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ON LIFE'S BANQUET STAIRS.

WE pass each other on life's banquet stairs;  
New guests are mounting to the festal  
light,

While we descend together to the night,  
Close muffled 'gainst the outside wintry airs.

They tread upon our shadows as they climb  
With quick, strong steps to join the crowd  
and crush.

We see in sparkling eyes and speaking blush  
How expectation gilds the coming time.

Young forms go by us tossing rosy sprays  
In brave apparel, tints of flower and bird,  
Of blossom patches by the summer stirred,  
With sheen of silk and gems that scatter rays.

Knew we such zest, true heart! when mount-  
ing up?

Such haste to lift the chalice to our lips.  
To learn if pleasure sweeter is in sips,  
Or when, with manhood's thirst, we drain the cup?

Shall we stand by and carp at these, and say—  
"Go, giddy ones, and moth-like fire your wings—  
Pleasure is pain, and laughter sorrow brings."  
Shall we speak thus, who once were young as  
they?

\* \* \* \* \*  
Farewell! we've supped. Life's wine was keen  
and bright;

Old friends move by and gain the outer door;  
The wind blows buffets with a northern roar,  
And past the shadows gleams the distant light!