

“Four-Leaf Clover”

• 1890 •

I know a place where the sun is like gold,
And cherry blossoms burst with snow,
And down underneath is the loveliest nook
Where the four-leaf clovers grow.

One leaf is for hope, and one is for faith,
And one is for love, you know,
And God put another in for luck—
If you search, you will find where they grow.

But you must have hope, and you must have faith,
You must love and be strong—and so—
If you work, if you wait, you will find the place
Where the four-leaf clovers grow.



“FOUR-LEAF CLOVER,” Higginson’s most well-known work, was published in 1890 in Portland, Oregon’s *West Shore* magazine. It also appeared in Higginson’s books *When The Birds Go North Again* (1898) and *Four-Leaf Clover* (1901), and was widely reprinted in her lifetime. Higginson regularly received letters from people seeking permission to reprint “Four-Leaf Clover” on calendars, greeting cards, postcards, and other items. “Four-Leaf Clover” was set to music and performed internationally by renowned dramatic singers of the day. In the twenty-first century, “Four-Leaf

Clover” continues to be popular. It appears as a common verse for St. Patrick’s Day cards, on many websites, and as a frequently reprinted poem sometimes inaccurately attributed to Emily Dickinson.

Higginson responded to the poem’s popularity by adopting the clover as her identifying symbol. She named her house “Clover Hill,” her dog “Clover,” and wore four-leaf clover jewelry. In 1892, she campaigned unsuccessfully for wild clover to be the Washington State flower. In 1899, her husband—druggist and real estate investor Russell Carden Higginson—named a building in downtown Bellingham, Washington, the Clover Building, in reference to the poem. In 1900, Higginson began writing a regular column called “Clover Leaves” in the *Seattle Times* newspaper. Images of clovers adorn Higginson’s self-designed gravestone and “Four-Leaf Clover” was sung at her funeral.

Later in life, Higginson corrected the common interpretation that the poem was about luck. She explained that instead it was a poem about industrious effort: “We should never lack for ‘good luck’ which is another name for work” (Washington State Federation of Women’s Clubs 11). Having devoted her energies to becoming a prolific, professional writer in the years since she had written the poem, Higginson presented success as earned. In Higginson’s poem, the person who finds a four-leaf clover does so as the result of sustained, committed labor and not as the result of random chance.

“The Snow Pearls”

• 1897 •

I love the pale green emerald,
 The ruby’s drop of flame,
 The rare and precious sardonyx
 Of deeply envied fame;
 I love the opal’s restless fire
 With green lights interwove,
 And e’en the royal amethyst,—
 But most of all I love
 The string of snow-pearls set around
 This great blue sapphire, Puget Sound.

 The modest garnet, finely cut,
 Glams like some rich old wine;
 I hold the diamond’s crimson flash
 As something half divine;
 The turquoise—chill December’s gem—
 Blue as the blue above,
 Is precious unto every heart—
 But more than these I love
 The string of snow-pearls linked around
 This cool, blue sapphire, Puget Sound.

When up Mount Baker’s noble dome
 Struggles the morning sun,
 And waves of crimson and of gold
 Across the pale sky run;

When every fir-tree flashes out
 Like a tall gilded spire,
 Sweet as a hope rooted in Heaven,
 Springs a soft, sudden fire
 Upon the snow-pearls strung around
 This deep blue sapphire, Puget Sound.

Take, then, all jewels of the earth
 Which only gold can buy—
 Not one is worth that glistening chain
 Linked in God's pale green sky!
 Let him who will, roam East or West,
 On prairie or on sea,
 Searching for empty gems—but oh!
 Let us contented be
 With these pure snow-pearls clasped around
 Our own blue sapphire, Puget Sound.



"THE SNOW PEARLS" is a poem that was published as an illustrated book in 1897.

In the book version of this poem, striking pen-and-ink lithographic illustrations of Mount Baker and the Puget Sound region by Pacific Northwest artist Maud Miner Biglow were integrated with the poem. Each stanza was printed on a single page that was then followed by two pages of illustrations.

In "The Snow Pearls," Higginson writes within the poetic tradition of Romantic depictions of nature. Like British poet William Wordsworth and others, Higginson in this poem both closely describes the speaker's physical environment and expresses the religious fervor experienced in response to the sublime natural splendor with which the speaker is surrounded. "The Snow Pearls"

delivers the speaker's inspired reaction to the magnificent nature of the Puget Sound region.

“Sunrise on the Willamette”

• 1898 •

The sun sinks downward thro' the silver mist
That looms across the valley, fold on fold,
And sliding thro' the fields that dawn has kissed,
Willamette sweeps, each dimple set with gold.

Sweeps onward ever, curving as it goes,
Past many a hill and many a flowered lea,
Until it pauses where Columbia flows,
Deep-tongued, deep-chested, to the waiting sea.

O lovely vales thro' which Willamette slips!
O vine-clad hills that hear its soft voice call!
My heart turns ever to those sweet, cool lips!
That, passing, press each rock or grassy wall.

Thro' pasture lands, where mild-eyed cattle feed,
Thro' marshy flats, where velvet tulés grow,
Past many a rose-tree, many a singing reed,
I hear those wet lips calling, calling low.

The sun sinks downward thro' the trembling haze,
The mist flings glistening needles high and higher,
And thro' the clouds—O fair beyond all praise!—
Mount Hood leaps, chastened, from a sea of fire.



“SUNRISE ON THE WILLAMETTE” was published in 1898 in Higginson's book *When the Birds Go North Again*. It has been reprinted often, particularly in reference to the literature of Oregon.

Though Higginson lived her entire adult life in Washington, she held an enduring love for Oregon, where she spent her childhood. Through detailed description of the Willamette River this poem exalts the magnificence of Pacific Northwest nature and promotes the opportunities available to whites who settle in the West. The speaker's depiction of the river at sunrise and its progress towards the sea invokes the hopeful beginning (represented by the sunrise) of white settlement in the West and what was seen as its unstoppable progress toward greater things (represented by the vast sea).

“The Vanishing Race”

• 1911 •

Into the shadow, whose illumined crest
Speaks of the world behind them where the sun
Still shines for us whose day is not yet done,
Those last dark ones go drifting: East or West,
Or North or South—it matters not; their quest
Is toward the shadow whence it was begun;
Hope in it, Ah, my brothers! there is none;
And yet—they only seek a place to rest.

So mutely, uncomplainingly, they go!
How shall it be with us when they are gone,
When they are but a memory and a name?
May not those mournful eyes to phantoms grow—
When wronged and lonely, they have drifted on
Into the voiceless shadow whence they came?



THE SONNET “The Vanishing Race” was published in Higginson’s book *The Vanishing Race* in 1911. The poem was written in response to a 1904 photograph of the same name by well-known, prolific Seattle-based photographer and ethnographer Edward S. Curtis (1868–1952). The photograph features a line of Navaho Indians on horseback riding slowly away from the camera.

This poem accurately reflects the meanings that are suggested by Curtis’s photograph. Both the photograph and the poem

sympathetically endorse the then-dominant myth of American Indians as a vanished race, destroyed by colonization, disease, and assimilation.