

MAY-DAY AND OTHER PIECES

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May-day and other pieces by Ralph Waldo Emerson

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RALPH WALDO EMERSON

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OTHER PIECES**

~~July~~
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AND OTHER PIECES.

BY

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.



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1867.

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M A Y - D A Y .

DAUGHTER of Heaven and Earth, coy Spring,
With sudden passion languishing,
Maketh all things softly smile,
P'ainteth pictures mile on mile,
Holds a cup with cowslip-wreaths,
Whence a smokeless incense breathes.
Girls are peeling the sweet willow,
Poplar white, and Gilead-tree,
And troops of boys
Shouting with whoop and hilloo,
And hip, hip three times three.
The air is full of whistlings bland ;
What was that I heard

Out of the hazy land?
Harp of the wind, or song of bird,
Or clapping of shepherd's hands,
Or vagrant booming of the air,
Voice of a meteor lost in day?
Such tidings of the starry sphere
Can this elastic air convey.
Or haply 't was the cannonade
Of the pent and darkened lake,
Cooled by the pendent mountain's shade,
Whose deeps, till beams of noonday break,
Afflicted moan, and latest hold
Even unto May the iceberg cold.
Was it a squirrel's peevish bark,
Or clarionet of jay? or hark,
Where you wedged line the Nestor leads,
Steering north with raucous cry
Through tracts and provinces of sky,
Every night alighting down

In new landscapes of romance,
Where darkling feed the clamorous clans
By lonely lakes to men unknown.
Come the tumult whence it will,
Voice of sport, or rush of wings,
It is a sound, it is a token
That the marble sleep is broken,
And a change has passed on things.

Beneath the calm, within the light,
A hid unruly appetite
Of swifter life, a surer hope,
Strains every sense to larger scope,
Impatient to anticipate
The halting steps of aged Fate.
Slow grows the palm, too slow the pearl :
When Nature falters, fain would zeal
Grasp the felloes of her wheel,
And grasping give the orbs another whirl.

Turn swifelier round, O tardy ball !
And sun this frozen side,
Bring hither back the robin's call,
Bring back the tufip's pride.

Why chidest thou the tardy Spring ?
The hardy bunting does not chide ;
The blackbirds make the maples ring
With social cheer and jubilee ;
The redwing flutes his *a-ka-lee*,
The robins know the melting snow ;
The sparrow meek, prophetic-eyed,
Her nest beside the snow-drift weaves,
Secure the osier yet will hide
Her callow brood in mantling leaves ;
And thou, by science all undone,
Why only must thy reason fail
To see the southing of the sun ?