

A close-up photograph of a large, dense cluster of red roses. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some fully open and others as buds. The petals are a vibrant red color, and the green leaves are visible between the flowers. The background is slightly blurred, emphasizing the foreground flowers.

***JAMES RUSSELL
LOWELL***

***THE COMPLETE
POETICAL WORKS
OF JAMES
RUSSELL LOWELL***

James Russell Lowell

The Complete Poetical Works of James Russell Lowell

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Gone, gone from us! and shall we see
Those sibyl-leaves of destiny,
Those calm eyes, nevermore?
Those deep, dark eyes so warm and bright,
Wherein the fortunes of the man
Lay slumbering in prophetic light,

In characters a child might scan?
So bright, and gone forth utterly!
Oh stern word—Nevermore!

The stars of those two gentle eyes 10
Will shine no more on earth;
Quenched are the hopes that had their birth,
As we watched them slowly rise,
Stars of a mother's fate;
And she would read them o'er and o'er,
Pondering, as she sate,
Over their dear astrology,
Which she had conned and conned before,
Deeming she needs must read aright 19
What was writ so passing bright.
And yet, alas! she knew not why.
Her voice would falter in its song,
And tears would slide from out her eye,
Silent, as they were doing wrong.
Oh stern word—Nevermore!

The tongue that scarce had learned to claim
An entrance to a mother's heart
By that dear talisman, a mother's name,
Sleeps all forgetful of its art!
I loved to see the infant soul 30
(How mighty in the weakness
Of its untutored meekness!)
Peep timidly from out its nest,
His lips, the while,
Fluttering with half-fledged words,
Or hushing to a smile

That more than words expressed,
When his glad mother on him stole
And snatched him to her breast!
Oh, thoughts were brooding in those eyes, 40
That would have soared like strong-winged birds
Far, far into the skies,
Gladding the earth with song,
And gushing harmonies,
Had he but tarried with us long!
Oh stern word—Nevermore!
 How peacefully they rest,
Crossfolded there
Upon his little breast,
Those small, white hands that ne'er were still before, 50
But ever sported with his mother's hair,
Or the plain cross that on her breast she wore!
Her heart no more will beat
To feel the touch of that soft palm,
That ever seemed a new surprise
Sending glad thoughts up to her eyes
To bless him with their holy calm,—
Sweet thoughts! they made her eyes as sweet.
How quiet are the hands
That wove those pleasant bands!
But that they do not rise and sink 61
With his calm breathing, I should think
That he were dropped asleep.
Alas! too deep, too deep
Is this his slumber!
Time scarce can number

The years ere he shall wake again.
Oh, may we see his eyelids open then!
Oh stern word—Nevermore!

As the airy gossamere, 70
Floating in the sunlight clear,
Where'er it toucheth clingeth tightly,
Bound glossy leal or stump unsightly,
So from his spirit wandered out
Tendrils spreading all about,
Knitting all things to its thrall
With a perfect love of all:
Oh stern word—Nevermore!

He did but float a little way
Adown the stream of time, 80
With dreamy eyes watching the ripples play,
Or hearkening their fairy chime;
His slender sail
Ne'er felt the gale;
He did but float a little way,
And, putting to the shore
While yet 't was early day,
Went calmly on his way,
To dwell with us no more!
No jarring did he feel, 90
No grating on his shallop's keel;
A strip of silver sand
Mingled the waters with the land
Where he was seen no more:
Oh stern word—Nevermore!

Full short his journey was; no dust
Of earth unto his sandals gave;
The weary weight that old men must,
He bore not to the grave.
He seemed a cherub who had lost his way 100
And wandered hither, so his stay
With us was short, and 't was most meet
That he should be no deliver in earth's clod,
Nor need to pause and cleanse his feet
To stand before his God:
Oh blest word—Evermore!

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The sea is lonely, the sea is dreary,
The sea is restless and uneasy;
Thou seekest quiet, thou art weary,
Wandering thou knowest not whither;—
Our little isle is green and breezy,
Come and rest thee! Oh come hither,
Come to this peaceful home of ours,
Where evermore
The low west-wind creeps panting up the shore 9
To be at rest among the flowers;
Full of rest, the green moss lifts,
As the dark waves of the sea
Draw in and out of rocky rifts,
Calling solemnly to thee

With voices deep and hollow,—
'To the shore
Follow! Oh, follow!
To be at rest forevermore!
Forevermore!'

Look how the gray old Ocean 20
From the depth of his heart rejoices,
Heaving with a gentle motion,
When he hears our restful voices;
List how he sings in an undertone,
Chiming with our melody;
And all sweet sounds of earth and air
Melt into one low voice alone,
That murmurs over the weary sea,
And seems to sing from everywhere,—
'Here mayst thou harbor peacefully, 30
Here mayst thou rest from the aching oar;
Turn thy curved prow ashore,
And in our green isle rest forevermore!
Forevermore!'

And Echo half wakes in the wooded hill,
And, to her heart so calm and deep,
Murmurs over in her sleep,
Doubtfully pausing and murmuring still,
'Evermore!'

Thus, on Life's weary sea, 40
Heareth the marinere
Voices sweet, from far and near,
Ever singing low and clear,
Ever singing longingly.

Is it not better here to be,
Than to be toiling late and soon?
In the dreary night to see
Nothing but the blood-red moon
Go up and down into the sea;
Or, in the loneliness of day, 50
To see the still seals only
Solemnly lift their faces gray,
Making it yet more lonely?
Is it not better than to hear
Only the sliding of the wave
Beneath the plank, and feel so near
A cold and lonely grave,
A restless grave, where thou shalt lie
Even in death unquietly?
Look down beneath thy wave-worn bark, 60
Lean over the side and see
The leaden eye of the sidelong shark
Upturnèd patiently,
Ever waiting there for thee:
Look down and see those shapeless forms,
Which ever keep their dreamless sleep
Far down within the gloomy deep,
And only stir themselves in storms,
Rising like islands from beneath,
And snorting through the angry spray, 70
As the frail vessel perisheth
In the whirls of their unwieldy play;
Look down! Look down!
Upon the seaweed, slimy and dark,