

**THE BEST SHORT POEMS OF THE  
NINETEENTH CENTURY; BEING THE  
TWENTY-FIVE BEST SHORT POEMS AS  
SELECTED BY BALLOT BY COMPETENT  
CRITICS. [CHICAGO-1899]**

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The Best Short Poems of the Nineteenth Century; Being the Twenty-Five Best Short Poems as Selected by Ballot by Competent Critics. [Chicago-1899] by William S. Lord

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**WILLIAM S. LORD**

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# The Best Short Poems of The Nineteenth Century

BEING THE TWENTY-FIVE BEST  
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BALLOT BY COMPETENT CRITICS

COMPILED BY

WILLIAM S. LORD

Author of "Blue and Gold," "Jungle and Jangle," etc.



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1899

R. C. P.

## NOTE.

**T**WO hundred representative literary people were recently asked for a list of "twenty-five of the best short poems (limit fifty lines) written in the English language in the nineteenth century." This request met with a ready response. Lists were received from prominent poets, critics, editors, educators, and others interested in poetry. These lists were carefully prepared. The names of those who so kindly gave valuable time and study in preparing them would be given had not the request been made, in a number of instances, that the list submitted be considered confidential. This emphasizes the value of the verdict as being a perfectly free expression of the minds best qualified to judge of the merits of the poetry of the period.

No individual list is given. The twenty-five poems which received the highest number of votes will, it is hoped, make an acceptable "nut-shell anthology." They are arranged in order according to the ballots cast, "The Chambered Nautilus," which received the highest vote, being number one on the list.

A supplementary list of two hundred poems is arranged alphabetically by authors. These poems received votes, but none received enough to place it among the first twenty-five.

It is, perhaps, worthy of note that when these lists were prepared Mr. Kipling had not written "Recessional," which would undoubtedly, at this time, be placed well among the first.

The names of Lowell, Longfellow and Whittier do

not appear, while Bryant is represented by "To a Waterfowl," and not by "Thanatopsis." America's bards number five, while Tennyson's name appears four times and Wordsworth's name three times.

In the supplementary list Longfellow is represented by nine titles, Lowell by ten, Tennyson by fifteen, Wordsworth by six and Whittier by five.

Dr. Holmes's "Chambered Nautilus," Mrs. Howe's "Battle-Hymn of the Republic," and "Emerson's Concord Fight" are published by permission of Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., the publishers of the works of Emerson and Holmes and of Mrs. Howe's poems. "Crossing the Bar" is reprinted from The Macmillan Company's complete edition of Lord Tennyson's poems.

W. S. L.

March, 1899, Evanston, Ill.

## THE BEST SHORT POEMS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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1.	THE CHAMBERED NAUTILUS <i>Oliver Wendell Holmes</i>	9
2.	THE BUGLE SONG - - - - <i>Alfred, Lord Tennyson</i>	11
3.	CROSSING THE BAR - - - - <i>Alfred, Lord Tennyson</i>	12
4.	BATTLE HYMN OF THE RE- PUBLIC - - - - - <i>Julia Ward Howe</i>	13
5.	THE LOST LEADER - - - - <i>Robert Browning</i>	15
6.	ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER - - - - <i>John Keats</i>	17
7.	ODE ON A GRECIAN URN - - <i>John Keats</i>	18
8.	"SHE WAS A PHANTOM OF DELIGHT" - - - - - <i>William Wordsworth</i>	20
9.	"THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH WITH US: LATE AND SOON" <i>William Wordsworth</i>	21
10.	A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT - - <i>Elizabeth Barrett Browning</i>	22
11.	LIGHT - - - - - <i>Francis William Bourdillon</i>	24
12.	TO A WATERPOWL - - - - <i>William Cullen Bryant</i>	25
13.	THE THREE FISHERS - - - - <i>Charles Kingsley</i>	27
14.	LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT - - - - <i>John Henry Newman</i>	28
15.	ISRAEL - - - - - <i>Edgar Allan Poe</i>	29
16.	TEARS, IDLE TEARS - - - - <i>Alfred, Lord Tennyson</i>	31
17.	BREAK, BREAK, BREAK - - - <i>Alfred, Lord Tennyson</i>	32
18.	THE BURIAL OF SIR JOHN MOORE - - - - - <i>Charles Wolfe</i>	33
19.	A COURT LADY - - - - - <i>Elizabeth Barrett Browning</i>	35
20.	PROSPICE - - - - - <i>Robert Browning</i>	39
21.	CONCORD FIGHT - - - - - <i>Ralph Waldo Emerson</i>	40
22.	AMOU BEN ADHEM - - - - - <i>Leigh Hunt</i>	41
23.	NIGHT - - - - - <i>Percy Bysshe Shelley</i>	43
24.	NIGHT AND DEATH - - - - - <i>Joseph Blanco White</i>	44
25.	DAFFODILS - - - - - <i>William Wordsworth</i>	45





The Best Short Poems  
OF THE  
Nineteenth Century.

R. R.

I.

THE CHAMBERED NAUTILUS.\*

THIS is the ship of pearl, which, poets feign,  
Sails the unshadowed main,—  
The venturous bark that flings  
On the sweet summer wind its purple wings  
In gulfs enchanted, where the Siren sings,  
And coral reefs lie bare,  
Where the cold sea-maids rise to sun their streaming  
hair.

Its webs of living gauze no more unfurl;  
Wrecked is the ship of pearl!  
And every chambered cell,  
Where its dim dreaming life was wont to dwell,  
As the frail tenant shaped his growing shell,  
Before thee lies revealed,—  
Its irised ceiling rent, its sunless crypt unsealed!

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Year after year beheld the silent toil  
That spread his lustrous coil;  
Still, as the spiral grew,  
He left the past year's dwelling for the new,  
Stole with soft step its shining arch-way through,  
Built up its idle door,  
Stretched in his last-found home, and knew the old no  
more.

Thanks for the heavenly message brought by thee,  
Child of the wandering sea,  
Cast from her lap, forlorn!  
From thy dead lips a clearer note is born  
Than ever Triton blew from wreathed horn!  
While on my ear it rings,  
Through the deep caves of thought I hear a voice that  
sings:—

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,  
As the swift seasons roll!  
Leave thy low-vaulted past!  
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,  
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,  
Till thou at length art free,  
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!

—*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

1809-1894.