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E-text prepared by Al Haines



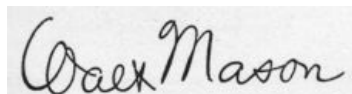
**The Umpire**

# RIPPLING RHYMES

**To Suit The Times  
All Sorts of Themes Embracin'**

**Some Gay  
Some Sad  
Some not so Bad**

**AS  
WRITTEN BY**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Coax Mason". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

**Chicago  
A. C. McClurg & Co.  
1913**

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A. C. McClurg & Co.  
1913**

**Published October, 1913**

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For permission to use copyright prose poems in this book thanks are extended to the editors and publishers of Harper's Magazine, Harper's Weekly, The Ladies' Home Journal, System, The Magazine of Business, The Popular Magazine, Collier's Weekly, The Smart Set Magazine, The American Magazine and Lippincott's Magazine.

**To  
GEORGE MATTHEW ADAMS**

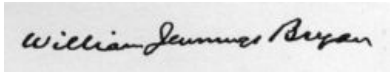
Who teaches poets how to win.  
And helps to make the glad world grin,  
And sticks to friends through thick and thin.

**ONE MOMENT, PLEASE!**

Walt Mason's poetry is in a class by itself. Although having the appearance of prose the rhythm is perfect and the philosophy that runs through his lines is illumined by an irresistible humor. There is a quaintness about his style that makes his writings a continuing delight.

I began to read Walt twenty-five years ago and although he has drawn upon his intellectual store constantly for more than a quarter of a century the fountain of his genius still is flowing with undiminished volume and the waters are as pure as in the idealistic days of his youth.

I have shared the satisfaction that his increasing fame has brought him and have encouraged him to publish this collection that his readers, now numbering people of many lands, may have permanent companionship with him.



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### **MORNING IN KANSAS**

There are lands beyond the ocean which are gray beneath their years, where a hundred generations learned to sow and reap and spin; where the sons of Shem and Japhet wet the furrow with their tears—and the noontide is departed, and the night is closing in.

Long ago the shadows lengthened in the lands across the sea, and the dusk is now enshrouding regions nearer home, alas! There are long deserted homesteads in this country of the free—but it's morning here in Kansas, and the dew is on the grass.

It is morning here in Kansas, and the breakfast bell is rung! We are not yet fairly started on the work we mean to do; we have all the day before us, for the morning is but young, and there's hope in every zephyr, and the skies are bright and blue.

It is morning here in Kansas, and the dew is on the sod; as the builders of an empire it is ours to do our best; with our hands at work in Kansas, and our faith and trust in God, we shall not be counted idle when the sun sinks in the West.

### **EDITORIAL INFLUENCE**

It is a solemn thing, to think when you sit down to splatter ink, that what you write, in prose or verse, may be a blessing or a curse. The gems of thought that you impart may upward guide some mind and heart; some youth may read your Smoking Stuff, and say: "That logic's good enough; the path of virtue must be fine; I'll have no wickedness in mine." And some day, when you're old and gray, that youth may come along your way, and say, in language ringing true: "All that I've won I owe to you! When I was young I read your rot; it hit a most responsive spot, encouraged me for stress and strife, and made me choose the best in life." And this will warm your heart and brain; you'll know you have not lived in vain. But if you write disgusting dope, that thrusts at Truth, and Faith and Hope; if you apologize for vice, and show that wickedness is nice, it well may chance, when you are old, and in your veins the blood runs cold, there'll come your way some dismal wreck, who'll roast you sore, and cry: "By heck! And also I might say, by gum! 'Twas you that put me on the bum! Your writings got me headed wrong; you threw it into Virtue strong; and in the prison that you see, I'm convict No. 23!"

### **FARM MACHINERY**

We have things with cogs and pulleys that will stack and bale the hay, we have scarecrows automatic that will drive the crows away; we have riding cultivators, so we may recline at ease, as we travel up the corn rows, to the tune of haws and gees; we have engines pumping water, running churns and grinding corn, and one farmer that I know of has a big steam dinner horn; all of which is very pleasant to reflect upon, I think, but we need a good contrivance that will teach the calves to drink.

Now, as in the days of Noah, man must take a massive pail, loaded up with milk denatured, with a dash of Adam's ale, and go down among the calfkens as the lion tamer goes 'mong the monarchs of the jungle, at the famous three-ring shows; and

the calves are fierce and hungry, and they haven't sense to wait, till he gets a good position and has got his bucket straight; and they act as though they hadn't e'en a glimmering of sense, for they climb upon his shoulders ere he is inside the fence, and they butt him in the stomach, and they kick him everywhere, till he thinks he'd give a nickel for a decent chance to swear; then they all get underneath him and capsize him in the mud, and the milk runs down his whiskers and his garments in a flood, and you really ought to see him when he goes back to his home quoting divers pagan authors and the bards of ancient Rome. And he murmurs while he's washing mud off at the kitchen sink: "What we need is a contraption that will teach the calves to drink!"

We've machinery for planting, we've machines to reap and thrash, and the housewife has an engine that will grind up meat for hash; we've machines to do our washing and to wring the laundered duds, we've machines for making cider and to dig the Burbank spuds; all about the modern farmstead you may hear the levers clink, but we're shy of a contrivance that will teach the calves to drink!

## **THE STRONG MEN**

Behold the man of muscle, who wears the victor's crown! In gorgeous scrap and tussle he pinned the others down. His brawn stands out in hummocks, he like a lion treads; he sits on foemen's stomachs and stands them on their heads. The strong men of all regions, the mighty men of note, come here in beefy legions to try to get his goat; with cordial smiles he greets them, and when we've raised a pot, upon the mat he meets them and ties them in a knot. From Russia's frozen acres, from Grecian ports they sail, and Turkey sends her fakers to gather in the kale; old brooding Europe breeds them, these mighty men of brawn; our Strong Man takes and kneads them, and puts their hopes in pawn.

Behold this puny fellow, this meek and humble chap! No doubt he'd show up yellow if he got in a scrap. His face is pale and sickly, he's weak of arm and knee; if trouble came he'd quickly shin up the nearest tree. No hale man ever loves him; he stirs the sportsman's wrath; the whole world kicks and shoves him and shoos him from the path. For who can love a duffer so pallid, weak and thin, who seems resigned to suffer and let folks rub it in? Yet though he's down to zero in fellow-men's esteem, this fellow is a hero and that's no winter dream. Year after year he's toiling, as toiled the slaves of Rome, to keep the pot a-boiling in his old mother's home. Through years of gloom and sickness he kept the wolf away; for him no tailored slickness, for him no brave array; for him no cheerful vision of wife and kids a few; for him no dreams Elysian—just toil, the long years through! Forever trying, straining, to sidestep debtors' woes, unnoticed, uncomplaining, the little Strong Man goes!

## **THE SNOWY DAY**

I like to watch the children play, upon a wintry, snowy day; like little elves they run about, and leap and slide, and laugh and shout. This side of heaven can there be such pure and unmixed ecstasy? I lean upon ye rustic stile, and watch the children with a smile, and think upon a vanished day, when I, as joyous, used to play, when all the world seemed young and bright, and every hour had its delight; and, as I brush away a tear, a snowball hits me in the ear.

## **THE POOR MAN'S CLUB**

The poor man's club is a genial place—if the poor man has the price; there's a balmy smile on the barkeep's face, and bottles of goods on ice; the poor man's club is a place designed to brighten our darkened lives, and send us home, when we're halfway blind, in humor to beat our wives. So hey for the wicker demi-john and the

free-lunch brand of grub! We'll wassail hold till the break of dawn, we friends of the poor man's club! It's here we barter our bits of news in our sweat stained hand-me-downs; it's here we swallow the children's shoes and the housewives hats and gowns. It's here we mortgage the house and lot, the horse and the muley cow; the poor man's club is a cheerful spot, so open a bottle now! From brimming glasses we'll blow the foam till the midnight hour arrives, when we'll gayly journey the long way home and merrily beat our wives. We earn our dimes like the horse or ox, we toil like the fabled steer, and then we journey a dozen blocks to blow in the dimes for beer. While the women work at the washing tub to add to our scanty hoard, we happily meet at the poor man's club, where never a soul is bored. We recklessly squander our minted brawn, and the clubhouse owner thrives; and we'll homeward go at the break of dawn and joyously beat our wives.

## **WORDS AND DEEDS**

A fire broke out in Bildad's shack and burned it to the ground; and Bildad, with his roofless pack, sent up a doleful sound. And I, who lived the next door west, hard by the county jail, went over there and beat my breast, and helped poor Bildad wail. Around the ruined home I stepped, and viewed the shaking walls, and people say the way I wept would beat Niagara Falls. Then words of sympathy I dealt to Bildad and his wife; such kindly words, I've always felt, nerve people for the strife. If I can kill with words your fears, or argue grief away, or drown your woe by shedding tears, call on me any day. I have a sympathetic heart that bleeds for others' aches, and I will ease your pain and smart unless the language breaks. And so to Bildad and his mate I made a helpful talk, with vital truths that elevate and break disasters' shock; I pointed out that stricken men should not yield to the worst, but from the wreckage rise again like flame from torch reversed.

Then Johnson interrupted me as I was growing hoarse. A rude, offensive person he, a tactless man and coarse.

He said to Bildad, "Well, old pard! You are burned out I see! You can't keep house here in your yard, so come and live with me!"

The neighbors who had gathered round applauded Johnson then, declaring that at last they'd found the kindest of men; not one appreciative voice for me, who furnished tears, who made the sad man's heart rejoice, and drove way his fears!

## **A DAY OF REST**

I'm glad there is a day of rest, one day in every seven, when worldly cares cannot molest, and we may dream of heaven. The week day labor that we do, is highly necessary, but if our tasks were never through, if they should never vary, we'd soon be covered o'er with mold, from bridle-bits to breeching; so let the Sabbath bells be tolled, and let us hear the preaching!

## **USE YOUR HEAD**

If a man would be a winner, whether he's a clerk or tinner, whether he's a butcher, banker, or a dealer in rye bread, he must show his brains are bully, he must understand it fully that a man can't be an Eli if he doesn't use his head.

There was old man Hiram Horner, once located on the corner, where he sold his prunes and codfish and dried apples by the pound; he was always mighty busy; it would fairly make you dizzy just to watch old Uncle Hiram as he chased himself around. He got down when day was breaking, always ready to be raking in the pennies of the people if they chanced to come that way; he was evermore on duty till the midnight whistles, tooty, sent him home, where he'd be fussing to begin another

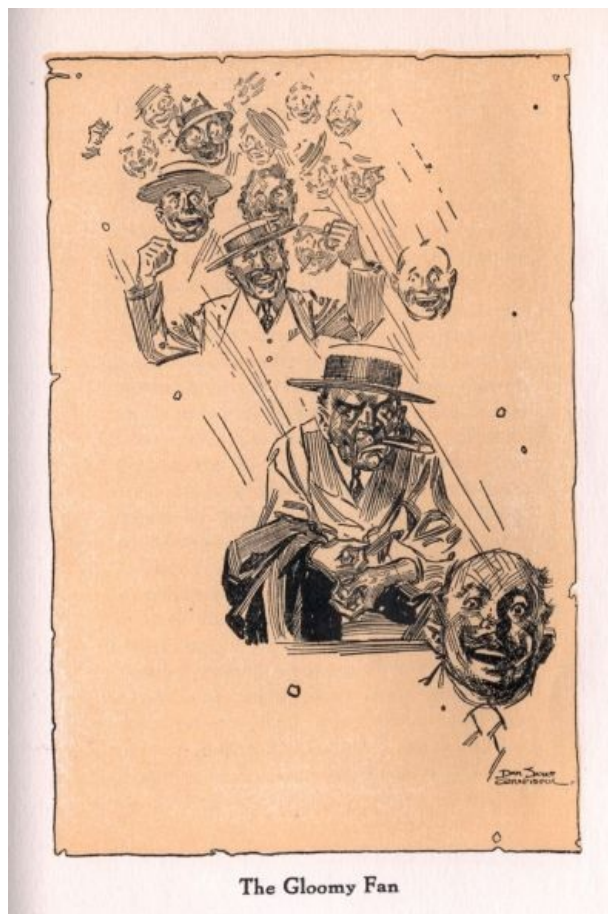
day. Yet old Hiram soon was busted, and you'll see him now, disgusted, whacking mules in worthy effort to attain his daily bread; he was diligent, deserving, from good morals never swerving but he lost his grip in business for he didn't use his head. He was always overloaded with a lot of junk corroded, he was always short of goodlets that the people seem to need; he would trust the dead beat faker till he'd bad bills by the acre, and he's now at daily labor, with his whiskers gone to seed.

There is Theodore P. Tally in his store across the alley; you will see he takes it easy, not a button does he shed; you can hear the wheels revolving in his brow while he's resolving to get rich by drawing largely on the contents of his head.

It is well to use your fingers blithely while the daylight lingers, it is well to use your trilbys with a firm and active tread; it is good to rustle daily, doing all your duties gaily, but in all your divers doings, never fail to use your head.

## THE GLOOMY FAN

O the gloomy fan is a mournful man, and he fills my soul with sorrow; he watched the play with a frown today, and he'll scowl at the game tomorrow. He ambles in when the games begin, a soul by the gods forgotten; and he eyes the play in his morbid way, and he yells out "punk!" and "rotten!" No player yet, be he colt or vet, won praise from this critic gloomy; he'll sit and scowl like a poisoned owl, and his eyes are red and rheumy; and his blood is thin and his heart is tin, and his head is stuffed with cotton; and he merely sits, throwing frequent fits, and he calls out "punk!" and "rotten!" He casts a pall on the bleachers all, and he breaks the hearts of players; he gives the dumps to his nibs the umps, who would spread him out in layers; he queers the game and he chills the frame of the man on the bases trottin', with his fish-like eyes and his mournful sighs, and his cries of "punk!" and "rotten!"



**The Gloomy Fan**

## THE PURIST



"William Henry," said the parent, and his voice was sad and stern, "I detest the slang you're using; will you never, never learn that correct use of our language is a thing to be desired? All your common bughouse phrases make the shrinking highbrow tired. There is nothing more delightful than a pure and careful speech, and the man who weighs his phrases always stacks up as a peach, while the guy who shoots his larynx in a careless slipshod way looms up as a selling plater, people brand him for a jay. In my youth my father soaked me if I entered his shebang handing out a line of language that he recognized as slang. He would take me to the cellar, down among the mice and rats, and with nice long sticks of stovewood he'd play solos on my slats. Thus I gained a deep devotion for our language undented, and it drives me nearly batty when I hear my only child springing wads of hard boiled language such as dips and yegg-men use, and I want a reformation or I'll stroke you with my shoes. Using slang is just a habit, just a cheap and dopey trick; if you hump yourself and try to, you can shake it pretty quick. Watch my curves and imitate them, weigh your words before they're sprung, and in age you'll bless the habit that you formed when you were young."

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

I went around to Thompson's store and asked him if he'd give me work—for Thompson, in the Daily Roar, was advertising for a clerk. He looked me over long and well, and then enquired: "What can you do? Do you in anything excel? If you've strong points, just name a few." His manner dashed my sunny smile, I seemed to feel my courage fall; I had to ponder for a while my strongest features to recall.

"Well, I a motor boat can sail, and I a 4-horse team can tool; and I can tell a funny tale and play a splendid game of pool. I'm good at going into debt and counting chicks before they hatch, and I can roll a cigarette or referee a wrestling match.

"There was a time," the merchant said, "when qualities like those were fine; alas, those good old days are dead! The mixer's fallen out of line! The business houses turn him down, and customers no longer sigh for one to show them through the town, and open pints of Extra Dry! The salesman of these modern days must study things he wants to sell, instead of haunting Great White Ways and painting cities wildly well. He must be sober as a judge, he must be genial and polite, from virtue's path he'll never budge, he'll keep his record snowy white. Into the world of commerce go and mark the ways of business men; forget the list of things you know and then come here and try again."

In his remarks there was no bile; with sympathy he gently laughed, and dropped me, with a kindly smile, adown the elevator shaft.

## **THE POMPOUS MAN**

I do not like the pompous man; I do not wish him for a friend; he's built on such a gorgeous plan, that he can only condescend; and when he bows his neck is sprained; he walks as though he owned the earth—as though his vest and shirt contained all that there is of Sterling Worth. With sacred joy I see him tread, upon a stray banana rind, and slide a furlong on his head and leave a trail of smoke behind.

## **INEFFICIENT MEN**

King Alfred, in a rude disguise, was resting in the cowherd's cot; the cowherd's wife was baking pies, and had her oven smoking hot.

"You watch these pies," exclaimed the frau; "I have to chase myself outdoors, and see what ails the spotted cow, the way she bawls around and roars."

King Alfred said he'd watch the pies; then started thinking of the Danes, who fooled him with their tricks and lies, and put his bleeding realm in chains. He studied plans to gain his own, fair visions rose before his eyes; he'd hew a pathway to his throne—and he forgot the matron's pies. And then the cowherd's wife came in; she smelled the smoke, she gave a shout; she biffed him with the rolling pin, and cried: "Ods fish, you useless lout! You are not worth the dynamite 'twould take to blow you off the map! Your head is not upholstered right—you are a worthless trifling chap!"

When on his throne King Alfred sat, that woman had an inward ache; she chewed the feathers from her hat because she'd made so bad a break.

It isn't safe, my friends, to say that any man's a failure flat because he cannot shovel hay, or climb a tree, or skin a cat. The man who's awkward with a saw, who cannot hammer in a nail, may in the future practice law and fill his bins with shining kale. The ne'er-do-well who cannot cook the luscious egg his hen has laid, may yet sit down and write a book that makes the big best sellers fade. The man who blacks your boots today, and envies you your rich cigar, next year may have the right of way while touring in his private car.

It isn't safe at men to jeer however awkwardly they tread; they yet may find their proper sphere—no man's a failure till he's dead.

## LIFE'S INJUSTICE

The learned man labors in his lair, and trains his telescope across a million leagues of air, among the stars to grope. He would increase the little store of knowledge we possess, and so he toils forever more, and often in distress. His whiskers and his hair are long, and in the zephyrs wave, because—alas! such things are wrong—he can't afford a shave. His trousers bag about the knees, his ancient coat's a botch; his shoes allow his feet to freeze, he bears a dollar watch. And when the grocer's store he seeks to buy a can of hash, in frigid tones the merchant speaks: "I'll have to have the cash!" And when he's dead a hundred years the people will arise, and praise the man who found new spheres cavorting through the skies. The children in the public schools will learn to bless his name, and guide their studies by his rules, and glory in his fame. And in the graveyard, where he went unhonored by the town, a big fat marble monument will hold the wise man down.

The low-brow spars a dozen rounds, before an audience, and he is loaded down with pounds, and shillings, crowns and pence. Where'er he goes the brawny Goth is lionized by all, like Caesar, when he cut a swath along the Lupercal. Promoters grovel at his feet, and offer heaps of scads, if he will condescend to meet some other bruising lads. The daily journals print his face some seven columns wide, call him the glory of the race, the nation's hope and pride. And having thus become our boast, the wonder of our age, he battles with his larynx most, and elevates the stage. In fifty years when people speak the savant's name with pride, the pug's renown you'll vainly seek—it with its owner died.

There may be consolation there for him who bravely tries to solve great problems in his lair, and make the world more wise; but when the world is really wise—may that day come eftsoons!—we'll give the men of learning pies, and give the fighters prunes.

## THE POLITICIAN

I will not say that blade is black, nor yet that white is white; for rash assertions oft come back, and put us in a plight. Some people hold that black is white, and some that white is black; to me the neutral course looks right; I take the middle track. If I should say that black is white, and white is black, today, some one would mix the two tonight—tomorrow they'd be gray. In politics I wish to thrive, and swiftly forge ahead, so dare not say that I'm alive, nor swear that I am dead. You say that fishes climb the trees, that cows on wings do fly, I can't dispute such facts as these, so patent to the eye; with any man I will agree, no odds what he defends, if he will only vote for me, and boom me to his friends.

## RANDOM SHOTS

I shot an arrow into the air, it fell in the distance, I knew not where, till a neighbor said that it killed his calf, and I had to pay him six and a half (\$6.50). I bought some poison to slay some rats, and a neighbor swore that it killed his cats; and, rather than argue across the fence, I paid him four dollars and fifty cents (\$4.50). One night I set sailing a toy balloon, and hoped it would soar till it reached the moon; but the candle fell out, on a farmer's straw, and he said I must settle or go to law. And that is the way with the random shot; it never hits in the proper spot; and the joke you spring, that you think so smart, may leave a wound in some fellow's heart.

### LOOK PLEASANT, PLEASE!

"Look pleasant, please!" the photo expert told me, for I had pulled a long and gloomy face; and then I let a wide, glad smile enfold me and hold my features in its warm embrace.

"Look pleasant, please!" My friends, we really ought to cut out these words and put them in a frame; long, long we'd search to find a better motto to guide and help us while we play the game. Look pleasant, please, when you have met reverses, when you beneath misfortune's stroke are bent, when all your hopes seem riding round in hearses—a scowling brow won't help you worth a cent. Look pleasant, please, when days are dark and dismal and all the world seems in a hopeless fix; the clouds won't go because your grief's abysmal, the sun won't shine the sooner for your kicks. Look pleasant, please, when Grip—King of diseases, has filled your system with his microbes vile; I know it's hard, but still, between your sneezes, you may be able to produce a smile. Look pleasant, please, whatever trouble galls you; a gloomy face won't cure a single pain. Look pleasant, please, whatever ill befalls you, for gnashing teeth is weary work and vain.

Look pleasant, please, and thus inspire your brothers to raise a smile and pass the same along; forget yourself and think a while of others, and do your stunt with gladsome whoop and song.

### COURAGE

Brave men are they who set their faces toward the polar bergs and floes, who roam the wild, unpeopled places, perchance to find among the snows a resting-place remote and lonely; a winding-sheet of deathless white, where elemental voices only disturb the brooding year-long night.

Brave souls are they whose man-made pinions have borne them over plains and seas, who conquered wide and new dominions, and strapped a saddle on the breeze. Their engine-driven wings are wearing new pathways through the realm of clouds; they play with death, with dauntless daring, to please the breathless, fickle crowds.

Brave men go forth to distant regions, forsaking luxury and ease; through all the years they've gone in legions, to unknown lands, o'er stormy seas; and when, by sword or fever smitten, they blithely journeyed to the grave, full well they knew their names were written down in the annals of the brave.

I am as brave as any rover described in gay, romantic screeds, but, when my fitful life is over, no epic will narrate my deeds. Condemned to silent heroism, I go my unmarked way alone, and no one hands me prune or prism, as token that my deeds are known. But yesterday my teeth were aching, and to the painless dentist's lair I took my way, unawed, unquaking, and sat down in the fatal chair. He dug around my rumbling molars with drawing-knives and burglars' tools, and cross-cut saws and patent rollers, and marlinspikes and two-foot rules. He climbed upon my lap and prodded with crowbar and with garden spade, to see that I was not defrauded of all the agony that's made. He pulled and yanked and pried and twisted, and uttered oft his battle shout, and now and then his wife assisted—till finally the teeth came out. And never once while thus he pottered around my torn and mangled jowl—not once, while I was being slaughtered, did I let out a single howl! No brass-bands played, none sang a ditty of triumph as I took my way; no signs of "Welcome to Our City" were hung across the street that day!

Thus you and I and plain, plug mortals may show a courage high and fine, and be obscure, while some jay chortles in triumph where the limelights shine.

## PLAY BALL

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If I a stock of rags should keep, I'd read up sundry books on sheep and wool and how it grows. Beneath my old bald, freckled roof, I'd store some facts on warp and woof and other things like those. I'd try to know a spinning-jack from patent churn or wagon rack, a loom from hog-tight fence; and if a man came in to buy, and asked some leading question, I could answer with some sense.

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Major Bounder was the victor on that day of stress and strife, for it seemed that many women didn't like the Colonel's wife.

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And Ganderson, across the street, is selling furniture for feet. "All day he hands out boots and shoes with cheerful cockadoodledoos. I have no reason to complain," says Ganderson; all kicks are vain; my customers don't come to hear me raising thunder by the year.

"They have some troubles of their own, and do not care to hear me groan. And so I beam around my place, and wear a smile that splits my face, and gather in the shining dime—trade's getting better all the time!"

Though days be dark and trade be tough, it's always well to make a bluff, to face the world with cheerful eye, as though the goose were hanging high. No merchant ever made a friend by dire complainings without end. And people never seek a store to hear a grouchy merchant roar; they'll patronize the wiser gent who doesn't air his discontent.

### **LOOK PLEASANT, PLEASE!**

"Look pleasant, please!" the photo expert told me, for I had pulled a long and gloomy face; and then I let a wide, glad smile enfold me and hold my features in its warm embrace.

"Look pleasant, please!" My friends, we really ought to cut out these words and put them in a frame; long, long we'd search to find a better motto to guide and help us while we play the game. Look pleasant, please, when you have met reverses, when you beneath misfortune's stroke are bent, when all your hopes seem riding round in hearses—a scowling brow won't help you worth a cent. Look pleasant, please, when days are dark and dismal and all the world seems in a hopeless fix; the clouds won't go because your grief's abysmal, the sun won't shine the sooner for your kicks. Look pleasant, please, when Grip—King of diseases, has filled your system with his microbes vile; I know it's hard, but still, between your sneezes, you may be able to produce a smile. Look pleasant, please, whatever trouble galls you; a gloomy face

won't cure a single pain. Look pleasant, please, whatever ill befalls you, for gnashing teeth is weary work and vain.

Look pleasant, please, and thus inspire your brothers to raise a smile and pass the same along; forget yourself and think a while of others, and do your stunt with gladsome whoop and song.

## **COURAGE**

Brave men are they who set their faces toward the polar bergs and floes, who roam the wild, unpeopled places, perchance to find among the snows a resting-place remote and lonely; a winding-sheet of deathless white, where elemental voices only disturb the brooding year-long night.

Brave souls are they whose man-made pinions have borne them over plains and seas, who conquered wide and new dominions, and strapped a saddle on the breeze. Their engine-driven wings are wearing new pathways through the realm of clouds; they play with death, with dauntless daring, to please the breathless, fickle crowds.

Brave men go forth to distant regions, forsaking luxury and ease; through all the years they've gone in legions, to unknown lands, o'er stormy seas; and when, by sword or fever smitten, they blithely journeyed to the grave, full well they knew their names were written down in the annals of the brave.

I am as brave as any rover described in gay, romantic screeds, but, when my fitful life is over, no epic will narrate my deeds. Condemned to silent heroism, I go my unmarked way alone, and no one hands me prune or prism, as token that my deeds are known. But yesterday my teeth were aching, and to the painless dentist's lair I took my way, unawed, unquaking, and sat down in the fatal chair. He dug around my rumbling molars with drawing-knives and burglars' tools, and cross-cut saws and patent rollers, and marlinspikes and two-foot rules. He climbed upon my lap and prodded with crowbar and with garden spade, to see that I was not defrauded of all the agony that's made. He pulled and yanked and pried and twisted, and uttered oft his battle shout, and now and then his wife assisted—till finally the teeth came out. And never once while thus he pottered around my torn and mangled jowl—not once, while I was being slaughtered, did I let out a single howl! No brass-bands played, none sang a ditty of triumph as I took my way; no signs of "Welcome to Our City" were hung across the street that day!

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## **PLAY BALL**

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## BUCCANEERS

### (The Pirate of 1612)

Oh, once again my merry men and I are on the water with prospects fair, with hearts to dare, and souls athirst for slaughter! Before the breeze we scour the seas,



our vessel low and raking, and men who find our ship behind in mortal fear are quaking. We love the fight and our delight grows as the strife increases; we slash and slay and hew our way to win the golden pieces. To hear, to feel the clang of steel! Ah, that, my men, is rapture! Our hearts are stern, we sink, we burn, we kill the men we capture! Why mercy show when well we know that when our course is ended, we all must die—they'll hang us high, unshaven, undefended! Ah, wolves are we that roam the sea, and rend with savage fury; as soft our mind, our hearts as kind will be judge and jury! To rob and slay we go our way, our vessel low and raking; and men who hail our ebon sail may well be chilled and quaking!

### **(The Pirate of 1912)**

My heart is light and glad tonight, and life seems good and merry; my coffer groans with golden bones I've pulled from the unwary. Ah, raiment fine and gems are mine, and costly bibs and tuckers; I got my rocks for mining stocks—I worked the jays and suckers. What though my game is going lame—a jolt the courts just gave me—my lawyers gay will find a way to beat the law and save me. I'll just lie low a year or so until the row blows over, then I'll come back to my old shack and be again in clover! I've fifty ways to work the jays and there's a fortune in it! The sucker crop will never stop, for one is born each minute.



**Buccaneers**

### **ST. PATRICK'S DAY**

Away with tears and sordid fears, no trouble will we borrow, but shed our woes like winter clothes—it's Patrick's day tomorrow. With clubs and rakes we'll chase the snakes, and send the toads a-flying, and we'll be seen with ribbons green, all other hues decrying. In grass-green duds we'll plant the spuds, where they can do no growing; with flat and sharp we'll play the harp, and keep the music going. Then let us yell, for all is well, the world's devoid of sorrow; the toads are snared, the snakes are scared, it's Patrick's day tomorrow.

## NAMING THE BABY

First I thought I'd call him Caesar; but my Uncle Ebenezer said that name was badly hoodoed—wasn't Julius Caesar slain? Then I said, "I'll call him Homer"; but my second cousin Gomer answered; "Homer was a pauper, and he wrote his rhymes in vain." Long I pondered, worried greatly seeking names both sweet and stately, something proud and high and noble, such as ancient heroes bore. "I shall call him Alexander—" but an innocent bystander muttered, "Aleck was a tyrant, and he splashed around in gore." And my aunts said: "Only trust us, and we'll name him Charles Augustus, which is princely and becoming, and will end this foolish fuss." But my Cousin James objected: "Nothing else can be expected, if you give him such a handle, but that folks will call him Gus." "Let us call the darling Reggie," said my cheerful sister Peggy, "which is short for Rex or Roland or some other kingly name." But my Uncle George protested. "Surely," said he, "you but jested: never yet did youth named Reggie scale the shining height of fame." Thus it was for weeks together, and I often wondered whether other parents ever suffered as I did upon the rack. All my uncles and my cousins and my aunts gave tips by dozens, so I named the babe John Henry, and for short we call him Jack.

## WON AT LAST

### I.

"Rise, Charles De Jones, rise, if you please; you don't look well upon your knees. You say that I must be your bride; in all the whole blamed countryside no other girl could fill your life with joy and sunshine, as your wife. What can you offer—you who seek my hand? You draw ten bucks a week. Shall I your Cheap John wigwam share, the daughter of a millionaire, who early learned in wealth to bask? Shall I get down to menial task? Go chase yourself! My hand shall go to one who has a roll of dough!"

Thus spake Letitia Pinkham Brown, the fairest girl in all the town. Her lover, crushed beneath the weight of blows from an unkindly fate, rended his garments and his hair and turned away in dumb despair.

### II.

Our hero's feet, of course, were cold, and yet his heart was strong and bold. "It will not heal this wound of mine," he said, "to murmur and repine. Though sad my heart, I'll sing and smile, and try to earn a princely pile; and having got the bullion, then I'll ask her for her hand again."

He quenched the yearnings of his heart and plunged into the clanging mart as agent for a handsome book instructing women how to cook. His volume sold to beat the band and wealth came in hand over hand; but ever, as he scoured the town, he thought of "Titia Pinkham Brown, and scalding tears anon would rise and almost cook his steely eyes.

### III.

Once more a lover knelt before Letitia Pinkham Brown and swore to cherish her while life endures, "Come out of it," she said, "I'm yours."

He rose, a man of stately frame; J. Roland Percival his name. He had a high, commanding mien, and seemed possessed of much long green; in costly fabrics he was dressed, and diamonds flashed upon his breast.

"And so you're mine!" J. Roland cried. "You'll be my own and only bride! Oh, joy, oh, rapture! I am It! Excuse me while I throw a fit. Come to my arms, my precious dear! My darling love—but who comes here?"

De Jones stood in the arbor door, and deadly was the smile he wore.

#### IV.

J. Roland cried in abject fear: "Great Scott! What are you doing here!"

"Well may you ask," said Charles De Jones, in bitter, caustic, scathing tones. "You've dodged me for a dozen weeks, but now—'tis the avenger speaks—you'll have to pay up what you owe, or to the county jug you'll go."

Then turning to the maiden fair, De Jones went on: "That villain there! Four months ago I sold that man a cook book on th' installment plan. He gave his solemn pledge to pay, for seven years, two cents a day. He made two payments, then he flunked. I've hung around the place he bunked, I've chased him through the rain and sleet, I've boned him on the public street, I've shadowed him by night and day, but not a kopeck would he pay. I'm weary of these futile sprints; I'll roast him in the public prints, and give him such a bum renown he'll be a byword in the town."

She viewed her lover in amaze, and cold and scornful was her gaze.

"And so the book you handed me, to plight our troth," with ire said she, "you bought from Charlie here on tick? Skidoo! A deadbeat makes me sick! I'll never marry any jay who can't dig up two cents a day!"

#### V.

"I have a bundle in the bank," said Charles, as on his knee he sank, "and all of it is yours to blow, so let us to the altar go."

"I've learned some things," said L. P. Brown, "and now I would not turn you down if you were busted flat, my dear; I've learned that love's the one thing here that's worth a continental dam\*; you ask for me—well, here I am!"

\* Dam—A former copper coin.—Dictionary.

### THE GREATEST THING

The orator shrieks and clamors, and kicks up a lot of dust, and larrups and whacks and hammers the weary old sinful Trust; the congressman chirps and chatters, pursuing his dream of fame; but there's only one thing that matters, and that is the baseball game. The pessimist rails and wrangles, and takes up a lot of room and tells, in a voice that jangles, his view of the nation's doom; we shy at his why and wherefore, and balk at his theories lame; for there's only one thing we care for, and that is the baseball game. The rakers of muck are busy, with shovels and spades and screens, a-dishing up stuff that's dizzy, in the popular magazines; these fellows are ever present, with stories of graft and shame, and there's only one thing that's pleasant, and that is the baseball game. Some people are in a passion, and have been, for many weeks, because the decrees of fashion make women look much like freaks; why worry about the dress of the frivolous modern dame? There's only one thing impressive, and that is the baseball game.

### THE UMPIRE

Be kind to the umpire who bosses the game, whose doom is too frequently sealed; it serves no good purpose to camp on his frame, and strew him all over the field.

The umpire is human—which fact you may doubt—a creature of tissues and blood; he pales at the sound of your bloodthirsty shout, and shrinks from the sickening thud. He may have a vine covered cottage like yours, a home where a loving wife dwells; and when he's on duty the fear she endures is something no chronicler tells. She hears from the bleachers a thunderous roar, and thinks it announces his fate. "I reckon," she sighs, "he'll come home on a door, or perhaps in a basket or crate."

Be kind to the umpire; his hopes are your own; he's doing the best that he can; his head isn't elm and his heart isn't stone; he's just like the neighboring man. Don't call him a bonehead or say his work's punk, or that he's a robber insist; don't pelt him with castings or vitrified junk, or smite him with bludgeon or fist.

Suppose you are doing the best you know how, and striving your blamedest to please, and bystanders throw at your head a dead cow, or break your legs off at the knees. Suppose you are trying your best to be fair, and critics come up in a crowd, set fire to your whiskers, and pull out your hair, and put you in shape for a shroud. If people refused to believe that you try to give them their fifty cents' worth, you'd be so discouraged you'd sit down and cry, and say there's no justice on earth.

Be kind to the umpire and give him a chance to live to a happy old age; reward him with praise and encouraging glance when he does his devoir on his stage. Save up your dead cats for the scavenger man, your cabbage for cigarette smoke; the umpire is doing the best that he can—he shouldn't be killed as a joke.

## **THE TWO MERCHANTS**

Methinks that clerics, the whole world through, will do much as their bosses do, for which they're not to blame; for emulation is a part, in office, drawing room and mart, of this weird human game.

I often go to Jimpson's store; I blow in twice a day or more to buy my prunes and things. Old Jimpson is a joyous jay; he hustles around the livelong day, he whistles and he sings. I like to watch the blamed old chump; I like to see him on the jump, he is so full of steam; and all his clerks have caught his style; they hump around with cheerful smile, and do not loaf or dream.

When I blow into Jimpson's lair they all seem glad to see me there and anxious for my trade; they give me brisk attention then, and sing the chorus, "Come again!" when from the shop I fade.

Jim Clinker has another store. Jim Clinker's head seem always sore, he grumbles and he scowls; and all his clerks have caught that trick; they gloom around the store like sick or broken-hearted owls. When I go in to buy some tea, a languid salesman waits on me as though it were a crime to rouse him from his sour repose, his brooding over secret woes, and occupy his time.

If Clinker's clerks to Jimpson went, they soon would shake their discontent, and carol like the birds; if Jimpson's clerks for Clinker toiled their optimism would be spoiled; they'd hand out doleful words.

And so I say, and say some more, that all the salesmen in a store will emulate their boss; if he is sour on all the works, you may be sure his string of clerks will be a total loss.

## **TODAY'S MOTTO**

"Love your neighbor as yourself," was a motto famed of yore; now it's placed upon the shelf, with about a thousand more; now the child on mother's knee, sees the lovelight in her eyes, while she says: "Where'er you be, boil the germs and swat the flies!" In the olden golden days, preachers told the sacred tale of poor Jonah's erring ways, and his journey in the whale; of the lions in their den, and of Daniel, good and wise; now they preach this creed to men: "Boil the germs and swat the flies!" When my dying eyelids close, and the world is growing dim, while I'm turning up my toes, I may ask to hear a hymn; and the people by my bed, they will sing, with streaming eyes, while each humbly bows his head: "Boil the germs and swat the flies!"

## SOME PROTESTS

I sit in my cushioned motor, indulging in wise remarks, concerning the outraged voter crushed down by the money sharks. We burdened and weary toilers are ground by the iron wheels of soulless, despotic spoilers, and bruised by the tyrants' heels. They're flaunting their corsair mottoes while treading upon our toes, and some of us can't have autos or trotters or things like those. I know of a worthy neighbor who lives in a humble cot, and after long years of labor he hasn't a single yacht!

While eating my dinner humble—of porterhouse steak and peas, and honey from bees that bumble, and maybe imported cheese—I think, with a bitter feeling, of insolent money kings, who, drunk with their wealth and reeling, condemn me to eat such things. The pirate and banknote monger still gloat o'er their golden stacks, while I must appease my hunger with oysters and canvasbacks. The plutocrat has his chuffer, a minion of greed and pelf; the poor man must weep and suffer, and drive his own car himself.

The plutocrat homeward totters with diamonds to load his girls, and meanwhile my wife and daughters must struggle along with pearls. In silk, with a trademark Latin, the plutocrat's wife appears, and I can afford but satin to tog out my dimpled dears. The plute has a splendid palace, with pictures and Persian rugs; he drinks from a silver chalice and laughs at the poor men's jugs, and I, in my lowly cottage, that's shadowed by tree and vine, fill up on mock turtle pottage, with only three kinds of wine!

It's time for a revolution, to punish the wealthy ones! I'll furnish the elocution if you'll bring the bombs and guns!

## THE WORKERS

Here's to the man who labors and does it with a song! He stimulates his neighbors and helps the world along!

I like the men who do things, who hustle and achieve; the men who saw and glue things, and spin and dig and weave.

Man earns his bread in sweat or in blood since Adam sinned; and bales of hay are better than are your bales of wind.

Man groans beneath his burden, beneath the chain he wears; and still the toiler's guerdon is worth the pain he bears.

For there's no satisfaction beneath the bending sky like that the man of action enjoys when night is nigh.

To look back o'er the winding and dark and rocky road, and know you bore your grinding and soul-fatiguing load—

As strong men ought to bear it, through all the stress and strife—that's the reward of merit—that is the balm of life!

I like the men who do things, who plow and sow and reap, who build and delve and hew things while dreamers are asleep.

## THE UTILITARIAN

We sat around the stove discoursing of mighty deeds that we had done; of struggling up the Alps and forcing our way to summits then unwon; of fights with lions and hyenas, of facing grim and ghostly shapes, of dodging bailiffs and subpoenas, and many perilous escapes.

And one sat by, distraught and gloomy, and listened to each stirring tale; his beard was long, his eyes were rheumy, his nose was red, his aspect stale. And this old pilgrim, dour and hoary, on all our pleasure drew the noose; for, at the end of every story, he'd sadly ask: "What was the use?"

I told of how I went a-sailing to Europe in an open boat; the billows raved, the winds were wailing till I could scarcely keep afloat. The salt sea spray was on my features; I heard King Neptune's angry shouts; I fought with whales and other creatures, and was pursued by waterspouts. I sailed those seas for weeks together, and bore my life in either hand, and very often doubted whether I'd ever bring my boat to land. But still, resolved on winning glory, I sailed along like Captain Loose. The old man broke into my story, and mildly asked: "What was the use?"

Jones told of how, appareled thinly (the thirst for glory warmed his breast), he scaled the heights of Mount McKinley and placed our flag upon its crest. He placed the flag to thwart the scorner, the doubter, and the man obtuse; and then the old man in the corner looked up and asked: "What was the use?"

Brown told of how a cask he entered and floated o'er the Horseshoe Falls, and how all eyes for months were centered on him; in cottages and halls the people joined to sing his praises or level at his head abuse; the old man heard his burning phrases, and sadly asked: "What was the use?"

We smote him roundly in our anger, resolved to cook his ancient goose, and still, above the din and clangor, we heard him ask, "What is the use?"

## **FIRESIDE ADVENTURES**

It is not mine the world to roam; when I was born the Fates decreed that I should always stay at home, and deal in hay and bran and feed. For mighty deeds I have no chance while I am rustling in my store; and yet my life has its romance, and I've adventures by the score.

For evening comes, and then, serene, to my abode I take my way, and grab this good old magazine, and leave the world of bran and hay. Through Arctic wildernesses cold, I follow the explorers' train, or seeking go for pirate's gold along the storied Spanish Main. Oft, by the miner's struggling lamp, I count the nuggets I have won; or in the cowboys' wind-swept camp indulge in wild athletic fun. The big round world is all for me, brought to me by the sprightly tale; o'er every strange and distant sea my phantom ship has learned to sail, I travel in all neighborhoods where daring man has left his tracks; I am the hunter in the woods, I am the woodman with his ax. I am the grim, effective sleuth who goes forth in a rare disguise, and quickly drags the shining truth from out a mountain range of lies. I am the watcher of the roads, the highwayman of wold and moor, relieving rich men of their loads, to give a rakeoff to the poor. I am the hero of the crowds, as, on my trusty aeroplane, I cleave a pathway through the clouds, to Milky Way and Charles's Wain. I am the pitcher known to fame; I pitch as though I worked by Steam, and in the last and crucial game I win the pennant for my team. I am the white man's final hope, on whom his aspirations hinge, and, notwithstanding all the dope, I knock the daylights from the dinge.

I am the man of action when, with lamplight gloating o'er the scene, I bask at leisure in my den, and read my fav'rite magazine. And so all day I stay at home attending to the treadmill grind; but when night comes afar I roam, and leave the workday world behind.

## **HUNTING A JOB**

"I would like a situation. I have hunted for it long," said a youth who looked discouraged; "everything that is is wrong; there is no demand for labor, no respect for willing hands, hence the people who are idle are as frequent as the sands. I have waited in the pool hall through the long and weary day, and no lucrative position seemed to come along that way; I have stood upon the corner, smoking at my trusty cob, but no merchant came to hire me, though all knew I had no job; I have sat on every doorstep that against me wasn't fenced, you could scarcely find a building that I haven't leaned against; I have smoked a thousand stogies, I have chewed a cord of plug, I have shaken dice with dozens, I have touched each cider jug, to sustain my drooping spirits while I waited for a berth, with some up-to-date employer who'd appreciate my worth. But the world is out of kilter and the country's out of plumb,

and the poor downtrodden voter finds that things are on the bum."

### **OLD AND NEW**

New songs are made in long array; we learn and sing them,—for a day, and then they fade and die away. But when the long, sad day is through, refreshing as the evening dew, are those old songs our fathers knew. New books, in rich and gorgeous dress, are coming hourly from the press, and charm by all their loveliness. But when from bench or desk we roam, to find the resting place at home, we read the old, old treasured tome. New friends are made at every reach of our long road to Styx's beach; new friends of warm and pleasant speech. But when life's sun is in the West, and feet are tired and hearts oppressed, the old time friend seems always best.

### **THE HANDY EDITOR**

When a man has got a grievance that is keeping him awake, some old moldy, tiresome trouble that has made his innards ache, then he comes a-callyhooting to the printing-office door, for he wants to share his trouble with the humble editore.

When a man has got a hobby that has put him on the bum, then the people flee a-shrieking when they chance to see him come; but he knows one weary mortal who must suffer and endure, so he comes to share his theories with the lowly editure.

When a man has got a story that with age was stiff and stark when old Father Noah told it to the people in the ark, then he comes, a-bubbling over, to the Weekly Bugle's lair, for he wants to share his gladness with the soulful editaire.

O, he's always freely giving of the things that make us tired, and he's often pretty stingy with the things that are desired; he might bring a ray of sunlight to a life that's sad and drear, if he'd give the absent treatment to the heartsick editeer.

### **THE SLEEPER WAKES**

Perhaps you've heard of old Tom Tinkle, who went to sleep like Rip Van Winkle, and slept for thirty years; he woke the other day, and gazing around him on the sights amazing, his soul was filled with fears.



The Sleeper Wakes

### The Sleeper Wakes

"What world is this?" he asked, in terror; "what life, of which I'm now a sharer? What globe do we infest? Oh, is it Saturn, Mars or Venus? How many planets are between us and good old Mother Earth? What mighty bird is that a-soaring—I seem to hear its pinions roaring, it scoots along so fast? Old Earth, with all her varied features, had no such big, outlandish creatures around, from first to last."

"It is an airship, Thomas Tinkle," I answered him; "a modern wrinkle, just one of many score which were by scientists invented to make the people more contented since you began to snore."

I told him of the wireless system and other wonders—he had missed 'em, since he was sound asleep; of submarines which sink and travel serenely o'er the mud and gravel beneath the raging deep.

"You can't convince me," said the waker, "that 'tis the earth—you are a faker, and deal in fairy tales; no man could soar away up yonder, like some blamed albatross or condor on metal wings or sails. And as for sending long dispatches from Buffalo clear down to Natchez, the same not being wired, if that's done here it's not the planet whereon I lived when mortals ran it; your stories make me tired. But what are these rip-snorting wagons? We must be in the land of dragons! I never saw the like! So riotously are they scooting, so wildly are they callyhooting they fairly burn the pike!"

I told him they were merely autos whose drivers lived up to their mottoes that speed laws are in vain; and other miracles amazing with delicate and pointed phrasing I started to explain. I told of triumphs most astounding, of things which should be quite confounding to resurrected men; but in the middle of my soaring I heard old Thomas Tinkle snoring—he'd gone to sleep again.

### IN HORSELAND

A well-fed horse drove into town, behind a span of ancient men, whose knees were sore from falling down and striving to get up again; their poor old ribs were bare of meat, and they had sores upon their necks; there wasn't, on the village street, a tougher looking pair of wrecks. And so they shambled up the street, a spectre harnessed with a ghost; the horse descended from his seat, and left them standing by a post. And there they stood through half the night, and shook and shivered in the



tugs, the while their master, in delight, was shaking dice with other plugs. And there they died, of grief and cold—no more they'll haul the heavy plow; their master said, when he was told: "They cost blamed little, anyhow!"

## INAUGURATION DAY, 1913

Now Washington is swarming with men of sterling worth, all bent upon reforming the heaven and the earth; they come from far Savannah, they come from Texarkana, and points in Indiana, with loud yet seemly mirth. They're come from far Alaska, where show is heaped on snow; they've journeyed from Nebraska where commoners do grow; the famed, the wise, the witty, the timid, and the gritty have come from Kansas City and also Broken Bow. Their battle shout is thrilling as they go marching by, and every man is willing at once to bleed and die; to guarantee this nation a fine Administration he'd take a situation or kill himself with pie. The editors of journals are marching in the throng; and old and war-worn colonels are teetering along; and friends of Andrew Jackson and Jefferson, now waxin' a trifle old, are taxin' their dusty throats with song. No wonder Woodrow Wilson, as this great crowd appears, his silken kerchief spills on some proud and grateful tears; the ranks of colonels face him—such loyalty must brace him, and from dejection chase him in future pregnant years. No office need go begging before this mighty host; he need not go a-legging for masters of the post; he has to do no pleading; they bring the help he's needing; of dying and of bleeding they make a modest boast. And so he views the strangers from Maryland and Maine, the tall, bewhiskered grangers who till the Western plain; the men from desks and foyers, the sheepmen and the sawyers, the lumberjacks and lawyers, all come to ease the strain; he views the dusty millers from Minnesota land; the shining social pillars from Boston's sacred strand; the men of hill and valley around his standard rally (and on the snaps keep tally), each with a helping hand. "My fears are in the distance," is Woodrow's grateful song; "what foe can make resistance against this mighty throng? So let us, lawyer, farmer, ex-plute, and social charmer, gird on our snow-white armor, and paralyze each wrong!"

## PRAYER OF THE HEATHEN

Before a wooden idol two heathen knelt and prayed; it was their day of bridal, the savage and the maid. "We two have come together, to journey through the years, in calm and stormy weather, in sunshine and in tears. O idol most exalted, protect us on our way, and may our feet be halted from going far astray. This maid," the bridegroom muttered, "is fresh from Nature's hands; her boudoir is not cluttered with strings and pins and bands; she does not paint her features, or wear rings on her paws; she's one of Nature's creatures, and lives by Nature's laws. Her foot, she does not force it into a misfit shoe; nor does she wear a corset to squeeze her frame in two. That frame has got upon it no clothes she does not need; she wears no bughouse bonnet that makes man's bosom bleed. This maid, this weaker vessel, has movements swift and free, and she can run and wrestle, and she can climb a tree. And it she shows a yearning to emulate the whites, our good old customs spurning, pursuing vain delights, O idol stern and oaken, take thou thy sceptre dread, and may the same be broken upon her silly head."

"This bridegroom," said the maiden, "untutored is and rude, but still he is not laden with habits vain and lewd. I hope to see him trundle each evening to his kraal, and not blow in his bundle for long cold pints of ale. With my consent he'll never get next the slot machine, or use his best endeavor to burn up gasoline. No tailor hath arrayed him, no valet hath defaced! He stands as Nature made him, broad-chested, slim of waist! And he can swim the Niger, or rob a lion's lair, or whip a full-grown tiger at Reno or elsewhere! And if he would abandon our simple heathen ways, and learn to place his hand on some foolish white men's craze, O idol, in your dudgeon, obey his bride's behest! Take up your big spiked bludgeon, and swat him galley-west!"

## THEORY AND PRACTICE

In public I talk of Milton and give him ecstatic praise, and say that I love to ponder for hours o'er his living lays; I speak of his noble epic, that jewel which proudly shines, and quote from his splendid sonnets (I know maybe twenty lines); but when I am home John Milton is left on the bookcase shelf; he's rather too dull for reading—you know how it is yourself; to lighten the weight of sorrow that over my spirit hangs, I dig up the works of Irwin or Nesbit or Kendrick Bangs.

I talk much of Thomas Hardy when I'm with the cultured crowd, and say that few modern writers so richly have been endowed; I speak of his subtle treatment of life and its grim distress, and quote from "The Trumpet Major" or spiel a few lines from "Tess." But when I am in my chamber, where no one can see me read, remote from the highbrow people and all that the highbrows need, I never have known a longing to reach for the Hardy tomes; I put in a joyous evening with Watson and Sherlock Holmes.

I talk a good deal of Wagner in parlor and drawing room, and speak of the gorgeous fabrics he wove on his wondrous loom, the fabrics of sound and beauty, the wonderful scroll of tone, and say that this mighty genius remains in a class alone. I whistle "The Pilgrims' Chorus," and chortle of "Lohengrin," and say that all other music is merely a venial sin. But when at my own piano Susannah sits down to play, I beg her to cut out Wagner and shoo all his noise away. "I'm weary and worn and beaten; my spirits," I say, "are low; so give us some helpful music—a few bars of Jungle Joe!"

## FOOL AND SAGE

The fool and his money are parted, not long did they stay in cahoots; but the fool is the cheeriest-hearted and gladdest of human galoots. His neighbor is better and wiser, six figures might tell what he's worth; but O how folks wish the old miser would fall off the edge of the earth!

## THEN AND NOW

In olden times the gifted bard found life a pathway rough and hard. Starvation often was his goad, and some dark garret his abode, and there, when nights were long and chill, he sadly plied his creaking quill. He wrote of shepherds and their crooks, of verdant vales and babbling brooks, displaying artfully his lore—while bailiffs threatened at the door. And having wrought his best, he took with trembling hands his little book to lay before some haughty lord, and cringe around for a reward. Some times, perchance, he got a purse; anon he only drew a curse; and often in a prison yard the weary, debt-incumbered bard was herded with the squalid throng, and damned the shining peaks of song.

The world moves on. The bard today finds life a soft and easy way. If he elects to cut his hair he has the price and some to spare. Attired in purple, he goes by with hard boiled shirt and scrambled tie, and you can hear his bullion clank as he goes prancing to the bank. He writes no tame, insipid books of dairy maids or shepherds' crooks, of singing birds or burbling streams, or any other worn-out themes. Anon he touches up his lyre to boost a patent rubber tire, or sings a noble song that thrills concerning someone's beeswax pills. His lyre's a wonder to behold; its frame is pearl, its strings are gold. His sheetiron laurels never fade; the grocer's glad to get his trade. While he can make the muses sweat he'll never go to jail for debt.

He calmly puts his harp away, when he has toiled a 10-hour day, and softly sighs: "There's nothing wrong with this old graft of deathless song!"

## THE SLEEPER

They have planted him deep in a grave by the fence, where the sand burs are thick and the jimson is dense; he's sleeping at last, and as still as a mouse, held down by a boulder as big as a house, and the whangdoodle mourns in a neighboring tree, with a voice that's as sad as the sorrowing sea. They have planted him deep in the silt and the sand, with appropriate airs by the fife and drum band, and they joyfully yell when the sad rites are o'er: "Gosh ding him, he's taking his straw votes no more."

## FOOLING AROUND

Old Griggins the grocer, has gone to the dump, and people who knew him say he was a chump; his prospects were fine when he opened his store, and customers brought him their bullion and ore, and bought his potatoes and pumpkins and peas, his milk and molasses, his chicory, cheese. But soon they went elsewhere to blow in their plunks, for Griggins turned out such a foolish old hunk; while others were rustling for shilling and pound, old Griggins the grocer kept fooling around.

He stood in the alley and ranted and tore, debating the tariff with some one next door; he roasted the tariff on spigots and spoons while customers waited to purchase some prunes; he argued that congress is out for the pelf, and left his trade palace to wait on itself. And patrons got huffy, their molars they ground, while Griggins the grocer was fooling around.

Old Griggins kept cases on sprinters and pugs, and talked of their records, while people with jugs were wishing he'd fill them with syrup or oil, and cut out his yarns, which were starting to spoil; he'd talk about Jeffries or Johnsing or Gotch for forty-five minutes or more by the watch, while customers jingled their coin in his store, and waited and waited, and sweated and swore. At last they would leave his old joint on the bound, while Griggins the grocer was fooling around.

The man who would win in these strenuous days must tend to his knitting in forty-five ways, be eager and hustling, with vim all athrob, his mind not afield, but intent on his job. The sheriff will come with his horse and his hound to talk with the man who keeps fooling around.

## GUESS WHO!

He is the press and the people, the sultan who rules the Turks; he is the bell in the steeple, and he is the whole blamed works. He is the hill and valley, the dawning, the dusk, the moon; he is the large white alley, he is the man in the moon. He is the soothing slumber, he is the soul awake, he is the big cucumber, that gives us the bellyache. He is the fire that quickens, the company that insures; he is the ill that sickens, and he is the thing that cures. He is the ruling Russian, and we are the groveling skates; he is the constitution, and he's the United States.

## TRYING AGAIN

No boarding house, tavern or inn was in sight; so into a cavern went Bruce, in sore plight. By enemies hunted, a price on his head, and all his schemes shunted, he wished he was dead. "In vain my endeavor, repulsed my demands; I'll try again never—I throw up my hands!" And so he lay sighing and cussing his fate, and wished he was lying stone dead in a crate. A spider was spinning its web by the wall; now losing, now winning, now taking a fall; though often it tumbled, it breathed not a sob, nor crawfished nor grumbled, but stuck to its job. Then Bruce opened wider his eyes and exclaimed: "That dodgasted spider has made me ashamed! I'm but a four-flusher to sit here and whine! This morning must usher in triumphs of mine!"

He canned all his wailing and cut out the frown, and went forth a-smiling, and won a large crown!

And legions of fellows with tears in their eyes, who wear out their bellows with groaning and sighs, who think they are goners, ordained to the dump, would harvest some honors if they would just hump! The spiders are teaching, the same as of old; the spiders are preaching a gospel of gold: "Though baffled and broken, O children of men, let grief be unspoken—go at it again!"

## ICONOCLASM

King Skeptic wears his modern crown, his stern, destructive law prevails; he's tearing all our idols down, disproving all our fav'rite tales. Is there a legend you hold dear, some legend of the long ago? King Skeptic hears it with a sneer, and digs up history to show that things of that sort never chanced, and never could, and never will. "We have," he says, "so much advanced, that fairy tales don't fill the bill. No faked-up tales of knightly acts, no Robin Hood romance for me; the only things worth while are Facts, Statistics, and the Rule of Three."

With diagrams he shows full well that old-time tales are things to scorn; that such a man as William Tell, in liklihood, was never born. If Gessler lived and had a hat, he didn't hang it on a pole; the rules of Euclid show us that—so goes King Skeptic's rigmarole. But, granting that he had a lid, and hung it on a pole awhile, and granting that the people did bow down to reverence that tile, this does not prove that William shot an apple through an apple's core, and so the anecdote is rot—don't let us hear it any more.

One-eyed Horatius never held the bridge beside his comrades bold, while Sextus and his foemen yelled—because there was no bridge to hold. With Fact King Skeptic pounds your head, and prods you with it to the hilt, and shows Horatius had been dead ten years before the bridge was built. "He fell not in the Tiber's foam, performed no feats of arms sublime. I know! The city clerk of Rome sent me the records of that time!"

Mazeppa's ride was all a joke, as all the statisticians know; the horse he rode was city broke, and stopped whene'er he whispered "whoa." Most luckily, the village vet wrote down the facts with rugged power; Mazeppa simply made a bet the horse could go three miles an hour; he wasn't strapped upon its back, no perils dire did him befall; he rode around a kite-shaped track, and lost his bet, and that was all.

And so it goes; you can't relate a legend of heroic acts but that the Skeptic then will state objections based on Deadly Facts. Romance is but a total loss, and all the joy of life departs; we've nothing left but Charlie Ross, and he'll turn up, to break our hearts.

## GATHERING ROSES

I've gathered roses and the like, in many glad and golden Junes; but now, as down the world I hike, my weary hands are filled with prunes. I've gathered roses o'er and o'er, and some were white, and some were red; but when I took them to the store, the grocer wanted eggs instead. I gathered roses long ago, in other days, in other scenes; and people said: "You ought to go, and dig the weeds out of your beans." A million roses bloomed and died, a million more will die today; that man is wise who lets them slide, and gathers up the bales of hay.

## THE FUTURE SPORT

The airship is a thing achieved; it has its rightful place, as well as any autocart

that ever ran a race. The farmer, in the coming years, when eggs to town he brings, will flop along above the trees, upon his rusty wings. The doctor, when he has a call, from patients far or near, will quickly strap his pinions on, and hit the atmosphere. And airship racing then will be the sport to please the crowds; there'll be racecourses overhead, and grandstands in the clouds. The umpire, on his patent wings, will hover here and there; the fans, with rented parachutes, will prance along the air; the joyous shrieks of flying sports will keep the welkin hot, and soaring cops will blithely chase the scorching aeronaut. We'll soon be living overhead, our families and all; and then we'll only need the earth to land on when we fall.

## **TAKING ADVICE**

A forty-foot constrictor once was swallowing a goat, and having lots of trouble, for the horns stuck in his throat. And then a warthog came along, and said: "Oh, foolish snake! To swallow all your victuals whole is surely a mistake. It puts your stomach out of plumb, your liver out of whack, and gives you all the symptoms in the latest almanac. If serpents for abundant health would have a fair renown, they'll chew a mouthful half an hour before they take it down. Eat slowly, with a tranquil mind and heart serene beneath, and always use a finger bowl, and always pick your teeth. I'm reading up Woods Hutchinson and Fletcher and those guys, and following the rules they make, which are extremely wise, and oh, it pains me to the quick, and jars my shrinking soul, to see a foolish snake like you absorbing dinners whole!"

The serpent got his dinner down, with whiskers, horns and feet, then slept three weeks; then looked around for something more to eat. And, having killed a jabberwock, and found it fat and nice, he thought he'd eat according to the warthog's sage advice.

Ah, never more that snake is seen upon his native heath! The little serpents tell the tale of how he starved to death!

Moral:

The counsel of the great may help the man next door, 'tis true, and yet turn out to be a frost when followed up by you.

## **POST-MORTEM INDUSTRY**

You've heard of Richard Randle Rox? He died; they put him in a box, and lowered him into a grave, and said: "He'll surely now behave."

For years this fertile Richard penned books, rhymes and essays without end. His helpful, moral dope was seen in every uplift magazine, and people used to wonder how the wheels within that bulging brow produced such countless bales of thought, such wondrous wealth of tomyrot; and folks chewed cloves and cotton waste to try to take away the taste.

At last he died before his time—killed off by an ingrowing rhyme. The mourners laid him on his pall, his three assorted names and all, and said: "Doggone him! Now he'll stop this thing of writing helpful slop." He got the finest grave in town, and marble things to hold him down.

Long years have passed since R. R. Rox was placed in silver-mounted box; and does he rest in peace? Instead, he's working harder now he's dead. New books are coming from his pen until the chastened sons of men look round, their eyelids red with grief—look round, imploring for relief. "Is there no way," so wails the host, "to lay this Richard Randle's ghost?"

## **THE CONQUEROR**

The pugilist, tall and majestic, and proud of his numerous scars, was telling of foreign, domestic, and all kinds of Homeric wars. His hearers were standing before him in attitudes speaking of awe, for what could they do but adore him, the man with the prognathous jaw?

"My make-up," he said, "rather queer is, I've never seen others that way; I simply don't know what a fear is; I really rejoice in the fray, I guess I'm the champion glarer, my glance seems to wilt all my foes; I've seen fellows crumple with terror before we had got down to blows. This made me so often the victor; no qualms in my bosom I feel; I don't fear a boa constrictor—my heart is an engine of steel."



### The Conqueror

And so of his feats superhuman he talked in a voice ringing loud, until a small, fiery-eyed woman came elbowing up through the crowd. Her voice, like her person, was spindling, but Hercules heard when she called: "Come home, now, and cut up some kindling, or I will be snatching you bald!" No more of his triumphs he lilted, like Spartacus spieeling in Rome; the steel hearted warrior wilted, and followed his conquerer home.

### THE TRUTHFUL MERCHANT

If Ananias lived today and ran the corner store, he couldn't keep the wolf away from his old creaking door. For men who spend their hard-earned rocks won't patronize the man who must forever, when he talks, make truth an also ran.

I bought a whole new suit of clothes from Bilks, across the street. He said to me: "Such rags as those just simply can't be beat. They ornament the clothier's trade, and eke the tailor's shears; they will not shrink, they will not fade, they'll last a hundred years. Go forth," said Bilks, "upon the street, in all your pomp and pride, and every pretty girl you meet will wish she was your bride."

So I went forth in brave array, the city's one best bet. There was a little shower that day, and I got slightly wet. And then the truth was driven in that my new rags were punk. Alas, my friends, it was a sin the way those trousers shrunk! The buttons from my waistcoat flew with dull and sickening crack; my coat soon changed from brown to blue and then split up the back.

Old Bilks gold-bricked me in that deal, but does his system pay? He'll never get another wheel from me till Judgment Day. The kopeck that you win by guile may swell your roll today, but in the clammy afterwhile it melts that roll away.

### **STANDING PAT**

Your arguments for modern things with me cannot avail; my father reaped his grain by hand and thrashed it with a flail; then who am I to strike new paths and buy machinery? The methods good enough for dad are good enough for me! I want no hydrant by my house—such doodads I won't keep! My father drew the water from a well three furlongs deep, and skinned his hands and broke his back a-pulling at the rope, and methods that my father used will do for me, I hope! Don't talk of your electric light; a candle's all I need; my father always went to bed when 'twas too dark to read; I want no books or magazines to clutter up my shack; my father never read a thing but Johnson's almanac. A bathroom? Blowing wealth for that ridiculous appears; my father never used to bathe, and lived for ninety years. I care not for your "progress" talk, "reform" or other tricks; my father never used to vote or fuss with politics; he never cared three whoops in Troy which side should win or lose, and I'm content to go his gait, and wear my father's shoes.

### **THE OUTCAST**

You ask me why I weep and moan, like some lost spirit in despair, and why I wonder [Transcriber's note: wander?] off alone, and paw the ground and tear my hair? You ask me why I pack this gun, all loaded up, prepared to shoot? Alas! my troubles have begun—the women folk are canning fruit! There is no place for me to eat, unless I eat upon the floor; and peelings get beneath my feet, and make me fall a block or more; the odors from the boiling jam, all day assail my weary snoot; you find me, then, the wreck I am—the women folk are canning fruit! O, they have peaches on the chairs, and moldy apples on the floor, and wormy plums upon the stairs, and piles of pears outside the door; and they are boiling pulp and juice, and you may hear them yell and hoot; a man's existence is the deuce—the women folk are canning fruit!

### **ODE TO KANSAS**

Kansas: Where we've torn the shackles  
From the farmer's leg;  
Kansas: Where the hen that cackles,  
Always lays an egg;  
Where the cows are fairly achin'  
To go on with record breakin',  
And the hogs are raising bacon  
By the keg!

### **DOMESTIC HAPPINESS**

It is good to watch dear father as he blithely skips along, on his face no sign of bother, on his lips a cheerful song; peeling spuds and scraping fishes, putting doilies on the chairs, sweeping floors and washing dishes, busy with his household cares. Now the kitchen fire is burning; to get supper he will start—mother soon will be returning from her labors in the mart.

Poor tired mother! Daily toiling to provide our meat and bread! Where the eager crowd is moiling, struggling on with weary tread! Battling with stockjobbing ladies, meeting all their wiles and tricks, or embarking in the Hades of the city's politics! But forgotten is the pother, all the work day cares are gone, when she comes home to dear father with his nice clean apron on! There's your chair, he says; "sit in it; supper will be cooked eftsoons: I will dish it in a minute—scrambled eggs and shredded prunes." It is good to watch him moving round the stove with eager zeal, in his every action proving that his love goes with the meal.

When the evening meal is eaten and the things are cleared away, then we sit around repeatin' cares and triumphs of the day; and the high resounding rafter echoes to our harmless jokes, to our buoyant peals of laughter, while tired mother sits and smokes. Thus her jaded mind relaxes in an atmosphere so gay, and she thinks no more of taxes or of bills that she must pay; smiles are soon her face adorning, in our nets of love enmeshed, and she goes to work next morning like a giantess refreshed.

## CELEBRITIES

He had written lovely verses, touching hollyhocks and hearses, lotus-eaters, ladies, lilies, porcupines and pigs and pies, nothing human was beyond him, and admiring people conned him, adoration in their bosoms and a rapture in their eyes. He had sung of figs and quinces in the tents of Bedouin princes, he'd embalmed the Roman Forum and the Parthenon of Greece; many of his odes were written in the shrouding fogs of Britain, while he watched the suffrage ladies mixing things with the police.

So we met to do him honor; worshipper and eager fawner begged a tassel of his whiskers, or his autograph in ink; never was there so much sighin' round a pallid human lion, as he stood his lines explaining, taking out the hitch and kink!

All were in a joyous flutter, till we heard some fellow mutter: "Here comes Griggs, the southpaw pitcher, fairly burdened with his fame! He it was who beat the Phillies—gave the Quaker bugs the willies—he it was who saved our bacon in that 'leven-inning game!"

Then we crowded round the pitcher, making that great man the richer by a ton of adulation, in a red-hot fervor flung; and the poet, in a pickle, mused upon the false and fickle plaudits of the heartless rabble, till the dinner gong was rung!

## THE VIRTUOUS EDITOR

I use my Trenchant, fertile pen to help along the cause of men and make the sad world brighter, to give all good ambitions wings, to help the poor to better things and make their burdens lighter. The page whereon my screeds appear envoys a sacred atmosphere; it's helpful and uplifting; it hands out morals by the ton, and shows the people how to shun the rocks to which they're drifting.

You say my other pages reek with filthy "cures for cancer"? Impertinently, sir, you speak, and I refuse to answer.

All causes good and true and pure, and everything that should endure I'm always found supporting; and in my lighter moments I to heights of inspiration fly, the soft-eyed muses courting. To those who wander far astray I, like a shepherd, point the way to paths and fields Elysian; no sordid motives soil my pen as I assist my fellow men, no meanness mars my vision.

You say I print too many ads, unfit for youths' perusal, of fakers' pills and liver pads? I gave you one refusal to argue that, so quit your fuss and cease your foolish chatter; it is beneath me to discuss a purely business matter.

I point out all the shabby tricks which now disgrace our politics, those tricks which shame the devil; I ask the voters to deface corruption and our country place upon a higher level. Through endless wastes of words I roam to make the Fireside



and the Home the nation's shrine and glory; and Purity must ring again in every offsprung of my pen, in every screed and story.

You say my paper isn't fit for aught but toughs and muckers? That all the fakers come to it when they would fleece the suckers? Your criticism takes the buns! It's surely most surprising! You'll have to see the man who runs the foreign advertising.

### **THIS DISMAL AGE**

"It is a humdrum world," he said, "in which we now abide! alas! the good old times are dead when brave knights used to ride to war upon their armored steeds; then bloodshed was in style; then men could do heroic deeds, and life was worth the while. If I should go with lance and sword to enemy of mine—to one by whom I've long been bored, and cleave him to the chine, there'd be no plaudits long and loud, no wreaths from ladies pale; the cops would seek me in a crowd, and hustle me to jail. If down the highway I should press, beneath the summer skies, to rescue damsels in distress and wipe their weeping eyes, I'd win no praises from the sports; they'd call me a galoot; I'd have to answer in the courts to breach-of-promise suit. Adventure is a thing that's dead, we've reached a low estate, and I was born, alas!" he said, "five hundred years too late."

He took the morning paper then, which reeked with thrilling things, with tales of fighting modern men; the strife of money kings; the eager, busy, human streams throughout this mundane hive; the struggle of the baseball teams, which for the pennant strive; the polar hero and his sled; the race of motor cars; the flight of aernauts o'erhead, outlined against the stars.

"It is a humdrum age," he sighed, "of avarice the fruit. Upon a steed I'd like to ride, and wear a cast iron suit, and live as lived the knights of old, the heroes of romance; I'd like to carry spurs of gold and wield a sword and lance; but in this drear and pallid age, from Denver to Des Moines, there's naught to stir a noble rage—there's nothing counts but coin!"

### **BOOST THINGS**

Don't sit supinely on your roost, but come along and help us boost, for better things of every kind, and leave your kicking clothes behind. O let us boost for better streets, and softer beds, and longer sheets; for smoother lawns and better lights, and shorter-winded blatherskites; for finer homes, and larger trees, for bats and boots and bumble bees; for shorter hours and longer pay, and fewer thistles in our hay, for better grub, and bigger pies, for two more moons to light the skies. And let the wolves of war be loosed on every man who doesn't boost!

### **THE ADVENTURER**

He had braved the hungry ocean when the same was in commotion, he had floated on the wreckage of his tempest-shattered bark; he had flirted in deep waters with the merman's wives and daughters, he had scrapped through seven sessions with a large man-eating shark.

He had roamed in regions polar, where there's no effulgence solar, he had slain the festive walrus and the haughty arctic bear; and his watchword had been spoken in the wastes by whites unbroken, and he shelled out many gumdrops to the natives living there.

In the jungles, dark and fearful, where the tiger, fat and cheerful, gnaws the bones of foreign hunters, he had gone, unscathed, his way; he had whipped a big constrictor, and emerged the smiling victor from a scrimmage with a hippo, which

was fond of deadly fray.

He was shot with poisoned arrows and his tale of anguish harrows up the bosom of the reader, but he lived to journey home; he was chased by wolves in Russia, thrown in prison cell in Prussia, and was captured by fierce bandits in the neighborhood of Rome. He had lived where dwells the savage whose ambition is to ravage and to fill his cozy wigwam with a handsome line of scalps; he had lived with desert races, sought the strange and distant places, he had stood upon the summit of the loftiest of Alps.

To his home at last returning, filled with sentimental yearning, "Now," he cried, "farewell to danger—I have left its stormy track!" Far from scenes of strife and riot he desired long years of quiet, but a casting from an airship fell three miles and broke his back.

### **THEY ALL COME BACK**

The stars will come back to the azure vault when the clouds are all blown away; and the sun will come back when the night is done, and give us another day; the cows will come back from the meadows lush, and the birds to their trysting tree, but the money I paid to a mining shark will never come back to me! The leaves will come back to the naked boughs, the flowers to the frosty brae; the spring will come back like a blooming bride, and the breezes that blow in May; and joy will come back to the stricken heart, and laughter and hope and glee, but the money I blew for some mining stock will never come back to me!

### **HOME BUILDERS**

Old Bullion has a stack of rich things in his shack; of Persian rugs and antique jugs and costly bric-a-brac. There's art work in the hall, fine paintings on the wall; and yet a gloom as of the tomb is hanging over all. Here costly books abound. "This cost a thousand pound; that trade-mark blur means Elzivir—I've nothing cheap around. Here's Venus in the foam; the statue came from Rome; I bought the best the world possessed when I built up this home." Thus proudly Bullion talks, as through his home he walks, and tells the cost of things embossed, of vases, screens and crocks. No children's laughter rings, among those costly things; no sounds of play by night or day; no happy housewife sings. For romping girl or boy might easily destroy a priceless jug, or stain a rug, and ruin Bullion's joy. The guests of Bullion yawn, impatient to be gone, afraid they'll mar some lacquered jar, or tread some fan upon.

Down here where Tiller dwells you hear triumphant yells of girls and boys who play with toys, with hoops and horns and bells. There are no costly screens; no relics of dead queens; but on the stand, close to your hand, cheap books and magazines. There's no Egyptian crock, or painted jabberwock, but by the wall there stands a tall and loud six-dollar clock. Old Tiller can't impart much lore concerning art, or tell the price of virtu nice until he breaks your heart. But in his home abide those joys which seem denied to stately halls upon whose walls are works of pomp and pride. That pomp which smothers joy, and chills a girl or boy, may have and hold the hue of gold, but it has base alloy.

### **FAILURE AND SUCCESS**

He was selling tacks and turnips in a gloomy corner store, and he never washed his windows and he never swept the floor, and he let the cobwebs gather on the ceiling and the walls, and he let his whiskers flourish till they brushed his overalls. So his customers forsook him—for his patrons were not chumps—and the sheriff came and got him and that merchant bumped the bumps.

He was selling hens and hammocks, as he'd done since days of youth, and he queered himself with many, for he never told the truth. Oh, he thought it rather cunning if he sold a rooster old as a young and tender pullet through the artful lies he told; and he'd sell a shoddy hammock as a thing of silken thread, and the customer would bust it and fall out upon his head; so his customers forsook him, and he sadly watched them flit, and the sheriff came and got him, and that merchant hit the grit.

He was selling shoes and sugar—sugar from the sunny South—and he'd roast the opposition when he should have shut his mouth. He would stand and rant and rumble by the hour of Mr. Tweet, who was selling shoes and sugar in the shack across the street; and he'd vow all kinds of vengeance, and he'd tell all kinds of tales, till his wearied patrons sometimes rose and smote him with his scales; for they cared about his troubles and his sorrows not three whoops, and the sheriff came and got him, and that merchant looped the loops.

He was selling books and beeswax, and his store was neat and clean, and the place was bright and cheerful, and the atmosphere serene. He was tidy in his person, and his clerks were much the same, and no precious time was wasted, in the tiresome knocking game. And the customer who entered was with courtesy received, and he felt quite proud and happy when of cash he was relieved. And the merchant's word was golden, what he said was always true, and he sold no moldy beeswax, saying it was good as new. And his trade kept on increasing till his bank account was fat, and the sheriff, when he met him, always bowed and tipped his hat.

## **THE OPEN ROAD**

### **Romance**

To walk again the open road I have a springtime longing; I yearn to leave my town abode, the jostling and the thronging, and tread again the quiet lanes, among the woodland creatures; where birds are singing joyous strains to beat the music teachers. Afar from honks of motor cars, and all the city's clamor, I'd like to sleep beneath the stars, and feel no katzenjammer when in the vernal dawn I wake, as chipper as the foxes, to eat my frugal oatmeal cake put up in paper boxes. I fain would revel in the breeze that blows across the clover, and drink from brooks, with stately trees, like Druids, bending over. I'd leave the pavement and the wall, the too persistent neighbor, and hear the rooster's early call that wakes the world to labor. I'd seek the hayfields whose perfume the jaded heart doth nourish, I'd go where wayside roses bloom and johnny-jump-ups flourish. I'd see the pasture flecked with sheep and mule and colt and heifer, and let my spirit lie asleep upon the twilight zephyr. Oh, town, I leave you for a week, your burdens and your duties! The country calls me—I must seek its glories and its beauties!

### **Reality**

Gee whiz! I'd give a million bones to be back home a-sleeping! My shoes are full of burs and stones, and I am tired of weeping. Last night I sought a stack of hay, where slumber's fetters bound me, and at the cold, bleak break of day a husky farmer found me. I tried to pacify his nibs when he stood there and blessed me; alas, his pitchfork smote my ribs, his cowhide shoes caressed me. The dogs throughout this countryside all seem to think they need me; they've gathered samples of my hide, and many times they've treed me. And when I roamed the woodland path to see the wild-flowers' tinting, a bull pursued me in its wrath and broke all records sprinting. At noontide I sat down to rest, and rose depressed and dizzy; I'd sat upon a hornet's nest, and all the birds got busy. My whiskers now are full of hay, my legs are lame and weary; it's been a-raining every day, and all the world is dreary. The road will do for those who like a pathway rough and gritty; I've had enough—just watch me hike back to the good old city.

## **THE MILLIONAIRES**

They like to make the people think that all their piles of yellow chink, are weary burdens, to be borne, with eyes that weep and hearts that mourn; but as you jog along the road, you see no millionaires unload. They like to talk and drone and drool, to growing youths in Sunday school, and tell them that the poor man's lot is just the thing that hits the spot; to warn them of ambition's goad—they talk, and talk, but don't unload. They like to talk of days long gone, when life for them was at its dawn, and they were poor and bent with toil, and drew their living from the soil, and lived in some obscure abode—and so they dream, but don't unload. They like to take a check in hand, and, headed by the village band, present it to some charity—'twould mean five cents to you or me; then they're embalmed in song and ode; they smirk and smile, but don't unload.

## **LITTLE MISTAKES**

I used to trade at Grocer Gregg's and paid him heaps of cash for flour and cheese and germ-proof eggs, and cans of succotash. But now he doesn't get my trade—that's why his bosom aches; I had to quit him, for he made so many small mistakes.

He'd send me stale and wilted greens when I had ordered fresh; he's send me gutta percha beans, all string and little flesh. And when I journeyed to his store to read the riot act, three score apologies or more he'd offer for the fact. That doggone clerk of his, he'd say, had got the order wrong; and always, in the same old way, he'd sing the same old song. He seemed to think apologies were all I should desire, when he had sent me moldy cheese or herrings made of wire.

And when his bill came in, by jings, it always made me hot; he'd have me charged with divers things I knew I never bought. Then I would call on Grocer Gregg in wrath and discontent, and seize him firmly by the leg and ask him what he meant. Then grief was in the grocer's looks, frowns came, his eyes betwixt; "The idiot who keeps my books," he'd say, "has got things mixed. I wouldn't have such breaks as these for forty million yen; I offer my apologies and hope you'll come again."

He'd often send the things I bought to Colonel Jones, up town, and I would get a bunch of rot that should have gone to Brown. And oft at home I'd wait and wait, in vain for Sweitzer cheese; instead of that I'd get a crate of codfish, prunes or peas. And then I'd go to Grocer Gregg, and mutter as I went; "I'll take that merchant down a peg, and in him make a dent." He'd spring the same old platitudes when I had reached his den: "That vampire who delivers goods has balled things up again."

Apologies are good enough, excuses are the same; but forty-seven are enough to tire one of that game. It's better far to shun mistakes, and do things right at first, than to explain your dizzy breaks till your suspenders burst.

## **EASY MORALITY**

When things are moving slick as grease, it's easy to be moral then, to wear a gentle smile of peace, and talk about good will to men. Such virtue doesn't greatly weigh, in making up the books of life; the man who cheerful is and gay, in times of sorrow and of strife, is better worth a word of praise, than all the gents of smiling mien, who swear in forty different ways when life has ceased to be serene. This morning, as I ambled down, a neighbor fell (the walk was slick) and slid half-way across the town, and landed on a pile of brick. He slid along at such a rate the ice was melted as he went; his shins were barked, and on his pate there was a large unsightly dent. And when he'd breath enough to talk, he didn't cave around and swear, or blank the blanked old icy walk; he merely cried: "Well, I declare!"

## **THE CRITIC**

Some years ago I wrote a book, and no one read it save myself; it occupies a dusty nook, all sad and lonesome, on the shelf. And having found I couldn't write such stories as would please the mob, I sternly said, "I'll wreak my spite on those who can hold down the job." So now I sit in gloomy state and roast an author every day, and show he's a misguided skate who should be busy baling hay. The people read me as I cook my victims, and exclaim with glee, "If he would only write a book, oh where would Scott and Dickens be?"

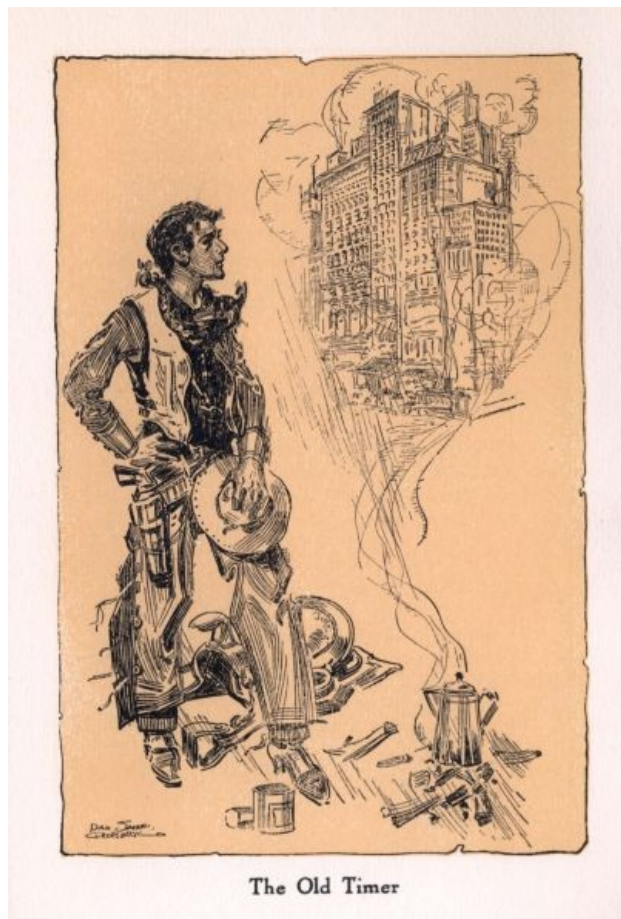
I used to think that I could sing, but when a few sweet trills I'd shed, the people would arise and fling dead cats and cabbage at my head. Then, realizing that my throat was modeled on the foghorn plan, I said, "If I can't sing a note, I'll surely roast the folks who can!" I go to concerts and look wise, and shudder as in misery; in vain the prima donna tries to win approving smiles from me; in vain the tenor or the bass, to gain from me admiring looks, pours floods of music through his face—I squirm as though on tenderhooks. And people watch my curves and sigh; "He has it all by heart, by jing! What melody would reach the sky if he would but consent to sing!"

When I was young I painted signs, but not a soul my work would buy, for all my figures and my lines were out of drawing and awry. And so I said; "It breaks my heart that I can't sell a single sign; but in the noble realms of art as critic I shall surely shine!" And so I grew a Vandyke beard, and let my hair grow long as grass, and studied up a jargon weird, and learned to wear a single glass. Then to the galleries I went and looked at paintings with a frown, and wept in dismal discontent that art's so crushed and beaten down. And people followed in my tracks to ascertain my point of view; whenever I applied the ax they gaily swung the cleaver, too. And often, through a solemn hush, I'd hear my rapt admirers say: "If he would only use the brush, Mike Angelo would fade away!"

## **THE OLD TIMER**

You've built up quite a city here, with stately business blocks, and wires a-running far and near, and handsome concrete walks. The trolley cars go whizzing by, and smoke from noisy mills is trailing slowly to the sky, and blotting out the hills. And thirty years ago I stood upon this same old mound, with not a house of brick or wood for twenty miles around! I'm mighty glad to be alive, to see the change you've made; it's good to watch this human hive, and hear the hum of trade!

I list to the moans and wails  
Of your town, with its toiling hands,  
But O for the lonely trails  
That led to the unknown lands!



### **The Old Timer**

I used to camp right where we stand, among these motor cars, and silence brooded o'er the land, as I lay 'neath the stars, save when the drowsy cattle lowed, or when a broncho neighed; and now you have an asphalt road, and palaces of trade! We hear the clamor of the host on every wind that blows, when people take the time to boast of how their city grows! I do not doubt that you will rise to greater heights of fame, and maybe paint across the skies your city's lustrous name!

I list to the ceaseless tramp  
Of the host, with its hopes and fears;  
But O for the midnight camp  
And the sound of the milling steers!

### **THE BRIGHT FACE**

Things are moving slowly? Business seems unholy? Better things are coming, though they seem delayed! Sitting down and scowling, standing up and growling, fussing round complaining will not bring the trade! Here comes Mr. Perkins for a quart of gherkins—don't begin to tell him all about your woes; you will only bore him, laying griefs before him, and he'll be disgusted when he ups and goes. Show him that you're cheerful, for the merchant tearful always jars his patrons, always makes them groan; they don't want to hearken to the ills that darken over you for they have troubles of their own.

Here comes Mrs. Twutter for three yards of butter—let her see you smiling, let her find you gay; be as bright and chipper as a new tin dipper, show you're optimistic, in the good old way! If you mope and mumble this good dame will tumble, and she'll tell her neighbors that your head is sore; no one likes a dealer who's a dismal squealer, so your friends will toddle to some other store. When the luck seems balky, and the trade is rocky, that's the time to whistle, that's the time to grin! Time to make a showing that your trade is growing, time to show your grit and rustle round like sin.

Here comes Mr. Bunyan for a shredded onion, bullion in his trousers, checkbook in his coat; give him no suspicion that the dull condition in the world of commerce has destroyed your goat!

## **LADIES AND GENTS**

When I was younger kids were kids, in Kansas or in Cadiz; now all the boys are gentlemen, and all the girls are ladies. Where are the kids who climbed the trees, the tousled young carousers, who got their faces black with dirt, and tore their little trousers? Where are the lads who scrapped by rounds, while other lads kept tallies? The maids who made their pies of mud, and danced in dirty alleys? They're making calf-love somewhere now, exchanging cards and kisses, they're all fixed up in Sunday togs, and they are Sirs and Misses. Real kids have vanished from the world—which fact is surely hades; and all the boys are gentlemen, and all the girls are ladies.

## **AUTUMN JOYS**

The summer days have gone their ways, to join the days of summers olden; the eager air is making bare the trees, the leaves are red and golden; the flowers that bloomed are now entombed, the morn is chill, the night is dreary; and I confront the same old stunt that all my life has made me weary. Hard by yon grove our heating stove is standing red and fierce and rusty; and I must black its front and back, and get myself all scratched and dusty. And I must pack it on my back, about a mile, up to our shanty, and work with wire and pipes and fire, the while I quote warm things from Dante.

## **THE LAND OF BORES**

In the country of the bores people never shut the doors, and they leave the windows open, so you're always catching cold; and they lean against your breast while relating moldy jest that had long and flowing whiskers when by Father Adam told. In the country of the bores people carry sample ores, and they talk of mines prolific till you buy ten thousand shares; and they sell you orange groves and revolving fireless stoves, while they loll upon your divan with their feet upon your chairs. In the country of the bores every other fellow roars of the sins of public servants and the need of better things; in a nation full of vice he alone is pure and nice, he alone has got a halo and a flossy pair of wings. In the country of the bores men who wish to do their chores are disturbed by agitators who declaim of iron heels, urging toiling men to rise, with chain lightning in their eyes and do something to the tyrant and his car with bloody wheels. In the country of the bores evermore the talksmith pours floods of language on the people, who were better left alone. But that land is far away, and we should rejoice today that we're living in a country where no bores were ever known.

## **SKILLED LABOR**

The pumpmaker came to my humble abode, for the pump was in need of repair; his auto he left by the side of the road, and his diamonds he placed on a chair. And he said that the weather was really too cold, for comfort, this time of the year; and he thought from Japan—though she's haughty and bold—this country has nothing to fear. He thought that our navy should equal the best, for a navy's a warrant of peace; and he said when a man has a cold on his chest, there's nothing as good as goose grease. He thought that the peach crop is ruined for good, and the home team is playing good ball; and the currency question is not understood, by the voters he said, not at all. Then he looked at the pump and he gave it a whack and he kicked at the spout and said "Shucks!" And he joggled the handle three times up and back, and

soaked me for seventeen bucks.

## AN EDITORIAL SOLILOQUY

I sit all day in my gorgeous den and I am the boss of a hundred men; my enemies shake at my slightest scowl, I make the country sit up and howl; to the farthest ends of this blooming land men feel the weight of my iron hand.

But, oh, for the old, old shop,  
Where I printed the Punktown Dirk,  
And the toil and stress with the darned old press  
That always refused to work!

I soothe my face with a rich cigar and ride around in a motor car; I go to a swell cafe to dine and soak my works in the rarest wine. Oh, nothing's too rich for your Uncle Jones, whose check is good for a heap of bones!

But, oh, for the old, old shop,  
Where I set up the auction bills,  
And printed an ad of a liver pad,  
And took out the pay in pills!

I've won the prize in the worldly game, my name's inscribed on the roll of fame; my home is stately, in stately grounds, I have my yacht and I ride to hounds; nothing I've longed for has been denied; is it any wonder I point with pride?

But, oh, for the old, old shop,  
In the dusty Punktown street!  
I was full of hope as I wrote my dope,  
Though I hadn't enough to eat!

## YOUTHFUL GRIEVANCES

"My lads," quoth the father, "come forth to the garden, and merrily work in the glow of the sun; to loiter about is a crime beyond pardon, when there's so much hoeing that has to be done! It pains me to mark that you'd fain be retreating away from the hoes and such weapons as these; you're diligent, though, when the time comes for eating the turnips and lettuce and cabbage and peas."

"Alas," sigh the boys, "that our father must work us like galley slaves, thus, at the hoe and the spade! More fortunate lads all have gone to the circus, they revel in peanuts and pink lemonade! Oh, what is the profit of pruning and trimming, and sowing the radish, and planting the yam, when everyone knows there is excellent swimming two miles up the creek at the foot of the dam?"

"Sail in!" cries the parent, "the daytime is speeding, the night will be here in the space of three shakes! Oh, this is the season for digging and seeding, for doing great deeds with the long-handled rakes! Consider the maxims of Franklin, the printer, the rede of the prophets, of poets who sing; in comfort they live through the stress of the winter, who toil like the ants or the bees in the spring!"

"For maxims and proverbs it's little we're wishing," the boys mutter low, as they wearily delve; "the neighbor boy says there is elegant fishing—he went after catfish and came home with twelve. We have to stay here doing labors that cramp us, while others are pulling out fish by the pound! They're playing baseball every day on the campus, and down in the grove there's a merry-go-round!"

Alack! If the parents could see with the vision of boys and if boys used the eyes of their sires, then fun would be labor, with rapture elysian, and toil would be play, to the music of lyres!



## SUNDAY

Now the day is fading slowly and the week is near its close; comes the Sabbath, calm and holy, with its quiet and repose; then the wheels no more are driven, and the noise no longer swells and like whisperings of heaven, sound the far-off Sabbath bells. Are we striving, are we reaching, for the life serene and sweet? Not by platitudes and preaching, not by praying on the street, but by doing deeds of kindness, comforting some heart that's sore, helping those who grope in blindness, giving something from our store. If it be our strong endeavor to make others' lives less hard, then forever and forever Sunday brings a rich reward.

## JOHN BARLEYCORN

I like to find the gifted youth, the youth of brains and virtue, and whisper in his ears: "In truth, one flagon will not hurt you. He who eschews the painted breath is nothing but a fossil; just try a drink of liquid death—just join me in high wassail." At first my words may not avail, they but offend and fret him, but I keep camping on his trail until at last I get him.

And having marked him for my own, I glory in the reaping; I feel that death, and death alone, can take him from my keeping. He's mine to do with as I will, he's mine, both soul and body; his one ambition is to fill his outcast form with toddy. At first I take away his pride, destroy his sense of honor, and when I see these things have died, I know he is a goner. I house him in a squalid den, and take his decent garments, and entertain him now and then with rats and other varmints. I place a mortgage on his shack, despite his feeble ravings, I put old rags upon his back, and confiscate his savings. And thus I take what is a man, here in your Christian city, and make him, by my ancient plan, a thing to scorn and pity.

My victims lie in Potter's Fields in regiments and legions; John Barleycorn his scepter wields o'er all these smiling regions. I find new victims every day as I go blithely roaming; a million feet I lead astray between the dawn and gloaming. With sparkling beer and foaming ale I am my friends befriending, and to the poorhouse and the jail my followers are wending. You hear the pageant's dreary song as down the road it ambles; I wonder, oftentimes, how long you'll stand my cheerful gambols?

## CHRISTMAS DAY

It is the day of kindness, and for this day we're freed from all the sordid blindness of selfishness and greed; we have a thought for others, we'd ease their load of care; and all men are our brothers, and all the world is fair.

This is the day of laughter, wherein no shadows fall; and 'neath the cottage rafter, and in the mullioned hall, are happy cries ascending, and songs of joy and peace; why should they have an ending? Why should the music cease? The music! When we hear it, we old men softly sigh; "Could but the Christmas spirit live on, and never die!"

This is the day of giving, and giving with a smile makes this gray life we're living seem doubly worth the while. When giving we're forgetting the counting-room and mart, and all the work-day fretting—and this improves the heart; forgetting bonds and leases, and every sordid goal—this sort of thing increases the stature of the soul!

This is the day of smiling, and faces stern and drear, on which few smiles beguiling are seen throughout the year, are lighted up with pleasure and eyes are soft today, and old men trip a measure with children in their play. And graybeards laugh when pelted with snow by springalds flung, and frozen hearts are melted, and ancient hearts are young.

It is a day for singing old songs our fathers knew, while gladsome bells are ringing a message sweet to you; a day that brings us nearer to heaven's neighborhood, that makes our vision clearer for all that's true and good.

On with the Christmas revels in cottage and in hall! While from the starry levels smiles Christ, who loves us all!

## A CRANK'S THANKSGIVING

Like others, I'm grateful for plenty to eat; I'm fond of a plateful of rich turkey meat. For pies in the cupboard, and coal in the bin, for tires that are rubbered, and motors that spin; for all of my treasures, for all that I earn, for comforts and pleasures, my thanks I return. I'm glad that the nation is greasy and rich, acquiring high station with nary a hitch; her barns are a-bursting with mountains of grain; her people are thirsting for glory and gain. She'll ne'er backward linger, this land of our dads, for she is a dinger at nailing the scads. I'm glad that our vessels bring cargoes across, while counting rooms wrestle with profit and loss; that men know the beauties of figures and dates, and tariffs and duties and railway rebates.

I'm glad there are dreamers not industry-drunk, surrounded by schemers whose god is the plunk. I'm glad we've remaining incompetent jays, not always a-straining, in four hundred ways, to run down and collar one big rouble more, to add to the dollar they nailed just before. I'm glad there are writers more proud of their screeds than board of trade fighters of options and deeds. I'm glad there are preachers who tell of a shore where wealth-weary creatures need scheme never more.

For books that were written by masters of thought; for harps that were smitten with Homeric swat; for canvases painted by monarchs of art; for all things untainted by tricks of the mart; for hearts that are kindly, with virtue and peace, and not seeking blindly a hoard to increase; for those who are grieving o'er life's sordid plan; for souls still believing in heaven and man; for homes that are lowly with love at the board; for things that are holy, I thank thee, O Lord!

## THE BRIEF VISIT

I won't be long in this vale of tears; my works may run for a few more years, but even that is a risky bet, and the sports are hedging already yet. At morning a gent feels gay and nice; and evening finds him upon the ice, with his folded hands and his long white gown, and his toes turned up and his plans turned down. So, viewing this sad uncertainty, and hearing the wash of the Dead Man's sea, I want to chortle the best I can, and try to cheer up my fellow man; to make a fellow forget his care, and make him laugh when he wants to swear, is as much as a poet can hope to do, whose lyre is twisted and broke in two.

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