

AUTOGRAPH OF

WHITTIER, JOHN G.

Contents

MANUSCRIPT POEMS - 27 TP (1841)

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The Exiles. A Tale of New England.

The incidents upon which the following ballad has its foundation, occurred about the year 1620. Thomas Macey was one of the first, if not the first white settler of Nantucket. A quaint description of his singular and perilous voyage, in his own handwriting, is still preserved.

The goodman sat beside his door
One sultry afternoon,
With his young wife singing at his side
A quaint and goodly tune.

A glimmer of heat was in the air;—
The dark green woods were still;
And the skirts of a heavy thunder-cloud
Hung over the western hill.

Black, thick, and vast, across that cloud
Above the wilderness,
As some dark world from upper air
Were stooping over this.

At times, the solemn thunder pealed,
And all was still again,
Save a low murmur in the air
Of coming wind and rain.

Just as the first big rain-drop fell,
A weary stranger came,

2
And stood before the farmer's door,
With travel soiled, and lame.

God seems he, yet sustaining hope
Was in his quiet glance,
And peace, like Autumn's moonlight, clothed
His tranquil countenance.

A look, like that his Master wore
In Pilate's Council hall:
It told of wrongs - but of a love
Meekly forgiving all.

"Friend! wilt thou give me shelter here?"
The stranger meekly said;
And, leaning on his oaken staff,
The goodman's features read.

"My life is haunted - evil men
Are following on my track;
The traces of the torturer's whip
Are on my aged back.

"And much, I fear, I will peril thee
Within thy doors to take
A hunted Seeker of the Truth,
Oppressed for Conscience' sake."

Oh! kindly spoke the goodman's wife -
"Come in, old man!" quoth she, -
"We will not leave thee to the storm,
Whoever thou may'st be."

3

"Then came the aged wanderer in,
And silent sat him down;
While all within grew dark as night
Beneath the storm-cloud's frown.

"But while the sudden lightning's blaze
Filled every cottage nook,
And with the farring thunder-roll
The loosened ornaments shook,

A heavy tramp of horses' feet
Came sounding up the lane,
And half a score of horse, or more,
Came plunging through the rain.

"Now, Goodman Macey, open thy door,
We would not be house-breakers;
A fearful deed thou'st done this day,
In harbouring banished Quakers.

Out looked the cautious Goodman then,
With much of fear and awe,
For there, with broad wig drenched with rain,
The Parish Priest he saw.

"Open thy door, thou wicked man,
And let thy pastor in,
And give God thanks if forty stripes
Repay thy deadly sin."

4
"What seek ye?" quoth the goodman, -
The stranger is my guest;
He is worn with toil and grievous wrong, -
Pray let the old man rest."

"Now, out upon thee, canting stave!" -
And strong hands shook the door,
"Believe me, Macey," quoth the Priest, -
Thou'lt rue thy conduct sore."

"Thou'lt kindled Macey's eye of fire:
No priest who waltz the earth,
Shall pluck away the stranger-guest
Made welcome to my hearth."

Down from his cottage wall he caught
The matchlocks hotly tried
At Prestow-pans and Murston-moor,
By fiery Ireton's side;

When Turstan and Cavalier,
With shout and psalm contended;
And Rupert's oath and Cromwell's prayers,
With battle-thunder blended.

Up rose the ancient stranger then:
"My spirit is not free
To bring the wrath and violence
Of evil men on thee:"

And for thyself, I pray forbear, -
 "Dethink thee of thy Lord,
 Who healed again the smitten ear,
 And sheathed his follower's sword."

"I go, as to the slaughter led:
 "Friends of the poor, farewell!"
 "Beneath his hand the oaken door,
 "Back on its hinges fell."

Come forth, old gray-beard, yea and nay;
 The reckless scoffers cried
 As to a horseman's saddle-bow
 The old man's arms were tied.

And of his bondage hard and long
 In Boston's crowded jail,
 Where suffering woman's prayer was heard,
 And sickening childhood's wail,

It suits not with our tale to tell:
 Those scenes have passed away -
 Let the dim shadows of the Past
 Brood o'er that evil day.

"Ho, Sheriff!" quoth the ardent Priest -
 Take goodman Macey too;
 The sin of this day's hersy,
 His back or purse shall rue."

And Priest and Sheriff, both together
Upon his threshold stood,
When Macey, through another door,
Sprang out into the wood.

"Now goodwife, as thou lovest me, haste!"
He caught his manly arm:—
"Behind, the parson urged pursuit,
With outcry and alarm.

"Ho! speed the Maceys neck or nought,—
The river course was near:—
The plashing on its pebbled shore
Was music to their ear.

A grey rock, tassled o'er with birch
Above the waters hung,
And at its base, with every wave,
A small light wherry swung.

A leap — they gain the boat — and there
The goodman wields his oar:
"I'll luck betide them all" — he cried, —
The luggards upon shore."

Down through the crashing underwood
The burley Sheriff came:—
Stand, goodman Macey — yield thyself;
Yield in the King's own name."

"Now out upon thy hangman's face!"

"Old Macey answered them, -
Whip women on the village green,
But muddle not with men."

The Priest came panting to the shore, -
His grave, cocked hat was gone:
Behind him, like some owl's nest, hung
His wig upon a thorn.

"Come back - come back!" the Parson cried,
"The Church's curse beware."

"Curse an' thou wilt," said Macey, "but
thy blessing prithier spare."

"Vile scoffer!" cried the baffled priest, -
Thou'lt yet the gallows see."

"Who's born to be hanged, will not be drowned,"
Quoth Macey merrily;

"And so, Sir Sheriff and Priest, good bye!"
He bent him to his oar.

And the small boat glided quietly
From the tavern upon the shore.

Now in the West, the heavy clouds
Scattered and fell asunder,
While fubler came the rush of rain,
And fainter growled the thunder.

And through the broken clouds, the Sun
Looked out, serene and warm,
Painting its holy symbol - light
Upon the passing storm.

Oh, beautiful! that rainbow-span,
O'er dim Crane-neck was bended; -
One bright foot touched the Eastern hills,
And one with ocean blended.

By green Pentucket's southern-slope
The small boat glided fast, -
The watchers of "the Block-house" saw
The strangers as they passed.

That night a stalwart garrison
Sat shattering in their shoes,
To hear the dip of Indian oars, -
The glide of birch canoes.

They passed the bluffs of Amesbury,
And saw the sunshine glow
Upon the Powwow's winding stream,
And on the hills of To.

The fishes wives of Salisbury,
[The men were all away.]
Looked out to see the stranger oar
Upon their waters play.

9

Deer-Island's rocks and fir trees threw
Their sunset shadows o'er them,
And Newbury's spire and weathercock
Peered o'er the pines before them.

Around the Black Rocks, on their left,
The marsh lay broad and green;
And on their right, with dwarf shrubs crowned,
Olum Island's hills were seen.

With skilful hand and wary eye
The harbour-bar was crossed; -
A plaything of the restless seas,
The boat on ocean tossed.

The glory of the sunset Heaven
On land and water lay -
On the steep hills of Agbar Agarwan
On cape, and bluff, and bay.

They passed the gray rocks of Cape Ann,
And Gloucester harbour-bar;
The watch fire of the garrison
Shone like a setting star.

"How brightly broke the morning
On Massachusetts' Bay!"
"Blue ware, and bright green island,
Rejoicing in the day."

10
On passed the bar in safety
Round isle and headland steep -
No tempest broke above them,
No fog-cloud veiled the deep.

Far round the bleak and stormy Cape
The bent'roud Macey passed,
And on Nantucket's naked isle,
Drew up his boat at last.

And how, in log-built cabin,
They braved the rough sea weather,
And there, in peace and quietness,
Went down life's pale together;

How others drew around them,
And how their fishing sped,
(Until to every wind of heaven
Nantucket's sails were spread;

How pale Mace alternated
With Plenty's golden smile;
Behold, is it not written
In the annals of the isle?

And yet that isle remaineth
A refuge of the free,
As when true hearted Macey
Beheld it from the sea.

Free as the winds that winnow
 Her shrubless hills of sand -
 Free as the waves that batter
 Along her yielding land.

Than hers, at Duty's summons,
 No loftier spirit stirs, -
 Nor falls o'er human suffering
 A readier tear than hers.

God bless the sea-beat island! -
 And grant for evermore,
 That Charity and Freedom dwell
 As now, upon her shore!

The Funeral Tree of the Pottokis.

[Solon, a Chief of the Pottokis Indians, fell in a skirmish with the Whites on the borders of Sebago Lake in the Spring of 1756. His companions bent down a young tree until its roots were turned up, placed the body beneath it, and then let the tree spring back to its former position.]

I
 Around Sebago's lonely lake
 There lingers not a breeze to break
 The mirror which its waters make.

II
 The solemn pines along its shore,
 The firs that hang its grey rocks o'er,
 Are painted on its glassy floor.

III

The sun looks o'er with hazy eye
The snowy mountain-tops which lie
Piled coldly up against the sky,

IV

Dazzling and white! — save where the bleak
Wild winds have bared some splintering peak,
Or snow-slide left its dusky streak.

V

Yet Laco's banks are green below,
And belts of spruce and cedar show
Dark, fringing round those cones of snow.

VI

The earth hath felt the breath of Spring;
Though yet upon her tardy wing
The lingering frosts of winter cling.

VII

Fresh grasses fringe the meadow-brooks,
And, mildly, from its sunny nooks,
The blue eye of the violet looks.

VIII

And odours from the tender grass,
The sweet birch and the Sassafras,
Alow the scarce felt breezes pass.

IX

Her tokens of renewing care
Hath Nature scattered every where,
In bud, and flower, and warmer air.

X

But in their hour of bitterness,
What seek the broken Sokokis,
Beside their fallen chief, of this?

XI

The turf's red stain is yet undried -
Scarcely have the death-shot echoes died,
Along Sebago's wooded side.

XII

And silent now the hunters stand
Grouped darkly, where a swell of land
Slopes downward to the lake's white sand.

XIII

Fire and the axe have swept it bare,
Save one lone beech, unfolding there
Its light leaves in the April air

XIV

With grave cold looks, all sternly mute,
They break the damp turf at its foot,
And bare its coiled and twisted root.

XV

They heave the stubborn trunk aside -
The firm roots from the earth divide -
The rent beneath, yawns dark and wide.

XVI

And there the fallen chief is laid,
In passel'd garb of skins arrayed,
And girded with his wampum braid.

XVII

The silver cross he loved, is pressed
Beneath the heavy arms which rest
Upon his scarred and naked breast.

XVIII

'Tis done! - the roots are backward sent -
The beechen tree stands up unbent -
The Indian's fitting monument! -

XIX

When of that sleeper's broken race,
The green and pleasant dwelling place
Which knew them once, returns no trace,

XX

Oh, long shall sunset's light be shed
As now, upon that buck's head -
A green memorial of the dead!

XXI

There, shall a fitting requiem be
In northern winds, that cold and free,
Howl mightily round that funeral tree.

XXII

To its wild wail, the waves which break
Forever round that lonely lake
A solemn undertone shall make.

XXIII

And who shall deem the spot unblest,
Where Nature's younger children rest,
Lulled on their sorrowing mother's breast?

XXIV

Or dream, that mother loveth less
Those bronzed forms of the wilderness,
She foldeth in her long arms? -

XXV

As sweet o'er them her wild flowers blow,
As if with fairer hair and brow
The blue-eyed sorrow slept below.

XXVI

What, if the place of their rest,
A priestly knee hath never pressed,
Nor funeral rite nor prayer hath blessed;

XXVII

What if the ligots ban be there,
And thoughts of wailing and despair,
And cursing in the place of prayer.

XXVIII

Yet Heaven hath angels watching round
The Indian's lowliest forest mound -
And they have made it holy ground!

XXIX

There ceases man's frail judgment - all
His powerless bolts of cursing fall
Unheded on that grassy fall.

XXX

Oh, peeled and hunted and reviled,
Sleep on dark tenants of the wild! -
Great Nature owns her simple child!

XXXI

And Nature's God, to whom alone
The secret of the hearts is known -
The mystic language traced thereon -

XXXII

Who from its many cumberings
Of forms, and creeds, and outward things,
To light the naked spirit bring:

XXXIII

Not with our partial eye shall see -
Not with our pride and scorn shall see
The Spirit of our brother man.

Lines

Written on receiving an elegant walking-stick manufactured
from a portion of the woodwork of Pennsylvania Hall*,
which the fire had spared.

'Tis token of friendship true and tried,
From one whose fiery heart of youth
With mine has beaten side by side
For Liberty and Truth;
With honest pride the gift I take,
And prize it for the giver's sake.

'But not alone because it tells
Of generous hand, and heart sincere,
Around that gift of friendship dwells
A memory doubly dear -
Earth's noblest aim - man's holiest thought,
With that memorial frail inwrought!

Pure thoughts and sweet, like flowers unfold,
And precious memories round it cling,
Even as the Prophet's rod of old
In beauty blossoming;
And buds of feeling, pure and good,
Spring from its cold unconscious wood.

'Relic of Freedom's Shrine - a brand
Plucked from its burning! - let it be
Dear as a jewel from the hand
Of a lost friend to me! -

* Destroyed by a Mob on the 16th of 5th mo 1838.

Flower of a perished garland left,
Of life and beauty unbereft!

Oh! if the enthusiast pilgrim bears
A relic from the crumbling stone
On Caracalla's marble stairs,
Or round the Parthenon -
Or olive-bough from some wild tree,
Hung over old Thermopylae:

If leaflets from some hero's tomb,
Or moss-wreath torn from ruins hoary, -
Or flowers whose plundered sisters bloom
On fields renowned in story, -
Or fragment from the Alhambra's crest,
Or the grey rock by Druids blessed! -

If Erin's Shamrock greenly growing
Where Freedom led her stalwart men,
Or Scotia's "rough bear whistle" blowing
On Bruce's Bannockburn -
Or Kunnymead's wild English rose,
Or lichen plucked from Lempack's snow -

If it be true that things like these
To heart and eye bright visions bring,
Shall not far holier memories
To this memorial cling?
Which needs no mellowing mist of Time
To hide the crimson stains of crime.

Wrecks of a temple unprofaned -

Of courts where Dea^m with Freedom trod,
Lifting on high with hands unstained
Thanks giving unto God:

Where Mercy's voice of love was pleading
For human hearts in bondage bleeding:

Where 'midst the sound of rushing feet,
And curses on the night air flung,
The pleading voice rose calm and sweet
From woman's earnest tongue;
And Riot turned his scowling glance,
Awe, from her tranquil countenance!

That Temple now in ruin lies, -
The fire-stain on its shattered wall,
And open to the changing skies
Its black and roofless hall,
Its stands before a Nation's sight,
A grave-stone over buried Right!

But from that ruin, as of old,
The fire-scathed stones themselves are crying,
And from their ashes white and cold
Its timbers are replying!
A voice which Slavery cannot kill
Speaks from its crumbling arches still!

And even this relic from thy Shrine,
Oh, holy Freedom! - hath to me
A potent power of voice and sign,
To testify of thee.

And, as I grasp it now, I feel
A stronger faith - a warmer zeal.

Nor all unlike that mystic rod
Of old stretched o'er the Egyptian wars,
Which opened in the strength of God
A pathway for the slave,
It yet may point the bondman's way
And turn the spoiler from his prey!

The Norsemen.

Some three or four years since, a fragment of a statue
nicely chiseled from dark grey stone, was found in the town
of Bradford on the Merrimack. Its origin must be left
entirely to conjecture. The fact, that the ancient Norsemen
visited New England some centuries before the discoveries of
Columbus, is now very generally admitted.

Gift from the cold and silent Past!
A relic to the Present East;
Left on the low-changing strand
Of shifting and unstable sand,
Which wastes beneath the steady chime
And beating of the waves of Time!
Who from its bed of primal rock
First wrenched thy dark unshapely block?
Whose hand of curious skill untaught
First thy rude and savage outline wrought?

The waters of my native stream

Are glancing in the sun's warm beam;
 From sail-waged keel and flashing oar
 The circles widen to its shore;
 And cultured fields and steeped town
 Slope to its willowed margin down.
 Yet, while this morning breeze is bringing
 The mellow sound of church-bells ringing,
 And rolling wheel, and rapid far
 Of the fire-winged and steedless car,
 And voices from the wayside near
 Come quiet and blended on my ear,
 A spell is in this old grey stone -
 My thoughts are with the Past alone!

A change! the steeped town no more
 Stretches along the sail-thronged shore;
 Like palace-domes in sunset's cloud,
 Fade sun-gilt spire and mansion proud!
 Spectrally rising where they stood,
 I see the old primeval wood;
 Dark, shadow-like, on either side stand
 I see its solemn waste expand:
 It climbs the green and cultured hill,
 It arches o'er the valley's rill;
 And leans from cliff and crag, to throw
 Its wild arms o'er the stream below.
 Unchanged, alone, the same bright river
 Flows on, as it will flow forever!
 I listen, and I hear the low
 Soft ripple where its waters go;
 I hear behind the panther's cry,
 The wild bird's scream goes thrilling by.

And shyly, on the river's brink
The deer is stooping down to drink.

But hark! from wood and rock flung back,
What sound comes up the Merrimack?
What sea-worn barks are those which throw
The light spray from each rushing prow?
Have they not in the North Sea's blast
Bowed to the waves the straining mast?
Their frozen sails the wint'ry sun
Of Thule's night had shorn upon;
Flapped by the sea-~~wind's~~^{wind's} gusty sweep
Round icy drift, and headland steep.
Mild Jutland's wives, and Lochlin's daughters,
Have watched them fading o'er the waters,
Lessening through driving mist and spray,
Like white-winged sea-birds on their way!

Onward they glide - and now I view
Their iron-armed and stalwart crew:
Joy glistens in each wild blue eye,
Turned to green earth and summer sky;
Each broad scamed breast had cast aside
Its cumbering vest of shaggy hide;
Bared to the sun and soft warm air
Streams back the Norseman's yellow hair.
I see the gleam of axe and spear,
The sound of smitten shields I hear,
Keeping a harsh and fitting time
To Saga's chant or Runic rhyme;
Such lays as Letland's Scald has sung,
His grey and naked isles among;

Or muttered low at midnight hour,
 'Round Odin's mossy stone of power,
 The wolf beneath the Arctic Moon
 Has answered to that startling ~~rumor~~ ^{rumor} ~~flour~~
 The Gaal has heard its stormy swell,
 The light Frank knows its summons well;
 Iona's sable-stoled Ouldee
 Has heard it sounding o'er the sea,
 And swept with hoary beard and hair
 His altar's foot in trembling prayer.

It is past - the wildering vision dies
 In darkness on my dreaming eyes!
 The forest vanishes in air -
 Hill-slope and vale lie starkly bare;
 I hear the common tread of men,
 And hum of work-day life again;
 The mystic relics seem alone
 A broken mass of common stone;
 And if it be the chiselled limb
 Of Berserkur or idol grim -
 A fragment of Valhall's Thor,
 Or Tyr, the restless god of war,
 Or Braga of the Runic lay,
 Or love-awakening Iona,
 I know not - for no grainy line,
 Nor Druid mark, nor Runic sign
 Is left me here, by which to trace
 Its name, or origin, or place.
 Yet, for this vision of the Past,
 This glance upon its darkness east,

My spirit bows in gratitude
 Before the Giver of all good,
 Who fashioned so the human mind,
 That, from the waste of Time behind,
 A simple stone, or mound of earth,
 Can summon the departed forth;
 Quieten the Past to life again—
 The Present lose, in what hath been,
 And in their primal freshness show
 The buried forms of long ago,
 As if a portion of that Thought
 By which the Eternal will is wrought,
 Whose impulse fills anew with breath
 The frozen solitude of Death,
 To mortal mind were sometimes lent,
 To mortal musings sometimes sent,
 To whisper— even when it seems
 But Memory's phantasy of dreams—
 Through the mind's waste of woe and sin
 Of an immortal origin!

The Merrimack.

"The Indians speak of a beautiful river far to the South,
which they call Merrimac.

Sieur de Monts: 1604.

Streams of my fathers! sweetly still
The sunset rays thy valleys fill;
Poured stantwise down the long defile,
Wave, wood, and spire beneath them smile.
I see the winding Powow fold
The green hill in its belt of gold,
And following down its wavy line,
Its sparkling waters blend with thine.
There's not a tree upon thy side,
Nor rock, which thy returning tide
As yet hath left abrupt and stark
Above thy evening water-mark;
No calm cove with its rocky hem,
No isle whose emerald swells begem
Thy broad smooth current; not a sail
Bowed to the freshening ocean gale;
No small boat with its busy oars,
Nor grey wall sloping to thy shores;
Nor farm house, with its maple shade,
But lies distinct and full in sight,
Beneath this gush of sunset light.

Centuries ago, that harbour bar,
Stretching its length of foam afar,
And Salisbury's beach of shining sand,
And yonder island's wave smoothed strand,

Saw the adventurer's tiny sail
 Flit, stooping from the eastern gale;^{*}
 And o'er these woods and waters broke
 The cheer from Britain's hearts of oak;
 As brightly on the voyager's eye,
 Weary of forest, sea, and sky,
 Breaking the dull continuous wood,
 The Merrimack rolled down his flood;
 Mingling that clear pellucid brook
 Which channels vast Agiochook -
 When spring-time's sun and showers unlock
 The frozen fountains of the rock,
 And more abundant waters giv'nd
 From that pure lake, 'The Smile of Heaven,'[†]
 Tributes from vale and mountain side -
 With ocean's dark eternal tide!

On yonder rocky cape, which braves
 The stormy challenge of the waves,
 'Midst tangled vines and dwarfish wood,
 The hardy Anglo-Saxon stood,
 Planting upon the topmost crag
 The staff of England's battle-flag;

^{*} The celebrated Captain Smith, after resigning the government of the colony in Virginia in his capacity of "Admiral of New England," made a careful survey of the Coast, from Penobscot to Cape Cod, in the summer of 1614.

[†] Lake Winnepiseogee - "the Smile of the Great Spirit" - the source of one of the branches of the Merrimack.

And, while from out its heavy fold
 St. George's crimson cross unrolled,
 'Midst roll of drum and trumpet blare,
 And weapons brandishing in air,
 He gave to that lone promontory
 The sweetest name in all his story; †
 Of her - the flower of Iblani's daughter,
 Whose charms look on Stamboul's waters -
 Who, when the chance of war had bound
 The Moslem chain his limbs around,
 Breathed air with silt that iron chain,
 Soothed with her smiles his hours of pain,
 And fondly to her youthful slave,
 A dearer gift than freedom gave.

But look! the yellow light no more
 Streams down on waves and verdant shore;
 And clearly on the calm air swells
 The distant voice of twilight bells.
 From Ocean's bosom, white and thin,
 The mists come slowly rolling in;
 Hills, woods, the river's rocky rim,
 Amidst the sea-like vapour swim;
 While yonder lonely coast light set
 Within its waves washed minaret,
 Half quenched, a beamless star and pale,
 Shines dimly through its cloudy veil!

† Captain Smith gave to the promontory now called Cape Sun, the name of Tragabizanda, in memory of his young and beautiful mistress of that name, ^{who} while a captive at Constantinople, like Desdemona, loved him for the dangers he had passed.

Vale of my father! I have stood
 Where Hudson rolled his lordly flood;
 Seen sunrise rest, and sunset fade
 Along his frowning Palisade;
 Looked down the Appalachian peak
 On Juniata's slow streak;
 Have seen along his valley gleam
 The Mohawk's softly winding stream;
 The setting sun, his apple red
 Quench darkly in Potomac's bed;
 And Autumn's rainbow-tinted banner
 Hang lightly o'er the Susquehanna;
 Yet, where so'er his step might be,
 Thy wandering child looked back to thee!
 Heard in his dreams thy river's sound
 Of murmuring on its pebbly bound,
 The unforgetten swell and roar
 Of waves on thy familiar shore;
 And saw amidst the curtained gloom
 And quiet of ^{his} ~~any~~ lonely room,
 Thy sunset scenes before him pass;
 As, in Agrippa's magic glass,
 The loved and lost arose to view,
 Remembered groves in greenness grew;
 And while the gazer leaned to trace,
 More near, some old familiar face,
 He wept to find the vision flown -
 A phantom and a dream alone!
