

The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The tide rises, the tide falls,
 The twilight darkens, the curlew calls;
 Along the sea-sands damp and brown
 The traveler hastens toward the town,` 5
 And the tide rises, the tide falls.

Darkness settles over roofs and walls,
 But the sea, the sea in the darkness calls;
 The little waves, with their soft, white hands,
 Efface the footprints in the sands, 10
 And the tide rises, the tide falls.

The morning breaks; the steeds in their stalls
 Stamp and neigh, as the hostler calls;
 The day returns, but nevermore
 Returns the traveler to the shore, 15
 And the tide rises, the tide falls.

The Cross of Snow

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

In the long, sleepless watches of the night,
 A gentle face — the face of one long dead —
 Looks at me from the wall, where round its head
 The night-lamp casts a halo of pale light.
 Here in this room she died; and soul more white
 Never through martyrdom of fire was led
 To its repose; nor can in books be read
 The legend of a life more benedight.
 There is a mountain in the distant West
 That, sun-defying, in its deep ravines
 Displays a cross of snow upon its side.
 Such is the cross I wear upon my breast
 These eighteen years, through all the changing scenes
 And seasons, changeless since the day she died.

The First Snowfall

James Russell Lowell

The snow had begun in the gloaming,
 And busily all the night
 Had been heaping field and highway
 With a silence deep and white.

Every pine and fir and hemlock 5
 Wore ermine too dear for an earl,
 And the poorest twig on the elm tree
 Was ridged inch deep with pearl.

From sheds new-roofed with Carrara
 Came chanticleer's muffled crow, 10
 The stiff rails softened to swan's down,
 And still fluttered down the snow.

I stood and watched by the window
 The noiseless work of the sky,
 And the sudden flurries of snowbirds, 15
 Like brown leaves whirling by.

I thought of that mound in sweet Auburn
 Where a little headstone stood;
 How the flakes were folding it gently,
 As did robins the babes in the wood. 20

Up spoke our own little Mabel,
 Saying, "Father, who makes it snow?"
 And I told of the good All-Father
 Who cares for us here below.

Again I looked at the snowfall, 25
 And thought of the leaden sky
 That arched o'er our first great sorrow,
 When that mound was heaped so high.

I remembered the gradual patience
 That fell from that cloud like snow, 30
 Flake by flake, healing and hiding,
 The scar that renewed our woe.

And again to the child I whispered,
 "The snow that husheth all,
 Darling, the merciful Father 35
 Alone can make it fall!"

Then, with eyes that saw not, I kissed her;
 And she, kissing back, could not know
 That my kiss was given to her sister,
 Folded close under deepening snow. 40

Thanatopsis

William Cullen Bryant

To him who in the love of Nature holds
 Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
 A various language; for his gayer hours
 She has a voice of gladness, and a smile
 And eloquence of beauty, and she glides 5
 Into his darker musings, with a mild
 And healing sympathy, that steals away
 Their sharpness, ere he is aware. When thoughts
 Of the last bitter hour come like a blight
 Over thy spirit, and sad images 10
 Of the stern agony, and shroud, and pall
 And breathless darkness, and the narrow house,
 Make thee to shudder, and grow sick at heart; --
 Go forth, under the open sky, and list
 To Nature's teachings, while from all around -- 15
 Earth and her waters, and the depths of air --
 Comes a still voice -- Yet a few days, and thee
 The all-beholding sun shall see no more
 In all his course; nor yet in the cold ground,
 Where thy pale form was laid, with many tears, 20
 Nor in the embrace of ocean, shall exist
 Thy image. Earth, that nourished thee, shall claim
 Thy growth, to be resolved to earth again,
 And, lost each human trace, surrendering up
 Thine individual being, shalt thou go 25
 To mix forever with the elements,
 To be a brother to the insensible rock
 And to the sluggish clod, which the rude swain
 Turns with his share, and treads upon. The oak
 Shall send his roots abroad, and pierce thy mold. 30

Yet not to thine eternal resting-place
 Shalt thou retire alone, nor couldst thou wish
 Couch more magnificent. Thou shalt lie down
 With patriarchs of the infant world -- with kings,
 The powerful of the earth -- the wise, the good, 35
 Fair forms, and hoary seers of ages past,
 All in one mighty sepulcher. -- The hills
 Rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun, -- the vales
 Stretching in pensive quietness between;
 The venerable woods -- rivers that move 40
 In majesty, and the complaining brooks
 That make the meadows green; and poured round all,
 Old Ocean's gray and melancholy waste, --
 Are but the solemn decorations all
 Of the great tomb of man. The golden sun, 45
 The planets, all the infinite hosts of heaven,
 Are shining on the sad abodes of death,
 Through the still lapse of ages. All that tread
 The globe are but a handful to the tribes
 That slumber in its bosom. -- Take the wings 50

Of morning, pierce the Barcan wilderness,
 Or lose thyself in the continuous woods
 Where rolls the Oregon, and hears no sound,
 Save his own dashings -- yet the dead are there:
 And millions in those solitudes, since first 55
 The flight of years began, have laid them down
 In their last sleep -- the dead reign there alone.
 So shalt thou rest, and what if thou withdraw
 In silence from the living, and no friend
 Take note of thy departure? All that breathe 60
 Will share thy destiny. The gay will laugh
 When thou art gone, the solemn brood of care
 Plod on, and each one as before will chase
 His favorite phantom; yet all these shall leave
 Their mirth and their employments, and shall come 61
 And make their bed with thee. As the long train
 Of ages glides away, the sons of men,
 The youth in life's fresh spring, and he who goes
 In the full strength of years, matron and maid,
 The speechless babe, and the gray-headed man -- 65
 Shall one by one be gathered to thy side,
 By those, who in their turn shall follow them.

So live, that when thy summons comes to join
 The innumerable caravan, which moves
 To that mysterious realm, where each shall take 70
 His chamber in the silent halls of death,
 Thou go not, like the quarry slave at night,
 Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed
 By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,
 Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch 75
 About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.