

**A THANKSGIVING STORY;
EMBODYING THE BALLAD
OF "BETSEY AND I ARE
OUT" AND OTHER POEMS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649133475

A thanksgiving story; embodying the ballad of "Betsey and I are out" and other poems by N. S. Emerson

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N. S. EMERSON

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A, THANKSGIVING STORY;

EMBODYING

THE BALLAD

OF

"BETSEY AND I ARE OUT"

AND

OTHER POEMS,

BY

N. S. EMERSON.

Printed by
N. S. Emerson.



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NEW YORK :

G. W. Carleton & Co., Publishers.

LONDON: S. LOW & CO.

M. DCCC. LXXIII.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1873, by
N. S. EMERSON,
In the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

Stereotyped at the
WOMEN'S PRINTING HOUSE,
28, 44 and 60 Park Street,
New York.

TO

MY MOTHER

(WHO WILL RECOGNIZE EVERY ACTOR IN THIS HOMELY DRAMA)

I DEDICATE MY BOOK,

WISHING ONLY IT WERE BETTER WORTH

The Patient and Partial Personal

THAT I KNOW

SHE WILL GIVE IT.

New York, 1873.

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I.

THE STORY.

'Tis Christmas eve! The snow is falling fast,
 The sky is thick with clouds, that hurry by
 Like chariots of midnight, wreathed in smoke;
 And not a living thing is out o' doors.
 Within, the firelight glows upon the hearth.
 The ruddy hearth, with polished fire-dogs graced,
 Shines yellower on the yellow-sanded floor,
 Touches the tall, old-fashioned, cuckoo clock,
 And lights the crook-necks, and the almanac,
 Hung on a friendly beam, half out of sight.
 Ah! blessed firelight, flickering through the room,
 As if to compensate for lack of moon
 And shining stars outside.

We gather round,
 While yet the candles stand unlighted near,
 Like white-robed maidens, dainty, shy, and prim,
 Until their crown of glory comes to bring
 Life, usefulness, and martyrdom, and death.
 Almost as strangers gather we, yet bound
 By viewless cord of sympathy, or kin,
 Or marriage covenant, which, more than tie
 Of consanguinity, seems sacred now;
 For we've been summoned from far-distant homes
 On a strange errand.

Listen, while I try
 To make it plain to you, though this, I say,

That it is more like dreamland e'en to me,
 Than sober, staid, New England verity.
 There's Grandsire, in the chimney-corner wide,
 And Grandma, nestled cosily beside,
 In their two high-backed, wide-armed, oaken chairs,
 That they have sat in almost every night
 For more than sixty years.

Grandma, for once,
 Lets her thin hands lie idle in her lap
 Without their knitting, and the 'customed click
 Of swiftly-moving needles.

Grandsire says,
 That, fifty years ago, they filled those chairs
 Plump full, from arm to arm ; but now they might
 Both sit in one, and still have room to spare.

For they are old, are very old indeed.
 Oh, happy fate, to live so long on earth,
 And bear such strong, fond, loving hearts through all.
 Yet they have tasted sorrow, walked with grief,
 And shrunk away from trouble oft, ere now.
 Of their twelve children five have gone before
 To faith's bright haven ; and the golden door
 Swings lightlier on its hinges every time ;
 And nearer draws the Heaven toward which they climb,
 And brighter glows the star of hope, and still
 More radiant burns the light on Zion's hill.
 And six are living still—are here to-night.
 I hear their voices talking o'er old times,
 And soon they will be telling stories quaint,
 And laughing at each other's kindly jests.
 But one—alas ! we know not where he is ;
 Or if the sea has 'whelmed him, or the strife
 Of battle stricken out his changeful life.
 We do not often talk of him. But now,