



*H. M. Paston*

A  
CENTURY HENCE  
AND  
OTHER POEMS,

BY W. M. PAXTON.

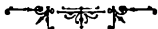
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## PREFACE.

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In the year 1876, while busily engaged in the practice of law, I suddenly became hard of hearing. I had already attained an age at which many of my profession are superseded by younger and more active men. It became necessary for me to refuse all litigated cases, and content myself with an office practice. The impairment of my usefulness was a bitter affliction. But my active and ardent nature could not brook idleness. To while away my leisure hours, and to ward off the misanthropy that often accompanies trouble or disappointment, I turned my attention to poesy. I wished to guard my heart from uncharitableness and to warm it with the genial glow of benevolence. The result has been quite a number of pieces, from which I now select a few for publication and private distribution among my friends. To them this small volume is dedicated as a holiday present and a memento of my regard. My heart is overflowing with kindness and sympathy for all mankind, and I hope I have succeeded in my purpose of printing "nothing that, dying, I shall wish to blot."

W. M. P.

*Platte City, Mo., January, 1881.*

# A CENTURY HENCE.

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## I. PROPHECIC VISIONS.

If we could look down the long vista of ages,  
And witness the changes of time—  
Or draw from Isaiah's mysterious pages,  
A key to his visions sublime,  
We'd gaze on the picture with pride and delight,  
And all its magnificence trace—  
Give honor to man for his genius and might,  
And glory to God for his grace.

## II. PROGRESS.

Behold, what astonishing progress appears,  
In literature, science and wealth,  
Within the past era, of one hundred years,  
Of energy, virtue and health.  
And now let us view the bright glories this land  
In the next hundred years shall possess—  
When genius and science, with industry's hand,  
This country and people shall bless.

## III. THE SEVEN SLEEPERS.

We've all read the mythical story of old,  
How seven young sleepers withdrew,

And hid in a cavern, where, weary and cold,  
They slept a whole century through—  
Then rose to return to their old habitation,  
But found it dismantled and hoary ;  
Their kindred were dead, and the new generation  
Refused to give heed to their story.

## IV. MY TRANCE.

And I, too, have slept a whole century through,  
And rising, go forth through my land ;  
I seek for my home, and at length find the place,  
But all is so strange and so grand ;  
My cottage, that stood on the hill, is no more ;  
A mansion now covers the ground ;  
I pass up the yard, and approach to the door,  
But none to receive me is found.

## V. THE GARDEN.

I go to the garden—in wonder I'm lost :  
The fruits of all countries are there :  
The fig and the date are not hurt by the frost—  
The orange is luscious and fair.  
Each month brings renewal of all kinds of fruits ;  
The tropical flowers grow wild ;  
The birds of the south and the African brutes  
Find the climate congenial and mild.

## VI. THE FLYING FEMALE.

In deep meditation I wandered alone,  
And lifted my gaze to the sky ;  
And lo ! in the heavens a bright object shone,  
Approaching from regions on high :

As an angel it hovered, then drop't by my side :  
    "Who are you?" I asked and retreated :  
She folded her pinions and sweetly replied :  
    "Your hostess ; come in and be seated."

## VII. RELATIVES.

No words can express my surprise when I learned  
    This lady possessed my own name ;  
She told me I'd hear, when her husband returned,  
    He, too, would relationship claim.  
By different lines, they their pedigree traced,  
    Through four generations to me ;  
And my portrait the walls of the gallery graced,  
    Where all of my race I could see.

## VIII. THE DAGUERREAN ART.

We turned to the hall, and my likeness selected,  
    Mid pictures enchantingly bright ;  
She told me photography now was perfected,  
    And colors were painted by light.  
These pictures surpassed, in their scope and design,  
    The paintings of masters of art ;  
Their colors were such as no art could combine,  
    And nature alone could impart.

## IX. RAIN PRODUCED.

She saw that my mind was bewildered and dazed,  
    And guided me forth to the green ;  
"And now," she observed, as to heaven she gazed,  
    "Not a cloud in the sky can be seen ;  
And yet I will bring, in the course of an hour,  
    A thunder-cloud, lightning and rain ;

And languishing nature, refreshed by the shower,  
Will smile in soft beauty again."

#### X. SUNSHINE.

She stepped to a rod, that extended on high,  
And touched it with magical craft—  
The gathering vapors grew thick in the sky,  
And poured out a copious draught.  
She again touched the rod, and the sun, from his path,  
Looked down with exhilarant ray ;  
All nature rejoiced in the life-giving bath,  
And mountain and meadow were gay.

#### XI. ACCLIMATURE.

We walked through the nutmeg and cinnamon bowers,  
By statues and beautiful fountains,  
Mid shrubbery, fruit trees and tropical flowers,  
By streamlets and miniature mountains—  
Saw birds, of rich plumage, from Borneo's isle,  
And humming birds brought from Brazil ;  
While songsters from Europe, the Ganges and Nile,  
Glad nature's rich orchestra fill.

#### XII. SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS.

The lady explained that, as science progressed,  
Man ruled upon sea and in air,—  
That storms were forbidden—the sea kept at rest,  
And seasons made fruitful and fair ;  
That flowers and animals, far away reared,  
Were acclimated here and grew wild ;  
And a motor, much stronger than steam, had appeared,  
Yet cheap, economic and mild.



## XIII. ATMOSPHERIC SHIP.

“ And look,” she exclaimed, as she lifted her face,  
“ There, now in the sky is a ship ;  
As swift as an eagle it moves to its place ;  
’Tis my husband returned from his trip.”  
He stepped from the vessel, as near us it came,  
And dropped upon wings from above :  
He knew, from my portrait, my kinship and name,  
And hailed me in tenderest love.

## XIV. AERIAL VOYAGE.

He told of his visit to Paris and Rome—  
Of his flight over England and Spain ;  
He found in his travels, no land like his home,  
No place where he wished to remain.  
He spoke of his trip to the banks of the Nile,  
To cities now crumbling to dust—  
Of China, Japan and Australia’s isle,  
Where all are in ruin and rust.

## XV. DESOLATION IN THE EAST.

He noted and wept, for the rapid decay,  
Of lands of the date and the lime,  
Where ignorance, vice and oppression held sway,  
And men sought a happier clime.  
But when he had passed o’er the isles of the ocean,  
And reached California’s strand,  
His spirit was filled with a thrilling emotion,  
Of pride for his own happy land.

## XVI. VIEW FROM THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

He rested on top of the high Rocky Mountains,  
And turned for a view of the West ;

The land was a garden, with forests and fountains—  
 A home for the free and the blest.  
 He turned to the East, and a picture more bright,  
 Never rose in the poet's sweet dream ;  
 The land was an Eden of love and delight,  
 With mountain and valley and stream.

#### XVII. THE WHOLE CONTINENT OURS.

In the midst, at St. Louis, the Capitol loomed,  
 With lofty and glittering steeple—  
 The seat of a Nation, where freedom first bloomed,  
 Containing a billion of people.  
 " And now," he exclaimed, " the whole Continent's ours,  
 From Panama, North to the pole !  
 For naught but the ocean can fetter our powers,  
 Or give to us less than the whole !"

#### XVIII. INVENTIONS.

As we walked to the house, my companions reported,  
 That roads through the land were not found,  
 That men, on light wings, in the atmosphere sported,  
 Or walked, as they pleased, on the ground.  
 With the new motive power, one man could do more  
 Than fifty, without it, could do ;  
 So people were able to add to their store,  
 And be generous, noble and true.

#### XIX. TELEPHONE.

An order for supper, by telephone, now,  
 Had scarcely been made, by my host,  
 When in sprang a servant, I cannot tell how,  
 With coffee, ham, biscuit and toast.

He'd come from St. Louis, three hundred miles out,  
With dishes delicious and rare ;  
There were venison, and turkey, and salmon, and trout,  
With pine-apple, orange and pear.

## XX. ARTIFICIAL LIGHT.

When supper was ended, I found it still light ;  
I looked for a lamp, and found none ;  
I stepped to the door, and looked forth on the night,  
And lo! every house had a sun.  
Above me in splendor, surpassing the moon,  
A disk, in the heavens gave light ;  
And neighboring orbs gave the brightness of noon,  
And scattered the darkness of night.

## XXI. CONCLUSION.

By reflectors, the light of these beacons was cast,  
On parlor, and chamber, and hall ;  
And candles and lamps were consigned to the past,  
And light, like the air, was for all.  
Now worn by the scenes of the day, I need rest,  
And find it in slumber elysian ;  
But rise in the morning, perplexed and distressed ;  
T'was all but a beautiful vision.