

VERSE

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Verse by Henry Webster Parker

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HENRY WEBSTER PARKER

VERSE

V E R S E

BY

H. W. P.

[i.e., Henry Webster Parker.]

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A few words here, to *acquaintances*, may save much oral repetition.

This booklet is printed, first and chiefly, as a medium of sympathy between the writer and persons of like tastes. Next, to make up for the crudeness of a volume put forth hastily a few years since, from a western press,—a part of which volume is revised and included in this. Also, to vindicate, though never so little, a faith and a vocation that often are unfairly thought to be, or made to be, adverse to naturalness and genial culture.

Beyond these reasons, it is enough that the soul delights to express itself in all ways, honors and cherishes its true human experiences, even the most trifling, and is moved to share them with other minds. The title-page may be taken as a sign that the writer does not much affect a rhymers' reputation—fabled grapes in the best sense, and not desirable in the common acceptation.

Of poetizing, enough to say, it rejuvenates life; it educates in all beauty; it sharpens and refines all perception; it disciplines in all use of language; it trains to a better appreciation and elocution of all poetry; it crystallizes many a sweet and fleeting impression, else lost; it may coin many a golden truth that never would be unearthed from a treatise or sermon, and never so well remembered in the form of prose; it helps to fill the world with song, which, of its own nature, tends to "whatsoever things are true, are pure, are lovely." It is work; yet it may

serve as recreation ; and all persons have their diversions, of some sort.

A title like "Vignettes" is a small matter and common property ; but it may be well to say that the heading was printed in these pages before another book appeared in which the same word is put to similar use.

While these leaves were being arranged in rare moments of leisure, civil war darkened the land. But the birds did not stop singing.

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VERSE.

THE RAVINE.

Far in Eden's sunny upland,
Sweet the stream began to flow ;
Now, between o'erhanging ledges,
Down a shadowy gulf we go.
Only here and there a sunbeam
Slips the fir-tree's fingers through ;
Only from a sky of azure
Falls a light of silver-blue.

All along the rocky channel
Little rifts of progress gleam ;
Bubbles from the past are circling
Where the slower waters dream.
Tuneful silence—tender beauty !—
Moss and fern and fragrant wood,
Lonely bird and bird-like gurgle
Of the ever-gliding flood !

List! a deep and deeper murmur
In the air and in the ground—
See! a rush of glassy rapids,
Sudden brink and depth profound!
Gloom and roar and wraith of vapor—
Phantom of a death abhorred!
Foam-white fear and seething passion—
'Tis a great day of the Lord!

Down we step from shelf to crevice,
Down from branch to branch below—
Now, 'tis passed! and with the torrent
Through still shades again we go;—
Then again a roar, a tumult!
Often, grander, are the falls,
Steeper slants the hill to valley,
Higher loom the Future's walls.

Weary pathway—is it endless?
When the opening shall we find
Where the floods, their struggle over,
Through millennial meadows wind?
Yet, if ere we find we perish,
Could we choose sublimer place—
Time's wild cataract beholding,
And the rainbow on its face!