A TINKLE OF BELLS AND OTHER POEMS

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

"Pirate
Edition"

A Tinkle of Bells.

A TINKLE OF BELLS

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

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A TINKLE OF BELLS.

The light of the moon on the white of the snow,
And the answering tinkles along the street,
And our sleigh flashing by, in the glamour and glow
Of the glorious nights of the long ago,
When the laugh of her lips rang clear and sweet,
As the tinkle our horses shook out of the bells
And flung and tossed back
On our glittering track
In a shower of tremulous, murmuring swells—
Of the echoing, airy, melodious bells!
O the mirth of the bells!
And the worth of the bells!
Come tinkle again, in this dearth of the bells,
This laughter and love that I lack, yearning back,
For the faraway sound of the bells!

Ah! the bells, they were glad in the long ago!
And the tinkles they had, they have thrilled me so
I have said: "It is they and her songs and face
Make summer for me in the wintriest place!"
And now—but sobbings and sad farewells,
As I peer in the night through the sleeted pane,
Hearing a clangor and wrangle of bells,
And never a tinkle again!

The snow is a-swoon, and the moon dead white,
And the frost is wild in the air to-night!
Yet still will I linger and listen and pray
Till the sound of her voice shall come this way,
With a tinkle of bells,
And the lisp-like tread
Of the hooves of the sleigh,
And the murmurs and swells
Of the vows she said.
And O, I shall listen as madmen may,
But the tinkling bells ring down this way!—
Till again the grasp of my hand entwines
The tensioned loops of the quivering lines,
And again we ride in the wake of the pride
And the strength of the coursers, side by side;
With our faces smitten again by the spray
Of the froth of our steeds as we gallop away
In affright of the bells,
And the infinite glee and delight of the bells,
As they tinkle and tinkle and tinkle, till they
Are heard through a dawn where the mists are drawn,
And we canter and gallop and dash away
Sheer into the Judgment Day!

HAS SHE FORGOTTEN.

I.

HAS she forgotten? On this very May
We were to meet here with the birds and bees,
As on that Sabbath, underneath the trees
We strayed among the tombs, and stripped away
The vines from these old granites, cold and gray—
And yet, indeed, not grim enough were they
To stay our kisses, smiles and ecstasies.
Has she forgotten—that the May has won
Its promise?—and that the bird-songs from the tree
Are sprayed above the grasses as the sun
Might jar the dazzling dew down showeringly?
Has she forgotten life—love—everyone—
Has she forgotten me—forgotten me?

II.

Low, low down in the violets I press
My lips and whisper to her. Does she hear,
And yet hold silence, though I call her dear
Just as of old, save for the tearfulness
Of the clenched eyes, and the soul's great distress?

Has she forgotten thus the old caress
  That made our breath a quickened atmosphere
  That failed nigh unto swooning with the sheer
Delight! My arms clutch now this earthen heap
  Sodden with tears that flow on ceaselessly,
As autumn rains the long, long, long nights weep
  In memory of days that used to be—
Has she forgotten these? And, in her sleep,
  Has she forgotten me—forgotten me?

III.

To-night, against my pillow, with shut eyes,
  I mean to weld our faces—through the dense
  Incalculable darkness make pretense
That she has risen from her reveries
To mate her dreams with mine in marriages
  Of mellow palms, smooth faces, and tense ease
Of every longing nerve of indolence,—
  Lift from the grave her quiet lips, and stun
My senses with her kisses—drawl the glee
Of her glad mouth, full blithe and tenderly,
  Across mine own, forgetful if is done
The old-time intimacy when said we,
  "To-day is ours!" * * * Ah, Heaven! can it be
She has forgotten me—forgotten me?

IN DAYS TO COME.

I.

In days to come, when you and I
Wax faint and frail, and heartfires die,
  And tinkling rhymes no more obey
  The wooing lips of yesterday,
How slowly will the hours go by!
When we have drained our song cups dry,
My comrade, shall we sit and sigh,
  Child-like, o'er joys too sweet to stay,
    In days to come?

Nay! nay! we'll give old time the lie,
And, thatched with three-score years we'll try
  A rondeau or a roundelay
  As long as any lute string may
To our light touches make reply—
    In days to come.

J. N. Matthews.

II.

In days to come—whatever ache
Of age shall rack our bones, or quake

Our slackened thews—whate'er grip
Rheumatic catch us i' the hip,—
We, each one, for the other's sake,
Will of our very wailings make
Such quips of song as well may shake
The spasm'd corners from the lip—
In days to come.

Ho! ho! how our old hearts shall rake
The past up!—how our dry eyes slake
Their sight upon the dewy drip
Of juicy-ripe companionship,
And blink stars from the blind opaque—
In days to come.

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

DECEMBER DARK.

I.

THE air is chill;
The whippoorwill
Pipes mournfully behind the hill;
The dusk grows dense—
The silence tense,
And, lo, the katydids commence!

II.

Through shadowy rifts,
Of woodland lifts,
The low, slow moon, and upward drifts;
And left and right
The fire-flies light
And trail their torches through the night.

III.

In strata gray
And level lay
The mists across the face of Day;
At foot and head,
Above the dead,
The dews weep on uncomforted.

AN IDEAL.

It is a dream he has. In some strange place
That is not, as he knows, he sees her face,
And, coming thus upon it, unaware,
Set moonwise in the midnight of her hair,
He can but think him of a glimmering June
Long lost, and his soul's lips do purl a tune
Remembered of his youth. The eyes of her—
That show nor tears, nor laughter, nor surprise—
Are dim with far-off gazings, and the blur
Of dreams drawn from the depths of deepest skies,
He doth not know if any lily blows
As fair of feature, nor of any rose.

DOWN ON WRIGGLE CREEK.

Best time to kill a hog's when he's fat.—*Old Saw.*

MOSTLY, folks is law abidin',
Down on Wriggle Creek,—
Seein' they's no Squire residin'
In our bailwick;
No grand juries, nor suppeenies;
Ner no vestal rights to pick
Out yer man, jerk up and jail if
He's outragin' Wriggle Creek!

Wriggle Creek haint got no lawin',
Ner no suits to beat:
Ner no Court-house gee-and-hawin'
Like a county-seat;
Ner no waitin' round fer verdicks,
Ner no gettin' witness fees;
Ner no thiefs 'at gits "new hearin's,"
By some lawyer slick as grease!

Wriggle Creek's leadin' spirit
Is old Johnts Culwell,—
Keeps postoffice, and right near it
Owns what's called "The Grand
Hotel"—

(Warehouse now)—buys wheat and ships it;
Gits out ties and trades in stock,
And knows all the high-toned drummers
'Twixt South Bend and Mishawauk.

Last year comes along a feller—
Sharper 'an a lance,—
Stovepipe hat, and silk umbreller,
And a' all-wool pants,—
Tinkerin' of clocks and watches;
Says a trial is all he wants—
And rents out the tavern-office
Next to uncle Johnts.

Well.—He tacked up his k'dentials,
And got down to biz—
Captured Johnts by cuttin' stencils
Fer them old wheat sacks o' his.—
Fixed his clock, in the postoffice—
Painted for him, clean and slick,
'Crost his safe in gold-leaf letters,
"J. Culwell's: Wriggle Creek."

Any kind o' job you keered to
Resk him with and bring
He'd fix fer you—just appeared to
Turn his hand to anything!—
Rings, er earbobs, er umbrellas—
Glue a cheer, er chany doll,—

W'y, of all the beatin' fellers
He jest beat 'em all!

Made his friends, but wouldn't stop there,—
One mistake he learnt,
That was, sleepin' in his shop there,
And one night it burnt!
Come in one o' jest a-sweepin'
All the whole town high and dry,
And that feller, when they waked him,
Suffocatin' mighty nigh!

Johnts he drug him from the buildin'
Helpless—'peared to be,—
And the women and the childr'n
Drenchin' him with sympathy!
But I noticed Johnts helt on him
With a' extry lovin' grip,
And the men-folks gethered round him
In most warm pardenship!

That's the whole mess, grease and dopin!
Johnts safe was saved,—
But the lock was found sprung open,
And the inside caved.
Was no trial—ner no jury—
Ner no jedge ner court-house-click.
Circumstances alters cases
Down on Wriggle Creek.

NOON.

A DEEP, delicious hush in earth and sky,
  A gracious lull—since from its wakening,
  The morn has been a feverish, restless thing
In which the pulse of Summer ran too high
And riotous, as though its heart went nigh
  To bursting with delights past uttering:
  Now, as an o'er-joyed child may cease to sing
All falteringly, at play, with drowsy eye
  Draining the pictures of a fairy-tale
To brim his dreams with—There comes o'er the day
  A lothful silence, wherein all sounds fail
Like loitering tones of some sweet roundelay;
  No wakeful effort longer may avail—
The wand waves, and the dozer sinks away.

"JACK IN THE BOX."

In childish days! O memory,
You bring such curious things to me!—
Laughs to the lips—tears to the eye,
In looking on the gifts that lie
Like broken playthings scattered o'er
Imagination's nursery floor!
Did these old hands once click the key
That let "Jack's" box-lid upward fly,
And that blear-eyed, fur-whiskered elf
Leap, as though frightened at himself,
And quiveringly lean and stare
At me, his jailer, laughing there?

A child then! Now—I only know
They call me very old; and so
They will not let me have my way,
But uselessly I sit all day
Here by the chimney-jamb, and poke
The lazy fire, and smoke and smoke,
And watch the wreaths swoop up the flue,
And chuckle, as I often do,
Seeing again, all suddenly,
"Jack-in-the-box" leap up in glee,

To see how much he looks like me.
They talk; I can't hear what they say—
But I am glad clean through and through,
Sometimes, in fancying that they
Are saying, "Sweet! that fancy strays
In age back to our childish days!"

OUR OLD FRIEND NEVERFAIL.

O, IT'S good to ketch a relative 'at's richer and
don't run
When you holler out to hold up, and 'll joke and
have his fun;
It's good to hear a man called bad and then find
out he's not,
Er strike some chap they call lukewarm 'at's really
red-hot;
It's good to know the Devil's painted jest a leetle
black;
And it's good to have most anybody pat you on
the back;—
But jest the best thing in the world's our old
friend Neverfail,
When he wags yer hand as honest as an old dog
wags his tail!

I like to strike the man I owe the same time I can
pay,
And take back things I've borried, and su'prise
folks thataway;
I like to find out that the man I voted fer last
fall,
That didn't git elected, was a scoundrel after all;

I like the man that likes the pore and he'ps 'em
when he can;
I like to meet a ragged tramp 'at's still a gentle-
man;
But most I like—with you, my boy—our old
friend Neverfail,
When he wags yer hand as honest as an old dog
wags his tail!

THE CYCLONE.

I.

So lone I stood the very trees seemed drawn
  In conference with themselves—intense—
    intense
Seemed everything—the summer splendor on
  The sight—magnificence!

II.

A babe's life might not lighter fall and die
  Than failed the sunlight; though the hour was
    noon
The palm of midnight might not lighter lie
  Upon the brow of June.

III.

With eyes upraised, I saw the underwings
  Of swallows—gone the instant afterward—
While from the elms there came strange twitter-
    ings,
  Stilled scarce ere they were heard.

IV.

The river seemed to shiver; and, far down
  Its darkened length, I saw the sycamores

Lean inward closer, under the vast frown
  That weighed above the shores.

V.

There was a roar, born of some awful burst—
  And one lay, shrieking, chattering, in my path—
Flung—he or I—out of some space accurst
  As of Jehovah's wrath.

VI.

Nor barely had he wreaked his latest prayer,
  Ere back the noon flashed o'er the ruin done,
And, o'er uprooted forests, tousled there,
  The birds sang in the sun.

KINGRY'S MILL.

On old Brandy-wine—about
Where White's lots is now laid out,
And the old creek narries down
To the ditch that splits the town,—
Kingry's Mill stood: Hardly see
Where the old dam ust to be;
Shaller, long, dry trought o' grass
Where the old race ust to pass!

That's been forty years ago—
Forty years of frost and snow—
Forty years of shade and shine
Sence them boyhood days o' mine!—
All the old landmarks o' town
Changed about, er rotted down!
Where's the tan-yard? Where's the still?
Tell me where's old Kingry's Mill!

Don't seem furder back, to me,
I'll be dogg'd! than yisterday,
Sence us fellers in bare feet
And straw hats went through the wheat,
Cuttin' crost the shortest shoot
Fer that-air old ellum-root

Jest above the mill-dam, where
The blame' cars now crosses there!

Through the willers down the crick
We could see the old mill stick
Its red gable up, as if
It jest knowed we'd stol'd the skiff!
See the winders in the sun,
Blink like they was wonderun'
What the miller ort to do
With sech boys as me and you!

But old Kingry!—who could fear
That old chap, with all his cheer?—
Leanin' at the winder-sill,
Er the half-door of the mill,
Swoppin' lies, and pokin' fun
'N-jigglin' like his hoppers done,
Laughin' grists o' gold and red
Right out o' the wagon-bed!

What did he keer where we went?—
"Jest keep out o' devilment,
And don't fool round the belts,
Bolts, ner burrs, ner nothin' else
'Bout the whole machinery,
And that's all I'll ast!" says-ee.
Then we'd climb the stairs, and play
In the bran-bins half the day!

Rickollect the dusty wall,
And the spider-webs and all!
Rickollect the trimblin' spout
Where the meal come josslin' out—
Stand and comb your fingers through
The fool-truck an hour er two—
Felt so sort o' warm-like and
Soothin' to a feller's hand!

Climb, high up above the stream,
And "coon" out the wobbly beam,
And peek down from out the lof'
Where the weatherboards was off—
Gee-mun-nee! w'y it takes grit
Even just to think of it!—
Lookin' 'way down there below
On the worter roarin' so!

Rickollect the flume and wheel,
And the worter, slosh and reel,
And jest ravel out in froth
Flossier'n satin cloth!
Rickollect them paddles jest
Knock the bubbles galley-west,
And plunge under, and come up,
Drippin' like a worter-pup!

And, to see them old things gone
That I onc't was bettin' on,

In rale pint o' fact, I feel
Kindo' like that worter-wheel,—
Sorto' drippy-like and wet
Round the eyes—but paddlin' yet,
And, in mem'ry, loafin' still
Down around old Kingry's Mill!

"THE PREACHER'S BOY."

I RECKOLLECT the little tad, back, years and years ago—
"The Preacher's Boy" that every one despised and hated so!
A meek-faced little feller, with white eyes and foxy hair,
And a look like he expected serious trouble everywhere;
A sort o' fixed expression of suspicion in his glance;
His bare feet always scratched with briars; and green spots on his pants;
Molasses marks along his sleeves; his cap-rim turned behind—
And so it is "The Preacher's Boy" is brought again to mind!

My fancy even brings the sly marauder back so plain,
I see him jump our garden fence and slip off down the lane;
And I seem to holler at him and git back the old reply:

"Oh, no! your peaches is too green 'for such a worm as I!'"
For he scorned his father's phrases—every holy one he had—
"As good a man," folks put it, "as that boy of his was bad!"
And again, from their old buggy shed, I hear "the rod unspared"
That never "spoiled the child," of course, for which nobody cared!

If any neighbor ever found his gate without a latch;
Or rines around the edges of his watermelon patch;
His pastur'-bars left open; or his pump-spout chocked with clay,
He'd swear 'twas "that infernal preacher's boy," right away!
When strings were stretched acrost the street at night, and someone got
An everlastin' tumble, and his nose broke', like as not,
And laid it on "the preacher's boy" — no powers, low nor high,
Could ever quite substantiate that boy's alibi!

And did nobody like the boy? Well, all the pets in town
Would eat out of his fingers; and canaries would come down
And leave their swingin' perches and their fish-bone jist to pick
The little warty knuckles that the dogs would leap to lick—
No little snarlin', snappin' fiste but what would leave his bone
To foller if he whistled in that tantalizin' tone
That made the goods-box whittler blasphemously protest
He couldn't tell, 'twixt dog and boy, which one was ornriest!

'Twas such a little cur as this, once, when the crowd was thick
Along the streets, a drunken corner-loafer tried to kick,
When a sudden foot behind him tripped him up, and, falling so,
He "marked his man," and jerked his gun—drawed up and let 'er go!
And the crowd swarmed round the victim—holding close against his breast
The little dog, unharmed, in arms that still as they caressed

Grew rigid in their last embrace, as with a smile of joy
He recognized the dog was saved. So died "The Preacher's Boy!"

When it appeared, before the 'Squire, that fatal pistol-ball
Was fired at "a dangerous beast," and not the boy at all,
And the facts set forth established, it was like-befittin' then
To order out a possy of the "city councilmen"
To kill the dog! But, strange to tell, they searched the country round,
And never hide nor hair of that "said" dog was found!
And, somehow, then I sort o' thought—and half way think to-day—
The spirit of "The Preacher's Boy" had whistled him away.

ON THE SUNNY SIDE.

Hi and whoop-hooray boys!
  Sing a song of cheer!
Here's a holiday, boys,
  Lasting half a year!
Round the world, and half is
  Shadow we have tried;
Now we're where the laugh is,—
  On the sunny side!

Pigeons coo and mutter,
  Strutting high aloof
Where the sunbeams flutter
  Through the stable roof.
Hear the chickens cheep, boys,
  And the hen with pride
Clucking them to sleep, boys,
  On the sunny side!

Hear the clacking guinea;
  Hear the cattle moo;
Hear the horses whinny,
  Looking out at you!

On the hitching-block, boys,
  Grandly satisfied,
See the old peacock, boys,
  On the sunny side!

Robbins in the peach-tree;
  Bluebirds in the pear;
Blossoms over each tree
  In the orchards there!
All the world's in joy, boys,
  Glad and glorified
As a romping boy, boys,
  On the sunny side!

Where's a heart as mellow?
  Where's a soul as free?
Where is any fellow
  We would rather be?
Just ourselves or none, boys,
  World around and wide,
Laughing in the sun, boys,
  On the sunny side!

WE TO SIGH INSTEAD OF SING!

"RAIN and rain! and rain and rain!"
  Yesterday we muttered
Grimly, as the grim refrain
  That the thunders uttered.
All the heavens under cloud—
  All the sunshine sleeping;
All the grasses limply bowed
  With their weight of weeping.

Sigh and sigh! and sigh and sigh!
  Never end of sighing;
Rain and rain for our reply—
  Hopes half-drowned and dying;
Peering through the window pane,
  Naught but endless raining–
Endless sighing, and, as vain,
  Endlessly complaining.

Shine! and shine! and shine! and shine!
  Ah! to-day, the splendor!—
All this glory yours and mine—
  God! but God is tender!

We to sigh instead of sing
  Yesterday, in sorrow,
While the Lord was fashioning
  This for us to-morrow!

THE BEAUTIFUL CITY.

THE Beautiful City! Forever
  Its rapturous praises resound,
And we fain would behold it—but never
  A glimpse of its glory is found.
We slacken our lips at the tender
  White breasts of our mothers to hear
Of its marvelous beauty and splendor;—
  We see—but the gleam of a tear!

Yet never the story may tire us—
  First graven in symbols of stone—
Rewritten on scrolls of papyrus,
  And parchment, and scattered and blown
By the winds of the tongues of all nations,
  Like a litter of leaves wildly whirled
Down the rack of a hundred translations,
  From the earliest lisp of the world.

We compass the earth and the ocean,
  From the Orient's uttermost light,
To where the last ripple in motion
  Lips hem of the skirt of the night,—
But the Beautiful City evades us—
  No spire of it glints in the sun—

No glad-bannered battlement shades us
  When all our long journey is done.

Where lies it? We question and listen;
  We lean from the mountain, or mast,
And see but dull earth, or the glisten
  Of seas inconceivably vast:
The dust of the one blurs our vision—
  The glare of the other our brain,
Nor city nor island elysian
    n all of the land or the main!

We kneel in dim fanes where the thunders
  Of organs tumultuous roll,
And the longing heart listens and wonders,
  And the eyes look aloft from the soul,
But the chanson grows fainter and fainter,
  Swoons wholly away and is dead;
And our eyes only reach where the painter
  Has dabbled a saint overhead.

The Beautiful City! O mortal,
  Fare hopefully on in thy quest,
Pass down through the green grassy portal
  That leads to the valley of rest.
There first passed the One who, in pity
  Of all thy great yearning, awaits
To point out the Beautiful City,
  And loosen the trump at the gates.

THE KIND OLD MAN.

THE kind old man—the mild old man—
  Who smiled on the boys at play,
Dreaming, perchance, of his own glad youth,
  When he was as blithe and gay!

And the larger urchin tossed the ball,
  And the lesser held the bat—
Though the kindly old man's eyes were blurred,
  He could even notice that!

But suddenly he was shocked to hear
  Words that I dare not write,
And he hastened, in his kindly way,
  To curb them as he might!

And he said—"Tut! tut! you naughty boy
  With the ball! for shame!" and then,—
"You boy with the bat, whack him over the head
  If he calls you that again!"

The kind old man—the mild old man—
  Who gazed at the boys at play,
Dreaming, perchance, of his own wild youth,
  When he was as tough as they!

A VISION OF SUMMER.

'TWAS a marvelous vision of Summer,—
  That morning the dawn was late,
And came, like a long dream-ridden guest,
  Through the gold of the Eastern gate.

Languid it came, and halting,
  As one that yawned, half roused,
With lifted arms and indolent lids,
  And eyes that drowsed and drowsed.

A glimmering haze hung over
  The face of the smiling air;
And the green of the trees, and the blue of the leas
  And the skies gleamed everywhere.

Emeralds of dew on the grasses;
  The rose with rubies set;
On the lily, diamonds; and amethysts
  Pale on the violet.

There were the pinks of the fuchsias,
  And the peony's crimson hue,
The lavender of the hollyhocks,
  And the morning-glory's blue:

The pallor of the pansy bloom,
  And the passionate flush of the face
Of the velvet-rose; and the thick perfume
  Of the locust every place.

And the air and the sun and the shadows
  Were wedded and made as one;
And the winds ran over the meadows
  As little children run:—

And the winds poured over the meadows,
  And along the willowy way
The river ran, with its ripples shod
  With the sunshine of the day,—

O, the winds flowed over the meadows
  In a tide of eddies and calms,
And the bared brow felt the touch of it
  As a sweetheart's tender palms.

And the lark went palpitating
  Up through the glorious skies,
His song spilled down from the blue profound
  As a song from Paradise.

And here was the loitering current—
  Stayed by a drift of sedge
And sodden logs scummed thick with the gold
  Of the pollen from edge to edge.

The catbird piped in the hazel,
  And the harsh kingfisher screamed,
And the crane, in amber and oozy swirls
  Dozed in the reeds and dreamed.

And in through the tumbled driftage,
  And the tangled roots below,
The waters warbled and gurgled and lisped
  Like the lips of long ago.

And the senses caught, through the music,
  Twinkles of dabbling feet,
And glimpses of faces in coverts green,
  And voices faint and sweet.

And back from the lands enchanted
  Where my earliest mirth was born,
The trill of a laugh was blown to me
  Like the blare of an elfin horn.

Again I romped through the clover,
  And again I lay supine
On grassy swards, where the skies, like eyes,
  Look lovingly back in mine.

And anon o'er my vision floated
  Misty illusive things,
Trailing strands of the gossamer
  On heavenward wanderings.

Figures that veered and wavered,
  Luring the sight, and then,
Glancing away into nothingness,
  And blinked into shape again.

From out far depths of the forest,
  Ineffably sad and lorn,
Like the yearning cry of a long-lost love,
  The moan of the dove was borne.

And through the lush glooms of the thicket
  The flash of the redbird's wings
On branches of star-white blooms that shook
  And thrilled with his twitterings.

Through mossy and viney vistas,
  Soaked ever with deepest shade,
Dimly the dull owl stared and stared
  From his bosky ambuscade.

And up through the rifted treetops,
  That signaled the wayward breeze,
I saw the hulk of the hawk becalmed
  Far out on the azure seas.

Then sudden an awe fell on me,
  As the hush of the golden day
Rounded to noon, as a May to June,
  That a lover has dreamed away.

And I heard, in the breathless silence,
  And the full glad light of the sun,
The tinkle and drip of a timorous shower—
  Ceasing as it begun.

And my thoughts, like the leaves and grasses,
  In a rapture of joy and pain,
Seemed fondled and petted and beat upon
  With a tremulous patter of rain.

BACK FROM A TWO YEARS' SENTENCE.

BACK from a two years' sentence!
  And though it had been ten,
You think, I were scarred no deeper,
  In the eyes of my fellowmen.
"My fellow-men?"—sounds like a satire,
  You think—and I so allow,
Here, in my home since childhood—
  Yet more than a stranger now!

Pardon! Not wholly a stranger,
  For I have a wife and child:
That woman has wept for two long years,
  And yet last night she smiled!
Smiled, as I leapt from the platform
  Of the midnight train, and then—
All that I know was that smile of hers,
  And our babe in my arms again!

Back from a two-years' sentence—
  But I have thought the whole thing through—
A hint of it came when the bars swung back
  And I looked straight up in the blue

Of the blessed skies with my hat off!
  O-ho! I've a wife and child:
That woman has wept for two long years,
  And yet last night she smiled!

THE WIFE.

I.

In youth he wrought, with eyes a-blur,
  Lorn-faced and long of hair—
In youth—in youth, he painted her
  A sister of the air—
Could clasp her not, but felt the stir
  Of pinions everywhere.

II.

She lured his gaze, in braver days,
  And tranced him sirenwise;
And he did paint her, through a haze
  Of sullen paradise,
With scars of kisses on her face
  And embers in her eyes.

III.

And now—nor dreams, nor wild conceit—
  Though faltering, as before—
Through tears he paints her, as is meet,
  Tracing the dear face o'er
With lilied patience meek and sweet
  As Mother Mary wore.

A CHARACTER.

I.

SWALLOWED up in gulfs of tho't—
Eye-glass fixed on—who knows what?
But we know he sees us not.

Chance upon him, here and there—
Base-ball park—Industrial Fair—
Broadway—Long Branch—anywhere!

Even at the races,—yet
With his eye-glass tranced and set
On some dreamland minaret.

At the beach, the where, perchance,
Tenderest of eyes may glance
On the fitness of his pants.—

Vain! all admiration—vain!
His mouth, o'er and o'er again,
Absently absorbs his cane.

Vain, as well, all tribute paid
To his morning coat, inlaid
With crossbars of every shade.

He is so oblivious, tho'
We played checkers to and fro
On his back—he would not know.

II.

So removed—illustrious—
Peace! kiss hands, and leave him thus.
He hath never need of us.

Come away! Enough! Let be!
Purest praise, to such as he,
Were as basest obloquy.

Vex no more that mind of his,—
We, to him, are but as phizz
Unto pop that knows it is.

Haply, even as we prate
Of him HERE—in astral state—
Or jackastral—he, elate,

Browses round, with sportive hops,
In far fields of sphery crops,
Nibbling stars like clover tops.

He, occult and psychic, may
Now be solving why to-day
Is not midnight. But away!

Cease vain queries! Let us go!
Leave him all unfathomed.—Lo,
He can hear his whiskers grow.

LUTHER A. TODD.

Obit. July 27, 1887, Kansas City, Mo.

GIFTED, and loved and praised
  By every friend;
Never a murmur raised
  Against him, to the end!
With tireless interest
He wrought as he thought best,—
  And—lo, we bend
Where now he takes his rest!

His heart was loyal, to
  Its latest thrill,
To the home-loves he knew—
  And now forever will,—
Mother and brother—they
The first to pass away,—
  And, lingering still,
The sisters bowed to-day.

Pure as a rose might be,
  And sweet and white,
His father's memory
  Was with him day and night:—
He spoke of him, as one
May now speak of the son,—

Sadly and tenderly,
Yet as a trump had done.

Say, then, of him: He knew
Full depths of care
And stress of pain, and you
Do him scant justice there,—
Yet in the lifted face
Grief left not any trace,
Nor mark unfair,
To mar its manly grace.

It was as if each day
Some new hope dawned—
Each blessing in delay,
To him, was just beyond;
Between whiles, waiting, he
Drew pictures cunningly—
Fantastic—fond—
Things that we laughed to see.

Sometimes, as we looked on
His crayon's work,
Some angel-face would dawn
Out, radiant, from the mirk
Of features old and thin,
Or jowled with double-chin,
And eyes a-smirk,
And gaping mouths a-grin.

That humor in his art,
  Of genius born,
Welled warmly from a heart
  That could not but adorn
All things it touched with love—
The eagle, as the dove—
  The burst of morn—
The night—the stars above.

Sometimes, amid the wild
  Of faces queer,
A mother, with her child
  Pressed warm and close to her;
This, I have thought, somehow,
The wife, with head a-bow,
  Unreconciled,
In the great shadow now.

* * * * * * *

O ye of sobbing breath,
  Put by all sighs
Of anguish at his death—
  Turn—as he turned his eyes,
In that last hour, unknown,
In strange lands, all alone—
  Turn toward the skies,
And, smiling, cease thy moan.

HER HAIR.

THE beauty of her hair bewilders me—
  Pouring adown the brow, its cloven tide
  Swirling about the ears on either side
And storming round the neck tumultuously:
Or like the lights of old antiquity
  From mullioned windows, in cathedrals wide,
  Spilled Moltenly o'er figures deified
In chastest marble, nude of drapery.
And so I love it. Either unconfined,
  Or plaited in close braidings manifold;
Or smoothly drawn, or indolently twined
  In careless knots whose coilings come unrolled
At any lightest kiss; or by the wind
  Whipped out in flossy ravellings of gold.

"OUT TO OLD AUNT MARY'S."

WASN'T it pleasant, O, brother mine,
In those old days of the lost sunshine
Of youth—when the Saturday's chores were through,
And the "Sunday's wood" in the kitchen, too,
And we went visiting, "Me and you,
Out to old Aunt Mary's!"

It all comes back so clear to-day!
Though I am as bald as you are gray—
Out by the barn-lot and down the lane,
We patter along in the dust again,
As light as the tips of the drops of the rain,
Out to old Aunt Mary's.

We cross the pasture, and through the wood
Where the old gray snag of the poplar stood,
Where the hammering "red-heads" hopped away,
And the buzzard raised in the open sky
And lolled and circled as we went by
Out to old Aunt Mary's.

And then in the dust of the road again;
And the teams we met, and the country-men;
And the long highway with the sunshine spread
As thick as butter on country bread,
And our cares behind, and our hearts ahead,
Out to old Aunt Mary's.

I see her now in the open-door
Where the little gourds grew up the sides, and o'er
The clapboard roof.—And her face—oh, me!
Wasn't it good for a boy to see?
And wasn't it good for a boy to be
Out to old Aunt Mary's!

And O, my brother, so far away,
This is to tell you she waits to-day
To welcome us. Aunt Mary fell
Asleep this morning, whispering, "Tell
The boys to come!" And all is well!
Out to old Aunt Mary's.

PAP'S OLD SAYIN'.

PAP he used to have a sayin'
  That I'll never quite fergit—
And they're seven growed-up childern
  Of us recollects it yit!—
Settin' round the dinner table,
  Gossippin' of friends, perhaps,
Er abusin' of our neighbors,
  I kin hear them words of Pap's—
"Shet up, and eat your vittals!"

Pap h'd never argy with us,
  Ner cut any subject short
While we all kep' shet of jawin',
  And was actin' as we ort;
But ef we'd git out of order—
  Like, sometimes, a family is—
Faultin' folks, er one another,
  Then you'd hear that voice of his:
"Shet up, and eat your vittals!"

Was no hand hisself at talkin'—
  Never hadn't much to say—
Only, as I said, pervidin'
  When we'd rile him thataway;

Then he'd allus lose his temper
  'Spite of fate, and jerk his head,
And slam down his caseknife vicious',
  While he grit his teeth and said:
"Shet up, and eat your vittals!"

Mind last time when Pap was ailin'
  With a misery in his side,
And that hobbled in the kitchen
  Jest the very day he died;
Laury Jane she ups and tells him
  "Pap, you're pale as pale kin be—
Haint you 'feard them there cowcumbers
  Haint good fer you?" And says he,
"Shet up, and eat your vittals."

* * * * * * * *

Well! I've saw a-many-sorrow,—
  Forty year, through thick and thin;
I've "got there," and I've got "tuckered"
  Time and time and time agin!—
But I've met a-many trouble
  That I hain't run onto twice,
When I'd turn to overhaulin'
  Them there words of Pap's advice:
"Shet up, and eat your vittals!"

THE LITTLE WHITE HEARSE.

As THE little white hearse went glimmering by—
The man on the coal-cart jerked his lines,
And smutted the lid of either eye,
And turned and stared at the business signs;
And the street-car driver stopped and beat
His hands on his shoulders, and gazed up street
Till his eye on the long track reached the sky—
As the little white hearse went glimmering by.

As the little white hearse went glimmering by—
A stranger petted a ragged child
In the crowded walk, and she knew not why,
But he gave her a coin for the way she smiled;
And a bootblack thrilled with a pleasure strange
As a customer put back his change
With a kindly hand and a grateful sigh—
As the little white hearse went glimmering by.

As the little white hearse went glimmering by—
  A man looked out of a window dim,
And his cheeks were wet and his heart was dry—
  For a dead child even were dear to him!
    And he thought of his empty life and said:
    "Loveless alive, and loveless dead—
    Nor wife nor child in earth or sky!"
    As the little white hearse went glimmering
      by.

ALL ALONE.

How all alone
A man may be in crowds.—JOAQUIN MILLER.

HE sat in a seat in the smoking-car—
A double seat which he occupied—
Himself and his legs on either side—
Smoking a very black cigar
With the air of a man who had paid his way
From Genesis to Judgment Day.

The collar he wore was loose at the throat,
And a ragged tie scarce held it to;
And which was the dirtiest no one knew,
His shirt, his face, or his overcoat—
And yet, that man, with the cheap cigar,
We envied there in the smoking-car.

Envied him? Yes—for the tranquil smile,
Diluting the grime on his swathy face,
And the rude plebeian force and grace
Of the sweep of his eye o'er the crowded aisle?
Nay, not for these—but that rank cigar
That gave him room in the crowded car.

WHEN AGE COMES ON.

I.

When age comes on:—
The deepening dusk is where the dawn
  Once glittered splendid, and the dew
In honey-drips from red rose-lips
  Was kissed away by me and you.—
And now across the frosty lawn
Black footprints trail, and Age comes on—
        And Age comes on—
  And biting wild-winds whistle through
Our tattered hopes—and Age comes on!

II.

When Age comes on!
O tide of raptures, long withdrawn,
  Flow back in summer-floods, and fling
Here at our feet our childhood sweet,
  And all the songs we used to sing,
Old loves, old friends—all dead and gone—
Our old faith lost—and Age comes on—
        And age comes on!
  Poor hearts! have we not anything
But longings left when Age comes on?

A SONG OF LONG AGO.

A SONG of long ago,
Sing it lightly—sing it low—
Sing it softly—like the lisping of the lips we
used to know
When our baby-laughter spilled
From the hearts forever filled
With a music sweet as robin ever trilled!

Let the fragrant summer breeze,
And the leaves of the locust-trees,
And the apple-buds and blossoms, and the
wings of honey-bees
All palpitate with glee,
Till the happy harmony
Brings back each childish joy to you and me.

Let the eyes of fancy turn
Where the tumbled pippins burn
Like embers in the orchard's lap of tousled
grass and fern;
And let the wayward wind,
Still singing, plod behind
The cider-press—the good old-fashioned kind!

Blend in the song the moan
Of the dove that grieves alone,
And the wild whirr of the locust, and the
bumble's drowsy drone;
And the low of the cows that call
Through the pasture bars when all
The landscape faints away at evenfall.

Then, far away and clear,
Through the dusky atmosphere,
Let the wailing of the kildee be the only
sound you hear.
O sweet and sad and low
As the memory may know
Is the glad-pathetic song of Long Ago!

THAT NIGHT.

You and I, and that night, with its perfume and glory!—
The scent of the locusts—the light of the moon;
And the violin weaving the waltzers a story,
Enmeshing their feet in the weft of the tune.
Till their shadows uncertain
Reeled round on the curtain,
While under the trellis we drank in the June.

Soaked through with the midnight the cedars were sleeping,
Their shadowy tresses outlined in the bright
Crystal, moon-smitten mists, where the fountain's heart, leaping
Forever, forever burst, full with delight;
And its lisp on my spirit
Fell faint as that near it
Whose love like a lily bloomed out in the night.

O your glove was an odorous sachet of blisses!
The breath of your fan was a breeze from Cathay!

And the roses at your throat was a nest of spilled
kisses!—
And the music!—in fancy I hear it to-day,
As I sit here, confessing
Our secret and blessing
My rival who found us, and waltzed you away.

GRANNY.

GRANNY'S come to our house,
  And ho! my lawzy-daisy!
All the childrens round the place
  Is jes' a-runnin' crazy!
Fetched a cake fer little Jake,
  And fetched a pie fer Nanny,
And fetched a pear fer all the pack
  That runs to kiss ther' Granny!

Lucy Ellen's in her lap;
  And Wade, and Silas Walker,
They're a-ridin' on her foot,
  And 'Pollos on the rocker;
And Marthy's twins, from Aunt Marin's,
  And the little orphant Anny,
All's a-eatin' gingerbread
  And giggle-un at Granny!

Tells us all the fairy tales
  Ever thought er wundered—
And 'bundance o' other stories—
  Bet she knows a hundred!—
Bob's the one fer "Whittington,"
  And "Golden Locks" fer Fanny!

Hear 'em laugh and clap ther' hands,
  Listening' at Granny!

"Jack the Giant-killer" 's good—
  "Bean-stalk" it's another—
So's the one of Cinderell'
  And her old god-mother;—
That un's best of all the rest—
  Bestest one of any—
Where the mices scampers home
  Like we runs to Granny!

Granny's come to our house,
  Ho! my lawzy-daisy!
All the childrens round the place
  Is jes' a-runnin' crazy!
Fetched a cake fer little Jake,
  And fetched a pie fer Nanny,
And fetched a pear fer all the pack
  That runs to kiss ther' Granny!

THE LITTLE COAT.

HERE'S his ragged "roundabout"—
Turn the pockets inside out;
See, his penknife, lost to use,
Rusted shut with apple-juice;
Here with marbles, top and string,
Is his deadly "devil-sling,"
With its rubber, limp at last
As the sparrows of the past!
Beeswax—buckles—leather straps—
Bullets and a box of caps,—
Not a thing of all, I guess,
But betrays some waywardness—
E'en these tickets, blue and red,
For the Bible-verses said—
Such as these his mem'ry kept—
"Jesus wept."

Here a fishing hook and line,
Tangled up with wire and twine,
And dead angle-worms, and some
Slugs of lead and chewing gum,
Blent with scents that can but come
From the oil of rhodium.
Here—a soiled, yet dainty note,

That some little sweetheart wrote,
Dotting—"Vine grows round the stump,"
And—"My sweetest sugar lump!"
Wrapped in this—a padlock key
Where's he filed a touch-hole—see!
And some powder in a quill
Corked up with a liver pill;
And a spongy little chunk
Of "punk"

Here's the little coat—but O!
Where is he we've censured so!
Don't you hear us calling, dear?
Back! Come back, and never fear!
You may wander where you will,
Over orchard, field and hill;
You may kill the birds, or do
Anything that pleases you!
Ah, this empty coat of his!
Every tatter worth a kiss!
Every stain as pure instead
As the white stars overhead;
And the pockets—homes were they
Of the little hands that play
Now no more—but, absent, thus
Beckon us.

AT MADAME MANICURE'S.

DAINTIEST of Manicures!
What a cunning hand is yours;
And how awkward, rude and great
Mine, as you manipulate!
Wonderfully cool and calm
Are the touches of your palm
To my fingers as they rest
In their rosy, cozy nest,
While your own, with deftest skill,
Dance and caper as they will,—
Armed with instruments that seem
Gathered from some fairy dream—
Tiny spears and scimiters
Such as pixy armorers
Might have made for jocund fays
To parade on holidays,
And flash round in dewy dells,
Lopping down the lily-bells;
Or in tilting o'er the leas,
At the clumsy bumble-bees,
Splintering their stings, perchance,
As the knights in old romance
Snapped the spears of foes that fought
In the jousts at Camelot!

Smiling? Dainty Manicure?
'Twould delight me, but that you're
Simply smiling, as I see,
At my nails, and not at me!
Haply this is why they glow
And light up and twinkle so!
I have read your secret!—now
I divine the why and how
Of the sorcery that thus
Gems my fingers glorious!—
It is not the tepid bath—
Not the crescent blade and swath—
Not the frankincense and myrrh
And the spikenard, as it were—
(Not to name the "rosaline"
And "enamel" that I mean)—
Not the "polishers" and files—
Not the powder,—but the smiles.—
Ah! that matchless art of yours,
Daintiest of Manicures!

LINCOLN.

A QUIET life—just simple things,
  Was his desire,—
To read of presidents and kings
  Beside the cabin fire.
That was enough:—to peer sometimes
  Above the page, in dimmest gleams
Of amber light, and hear the rhymes
  That came to him in dreams.

A quiet life,—to hear the low
  Of pastured herds,
Or woodman's ax, that blow on blow
  Fell sweet as rhythmic words;
And yet there stirred within his breast
  A fateful pulse that, like a roll
Of drums, made high above his rest
  A tumult in his soul.

A quiet life! They hailed him even
  As One was hailed
Whose open palms were nailed toward heaven
  When prayers nor aught availed;
And, lo, the self-same price he paid
  To lull a nation's awful strife,
And will us through a new decade
  The peace of his quiet life.

THE DEAD WIFE.

I looked from the window. The smoke goes straight,
From the chimney, and there is a dust of snow;
And the weather is keen as the edge of fate.
And she was a girl in the long ago!

And I think of the laughing child she was—
With nothing to hint of the old perfume
Of locust-blossoms—yet something does—
Is it the camphor in the room?

Christ Almighty, give me the past,
And let me be with things that were;
Or give me the hope of a glimpse at last
Of the living, laughing face of her!

WHEN BESSIE DIED.

If from your own the dimpled hands had slipped
And ne'er would nestle in your hand again;
If the white feet into the grave had tripped—

WHEN Bessie died—
We braided the brown hair, and tied
It just as her own little hands
Had fastened back the silken strands
A thousand times—the crimson bit
Of ribbon woven into it
That she had worn with childish pride—
Smoothed down the dainty bow; and cried
When Bessie died.

When Bessie died—
We drew the nursery blinds aside,
And as the morning in the room
Burst like a primrose into bloom,
Her pet canary's cage we hung
Where she might hear him when he sung—
And yet not any note he tried,
Though she lay listening folded-eyed!

When Bessie died—
We writhed in prayer unsatisfied;

We begged of God, and He did smile
In silence on us all the while;
And we did see Him, through our tears,
Enfolding that fair form of her's,
She laughing back against His love
The kisses we had nothing of,
And death to us He still denied—
When Bessie died—

FROM DELPHI TO CAMDEN.

I.

FROM Delphi to Camden—little Hoosier towns,—
But here were classic meadows, blooming dales and downs;
And here were grassy pastures, dewy as the leas
Trampled over by the trains of royal pageantries!

And here the winding highway loitered through the shade
Of the hazel-covert, where, in ambuscade,
Loomed the larch and linden, and the green-wood-tree
Under which bold Robin Hood loud hallooed to me!

Here the stir and riot of the busy day
Dwindled to the quiet of the breath of May;
Gurgling brooks, and ridges, lily-marged, and spanned
By the rustic bridges found in Wonderland!

II.

From Delphi to Camden—from Camden back again!—

And now the night was on us, and the lightning
and the rain;
And still the way was wondrous with the flash of
hill and plain,—
The stars, like printed asterisks—the moon a
murky stain!

And I thought of tragic idyl, and of flight and
hot pursuit,
And the jingle of the bridle, and cuirass, and
spur on boot,
As our horses' hooves struck showers from the
flinty bowlders set
In freshet-way with writhing reed and drowning
violet.

And we passed beleaguered castles, with their
battlements a-frown,
Where a tree fell in the forest was a turret toppled
down;
While my master and commander—the brave
knight I galloped with
On this reckless road to ruin, or to fame, was—
Dr. Smith!

IN STATE.

Is IT the martins or katydids?—
  Early morning or late at night?
A dream, perhaps, kneeling down on the lids
  Of a dying man's eyesight.

Over and over I heard the rain—
  Over and over I waked to see
The blaze of the lamp as again and again
  Its stare insulted me.

Time is so long when a man is dead!
  Some one sews; and the room is made
Very clean; and the light is shed
  Soft through the window-shade.

Yesterday I thought: "I know
  Just how the bells will sound, and how
Friends will talk, and the sermon go,
  And the hearse-horse bow and bow!"

This is to-day: and I have no thing
  To think of—nothing whatever to do
But to hear the throb of the pulse of a wing
  That wants to fly back to you.

THE BLOSSOMS ON THE TREES.

O THE blossoms, white and blue,
Purple, pink, and every hue,
From the sunny skies to tintings drowned
In dusky drops of dew!
O ye blossoms on the trees,
With your breath upon the breeze,
There's nothing all the world around
As half as sweet as you!

Could the rhymer only wring
All the sweetness to the lees
Of all the kisses clustering
In juicy use-to-be's,
He would dip his rhymes and sing
Of the blossoms on the trees!

"O ye blossoms on the trees,"
He would twitter, trill and coo,
And singing say—"Such songs as these
Are not as sweet as you,—
For you are blooming melodies
The eyes may listen to!"

NONSENSE JINGLES.

'TWAS a strange young man of the dreamy times
When bards made money, and bankers rhymes;
And drones made honey, and bees made naught;
And the bad sung hymns, and the good folk fought;
And the merchants lurked in the shade all day
And pitched horse-shoes in a listless way:
When the ticket-man at the depot knew
If your trunk would go if you checked it through,
And if 2:30 meant half-past two,
And in-the-name-of-the-land to do
If a man got left when he oughtn't to;
When the hackman wept as he took your fare,
And the street-car driver led in prayer—
And the kuss with the dyed mustache was there
That rode in town on a "jumper" sled,
And got whipped twice for the things he said
To fellows that told him his hair was red.
And the strange young man of which and whom
Our pencil offers to deign presume
To treat of now, in the days like these
When young men dress as they please to please;
Round in a coat of pale pink-blue,

And a snow-white vest of a crimson hue,
And trousers purple, and gaiters gray—
All cut, as the French or the Dutch would say,—
La-macht nichts aus, oder-decollete,—
Strange not only in dress, but in
The dimples he wore in cheek and chin—
All nailed over with scraps of tin;
And his crape cravat, and the shape of that,
And the ear-tab over his diamond pin.
And his friends all wondered, and used to say,—
"What a strange young man! Ah me! Hooray,
How sad he seems in his wild delight!
And how tickled indeed when he weeps outright!
What a comical man when he writhes in pain!
And how grieved he grows when he's glad
again!"
And, marvelling still to remark new facts,
They said, "How slender and slim he acts!
And isn't it odd for a man to wear
A thumb-stall on his nose, and pare
His finger-nails with a carving-knife,
And talk of prunes to the landlord's wife?
It is patent to us—and, indeed, no doubt,
Though as safely sealed as an oyster can,
Our interest in him must needs leak out,—
Namely—that he is a strange young man!"

"CORDAROY" POETRY.

Never talk back.

NEVER talk back! such things is reprehensible;
A feller only corks hiss'ef that jaws a man that's hot;
In a quarrel, ef you'll only keep your mouth shet and be sensible,
The man that does the talkin' 'll git worsted every shot!

Never talk back to a feller that's abusin' you—
Jest let him carry on, and rip and cuss and swear;
And when he finds his lyin' and his dammin's jest amusin' you,
You've got him clean kaflummixed, and you want to hold him there!

Never talk back, and wake up the whole community
And call a man a liar, howsomever that's his fix;—
You can lift and land him furder and with gracefuller impunity,
With one good jolt of silence than a half a dozen kicks!

THE ALL-GOLDEN.

I.

THROUGH every happy line I sing
I feel the tonic of the spring.

The day is like an old-time face
That gleams across some grassy place—

An old-time face—an old-time chum—
Who rises from the grave to come

And lure me back along the ways
Of Time's all-golden yesterdays.

Sweet day! to thus remind me of
The truant boy I used to love—

To set, once more, his finger tips
Against the blossom of his lips,

And pipe for me the signal known
By none but he and I alone!

II.

I see, across the school-room floor,
The shadow of the open door,

And dancing dust and sunshine blent
Slanting the way the morning went,

And beckoning my thoughts afar
Where reeds and running waters are;

Where amber-colored bayous glass
The half-drowned weeds and wisps of grass;

Where sprawling frogs, in loveless key,
Sing on and on incessantly.

Against the green wood's dim expanse
The cat-tail tilts its tufted lance,

While on its tip—one might declare
The white "snakefeeder" blossomed there!

III.

I catch my breath, as children do
In woodland swings, when life is new,

And all the blood is warm as wine
And tingles with a tang divine.

My soul soars up the atmosphere
And sings aloud where God can hear,

And all my being leans intent
To mark his smiling wonderment.

O gracious dream and gracious time,
And gracious theme and gracious rhyme—

When buds of Spring begin to blow
In blossoms that we used to know—

And lure us back along the ways
Of Time's all-golden yesterdays!

JUDITH.

O HER eyes are amber-fine,
Dark and deep as wells of wine,
While her smile is like the noon
Splender of a day of June.
If she sorrow, lo her face
It is like a flowery space
In bright meadows overlaid
With light clouds and lulled with shade;
If she laugh, it is the trill
Of the wayward whippoorwill
Over upland pastures, heard
Echoed by the mocking-bird
In dim thickets, dense with bloom
And thick tangles of perfume;
If she sigh, there sinks and swells
The faint breath of asphodels
And wan lilies in lush plots
Of moon-drowned forget-me-nots.
Then—the soft touch of her hand
Takes all breath to understand
What to liken it thereto!—
Never rose-leaf rinsed with dew

Might slip gentlier than slips
Her slow palm, the while her lips
Swoon through mine, with kiss on kiss
Sweet as heated honey is.

A LIFE-TERM.

SHE was false, and he was true,
  Thus their lives were rent apart;
'Twas his dagger driven through
  A mad rival's heart.

He was shut away. The moon
  May not find him; nor the stars—
Nay, nor yet the sun of noon
  Pierce his prison bars.

She was left—again to sin—
  Mistress of all siren arts—
The poor soulless heroine
  Of a hundred hearts!

Though she dare not think of him
  Who believed her lies, and so
Sent a ghost adown the dim
  Path she dreads to go,—

He, in fancy, smiling sips
  Of her kisses, purer yet
Than the dew upon the lips
  Of the violet.

"GOD MOVES IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY."

"It will be an undoubtabel surprise to you to git the poem I now send to you herein enclosed; but I was a-readin' one which starts out "God moves in a mysterious way His wunders to purform," and the idy struck me that I could write off somepin in that style which would express a man's views that still ain't no perfessor of religion, ner a member of no church, as I take fer granted Watts was when he wrote that and the rest of all his hymn-book full of the same kind."

The poem sent is something of a surprise to us, but none the less a pleasant one. But while we place it with pride before Mr. Riley's admirers we beg to inform the author that while Mr. Watts has given to hymnal literature a numberless array of very creditable verses, the poem referred to by Mr. Riley is by no means a Watts production. "God Moves in a Mysterious Way" was written by William Cowper, the English poet, who was as little a pretender of religion, perhaps, as Mr. Riley himself, since that famous poem was written immediately upon returning from an unsuccessful attempt at suicide—an idea which seems never to have occurred to Mr. Watts.

Here is Mr. Riley's effort:

O, THOU that doth all things devise
  And fashion fer the best,
Help us who sees with mortal eyes
  To overlook the rest.

They's times, of course, we grope in doubt,
  And in afflictions sore;
So, knock the louder, Lord, without,
  And we'll unlock the door.

Make us to feel, when times looks bad
  And tears in pitty melts,
Thou wast the only help we had
  When they was nothin' else.

Death comes alike to every man
  That ever was borned on earth,
Then let us do the best we can
  To live fer all life's worth.

Ef storms and tempests, dread to see,
  Makes black the heavens o'er,
They done the same in Galilee,
  Six thousand years ago!

But, after all, the golden sun
  Poured out its flood on them
That watched and waited fer the One
  Then borned in Bethlehem.

Also the star of holy writ
  Made noonday of the night,
While other stars that looked at it
  Was envious with delight.

The sages then in worship bowed
  From every clime so fare:
O, sinner, think, of that glad crowd
  That congregated thare!

They was content to fall in ranks
  With one that knowed the way
From good old Jurden's stormy banks
  Clean up to Judgement Day.

No matter, then, how all is mixed
  In our near-sighted eyes,
All things is fer the best, and fixed
  Out straight in Paradise.

Then take things as God sends 'em here,
  And, ef we live er die,
Be more and more contenteder,
  Without a-asking why.

O, thou that doth all things devise
  And fashin fer the best,
Help us who sees with mortal eyes
  To overlook the rest.

THE CLOVER.

SOME sings of the lily, and daisy, and rose,
And the pansies and pinks that the summer-time throws
In the green and grassy lap of the medder that lays
Blinkin' up at the skies through the sunshiny days;
But what is the lily, and all the rest
Of the flowers to a man, with a heart in his breast
That was dipped brimmin' full of the honey and dew
Of the sweet clover-blossoms his babyhood knew?

I never set eyes on a clover-field now,
Er fool round a stable, er climb in the mow,
But my childhood comes back, jest as clear and as plain
As the smell of the clover I'm sniffin' again;
And I wander away, in a barefooted dream,
Where I tangle my toes in the blossoms that gleam

With the dew of the dawn of the morning of
love
Ere it wept o'er the graves that I'm weepin'
above.

And so I love clover—it seems like a part
Of the sacredest sorrows and joys of my heart;
And wharever it blossoms, oh, thare let me bow
And thank the good God as I'm thankin' him
now;
And pray to Him still fer the strength, when I
die,
To go out in the clover and tell it good-bye,
And lovingly nestle my face in its bloom
While my soul slips away on a breath of perfume.

HE CALLED HER IN.

I.

He called her in from me and shut the door.
And she so loved the sunshine and the sky!—
She loved them even better yet than I
That ne'er knew dearth of them—my mother dead,
Nature had nursed me in her lap instead,
And I had grown a dark and eerie child
That rarely smiled,
Save when, shut all alone in grasses high,
Looking straight up in God's great lonesome sky,
And coaxing mother to smile back on me.
'Twas lying thus, this fair girl suddenly
Came on me, nestled in the fields beside
A pleasant-seeming house, with doorway wide—
The sunshine beating in upon the floor
Like golden rain—
O sweet, sweet face above me, turn again
And leave me! I had cried, but that an ache
Within my throat so gripped it I could make
No sound but a thick sobbing. Cowering so,
I felt her light hand laid

Upon my hair—a touch that ne'er before
Had tamed me thus, all soothed and unafraid—
It seemed the touch the children used to know
When Christ was here, so dear it was—so dear,
At once I loved her as the leaves love dew
In midmost summer when the days are new.

Barely an hour I knew her; yet a curl
Of silken sunshine did she clip for me
Out of the bright May morning of her hair,
And bound and gave it to me laughingly,
And caught my hands and called me "Little girl,"
Tip-toeing as she spoke to kiss me there!
And I stood dazed and dumb for very stress
Of my great happiness.
She plucked me by the gown, nor saw how mean
The raiment—drew me with her everywhere:
Smothered her face in tufts of grasses green;
Put up her dainty hands and peeped between
Her fingers at the blossoms—crooned and talked
To them in strange, glad whispers, as we walked,—
Said this one was her angel mother—this,
Her baby-sister—come back, for a kiss,
Clean from the Good-World!—smiled and kissed them, then

Closed her soft eyes and kissed them o'er again.
And so did she beguile me—so we played,—
She was the dazzling shine—I, the dark shade,
And we did mingle, like to these, and thus,
Together, made
The perfect summer, pure and glorious.
So blent we, till a harsh voice broke upon
Our happiness. She, startled as a fawn,
Cried, "Oh, 'tis Father!"—all the blossoms gone
From out her cheeks as those from out her grasp.—
Harsher the voice came;—she could only gasp
Affrightedly, "Good-bye!—good-bye!—good-bye!"
And lo, I stood alone, with that harsh cry
Ringing a new and unknown sense of shame
Through soul and frame,
And, with wet eyes, repeating o'er and o'er,—
"He called her in from me and shut the door!"

II.

He called her in from me and shut the door!
And I went wandering alone again—
So lonely—O, so very lonely then,
I thought no little, sallow star, alone
In all a world of twilight, e'er had known
Such utter loneliness. But that I wore

Above my heart that gleaming tress of hair
To lighten up the night of my despair,
I think I might have groped into my grave,
Nor cared to wave
The ferns above it with a breath of prayer.
And how I hungered for the sweet, sweet face
That bent above me in my hiding-place
That day amid the grasses there beside
Her pleasant home!—"Her pleasant home?" I sighed,
Remembering;—then shut my teeth and feigned
The harsh voice called to me, then clinched my nails
So deeply in my palms, the sharp wounds pained,
And tossed my face toward heaven, as one who pales
In splendid martyrdom, with soul serene,
As near to God as high the guillotine.
And I had envied her? Not that—O no!
But I had longed for some sweet haven so!—
Wherein the tempest-beaten heart might ride
Sometimes at peaceful anchor, and abide
Where those that loved me touched me with their hands,
And looked upon me with glad eyes, and slipped
Smooth fingers o'er my brow, and lulled the strands

Of my wild tresses, as they backward tipped
My yearning face and kissed it, satisfied!
Then bitterly I murmured as before—
"He called her in from me and shut the door."

III.

He called her in from me and shut the door!
After long struggling with my pride and pain—
A weary while it seemed, in which the more
I held myself from her, the greater fain
Was I to look upon her face again—
At last!—at last!—half conscious where my feet
Were faring, I stood waist-deep in the sweet
Green grasses there where she
First came to me.
The very blossoms she had plucked that day,
And, at her father's voice, had cast away,
Around me lay,
Still bright and blooming in these eyes of mine;
And as I gathered each one eagerly,
I pressed it to my lips and drank the wine
Her kisses left there for the honey-bee.
Then, after I had laid them with the tress
Of her bright hair, with lingering tenderness,
I, turning, crept on to the hedge that bound
Her pleasant-seeming home—but all around
Was never sign of her! The windows all

Were blinded; and I heard no rippling fall
Of her glad laugh, nor any harsh voice call:—
But, clutching to the tangled grasses, caught
A sound as though a strong man bowed his head
And sobbed alone—unloved—uncomforted;
And then straightway before
My tearless eyes, all vividly, was wrought
A vision that is with me evermore;
A little girl that lies asleep, nor hears
Nor heeds not any voice, or fall of tears—
And I sit singing o'er and o'er and o'er,—
"God called her in from him and shut the door!"

SONG.

THERE is ever a song somewhere, my dear;
  There is ever a something that sings alway;
There's the song of the lark when the skies are clear
  And the song of the thrush when the skies are gray.
The sunshine showers across the grain,
  And the bluebird trills in the orchard tree,
And in and out, when the eaves drip rain,
  The swallows are twittering ceaselessly.

There is ever a song somewhere, my dear;
  Be the skies above or dark or fair,
There is ever a song that our hearts may hear—
There is ever a song somewhere, my dear—
  There is ever a song somewhere!

There is ever a song somewhere, my dear;
  In the midnight black or the mid-day blue;
The robin pipes when the sun is here,
  And the cricket chirrups the whole night through.

The buds may blow and the fruit may grow,
  And the Autumn leaves drop crisp and sere;
But whether the sun, or the rain, or the snow,
  There is ever a song somewhere, my dear.

THE AMIABLE OLD SISTER.

THERE are four of us girls in the family,
Margaret, Jennie, and Tillie and I;
And Margaret is the oldest—thus
She is the model held up for us.

And she is so moral—so modest—My!—
So gentle-voiced, and so dainty sweet!
She always writes her name "Marguerite;"
Mag is the name we call her by!

She lifts her brows, at our worldly chat
Of party, and picnic, and themes like that,
With such a sister-superior air,
St. Cicely wouldn't be anywhere!

So everybody, as you'd infer,
Thinks the-world-and-all of her—
Everybody but, by the bye,
Her sisters, Jennie and Tillie and I!

Mag never had—and Mag never will
Have a beau of her own! So she lies in wait
For ours; and "tabbys" around until
They grab their hats and evaporate!

You should see her when Jennie's beau
Calls sometimes, and Mag remains
There in the parlor and "entertains"
The poor bored boy till he has to go!

Jennie came crying to bed last night,
Red in the cheeks and white at the lips—
Lawzy! if murder were only right,
Mag would never have seen daylight!

GIVE ME THE BABY. Page 99.

"GIVE ME THE BABY."

GIVE me the baby to hold, my dear—
  To hold and to hug, and to love and kiss.
Ah! he will come to me, never a fear—
  Come to the nest of a breast like this,
As warm for him as his face with cheer.
Give me the baby to hold, my dear—

Trustfully yield him to my caress.
  "Bother," you say? what! "a bother" to me?—
To fill up my soul with such happiness
  As the love of a baby that laughs to be
Snuggled away where my heart can hear!
Give me the baby to hold, my dear!

Ah! but his hands are soiled, you say,
  And would dirty my laces and clutch my hair—
Well, what would pleasure me more, I pray,
  Than the touch and the tug of the wee hands there?—
The wee hands there, and the warm face here—
Give me the baby to hold, my dear!

Give me the baby! (O won't you see?
  * * * Somewhere, out where the green
    of the lawn
Is turning to gray, and the maple tree
  Is weeping its leaves of gold upon
A little mound, with a dead rose near * * *)
Give me the baby to hold, my dear!

AT NINETY IN THE SHADE.

HOT weather? Yes; but really not,
Compared with weather twice as hot.
Find comfort, then, in arguing thus,
And you'll pull through victorious;
For instance, whule you gasp and pant
And try to cool yourself—and can't—
With soda, cream and lemonade,
The heat at ninety in the shade,—
Just calmly sit and ponder o'er
These same degrees, with ninety more
On top of them, and so concede
The weather now is cool indeed!
Think—as the perspiration dews
Your fevered brow, and seems to ooze
From out the ends of every hair—
Whole floods of it, with floods to spare—
Think, I repeat, the while the sweat
Pours down your spine—how hotter yet
Just ninety more degrees would be,
And bear this ninety patiently!
Think—as you rise from knoll or chair
With sticky feelings everywhere—

How ninety more degrees increase
Of heat like this would start the grease;
Or, think, as you exhausted stand,
A wilted "palmleaf" in each hand—
When the thermometer has done
With ease the lap of ninety-one,
O think, I say, what heat might do
At one hundred and eighty-two—
Just twice the heat you now declare
Complainingly, is hard to bear.
Or, as you watch the mercury
Mount, still elate, one more degree,
And doff your collar and cravat,
And rig a sponge up in your hat,
And ask Tom, Harry, Dick and Jim
If this is hot enough for him—
Consider how the sun would pour
At one hundred and eighty-four—
Just twice the heat that seems to be
Affecting you unpleasantly—
The very hour that you might find
As cool as dew, were you inclined.
But why proceed when none will heed
Advice apportioned to the need?
Hot weather? Yes; but really not,
Compared with weather twice as hot!

TO A BENEDICT FRIEND.

DEAR MAN — happy husband and rapturous father,
My heart bubbles over with joy
To hear, high above all my bachelor bother,
My Benedict friend has a boy!
Though to note your delight
In the rhymes that you write
Makes me envious in a degree,
I am tickled clean through
That the babe, having you,
Has a far better father than me.

Then whoop and hoo-ray for both father and mother!
And whoop and hoo-ray for the heir!
May the hearts of you all, shuffled up with each other,
Yield ever this ace and a pair!
'Tis a fortunate deal;
And whatever I feel
Of envy is lost in my joy,—
Because you're its pa,
And your wife is its ma,
And because its like me—It's a boy!

A SUDDEN SHOWER.

THE noon is tropical. The rose
  Leans like a yearning mouth to meet
The kisses that the zephyr blows
  Full-flavored with the fragrant heat.

The breezy maples seem to quaff
  The shade like wine, and, thrilled with glee,
Toss up their leafy hands and laugh
  And lisp and whisper tipsily.

As in the sight the air afloat
  The meadow glimmers on to us,
A glamoured murmur, nigh, remote,
  Falls on the hearing tremulous.—

The pent-up anger of the storm!
  The dust grows ashen, as with fright,
And, rising, reels in phantom form,
  And passes in convulsive flight.

With petulant and gusty breaths
  The winds come waltzing as they may,
Till e'en the sunshine vanishes
  As it were whirled and blown away

Barefooted boys scud up the street,
  Or skurry under sheltering sheds,
And school-girl faces, pale and sweet,
  Gleam from the shawls about their heads.

Doors bang; and mother-voices call
  From alien homes; and rusty gates
Are slammed, and high above it all
  The thunder grim articulates.

And then, abrupt, the rain! the rain!
  The earth lies gasping; and the eyes
Behind the streaming window-pane
  Smile at the trouble of the skies.

The highway smokes; sharp echoes ring;
  The cattle bawl, and cow-bells clank:
And into town comes galloping
  The farmer's horse, with steaming flank.

The swallow dips beneath the eaves
  And flirts his plumes and folds his wings;
And under the catawba leaves
  The caterpillar curls and clings.

The bumble-bee is pelted down
  The wet stem of the hollyhock;
And sullenly, in spattered brown,
  The cricket leaps the garden walk.

Within, the baby claps his hands
  And crows with rapture strange and vague;
Without, beneath the rosebush stands
  A dripping rooster on one leg.

A MERE OUTLINE.

AH, help me! but her face and brow
Were lovelier than the lilies are
Beneath the light of moon and star
That smile as they are smiling now—
White lilies in a pallid swoon
Of sweetest white beneath the moon—
White lilies in a flood of bright,
Pure lucidness of liquid light
That overflows some night of June
When all the azure overhead
Blooms like a dazzling daisy-bed.
So marvelous her face and brow,
Their beauty blinds my fancy now.

And there—the oval chin below,
Carved, like a cunning cameo,
With one exquisite dimple, swirled
With swimming light and shade, and whirled
The daintiest vortex poets know—
The sweetest whirlpool ever twirled
By Cupid's finger-tip—and so
The deadliest maelstrom in the world.

And O!—bewilderment gone mad
And riotous!—what eyes she had!
Let any dew-drop soak the hue
Of any violet through and through,
And then be colorless and dull
Compared with eyes so beautiful!
I tell you that her eyes were bright
As noonday and as dark as night—
As bright as are the burnished bars
Of rainbows set in sunny skies,
And yet as deep and dark—her eyes—
And lustrous-black as blown-out stars.

A DREAM OF AUTUMN.

As A harvester, at dusk,
Faring down some woody trail
Leading homeward through the musk
Of may-apple and pawpaw,
Hazel-bush and spice and haw—
So comes Autumn, swart and hale,
Drooped of frame and slow of stride,
But withal an air of pride;
Looming up in stature far
Higher than his shoulders are:
Weary both in arm and limb,
Yet the wholesome heart of him
Sheer at rest and satisfied.

Greet him as with glee of drums
And glad cymbals, as he comes!
Robe him fair, O Rain and Shine!
He the Emperor—the King—
Royal prince of everything;
Sagging Plenty's granary floors,
And out-bulging all her doors:
He the god of corn and wine,
Honey, milk, and fruit and oil—

Lord of feast, as lord of toil—
Jocund host of yours and mine!

Ho! the revel in his laugh!—
Half is sound of winds, and half
Roar of ruddy blazes drawn
Up the throats of chimneys wide,
Circling which, from side to side,
Faces—lit as by the Dawn,
With her highest tintings on
Tip of nose and cheek and chin—
Smile at some old fairy tale
Of enchanted lovers, in
Silken gown and coat of mail,
With a retinue of elves,
Merry as their very selves,
Trooping ever, hand in hand,
Down the dales of Wonderland.

Then, the glory of his song!
Lifting up his dreamy eyes—
Singing haze across the skies—
Singing clouds that trail along
Towering tops of trees that seize
Tufts of them to stanch the breeze:
Singing slanted strands of rain
In between the sky and earth
For the lyre to mate the mirth

And the might of his refrain;
Singing southward-flying birds
Down to us, and afterwards
Singing them to flight again;
Singing blushes to the cheeks
Of the leaves upon the trees—
Singing on, and changing these
Into pallor, slowly wrought,
Till the little wayward creeks
Bear them to their last farewell,
As Elaine, the lovable,
Floated down to Lancelot,—
Singing drip of tears, and then
Drying them with smiles again.

Singing apple, peach and grape
Into roundest, plumpest shape;
Rosy ripeness to the face
Of the pippin; and the grace
Of the dainty stamin-tip
To the huge form of the pear,
Pendant in the green caress
Of the leaves, and glowing through
With a yellow haziness
Of the gold that Ophir knew—
Haply, too, within its rind
Such a cleft as bees may find,
Bungling on it half aware,

And wherein to see them sip,
Fancy lifts an oozy lip,
And the singer's falters there.

Sweet as swallows swimming through
Eddyings of dusk and dew,
Singing happy scenes of home
Into sight of eager eyes
That have longed for them to come,
Till their coming is surprise
Uttered only by the rush
Of quick tears and prayerful hush;
Singing on, in clearer key,
Hearty palms of you and me
Into grasps that tingle still
Rapturous, and ever will;
Singing twank and twang of strings—
Trill of flute and clarinet
In a melody that rings
Like the tunes they used to play,
And our dreams are playing yet:
Singing lovers, long astray,
Each to each; and, sweeter things,—
Singing in their marriage-day,
And a banquet holding all
These delights for festival.

THE WAY IT WUZ.

Elizabeth City, Ind., 1884.

LAS' July—an' I persume
'Bout as hot
As the ole Gran'-jury room
Where they sot!—
Fight 'twixt Mike and Dock McGriff;—
'Pears to me jes' like as if
I'd a dremp' the whole blame thing—
Allus hants me roun' the gizzard
When they're nightmares on the wing,
An' a feller's blood's jes' friz!
Seed the row from A to Izzard—
'Cause I wuz a-standin' as clos't to 'em
As me an' you is!

Tell you the way it wuz—
An' I don't want to see,
Like some fellers does,
When they're goern to be
Any kind o' fuss—
On'y makes a rumpus wuss
Fer to interfere
When their dander's riz—

But I wuz a-standin' as clos't to 'em
As me an' you is!

I wuz kindo' strayin'
Past the blame saloon—
Heerd some feller playin'
That "old hee-cup tune"—
Sorto stopped, you know,
Fer a minit er so,
And wuz jes' about
Settin' down, when—Jeemses whizz!
Whole durn winder-sash fell out!
An' there laid Dock McGriff, an' Mike
A-straddlin' him, all bloody-like,
An' both a gittin' down to biz:—
An' I wuz a-standin' as clos't to 'em
As me and you is!

I wuz the on'y man aroun'—
Durn old-fogy town!
'Peared more like, to me,
Sunday than Saturday!
Dog come 'crost the road
An' tuck a smell
An' put right back;
Mishler driv by 'ith a load
O' cantalopes he couldn't sell,

Too mad, 'y jack!
To even ast
What wuz up as he went past!
Weather most outrageous hot!—
Fairly hear it sizz
Roun' Dock an' Mike, till Dock he shot,
An' Mike he slacked that grip o' his
An' fell, all spraddled out. Dock riz
'Bout half up, a-spittin' red,
An' shuck his head—
An' I wuz a-standin' as clos't to 'em
As me and you is!

An' Dock he says,
A-whisper'n-like,—
"It hain't no use
A-tryin'!—Mike
He's jes' ripped my insides loose!—
Git that blame-don fiddler to
Let up, an' come out with you—
Got some burryin' to do,—
Mike makes *one*, an' I expects
In ten seconds I'll make *two!*"
An' he drapped back, where he riz,
'Crost Mike's body, black and blue,
Like a great big letter X!—
An' I wuz a-standin' as clos't to 'em
As me an' you is!

WRITTEN IN BUNNER'S "AIRS FROM ARCADY."

O, EVER gracious Airs from Arcady!
  What lack is there of any jocund thing
    In glancing wit or glad imagining
Capricious fancy may not find in thee?
The laugh of Momus, tempered daintily
  To lull the ear and lure its listening;
    The whistled syllables the birds of spring
Flaunt ever at our guessings what they be;
The wood, the seashore, and the clanging town;
  The pets of fashion, and the ways of such;
The robe de chambre, and the russet gown;
  The lordling's carriage, and the pilgrim's crutch—
From hale old Chaucer's wholesomeness, clean down
  To our artistic Dobson's deftest touch!

OUT OF NAZARETH.

"He shall sleep unscathed of thieves
Who loves Allah and believes."
Thus heard he who shared the tent,
In the far-off Orient,
Of the Bedouin Ben Ahrzz—
Nobler never loved the stars.
Through the palm of leaves nigh the dim
Dawn his courser neighed to him!

He said: "Let the sands be swarmed
With such thieves as I, and thou
Shalt at morning rise, unharmed,
Light as eyelash to the brow
Of thy camel, amber-eyed,
Ever munching either side,
Striding still, with nestled knees,
Through the midnight's oases.

"Who can rob thee an thou hast
More than this that thou hast cast
At my feet—this dust of gold?
Simply this and that, all told!
Hast thou not a treasure of
Such a thing as men call love?—

Nor a dream beneath the brow
Of the 'crowns' thou dolest now?

"Can the dusky band I lead
Rob thee of thy daily need
Of a whiter soul? or steal
What thy lordly prayers reveal?
And who could possess of thee
Such a hoard of poverty
As thy niggard soul pretends
To give me—thy worst of friends?
Therefore shalt thou pause to bless
One indeed who blesses thee?
Robbing thee, I dispossess
But myself.—Pray thou for me!

"Sleep; for he is safe from thieves
Who loves Allah and believes!"
So he slept, and, even so,
Sleeping in the robbers' tent,
Morning came at last, and lo,
He had not a single cent,
Nor a thought but pure content.

JOSH BILLINGS.

Dead in California, October 15th, 1885.

JOLLY-HEARTED old Josh Billings,
  With his wisdom and his wit,
And his gravity of presence,
  And the drollery of it!—
Has he left us, and forever?—
  When so many merry years
He has only left us laughing—
  And he leaves us now in tears!

Has he turned from his "Deer Publik,"
  With his slyly-twinkling eyes
Grown dim and heavy lidded
  In despite of sunny skies?—
Yet with rugged brow uplifted,
  And the long hair tossed away,
Like an old heroic lion,
  With a mane of iron-gray.

Though we lose him, still we find him
  In the mirth of every lip,
And we fare through all his pages
  In his glad companionship;

His voice is wed with Nature's,
  Laughing in each woody nook
With the chirrup of the robin
  And the chuckle of the brook.

But the children—O the children!—
  They who leaped to his caress,
And felt his arms about them,
  And his love and tenderness,—
Where—where will they find comfort
  As their tears fall like the rain,
And they swarm his face with kisses
  That he answers not again?

BACK WHERE THEY USED TO BE.

Pap's got his patent right and rich as all creation;
  But where's the peace and comfort that we all
    had before?
Le's go a-visitin' back to Griggsby Station—
  Back where we used to be so happy and so
    pore!

The likes of us a-livin' here! It's jest a mortal
  pity
  To see us in this great big house, with cyar-
    pets on the stairs,
And the pump right in the kitchen; and the city!
  city! city!—
  And nothin' but the city all around us every-
    wheres!

Climb clean above the roof and look from the
  steeple,
  And never see a robin, ner a beech er ellum
    tree!
And right here in ear-shot of at least a thousand
  people,
  And none that neighbors with us, or we want
    to go and see!

Le's go back to Griggsby's Station—
  Back where the latch-string's a hangin' from the door,
And every neighbor 'round the place is dear as a relation—
  Back where we used to be so happy and so pore!

I want to see the Wiggenses, the whole kit and bilin',
  A drivin' up from Shallow Ford to stay the Sunday through,
And I want to see 'em hitchen' at their son-in-law's and pilin'
  Out there at Lizzy Ellen's like they used to do!

I want to see the piece-quilts the Jones girls is makin,'
  And I want to pester Laury 'bout their freckled hired hand,
And joke her 'bout the widower she come purt' nigh a-takin',
  Till her pap got his pension 'lowed in time to save his land.

Le's go a-visitin' back to Griggsby's Station—
  Back where they's nothin' aggervatin' anymore,

Shet away safe in the wood around the old location—
Back where we used to be so happy and so pore!

I want to see Marindy and he'p her with her sewin',
And hear her talk so lovin' of her man that's dead and gone,
And stand up with Emanuel to show me how he's growin',
And smile as I have saw her 'fore she put her mournin' on.

I want to see the Samples on the old lower Eighty—
Where John, our oldest boy, he was took and burried, for
His own sake and Katy's—and I want to cry with Katy
As she reads all his letters over, writ from the war.

What's in all this grand life and high situation,
And nary pink nor hollyhawk bloomin' at the door?—
Le's go a-visitin' back to Griggsby's Station—
Back where we used to be so happy and so pore!

KISMET.

OUR fortunes! O we need not waste
  Our smiles, or tears, whate'er befall,—
No joy or pain, but holds a taste
  Of something sweeter, after all!—
No dying agony but feels
  Some fragment of abiding trust:—
Whatever Death unlocks or seals,
  The mute Beyond is just!

THE RIVALS: OR, THE SHOWMAN'S RUSE.

A TRAGI-COMEDY, IN ONE ACT.

Persons Represented.

BILLY MILLER, } ..... The Rivals.
JOHNNY WILLIAMS, }
TOMMY WELLS, ... Conspirator.

TIME—Noon ; Scene—Country Town—Rear view of the Miller Mansion, showing barn, with practical loft window, opening on alley-way — with colored-crayon poster beneath announcing:—"Billy Miller's Big Show and Monstur Circus and Equareum. A Shourbath fer Each an' All fer 20 pins. This Afternoon. Don't fergit the date!" Enter Tommy Wells and Johnny Williams, who gaze awhile at poster, Tommy secretly smiling and winking at Billy, concealed at loft-window above.

Tommy (*to Johnny*,)

Guess 'at Billy ain't got back,—
Can't see nothin' through the crack—
Can't hear nothin' neither—no.
Think's he's got the dandy show,
Don't he?

Johnny—

'Course! but what I care?
He hain't got no show in there!

What's he got in there but that
Old hen, cooped up with a cat
An' a turkle, and that thing
'At he calls his circus-ring?
What a circus-ring! I'd quit!
Bet mine's twic't as big as it!

Tommy—

Yes, but got no machine
Wat you bathe with, painted green,
With a string to work it, guess!

Johnny (*contemptuously*)—

Folk's don't bathe in circusses!—
Ladies comes to mine, you bet!
An' I got seats where girls can set;
An' a dressin'-room, an' all,
Fixed up in my pony's stall—
Yes, an' I' got carpet, too,
Fer the tumblers, and a blue
Center-pole!

Tommy—

Well, Billy, he's
Got a tight-rope an' trapeze,
An' a hoop that he jumps through
Head-first!

Johnny—

Well, what's that to do,

Lightin' on a pile c' hay?
Hain't no actin' thataway!

Tommy—

Don't care what you say, he draws
Bigger crowds 'an you do, 'cause,
Sense he started up, I know
All the fellers say his show
Is the best un

Johnny—

Yes, an' he
Better not tell things on me;
His old circus ain't no good
'Cause he's got the neighborhood
Down on me! He thinks 'at I'm
Goin' to stand it all the time;
Thinks just 'cause my pa don't 'low
Me to fight, he's got me now,
An' can say I lie, an' call
Me jes anything at all!
Billy Miller thinks I am
'Feared to say 'at he says 'dam''—
Yes, and worser ones! and I'm
Goin' to tell his folks sometime!—
An' ef he don't shet his head
I'll tell worse 'an that he said
When he fighted Willie King—
An't got licked like everything!—

Billy Miller better skin
Down his daddy's lane agin,
Like a cowardly-calf, an' climb
In fer home another time!
Better—

Here Billy leaps from the loft upon his unsuspecting victim, and two minutes later, another boy (Johnny) with the half of a straw hat, a bleeding nose, and a straight rent across one trouser-knee, "Skins down his (Tommy's) daddy's lane again."

THE ELF-CHILD.

Modern.

LITTLE Orphant Annie's come to our house to stay,
An' wash the cups and saucers up, an' brush the crumbs away,
An' shoo the chickens off the porch, an' dust the hearth, an' sweep,
An' make the fire, an' bake the bread, an' earn her board-an'-keep;
An' all us other children, when the supper things is done,
We set around the kitchen fire an' has the mostest fun,
A-list'nin to the witch tales 'at Annie tells about,
An' the gobble-uns 'at gits you
Ef you
Don't
Watch
Out!

Onc't there was a little boy wouldn't say his prayr's,—
An' when he went to bed at night, away up stairs,

His mammy heerd him holler, an' his daddy
heerd him bawl,
An' when they turned the kivvers down, he
wasn't there at all!
An' they seeked him in the rafter-room, an'
cubby-hole an' press,
An' seeked him up the chimbly-flue, an' every-
wheres, I guess,
But all they ever found was thist his pants an'
roundabout!—
An' the gobble-uns 'll git you
Ef you
Don't
Watch
Out!

An' one time a little girl 'ud allus laugh an' grin,
An' make fun of ever' one an' all her blood-an'-
kin,
An' onc't, when they was "company," an' ole
folks was there,
She mocked 'em an' shocked 'em, an' said she
didn't care!
An thist as she kicked her heels, an' turn't to run
and hide,
They was two great big Black Things a-standin'
by her side,

An' they snatched her through the ceilin' 'fore
she knowed what she's about!
An' the gobble-uns 'll git you
Ef you
Don't
Watch
Out!

An' little Orphant Annie says, when the blaze is
blue,
An' the lamp-wick sputters, an' the wind goes
woo-oo!
An' you hear the crickets quit, an' the moon is
gray,
An' the lightnin'-bugs in dew is all squenched
away,—
You better mind yer parents, an' yer teachers
fond an' dear,
An' churish them 'at loves you, an' dry the
orphant's tear,
An' he'p the pore an' needy ones 'at clusters all
about,
Er the gobble-uns 'll git you
Ef you
Don't
Watch
Out!

TO A JILTED SWAIN.

GET thee back neglected friends,
And repay, as each one lends,—
Tithes of shallow-sounding glee,
Or clear-ringing raillery;
Get thee from lone vigils; be
But in jocund company,
Where is laughter and acclaim
Boisterous above the name.
Get where husbands sit and sip
Alehouse cheer, with pipe at lip;
And where Moll the barmaid saith
Curst is she that marryeth.

THE DRUM.

O THE drum!
There is some
Intonation in thy grum
Monotony of utterance that strikes the spirit dumb
As we hear
Through the clear
And unclouded atmosphere,
Thy palpitating syllables roll in upon the ear!

There's a part
Of the art
Of thy music-throbbing heart
That thrills a something in us, that awakens with a start,
And in rhyme,
With the chime
And exactitude of time,
Goes marching on to glory to thy melody sublime.

And the guest
Of the breast
That thy rolling robs of rest

Is a patriotic spirit as a Continental dressed;
And he looms
From the glooms
Of a century of tombs,
And the blood he spilled at Lexington in living beauty blooms.

And his eyes
Wear the guise
Of a purpose pure and wise,
As the love of them is lifted to a something in the skies
That is bright
Red and white,
With a blur of starry light,
As it laughs in silken ripples to the breezes day and night.

There are deep
Hushes creep
O'er the pulses as they leap,
And the murmur, fainter growing, on the silence falls asleep,
While the prayer
Rising there
Wills the sea and earth and air
As a heritage to Freedom's sons and daughters everywhere.

Then, with sound
As profound
As the thunderings resound,
Come thy wild reverberations in a throe that shakes the ground,
And a cry
Flung on high,
Like the flag it flutters by,
Wings rapturously upward till it nestles in the sky.

O, the drum!
There is some
Intonation in thy grum
Monotony of utterance that strikes the spirit dumb,
As we hear
Through the clear
And unclouded atmosphere
Thy palpitating syllables roll in upon the ear!

'LONG ABOUT KNEE-DEEP IN JUNE.

I.

Tell you what I like the best;
  'Long about knee-deep in June,
  'Bout the time strawberries melts
  On the vines—some afternoon
Like to jes' git out and rest,
  And not work at nothin' else!

II.

Orchard's where I'd ruther be—
Needn't fence it in fer me!—
  Jes' the whole sky overhead,
  And the whole world underneath—
  Sorto' so's a man kin breathe
  Like he ort, and kindo' has
Elbow-room to keerlessly
  Sprawl out len'thways on the grass
  Where the shadders thick and soft
As the kivvers on the bed
  Mother fixes in the loft
  Allus when they's company!

'Long About Knee Deep in June. Page 136.

III.

Jes' a sorto' lazin' there—
S'lazy 'at you peek and peer
Through the wavin' leaves above
Like a feller at's in love
And don't know it and don't keer!
Everything you hear and see
Got some sort o' interest;—
Maybe find a blue-bird's nest
Tucked up there conveniently
Fer the boy 'at's apt to be
Up some other apple-tree!
Watch the swallers skootin' past
'Bout as peert as you could ast;
Er the Bobwhite raise and whiz
Where some other's whistle is.

IV.

Ketch a shadder down below,
And look up to find the crow;
Er a hawk away up there,
'Pearantly froze in the air!—
Hear the old hen squawk, and squat
Over every chick she's got
Suddent-like!—And she knows where
That air hawk is, well as you!—
You jes' bet your life she do!—

Eyes a-glittern' like glass,
Waitin' till he make a pass!

V.

Pee-wee's singin' to express
My opinion's second-class,
Yit you'll hear 'em, more or less;
Sap-sucks gittin' down to biz,
Weedin' out the lonesomeness;
Mr. Bluejay, full o' sass,
In them base-ball clothes o' his,
Sportin' round the orchard jes'
Like he owned the premises.
Sun out in the fields kin sizz,
But flat on your back, I guess,
In the shade's where glory is!
That's jes' what I'd like to do
Stiddy for a year or two!

VI.

Plague! ef they ain't somepin' in
Work 'at kindo' goes agin
My convictions! long about
Here in June especially!—
Under some old apple-tree,
Jes' a-restin' through and through,
I could git along without

Nothin' else at all to do
Only jes' a-wishin' you
Was a-gittin' there like me,
And June wuz eternity!

VII.

Lay out there and try to see
Jes' how lazy you kin be!—
Tumble round and souse your head
In the clover-bloom, er pull
Your straw hat acrost your eyes,
And peek through it at the skies,
Thinkin' of old chums 'at's dead,
Maybe smilin' back at you
In betwixt the beautiful
Clouds o' gold, and white and blue!—
Month a man can railly love—
June, you know, I'm talkin' of!

VIII.

March ain't never nothin' new!—
April's altogether too
Brash for me! and May—I jes'
'Bominate its promises,—
Little hints o' sunshine and
Green around the timber land—
A few blossoms, and a few

Chip birds, and a sprout er two—
Drap asleep, and it turns in
'Fore daylight and snows agin!—
  But when June comes—clear my throat
    With wild honey! Rench my hair
  In the dew! and hold my coat!
    Whoop out loud! and throw my hat!
June wants me, and I'm to spare!
Spread them shadders anywhere,
I'll get down and waller there,
  And obleeged to you at that!

LIKE HIS MOTHER USED TO MAKE.

At "Uncle Jake's," St. Joe, Mo., '84.

"I WAS born in Indiany," says a stranger, lank and slim,
As us fellers in the restarunt was kindo' guyin' him,
And Uncle Jake was slidin' him another pun'kin pie,
And a' extry cup o' coffee, with a twinkle in his eye,—
"I was born in Indiany—more'n forty year' ago—
And I hain't be'n back in twenty—and I'm workin' back'ards slow;
But I've et in every restarunt twixt here and Santy Fee,
And I want to state this coffee tastes like gittin' home to me!

"Pour us out another, Daddy," says the feller, warmin' up,
A-speakin' 'crost a saucerful, as Uncle tuck his cup—

"When I seed yer sign out yender," he went
on, to Uncle Jake,—
"'Come in and git some coffee like yer mother
used to make!'—
I thought of my old mother, and the Posey county
farm,
And me a little kid agin, a-hangin' in her arm,
As she set the pot a-bilin'—broke the eggs and
poured 'em in"—
And the feller kindo' halted, with a trimble in his
chin!

And Uncle Jake he fetched the feller's coffee back,
and stood
As solemn, fer a minute, as a' undertaker would.
Then he sorto' turned and tiptoed to'rds the
kitchen door—and next,
Here comes his old wife out with him, a-rubbin'
of her specs—
And as she rushes for the stranger, she hollers
out, "It's him!
Thank God we've met him comin'! Don't you
know your mother, Jim?"
And the feller, as he grabbed her, says,—"You
bet I hain't forgot—
But," wipin' of his eyes, says he, "Yer coffee's
mighty hot!"

A SUMMER DAY.

And its Effects on Benj. F. Johnson, of Boone.

The Summer's put the idy in
My head that I'm a boy agin;
  And all around's so bright and gay
  I want to put my team away,
  And jest git out whare I can lay
  And soak my hide full of the day!—
But work is work, and must be done—
Yit, as I work, I have my fun
Jest fancyin' these furries here
Is childhood's paths onc't more so dear:—
And so I walk through medder-lands,
  And country lanes, and swampy trails
Whare long bullrushes bresh my hands;
  And, tilted on the ridered rails
  Of deadnin' fences, "Old Bob White"
  Whistles his name in high delight,
And whirrs away. I wunder still
Whichever way a boy's feet will—
Where trees has fell, with tangled tops
  Where dead leaves shakes, I stop fer
    breath,

Hearin' the akorn as it drops—
  H'istin' my chin up still as deth,
And watchin' close with upturned eyes
The tree whare Mr. Squirrel tries
To hide hisself above the limb,
But lets his own tale tell on him.

I wunder on in deeper glooms—
  Git hungry, hearin' female cries
From old farm-houses, whare perfumes
  Of harvest dinners seem to rise
And ta'nt a feller, hart and brane,
With memories he cain't explain.

I wunder through the underbresh,
  Where pig-tracks, pintin' to'rds the crick,
Is picked and printed in the fresh
  Black bottom lands, like wimmen pick
Their pie-crusts with a fork, some way,
When bakin' fer camp-meetin' day.

I wunder on and on and on
Till my gray hair and beard is gone,
And every wrinkle on my brow
Is rubbed clean out, and shaddered now
With curls as brown and fair and fine
As tendrils of the wild-grape vine
That ust to climb the highest tree

To keep the ripest ones fer me.
I wunder still, and here I am
Wadin' the ford below the dam—
The worter chucklin' 'round my knee
  At hornet-welt and bramble scratch,
And me a-slippin' crost to see
  Ef Tyner's plums is ripe, and size
The old man's watermelon-patch,
  With juicy and droughty eyes.
Then, after sich a day of mirth
And happiness as worlds is worth—
  So tired that heaven seems nigh about—
The sweetest tiredness on earth
  Is to git home and flatten out;
So tired you cain't lay flat enough,
And sort o' wisht that you could spread
Out like molasses on the bed,
And jest drip off the aidges in
The dreams that never comes agin.

IN THE MANNER OF HERRICK.

To a Babe Sleeping.

As A rosebud might in dreams
Mid some lilies lie,—meseems
Thou, pink youngling, on the breast
Of thy mother, slumberest.

HAD A HARE-LIP.

HAD a hare-lip—Joney had;
  Spiled his looks, and Joney knowed it;
Fellers tried to bore him bad—
But, ef ever he got mad,
  He kep still and never showed it.
'Druther have his mouth, all pouted
  And split up, and like it wuz,
Than the ones 'at laughed about it.—
  Purty is as purty does!

Had to listen ruther clos't
  'Fore you knowed what he wuz givin'
You: and yet, without no boast,
Joney he wuz jes' the most
  Entertainin' talker livin'!
Take the Scripturs and run through 'em,
  Might say, like a' auctioneer,
And 'ud argy and review 'em
  'At wuz beautiful to hear!

Hare-lip and impediment
  Both wuz bad, and both agin him—
But the old folks where he went,
  Peared like, knowin' his intent,

'Scused his mouth fer what wuz in him.
And the children all loved Joney—
And he loved 'em back, you bet!—
Put their arms around him—on'y
None had ever kissed him yet.

In young company, someway,
Boys 'ud grin at one-another
On the sly; and girls 'ud lay
Low, with nothin' much to say,
Er leave Joney with their mother.
Many and many a time he's fetched 'em
Candy by the paper-sack,
And turned right around and ketched 'em
Makin' mouths behind his back!

S'prised, sometimes, the slurs he took—
Chap said onc't his mouth looked sorter
Like a fish's mouth 'ud look
When he'd be'n jerked off the hook
And plunked back into the worter.—
Same durn feller—it's su'prisin',
But it's facts—'at stood and cherred
From the bank that big baptizin'
Pike-bridge accident occurred!

Cherred fer Joney while he give
Life to little children drowndin'!

Which wuz fittenest to live—
Him 'at cherred, er him 'at div'
  And saved thirteen lives? * * * They
    found one
Body, three days later, floated
  Down the bayou, eight miles south,
All discolored-up and bloated—
  On'y knowed him by his mouth.

Had a hare-lip—Joney had—
  Folks 'at filed apast all knowed it—
Them 'at used to smile looked sad,
But ef he thought good or bad,
  He kep' still and never showed it—
'Druther have that mouth, all pouted
  And split up, and like it wuz,
Than the ones 'at laughed about it.
  Purty is as purty does!

SMELL OF BRUISED GRASS.

WAIT till the morning! Ah! we wait indeed
For daylight, we who toss about through stress
Of vacant-armed desires and emptiness
Of all the warm, warm touches that we need,
And the warm kisses upon which we feed
Our famished lips in fancy. May God bless
The starved lips of us with but one caress,
Warm as the yearning blood our poor hearts bleed.

* * * A wild prayer!—bite thy pillow, praying so—
Whirl this side, and whirl that, and moan for dawn;
Let the clock's seconds dribble out their woe,
And Time be drained of sorrow! Long ago
We heard the crowing cocks, with answers drawn,
As hoarsely sad at throat as sobs. Pray on!

IKE WALTON'S PRAYER.

I CRAVE, dear Lord,
No boundless hoard
  Of gold and gear,
    Nor jewels fine,
    Nor lands, nor kine,
      Nor treasure heaps of anything—
    Let but a little hut be mine
  Where at the hearthstone I may hear
      The cricket sing,
    And have the shine
Of one glad woman's eyes to make,
For my poor sake,
    Our simple home a place divine—
Just the wee cot—the cricket's chirr—
Love, and the smiling face of her!

I pray not for
Great riches, nor
  For vast estates and castle halls,—
  Give me to hear the bare footfalls
    Of children o'er
    An oaken floor
      New rinsed with sunshine, or be-
        spread

With but the tiny coverlet
And pillow for the baby's head;
And, pray Thou, may
The door stand open, and the day
Send ever in a gentle breeze,
With fragrance from the locust trees,
And drowsy moan of doves, and blur
Of robin-chirps and drone of bees,
With afterhushes of the stir
Of intermingling sounds, and then
The good-wife, and the smile of her
Filling the silence again—
The cricket's call,
And the wee cot,
Dear Lord of all,
Deny me not!

I pray not that
Men tremble at
My power of place
And lordly sway,—
I only pray for simple grace
To look my neighbor in the face
Full honestly from day to day;
Yield me his horny palm to hold
And I'll not pray
For gold,—
The tanned face, garlanded with mirth,

It hath the kingliest smile on earth—
The swart brow, diamonded with sweat,
Hath never need of coronet.—
  And so I reach,
    Dear Lord, to thee,
  And do beseech
    Thou givest me
The wee cot, and the cricket's chirr,
Love, and the glad sweet face of her!

SPIRITS AT HOME.

THE FAMILY.

THERE was father and mother and Emmy and Jane,
And Lou, and Ellen, and John and me—
And father was killed in the war, and Lou
She died of consumption, and John did too,
And Emmy she went with the pleurisy.

THE SPIRITS.

Father believed in 'em all his life—
But mother, at first, she'd shake her head—
Till after the battle of Champion Hill,
When many a flag in the winder-sill
Had crape mixed in with the white and red.

I used to doubt 'em myself till then—
But me and mother was satisfied
When Ellen she set, and father came
And rapped "God bless you," and mother's name,
And "The flag's up here." And we all just cried!

Used to come often after that,
  And talk to us just as he used to do,
Pleasantest kind! And once, for John,
He said he was lonesome but wouldn't let on—
  Fear mother would worry and Emmy and Lou.

But Lou was the bravest girl on earth--
  For all she was never hale nor strong
She'd have her fun! With her voice clean lost
She'd laugh and joke us that when she crossed
  To father, we'd all come taggin' along!

Died—just that way! And the raps was thick
  That night, as they often since occur,
Extry loud. And when Lou got back
She said it was father and her—and whack!
  She took the table—and we knowed HER!

John and Emmy, in five years more,
  Both had went.—And it seemed like fate!—
For the old home it burnt down,—but Jane
And me and Ellen we built again
  The new house here on the old estate.

And a happier family I don't know
  Of anywheres—unless its THEM—
Father, with all his love for Lou,

And her there with him, and healthy, too,
  And laughin' with John and little Em.

And, first we moved in the new house here,
  They all dropped in for a long pow-wow.
"We like your buildin', of course," Lou said,—
"But wouldn't swop with you to save your head—
  For we live in the ghost of the old house, now."

WINTER FANCIES

IT'S A COLD DAY.

I.

WINTER without
  And warmth within!
The winds may shout
  And the storm begin:
The snows may pack
  At the window pane,
And the skies grow black,
  And the sun remain
  Hidden away
  The livelong day—
But here—in here is the warmth of May!

II.

  Swoop your spitefullest!
  Up the flue,
  Wild winds—do!
What in the world do I care for you?
  O, delightfullest
    Weather of all!
    Howl and squall,
And shake the trees till the last leaves
    fall!

III.

The joy one feels,
In an easy chair,
Cocking his heels
In the dancing air
That wreathes the rim of a roaring stove,
Whose heat loves better than hearts can love,
Will not permit
The coldest day
To drive away
The fire in his blood, and the bliss of it!

IV.

Then blow, Winds! blow,
And rave and shriek,
And snarl and snow
Till your breath grows weak—
While here in my room
I'm as snugly shut
As a glad little worm
In the heart of a nut!

A BRAVE REFRAIN.

Imitated.

WHEN snow is here, and the trees look weird,
  And the knuckled twigs are gloved with frost;
When the breath congeals in the drover's beard,
  And the old pathway to the barn is lost;
When the rooster's crow is sad to hear,
  And the stamp of the stabled horse is vain,
And the tone of the cow-bell grieves the ear—
  O then is the time for a brave refrain!

When the gears hang stiff on the harness-peg,
  And the tallow gleams in frozen streaks,
And the old hen stands on a lonesome leg,
  And the pump sounds hoarse and the handle squeaks;
When the woodpile lies in a jumbled heap,
  And the frost is scratched from the window-pane,
And anxious eyes from the inside peep—
  O then is the time for a brave refrain!

When the ax-helve warms at the chimney-jam,
  And the hob-nailed boots on the hearth below,

And the house-cat curls in a slumber calm,
  And the eight-day clock ticks loud and slow;
When the harsh broom-handle jabs the ceil
  'Neath the kitchen-loft, and the drowsy brain
Sniffs the breath of the morning meal!—
  O then is the time for a brave refrain!

'ENVOI.

When the skillet seethes, and a blubbering hot
Tilts the lid of the coffee-pot,
And the scent of the buckwheat cake grows
    plain—
O then is the time for a brave refrain.

AS I SIT IN THE SILENCE.

ALL the pleasures of home have been numbered
and sung,
And, borne on the winds of the world, they
have beat
With their tremulous wings at the hearts of the
young,
And in bosoms of age found as warm a retreat;
And sweetest of all of the musical throng,
Yet least of the numbers that upward aspire,
Is the one rising now into wavering song,
As I sit in the silence and gaze in the fire.

'Tis a Winter long dead that beleaguers my door
And muffles his steps in the snows of the past,
And I see in the embers I'm dreaming before
Lost faces of love as they looked on me last—
The round, laughing eyes of a desk-mate of old
Gleam out for a moment with truant desire,
Then fade and are lost in a city of gold,
As I sit in the silence and gaze in the fire.

And then comes the face, peering back in my
own,
Of a shy little girl with her lids drooping low,

As she faltering tells, in a faraway tone,
  The ghost of a story of long, long ago—
Then her dewy blue eyes they are lifted again,
  But I see their glad light slowly fall and expire,
And I reach and cry to her in vain, all in vain,
  As I sit in the silence and gaze in the fire.

Then the face of a mother looks back through the mist
  Of the tears that are welling, and lucent with light,
I see the dear smile of the lips I have kissed
  As she knelt by my cradle at morning and night;
And my arms are outheld with a yearning too wild
  For any but God in his love to inspire,
As she pleads at the foot of His throne for her child,
  As I sit in the silence and gaze in the fire.

O pathos of rapture! O glorious pain!
  My heart is a blossom of joy over-run
With a shower of tears, as a lily with rain,
  That weeps in the shadow and laughs in the sun.

The blight of the Winter may fall on the tree,
  And the leaf and the flower may fall and expire,
But ever and ever love blossoms for me,
  As I sit in the silence and gaze in the fire.

PROSE

A WILD IRISHMAN.

Not many years ago the writer was for some months stationed at South Bend, a thriving little city of northern Indiana, its main population on the one side of the St. Joseph river, but quite a respectable fraction thereof taking its industrial way to the opposite shore, and there gaining an audience and a hearing in the rather imposing growth and hurly-burly of its big manufactories, and the consequent rapid appearance of multitudinous neat cottages, tenement houses and business blocks. A stranger, entering South Bend proper on an ordinary day, will be at some loss to account for its very prosperous appearance—its flagged and bowldered streets—its handsome mercantile blocks, banks and business houses generally. Reasoning from cause to effect, and seeing but a meagre sprinkling of people on the streets throughout the day, and these seeming, for the most part, merely idlers, and in no wise accessory to the evident thrift and opulence of their surroundings, the observant stranger will be puzzled at the situation. But when evening comes, and the outlying foundries, sewing-machine, wagon, plow, and other "works," together

with the paper mills and all the nameless industries—when the operations of all these are suspended for the day, and the workmen and workwomen loosed from labor—then, as this vast army suddenly invades and overflows bridge, roadway, street and lane, the startled stranger will fully comprehend the why and wherefore of the city's high prosperity. And, once acquainted with the people there, the fortunate sojourner will find no ordinary culture and intelligence, and, as certainly, he will meet with a social spirit and a whole-souled heartiness that will make the place a lasting memory. The town, too, is the home of many world-known notables, and a host of local celebrities, the chief of which latter class I found, during my stay there, in the person of Tommy Stafford, or "The Wild Irishman," as everybody called him.

"Talk of odd fellows and eccentric characters," said Major Blowney, my employer, one afternoon, "you must see our 'Wild Irishman' here before you say you've yet found the queerest, brightest, cleverest chap in all your travels. What d' ye say, Stockford?" And the Major paused in his work of charging cartridges for his new breech-loading shotgun and turned to await his partner's response,

Stockford, thus addressed, paused above the

shield sign he was lettering, slowly smiling as he dipped and trailed his pencil through the ivory black upon a bit of broken glass and said in his deliberate, half-absent-minded way, — "Is it Tommy you are telling him about?" and then, with a gradual broadening of the smile, he went on, "Well, I should say so. Tommy! What's come of the fellow, anyway? I haven't seen him since his last bout with the mayor, on his trial for shakin' up that fast-horse man."

"The fast-horse man got just exactly what he needed, too," said the genial Major, laughing, and mopping his perspiring brow. "The fellow was barkin' up the wrong stump when he tackled Tommy! Got beat in the trade, at his own game, you know, and wound up by an insult that no Irishman would take; and Tommy just naturally wore out the hall carpet of the old hotel with him!"

—"And then collared and led him to the mayor's office himself, they say!"

"Oh, he did!" said the Major, with a dash of pride in the confirmation; "that's Tommy all over!"

"Funny trial, wasn't it?" continued the ruminating Stockford.

"Wasn't it, though?" laughed the Major. "The porter's testimony: You see, he was for

Tommy, of course, and on examination testified that the horse-man struck Tommy first. And Tommy broke in with: 'He's a-meanin' well, yer Honor, but he's lyin' to ye—he's lyin' to ye. No livin' man iver struck me first—nor last, nayther, for the matter o' that!' And I thought — the — court — would — die," concluded the Major, in a like imminent state of merriment.

"Yes, and he said if he struck him first," supplemented Stockford, "he'd like to know why the horse-man was wearin' all the black eyes, and the blood, and the boomps on the head of um!' And it's that talk of his that got him off with so light a fine!"

"As it always does," said the Major, coming to himself abruptly and looking at his watch. "Stock', you say you're not going along with our duck-shooting party this time? The old Kankakee is just lousy with 'em this season!"

"Can't go possibly," said Stockford, "not on account of the work at all, but the folks at home ain't as well as I'd like to see them, and I'll stay here till they're better. Next time I'll try and be ready for you. Going to take Tommy, of course?"

"Of course! Got to have 'The Wild Irishman' with us! I'm going around to find him now." Then turning to me the Major continued,

"Suppose you get on your coat and hat and come along. It's the best chance you'll ever have to meet with Tommy. It's late anyhow, and Stockford'll get along without you. Come on!"

"Certainly," said Stockford; "Go ahead. And you can take him ducking, too, if he wants to go."

"But he doesn't want to go—and won't go," replied the Major with a commiserative glance at me. "Says he doesn't know a duck from a poll-parrot—nor how to load a shot-gun—and couldn't hit a house if he were inside of it and the door shut. Admits that he nearly killed his uncle once, on the other side of a tree, with a squirrel runnin' down it. Don't want him along!"

Reaching the street with the genial Major, he gave me this advice: "Now, when you meet Tommy, you mustn't take all he says for dead earnest, and you musn't believe, because he talks loud, and in italics every other word, that he wants to do all the talking and won't be interfered with. That's the way he's apt to strike folks at first—but it's their mistake, not his. Talk back to him—controvert him whenever he's aggressive in the utterance of his opinions, and if you're only honest in the announcement of your own ideas and beliefs, he'll like you all the better

for standing by them. He's quick tempered, and perhaps a trifle sensitive, so share your greater patience with him, and he'll pay you back by fighting for you at the drop of the hat. In short, he's as nearly typical of his oppressed country's brave, impetuous, fun-loving individuality as such a likeness can exist."

"But is he quarrelsome?" I asked.

"Not at all. There's the trouble. If he'd only quarrel, there'd be no harm done. Quarreling's cheap, and Tommy's extravagant. A big blacksmith here, the other day, kicked some boy out of his shop, and Tommy, on his cart, happened to be passing at the time; and he just jumped off without a word, and went in and worked on that fellow for about three minutes, with such disastrous results that they couldn't tell his shop from a slaughter-house; paid an assault and battery fine, and gave the boy a dollar beside, and the whole thing was a positive luxury to him! But I guess we'd better drop the subject, for here's his cart, and here's Tommy. Hi! there, you 'far-down' Irish Mick!" called the Major, in affected antipathy, "been out raiding the honest farmers' hen-roosts again, have you?"

We halted at a corner grocery and produce store, as I took it, and the smooth-faced, shave-headed man in woolen shirt, short vest, and sus-

penderless trousers so boisterously addressed by the Major, was just lifting from the back of his cart a coop of cackling chickens.

"Arrah,' ye blasted Kerryonian!" replied the handsome fellow, depositing the coop on the curb and straightening his tall, slender figure; "I were jist thinkin' of yez and the ducks, and here ye come quackin' into the prisence of r'yalty, wid yer canvas-back suit upon ye and the shwim-skins bechuxt yer toes! How air yez, anyhow—and air we startin' for the Kankakee by the nixt post?"

"We're to start just as soon as we get the boys together," said the Major, shaking hands. "The crowd's to be at Andrews' by 4, and it fully that now; so come on at once. We'll go 'round by Munson's and have Hi send a boy to look after your horse. Come; and I want to introduce my friend here to you, and we'll all want to smoke and jabber a little in appropriate seclusion. Come on." And the impatient Major had linked arms with his hesitating ally and myself and was turning the corner of the street.

"It's an hour's work I have yet wid the squawkers," mildly protested Tommy, still hanging back and stepping a trifle high; "but, as one Irishman would say til another, 'Ye're wrong, but I'm wid ye!'"

And five minutes later the three of us had joined a very jolly party in a snug back room, with

> The chamber walls depicted all around
> With portraitures of huntsman, hawk, and hound,
> And the hurt deer.

And where, as well, drifted over the olfactory intelligence a certain subtle, warm-breathed aroma, that genially combatted the chill and darkness of the day without, and, resurrecting long-dead Christmases, brimmed the grateful memory with all comfortable cheer.

A dozen hearty voices greeted the appearance of Tommy and the Major, the latter adroitly pushing the jovial Irishman to the front, with a mock-heroic introduction to the general company, at the conclusion of which Tommy, with his hat tucked under his left elbow, stood bowing with a grace of pose and presence Lord Chesterfield might have applauded.

"Gintlemen," said Tommy, settling back upon his heels and admiringly contemplating the group; "Gintlemen, I congratulate you wid a pride that shoves the thumbs o' me into the arrum holes of me weshkit! At the inshtigation of the bowld O'Blowney—axin' the gintleman's pardon —I am here wid no silver tongue of illoquence to

paralyze you, but I am prisent, as has been ripresinted, to jine wid you in a stupindeous waste of gun-powther, and duck-shot, and 'High-wines,' and ham sand-witches, upon the silvonian banks of the ragin' Kankakee, where the 'di-dipper' tips ye good-bye wid his tail, and the wild loon skoots like a sky-rocket for his exiled home in the alien dunes of the wild morass—or, as Tommy Moore so illegantly describes the blashted birrud,—

> 'Away to the dishmal shwamp he shpeeds—
> His path is rugged and sore,
> Through tangled juniper, beds of reeds,
> And many a fen where the serpent feeds,
> And birrud niver flew before—
> And niver will fly any more'

if iver he arrives back safe into civilization again—and I've been in the poultry business long enough to know the private opinion and personal integrity of every fowl that flies the air or roosts on poles. But, changin' the subject of my few small remarks here, and thankin' you wid an overflowin' heart but a dhry tongue, I have the honor to propose, gintlemen, long life and health to every mother's son o' ye, and success to the 'Duck-hunters of the Kankakee.'"

"The Duck-hunters of the Kankakee!" chorused the elated party in such musical uproar that for a full minute the voice of the enthusiastic

Major—who was trying to say something—could not be heard. Then he said:

"I want to propose that theme—'The Duck-hunters of the Kankakee'—for one of Tommy's improvizations. I move we have a song now from Tommy on the 'Duck-hunters of the Kankakee.'"

"Hurra! hurra! A song from Tommy," cried the crowd. "Make us up a song, and put us all into it! A song from Tommy! A song! a song!"

There was a queer light in the eye of the Irishman. I observed him narrowly—expectantly. Often I had read of this phenomenal art of improvised ballad-singing, but had always remained a little skeptical in regard to the possibility of such a feat. Even in the notable instances of this gift as displayed by the very clever Theodore Hook, I had always half suspected some prior preparation—some adroit forecasting of the sequence that seemed the inspiration of his witty verses. Here was evidently to be a test-example, and mechanically I found pencil and blank paper in my hand.

The clamor had subsided, and Tommy had drawn a chair near to and directly fronting the Major's. His right hand was extended, closely grasping the right hand of his friend which he

scarce perceptibly, though measuredly, lifted and let fall throughout the length of all the curious performance. The voice was not unmusical, nor was the quaint old ballad-air adopted by the singer unlovely in the least; simply a monotony was evident that accorded with the levity and chance-finish of the improvisation—and that the song was improvised on the instant I am certain —though in no wise remarkable, for other reasons, in rhythmic worth or finish. And while his smiling auditors all drew nearer, and leant, with parted lips, to catch every syllable, the words of the strange melody trailed unhesitatingly into the lines literally as here subjoined:—

One gloomy day in the airly fall,
Whin the sunshine had no chance at all—
No chance at all for to gleam and shine
And lighten up this heart of mine:

'Twas in South Bend, that famous town,
Whilst I were a-strollin' round and round,
I met some friends, and they says to me,
"Its a hunt we'll take on the Kankakee!"

"Hurra! for the Kankakee! Give it to us, Tommy!" cried an enthused voice between verses. "Now give it to the Major!" And the song went on:—

There's Major Blowney leads the van,
As crack a shot as an Irishman,—

For it's the duck is a tin decoy
That his old shotgun can't destroy!

And half a dozen jubilant palms patted the Major's shoulders, and his ruddy, good-natured face beamed with delight. "Now give it to the rest of 'em, Tommy!" chuckled the Major. And the song continued:—

And along wid 'Hank' is Mick Maharr,
And Barney Pince, at 'The Shamrock' bar—
There's Barney Pince, wid his heart so true;
And the Andrews Brothers they'll go too!

"Hold on, Tommy!" chipped in one of the Andrews; "you must give 'the Andrews Brothers' a better advertisement than that! Turn us on a full verse, can't you?"

"Make 'em pay for it if you do!" said the Major in an undertone. And Tommy promptly amended:—

O, the Andrews Brothers, they'll be there,
Wid good se-gyars and wine to shpare—
They'll treat us here on fine champagne,
And when we're there they'll treat again.

The applause here was vociferous, and only discontinued when a box of Havanas stood open upon the table. During the momentary lull thus occasioned, I caught the Major's twinkling eyes glancing evasively toward me, as he leant whis-

pering some further instructions to Tommy, who again took up his desultory ballad, while I arose and fled for the street, catching, however, as I went, and high above the laughter of the crowd, the satire of this quatrain to its latest line:

> But R-R-Riley he'll not go, I guess,
> Lest he'd get lost in the wil-der-ness,
> And so in the city he will shtop
> For to curl his hair in the barber shop.

It was after 6 when I reached the hotel, but I had my hair trimmed before I went down to supper. The style of trimming I adopted then I still adhere to, and call it "the Tommy Stafford stubble crop."

Ten days passed before I again saw the Major. Immediately upon his return—it was late afternoon when I heard of it—I determined to take my evening walk out the long street toward his pleasant home and call upon him there. This I did, and found him, in a wholesome state of fatigue, slippers and easy chair, enjoying his pipe on the piazza. Of course he was overflowing with happy reminiscences of the hunt — the wood-and-water-craft — boats — ambushes—decoys, and tramp and camp and so on, without end:—but I wanted to hear him talk of "The Wild Irishman"—Tommy; and I think, too, now, that the sagacious Major secretly read

my desires all the time. To be utterly frank with the reader I will admit that I not only think that the Major divined my interest in Tommy, but I know he did, for at last, as though reading my very thoughts, he abruptly said, after a long pause, in which he knocked the ashes from his pipe and refilled and lighted it: "Well, all I know of 'The Wild Irishman' I can tell you in a very few words—that is, if you care at all to listen?" And the crafty old Major seemed to hesitate.

"Go on—go on!" I said, eagerly.

"About forty years ago," resumed the Major, placidly, "in the little, old, unheard-of town of Karnteel, County Tyrone, Province Ulster, Ireland, Tommy Stafford—in spite of the contrary opinion of his wretchedly poor parents—was fortunate enough to be born. And here again, as I advised you the other day, you must be prepared for constant surprises in the study of Tommy's character."

"Go on," I said; "I'm prepared for anything."

The Major smiled profoundly and continued:—

"Fifteen years ago, when he came to America—and the Lord only knows how he got the passage-money—he brought his widowed mother

with him here, and has supported, and is still supporting her. Besides," went on the still secretly smiling Major, "the fellow has actually found time, through all his adversities, to pick up quite a smattering of education, here and there—"

"Poor fellow!" I broke in, sympathizingly, "what a pity it is that he couldn't have had such advantages earlier in life," and as I recalled the broad brogue of the fellow, together with his careless dress, recognizing beneath it all the native talent and brilliancy of a mind of most uncommon worth, I could not restrain a deep sigh of compassion and regret.

The Major was leaning forward in the gathering dusk, and evidently studying my own face, the expression of which, at that moment, was very grave and solemn, I am sure. He suddenly threw himself backward in his chair, in an uncontrollable burst of laughter. "Oh, I just can't keep it up any longer!" he exclaimed.

"Keep what up?" I queried, in a perfect maze of bewilderment and surprise: "Keep what up?" I repeated.

"Why, all this twaddle, farce, travesty and by-play regarding Tommy! You know I warned you over and over, and you musn't blame me for the deception. I never thought you'd take it so

in earnest!" and here the jovial Major again went into convulsions of laughter.

"But I don't understand a word of it at all," I cried, half-frenzied with the gnarl and tangle of the whole affair. "What 'twaddle, farce and travesty,' is it anyhow?" And in my vexation I found myself on my feet, and striding nervously up and down the paved walk that joined the street with the piazza, pausing at last and confronting the Major most savagely. "Please explain," I said, controlling myself with an effort.

The Major arose, "Your striding up and down there reminds me that a little stroll on the street might do us both good," he said. "Will you wait till I get a coat and hat?"

He rejoined me a moment later, and we passed through the open gate; and saying, "Let's go down this way," he took my arm and turned into a street where, cooling as the dusk was, the thick maples lining the walk seemed to throw a special shade of tranquility upon us.

"What I meant was"—began the Major, in a low, serious voice,—"What I meant was—simply this: Our friend Tommy, though the truest Irishman in the world, is a man quite the opposite every way of the character he appeared to you. All that rich brogue of his is assumed.

Though poor, as I told you, when he came here, his native quickness, and his marvelous resources —tact, judgment, business qualities—all have helped him to the equivalent of a liberal education. His love of the humorous and the ridiculous is unbounded; but he has serious moments as well, and at such times is as dignified and refined in speech and manner as any man you'd find in a thousand. He is a good speaker, can stir a political convention to fomentation when he gets fired up; and can write an article for the press that goes to the spot. He gets into a good many personal encounters of a rather undignified character; but they are almost invariably bred of his innate interest in the 'under dog,' and the fire-and-tow of his impetuous nature."

My companion had paused here, and was looking through some printed slips in his pocket-book. "I wanted you to see some of the fellow's articles in print, but I have nothing of importance here—only some of his 'doggeral,' as he calls it, and you've had a sample of that. But there's a bit of his native dialect you should hear him recite. You may keep that if you care to. The boys all fell in love with it, hearing his rendition of it, and wanted copies. So we had a lot printed, and I have two or three left. Put it in your pocket and read it at your leisure."

But I read it there and then, as eagerly, too, as I append it here and now. It is called—

THE TOWN KARNTEEL.

The town Karnteel—it's who'll reveal
  Its praises justifiable?
For who can sing of anything
  As lovely and reliable?
Where summer, spring, or winter lies,
  From Malin's Head to Tipperary,
There's no such town for interprise
  Bechuxt Youghal and Londonderry!

There's not its likes in Ireland—
  For twicet the week, be-gorries,
They're playing jigs upon the band—
  And jumping them in sacks—and—and
And racing wid phweel-borries!

Karnteel—it's there, like any fair,
  The purty gurls are plinty, sure—
And man alive, at forty-five
  The legs of me are twinty, sure.
I lave my cares and loein' too,
  Behind me, as is sinsible,
And it's Karnteel I'm goin' to
  To cilebrate in principal!

For there's the town of all the land,
  And twicet the week, be-gorries,
They're playing jigs upon the band—
  And jumping there in sacks—and—and
And racing wid phweel-borries!

And whilst I feel for old Karnteel
  That I've no phrases glorious,
It stands above the need of love
  That boasts in voice uproarious.
Lave that for Cork, and Dublin too,
  And Armagh and Killarney, thin,
And Karnteel won't be troublin' you
  Wid any jealous blarney, thin!

Ah! there's the town of all the land,
  For twicet the week, be-gorries,
They're playing jigs upon the band—
  And jumping there in sacks—and—and
And racing wid phweel-borries.

"Before we turn back, now," said the smiling Major, as I stood lingering over the indefinable humor of the last refrain, "before we turn back I want to show you something eminently characteristic. Come this way a half dozen steps."

As he spoke I looked up, to observe that we had paused before a handsome square brick residence, centering a beautiful smooth lawn, its emerald only littered with the light gold of the earliest autumn leaves. On either side of the trim walk that led up from the gate to the curved stone balusters of the broad piazza, with its empty easy chairs, were graceful vases, frothing over with late blossoms, and wreathed with laurel looking vines; and, luxuriantly lacing the border

of the pave that turned the further corner of the house, blue, white and crimson, pink, and violet, went fading in perspective as my gaze followed the gesture of the Major's.

"Here, come a little further. Now you can see him, can't you?"

Yes, I could make out a figure in the deepening dusk—the figure of a man on the back stoop—a tired-looking man, in his shirt-sleeves, that sat upon a low chair—no, not a chair—an empty box. He was leaning forward with his elbows resting on his knees, and the hands dropped limp. He was smoking, too; I could barely see his pipe, and but for the odor of very strong tobacco would not have known he had a pipe. Why does the master of the house permit his servants to so desecrate this beautiful home? I thought.

"Well, shall we go now?" said the Major.

I turned silently and we retraced our steps. I think neither of us spoke for the distance of a square.

"Guess you didn't know the man there on the back porch?" said the Major.

"No; why?" I asked dubiously.

"I hardly thought you would, and besides the poor fellow's tired, and it was best not to disturb him," said the Major.

"Why, who was it—some one I know?"

"It was Tommy."

"Oh," said I, queryingly. "He's employed there in some capacity?"

"Yes, as master of the house."

"You don't mean it?"

"I certainly do. He owns it, and made every cent of the money that paid for it!" said the Major proudly. That's why I wanted you particularly to note that 'eminent characteristic' I spoke of. Tommy could just as well be sitting, with a fine cigar, on the front piazza in an easy chair, as with his dhudeen, on the back porch, on an empty box, where every night you'll find him. It's the unconscious dropping back into the old ways of his father, and his father's father, and his father's father's father. In brief, he sits there the poor lorn symbol of the long oppression of his race.

MRS. MILLER.

JOHN B. MCKINNEY, attorney and counselor-at-law, as his sign read, was, for many reasons, a fortunate man, and for many other reasons he was not. He was chiefly fortunate in being, as certain opponents often strove to witheringly designate him, "the son of his father," since that sound old gentleman was the wealthiest farmer in that section, with but one son and heir to, in time, supplant him in the role of "county god," and haply perpetuate the prouder title of "the biggest tax-payer on the assessment list." And this fact, too, fortunate as it would seem, was doubtless the indirect occasion of a liberal percentage of all John's misfortunes. From his earliest schooldays in the little town, up to his tardy graduation from a distant college, the influence of his father's wealth invited his procrastination, humored its results, encouraged the laxity of his ambition, "and even now," as John used, in bitter irony, to put it, "it is aiding and abetting me in the ostensible practice of my chosen profession, a listless, aimless, undetermined man of forty, and a confirmed bachelor at that!" At the utterance of this self-depreciating statement, John

"Here," He Said, "Is My Best Friend in the World."
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generally jerked his legs down from the top of his desk; and, rising and kicking his chair back to the wall, he would stump around his littered office till the manilla carpet steamed with dust. Then he would wildly break away, seeking refuge either in the open street or his room at the old-time tavern, the Eagle House, "where," he would say, "I have lodged and boarded, I do solemnly asseverate, for a long, unbroken, middle-aged eternity of ten years, and can yet assert, in the words of the more fortunately-dying Webster, that 'I still live!'"

Extravagantly satirical as he was at times, John had always an indefinable drollery about him that made him agreeable company to his friends, at least; and such an admiring friend he had constantly at hand in the person of Bert Haines. Both were Bohemians in natural tendency, and, though John was far in Bert's advance in point of age, he found the young man "just the kind of a fellow to have around." And so it was, when summer days were dull and tedious, these two could muse and doze the hours away together; and when the nights were long, and dark, and deep, and beautiful, they could drift out in the noon-light of the stars, and with "the soft complaining flute" and "warbling lute," "lay the pipes," as John would say, "for

our enduring popularity with the girls!" And it was immediately subsequent to one of these romantic excursions, when the belated pair, at 2 o'clock in the morning, had skulked up a side stairway of the old hotel, and gained John's room, with nothing more serious happening than Bert's falling over a trunk and smashing his guitar,—just after such a night of romance and adventure it was that, in the seclusion of John's room, Bert had something of especial import to communicate.

"Mack," he said, as that worthy anathematized a spiteful match, and then sucked his finger.

"Blast the all-fired old torch!" said John, wrestling with the lamp-flue, and turning on a welcome flame at last. "Well, you said 'Mack!' Why don't you go on? And don't bawl at the top of your lungs, either. You've already succeeded in waking every boarder in the house with that guitar, and you want to make amends now, by letting them go to sleep again!"

"But my dear fellow," said Bert, with forced calmness, "you're the fellow that's making all the noise—and—"

"Why, you howling dervish!" interrupted John, with a feigned air of pleased surprise and admiration. "But let's drop controversy. Throw

the fragments of your guitar in the wood-box there, and proceed with the opening proposition."

"What I was going to say was this," said Bert, with a half-desperate enunciation; "I'm getting tired of this way of living—clean, dead-tired, and fagged out, and sick of the whole artificial business!"

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed John, with a towering disdain, "you needn't go any further! I know just what malady is throttling you. Its reform—reform! You're going to 'turn over a new leaf,' and all that, and sign the pledge, and quit cigars, and go to work, and pay your debts, and gravitate back into Sunday-school, where you can make love to the preacher's daughter under the guise of religion, and desecrate the sanctity of the innermost pale of the church by confessions at class of your 'thorough conversion!' Oh, you're going to—"

"No, but I'm going to do nothing of the sort," said Bert resentfully. "What I mean—if you'll let me finish—is, I'm getting too old to be eternally undignifying myself with this 'singing of midnight strains under Bonnybell's window-panes,' and too old to be keeping myself in constant humiliation and expense by the borrowing and stringing up of old guitars, together with

the breakage of the same, and the general wear-and-tear on a constitution that is slowly being sapped to its foundations by exposure in the night air and the dew." "And while you receive no further compensation in return," said John, "than, perhaps, the coy turning-up of a lamp at an upper casement where the jasmine climbs, or an exasperating patter of invisible palms, or a huge dank wedge of fruit-cake shoved at you by the old man, through a crack in the door."

"Yes, and I'm going to have my just reward, is what I mean," said Bert; "and exchange the lover's life for the benedict's. Going to hunt out a good sensible girl and marry her." And as the young man concluded this desperate avowal he jerked the bow of his cravat into a hard knot, kicked his hat under the bed, and threw himself on the sofa like an old suit.

John stared at him with absolute compassion. "Poor devil," he said, half musingly, "I know just how he feels—

> Ring in the wind his wedding chimes;
> Smile, villagers, at every door;
> Old churchyards stuffed with buried crimes,
> Be clad in sunshine o'er and o'er,
> And youthful maidens, white and sweet,
> Scatter your blossoms far and wide,
> And with a bridal-chorus greet
> This happy bridegroom and his bride!"

"Oh, here!" exclaimed the wretched Bert, jumping to his feet; "let up on that dismal recitative. It would make a dog howl to hear that."

"Then you 'let up' on that suicidal talk of marrying," replied John, "and all that harangue of incoherency about your growing old. Why, my dear fellow, you're at least a dozen years my junior, and look at me!" And John glanced at himself in the glass with a feeble pride, noting the gray sparseness of his side-hair, and its plaintive dearth on top. "Of course I've got to admit," he continued, "that my hair is gradually evaporating; but for all that, I'm 'still in the ring,' don't you know; as young in society, for the matter of that, as yourself! And this is just the reason why I don't want you to blight every prospect in your life by marrying at your age—especially a woman—I mean the kind of woman you'd be sure to fancy at your age."

"Didn't I say 'a good, sensible girl' was the kind I had selected?" Bert remonstrated.

"Oh!" exclaimed John, "you've selected her then? And without one word to me!" he ended rebukingly.

"Well, hang it all!" said Bert, impatiently; "I knew how you were, and just how you'd

talk me out of it, and I made up my mind that for once, at least, I'd follow the dictates of a heart that—however malleable in youthful frivolities—should beat in manhood loyal to itself and loyal to its own affinity."

"Go it! Fire away! Farewell, vain world!" exclaimed the excited John. "Trade your soul off for a pair of ear bobs and a button hook—a hank of jute hair and a box of lily-white! I've buried not less than ten old chums this way, and here's another nominated for the tomb! How dare I ever trust again in transitory man!"

It was a bright morning when the slothful John was aroused by a long, vociferous pounding on the door. He started up in bed to find himself alone—the victim of his wrathful irony having evidently risen and fled away while his pitiless tormentor slept—"Doubtless to at once accomplish that nefarious intent as set forth by his unblushing confession of last night," mused the miserable John, and he ground his fingers in the corners of his swollen eyes, and leered grimly at the feverish orbs, blood-shotten, blurred and aching.

The pounding on the door continued. John looked at his watch; it was only 8 o'clock.

"Hi, there!" he called viciously. "What do you mean, anyhow?" he went on, elevating

his voice again; "shaking a man out of bed when he's just dropping into his first sleep?"

"I mean that you're going to get up; that's what!" replied a firm female voice. "It's 8 o'clock, and I want to put your room in order, and I'm not going to wait all day about it, either! Get up and go down to your breakfast, and let me have the room!" And the clamor at the door was industriously renewed.

"Say!" called John, querulously, hurrying on his clothes, "Say, you!"

"There's no say about it!" responded the determined voice; "I've heard about you, and your ways around this house, and I'm not going to put up with it! You'll not lie in bed till high noon when I've got to keep your room in proper order!"

"Oh, ho!" said John, "reckon you're the new invasion here? Doubtless you're the girl that's been hanging up the new window blinds that won't roll, and disguising the pillows with clean slips, and 'hennin' around among my books and papers on the table here, and ageing me generally till I don't know my own handwriting by the time I find it. Oh, yes! you're going to revolutionize things here; you're going to introduce promptness, and system, and order. See you've even filled the wash-pitcher and tucked two

starched towels through the handle. Haven't got any tin towels, have you? I rather like this new soap, too! So solid and durable, you know; warranted not to raise a lather. Might as well wash one's hands with a door knob!" And as John's voice grumbled away into the sullen silence again, the determined voice without responded: "Oh, you can growl away to your heart's content, Mr. McKinney, but I want you to distinctly understand that I'm not going to humor you in any of your old bachelor sluggardly, slovenly ways, and whims and notions. And I want you to understand, too, that I am not hired help in this house, nor a chambermaid, nor anything of the kind. I'm the landlady here, and I'll give you just five minutes more to get down to your breakfast, or you'll not get any—that's what!" And as the reversed cuff he was in the act of buttoning slid from John's wrist and rolled under the dresser, he heard a stiff rustling of starched muslin flouncing past the door, and the quick italicized patter of determined gaiters down the hall.

"Look here," said John, to the bright-faced boy in the hotel office, a half hour, later "It seems the house here's been changing hands again."

"Yes, sir," said the boy, closing the cigar

case, and handing him a lighted match. "Well, the new landlord, whoever he is," continued John, patronizingly, "is 'a good one.' Leastwise, he knows what's good to eat, and how to serve it."

The boy laughed timidly,—"It ain't a 'landlord,' though—it's a landlady; it's my mother."

"Ah," said John, dallying with the change the boy had pushed toward him. "Your mother, eh? And where's your father?"

"He's dead," said the boy.

"And what's this for?" abruptly asked John, examining his change.

"That's your change," said the boy. "You got three for a quarter, and gave me a 'half.'"

"Well, you just keep it," said John, sliding back the change. "It's for good luck, you know, my boy. Same as drinking you long life and prosperity. And Oh, yes, by the way, you may tell your mother I'll have a friend to dinner with me to-day."

"Yes, sir, and thank you, sir," said the beaming boy.

"Handsome boy," mused John, as he walked down street. "Takes that from his father, though, I'll wager my existence."

Upon his office desk, John found a hastily written note. It was addressed in the well-

known hand of his old chum. He eyed the missive apprehensively, and there was a positive pathos in his voice as he said aloud; "It's our divorce, I feel it!" The note, headed "At the office, 4 in morning," ran like this:

DEAR MACK—I left you slumbering so soundly that, by noon, when you waken, I hope, in your refreshed state, you will look more tolerantly on my intentions as confided to you this night. I will not see you here again to say good-bye. I wanted to, but was afraid to "rouse the sleeping lion." I will not close my eyes to-night—fact is I haven't time. Our serenade at Josie's was a prearranged signal by which she is to be ready and at the station for the 5 morning train. You may remember the lighting of three consecutive matches at her window before the igniting of her lamp. That meant, "Thrice, dearest one, I'll meet thee at the depot at 4:30 sharp." So, my dear Mack, this is to inform you that, even as you read, Josie and I have eloped. It is all the old man's fault, yet I forgive him. Hope he'll return the favor. Josie predicts he will inside of a week—or ten days, anyhow. Good-bye, Mack, old boy, and let a fellow down as easy as you can. Affectionately,

BERT.

"Heavens!" exclaimed John, stifling the note in his hand and stalking tragically around the room. "Can it be possible that I have nursed a frozen viper? An ingrate? A wolf in sheep's clothing? An ourang-outang in gent's furnishings?"

"Was you callin' me, sir?" asked a voice at the door. It was the janitor.

"No!" thundered John; "quit my sight! get out of my way! No, no, Thompson, I don't mean that," he called after him. "Here's a half dollar for you, and I want you to lock up the office, and tell anybody that wants to see me that I've been set upon, and sacked and assassinated in cold blood, and I've fled to my father's in the country, and am lying there in the convulsions of dissolution, babbling of green fields and running brooks, and thirsting for the life of every woman that comes in gun-shot!" And then, more like a confirmed invalid than a man in the strength and pride of his prime, he crept down into the street again, and thence back to his hotel.

Dejectedly climbing to his room, he encountered on the landing above a little woman in a jaunty dusting-cap and a trim habit of crisp muslin. He tried to evade her, but in vain. She looked him squarely in the face.

"You're the gentleman in No. 11, I believe?" she said.

He nodded confusedly.

"Mr. McKinney is your name, I think?" she queried, with a pretty elevation of the eyebrows.

"Yes, ma'am," said John rather abjectly. "You see, ma'am—but I beg pardon," he went

on stammeringly, and with a very awkward bow —"I beg pardon, but I am addressing—ah—the—ah—the—"

"You are addressing the new landlady," she interpolated, pleasantly. "Mrs. Miller is my name. I think we should be friends, Mr. McKinney, since I hear you are one of the oldest patrons of the house."

"Thank you—thank you!" said John, completely embarrassed. "Yes, indeed!—ha, ha. Oh, yes—yes—really we must be quite old friends, I assure you, Mrs.—Mrs.—"

"Mrs. Miller," smilingly prompted the little woman.

"Yes, ah, yes,—Mrs. Miller. Lovely morning, Mrs. Miller," said John, edging past her and backing toward his room.

But as Mrs. Miller was laughing outright, for some mysterious reason, and gave no affirmative in response to his proposition as to the quality of the weather, John, utterly abashed and nonplused, darted into his room and closed the door. "Deucedly extraordinary woman!" he thought; "wonder what's her idea!"

He remained locked in his room till dinner, and when he promptly emerged for that occasion there was a very noticeable improvement in his personal appearance, in point of dress at least, for

there still lingered about his smoothly shaven features a certain haggard, care-worn, anxious look.

Next his own place at the table he found a chair tilted forward, as though in reservation for some honored guest. What did it mean? Oh, he remembered now. Told the boy to tell his mother he would have a friend to dine with him. Bert,—and, blast the fellow! he was doubtless dining then with a far preferable companion—his wife—in a palace car on the P., C. & St. L., two hundred miles away. The thought was maddening. Of course, now, the landlady would have material for a new assault. And how could he avert it? Dare he meet it? A despairing film blurred his sight for the moment—then the eyes flashed daringly. "I will meet it like a man!" he said mentally—"yes, I will invite it! Let her do her worst!"

He called a servant, directing some message in an undertone.

"Yes, sir," said the agreeable servant, "I'll go right away, sir," and he left the room.

Five minutes elapsed, and then a voice at his elbow startled him:

"Did you send for me, Mr. McKinney? What is it I can do?"

"You are very kind, Mrs.—Mrs.—"

"Mrs. Miller," said the landlady, with a smile that he remembered.

"Now, please spare me even the mildest of rebukes. I deserve your censure, but I can't stand it—I can't, positively!" and there was a pleading look in John's lifted eyes that changed the little woman's smile to an expression of real solicitude. "I have sent for you," continued John, "to ask of you three great favors. Please be seated while I enumerate them. First—I want you to forgive and forget that ill-natured, uncalled-for grumbling of mine this morning when you wakened me."

"Why, certainly," said the landlady, again smiling, though quite seriously.

"I thank you," said John, with dignity. "And, second," he continued—"I want your assurance that my extreme confusion and awkwardness on the occasion of our meeting later were rightly interpreted."

"Certainly—certainly," said the landlady, with the kindliest sympathy.

"I am grateful—utterly," said John, with newer dignity. "And then," he went on—"after informing you that it is impossible for the best friend I have in the world to be with me at this hour, as intended, I want you to do me the very great honor of dining with me. Will you?"

"Why, certainly," said the charming little landlady—"and a thousand thanks beside! But tell me something of your friend," she continued, as they were being served: "What is he like—and what is his name—and where is he?"

"Well," said John, warily—"he's like all young fellows of his age. He's quite young, you know—not over thirty, I should say—a mere boy, in fact, but clever—talented—versatile."

"Unmarried, of course," said the chatty little woman.

"Oh, yes," said John, in a matter-of-course tone—but he caught himself abruptly—then stared intently at his napkin—glanced evasively at the side-face of his questioner, and said,—"Oh, yes! Yes, indeed! He's unmarried. Old bachelor like myself, you know. Ha! ha!"

"So he's not like the young man here that distinguished himself last night?" says the little woman, archly.

The fork in John's hand, half-lifted to his lips, faltered, and fell back toward his plate.

"Why, what's that?" said John, in a strange voice; "I haven't heard anything about it—I mean I haven't heard anything about any young man. What was it?"

"Haven't heard anything about the elopement?" exclaimed the little woman in astonish-

ment. "Why, it's been the talk of the town all morning. Elopement in high life—son of a grain dealer, name of Hines, or Himes or something, and a preacher's daughter—Josie somebody—didn't catch her last name. Wonder if you don't know the parties—Why, Mr. McKinney, are you ill?"

"Oh, no—not at all!" said John: "Don't mention it. Ha—ha! Just eating too rapidly, that's all. Go on with—you were saying that Bert and Josie had really eloped."

"What Bert?" asked the little woman quickly.

"Why, did I say Bert?" says John, with a guilty look. "I meant Haines, of course, you know—Haines and Josie. And did they really elope?"

"That's the report," answered the little woman as though deliberating some important evidence; "and they say, too, that the plot of the runaway was quite ingenious. It seems the young lovers were assisted in their flight by some old fellow—friend of the young man's—Why, Mr. McKinney, you are ill, surely!"

John's face was ashen.

"No—no!" he gasped painfully: "Go on—go on! Tell me more about the—the—the old

fellow—the old reprobate! And is he still at large?"

"Yes," said the little woman, anxiously regarding the strange demeanor of her companion. "They say, though, that the law can do nothing with him, and that this fact only intensifies the agony of the broken-hearted parents—for it seems they have, till now, regarded him both as a gentleman and family friend in whom"—

"I really am ill," moaned John, waveringly rising to his feet; "but I beg you not to be alarmed. Tell your little boy to come to my room, where I will retire at once and send for my physician. It is simply a nervous attack. I am often troubled so, and only perfect quiet and seclusion restores me. You have done me a great honor, Mrs."—"Mrs. Miller," sighed the sympathetic little woman—"Mrs. Miller,—and I thank you more than I have words to express." He bowed limply, turned through a side door opening on a stair, and tottered to his room.

During the three weeks of illness through which he passed, John had every attention—much more, indeed, than he had consciousness to appreciate. For the most part his mind wandered, and he talked of curious things, and

laughed hysterically, and serenaded mermaids that dwelt in grassy seas of dew, and were bald-headed like himself. He played upon a fourteen-jointed flute of solid gold, with diamond holes, and keys carved out of thawless ice. His old father came at first to take him home; but he could not be moved, the doctor said.

Two weeks of John's illness had worn away, when a very serious looking young man, in a travelling duster, and a high hat, came up the stairs to see him. A handsome young lady was clinging to his arm. It was Bert and Josie. She had guessed the very date of their forgiveness. John wakened even clearer in mind than usual that afternoon. He recognized his old chum at a glance, and Josie—now Bert's wife. Yes, he comprehended that. He was holding a hand of each when another figure entered. His thin, white fingers loosened their clasp, and he held a hand toward the newcomer. "Here," he said, "is my best friend in the world—Bert, you and Josie will love her, I know; for this is Mrs.—Mrs."—"Mrs. Miller," said the radiant little woman.—"Yes, Mrs. Miller," said John, very proudly.