dawn are faintly seen ;  
The stars of half their light are shorn ;  
The Hudson, with its banks of green,  
Lies tranquil in the early morn.

The earth and sky breathe sacred rest,  
A holy peace too sweet to break,  
A spell like that divine behest  
Which stilled the Galilean lake.

The circling hills, with foreheads fair,  
Await with joy the crowning rays ;  
All nature bows in grateful prayer,  
The templed groves respond with praise.

Ye trembling shafts of glorious light,  
Dart from the east with arrowy gleam ;  
Cleave the dark shield of fleeing Night,  
And slay her with your golden beam.

Cities and hamlets, up and down  
This level highway to the sea,  
Along the banks sit gray and brown,  
Dim shadows musing dreamily.

Adown the river sloops and ships  
Float slowly with the lazy tide ;  
And round the bluff a paddle dips,  
Where once the storm-ship used to ride.

The vision widens as the morn  
Sweeps through the portals of the day ;  
Purple and rosy mists adorn  
Mountain and hill-top far away.



—◆—

RHYME OF THE RAIL.

Singing through the forests,  
 Rattling over ridges,  
 Shooting under arches,  
 Rumbling over bridges,  
 Whizzing through the mountains,  
 Buzzing o'er the vale, —  
 Bless me! this is pleasant,  
 Riding on the Rail!

**Men of different "stations"**  
 In the eye of Fame

Here are very quickly  
 Coming to the same.  
 High and lowly people,  
 Birds of every feather,  
 On a common level  
 Traveling together!

Gentleman in shorts,  
 Looming very tall;  
 Gentleman at large,  
 Talking very small;  
 Gentleman in tights,  
 With a loose-ish mien;  
 Gentleman in gray,  
 Looking rather green.

Gentleman quite old,  
 Asking for the news;  
 Gentleman in black,  
 In a fit of blues;  
 Gentleman in claret,  
 Sober as a vicar;  
 Gentleman in Tweed,  
 Dreadfully in liquor!

Stranger on the right,  
 Looking very sunny,  
 Obviously reading  
 Something rather fanny.  
 Now the smiles are thicker,  
 Wonder what they mean?  
 Faith he's got the ~~KNICKER~~  
 BOCKER Magazine!

Stranger on the left,  
 Closing up his peepers;  
 Now he snores amain,  
 Like the Seven Sleepers;  
 At his feet a volume  
 Gives the explanation,  
 How the man grew stupid  
 From "Association"!

Ancient maiden lady  
 Anxiously remarks,  
 That there must be peril  
 'Mong so many sparks!  
 Roguish-looking fellow,  
 Turning to the stranger,  
 Says it's his opinion  
 She is out of danger!

Woman with her baby,  
 Sitting *vis-à-vis*;  
 Baby keeps a squalling;  
 Woman looks at me;  
 Asks about the distance,  
 Says it's tiresome talking.  
 Noises of the cars  
 Are so very shocking!

Market-woman careful  
 Of the precious casket,  
 Knowing eggs are eggs,  
 Tightly holds her basket;  
 Feeling that a smash,  
 If it came, would surely  
 Send her eggs to pot  
 Rather prematurely!

Singing through the forests,  
 Rattling over ridges,  
 Shooting under arches,  
 Rumbling over bridges,  
 Whizzing through the mountains,  
 Buzzing o'er the vale, —  
 Bless me! this is pleasant,  
 Riding on the Rail!

# CLIMBING UP THE MOUNTAIN;

A Parody of Saxe's Rhyme of the Rail.



CRAMBLING thro' the forest,  
Tumbling over ridges,  
Driving under fir boughs,  
Tilting on log bridges—  
Wheezing up the hill-side,  
Drinking at the fountain—  
Bless me, this is pleasant,  
Climbing up the mountain!

Men of different "standing"  
In the eye of Fame,  
Are tugging thro' the "debris"  
Pretty much the same;  
Smart and clumsy people,  
Birds of every feather,  
On the mountain hillocks,  
Tumble round together.

Gentleman from Ireland  
Calls the mountains tall—  
Gentleman from H'England  
Thinks them rather small—  
Gentleman from Gotham,  
With a Wall street mein,  
Thinks these "rocks" the biggest  
He has ever seen!

Gentleman quite old  
Asks, "How far to the summit?"  
Lady young and handsome  
Has sadly smashed her bunnit;  
Gentleman fat and heavy,  
Sober as a vicar,  
Bumps around as dreadfully  
As if he'd been in liquor.

Stranger on the right  
Looking very sunny,  
Is obviously telling  
The ladies something funny.  
Let us turn inquisitor,  
For the smiles are growing "wide;"  
'Faith, the man is quoting  
FROM COLT'S, TOURIST'S GUIDE.

Ancient single lady  
Very dubiously says,  
She would not like *alone*  
To traverse rugged ways ;  
Roguish looking fellow  
Mutters to the stranger—  
She ought to be accustomed  
To *such* a kind of danger !

One thoughtful soul is careful  
Of the luncheon casket—  
Knowing we'll be hungry,  
Tightly holds the basket ;  
Feeling that a smash,  
If it came, would surely  
Make an end of all things  
Rather prematurely !

Sorambling thro' the forest,  
Tumbling over ridges,  
Driving under fir boughs,  
Tilting on log bridges—  
Wheezing up the hill-side,  
Drinking at the fountain—  
Bless me, this is pleasant,  
Olimbing up the mountain !



## THE SUMMER GIRL.

1895.

She's a little bit more fluffy,  
Still she's one of nature's pets;  
Her shoulders are more puffy,  
And she's covered with rosettes.  
She's just as "cute" and clinging  
In the dance's merry whirl;  
Every one her praise is singing—  
This summer's summer girl.

She looks a little taller,  
And a little bit more grand;  
Her waist seems somewhat smaller—  
It's because her skirts expand.  
But her heart is light and spacious,  
And her locks as gaily curl,  
And she's just as sweet and gracious  
As last summer's summer girl.

Ere our heads with white were covered,  
There was one of pleasing name—  
"Summer girls" were undiscovered,  
But we loved her just the same.  
Her voice was low and soothing  
As a brook's delightful purl:  
There was something mighty "moving"  
In *that* summer's summer girl.

## A FAIR POUGHKEEPSIAN.

We only bowed as we passed by,  
Yet from the brightness of her eye,  
She seemed as happy as of yore,  
And sweeter far than e'er before.

If bright her lot, it should be so:  
I'd have her life with gladness glow.  
A nature of so fine a poise  
Should know the fullest, richest joys.

With heart so warm and kind to all,  
And form so fair, "divinely tall,"  
She like a lily seems to be—  
Gold wrapped around with purity.



THE NEW YORK CENTRAL PAY  
CAR ON THE ROAD.

Swift the word goes o'er the line,  
Filling all with thoughts benign--  
"For the Pay Car right of way!" 'tis welcome  
news.  
Soon we'll have beneath our gaze,  
Recompense for many days--  
We'll absorb it as the flowers the evening dew.

Now the trackman with his pick,  
And the walker with his stick,  
And the operator testy at his key;  
And the station agent bland,  
And the baggage master grand,  
All are smiling and as happy as can be.

Here she comes around the curve,  
And the man of steady nerve  
"Shuts her off," and then applies the ready  
brakes.  
Let me say a word or two,  
Ere he rushes from our view,  
Of the man within who holds the heavy stakes.

He is ruddy, round and fair,  
Though his brow is lined with care,  
Yet his heart is tender as a woman's sigh;  
And his highly polished crown,  
Like a beacon of renown,  
Shines above his brightly flashing hazel eye.

Ring the bell and off she goes,  
While the money in our clothes  
Makes us poorer feel than when we hadn't any;  
And but little good 'twill do  
Where it most is needed, too,  
In the homes of just a few among the many.

Drink will conquer some to-night,  
Send them home to quarrel and fight,  
Make the house a scene of rank confusion wild;  
In the morn they'll work the trick--  
"My poor man is very sick,"  
Says a weary, weeping woman with a child.

But the many faithful men,  
Work and wait for it again,  
With its precious silver, green and golden  
load.  
Happy hearts you'll always find,  
In the trail that's left behind,  
By the New York Central Pay Car on the road.

## EPITAPH ON A DROWNED BOY.

A NAMELESS youth lies buried here,  
Who on the sandy beach was thrown ;  
No mother wept beside his bier, —  
No father claimed him as his own.

Uncover'd on the river's brink,  
A stranger-band around him stood,  
As died the solemn funeral rites  
In murmurs o'er the silent flood.

Then hitherward his corpse they bore,  
And laid within its narrow bed,  
At rest till call'd to stand before  
The righteous Judge of quick and dead.

## A TOWN IN DUTCHESS COUNTY.

My first is a river,\* long famous in story ;  
It flows where the French and the Germans unite ;  
'Twas ceded to France in the days of her glory ;  
Though now it is German, by title and right.

My second is part of a name,† that has yielded  
The incense of worth, where his ashes repose,  
Who entered the wilderness, planted, and builded ;  
And made it to blossom and bud as the rose.

My whole, is a spot on the face of creation,  
Where industry banishes want from the door ;  
Where the axe, and the plough, and the mill-wheel in  
motion,  
Bring fulness of bread to the poorest of poor.

1834.

\* Rhine,

† Beekman,

## THE BRIDE'S WELCOME.\*

TO MRS. J. C. T——N, ON HER MARRIAGE.

SHALL aught on this morning of gladness be wanting,  
Of warm gratulation, to welcome the bride —  
To the hills and the vales which she lov'd in her child-  
hood,  
Where the waves of the Hudson deep roll in their pride?

She comes like the sunshine, the shadows dispersing  
That gather'd around in the season of gloom ;  
The plants that fresh springing, await but her culture,  
To cause them in beauty and fragrance to bloom.

What heart-felt emotions are upward ascending,  
Beseeching the Father of mercies to guide,  
To bless and protect, and to smile on the union,  
And crown with his favour the bridegroom and bride.

### MOTTO.

I WOULD not ask, — for that were vain, —  
To mingle with the reaper-train, —  
Who gayly sing, as hast'ning by  
To pile their golden sheaves on high ;  
But with the group who meet the view,  
In kerchief red and apron blue,  
I crave the scatter'd ears they yield,  
To bless the gleaner of the field.

---

\* The bridal party, shortly after their marriage, left the city of N. Y., where it took place, and came up the river to Mr. L——'s seat, where these lines were found on the lady's dressing table.

## THE BROOM.

GIVE me a broom, one neatly made  
In Niscayuna's distant shade ;  
Or bearing full its staff upon  
The well-known impress, 'Lebanon.'  
A handle slender, smooth, and light,  
Of bass-wood, or of cedar white ;  
Where softest palm from point to heel  
Might ne'er a grain of roughness feel —  
So firm a fix, the stalks confine ;  
So tightly drawn the hempen line ;  
Then fan-like spread divided wove,  
As fingers in a lady's glove —  
To crown the whole, (and save beside,)  
The loop, the buckskin loop is tied.

With this in hand, small need to care  
If C — y or J — n fill the chair —  
What in the banks is said or done —  
The game at Texas lost or won —  
How city belles collect their rings,  
And hie to Saratoga springs ; —  
To Erie's, or Ontario's shore,  
To hear Niagara's thunders roar —  
While undisturb'd my course I keep,  
Cheer'd by the sound of sweep, sweep, sweep.

See learned Doctors rack their brains,  
To cure mankind of aches and pains,  
When half, and more than half, arise  
From want of prudence, — exercise.  
The body like a garment wears,  
And aches and pains may follow years ;  
But when I see the young, the gay,  
Untimely droop, and pine away,  
As if the life of life were o'er,  
Each day less active than before, —  
Their courage fled, their interest cold, —  
With firmer grasp, my broom I hold.

The broom may prove a friend in need ;  
On this I lean, — on this depend ;  
With such a surety, such a friend,  
There's not a merchant in the place  
Who would refuse me silk or lace ;  
Or linen-fine, or broad-cloth dear,  
Or e'en a shawl of fam'd Cashmere,  
Though prudence whispering, still would say,  
“ Remember, there's a rainy day.”

Hand me the broom, (a matron said,)  
As down the hose and ball were laid ;  
I think your father soon will come ;  
I long to see him safe at home.  
Pile on the wood, and set the chair, —  
The supper and the board prepare ;  
The gloom of night is gathering fast, —  
The storm is howling o'er the waste.

The hearth is swept, arrang'd the room,  
And duly hung the shaker-broom,  
While cheerful smiles and greetings wait  
The master entering at his gate.  
Let patriots, poets, twine their brows  
With laurel, or with holly boughs ;  
But let the broom-corn wreath be mine,  
Adorn'd with many a sprig of pine ;  
With wild-flowers from the forest deep,  
And garlands from the craggy steep,  
Which ne'er have known the gardener's care,  
But rise, and bloom spontaneous there.

## *Catterskill Falls*

Midst greens and shades the Catterskill leaps,  
From cliffs where the wood-flower clings;  
All summer he moistens his verdant steeps,  
With the sweet light spray of the mountain-springs,  
And he shakes the woods on the mountain-side,  
When they drip with the rains of autumn-tide.

But when, in the forest bare and old,  
The blast of December calls,  
He builds, in the starlight clear and cold,  
A palace of ice where his torrent falls,  
With turret, and arch, and fretwork fair,  
And pillars blue as the summer air.

For whom are those glorious chambers wrought,  
In the cold and cloudless night?  
Is there neither spirit nor motion of thought  
In forms so lovely, and hues so bright?  
Hear what the gray-haired woodmen tell  
Of this wild stream and its rocky dell.

'Twas hither a youth of dreamy mood,  
A hundred winters ago,  
Had wandered over the mighty wood,  
When the panther's track was fresh on the snow,  
And keen were the winds that came to stir  
The long dark boughs of the hemlock-fir.

Too gentle of mien he seemed and fair,  
For a child of those rugged steeps;  
His home lay low in the valley where  
The kingly Hudson rolls to the deeps;  
But he wore the hunter's frock that day,  
And a slender gun on his shoulder lay.

And here he paused, and against the trunk  
Of a tall gray linden leant,  
When the broad clear orb of the sun had sunk,  
From his path in the frosty firmament,  
And over the round dark edge of the hill  
A cold green light was quivering still.

And the crescent moon, high over the green,  
From a sky of crimson shone,  
On that icy palace, whose towers were seen  
To sparkle as if with stars of their own,  
While the water fell with a hollow sound,  
'Twixt the glistening pillars ranged around.

Is that a being of life, that moves  
Where the crystal battlements rise?  
A maiden watching the moon she loves,  
At the twilight hour, with pensive eyes?  
Was that a garment which seemed to gleam  
Betwixt the eye and the falling stream?

'Tis only the torrent tumbling o'er,  
In the midst of those glassy walls,  
Gushing, and plunging, and beating the floor  
Of the rocky basin in which it falls.  
'Tis only the torrent—but why that start?  
Why gazes the youth with a throbbing heart?

He thinks no more of his home afar,  
Where his sire and sister wait.  
He heeds no longer how star after star  
Looks forth on the night as the hour grows late.  
He heeds not the snow-wreaths, lifted and cast  
From a thousand boughs, by the rising blast.

His thoughts are alone of those who dwell  
In the halls of frost and snow,  
Who pass where the crystal domes upswell  
From the alabaster floors below,  
Where the frost-trees shoot with leaf and spray,  
And frost-gems scatter a silvery day.

“And oh that those glorious haunts were mine!”  
He speaks, and throughout the glen  
Thin shadows swim in the faint moonshine,  
And take a ghastly likeness of men,  
As if the slain by the wintry storms  
Came forth to the air in their earthly forms.

There pass the chasers of seal and whale,  
With their weapons quaint and grim,  
And bands of warriors in glittering mail,  
And herdsmen and hunters huge of limb;  
There are naked arms, with bow and spear,  
And furry gauntlets the carbine rear.

There are mothers—and oh how sadly their eyes  
On their children's white brows rest!  
There are youthful lovers—the maiden lies,  
In a seeming sleep, on the chosen breast;  
There are fair wan women with moonstruck air,  
The snow-stars flecking their long loose hair.

They eye him not as they pass along,  
But his hair stands up with dread,  
When he feels that he moves with that phantom throng,  
Till those icy turrets are over his head,  
And the torrent's roar as they enter seems  
Like a drowsy murmur heard in dreams.

The glittering threshold is scarcely passed,  
When there gathers and wraps him round  
A thick white twilight, sullen and vast,  
In which there is neither form nor sound;  
The phantoms, the glory, vanish all,  
With the dying voice of the waterfall.

Slow passes the darkness of that trance,  
And the youth now faintly sees  
Huge shadows and gushes of light that dance  
On a rugged ceiling of unhewn trees,  
And walls where the skins of beasts are hung,  
And rifles glitter on antlers strung.

On a couch of shaggy skins he lies;  
As he strives to raise his head,  
Hard-featured woodmen, with kindly eyes,  
Come round him and smooth his furry bed,  
And bid him rest, for the evening star  
Is scarcely set and the day is far.



They had found at eve the dreaming one  
By the base of that icy steep,  
When over his stiffening limbs begun  
The deadly slumber of frost to creep,  
And they cherished the pale and breathless form,  
Till the stagnant blood ran free and warm.

### *A Scene on the Banks of the Hudson*

Cool shades and dews are round my way,  
And silence of the early day;  
Mid the dark rocks that watch his bed,  
Glitters the mighty Hudson spread,  
Unrippled, save by drops that fall  
From shrubs that fringe his mountain wall;  
And o'er the clear still water swells  
The music of the Sabbath bells.  
All, save this little nook of land,  
Circled with trees, on which I stand;  
All, save that line of hills which lie  
Suspended in the mimic sky—  
Seems a blue void, above, below,  
Through which the white clouds come and go;  
And from the green world's farthest steep  
I gaze into the airy deep.  
Loveliest of lovely things are they,  
On earth, that soonest pass away.  
The rose that lives its little hour  
Is prized beyond the sculptured flower.  
Even love, long tried and cherished long,  
Becomes more tender and more strong  
At thought of that insatiate grave  
From which its yearnings cannot save.  
River! in this still hour thou hast  
Too much of heaven on earth to last;  
Nor long may thy still waters lie,  
An image of the glorious sky.  
Thy fate and mine are not repose,  
And ere another evening close,  
Thou to thy tides shalt turn again,  
And I to seek the crowd of men.

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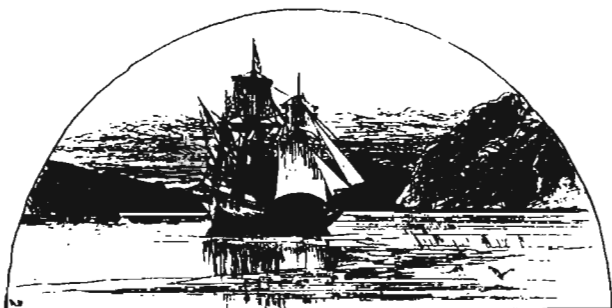
## PAN IN THE CATSKILLS

They say that he is dead, and now no more  
The reedy syrinx sounds among the hills,  
When the long summer heat is on the land.  
But I have heard the Catskill thrushes sing,  
And therefore am incredulous of death,  
Of pain and sorrow and mortality.

In these blue cañons, deep with hemlock shade,  
In solitudes of twilight or of dawn,  
I have been rapt away from time and care  
By the enchantment of a golden strain  
As pure as ever pierced the Thracian wild,  
Filling the listener with a mute surmise.

At evening and at morning I have gone  
Down the cool trail between the beech-tree boles,  
And heard the haunting music of the wood  
Ring through the silence of the dark ravine,  
Flooding the earth with beauty and with joy  
And all the ardors of creation old.

And then within my pagan heart awoke  
Remembrance of far-off and fabled years  
In the untarnished sunrise of the world,  
When clear-eyed Hellas in her rapture heard  
A slow mysterious piping wild and keen  
Thrill through her vales, and whispered, "It is Pan!"



## WILD GEESE

To-night with snow in the November air,  
Over the roof I heard that startling cry  
Passing along the highway of the dark—  
The Wild Geese going South. Confused commands  
As of a column on the march rang out  
Clamorous and sharp against the frosty air.  
And with an answering tumult in my heart  
I too went hurrying out into the night  
Was it from some deep immemorial past  
I learned those summoning signals and alarms,  
And still must answer to my brothers' call?  
I knew the darkling hope that bade them rise  
From Northern lakes, and with courageous hearts  
Adventure forth on their uncharted quest.

## THE BLUE HERON

I see the great blue heron  
Rising among the reeds  
And floating down the wind,  
Like a gliding sail  
With the set of the stream.

I hear the two-horse mower  
Clacking among the hay,  
In the heat of a July noon,  
And the driver's voice  
As he turns his team.

I see the meadow lilies  
Flecked with their darker tan,  
The elms, and the great white clouds;  
And all the world  
Is a passing dream.

## RIVER WATER

*The Dance of River Water  
Sets all the leaves astir,  
And all the woods of Arcady  
Are glad because of her.*

*They whisper, "Listen, listen,  
While River Water sings  
That bubble song of bobolinks  
And wild June things."*

*And when the silver birches  
Are golden in the fall,  
And in the quiet sunlight  
The plaintive phoebes call,*

*I lie and listen, listen,  
While River Water sings  
The murmur song of meadow-bloom  
And white moth wings.*

Among the silver birches  
Young River Water grew,  
A happy sprite who loved to dance  
Her joy the whole year through.

When first the wind of April  
Arose and called her clear,  
"Come forth from the cold stars and hills  
O River Water, dear!"

Out from the stilly alders  
That keep the meadow side,  
A murmur through the melting snows  
Awakened and replied,

"From dream thou dost arouse me  
Under the wintry dome,  
But thy warm voice is sweet to hear.  
O Mother Wind, I come."

Shake out the buds of April,  
Sing of the growing year,  
Drum up glad morning on the height  
Thy dancing child is here.

Here is gay River Water,  
Thy fairy forest child,  
To dance with shadow and with shine  
And learn their secrets wild.

Here in the wild-rose weather  
Laughs River Water brown,  
Dancing the gorgeous noons away,  
Dancing the twilights down;

Dancing the dawn to ashes,  
Dancing the white day through,  
Until soft night comes round again  
With whippoorwills and dew.

And when the moon in winter  
Shall make the night like day,  
When all the creatures are asleep  
And all the birds away,

Though merry River Water  
A frosty robe must don,  
The crooning hill-born heart of her  
Will still go dancing on.

Enchanted by the echo  
Of an immortal chime,  
She knows what God intends to do  
With music and with rhyme.

I see the meadow lilies  
Flecked with their darker tan,  
The elms, and the great white clouds  
And all the world  
Is a passing dream.

## WAITING

Serene, I fold my hands and wait,  
Nor care for wind, nor tide, nor sea;  
I rave no more 'gainst time or fate,  
For lo! my own shall come to me.

I stay my haste, I make delays,  
For what avails this eager pace?  
I stand amid th' eternal ways,  
And what is mine shall know my face.

Asleep, awake, by night or day,  
The friends I seek are seeking me;  
No wind can drive my bark astray,  
Nor change the tide of destiny.

What matter if I stand alone?  
I wait with joy the coming years;  
My heart shall reap where it hath sown,  
And garner up its fruit of tears.

The waters know their own and draw  
The brook that springs in yonder heights;  
So flows the good with equal law  
Unto the soul of pure delights.

The stars come nightly to the sky,  
The tidal wave comes to the sea;  
Nor time, nor space, nor deep, nor high,  
Can keep my own away from me.

## The Poets

"The Culprit Fay." Joseph Rodman Drake, from *The Culprit Fay* (New York: Rudd & Carleton, 1859). The book carries this "advertisement": "The exquisite poem of 'The Culprit Fay,' was composed hastily among the Highlands of the Hudson, in the summer of 1819. The author—says his biography—was walking with some friends on a warm moonlight evening, when one of the party remarked that it would be difficult to write a faery poem, purely imaginative, without the aid of human characters. When the party was reassembled, two or three days afterward, 'The Culprit Fay' was read to them, nearly as it is now printed." The selection here comprises stanzas XVII to XXIV.

"Morning." Wallace Bruce, *The Hudson* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin & Co., c. 1881). The book is dedicated to Washington Irving and contains a suite of six poems sweeping the length of the river: "Morning," "The Catskills," "The Adirondacks," "The Highlands," "Tappan Zee," and "Evening."

"Rhyme of the Rail." John Geoffrey Saxe, *The Poetical Works* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., c. 1875). The earliest collection of John Saxe's work was at the suggestion of James T. Fields, who also induced Nathaniel Hawthorne to submit *The Scarlet Letter* for publication.

"Climbing Up the Mountain." S. S. Colt, *The Tourist Guide* (n.p, n.d). The guide proceeds from New York up the Hudson River and across to Niagara Falls.

"The Summer Girl," "A Fair Poughkeepsian," "The New York Central Pay Car on the Road." Henry David Stringham, "Harry David," *Dutchess Rhythms* (New York: n.p., 1896).

"Epitaph on a Drowned Boy," "A Town in Dutchess County," "The Bride's Welcome," "Motto," "The Broom." Maria James, *Wales, and Other Poems* (New York: John S. Taylor, 1839). Maria James was a servant in the household of Freeborn Garretson; the publication of her poems was the result of a subscription taken up by river gentry.

"Catterskill Falls," "A Scene on the Banks of the Hudson." William Cullen Bryant, *Poems* (New York: Heritage Press, 1947).

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“Pan in the Catskills,” “Wild Geese,” “The Blue Heron,” “River Water.” Bliss Carman, *Poems* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1931).

“Waiting.” John Burroughs, from *Our Friend Burroughs*, a biography by Clara Barrus (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co, c. 1914). Barrus writes, “‘Waiting’ seems to have gone all over the world. It has been several times set to music, and its authorship has even been claimed by others. It has been parodied. . . .” She also quotes Joel Benton: “The lyric as Burroughs wrote it embodies a motive, or concept, that has scarcely been surpassed for amenability to poetic treatment, and for touching and impressive point. Its partly elusive outlines add to its charm. Its balance between hint and affirmation; its faith in universal forces, and its tender yet virile expression, are all shining qualities, apparent to the critical, and hypnotic to the general, reader. There is nothing in it that need even stop at ‘heaven’s gate’. It permits the deserving reader by happy instinct to go through that portal—without waiting outside to parade his sect mask.”

The steel engravings from Wallace Bruce’s *The Hudson* are by Alfred Fredericks.

