

THE COLD SPRING IN NORTH SALEM

JONES V E R Y

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Edited and Annotated by Morgan Panknin
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T hou small, yet ever-bubbling spring,
 Hid by low hillocks round,
And oaks whose stretching branches fling
 Their shadows on the ground;

I stoop upon thy stony brim
 To taste thy waters sweet,
For I am weary and worn of limb,
 And joy thy sight to meet.

I would not from thy free bowl scare
 The birds from the boughs above,
But learn with them this fount to share
 As the gift of a Father's love.

Thou hast joy in this thy wilderness,
 In thy still yet constant flow,
Such as one form pure and perfect bliss
 Alone with thee can know.

Oh, seldom may the sea, that near
 Sends up its frequent tide,
Mix with thy cooling waters clear
 And in they breast abide!

And if perchance a lengthened wave
 Should o'er thy margin swell,
Quick may thy bubbling freshness save,
 And the salt brine repel.



EDITOR'S NOTE

Jones Very was born and raised in Salem, MA, and attended Harvard from 1833 to 1838 working both as a student and then as a tutor. During this time his fascination with transcendentalism grew and morphed, until he came to believe that by completely expunging self he could allow God to fully enter into himself. He believed he achieved this state in the September of 1838, subsequently being dismissed from Harvard and throwing himself completely into the writing of his poetry (Jones Very, *American Transcendentalism Web*). However, his fervor petered out after being institutionalized and spending a year preaching and attempting to gain disciples (Jones Very, *The Poetry Foundation*).

His religious fervor and ideals were inextricably connected with his poetry—especially the idea that by smothering his idea of self he could invite God into himself. This can be seen in the final stanza of the poem as the narrator says, “quick may thy bubbling freshness save, and the salt brine repel.” The image evoked being the pure spring of water repelling the polluting salt water that invades from time to time. The whole setting of the poem hinges on the spring staying fresh, as the oaks would be poisoned by high concentrations of salt (Beckerman 6), and the birds and the narrator would not be able to drink from the spring otherwise. The poem, then, heightens not only his desire for this constant state of cleansing, but also the importance that he believed was attached to such a state.

MORGAN PANKNIN



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