

**THE HILL OF
STONES AND
OTHER POEMS**

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The Hill of Stones and Other Poems by S. Weir Mitchell

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S. WEIR MITCHELL

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AND

OTHER POEMS

BY

S. WEIR MITCHELL, M. D.



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M.P.S.

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THE HILL OF STONES:

A LEGEND OF FONTAINEBLEAU.

WE two, my guide and I, through dusty ways
And formal avenues of well pruned trees,
Went past the village and thy dark gray walls,
Antique, deserted Fontainebleau; and still
With talk of him the shade of whose despair
Lies on thy court-yard yet, we loitering
Strolled through the deeper wood, and found
at last .

A barren space that crowned a hill's green
slope,

Where, lonely as a king, a single oak,
Crippled in boisterous battle with the winds,
And gay with leafy flattery of the spring,
Seemed like an old man, cheated suddenly

With some sweet dream of childhood's tender
hours.

"Here let us rest," he said, and casting down
His woodman's staff set out upon the grass
Twin flasks of Léoville and fair white loaves;
There as at ease we lay, and ate and drank,
My roving gaze in pleasant wanderings went
Down the green hill, along the valley's
range.

The noon-day sun hung half asleep in heaven,
And in the drowsied wood no leaflet's stir
Broke the still shadows slumbering on the
ground.

Adown the hill, beside a brook that lay
A silver thread, heat-wasted, — far below,
Gaunt rocks in wild confusion tumbled lay,
Thick strewn along the narrowing vale, and barred
The distant thickets with their broken lines.
High on the further hill, twin mount to ours,
A single slab, time-worn, imperial, towered,

And all around it cumbering the sod
A stern gray host of barren rocks were cast
Each upon each,— as after battle lie
The dead upon the dead, to war no more,—
Whilst over them the hot and curdled air
Shook in uneasy whirls that broke the crests
Of distant trees and hill-tops far away.
In musing wonder tranced I lay and gazed
Down the cleft valley o'er the waste of stones,—
The while my comrade, stretched upon the
 grass,
Lay whistling cheerily his ballad gay
Of good king Dagobert; or smiling told,
With frequent urging, in his rough patois,
Some broken bit of legendary lore,
And at the last a story of these stones.

A thousand noisy years ago, 't is said,
Along yon silent vale at eventide
A bearded king, grown weary of the chase,

Rode thoughtful home, but pausing here awhile,
Said: "When life palls, and I no more can ride
With lance in rest, or smite with gleaming
blade,

When sorrows sweeten the near cup of death,
Then in this valley's quiet I will build
A palace, where the wise and old shall come,
And none shall talk of what has been, and all
Shall ponder, with clear vision looking on
To that which is to be."

Then pensive still

He turned away, and westward rode again,
Whilst after him an hundred barons came,
And riding swiftly, starred at intervals
The dark wood spaces with their robes of
gold.

Next morn at Fontainebleau the bearded king
Held, neath the oaks, his court, when suddenly
A young knight, breaking through the outer
guard,