

**THE PASSING OF
YOUTH: A VOLUME
OF POEMS**

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The passing of youth: a volume of poems by John Bateman

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JOHN BATEMAN

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OF POEMS**

The Passing of Youth.

A VOLUME OF POEMS by

JOHN BATEMAN, *writer of songs*

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THE PASSING OF YOUTH.

O splendour of my youth, can it be true
That all thy sweet and proudly passioned days
Are ended? On thy fair and fragrant ways
Now shadowy and vague, I can but view
The golds that once were greens changing to greys,
And all the mighty loves that once I knew
The magic castles towering in the blue
Now shrink and shake and shatter in the haze.

Nothing remains but memory. I plod
With sullen feet adown life's darkling maze.
On youth that is the grandest gift of God
I ever backward bend my wistful gaze;
While on my chastened brow runs 'Ichabod,'
Where I had hoped that men would wreath the
bays.

MEETING OF THE OLD YEAR AND THE NEW.

THE NEW YEAR :

“ Begone my friend, thou hast enjoyed
Thy moment's measure.
Go hide thee in the yawning Void.
Thy sun is set, thy house ' To Let,'
And now thou must resign to me
All Space thy throne
And Time thy sovereignty.
Now I shall BE
And I shall be supreme,
The cause and course of everything;
All songsters and the songs they sing;
The kiss, the lover, and the ring;

All things that are, all things that seem;
I shall be glutton of the hour,
All things become, all things devour.
I'll show thee every blessed minute
How much thou could'st have crowded in it.”

THE OLD YEAR :

“ I go, nor wish to stay, my son.
As thou hast said, my day is done.
Happy am I to leave thee to it,
Thy duty is clear, I know thou'lt do it—
And then grow old, and learn to rue it.
My sovereignty I yield this minute,
And all that is, or is not, in it.

For what is When, and what is Where?
That thou, my child, dost hold so fair?
Ah, soon shall knowledge come to thee,
And demonstrate thy vanity.
This empire, bah! thou'rt mad to wish it:
Ere long thou'lt hum and haw and pish it.
What are thy vaunted Space and Time
But figures of speech, a poet's rhyme,

Conditions of a madman's dream,
That what is not, to us may seem;
Aspects of Universal Naught,
The mannerisms of our thought,
A grimace or a squint.
But now I hear the midnight chime,
The future is here, the future is thine,
And all that is, I now resign,
For thee to find there's nothing in't."

INVOCATION TO MINERVA.

Spirit of sweet poesy,
Mother of man's loveliest dreams,
Shed on me, thine acolyte,
More of thy divinest beams.

O give me answer.
Tell me why
That which is here,
Here 'fore mine eye,
In my nostril, in mine ear,
Here on my tongue, here in mine arms,
That which is ever 'now,' ne'er charms
Nor stirs mine eager sense,
As that experience
Once known, and now forever lost,
Or that by which my soul was never tossed?
Why do the near
Seek their perfection in the far?
And they which never were
Fulfil the things that are?

O give me answer!
This loosely-petalled rose
That lifts and falls without repose
With every wind that haply blows,
Pray tell me why its perfume never seems
So sleepy-sweet as is the perfume of the rose
That steals its way
Into my dreams

Of yesterday?
Even its name
Writ in its cold black letters
And seen upon a printed page,
Can put the present rose to shame,
Can loose my spirit's fetters
And forge me wings
Wherewith I fly
Happy and high
To faery realms where flit ineffable things.

Tell me why
I listen to some mighty moving symphony
Or to the silver raindrops of the clavichord
As stolid as a fattened sheep,
Yet knowing that to-morrow I shall weep,
Rememb'ring beauty now ignored.
And when the lambkin Spring comes leaping o'er
the hills
That shout their young hosannas to the skies,
Why does my heart know pain, a vain regret
For the Springs that used to be,
For the Springs I yet shall see?
Why then do I mourn
The winter that is past,
The bite of the blast
That drove me shivering indoors,
To crouch where blazing logs were massed?

Must I always pine for alien shores,
Till there, I sigh for songs of home?