

Ichabod!¹

So fallen! so lost! the light withdrawn
Which once he wore!
The glory from his gray hairs gone
Forevermore!

Revile him not—the Tempter hath
A snare for all;
And pitying tears, not scorn and wrath,
Befit his fall!

Oh! dumb be passion's stormy rage,
When he who might
Have lighted up and led his age,
Falls back in night.

Scorn! would the angels laugh, to mark
A bright soul driven,
Fiend-goaded, down the endless dark,
From hope and heaven!

Let not the land, once proud of him,
Insult him now,
Nor brand with deeper shame his dim,
Dishonored brow.

But let its humbled sons, instead,
From sea to lake,
A long lament, as for the dead,
In sadness make.

Of all we loved and honored, nought
Save power remains—
A fallen angel's pride of thought,
Still strong in chains.

All else is gone; from those great eyes
The soul has fled:
When faith is lost, when honor dies,
The man is dead!

Then, pay the reverence of old days
To his dead fame;
Walk backward, with averted gaze,
And hide the shame!²

1. "Ichabod!" is an attack on Daniel Webster, whose championing of the Fugitive Slave Bill (the part of the Compromise of 1850 making it a federal crime to assist runaway slaves) infuriated the abolitionists. The title is from 1 Samuel 4.21: "And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The

glory is departed from Israel." The text is that of the first printing in *Songs of Labor, and Other Poems* (1850).

2. Alluding to Genesis 9.20–25, Whittier equates Webster's shame with that of Noah after his sons discovered him naked and drunk in his cave.