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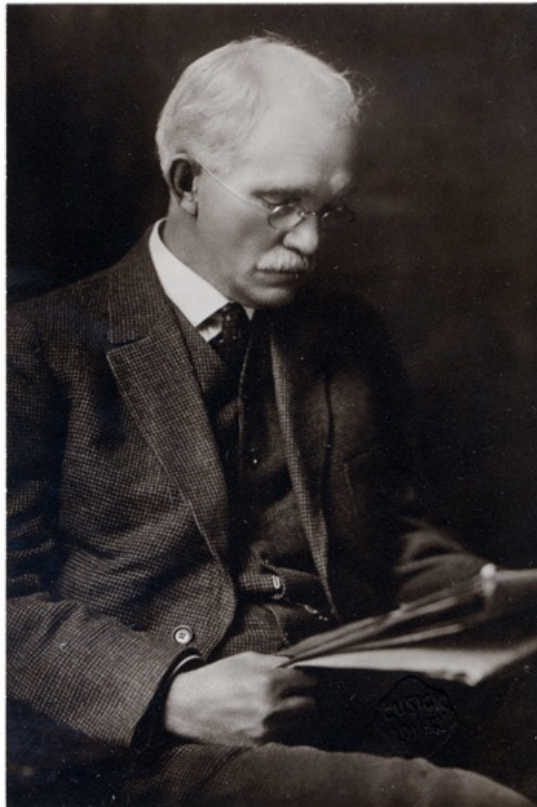
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*OF THIS LITTLE VOLUME TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY  
COPIES HAVE BEEN MADE*

YOUNG EWING ALLISON  
—A REMINISCENCE



*Photograph By Cusick.*

Young Ewing Allison

"The man who wrote such a poem should not be unknelled, unhonored and  
unsung."

—Walt Mason.

# The Dead Men's Song:

BEING THE  
STORY OF A POEM AND A REMINISCENT SKETCH  
OF ITS AUTHOR

YOUNG EWING ALLISON

TOGETHER WITH A BROWSE THROUGH OTHER  
GEMS OF HIS AND RECOLLECTIONS  
OF OLDER DAYS

BY

HIS FRIEND AND ASSOCIATE

CHAMPION INGRAHAM HITCHCOCK

*Incorporated with which are Facsimiles of Certain  
Interesting Manuscripts*

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

1914

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CHAMPION INGRAHAM HITCHCOCK

1914

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### "A PIRITICAL BALLAD" (Words And Music)

Facsimile in Miniature of the First Printed Verses of "Derelict" Published and Copyrighted by William A. Pond & Co., 1891.

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Together With Certain Letters and Memoranda, Proofs, Mss., etc., About "Fifteen Dead Men," in Facsimile of Young E. Allison's Characteristic Handwriting, which are to be Found in a "Pocket" in the Inside Back Cover of This Volume.

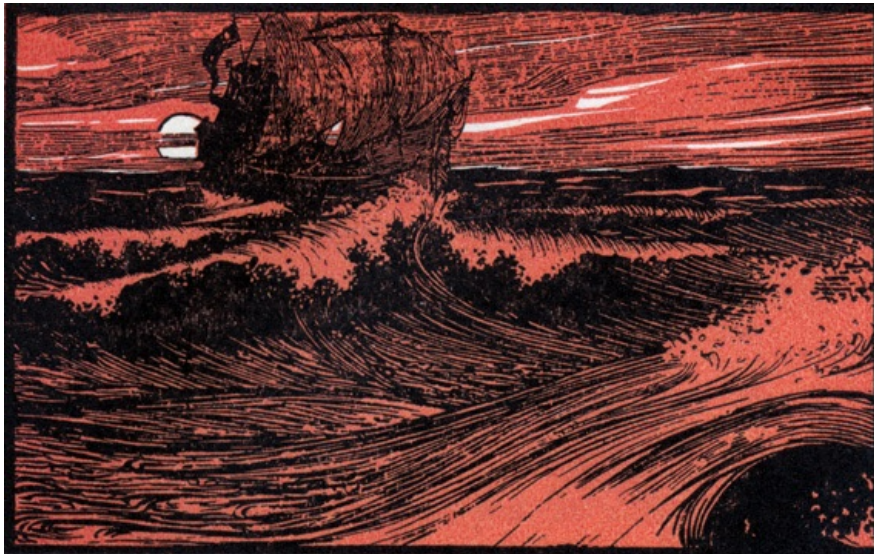
# A WORD SAID BEFOREHAND

If a careless and uninformed writer in *The New York Times Book Review* had not hazarded the speculation in his columns that it was very doubtful if Young Ewing Allison wrote the famous poem "Fifteen Men on the Dead Man's Chest," the creation and perfection of which took him through a period of about six years, the idea of undertaking a sketch of him and the stuff he has done might never have occurred to me. While not exactly thankful to the New York editor, I have abandoned a blood-thirsty raid on his sanctum and a righteous indignation has been dissipated in the serene pleasure I have found in expressing an appreciation of Allison's genius in this private volume for our friends. God bless the Old Scout! In all of our intimate years there has been such a complete understanding between us that spoken words have been largely unnecessary, and so the opportunity of saying publicly what has ever been in my heart, is a rare one, eagerly seized.

C. I. H.

Louisville, November, 1914.

*THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED TO HER WHOSE FAITH IN  
ME AND LOVE FOR ME NEVER WANED*



## DERELICT

A Reminiscence of "Treasure Island"

*Fifteen men on the dead man's chest—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
Drink and the devil had done for the rest—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!*  
*(Cap'n Billy Bones his song.)*

14

Fifteen men on the dead man's chest—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
Drink and the devil had done for the rest—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
The mate was fixed by the bos'n's pike,  
The bos'n brained with a marlinspike  
And Cookey's throat was marked belike  
It had been gripped  
By fingers ten;  
And there they lay,  
All good dead men,  
Like break-o'-day in a boozing-ken—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!



Fifteen men of a whole ship's list—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
Dead and bedamned, and the rest gone whist!—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
The skipper lay with his nob in gore  
Where the scullion's axe his cheek had shore—  
And the scullion he was stabbed times four.  
And there they lay,  
And the soggy skies  
Dripped all day long  
In up-staring eyes—  
At murk sunset and at foul sunrise—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!

15



16



Fifteen men of 'em stiff and stark—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
Ten of the crew had the Murder mark—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
'Twas a cutlass swipe, or an ounce of lead,  
Or a yawing hole in a battered head—  
And the scuppers glut with a rotting red.  
And there they lay—  
Aye, damn my eyes!—  
All lookouts clapped  
On paradise—  
All souls bound just contrariwise—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!

17



Fifteen men of 'em good and true—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
Every man jack could ha' sailed with Old Pew—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
There was chest on chest full of Spanish gold,  
With a ton of plate in the middle hold,  
And the cabins riot of stuff untold.  
And they lay there  
That had took the plum,  
With sightless glare  
And their lips struck dumb,  
While we shared all by the rule of thumb—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!

18



*More was seen through the sternlight screen—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
Chartings ondoubt where a woman had been—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
A flimsy shift on a bunker cot,  
With a thin dirk slot through the bosom spot  
And the lace stiff-dry in a purplish blot.  
Or was she wench ...  
Or some shuddering maid...?  
That dared the knife  
And that took the blade!  
By God! she was stuff for a plucky jade—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!*



19

Fifteen men on the dead man's chest—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
Drink and the devil had done for the rest—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
We wrapped 'em all in a mains'l tight,  
With twice ten turns of a hawser's bight,  
And we heaved 'em over and out of sight—  
With a yo-heave-ho!  
And a fare-you-well!  
And a sullen plunge  
In the sullen swell  
Ten fathoms deep on the road to hell—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!



20



PICTURING *the* INDIVIDUAL

One of my earliest recollections of my friend and business associate for very many, very short and very happy years, is a conversation in the old Chicago Press Club rooms on South Clark Street, near Madison, in the early 90's, about three o'clock one morning, when the time for confidences arrives—if ever it does. What his especial business in Chicago was at that particular moment makes no particular difference. He might have been rehearsing "The Ogallallas," or mayhap he was on duty as Kentucky commissioner to the World's Fair. As a matter of mere fact he was there and we had spent an evening and part of a morning together and were bent on extending the session to daybreak. Sunrise on Madison Street always was a wonderful sight. The dingy buildings on that busy old thoroughfare, awakening to day-life, then appeared as newly painted in the mellow of the early morning.

My companion knew something was coming. Our chairs were close together—side by side—and we were looking each in the other's face. He had his hand back of his ear. "Allison," I said—and I suppose that after a night in his company I was so impregnated with his strong personality that I had my hand back of my ear too, and spoke in a low, slightly drawling nasal, like his—"Allison," I repeated, "don't you miss a great deal by being deaf?" Now, it is said with tender regret, but a deep and sincere regard for truth, that my friend makes a virtue of a slight deafness. He uses it to avoid arguments, assignments, conventions, parlor parties—and bores—and deftly evades a whole lot of "duty" conversations as well. Of course I know all this now, but in those days I thought his lack of complete hearing an infirmity calling for a sort of sympathy on my part. Anyway it was three o'clock in the morning, and...!

"Well," he replied, after a little pause, "I can't say that I do. You see, if anyone ever says anything worth repeating, he always tells me about it anyway." Such is the philosophical trend that makes Allison an original with a peculiar gift of expression both in the spoken and written word. He is literary to his finger tips, in the finest sense of the word, for pure love, his own enjoyment and the pleasure of his friends. There is an ambition for you! With all his genuine modesty (and he is painfully modest) by which the light of his genius is hid under even less than the Scriptural bushel, he has a deep and healthy and honorable respect for fame—not of the cheap and tawdry, lionizing kind, but fame in an everlasting appreciation of those who think with their own minds. Almost any pen portraiture could but skim the surface of a nature so gifted and with which daily association is so delightful—an association which is a constant fillip to the mind in fascinating witticisms, in deft characterizations of men and things, and in deep drafts on memory's storehouse for odd incidents and unexpected illuminations. A long silence from "Allison's corner" may precede a gleeful chortle, as he throws on my desk some delicious satirical skit with a "Well, I've got that out of my system, anyway!"

Allison has a method of prose writing all his own. If you could see him day in and out, you would soon recognize the symptoms. An idea strikes him; he becomes abstracted, reads a great deal, pull down books, fills pages of particularly ruled copy paper with figures from a big, round, black pencil until you might think he was calculating the expenditures of a Billion Dollar Congress. He is not a mathematician

but, like Balzac, simply dotes on figures. Then comes the analytical stage and that he performs on foot, walking, head bent forward, upstairs, downstairs, outdoors, around the block, in again, through the clattering press room and up and down the hall. When the stride quickens and he strikes a straight line for his desk, his orderly mind has arranged and classified his subject down to the illuminating adjectives even and the whole is ready to be put on paper. Though his mind is orderly, his desk seldom is. He is the type of old-school editor who has everything handy in a profound confusion. He detests office system, just as he admires mental arrangement. I got a "rise" out of him only once when making a pretence of describing his very complex method of preserving correspondence, and then he flared: "It saved us a lot of trouble, didn't it?" The fact was patent, but the story is apropos. Allison was complaining to a friend of office routine.

"Hitch has no heart," he said. "He comes over here, takes letters off my desk and puts 'em into an old file somewhere so no one can find them. That's no way to do. When a letter comes to me I clip open the end with my shears, like a gentleman, read it, and put it back in the envelope. When in the humor I answer it. Of course there is no use keeping a copy of what I write; I know well enough what *I* say. All I want to keep is what the other fellow said to me. When it is time to clean the desk, I call a boy, have him box all the letters and take them over to the warehouse. Then whenever I want a letter I know damned well where it is—it's in the warehouse." It really happened that certain important and badly needed letters were "in the warehouse" and so Allison's system was vindicated.

Just the mere mention of his system brings up the delightful recollections of his desk-cleaning parties, Spring and Fall, events so momentous that they almost come under the classification of office holidays. The dust flies, torn papers fill the air and the waste-baskets, and odd memoranda come to light and must be discussed. While wielding the dust cloth Allison hums "Bing-Binger, the Baritone Singer," has the finest imaginable time and for several day wears an air of such conscious pride that every paper laid upon his desk is greeted with a terrible frown.

Musical? Of course. His is the poetic mind, the imaginative, with an intensely practical, analytical perception—uncanny at times. He is perfectly "crazy" about operas, reads everything that comes to his hand—particularly novels—and is an inveterate patron of picture shows. "Under no strain trying to hear 'em talk," he confidences. While such occasions really are very rare, once in an age he becomes depressed—a peculiar fact (their rarity) in one so temperamental. After the fifth call within a month to act as pall-bearer at a funeral, he was in the depths. A friend was trying to cheer him.

"Isn't it too bad, Mr. Allison," the friend suggested, "that we can't all be like the lilies in the field, neither toiling nor spinning, but shedding perfume everywhere?"

"That lily business is all right," was Allison's retort, "but if I were a flower it would be just my luck to be a tube-rose and be picked for a funeral!"

In all our years of association and friendship, I have never known him to do an unkind or dishonorable act. He is considerate of others, tender-hearted, sentimental. But, believe me, in "contrariwise," he is flinty obsidian when it comes to his convictions. Shams and hypocrites and parading egotists are his particular and especial abomination and when he gets on the editorial trail of one of that ilk, he turns him inside out and displays the very secrets of what should be his immortal soul. He is always poking fun at friends and they laugh with him at what he writes about them, which recalls one of his earliest and best bits of advice—"never to write about a man so that others will laugh *at* him, unless your intention is deliberately to hurt his feelings. Write so that he will laugh *with* you."

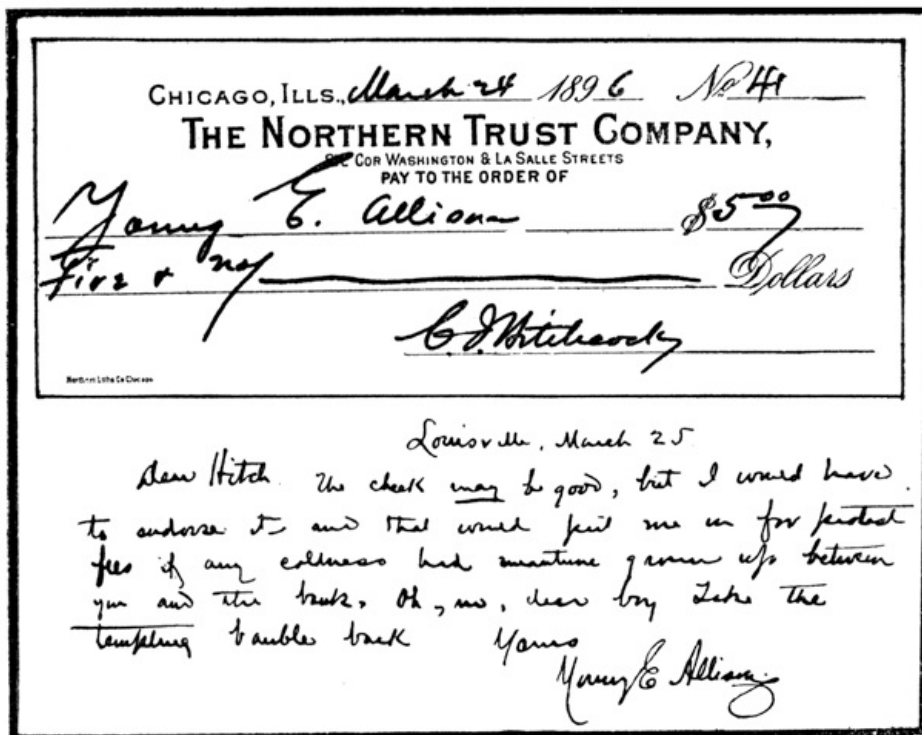
If I could have one grand wish it would be that everybody could know him as I do: the man; the book-worm; the toastmaster; the public speaker; the writer; the sentimentalist; the friend. Absolutely natural and approachable at all times with never the remotest hint of theatricalism, (unless the careless tossing over his shoulder of one flap of the cape of a cherished brown overcoat might be called theatrical), he is yet so many sided and complex that, without this self-same naturalness, often would be misunderstood. That he never cultivated an exclusiveness or built about himself barriers of idiosyncrasy is a distinct credit to his

common sense. He's chock-full of that!

Let us see just how versatile Young Allison is. Years ago—twenty-six to be exact—he took the dry old subject of insurance and week in and out made it sparkle with such wit and brilliancy that every-day editorials became literary gems which laymen read with keenest enjoyment. Insurance writing might be said to be his vocation—a sort of daily-bread affair, well executed, because one should not quarrel with his sustenance—with librettos for operas, and poems and essays as an avocation. Fate must have doomed his operas in the very beginning, for despite some delicious productions, captivating in words and spirit, and set to slashing music, they go unsung because a a malign Jinx pursued.

While Allison is an omnivorous reader of novels and every other form of book, which he carries to and from his home in a favorite brown-leather handbag of diminutive size, he never had an ambition to create novels, though to his everlasting credit wrote two for a particular purpose which he accomplished by injecting the right tone or "color" into tales depicting the inner life on daily newspapers. We of the old Press Club used to grow choleric as we would read stories about alleged newspaper men, but a serene satisfaction fell upon us when Allison's reflections appeared. They were "right!" And while "resting" (definition from the private dictionary of Cornelius McAuliff) from the more or less arduous and routine and yet interest-holding duties of newspaper-man, Allison's relaxation and refreshment come in studies of human nature in all its mystifying aspects, whether in war or in peace; or in the sports—prize-fighting and baseball; or in the sciences; in politics; in the streets or in the home. Or they come from pleasure in the creation of essays on books—novels; of lectures; of formal and serious addresses; of tactful and witty toasts.

From my viewpoint Allison appears in public speaking to best advantage at banquets, either when responding to some toast, or as toastmaster. On such occasions he very quickly finds the temper of his listeners and without haste or oratorical effect, for he never orates, and almost without gesture, he "gets 'em" and "keeps 'em." Knowing how little he hears at public functions his performances at the head of the table, when acting as toastmaster, to me are only a shade removed from the marvelous. Either he has an uncanny second-sight, or that vaunted deafness is all a big pretense, for I have heard him "pull stuff" on a preceding speaker so pat that no one else could be made to believe what I knew was the truth: that—he—had—not—heard—a—single—word—uttered!



Perchance as a character note, should be added here a line or two about a work undertaken in behalf of a friend on a few hours notice for which he received a reward only in thanks. This friend had contracted to write certain memoirs but was incapacitated by illness and hung out the distress signal. Allison responded, shut himself up for a month, and produced a smooth and well balanced work of five hundred and fifty pages. Once I sent him a check to cover the cost of one of his books but he declared the check a "tempting bauble" and returned it framed. But I got a copy just the same inscribed "With the compliments of the Author" which I prized just as much as if I had paid for it with a clearing house certificate.

Physically he is of medium height, rather slight in form and, when walking, stoops a bit with head forward and a trifle to one side. In conversing he has a captivating trick of looking up while his head is bent and keeping his blue eyes nailed to yours pretty much all the time. Around eyes and mouth is ever lurking a wrinkling smile and its break—the laugh—is hearty and contagious with a timbre of peculiar huskiness. His face is a trifle thin through the cheeks, which accentuates a breadth of head, now crowning with silvery—and let me whisper this—slowly thinning hair. Stubby white mustaches for facial adornment, and cloth of varying brown shades to encompass the physical man, complete the picture.

Such is Young Ewing Allison as I see him.

## MAN *and* NEWSPAPER MAN

Young Allison is a Kentuckian (Henderson, December 23, 1853) and proud of it with a pride that does not restrain him from seeing the peculiarities and frailties as well as the admirable traits of his fellow natives and skillfully putting them on paper to his own vast delight—and theirs too. What he gives, he is willing to take with Cromwell-like philosophy: "Paint me warts and all!" To speak of Allison in any sense whatever must be in the character of newspaper man, since to this work his whole life has been devoted. And if I may speak with well intentioned frankness: He's a damn good editor, too! However little our lay friends may understand this message, aside from its emphasis, I rest secure in the thought that to the brotherhood it opens a wide vista of qualifications to which realms might be devoted without doing full justice to the subject. Today he might not be the ideal city editor, or night editor, or managing editor of our great modern miracle-machines called newspapers, but I have yet to meet the man who can more quickly absorb, analyze, sum-up and deliver an editorial opinion, so deliciously phrased and so nicely gauged. He who can do this is the embodiment of all staff editors!

If I may be pardoned for a moment, I will get myself associated with Allison and proceed with this relation. In 1888 he left daily newspaper work to found *The Insurance Herald*, though he continued old associations by occasional contributions, and in 1899 sold that publication and established *The Insurance Field*. In the fall of 1902 when presented with the opportunity of becoming editor-in-chief of *The Daily Herald* in Louisville, he gave up temporarily an active connection with *The Insurance Field* and in January, 1903, chose me to carry on this latter work, from which I am thankful to say he was absent only three years.

Allison is newspaper man through and through and was all but born in the business for he was "a devil in his own home town" of Henderson in a printing office when thirteen, "Y. E. Allison, Jr., Local Editor" on the village paper at fifteen and city reporter on a daily at seventeen. Up to this point in his career I might find a parallel for my own experience, but there the comparison abruptly ceases. He became a

writer while I took to blacksmithing according to that roystering Chicagoan, Henry Barrett Chamberlin, who thinks because he once owned a paper called *The Guardsman* in days when a new subscription often meant breakfast for the two of us, that he is at liberty to cast javelins at my style of writing. And yet, to be perfectly frank, I have always been grateful for even *his* intimation that I had a "style." Allison once accepted—I can hardly say enjoyed—one of those subscription breakfasts——— But that is a matter not wholly concerned with his newspaper experience, which has extended through nearly all the daily "jobs:" reporter and city editor of *The Evansville Journal*, dramatic and city editor of *The Louisville Courier-Journal*; managing editor of *The Louisville Commercial*, and after a lapse of years as previously told, editor-in-chief of *The Daily Herald*.

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Fifteen years or more ago, long before we dreamed of being associated in business, Allison wrote me with the frankness that has characterized our friendship from the first, just how he came to enter newspaper work. Where he was concerned I was always "wanting to know" and he seemed ever willing to tell—me. The letter was as usual written in lead pencil on soft, spongy, ruled copy paper and that portion having reference to the subject named is given verbatim:

You see I lost two years going to school—from seven to nine years old. I was put out of all the private schools for incorrigible "inattention"—then it was discovered that I had been partially deaf and not guilty—but my schooling ended there and I was turned loose on my father's library to get an education by main force—got it by reading everything—had read Rousseau's "Confessions" at 14—and books replaced folks as companions. Wanted to get nearer to books and so hired myself to the country printer and newspaper at 13—great disappointment to the family, my mother having dreams of my becoming a preacher—[hell of a preacher I would have made]. I had meantime begun and finished as much as a page apiece of many stories and books, several epic poems—but one day the Old Man went home to dinner and left me only a scrap of "reprint" to set during his hour and a half of absence. It was six or eight lines nonpareil about the Russian gentleman who started to drive from his country home to the city one evening in his sleigh with his 4 children. Wolves attacked them and one by one he threw the children to the pack, hoping each time thus to save the others. When he had thrown the last his sleigh came to the city gate with him sitting in it a raving maniac. That yarn had been going the rounds of print since 1746. The Old Man was an absent-minded old child, and I knew it, so I turned my fancy loose and enlarged the paragraph to a full galley of long primer, composing the awful details as I set the type and made it a thriller. The Old Man never "held copy" reading proof, so he passed it all right and I saw myself an author in print for the first time. The smell of printer's ink has never since been out of my hair.

Allison's newspaper years are rich with experience, for while he could never be classed as a Yellow Reformer, his caustic, or amusing, or pathetic pen, as the case demanded, has never been idle. Away back in the old days the gambling element in Louisville fairly "owned the town" and he attempted to curtail their power. They tried to cajole him and to bribe him and when both alike failed, intimidated the millionaire owner of the *Commercial* out from under him! He either had to sacrifice Allison or his street railway interests, and chose Allison to throw to the lions. But he made Mr. Dupont go the whole length and "fire" him! He wouldn't resign when asked to do so. And of course while it all lasted Allison had his meed of personal amusement. For no editor ever took himself less seriously. Prominent citizens came with fair words and he listened to them and printed them; bribes were offered and accepted only for publication; while threats were received joyously and made the subject of half-whimsical comment.

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As a newspaper man Allison prided himself on never having involved any of his papers in a libel suit, though he was usually the man who wrote the "danger-stuff." He had complaints, yes; libel suits, no. Dick Ryan, known in prehistoric newspaper circles in Louisville as "Cold Steel," because his mild blue eyes hardened and glinted when his copy was cut—the typical police court reporter who could be depended upon for a sobbing "blonde-girl story" when news was off—always said that when a party came in to complain of the hardship of an article, Allison talked to him so benevolently that the complainant always went away in tears, reflecting on how much worse it might have been if Allison hadn't softened the article that seemed so raw. "Damned if I don't believe he cries with 'em, too!" said Ryan. "If I had that sympathetic stop in my own voice I know I'd cry during ordinary conversations, just listening to myself."



*Caricature by Wyncie King in Louisville  
Daily Herald*

But of course the libel suit had to come to spoil an otherwise perfect record. And of course it was political and sprang out of a red-hot state campaign, while he was editor-in-chief of the *Herald*, in which his pen went deep enough to enrage the adversary and force the libel case. Like all political cases of this kind it was not a suit for damages, but an indictment for criminal libel, found by a complaisant political grand jury at the other end of the state—intended to cause the greatest amount of annoyance and to die out slowly. By that means it costs the accused both time and money while the state pays all expenses for the prosecution.

Judge “Bill” Smith, one of the greatest of Kentucky lawyers on constitutional points, or rather Judge William Smith of the Jefferson Circuit Court—because he has passed over now, taking his kindly and childlike, yet keen and resourceful personality out of life’s war for good and all—Judge Smith told me the story of that case one night after we had discussed down to the water-marks in the paper, his treasured copy of Burns. And at my very urgent solicitation he transcribed the salient features, not in all the intimate details of the spoken words, but with deep poetic feeling and rare conception of their human aspects. He wrote:

There are three poets in Burns. One is the poet you read; the second is the poet some mellow old Scot, with an edge on his tongue, recites to you; the third and most wonderful is the Burns that somebody with even a thin shred of a high voice sings to you. Burns is translated to the fourth power by singing him—without accompaniment—just the whinnying of a tenor or soprano voice, vibrant with feeling and pathos, at the right time of the evening, or in some penumbrous atmosphere of seclusion where memory can work its miracles.

I was defending Allison in that libel case and we started off on the 200-mile trip together. We had the smoker of the Pullman all to ourselves, and after I had

recited some furlongs of Burns to him, he began to sing "Jockey's Ta'en the Parting Kiss" in a sort of thin and whimpering quaver of a tenor that cut through the noise of the train like a violin note through silence. I thought I knew the poem, but it seemed to me I had never dreamed what was in it, with the wail of a Highland woman pouring plaintive melody through the flood gates of her heart. And he knew every one of them and sang them all with the tailing of the bagpipes in the sound.

I wasn't going down to practice law, but to practice patience and politics. I had been on that circuit for years and knew the court and the bar very well. So I said to Allison "Don't you sing one of those songs again until I give the sign." And the first thing I did was to bring him into touch with the circuit judge, who had the room adjoining mine at the hotel. He was a Burns lover, too; and besides as I had brought whiskey and as the town was prohibition, there was really nowhere else for the judge to spend his evenings. Soon we were capping back and forth, the judge and I, with Burns.

I don't remember now—nobody ever remembers, after a cold, snowy night outside, between Burns quotations, hot whiskies, and reminiscences, exactly how anything happens—but about 10 o'clock, maybe, Allison was somewhere between "Jockey's Ta'en the Parting Kiss," "Bonnie Doon," "Afton Water" and "Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast," and the judge and I were looking deep into the coals of the grate and crying softly and unconsciously together. You see it wasn't only the songs. Every damned one of us was Scotch-Irish and we just sat there and were transported back to the beginning of ourselves in the bare old primitive homes of us in farm and village, saw the log and coal fires of infancy blazing up again, and heard the voices of our mothers crooning and caressing those marvelous lines, and behind them *their* mothers crooning and wailing the same back in the unbroken line to Ayrshire and the Pentland Hills. And all life was just a look into yesterday and the troubles and the struggles of manhood fell right off as garments and left us boys again. That's what's in Burns, the singing poet. That is, when anybody knows how to sing him—not concert singers with artfulness, but just a singer with the right quaver and the whine of catgut in the voice and the tailing of Scotch pipes for the swells. It was perhaps two o'clock of the morning when we stood up, said "Little Willie's Prayer" softly together, arms on shoulders, and the judge remarked:

"Allison, if you wrote like you sing Burns, maybe you wouldn't be here—but it's well worth the trouble!"

I knew then there was no more politics to practice—just law enough to be found to let the court stand firm when the time came.

The next night it was in the judge's room. Half a dozen old followers of the circuit were there on the judge's tip. "You bring your whiskey," he said to me, privately, "or there'll be none." And I brought it. And between Burns and the bottle and the long low silences of good country-bred men listening back through the soft cadences of memory, the case was won that night. I think it was Jock's song that did it. You never hear it sung by concert singers; because it has no theatricalism in it. It's just the wailing of the faith of the country lass in her lover:

'When the shades of evenin' creep  
O'er the day's fair, gladsome e'e  
Sound and safely may he sleep,  
Sweetly blithe his waukenin' be.  
He will think on her he loves,  
Fondly he'll repeat her name,  
For, where'er he distant roves,  
Jockey's heart is still at hame.'

If you listen right close you'll hear the hiss of the kettle behind it, and you can see the glow of the firelight and smell the sap of green wood in the smoke.

Well, there were continuances; of course. It is never constitutional to throw a case of politics out of court too soon. We made that four hundred-mile round trip four times and, every time, Burns sat at night where Blackstone ruled by day. Never one word of the case from judge to accused, just continuances. But on the last night—the case was to be pressed next day—the judge said to Allison at the door, as he went off to bed:

"I think you will be before me in a case tomorrow. If the worst comes and you demand your right to address the jury, the court will sustain you. And I advise you give 'em 'Jockey's Ta'en the Parting Kiss'—*and no more*. I know the jury."

But the case was dismissed; we were serenaded at the hotel and held a reception. Driving away in a buggy over the fourteen miles to the railway station, Allison said: "There never was a prettier summer-time jail anywhere in the world than this one. I've been down to see it. It has vines growing over the low, white-washed walls, there's apple trees in the yard and the jailer has a curly headed little girl of six who would bring 'em to you and could slip 'em through the barred window by standing on the split bottom chair where her father sleeps in the shade after dinner. It's a beautiful picture—but it hasn't got a single damned modern convenience for winter and a six months' term would have landed me there till January!"

I shall always believe this to be the most graceful, sympathetic and poetic relation involving a legal case I ever heard and never will cease to give thanks that my always strong and constantly growing admiration for Allison led me to insist upon its transcription.

As soon as the trial fizzled I called on Allison at the *Herald* office, to extend congratulations and with eager requests for details.

"Well," Allison ruminated, with that ever present twinkle in his eye, "my

experience was very interesting. I found I had friends; and discovered traces of a family unknown to history claiming direct kinship with President Thomas Jefferson!"

When the "sports" brought about Allison's discharge from the *Commercial* to stop his articles on the gambling control of Louisville, unconsciously they added a forceful factor to insurance publishing and I might truthfully say to the insurance business itself. I cannot begin to tell how much has been encompassed in these twenty-six years, but our bound volumes are full of his editorials and articles—the serious, the analytical, the constructive, the caustic, the witty and the amusing. He created *The Piney Woods Clarion* and in quotations from that mythical publication put a new light on the business. "Insurance Arabian Nights" which he declared were "translated from the Persian," contained more of the odd conceits that fairly flowed from his pen and these two series, with a marine policy-form insuring the "contents" of Noah's Ark, concocted in collaboration with good old Col. "Tige" Nelson (gone long ago, but not forgotten) are the classics of the business.

During his insurance newspaper work Allison was once called upon to give a public endorsement to a friend and very kindly expressed conviction that had his management continued "all the interest of the company would have been secured." When later on he was forced to criticise extraordinary acts of this whilom friend, the endorsement was called up against him in a broadside affidavit, which he promptly reviewed in the most deliciously sarcastic editorial concluding:

And we do not hesitate to declare anew that "we believe if he had been continued as president, all the interests of the company would have been secured." It was certainly not his fault that he did not secure more. Everything cannot be done in eleven months. But in the language of the far-Western tombstone it can be justly said, "He done what he could."

## JUST BROWSING AROUND

One who has never read around the clock in a virtual debauch of novel reading cannot appreciate Allison's "Delicious Vice;" no more can he Field's "Dibdin's Ghost" who has not smuggled home under his coat some cherished volume at the expense of his belly—and possibly someone else's too! "The Delicious Vice!" What a tart morsel to roll on one's tongue in anticipation and to speculate over before scanning the pages to discover that the vice is not "hitting the pipe" or "snuffing happy dust" but is as Allison paints it with whimsical but affectionate words, "pipe dreams and fond adventures of an habitual novel-reader among some great books and their people." These are the all too skimpy pages through which its author rhapsodizes on the noble profession, makes a keen distinction between novel readers and "women, nibblers and amateurs," brings up reminiscences of "early crimes and joys" and discourses learnedly, discerningly and entertainingly upon "good honest scoundrelism and villains." Every page is the best and when the last has passed under your eye, you again begin square at the beginning and read it all over. You are here only to have the appetite spiced by one single gem quoted from the first novel for the boy to read which of course is "Robinson Crusoe:"

... There are other symptoms of the born novel-reader to be observed in him. If he reads at night he is careful so to place his chair that the light will fall on the page from a direction that will ultimately ruin the eyes—but it does not interfere with the light. He humps himself over the open volume and begins to display that unerring curvilinearity of the spine that compels his mother to study braces and to fear that he will develop consumption. Yet you can study the world's health records and never find a line to prove that any man with "occupation or profession—novel-reading" is recorded as dying of consumption. The humped-over attitude promotes compression of the lungs, telescoping of the diaphragm, atrophy of the abdominal abracadabra and other things (see Physiological Slush, p. 179, et seq.); but—it—never—hurts—the—boy!

To a novel-reading boy the position is one of instinct like that of a bicycle racer. His eyes are strained, his nerves and muscles at tension—everything ready for excitement—and the book, lying open, leaves his hands perfectly free to drum on the sides of the chair, slap his legs and knees, fumble in his pockets or even



scratch his head, as emotion and interest demand. Does anybody deny that the highest proof of special genius is the possession of the instinct to adapt itself to the matter in hand? Nothing more need be said.

Now, if you will observe carefully such a boy when he comes to a certain point in "Robinson Crusoe" you may recognize the stroke of fate in his destiny. If he's the right sort, he will read gayly along; he drums, he slaps himself, he beats his breast, he scratches his head. Suddenly there will come the shock. He is reading rapidly and gloriously. He finds his knife in his pocket, as usual, and puts it back; the top-string is there; he drums the devil's tattoo, he wets his finger and smears the margin of the page as he whirls it over and then—he finds—

"The—Print—of—a—Man's—Naked—Foot—on—the—Shore !!!"

Oh, Crackey! At this tremendous moment the novel-reader, who has genius, drums no more. His hands have seized the upper edges of the muslin lids, he presses the lower edges against his stomach, his back takes an added intensity of hump, his eyes bulge, his heart thumps—he is landed—landed!

Terror, surprise, sympathy, hope, skepticism, doubt—come all ye trooping emotions to threaten and console; but an end has come to fairy stories and wonder tales—Master Studious is in the awful presence of Human Nature.

For many years I have believed that that Print—of—a—Man's—Naked—Foot was set in Italic type in all editions of "Robinson Crusoe." But a patient search of many editions has convinced me that I must have been mistaken.

The passage comes sneaking along in the midst of a paragraph in common Roman letters and by the living jingo, you discover it just as Mr. Crusoe discovered the footprint itself!

I wish I might tell the reason why no scoundrel was ever a novel reader; that I might browse for the benefit of those who have never been translated into ecstasies over "good old honest scoundrelism and villains" or describe my friend's first blinding and unselfish tears that watered the grave of Helen Mar, but these are among the delicious experiences of the "Vice" itself, so sacred that other hands, no matter how loving, may not be laid upon them.

† † † †

Allison has a very happy faculty of hitting upon titles for essays and addresses that stir the imagination and whet the appetite. Probably the best example is "The Delicious Vice" to which reference has just been made. This title was more or less an evolution from an address delivered before the Western Writers Association "On the Vice of Novel Reading" that started a discussion lasting through one whole day. Allison is a warm champion of The Novel as an institution, and as well an avowed and confirmed reader of novels, which he declares are poetry in essence, lacking only the form and rhyme but having measure, the accent and the figures of the whole range of poetry. He says that in all literature—

The great muse of History ranks first in dignity, power and usefulness; but who will say that at her court the Prime Minister is not the Novel which by its lightness, grace and address has popularized history all over the world?

At that time the word "microbe" and the theory of its significance was in the full swell of popular use. Allison took it to illustrate the essence of spiritual intellectuality struggling against the swarming bacteria of animalism that made up the rest of the human body controlled by the brain. He pointed out that the difference between types of brains was two ounces of grayish pulp, almost wholly absent in the unthinking herd of men. But it enlarged in gradually lessening groups of men to the intellectual few that dominate thought, thus:

The microbe that might have become glorious ounces of brain has been content at first to become merely a little wart of pulp, which finds expression in skill and quickness and more of coveted leisure. There is the next higher terrace and another and another, until finally it becomes a pyramid, ever more fragile and symmetrical, the apex of which is a delicate spire, where the purest intellects are elevated to an ever increasing height in ever decreasing numbers, until in the dizzy altitude above the groveling base below they are wrapped little by little in the cold solitude of incarnate genius burning like suns with their own essence. It is so far up that the eyes deceive and men dispute who it is that stands at the top, but, whoever he may be, he has carried by the force of strength, determination and patient will, the whole swarm of his evil bacteria with him. They swarm through every terrace below, increasing in force as the pyramid enlarges downward. It is the pyramidal bulk of human nature with its finest brain, true to anatomic principles, at the top. That radiance at the summit is the delight and the aspiration of all below.



*The Infallible—Type of Handy Man  
formerly in every Newspaper Office.  
Century, 1889*

As an active, enthusiastic and successful newspaper man, every time Allison read a novel depicting the reporter as a sharp-featured and half-disreputable young man running about with pencil and note-book in hand and making himself personally and professionally obnoxious, it produced apoplectic tendencies that permanently threatened health and peace of mind. Hence with the characteristic energy devoted to writing, he proceeded to get it out of his system and produced "The Longworth Mystery," published in *Century*,† (which it is interesting to note was illustrated by Charles Dana Gibson who then signed himself "C. D. Gibson"), and "The Passing of Major Kilgore," appearing in *Lippincott's*,† both depicting newspaper life. When this latter novelette was printed it soothed me so that I had the paper covers protected with more permanent boards and sent it on many pilgrimages from which it safely returned enriched with further messages of thanks to the creator for his good job. Having browsed deeply behind the bindings of many books I have yet to find others written in the first person, where the pronoun "I" is used by the relator so seldom as in either "The Longworth Mystery" or "The Passing of Major Kilgore," the intimacy of the relation the while being maintained very adroitly by the observations of the "City Editor" who tells both stories. Major Kilgore in the latter tale, is financial man on the *Banner*. He is an old school gentleman and profound student of finances who finally goes mad over the study of the market and while dreaming himself possessed of vast wealth, is seeking to further the happiness of others where riches will assist. Of course the denouement shattered many sumptuous air castles but it left the profession the richer by a faithful portrayal. It is in the development of this tale that Allison, ever seeking an opportunity to draw amusement from his friends, created a fine occasion through a reminiscent conversation between Major Kilgore and Colonel Hamilton to inject a famous Southern quartette, Clarence Knowles, Col. John D. Young, James A. Thomas and Col. W. C. Nelson, then in their prime, but who have since passed on to swell the silent throng. Colonel Hamilton is trying to divert Major Kilgore, already showing signs of mental unbalance:

† *Century*, October, 1889.

† *Lippincott's* January, 1892.

"Some of the fellows we knew in the C. S. A. have had queer luck in the shuffle, Kilgore. You remember Knowles of Georgia? I found him keeping bar in Sacramento. Young of North Carolina, who led that charge at Fredericksburg, is running a restaurant in Colorado; and Thomas, of Tennessee—by the Lord Harry, he killed himself with drink working in a mine in Arizona—had the jim-jams seven times they say and thought his head was a rabbit's nest. Last time I saw you riled, Kilgore, was that night in the trenches at Fredericksburg when Nelson hid your

tobacco bag. You wanted to fight him, by the Lord Harry, there and then, but he wouldn't do it—because he said he would rather kill Yankees than gentlemen. And you both agreed to take your chances next day on a fool trial which would fight the Yankees best!"

Only one who knows Allison intimately can measure the delight, expressed in chuckles of joy, with which he marked this passage in *Lippincott's* and mailed copies to the friends he had whimsically pilloried.

† † † †

When one browses around among Allison's productions he runs across many odd conceits as in "The Ballad of Whiskey Straight" which he declares was "prepared according to the provisions of the Pure Food Law, approved 1906." Whatever quarrel one might have with the subject itself, or the sentiment, he cannot fail to fall a victim to the soft cadences of the rippling rhyme.

#### THE BALLAD OF WHISKEY STRAIGHT.

##### I

Let dreamers whine  
Of the pleasures of wine  
For lovers of soft delight;  
But this is the song  
Of a tippie that's strong—  
For men who must toil and fight.  
Now the drink of luck  
For the man full of pluck  
Is easy to nominate:  
It's the good old whiskey of old Kentuck,  
And you always drink it straight.

##### II

A julep's tang  
Will diminish the pang  
Of an old man's dream of yore,  
When meadows were green  
And the brook flowed between  
The hills he will climb no more;  
But the drink of luck  
For the youth of good pluck,  
Who can stare in the eye of fate,  
Is the good old whiskey of old Kentuck  
And invariably straight.

##### III

So here's to the corn  
That is growing this morn  
All tasselled and gold and gay!  
And the old copper still  
In the sour mash mill  
By the spring on the turnpike gray!  
May the fount of luck  
For the man full of pluck  
Flow ever without abate  
With the good old whiskey of old Kentuck,  
And strong and pure and straight.

##### ENVOY

Old straight whiskey! That is the drink of life—  
Consolation, family, friends and wife!  
So make your glasses ready,  
Pour fingers three, then—steady!  
"Here's good luck to Kentucky and whiskey straight!"

† † † †

No one, like Allison, who has made the newspaper profession a life work, has failed to study its weak spots and to note its imperfections; or on the other hand, to grasp its marvelous opportunities for studying the wonderful mystery of the variations of human nature. In the very essence of things therefore, he recognizes

the human elements in his own profession and does not hold that the newspaper man is perfect or that it does not harbor types of black sheep the likes of which may not be found in other flocks. At the same time nothing raises his gorge quicker than to hear the uninformed or unthinking deliver themselves, parrot-like, of the formula "that's only a newspaper lie" or to see some man climb high by the aid of the newspaper and then kick down the ladder by which he rose. Allison once discussed this subject skillfully in an address on "Newspaper Men and Other Liars" which is worth a half-hour of any man's time. The only difficulty would be experienced in finding a copy, for so far as known, I have the only one extant. Allison believes and says that by the very nature of his occupation and training the newspaper man is the least of liars among men and proves to his own complete satisfaction that the reporter gets his undeserved reputation for lying from his very impersonality—an impersonality that may be condemned with perfect safety. Fact, he declares, is a block of granite that the whole world may see without wrangling over, but once inject the human interest, with its divided opinions, into the occult mystery of the printed type and you have the newspaper "lie" in so many of its aspects, an analysis that leads him to arrive at this rather remarkable deduction:

I might almost define a lie as being the narrative of a human event that had been printed.

And what about a comparison of those "other" liars with the newspaper man? Allison makes it very adroitly this way:

Suppose every word that every member of this intelligent and most respectable audience has said today:—the merchant to his customers and creditors; the man of leisure to his cronies and companions, the professional man to his clients; even the ladies to their bosom friends at tea or euchre—suppose, I say, that every word you had uttered had been taken down by some marvelous mechanical contrivance, and should be published verbatim tomorrow morning with your names attached showing just what each of you had said. What do you think would happen? I can tell you from observation. You would likely spend next year explaining, denying, apologizing and repenting. Suits for slander would appear on the courthouse shelves as thick as blackberries in August. There would be friendships shattered, confidences dissipated, feuds established, social anarchy enthroned and perhaps this admirable club could never hold another meeting for lack of a quorum of members willing to meet each other in one room.

Well, browsing time is up! I wish I might open the pages of other gems and quote from their wit, their satire and their sentiment, but any reference to Allison's productions must of very necessity touch only the high spots and besides that—

This volume wouldn't be big enough!

## IN *the* OPERATIC FIELD

Did I remark in some preceding breath that Allison is more or less "dippy" over music? Well, the statement, though made kindly, is severely and unqualifiedly true and whenever there is "big music" in town I can always find him in a front seat where he won't miss a single note. This inherent love of music was what first led him to listen by the hour to Henry Waller at the piano and later into setting words to Waller's big creations. When Philip Sousa was in Louisville five or six years ago and told Allison that the time was ripe to revive "The Ogallallas," which embraced, he said, some of the finest music he had ever heard, I inquired of Waller's whereabouts. "Heaven knows!" Allison replied, "And I wish I did, too!" Some years prior to that time they had "lost" each other; that is, Allison lost Waller.

Henry Waller was the adopted son of Mrs. Scott Siddons, the English actress and dramatic reader—a famous beauty. He had been an infant prodigy as a pianist, but was overdriven by his father and Mrs. Siddons intervened and bought his freedom. She sent him to Woolwich Academy, the great Royal Artillery and Engineering School

of Great Britain, where, curiously enough for a musician, he graduated at the head of his class in mathematics. Waller was a class-mate and friend of the ill-fated Prince Imperial of France, killed by the Zulus, and afterwards spent three years in Franz Liszt's house as the master's pupil. Strangely enough, too, Waller's piano performances on the stage were almost mediocre, but to private audiences of those known to be appreciative, he was a tireless marvel. Allison was a frequent visitor at Waller's quarters and here his idea germinated for an American opera. At that time he had no intention of writing the libretto but, after outlining the plot, at Waller's urgent request he wrote the scenario. Waller was enthused by Allison, the past master in creating enthusiasm, to a point where he had entered into its spirit and was composing great accompanying music, so there was nothing left for him but to complete the job. While they worked together the mode of procedure was about this: Allison would sketch out an idea and raise Waller to a seventh heaven over some dramatic scene until he struck fire and evolved its musical conception. Whereupon Allison would fit words to the music. So "The Ogallallas" was completed, submitted to The Bostonians, accepted at once, rehearsed in New York, Washington and Chicago, making its first public bow at the Columbia Theatre in the latter city in 1893, where I heard it. The plot is simple enough and is all worked out in the opening conversation of the "Scouts" while waiting for their leader. Here it is:

*Joe.* So, then, you know all about this errand of ours?

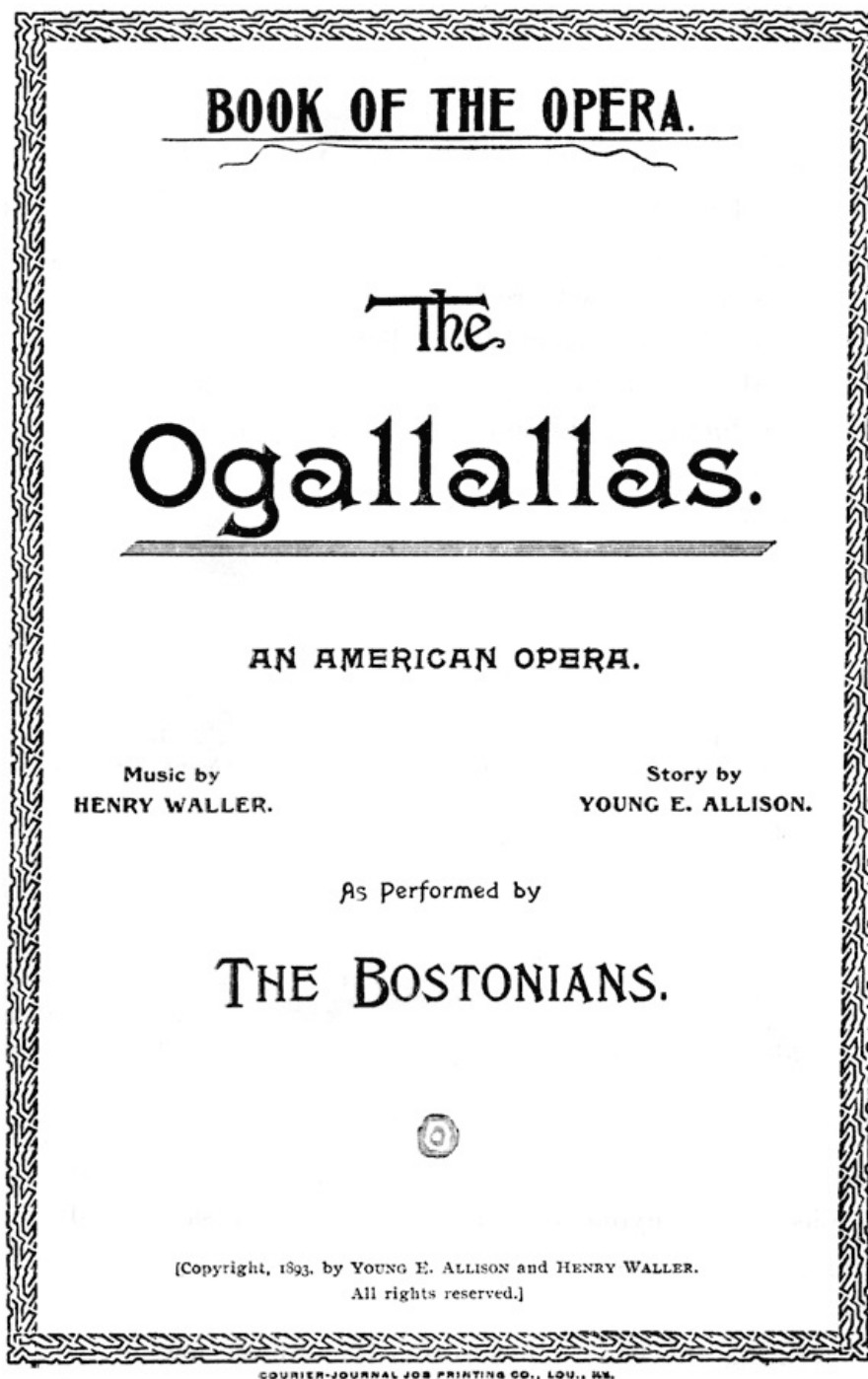
*Wickliffe.* As much as you do. I know that General Belcher sent a messenger, asking Deadshot to provide a safe escort for Professor Andover, of Boston, and a party of ladies, to Lone Star Ranch. Andover declined a military escort, but Belcher, notwithstanding the country is quiet, wants us to see them safely through.

*Joe.* Yes, that's it; but who are Professor Andover and his party?

*Wickliffe.* Boston people; with a mission to regenerate the world, Indians especially.

*Joe.* Well, I should think Deadshot would like his errand. He is a Boston man I've always understood.

*Wickliffe.* Yes. He came out here with me ten years ago, just out of college, rich, adventurous and restless. City life was too tame for Arthur Cambridge. You know how he took to the life of a scout, and now, under the name of Captain Deadshot, he is the most famous Indian fighter and scout on the plains.



*Title Page, Book of "The Ogallallas"*

Imagination could finish the story, but the old, old Beadle Dime Novel of the Scout, the Girl and the Redskins—capture, threatened death, beautiful Indian maidens, villain, hero, heroine and rescue, "You set fire to the girl and I'll take care of the house"—excellently executed in dialogue and verse, briefly represent the whole thing. The cast of characters in the first night's production, February 16, 1893, which was widely reviewed and complimented by the critics in next day's Chicago dailies, was as follows:

#### CAST OF CHARACTERS.

Arthur Cambridge, known as Captain Deadshot	Tom Karl
Professor Andover, a philanthropist	H. C. Barnabee
War Cloud, chief of the Ogallallas	W. H. McDonald
Cardenas, a Mexican bandit	Eugene Cowles
Mississinewa, medicine man of	George Frothingham

Ogallallas	
Wickliffe	
Buckskin Joe	} Scouts {
Commander United States forces	Peter Lang
Edith, niece and ward of Professor Andover	Clem Herschel
Minnetoa, an Indian girl	W. A. Howland
Miss Hepzibah Small, Edith's governess	Camille D'Arville
Kate, friend of Edith	Flora Finlayson
Cosita, a Mexican girl	Josephine Bartlett
Laura, friend of Edith	Lillian Hawthorne
	Lola Hawthorne
	Georgie Newel

“Bill” MacDonald, the big baritone, as “War Cloud,” seized the opportunity of his life. He almost ran away with the piece and anyone ever after, who would say “Ogallallas” could get a conversation out of him that would wind up with “that was the greatest stuff ever written.” When costumed and wearing the Chief’s head-dress (old-timers may recall having observed it hanging in Harry Ballard’s city room of the *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, at Madison and Dearborn) MacDonald boomed out the War Song of the Ogallallas, he scored the big hit of the opera.

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### WAR SONG OF THE OGALLALLAS.

Great is the warrior of the Ogallallas,  
 Fearless his heart is and great is his glory.  
 Lighted my war-fires and hill-tops flaming  
 Red to the skies, arouse all my braves.  
 In the air the swelling war-cry—  
 In the air that swelling cry—  
 Wildest sound to combat calling,  
 Swift the onset in the lust of war.

Shrill is the cry of the wolf  
 As he howls in the moonlight,  
 Shrill is the sound of the war-cry—  
 Ogallalla! Ogallalla!

Lo! where the warriors, trailing their lances,  
 Sweep o'er the plain upon resistless steeds!  
 There, on the trail, vengeance is launching  
 Swift as the arrow upon the hated foe.  
 In their hearts the whispered war-cry—  
 In their hearts that wailing cry.  
 Low the sound of vengeance breathing.  
 Ride they boldly in the thrill of war.

Low is the cry of the bird  
 As he chants in the moonlight,  
 Low is the sound of the war-cry—  
 Ogallalla! Ogallalla!

Great are the warriors of the Ogallallas!  
 Strong of arm and fearless of danger,  
 Where wait the foemen—  
 Warriors will meet them where the white sun  
 Is burning on the plain.  
 In the air resounds the war-cry—  
 In the air resounds that cry.  
 Wildest sound to combat calling,  
 Bold the onset of the warriors charge.

Shrill is the cry of the wolf  
 As he howls in the moonlight,  
 Shrill is the sound of the war-cry—  
 Ogallalla! Ogallalla!

Mr. Barnabee (Professor Andover—dignified, staid and circumscribed; a misogynist if there ever was one) took huge delight in accentuating the satire of his character’s advice to the bevy of school girls in his charge to—

### BEWARE OF LOVE.

Whoever heard of Homer making sonnets to an eye-brow?  
 Or Aristotle singing to a maiden with his lute?  
 Imagine wise old Plato, with his pale and massive high-brow.  
 Wrinkling it by thinking how his love he’d prosecute;  
 Do you think Professor Agassiz learned all he knew by sighing?  
 Or that Mr. Herbert Spencer thought out ethics at a ball?

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If our own lamented Emerson of love had been a-dying,  
We never should have heard of his philosophy at all.

Can love teach youthful maidens anything at all of Botany?  
Or Mathematics cause a thrill erotic in the heart?  
Will flirting give a lady brains—if she hasn't got any?—  
Or solve the esoteric problems hid in Ray's Third Part?  
You may lose yourself completely in pursuing Etiology,  
Or safely throw yourself away upon a Cubic Rule;  
But nowhere else in nature will you find such useless "ology,"  
As in a man who's dead in love and makes himself a fool.

Quite in contrast, is the delicate little waltz song of Edith's (Camille D'Arville) in which the ring of the blue bells sounds the gladsomeness of springtime and the intoxication of love.

55

#### THE BREATH OF MAY.

Ah! The breath of May!  
Never was wine  
Half so divine;  
Never the air  
As fresh or as fair.

Ah! Delight of May!  
When every bud  
Upon the tree  
Lays bare its heart  
To every bee.

Ah! The breath of May.

Glowing sunshine everywhere  
Flings a gleaming, golden snare—  
Flowers here—  
And there—  
Are blowing in May air.

Ah! The joy of May!  
When to the heart  
Love doth impart  
All the delight  
Love can excite.

Ah! The joy of Spring!  
When every bird  
Hath found its mate,  
And every heart  
Hath had its sate.

Ah! Love is King!

Love and music everywhere,  
Weaving rapture's joyous snare,  
Love is here—  
Is there—  
Is wafted on May air.

Ah! The song of May!  
How every trill  
Makes hearts to thrill,  
And every note's  
Aleap in our throats.

Ah! Sweet lay of love!  
Story so tender,  
Old and gray;  
Yet sing again  
Love's roundelay—

Ah! Love is King!

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In greater contrast is the roystering drinking song of Cardenas, the Mexican bandit, who was characterized by Eugene Cowles without in any way overdoing a part easily overdone.

#### CARE'S THE KING OF ALL.

Oh, care's the King of all—  
A King who doth appal;  
But shall we who love delight bow before him?  
Or raise revolting cry—  
Proclaiming pleasure high,  
Declare it treason if good men dare adore him?  
And to this design  
We'll pledge in good wine;  
Come all and drink and laugh tonight;  
We'll clink and we'll drink,  
Nor stop to sigh or think—



Come all with me who love delight.

Away, away with care;  
Come on, come all who dare  
With me to banish care in joyous drinking.  
The night's for pleasure bought,  
The day alone for thought—  
Let all begone who would annoy us thinking.  
Then come while above  
The stars wink at love—  
Come all and drink and laugh tonight.  
We'll clink and we'll drink,  
Nor stop to sigh or think—  
Come on with me who love delight.

57

Jessie Bartlett Davis was cast for "Minnetoa, an Indian Girl," but didn't take the part until Flora Finlayson had made a hit and even then she wanted certain changes made in the finale, which Waller refused.

Well, "The Ogallallas" deserved a better fate and probably would have been a go, if there had been tenors enough to carry Waller's big themes. They were really Grand Opera parts and the average—and better than average—tenor could not continue night after night without breaking down. It was great! Too bad it was so far ahead of the times—and failed.

That was Jinx No. 1.

† † † †

Allison was everlastingly encouraging Waller to musical creations by exciting his imagination with suggestions and in the end writing the story, although he tried faithfully to find a librettist who, he too modestly believed, might do better work than he. In the end, however, each of the children of his brain came back to its creator. The fact was that Waller couldn't or wouldn't work with others. So was conceived "Brother Francesco," an opera set in a monastery in Italy during the Seventeenth Century, and bringing up a vivid picture of monks, medieval chapels—dark, massive and severe—and the dank scent of deep tragedy. There were but four main characters, a quartette of voices, in "Brother Francesco," which was in one act of about an hour and ten minutes, the whole story unravelling itself in the public chapel between the ringing of the church bell and the conclusion of the mass of the Benediction of the Holy Virgin. The altar lights have not been lit. Enter Francesco, a novice, to light them. A candle flashes on the altar; then another—and the tale unfolds. Francesco, sorrowing over his lost love, Maria, observes the Father Confessor enter the Confessional and, reminded of his too worldly thoughts, kneels and sings an aria, "The Confession," in which the tragedy of his life is revealed.

58

#### THE CONFESSION.

All my sins confessing humbly, oh, my father—  
All my thoughts are ever of my lost Maria.  
Wondrously fair and so pure was she  
Whom I loved ere my heart was dead—  
When love yet thrilled with tender mystery.

Ah, her face! I see it ever—waking, dreaming,  
Hear her voice in cadence tender, softly speaking.  
Pure was the love that from heaven above  
Filled my heart with its ardent flame  
And blowed with passion's thrilling mystery.

Our fathers were at strife  
And we were kept apart.  
I told Lucretia all and  
Bade her pour my love  
Into Maria's breast.

I waited long and then  
She said Maria—false  
To me—was pledged to wed  
Another that she loved.  
That cruel message, father, broke my heart.

It was not long until I saw  
Lucretia's heart—that she could love  
Where false Maria failed. And so

In sympathy we two were wed.

The vows had scarce been said—  
Aye, on the church's steps—a messenger  
Did crush a letter in my hand.  
'Twas but a line, but at the end—  
Oh God in Heaven! Maria's name.

"I hear that thou art false," it said,  
"But I cannot believe  
"That one who loved as thou didst  
"Could fail me or deceive."

Ah! suspicion, like a lightning flash,  
Transfixed me and I held  
The paper to Lucretia's face  
And bade her read and tell me all.  
Upon her knees she fell and whined  
That she had loved me too, and had  
Deceived me of Maria's heart—Ah! God!  
In that damned moment's rage  
I struck her as she knelt—to kill!

The wedding guests did drag me off  
And take the knife away. But, Ah!  
There was one stain of blood it bore,  
Where, as I struck, it slashed across  
The dark and faithless cheek of her  
And left it scarred for life. Scarred!  
When I had meant to kill.

All that night I lingered, watching 'neath her window—  
Saw once more the haunting face of my Maria—  
Saw her once more—I can see her still!—  
Fled away and am buried here  
In God's own house and all unchastened yet.

In very irony, it would seem, to the simplicity of his nature, the outpourings of the novitiate's sorrowing heart have been confessed to his wife, the scarred-faced Lucretia, who inhabits the monastery in the guise of the Father Confessor (not an unknown historical fact) thus in its very inception lending an intense dramatic effect to the story. Now, at the ringing of the bell, the villagers enter the public loft, Maria—his lost love—in the foreground unrecognized either by Francesco or Lucretia, singing an "Ave Maria:"

Ave Maria, Mother of Mercy,  
Thou art our hope, and our sweetness and life.  
Pray for Francesco, Oh, watch o'er his footsteps;  
Turn on his sorrow thine eyes sweet and tender.  
At thy dear feet anguished I fall  
To pray for him—  
For oh! somewhere he's wandering,  
Sorrow enduring.  
Pray for him Mother, oh watch o'er his footsteps.  
Lost, lost to me, yet so dear to me—  
Pray for him, oh Mother dear.  
Ave Maria! Hope of the hopeless!  
To thy sweet mercy in anguish I cry—  
Pray for Francesco, my own, my beloved—  
Pray for him Mother, oh pray for Francesco.  
Lost, lost to me—oh! loved and lost!  
Oh Mother dear pray for him.

Again the bell rings and the monks pass before the altar with genuflections and sink in their stalls in prayer, while a male chorus chants the Office of the Benediction. During the singing of the anthem, Francesco enters with cowl thrown back and a lighted taper in his hand. He is recognized by Maria and at her exclamations starts to her but is restrained by the Father Confessor now disclosed to him for the first time as his discarded wife. After a trio of great dramatic force, Francesco seizes a dagger drawn by Lucretia to kill him, and stabbing himself, expires in Maria's arms, while Lucretia, still disguised as the Father Confessor, takes back her place unnoticed among the monks who hold their crosses in horror against the suicide!

Waller wrote the entire service in imitation of the sombre Gregorian Mass, and then over the face of this dark background sketched in modern passionate music the lyrical and dramatic lightning of the action. This wonderful conception, both in idea,

words and music, was “passed by censors” of the church—that is, Archbishop Corrigan and the Archbishop of Paris both said that while they did not approve of representations of the Church on the stage, it had been done before, and would no doubt be done again. Otherwise there was nothing objectionable in it.

Yet when it was produced in Berlin at the Royal Opera, under the wing of Emperor William, even though horribly mutilated by the Public Censor, the Catholic party, (aided and abetted by the musical cabal that has always existed in Berlin), made it the cause of protests against the German Government and Jinx No. 2 came to life in riotous uprisings against it during its three performances. Whereupon it was withdrawn. These simple facts are gleaned from Mr. Waller’s descriptive letters. Jean de Reszke thought so well of “Brother Francesco” that he proposed—nay promised—to have it produced at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. But the old Jinx proceeded to put his No. 3 seal on de Reszke’s voice that year, and he and the opera were heard from no more under the proscenium arch.

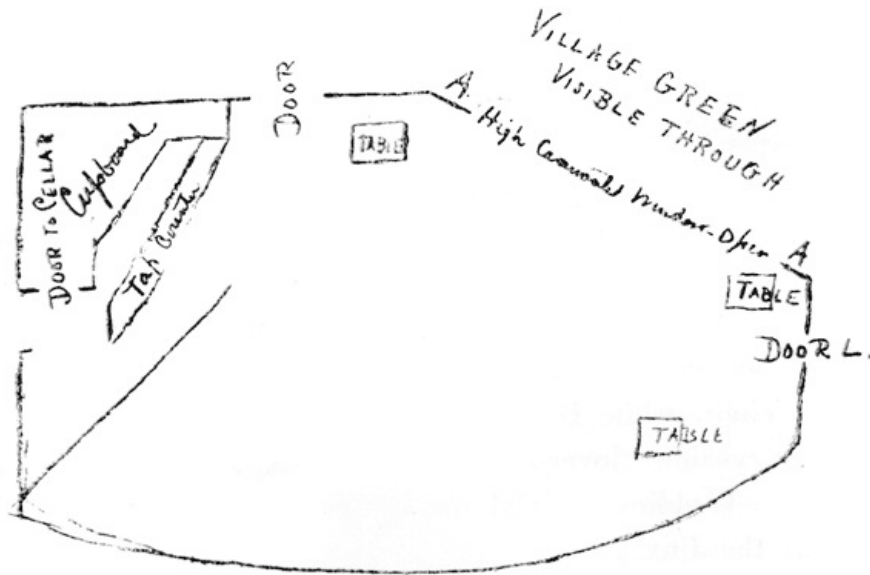
† † † †

Then there was “The Mouse and the Garter,” a travesty on Grand Opera in two acts that Clarence Andrews was to produce at the opening of the Waldorf-Astoria ballroom-theater. Many has been the pleasurable moment I have had in examining the old “prompt book” in use during rehearsals, for the company was picked, the scenery modeled, the costumes made and the “fancy,” as Allison called it, ready to be staged, when Oscar Hammerstein, who had a contract with Andrews to transfer successes to the old Victoria Theater, blew up in one of his bankruptcies. The Jinx was again monarch of all he surveyed—and Monte-Cristo-like held up four fingers! That old “prompt book” mentioned shows the wear and tear of much use and is filled with odd notes in Allison’s characteristic handwriting. No less interesting were the “Librettist’s Notes on Characters in the Opera and the Business,” dated October 21, 1897, and taken from an old letter-press copy that turned up in our archives. There we find that—

The general tone of the performance is to be light, gay, rapid, suggestive and delicate—without a trace of the license of current musical farce. The suggestiveness must naturally arise from the innocent freedom of village life. The whole idea is a travesty of sentimental grand opera, the vocal characters being transposed so far as their fate and actions are concerned.

Good stuff! And who were these innocent villagers? Well, there was Tenor Robusto, in love with Soprano and fated to be left at the post; Tenor Di Grazia, his twin brother; Giovanni Baritono, a Soldier of Fortune; Piccolo, an innkeeper; Fra Tonerero Basso, a priest; Signorina Prima Soprano, a bar maid; Signorina Mezzo, also a bar maid, and Signora Contralto, Piccolo’s wife, besides villagers, eight toppers, musicians, five couples of rustic brides and grooms, and a dancing bear and his keeper. Let us not forget the mythical mouse and the ribbon from which The Garters were made, though neither appears among the “properties” scheduled by Allison.

Plan of Stage.



Footlights

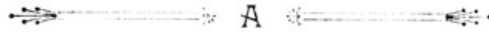
(Interior of Mediaeval inn, the casement left rear opening one slight step above floor, the green sloping up outside and flooded with sun-light Interior finishings dark and rich; the cup-board reaching to ceiling, counter as high as a man's ~~waist~~ <sup>waist</sup>. The room should be massive with beamed ceiling At either end of casement (marked A A) a "shoulder" or wooden panel about as high as a man's waist, —part of the casement A few stout, dark mediaeval tables and chairs

---o0) (0o---

Page from the old Prompt Book "The Mouse and the Garter"

Robusto and Soprano flirted. He gave her a ribbon and she promised to marry him. Just a bluff! And then he wanted his ribbon back, but she had already made it into garters, and when he tried to take them by force she boxed him smartly. He got fussy, drank a gallon of gooseberry wine, smoked two cigarettes and making out that he was a great bounder, threatened her with sudden death. Great dialogue! He would have gone to war, only there was no war at the time and anyway his "mother wouldn't let him"—the topical number. After smacking Robusto good and plenty before all the villagers, Soprano, who seems to know how to take care of herself, swears that she'll marry no one unless he has the wit "to get—that! And this!"—the garters. Baritono, Soldier of Fortune, comes on the scene. Lots more bully dialogue and song and then Baritono hears of Soprano's oath. It's easy for him and he bides his time—you always have to bide your time—to indicate a point behind Soprano, when she is in a wholly unsuspecting mood, and shout "Ha! A mouse!! A mouse!!!" Village maidens scream and scatter. Soprano, skirts to knees, hurdles into a chair, while Baritono deftly seizes the loose ends of the now visible "lover-knots" and holds aloft the precious talismen. Wedding. Finis!

But the Jinx got it.



# PIRATICAL BALLAD

"Fifteen men on the dead man's chest—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
Drink and the Devil had done for the rest—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!"  
—Bill, Louis Brumm.

SONG FOR

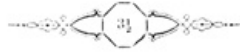
Bass or Deep Baritone.

WORDS BY

YOUNG E. ALLISON.

MUSIC BY

HENRY WALLER.



NEW YORK

Published by **WM. A. POND & Co.**, 25 Union Square,  
BROADWAY, BETWEEN 20th AND 16th STREETS

CHICAGO: CHICAGO MUSIC CO., 195-197 WABASH AVE.

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# A PIRATICAL BALLAD.

Words by  
YOUNG E. ALLISON.

Music by  
HENRY WALLER.

Allegretto pesante. M.M. ♩ = 66.

The piano introduction for the first system is written in 6/8 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The melody begins with a half note F#4, followed by quarter notes G4, A4, B4, and C5. The bass line consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The system concludes with a fermata over the final notes.

The first system of the vocal and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in the bass clef, and the piano accompaniment is in the treble and bass clefs. The lyrics are: "Fif - teen men on the dead man's chest - Yo - ho - ho and a bottle of rum! / Fif - teen men all stark and cold - Yo - ho - ho and a bottle of rum! Their / Fif - teen men of the Vix - en's list - Yo - ho - ho and a bottle of rum!". The piano accompaniment provides a rhythmic and harmonic support for the vocal line.

The second system of the vocal and piano accompaniment. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: "Drink and the devil had done for the rest - Yo - ho - ho and a bottle of rum! The / eyes popp' wide and glazed and bold - Yo - ho - ho and a bottle of rum! The / All gone down from the devil's own fist - Yo - ho - ho and a bottle of rum! We". The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern, ending with a fermata. The word "simile." is written below the piano part.

12,491-3

Copyright 1891, by Wm. A. Pond & Co.

Mate was fixed by the Bo - 's'n's pike, The Bo - 's'n brained with a  
 skip - per lay with his nob in gore Where the scul - lion's axe his  
 wrapped 'em all in a main - sail's fold, We sewed at the foot a

*f piu moto. Legato.*

mar - lin's-pike, And Cook - ey's throat was marked be - like  
 cheek had shore, And the scul - lion he was stabbed times four.  
 bit of gold, And we heaved 'em in - to the bil - lows cold.

*a tempo.*  
*p* *cresc.*  
 It had been gripped by fin - gers ten And  
 And there they lay and the sog - gy skies Rained  
 The bit was put as snug's could be, Where't

*a tempo.*  
*ff* *ff* *p legatissimo.* *cresc.*

*sempre cresc.*

there they lay, all good dead men - Yo - ho - ho and a  
 all day long on the star - ing eyes - Yo - ho - ho and a  
 never will both - er you nor me - Yo - ho - ho and a

*sempre cresc.*

*ff*

bottle of rum, Yo - ho - ho and a bottle of rum!  
 bottle of rum, Yo - ho - ho and a bottle of rum!  
 bottle of rum, Yo - ho - ho and a bottle of rum!

*ff*

End of 3rd verse.

12,491 - 3

### BALLAD of DEAD MEN

If Young Allison is vain of anything he has done I have yet to hear such an expression from him. He just writes things and tucks them away in odd corners and it has devolved upon me to collect them and keep them. So it is that, while not a literary executor—because Allison, thank God, is scandalously healthy and I am making no professions—it falls to my satisfied lot to be a literary collector in a certain sense—if he who gathers and preserves and gloats over the brain products of others may thus be described. That is why, treasured among my earthly possessions—scant enough, the good Lord knows, but full of joy and satisfaction to me—are extensive lead-pencil manuscript memoranda in Allison's writing showing the painstaking stages by which "Fifteen Dead Men," characterized by James Whitcomb Riley as that "masterly and exquisite ballad of delicious horri-ficness," reached its perfection. Under whatever name it may be sung, be it "The Ballad of Dead Men," or "On Board the Derelict" or "Derelict," it is a poem big enough to fix the Jewel of Fame firmly over the author's brow.



Away back in the Allison strain somewhere must have been a bold buccaneer, for who else but the descendant of a roystering, fighting, blood-letting pirate could have seen the “scuppers glut with a rotting red?” Through all the visible mildness of his deep and complex nature there surely runs a blood-thirsty current, in proof of which I submit this single paragraph from certain confessions† of his:

† The Delicious Vice.  
Pages 23-24. First  
Series, 1907.

With character seared, abandoned and dissolute in habit, through and by the hearing and seeing and reading of history, there was but one desperate step left. So I entered upon the career of a pirate in my ninth year. The Spanish Main, as no doubt you remember, was at that time upon an open common just across the street from our house, and it was a hundred feet long, half as wide and would average two feet in depth. I have often since thanked Heaven that they filled up that pathless ocean in order to build an iron foundry upon the spot. Suppose they had excavated for a cellar! Why during the time that Capt. Kidd, Lafitte and I infested the coast thereabout, sailing three “low, black-hulled schooners with long rakish masts,” I forced hundreds of merchant seamen to walk the plank—even helpless women and children. Unless the sharks devoured them, their bones are yet about three feet under the floor of that iron foundry. Under the lee of the Northernmost promontory, near a rock marked with peculiar crosses made by the point of the stiletto which I constantly carried in my red silk sash, I buried tons of plate, and doubloons, pieces of eight, pistoles, Louis d’ors, and galleons by the chest. At that time galleons somehow meant to me money pieces in use, though since then the name has been given to a species of boat. The rich brocades, Damascus and Indian stuffs, laces, mantles, shawls and finery were piled in riotous profusion in our cave where—let the whole truth be told if it must—I lived with a bold, black-eyed and coquettish Spanish girl, who loved me with ungovernable jealousy that occasionally led to bitter and terrible scenes of rage and despair. At last when I brought home a white and red English girl, whose life I spared because she had begged me on her knees by the memory of my sainted mother to spare her for her old father, who was waiting her coming, Joquita passed all bounds. I killed her—with a single knife thrust, I remember. She was buried right on the spot where the Tilden and Hendricks flag pole afterwards stood in the campaign of 1876. It was with bitter melancholy that I fancied the red stripes on the flag had their color from the blood of the poor, foolish, jealous girl below.

So it is, naturally enough, that to Allison, “Treasure Island” is the *ne plus ultra* and composite of all pirate stories, and this marvel of delight he called to Waller’s attention while they were incubating “The Ogallallas.” No sooner had Waller read it than the quatrain of Old Billy Bones took possession of him and converted itself into music. The two of them, as so many other thousands had done, bewailed the parsimony of Stevenson in the use and development of the grisly suggestion and Waller declared that if Allison would complete the verse he would set it to music. That same night Allison composed three ragged but promising verses, at white heat, while walking the floor in a cloud of tobacco smoke of his own making. Next morning he gave them to Waller, who by night had the score and words married and a day later the finished product went forward to Wm. A. Pond & Co., and was published under the title of “A Piratical Ballad”†. Note that these initial verses are described as “ragged” and in this I am also quoting Allison himself who in our various chats on his reminiscence of “Treasure Island” has often given them this characterization. Be that as it may these three verses were the foundation for the perfect six that were to emerge after several years more of intermittent but patient development and labor.

† A Piratical Ballad.  
Song for Bass or  
Deep Baritone.  
Words by Young E.  
Allison; Music by  
Henry Waller; New  
York. Published by  
William A. Pond &  
Co. Copyright 1891.  
[See pages 65-68.]

#### A PIRATICAL BALLAD.

Fifteen men on the dead man’s chest—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
Drink and the devil had done for the rest—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
The mate was fixed by the bo’s’n’s pike,  
The bo’s’n brained with a marlinspike,  
And cookey’s throat was marked belike  
It had been gripped  
By fingers ten.  
And there they lay,  
All good dead men—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum,  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!

Fifteen men all stark and cold—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
Their eyes popp’d wide and glazed and bold—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
The skipper lay with his nob in gore  
Where the scullion’s axe his cheek had shore,  
And the scullion he was stabbed times four.

And there they lay,  
 And the soggy skies  
 Rained all day long  
 On the staring eyes—  
 Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum,  
 Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
  
 Fifteen men of the Vixen's list—  
 Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
 All gone down from the devil's own fist—  
 Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
 We wrapped 'em all in a mainsail's fold,  
 We sewed at the foot a bit of gold,  
 And we heaved 'em into the billows cold.  
 The bit was put  
 As snug's could be,  
 Where't ne'er will bother  
 You nor me—  
 Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum,  
 Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!

This is the requiem of the Fifteen Dead Men that Eugene Cowles would sing so effectively in his booming bass after rehearsals of "The Ogallallas." It must have been great!

Allison felt that he had done little justice to an idea full of great possibilities and made a number of revisions during the polishing process until it was raised to five verses. I have the original manuscript† of the first revision of "A Piratical Ballad" unearthed from a cubby-hole in an old desk of his to which I fell heir, the only change being in the title to "A Ballad of Dead Men," the elimination of one of the concluding lines "Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum" from the refrain of each verse, (it had been added originally to fit the musical cadence), and the strengthening of the final verse by the substitution of—

With willing hearts  
 And a Yo-heave-ho  
 Over the side  
 To the sharks below.

Many will no doubt recall "The Philosophy of Composition"† by Edgar Allen Poe, and those who by some mischance have missed it, can spend a delightful hour in the perusal of what, beyond the least doubt, is the most skillful analysis of poetic composition ever written, even though it fails to carry conviction that "The Raven" was ever produced by the formula described. Poe declared that—

... most writers—poets in especial—prefer having it understood that they compose by a species of fine frenzy—an ecstatic intuition; and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes at the elaborate and vacillating crudities of thought, at the true purposes seized only at the last moment, at the innumerable glimpses of idea that arrived not at the maturity of full view, at the fully matured fancies discarded as unmanageable, at the cautious selections and rejections, at the painful erasures and interpolations—in a word at the wheels and pinions, the tackle for scene shifting, the step ladders and demon traps, the cock's feather, the red paint and the black patches, which in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred constitute the properties of the literary *histrion*.

And so he proceeds to detail how he composed "The Raven." First he decided on a length of about one hundred lines that could be read at one sitting; on beauty as its province; on sadness as its tone; on a variation of the application of the refrain—it remaining for the most part unvaried—to obtain what he termed "artistic piquancy;" proceeding only at that stage to the composition of the last verse as the first step. All this of course has little to do with "Derelict" and yet I cannot but see a sort of analogy of effect by processes wholly divergent, particularly as Allison once told me that the central idea of the last verse for consigning the bodies to the deep was ever in his mind and that this verse was first projected, although its development was the most difficult and its perfection did not come until later. So much for that! In the five verses he had arrived approximately at a consummation of the sea burial, the introduction very properly repeating the quatrain of Billy Bones before concluding:

We wrapped 'em all in a mains'l tight,  
 With twice ten turns of a hawser's bight,

† Reproduced in facsimile.

† Stone & Kimball Edition. Vol. 6; page 31.

And we heaved 'em over and out of sight—  
 With a yo-heave-ho!  
 And a fare-you-well!  
 And a sullen plunge  
 In the sullen swell—  
 Ten fathom-lengths of the road to hell—  
 Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!

75 While this composition is fine and tight as a drum in poetic meter and conception, the real perfection was not arrived at until he made it “Ten fathoms *deep* on the road to hell.” In the five-verse revision a part of the last verse as it appeared in “A Piratical Ballad” went into the second, a part of the second verse was shifted to the third and a fourth was added to give an implied reason for the riot of death in an inferred quarrel over the “chest on chest full of Spanish gold, with a ton of plate in the middle hold.” Strangely enough all these shifts and additions do not appear to have altered the sentiment in the least and at times I am amazed, in reading over old versions, that I do not appreciably miss certain lines and ideas that seem vital to the finished product.

Shortly after the five verses had been privately printed for his friends on a single slip, Allison conceived the rather daring idea of injecting the trace of a woman on board the *Derelict* which up to this time he had very closely developed in the Stevensonian spirit. While there was no woman in “*Treasure Island*,” he proved to himself by analysis that his new thought would do no violence to Stevenson’s idea, because Billy Bones’ song was a reminiscence of *his own past* and not of *Treasure Island*. Hence the trace of a woman, skillfully injected, might be permissible. Here, too, his analysis gave him the melancholy tone—of which Poe speaks as so highly desirable—greatly accentuated by doubt of whether she was “wench” or “maid,” and a further possible incentive for the extermination of the whole ship’s list. This verse† has undergone little change since the woman trace was first injected:

† Reproduced in  
 facsimile.

More we saw, through the stern-light screen—  
 Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
 Chartings ondoubt where a woman had been—  
 Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
 A flimsy shift on a bunker cot,  
 With a dagger-slot in the bosom spot  
 And the lace stiff-dry in a purplish blot.  
 Now whether wench  
 Or a shuddering maid,  
 She dared the knife  
 And she took the blade.  
 By God! She was stuff for a plucky jade—  
 Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!

76 There were certain niceties of word adjustment to follow as for instance the substitution of “a thin dirk-slot” for “a dagger-slot,” the word “thin” carrying a keen mental impression of a snaky, hissing sound-sensation as the idea unfolded of the dirk slipping through the flimsy fabric of the shift, cast on the bunker cot to remain the silent evidence of the tragedy. The very acme of touches came in the punctuation† of the concluding lines—pauses that emphasize with so much ingenuity the very question that lends the speculatively mournful cadence to the whole:

† Reproduced in  
 facsimile.

Or was she wench ...  
 Or some shuddering maid...?  
 That dared the knife  
 And that took the blade!

And as a cap-sheaf came the thought of differentiating the whole verse† by an italicized setting! That is almost the last word of the conception of poet-printer.

† Reproduced in  
 facsimile.

The dogged persistency that Allison applied to the completion of this masterpiece has always won my deepest admiration. And the admiration of many others too, for this poem, first publicly printed in the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, has been reprinted in one form or another, in almost every newspaper in the country and has an honored place in many scrap books. What great and painstaking effort was encompassed in its composition only one can know even partly who has been privileged to “peep behind the scenes” at the “properties of the literary *histrion*”—the manuscript notes and

## IF THERE *is* CONTROVERSY!

If any one in this wide, old world, after reading the wealth of evidence in this little volume, still thinks Young E. Allison did not write "Derelict," let him come to me like a man and say so and I'll give him a good swift stab in the eye, with my eye, and say: "You don't want to be convinced." This includes the editor of *The New York Times Book Review*. When he made an egregious blunder by stating that "Derelict" was an unskilled sailor's jingle, a wave of protest reached him. He then printed Walt Mason's letter describing the poem as a work of art and altered his editorial characterization of it to "famous old chanty." In the same breath he wrote that it was not likely that Mr. Allison was the author—but why not likely? It is plain that somebody must have written it. Nobody else's name had ever been associated with it. The *Times* man had nobody to suggest as the author. Why, then, maintain that Mr. Allison was not the author? His sole reason is that the "Bowdlerized" and bastard version which he printed had been *copied from a manuscript written into an old book printed in 1843!* What does the ink say about dates? What do the pen marks say? Great gods and little fishes! If ever I shall desire to antiquitize a modernity I'll copy it into an old book and send a transcript to that delightful Babe of the Woods of *The New York Times Book Review*.

When *Rubric*, a Chicago magazine venture of attractiveness, but doomed in advance to failure, published Allison's poem under the title "On Board the Derelict," I detached three sets of the eight illustrated and illuminated pages on which it was printed, had the sheets inlaid in hand-made paper and neatly bound. This was accomplished with the sage advice of my old playmate, Frank M. Morris, the bookman of Chicago. One of these volumes was made for Mr. Allison, (so that he would surely have at least one copy of his own poem), a second was for my bookish friend, James F. Joseph, then of Chicago and now of Indianapolis, and a third was for my own library. The mere fact that Allison was five years autographing my particular copy has no bearing whatever in this discussion, but leads me to say that I felt amply repaid in the end by this very handsome inscription on the fly-leaf:

This Volume,

No. 1

of the limited private edition of "On Board the Derelict," is for the private delight of my dear friend,

Champion Ingraham Hitchcock,

the publisher and designer thereof—appreciative guide, counselor and encourager of other excursions into "the higher altitudes,"—with all love and long memory

Christmas, 1906.

YOUNG E. ALLISON.

Well, because "Derelict" was a delight and Allison my friend, I gave away *Rubrics* by the score and, among others, saw that a copy went to Wallace Rice, literatus—and Chicago book reviewer—to whom I owe an everlasting debt of gratitude for precious moments saved by good advice on modern stuff not to read. In presenting "Derelict," the *Rubric* publishers left an impression that the poem had but then been completed† for its pages. I knew better; Wallace had read it before, in whole or in part and raised a question. It so worked upon me that later I decided to submit it to Allison himself. Sometimes we do things, and know not why, that have a very distinct later and wholly unexpected bearing upon situations, and when the opportunity for this volume arose, the memory that I had saved Allison's penciled reply came over me. A patient search had its reward. Here is the letter† written with the same old lead pencil on the same old spongy copy paper:

† See letter to "The New York Times Book Review".

† Reproduced in [facsimile](#).

Dear Hitch:

My supposition is that the *Rubric* folks misunderstood or have been misunderstood. The Dead Man's Song was first written about 10 years ago—3 verses—and Henry Waller set it to music & it was published in New York. The version for the song did not exhaust it in my mind and so I took it up every now & then for 4 or 5 years and finally completed it. A very lovely little girl who was visiting my wife helped me to decide whether I should write in one verse "a flimsy shift" or "a filmy shift" or other versions, and her opinion on "flimsy" decided me. She is the only person that ever had anything to do with it—*as far as I know!* What hypnotic influences were at work or what astral minds may have intervened, I know not. But I have always thought I did it all. It was not much to do, except for a certain 17th Century verbiage and grisly humor.

I am glad you still believe I wouldn't steal anybody else's brains any more than I would his money. Waller wrote splendid singing music to it which Eugene Cowles used to bellow beautifully.

With best love, as always,  
Y. E. A.

That this narrative may be complete, the articles and comment that appeared in *The New York Times Book Review* are reproduced, together with a letter to the editor written by the author of this volume, which, neither acknowledged nor published by him, obtained wide circulation through *The Scoop*,† a magazine issued every Saturday by The Press Club of Chicago. It was quite characteristic of Allison to decline the very urgent requests of many friends to jump into the arena and make a claim for that which is his own creation and in coming to a negative decision, his reasons are probably best expressed in a letter to Henry A. Sampson, who himself writes poetry:

Yours of the 5th containing wormwood from the *N. Y. Times* (and being the 11th copy received from loving friends) is here.

Jealous! Jealous! Just the acute development on your part of the ordinary professional jealousy. Merely because I have at last found my place amongst those solitary and dazzling poets, Homer and Shakespeare, who, also, it has been proved, did not write their own stuff, but found it all in folk lore and copied it down.

Well, damn me, I can't help my own genius and do not care for its products because I can always make more, and I compose these things for my own satisfaction.

I, with Shakespeare and Homer, perceive the bitter inefficacy of fighting the scientific critics. Walt Mason saw the versification was artful instead of "bungling and crude," but the *Times* critic knows a copy out of a "chanty book" when he sees it.

I envy your being unpublished. You do not have to bleed with me and Homer and Bill. I feel the desiccating effects of my own dishonor. I grow distrustful. I wonder if *you* wrote *your* poems. You refused to publish. Were you, astute and keen reader of auguries, afraid of being found out? Who writes all these magnificent things that me and Homer and Bill couldn't and didn't write?

No, I don't owe it to my friends to settle this. I'd a sight rather plead guilty and accept indeterminate sentence than to waste time on my friends. I've got 'em or I haven't. And I want to convince enemies by a profound and dignified sneak.

From one who has had dirt done him.

MANTELLINI

Louisville, Oct. 6, 1914.

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† Issue of October 10, 1914.

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## SOME CLIPPINGS; *and* A LETTER

The controversial comments on Allison's "Fifteen Men on the Dead Man's Chest," heretofore mentioned, appeared in *The New York Times Book Review* of September 20, 1914, and October 4, 1914, while the inquiry that precipitated the discussion was published July 26. The printed matter, *verbatim et literatim*, and the matter not printed, are subjoined:

*July 26, 1914.*

### APPEALS TO READERS

EDWARD ALDEN.—Can some reader tell me if the verse or chorus of a pirate's song, which Robert Louis Stevenson recites

several times in whole or in part in "Treasure Island," was original or quoted; and, if there are other verses, where they may be found? The lines as Stevenson gives them are:

Fifteen men on the dead man's chest,  
Yo-ho-ha and a bottle of rum;  
Drink and the devil had done for the rest,  
Yo-ho-ha and a bottle of rum.

† † † †

September 20, 1914.

#### ANSWERS FROM READERS

W. L.—The verse about which Edward Alden inquired in your issue of July 26. and which is quoted in Stevenson's "Treasure Island," is the opening stanza of an old song or chantey of West Indian piracy, which is believed to have originated from the wreck of an English buccaneer on a cay in the Caribbean Sea known as "The Dead Man's Chest." The cay was so named from its fancied resemblance to the old sailors' sea chest which held his scanty belongings. The song or chantey was familiar to deep-sea sailors many years ago. The song is copied from a very old scrapbook, in which the author's name was not given. The verses† are as follows:

Fifteen men on the Dead Man's Chest,  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
Drink and the devil had done for the rest.  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
The mate was fixed by the bo'sun's pike  
An the bo'sun brained with a marlin spike.  
And the cookie's throat was marked belike  
It had been clutched by fingers ten,  
And there they lay, all good dead men,  
Like break o' day in a boozin' ken—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!

Fifteen men of a whole ship's list,  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
Dead and bedamned and their souls gone whist,  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
The skipper lay with his nob in gore  
Where the scullion's axe his cheek had shore,  
And the scullion he was stabbed times four;  
And there they lay, and the soggy skies  
Dripped ceaselessly in upstaring eyes,  
By murk sunset and by foul sunrise—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!

Fifteen men of 'em stiff and stark,  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
Ten of the crew bore the murder mark,  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
'Twas a cutlass swipe or an ounce of lead,  
Or a gaping hole in a battered head,  
And the scuppers' glut of a rotting red;  
And there they lay, ay, damn my eyes,  
Their lookouts clapped on Paradise,  
Their souls gone just the contrawise—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!

Fifteen men of 'em good and true,  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
Every man Jack could a' sailed with Old Pew,  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
There was chest on chest of Spanish gold  
And a ton of plate in the middle hold,  
And the cabin's riot of loot untold—  
And there they lay that had took the plum,  
With sightless eyes and with lips struck dumb,  
And we shared all by rule o' thumb—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!

More was seen through the stern light's screen,  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
Chartings undoubt where a woman had been,  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
A flimsy shift on a bunker cot  
With a dirk slit sheer through the bosom spot  
And the lace stiff dry in a purplish rot—  
Or was she wench or shuddering maid,

† To observe liberties taken with the text, compare these verses with authentic version.

She dared the knife and she took the blade—  
Faith, there was stuff for a plucky Jade!  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!

Fifteen men on the Dead Man's Chest,  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
Drink and the devil had done for the rest,  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!  
We wrapped 'em all in a mainsail tight  
With twice ten turns of a hawser's bight,  
And we heaved 'em over and out of sight  
With a yo-heave-ho and a fare-ye-well,  
And a sullen plunge in a sullen swell,  
Ten fathoms along on the road to hell—  
Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum!

† † † †

September 20, 1914.

Who that loves tales of adventure, thrilling yarns involving the search for mysteriously lost treasure, has not gloried in "Treasure Island"? And who that recalls STEVENSON'S stirring romance does not involuntarily chant to himself the ridiculous but none the less fascinating verse commencing

"Fifteen men on the Dead Man's Chest—"

as if the gruesome rhyme were in a way intended as a sort of refrain for the entire story? When we were younger we undoubtedly speculated on the amazing capacity of this particular dead man's chest, and we gloated over the uncanny wickedness of the whole affair. The verse, however, turns out to be one of those curiosities of literature which is unearthed every now and then by some industrious contributor to the "Query Page" of THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW. In this number of the latter the entire song or "chantey" is given, copied from an old scrapbook, and while it can hardly be recommended as a delectable piece of literature, in any sense, it is interesting, aside from its Stevensonian connection, as a bit of rough, unstudied sailor's jingle, the very authorship of which is long since forgotten. And the youthful myth of the Dead Man's Chest—that, too, it appears, is not at all the thing that fancy painted it. The real Dead Man's Chest, however, as "W. L." explains it, is quite as alluring as the imaginary one and will appeal to the student of geographical peculiarities in the West Indies.

† † † †

October 4, 1914.

#### "FIFTEEN MEN ON THE DEAD MAN'S CHEST"

*New York Times Review of Books:*

The fine old sea poem, "Fifteen Men on the Dead Man's Chest," recently quoted in your columns, was written by Younge E. Allison. I have raked through various biographical dictionaries trying to discover who Younge E. Allison was, but without results. The man who wrote such a poem should not be unknelted, unhonored, and unsung. In your editorial touching the rhyme I don't think you do it justice. You describe it as "a rough, unstudied sailor's jingle," whereas it is a work of art. Some of the lines are tremendous, and the whole poem has a haunting quality that never yet distinguished a mere jingle. I never weary of repeating some of its sonorous lines.

WALT MASON.

Emporia, Kan., Sept. 24.

EDITORIAL NOTE.—We have received several other letters in which the authorship of the lines is credited to Mr. Allison, who is a resident of Louisville, Ky., and the editor of The Insurance Field of that city. Mr. Allison was at one time a correspondent of THE NEW YORK TIMES and also has written several books of fiction, including "The Passing of Major Galbraith." It is not likely, however, that he wrote the famous old chanty. One of our correspondents writes that Mr. Allison "reconstructed" the song some years ago on the first four lines

which are quoted in Stevenson's "Treasure Island."

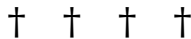
Our correspondent, "W. L.," who furnished the copy of the song as published recently in THE BOOK REVIEW says, however, that he copied the verses from a manuscript written into a book which bears this title: "Tales of the Ocean and Essays for the Forecastle, Containing Matters and Incidents Humorous, Pathetic, Romantic, and Sentimental, by Hawser Martingale, Boston, Printed and Published by S. W. Dickinson, 52 Washington St., 1843." This book belonged to his grandfather, who died in 1874, and the song was familiar to "W. L." in his youth as early as 1870.

In a letter to W. E. Henley, dated at Braemar, Aug. 25, 1881, written when Stevenson had begun the writing of "Treasure Island," he writes:

I am now on another lay for the moment, purely owing to Lloyd this one; but I believe there's more coin in it than in any amount of crawlers. Now see here "The Sea Cook or Treasure Island: A Story for Boys." [This was the first title selected for the book.]

If this don't fetch the kids, why, they have gone rotten since my day. Will you be surprised to learn that it is about Buccaneers, that it begins in the Admiral Benbow public house on the Devon coast, that it's all about a map and a treasure and a mutiny and a derelict ship and a current and a fine old Squire Trelawney, (the real Tre. purged of literature and sin to suit the infant mind,) and a doctor and another doctor and a sea cook with one leg and a sea song with a chorus, "Yo-ho-ho and a Bottle of Rum," (at the third "ho" you heave at the capstan bars,) which is a real buccaneer's song, only known to the crew of the late Capt. Flint, who died of rum at Key West much regretted?

The first publication of "Treasure Island" was in 1883, and in a letter to Sidney Colvin in July, 1884, Stevenson writes: "'Treasure Island' came out of Kingsley's 'At Last,' where I got 'The Dead Man's Chest.'"



## THE UNPUBLISHED LETTER

*New York Times Review of Books,*

It has been my great pleasure and satisfaction to sit with Young E. Allison of Louisville in business intimacy and friendship for many years, and to have seen the inception of his "Derelict" in three verses based on Billy Bones' song of "Fifteen Men on the Dead Man's Chest" from "Treasure Island." During this intimacy also I have observed those original three stanzas grow to six and viewed the adjustment and balance and polish he has given to what I now consider a masterpiece.

No one who ever read "Treasure Island" with a mind, but feels there is something lacking in Billy Bones' song. It left a haunting wish for more and if the book was closed with a single regret it was because Billy Bones had not completed his weird chant. So it affected Mr. Allison, a confirmed novel reader and a great admirer of Stevenson. Henry Waller, collaborating with Mr. Allison in the production† of the "Ogallallas" by the Bostonians along back in 1891, declared he had a theme for that swashbuckling chant and Allison, who wrote the libretto for the "Ogallallas," agreed to work it out. That same night with Waller's really brilliant musical conception in his mind, Mr. Allison wrote what might be considered the first three verses of the present revision, which were set to Waller's music, written for a deep baritone, and published by Pond. Thereafter during the rehearsal of the "Ogallallas" no session was complete until Eugene Cowles, in his big, rich bass, had sung Allison's three verses of "Fifteen Men on the Dead Man's Chest" to Waller's music, as "lagniappe," while cold chills raced up and down the spines of his hearers—more or less immune to sensations of that character.

As I write I have before me a copy of the music, the title page of which reads as follows: "A Piratical Ballad. Song for Bass or Deep Baritone. Words by Young E. Allison. Music by Henry Waller. New York. Published by William A. Pond & Co. 1891."

Later it occurred to Mr. Allison that he had done scant justice to an idea full of great possibilities, and another verse was added, and still later another, making five in all, when in a more polished condition it was submitted to the *Century* for publication, and accepted, though later the editor asked to have the closing lines re-constructed as being a bit too strong for his audience. Mr. Allison felt that to bring back those drink-swollen and weighted bodies "wrapp'd in a mains'l tight" from their "sullen plunge in the sullen swell, ten fathoms deep on the road to hell" would cut the heart out of the idea—while admitting to the *Century's* editor that such a sentiment might not be entirely fitted for his clientele—and so declined to make the alteration.

About this time Mr. Allison had "Derelict" privately printed for circulation among friends. I have in my possession his printer's copy, and the various revisions in his own handwriting—probably a dozen in all.

Six years after the first verses were written, Mr. Allison decided to inject a woman into his "Reminiscence of Treasure Island," as he styles it, which was

† Incubation at that time. Production in 1893.



most adroitly done in the fifth verse—last written—and in the private copies it is set in Italics as a delicate intimation that the theme of a woman was foreign to the main idea which he attempted to carry out just as he believed Stevenson might have done. There was no woman on Treasure Island yet she passes here without question.

Shortly after the sixth verse had been added, the editors of the *Rubric*—a Chicago magazine venture of the late 90's†—asked Mr. Allison for permission to publish the five verses which had fallen into their hands, and in granting the request he furnished the later revision in six verses. This was published on eight pages of the *Rubric* in two colors, very happily illustrated, I thought, and was captioned "On Board the Derelict."

It is the fine adjustment, the extreme delicacy, the very artfulness of the whole poem, I might say, which has led you into believing it "a rough, unstudied sailor's jingle" and in stating editorially, "it is not likely however that he [Mr. Allison] wrote the famous old chanty." Were it not that you hazarded this speculation I would not feel called upon to recite this history, in justice to Mr. Allison, who is one of the most honorable, modest and original men of letters and who would scorn to enter the lists in an effort to prove that what he had created was his own. Among those who know him like Henry Watterson, Madison Cawein, James H. Mulligan, (who was one of Stevenson's friends, present in Samoa when he died), James Whitcomb Riley, and a host of others he needs no defense.

Mr. Mason's comment in your issue of October 4, 1914, is a very fine tribute to the work of a stranger to him and testifies to his artistic judgment, for a study of this "old chanty" will prove it to be a work of art, not only for the tremendous lines of which Mr. Mason speaks, but because it creates the impression of antiquity while being entirely modern by every rule of versification.

If you take the pains to scan the lines you must soon admit how subtle and delicate are the alternating measures, prepared purposely to create the very idea of age and coarseness and succeeding with every almost matchless line and selected word.

Just a word more. Of course I cannot pretend to say how the version published in your issue of September 20, 1914, got copied into the "Old Scrap Book" to which "W. L." refers, but violence to the text and the meter—which you may determine by reference to the authentic copy inclosed herewith—would indicate that it had been "expurgated" for drawing room recital by an ultra-fastidious† who nevertheless recognized its great force.

By the way, Mr. Allison wrote "The Passing of Major Kilgore," not "Major Galbraith," one of the first really good newspaper stories "from the inside" then written, though since there have been many.

Yours very truly,  
C. I. HITCHCOCK

Louisville, October 6, 1914.

† Vol. I No. 1, 1901.

† And non-poetic.

## YO - HO - HO and a BOTTLE OF RUM

It has not been the purpose of this sketch of a poem's history, with which has been joined other matters, reminiscent or germane, to enter into a discussion relative to the origin of chanties, or to attempt to trace the four lines of Captain Billy Bones' song to any source beyond their appearance in "Treasure Island." In a more or less extensive, though desultory, reading of a little of almost everything, the writer has never stumbled upon any chanty or verse from which the famous quatrain might have sprung. Nor has he ever met anyone who remembers to have read or heard of anything of the kind. This includes Allison himself, an omnivorous reader, a Stevenson admirer and student, a friend of many of Stevenson's friends, and who, since the appearance of "Treasure Island," has had hundreds of letters and conversations bearing on the subject.

While "Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum," as a line, occasionally has since been used in modern versification, but without any of the Stevenson flavor and seldom with much poetic or dramatic instinct, all authorities appear to be agreed that he evolved the quatrain. This however is not a point at issue here. What seems to be of prime importance to this narrative though, is that Allison, taking this quatrain as a starting point, wrote a wholly modern versification in words and meter so skillfully used as to create not only a vivid atmosphere of piracy and antiquity, but of unskillfulness and coarseness. That is the highest expression of art.

Since *The New York Times Book Review* very unjustly raised a question of the authorship of "Derelict," it has been my privilege to read the really remarkable correspondence that has reached Mr. Allison from men all over the country who have been treasuring newspaper clippings of perverted versions of the poem out of pure admiration for its classical lines and the bold portrayal of a grewsome story. These

letters have increased since *The Scoop* of the Press Club of Chicago printed the correspondence [See "[The Unpublished Letter](#)"] addressed to *The New York Times Book Review*. *The Scoop* continued its interesting discussion of the poem in the issue of October 24, under a caption of "Yo-ho-ho!" and incorporated a communication from "our Bramleykite Pilling" on chanties in general, submitting also a criticism of Allison's sea-faring knowledge of the consistency of mainsails and the size of hawsers. If anything were needed to prove that "Derelict" is not "of the sea," this in itself would be sufficient. *The Scoop* article is worthy of production in toto:

### YO-HO-HO!

In an annoying discussion of Young Allison's "Derelict" and the origin of the chanty beginning "Fifteen men on the Dead Man's Chest," *The New York Times* quotes Robert Louis Stevenson as saying "Treasure Island came out of Kingsley's 'At Last,' where I got 'The Dead Man's Chest.'" That is interesting, and apparently authentic, but it has nothing to do with Allison's poem. The development of that poem, as related by C. I. Hitchcock in *The Scoop* two weeks ago, is as clearly established as the similar process out of which emerged Smith's "Evolution," and is abundantly attested. Allison's chanty is one of the best, if not the very best, in its class, and *The Scoop* is glad to have been given a chance to so accredit it.

Taking up the subject matter, our Bramleykite Pilling, a retired mariner now enjoying his otium cum dignitate at the town of Athol in the state of Massachusetts, writes this letter:

"In the days when sailing ships and sailors were on the deep, chanties were used with every heave or pull.

"Fifteen or twenty men trailing onto a rope, fitting each other like spoons, as the sway-back pull induced whatever was at the other end to give way.

"Nothing ever was broken, as it was seen to that such a possibility did not exist; hence the command 'Break something, break something.'

"A chanty contained one verse or line only, the rest depending on the composition of the man who sang the verse or line. The pull was always at the accent of the chorus, as follows:

"Blow a man down is a blow me down trick.

Blow—Blow—Blow—a man Down.

Blow a man down to the home of old Nick.

Give me some time to blow a man down.'

"The pull being at every other line, there are eight pulls in the above.

"For a quick pulling chanty we often use this one:

"Rendso was no sailor—

Rendso, boys, Rendso,

He shipped on board a whaler—

Rendso, boys, Rendso.'

"What happened to Rendso depended on the imagination of the one who sang the 'coal box'—the line. Here is a heaving chanty, or slow pull:

"To South Australia we're bound to go—

Heave away, heave away.

Let the wind blow high or low—

We're bound to South Australia.

We're going home and don't give a damn—

Heave away, heave away.

For the captain, the mate or any other man—

We're bound to South Australia.'

"'Fifteen men on the dead man's chest' never was used as a chanty. It would require too much bass; but it was used as a drone, which it is. An abstracted man would use a line, or may be, the whole verse, or the first line, used as derision. For illustration:

"When I was last at the Press Club a question pertaining to the sea came up. One man sought the dictionary. To express my contempt I repeated the first line. 'We have no use for the dictionary. To hell with it,' expresses the idea. We sailors have a language of our own. It is ours, it is up to us to put you right when the impossible is said. I quote two such lines:

"'We wrapped 'em all in a mains'l tight

With twice ten turns of the hawser's bight!

"These two lines are part of a poem written by Young Allison as a continuance of the Billy Bones song in *Treasure Island*.

"A mainsail is made of 0, 1 or 2 canvas, which will stand alone; 28 sheet-iron would do as well.

"A hawser, with us, is anything in the shape of a rope which is above six inches circumference. You will note that the bight is used—two parts, or loop. Instead of using the largest rope on board a ship, the smallest—skysail bunt-line—would have been more to the point.

"A sailor would get back at me by saying 'Perhaps she didn't carry skysails.'

"I would reply, 'Suppose the mainsail was as soft as silk and the hawser

as pliable, would you, as a sailor, throw them away on dead men?"

"A mistaken idea exists that Stevenson wrote the Billy Bones song and only used one verse in "Treasure Island." He 'quotes' the only verse there is. We of the sea locate the scene of the verse at Dead Chest Island, half way between the S. W. & S. E. points of Porto Rico, four and one-half miles off shore, which was used as a buccaneer rendezvous, and later as the haven of wreckers and smugglers. It was first named by the Spanish 'Casa de Muertos'—the Coffin.

"While I knew that Stevenson wrote, I did not know him as a writer. I knew him as the grandson and son of men who dared to do, and who achieved in the doing. I also knew him as a man interested in everything pertaining to the sea.

"In fancy, I can see him gazing off to leeward, and hear him drone—as of yore—

"Fifteen men on the dead man's chest."

My personal interest in "Derelict" from its earliest stages has led me to discuss it with many people, some of them A. B.'s, and this is the first criticism I have ever heard of the technic of the words used to convey the picture. I do not mean to say that Bramleykite Filling's points are not well taken, technically, but I do say that qualified sailors, with literary judgment, have been carried over these delinquencies of technic, if that expresses it, by the very vividness but simplicity of the picture, which could not be so were there a false note in either sentiment or portrayal. Thus for this purpose a mainsail is a piece of jute bagging, if you please, or ordinary canvas, and a hawser is a flexible rope.

When *The Scoop* reached my hand with its entertaining and not unjust criticism, I besought Allison for a few lines of comment to add to my collection of "Derelict" treasures. In the same old characteristic way (same old black pencil; same old spongy copy paper) he wrote me the following note with which this volume closes:

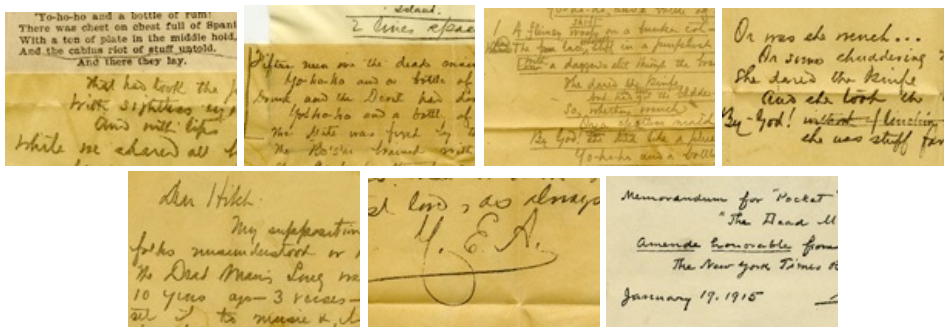
Oct. 26, 1914.

Dear Hitch:

Bramleykite Pilling's comments on "Derelict," from the standpoint of scientific criticism, seem to me to be beyond any sort of reproach. He is evidently an actual, real water sailor who learned his nautics within the smell of bilgewater and the open sea. My own education as an able seaman was gained from years of youthful deep study of dime-novel sea yarns by Ned Buntline, Fenimore Cooper, Sylvanus Cobb, Jr., Billy Bowline, and other masters of the sea in libraries. I have, however, made two ocean trips from Norfolk to New York, time 23 hours. On both occasions I went sound asleep at the end of the first hour and woke up at the end of twenty-third hour. Under such circumstances I may have missed many important details of realism. I have also visited often the tomb of that fine old patriot-pirate and ex-Alderman, Dominique You, in the old French cemetery at New Orleans. As chief gunner for Jean Lafitte, he was some pirate; as chief artilleryman for Gen. Andrew Jackson at the battle of New Orleans, he was some patriot. I feel stronger in my piracy than in my seamanship. I love criticism—especially of poetry. If there is a single verse, or, mayhap, one line, of "Derelict" that will hold, without leaking, anything of a specific gravity heavier than moonshine, it would surprise me. But it *seems* to, when it is adopted as a "real chanty"—and that's the test, that it "seems."

Y. E. A.

## The Pocket



## Transcriber's Notes

The music for *A Piratical Ballad* has been transcribed into a *Finale* music file (.mus file), a .pdf file, and a .midi file.

The chapter title "The Pocket" was added by the transcriber.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE DEAD MEN'S SONG \*\*\*

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