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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK RHYMES OF THE EAST AND RE-  
COLLECTED VERSES \*\*\*

# Rhymes of the East

AND

# Re-collected Verses

BY D U M-D U M

AUTHOR OF  
'AT ODD MOMENTS'  
'IN THE HILLS'

LONDON

ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE

AND COMPANY, LTD.

1905

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TO

MY MOTHER

---

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

Nearly all the verses that now make their first appearance in book form are reprinted from *Punch*, by kind permission of Messrs. Bradbury and Agnew. The rest I have taken from two little books that were published in Bombay during my last (and, I suppose, final) tour of service in India. They contained a good deal of work that was too local or topical in interest to stand

reproduction, and—especially the elder, which is out of print—some that I would sooner bury than perpetuate. The rest I have overhauled, and included in this re-collection.

Readers in, or of, India have been kind enough to regard my previous efforts with favour. I hope that this little volume will find them no less benevolently disposed, and that at the same time it may not be without interest to those whose knowledge of the Shiny East is derived from hearsay.

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## NOCTURNE WRITTEN IN AN INDIAN GARDEN

[1]

'Where ignorance is bliss,  
'Tis folly to be wise.'

The time-gun rolls his nerve-destroying bray;  
The toiling moon rides slowly o'er the trees;  
The weary diners cast their cares away,  
And seek the lawn for coolness and for ease.

Now spreads the gathering stillness like a pall,  
And melancholy silence rules the scene,  
Save where the bugler sounds his homing call,

And thirsty THOMAS leaves the wet canteen;

Save that from yonder lines in deepest gloom  
Th' ambiguous mule does of the stick<sup>[1]</sup> bewail,  
Whose *dunder* craft forbids him to consume  
His proper blanket, or his neighbour's tail.

[1] The *dunder-stick*—an ingenious instrument devised to defeat this extraordinary appetite.

[2]

Beneath those jagged tiles, that low-built roof  
(Whose inmost secret deeps let none divine!),  
Each to his master's cry supremely proof,  
The Aryan Brothers of our household dine.

Let not Presumption mock their joyless pile,—  
The cold boiled rice, in native butter greased;  
Nor scorn, with rising gorge and painful smile,  
The cheap but filling flapjacks of the East.

Full many a gem of highest Art-cuisine  
Those dark unfathomed dogmatists eschew;  
Full many a 'dish to set before the Queen'  
Would waste its sweetness on the mild Hindoo.

Nor you, their lords, expect of these the toil,  
When o'er their minds a soft oblivion steals,  
And through the long-drawn hookah's pliant coil  
They soothe their senses, and digest their meals.

For Knowledge to their ears her ample store,  
Rich with the latest news, does then impart,  
Whose source, when known, shall chill you to the core,  
And freeze the genial cockles of the heart.

[3]

For once, to dumb Neglectfulness a prey,  
Resentment led me undetected near,  
To know the reason of this cool delay,  
And teach my trusty pluralist to hear.

There to my vassals' ruminating throng  
Some total stranger, seated on a pail,  
Perused, translating as he went along,  
My private letters by the current mail.

One moment, horror baulked my strong intent;  
Next o'er the compound wall we saw him go,  
While uncouth moan, with hapless gesture blent,  
Deplored the pressing tribute of the toe.

#### THE MORAL

To you, fresh youths, with round unblushing cheeks,  
Some moral tag this closing verse applies;  
E'en from the old the voice of Wisdom speaks—  
Even the youngest are not always wise!

[4]

No further seek to probe the Best Unknown,  
From Exploration's curious arts refrain;  
Lest Melancholy mark you for her own,  
And you should learn—nor ever smile again.

---

## TO HIS PECULIAR FRIEND WITHIN-DOORS

[5]

*After R. H.*

A strong discomfort in the dress  
Dwindling the clothes to nothingness  
Saving, for due decorum placed,  
A huckaback about the waist,  
Or wanton towel-et, whose touch  
Haply may spare to chafe o'ermuch:  
A languid frame, from head to feet

Prankt in the arduous prickle-heat:  
An erring fly, that here and there  
Enwraths the crimsoned sufferèr:  
An upward toe, whose skill enjoys  
The slipper's curious equipoise:  
A punkah wantoning, whereby  
Papers do flow confoundedly:  
By such comportment, and th' offence  
Of thy fantastic eloquence,  
Dost thou, my WILLIAM, make it known  
That thou art warm, and best alone.

---

## VALEDICTION

[6]

### TO THE SS. 'ARABIA,' WHEN RETURNING WITH HER PASSENGERS FROM THE DELHI DURBAR

Now the busy screw is churning,  
Now the horrid sirens blow;  
Now are India's guests returning  
Home from India's Greatest Show;  
Now the gleeful Asiatic  
Speeds them on their wild career,  
And, though normally phlegmatic,  
Gives a half-unconscious cheer.

India's years were years of leanness,  
Till the Late Performance drew  
These, whose confidential greenness  
She has run for all she knew.  
Gladly rose the land to bid them  
Welcome for a fleeting spell—  
Nobly took them in and did them—  
And has done extremely well.

Peace be theirs, important Packet,  
Genial skies and happy calms—  
No derogatory racket,  
No humiliating qualms!  
Gales, I charge you, shun to rouse and  
Lash the seas to angry foam,  
While Britannia's Great Ten Thousand  
Sweep, with huge enjoyment, home!

[7]

Let the spiced and salty zephyr  
Build them up in frame and mind,  
Till they feel as fresh and effer-  
vescent as their hearts are kind,  
And in triumph close their Indian  
Tour on far Massilia's quay,  
Never having known too windy an  
Offing, too disturbed a sea.

So, when English snows are falling,  
When the fogs are growing dense,  
They shall hear the East a-calling,  
And shall come, and blow expense.  
Every year shall bring his Argo;  
Every year a grateful East  
Shall receive her golden Cargo,  
And restore the Gilded—Fleeced!

---

## A SOLDIER OF WEIGHT

[8]

In the dim and distant ages, in the half-forgotten days,  
Ere the East became the fashion and an Indian tour the craze,  
Lived a certain Major-General, renowned throughout the State  
As a soldier of distinction and considerable weight.

But though weightiness of mind is an invaluable trait,  
When applied to adiposity it's all the other way;  
And our hero was confronted with an ever-growing lack  
Of the necessary charger and the hygienic hack.

[9]

He had bought them by the dozen, he had tried them by the score,  
But not one of them was equal to the burden that he bore;  
They were conscious of the honour, they were sound in wind and limb,  
They could carry a cathedral, but they drew the line at *him*.

But he stuck to it, till finally his pressing needs were filled  
By the mammoth of his species, a Leviathan in build,  
A superb upstanding brown, of unexceptionable bone,  
And phenomenally qualified to carry twenty stone.

And the General was happy; for the noble creature showed  
An unruffled acquiescence with the nature of his load;  
Till without the slightest warning, that superb upstanding brown  
Thought it time to make a protest, which he did by lying down.

[10]

They appealed to him, reproached him, gave him sugar, cut his feed,  
But in vain; for almost daily that inexorable steed,  
When he heard his master coming, looked insultingly around,  
And with cool deliberation laid him down upon the ground.

But they fought it out between them, till the undefeated brute  
Made a humorous obeisance at the General Salute!  
Then his owner kicked him wildly in the stomach for his pranks,  
Said he'd stand the beast no longer, and returned him to the ranks.

*(An interval of about three years.)*

[11]

Time has dulled our hero's anguish; time has raised our man of weight  
To an even higher office in the service of the State;  
And we find him at his yearly tour, inspecting at his ease  
A distinguished corps of cavalry, the Someone's Own D. G.'s.

And our fat but famous man of war, accoutred to the nines,  
Was engaged in making rude remarks, and going round the lines,  
When he suddenly beheld across an intervening space  
A Leviathan of horseflesh, the Behemoth of his race.

'Colonel Robinson,' he shouted, with enthusiastic force,  
'A remarkably fine horse, sir!' The remarkably fine horse  
Gave a reminiscent shudder, looked insultingly around,  
And with cold deliberation laid him down upon the ground!

---

## ODE TO THE TIME-GUN OF GURRUMBAD

[12]

[Time-guns are of invariable pattern and extreme antiquity. Other species come and go; their ancestor remains always. One is to be found in each cantonment: he generally occupies a position of unsheltered and pathetic loneliness in a corner of the local parade-ground. The writer has never seen one herded in the Gun-park with his kind.]

Strong scion of the sturdy past  
When simpler methods ruled the fray,  
At whose demoralising blast  
The stoutest foe recoiled aghast,  
How fall'n art thou to-day!

Thy power the little children mock;  
Thy voice, that shook the serried line,  
But supplements the morning cock  
At—roughly speaking—one o'clock,  
And—broadly—half-past nine.

[13]

(Saving when THOMAS' deep employ  
Th' attendant closing hour postpones,  
And he, the undefeated boy,  
To gain a temporary joy,  
Hath stuffed thee up with stones.)

Thy kindred of a mushroom 'Mark,'  
Young guns, intolerably spruce,  
Have cast thee from the social 'park';  
Which, to their humbled patriarch,  
Must be the very deuce.

Their little toils with leisure crowned,  
They, in their turn, will seek the Vale  
Of Rest that thou hast never found;  
What wonder if thy daily Round  
Is very like a Wail?

Yet many love thee. Though his clutch  
Be heavy, Time doth still afford  
That fine consolatory touch—  
It hardly seems to go for much,  
But cannot be ignored.

For him that braves the midday fare  
Thou hast the immemorial task  
Of booming forth at one—or there-  
abouts—which saves the wear and tear  
Of yelling out to ask.

So, when athwart the glooming flats  
Thy hoarse, nocturnal whispers stray—  
Much to the horror of the bats—  
We're one day nearer home, and that's  
A comfort, anyway!

Then courage! Guns may come and go,  
But him alone we hold divine  
Whose task it is to let us know  
The hours of one o'clock—or so—  
And—roundly—half-past nine.

[14]

---

## OMAR OUT OF DATE

[15]

### BY A RENEGADE DISCIPLE

Wake! for Reveillée scatters into flight  
The flagging Rearguard of a ruined Night,  
And hark! the meagre Champion of the Roost  
Has flung a matins to the Throne of Light.

Here, while the first beam smites the sullen Sky,  
With silent feet Hajâm comes stealing nigh,  
Bearing the Brush, the Vessel, and the Blade,  
These sallow cheeks of mine to scarify.

How often, oh, how often have I sworn  
Myself myself to shave th' ensuing Morn!  
And then—and then comes Guest-night, and Hajâm  
Appears unbidden, and is gladly borne.

Come, fill the Cup! The nerve-restoring Ti  
Shall woo me with the Leaf of far Bohi;  
What matter that to some the Koko makes  
Appeal, to some the Cingalese Kofi?

[16]

For in a minute Toil, that ever thrives,  
Awaits me with her Shackles and her Gyves,  
And ever crieth Folly in the streets:  
'To work! for needs ye must when Shaitân drives.'

Alas! that I did yesternight disport  
With certain fellows of the baser Sort,  
Unheedful of the living consequence  
When Drinks are long, and Pockets all too short!

With them the game of Poka did I play,  
And in wild session turned the Night to Day;  
And many a Chip I dropped upon the Board,

And many a Moistener poured upon the Clay.

[17]

I put my Pile against th' Improbable,  
And with a Full Hand thought to make it swell;  
    And this was all the Profit that I reaped:  
A Full of Kings is Heaven—and Fours are Hell!

Then to the Mountain Dew I turned to seek  
    New courage for the Vengeance I should wreak;  
And once again came Fours, again the Flesh  
Was willing, and the Spirits far from weak.

---

*O Friend of pseudo-philosophic Calm,  
Who found within the Cup a life's Aram,  
    Thy counsel, howsoever fair to read,  
Were passing bad to follow, friend Khayyam!*

*Was it not Suleiman the Wise that said:  
Look not upon the Wine when it is red?  
    And Suleiman the Wise knew What was Which,  
Though that great Heart of his outmatched his Head!*

---

Ah! with the Pledge a Door of Refuge ope  
To wean my footsteps from the facile Slope,  
    And write me down, fulfilled of Self-esteem,  
A Prop and Pillar of the Band of Hope;

[18]

That in the Club, should whilom Comrades try  
To lure me to a Roister on the sly,  
    The necessary Zeal I may not lack  
To turn away, nor wink the Other Eye!

---

## ODE

[19]

### ON A DISTANT PROSPECT OF EVER GETTING TO THE HILLS

*After T. G.*

Ye distant Hills, ye smiling glades,  
    In decent foliage drest,  
Where green Sylvanus proudly shades  
    The Sirkar's haughty crest,  
And ye, that in your wider reign  
Like bold adventurers disdain  
    The limit set for common clay,  
Whose luck, whose pen, whose power of song,  
Distinguish from the vulgar throng  
    To walk the flowery way:

Ah happy Hills! Ah genial sky!  
    Ah Goal where all would end!  
Where once, and only once, did I  
    Go largely on the bend;  
E'en now the tales that from ye flow  
A fragmentary bliss bestow,  
    Till, once again a dædal boy,  
In dreaming dimly of the first  
I seem to take a second burst,  
    And snatch a tearful joy.

[20]

But tell me, Jakko, dost thou see  
    The same old sprightly crew  
Disport with unembarrassed glee,  
    As we were wont to do?  
What youth, in brazen armour cased,  
With pliant arm the yielding waist  
    To arduous dalliance ensnares?

Who, foremost of his peers, exalts  
The labours of the devious waltz  
By sitting out the squares?

Does Prudence, gentle Matron, force  
On Folly in her 'teens  
The value of a stalking-horse  
When hunting Rank and Means?  
And is the Summer Widow's mind  
Aggrieved and horrified to find  
That, as her male acquaintance grows,  
Her female circle pass her by  
With Innuendo's outraged eye,  
And Virtue's injured nose?

[21]

Lo, in the Vale of Tears beneath  
A grilling troop is seen  
Whom Failure gnaws with rankling teeth,  
While Envy turns them green.  
This racks the head, that scars the pelt,  
These bore beneath the ample belt,  
Those in the deeper vitals burn:  
Lo, Want of Leave, to fill the cup,  
Hath drunken all our juices up,  
And topped the whole concern.

To each his billet; some succeed,  
And some are left to groan;  
The latter serve their country's need,  
The former serve their own.  
Then let the maiden try her wing,  
The youth enjoy his roomy fling,  
The Single Matron dry her eyes!  
As Fate is blind, and Life is short,  
If Ignorance can give them sport,  
'Twere folly to be wise.

---

## A SOMBRE RETROSPECT

[22]

Long, long ago, in that heroic time  
When I, a coy and modest youth, was shot  
Out on this dust-heap of careers and crime  
To try and learn what's what,

I had a servitor, a swarthy knave,  
Who showed an almost irreligious taste  
For wearing nothing but a turban, save  
A rag about the waist.

This apparition gave me such a start,  
That I endowed him with a cast-off pair  
Of inexpressibles, and said, 'Depart,  
And be no longer bare.'

He took the offering with broken thanks;  
But day succeeded day, and still revealed  
Those sombre and attenuated shanks  
Intensely unconcealed;

[23]

Until at last the climax came when I  
Resolved to bring this matter to an end,  
And when I saw him passing, shouted, 'Hi!  
Where are your trousers, friend?'

Halting, he gave a deferential bow;  
Then, to my horror, beamingly replied,  
'Master not see? I wearing trousers *now!*'  
I would have said he lied,

But could not. As I shaped the glowing phrase,  
I looked upon his turban—looked again—  
Mine own familiar pattern met my gaze,  
And all the truth was plain!



Th' unhappy creature, Eastern to the core,  
Holding my gift in superstitious dread,  
Had made a turban out of it, and wore  
His trousers—*on his head!*

---

## TO MANDALAY—GREETING

[24]

(BY WALT YARD WHIPMING)

I

A song of Mandalay!  
Allons, Camerados, Desperadoes, Amontillados!  
Hear my Recitative, my Romanza, my Spring Onion!

II

You three-striped sergeants, you corporals, non-commissioned officers, and  
men with one or more good-conduct badges,  
You indifferent and bad characters, am I not also one with you?  
And will you not then hear my song?  
This for prelude.

III

You, O Mandalay, I sing!  
For I see the pagoda, the Moulmein and essentially wotto pagoda,  
And the pagoda is above the trees,  
But the trees are below the pagoda.

[25]

IV

I see the flying-fish sitting on the branches, I hear them sing, and they fly and  
mate and build their nests in the branches;  
I see a dun-coloured aboriginal she-female, mongolianée, petite, squat-faced,  
And she has a cast in her sinister optic and a snub nose but her heart is true;  
And I gaze into her heart (which is true), and I find that she is musing (as  
indeed I often muse) on ME,  
Me Prononcè, Me Imperturbe, Me Inconscionabilamente.

V

I see [*a page or so unavoidably omitted for lack of space,—refer to guide-  
book*] and ... the wind, and the palm-trees idly swaying to and fro in the  
wind (now to, now fro), and I hear the bells of a temple, and I know that  
they are singing, and what it is that they would say.

[26]

VI

What is it that they would say do you ask Me?

VII

How shall I tell you, how shall I make you understand?  
For I know that you do not love Me, you do not comprehend Me, you say that  
this sort of thing does you harm;  
But I will even now do my darndest (as indeed I always do more or less), and  
if you do not like it,  
Waal, Soldados?

VIII

Behold, I will write it as a song and put it in italics, so that even *you* will know  
that it *is* a song;  
So listen, listen, Camerados! for I am about to spout and my song shall be  
masculine and virile. *A bas* your metre, *à la lanterne* your rhyme,  
*conspuez* your punctuation,  
I say pooh-pooh!

---

*Allons! Allons! Tra-la-la! Hear my Bellata!  
Why do you not return to Mandalay O soldier?  
Do you not remember the boats, and the paddles as they chunked outside the  
boats?  
Do you not remember the elephants, the mighty elephants, strong,  
mysterious, impalpable (no, not impalpable), pachydermatous, and the  
extraordinary accuracy with which they succeeded in balancing trees or  
parts of trees, branches, logs, beams, planks, ... etc., ... with their  
trunks (the beams carefully supported at their centre of gravity, the  
logs carefully supported at their centre of gravity, the elephants without  
a smile at their centre of gravity)  
From Rangoon to Mandalay?*

[28]

*For—*

*On the road to Mandalay the flying-fishes play,  
But there are no omnibuses to ply.  
Is there not a thirst here, and are there any ten commandments?  
O you commandments! you first, second, third ... and tenth commandments!  
What has Mandalay to do with you, and what have you to do with  
Mandalay?*

*Ha! What is that?*

*Is it a sound, is it the thunder, the sudden thunder, strepitant, tonant?  
Is it the midday (twelve o'clock) cannon?*

*No!*

*Is it not then the ocean, the storm of the ocean?*

*Divil a bit!*

*Return, return then O soldiers,  
Return, you that have been discharged with pensions, as time-expired men, or  
as incorrigible and worthless,  
Return, for it is the dawn, and it is calling to you as it comes up from China,  
Though why from China do you ask me?  
Then ask me another!*

[29]

---

## **A BALLAD OF BUTTONRY**

[30]

*Clothes and the Man I sing. Reformers, note  
These of the Subaltern who owned a Coat.*

He was what veterans miscall, for short,  
By that objectionable term, a wart:[2]

The Coat an item of the 'sealed' attire  
Wrung from his helpless but reluctant sire;

Also the tails were long; and, for the pride  
Thereof, were buttons on the after-side;

Majestic orbs, whose gilded obverse bore  
The bossy symbol of his future corps.

The youth, ere sailing for a distant land,  
Did, in the interval, receive command

[2] A last-joined young officer.—*Military Definitions.*

[31]

To join a 'Course,' where men of grave repute  
Instruct the young idea how to shoot.

Thither he sped, and on the opening day  
Rose, and, empanoplied in brave array,

(Ample of flowing skirt, and with great craft  
And pomp of blazoned buttonry abaft)

Won to the mess, and preened his fledgling plumes  
Both in the breakfast and the ante-rooms.

Awhile he moved in rapture, and awhile  
Thrilled in the old, inevitable style

To that stern joy which youthful warriors feel  
In wearing garments worthy of their zeal;

Then came the seneschal upon the scenes,  
And knocked his infant pride to smithereens.

For out, alack! the Fathers of the mess  
Strictly prohibited that form of dress,

Being by sad experience led to find  
Disaster in the buttonry behind,

Which tore and scratched the leather-cushioned chairs,  
And cost a perfect fortune in repairs!

It was a crushing blow. That Subaltern  
Discovered that he had a lot to learn;

Removed his Coat, and laid it, weeping, in  
Its long sarcophagus of beaten tin:

Buried it deep, and drew it thence no more;  
Finished his Course, and sought an alien shore.

[32]

---

So runs the tale. I had it from the youth  
Himself, and I suppose he told the truth.

(The words alone are mine; I need but hint  
That his were too emotional for print.)

And as in India, though the chairs are hard,  
His Coat—delicious irony—is barred;

Being designed for cooler zones, and not  
For one inadequately known as 'hot';

And, furthermore, as bold Sir Fashion brings  
Changes, yea, even to the soldier's things:

He questions if the Coat were worth the price,  
Seeing that he will hardly wear it twice.

[33]

---

## THE IRON HAND

[34]

'The Government of India *has been pleased* to sanction the infliction of a fine of ...,  
etc.'

To him that reads with careless eyes  
My present theme affords  
But little scope for enterprise  
In buttering one's lords:  
Fines, he would urge, have always bulked  
Largely to Those that rule,  
For, plainly, every man They mulct  
Contributes to the pool.

But when in ages dead and gone  
Our fathers fought with Sin,  
However hard they laid it on,  
They didn't rub it in;  
While These not only bring to bear  
Their dark prerogatives,  
But diabolically air  
The pleasure that it gives!

Here is the Iron Hand that builds  
Our realms beyond the sea;  
No *suaviter in modo* gilds  
Their *fortiter in re*;

[35]

Here is no washy velvet glove  
To pad the Fist of Fear—  
None of your guiding charms of Love—  
None of your hogwash here!

No. From Their thrones amid the stars  
They glower athwart the land  
Implacable, with 'eye like Mars  
To threaten and command.'  
Too cold, too truculent, to stay  
The awful bolt They fling,  
They make no bones about it—They  
Are *pleased* to do this thing!

[36]

Blind to the victim's mask of woe,  
Deaf to his poignant howls,  
No pity stirs Their bosoms, no  
Reluctance wrings Their bow'ls!  
By prompt and ready cash alone  
Their wrath shall be appeased  
Who pile it on like gods, and own,  
Like men, to being pleased.

---

## THE WOONIN' O' TUMMAS

[37]

*After R. B.*

Tummas Katt cam' roun' to woo,  
Ha, ha, the woonin' o't;  
Lichtly sang ta lang nicht thro',  
Ha, ha, the mewin' o't;  
Tabbie, winsome, tim'rous beast,  
Speakit: 'Tummas, hand tha' weist!  
Girt auld Tummas 'gan inseest;  
Ha, ha, the doin' o't!

Tabbie laucht, an' brawly fleired,  
Ha, ha, the fleirin' o't;  
Tummas,—ech! but Tummas speired  
Ha, ha, the speirin' o't;  
Sic an awesome, fearfu' screeep,  
Wakin' a' aroun' frae sleep;  
Fegs, it gar'd the Gudeman weep!  
Ha, ha, the hearin' o't!

[38]

Quoth the Gudeman: 'Dairm his een!'  
Ha, ha, the swearin' o't;  
'Muckle fasht was I yestreen,  
A' thro' the bearin' o't!  
Ere the sonsie moon was bricht,  
Clean awa' till mornin' licht,  
Mickle sleep was mine the nicht;  
Ha, ha, the wearin' o't!

'Where are noo ma booties twa?  
Ha, ha, the stoppin' o't;  
'Tis mysel' shall gar him fa';  
Ha, ha, the coppin' o't!  
'Gin a bootie, strang an' stoot,  
Sneckit Tummas roun' ta snoot,  
Winna Tummas gang frae oot?  
Ha, ha, the droppin' o't!

Swift the pawky booties came,  
Ha, ha, the flittin' o't:  
Tummas scraught, an' lit for hame,  
Ha, ha, the spittin' o't;  
Lauchit Tabbs to see him fa';  
Leapit frae ta gairden wa';  
Quoth the Gudeman: 'Dairm it a!'  
What price the hittin' o't?'

[39]

Christmas comes but once a year.  
 Though by nature snappy,  
 Let us, as we may, appear  
 Merry, friend, and happy!  
 Buckle to; and when you meet your  
 Thunderstricken fellow-creature,  
 Show the broad, indulgent smile  
 Of th' ingenuous crocodile!  
 Look as if you'd backed a winner!  
 Laugh, you miserable sinner!

Brother, Christmas Day has come.  
 Can't you seek for inspi-  
 ration in the turkey, plum-  
 pudding, beef, and mince-pie?  
 Brave it out, and tho' you sit on  
 Tenterhooks, remain a Briton;  
 You can only do your best;  
 Boxing Day's a day of rest!  
 Throw aside your small digestive  
 Eccentricities. Be festive!

[41]

Christmas Day is on the wing.  
 Are you feeling wroth with  
 Any one for anything?  
 Beg his pardon *forthwith*!  
 Though the right is all on *your* side,  
 Say it isn't; say 'Of course I'd  
 No intention—very rude—  
 Shocking taste—but misconstrued'—  
 Then (while I admit it's horri-  
 fying) tell the man you're sorry!

Christmas Day will soon have flown.  
 If, despite persuasion,  
 You resolve to be alone  
 On the glad occasion,  
 Better (do as I have done!)  
 Vanish with a scatter-gun;  
 If you have to see it through,  
 (Better do what I shall do!)  
 Dining quietly at the Club'll  
 Save us from a world of trouble!

[42]

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**'KAL!'**

[43]

**(=TO-MORROW)**

['Never do To-day what can be postponed till To-morrow, save at the dictates of your personal convenience.'—*Maxims of the Wicked*, No. 3.]

Sweet Word, by whose unwearying assistance  
 We of the Ruling Race, when sorely tried,  
 Can keep intrusive persons at a distance,  
 And let unseasonable matters slide;  
 Thou at whose blast the powers of irritation  
 Yield to a soft and gentlemanly lull  
 Of solid peace and flat Procrastination,  
 These to thy praise and honour, good old Kal!

For we are greatly plagued by sacrilegious  
 Monsters in human form, who care for naught  
 Save with incessant papers to besiege us,  
 E'en to the solemn hour of silent thought;  
 They draw no line; the frightful joy of giving  
 Pain is their guerdon; but for Thee alone,  
 Life would be hardly worth the bore of living,  
 No one could call his very soul his own.

[44]

But in thy Name th' importunate besetter

Meets a repelling force that none can stem;  
Varlets may come (they do) and go (they'd better!),  
Kal is the word that always does for them!  
*To-morrow* they may join the usual muster;  
To-day shall pass inviolably by;  
BEELZEBUB Himself, for all his bluster,  
Would get the same old sickening reply.

And, for thine aid in baffling the malignant,  
Who, with unholy art, conspire to see  
Our ease dis-eased, our dignity indignant,  
We do Thee homage on the bended knee.  
And I would add a word of common gratitude [45]  
To those thy coadjutors, *ao* and *lao*, [3]  
Who take, with Thee, th' uncompromising attitude  
From which the dullest mind deduces *jao*.

[3] *Kal-ao*='return to-morrow'; *kal-lao*='bring it back to-morrow.' Each of these phrases is the euphemistic equivalent of *jao*, that is, 'go away, (and stay there).'

---

## TO AN ELEPHANT [46]

### ON HIS TONIC QUALITIES

Solace of mine hours of anguish,  
Peace-imparting View, when I,  
Sick of Hindo-Sturm-und-Drang, wish  
I could lay me down and die,

Very present help in trouble,  
Never-failing anodyne  
For the blows that knock us double,  
Here's towards thee, Hathi mine!

As, 'tis said, the dolorous Jack Tar  
Turns to view the watery Vast,  
When he mourns his frail charàc-tar,  
Or deplores his jagged Past,

Climbs a cliff, and breathes his sighs on [47]  
That appalling breast until,  
Borne from off the far horizon,  
Voices whisper, 'Cheer up, Bill!'

So when evil chance or dark as-  
persions crush the bosom's lord,  
When discomfort rends the car-cass,  
When we're sorry, sick, or bored,

When the year is at its hottest,  
And our life with sorrow crowned,  
Gazing thee-wards, where thou blottest  
Out the landscape, pulls us round,

Gives us peace, some nameless modi-  
cum of cheer to mind and eye:  
Something that can soothe a body  
Like a blessed lullaby.

Sweet it is to watch thee, Hathi,  
Through the stertorous afternoons,  
Wond'ring why so stout a party  
Wears such baggy pantaloons: [48]

Sweet, again, to steal a-nigh and  
Watch thee, ere thy meals begin,  
Deftly weigh th' unleavened viand,  
Lest thou be deceived therein:

Sweet to mark thee gravely dining:  
Grand, when day has nearly gone,  
'Tis to view yon Orb declining

Down behind thee, broadside on:

Ay! and when thy vassals tub thee,  
And thou writhest 'neath the brick  
Wherewithal they take and scrub thee,  
'Twere a sight to heal the sick!

Not a pose but serves to ward off  
Pangs that had of yore prevailed;  
E'en the stab of being scored off  
Owns the charm, old Double-Tailed!

But, O Thou that giv'st the flabby  
Strength, and stingo'st up the weak:-  
Restful as a grand old Abbey—  
Bracing as a Mountain Peak:—

[49]

All the bonds of Age were slackened,  
And my years were out of sight,  
When I burst upon thy back end  
As thou kneeled'st yesternight!

Head and frame were hidden. Only  
Loomed a black, colossal Seat,  
Taut, magnificent, and lonely,  
O'er a pair of suppliant feet

To th' astounded mind conveying  
Dreams from which my manhood shrank,  
Of a very fat man praying,  
Whom a boy would love to spank.

And I felt my fingers twitching,  
And my sinews turned to wire,  
And my palm was itching, itching,  
With the old, unhallowed fire.

While the twofold voice within me  
Urged their long-forgotten feud,  
One to do thee shame would win me,—  
One that whispered, 'Don't be rude!'

[50]

Till, by heaven! thy pleading beauty  
Drove those carnal thoughts away,  
And the friend that came to scruti-  
nise was left behind to pray:—

For I shamed thee not, nor spanked thee;  
But to rearward, on the plain,  
Hathi, on my knees I thanked thee  
That I felt a boy again!

---

## VISIONARY

[51]

### ON THE ADVANTAGES OF AN 'ASTRAL BODY'

It is told, in Buddhi-theosophic Schools  
There are rules  
By observing which when mundane matter irks,  
Or the world has gone amiss, you  
Can incontinently issue  
From the circumscribing tissue  
Of your Works.

That the body and the gentleman inside  
Can divide,  
And the latter, if acquainted with the plan,  
Can alleviate the tension  
By remaining 'in suspension'  
As a kind of fourth dimension  
Bogie man.

And to such as mourn an Indian Solar Crime

[52]

At its prime,  
'Twere a stratagem so luminously fit,  
That tho' doctrinaires deny it,  
And Academicians guy it,  
I, for one, would like to try it  
For a bit.

Just to leave one's earthly tenement asleep  
In a heap,  
And detachedly to watch it as it lies,  
With an epidermis pickled  
Where the prickly heat has prickled,  
And a sense of being tickled  
By the flies.

And to sit and loaf and idle till the day  
Dies away,  
In a duplicate ethereally cool,  
Or around the place to potter,  
(Tho' the flesh could hardly totter,)  
As contented as an otter  
In a pool!

'Let the pestilent mosquito do his worst  
Till he burst,  
Let him bore and burrow, morning, noon, and night,  
If he finds the diet sweet, oh,  
Who am *I* to place a veto  
On the pestilent mosquito?—  
*Let him bite!*'

O my cumbersome misfit of bone and skin,  
Could I win  
To the wisdom that would render me exempt  
From the grosser bonds that tether  
You and Astral Me together,  
I should simply treat the weather  
With contempt;

I should contemplate its horrors with entire  
Lack of ire,  
And pursuant to my comfortable aim,  
With a snap at every shackle  
I should quit my tabernacle,  
And serenely sit and cackle  
At the game!

But, alas! the 'mystic glory swims away,'  
And the clay  
Is as vulgarly persistent as of yore,  
And the cuticle is pickled  
Where the prickly heat has prickled,  
And the nose and ears are tickled  
As before;

And until the Buddhi-theosophic Schools  
Print the rules  
That will bring our tale of sorrows to a close,  
Body mine, though others chide thee,  
And consistently deride thee,  
I shall have to stay inside thee,  
I suppose!

---

## SUMMER PORTENTS

Come, let us quaff the brimming cup  
Of sorrow, bitterness, and pain;  
For clearly, things are warming up  
Again.

Observe with what awakened powers  
The vulgar Sun resumes the right  
Of rising in the hallowed hours

[53]

[54]

[55]



Of night.

Bound to the village water-wheel,  
The motive bullock bows his crest,  
And signals forth a mute appeal  
For rest.

His neck is galled beneath the yoke:  
His patient eyes are very dim:  
Life is a dismal sort of joke  
To *him*.

Yet one there is, to whom the ox  
Is kin; who knows, as habitat,  
The cold, unsympathetic box,  
Or mat;

Who urges on, with wearied arms,  
The punkah's rhythmic, laboured sweep,  
Nor dares to contemplate the charms  
Of sleep.

Now 'mid a host of lesser things  
That pasture through the heaving nights,  
The sharp mosquito flaps his wings,  
And bites;

With other Anthropophagi,  
Such as that microscopic brand  
The common Sand-fly (or the fly  
Of sand),

Who, with a hideous lust uncurbed  
By clappings of the frequent palm,  
Devours one's ankles, undisturbed,  
And calm.

The scorpion nips one unaware:  
The lizard flops upon the head:  
And cobras, uninvited, share  
One's bed.

Oh, if I only had the luck  
To feel the grand Olympic fire  
That thrilled the Greater when they struck  
The lyre!

When Homer wrote of this and that:  
When Dante sang like one possessed:  
When Milton groaned and laboured at  
His Best!

Had I the swelling rise and fall,  
Whereof the Bo'sun's quivering moan  
Derives a breezy fragrance all  
Its own:

Oh, I would pour such passion out—  
Good gracious me!—I would so sing  
That you should know the *facts* about  
This thing!

Then w-w-wake, my Lyre! O halting lilt!  
O miserable, broken lay!  
It may not be: I am not built  
That way.

Yet other gifts the gods bestow.  
I do not weep, I do not grieve.  
Far from it. I shall simply go  
On leave.

[56]

[57]

[58]

From the dust, and the drought, and the heat,  
I am borne on the pinions of leave,  
From the things that are bad to repeat  
To the things that are good to receive.

From the glare of the day at its height  
On a land that was blinding to see,  
From the wearisome hiss of the night,  
By a turn of the wheel I am free.

I have passed to the heart of the Hills,  
For a season of halcyon hours,  
'Mid the music of murmurous rills,  
And the delicate odours of flowers;

[60]

And I walk in an exquisite shade,  
Where the fern-tasselled boughs interlace;  
And the verdurous fringe of the glade  
Is a marvel of fairylike grace;

And with never an aim or a plan  
I can wander in uttermost ease,  
Where the only reminders of Man  
Are the monkeys aloft in the trees;

Or, perchance, on the 'silvery mere,'  
In a 'shallop' I lazily float,  
With—it's possible—some one to steer,  
Or with no one (which lightens the boat).

O the glorious gift of release  
From the chains that encircle the thrall,  
To be quiet, and cool, and at peace,  
And to loaf, and do nothing at all!

I am clear of that infamous lark;  
I am far from the blare of the Band;  
And the bugles are silent, the bark  
Of the Colonel is hushed in the land.

[61]

And—I say it again—I am free,  
In the valleys of wandering bliss;  
And most gratefully 'own, if there *be*  
An Elysium on earth, it is this!

---

## TO MY LADY OF THE HILLS

[62]

'... O she,  
To me myself, for some three careless moons,  
The summer pilot of an empty heart  
Unto the shores of Nothing.'—*Tennyson*.

'Tis the hour when golden slumbers  
Through th' Hesperian portals creep,  
And the youth who lisps in numbers  
Dreams of novel rhymes to 'sleep';  
*I* shall merely note, at starting,  
That responsive Nature thrills  
To the *twilight* hour of parting  
From my Lady of the Hills.

Lady, 'neath the deepening umbrage  
We have wandered near and far,  
To the ludicrously dumb rage  
Of your truculent Mamma;  
We have urged the long-tailed gallop;  
Lightly danced the still night through;  
Smacked the ball, and oared the shallop  
(In a vis-à-vis canoe);

[63]

We have walked this fair Oasis,  
Keeping, more by skill than chance,  
To the non-committal basis  
Of indefinite romance;

Till, as love within me ripened,  
I have wept the hours away,  
Brooding on my meagre stipend,  
Mourning mine exiguous pay.

Dear, 'tis hard, indeed, to stifle  
Fervour such as mine has grown,  
And I 'd freely give a trifle  
Could I win you for mine own;  
But the question simply narrows  
Down to one persistent fact,  
That we cannot say we're sparrows,  
And we oughtn't so to act.

[64]

Married bliss is born of incomes;  
While to drag the long years through  
Till some hypothetic tin comes,  
Seems a childish thing to do;  
Rather let us own as lasting  
Our unpardonable crime,  
Giving thanks, with prayer and fasting,  
For so very high a time.

Fare you well. Your dreadful Mother,  
If I know that woman's mind,  
Has her eye upon Another  
*Vice* me, my dear, resigned;  
And I see you mated shortly  
To some covenanted swain,  
Not objectionably portly,  
Not prohibitively plain.

Take his gifts, and ask a blessing.  
Meddle not with minor cares.  
Trust me, your unprepossessing  
Dam soon settles those affairs!  
Then will I, with honeyed suasion,  
Pinch some thriftless man of bills  
Of a mark of the occasion  
For my Lady of the Hills.

[65]

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## THE SHORES OF NOTHING

[66]

There's a little lake that lies  
In a valley, where the skies  
Kiss the mountains, as they rise,  
On the crown;  
And the heaven-born élite  
Are accustomed to retreat  
From the pestilential heat  
Lower down.

Where the Mighty, for a space,  
Mix with Beauty, Rank, and Grace,  
(I myself was in the place,  
At my best!)  
And the atmosphere's divine,  
While the deodar and pine  
Are particularly fine  
For the chest.

[67]

And a little month ago,  
When the sun was lying low,  
And the water lay aglow  
Like a pearl,  
I, remarkably arrayed,  
Dipped an unobtrusive blade  
In the lake—and in the shade—  
With a girl.

O 'twas pleasant thus to glide  
On the 'softly-flowing tide'  
(Which it's not!) and, undescried,

Take a hand  
In the sweet, idyllic sports  
That are known in such resorts,  
To the sympathetic snorts  
Of the Band.

Till, when o'er the 'still lagoon'  
Passed the golden afternoon,  
The preposterous bassoon,  
Growling deep,  
Saved the King and knelled the day  
As the crimson changed to grey  
And the little valley lay  
Half asleep.

It is finished. She was kind.  
'Out of sight is out of mind.'  
But the taste remains behind,  
(And the bills,)  
And I'd give the world to know  
If there's some one else in tow  
With my love (a month ago)  
In the Hills!

O ye valleys, tell me, pray,  
Was she on the lake to-day?  
Does she foot it in the gay,  
Social whirl?  
O ye Mountains of Gilboa,  
Send a bird, or kindly blow a  
Breeze to tell me all you know a-  
bout that girl!

---

## THE LAST HOCKEY

*After A. T.*

So for the last great Hockey of the Hills,  
—Damsel *v.* Dame—by ruder cynics called  
The Tournament of the Dead Dignities,  
We gained the lists, and I, thro' humorous lens,  
Perused the revels. Here on autumn grass  
Leapt the lithe-elbowed Spin, and strongly merged  
In scrimmage with the comfortable Wife  
And temporary Widow,—know you not,  
Such trifles are the merest commonplace  
In loftier contours?—Twenty-two in all  
They numbered, and none other trod the field  
Save one, the bold Sir Referee, whose charge  
It was to keep fair order in the lists,  
And peace 'twixt Dame and Damsel: married, he.

O brothers, had ye seen them! O the games!  
Fleet-footed some: lightly they leapt, and drave  
Or missed the pellet; then, perchance, would turn  
With hand that sought their tresses. Others moved  
Careless, in half disdain, nor urged pursuit;  
Yet ever and anon would shriek, and miss  
The pellet, while the bold Sir Referee  
Skipt in avoidance. From the factions came  
The cry of voices shrilling woman-wise,  
The clash of stick on stick, the muffled shin,  
The sudden whistle, and the murmurous note  
Of mutual disaffection. Otherwhere  
The myriad coolie chortled, knightly palms  
Clapped, and the whole vale echoed to the noise  
Of ladies, who in session to the West  
Sat with the light behind them, self-approved.

Fortune with equal favour poised the scale,  
And loudlier rang the trouble, till I heard  
'A Susan! Ho! A Susan!'—She, oh she,

[68]

[69]

[70]

[71]

One whom myself had picked from out the crowd  
Of hot girl-athletes with their tousled hair,  
Was on the ball. Deftly she smote, and drave  
On, and so paddled swiftly in its wake.  
The good ash gleamed and fell; the forward ranks  
Gave passage; once again she smote, again  
Paddled, nor passed, but paddling ever neared  
The mournful guardian of the Sacred Goal,  
Hewing and hacking. Little need to tell  
Of Susan in her glory; whom she smote  
She felled, and whom she shocked she overthrew;  
And, shrieking, passed exultant to her doom.

For Susan, while she clove a devious course,  
Moved crab-like, in a strange diagonal,  
And, driving, crossed the frontiers. Thither came  
The bold Sir Referee, and shrilled abroad  
The tremulous, momentary 'touch.' But she,  
Heaving with unaccustomed exercise,  
Blinded and baffled, wild with all despair,  
Stood sweeping, as a churl that sweeps the scythe  
In earlier pastures. Twice he skipped, and poured [72]  
The desperate whistle. Once again, and he,  
Skipping, diffused the whistle. But at last,  
So shrewd a blow she dealt him on the shin,  
That had he stood reverse-wise on his head,  
Not on his feet, I know not what had chanced.  
Then to the shuddering Orient skies there rose  
A marvellous great shriek, the splintering noise  
Of shattered ash-plant and of battered shank,  
Mixed with a higher. For Susan, overwrought,  
Lost footing, and with one clear dolorous wail  
Fell headlong, only more so. And I saw,  
Clothed in black stockings, mystic, wonderful,  
That which I saw. The coolies yelled. The crowd  
Closed round, and so the tourney reached an end.

Then home they bore the bold Sir Referee  
In Susan's litter; and they tended him  
With curious tendance; and they drowned his views  
On Susan, and the tourney, and the place  
Whither he'd see them ere again he ruled  
Such functions, with a sweet, small song (I call [73]  
It sweet that should not!). This is how it ran:—

'Our Referee has fall'n, has fall'n. The stick,  
The little stick he leapt at in the lists  
Has riven and cleft the bark, and raised a bulk  
Of crescent span, that spreads on every side  
A thousand hues, all flushing into one.

'Our Referee has fall'n, has fall'n. She came,  
The woman with her ash, and lo the wound!  
But we will make a bandage for the limb,  
And swathe it, heel to knee, with splints and wool,  
And embrocations for the hurts of man.

'Our Referee has fall'n, has fall'n; he wailed;  
With our own ears we heard him, and we knew  
*There dwelt an iron nature in the grain!*  
The splintering ash was cloven on his limb;  
His limb was battered to the cannon-bone.'

So passed that stout but choleric knight away;  
And we, by certain wandering instincts led,  
Made for a small pavilion, where we found  
Viands and what not, and the thirsty flower  
Of mountain knighthood gathered at the board.  
And entering, here we lingered, and discussed  
The what not, and the viands, and in time [74]  
Drew to the tourney, giving each his views;—  
But mostly wondering what the coolies thought  
To see these ladies of the Ruling Race,  
'Yoked in all *exercise* of noble end,'  
And Public Exhibition. Was it wise?  
Some questioned; others, was it quite the thing?

And here indeed we left it, for the shades

Deepened, the high, swift-narrowing crest of day  
Brake from the hills, and down the path we went,  
Well pleased, for it was guest-night at the Club.

---

## 'FAREWELL'

[75]

'Farewell. What a subject! How sweet  
It looks to the careless observer!  
So simple; so easy to treat  
With tenderness, mark you, and fervour.  
*Farewell.* It's a poem; the song  
Of nightingales crying and calling!  
O Reader, you're utterly wrong.  
It's not. It's appalling!

And yet when she asked me to send  
Some trifle of verse to remind her  
Of days that had come to an end,  
And one she was leaving behind her,  
It looked, as we stood on the shore,  
A theme so entirely delightful  
That I, like a lunatic, swore  
(Quite calmly) to write some.

[76]

I've toiled with unwavering pluck;  
I've struggled if ever a man did;  
Infringed every postulate, stuck  
At nothing,—nay, once, to be candid,  
I shifted the cadence—designed  
A fresh but unauthorised *fare-well*;  
'Twas plausible, too, but I find  
The thing doesn't wear well.

I know that it shouldn't be hard;  
That dozens, who claim to be poets,  
Could scribble off stuff by the yard  
And fare very well; and I know it's  
A theme that the Masters of Rhyme  
Have written some excellent verse on,  
Which proves, as I take it, that I'm  
Not that sort of person.

But that we can leave. It remains  
To state that my present appearance  
Is something too awful, my brains  
Are tending to wild incoherence;  
My mental condition's absurd;  
My thoughts are at sixes and sevens,  
Inextrica—lord! what a word!  
Inextri—good heavens!

[77]

My dear, you can do what you like,—  
Forgive, or despise, or abuse me—  
But frankly, I'm going on strike,  
And really you'll have to excuse me.  
Indeed it's my only resource,  
For, sure as I stuck to my promise, I'd  
Be booked in a week for a course  
Of *sui-cum*-homicide.

---

## A HAPPY NEW YEAR

[78]

11.30 P.M., DEC. 31

Friend, when the year is on the wing,  
'Tis held a fair and comely thing  
To turn reflective glances  
Over the days' forbidden Scroll,  
See if we're better on the whole,

And average our chances.

Yet 'tis an awful thing to drag  
Each separate deed from out the bag  
    That up till now has hidden 't,  
And bring before the shuddering view  
All that we swore we wouldn't do,  
    Or should have done, but didn't.

The broken code, the baffled laws  
Our little private faults and flaws,  
    And every naughty habit,  
Come whistling through the Waste of Life, [79]  
Until one longs to take a knife,  
    Feel for his heart, and stab it.

Unchanged, exultant, one and all  
Rise up spontaneous to the call,  
    And bring their stings behind them;  
But when the search is duly plied  
For items on the credit side,  
    One has a job to find them!

I know not *why* they change. I know—  
None better—how one's feelings grow  
    Distinctly kin to mutiny,  
To see one's assets limping in,  
All too preposterously thin  
    To stand a moment's scrutiny.

I know that shock must follow shock,  
Until the sole remaining Rock  
    That all one's hopes exist on,  
Crumbles beneath the crushing force  
Of Conscience, kicking like a horse,  
    And pounding like a piston. [80]

Hardly a little year has past  
Since you, I take it, swore to cast  
    Aside the bonds that girt you,  
And thought to stun the dazzled earth,  
A pillared Miracle of Worth,  
    Raised on a plinth of Virtue.

One always does. One wonders why.  
One knows that, as the years go by,  
    One finds the same old blunders,  
The same old acts, the same old words;  
And as one trots them out in herds,  
    Or one by one, one wonders;

---

Another year,—a touch of grey,—  
A little stiffness,—day by day  
We feel the need of, shall we say,  
    Goggles to face the sun with,—  
A little loss of youthful bloom,—  
A little nearer to the Tomb!  
(Pardon this momentary gloom)  
    Bang go the bells. *That's* done with!

---

## SAIREY [81]

### EXCERPTS FROM AN INCONGRUITY

*After A. C. S.*

In Spring there are lashings of new books,  
    In Autumn fresh novels are sold,  
They are many, but my shelf has few books,  
    My comrades, the favourites of old;

Tho' the roll of the cata-logues vary,  
Thou alone art unchangeably dear,  
O bibulous, beautiful Sairey,  
Our Lady of Cheer.

By the whites of thine eyes that were yellow,  
By the folds of thy duplicate chin,  
By thy voice that was husky but mellow  
With gin, with the richness of gin,  
By thy scorn of the boy that was Bragian,  
By thy wealth of perambulate swoons,  
O matchless and mystical Magian,  
Beguile us with boons.

[82]

For thou scatterest the evil before us  
With grave humours and exquisite speech,  
Till we heed not the 'new men that *bore* us,'  
Nor regard the new women that screech;  
We are weak, but thy hand shall refresh us;  
We are faint, but we know thee sublime;  
More priceless than pills, and more precious  
Than draughts that are slime.

Thou hast lifted us forth from the *melly*,  
Thou hast told, with thick heavings of pride,  
Of the Package in Jonadge's belly,  
And the Camel that rich folks may ride;  
From the mire and the murk of a stern Age  
In the Font of St. Polge we are clean,  
O Gold as has passed through the Furnage,  
Our Lady and Queen.

---

In thy chamber where Holborn is highest,  
At the banquet, ere night had begun,  
Thou wert seated with her that was nighest  
Thy heart, save the Only, the One;  
For the hours of thy labour were ended,  
And the spirit of peace was within,  
And the fumes from the teapot ascended  
Of unsweetened gin.

[83]

Dost thou dream in dim dusk when light lingers,  
Of Betsy, the bage, the despiged,  
Who with snap of imperious fingers  
Hariçina, thy figment, deniged?  
Dost thou gasp at the shock of the blow sich  
As she, in her tantrum, let fall,  
Who 'didn't believe there was no sich  
A person' at all?

Fear not! Though the torters be frightful,  
Though the words that thou took'st unawares  
Be as serpiants that twine and are spiteful,  
O thou best of good creeturs, who cares?  
For the curse hath recoiled, and the stigma  
Thou hast turned to her sorrer and shame,  
While thy cryptic and sombre Enigma  
Is shrined in a Name.

[84]

---

And our wine shall not lack for thy throttle,  
Nor at night shall our portals be cloged,  
And thy lips thou shalt place to the bottle  
On our chimley, when so thou'rt dispoged;  
We have pickled 'intensely' our salmon;  
To thy moods are great cowcubmers dressed,  
O Daughter of Gumption and Gammon,  
Our Mistress and Guest!

And in hours when our lamp-ile has dwindled  
In deep walleyes of uttermost pain,  
When our hopes to grey ashes are kindled,



We are fain of thee still, we are fain;  
In this Piljian's Projiss of Woe, in  
This Wale of white shadders and damp,  
O Roge all a-blowin' and growin',  
We open our Gamp!

---

## ADAM

[85]

*After W. W.*

An adventure of the Author's, and one designed to show that grievances may be met with in the cottages of the humblest, and may take the most unexpected forms.

When in my white-washed walls confined  
Till eve her freedom brings,  
I often turn a musing mind  
To think awhile of things,

And thus about the noontide glow  
To-day my thoughts recalled  
Old Adam, whom I once did know,  
A dear old thing, though bald.

A village Gravedigger was he  
With Newgate fringe of grey,  
The only man that one could see  
At work on Saturday!

For on those evenings (which provide  
A due release to toil)  
He shovelled wearily, and plied  
His task upon the soil.

Therein a sorrow Adam had,  
And when he knew me well  
He told this tale, and made me sad,  
Which now to you I tell.

For once my feet did chance to stray  
Across the old churchyard,  
And Adam sighed, and paused to say  
'It's werry, werry hard.'

I marvelled much to hear him sigh,  
And when he paused again,  
'Come, come, you quaint old thing,' said I,  
'Why thus this tone of pain?'

In silence Adam rose, and gained  
A seat amid the stones,  
And thus the veteran complained,  
The dear old bag of bones.

'Down by the wall the Village goes,  
How horrid sounds their glee,  
On Saturdays they early close,  
They have their Sundays free;

'And here, on this depressing spot,  
I cannot choose but moan  
That I, a labouring man, have not  
An hour to call my own.

'The Blacksmith in his Sunday things,  
The Clerk that leaves his till,  
Can give their thoughts of labour wings,  
And frolic as they will.

'To me they—drat 'em!—never give  
A thought; they wander by,  
An irritation while they live,  
A nuisance when they die.

[86]

[87]

'If there be one that needs lament  
The way these folks behave,  
'Tis he whose holidays are spent  
In digging someone's grave,

[88]

'For when a person takes and dies,  
On Monday though it be,  
They *never* hold his obsequies  
Till Sunday after three.

'And thus it fares through their delay,  
That I may not begin  
To dig the grave till Saturday,—  
On Sunday fill it in.

'My Sabbath ease is broken through,  
My Saturdays destroyed;  
Many employ me; *very few*  
*Have left me unemployed!*'

Again did Adam murmur 'Drat!'  
And smote the old-churchyard,  
And said, as on his hands he spat,  
'It's werry, werry hard!'

And as I rose, the path to take  
That led me home again,  
My head was in my wideawake,  
His words were in my brain.

---

## ELEGY ON A RHINOCEROS

[89]

### RECENTLY DECEASED

Come, let us weep for Begum; he is dead.  
Dead; and afar, where Thamis' waters lave  
The busy marge, he lies unvisited,  
Unsung; above no cypress branches wave,  
Nor tributary blossoms fringe his grave;  
Only would these poor numbers advertise  
His copious charms, and mourn for his demise.

Blithesome was he and beautiful; the Zoo  
Hath nought to match with Begum. He was one  
Of infinite humour; well indeed he knew  
To catch with mobile lips th' impetuous bun  
Tossed him-ward by some sire-encouraged son,  
Half-fearful, yet of pride fulfilled to note  
The dough, swift-homing down th' exultant throat.

[90]

Whilom he pensive stood, infoliate  
Of comfortable mud, and idly stirred  
His tiny caudal, disproportionate  
But not ungraceful, while a wanton herd  
Of revellers the mystic lens preferred;  
Whereof the focus rightly they address;  
And, Phœbus being kind, the button prest.

Then, being frolic, he, as one distraught,  
Would blindly, stumbling, seek the watery verge  
And sink, nor rise again. But when, untaught  
In craft, the mourners raised the untimely dirge,  
Lo! elsewhere himself would swift emerge  
Incontinent, and crisp his tasselled ears;  
And, all vivacious, own the sounding cheers.

Nothing of dark suspicion nor of guile  
Was limned on Begum; his the mirthful glance,  
The genial port, the comprehensive smile:—  
The very sunbeams shimmering loved to dance  
Within that honest, open countenance;—  
And far as eye could pierce, his roomy grin  
Was pink, as 'twere Aurora dwelt therein.

[91]

Yet he is dead! Whether the froward cates  
Some lawless lodgment found, nor coughs released:  
Or if adown those hospitable gates  
Drave the strong North, or shrilled the ravening East,  
And, ill-requiting, slew the wretched beast,  
We nothing know; only the news is cried,  
Begum is dead: we know not how he died.

Still, though the callous bards neglect to hymn  
Thy praises, Begum; though, on dross intent,  
The hireling sculptor pauseth not to limn  
Thy spacious visage, kindly hands are bent  
E'en now to stuff thy frail integument.  
Then sleep in peace, Belovèd; blest Sultân  
Of some Rhinokeraunian Devachân.

---

## IN SEVERAL KEYS

[92]

### No. 1

#### 'MARIE'

We hear the opening refrain,  
Marie!  
We thought so; here you are again,  
Marie!  
A simple tune, in simple thirds,  
Beloved of after-dinner birds;  
A legend, self-condemned as 'words,'  
Marie!

She lingers by the flowing tide,  
Marie;  
A 'fisher-lad' is close beside  
Marie;  
He gazes in her 'eyes so blue';  
*Marie, Marie, my heart is true;*  
And then,—you do, you know you do,  
Marie!—

But vain is every mortal wish,  
Marie;  
And 'fisher-lads' have got to fish,  
Marie;  
O blinding tears! O cheeks 'so' wet!  
*Marie, I come again!* And yet  
I shouldn't feel disposed to bet,  
Marie!

A tempest drives across the wave,  
Marie;  
With triplets in the treble stave,  
Marie;  
The player pounds. With bulging eyes  
Th' excited vocalist replies;  
The maddened octaves drown his cries,  
Marie!

The storm is past. We hear again,  
Marie,  
The simple thirds, the waltz refrain,  
Marie;  
We only see some drifting wrack,  
An empty bunk, a battered smack,  
Alas! Alas!! Alack!!! Alack!!!!  
Marie!

O good old words, O 'tears that rise,'  
Marie!  
O good young fisher-lad that dies,  
Marie!  
We leave you on the lonely shore;—

[93]

[94]

You wave your hands for evermore,  
A bleak, disgusted semaphore,  
Marie!

---

## IN SEVERAL KEYS

[95]

### No. 2

#### THE BALLAD OF MORBID MOTHERS

Why do you sit in the churchyard weeping?  
Why do you cling to the dear old graves,  
When the dim, drear mists of the dusk are creeping  
Out of the marshes in wan, white waves?  
Darling, I know you're a slave to sorrow;  
Dearie, I *know* that the world is cruel;  
But *you'll* be in bed with a cold to-morrow,  
*I* shall be running upstairs with gruel.

Why do you weep on a tombstone, Mammy,  
Sobbing alone in the drizzling sleet,  
When the chill mists rise, and the wind strikes clammy?  
Think of your bones, and your poor old feet!  
Darling, I know that you feel lugubrious;  
Dearie, I *know* you must work this off;  
But graveyards are not, as a rule, salubrious,  
Whence the expression, a 'churchyard cough.'

[96]

[*The Old Lady explains her eccentric behaviour.*]

Why do I ululate, dear my dearie,  
Coiled on a nastily mildewed tomb,  
When the horned owl hoots, and the world is weary,  
Weary of sorrow, and swamped in gloom?  
Childie my child, 'tis a cogent question;  
Dearie my dear, if you wish to know,  
Tis not that I suffer from indigestion,  
But that the Public ordains it so.

Babies, and Aunties, and dying brothers,  
Boom for a season, as 'loves' may part;  
But the old shop-ballad of Morbid Mothers  
Dives to the depths of the Public's heart.  
Dearie, with booms, at the best, precarious,  
All but the permanent needs must fail;  
And Childie, if Mammy became hilarious,  
Mammy would never command a sale.

[97]

---

## THE STORY OF RUD.

[98]

Once for a tight little Island, fonder of ha'pence than kicks,  
Rud., a maker of verses, sang of an Empire of Bricks,  
Sang of the Sons of that Empire—told them they came of the Blood—  
Rubbing it under their noses. *Read ye the Story of Rud!*

Pleased was the Public to hear it—rose in their hundreds to sing—  
Swallowed it, chewed it, and gurgled: 'Verily, this is the thing!  
Thus do we wallop our foemen—roll 'em away in the mud—  
This is the People that *we* are. Glory and laurels for Rud.!'

[99]

Later he pictured a Panic—later he pictured a Scare,  
Pictured the burning of coast towns—skies in a reddening glare—  
Pictured the Mafficking Million—collared, abortive, alone—  
Out of the duty he owed them, pictured them down to the bone.

Sick was the Public to read it—passed it along to 'the Sports'—  
'Fools in the full-flannelled breeches, oafs in the muddy-patched shorts'—  
Loafers and talkers and writers, furtively whispering low—  
'*Say* that it's like 'em—it *may* be—nobody ever need know.

'Rud.,—would he drive us to Barracks—make of us militant hordes—  
Broke to the spit of the pom-pom—trained to the flashing of swords?—  
Pooh! It is *these* that he goes for—Sport is the bubble he pricks—  
Doubt not but *we* are The People—Bricks of an Empire of Bricks!

[100]

What of that maker of verses? Did he not answer the call:  
'Loafers and talkers and writers, children or knaves are ye all;  
Look at the lines ere ye quote them: read, ere ye cackle as geese!'  
Nay. But he passed from The People—left them to stew in their grease.

---

But a hyphen-ish growl makes answer: 'Ye that would take from the whole  
The one line robbed of the context, nor win to the straight-set Goal,  
Is it thus ye will fend the warning—thus ye will move the shame  
From the Mob that watch by the thousand, to the dozens that play the game?  
Still will ye pay at the turnstile—thronging the rope-ringed Match,  
Where the half-back fumbles the leather, or the deep-field butters the catch?  
Will ye thank your gods (being 'umble) that the fool and the oaf are found  
In the field, at the goal or the wicket, and *not* in the seats around?  
*Not* in the Saturday Squallers—men of a higher grade—  
That lay down a law they know not, of a game that they have not played?  
Holding the folly of flannel, still will ye teach the Schools  
That Wisdom is dressed in shoddy, and how should the Wise be fools?  
Not doubting but ye are The People—ye are the Sons of The Blood?  
Loafers and talkers and writers,—*Read ye the Verses of Rud.!*'

[101]

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## THE HAPPY ENDING

[103]

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## STANZAS WRITTEN IN DEJECTION

[105]

I am tired of the day with its profitless labours,  
And tired of the night with its lack of repose,  
I am sick of myself, my surroundings, and neighbours,  
Especially Aryan Brothers and crows;  
O land of illusory hope for the needy,  
O centre of soldiering, thirst, and shikar,  
When a broken-down exile begins to get seedy,  
What a beast of a country you are!

There are many, I know, that have honestly drawn a  
Most moving description of pleasures to win  
By the exquisite carnage of such of your fauna  
As Nature provides with a 'head' or a 'skin';  
I know that a pig is magnificent sticking;  
But good as you are in the matter of sports,  
When a person's alive, so to put it, and kicking,  
You're a brute when a man's out of sorts.

[106]

For the moment he feels the effects of the weather—  
A mild go of fever—a touch of the sun—  
He arrives with a jerk at the end of his tether,  
And finds your attractions a bit overdone;  
Impatiently conscious of boredom and worry,  
He sits in his misery, scowling at grief,  
With a face like a pallid *rechauffée* of curry,  
And a head like a lump of boiled beef.

I am sick of the day (as I happened to mention),  
And sick of the night (as I stated before),  
And it's oh, for the wings of a dove or a pension  
To carry me home to a happier shore!  
And oh, to be off, homeward bound, on the briny,  
Away from the tropics—away from the heat,  
And to take off a shocking old hat to the Shiny,  
As I shake off her dust from my feet!

---

Away, away! The plains of Ind  
 Have set their victim free;  
 I give my sorrows to the wind,  
 My sun-hat to the sea;  
 And, standing with a chosen few,  
 I watch a dying glow,  
 The passing of the Finest View  
 That all the world can show.

It would not fire an artist's eye,  
 This View whereof I sing;  
 Poets, no doubt, would pass it by  
 As quite a common thing;  
 The Tourist with belittling sniff  
 Would find no beauties there—  
 He couldn't if he would, and if  
 He could he wouldn't care.

[108]

Only for him that turns the back  
 On dark and evil days  
 It throws a glory down his track  
 That sets his heart ablaze;  
 A charm to make the wounded whole,  
 Which wearied eyes may draw  
 Luxuriously through the soul,  
 Like cocktails through a straw.

I have seen strong men moved to tears  
 When gazing o'er the deep,  
 Hard men, whom I have known for years,  
 Nor dreamt that they could weep;  
 Even myself, though stern and cold  
 Beyond the common line,  
 Cannot, for very joy, withhold  
 The tribute of my brine.

Farewell, farewell, thou best of Views!  
 I leave thee to thy pain,  
 And, while I have the power to choose,  
 We shall not meet again;  
 But, 'mid the scenes of joy and mirth,  
 My fancies oft will turn  
 Back to the Finest Sight on Earth,  
 The Bombay Lights—*astern!*

[109]

---

HAVEN

[110]

Here, in mine old-time harbourage installed,  
 Lulled by the murmurous hum of London's traffic  
 To that full calm which may be justly called  
 Seraphic,

I praise the gods; and vow, for my escape  
 From the hard grip of premature Jehannun,  
 One golden-tissued bottle of the grape  
 Per annum.

For on this day, from Orient toils enlarged,  
 Kneeling, I kissed the parent soil at Dover,  
 Where a huge porter in his orbit charged  
 Me over;

[111]

Flashed in the train by Shorncliffe's draughty camp;  
 Gazed on the hurrying landscape's pastoral graces,  
 Old farms, and happy fields (a trifle damp  
 In places);

Passed the grim suburbs, indigent and bare  
 Of natural foliage, but bravely flying  
 Frank garlandry of last week's underwear

Out drying;

And so to Town; and with that blessed sight  
I, a poor fevered wreck, forgot to shiver—  
Forgot to mourn the Burden of my White  
Man's Liver;

And felt my bosom heave, my breast expand,  
With thoughts too sweet, too deep for empty cackle,  
Such thoughts as nothing but a first-class Band  
Could tackle:

Till, from its deeps, my celebrated smile  
(Which friends called Marvel) clove my jaws asunder,  
Lucid, intense, and all men stood awhile  
In wonder!

[112]

---

Let none approach me now, for I have dined;  
The fire is bright; Havana's choice aroma  
Infects my being with a pleasant kind  
Of coma;

Calmly I contemplate my future lot:  
I reconstruct the past—it fails to strike me  
With aught of horror (pity there are not  
More like me!)—

My bosom's lord sits lightly on my breast;  
The East grows dim; and every hour I stuck to it  
Imparts a richer brightness to the West,  
Good luck to it!

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