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The Complete Works of James Whitcomb Riley

## **Volume 1**

October, 1996 [Etext #691]

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Memorial Edition The Complete Works of James Whitcomb Riley IN TEN VOLUMES Including Poems and Prose Sketches, many of which have not heretofore been published; an authentic Biography, an elaborate Index and numerous Illustrations in color from Paintings by Howard Chandler Christy and Ethyl Franklin Betts

**VOLUME I**

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TO  
THE MEMORY OF  
James Whitcomb Riley  
AND  
IN PLEASANT RECOLLECTION OF MORE THAN THIRTY-FIVE YEARS  
OF BUSINESS AND PERSONAL ASSOCIATION  
THESE FINAL VOLUMES  
ARE AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

BORN: DIED:  
October 7, 1849, July 22, 1916  
Greenfield, Ind. Indianapolis, Ind.

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## JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY—A SKETCH

On Sunday morning, October seventh, 1849, Reuben A. Riley and his wife, Elizabeth Marine Riley, rejoiced over the birth of their second son. They called him James Whitcomb. This was in a shady little street in the shady little town of Greenfield, which is in the county of Hancock and the state of Indiana. The young James found a brother and a sister waiting to greet him—John Andrew and Martha Celestia, and afterward came Elva May—Mrs. Henry Eitel— Alexander Humbolt and Mary Elizabeth, who, of all, alone lives to see this collection of her brother's poems.

James Whitcomb was a slender lad, with corn-silk hair and wide blue eyes. He was shy and timid, not strong physically, dreading the cold of winter, and avoiding the rougher sports of his playmates. And yet he was full of the spirit of youth, a spirit that manifested itself in the performance of many ingenious pranks. His every-day life was that of the average boy in the average country town of that day, but his home influences were exceptional. His father, who became a captain of cavalry in the Civil War, was a lawyer of ability and an orator of more than local distinction. His mother was a woman of rare strength of character combined with deep sympathy and a clear understanding. Together, they made home a place to remember with thankful heart.

When James was twenty years old, the death of his mother made a profound impression on him, an impression that has influenced much of his verse and has remained with him always.

At an early age he was sent to school and, "then sent back again," to use his own words. He was restive under what he called the "iron discipline." A number of years ago, he spoke of these early educational beginnings in phrases so picturesque and so characteristic that they are quoted in full:

"My first teacher was a little old woman, rosy and roly-poly, who looked as though she might have just come tumbling out of a fairy story, so lovable was she and so jolly and so amiable. She kept school in her little Dame-Trot kind of dwelling of three rooms, with a porch in the rear, like a bracket on the wall, which was part of the play-ground of her 'scholars,'—for in those days pupils were called 'scholars' by their affectionate teachers. Among the twelve or fifteen boys and girls who were there I remember particularly a little lame boy, who always got the first ride in the locust-tree swing during recess.

"This first teacher of mine was a mother to all her 'scholars,' and in every way looked after their comfort, especially when certain little ones grew drowsy. I was often, with others, carried to the sitting-room and left to slumber on a small made-down pallet on the floor. She would sometimes take three or four of us together; and I recall how a playmate and I, having been admonished into silence, grew deeply interested in watching a spare old man who sat at a window with its shade drawn down. After a while we became accustomed to this odd sight and would laugh, and talk in whispers and give imitations, as we sat in a low sewing-chair, of the little old pendulating blind man at the window. Well, the old man was the gentle teacher's charge, and for this reason, possibly, her life had become an heroic one, caring for her helpless husband who, quietly content, waited always at the window for his sight to come back to him. And doubtless it is to-day, as he sits at another casement and sees not only his earthly friends, but all the friends of the Eternal Home, with the smiling, loyal, loving little woman forever at his side.

"She was the kindest of souls even when constrained to punish us. After a whipping she invariably took me into the little kitchen and gave me two great white slabs of bread cemented together with layers of butter and jam. As she always whipped me with the same slender switch she used for a pointer, and cried over every lick, you will have an idea how much punishment I could stand. When I was old enough to be lifted by the ears out of my seat that office was performed by a pedagogue whom I promised to 'whip sure, if he'd just wait till I got big enough.' He is still waiting!

"There was but one book at school in which I found the slightest interest: McGuffey's old leather-bound Sixth Reader. It was the tallest book known, and to the boys of my size it was a matter of eternal wonder how I could belong to 'the big class in that reader.' When we were to read the death of 'Little Nell,' I would run away, for I knew it would make me cry, that the other boys would laugh at me, and the whole thing would become ridiculous. I couldn't bear that. A later teacher, Captain Lee O. Harris, came to understand me with thorough sympathy, took compassion on my weaknesses and encouraged me to read the best literature. He understood that he couldn't get numbers into my head. You couldn't tamp them in! History I also disliked as a dry thing without juice, and dates melted out of my memory

as speedily as tin-foil on a red-hot stove. But I always was ready to declaim and took natively to anything dramatic or theatrical. Captain Harris encouraged me in recitation and reading and had ever the sweet spirit of a companion rather than the manner of an instructor."

But if there was "only one book at school in which he found the slightest interest," he had before that time displayed an affection for a book—simply as such and not for any printed word it might contain. And this, after all, is the true book-lover's love. Speaking of this incident—and he liked to refer to it as his "first literary recollection," he said: "Long before I was old enough to read I remember buying a book at an old auctioneer's shop in Greenfield. I can not imagine what prophetic impulse took possession of me and made me forego the ginger cakes and the candy that usually took every cent of my youthful income. The slender little volume must have cost all of twenty-five cents! It was Francis Quarles' Divine Emblems,—a neat little affair about the size of a pocket Testament. I carried it around with me all day long, delighted with the very feel of it.

" 'What have you got there, Bub?' some one would ask. 'A book,' I would reply. 'What kind of a book?' 'Poetry-book.' 'Poetry!' would be the amused exclamation. 'Can you read poetry?' and, embarrassed, I'd shake my head and make my escape, but I held on to the beloved little volume."

Every boy has an early determination—a first one—to follow some ennobling profession, once he has come to man's estate, such as being a policeman, or a performer on the high trapeze. The poet would not have been the "Peoples' Laureate," had his fairy god-mother granted his boy-wish, but the Greenfield baker. For to his childish mind it "seemed the acme of delight," using again his own happy expression, "to manufacture those snowy loaves of bread, those delicious tarts, those toothsome bonbons. And then to own them all, to keep them in store, to watch over and guardedly exhibit. The thought of getting money for them was to me a sacrilege. Sell them? No indeed. Eat 'em—eat 'em, by tray loads and dray loads! It was a great wonder to me why the pale-faced baker in our town did not eat all his good things. This I determined to do when I became owner of such a grand establishment. Yes, sir. I would have a glorious feast. Maybe I'd have Tom and Harry and perhaps little Kate and Florry in to help us once in a while. The thought of these play-mates as 'grown-up folks' didn't appeal to me. I was but a child, with wide-open eyes, a healthy appetite and a wondering mind. That was all. But I have the same sweet tooth to-day, and every time I pass a confectioner's shop, I think of the big baker of our town, and Tom and Harry and the youngsters all."

As a child, he often went with his father to the court-house where the lawyers and clerks playfully called him "judge Wick." Here as a privileged character he met and mingled with the country folk who came to sue and be sued, and thus early the dialect, the native speech, the quaint expressions of his "own people" were made familiar to him, and took firm root in the fresh soil of his young memory. At about this time, he made his first poetic attempt in a valentine which he gave to his mother. Not only did he write the verse, but he drew a sketch to accompany it, greatly to his mother's delight, who, according to the best authority, gave the young poet "three big cookies and didn't spank me for two weeks. This was my earliest literary encouragement."

Shortly after his sixteenth birthday, young Riley turned his back on the little schoolhouse and for a time wandered through the different fields of art, indulging a slender talent for painting until he thought he was destined for the brush and palette, and then making merry with various musical instruments, the banjo, the guitar, the violin, until finally he appeared as bass drummer in a brass band. "In a few weeks," he said, "I had beat myself into the more enviable position of snare drummer. Then I wanted to travel with a circus, and dangle my legs before admiring thousands over the back seat of a Golden Chariot. In a dearth of comic songs for the banjo and guitar, I had written two or three myself, and the idea took possession of me that I might be a clown, introduced as a character-song-man and the composer of my own ballads.

"My father was thinking of something else, however, and one day I found myself with a 'five-ought' paint brush under the eaves of an old frame house that drank paint by the bucketful, learning to be a painter. Finally, I graduated as a house, sign and ornamental painter, and for two summers traveled about with a small company of young fellows calling ourselves 'The Graphics,' who covered all the barns and fences in the state with advertisements."

At another time his, young man's fancy saw attractive possibilities in the village print-shop, and later his ambition was diverted to acting, encouraged by the good times he had in the theatricals of the Adelphian Society of Greenfield. "In my dreamy way," he afterward said, "I did a little of a number of things fairly well—sang, played the guitar and violin, acted, painted signs and wrote poetry. My father did not encourage my verse-making for he thought it too visionary, and being a visionary himself, he believed he understood the dangers of following the promptings of the poetic temperament. I doubted if anything would come of the verse-writing myself. At this time it is easy to picture my father, a lawyer of ability, regarding me, nonplused, as the worst case he had ever had. He wanted me to do something

practical, besides being ambitious for me to follow in his footsteps, and at last persuaded me to settle down and read law in his office. This I really tried to do conscientiously, but finding that political economy and Blackstone did not rhyme and that the study of law was unbearable, I slipped out of the office one summer afternoon, when all out-doors called imperiously, shook the last dusty premise from my head and was away.

"The immediate instigator of my flight was a traveling medicine man who appealed to me for this reason: My health was bad, very bad,—as bad as I was. Our doctor had advised me to travel, but how could I travel without money? The medicine man needed an assistant and I plucked up courage to ask if I could join the party and paint advertisements for him.

"I rode out of town with that glittering cavalcade without saying good-by to any one, and though my patron was not a diplomaed doctor, as I found out, he was a man of excellent habits, and the whole company was made up of good straight boys, jolly chirping vagabonds like myself. It was delightful to bowl over the country in that way. I laughed all the time. Miles and miles of somber landscape were made bright with merry song, and when the sun shone and all the golden summer lay spread out before us, it was glorious just to drift on through it like a wisp, of thistle-down, careless of how, or when, or where the wind should anchor us. 'There's a tang of gipsy blood in my veins that pants for the sun and the air.'

"My duty proper was the manipulation of two blackboards, swung at the sides of the wagon during our street lecture and concert. These boards were alternately embellished with colored drawings illustrative of the manifold virtues of the nostrum vended. Sometimes I assisted the musical olio with dialect recitations and character sketches from the back step of the wagon. These selections in the main originated from incidents and experiences along the route, and were composed on dull Sundays in lonesome little towns where even the church bells seemed to bark at us."

On his return to Greenfield after this delightful but profitless tour he became the local editor of his home paper and in a few months "strangled the little thing into a change of ownership." The new proprietor transferred him to the literary department and the latter, not knowing what else to put in the space allotted him, filled it with verse. But there was not room in his department for all he produced, so he began, timidly, to offer his poetic wares in foreign markets. The editor of The Indianapolis Mirror accepted two or three shorter verses but in doing so suggested that in the future he try prose. Being but an humble beginner, Riley harkened to the advice, whereupon the editor made a further suggestion; this time that he try poetry again. The Danbury (Connecticut) News, then at the height of its humorous reputation, accepted a contribution shortly after The Mirror episode and Mr. McGeechy, its managing editor, wrote the young poet a graceful note of congratulation. Commenting on these parlous times, Riley afterward wrote, "It is strange how little a thing sometimes makes or unmakes a fellow. In these dark days I should have been content with the twinkle of the tiniest star, but even this light was withheld from me. Just then came the letter from McGeechy; and about the same time, arrived my first check, a payment from Hearth and Home for a contribution called A Destiny (now A Dreamer in A Child World). The letter was signed, 'Editor' and unless sent by an assistant it must have come from Ik Marvel himself, God bless him! I thought my fortune made. Almost immediately I sent off another contribution, whereupon to my dismay came this reply: 'The management has decided to discontinue the publication and hopes that you will find a market for your worthy work elsewhere.' Then followed dark days indeed, until finally, inspired by my old teacher and comrade, Captain Lee O. Harris, I sent some of my poems to Longfellow, who replied in his kind and gentle manner with the substantial encouragement for which I had long thirsted."

In the year following, Riley formed a connection with The Anderson (Indiana) Democrat and contributed verse and locals in more than generous quantities. He was happy in this work and had begun to feel that at last he was making progress when evil fortune knocked at his door and, conspiring with circumstances and a friend or two, induced the young poet to devise what afterward seemed to him the gravest of mistakes,—the Poe-poem hoax. He was then writing for an audience of county papers and never dreamed that this whimsical bit of fooling would be carried beyond such boundaries. It was suggested by these circumstances.

He was inwardly distressed by the belief that his failure to get the magazines to accept his verse was due to his obscurity, while outwardly he was harassed to desperation by the junior editor of the rival paper who jeered daily at his poetical pretensions. So, to prove that editors would praise from a known source what they did not hesitate to condemn from one unknown, and to silence his nagging contemporary, he wrote Leonainie in the style of Poe, concocting a story, to accompany the poem, setting forth how Poe came to write it and how all these years it had been lost to view. In a few words Mr. Riley related the incident and then dismissed it. "I studied Poe's methods. He seemed to have a theory, rather misty to be sure, about the use of 'm's' and 'n's' and mellifluous vowels and sonorous



words. I remember that I was a long time in evolving the name Leonainie, but at length the verses were finished and ready for trial.

"A friend, the editor of The Kokomo Dispatch, undertook the launching of the hoax in his paper; he did this with great editorial gusto while, at the same time, I attacked the authenticity of the poem in The Democrat. That diverted all possible suspicion from me. The hoax succeeded far too well, for what had started as a boyish prank became a literary discussion nation-wide, and the necessary expose had to be made. I was appalled at the result. The press assailed me furiously, and even my own paper dismissed me because I had given the 'discovery' to a rival."

Two dreary and disheartening years followed this tragic event, years in which the young poet found no present help, nor future hope. But over in Indianapolis, twenty miles away, happier circumstances were shaping themselves. Judge E. B. Martindale, editor and proprietor of The Indianapolis Journal, had been attracted by certain poems in various papers over the state and at the very time that the poet was ready to confess himself beaten, the judge wrote: "Come over to Indianapolis and we'll give you, a place on The Journal." Mr. Riley went. That was the turning point, and though the skies were not always clear, nor the way easy, still from that time it was ever an ascending journey. As soon as he was comfortably settled in his new position, the first of the Benj. F. Johnson poems made its appearance. These dialect verses were introduced with editorial comment as coming from an old Boone county farmer, and their reception was so cordial, so enthusiastic, indeed, that the business manager of The Journal, Mr. George C. Hitt, privately published them in pamphlet form and sold the first edition of one thousand copies in local bookstores and over The Journal office counter. This marked an epoch in the young poet's progress and was the beginning of a friendship between him and Mr. Hitt that has never known interruption. This first edition of The Old Swimmin' Hole and 'Leven More Poems has since become extremely rare and now commands a high premium. A second edition was promptly issued by a local book dealer, whose successors, The Bowen-Merrill Company—now The Bobbs-Merrill Company—have continued, practically without interruption, to publish Riley's work.

The call to read from the public platform had by this time become so insistent that Riley could no longer resist it, although modesty and shyness fought the battle for privacy. He told briefly and in his own inimitable fashion of these trying experiences. "In boyhood I had been vividly impressed with Dickens' success in reading from his own works and dreamed that some day I might follow his example. At first I read at Sunday-school entertainments and later, on special occasions such as Memorial Days and Fourth of Julys. At last I mustered up sufficient courage to read in a city theater, where, despite the conspiracy of a rainy night and a circus, I got encouragement enough to lead me to extend my efforts. And so, my native state and then the country at large were called upon to bear with me and I think I visited every sequestered spot north or south particularly distinguished for poor railroad connections. At different times, I shared the program with Mark Twain, Robert J. Burdette and George Cable, and for a while my gentlest and cheeriest of friends, Bill Nye, joined with me and made the dusty detested travel almost a delight. We were constantly playing practical jokes on each other or indulging in some mischievous banter before the audience. On one occasion, Mr. Nye, coming before the foot-lights for a word of general introduction, said, 'Ladies and gentlemen, the entertainment to-night is of a dual nature. Mr. Riley and I will speak alternately. First I come out and talk until I get tired, then Mr. Riley comes out and talks until YOU get tired!' And thus the trips went merrily enough at times and besides I learned to know in Bill Nye a man blessed with as noble and heroic a heart as ever beat. But the making of trains, which were all in conspiracy to outwit me, schedule or no schedule, and the rush and tyrannical pressure of inviolable engagements, some hundred to a season and from Boston to San Francisco, were a distress to my soul. I am glad that's over with. Imagine yourself on a crowded day-long excursion; imagine that you had to ride all the way on the platform of the car; then imagine that you had to ride all the way back on the same platform; and lastly, try to imagine how you would feel if you did that every day of your life, and you will then get a glimmer—a faint glimmer—of how one feels after traveling about on a reading or lecturing tour.

"All this time I had been writing whenever there was any strength left in me. I could not resist the inclination to write. It was what I most enjoyed doing. And so I wrote, laboriously ever, more often using the rubber end of the pencil than the point.

"In my readings I had an opportunity to study and find out for myself what the public wants, and afterward I would endeavor to use the knowledge gained in my writing. The public desires nothing but what is absolutely natural, and so perfectly natural as to be fairly artless. It can not tolerate affectation, and it takes little interest in the classical production. It demands simple sentiments that come direct from the heart. While on the lecture platform I watched the effect that my readings had on the audience very closely and whenever anybody left the hall I knew that my recitation was at fault and tried to find out why. Once a man and his wife made an exit while I was giving The Happy Little Cripple—a recitation I had prepared with particular enthusiasm and satisfaction. It fulfilled, as few poems do, all the requirements of length, climax and those many necessary features for a recitation. The subject

was a theme of real pathos, beautified by the cheer and optimism of the little sufferer. Consequently when this couple left the hall I was very anxious to know the reason and asked a friend to find out. He learned that they had a little hunch-back child of their own. After this experience I never used that recitation again. On the other hand, it often required a long time for me to realize that the public would enjoy a poem which, because of some blind impulse, I thought unsuitable. Once a man said to me, 'Why don't you recite When the Frost Is on the Punkin?' The use of it had never occurred to me for I thought it 'wouldn't go.' He persuaded me to try it and it became one of my most favored recitations. Thus, I learned to judge and value my verses by their effect upon the public. Occasionally, at first, I had presumed to write 'over the heads' of the audience, consoling myself for the cool reception by thinking my auditors were not of sufficient intellectual height to appreciate my efforts. But after a time it came home to me that I myself was at fault in these failures, and then I disliked anything that did not appeal to the public and learned to discriminate between that which did not ring true to my hearers and that which won them by virtue of its truthfulness and was simply heart high."

As a reader of his own poems, as a teller of humorous stories, as a mimic, indeed as a finished actor, Riley's genius was rare and beyond question. In a lecture on the Humorous Story, Mark Twain, referring to the story of the One Legged Soldier and the different ways of telling it, once said:

"It takes only a minute and a half to tell it in its comic form; and it isn't worth telling after all. Put into the humorous-story form, it takes ten minutes, and is about the funniest thing I have ever listened to—as James Whitcomb Riley tells it.

"The simplicity and innocence and sincerity and unconsciousness of Riley's old farmer are perfectly simulated, and the result is a performance which is thoroughly charming and delicious. This is art—and fine and beautiful, and only a master can compass it."

It was in that *The Old Swimmin' Hole* and *'Leven More Poems* first appeared in volume form. Four years afterward, Riley made his initial appearance before a New York City audience. The entertainment was given in aid of an international copyright law, and the country's most distinguished men of letters took part in the program. It is probably true that no one appearing at that time was less known to the vast audience in Chickering Hall than James Whitcomb Riley, but so great and so spontaneous was the enthusiasm when he left the stage after his contribution to the first day's program, that the management immediately announced a place would be made for Mr. Riley on the second and last day's program. It was then that James Russell Lowell introduced him in the following words:

"Ladies and gentlemen: I have very great pleasure in presenting to you the next reader of this afternoon, Mr. James Whitcomb Riley, of Indiana. I confess, with no little chagrin and sense of my own loss, that when yesterday afternoon, from this platform, I presented him to a similar assemblage, I was almost completely a stranger to his poems. But since that time I have been looking into the volumes that have come from his pen, and in them I have discovered so much of high worth and tender quality that I deeply regret I had not long before made acquaintance with his work. To-day, in presenting Mr. Riley to you, I can say to you of my own knowledge, that you are to have the pleasure of listening to the voice of a true poet."

Two years later a selection from his poems was published in England under the title *Old Fashioned Roses* and his international reputation was established. In his own country the people had already conferred their highest degrees on him and now the colleges and universities—seats of conservatism—gave him scholastic recognition. Yale made him an Honorary Master of Arts in 1902; in 1903, Wabash and, a year later, the University of Pennsylvania conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Letters, and in 1907 Indiana University gave him his LL. D. Still more recently the Academy of Arts and Letters elected him to membership, and in 1912 awarded him the gold medal for poetry. About this time a yet dearer, more touching tribute came to him from school children. On October 7, 1911, the schools of Indiana and New York City celebrated his birthday by special exercises, and one year later, the school children of practically every section of the country had programs in his honor.

As these distinguished honors came they found him each time surprised anew and, though proud that they who dwell in the high places of learning should come in cap and gown to welcome him, yet gently and sincerely protesting his own unworthiness. And as they found him when they came so they left him.

Mr. Riley made his home in Indianapolis from the time judge Martindale invited him to join *The Journal's* forces, and no one of her citizens was more devoted, nor was any so universally loved and honored. Everywhere he went the tribute of quick recognition and cheery greeting was paid him, and his home was the shrine of every visiting Hoosier. High on a sward of velvet grass stands a dignified middle-aged brick house. A dwarfed stone wall, broken by an iron gate, guards the front lawn, while in the rear an old-fashioned garden revels in hollyhocks and wild roses. Here among his books and his souvenirs the poet spent his happy and contented days. To reach this restful spot, the pilgrim must

journey to Lockerbie Street, a miniature thoroughfare half hidden between two more commanding avenues. It is little more than a lane, shaded, unpaved and from end to end no longer than a five minutes' walk, but its fame is for all time.

"Such a dear little street it is, nestled away  
From the noise of the city and heat of the day,  
In cool shady coverts of whispering trees,  
With their leaves lifted up to shake hands with the breeze  
Which in all its wide wanderings never may meet  
With a resting-place fairer than Lockerbie Street!"

Riley never married. He lived with devoted, loyal and understanding friends, a part of whose life he became many years ago. Kindly consideration, gentle affection, peace and order,— all that go to make home home, were found here blooming with the hollyhocks and the wild roses. Every day some visitor knocked for admittance and was not denied; every day saw the poet calling for some companionable friend and driving with him through the city's shaded streets or far out into the country.

And so his life drew on to its last and most beautiful year. Since his serious illness in 1910, the public had shown its love for him more and more frequently. On the occasion of his birthday in 1912, Greenfield had welcomed him home through a host of children scattering flowers. Anderson, where he was living when he first gained public recognition, had a Riley Day in 1913.

The Indiana State University entertained him the same year, as did also the city of Cincinnati. In 1915 there was a Riley Day at Columbus, Indiana, and during all this time each birthday and Christmas was marked by "poetry-showers," and by thousands of letters of affectionate congratulation and by many tributes in the newspapers and magazines.

His last birthday, October 7, 1915, was the most notable of all. Honorable Franklin K. Lane, Secretary of the Interior, suggested to the various school superintendents that one of Riley's poems be read in each schoolhouse, with the result that Riley celebrations were general among the children of the entire country. In a proclamation by Governor Ralston the State of Indiana designated the anniversary as Riley Day in honor of its "most beloved citizen." Thousands of letters and gifts from the poet's friends poured in—letters from schools and organizations and Riley Clubs as well as from individuals—while flowers came from every section of the country. Among them all, perhaps the poet was most pleased with a bunch of violets picked from the banks of the Brandywine by the children of a Riley school.

It was on this last birthday that an afternoon festival of Riley poems set to music and danced in pantomime took place at Indianapolis. This was followed at night by a dinner in his honor at which Charles Warren Fairbanks presided, and the speakers were Governor Ralston, Doctor John Finley, Colonel George Harvey, Young E. Allison, William Allen White, George Ade, Ex-Senator Beveridge and Senator Kern. That night Riley smiled his most wonderful smile, his dimpled boyish smile, and when he rose to speak it was with a perceptible quaver in his voice that he said: "Everywhere the faces of friends, a beautiful throng of friends!"

The winter and spring following, Riley spent quietly at Miami, Florida, where he had gone the two previous seasons to escape the cold and the rain. There was a Riley Day at Miami in February. In April, he returned home, feeling at his best, and, as if by premonition, sought out many of his friends, new and old, and took them for last rides in his automobile. A few days before the end, he visited Greenfield to attend the funeral of a dear boyhood chum, Almon Keefer, of whom he wrote in *A Child-World*. All Riley's old friends who were still left in Greenfield were gathered there and to them he spoke words of faith and good cheer. Almon Keefer had "just slipped out" quietly and peacefully, he said, and "it was beautiful."

And as quietly and peacefully his own end came—as he had desired it, with no dimming of the faculties even to the very close, nor suffering, nor confronting death. This was Saturday night, July 22, 1916. On Monday afternoon and evening his body lay in state under the dome of Indiana's capitol, while the people filed by, thousands upon thousands. Business men were there, and schoolgirls, matrons carrying market baskets, mothers with little children, here and there a swarthy foreigner, old folks, too, and well-dressed youths, here a farmer and his wife, and there a workman in a blue jumper with his hat in his hand, silent, inarticulate, yet bidding his good-by, too. On the following day, with only his nearest and dearest about him, all that was mortal of the people's poet was quietly and simply laid to rest.

The Complete Works of James Whitcomb Riley

**A BACKWARD LOOK**

As I sat smoking, alone, yesterday,  
And lazily leaning back in my chair,  
Enjoying myself in a general way—  
Allowing my thoughts a holiday  
From weariness, toil and care,—  
My fancies—doubtless, for ventilation—  
Left ajar the gates of my mind,—  
And Memory, seeing the situation,  
Slipped out in the street of "Auld Lang Syne."—

Wandering ever with tireless feet  
Through scenes of silence, and jubilee  
Of long-hushed voices; and faces sweet  
Were thronging the shadowy side of the street  
As far as the eye could see;  
Dreaming again, in anticipation,  
The same old dreams of our boyhood's days  
That never come true, from the vague sensation  
Of walking asleep in the world's strange ways.

Away to the house where I was born!  
And there was the selfsame clock that ticked  
From the close of dusk to the burst of morn,  
When life-warm hands plucked the golden corn  
And helped when the apples were picked.  
And the "chany dog" on the mantel-shelf,  
With the gilded collar and yellow eyes,  
Looked just as at first, when I hugged myself  
Sound asleep with the dear surprise.

And down to the swing in the locust-tree,  
Where the grass was worn from the trampled ground,  
And where "Eck" Skinner, "Old" Carr, and three  
Or four such other boys used to be  
"Doin' sky-scrapers," or "whirlin' round":  
And again Bob climbed for the bluebird's nest,  
And again "had shows" in the buggy-shed  
Of Guymon's barn, where still, unguessed,  
The old ghosts romp through the best days dead!

And again I gazed from the old schoolroom  
With a wistful look, of a long June day,  
When on my cheek was the hectic bloom  
Caught of Mischief, as I presume—  
He had such a "partial" way,  
It seemed, toward me.—And again I thought  
Of a probable likelihood to be  
Kept in after school—for a girl was caught  
Catching a note from me.

And down through the woods to the swimming-hole—  
Where the big, white, hollow old sycamore grows,—  
And we never cared when the water was cold,  
And always "ducked" the boy that told  
On the fellow that tied the clothes.—  
When life went so like a dreamy rhyme,  
That it seems to me now that then  
The world was having a jollier time  
Than it ever will have again.

## PHILIPER FLASH

Young Philiper Flash was a promising lad,  
His intentions were good—but oh, how sad

For a person to think  
How the veriest pink  
And bloom of perfection may turn out bad.  
Old Flash himself was a moral man,  
And prided himself on a moral plan,  
Of a maxim as old  
As the calf of gold,  
Of making that boy do what he was told.

And such a good mother had Philiper Flash;  
Her voice was as soft as the creamy plash  
Of the milky wave  
With its musical lave  
That gushed through the holes of her patent churn-dash;—  
And the excellent woman loved Philiper so,  
She could cry sometimes when he stumped his toe,—  
And she stroked his hair  
With such motherly care  
When the dear little angel learned to swear.

Old Flash himself would sometimes say  
That his wife had "such a ridiculous way,—  
She'd, humor that child  
Till he'd soon be sp'iled,  
And then there'd be the devil to pay!"  
And the excellent wife, with a martyr's look,  
Would tell old Flash himself "he took  
No notice at all  
Of the bright-eyed doll  
Unless when he spanked him for getting a fall!"

Young Philiper Flash, as time passed by,  
Grew into "a boy with a roguish eye":  
He could smoke a cigar,  
And seemed by far  
The most promising youth.—"He's powerful sly,  
Old Flash himself once told a friend,  
"Every copper he gets he's sure to spend—  
And," said he, "don't you know  
If he keeps on so  
What a crop of wild oats the boy will grow!"

But his dear good mother knew Philiper's ways  
So—well, she managed the money to raise;  
And old Flash himself  
Was "laid on the shelf,"  
(In the manner of speaking we have nowadays).  
For "gracious knows, her darling child,  
If he went without money he'd soon grow wild."  
So Philiper Flash  
With a regular dash  
"Swung on to the reins," and went "slingin' the cash."

As old Flash himself, in his office one day,  
Was shaving notes in a barberous way,  
At the hour of four  
Death entered the door  
And shaved the note on his life, they say.  
And he had for his grave a magnificent tomb,  
Though the venturous finger that pointed "Gone Home,"  
Looked white and cold  
From being so bold,  
As it feared that a popular lie was told.

Young Philiper Flash was a man of style  
When he first began unpacking the pile

Of the dollars and dimes  
Whose jingling chimes  
Had clinked to the tune of his father's smile;  
And he strewed his wealth with such lavish hand,  
His rakish ways were the talk of the land,  
And gossipers wise  
Sat winking their eyes  
(A certain foreboding of fresh surprise).

A "fast young man" was Philiper Flash,  
And wore "loud clothes" and a weak mustache,  
And "done the Park,"  
For an "afternoon lark,"  
With a very fast horse of "remarkable dash."  
And Philiper handled a billiard-cue  
About as well as the best he knew,  
And used to say  
"He could make it pay  
By playing two or three games a day."

And Philiper Flash was his mother's joy,  
He seemed to her the magic alloy  
That made her glad,  
When her heart was sad,  
With the thought that "she lived for her darling boy."  
His dear good mother wasn't aware  
How her darling boy relished a "tare."—  
She said "one night  
He gave her a fright  
By coming home late and ACTING tight."

Young Philiper Flash, on a winterish day,  
Was published a bankrupt, so they say—  
And as far as I know  
I suppose it was so,  
For matters went on in a singular way;  
His excellent mother, I think I was told,  
Died from exposure and want and cold;  
And Philiper Flash,  
With a horrible slash,  
Whacked his jugular open and went to smash.

## THE SAME OLD STORY

The same old story told again—  
The maiden droops her head,  
The ripening glow of her crimson cheek  
Is answering in her stead.  
The pleading tone of a trembling voice  
Is telling her the way  
He loved her when his heart was young  
In Youth's sunshiny day:  
The trembling tongue, the longing tone,  
Imploringly ask why  
They can not be as happy now  
As in the days gone by.  
And two more hearts, tumultuous  
With overflowing joy,  
Are dancing to the music  
Which that dear, provoking boy  
Is twanging on his bowstring,  
As, fluttering his wings,  
He sends his love-charged arrows  
While merrily he sings:

"Ho! ho! my dainty maiden,  
It surely can not be  
You are thinking you are master  
Of your heart, when it is me."  
And another gleaming arrow  
Does the little god's behest,  
And the dainty little maiden  
Falls upon her lover's breast.  
"The same old story told again,"  
And listened o'er and o'er,  
Will still be new, and pleasing, too,  
Till "Time shall be no more."

## TO A BOY WHISTLING

The smiling face of a happy boy  
With its enchanted key  
Is now unlocking in memory  
My store of heartiest joy.

And my lost life again to-day,  
In pleasant colors all aglow,  
From rainbow tints, to pure white snow,  
Is a panorama sliding away.

The whistled air of a simple tune  
Eddies and whirls my thoughts around,  
As fairy balloons of thistle-down  
Sail through the air of June.

O happy boy with untaught grace!  
What is there in the world to give  
That can buy one hour of the life you live  
Or the trivial cause of your smiling face!

## AN OLD FRIEND

Hey, Old Midsummer! are you here again,  
With all your harvest-store of olden joys,—  
Vast overhanging meadow-lands of rain,  
And drowsy dawns, and noons when golden grain  
Nods in the sun, and lazy truant boys  
Drift ever listlessly adown the day,  
Too full of joy to rest, and dreams to play.

The same old Summer, with the same old smile  
Beaming upon us in the same old way  
We knew in childhood! Though a weary while  
Since that far time, yet memories reconcile  
The heart with odorous breaths of clover hay;  
And again I hear the doves, and the sun streams through  
The old barn door just as it used to do.

And so it seems like welcoming a friend—  
An old, OLD friend, upon his coming home  
From some far country—coming home to spend  
Long, loitering days with me: And I extend  
My hand in rapturous glee:—And so you've come!—  
Ho, I'm so glad! Come in and take a chair:  
Well, this is just like OLD times, I declare!

## WHAT SMITH KNEW ABOUT FARMING

There wasn't two purtier farms in the state  
Than the couple of which I'm about to relate;—  
Jinin' each other—belongin' to Brown,  
And jest at the edge of a flourishin' town.  
Brown was a man, as I understand,  
That allus had handled a good 'eal o' land,  
And was sharp as a tack in drivin' a trade—  
For that's the way most of his money was made.  
And all the grounds and the orchards about  
His two pet farms was all tricked out  
With poppies and posies  
And sweet-smellin' rosies;  
And hundreds o' kinds  
Of all sorts o' vines,  
To tickle the most horticultural minds  
And little dwarf trees not as thick as your wrist  
With ripe apples on 'em as big as your fist:  
And peaches,—Siberian crabs and pears,  
And quinces—Well! ANY fruit ANY tree bears;  
And th purtiest stream—jest a-swimmin' with fish,  
And—JEST O'MOST EVERYTHING HEART COULD WISH!  
The purtiest orch'rds—I wish you could see  
How purty they was, fer I know it 'ud be  
A regular treat!—but I'll go ahead with  
My story! A man by the name o' Smith—  
(A bad name to rhyme,  
But I reckon that I'm  
Not goin' back on a Smith! nary time!)  
'At hadn't a soul of kin nor kith,  
And more money than he knowed what to do with,—  
So he comes a-ridin' along one day,  
And HE says to Brown, in his offhand way—  
Who was trainin' some newfangled vines round a bay-  
Winder—"Howdy-do—look-a-here—say:  
What'll you take fer this property here?—  
I'm talkin' o' leavin' the city this year,  
And I want to be  
Where the air is free,  
And I'll BUY this place, if it ain't too dear!"—  
Well—they grumbled and jawed aroun'—  
"I don't like to part with the place," says Brown;  
"Well," says Smith, a-jerkin' his head,  
"That house yonder—bricks painted red—  
Jest like this'n—a PURTIER VIEW—  
Who is it owns it?" "That's mine too,"  
Says Brown, as he winked at a hole in his shoe,  
"But I'll tell you right here jest what I KIN do:—  
If you'll pay the figgers I'll sell IT to you.,"  
Smith went over and looked at the place—  
Badgered with Brown, and argied the case—  
Thought that Brown's figgers was rather too tall,  
But, findin' that Brown wasn't goin' to fall,  
In final agreed,  
So they drawed up the deed  
Fer the farm and the fixtures—the live stock an' all.  
And so Smith moved from the city as soon  
As he possibly could—But "the man in the moon"  
Knowed more'n Smith o' farmin' pursuits,  
And jest to convince you, and have no disputes,  
How little he knowed,  
I'll tell you his "mode,"  
As he called it, o' raisin' "the best that growed,"



In the way o' potatoes—  
Cucumbers—tomatoes,  
And squashes as lengthy as young alligators.  
'Twas allus a curious thing to me  
How big a fool a feller kin be  
When he gits on a farm after leavin' a town!—  
Expectin' to raise himself up to renown,  
And reap fer himself agricultural fame,  
By growin' of squashes—WITHOUT ANY SHAME—  
As useless and long as a technical name.  
To make the soil pure,  
And certainly sure,  
He plastered the ground with patent manure.  
He had cultivators, and double-hoss plows,  
And patent machines fer milkin' his cows;  
And patent hay-forks—patent measures and weights,  
And new patent back-action hinges fer gates,  
And barn locks and latches, and such little dribs,  
And patents to keep the rats out o' the cribs—  
Reapers and mowers,  
And patent grain sowers;  
And drillers  
And tillers  
And cucumber hillers,  
And horries;—and had patent rollers and scrapers,  
And took about ten agricultural papers.  
So you can imagine how matters turned out:  
But BROWN didn't have not a shadder o' doubt  
That Smith didn't know what he was about  
When he said that "the OLD way to farm was played out."  
But Smith worked ahead,  
And when any one said  
That the OLD way o' workin' was better instead  
O' his "modern idees," he allus turned red,  
And wanted to know  
What made people so  
INFERNALLY anxious to hear theirselves crow?  
And guessed that he'd manage to hoe his own row.  
Brown he come onc't and leant over the fence,  
And told Smith that he couldn't see any sense  
In goin' to such a tremendous expense  
Fer the sake o' such no-account experiments  
"That'll never make corn!  
As shore's you're born  
It'll come out the leetlest end of the horn!"  
Says Brown, as he pulled off a big roastin'-ear  
From a stalk of his own  
That had tribble outgrown  
Smith's poor yaller shoots, and says he, "Looky here!  
THIS corn was raised in the old-fashioned way,  
And I rather imagine that THIS corn'll pay  
Expenses fer RAISIN' it!—What do you say?"  
Brown got him then to look over his crop.—  
HIS luck that season had been tip-top!  
And you may surmise  
Smith opened his eyes  
And let out a look o' the wildest surprise  
When Brown showed him punkins as big as the lies  
He was stuffin' him with—about offers he's had  
Fer his farm: "I don't want to sell very bad,"  
He says, but says he,  
"Mr. Smith, you kin see  
Fer yourself how matters is standin' with me,  
I UNDERSTAND FARMIN' and I'd better stay,

You know, on my farm;—I'm a-makin' it pay—  
 I oughtn't to grumble!—I reckon I'll clear  
 Away over four thousand dollars this year."  
 And that was the reason, he made it appear,  
 Why he didn't care about sellin' his farm,  
 And hinted at his havin' done himself harm  
 In sellin' the other, and wanted to know  
 If Smith wouldn't sell back ag'in to him.—So  
 Smith took the bait, and says he, "Mr. Brown,  
 I wouldn't SELL out but we might swap aroun'—  
 How'll you trade your place fer mine?"  
 (Purty sharp way o' comin' the shine  
 Over Smith! Wasn't it?) Well, sir, this Brown  
 Played out his hand and brought Smithy down—  
 Traded with him an', workin' it cute,  
 Raked in two thousand dollars to boot  
 As slick as a whistle, an' that wasn't all,—  
 He managed to trade back ag'in the next fall,—  
 And the next—and the next—as long as Smith stayed  
 He reaped with his harvests an annual trade.—  
 Why, I reckon that Brown must 'a' easily made—  
 On an AVERAGE—nearly two thousand a year—  
 Together he made over seven thousand—clear.—  
 Till Mr. Smith found he was losin' his health  
 In as big a proportion, almost, as his wealth;  
 So at last he concluded to move back to town,  
 And sold back his farm to this same Mr. Brown  
 At very low figgers, by gittin' it down.  
 Further'n this I have nothin' to say  
 Than merely advisin' the Smiths fer to stay  
 In their grocery stores in flourishin' towns  
 And leave agriculture alone—and the Browns.

## A POET'S WOOING

I woo'd a woman once,  
 But she was sharper than an eastern wind.  
 —TENNYSON.

"What may I do to make you glad,  
 To make you glad and free,  
 Till your light smiles glance  
 And your bright eyes dance  
 Like sunbeams on the sea?  
 Read some rhyme that is blithe and gay  
 Of a bright May morn and a marriage day?"  
 And she sighed in a listless way she had,—  
 "Do not read—it will make me sad!"

"What shall I do to make you glad—  
 To make you glad and gay,  
 Till your eyes gleam bright  
 As the stars at night  
 When as light as the light of day  
 Sing some song as I twang the strings  
 Of my sweet guitar through its wanderings?"  
 And she sighed in the weary way she had,—  
 "Do not sing—it will make me sad!"

"What can I do to make you glad—  
 As glad as glad can be,  
 Till your clear eyes seem  
 Like the rays that gleam  
 And glint through a dew-decked tree?—

Will it please you, dear, that I now begin  
A grand old air on my violin?"  
And she spoke again in the following way,—  
"Yes, oh yes, it would please me, sir;  
I would be so glad you'd play  
Some grand old march—in character,—  
And then as you march away  
I will no longer thus be sad,  
But oh, so glad—so glad—so glad!"

## MAN'S DEVOTION

A lover said, "O Maiden, love me well,  
For I must go away:  
And should ANOTHER ever come to tell  
Of love—What WILL you say?"

And she let fall a royal robe of hair  
That folded on his arm  
And made a golden pillow for her there;  
Her face—as bright a charm

As ever setting held in kingly crown—  
Made answer with a look,  
And reading it, the lover bended down,  
And, trusting, "kissed the book."

He took a fond farewell and went away.  
And slow the time went by—  
So weary—dreary was it, day by day  
To love, and wait, and sigh.

She kissed his pictured face sometimes, and said:  
"O Lips, so cold and dumb,  
I would that you would tell me, if not dead,  
Why, why do you not come?"

The picture, smiling, stared her in the face  
Unmoved—e'en with the touch  
Of tear-drops—HERS—bejeweling the case—  
'Twas plain—she loved him much.

And, thus she grew to think of him as gay  
And joyous all the while,  
And SHE was sorrowing—"Ah, welladay!"  
But pictures ALWAYS smile!

And years—dull years—in dull monotony  
As ever went and came,  
Still weaving changes on unceasingly,  
And changing, changed her name.

Was she untrue?—She oftentimes was glad  
And happy as a wife;  
But ONE remembrance oftentimes made sad  
Her matrimonial life.—

Though its few years were hardly noted, when  
Again her path was strown  
With thorns—the roses swept away again,  
And she again alone!

And then—alas! ah THEN!—her lover came:  
"I come to claim you now—  
My Darling, for I know you are the same,  
And I have kept my vow

Through these long, long, long years, and now no more  
Shall we asundered be!"  
She staggered back and, sinking to the floor,  
Cried in her agony:

"I have been false!" she moaned, "*I* am not true—  
I am not worthy now,  
Nor ever can I be a wife to YOU—  
For I have broke my vow!"

And as she kneeled there, sobbing at his feet,  
He calmly spoke—no sign  
Betrayed his inward agony—"I count you meet  
To be a wife of mine!"

And raised her up forgiven, though untrue;  
As fond he gazed on her,  
She sighed,—"**SO HAPPY!**" And she never knew  
HE was a WIDOWER.

## A BALLAD

### WITH A SERIOUS CONCLUSION

Crowd about me, little children—  
Come and cluster 'round my knee  
While I tell a little story  
That happened once with me.

My father he had gone away  
A-sailing on the foam,  
Leaving me—the merest infant—  
And my mother dear at home;

For my father was a sailor,  
And he sailed the ocean o'er  
For full five years ere yet again  
He reached his native shore.

And I had grown up rugged  
And healthy day by day,  
Though I was but a puny babe  
When father went away.

Poor mother she would kiss me  
And look at me and sigh  
So strangely, oft I wondered  
And would ask the reason why.

And she would answer sadly,  
Between her sobs and tears,—  
"You look so like your father,  
Far away so many years!"

And then she would caress me  
And brush my hair away,  
And tell me not to question,  
But to run about my play.

Thus I went playing thoughtfully—  
For that my mother said,—  
"**YOU LOOK SO LIKE YOUR FATHER!**"  
Kept ringing in my head.

So, ranging once the golden sands  
That looked out on the sea,

I called aloud, "My father dear,  
Come back to ma and me!"

Then I saw a glancing shadow  
On the sand, and heard the shriek  
Of a sea-gull flying seaward,  
And I heard a gruff voice speak:—

"Ay, ay, my little shipmate,  
I thought I heard you hail;  
Were you trumpeting that sea-gull,  
Or do you see a sail?"

And as rough and gruff a sailor  
As ever sailed the sea  
Was standing near grotesquely  
And leering dreadfully.

I replied, though I was frightened,  
"It was my father dear  
I was calling for across the sea—  
I think he didn't hear."

And then the sailor leered again  
In such a frightful way,  
And made so many faces  
I was little loath to stay:

But he started fiercely toward me—  
Then made a sudden halt  
And roared, "*I* think he heard you!"  
And turned a somersault.

Then a wild fear overcame me,  
And I flew off like the wind,  
Shrieking "MOTHER!"—and the sailor  
Just a little way behind!

And then my mother heard me,  
And I saw her shade her eyes,  
Looking toward me from the doorway,  
Transfixed with pale surprise

For a moment—then her features  
Glowed with all their wonted charms  
As the sailor overtook me,  
And I fainted in her arms.

When I awoke to reason  
I shuddered with affright  
Till I felt my mother's presence  
With a thrill of wild delight—

Till, amid a shower of kisses  
Falling glad as summer rain,  
A muffled thunder rumbled,—  
"Is he coming 'round again?"

Then I shrieked and clung unto her,  
While her features flushed and burned  
As she told me it was father  
From a foreign land returned.

.....

I said—when I was calm again,  
And thoughtfully once more  
Had dwelt upon my mother's words

Of just the day before,—

"I DON'T look like my father,  
As you told me yesterday—  
I know I don't—or father  
Would have run the other way."

## THE OLD TIMES WERE THE BEST

Friends, my heart is half aweary  
Of its happiness to-night:  
Though your songs are gay and cheery,  
And your spirits feather-light,  
There's a ghostly music haunting  
Still the heart of every guest  
And a voiceless chorus chanting  
That the Old Times were the best.

### CHORUS

All about is bright and pleasant  
With the sound of song and jest,  
Yet a feeling's ever present  
That the Old Times were the best.

## A SUMMER AFTERNOON

A languid atmosphere, a lazy breeze,  
With labored respiration, moves the wheat  
From distant reaches, till the golden seas  
Break in crisp whispers at my feet.

My book, neglected of an idle mind,  
Hides for a moment from the eyes of men;  
Or lightly opened by a critic wind,  
Affrightedly reviews itself again.

Off through the haze that dances in the shine  
The warm sun showers in the open glade,  
The forest lies, a silhouette design  
Dimmed through and through with shade.

A dreamy day; and tranquilly I lie  
At anchor from all storms of mental strain;  
With absent vision, gazing at the sky,  
"Like one that hears it rain."

The Katydid, so boisterous last night,  
Clinging, inverted, in uneasy poise,  
Beneath a wheat-blade, has forgotten quite  
If "Katy DID or DIDN'T" make a noise.

The twitter, sometimes, of a wayward bird  
That checks the song abruptly at the sound,  
And mildly, chiding echoes that have stirred,  
Sink into silence, all the more profound.

And drowsily I hear the plaintive strain  
Of some poor dove . . . Why, I can scarcely keep  
My heavy eyelids—there it is again—

"Coo-coo!"—I mustn't—"Coo-coo!"—fall asleep!

## AT LAST

A dark, tempestuous night; the stars shut in  
With shrouds of fog; an inky, jet-black blot  
The firmament; and where the moon has been  
An hour ago seems like the darkest spot.  
The weird wind—furious at its demon game—  
Rattles one's fancy like a window-frame.

A care-worn face peers out into the dark,  
And childish faces—frightened at the gloom—  
Grow awed and vacant as they turn to mark  
The father's as he passes through the room:  
The gate latch clatters, and wee baby Bess  
Whispers, "The doctor's tummin' now, I dess!"

The father turns; a sharp, swift flash of pain  
Flits o'er his face: "Amanda, child! I said  
A moment since—I see I must AGAIN—  
Go take your little sisters off to bed!  
There, Effie, Rose, and CLARA MUSTN'T CRY!"  
"I tan't he'p it—I'm fyaid 'at mama'll die!"

What are his feelings, when this man alone  
Sits in the silence, glaring in the grate  
That sobs and sighs on in an undertone  
As stoical—immovable as Fate,  
While muffled voices from the sick one's room  
Come in like heralds of a dreaded doom?

The door-latch jingles: in the doorway stands  
The doctor, while the draft puffs in a breath—  
The dead coals leap to life, and clap their hands,  
The flames flash up. A face as pale as death  
Turns slowly—teeth tight clenched, and with a look  
The doctor, through his specs, reads like a book.

"Come, brace up, Major!"—"Let me know the worst!"  
"W'y you're the biggest fool I ever saw—  
Here, Major—take a little brandy first—  
There! She's a BOY—I mean HE is—hurrah!"  
"Wake up the other girls—and shout for joy—  
Eureka is his name—I've found A BOY!"

## FARMER WHIPPLE—BACHELOR

It's a mystery to see me—a man o' fifty-four,  
Who's lived a cross old bachelor fer thirty year' and more—  
A-lookin' glad and smilin'! And they's none o' you can say  
That you can guess the reason why I feel so good to-day!

I must tell you all about it! But I'll have to deviate  
A little in beginnin', so's to set the matter straight  
As to how it comes to happen that I never took a wife—  
Kindo' "crawfish" from the Present to the Springtime of my life!

I was brought up in the country: Of a family of five—  
Three brothers and a sister—I'm the only one alive,—  
Fer they all died little babies; and 'twas one o' Mother's ways,  
You know, to want a daughter; so she took a girl to raise.

The sweetest little thing she was, with rosy cheeks, and fat—

We was little chunks o' shavers then about as high as that!  
But someway we sort a' SUITED-like! and Mother she'd declare  
She never laid her eyes on a more lovin' pair

Than WE was! So we growed up side by side fer thirteen year',  
And every hour of it she growed to me more dear!—  
W'y, even Father's dyin', as he did, I do believe  
Warn't more affectin' to me than it was to see her grieve!

I was then a lad o' twenty; and I felt a flash o' pride  
In thinkin' all depended on ME now to pervide  
Fer Mother and fer Mary; and I went about the place  
With sleeves rolled up—and workin', with a mighty smilin'  
face.—

Fer SOMEPIN' ELSE was workin'! but not a word I said  
Of a certain sort o' notion that was runnin' through my head,—  
"Some day I'd maybe marry, and a BROTHER'S love was one  
Thing—a LOVER'S was another!" was the way the notion run!

I remember onc't in harvest, when the "cradle-in' " was done,  
(When the harvest of my summers mounted up to twenty-one),  
I was ridin' home with Mary at the closin' o' the day—  
A-chawin' straws and thinkin', in a lover's lazy way!

And Mary's cheeks was burnin' like the sunset down the lane:  
I noticed she was thinkin', too, and ast her to explain.  
Well—when she turned and KISSED ME, WITH HER ARMS AROUND  
ME—LAW!  
I'd a bigger load o' Heaven than I had a load o' straw!

I don't p'tend to learnin', but I'll tell you what's a fac',  
They's a mighty truthful sayin' somers in a' almanac—  
Er SOMERS—'bout "puore happiness"—perhaps some folks'll laugh  
At the idy—"only lastin' jest two seconds and a half."—

But it's jest as true as preachin'!—fer that was a SISTER'S  
kiss,  
And a sister's lovin' confidence a-tellin' to me this:—  
"SHE was happy, BEIN' PROMISED TO THE SON O' FARMER BROWN."—  
And my feelin's struck a pardnership with sunset and went down!

I don't know HOW I acted, and I don't know WHAT I said,—  
Fer my heart seemed jest a-turnin' to an ice-cold lump o' lead;  
And the hosses kind o'glimmered before me in the road,  
And the lines fell from my fingers—And that was all I knowed—

Fer—well, I don't know HOW long—They's a dim rememberence  
Of a sound o' snortin' horses, and a stake-and-ridered fence  
A-whizzin' past, and wheat-sheaves a-dancin' in the air,  
And Mary screamin' "Murder!" and a-runnin' up to where

I was layin' by the roadside, and the wagon upside down  
A-leanin' on the gate-post, with the wheels a-whirlin' roun'!  
And I tried to raise and meet her, but I couldn't, with a vague  
Sort o' notion comin' to me that I had a broken leg.

Well, the women nussed me through it; but many a time I'd sigh  
As I'd keep a-gittin' better instid o' goin' to die,  
And wonder what was left ME worth livin' fer below,  
When the girl I loved was married to another, don't you know!

And my thoughts was as rebellious as the folks was good and kind  
When Brown and Mary married—Raily must 'a' been my MIND  
Was kind o' out o' kilter!—fer I hated Brown, you see,  
Worse'n PIZEN—and the feller whittled crutches out fer ME—

And done a thousand little ac's o' kindness and respec'—



And me a-wishin' all the time that I could break his neck!  
My relief was like a mourner's when the funeral is done  
When they moved to Illinois in the Fall o' Forty-one.

Then I went to work in airnest—I had nothin' much in view  
But to drownd out rickollections—and it kep' me busy, too!  
But I slowly thrived and prospered, tel Mother used to say  
She expected yit to see me a wealthy man some day.

Then I'd think how little MONEY was, compared to happiness—  
And who'd be left to use it when I died I couldn't guess!  
But I've still kep' speculatin' and a-gainin' year by year,  
Tel I'm payin' half the taxes in the county, mighty near!

Well!—A year ago er better, a letter comes to hand  
Astin' how I'd like to dicker fer some Illinois land—  
"The feller that had owned it," it went ahead to state,  
"Had jest deceased, insolvent, leavin' chance to speculate,"—

And then it closed by sayin' that I'd "better come and see."—  
I'd never been West, anyhow—a'most too wild fer ME,  
I'd allus had a notion; but a lawyer here in town  
Said I'd find myself mistakend when I come to look around.

So I bids good-by to Mother, and I jumps aboard the train,  
A-thinkin' what I'd bring her when I come back home again—  
And ef she'd had an idy what the present was to be,  
I think it's more'n likely she'd 'a' went along with me!

Cars is awful tejus ridin', fer all they go so fast!  
But finally they called out my stoppin'-place at last:  
And that night, at the tavern, I dreamp' I was a train  
O' cars, and SKEERED at somepin', runnin' down a country lane!

Well, in the morning airly—after huntin' up the man—  
The lawyer who was wantin' to swap the piece o' land—  
We started fer the country; and I ast the history  
Of the farm—its former owner—and so forth, etcetery!

And—well—it was interESTin'—I su'prised him, I suppose,  
By the loud and frequent manner in which I blowed my nose!—  
But his su'prise was greater, and it made him wonder more,  
When I kissed and hugged the widder when she met us at the  
door!—

IT WAS MARY: . . . They's a feelin' a-hidin' down in here—  
Of course I can't explain it, ner ever make it clear.—  
It was with us in that meetin', I don't want you to fergit!  
And it makes me kind o'nervous when I think about it yit!

I BOUGHT that farm, and DEEDED it, afore I left the town  
With "title clear to mansions in the skies," to Mary Brown!  
And fu'thermore, I took her and the CHILDERN—fer you see,  
They'd never seed their Grandma—and I fetched 'em home with me.

So NOW you've got an idy why a man o' fifty-four,  
Who's lived a cross old bachelor fer thirty year' and more  
Is a-lookin' glad and smilin'!—And I've jest come into town  
To git a pair o' license fer to MARRY Mary Brown.

## MY JOLLY FRIEND'S SECRET

Ah, friend of mine, how goes it,  
Since you've taken you a mate?—  
Your smile, though, plainly shows it  
Is a very happy state!

Dan Cupid's necromancy!  
You must sit you down and dine,  
And lubricate your fancy  
With a glass or two of wine.

And as you have "deserted,"  
As my other chums have done,  
While I laugh alone diverted,  
As you drop off one by one—  
And I've remained unwedded,  
Till—you see—look here—that I'm,  
In a manner, "snatched bald-headed"  
By the sportive hand of Time!

I'm an "old 'un!" yes, but wrinkles  
Are not so plenty, quite,  
As to cover up the twinkles  
Of the BOY—ain't I right?  
Yet, there are ghosts of kisses  
Under this mustache of mine  
My mem'ry only misses  
When I drown 'em out with wine.

From acknowledgment so ample,  
You would hardly take me for  
What I am—a perfect sample  
Of a "jolly bachelor";  
Not a bachelor has being  
When he laughs at married life  
But his heart and soul's agreeing  
That he ought to have a wife!

Ah, ha I old chum, this claret,  
Like Fatima, holds the key  
Of the old Blue-Beardish garret  
Of my hidden mystery!  
Did you say you'd like to listen?  
Ah, my boy! the "SAD NO MORE!"  
And the tear-drops that will glisten—  
TURN THE CATCH UPON THE DOOR,

And sit you down beside me,  
And put yourself at ease—  
I'll trouble you to slide me  
That wine decanter, please;  
The path is kind o' mazy  
Where my fancies have to go,  
And my heart gets sort o' lazy  
On the journey—don't you know?

Let me see—when I was twenty—  
It's a lordly age, my boy,  
When a fellow's money's plenty,  
And the leisure to enjoy—  
And a girl—with hair as golden  
As—THAT; and lips—well—quite  
As red as THIS I'm holdin'  
Between you and the light.

And eyes and a complexion—  
Ah, heavens!—le'-me-see—  
Well,—just in this connection,—  
DID YOU LOCK THAT DOOR FOR ME?  
Did I start in recitation  
My past life to recall?  
Well, THAT'S an indication

I am purty tight—that's all!

## THE SPEEDING OF THE KING'S SPITE

A king—estranged from his loving Queen  
By a foolish royal whim—  
Tired and sick of the dull routine  
Of matters surrounding him—  
Issued a mandate in this wise.—  
"THE DOWER OF MY DAUGHTER'S HAND  
I WILL GIVE TO HIM WHO HOLDS THIS PRIZE,  
THE STRANGEST THING IN THE LAND."

But the King, sad sooth! in this grim decree  
Had a motive low and mean;—  
'Twas a royal piece of chicanery  
To harry and spite the Queen;  
For King though he was, and beyond compare,  
He had ruled all things save one—  
Then blamed the Queen that his only heir  
Was a daughter—not a son.

The girl had grown, in the mother's care,  
Like a bud in the shine and shower  
That drinks of the wine of the balmy air  
Till it blooms into matchless flower;  
Her waist was the rose's stem that bore  
The flower—and the flower's perfume—  
That ripens on till it bulges o'er  
With its wealth of bud and bloom.

And she had a lover—lowly sprung,—  
But a purer, nobler heart  
Never spake in a courtlier tongue  
Or wooed with a dearer art:  
And the fair pair paled at the King's decree;  
But the smiling Fates contrived  
To have them wed, in a secrecy  
That the Queen HERSELF connived—

While the grim King's heralds scoured the land  
And the countries roundabout,  
Shouting aloud, at the King's command,  
A challenge to knave or lout,  
Prince or peasant,—"The mighty King  
Would have ye understand  
That he who shows him the strangest thing  
Shall have his daughter's hand!"

And thousands flocked to the royal throne,  
Bringing a thousand things  
Strange and curious;—One, a bone—  
The hinge of a fairy's wings;  
And one, the glass of a mermaid queen,  
Gemmed with a diamond dew,  
Where, down in its reflex, dimly seen,  
Her face smiled out at you.

One brought a cluster of some strange date,  
With a subtle and searching tang  
That seemed, as you tasted, to penetrate  
The heart like a serpent's fang;  
And back you fell for a spell entranced,  
As cold as a corpse of stone,  
And heard your brains, as they laughed and danced

And talked in an undertone.

One brought a bird that could whistle a tune  
So piercingly pure and sweet,  
That tears would fall from the eyes of the moon  
In dewdrops at its feet;  
And the winds would sigh at the sweet refrain,  
Till they swooned in an ecstasy,  
To waken again in a hurricane  
Of riot and jubilee.

One brought a lute that was wrought of a shell  
Luminous as the shine  
Of a new-born star in a dewy dell,—  
And its strings were strands of wine  
That sprayed at the Fancy's touch and fused,  
As your listening spirit leant  
Drunken through with the airs that oozed  
From the o'ersweet instrument.

One brought a tablet of ivory  
Whereon no thing was writ,—  
But, at night—and the dazzled eyes would see  
Flickering lines o'er it,—  
And each, as you read from the magic tome,  
Lightened and died in flame,  
And the memory held but a golden poem  
Too beautiful to name.

Till it seemed all marvels that ever were known  
Or dreamed of under the sun  
Were brought and displayed at the royal throne,  
And put by, one by one  
Till a graybeard monster came to the King—  
Haggard and wrinkled and old—  
And spread to his gaze this wondrous thing,—  
A gossamer veil of gold.—

Strangely marvelous—mocking the gaze  
Like a tangle of bright sunshine,  
Dipping a million glittering rays  
In a baptism divine:  
And a maiden, sheened in this gauze attire—  
Sifting a glance of her eye—  
Dazzled men's souls with a fierce desire  
To kiss and caress her and—die.

And the grim King swore by his royal beard  
That the veil had won the prize,  
While the gray old monster blinked and leered  
With his lashless, red-rimmed eyes,  
As the fainting form of the princess fell,  
And the mother's heart went wild,  
Throbbing and swelling a muffled knell  
For the dead hopes of her child.

But her clouded face with a faint smile shone,  
As suddenly, through the throng,  
Pushing his way to the royal throne,  
A fair youth strode along,  
While a strange smile hovered about his eyes,  
As he said to the grim old King:—  
"The veil of gold must lose the prize;  
For *I* have a stranger thing."

He bent and whispered a sentence brief;  
But the monarch shook his head,

With a look expressive of unbelief—  
"It can't be so," he said;  
"Or give me proof; and I, the King,  
Give you my daughter's hand,—  
For certes THAT IS a stranger thing—  
THE STRANGEST THING IN THE LAND!"

Then the fair youth, turning, caught the Queen  
In a rapturous caress,  
While his lithe form towered in lordly mien,  
As he said in a brief address:—  
"My fair bride's mother is this; and, lo,  
As you stare in your royal awe,  
By this pure kiss do I proudly show  
A LOVE FOR A MOTHER-IN-LAW!"

Then a thaw set in the old King's mood,  
And a sweet Spring freshet came  
Into his eyes, and his heart renewed  
Its love for the favored dame:  
But often he has been heard to declare  
That "he never could clearly see  
How, in the deuce, such a strange affair  
Could have ended so happily!"

## **JOB WORK**

"Write me a rhyme of the present time".  
And the poet took his pen  
And wrote such lines as the miser minds  
Hide in the hearts of men.

He grew enthused, as the poets used  
When their fingers kissed the strings  
Of some sweet lyre, and caught the fire  
True inspiration brings,

And sang the song of a nation's wrong—  
Of the patriot's galling chain,  
And the glad release that the angel, Peace,  
Has given him again.

He sang the lay of religion's sway,  
Where a hundred creeds clasp hands  
And shout in glee such a symphony  
That the whole world understands.

He struck the key of monopoly,  
And sang of her swift decay,  
And traveled the track of the railway back  
With a blithesome roundelay—

Of the tranquil bliss of a true love kiss;  
And painted the picture, too,  
Of the wedded life, and the patient wife,  
And the husband fond and true;

And sang the joy that a noble boy  
Brings to a father's soul,  
Who lets the wine as a mocker shine  
Stagnated in the bowl.

And he stabbed his pen in the ink again,  
And wrote with a writhing frown,  
"This is the end." "And now, my friend,  
You may print it—upside down!"

## PRIVATE THEATRICALS

A quite convincing axiom  
Is, "Life is like a play";  
For, turning back its pages some  
Few dog-eared years away,  
I find where I  
Committed my  
Love-tale—with brackets where to sigh.

I feel an idle interest  
To read again the page;  
I enter, as a lover dressed,  
At twenty years of age,  
And play the part  
With throbbing heart,  
And all an actor's glowing art.

And she who plays my Lady-love  
Excels!—Her loving glance  
Has power her audience to move—  
I am her audience.—  
Her acting tact,  
To tell the fact,  
"Brings down the house" in every act.

And often we defy the curse  
Of storms and thunder-showers,  
To meet together and rehearse  
This little play of ours—  
I think, when she  
"Makes love" to me,  
She kisses very naturally!

. . . . .

Yes; it's convincing—rather—  
That "Life is like a play":  
I am playing "Heavy Father"  
In a "Screaming Farce" to-day,  
That so "brings down  
The house," I frown,  
And fain would "ring the curtain down."

## PLAIN SERMONS

I saw a man—and envied him beside—  
Because of this world's goods he had great store;  
But even as I envied him, he died,  
And left me envious of him no more.

I saw another man—and envied still—  
Because he was content with frugal lot;  
But as I envied him, the rich man's will  
Bequeathed him all, and envy I forgot.

Yet still another man I saw, and he  
I envied for a calm and tranquil mind  
That nothing fretted in the least degree—  
Until, alas! I found that he was blind.

What vanity is envy! for I find  
I have been rich in dross of thought, and poor  
In that I was a fool, and lastly blind  
For never having seen myself before!

## "TRADIN' JOE"

I'm one o' these cur'ous kind o' chaps  
You think you know when you don't, perhaps!  
I hain't no fool—ner I don't p'tend  
To be so smart I could rickommend  
Myself fer a CONGERSSMAN my friend!—  
But I'm kind o' betwixt-and-between, you know,—  
One o' these fellers 'at folks call "slow."  
And I'll say jest here I'm kind o' queer  
Regardin' things 'at I SEE and HEAR,—  
Fer I'm THICK o' hearin' SOMETIMES, and  
It's hard to git me to understand;  
But other times it hain't, you bet!  
Fer I don't sleep with both eyes shet!

I've swapped a power in stock, and so  
The neighbors calls me "Tradin' Joe"—  
And I'm goin' to tell you 'bout a trade,—  
And one o' the best I ever made:

Folks has gone so fur's to say  
'At I'm well fixed, in a WORLDLY way,  
And BEIN' so, and a WIDOWER,  
It's not su'prisin', as you'll infer,  
I'm purty handy among the sect—  
Widders especially, rickollect!  
And I won't deny that along o' late  
I've hankered a heap fer the married state—  
But some way o' 'nother the longer we wait  
The harder it is to discover a mate.

Marshall Thomas,—a friend o' mine,  
Doin' some in the tradin' line,  
But a'most too YOUNG to know it all—  
On'y at PICNICS er some BALL!—  
Says to me, in a banterin' way,  
As 'we was a-loadin' stock one day,—  
"You're a-huntin' a wife, and I want you to see  
My girl's mother, at Kankakee!—  
She hain't over forty—good-lookin' and spry,  
And jest the woman to fill your eye!  
And I'm a-goin' there Sund'y,—and now," says he,  
"I want to take you along with ME;  
And you marry HER, and," he says, "by 'shaw I  
You'll hev me fer yer son-in-law!"  
I studied a while, and says I, "Well, I'll  
First have to see ef she suits my style;  
And ef she does, you kin bet your life  
Your mother-in-law will be my wife!"

Well, Sundy come; and I fixed up some—  
Putt on a collar—I did, by gum!—  
Got down my "plug," and my satin vest—  
(You wouldn't know me to see me dressed!—  
But any one knows ef you got the clothes  
You kin go in the crowd wher' the best of 'em goes!)  
And I greeced my boots, and combed my hair  
Keerfully over the bald place there;  
And Marshall Thomas and me that day  
Eat our dinners with Widder Gray  
And her girl Han'! \* \* \*

Well, jest a glance  
O' the widder's smilin' countenance,

A-cuttin' up chicken and big pot-pies,  
Would make a man hungry in Paradise!  
And passin' p'serves and jelly and cake  
'At would make an ANGEL'S appetite ACHE!—  
Pourin' out coffee as yaller as gold—  
Twic't as much as the cup could hold—  
La! it was rich!—And then she'd say,  
"Take some o' THIS!" in her coaxin' way,  
Tell ef I'd been a hoss I'd 'a' FOUNDERED, shore,  
And jest dropped dead on her white-oak floor!

Well, the way I talked would 'a' done you good,  
Ef you'd 'a' been there to 'a' understood;  
Tel I noticed Hanner and Marshall, they  
Was a-noticin' me in a cur'ous way;  
So I says to myse'f, says I, "Now, Joe,  
The best thing fer you is to jest go slow!"  
And I simmered down, and let them do  
The bulk o' the talkin' the evening through.

And Marshall was still in a talkative gait  
When he left, that evening—tolable late.  
"How do you like her?" he says to me;  
Says I, "She suits, to a 'T-Y-TEE!"  
And then I ast how matters stood  
With him in the OPPOSITE neighborhood?  
"Bully!" he says; "I ruther guess  
I'll finally git her to say the 'yes.'  
I named it to her to-night, and she  
Kind o' smiled, and said 'SHE'D SEE'—  
And that's a purty good sign!" says he:  
"Yes" says I, "you're ahead o' ME!"  
And then he laughed, and said, "GO IN!  
And patted me on the shoulder ag'in.

Well, ever sense then I've been ridin' a good  
Deal through the Kankakee neighborhood;  
And I make it convenient sometimes to stop  
And hitch a few minutes, and kind o' drop  
In at the widder's, and talk o' the crop  
And one thing o' 'nother. And week afore last  
The notion struck me, as I drove past,  
I'd stop at the place and state my case—  
Might as well do it at first as last!

I felt first-rate; so I hitched at the gate,  
And went up to the house; and, strange to relate,  
MARSHALL THOMAS had dropped in, TOO.—  
"Glad to see you, sir, how do you do?"  
He says, says he! Well—it SOUNDED QUEER:

And when Han' told me to take a cheer,  
Marshall got up and putt out o' the room—  
And motioned his hand fer the WIDDER to come.  
I didn't say nothin' fer quite a spell,  
But thinks I to myse'f, "There's a dog in the well!"  
And Han' SHE smiled so cur'ous at me—  
Says I, "What's up?" And she says, says she,  
"Marshall's been at me to marry ag'in,  
And I told him 'no,' jest as you come in."  
Well, somepin' o' 'nother in that girl's voice  
Says to me, "Joseph, here's your choice!"  
And another minute her guileless breast  
Was lovin'ly throbbin' ag'in my vest!—  
And then I kissed her, and heerd a smack  
Come like a' echo a-flutterin' back,



And we looked around, and in full view  
Marshall was kissin' the widder, too!  
Well, we all of us laughed, in our glad su'prise,  
Tel the tears come A-STREAMIN' out of our eyes!  
And when Marsh said "'Twas the squarest trade  
That ever me and him had made,"  
We both shuck hands, 'y jucks! and swore  
We'd stick together ferevermore.  
And old Squire Chipman tuck us the trip:  
And Marshall and me's in pardnership!

### **DOT LEEDLE BOY**

Ot's a leedle Gristmas story  
Dot I told der leedle folks—  
Und I vant you stop dot laughin'  
Und grackin' funny jokes!—  
So help me Peter-Moses!  
Ot's no time for monkey-shine,  
Ober I vast told you somedings  
Of dot leedle boy of mine!

Ot vas von cold Vinter vedder,  
Ven der snow vas all about—  
Dot you have to chop der hatchet  
Eef you got der sauerkraut!  
Und der cheekens on der hind leg  
Vas standin' in der shine  
Der sun shmile out dot morning  
On dot leedle boy of mine.

He vas yoost a leedle baby  
Not bigger as a doll  
Dot time I got acquaintet—  
Ach! you ought to heard 'im squall!—  
I grackys! dot's der moosic  
Ot make me feel so fine  
Ven first I vas been marriet—  
Oh, dot leedle boy of mine!

He look yoost like his fader!—  
So, ven der vimmen said,  
"Vot a purty leedle baby!"  
Katrina shake der head. . . .  
I dink she must 'a' notice  
Dot der baby vas a-gryin',  
Und she cover up der blankets  
Of dot leedle boy of mine.

Vel, ven he vas got bigger,  
Dot he grawl und bump his nose,  
Und make der table over,  
Und molasses on his glothes—  
Dot make 'im all der sveeter,—  
So I say to my Katrine,  
"Better you vas quit a-shpankin'  
Dot leedle boy of mine!"

No more he vas older  
As about a dozen months  
He speak der English language  
Und der German—bote at vonce!  
Und he dringk his glass of lager  
Like a Londsman fon der Rhine—  
Und I klingk my glass togeder

Mit dot leedle boy of mine!

I vish you could 'a' seen id—  
Ven he glimb up on der chair  
Und shmash der lookin'-glasses  
Ven he try to comb his hair  
Mit a hammer!—Und Katrina  
Say, "Dot's an ugly sign!"  
But I laugh und vink my fingers  
At dot leedle boy of mine.

But vonce, dot Vinter morning,  
He shlip out in der snow  
Mitout no stockin's on 'im.—  
He say he "vant to go  
Und fly some mit der birdies!"  
Und ve give 'im medi-cine  
Ven he catch der "parrygoric"—  
Dot leedle boy of mine!

Und so I set und nurse 'im,  
Vile der Gristmas vas come roun',  
Und I told 'im 'bout "Kriss Kringle,"  
How he come der chimbly down:  
Und I ask 'im eef he love 'im  
Eef he bring 'im someding fine?  
"Nicht besser as mein fader,"  
Say dot leedle boy of mine.—

Und he put his arms aroun' me  
Und hug so close und tight,  
I hear der gclock a-tickin'  
All der balance of der night! . . .  
Someding make me feel so funny  
Ven I say to my Katrine,  
"Let us go und fill der stockin's  
Of dot leedle boy of mine."

Vell.—Ve buyed a leedle horses  
Dot you pull 'im mit a shtring,  
Und a leedle fancy jay-bird—  
Eef you vant to hear 'im sing  
You took 'im by der topknot  
Und yoost blow in behine—  
Und dot make much spektakel  
For dot leedle boy of mine!

Und gandies, nuts und raizens—  
Und I buy a leedle drum  
Dot I vant to hear 'im rattle  
Ven der Gristmas morning come!  
Und a leedle shmall tin rooster  
Dot vould crow so loud und fine  
Ven he sqveeze 'im in der morning,  
Dot leedle boy of mine!

Und—vile ve vas a-fixin'—  
Dot leedle boy vake out!  
I t'ought he been a-dreamin'  
"Kriss Kringle" vas about,—  
For he say—"DOT'S HIM!—I SEE 'IM  
MIT DER SHTARS DOT MAKE DER SHINE!"  
Und he yoost keep on a-gryin'—  
Dot leedle boy of mine,—  
Und gottin' vorse und vorser—  
Und tumble on der bed!

So—ven der doctor seen id,  
He kindo' shake his head,  
Und feel his pulse—und visper,  
"Der boy is a-dyin'."  
You dink I could BELIEVE id?—  
DOT LEEDLE BOY OF MINE?

I told you, friends—dot's someding,  
Der last time dot he speak  
Und say, "GOOT-BY, KRISS KRINGLE!"  
—Dot make me feel so veak  
I yoost kneel down und drimble,  
Und bur-sed out a-gryin',  
"MEIN GOTT, MEIN GOTT IN HIMMEL!—  
DOT LEEDLE BOY OF MINE!"  
.....

Der sun don't shine DOT Gristmas!  
. . . Eef dot leedle boy vould LIFF'D—  
No deefer-en'! for HEAVEN vas  
His leedle Gristmas gift!  
Und der ROOSTER, und der GANDY,  
Und me—und my Katrine—  
Und der jay-bird—is awaiting  
For dot leedle boy of mine.

### **I SMOKE MY PIPE**

I can't extend to every friend  
In need a helping hand—  
No matter though I wish it so,  
'Tis not as Fortune planned;  
But haply may I fancy they  
Are men of different stripe  
Than others think who hint and wink,—  
And so—I smoke my pipe!

A golden coal to crown the bowl—  
My pipe and I alone,—  
I sit and muse with idler views  
Perchance than I should own:—  
It might be worse to own the purse  
Whose gluttoned bowels gripe  
In little qualms of stinted alms;  
And so I smoke my pipe.

And if inclined to moor my mind  
And cast the anchor Hope,  
A puff of breath will put to death  
The morbid misanthrope  
That lurks inside—as errors hide  
In standing forms of type  
To mar at birth some line of worth;  
And so I smoke my pipe.

The subtle stings misfortune flings  
Can give me little pain  
When my narcotic spell has wrought  
This quiet in my brain:  
When I can waste the past in taste  
So luscious and so ripe  
That like an elf I hug myself;  
And so I smoke my pipe.

And wrapped in shrouds of drifting clouds,

I watch the phantom's flight,  
Till alien eyes from Paradise  
Smile on me as I write:  
And I forgive the wrongs that live,  
As lightly as I wipe  
Away the tear that rises here;  
And so I smoke my pipe.

## RED RIDING-HOOD

Sweet little myth of the nursery story—  
Earliest love of mine infantile breast,  
Be something tangible, bloom in thy glory  
Into existence, as thou art addressed!  
Hasten! appear to me, guileless and good—  
Thou are so dear to me, Red Riding-Hood!

Azure-blue eyes, in a marvel of wonder,  
Over the dawn of a blush breaking out;  
Sensitive nose, with a little smile under  
Trying to hide in a blossoming pout—  
Couldn't be serious, try as you would,  
Little mysterious Red Riding-Hood!

Hah! little girl, it is desolate, lonely,  
Out in this gloomy old forest of Life!—  
Here are not pansies and buttercups only—  
Brambles and briars as keen as a knife;  
And a Heart, ravenous, trails in the wood  
For the meal he must,—Red Riding-Hood!

## IF I KNEW WHAT POETS KNOW

If I knew what poets know,  
Would I write a rhyme  
Of the buds that never blow  
In the summer-time?  
Would I sing of golden seeds  
Springing up in ironweeds?  
And of rain-drops turned to snow,  
If I knew what poets know?

Did I know what poets do,  
Would I sing a song  
Sadder than the pigeon's coo  
When the days are long?  
Where I found a heart in pain,  
I would make it glad again;  
And the false should be the true,  
Did I know what poets do.

If I knew what poets know,  
I would find a theme  
Sweeter than the placid flow  
Of the fairest dream:  
I would sing of love that lives  
On the errors it forgives;  
And the world would better grow  
If I knew what poets know.

## AN OLD SWEETHEART OF MINE

An old sweetheart of mine!—Is this her presence here with me,

Or but a vain creation of a lover's memory?  
A fair, illusive vision that would vanish into air  
Dared I even touch the silence with the whisper of a prayer?

Nay, let me then believe in all the blended false and true—  
The semblance of the OLD love and the substance of the NEW,—  
The THEN of changeless sunny days—the NOW of shower and shine—  
But Love forever smiling—as that old sweetheart of mine.

This ever-restful sense of HOME, though shouts ring in the  
hall.—  
The easy chair—the old book-shelves and prints along the wall;  
The rare HABANAS in their box, or gaunt church-warden-stem  
That often wags, above the jar, derisively at them.

As one who cons at evening o'er an album, all alone,  
And muses on the faces of the friends that he has known,  
So I turn the leaves of Fancy, till, in shadowy design,  
I find the smiling features of an old sweetheart of mine.

The lamplight seems to glimmer with a flicker of surprise,  
As I turn it low—to rest me of the dazzle in my eyes,  
And light my pipe in silence, save a sigh that seems to yoke  
Its fate with my tobacco and to vanish with the smoke.

'Tis a FRAGRANT retrospection,—for the loving thoughts that  
start  
Into being are like perfume from the blossom of the heart;  
And to dream the old dreams over is a luxury divine—  
When my truant fancies wander with that old sweetheart of mine.

Though I hear beneath my study, like a fluttering of wings,  
The voices of my children and the mother as she sings—  
I feel no twinge of conscience to deny me any theme  
When Care has cast her anchor in the harbor of a dream—

In fact, to speak in earnest, I believe it adds a charm  
To spice the good a trifle with a little dust of harm,—  
For I find an extra flavor in Memory's mellow wine  
That makes me drink the deeper to that old sweetheart of mine.

O Childhood-days enchanted! O the magic of the Spring!—  
With all green boughs to blossom white, and all bluebirds to  
sing!  
When all the air, to toss and quaff, made life a jubilee  
And changed the children's song and laugh to shrieks of ecstasy.

With eyes half closed in clouds that ooze from lips that taste,  
as well,  
The peppermint and cinnamon, I hear the old School bell,  
And from "Recess" romp in again from "Black-man's" broken line,  
To smile, behind my "lesson," at that old sweetheart of mine.

A face of lily-beauty, with a form of airy grace,  
Floats out of my tobacco as the Genii from the vase;  
And I thrill beneath the glances of a pair of azure eyes  
As glowing as the summer and as tender as the skies.

I can see the pink sunbonnet and the little checkered dress  
She wore when first I kissed her and she answered the caress  
With the written declaration that, "as surely as the vine  
Grew 'round the stump," she loved me—that old sweetheart of  
mine.

Again I made her presents, in a really helpless way,—  
The big "Rhode Island Greening"—I was hungry, too, that day!—  
But I follow her from Spelling, with her hand behind her—so—  
And I slip the apple in it—and the Teacher doesn't know!

I give my TREASURES to her—all,—my pencil—blue-and-red;—  
And, if little girls played marbles, MINE should all be HERS,  
instead!  
But SHE gave me her PHOTOGRAPH, and printed "Ever Thine"  
Across the back—in blue-and-red—that old sweet-heart of mine!

And again I feel the pressure of her slender little hand,  
As we used to talk together of the future we had planned,—  
When I should be a poet, and with nothing else to do  
But write the tender verses that she set the music to . . .

When we should live together in a cozy little cot  
Hid in a nest of roses, with a fairy garden-spot,  
Where the vines were ever fruited, and the weather ever fine,  
And the birds were ever singing for that old sweetheart of mine.

When I should be her lover forever and a day,  
And she my faithful sweetheart till the golden hair was gray;  
And we should be so happy that when either's lips were dumb  
They would not smile in Heaven till the other's kiss had come.

But, ah! my dream is broken by a step upon the stair,  
And the door is softly opened, and—my wife is standing there:  
Yet with eagerness and rapture all my visions I resign,—  
To greet the LIVING presence of that old sweetheart of mine.

### **SQUIRE HAWKINS'S STORY**

I hain't no hand at tellin' tales,  
Er spinnin' yarns, as the sailors say;  
Someway o' 'nother, language fails  
To slide fer me in the oily way  
That LAWYERS has; and I wisht it would,  
Fer I've got somepin' that I call good;  
But bein' only a country squire,  
I've learned to listen and admire,  
Ruther preferrin' to be addressed  
Than talk myse'f—but I'll do my best:—

Old Jeff Thompson—well, I'll say,  
Was the clos'test man I ever saw!—  
Rich as cream, but the porest pay,  
And the meanest man to work fer—La!  
I've knowed that man to work one "hand"—  
Fer little er nothin', you understand—  
From four o'clock in the morning light  
Tel eight and nine o'clock at night,  
And then find fault with his appetite!  
He'd drive all over the neighborhood  
To miss the place where a toll-gate stood,  
And slip in town, by some old road  
That no two men in the county knowed,  
With a jag o' wood, and a sack o' wheat,  
That wouldn't burn and you couldn't eat!  
And the trades he'd make, 'll I jest de-clare,  
Was enough to make a preacher swear!  
And then he'd hitch, and hang about  
Tel the lights in the toll-gate was blowed out,  
And then the turnpike he'd turn in  
And sneak his way back home ag'in!

Some folks hint, and I make no doubt,  
That that's what wore his old wife out—  
Toilin' away from day to day  
And year to year, through heat and cold,  
Uncomplainin'—the same old way

The martyrs died in the days of old;  
And a-clingin', too, as the martyrs done,  
To one fixed faith, and her ONLY one,—  
Little Patience, the sweetest child  
That ever wept unrickonciled,  
Er felt the pain and the ache and sting  
That only a mother's death can bring.

Patience Thompson!—I think that name  
Must 'a' come from a power above,  
Fer it seemed to fit her jest the same  
As a GAITER would, er a fine kid glove!  
And to see that girl, with all the care  
Of the household on her—I de-clare  
It was OUDACIOUS, the work she'd do,  
And the thousand plans that she'd putt through;

And sing like a medder-lark all day long,  
And drowned her cares in the joys o' song;  
And LAUGH sometimes tel the farmer's "hand,"  
Away fur off in the fields, would stand  
A-listenin', with the plow half drawn,  
Tel the coaxin' echoes called him on;  
And the furries seemed, in his dreamy eyes,  
Like foot-paths a-leadin' to Paradise,  
As off through the hazy atmosphere  
The call fer dinner reached his ear.

Now LOVE'S as cunnin'a little thing  
As a hummin'-bird upon the wing,  
And as liable to poke his nose  
Jest where folks would least suppose,—  
And more'n likely build his nest  
Right in the heart you'd leave unguessed,  
And live and thrive at your expense—  
At least, that's MY experience.  
And old Jeff Thompson often thought,  
In his se'fish way, that the quiet John  
Was a stiddy chap, as a farm-hand OUGHT  
To always be,—fer the airliest dawn  
Found John busy—and "EASY," too,  
Whenever his wages would fall due!—  
To sum him up with a final touch,  
He EAT so little and WORKED so much,  
That old Jeff laughed to hisse'f and said,  
"He makes ME money and airns his bread!—"

But John, fer all of his quietude,  
Would sometimes drap a word er so  
That none but PATIENCE understood,  
And none but her was MEANT to know!—  
Maybe at meal-times John would say,  
As the sugar-bowl come down his way,  
"Thanky, no; MY coffee's sweet  
Enough fer ME!" with sich conceit,  
SHE'D know at once, without no doubt,  
HE meant because she poured it out;  
And smile and blush, and all sich stuff,  
And ast ef it was "STRONG enough?"  
And git the answer, neat and trim,  
"It COULDN'T be too 'strong' fer HIM!"

And so things went fer 'bout a year,  
Tel John, at last, found pluck to go  
And pour his tale in the old man's ear—  
And ef it had been HOT LEAD, I know

It couldn't 'a' raised a louder fuss,  
Ner 'a' riled the old man's temper wuss!  
He jest LIT in, and cussed and swore,  
And lunged and rared, and ripped and tore,  
And told John jest to leave his door,  
And not to darken it no more!  
But Patience cried, with eyes all wet,  
"Remember, John, and don't ferget,  
WHATEVER comes, I love you yet!"  
But the old man thought, in his se'fish way,  
"I'll see her married rich some day;  
And THAT," thinks he, "is money fer ME—  
And my will's LAW, as it ought to be!"

So when, in the course of a month er so,  
A WIDOWER, with a farm er two,  
Comes to Jeff's, w'y, the folks, you know,  
Had to TALK—as the folks'll do:  
It was the talk of the neighborhood—  
PATIENCE and JOHN, and THEIR affairs;—  
And this old chap with a few gray hairs  
Had "cut John out," it was understood.  
And some folks reckoned "Patience, too,  
Knowed what SHE was a-goin' to do—  
It was LIKE her—la! indeed!—  
All she loved was DOLLARS and CENTS—  
Like old JEFF—and they saw no need  
Fer JOHN to pine at HER negligence!"

But others said, in a KINDER way,  
They missed the songs she used to sing—  
They missed the smiles that used to play  
Over her face, and the laughin' ring  
Of her glad voice—that EVERYthing  
Of her OLD se'f seemed dead and gone,  
And this was the ghost that they gazed on!

Tel finally it was noised about  
There was a WEDDIN' soon to be  
Down at Jeff's; and the "cat was out"  
Shore enough!—'Ll the JEE-MUN-NEE!  
It RILED me when John told me so,—  
Fer I WAS A FRIEND O' JOHN'S, you know;  
And his trimblin' voice jest broke in two—  
As a feller's voice'll sometimes do.—  
And I says, says I, "Ef I know my biz—  
And I think I know what JESTICE is,—  
I've read SOME law—and I'd advise  
A man like you to wipe his eyes  
And square his jaws and start AGIN,  
FER JESTICE IS A-GOIN' TO WIN!"  
And it wasn't long tel his eyes had cleared  
As blue as the skies, and the sun appeared  
In the shape of a good old-fashioned smile  
That I hadn't seen fer a long, long while.

So we talked on fer a' hour er more,  
And sunned ourselves in the open door,—  
Tel a hoss-and-buggy down the road  
Come a-drivin' up, that I guess John KNOWED,—  
Fer he winked and says, "I'll dessappear—  
THEY'D smell a mice ef they saw ME here!"  
And he thumbed his nose at the old gray mare,  
And hid hisse'f in the house somewhere.

Well.—The rig drove up: and I raised my head



As old Jeff hollered to me and said  
That "him and his old friend there had come  
To see ef the squire was at home."  
. . . I told 'em "I was; and I AIMED to be  
At every chance of a weddin'-fee!"  
And then I laughed—and they laughed, too,—  
Fer that was the object they had in view.  
"Would I be on hands at eight that night?"  
They ast; and 's-I, "You're mighty right,  
I'LL be on hand!" And then I BU'ST  
Out a-laughin' my very wu'st,—  
And so did they, as they wheeled away  
And drove to'rds town in a cloud o' dust.  
Then I shet the door, and me and John  
Laughed and LAUGHED, and jest LAUGHED on,  
Tel Mother drapped her specs, and BY  
JEEWHILLIKERS! I thought she'd DIE!—  
And she couldn't 'a' told, I'll bet my hat,  
What on earth she was laughin' at!

But all o' the fun o' the tale hain't done!—  
Fer a drizzlin' rain had jest begun,  
And a-havin' 'bout four mile' to ride,  
I jest concluded I'd better light  
Out fer Jeff's and save my hide,—  
Fer IT WAS A-GOIN' TO STORM, THAT NIGHT!  
So we went down to the barn, and John  
Saddled my beast, and I got on;  
And he told me somepin' to not ferget,  
And when I left, he was LAUGHIN' yet.

And, 'proachin' on to my journey's end,  
The great big draps o' the rain come down,  
And the thunder growled in a way to lend  
An awful look to the lowerin' frown  
The dull sky wore; and the lightnin' glanced  
Tel my old mare jest MORE'N pranced,  
And tossed her head, and bugged her eyes  
To about four times their natchurl size,  
As the big black lips of the clouds 'ud drap  
Out some oath of a thunderclap,  
And threaten on in an undertone  
That chilled a feller clean to the bone!

But I struck shelter soon enough  
To save myse'f. And the house was jammed  
With the women-folks, and the weddin'stuff:—  
A great, long table, fairly CRAMMED  
With big pound-cakes—and chops and steaks—  
And roasts and stews—and stumick-aches  
Of every fashion, form, and size,  
From twisters up to punkin-pies!  
And candies, oranges, and figs,  
And reezins,—all the "whilligigs"  
And "jim-cracks" that the law allows  
On sich occasions!—Bobs and bows  
Of gigglin' girls, with corkscrew curls,  
And fancy ribbons, reds and blues,  
And "beau-ketchers" and "curliques"  
To beat the world! And seven o'clock  
Brought old Jeff;-and brought—THE GROOM,—  
With a sideboard-collar on, and stock  
That choked him so, he hadn't room  
To SWALLER in, er even sneeze,  
Er clear his th'oat with any case

Er comfort—and a good square cough  
Would saw his Adam's apple off!

But as fer PATIENCE—MY! Oomh-OOMH!—  
I never saw her look so sweet!—  
Her face was cream and roses, too;  
And then them eyes o' heavenly blue  
Jest made an angel all complete!  
And when she split 'em up in smiles  
And splintered 'em around the room,  
And danced acrost and met the groom,  
And LAUGHED OUT LOUD—It kind o' spiles  
My language when I come to that—  
Fer, as she laid away his hat,  
Thinks I, "THE PAPERS HID INSIDE  
OF THAT SAID HAT MUST MAKE A BRIDE  
A HAPPY ONE FER ALL HER LIFE,  
Er else a WRECKED AND WRETCHED WIFE!"  
And, someway, then, I thought of JOHN,—  
Then looked towards PATIENCE. . . . She was GONE!—  
The door stood open, and the rain  
Was dashin' in; and sharp and plain  
Above the storm we heerd a cry—  
A ringin', laughin', loud "Good-by!"  
That died away, as fleet and fast  
A hoss's hoofs went splashin' past!  
And that was all. 'Twas done that quick! . . .  
You've heerd o' fellers "lookin' sick"?  
I wisht you'd seen THE GROOM jest then—  
I wisht you'd seen them two old men,  
With starin' eyes that fairly GLARED  
At one another, and the scared  
And empty faces of the crowd,—  
I wisht you could 'a' been allowed  
To jest look on and see it all,—  
And heerd the girls and women bawl  
And wring their hands; and heerd old Jeff  
A-cussin' as he swung hisse'f  
Upon his hoss, who champed his bit  
As though old Nick had holt of it:  
And cheek by jowl the two old wrecks  
Rode off as though they'd break their necks.

And as we all stood starin' out  
Into the night, I felt the brush  
Of some one's hand, and turned about,  
And heerd a voice that whispered, "HUSH!—  
THEY'RE WAITIN' IN THE KITCHEN, AND  
YOU'RE WANTED. DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?"  
Well, ef my MEMORY serves me now,  
I think I winked.—Well, anyhow,  
I left the crowd a-gawkin' there,  
And jest slipped off around to where  
The back door opened, and went in,  
And turned and shet the door ag'in,  
And maybe LOCKED it—couldn't swear,—  
A woman's arms around me makes  
Me liable to make mistakes.—  
I read a marriage license nex',  
But as I didn't have my specs  
I jest INFERRED it was all right,  
And tied the knot so mortal-tight  
That Patience and my old friend John  
Was safe enough from that time on!

Well, now, I might go on and tell  
How all the joke at last leaked out,  
And how the youngsters raised the yell  
And rode the happy groom about  
Upon their shoulders; how the bride  
Was kissed a hunderd times beside  
The one *I* give her,—tel she cried  
And laughed untel she like to died!  
I might go on and tell you all  
About the supper—and the BALL.—  
You'd ought to see me twist my heel  
Through jest one old Furginny reel  
Afore you die! er tromp the strings  
Of some old fiddle tel she sings  
Some old cowtillion, don't you know,  
That putts the devil in yer toe!

We kep' the dancin' up tel FOUR  
O'clock, I reckon—maybe more.—  
We hardly heerd the thunders roar,  
ER THOUGHT about the STORM that blowed—  
AND THEM TWO FELLERS ON THE ROAD!  
Tel all at onc't we heerd the door  
Bu'st open, and a voice that SWORE,—  
And old Jeff Thompson tuck the floor.  
He shuck hisse'f and looked around  
Like some old dog about half-drowned—  
HIS HAT, I reckon, WEIGHED TEN POUND  
To say the least, and I'll say, SHORE,  
HIS OVERCOAT WEIGHED FIFTY more—  
THE WETTEST MAN YOU EVER SAW,  
TO HAVE SO DRY A SON-IN-LAW!

He sized it all; and Patience laid  
Her hand in John's, and looked afraid,  
And waited. And a stiller set  
O' folks, I KNOW, you never met  
In any court room, where with dread  
They wait to hear a verdick read.

The old man turned his eyes on me:  
"And have you married 'em?" says he.  
I nodded "Yes." "Well, that'll do,"  
He says, "and now we're th'ough with YOU,—  
YOU jest clear out, and I decide  
And promise to be satisfied!"  
He hadn't nothin' more to say.  
I saw, of course, how matters lay,  
And left. But as I rode away  
I heerd the roosters crow fer day.

## **A COUNTRY PATHWAY**

I come upon it suddenly, alone—  
A little pathway winding in the weeds  
That fringe the roadside; and with dreams my own,  
I wander as it leads.

Full wistfully along the slender way,  
Through summer tan of freckled shade and shine,  
I take the path that leads me as it may—  
Its every choice is mine.

A chipmunk, or a sudden-whirring quail,  
Is startled by my step as on I fare—

A garter-snake across the dusty trail  
Glances and—is not there.

Above the arching jimson-weeds flare twos  
And twos of fallow-yellow butterflies,  
Like blooms of lorn primroses blowing loose  
When autumn winds arise.

The trail dips—dwindles—broadens then, and lifts  
Itself astride a cross-road dubiously,  
And, from the fennel marge beyond it, drifts  
Still onward, beckoning me.

And though it needs must lure me mile on mile  
Out of the public highway, still I go,  
My thoughts, far in advance in Indian file,  
Allure me even so.

Why, I am as a long-lost boy that went  
At dusk to bring the cattle to the bars,  
And was not found again, though Heaven lent  
His mother all the stars

With which to seek him through that awful night  
O years of nights as vain!—Stars never rise  
But well might miss their glitter in the light  
Of tears in mother-eyes!

So—on, with quickened breaths, I follow still—  
My avant-courier must be obeyed!  
Thus am I led, and thus the path, at will,  
Invites me to invade

A meadow's precincts, where my daring guide  
Clambers the steps of an old-fashioned stile,  
And stumbles down again, the other side,  
To gambol there a while.

In pranks of hide-and-peek, as on ahead  
I see it running, while the clover-stalks  
Shake rosy fists at me, as though they said—  
"You dog our country walks

"And mutilate us with your walking-stick!—  
We will not suffer tamely what you do,  
And warn you at your peril,—for we'll sick  
Our bumblebees on you!"

But I smile back, in airy nonchalance,—  
The more determined on my wayward quest,  
As some bright memory a moment dawns  
A morning in my breast—

Sending a thrill that hurries me along  
In faulty similes of childish skips,  
Enthused with lithe contortions of a song  
Performing on my lips.

In wild meanderings o'er pasture wealth—  
Erratic wanderings through dead'ning lands,  
Where sly old brambles, plucking me by stealth,  
Put berries in my hands:

Or the path climbs a boulder—wades a slough—  
Or, rollicking through buttercups and flags,  
Goes gaily dancing o'er a deep bayou  
On old tree-trunks and snags:

Or, at the creek, leads o'er a limpid pool  
Upon a bridge the stream itself has made,  
With some Spring-freshet for the mighty tool  
That its foundation laid.

I pause a moment here to bend and muse,  
With dreamy eyes, on my reflection, where  
A boat-backed bug drifts on a helpless cruise,  
Or wildly oars the air,

As, dimly seen, the pirate of the brook—  
The pike, whose jaunty hulk denotes his speed—  
Swings pivoting about, with wary look  
Of low and cunning greed.

Till, filled with other thought, I turn again  
To where the pathway enters in a realm  
Of lordly woodland, under sovereign reign  
Of towering oak and elm.

A puritanic quiet here reviles  
The almost whispered warble from the hedge,  
And takes a locust's rasping voice and files  
The silence to an edge.

In such a solitude my somber way  
Strays like a misanthrope within a gloom  
Of his own shadows—till the perfect day  
Bursts into sudden bloom,

And crowns a long, declining stretch of space,  
Where King Corn's armies lie with flags unfurled,  
And where the valley's dint in Nature's face  
Dimples a smiling world.

And lo! through mists that may not be dispelled,  
I see an old farm homestead, as in dreams,  
Where, like a gem in costly setting held,  
The old log cabin gleams.

.....

O darling Pathway! lead me bravely on  
Adown your valley-way, and run before  
Among the roses crowding up the lawn  
And thronging at the door,—

And carry up the echo there that shall  
Arouse the drowsy dog, that he may bay  
The household out to greet the prodigal  
That wanders home to-day.

## **THE OLD GUITAR**

Neglected now is the old guitar  
And moldering into decay;  
Fretted with many a rift and scar  
That the dull dust hides away,  
While the spider spins a silver star  
In its silent lips to-day.

The keys hold only nerveless strings—  
The sinews of brave old airs  
Are pulseless now; and the scarf that clings  
So closely here declares  
A sad regret in its ravelings  
And the faded hue it wears.

But the old guitar, with a lenient grace,  
Has cherished a smile for me;  
And its features hint of a fairer face  
That comes with a memory  
Of a flower-and-perfume-haunted place  
And a moonlit balcony.

Music sweeter than words confess,  
Or the minstrel's powers invent,  
Thrilled here once at the light caress  
Of the fairy hands that lent  
This excuse for the kiss I press  
On the dear old instrument.

The rose of pearl with the jeweled stem  
Still blooms; and the tiny sets  
In the circle all are here; the gem  
In the keys, and the silver frets;  
But the dainty fingers that danced o'er them—  
Alas for the heart's regrets!—

Alas for the loosened strings to-day,  
And the wounds of rift and scar  
On a worn old heart, with its roundelay  
Enthralled with a stronger bar  
That Fate weaves on, through a dull decay  
Like that of the old guitar!

## **"FRIDAY AFTERNOON"**

**TO WILLIAM MORRIS PIERSON**

[1868-1870]

Of the wealth of facts and fancies  
That our memories may recall,  
The old school-day romances  
Are the dearest, after all!—  
When some sweet thought revises  
The half-forgotten tune  
That opened "Exercises"  
On "Friday Afternoon."

We seem to hear the clicking  
Of the pencil and the pen,  
And the solemn, ceaseless ticking  
Of the timepiece ticking then;  
And we note the watchful master,  
As he waves the warning rod,  
With our own heart beating faster  
Than the boy's who threw the wad.

Some little hand uplifted,  
And the creaking of a shoe:—  
A problem left unsifted  
For the teacher's hand to do:  
The murmured hum of learning—  
And the flutter of a book;  
The smell of something burning,  
And the school's inquiring look.

The bashful boy in blushes;  
And the girl, with glancing eyes,  
Who hides her smiles, and hushes  
The laugh about to rise,—  
Then, with a quick invention,

Assumes a serious face,  
To meet the words, "Attention!  
Every scholar in his place!"

The opening song, page 20.—  
Ah! dear old "Golden Wreath,"  
You willed your sweets in plenty;  
And some who look beneath  
The leaves of Time will linger,  
And loving tears will start,  
As Fancy trails her finger  
O'er the index of the heart.

"Good News from Home"—We hear it  
Welling tremulous, yet clear  
And holy as the spirit  
Of the song we used to hear—  
"Good news for me" (A throbbing  
And an aching melody)—  
"Has come across the"—(sobbing,  
Yea, and salty) "dark blue sea!"

Or the paeon "Scotland's burning!"  
With its mighty surge and swell  
Of chorus, still returning  
To its universal yell—  
Till we're almost glad to drop to  
Something sad and full of pain—  
And "Skip verse three," and stop, too,  
Ere our hearts are broke again.

Then "the big girls'" compositions,  
With their doubt, and hope, and glow  
Of heart and face,—conditions  
Of "the big boys"—even so,—  
When themes of "Spring," and "Summer"  
And of "Fall," and "Winter-time"  
Droop our heads and hold us dumber  
Than the sleigh-bell's fancied chime.

Elocutionary science—  
(Still in changeless infancy!)—  
With its "Cataline's Defiance,"  
And "The Banner of the Free":  
Or, lured from Grandma's attic,  
A ramshackle "rocker" there,  
Adds a skreek of the dramatic  
To the poet's "Old Arm-Chair."

Or the "Speech of Logan" shifts us  
From the pathos, to the fire;  
And Tell (with Gessler) lifts us  
Many noble notches higher.—  
Till a youngster, far from sunny,  
With sad eyes of watery blue,  
Winds up with something "funny,"  
Like "Cock-a-doodle-do!"

Then a dialogue—selected  
For its realistic worth:—  
The Cruel Boy detected  
With a turtle turned to earth  
Back downward; and, in pleading,  
The Good Boy—strangely gay  
At such a sad proceeding—  
Says, "Turn him over, pray!"

So the exercises taper  
Through gradations of delight  
To the reading of "The Paper,"  
Which is entertaining—quite!  
For it goes ahead and mentions  
"If a certain Mr. O.  
Has serious intentions  
That he ought to tell her so."

It also "Asks permission  
To intimate to 'John'  
The dubious condition  
Of the ground he's standing on";  
And, dropping the suggestion  
To "mind what he's about,"  
It stuns him with the question:  
"Does his mother know he's out?"

And among the contributions  
To this "Academic Press"  
Are "Versified Effusions"  
By—"Our lady editress"—  
Which fact is proudly stated  
By the CHIEF of the concern,—  
"Though the verse communicated  
Bears the pen-name 'Fanny Fern.' "

. . . . .

When all has been recited,  
And the teacher's bell is heard,  
And visitors, invited,  
Have dropped a kindly word,  
A hush of holy feeling  
Falls down upon us there,  
As though the day were kneeling,  
With the twilight for the prayer.

. . . . .

Midst the wealth of facts and fancies  
That our memories may recall,  
Thus the old school-day romances  
Are the dearest, after all!—  
When some sweet thought revises  
The half-forgotten tune  
That opened "Exercises,"  
On "Friday Afternoon."

### "JOHNSON'S BOY"

The world is turned ag'in' me,  
And people says, "They guess  
That nothin' else is in me  
But pure maliciousness!"  
I git the blame for doin'  
What other chaps destroy,  
And I'm a-goin' to ruin  
Because I'm "Johnson's boy."

THAT ain't my name—I'd ruther  
They'd call me IKE or PAT—  
But they've forgot the other—  
And so have *I*, for that!  
I reckon it's as handy,  
When Nibsy breaks his toy,  
Or some one steals his candy,



To say 'twas "JOHNSON'S BOY!"

You can't git any water  
At the pump, and find the spout  
So durn chuck-full o' mortar  
That you have to bore it out;  
You tackle any scholar  
In Wisdom's wise employ,  
And I'll bet you half a dollar  
He'll say it's "Johnson's boy!"

Folks don't know how I suffer  
In my uncomplainin' way—  
They think I'm gittin' tougher  
And tougher every day.  
Last Sunday night, when Flinder  
Was a-shoutin' out for joy,  
And some one shook the winder,  
He prayed for "Johnson's boy."

I'm tired of bein' follered  
By farmers every day,  
And then o' bein' collared  
For coaxin' hounds away;  
Hounds always plays me double—  
It's a trick they all enjoy—  
To git me into trouble,  
Because I'm "Johnson's boy."

But if I git to Heaven,  
I hope the Lord'll see  
SOME boy has been perfect,  
And lay it on to me;  
I'll swell the song sonorous,  
And clap my wings for joy,  
And sail off on the chorus—  
"Hurrah for 'Johnson's boy!'"

### **HER BEAUTIFUL HANDS**

Your hands—they are strangely fair!  
O Fair—for the jewels that sparkle there,—  
Fair—for the witchery of the spell  
That ivory keys alone can tell;  
But when their delicate touches rest  
Here in my own do I love them best,  
As I clasp with eager, acquisitive spans  
My glorious treasure of beautiful hands!

Marvelous—wonderful—beautiful hands!  
They can coax roses to bloom in the strands  
Of your brown tresses; and ribbons will twine,  
Under mysterious touches of thine,  
Into such knots as entangle the soul  
And fetter the heart under such a control  
As only the strength of my love understands—  
My passionate love for your beautiful hands.

As I remember the first fair touch  
Of those beautiful hands that I love so much,  
I seem to thrill as I then was thrilled,  
Kissing the glove that I found unfilled—  
When I met your gaze, and the queenly bow,  
As you said to me, laughingly, "Keep it now!" . . .  
And dazed and alone in a dream I stand,  
Kissing this ghost of your beautiful hand.

When first I loved, in the long ago,  
And held your hand as I told you so—  
Pressed and caressed it and gave it a kiss  
And said "I could die for a hand like this!"  
Little I dreamed love's fullness yet  
Had to ripen when eyes were wet  
And prayers were vain in their wild demands  
For one warm touch of your beautiful hands.

.....

Beautiful Hands!—O Beautiful Hands!  
Could you reach out of the alien lands  
Where you are lingering, and give me, to-night,  
Only a touch—were it ever so light—  
My heart were soothed, and my weary brain  
Would lull itself into rest again;  
For there is no solace the world commands  
Like the caress of your beautiful hands.

### **NATURAL PERVERSITIES**

I am not prone to moralize  
In scientific doubt  
On certain facts that Nature tries  
To puzzle us about,—  
For I am no philosopher  
Of wise elucidation,  
But speak of things as they occur,  
From simple observation.

I notice LITTLE things—to wit:—  
I never missed a train  
Because I didn't RUN for it;  
I never knew it rain  
That my umbrella wasn't lent,—  
Or, when in my possession,  
The sun but wore, to all intent,  
A jocular expression.

I never knew a creditor  
To dun me for a debt  
But I was "cramped" or "bu'sted"; or  
I never knew one yet,  
When I had plenty in my purse,  
To make the least invasion,—  
As I, accordingly perverse,  
Have courted no occasion.

Nor do I claim to comprehend  
What Nature has in view  
In giving us the very friend  
To trust we oughtn't to.—  
But so it is: The trusty gun  
Disastrously exploded  
Is always sure to be the one  
We didn't think was loaded.

Our moaning is another's mirth,—  
And what is worse by half,  
We say the funniest thing on earth  
And never raise a laugh:  
'Mid friends that love us over well,  
And sparkling jests and liquor,  
Our hearts somehow are liable  
To melt in tears the quicker.

We reach the wrong when most we seek  
The right; in like effect,  
We stay the strong and not the weak—  
Do most when we neglect.—  
Neglected genius—truth be said—  
As wild and quick as tinder,  
The more you seek to help ahead  
The more you seem to hinder.

I've known the least the greatest, too—  
And, on the selfsame plan,  
The biggest fool I ever knew  
Was quite a little man:  
We find we ought, and then we won't—  
We prove a thing, then doubt it,—  
Know EVERYTHING but when we don't  
Know ANYTHING about it.

## **THE SILENT VICTORS**

**MAY 30, 1878,**

Dying for victory, cheer on cheer  
Thundered on his eager ear.  
—CHARLES L. HOLSTEIN.

**I**

Deep, tender, firm and true, the Nation's heart  
Throbs for her gallant heroes passed away,  
Who in grim Battle's drama played their part,  
And slumber here to-day.—

Warm hearts that beat their lives out at the shrine  
Of Freedom, while our country held its breath  
As brave battalions wheeled themselves in line  
And marched upon their death:

When Freedom's Flag, its natal wounds scarce healed,  
Was torn from peaceful winds and flung again  
To shudder in the storm of battle-field—  
The elements of men,—

When every star that glittered was a mark  
For Treason's ball, and every rippling bar  
Of red and white was sullied with the dark  
And purple stain of war:

When angry guns, like famished beasts of prey,  
Were howling o'er their gory feast of lives,  
And sending dismal echoes far away  
To mothers, maids, and wives:—

The mother, kneeling in the empty night,  
With pleading hands uplifted for the son  
Who, even as she prayed, had fought the fight—  
The victory had won:

The wife, with trembling hand that wrote to say  
The babe was waiting for the sire's caress—  
The letter meeting that upon the way,—  
The babe was fatherless:

The maiden, with her lips, in fancy, pressed  
Against the brow once dewy with her breath,  
Now lying numb, unknown, and uncaressed  
Save by the dews of death.

## II

What meed of tribute can the poet pay  
The Soldier, but to trail the ivy-vine  
Of idle rhyme above his grave to-day  
In epitaph design?—

Or wreath with laurel-words the icy brows  
That ache no longer with a dream of fame,  
But, pillowed lowly in the narrow house,  
Renowned beyond the name.

The dewy tear-drops of the night may fall,  
And tender morning with her shining hand  
May brush them from the grasses green and tall  
That undulate the land.—

Yet song of Peace nor din of toil and thrift,  
Nor chanted honors, with the flowers we heap,  
Can yield us hope the Hero's head to lift  
Out of its dreamless sleep:

The dear old Flag, whose faintest flutter flies  
A stirring echo through each patriot breast,  
Can never coax to life the folded eyes  
That saw its wrongs redressed—

That watched it waver when the fight was hot,  
And blazed with newer courage to its aid,  
Regardless of the shower of shell and shot  
Through which the charge was made;—

And when, at last, they saw it plume its wings,  
Like some proud bird in stormy element,  
And soar untrammelled on its wanderings,  
They closed in death, content.

## III

O Mother, you who miss the smiling face  
Of that dear boy who vanished from your sight,  
And left you weeping o'er the vacant place  
He used to fill at night,—

Who left you dazed, bewildered, on a day  
That echoed wild huzzas, and roar of guns  
That drowned the farewell words you tried to say  
To incoherent ones;—

Be glad and proud you had the life to give—  
Be comforted through all the years to come,—  
Your country has a longer life to live,  
Your son a better home.

O Widow, weeping o'er the orphaned child,  
Who only lifts his questioning eyes to send  
A keener pang to grief unreconciled,—  
Teach him to comprehend

He had a father brave enough to stand  
Before the fire of Treason's blazing gun,  
That, dying, he might will the rich old land  
Of Freedom to his son.

And, Maiden, living on through lonely years  
In fealty to love's enduring ties,—  
With strong faith gleaming through the tender tears  
That gather in your eyes,

Look up! and own, in gratefulness of prayer,  
Submission to the will of Heaven's High Host:—  
I see your Angel-soldier pacing there,  
Expectant at his post.—

I see the rank and file of armies vast,  
That muster under one supreme control;  
I hear the trumpet sound the signal-blast—  
The calling of the roll—

The grand divisions falling into line  
And forming, under voice of One alone  
Who gives command, and joins with tongue divine  
The hymn that shakes the Throne.

#### IV

And thus, in tribute to the forms that rest  
In their last camping-ground, we strew the bloom  
And fragrance of the flowers they loved the best,  
In silence o'er the tomb.

With reverent hands we twine the Hero's wreath  
And clasp it tenderly on stake or stone  
That stands the sentinel for each beneath  
Whose glory is our own.

While in the violet that greets the sun,  
We see the azure eye of some lost boy;  
And in the rose the ruddy cheek of one  
We kissed in childish joy,—

Recalling, haply, when he marched away,  
He laughed his loudest though his eyes were wet.—  
The kiss he gave his mother's brow that day  
Is there and burning yet:

And through the storm of grief around her tossed,  
One ray of saddest comfort she may see,—  
Four hundred thousand sons like hers were lost  
To weeping Liberty.

. . . . .

But draw aside the drapery of gloom,  
And let the sunshine chase the clouds away  
And gild with brighter glory every tomb  
We decorate to-day:

And in the holy silence reigning round,  
While prayers of perfume bless the atmosphere,  
Where loyal souls of love and faith are found,  
Thank God that Peace is here!

And let each angry impulse that may start,  
Be smothered out of every loyal breast;  
And, rocked within the cradle of the heart,  
Let every sorrow rest.

#### SCRAPS

There's a habit I have nurtured,  
From the sentimental time  
When my life was like a story,  
And my heart a happy rhyme,—  
Of clipping from the paper,  
Or magazine, perhaps,  
The idle songs of dreamers,

Which I treasure as my scraps.

They hide among my letters,  
And they find a cozy nest  
In the bosom of my wrapper,  
And the pockets of my vest;  
They clamber in my fingers  
Till my dreams of wealth relapse  
In fairer dreams than Fortune's  
Though I find them only scraps.

Sometimes I find, in tatters  
Like a beggar, form as fair  
As ever gave to Heaven  
The treasure of a prayer;  
And words all dim and faded,  
And obliterate in part,  
Grow into fadeless meanings  
That are printed on the heart.

Sometimes a childish jingle  
Flings an echo, sweet and clear,  
And thrills me as I listen  
To the laughs I used to hear;  
And I catch the gleam of faces,  
And the glimmer of glad eyes  
That peep at me expectant  
O'er the walls of Paradise.

O syllables of measure!  
Though you wheel yourselves in line,  
And await the further order  
Of this eager voice of mine;  
You are powerless to follow  
O'er the field my fancy maps,  
So I lead you back to silence  
Feeling you are only scraps.

## **AUGUST**

A day of torpor in the sullen heat  
Of Summer's passion: In the sluggish stream  
The panting cattle lave their lazy feet,  
With drowsy eyes, and dream.

Long since the winds have died, and in the sky  
There lives no cloud to hint of Nature's grief;  
The sun glares ever like an evil eye,  
And withers flower and leaf.

Upon the gleaming harvest-field remote  
The thresher lies deserted, like some old  
Dismantled galleon that hangs afloat  
Upon a sea of gold.

The yearning cry of some bewildered bird  
Above an empty nest, and truant boys  
Along the river's shady margin heard—  
A harmony of noise—

A melody of wrangling voices blent  
With liquid laughter, and with rippling calls  
Of piping lips and thrilling echoes sent  
To mimic waterfalls.

And through the hazy veil the atmosphere

Has draped about the gleaming face of Day,  
The sifted glances of the sun appear  
In splinterings of spray.

The dusty highway, like a cloud of dawn,  
Trails o'er the hillside, and the passer-by,  
A tired ghost in misty shroud, toils on  
His journey to the sky.

And down across the valley's drooping sweep,  
Withdrawn to farthest limit of the glade,  
The forest stands in silence, drinking deep  
Its purple wine of shade.

The gossamer floats up on phantom wing;  
The sailor-vision voyages the skies  
And carries into chaos everything  
That freights the weary eyes:

Till, throbbing on and on, the pulse of heat  
Increases—reaches—passes fever's height,  
And Day sinks into slumber, cool and sweet,  
Within the arms of Night.

### **DEAD IN SIGHT OF FAME**

DIED—Early morning of September 5, 1876, and in the gleaming dawn of "name and fame," Hamilton J. Dunbar.

Dead! Dead! Dead!  
We thought him ours alone;  
And were so proud to see him tread  
The rounds of fame, and lift his head  
Where sunlight ever shone;  
But now our aching eyes are dim,  
And look through tears in vain for him.

Name! Name! Name!  
It was his diadem;  
Nor ever tarnish-taint of shame  
Could dim its luster—like a flame  
Reflected in a gem,  
He wears it blazing on his brow  
Within the courts of Heaven now.

Tears! Tears! Tears!  
Like dews upon the leaf  
That bursts at last—from out the years  
The blossom of a trust appears  
That blooms above the grief;  
And mother, brother, wife and child  
Will see it and be reconciled.

### **IN THE DARK**

O In the depths of midnight  
What fancies haunt the brain!  
When even the sigh of the sleeper  
Sounds like a sob of pain.

A sense of awe and of wonder  
I may never well define,—  
For the thoughts that come in the shadows  
Never come in the shine.

The old clock down in the parlor

Like a sleepless mourner grieves,  
And the seconds drip in the silence  
As the rain drips from the eaves.

And I think of the hands that signal  
The hours there in the gloom,  
And wonder what angel watchers  
Wait in the darkened room.

And I think of the smiling faces  
That used to watch and wait,  
Till the click of the clock was answered  
By the click of the opening gate.—

They are not there now in the evening—  
Morning or noon—not there;  
Yet I know that they keep their vigil,  
And wait for me Somewhere.

### **THE IRON HORSE**

No song is mine of Arab steed—  
My courser is of nobler blood,  
And cleaner limb and fleeter speed,  
And greater strength and hardihood  
Than ever cantered wild and free  
Across the plains of Araby.

Go search the level desert land  
From Sana on to Samarcand—  
Wherever Persian prince has been,  
Or Dervish, Sheik, or Bedouin,  
And I defy you there to point  
Me out a steed the half so fine—  
From tip of ear to pastern-joint—  
As this old iron horse of mine.

You do not know what beauty is—  
You do not know what gentleness  
His answer is to my caress!—  
Why, look upon this gait of his,—  
A touch upon his iron rein—  
He moves with such a stately grace  
The sunlight on his burnished mane  
Is barely shaken in its place;  
And at a touch he changes pace,  
And, gliding backward, stops again.

And talk of mettle—Ah! my friend,  
Such passion smolders in his breast  
That when awakened it will send  
A thrill of rapture wilder than  
E'er palpitated heart of man  
When flaming at its mightiest.  
And there's a fierceness in his ire—  
A maddened majesty that leaps  
Along his veins in blood of fire,  
Until the path his vision sweeps  
Spins out behind him like a thread  
Unraveled from the reel of time,  
As, wheeling on his course sublime,  
The earth revolves beneath his tread.

Then stretch away, my gallant steed!  
Thy mission is a noble one:  
Thou bear'st the father to the son,



And sweet relief to bitter need;  
Thou bear'st the stranger to his friends;  
    Thou bear'st the pilgrim to the shrine,  
And back again the prayer he sends  
    That God will prosper me and mine,—  
The star that on thy forehead gleams  
Has blossomed in our brightest dreams.

Then speed thee on thy glorious race!  
The mother waits thy ringing pace;  
The father leans an anxious ear  
The thunder of thy hooves to hear;  
The lover listens, far away,  
To catch thy keen exultant neigh;  
And, where thy breathings roll and rise,  
The husband strains his eager eyes,  
And laugh of wife and baby-glee  
Ring out to greet and welcome thee.  
Then stretch away! and when at last  
    The master's hand shall gently check  
Thy mighty speed, and hold thee fast,  
    The world will pat thee on the neck.

## **DEAD LEAVES**

### **DAWN**

As though a gipsy maiden with dim look,  
    Sat crooning by the roadside of the year,  
    So, Autumn, in thy strangeness, thou art here  
To read dark fortunes for us from the book  
Of fate; thou flingest in the crinkled brook  
    The trembling maple's gold, and frosty-clear  
    Thy mocking laughter thrills the atmosphere,  
And drifting on its current calls the rook  
To other lands. As one who wades, alone,  
    Deep in the dusk, and hears the minor talk  
Of distant melody, and finds the tone,  
    In some wierd way compelling him to stalk  
The paths of childhood over,—so I moan,  
    And like a troubled sleeper, groping, walk.

### **DUSK**

The frightened herds of clouds across the sky  
    Trample the sunshine down, and chase the day  
    Into the dusky forest-lands of gray  
And somber twilight. Far, and faint, and high  
The wild goose trails his harrow, with a cry  
    Sad as the wail of some poor castaway  
    Who sees a vessel drifting far astray  
Of his last hope, and lays him down to die.  
The children, riotous from school, grow bold  
    And quarrel with the wind, whose angry gust  
Plucks off the summer hat, and flaps the fold  
    Of many a crimson cloak, and twirls the dust  
In spiral shapes grotesque, and dims the gold  
    Of gleaming tresses with the blur of rust.

### **NIGHT**

Funereal Darkness, drear and desolate,  
    Muffles the world. The moaning of the wind  
    Is piteous with sobs of saddest kind;  
And laughter is a phantom at the gate

Of memory. The long-neglected grate  
    Within sprouts into flame and lights the mind  
    With hopes and wishes long ago refined  
To ashes,—long departed friends await  
    Our words of welcome: and our lips are dumb  
And powerless to greet the ones that press  
    Old kisses there. The baby beats its drum,  
And fancy marches to the dear caress  
    Of mother-arms, and all the gleeful hum  
Of home intrudes upon our loneliness.

### **OVER THE EYES OF GLADNESS**

"The voice of One hath spoken,  
    And the bended reed is bruised—  
The golden bowl is broken,  
    And the silver cord is loosed."

Over the eyes of gladness  
    The lids of sorrow fall,  
And the light of mirth is darkened  
    Under the funeral pall.

The hearts that throbbed with rapture  
    In dreams of the future years,  
Are wakened from their slumbers,  
    And their visions drowned in tears.

. . . . .

Two buds on the bough in the morning—  
    Twin buds in the smiling sun,  
But the frost of death has fallen  
    And blighted the bloom of one.

One leaf of life still folded  
    Has fallen from the stem,  
Leaving the symbol teaching  
    There still are two of them,—

For though—through Time's gradations,  
    The LIVING bud may burst,—  
The WITHERED one is gathered,  
    And blooms in Heaven first.

### **ONLY A DREAM**

Only a dream!  
    Her head is bent  
Over the keys of the instrument,  
While her trembling fingers go astray  
In the foolish tune she tries to play.  
He smiles in his heart, though his deep, sad eyes  
Never change to a glad surprise  
As he finds the answer he seeks confessed  
In glowing features, and heaving breast.

Only a dream!  
    Though the fete is grand,  
And a hundred hearts at her command,  
She takes no part, for her soul is sick  
Of the Coquette's art and the Serpent's trick,—  
She someway feels she would like to fling  
Her sins away as a robe, and spring  
Up like a lily pure and white,  
And bloom alone for HIM to-night.

Only a dream

That the fancy weaves.

The lids unfold like the rose's leaves,  
And the upraised eyes are moist and mild  
As the prayerful eyes of a drowsy child.  
Does she remember the spell they once  
Wrought in the past a few short months?  
Haply not—yet her lover's eyes  
Never change to the glad surprise.

Only a dream!

He winds her form

Close in the coil of his curving arm,  
And whirls her away in a gust of sound  
As wild and sweet as the poets found  
In the paradise where the silken tent  
Of the Persian blooms in the Orient,—  
While ever the chords of the music seem  
Whispering sadly,—"Only a dream!"

### **OUR LITTLE GIRL**

Her heart knew naught of sorrow,  
Nor the vaguest taint of sin—  
'Twas an ever-blooming blossom  
Of the purity within:  
And her hands knew only touches  
Of the mother's gentle care,  
And the kisses and caresses  
Through the interludes of prayer.

Her baby-feet had journeyed  
Such a little distance here,  
They could have found no briers  
In the path to interfere;  
The little cross she carried  
Could not weary her, we know,  
For it lay as lightly on her  
As a shadow on the snow.

And yet the way before us—  
O how empty now and drear!—  
How ev'n the dewes of roses  
Seem as dripping tears for her!  
And the song-birds all seem crying,  
As the winds cry and the rain,  
All sobbingly,—"We want—we want  
Our little girl again!"

### **THE FUNNY LITTLE FELLOW**

'Twas a Funny Little Fellow  
Of the very purest type,  
For he had a heart as mellow  
As an apple over ripe;  
And the brightest little twinkle  
When a funny thing occurred,  
And the lightest little tinkle  
Of a laugh you ever heard!

His smile was like the glitter  
Of the sun in tropic lands,  
And his talk a sweeter twitter  
Than the swallow understands;  
Hear him sing—and tell a story—

Snap a joke—ignite a pun,—  
'Twas a capture—rapture—glory,  
An explosion—all in one!

Though he hadn't any money—  
That condiment which tends  
To make a fellow "honey"  
For the palate of his friends;—  
Sweet simples he compounded—  
Sovereign antidotes for sin  
Or taint,—a faith unbounded  
That his friends were genuine.

He wasn't honored, maybe—  
For his songs of praise were slim,—  
Yet I never knew a baby  
That wouldn't crow for him;  
I never knew a mother  
But urged a kindly claim  
Upon him as a brother,  
At the mention of his name.

The sick have ceased their sighing,  
And have even found the grace  
Of a smile when they were dying  
As they looked upon his face;  
And I've seen his eyes of laughter  
Melt in tears that only ran  
As though, swift-dancing after,  
Came the Funny Little Man.

He laughed away the sorrow  
And he laughed away the gloom  
We are all so prone to borrow  
From the darkness of the tomb;  
And he laughed across the ocean  
Of a happy life, and passed,  
With a laugh of glad emotion,  
Into Paradise at last.

And I think the Angels knew him,  
And had gathered to await  
His coming, and run to him  
Through the widely opened Gate,  
With their faces gleaming sunny  
For his laughter-loving sake,  
And thinking, "What a funny  
Little Angel he will make!"

### **SONG OF THE NEW YEAR**

I heard the bells at midnight  
Ring in the dawning year;  
And above the clanging chorus  
Of the song, I seemed to hear  
A choir of mystic voices  
Flinging echoes, ringing clear,  
From a band of angels winging  
Through the haunted atmosphere:  
"Ring out the shame and sorrow,  
And the misery and sin,  
That the dawning of the morrow  
May in peace be ushered in."

And I thought of all the trials  
The departed years had cost,

And the blooming hopes and pleasures  
That are withered now and lost;  
And with joy I drank the music  
Stealing o'er the feeling there  
As the spirit song came pealing  
On the silence everywhere:  
"Ring out the shame and sorrow,  
And the misery and sin,  
That the dawning of the morrow  
May in peace be ushered in."

And I listened as a lover  
To an utterance that flows  
In syllables like dewdrops  
From the red lips of a rose,  
Till the anthem, fainter growing,  
Climbing higher, chiming on  
Up the rounds of happy rhyming,  
Slowly vanished in the dawn:  
"Ring out the shame and sorrow,  
And the misery and sin,  
That the dawning of the morrow  
May in peace be ushered in."

Then I raised my eyes to Heaven,  
And with trembling lips I pled  
For a blessing for the living  
And a pardon for the dead;  
And like a ghost of music  
Slowly whispered—lowly sung—  
Came the echo pure and holy  
In the happy angel tongue:  
"Ring out the shame and sorrow,  
And the misery and sin,  
And the dawn of every morrow  
Will in peace be ushered in."

### **A LETTER TO A FRIEND**

The past is like a story  
I have listened to in dreams  
That vanished in the glory  
Of the Morning's early gleams;  
And—at my shadow glancing—  
I feel a loss of strength,  
As the Day of Life advancing  
Leaves it shorn of half its length.

But it's all in vain to worry  
At the rapid race of Time—  
And he flies in such a flurry  
When I trip him with a rhyme,  
I'll bother him no longer  
Than to thank you for the thought  
That "my fame is growing stronger  
As you really think it ought."

And though I fall below it,  
I might know as much of mirth  
To live and die a poet  
Of unacknowledged worth;  
For Fame is but a vagrant—  
Though a loyal one and brave,  
And his laurels ne'er so fragrant  
As when scattered o'er the grave.

## LINES FOR AN ALBUM

I would not trace the hackneyed phrase  
Of shallow words and empty praise,  
And prate of "peace" till one might think  
My foolish pen was drunk with ink.  
Nor will I here the wish express  
Of "lasting love and happiness,"  
And "cloudless skies"—for after all  
"Into each life some rain must fall."  
—No. Keep the empty page below,  
In my remembrance, white as snow—  
Nor sigh to know the secret prayer  
My spirit hand has written there.

## TO ANNIE

When the lids of dusk are falling  
O'er the dreamy eyes of day,  
And the whippoorwills are calling,  
And the lesson laid away,—  
May Mem'ry soft and tender  
As the prelude of the night,  
Bend over you and render  
As tranquil a delight.

## FAME

### I

Once, in a dream, I saw a man  
With haggard face and tangled hair,  
And eyes that nursed as wild a care  
As gaunt Starvation ever can;  
And in his hand he held a wand  
Whose magic touch gave life and thought  
Unto a form his fancy wrought  
And robed with coloring so grand,  
It seemed the reflex of some child  
Of Heaven, fair and undefiled—  
A face of purity and love—  
To woo him into worlds above:  
And as I gazed with dazzled eyes,  
A gleaming smile lit up his lips  
As his bright soul from its eclipse  
Went flashing into Paradise.  
Then tardy Fame came through the door  
And found a picture—nothing more.

### II

And once I saw a man, alone,  
In abject poverty, with hand  
Uplifted o'er a block of stone  
That took a shape at his command  
And smiled upon him, fair and good—  
A perfect work of womanhood,  
Save that the eyes might never weep,  
Nor weary hands be crossed in sleep,  
Nor hair that fell from crown to wrist,  
Be brushed away, caressed and kissed.  
And as in awe I gazed on her,  
I saw the sculptor's chisel fall—  
I saw him sink, without a moan,

Sink lifeless at the feet of stone,  
And lie there like a worshiper.  
Fame crossed the threshold of the hall,  
And found a statue—that was all.

### III

And once I saw a man who drew  
A gloom about him like a cloak,  
And wandered aimlessly. The few  
Who spoke of him at all, but spoke  
Disparagingly of a mind  
The Fates had faultily designed:  
Too indolent for modern times—  
Too fanciful, and full of whims—  
For, talking to himself in rhymes,  
And scrawling never-heard-of hymns,  
The idle life to which he clung  
Was worthless as the songs he sung!  
I saw him, in my vision, filled  
With rapture o'er a spray of bloom  
The wind threw in his lonely room;  
And of the sweet perfume it spilled  
He drank to drunkenness, and flung  
His long hair back, and laughed and sung  
And clapped his hands as children do  
At fairy tales they listen to,  
While from his flying quill there dripped  
Such music on his manuscript  
That he who listens to the words  
May close his eyes and dream the birds  
Are twittering on every hand  
A language he can understand.  
He journeyed on through life, unknown,  
Without one friend to call his own;  
He tired. No kindly hand to press  
The cooling touch of tenderness  
Upon his burning brow, nor lift  
To his parched lips God's freest gift—  
No sympathetic sob or sigh  
Of trembling lips—no sorrowing eye  
Looked out through tears to see him die.  
And Fame her greenest laurels brought  
To crown a head that heeded not.

And this is Fame! A thing, indeed,  
That only comes when least the need:  
The wisest minds of every age  
The book of life from page to page  
Have searched in vain; each lesson conned  
Will promise it the page beyond—  
Until the last, when dusk of night  
Falls over it, and reason's light  
Is smothered by that unknown friend  
Who signs his nom de plume, The End

### AN EMPTY NEST

I find an old deserted nest,  
Half-hidden in the underbrush:  
A withered leaf, in phantom jest,  
Has nestled in it like a thrush  
With weary, palpitating breast.

I muse as one in sad surprise

Who seeks his childhood's home once more,  
And finds it in a strange disguise  
Of vacant rooms and naked floor,  
With sudden tear-drops in his eyes.

An empty nest! It used to bear  
A happy burden, when the breeze  
Of summer rocked it, and a pair  
Of merry tattlers told the trees  
What treasures they had hidden there.

But Fancy, flitting through the gleams  
Of youth's sunshiny atmosphere,  
Has fallen in the past, and seems,  
Like this poor leaflet nestled here,—  
A phantom guest of empty dreams.

### **MY FATHER'S HALLS**

My father's halls, so rich and rare,  
Are desolate and bleak and bare;  
My father's heart and halls are one,  
Since I, their life and light, am gone.

O, valiant knight, with hand of steel  
And heart of gold, hear my appeal:  
Release me from the spoiler's charms,  
And bear me to my father's arms.

### **THE HARP OF THE MINSTREL**

The harp of the minstrel has never a tone  
As sad as the song in his bosom to-night,  
For the magical touch of his fingers alone  
Can not waken the echoes that breathe it aright;  
But oh! as the smile of the moon may impart  
A sorrow to one in an alien clime,  
Let the light of the melody fall on the heart,  
And cadence his grief into musical rhyme.

The faces have faded, the eyes have grown dim  
That once were his passionate love and his pride;  
And alas! all the smiles that once blossomed for him  
Have fallen away as the flowers have died.  
The hands that entwined him the laureate's wreath  
And crowned him with fame in the long, long ago,  
Like the laurels are withered and folded beneath  
The grass and the stubble—the frost and the snow.

Then sigh, if thou wilt, as the whispering strings  
Strive ever in vain for the utterance clear,  
And think of the sorrowful spirit that sings,  
And jewel the song with the gem of a tear.  
For the harp of the minstrel has never a tone  
As sad as the song in his bosom tonight,  
And the magical touch of his fingers alone  
Can not waken the echoes that breathe it aright.

### **HONEY DRIPPING FROM THE COMB**

How slight a thing may set one's fancy drifting  
Upon the dead sea of the Past!—A view—  
Sometimes an odor—or a rooster lifting  
A far-off "OOH! OOH-OOH!"



And suddenly we find ourselves astray  
In some wood's-pasture of the Long Ago—  
Or idly dream again upon a day  
Of rest we used to know.

I bit an apple but a moment since—  
A wilted apple that the worm had spurned,—  
Yet hidden in the taste were happy hints  
Of good old days returned.—

And so my heart, like some enraptured lute,  
Tinkles a tune so tender and complete,  
God's blessing must be resting on the fruit—  
So bitter, yet so sweet!

## **JOHN WALSH**

A strange life—strangely passed!  
We may not read the soul  
When God has folded up the scroll  
In death at last.

We may not—dare not say of one  
Whose task of life as well was done  
As he could do it,—"This is lost,  
And prayers may never pay the cost."

Who listens to the song  
That sings within the breast,  
Should ever hear the good expressed  
Above the wrong.

And he who leans an eager ear  
To catch the discord, he will hear  
The echoes of his own weak heart  
Beat out the most discordant part.

Whose tender heart could build  
Affection's bower above  
A heart where baby nests of love  
Were ever filled,—  
With upward growth may reach and twine  
About the children, grown divine,  
That once were his a time so brief  
His very joy was more than grief.

O Sorrow—"Peace, be still!"  
God reads the riddle right;  
And we who grope in constant night  
But serve His will;  
And when sometime the doubt is gone,  
And darkness blossoms into dawn,—  
"God keeps the good," we then will say:  
" 'Tis but the dross He throws away."

## **ORLIE WILDE**

A goddess, with a siren's grace,—  
A sun-haired girl on a craggy place  
Above a bay where fish-boats lay  
Drifting about like birds of prey.

Wrought was she of a painter's dream,—  
Wise only as are artists wise,  
My artist-friend, Rolf Herschelhiem,  
With deep sad eyes of oversize,  
And face of melancholy guise.

I pressed him that he tell to me  
This masterpiece's history.  
He turned—REturned—and thus beguiled  
Me with the tale of Orlie Wilde:—

"We artists live ideally:  
We breed our firmest facts of air;  
We make our own reality—  
We dream a thing and it is so.  
The fairest scenes we ever see  
Are mirages of memory;  
The sweetest thoughts we ever know  
We plagiarize from Long Ago:  
And as the girl on canvas there  
Is marvelously rare and fair,  
'Tis only inasmuch as she  
Is dumb and may not speak to me!"  
He tapped me with his mahlstick—then  
The picture,—and went on again:

"Orlie Wilde, the fisher's child—  
I see her yet, as fair and mild  
As ever nursling summer day  
Dreamed on the bosom of the bay:  
For I was twenty then, and went  
Alone and long-haired—all content  
With promises of sounding name  
And fantasies of future fame,  
And thoughts that now my mind discards  
As editor a fledgling bard's.

"At evening once I chanced to go,  
With pencil and portfolio,  
Adown the street of silver sand  
That winds beneath this craggy land,  
To make a sketch of some old scurf  
Of driftage, nosing through the surf  
A splintered mast, with knarl and strand  
Of rigging-rope and tattered threads  
Of flag and streamer and of sail  
That fluttered idly in the gale  
Or whipped themselves to sadder shreds.  
The while I wrought, half listlessly,  
On my dismantled subject, came  
A sea-bird, settling on the same  
With plaintive moan, as though that he  
Had lost his mate upon the sea;  
And—with my melancholy trend—  
It brought dim dreams half understood—  
It wrought upon my morbid mood,—  
I thought of my own voyagings  
That had no end—that have no end.—  
And, like the sea-bird, I made moan  
That I was loveless and alone.  
And when at last with weary wings  
It went upon its wanderings,  
With upturned face I watched its flight  
Until this picture met my sight:  
A goddess, with a siren's grace,—  
A sun-haired girl on a craggy place  
Above a bay where fish-boats lay  
Drifting about like birds of prey.

"In airy poise she, gazing, stood  
A machless form of womanhood,

That brought a thought that if for me  
Such eyes had sought across the sea,  
I could have swum the widest tide  
That ever mariner defied,  
And, at the shore, could on have gone  
To that high crag she stood upon,  
To there entreat and say, 'My Sweet,  
Behold thy servant at thy feet.'  
And to my soul I said: 'Above,  
There stands the idol of thy love!'

"In this rapt, awed, ecstatic state  
I gazed—till lo! I was aware  
A fisherman had joined her there—  
A weary man, with halting gait,  
Who toiled beneath a basket's weight:  
Her father, as I guessed, for she  
Had run to meet him gleefully  
And ta'en his burden to herself,  
That perched upon her shoulder's shelf  
So lightly that she, tripping, neared  
A jutting crag and disappeared;  
But she left the echo of a song  
That thrills me yet, and will as long  
As I have being! . . .

. . . "Evenings came  
And went,—but each the same—the same:  
She watched above, and even so  
I stood there watching from below;  
Till, grown so bold at last, I sung,—  
(What matter now the theme thereof!)—  
It brought an answer from her tongue—  
Faint as the murmur of a dove,  
Yet all the more the song of love. . . .

"I turned and looked upon the bay,  
With palm to forehead—eyes a-blur  
In the sea's smile—meant but for her!—  
I saw the fish-boats far away  
In misty distance, lightly drawn  
In chalk-dots on the horizon—  
Looked back at her, long, wistfully;—  
And, pushing off an empty skiff,  
I beckoned her to quit the cliff  
And yield me her rare company  
Upon a little pleasure-cruise.—  
She stood, as loathful to refuse,  
To muse for full a moment's time,—  
Then answered back in pantomime  
'She feared some danger from the sea  
Were she discovered thus with me.'  
I motioned then to ask her if  
I might not join her on the cliff  
And back again, with graceful wave  
Of lifted arm, she answer gave  
'She feared some danger from the sea.'

"Impatient, piqued, impetuous, I  
Sprang in the boat, and flung 'Good-by'  
From pouted mouth with angry hand,  
And madly pulled away from land  
With lusty stroke, despite that she  
Held out her hands entreatingly:  
And when far out, with covert eye

I shoreward glanced, I saw her fly  
In reckless haste adown the crag,  
Her hair a-flutter like a flag  
Of gold that danced across the strand  
In little mists of silver sand.  
All curious I, pausing, tried  
To fancy what it all implied,—  
When suddenly I found my feet  
Were wet; and, underneath the seat  
On which I sat, I heard the sound  
Of gurgling waters, and I found  
The boat aleak alarmingly. . . .  
I turned and looked upon the sea,  
Whose every wave seemed mocking me;  
I saw the fishers' sails once more—  
In dimmer distance than before;  
I saw the sea-bird wheeling by,  
With foolish wish that *I* could fly:  
I thought of firm earth, home and friends—  
I thought of everything that tends  
To drive a man to frenzy and  
To wholly lose his own command;  
I thought of all my waywardness—  
Thought of a mother's deep distress;  
Of youthful follies yet unpurged—  
Sins, as the seas, about me surged—  
Thought of the printer's ready pen  
To-morrow drowning me again;—  
A million things without a name—  
I thought of everything but—Fame. . . .

"A memory yet is in my mind,  
So keenly clear and sharp-defined,  
I picture every phase and line  
Of life and death, and neither mine,—  
While some fair seraph, golden-haired,  
Bends over me,—with white arms bared,  
That strongly plait themselves about  
My drowning weight and lift me out—  
With joy too great for words to state  
Or tongue to dare articulate!

"And this seraphic ocean-child  
And heroine was Orlie Wilde:  
And thus it was I came to hear  
Her voice's music in my ear—  
Ay, thus it was Fate paved the way  
That I walk desolate to-day!" . . .

The artist paused and bowed his face  
Within his palms a little space,  
While reverently on his form  
I bent my gaze and marked a storm  
That shook his frame as wrathfully  
As some typhoon of agony,  
And fraught with sobs—the more profound  
For that peculiar laughing sound  
We hear when strong men weep. . . . I leant  
With warmest sympathy—I bent  
To stroke with soothing hand his brow,  
He murmuring—"Tis over now!—

And shall I tie the silken thread  
Of my frail romance?" "Yes," I said.—  
He faintly smiled; and then, with brow

In kneading palm, as one in dread—  
His tasseled cap pushed from his head  
" 'Her voice's music,' I repeat,"  
He said,— " 'twas sweet—O passing sweet!—  
Though she herself, in uttering  
Its melody, proved not the thing  
Of loveliness my dreams made meet  
For me—there, yearning, at her feet—  
Prone at her feet—a worshiper,—  
For lo! she spake a tongue," moaned he,  
"Unknown to me;—unknown to me  
As mine to her—as mine to her."

### **THAT OTHER MAUD MULLER**

Maud Muller worked at making hay,  
And cleared her forty cents a day.

Her clothes were coarse, but her health was fine,  
And so she worked in the sweet sunshine

Singing as glad as a bird in May  
"Barbara Allen" the livelong day.

She often glanced at the far-off town,  
And wondered if eggs were up or down.

And the sweet song died of a strange disease,  
Leaving a phantom taste of cheese,

And an appetite and a nameless ache  
For soda-water and ginger cake.

The judge rode slowly into view—  
Stopped his horse in the shade and threw

His fine-cut out, while the blushing Maud  
Marveled much at the kind he "chawed."

"He was dry as a fish," he said with a wink,  
"And kind o' thought that a good square drink

Would brace him up." So the cup was filled  
With the crystal wine that old spring spilled;

And she gave it him with a sun-browned hand.  
"Thanks," said the judge in accents bland;

"A thousand thanks! for a sweeter draught,  
From a fairer hand"—but there he laughed.

And the sweet girl stood in the sun that day,  
And raked the judge instead of the hay.

### **A MAN OF MANY PARTS**

It was a man of many parts,  
Who in his coffer mind  
Had stored the Classics and the Arts  
And Sciences combined;  
The purest gems of poesy  
Came flashing from his pen—  
The wholesome truths of History  
He gave his fellow men.

He knew the stars from "Dog" to Mars;  
And he could tell you, too,

Their distances—as though the cars  
Had often checked him through—  
And time 'twould take to reach the sun,  
Or by the "Milky Way,"  
Drop in upon the moon, or run  
The homeward trip, or stay.

With Logic at his fingers' ends,  
Theology in mind,  
He often entertained his friends  
Until they died resigned;  
And with inquiring mind intent  
Upon Alchemic arts  
A dynamite experiment—  
.....  
A man of many parts!

## **THE FROG**

Who am I but the Frog—the Frog!  
My realm is the dark bayou,  
And my throne is the muddy and moss-grown log  
That the poison-vine clings to—  
And the blacksnakes slide in the slimy tide  
Where the ghost of the moon looks blue.

What am I but a King—a King!—  
For the royal robes I wear—  
A scepter, too, and a signet-ring,  
As vassals and serfs declare:  
And a voice, god wot, that is equaled not  
In the wide world anywhere!

I can talk to the Night—the Night!—  
Under her big black wing  
She tells me the tale of the world outright,  
And the secret of everything;  
For she knows you all, from the time you crawl,  
To the doom that death will bring.

The Storm swoops down, and he blows—and blows,—  
While I drum on his swollen cheek,  
And croak in his angered eye that glows  
With the lurid lightning's streak;  
While the rushes drown in the watery frown  
That his bursting passions leak.

And I can see through the sky—the sky—  
As clear as a piece of glass;  
And I can tell you the how and why  
Of the things that come to pass—  
And whether the dead are there instead,  
Or under the graveyard grass.

To your Sovereign lord all hail—all hail!—  
To your Prince on his throne so grim!  
Let the moon swing low, and the high stars trail  
Their heads in the dust to him;  
And the wide world sing: Long live the King,  
And grace to his royal whim!

## **DEAD SELVES**

How many of my selves are dead?  
The ghosts of many haunt me: Lo,

The baby in the tiny bed  
With rockers on, is blanketed  
And sleeping in the long ago;  
And so I ask, with shaking head,  
How many of my selves are dead?

A little face with drowsy eyes  
And lisping lips comes mistily  
From out the faded past, and tries  
The prayers a mother breathed with sighs  
Of anxious care in teaching me;  
But face and form and prayers have fled—  
How many of my selves are dead?

The little naked feet that slipped  
In truant paths, and led the way  
Through dead'ning pasture-lands, and tripped  
O'er tangled poison-vines, and dipped  
In streams forbidden—where are they?  
In vain I listen for their tread—  
How many of my selves are dead?

The awkward boy the teacher caught  
Inditing letters filled with love,  
Who was compelled, for all he fought,  
To read aloud each tender thought  
Of "Sugar Lump" and "Turtle Dove."  
I wonder where he hides his head—  
How many of my selves are dead?

The earnest features of a youth  
With manly fringe on lip and chin,  
With eager tongue to tell the truth,  
To offer love and life, forsooth,  
So brave was he to woo and win;  
A prouder man was never wed—  
How many of my selves are dead?

The great, strong hands so all-inclined  
To welcome toil, or smooth the care  
From mother-brows, or quick to find  
A leisure-scrap of any kind,  
To toss the baby in the air,  
Or clap at babbling things it said—  
How many of my selves are dead?

The pact of brawn and scheming brain—  
Conspiring in the plots of wealth,  
Still delving, till the lengthened chain,  
Unwindlassed in the mines of gain,  
Recoils with dregs of ruined health  
And pain and poverty instead—  
How many of my selves are dead?

The faltering step, the faded hair—  
Head, heart and soul, all echoing  
With maundering fancies that declare  
That life and love were never there,  
Nor ever joy in anything,  
Nor wounded heart that ever bled—  
How many of my selves are dead?

So many of my selves are dead,  
That, bending here above the brink  
Of my last grave, with dizzy head,  
I find my spirit comforted,  
For all the idle things I think:

It can but be a peaceful bed,  
Since all my other selves are dead.

### **A DREAM OF LONG AGO**

Lying listless in the mosses  
Underneath a tree that tosses  
Flakes of sunshine, and embosses  
    Its green shadow with the snow—  
Drowsy-eyed, I sink in slumber  
Born of fancies without number—  
Tangled fancies that encumber  
    Me with dreams of long ago.

Ripples of the river singing;  
And the water-lilies swinging  
Bells of Parian, and ringing  
    Peals of perfume faint and fine,  
While old forms and fairy faces  
Leap from out their hiding-places  
In the past, with glad embraces  
    Fraught with kisses sweet as wine.

Willows dip their slender fingers  
O'er the little fisher's stringers,  
While he baits his hook and lingers  
    Till the shadows gather dim;  
And afar off comes a calling  
Like the sounds of water falling,  
With the lazy echoes drawling  
    Messages of haste to him.

Little naked feet that tinkle  
Through the stubble-fields, and twinkle  
Down the winding road, and sprinkle  
    Little mists of dusty rain,  
While in pasture-lands the cattle  
Cease their grazing with a rattle  
Of the bells whose clappers tattle  
    To their masters down the lane.

Trees that hold their tempting treasures  
O'er the orchard's hedge embrasures,  
Furnish their forbidden pleasures  
    As in Eden lands of old;  
And the coming of the master  
Indicates a like disaster  
To the frightened heart that faster  
    Beats pulsations manifold.

Puckered lips whose pipings tingle  
In staccato notes that mingle  
Musically with the jingle-  
    Haunted winds that lightly fan  
Mellow twilights, crimson-tinted  
By the sun, and picture-printed  
Like a book that sweetly hinted  
    Of the Nights Arabian.

Porticoes with columns plaited  
And entwined with vines and freighted  
With a bloom all radiated  
    With the light of moon and star;  
Where some tender voice is winging  
In sad flights of song, and singing  
To the dancing fingers flinging



Dripping from the sweet guitar.

Would my dreams were never taken  
From me: that with faith unshaken  
I might sleep and never waken  
On a weary world of woe!  
Links of love would never sever  
As I dreamed them, never, never!  
I would glide along forever  
Through the dreams of long ago.

### **CRAQUEODOOM**

The Crankadox leaned o'er the edge of the moon  
And wistfully gazed on the sea  
Where the Gryxabodill madly whistled a tune  
To the air of "Ti-fol-de-ding-dee."  
The quavering shriek of the Fly-up-the-creek  
Was fitfully wafted afar  
To the Queen of the Wunks as she powdered her cheek  
With the pulverized rays of a star.

The Gool closed his ear on the voice of the Grig,  
And his heart it grew heavy as lead  
As he marked the Baldekin adjusting his wing  
On the opposite side of his head,  
And the air it grew chill as the Gryxabodill  
Raised his dank, dripping fins to the skies,  
And plead with the Plunk for the use of her bill  
To pick the tears out of his eyes.

The ghost of the Zhack flitted by in a trance,  
And the Squidjum hid under a tub  
As he heard the loud hooves of the Hooken advance  
With a rub-a-dub—dub-a-dub—dub!  
And the Crankadox cried, as he lay down and died,  
"My fate there is none to bewail,"  
While the Queen of the Wunks drifted over the tide  
With a long piece of crape to her tail.

### **JUNE**

Queenly month of indolent repose!  
I drink thy breath in sips of rare perfume,  
As in thy downy lap of clover-bloom  
I nestle like a drowsy child and doze  
The lazy hours away. The zephyr throws  
The shifting shuttle of the Summer's loom  
And weaves a damask-work of gleam and gloom  
Before thy listless feet. The lily blows  
A bugle-call of fragrance o'er the glade;  
And, wheeling into ranks, with plume and spear,  
Thy harvest-armies gather on parade;  
While, faint and far away, yet pure and clear,  
A voice calls out of alien lands of shade:—  
All hail the Peerless Goddess of the Year!

### **WASH LOWRY'S REMINISCENCE**

And you're the poet of this concern?  
I've seed your name in print  
A dozen times, but I'll be dern  
I'd 'a' never 'a' took the hint  
O' the size you are—fer I'd pictured you

A kind of a tallish man—  
Dark-complected and sallor too,  
And on the consumed plan.

'Stid o' that you're little and small,  
With a milk-and-water face—  
'Thout no snap in your eyes at all,  
Er nothin' to suit the case!  
Kind o'look like a—I don't know—  
One o' these fair-ground chaps  
That runs a thingamajig to blow,  
Er a candy-stand perhaps.

'Ll I've allus thought that poetry  
Was a sort of a—some disease—  
Fer I knowed a poet once, and he  
Was techy and hard to please,  
And moody-like, and kindo' sad  
And didn't seem to mix  
With other folks—like his health was bad,  
Er his liver out o' fix.

Used to teach fer a livelihood—  
There's folks in Pipe Crick yit  
Remembers him—and he was good  
At cipherin' I'll admit—  
And posted up in G'ography  
But when it comes to tact,  
And gittin' along with the school, you see,  
He fizzled, and that's a fact!

Boarded with us fer fourteen months  
And in all that time I'll say  
We never caught him a-sleepin' once  
Er idle a single day.  
But shucks! It made him worse and worse  
A-writin' rhymes and stuff,  
And the school committee used to furse  
'At the school warn't good enough.

He warn't as strict as he ought to been,  
And never was known to whip,  
Or even to keep a scholar in  
At work at his penmanship;  
'Stid o' that he'd learn 'em notes,  
And have 'em every day,  
Spilin' hymns and a-splittin' th'oats  
With his "Do-sol-fa-me-ra!"

Tel finally it was jest agreed  
We'd have to let him go,  
And we all felt bad—we did indeed,  
When we come to tell him so;  
Fer I remember, he turned so white,  
And smiled so sad, somehow,  
I someway felt it wasn't right,  
And I'm shore it wasn't now!

He hadn't no complaints at all—  
He bid the school adieu,  
And all o' the scholars great and small  
Was mighty sorry too!  
And when he closed that afternoon  
They sung some lines that he  
Had writ a purpose, to some old tune  
That suited the case, you see.

And then he lingered and delayed  
And wouldn't go away—  
And shet himself in his room and stayed  
A-writin' from day to day;  
And kep' a-gittin' stranger still,  
And thinner all the time,  
You know, as any feller will  
On nothin' else but rhyme.

He didn't seem adzactly right,  
Er like he was crossed in love,  
He'd work away night after night,  
And walk the floor above;  
We'd hear him read and talk, and sing  
So lonesome-like and low,  
My woman's cried like ever'thing—  
'Way in the night, you know.

And when at last he tuck to bed  
He'd have his ink and pen;  
"So's he could coat the muse" he said,  
"He'd die contented then";  
And jest before he past away  
He read with dyin' gaze  
The epitaph that stands to-day  
To show you where he lays.

And ever sence then I've allus thought  
That poetry's some disease,  
And them like you that's got it ought  
To watch their q's and p's ;  
And leave the sweets of rhyme, to sup  
On the wholesome draughts of toil,  
And git your health recruited up  
By plowin' in rougher soil.

### **THE ANCIENT PRINTERMAN**

"O Printerman of sallow face,  
And look of absent guile,  
Is it the 'copy' on your 'case'  
That causes you to smile?  
Or is it some old treasure scrap  
You cull from Memory's file?

"I fain would guess its mystery—  
For often I can trace  
A fellow dreamer's history  
Whene'er it haunts the face;  
Your fancy's running riot  
In a retrospective race!

"Ah, Printerman, you're straying  
Afar from 'stick' and type—  
Your heart has 'gone a-maying,'  
And you taste old kisses, ripe  
Again on lips that pucker  
At your old asthmatic pipe!

"You are dreaming of old pleasures  
That have faded from your view;  
And the music-burdened measures  
Of the laughs you listen to  
Are now but angel-echoes—  
O, have I spoken true?"

The ancient Printer hinted  
With a motion full of grace  
To where the words were printed  
On a card above his "case,"—  
"I am deaf and dumb!" I left him  
With a smile upon his face.

### **PRIOR TO MISS BELLE'S APPEARANCE**

What makes you come HERE fer, Mister,  
So much to our house?—SAY?  
Come to see our big sister!—  
An' Charley he says 'at you kissed her  
An' he ketched you, th'uther day!—  
Didn' you, Charley?—But we p'omised Belle  
An' crossed our heart to never to tell—  
'Cause SHE gived us some o' them-er  
Chawk'lut-drops 'at you bringed to her!

Charley he's my little b'uther—  
An' we has a-mostest fun,  
Don't we, Charley?—Our Muther,  
Whenever we whips one anuther,  
Tries to whip US—an' we RUN—  
Don't we, Charley?—An' nen, bime-by,  
Nen she gives us cake—an' pie—  
Don't she, Charley?—when we come in  
An' pomise never to do it ag'in!

HE'S named Charley.—I'm WILLIE—  
An' I'm got the purtiest name!  
But Uncle Bob HE calls me "Billy"—  
Don't he, Charley?—'N' our filly  
We named "Billy," the same  
Ist like me! An' our Ma said  
'At "Bob puts foolishnuss into our head!"—  
Didn' she, Charley?—An' SHE don't know  
Much about BOYS!—'Cause Bob said so!

Baby's a funniest feller!  
Nain't no hair on his head—  
IS they, Charley?—It's meller  
Wite up there! An' ef Belle er  
Us ask wuz WE that way, Ma said,—  
"Yes; an' yer PA'S head wuz soft as that,  
An' it's that way yet!"—An' Pa grabs his hat  
An' says, "Yes, childern, she's right about Pa—  
'Cause that's the reason he married yer Ma!"

An' our Ma says 'at "Belle couldn'  
Ketch nothin' at all but ist 'BOWS!'—  
An' PA says 'at "you're soft as puddun!"—  
An' UNCLE BOB says "you're a good-un—  
'Cause he can tell by yer nose!"—  
Didn' he, Charley?—An' when Belle'll play  
In the poller on th' pianer, some day,  
Bob makes up funny songs about you,  
Till she gits mad-like he wants her to!

Our sister FANNY she's 'LEVEN  
Years old! 'At's mucher 'an I—  
Ain't it, Charley? . . . I'm seven!—  
But our sister Fanny's in HEAVEN!  
Nere's where you go ef you die!—  
Don't you, Charley?—Nen you has WINGS—

IST LIKE FANNY!—an' PURTIEST THINGS!—  
Don't you, Charley?—An' nen you can FLY—  
Ist fly-an' EVER'thing! . . . I Wisht I'D die!

### WHEN MOTHER COMBED MY HAIR

When Memory, with gentle hand,  
Has led me to that foreign land  
Of childhood days, I long to be  
Again the boy on bended knee,  
With head a-bow, and drowsy smile  
Hid in a mother's lap the while,  
With tender touch and kindly care,  
She bends above and combs my hair.

Ere threats of Time, or ghosts of cares  
Had paled it to the hue it wears,  
Its tangled threads of amber light  
Fell o'er a forehead, fair and white,  
That only knew the light caress  
Of loving hands, or sudden press  
Of kisses that were sifted there  
The times when mother combed my hair.

But its last gleams of gold have slipped  
Away; and Sorrow's manuscript  
Is fashioned of the snowy brow—  
So lined and underscored now  
That you, to see it, scarce would guess  
It e'er had felt the fond caress  
Of loving lips, or known the care  
Of those dear hands that combed my hair.

. . . . .

I am so tired! Let me be  
A moment at my mother's knee;  
One moment—that I may forget  
The trials waiting for me yet:  
One moment free from every pain—  
O! Mother! Comb my hair again!  
And I will, oh, so humbly bow,  
For I've a wife that combs it now.

### A WRANGDILLION

Dexery-tethery! down in the dike,  
Under the ooze and the slime,  
Nestles the wraith of a reticent Gryke,  
Blubbering bubbles of rhyme:  
Though the reeds touch him and tickle his teeth—  
Though the Graigroll and the Cheest  
Pluck at the leaves of his laureate-wreath,  
Nothing affects him the least.

He sinks to the dregs in the dead o' the night,  
And he shuffles the shadows about  
As he gathers the stars in a nest of delight  
And sets there and hatches them out:  
The Zhederrill peers from his watery mine  
In scorn with the Will-o'-the-wisp,  
As he twinkles his eyes in a whisper of shine  
That ends in a luminous lisp.

The Morning is born like a baby of gold,  
And it lies in a spasm of pink,  
And rallies the Cheest for the horrible cold  
He has dragged to the willowy brink,  
The Gryke blots his tears with a scrap of his grief,  
And growls at the wary Graigroll  
As he twunkers a tune on a Tiljicum leaf  
And hums like a telegraph pole.

### GEORGE MULLEN'S CONFESSION

For the sake of guilty conscience, and the heart that ticks the  
time  
Of the clockworks of my nature, I desire to say that I'm  
A weak and sinful creature, as regards my daily walk  
The last five years and better. It ain't worth while to talk—

I've been too mean to tell it! I've been so hard, you see,  
And full of pride, and—onry—now there's the word for me—  
Just onry—and to show you, I'll give my history  
With vital points in question, and I think you'll all agree.

I was always stiff and stubborn since I could recollect,  
And had an awful temper, and never would reflect;  
And always into trouble—I remember once at school  
The teacher tried to flog me, and I reversed that rule.

O I was bad I tell you! And it's a funny move  
That a fellow wild as I was could ever fall in love;  
And it's a funny notion that an animal like me,  
Under a girl's weak fingers was as tame as tame could be!

But it's so, and sets me thinking of the easy way she had  
Of cooling down my temper—though I'd be fighting mad.  
"My Lion Queen" I called her—when a spell of mine occurred  
She'd come in a den of feelings and quell them with a word.

I'll tell you how she loved me—and what her people thought:  
When I asked to marry Annie they said "they reckoned not—  
That I cut too many didoes and monkey-shines to suit  
Their idea of a son-in-law, and I could go, to boot!"

I tell you that thing riled me! Why, I felt my face turn white,  
And my teeth shut like a steel trap, and the fingers of my right  
Hand pained me with their pressure—all the rest's a mystery  
Till I heard my Annie saying—"I'm going, too, you see."

We were coming through the gateway, and she wavered for a spell  
When she heard her mother crying and her raving father yell  
That she wa'n't no child of his'n—like an actor in a play  
We saw at Independence, coming through the other day.

Well! that's the way we started. And for days and weeks and  
months  
And even years we journeyed on, regretting never once  
Of starting out together upon the path of life—  
Akind o' sort o' husband, but a mighty loving wife,—

And the cutest little baby—little Grace—I see her now  
A-standin' on the pig-pen as her mother milked the cow—  
And I can hear her shouting—as I stood unloading straw,—  
"I'm ain't as big as papa, but I'm biggerest'n ma."

Now folks that never married don't seem to understand  
That a little baby's language is the sweetest ever planned—  
Why, I tell you it's pure music, and I'll just go on to say  
That I sometimes have a notion that the angels talk that way!

There's a chapter in this story I'd be happy to destroy;  
I could burn it up before you with a mighty sight of joy;  
But I'll go ahead and give it—not in detail, no, my friend,  
For it takes five years of reading before you find the end.

My Annie's folks relented—at least, in some degree;  
They sent one time for Annie, but they didn't send for me.  
The old man wrote the message with a heart as hot and dry  
As a furnace—"Annie Mullen, come and see your mother die."

I saw the slur intended—why I fancied I could see  
The old man shoot the insult like a poison dart at me;  
And in that heat of passion I swore an inward oath  
That if Annie pleased her father she could never please us both.

I watched her—dark and sullen—as she hurried on her shawl;  
I watched her—calm and cruel, though I saw her tear-drops fall;  
I watched her—cold and heartless, though I heard her moaning,  
call  
For mercy from high Heaven—and I smiled throughout it all.

Why even when she kissed me, and her tears were on my brow,  
As she murmured, "George, forgive me—I must go to mother now!"  
Such hate there was within me that I answered not at all,  
But calm, and cold and cruel, I smiled throughout it all.

But a shadow in the doorway caught my eye, and then the face  
Full of innocence and sunshine of little baby Grace.  
And I snatched her up and kissed her, and I softened through and  
through  
For a minute when she told me "I must kiss her muvver too."

I remember, at the starting, how I tried to freeze again  
As I watched them slowly driving down the little crooked lane—  
When Annie shouted something that ended in a cry,  
And how I tried to whistle and it fizzled in a sigh.

I remember running after, with a glimmer in my sight—  
Pretending I'd discovered that the traces wasn't right;  
And the last that I remember, as they disappeared from view,  
Was little Grace a-calling, "I see papa! Howdy-do!"

And left alone to ponder, I again took up my hate  
For the old man who would chuckle that I was desolate;  
And I mouthed my wrongs in mutters till my pride called up the  
pain  
His last insult had given me—until I smiled again

Till the wild beast in my nature was raging in the den—  
With no one now to quell it, and I wrote a letter then  
Full of hissing things, and heated with so hot a heat of hate  
That my pen flashed out black lightning at a most terrific rate.

I wrote that "she had wronged me when she went away from me—  
Though to see her dying mother 'twas her father's victory,  
And a woman that could waver when her husband's pride was rent  
Was no longer worthy of it." And I shut the house and went.

To tell of my long exile would be of little good—  
Though I couldn't half-way tell it, and I wouldn't if I could!  
I could tell of California—of a wild and vicious life;  
Of trackless plains, and mountains, and the Indian's  
scalping-knife.

I could tell of gloomy forests howling wild with threats of  
death;  
I could tell of fiery deserts that have scorched me with their  
breath;

I could tell of wretched outcasts by the hundreds, great and small,  
And could claim the nasty honor of the greatest of them all.

I could tell of toil and hardship; and of sickness and disease,  
And hollow-eyed starvation, but I tell you, friend, that these  
Are trifles in comparison with what a fellow feels  
With that bloodhound, Remorsefulness, forever at his heels.

I remember—worn and weary of the long, long years of care,  
When the frost of time was making early harvest of my hair—  
I remember, wrecked and hopeless of a rest beneath the sky,  
My resolve to quit the country, and to seek the East, and die.

I remember my long journey, like a dull, oppressive dream,  
Across the empty prairies till I caught the distant gleam  
Of a city in the beauty of its broad and shining stream  
On whose bosom, flocked together, float the mighty swans of steam.

I remember drifting with them till I found myself again  
In the rush and roar and rattle of the engine and the train;  
And when from my surroundings something spoke of child and wife,  
It seemed the train was rumbling through a tunnel in my life.

Then I remember something—like a sudden burst of light—  
That don't exactly tell it, but I couldn't tell it right—  
A something clinging to me with its arms around my neck—  
A little girl, for instance—or an angel, I expect—

For she kissed me, cried and called me "her dear papa," and I felt  
My heart was pure virgin gold, and just about to melt—  
And so it did—it melted in a mist of gleaming rain  
When she took my hand and whispered, "My mama's on the train."

There's some things I can dwell on, and get off pretty well,  
But the balance of this story I know I couldn't tell;  
So I ain't going to try it, for to tell the reason why—  
I'm so chicken-hearted lately I'd be certain 'most to cry.

## "TIRED OUT"

"tired out!" Yet face and brow  
Do not look aweary now,  
And the eyelids lie like two  
Pure, white rose-leaves washed with dew.  
Was her life so hard a task?—  
Strange that we forget to ask  
What the lips now dumb for aye  
Could have told us yesterday!

"Tired out!" A faded scrawl  
Pinned upon the ragged shawl—  
Nothing else to leave a clue  
Even of a friend or two,  
Who might come to fold the hands,  
Or smooth back the dripping strands  
Of her tresses, or to wet  
Them anew with fond regret.

"Tired out!" We can but guess  
Of her little happiness—  
Long ago, in some fair land,  
When a lover held her hand  
In the dream that frees us all,



Soon or later, from its thrall—  
Be it either false or true,  
We, at last, must tire, too.

### **HARLIE**

Fold the little waxen hands  
Lightly. Let your warmest tears  
Speak regrets, but never fears,—  
    Heaven understands!  
Let the sad heart, o'er the tomb,  
Lift again and burst in bloom  
Fragrant with a prayer as sweet  
As the lily at your feet.

    Bend and kiss the folded eyes—  
They are only feigning sleep  
While their truant glances peep  
    Into Paradise.  
See, the face, though cold and white,  
Holds a hint of some delight  
E'en with Death, whose finger-tips  
Rest upon the frozen lips.

    When, within the years to come,  
Vanished echoes live once more—  
Pattering footsteps on the floor,  
    And the sounds of home,—  
Let your arms in fancy fold  
Little Harlie as of old—  
As of old and as he waits  
At the City's golden gates.

### **SAY SOMETHING TO ME**

Say something to me! I've waited so long—  
    Waited and wondered in vain;  
Only a sentence would fall like a song  
    Over this listening pain—  
Over a silence that glowers and frowns,—  
    Even my pencil to-night  
Slips in the dews of my sorrow and wounds  
    Each tender word that I write.

    Say something to me—if only to tell  
    Me you remember the past;  
Let the sweet words, like the notes of a bell,  
    Ring out my vigil at last.  
O it were better, far better than this  
    Doubt and distrust in the breast,—  
For in the wine of a fanciful kiss  
    I could taste Heaven, and—rest.

    Say something to me! I kneel and I plead,  
    In my wild need, for a word;  
If my poor heart from this silence were freed,  
    I could soar up like a bird  
In the glad morning, and twitter and sing,  
    Carol and warble and cry  
Blithe as the lark as he cruises awing  
    Over the deeps of the sky.

### **LEONAINIE**

Leonainie—Angels named her;  
And they took the light  
Of the laughing stars and framed her  
In a smile of white;  
And they made her hair of gloomy  
Midnight, and her eyes of bloomy  
Moonshine, and they brought her to me  
In the solemn night.—

In a solemn night of summer,  
When my heart of gloom  
Blossomed up to greet the comer  
Like a rose in bloom;  
All forebodings that distressed me  
I forgot as Joy caressed me—  
(LYING Joy! that caught and pressed me  
In the arms of doom!)

Only spake the little lisper  
In the Angel-tongue;  
Yet I, listening, heard her whisper,—  
"Songs are only sung  
Here below that they may grieve you—  
Tales but told you to deceive you,—  
So must Leonainie leave you  
While her love is young."

Then God smiled and it was morning.  
Matchless and supreme  
Heaven's glory seemed adorning  
Earth with its esteem:  
Every heart but mine seemed gifted  
With the voice of prayer, and lifted  
Where my Leonainie drifted  
From me like a dream.

## A TEST OF LOVE

"Now who shall say he loves me not."

He wooed her first in an atmosphere  
Of tender and low-breathed sighs;  
But the pang of her laugh went cutting clear  
To the soul of the enterprise;  
"You beg so pert for the kiss you seek  
It reminds me, John," she said,  
"Of a poodle pet that jumps to 'speak'  
For a crumb or a crust of bread."

And flashing up, with the blush that flushed  
His face like a tableau-light,  
Came a bitter threat that his white lips hushed  
To a chill, hoarse-voiced "Good night!"  
And again her laugh, like a knell that tolled,  
And a wide-eyed mock surprise,—  
"Why, John," she said, "you have taken cold  
In the chill air of your sighs!"

And then he turned, and with teeth tight clenched,  
He told her he hated her,—  
That his love for her from his heart he wrenched  
Like a corpse from a sepulcher.  
And then she called him "a ghoul all red  
With the quintessence of crimes"—  
"But I know you love me now," she said,  
And kissed him a hundred times.

## FATHER WILLIAM

A NEW VERSION BY LEE O. HARRIS AND JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

"You are old, Father William, and though one would think  
All the veins in your body were dry,  
Yet the end of your nose is red as a pink;  
I beg your indulgence, but why?"

"You see," Father William replied, "in my youth—  
'Tis a thing I must ever regret—  
It worried me so to keep up with the truth  
That my nose has a flush on it yet."

"You are old," said the youth, "and I grieve to detect  
A feverish gleam in your eye;  
Yet I'm willing to give you full time to reflect.  
Now, pray, can you answer me why?"

"Alas," said the sage, "I was tempted to choose  
Me a wife in my earlier years,  
And the grief, when I think that she didn't refuse,  
Has reddened my eyelids with tears."

"You are old, Father William," the young man said,  
"And you never touch wine, you declare,  
Yet you sleep with your feet at the head of the bed;  
Now answer me that if you dare."

"In my youth," said the sage, "I was told it was true,  
That the world turned around in the night;  
I cherished the lesson, my boy, and I knew  
That at morning my feet would be right."

"You are old," said the youth, "and it grieved me to note,  
As you recently fell through the door,  
That 'full as a goose' had been chalked on your coat;  
Now answer me that I implore."

"My boy," said the sage, "I have answered you fair,  
While you stuck to the point in dispute,  
But this is a personal matter, and there  
Is my answer—the toe of my boot."

## WHAT THE WIND SAID

'I muse to-day, in a listless way,  
In the gleam of a summer land;  
I close my eyes as a lover may  
At the touch of his sweetheart's hand,  
And I hear these things in the whisperings  
Of the zephyrs round me fanned':—

I am the Wind, and I rule mankind,  
And I hold a sovereign reign  
Over the lands, as God designed,  
And the waters they contain:  
Lo! the bound of the wide world round  
Falleth in my domain!

I was born on a stormy morn  
In a kingdom walled with snow,  
Whose crystal cities laugh to scorn  
The proudest the world can show;  
And the daylight's glare is frozen there  
In the breath of the blasts that blow.

Life to me was a jubilee  
From the first of my youthful days:  
Clinking my icy toys with glee—  
Playing my childish plays;  
Filling my hands with the silver sands  
To scatter a thousand ways:

Chasing the flakes that the Polar shakes  
From his shaggy coat of white,  
Or hunting the trace of the track he makes  
And sweeping it from sight,  
As he turned to glare from the slippery stair  
Of the iceberg's farthest height.

Till I grew so strong that I strayed ere long  
From my home of ice and chill;  
With an eager heart and a merry song  
I traveled the snows until  
I heard the thaws in the ice-crag's jaws  
Crunched with a hungry will;

And the angry crash of the waves that dash  
Themselves on the jagged shore  
Where the splintered masts of the ice-wrecks flash,  
And the frightened breakers roar  
In wild unrest on the ocean's breast  
For a thousand leagues or more.

And the grand old sea invited me  
With a million beckoning hands,  
And I spread my wings for a flight as free  
As ever a sailor plans  
When his thoughts are wild and his heart beguiled  
With the dreams of foreign lands.

I passed a ship on its homeward trip,  
With a weary and toil-worn crew;  
And I kissed their flag with a welcome lip,  
And so glad a gale I blew  
That the sailors quaffed their grog and laughed  
At the work I made them do.

I drifted by where sea-groves lie  
Like brides in the fond caress  
Of the warm sunshine and the tender sky—  
Where the ocean, passionless  
And tranquil, lies like a child whose eyes  
Are blurred with drowsiness.

I drank the air and the perfume there,  
And bathed in a fountain's spray;  
And I smoothed the wings and the plumage rare  
Of a bird for his roundelay,  
And fluttered a rag from a signal-crag  
For a wretched castaway.

With a sea-gull resting on my breast,  
I launched on a madder flight:  
And I lashed the waves to a wild unrest,  
And howled with a fierce delight  
Till the daylight slept; and I wailed and wept  
Like a fretful babe all night.

For I heard the boom of a gun strike doom;  
And the gleam of a blood-red star  
Glared at me through the mirk and gloom  
From the lighthouse tower afar;

And I held my breath at the shriek of death  
That came from the harbor bar.

For I am the Wind, and I rule mankind,  
And I hold a sovereign reign  
Over the lands, as God designed,  
And the waters they contain:  
Lo! the bound of the wide world round  
Falleth in my domain!

I journeyed on, when the night was gone,  
O'er a coast of oak and pine;  
And I followed a path that a stream had drawn  
Through a land of vale and vine,  
And here and there was a village fair  
In a nest of shade and shine.

I passed o'er lakes where the sunshine shakes  
And shivers his golden lance  
On the glittering shield of the wave that breaks  
Where the fish-boats dip and dance,  
And the trader sails where the mist unveils  
The glory of old romance.

I joyed to stand where the jeweled hand  
Of the maiden-morning lies  
On the tawny brow of the mountain-land.  
Where the eagle shrieks and cries,  
And holds his throne to himself alone  
From the light of human eyes.

Adown deep glades where the forest shades  
Are dim as the dusk of day—  
Where only the foot of the wild beast wades,  
Or the Indian dares to stray,  
As the blacksnakes glide through the reeds and hide  
In the swamp-depths grim and gray.

And I turned and fled from the place of dread  
To the far-off haunts of men.  
"In the city's heart is rest," I said,—  
But I found it not, and when  
I saw but care and vice reign there  
I was filled with wrath again:

And I blew a spark in the midnight dark  
Till it flashed to an angry flame  
And scarred the sky with a lurid mark  
As red as the blush of shame:  
And a hint of hell was the dying yell  
That up from the ruins came.

The bells went wild, and the black smoke piled  
Its pillars against the night,  
Till I gathered them, like flocks defiled,  
And scattered them left and right,  
While the holocaust's red tresses tossed  
As a maddened Fury's might.

"Ye overthrown!" did I jeer and groan—  
"Ho! who is your master?—say!—  
Ye shapes that writhe in the slag and moan  
Your slow-charred souls away—  
Ye worse than worst of things accurst—  
Ye dead leaves of a day!"

I am the Wind, and I rule mankind,

And I hold a sovereign reign  
Over the lands, as God designed,  
And the waters they contain:  
Lo! the bound of the wide world round  
Falleth in my domain!

.....

'I wake, as one from a dream half done,  
And gaze with a dazzled eye  
On an autumn leaf like a scrap of sun  
That the wind goes whirling by,  
While afar I hear, with a chill of fear,  
The winter storm-king sigh.'

## **MORTON**

The warm pulse of the nation has grown chill;  
The muffled heart of Freedom, like a knell,  
Throbs solemnly for one whose earthly will  
Wrought every mission well.

Whose glowing reason towered above the sea  
Of dark disaster like a beacon light,  
And led the Ship of State, unscathed and free,  
Out of the gulfs of night.

When Treason, rabid-mouthed, and fanged with steel,  
Lay growling o'er the bones of fallen braves,  
And when beneath the tyrant's iron heel  
Were ground the hearts of slaves,

And War, with all his train of horrors, leapt  
Across the fortress-walls of Liberty  
With havoc e'en the marble goddess wept  
With tears of blood to see.

Throughout it all his brave and kingly mind  
Kept loyal vigil o'er the patriot's vow,  
And yet the flag he lifted to the wind  
Is drooping o'er him now.

And Peace—all pallid from the battle-field  
When first again it hovered o'er the land  
And found his voice above it like a shield,  
Had nestled in his hand.

.....

O throne of State and gilded Senate halls—  
Though thousands throng your aisles and galleries—  
How empty are ye! and what silence falls  
On your hilarities!

And yet, though great the loss to us appears,  
The consolation sweetens all our pain—  
Though hushed the voice, through all the coming years  
Its echoes will remain.

## **AN AUTUMNAL EXTRAVAGANZA**

With a sweeter voice than birds  
Dare to twitter in their sleep,  
Pipe for me a tune of words,  
Till my dancing fancies leap  
Into freedom vaster far

Than the realms of Reason are!  
Sing for me with wilder fire  
    Than the lover ever sung,  
From the time he twanged the lyre  
    When the world was baby-young.

O my maiden Autumn, you—  
You have filled me through and through  
With a passion so intense,  
All of earthly eloquence

    Fails, and falls, and swoons away  
In your presence. Like as one  
Who essays to look the sun

    Fairly in the face, I say,  
Though my eyes you dazzle blind  
Greater dazzled is my mind.

So, my Autumn, let me kneel  
    At your feet and worship you!

Be my sweetheart; let me feel  
Your caress; and tell me too  
Why your smiles bewilder me—  
Glancing into laughter, then

Trancing into calm again,  
Till your meaning drowning lies  
In the dim depths of your eyes.

Let me see the things you see  
Down the depths of mystery!  
Blow aside the hazy veil

    From the daylight of your face  
With the fragrance-laden gale  
    Of your spicy breath and chase  
    Every dimple to its place.

Lift your gipsy finger-tips  
To the roses of your lips,  
And fling down to me a bud—

    But an unblown kiss—but one—  
It shall blossom in my blood,

    Even after life is done—  
When I dare to touch the brow  
Your rare hair is veiling now—  
When the rich, red-golden strands  
Of the treasure in my hands  
Shall be all of worldly worth  
Heaven lifted from the earth,  
Like a banner to have set  
On its highest minaret.

## **THE ROSE**

It tossed its head at the wooing breeze;

    And the sun, like a bashful swain,  
Beamed on it through the waving trees  
    With a passion all in vain,—

For my rose laughed in a crimson glee,  
And hid in the leaves in wait for me.

    The honey-bee came there to sing  
    His love through the languid hours,  
And vaunt of his hives, as a proud old king

    Might boast of his palace-towers:  
But my rose bowed in a mockery,  
And hid in the leaves in wait for me.

    The humming-bird, like a courtier gay,  
    Dipped down with a dalliant song,

And twanged his wings through the roundelay  
Of love the whole day long:  
Yet my rose turned from his minstrelsy  
And hid in the leaves in wait for me.

The firefly came in the twilight dim  
My red, red rose to woo—  
Till quenched was the flame of love in him,  
And the light of his lantern too,  
As my rose wept with dewdrops three  
And hid in the leaves in wait for me.

And I said: I will cull my own sweet rose—  
Some day I will claim as mine  
The priceless worth of the flower that knows  
No change, but a bloom divine—  
The bloom of a fadeless constancy  
That hides in the leaves in wait for me!

But time passed by in a strange disguise,  
And I marked it not, but lay  
In a lazy dream, with drowsy eyes,  
Till the summer slipped away,  
And a chill wind sang in a minor key:  
"Where is the rose that waits for thee?"

.....

I dream to-day, o'er a purple stain  
Of bloom on a withered stalk,  
Pelted down by the autumn rain  
In the dust of the garden-walk,  
That an Angel-rose in the world to be  
Will hide in the leaves in wait for me.

## THE MERMAN

### I

Who would be  
A merman gay,  
Singing alone,  
Sitting alone,  
With a mermaid's knee,  
For instance—hey—  
For a throne?

### II

I would be a merman gay;  
I would sit and sing the whole day long;  
I would fill my lungs with the strongest brine,  
And squirt it up in a spray of song,  
And soak my head in my liquid voice;  
I'd curl my tail in curves divine,  
And let each curve in a kink rejoice.  
I'd tackle the mermaids under the sea,  
And yank 'em around till they yanked me,  
Sportively, sportively;  
And then we would wiggle away, away,  
To the pea-green groves on the coast of day,  
Chasing each other sportively.

### III

There would be neither moon nor star;



But the waves would twang like a wet guitar  
Low thunder and thrum in the darkness grum—  
    Neither moon nor star;  
We would shriek aloud in the dismal dales—  
Shriek at each other and squawk and squeal,  
    "All night!" rakishly, rakishly;  
They would pelt me with oysters and wiggletails,  
Laughing and clapping their hands at me,  
    "All night!" prankishly, prankishly;  
But I would toss them back in mine,  
Lobsters and turtles of quaint design;  
Then leaping out in an abrupt way,  
I'd snatch them bald in my devilish glee,  
And skip away when they snatched at me,  
    Fiendishly, fiendishly.  
O, what a jolly life I'd lead,  
Ah, what a "bang-up" life indeed!  
Soft are the mermaids under the sea—  
We would live merrily, merrily.

### **THE RAINY MORNING**

The dawn of the day was dreary,  
    And the lowering clouds o'erhead  
Wept in a silent sorrow  
    Where the sweet sunshine lay dead;  
And a wind came out of the eastward  
    Like an endless sigh of pain,  
And the leaves fell down in the pathway  
    And writhed in the falling rain.

I had tried in a brave endeavor  
    To chord my harp with the sun,  
But the strings would slacken ever,  
    And the task was a weary one:  
And so, like a child impatient  
    And sick of a discontent,  
I bowed in a shower of tear-drops  
    And mourned with the instrument.

And lo! as I bowed, the splendor  
    Of the sun bent over me,  
With a touch as warm and tender  
    As a father's hand might be:  
And, even as I felt its presence,  
    My clouded soul grew bright,  
And the tears, like the rain of morning,  
    Melted in mists of light.

### **WE ARE NOT ALWAYS GLAD WHEN WE SMILE**

We are not always glad when we smile:  
    Though we wear a fair face and are gay,  
    And the world we deceive  
    May not ever believe  
We could laugh in a happier way.—  
Yet, down in the deeps of the soul,  
    Ofttimes, with our faces aglow,  
    There's an ache and a moan  
    That we know of alone,  
And as only the hopeless may know.

We are not always glad when we smile,—  
For the heart, in a tempest of pain,

May live in the guise  
Of a smile in the eyes  
As a rainbow may live in the rain;  
And the stormiest night of our woe  
May hang out a radiant star  
Whose light in the sky  
Of despair is a lie  
As black as the thunder-clouds are.

We are not always glad when we smile!—  
But the conscience is quick to record,  
All the sorrow and sin  
We are hiding within  
Is plain in the sight of the Lord:  
And ever, O ever, till pride  
And evasion shall cease to defile  
The sacred recess  
Of the soul, we confess  
We are not always glad when we smile.

## **A SUMMER SUNRISE**

**AFTER LEE O. HARRIS**

The master-hand whose pencils trace  
This wondrous landscape of the morn,  
Is but the sun, whose glowing face  
Reflects the rapture and the grace  
Of inspiration Heaven-born.

And yet with vision-dazzled eyes,  
I see the lotus-lands of old,  
Where odorous breezes fall and rise,  
And mountains, peering in the skies,  
Stand ankle-deep in lakes of gold.

And, spangled with the shine and shade,  
I see the rivers raveled out  
In strands of silver, slowly fade  
In threads of light along the glade  
Where truant roses hide and pout.

The tamarind on gleaming sands  
Droops drowsily beneath the heat;  
And bowed as though weary, stands  
The stately palm, with lazy hands  
That fold their shadows round his feet.

And mistily, as through a veil,  
I catch the glances of a sea  
Of sapphire, dimpled with a gale  
Toward Colch's blowing, where the sail  
Of Jason's Argo beckons me.

And gazing on and farther yet,  
I see the isles enchanted, bright  
With fretted spire and parapet,  
And gilded mosque and minaret,  
That glitter in the crimson light.

But as I gaze, the city's walls  
Are keenly smitten with a gleam  
Of pallid splendor, that appalls  
The fancy as the ruin falls  
In ashen embers of a dream.

Yet over all the waking earth  
The tears of night are brushed away,  
And eyes are lit with love and mirth,  
And benisons of richest worth  
Go up to bless the new-born day.

## **DAS KRIST KINDEL**

I had fed the fire and stirred it, till the sparkles in delight  
Snapped their saucy little fingers at the chill December night;  
And in dressing-gown and slippers, I had tilted back "my  
throne"—  
The old split-bottomed rocker—and was musing all alone.

I could hear the hungry Winter prowling round the outer door,  
And the tread of muffled footsteps on the white piazza floor;  
But the sounds came to me only as the murmur of a stream  
That mingled with the current of a lazy-flowing dream.

Like a fragrant incense rising, curled the smoke of my cigar,  
With the lamplight gleaming through it like a mist-enfolded  
star;—  
And as I gazed, the vapor like a curtain rolled away,  
With a sound of bells that tinkled, and the clatter of a sleigh.

And in a vision, painted like a picture in the air,  
I saw the elfish figure of a man with frosty hair—  
A quaint old man that chuckled with a laugh as he appeared,  
And with ruddy cheeks like embers in the ashes of his beard.

He poised himself grotesquely, in an attitude of mirth,  
On a damask-covered hassock that was sitting on the hearth;  
And at a magic signal of his stubby little thumb,  
I saw the fireplace changing to a bright proscenium.

And looking there, I marveled as I saw a mimic stage  
Alive with little actors of a very tender age;  
And some so very tiny that they tottered as they walked,  
And lisped and purled and gurgled like the brooklets, when they  
talked.

And their faces were like lilies, and their eyes like purest dew,  
And their tresses like the shadows that the shine is woven  
through;  
And they each had little burdens, and a little tale to tell  
Of fairy lore, and giants, and delights delectable.

And they mixed and intermingled, weaving melody with joy,  
Till the magic circle clustered round a blooming baby-boy;  
And they threw aside their treasures in an ecstasy of glee,  
And bent, with dazzled faces and with parted lips, to see.

'Twas a wondrous little fellow, with a dainty double-chin,  
And chubby cheeks, and dimples for the smiles to blossom in;  
And he looked as ripe and rosy, on his bed of straw and reeds,  
As a mellow little pippin that had tumbled in the weeds.

And I saw the happy mother, and a group surrounding her  
That knelt with costly presents of frankincense and myrrh;  
And I thrilled with awe and wonder, as a murmur on the air  
Came drifting o'er the hearing in a melody of prayer:—

'By the splendor in the heavens, and the hush upon the sea,  
And the majesty of silence reigning over Galilee,—  
We feel Thy kingly presence, and we humbly bow the knee  
And lift our hearts and voices in gratefulness to Thee.

Thy messenger has spoken, and our doubts have fled and gone  
As the dark and spectral shadows of the night before the dawn;  
And, in the kindly shelter of the light around us drawn,  
We would nestle down forever in the breast we lean upon.

You have given us a shepherd—You have given us a guide,  
And the light of Heaven grew dimmer when You sent him from Your  
side,—  
But he comes to lead Thy children where the gates will open wide  
To welcome his returning when his works are glorified.

By the splendor in the heavens, and the hush upon the sea,  
And the majesty of silence reigning over Galilee,—  
We feel Thy kingly presence, and we humbly bow the knee  
And lift our hearts and voices in gratefulness to Thee.'

Then the vision, slowly failing, with the words of the refrain,  
Fell swooning in the moonlight through the frosty window-pane;  
And I heard the clock proclaiming, like an eager sentinel  
Who brings the world good tidings,—"It is Christmas—all is  
well!"

### **AN OLD YEAR'S ADDRESS**

"I have twankled the strings of the twinkering rain;  
I have burnished the meteor's mail;  
I have bridled the wind  
When he whinnied and whined  
With a bunch of stars tied to his tail;  
But my sky-rocket hopes, hanging over the past,  
Must fuzzle and fazzle and fizzle at last!"

I had waded far out in a drizzling dream,  
And my fancies had splattered my eyes  
With a vision of dread,  
With a number ten head,  
And a form of diminutive size—  
That wavered and wagged in a singular way  
As he wound himself up and proceeded to say,—

"I have trimmed all my corns with the blade of the moon;  
I have picked every tooth with a star:  
And I thrill to recall  
That I went through it all  
Like a tune through a tickled guitar.  
I have ripped up the rainbow and raveled the ends  
When the sun and myself were particular friends."

And pausing again, and producing a sponge  
And wiping the tears from his eyes,  
He sank in a chair  
With a technical air  
That he struggled in vain to disguise,—  
For a sigh that he breathed, as I over him leant,  
Was haunted and hot with a peppermint scent.

"Alas!" he continued in quavering tones  
As a pang rippled over his face,  
"The life was too fast  
For the pleasure to last  
In my very unfortunate case;  
And I'm going"—he said as he turned to adjust  
A fuse in his bosom,—"I'm going to—BUST!"

I shrieked and awoke with the sullen che-boom  
Of a five-pounder filling my ears;

And a roseate bloom  
Of a light in the room  
I saw through the mist of my tears,—  
But my guest of the night never saw the display,  
He had fuzzled and fazzled and fizzled away!

### A NEW YEAR'S PLAINT

In words like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,  
Like coarsest clothes against the cold;  
But that large grief which these enfold  
Is given in outline and no more.  
—TENNYSON.

The bells that lift their yawning throats  
And lolling tongues with wrangling cries  
Flung up in harsh, discordant notes,  
As though in anger, at the skies,—  
Are filled with echoings replete,  
With purest tinkles of delight—  
So I would have a something sweet  
Ring in the song I sing to-night.

As when a blotch of ugly guise  
On some poor artist's naked floor  
Becomes a picture in his eyes,  
And he forgets that he is poor,—  
So I look out upon the night,  
That ushers in the dawning year,  
And in a vacant blur of light  
I see these fantasies appear.

I see a home whose windows gleam  
Like facets of a mighty gem  
That some poor king's distorted dream  
Has fastened in his diadem.  
And I behold a throng that reels  
In revelry of dance and mirth,  
With hearts of love beneath their heels,  
And in their bosoms hearts of earth.

O Luxury, as false and grand  
As in the mystic tales of old,  
When genii answered man's command,  
And built of nothing halls of gold!  
O Banquet, bright with pallid jets,  
And tropic blooms, and vases caught  
In palms of naked statuettes,  
Ye can not color as ye ought!

For, crouching in the storm without,  
I see the figure of a child,  
In little ragged roundabout,  
Who stares with eyes that never smiled—  
And he, in fancy can but taste  
The dainties of the kingly fare,  
And pick the crumbs that go to waste  
Where none have learned to kneel in prayer.

Go, Pride, and throw your goblet down—  
The "merry greeting" best appears  
On loving lips that never drown  
Its worth but in the wine of tears;  
Go, close your coffers like your hearts,  
And shut your hearts against the poor,  
Go, strut through all your pretty parts

But take the "Welcome" from your door.

## LUTHER BENSON

### AFTER READING HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY

POOR victim of that vulture curse  
That hovers o'er the universe,  
With ready talons quick to strike  
In every human heart alike,  
And cruel beak to stab and tear  
In virtue's vitals everywhere,—  
You need no sympathy of mine  
To aid you, for a strength divine  
Encircles you, and lifts you clear  
Above this earthly atmosphere.

And yet I can but call you poor,  
As, looking through the open door  
Of your sad life, I only see  
A broad landscape of misery,  
And catch through mists of pitying tears  
The ruins of your younger years,  
I see a father's shielding arm  
Thrown round you in a wild alarm—  
Struck down, and powerless to free  
Or aid you in your agony.

I see a happy home grow dark  
And desolate—the latest spark  
Of hope is passing in eclipse—  
The prayer upon a mother's lips  
Has fallen with her latest breath  
In ashes on the lips of death—  
I see a penitent who reels,  
And writhes, and clasps his hands, and kneels,  
And moans for mercy for the sake  
Of that fond heart he dared to break.

And lo! as when in Galilee  
A voice above the troubled sea  
Commanded "Peace; be still!" the flood  
That rolled in tempest-waves of blood  
Within you, fell in calm so sweet  
It ripples round the Saviour's feet;  
And all your noble nature thrilled  
With brightest hope and faith, and filled  
Your thirsty soul with joy and peace  
And praise to Him who gave release.

### "DREAM"

Because her eyes were far too deep  
And holy for a laugh to leap  
Across the brink where sorrow tried  
To drown within the amber tide;  
Because the looks, whose ripples kissed  
The trembling lids through tender mist,  
Were dazzled with a radiant gleam—  
Because of this I called her "Dream."

Because the roses growing wild  
About her features when she smiled  
Were ever dewed with tears that fell  
With tenderness ineffable;

Because her lips might spill a kiss  
That, dripping in a world like this,  
Would tincture death's myrrh-bitter stream  
To sweetness—so I called her "Dream."

Because I could not understand  
The magic touches of a hand  
That seemed, beneath her strange control,  
To smooth the plumage of the soul  
And calm it, till, with folded wings,  
It half forgot its flutterings,  
And, nestled in her palm, did seem  
To trill a song that called her "Dream."

Because I saw her, in a sleep  
As dark and desolate and deep  
And fleeting as the taunting night  
That flings a vision of delight  
To some lorn martyr as he lies  
In slumber ere the day he dies—  
Because she vanished like a gleam  
Of glory, do I call her "Dream."

### **WHEN EVENING SHADOWS FALL**

When evening shadows fall,  
She hangs her cares away  
Like empty garments on the wall  
That hides her from the day;  
And while old memories throng,  
And vanished voices call,  
She lifts her grateful heart in song  
When evening shadows fall.

Her weary hands forget  
The burdens of the day.  
The weight of sorrow and regret  
In music rolls away;  
And from the day's dull tomb,  
That holds her in its thrall,  
Her soul springs up in lily bloom  
When evening shadows fall.

O weary heart and hand,  
Go bravely to the strife—  
No victory is half so grand  
As that which conquers life!  
One day shall yet be thine—  
The day that waits for all  
Whose prayerful eyes are things divine  
When evening shadows fall.

### **YLLADMAR**

Her hair was, oh, so dense a blur  
Of darkness, midnight envied her;  
And stars grew dimmer in the skies  
To see the glory of her eyes;  
And all the summer rain of light  
That showered from the moon at night  
Fell o'er her features as the gloom  
Of twilight o'er a lily-bloom.

The crimson fruitage of her lips  
Was ripe and lush with sweeter wine

Than burgundy or muscadine  
Or vintage that the burgher sips  
In some old garden on the Rhine:  
And I to taste of it could well  
Believe my heart a crucible  
Of molten love—and I could feel  
The drunken soul within me reel  
And rock and stagger till it fell.

And do you wonder that I bowed  
Before her splendor as a cloud  
Of storm the golden-sandaled sun  
Had set his conquering foot upon?  
And did she will it, I could lie  
In writhing rapture down and die  
A death so full of precious pain  
I'd waken up to die again.

### **A FANTASY**

A fantasy that came to me  
As wild and wantonly designed  
As ever any dream might be  
Unraveled from a madman's mind,—  
A tangle-work of tissue, wrought  
By cunning of the spider-brain,  
And woven, in an hour of pain,  
To trap the giddy flies of thought.

I stood beneath a summer moon  
All swollen to uncanny girth,  
And hanging, like the sun at noon,  
Above the center of the earth;  
But with a sad and sallow light,  
As it had sickened of the night  
And fallen in a pallid swoon.  
Around me I could hear the rush  
Of sullen winds, and feel the whir  
Of unseen wings apast me brush  
Like phantoms round a sepulcher;  
And, like a carpeting of plush,  
A lawn unrolled beneath my feet,  
Bespangled o'er with flowers as sweet  
To look upon as those that nod  
Within the garden-fields of God,  
But odorless as those that blow  
In ashes in the shades below.

And on my hearing fell a storm  
Of gusty music, sadder yet  
Than every whimper of regret  
That sobbing utterance could form,  
And patched with scraps of sound that seemed  
Torn out of tunes that demons dreamed,  
And pitched to such a piercing key,  
It stabbed the ear with agony;  
And when at last it lulled and died,  
I stood aghast and terrified.  
I shuddered and I shut my eyes,  
And still could see, and feel aware  
Some mystic presence waited there;  
And staring, with a dazed surprise,  
I saw a creature so divine  
That never subtle thought of mine  
May reproduce to inner sight



So fair a vision of delight.

A syllable of dew that drips  
From out a lily's laughing lips  
Could not be sweeter than the word  
I listened to, yet never heard.—  
For, oh, the woman hiding there  
Within the shadows of her hair,  
Spake to me in an undertone  
So delicate, my soul alone  
But understood it as a moan  
Of some weak melody of wind  
A heavenward breeze had left behind.

A tracery of trees, grotesque  
Against the sky, behind her seen,  
Like shapeless shapes of arabesque  
Wrought in an Oriental screen;  
And tall, austere and statuesque  
She loomed before it—e'en as though  
The spirit-hand of Angelo  
Had chiseled her to life complete,  
With chips of moonshine round her feet.  
And I grew jealous of the dusk,  
To see it softly touch her face,  
As lover-like, with fond embrace,  
It folded round her like a husk:  
But when the glitter of her hand,  
Like wasted glory, beckoned me,  
My eyes grew blurred and dull and dim—  
My vision failed—I could not see—  
I could not stir—I could but stand,  
Till, quivering in every limb,  
I flung me prone, as though to swim  
The tide of grass whose waves of green  
Went rolling ocean-wide between  
My helpless shipwrecked heart and her  
Who claimed me for a worshiper.

And writhing thus in my despair,  
I heard a weird, unearthly sound,  
That seemed to lift me from the ground  
And hold me floating in the air.  
I looked, and lo! I saw her bow  
Above a harp within her hands;  
A crown of blossoms bound her brow,  
And on her harp were twisted strands  
Of silken starlight, rippling o'er  
With music never heard before  
By mortal ears; and, at the strain,  
I felt my Spirit snap its chain  
And break away,—and I could see  
It as it turned and fled from me  
To greet its mistress, where she smiled  
To see the phantom dancing wild  
And wizard-like before the spell  
Her mystic fingers knew so well.

### **A DREAM**

I dreamed I was a spider;  
A big, fat, hungry spider;  
A lusty, rusty spider  
With a dozen palsied limbs;  
With a dozen limbs that dangled

Where three wretched flies were tangled  
And their buzzing wings were strangled  
In the middle of their hymns.

And I mocked them like a demon—  
A demoniacal demon  
Who delights to be a demon  
For the sake of sin alone;  
And with fondly false embraces  
Did I weave my mystic laces  
Round their horror-stricken faces  
Till I muffled every groan.

And I smiled to see them weeping,  
For to see an insect weeping,  
Sadly, sorrowfully weeping,  
Fattens every spider's mirth;  
And to note a fly's heart quaking,  
And with anguish ever aching  
Till you see it slowly breaking  
Is the sweetest thing on earth.

I experienced a pleasure,  
Such a highly-flavored pleasure,  
Such intoxicating pleasure,  
That I drank of it like wine;  
And my mortal soul engages  
That no spider on the pages  
Of the history of ages  
Felt a rapture more divine.

I careened around and capered—  
Madly, mystically capered—  
For three days and nights I capered  
Round my web in wild delight;  
Till with fierce ambition burning,  
And an inward thirst and yearning  
I hastened my returning  
With a fiendish appetite.

And I found my victims dying,  
"Ha!" they whispered, "we are dying!"  
Faintly whispered, "we are dying,  
And our earthly course is run."  
And the scene was so impressing  
That I breathed a special blessing,  
As I killed them with caressing  
And devoured them one by one.

### **DREAMER, SAY**

Dreamer, say, will you dream for me  
A wild sweet dream of a foreign land,  
Whose border sips of a foaming sea  
With lips of coral and silver sand;  
Where warm winds loll on the shady deeps,  
Or lave themselves in the tearful mist  
The great wild wave of the breaker weeps  
O'er crags of opal and amethyst?

Dreamer, say, will you dream a dream  
Of tropic shades in the lands of shine,  
Where the lily leans o'er an amber stream  
That flows like a rill of wasted wine,—  
Where the palm-trees, lifting their shields of green,  
Parry the shafts of the Indian sun

Whose splintering vengeance falls between  
The reeds below where the waters run?

Dreamer, say, will you dream of love  
That lives in a land of sweet perfume,  
Where the stars drip down from the skies above  
In molten spatters of bud and bloom?  
Where never the weary eyes are wet,  
And never a sob in the balmy air,  
And only the laugh of the paroquet  
Breaks the sleep of the silence there?

### **BRYANT**

The harp has fallen from the master's hand;  
Mute is the music, voiceless are the strings,  
Save such faint discord as the wild wind flings  
In sad aeolian murmurs through the land.  
The tide of melody, whose billows grand  
Flowed o'er the world in clearest utterings,  
Now, in receding current, sobs and sings  
That song we never wholly understand.  
\* \* O, eyes where glorious prophecies belong,  
And gracious reverence to humbly bow,  
And kingly spirit, proud, and pure, and strong;  
O, pallid minstrel with the laureled brow,  
And lips so long attuned to sacred song,  
How sweet must be the Heavenly anthem now!

### **BABYHOOD**

Heigh-ho! Babyhood! Tell me where you linger!  
Let's toddle home again, for we have gone astray;  
Take this eager hand of mine and lead me by the finger  
Back to the lotus-lands of the far-away!

Turn back the leaves of life.—Don't read the story.—  
Let's find the pictures, and fancy all the rest;  
We can fill the written pages with a brighter glory  
Than old Time, the story-teller, at his very best.

Turn to the brook where the honeysuckle tipping  
O'er its vase of perfume spills it on the breeze,  
And the bee and humming-bird in ecstasy are sipping  
From the fairy flacons of the blooming locust-trees.

Turn to the lane where we used to "teeter-totter,"  
Printing little foot-palms in the mellow mold—  
Laughing at the lazy cattle wading in the water  
Where the ripples dimple round the buttercups of gold;

Where the dusky turtle lies basking on the gravel  
Of the sunny sand-bar in the middle tide,  
And the ghostly dragon-fly pauses in his travel  
To rest like a blossom where the water-lily died.

Heigh-ho! Babyhood! Tell me where you linger!  
Let's toddle home again, for we have gone astray;  
Take this eager hand of mine and lead me by the finger  
Back to the lotus-lands of the far-away!

### **LIBERTY**

**NEW CASTLE, JULY 4, 1878**

For a hundred years the pulse of time  
Has throbb'd for Liberty;  
For a hundred years the grand old clime  
Columbia has been free;  
For a hundred years our country's love,  
The Stars and Stripes, has waved above.

Away far out on the gulf of years—  
Misty and faint and white  
Through the fogs of wrong—a sail appears,  
And the Mayflower heaves in sight,  
And drifts again, with its little flock  
Of a hundred souls, on Plymouth Rock.

Do you see them there—as long, long since—  
Through the lens of History;  
Do you see them there as their chieftain prints  
In the snow his bended knee,  
And lifts his voice through the wintry blast  
In thanks for a peaceful home at last?

Though the skies are dark and the coast is bleak,  
And the storm is wild and fierce,  
Its frozen flake on the upturned cheek  
Of the Pilgrim melts in tears,  
And the dawn that springs from the darkness there  
Is the morning light of an answered prayer.

The morning light of the day of Peace  
That gladdens the aching eyes,  
And gives to the soul that sweet release  
That the present verifies,—  
Nor a snow so deep, nor a wind so chill  
To quench the flame of a freeman's will!

## II

Days of toil when the bleeding hand  
Of the pioneer grew numb,  
When the untilled tracts of the barren land  
Where the weary ones had come  
Could offer nought from a fruitful soil  
To stay the strength of the stranger's toil.

Days of pain, when the heart beat low,  
And the empty hours went by  
Pitiless, with the wail of woe  
And the moan of Hunger's cry—  
When the trembling hands upraised in prayer  
Had only the strength to hold them there.

Days when the voice of hope had fled—  
Days when the eyes grown weak  
Were folded to, and the tears they shed  
Were frost on a frozen cheek—  
When the storm bent down from the skies and gave  
A shroud of snow for the Pilgrim's grave.

Days at last when the smiling sun  
Glanced down from a summer sky,  
And a music rang where the rivers run,  
And the waves went laughing by;  
And the rose peeped over the mossy bank  
While the wild deer stood in the stream and drank.

And the birds sang out so loud and good,  
In a symphony so clear

And pure and sweet that the woodman stood  
With his ax upraised to hear,  
And to shape the words of the tongue unknown  
Into a language all his own—

1

'Sing! every bird, to-day!  
Sing for the sky so clear,  
And the gracious breath of the atmosphere  
Shall waft our cares away.  
Sing! sing! for the sunshine free;  
Sing through the land from sea to sea;  
Lift each voice in the highest key  
And sing for Liberty!'

2

'Sing for the arms that fling  
Their fetters in the dust  
And lift their hands in higher trust  
Unto the one Great King;  
Sing for the patriot heart and hand;  
Sing for the country they have planned;  
Sing that the world may understand  
This is Freedom's land!'

3

'Sing in the tones of prayer,  
Sing till the soaring soul  
Shall float above the world's control  
In freedom everywhere!  
Sing for the good that is to be,  
Sing for the eyes that are to see  
The land where man at last is free,  
O sing for liberty!'

### III

A holy quiet reigned, save where the hand  
Of labor sent a murmur through the land,  
And happy voices in a harmony  
Taught every lisp'ing breeze a melody.  
A nest of cabins, where the smoke upcurled  
A breathing incense to the other world.  
A land of languor from the sun of noon,  
That fainted slowly to the pallid moon,  
Till stars, thick-scattered in the garden-land  
Of Heaven by the great Jehovah's hand,  
Had blossomed into light to look upon  
The dusky warrior with his arrow drawn,  
As skulking from the covert of the night  
With serpent cunning and a fiend's delight,  
With murderous spirit, and a yell of hate  
The voice of Hell might tremble to translate:  
When the fond mother's tender lullaby  
Went quavering in shrieks all suddenly,  
And baby-lips were dabbled with the stain  
Of crimson at the bosom of the slain,  
And peaceful homes and fortunes ruined—lost  
In smoldering embers of the holocaust.  
Yet on and on, through years of gloom and strife,  
Our country struggled into stronger life;

Till colonies, like footprints in the sand,  
Marked Freedom's pathway winding through the land—  
And not the footprints to be swept away  
Before the storm we hatched in Boston Bay,—  
But footprints where the path of war begun  
That led to Bunker Hill and Lexington,—  
For he who "dared to lead where others dared  
To follow" found the promise there declared  
Of Liberty, in blood of Freedom's host  
Baptized to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!

Oh, there were times when every patriot breast  
Was riotous with sentiments expressed  
In tones that swelled in volume till the sound  
Of lusty war itself was well-nigh drowned.  
Oh, those were times when happy eyes with tears  
Brimmed o'er as all the misty doubts and fears  
Were washed away, and Hope with gracious mien,  
Reigned from her throne again a sovereign queen.  
Until at last, upon a day like this  
When flowers were blushing at the summer's kiss,  
And when the sky was cloudless as the face  
Of some sweet infant in its angel grace,—  
There came a sound of music, thrown afloat  
Upon the balmy air—a clanging note  
Reiterated from the brazen throat  
Of Independence Bell: A sound so sweet,  
The clamoring throngs of people in the streets  
Were stilled as at the solemn voice of prayer,  
And heads were bowed, and lips were moving there  
That made no sound—until the spell had passed,  
And then, as when all sudden comes the blast  
Of some tornado, came the cheer on cheer  
Of every eager voice, while far and near  
The echoing bells upon the atmosphere  
Set glorious rumors floating, till the ear  
Of every listening patriot tingled clear,  
And thrilled with joy and jubilee to hear.

## I

'Stir all your echoes up,  
O Independence Bell,  
And pour from your inverted cup  
The song we love so well.

'Lift high your happy voice,  
And swing your iron tongue  
Till syllables of praise rejoice  
That never yet were sung.

'Ring in the gleaming dawn  
Of Freedom—Toll the knell  
Of Tyranny, and then ring on,  
O Independence Bell.—

'Ring on, and drown the moan,  
Above the patriot slain,  
Till sorrow's voice shall catch the tone  
And join the glad refrain.

'Ring out the wounds of wrong  
And rankle in the breast;  
Your music like a slumber-song  
Will lull revenge to rest.

'Ring out from Occident  
To Orient, and peal  
From continent to continent  
The mighty joy you feel.

'Ring! Independence Bell!  
Ring on till worlds to be  
Shall listen to the tale you tell  
Of love and Liberty!'

#### IV

O Liberty—the dearest word  
A bleeding country ever heard,—  
We lay our hopes upon thy shrine  
And offer up our lives for thine.  
You gave us many happy years  
Of peace and plenty ere the tears  
A mourning country wept were dried  
Above the graves of those who died  
Upon thy threshold. And again  
When newer wars were bred, and men  
Went marching in the cannon's breath  
And died for thee and loved the death,  
While, high above them, gleaming bright,  
The dear old flag remained in sight,  
And lighted up their dying eyes  
With smiles that brightened paradise.  
O Liberty, it is thy power  
To gladden us in every hour  
Of gloom, and lead us by thy hand  
As little children through a land  
Of bud and blossom; while the days  
Are filled with sunshine, and thy praise  
Is warbled in the roundelays  
Of joyous birds, and in the song  
Of waters, murmuring along  
The paths of peace, whose flowery fringe  
Has roses finding deeper tinge  
Of crimson, looking on themselves  
Reflected—leaning from the shelves  
Of cliff and crag and mossy mound  
Of emerald splendor shadow-drowned.—  
We hail thy presence, as you come  
With bugle blast and rolling drum,  
And booming guns and shouts of glee  
Commingled in a symphony  
That thrills the worlds that throng to see  
The glory of thy pageantry.  
O And with thy praise, we breathe a prayer  
That God who leaves you in our care  
May favor us from this day on  
With thy dear presence—till the dawn  
Of Heaven, breaking on thy face,  
Lights up thy first abiding place.

#### TOM VAN ARDEN

Tom Van Arden, my old friend,  
Our warm fellowship is one  
Far too old to comprehend  
Where its bond was first begun:  
Mirage-like before my gaze  
Gleams a land of other days,

Where two truant boys, astray,  
Dream their lazy lives away.

There's a vision, in the guise  
Of Midsummer, where the Past  
Like a weary beggar lies  
In the shadow Time has cast;  
And as blends the bloom of trees  
With the drowsy hum of bees,  
Fragrant thoughts and murmurs blend,  
Tom Van Arden, my old friend.

Tom Van Arden, my old friend,  
All the pleasures we have known  
Thrill me now as I extend  
This old hand and grasp your own—  
Feeling, in the rude caress,  
All affection's tenderness;  
Feeling, though the touch be rough,  
Our old souls are soft enough.

So we'll make a mellow hour:  
Fill your pipe, and taste the wine—  
Warp your face, if it be sour,  
I can spare a smile from mine;  
If it sharpen up your wit,  
Let me feel the edge of it—  
I have eager ears to lend,  
Tom Van Arden, my old friend.

Tom Van Arden, my old friend,  
Are we "lucky dogs," indeed?  
Are we all that we pretend  
In the jolly life we lead?—  
Bachelors, we must confess,  
Boast of "single blessedness"  
To the world, but not alone—  
Man's best sorrow is his own!

And the saddest truth is this,—  
Life to us has never proved  
What we tasted in the kiss  
Of the women we have loved:  
Vainly we congratulate  
Our escape from such a fate  
As their lying lips could send,  
Tom Van Arden, my old friend!

Tom Van Arden, my old friend,  
Hearts, like fruit upon the stem,  
Ripen sweetest, I contend,  
As the frost falls over them:  
Your regard for me to-day  
Makes November taste of May,  
And through every vein of rhyme  
Pours the blood of summer-time.

When our souls are cramped with youth  
Happiness seems far away  
In the future, while, in truth,

We look back on it to-day  
Through our tears, nor dare to boast,—  
"Better to have loved and lost!"  
Broken hearts are hard to mend,  
Tom Van Arden, my old friend.



Tom Van Arden, my old friend,  
I grow prosy, and you tire;  
Fill the glasses while I bend  
To prod up the failing fire. . . .  
You are restless:—I presume  
There's a dampness in the room.—  
Much of warmth our nature begs,  
With rheumatics in our legs! . . .

Humph! the legs we used to fling  
Limber-jointed in the dance,  
When we heard the fiddle ring  
Up the curtain of Romance,  
And in crowded public halls  
Played with hearts like jugglers' balls.—  
FEATS OF MOUNTEBANKS, DEPEND!—  
Tom Van Arden, my old friend.

Tom Van Arden, my old friend,  
Pardon, then, this theme of mine:  
While the firelight leaps to lend  
Higher color to the wine,—  
I propose a health to those  
Who have HOMES, and home's repose,  
Wife- and child-love without end!  
. . . Tom Van Arden, my old friend.

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