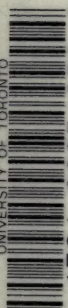


THE BRAZEN LYRE

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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E. V. KNOX

Mr Bott
London
35 guntrips, Maidstone
March 1, 1949

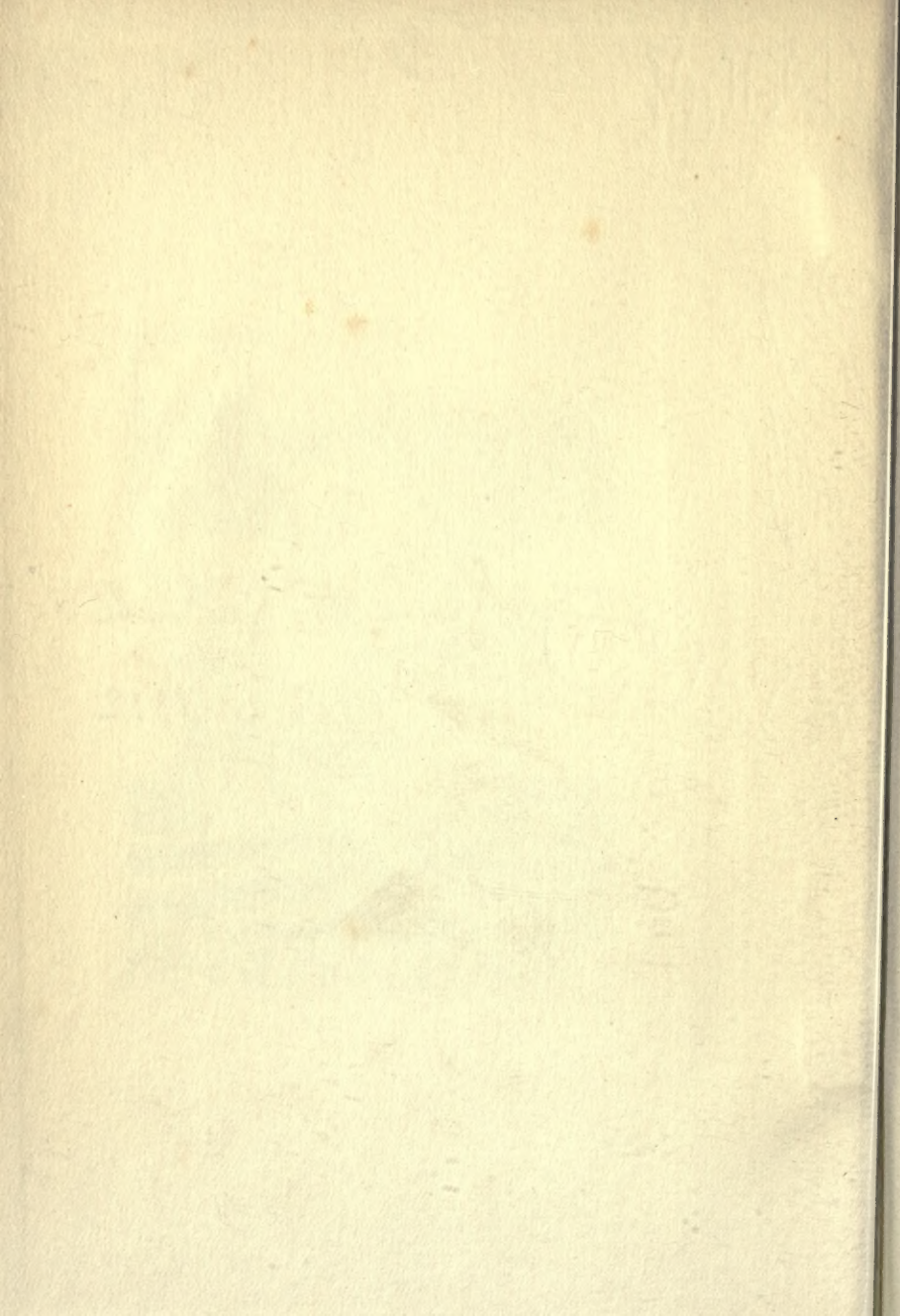
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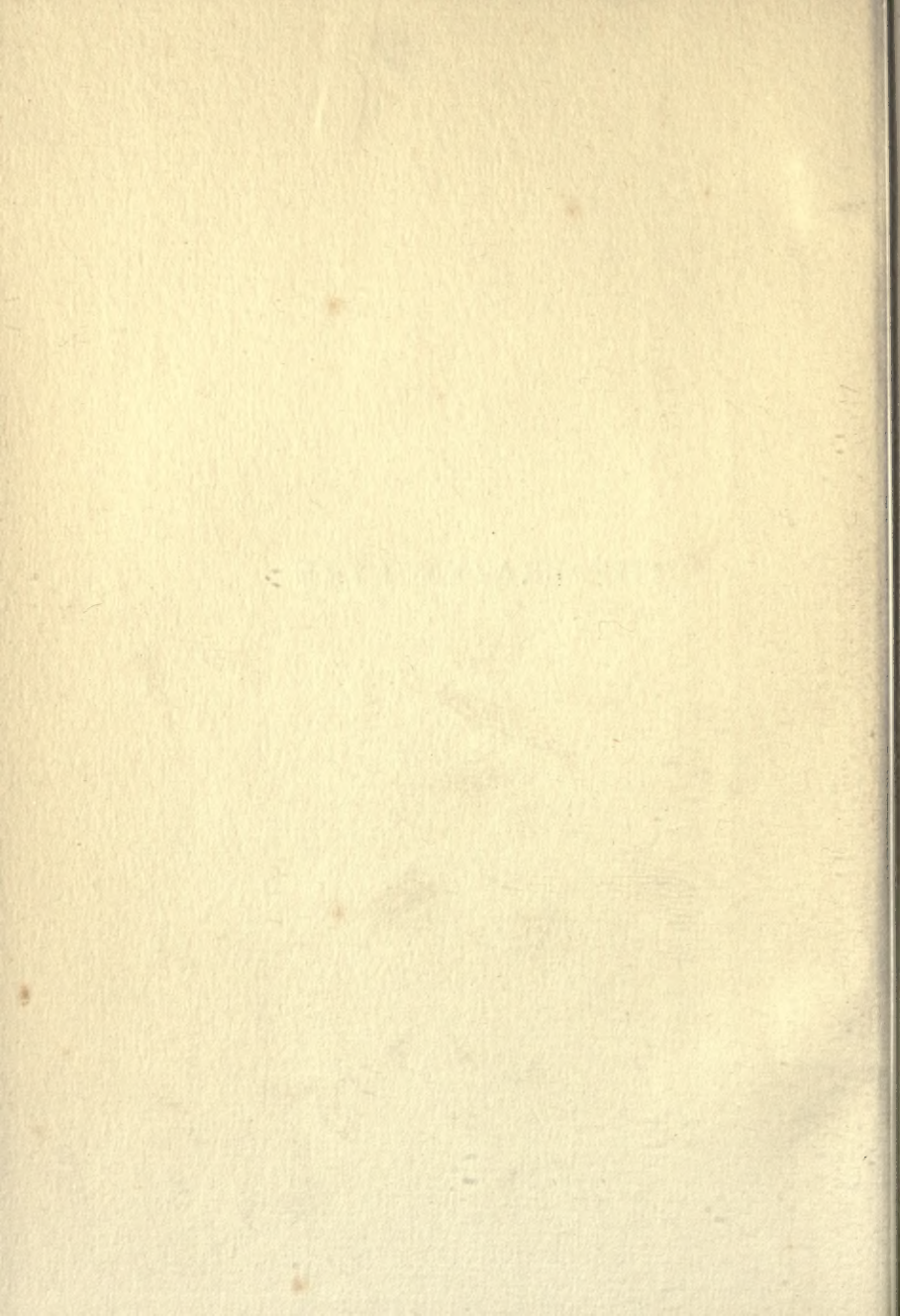
KENNETH T GEMMELL

Kenneth T. Gemmill

Feb 20. 1912



THE BRAZEN LYRE



THE BRAZEN LYRE

BY

E. V. KNOX

[Edmund Valpy Knox, 1881—]

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Most of these verses have appeared previously in the pages of *Punch*, and to the proprietors of that paper the author is indebted for their courtesy in allowing him to reprint them.

E. V. K.

Nov. 1911.

HYMN TO A HACK

(Encouraging him with the reflection that even the motor-bus will one day in turn be supplanted.)

BUS horse ! you have a faint and weary eye,
As if the pomp of Regent Street's apparel
Fatigued the heart of one who has to ply
From Maida Vale upon an empty barrel ;
I think you deprecate our modern show,
And muse, perhaps, on old familiar faces,
The partners of that pole, who long ago
Went to the dogs, but left behind their traces.

At times a cynic laughter curls your lip ;
Of frantic hurry no profound adorer,
It must be that you mock the mad *pip-pip*,
And spurn the mo-bus for a spavined roarer ;
Often, I think, at home (your final cruise
Completed), ere you sate a well-earned hunger,
The Pegasus of some suburban mews,
You harp on happy days when you were younger.

HYMN TO A HACK

“No, ‘Arrow’ cleft the unpolluted air,”
I hear you say, “before these brows were furrowed ;
No Tube detached the all too faithless fare,
The Piccadilly blowpipe was unburrowed,
A thing of beauty then, a barb sublime,
With ‘Angels’ white and blue I bowled to Fulham,
And when I slithered on the Chelsea slime
What crowds would quarrel for my reins and pull
’em.

“Where are they now—the boys that hauled my head?
The timid maids that diagnosed my cut knees?
Gone to behold a coarser liquid shed
And stanch the wounds of petrol-driven ‘Putneys’!”
Thus, or in some such wise, I think you mourn ;
But, if the case be so, forbear to dodder ;
Remember “Kismet,” my Arabian-born,
Cheer up, Bucephalus and champ your fodder.

Bethink you every pageant has its day ;
Unknown conductors weekly come to work us ;
The Panting “Pioneers” shall pass away
And cease to Square the edge of Oxford Circus ;
Soon shall our high mid-heaven cabs come on ;
Soon on an unsuspecting City’s toppers
Celestial “Pilots,” with their gear-chains gone,
From cloudy heights shall come explosive croppers.

HELLAS PRESERVED

(A contemporary has observed that "when Greece began to be living Greece once more, the quantity of currants produced year by year began to grow larger . . . and their relative cheapness to-day is a direct consequence of the disappearance of the Turk.")

GREECE, whose poets' predilection
For the stern syntax rules
Barely saves them from rejection
In our secondary schools—
Mourn not (though your sons can never
Warble with their fathers' ease)
While the fruits of their endeavour
Serve to spice our A.B.C.'s.

Though no more the Muses foster
Markets for Pierian song,
See! the merry Grecian coster
Still contrives to scratch along ;
Though no modern wits can weave you
Rôles of Sophoclean make,
Corinth of the double sea-view,
Keeps her interest in cake.

HELLAS PRESERVED

Since upon your mountains Freedom
Reassumed her normal pose,
Swifter to the shores that need 'em
The Levantine currant flows ;
Till, where tea-cups sound a pæan,
Clerks absorb (their labours done)
Trophies of the soft Ægean,
Set like Cyclads in a bun.

On you go, light-hearted masters
Of a craft that always paid,
And, if unforeseen disasters
Do not cause a slump in trade,
Bards, whose simple meals are mottled
By your toothsome stuff, shall learn,
KEATS-like, to applaud the bottled
Beauties of a Grecian urn.

Ancient songs are immaterial,
Art of little use to man ;
Pies, we know, if less ethereal,
Often keep the mark of Pan ;
So the best of Greece we cherish
(Spirit of her hills and woods),
Though the pure ideals perish
In a lb. of grocers' goods.

HELLAS PRESERVED

That is why so sorrow stirs us
That Melpomene despairs,
And you count the lyre and thyrsus
Unremunerative wares ;
Who can grumble, " Hellas fruit !"
When perforce our cooks must seek
For the cult of Saxon suet
All the cunning of the Greek !

ODE TO A GENUINE ANTIQUE

(“ A tortoise, a native of Seychelles, near Madagascar, but now residing in Mauritius, is said to have reached the respectable age of 236.”)

SOUND testimonial to tropic air !

Undamaged dotard of an alien clime !

Hoary testudo ! who (unlike the hare)

Remain contented with a slowish time—

What legends that impermeable hide

That holds your headpiece in a handy slit

(If they were printed on the top) would tell

Of leaf-fringed savages who worshipped it,

Or vowed to scoop the esculent inside,

And strum, like Hermes, on the hollowed shell ?

Played 'cellos may be sweet, but sweeter still,

The live Chelonian ; therefore, brute, breathe
on !—

I do not say for ever, but until

Ensuing notice : more of that anon—

And if, beneath the trees, you have some mate,

Some well-matured, contemporary fair,

ODE TO A GENUINE ANTIQUE

Prolong your joys, or if (as well may be)
The girl has predeceased you, laugh at Fate ;
Re-marry ! Female Platysternidæ
Are much alike, and not, I fancy, rare.

Thrice happy vertebrate ! that need not shed
Your winter clothing when the Spring is due,
But wear an osseous carapace instead,
Completely rainproof and as good as new.
More happy mind, whose retrospective ken
Surveys a bicentenary of frogs
For ever hunted for your homely tea :
How trivial must you count the lives of men
Concerned with clothes, or lurid catalogues
Of facts relating to the L.C.C. !

Who are these coming to the sacrifice ?
What care you for your watery kin (poor beasts)
Condemned to figure (but how stiff the price !)
As green consommé in our civic feasts.
What do you know of England, where so much
Of merely human import has "transpired"
Since 1670 hatched you ? Come, confess !
Did rumours of Queen Anne's departure touch
Your callow boyhood ? Were you greatly fired
By engines or the birth-throes of our Press ?

ODE TO A GENUINE ANTIQUE

Oh, attic-shaped ! immobile attitude !

The breed of men by worry over-wrought
Have lost their faculty to lie and brood

For centuries together upon naught !
Cold reptile, that is where you have the pull.

But should your hopes of a millennium fade,
And commerce cut that spine, of spirit void,

For damsels' haircombs, may some British maid,
Since truth is tough as well as beautiful,
Prefer your solid crust to celluloid !

NOT CRICKET

THE SCANDALOUS AFFAIR OF MY UMBRELLA

It was no article of costly make,
Fashioned of silk and ebony and gold
(The kind that careless men are apt to take),
It was not even very neatly rolled.

Still it was my ewe lamb. And when I found
The place untenanted where erst it stood,
I told my sorrow to the wainscot round,
I said some things that nearly warped the wood.

I cried aloud to the Olympian gods
And all the shadowy powers that rule the air
To punish him that did this deed with rods—
I also spoke to the commissioner.

I said, "This was the apple of my eye,"
Bought when a boyish heart was clean of doubt ;
I loved the little windows where the sky
Came peeping through when it was opened out.

NOT CRICKET

To some their silken hats are dear, to some
Their overcoats of astrakan or fur,
To me my ombrifuge, my childhood's chum.
He said, "I will inquire about it, sir."

Alas ! I have no hopes. But this, oh this,
Is what annoys me most about the thing :
I fondly deemed, if e'er I came to miss
The well-known handle, the familiar spring,

Whate'er might be the chances of the change,
Whatever substituted gamp I bore,
Chill to the grasp, and comfortless and strange,
In value I was simply bound to score.

Some elder poet, fired with heavenly flame,
Might leave his thyrsus with the gilded knob,
And brandish mine unconscious till he came
Home to his flat and then be vexed—the snob !

Or I myself, through want of proper care,
Might fail to localize my gingham roof,
And seize some editor's of samite rare,
Crusted with chrysopraxe—and waterproof.

NOT CRICKET

But now these hopes have crumbled into dust.

Cursed be the man who took beyond recall
The ancient shelter of a bardic crust,
And never brought *his* broolly here at all.

REDFORD MUSAGETES

AFTER MATTHEW ARNOLD

[An imaginary address by a dramatist of the Ernest School to the Censor, accusing him of making the musical comedy his standard of dramatic propriety.]

NOT here, my good fellow !
Are plays meet for you,
But where Aldwych is hoisting
Its pomp to the blue ;

Or where moon-smitten millions
Unceasingly crowd
At the entrance of Daly's—
Go there and be proud.

To the seats on the house-top
The multitude flock ;
They are fighting their hunger
With peppermint rock.

REDFORD MUSAGETES

On the *fauteuil* beneath sits
The blue-blooded swell ;
He has robed him and dined him
Remarkably well.

What gowns are these coming ?
What hats, and by whom ?
What skirt-trains outswEEPing
The vacuum broom ?

What sweet-breathing music
Unchastened of Time ?
What hosen illumed by
The light of the lime ?

'Tis EDWARDES presenting
His loveliest dream !
They all were stupendous,
But this is the cream !

Lo, here is the drama
Your wits understand ;
The Muse you have fostered
And foist on our land !

REDFORD MUSAGETES

The choruses chirrup
And pass to the wings ;
The wags entertain us
And somebody sings.

What strife do they tell off ?
What passions expound ?
Why, earth, and the motive
That makes her go round.

First show they the flirting
Of flappers, and then
The rest of existence,
The childhood of men ;

The dance in its daring,
The Corybant's wreath ;
The time-honoured chestnut
The Stars and their teeth.

ODE TO A SO-CALLED SPRING CHICKEN

A SONG OF SOHO

LONG since, in stately progress through your yard,
From all things underfoot you felt revolt,
Skyward you fixed your passionate regard,
An other-worldly poult.

Your voice as well, that ushered in the morn,
And roused the farmer from his rural crib,
Clear as the clarion of a motor-horn
(And reproduced *ad lib.*)—

This also marked you from the common group
Of mortal creatures with their few brief suns ;
You were not meant to know an earthly coop,
Nor pace terrestrial runs.

And so in death, 'twas but the baser part
That had not known the thrill of joy and pain,

ODE TO A SO-CALLED SPRING CHICKEN

The hope to soar, the ecstasy of art,—
(Your legs, to make it plain)—

'Twas only these that served our simple clay,
And passed the boundaries of human lips ;
And I have dined on one of them to-day
With *pommes de terre* in chips.

But not the breast !—where beat the ardent soul
Which made you challenger of rival kings :
That mounted up to some ethereal goal,
Rapt on your seraph wings.

“ How do you know,” the careless scoffer seeks,
“ What after-world awaits domestic brutes ? ”
“ Have I not dined ” (I answer) “ here for weeks
On limbs as tough as boots ? ”

And when the waiter hears my murmured plaint
He tells me (with that low respectful cough,
As who should speak of some departed saint)
The nobler parts are off.

“ Off ! ” How he puts it in a single word !
I see you cast your mortal coil and rise,
Leaving no relic of the carnal bird
Save amputated thighs.

UPON JULIA'S CLOTHES

[“Toy dogs with coats to match their owner's furs were a feature of the recent show at the Horticultural Hall.”—Daily Press.]

WHENAS in furs my Julia goes,
Of slaughtered vermin goodness knows,
What tails depend upon her clothes !

Next, when I cast my eyes and see
The living whelp she lugs to tea,
Oh, how their likeness taketh me !

ON ROBERT REDUCED

[“Every observant Londoner must have noticed the haggard appearance of the Police.”—*The Sketch.*]

A SHADOW on the sunlit kerb
He scarcely casts to-day ;
The outline of that front superb
Has warped the other way ;
His bosom by some secret care is cankered ;
You shall not make him from his post withdraw
To moisten with an unofficial tankard
The dryness of the Law.

In vain o' nights does Susan spread
Her supper-board for two,
Aside he turns his casquéed head,
A Galahad in blue ;
No more susceptible to basement beauty,
Unflinchingly he foots his stony fief ;
Not love can lure him from the paths of duty,
Nor plates of cold roast beef.

ON ROBERT REDUCED

What outrage, then, has made so spare,
What aggravating fret,
One that was never wont to wear
A concave silhouette ?
Is it that Sikes (incorrigible felon)
Has made his beat with high adventure hum,
And house-top Marathons begin to tell on
Our Robert's rounded tum ?

Not Man, I think, could disabuse
His staid content of mind ;
His is the mien of those that lose
Their faith in Woman-kind :
How many a peerless maid, the pink of manners,
Who seeks his prowess in some pavement plight,
May, meeting him next time with motley banners,
Call him a brute—and bite !

Still in the hour of stress they come
And find him, as of yore,
A half-inspired compendium
Of topographic lore ;
But lo, he meets their smiles with mute avoidance,
Their fluttered coquetries assuage him not ;
For him all fairs to-day are Suffrage hoydens ;
He hates the whole dam lot.

ON ROBERT REDUCED

That is the reason why he sags
 About the central zone ;
Misogynist he treads the flags,
 His heart is turned to stone ;
Ay, even in the once adoring kitchen
 Some blow for Woman's freedom might be dealt ;
So, fearing Susan's sauce, he takes a hitch in
 His disillusioned belt.

TO A FANCY VEST

TWELVE months ago (I told the tailor "urgent")
You clasped my palpitating bosom first,
And now once more, like Proserpine resurgent,
After your winter's sleep to life you burst ;
Time has not dimmed your buttons' starry bright-
ness,
Fair as the South but steadfast as the North,
Though possibly there *is* a hint of tightness
About the fourth.

With clearer skies, perhaps, we might have traced
where
That woeful mellay in a garden green
Projected on her suitor's summer waist-wear
An ice intended for the tourney's queen ;
I mind me, too (it happened at "The Larches"),
A strawberry, debouching from its mash,
Left a red trail of ruin round your marches,
And I said, "Dash !"

TO A FANCY VEST

But either Sol is kind or else the laundress ;
 You look, my yearling fancy, much the same
As when the nymph Neaera (in a fawn dress)
 Refused to gratify the heart you frame :
Little they thought, who plied on you the needle,
 Or dowered you with that tender tint of dove,
That such a classy line could fail to wheedle
 A woman's love !

Still, as I say, you have not lost your beauty :
 And (like the breast beneath it), barely frayed,
Your shining envelope must now do duty
 For courting Amaryllis—in the shade ;
I cannot think she too will turn her nose up
 At knightly adoration in a shell
Whose shade is so romantic and that shows up
 The tie so well.

But if she does—for all the sex is fickle—
 Can we but 'scape the hazards of the storm,
The sudden créam-drop and the icy trickle,
 Another June may see you yet in form ;
Close comrade as of yore, and even closer,
 I swear that on your faithful front shall bow
The fair-curled forehead of my heart's engrosser
 A year from now.

THE GREAT WHITE SALE

(BY ONE WHO MISAPPREHENDED THE WORDS)

NOT here, not here, where drapers squander,
In sheer self-sacrifice,
Their hoarded goods, I saw you wander,
But where eternal ice
Glitters about the Great White Stick
Found by Commander Peary (sic)
I fancied you a creature rare
(Something betwixt a seal and bear),
Furry and far from nice.

A beast within whose larder cupboard
Were remnants mouldering long,
A beast at whom the sperm-whale blubbered,
The walrus ceased his song,—
I saw you thus, O Great White Sale!
Having observed upon the tail
Of some one's millinery cart,
Those awful words, but bless my heart—
It seems that I was wrong.

THE GREAT WHITE SALE

I saw you also by the hummocks
That formed your frozen lair ;
Stout sailors crawled upon their stomachs
With dirk and cutlass bare ;
I saw you as the fray began,
Savagely maul them man by man,
Till at the last you, growling, died,
And all about were bits of hide,
Buttons and bones and hair.

It seems (I say) I was mistaken ;
That is the worst of bards,
The wings of fancy once you waken
They soar for yards and yards ;
But, since my aunt, my good aunt Jane,
Has been so kind as to explain
Exactly what a White Sale is,
The knowledge of these mysteries
Has spoilt my house of cards.

Or has it ? when the Muse considers
The bargain room that teems
With crowds of petticoated bidders,
The anguish and the screams,
The broken armies that emerge,
The triumph pæan and the dirge,—

THE GREAT WHITE SALE

I say when she considers this,
The Muse is not so badly dis-
appointed of her dreams.

The Blood, the Tumult, and the Terror,
The tresses flying fleet
(Although I placed the thing by error
Too far from Oxford Street),
All, all are there (I take it) when,
Torn with a strength unknown to men
By damsels pitiless and pale,
The carcase of the Great White Sale
Falls at the hunter's feet.

CHANSON DU SUD

(TO MY CAKE OF TRAVELLING SOAP)

REFINED companion! Sanitary friend!

Who, faring with me by the southward boat-train,
Met as we journeyed home your watery end,

Where Genoa sits enthroned, a sea-girt *haute reine* ;
Yours was the simple scent that cheered my nose
And overpowered Italia's rich afflatus
In regions where the almond-blossom blows,
But garlic has, in fact, a prior status.

The gilded orange-groves went slipping by ;

The sky, the sea, were blue, but ah, who was it,
When sections of that landscape stung my eye,
That helped me to remove their dumped deposit ?
Who else but you could bring the touch of home
Or make the tears in grateful optics gather,
When, whiter than the Alps or Asti's foam,
I sought the solace of your smarting lather ?

CHANSON DU SUD

Your day is passed, you shall not rise again ;
A sacrifice to Albion's homely custom,
Your relics float in many a far-off drain ;
Some foreign basin was your funeral *bustum* ;
Successors hold your room at eve and morn,
But still your shadow lives, a thought of gladness,
Loyal as Baedeker in lands forlorn
That deem our lustral rites a mark of madness !

Here, where the walls are plastered with your praise
And midnight sees it on our roofs resurgent,
Where no grim mystery, no secret shame,
Surrounds the saponaceous detergent ;
Unthinkingly I clasp your rosy peers ;
In trite though honoured use they perish daily ;
But you who passed, the sport of alien jeers,
To dissolution—*Ave atque vale !*

FIRST PRIZE

(AN ISLINGTON IDYLL)

DAME with the eyes of Zeus's queen,
A silken trophy on your brow,
With what humility of mien
Among your conquered peers, oh cow,
You stand and suck
Enormous mouthfuls from a pail of muck !

Yours was a triumph most supreme :
The Paris who acclaimed you first,
Disdaining divers fairs that seem
As lovely and as like to burst,
Unswayed by greed,
From sheer conviction handed you the swede.

And yet that overweening air
Which marks a champion's fame in man—
You have it not, nor seem to care
(Your muzzle being merged in bran)
When yokels come
And prod you rather rudely in the tum.

FIRST PRIZE

Nor yours to squander time and ink
On callisthenics, nor to bruit
What diet turned your nose so pink,
Nor how that under-rated fruit
Of Mother Earth,
The mangold wurzel, swelled your monstrous
girth.

Here is a parable for pride !
Oh would that other cracks who bear
The burden of a bulging side
Would cultivate your modest air,
And count it rot
To look so big about a champion pot !

VER VERECUNDUM

OR, NATURE'S GENTILITY

O SPRING-TIME, how shall I express
The coyness of your gradual coming,
The caution of that first address
So different from the loud caress
That bards are bent on thrumming ?

They see (with Eros at her side
Affixing to his bolt a new barb)
A corybantic lady glide,
And all the woods about her pied
With red and green, like rhubarb.

They sing how at a glance she stirs
The seeds that slumbered during snow-time,
Till all the conquered dale is hers,
And on the bough the catkin purrs
In practically no time.

VER VERECUNDUM

I fail to see it ; calm and slow
 (A patch of rain and now a dry bit)
A proudly proper gait you go
And, as I said, I do not know
 What words can well describe it.

Not with a sudden rosy stamp
 That sends a flush through fields and fences,
But dim and delicate and damp
With large goloshes and a gamp
 The English Spring—*commences*.

ODE TO A MISANTHROPE

(AS SEEN IN THE REGENT'S PARK VULTURE HOUSE)

DYSPEPTIC biped ! irritably brooding

And perchant in a none too savoury pen,
What is your trouble—if I'm not intruding—

Where do you mostly feel the pain, and when ?
What is that woe of yours that wrings the rare drop
From Cockney eyes, and makes the infant seek
To grant you the reversion of his pear-drop
Or ply with currant buns a carrion beak ?

Is it regret that haunts you ? Does that head-piece
(Needing a tonic) miss Rhodesia's morn
Charged with the subtle fragrance of some dead
piece

Of mutton on the mobile breezes borne ?
Long 'ere your plumes sustained such wholesale
losses

Who knows—when you were young and sweet and
shy—

ODE TO A MISANTHROPE

What tender obsequies that curved proboscis
Has undertaken, and in spheres how high ?

And now a milder tariff fails to tickle
The old *bon vivant*, and you break your fast
Cheerless as colonels chafing for the pickle,
The spicy relish of an Orient past :
Small wonder that you mope, the world despising,
Save when a meditative bill consumes
Some parasite that, strangely enterprising,
Molests your old insanitary plumes.

But this, I take it, most profoundly festers,
And grates your gizzard with a secret care—
The tactlessness of those official jesters
Whose task it was to choose your *nom de guerre* :
Captive—a bachelor—in bad condition—
When Fate's malevolence presumed to stick
“*Sociable Vulture*” on your scant partition,
No wonder that it turned you deathly sick !

THREE VALENTINES

I

HEADS AND HEARTS

(THE PSYCHOLOGIST'S IDEA OF A SUITABLE VALENTINE)

LONG ago, my dear, when Science
 Loaned from Fancy what she lacked,
Placing rather more reliance
 On hypothesis than Fact,
People with perverted notions
 Paid the body out in lots,
And located our emotions
 In the most unlikely spots.

Thus, they prate about our "choler,"
 Thus, they babble of our "spleen,"
Phrases which the finished scholar
 Merely understands to mean

THREE VALENTINES

That a somewhat wild vagary
 Made the old philosopher
Range around his "little Mary"
 Passions far removed from her.

We of course are not so foolish :
 We to-day should scorn to see
Such a "never-went-to-schoolish"
 Physical anatomy ;
Yet we keep one superstition :
 Age to erring age imparts
One deplorable tradition :
 'Tis the Shibboleth of Hearts.

So we find the shops again full
 Of St. Valentine his Ghost ;
Hearts, devoted or disdainful,
 Interchange, and by the post
Light-apparelled Loves await us,
 Piercing with pictorial darts
That hydraulic apparatus
 Of the inter-costal parts.

Well, they're wrong, then, let me tell 'em
 Since the seat where passions reign
Lies beyond the cerebellum,
 Somewhere in the upper brain ;

THREE VALENTINES

Love's a kind of ideo-motor
Action that depends upon
Certain centres in the coat or
Rind of the encephalon.

That is why I send no token
Of a cardiac distress ;
Hearts, my darling, are not broken
In the Stream of Consciousness ;
To denote the dizzy vortex
Where my love has lately swum,
I have diagrammed the cortex,
Dearest, of my cerebrum.

II

A VALETUDINARIAN'S VALENTINE

IF you were hoping, PHYLLIS, to receive
On Thursday instant, by the Love-God's post,
Endorsement of the vows I pledged one eve
Last August, on our bracing British coast,
Forgive me, if I send no Cupid's knot
Nor toasted hearts, like savouries of fried roe,

THREE VALENTINES

To Symbolise a passion soon forgot

When summer languished, and we left the Hydro :
Where is the ozone now to fire my blood ?
Where are those beneficial baths of mud ?

Our pulses echoed to the breakers' shout,

The pine woods were a tonic when we kissed,
The saline breezes cleared our heads from doubt,
The management controlled our diet-list.
What pain to think of those salubrious meals,
The cream, the eggs (our landlord kept his own
hens),

Now as I sit and shake from head to heels,

Expecting asthma, *et lignum reponens* :
What pain to dream of tender smile and tiff
When Love's receptacle is frozen stiff !

Perhaps, when earth disdains the icy lumps

That Winter squanders from her wastrel stores,
And Phœbus' radiating process pumps

The circulation through my cardiac pores,
When Summer, ornamenting bower and brake,
To nature's canvas has appended "*pinxit*,"
And that electric course he bids me take

Has proved the curative my doctor thinks it,
There may, but, mind, I do not say there will,
Be symptoms of the old internal thrill.

THREE VALENTINES

Till then the incident must count as past :
Yet murmur not at man's ingratitude :
Transfer your protest to the stormy blast,
And leave me to concoct my patent food.
I foster relics of the sweet complaint,
I keep that lock of hair you kindly scissored,
But if the feast-day of our amorous saint
Must fall inside a month of frost and blizzard,
The proper day, my dear, for Valentine
Is surely February 29 !

III

THE CUPBOARD VALENTINE

O Mary, in this month of Lent,
Although the motley minstrel feels
It hard upon his native bent,
An Anglo-Saxon never squeals,
And I adhere to my intent
Of cutting down my monstrous meals,
And so these Cupids on the wing,
This lover's bow I did not choose
To mail to any sweet young thing
Who fires my amatory Muse,
But her who makes the kettle sing—
A somewhat different pair of shoes.

THREE VALENTINES

There may be beauty more divine
Than that to which I fondly look,
But yours is that resplendent shrine,
With saucepans hung on every hook,
That claims from us this Valentine—
Accept it pray, O Mary, cook !

For yours it is with constant care,
And well-tried culinary plot,
To furnish me with pluck to bear
(Egeria of the basement grot !)
The rigours of my Lenten fare,
And make me *seem* to gorge a lot.

You help me through : your art is such
That (granted the correct receipt)
It makes the little like the much,
The plain as toothsome as the sweet ;
Your fingers have the fairy's touch,
Whatever size you take in feet.

Then if you loved me in the past,
O Mary mine, so love me still,
Accept this token of my vast
Affection, and be sure to grill
The meagre sole that suits the fast
With more than customary skill.

LOVE THE REDUCER

WHEN first my love-sick form was thrown
For Dot's disdainful feet to flatten,
It turned the scale at fifteen stone,
And though I did my best to batten
On patent foods, like Anti-tum,
And exercises hard and rum,
They only used to fatten.

But, oh, the powers of passion spurned !
Where drugs and drills appeared to cosset
A breast increasingly concerned
To bring the buttons home across it,
Romantic grief began to melt
Like mountain snows beneath my belt
The adipose deposit.

Amanda's help was more than Dot's ;
Her "No" (that nipped my prayers to win her)
Was worth its weight in gold, and lots
More use than eating toast for dinner ;

LOVE THE REDUCER

And Laura, too, when she forsook
My life for ever, made me look
At least a belt-hole thinner.

I think the next were Blanche and Nell ;
When they refused my hand (with jeering)
And all my shattered day-dreams fell.
Undoubtedly I found it cheering
When 'neath a bosom rent and raw,
Like long benighted friends I saw
My boot-tips re-appearing.

One disappointment more—should May
The sequence of her sisters follow
And melt a pound or so away,
Though all the world thenceforth were hollow,
’Twould comfort me, I feel, a bit
To know the suits I wore would fit
The Belvedere Apollo.

THE NARROWING YEARS

THERE is one bell whose solemn toll,
Re-echoing from door to door,
Inspires regret that years should roll,
And makes me pine to be once more
The hopeful little specimen
I was at ten.

'Tis not the mellow minster chime
That gives me that internal pain,
Nor golden memories of a time
When, pilgrim to some rural fane,
I suffered penance in a shirt
And boots that hurt.

'Tis not the cadence that recalls
Young England to her half-cooked sums ;
However deeply manhood palls,
I crave no more with chosen chums
To take the print of Culture warm
Across a form.

THE NARROWING YEARS

But when through wild deserted squares
 (Oblivious of the local ban)
I hear submit his sheeted wares,
 Shy trafficker ! the muffin-man,
'Tis then I hunger to resume
 My boyhood's bloom.

Behold the infant, when he eyes
 Those humid and unwholesome spheres
Dissolve in buttered ecstasies !
 What knows he of the coming years
When wisdom's tooth would lightlier plunge
 Into a sponge ?

Alas that with a widening girth,
 Capacity should grow less free !
Where is the unaffected mirth
 That used to hail a monstrous tea ?
The crumpets of a balmier day,
 Oh, where are they ?

TO MY POSTMAN

(A YULETIDE HOMILY)

HENRY or William, as the case may be
 (Or let me call you Herbert, like your master),
Unbinder of the bags of destiny,
 The meter-out of sunshine and disaster,
 I noticed, Herb,
You capped me yester morning on the kerb.

You want your Christmas box ? but tell me why ;
 Your cousin in the casque and beetle-biffers,
Who quells obstruction with his awful eye
 When frays occur or when the cabman differs,
 He, as a rule,
Has earned the silvery palm he wears at Yule ;

He keeps the pestilential tramp away ;
 Blend of the tireless sleuth-hound and the tough
 lynx,
He nearly always knows the time of day,

TO MY POSTMAN

And nabs the fellow who would pouch my cuff-
links ;

But you, old son,
What, in the name of Samuel, have you done ?

Have you not always tried to fob me off
With stale old bills, and futile propaganda,
And moneylenders' ads., and cures for cough,
When I was faint for something from Amada ?
Ay, and far worse,
When I expected needs for flower-like verse ?

Morns there have been—ay ! blush for it as red
As your own pillow-box—when you have simply
Passed by the front-door gate, and cut me dead,
Though all your sack with envelopes was pimply :
Never a line
To feed the sacred Muse, the fire divine.

Others again, when you have brought me—wet
With tears of editors—some homing sonnet,
Wrapped in a note like this of wild regret—
“ Your manuscript has every sign upon it
Of heaven-born flame,
But will not suit us. Thanks for offering same.”

TO MY POSTMAN

At times you've roused me from the evening lamp
For some absurdly unimportant billet
(Because it failed to wear your footling stamp)
To squander twopence—by Apollo's fillet!
At times to weep
Over some card returned from death's long sleep.

This is the way, O Herb, you've done your job,
And now you seek for largesse from the poet!
Small value have I found for this five bob,
Still, as you say, it's Christmas; I'll bestow it;
Only look here!
My correspondence *must* improve next year.

OUR LADY OF MIRTH

WHO was it said they had begun to bore us,
 These plays without a vestige of a plot,
Medley of comic gags and kicks and chorus?
 The fellow lied, they certainly had not.
Still, deathless maiden of the many titles,
 Offspring of Chaos and Terpsichore,
You hold the Pit's impressionable vitals,
 You suit the Upper Circles to a T.

The changing years may modify your numbers,
 The East be rearranged to suit your scenes,
But no profound sophistication cumpers
 That artless innocence of bygone teens ;
You live ! the subtle genii who stage you
 With magic carpet or embroidered robe,
Still hire the good old galaxies to play Ju-
 Jitsu around the habitable globe.

We like the well-known song on current topics,
 We like those vagrant " visitors " who choose,
Whether in London tea-shops or the tropics,
 To wear a low-necked dress and high-heeled shoes ;

OUR LADY OF MIRTH

We like the joke a trifle over-pointed,
But sanctified by immemorial age,
Those ladies, too, the lithe and double-jointed,
Whose toothful grins are still the public rage.

He was a fool indeed who banned repletion,
And found a feast no better than enough:
Such meagre sentiment might suit the Grecian,
But Northern minds are made of sterner stuff.
Go on, entrancing girl, the latest comer
Is welcome as the first-born of the batch;
Seasons may die, but your eternal summer
(Quotation from the Bard) will always catch!

One sees you in a sphere with sorrow laden,
Faced with the prospect of its final twirl,
Still on the boards as the Millennium Maiden,
Or possibly The Cadi and the Curl;
Framed in a house that palpitates with laughter,
And grasps with pride the wonted points of wit,
500 A.D. or after,
And looking (for your age) extremely fit.

THE DAILY DOLDRUM

(WITH DUE APOLOGIES)

OH, think not platitudes shall pall,
Or triteness bore the Briton's oak-heart,
So long as Jupiter can squall,
Or Phœbus steer his flaming go-cart ;
Deem not the obvious played out
While morn by morn those prattling leaders—
On " How it Hailed," " The Sun-God's rout "—
Enrapture half a million readers.

When streets become a gelid cake,
When frosts are practically joking,
The Daily Doldrum sits awake,
And pens " The Clutches of the Snow King ;"
When balmy zephyrs swathe the earth,
When Winter's ruder pants are worsted,
" Behold," we read, " the month of Mirth,
Once more the lilac-blossoms burst(ed).

THE DAILY DOLDRUM

The Doldrum's style ignores restraint.

In June it writes : "The air grows torrid ;
Two Piccadilly sparrows faint ;
A Peckham Bank clerk wipes his forehead."
Oh, who can say what tea-shop snack—
A glass of milk and penny bun (Bath)—
Inspired that symphony in black
On "Balham in her little sun-bath."

What need to book returns to Kew

And watch the withering trees grow russet ;
The Doldrum marks that change of hue ;
Its poignant paragraphs discuss it.
Acute reporters snuff the breeze
Around some crescent's garden-cincture,
And lo ! next morn ; "The Chelsea trees
Begin to don September's tincture."

Yet think not when the world is dead,

And Flora brags no tinted bloomers,
The Doldrum rakes an idle head,
Or lacks for horticultural humours ;
How can a dearth of news suppress
The voice which still contrived to blether :—
"Old Nature in her neutral dress ;
Unwonted weeks of normal weather."

LOVE'S MEDIUM'S LOST

(By discovering that bacteria abound in blotting-pads, *The Lancet* has broken yet another of the few remaining links between sanitary-minded lovers.)

DORA, when the leech was less in fashion,
Doubtless you recall how we two mugs
Nursed our not ineligible passion
On contagious tears and septic hugs.

Crude those raptures doubtless were yet heartfelt ;
Still we gave them up, when first my suits
Fostered micrococci, and your smart felt
Toques contained a depot for the brutes.

We decided on the handshake—chilly,
Yet approved till then by scientists—
Meeting, as we murmured, “ ’Ware *bacilli* ! ”
With a top-speed clutch of tender fists.

LOVE'S MEDIUM'S LOST

Then the hand became diphtheria's hot-house ;
Those who took its palm deserved their doom ;
That reduced us to "Hullo !" or "Dot, how's
Life with you ?"—we dare not cross the room.

Later, doctors after much disputing
Proved how mutual morbi hopped at sight ;
So we parted, I to Upper Tooting,
You to Brixton, saying, "Dearest, write !"

So I did, till reading lately "Think well !
Danger hides in these unwholesome fads ;
Proud bacteria, prancing round the ink-well,
Preen their plumage in absorbent pads."

Thus did Science, smashing every scheme laid
To connect the hearts of lovers true,
Find tuberculosis in our cream-laid
Correspondence—and we stopped that too.

Oft I've dreamed of sending birds, say swallows
(Which are cheap) to twitter of my love ;
Yet the microbe (who knows where he wallows ?)
May infest the beaks of the above.

LOVE'S MEDIUM'S LOST

Can MARCONI save us from the fever ?

While I wafted airy songs, the germ
Might come floating in through the receiver.

(Is receiver, though, the wireless term ?)

One means only offers us a few tricks,

Madly though the schizomycete raves ;
Telephatic thought's no typhus-nutrix—

Darling, let us meet in mental waves.

LOST INNOCENCE

THE hours of gold come back to me
That Time has pinched (he can't return 'em),
The well-remembered chestnut tree
(Or was it, after all, laburnum?),
The rural rill,
The shriek of dying pigs—I hear them still.

'Tis out of no bucolic whim
I promulgate agrarian measures ;
But, now that London's lure is dim,
And stale to me her storied pleasures,
I'd give a lot
To be like some of those to whom they're not.

I see them rubicund and hale,
Men whom the underground nonpluses,
Who cling convulsive to the rail
Of apoplectic motor-'buses,
On fire to view
The splendours of St. Stephen's and the Zoo.

LOST INNOCENCE

From hamlets far away they wend,
They breathe the air of brake and coppice,
They know not which the southward end
Of Regent Street, and which the top is ;
They also cube
By devious jinks their journeys on the Tube.

Ah, would that I could feel the thrill,
As once I felt, of urban clamour,
Could lose my heart to Ludgate Hill,
And re-experience the glamour
Of Oxford Street,
The magic and the mystery of the Fleet ;

Could share the wild delirious sense
Of those who hie from havens stilly,
And, flotsam on its seas immense,
Could pause again in Piccadilly
To ask some bland
Policeman, " Officer, is this the Strand ? "

A PROTEST FROM PARNASSUS

(WRITTEN IN APPREHENSION OF THE DAYLIGHT
SAVING BILL)

SAY, have the lees of the earth such a dreg as us
Bards if we bow to this tyrannous Bill,
Rise ere we want to, and saddle our Pegasus
Early by order?—I'm blowed if we will!
Was it for this that the Barons at Runnymede
Wrested a Charter of freedom from JOHN,
Toasting the health of its clauses in honeymead?—
Did they? I don't know, but let us get on.

I that have sung you what windblossoms blow lowest
Down in the valley where dances the fay,
Am I to rise when the lark is a soloist,
Merely to humour a Government, eh?
Am I to make my melodious madrigals
Out on the lawn at an hour when the thrush
Shortens the glee of the worm and his glad wriggles,
Rather than roam when the nightingales gush?

A PROTEST FROM PARNASSUS

No, and I deem not the multitude fortunate
Thinking to lengthen the hours of the light ;
Is not the daytime exacting, importunate,
Utterly vulgar compared with the night ?
See where Amyntas, and goodness ! how smart a
miss,

Twining their arms when the gloom has begun,
Utter at ease in the empire of Artemis
Twaddle they never could talk in the sun.

“ Cricket ” (the fanatics urge) and “ economy,”
“ Saving of gas ”—do I care about that ?
Think of the charm of our childhood’s astronomy,
Think of the soft and marsupial bat :
Think of the authors of sonnets that ruminate
Under the stars by the silvery Thames ;
Think of the thousands of ads. that illuminate
London by night with electrical gems.

No, by the might of the Muses that foster us !
Let them, advancing the hands of the clock,
Force on the masses a wholly preposterous
System—but we will be firm as a rock.
Others, surprising the sun in his chariot
Long ere their wont, may submissively delve,
We must demand of Eliza (or Harriet)
Not to be called at eleven, but twelve.

THE JOYS OF REJECTION

REFUSED ! Ah me, before I took the header,
What desperation dangled on that word !
The one thing doubtful (if I could not wed her)
What kind of suicide was least absurd ;
Wan were my features as a chunk of Cheddar
Ere it occurred.

And now it seems the blow was not so blasting,
The impulse to expire has been subdued,
The stern resolve to fade away by fasting
Has somehow vanished, and, when breakfast's
brewed,
I still sit up (the guise of anguish casting)
And take some food.

Nay, there are consolations ; love's a trammel
That woefully impedes the cardiac pump ;
But grief is like a pendant of enamel,
A thing of beauty, an eternal trump—
(I should not marvel if the Bactrian camel
Boasts of his hump).

THE JOYS OF REJECTION

'Tis no small victory that men should rank you
As one whose heart contains a bleeding sore,
Whose soul is swathed in cypresses and dank yew,
Dead to romance and deeming it a bore ;
Who murmurs, " Not for me, dear boy, I thank
you ;
Been there before."

Sweet also is the way that damsels cluster
About the hero of a high despair,
Whose bosom braved the amatory fluster
And might with due expenditure of care
(However hard it may have come a buster)
Be worth repair.

This is the most sublime of sorrow's chances ;
This is their meaning when the poets sing :—
" 'Tis better to have grieved for vain advances
Than never to have known the Love-god's
sting " ;
To cure a life-long woe is what entrances
The next young thing.

HOMO EX MACHINA

(TO A TUBE-LIFTMAN)

CONDUCTOR to the dim Tartarean levels
And satellite of that infernal "link"
Whose ceaseless round no accident dishevels,
What do you dream on as we softly sink?
Tell me, young man, the nature of your revels
When not on duty, do you dance or rink?
Or punt a leathern ball with thews of oak?
And (this is most important) do you smoke?

Immobile-feature as a marble statue,
You stare me in the eyes, ingenuous youth;
You make no answer to my questions, drat you
No sound of sorrow, mirthfulness, or ruth;
Either because you think I'm getting at you
Or (much more probably, to tell the truth)
Because I have not said these things aloud,
But merely thought them, wedged amongst the
crowd.

HOMO EX MACHINA

Let me get on, then. Do you know the fevers
Of common men on earth, unskilled to slam
The irrevocable gates and ply the levers ?
Do you take marmalade for tea or jam ?
And wherefore have the Fates, those sister weavers,
Doomed you to work a lift and not a tram ?
(Ah, who may read the riddles of the Fates ?)
And what's your surname ? Robinson ? or Bates ?

And would you seem to browse on sudden clover,
And tread mysterious heights and valleys strange,
With Cortez or some rare old English rover,
If haply for recuperative change
The company should shift you on from Dover
To Down Street ? Did you ever chance to range
Through " faëry lands forlorn " of light and myth,
Shunted to Finsbury Park or Hammersmith ?

And does some damsel greet you with embraces,
Some charming girl about to be your wife,
And bid you tell her of adventurous cases,
The haps and hazards of your strange, stern life ?
The whims of passengers, their clothes and faces,
Whether they touched the gates, and all the strife ?
And does she call you Alf, or Herb, or Reub ?
(I rather hope the last—it rhymes with tube.)

HOMO EX MACHINA

These things I cannot answer, and it's wearing
To go on talking bunkum all in vain ;
But some day I have sworn that, greatly daring,
While others pass, the poet shall remain.
Yes, you and I, for hours together faring
Shall hold high converse and beshrew my train !
Downwards and upwards we will fall and climb,
And you shall punch my ticket every time.

ADONAIS

[The extinction of the Sea-elephant (*Macrorhinus angustirostris*) is now said to be complete. A few specimens have, however, been secured for museums.]

NEVERMORE shall Amphitrite
Fondle that beloved snout,
Fallen, fallen are the mighty,
Behemoth has just pegged out !
Nereid nymphs, what were ye doing
When some sealer pinked his side ?
Heard ye not a voice hallooing
When the local Hathi died ?

In what wave-engirt arena,
Where, I think, his playful feats
Charmed the sirens, has there been a
Falling-off of gate-receipts ?
In what weed-embroidered pleasance
Does the lonely merchild weep,
Orphaned by the obsolescence
Of that Two-tails of the deep ?

ADONAIS

Louder, though, than all the dirges
Over Macrorhinus dead,
There beneath the dark-blue surges
Where he lived and loved and wed,
Greater than the grief of ocean,
Where the sea-mews mop their eyes,
Was the present bard's emotion
When he heard of that demise.

Never to have heard him trumpet,
Never to have cast him cakes,
That, though I must strive to lump it,
That is where the anguish aches.
Down the pathway dim and dusty
He was snatched to Hades' thrall,
Ere they told me that Angusti-
rostris ever lived at all.

Still there is a term to weeping,
And, although I missed his bloom,
Doubtless I shall see him sleeping
Sometimes in a glassy tomb.
Also I have lately cherished
In my heart a sanguine glow :
When they say his tribe has perished,
Do these *savants* really know ?

ADONAIS

What if in some coral antre
 Proteus, BARNUM of the blue,
Where the tame sea-horses canter,
 Keeps a docile mammoth too?
What if with his noblest feature
 Round some ocean-dainty linked,
He survives, deluded creature,
 Unaware that he's extinct?

PETTICOAT PRINTS

[Mrs. J. R. GREEN has asserted that women form the majority of newspaper readers, and complained that journalists, in the preparation of newspapers, thought only of men.]

SAY not the fair has been forgotten
By all that broach the midnight ink ;
Though half the morning press be rotten,
The "ha'p'nnies" know how women think :
If they despise the hand that holds the cotton
Then strike me pink.

Lo ! how the careless eye meanders
From news of statesmen and police
To boudoir tips and toilet candours,
And remedies for facial crease,
And, interspersed with stuffing for the ganders,
The sauce for geese.

PETTICOAT PRINTS

Here shall you find what arts demolish
The pimple (o'er your breakfast cup);
What fashion's latest whims abolish
And what demand, and where to sup;
The way to peel potatoes and to polish
Tiaras up.

Here is the nymph's delight, the "shocker,"
Telling how Guy, the baleful Bart.,
Stole papers from Lord Edwin's locker,—
And (oh, be still, poor panting heart!)
Virtue shall triumph yet, beneath the soccer,
In Monday's part.

Nay, when I contemplate the leaders,
The foreign items planned to thrill,
The interview that tells our readers
How Mr. Tubbs (that lion quill)
Welcomed our young reporter at "The Cedars"
On Streatham Hill,

Showed him his sanctum and his kitten,
Revealed his dietetic rules—
I sometimes wonder if they're written,
These papers, not for trousered fools,
But solely for the demoiselles of Britain
At boarding schools.

AWAKE, ENGLAND!

[The following lines will, it is hoped, arouse our youth to a sense of their decadence (as recently remarked by *The Daily Mail*) in permitting foreigners to monopolise the hotel-managing business.]

Oh, where has the sea-dog been couching?
Oh, where are the Norsemen of old,
The chaps who were constantly pouching
Some enemy's gold?

Has nothing been left of the order
Of barons who boned what they could,
Of raiders who harried the Border,
And bold ROBIN HOOD?

The buccaneer captains of Devon
Who barbered King PHILIP of Spain,
Has none of them left us his leaven
Of duty and gain?

AWAKE, ENGLAND!

And those, the delectable rangers
Of childhood, who dirked and who drank,
Whose simplest amusement for strangers
Was strolling the plank?

And TURPIN, whose hoof-beats would hammer
All night on his pillaging route,
Has *he* not bequeathed us the glamour,
The glory of loot?

Our fathers were full of the vigour,
The *verve* of the caterer's art,
That bleeds at a regular figure,
Or else *à la carte*.

Then up, O ye Britons, and follow
The gleam, the adventurous hope,
With backs that are bending and hollow,
With palms that are ope.

Remember the gold of the galleons,
Remember the night-riding swells,
And cut out the Swiss and Italians
At keeping hotels.

“THE AUTOCRAT OF THE BREAKFAST TABLE.”

[In discussing the “growing increase in the cost of living,” an evening paper mentions that bacon now ranks with the best cuts of beef, and eggs for cooking cost 1d. more per dozen.]

THE price of beef went up ; I did not grudge it ;
They said the loaf was dearer ; what cared I ?
The bristling leaders on a baleful Budget
Left me a mugwump still without a sigh :
Baccy and beer were blowed, but now I waken
To drain the teacup and its tannin'd dregs,
If dearth shall reave me of my morning bacon,
Topped by its two poached eggs.

Some deem the deathless birthright of the Briton
The football that he flicks with flying feet,
His Parliament, his Press ; and some have written
Their sagas round his sirloins and his Fleet :
But not the bard : I know that breasts are oaken
Because (maybe by ÆLFRED'S dying wish)
On ham and eggs their nightlong fast is broken—
(We need not note the squish).

THE AUTOCRAT

Some Atheling, I believe, in bygone ages,
Cooked them before the fight, and gave his men
The courage of the boar-pig when he rages,
The blithe abandon of the farmyard hen ;
And shall I shirk the furious fray (like ASHUR)
And not assail some party for its sins
When dearer grows the immemorial rasher
And rare the heavenly twins ?

Hard by the open sweetness of the heather,
In taverns underneath the fir-crowned hill,
In every aspect of our glorious weather,
Have I not put them down and paid the bill ?
The yolk that gushes out, the grease that hardens,
They come with memories of the moor and lea,
Or linked with "wet, bird-haunted" English
gardens,
Or lodgings by the sea.

Better to heed the siren voices singing
Of Food Reform, and prices bound to drop,
Than lose our "*semper eadem*" by ringing
The matutinal change on fish and chop ;
England is England still so long as morning
With plenishment of gold and crimson cheers
The platters of her hinds and those adorning
The sideboards of her peers.

THE TRUTHFUL ANGLER

(A CONFESSION TO HIS HOST)

No, it was not with cunning, not with guile,
Not with the "far-flung battle line" of "Zulus,"
Threshing the stream for many a weary mile,
Waving my arm like one that hath a screw
loose—

Not thus that, while the midges murmuréd
heir mournful incantations round my head,
I took this monster from his ancient bed
Of cool ooze.

He did not leap all panther to the lure,
Rush at the hint of steel like Wall Street buyers,
Struggle for ages ere I had him sure,
And seek to foul me underneath the briars ;
Jones would have told you that or some such myth,
So would a hundred of his craft and kith ;
But I am WASHINGTON, where Jones and Smith
Are liars.

THE TRUTHFUL ANGLER

No, with a leaded line, deliberate, calm,
 Standing behind a bush as I was bidden,
There in an evening hour of bats and balm,
 When all the swollen flood was flotsam-ridden,
I towed him to his meritorious doom,
I and a fat red worm the undergroom
Had garnered over-night from (I presume)
 The midden.

Heavy he came and bloated to his end,
 A sheer dead lump to pull, and not a skilled haul,
Like some stout City merchant who must wend
 (After the speeches and the wine have thrilled all)
His way to villadom, from where he sat,
Doing his duty by the turtle fat,
Helping to feast some high-souled hero at
 The Guildhall.

(Homeric simile.) But ere I close
 Observe once more the *triplex aes et robur*
Of this stout rodsman as compared with those
 Who lie from early March to late October ;
Though, had I not observed (with some chagrin)
That Jack, your son, was standing near the scene,
My story too had very likely been
 Less sober.

THE ROUND OF DESTINY

(DEDICATED TO THE PROPHETIC ALMANACK-MONGERS)

EVEN as erst, when the Pythian
Priestess, pretending to swoon,
Forged in the smoke of her smithy an
Artful political rune,
Doubtless Arcadian villagers,
Heedless of omens of war,
Careless of far-away pillagers,
Followed their Herds as before ;—

So, when oracular offices
Send me their leaflets of doom,
All unaffected by prophecies
Calmly my cleek I resume ;
Bogeys of apocalyptical
Authors, whoe'er they may be,
Less than a gossamer whip tickle
One that has sliced from the tee.

THE ROUND OF DESTINY

Steady of eye as a halibut,
Stolid of will as a serf,
Plough I the soil of the valley (but
Always replacing the turf) ;
Where is your wiser philosopher ?
Earth's international rubs
Harm not the soul who is boss of her
Surface by dint of his clubs.

Tell me no tales of a demagogue,
Read me no diplomat's wile ;
Any old thing will set them agog,
Nothing can alter my style ;
Here on this dune, with its sandy cap
Fronting the infinite main,
I and my 26 handicap
Start on our cycle again.

If you would garner my gratitude,
ZADKIEL, MOORE, and the rest,
Makers of mystical platitude,
Augurs of strife and unrest,
Tell me next year if some serious
Swerve in the counsels of Fate
Means to cut down my imperious
Card of 108.

THE LIMIT

[Inspired by the appalling prospect of a second General Election within six months of the last.]

NEVER a whine escaped me, not a whimper
Through all those weeks of weariness and fuss,
When every morning found the lyre grow limper,
As LLOYD said this and CHURCHILL laboured thus.
Who heeded songs meanwhile? What oats had
Pegasus?

Here were the papers stripped of half their glory,
The subjects which delight the Muse and me ;
What do we care for Liberal or for Tory
So we preserve a Press that's fancy free,
Ranging the whole wide world (through REUTER'S
agency)?

The sun was blotted out with facts and figures,
And through the darkness, desolate, opaque,
Perspiring rhetoricians toiled like niggers

THE LIMIT

As though some solid issue were at stake.
Poor innocents ! And yet I neither moved nor
spake.

And now, as when the last straw comes and smashes
The overburdened dromedary's spine,
They hint at more elections. Dust and ashes !
Am I to take this tyranny supine ?
Is there no end to politics, no anodyne ?

Must I again be numbered with the readers
Of awful economic rigmaroles ?
Admire the spectacle of party leaders
For ever climbing up their slippery polls ?
And hear the "Last Results" sound forth like
funeral tolls ?

If it be so, then, Ministers, take warning !
Ere I submit to that impendent pall,
Out I shall go (accomplices suborning)
And wreck the panes in Downing Street, and
squall,
"No votes for any one ! No votes ! No votes at
all !"

THE SENTIMENTAL GOLF- ROUND

[AN ATTEMPT TO REALISE THE ROMANTIC SPIRIT OF
LOCAL ADVERTISEMENTS]

WHERE the purple gloom of heather,
Where the golden stars of gorse
Twine and twist their roots together,
Let me linger and endorse
Praises of the moorland stretching
Into vistas faint and fetching,
Praises that the guide-book uttered of this pretty
nine-hole course.

By this tor, a famous beacon,
Once, no doubt, were British huts ;
Places that you ground your cleek on
(Full of tantalising ruts)
Saw the minstrel Druids gather,
Solemn men with beards like lather,
Witless that in time their temples would provoke
a Saxon's "Tuts."

THE SENTIMENTAL GOLF-ROUND

There to leftward lies the ocean,
Shining as a silver pall,
Moving with its magic motion
Onward till the breakers fall,
Onward till the foam-flake splashes
O'er the sea-weed, like my mashies
Tumbling on to greens where TAYLOR could not
stop the berserk ball.

Right, you have the moorland swelling,
Mile on mile, with countless kinks,
Mother of the streamlets welling
Into vales where Ceres winks,
Where the natives murmur "Thickey,"
And their tongue is soft and tricky
As this mass of vegetation which they choose to
term a links.

Stalwart men on tiny ponies,
You shall see them in the dale,
See them draining with their cronies
Mugs of cider and of ale.
Slack they seem and pleasant spoken,
Doubtless, though, their hearts are oaken,
Witness my undaunted caddy searching on a tee-
shot's trail.

THE SENTIMENTAL GOLF-ROUND

Ah, but now the shadows darken.

Hushed the fairy-haunted scene,
Beauteous land of Devon, hearken !

Help me, as with some chagrin,
By the souls of sea-dogs beckoned
I prepare to play my second

Out of this enchanted fern-tuft, to the faith-
envisaged green.

THE MARKET FOR MOTLEY

[“There ought to be scope for every variety of poetical energy, and in our cynical society the dearth of witty, ironical and satirical verse is serious.”—*Athenæum*.]

IN an age that is hollow and humdrum,
And heedless of all that is grand,
When the epic is burst like a dumb drum,
And lyres have gone out of the band ;
When we faint with the flippant and caustic,
Ye gods ! shall they *ask* us to use
(It's enough to make any one's jaw stick)
A jocular Muse ?

There's a want of satirical rhymesters,
A dearth, they declare, of the clown !
When the soul of a decadent time stirs
The staidest to stand on his crown ;
Why, I tell you, my dear *Athenæum*,
The bardlets whose absence you weep,
They are blocking the kerbs : one can see 'em
Like so many sheep.

THE MARKET FOR MOTLEY

It's the bane of my life ; it's the sorrow
That pierces the lobes of my heart
And impends like a cloud o'er the morrow—
That every one will be so smart ;
No longer the rhapsody pleases,
The rage of our forefathers clogs,
Young poets are packed full of wheezes,
The humorous dogs.

I rather lament and look back (but
In vain) to the season of song,
When the sound of the lute and the sackbut
And serious music was strong ;
To the days of the leonine bangers
Of harps with their wrath and their woe,
When Parnassus was roaring like Sanger's
Or Wombwell his show.

I pine for the lachrymose ditty,
I weep for the ponderous ode,
I hate all this stuff that is witty
And meant to make people explode :
For the trade in the verse that is pungent
(Compared with the songs that are sad)
Is too overcrowded, and one gent
Is feeling it bad.

DISILLUSIONED

YE that murmur in your folly :
 “ Friends are faithless to their trust ;
No one can return a broil ;
 Youth’s ambitions end in dust ;
Creeds are vain and life is jolly
 Well unjust.

“ Buoyant as a pumped-up bladder,
 Long ago we dreamed of bliss,
Gaily climbed romance’s ladder ;
 Now the world is all amiss ; ”—
Look you, mine’s a case that’s sadder
 Much than this.

Harking back, I don’t remember,
 As the bulk of bardlets do,
Hope expiring like an ember,
 Skies of iridescent hue
Stricken into dull December
 Tout à coup.

DISILLUSIONED

Cynic rather were the poses
Which inspired my pen to start
Raging at the sham that glozes
Love and faith and life and art—
Grubs that perforate the rose's
Blooming heart.

Sentiment, I thought, was sloppy :
I beheld a world of wrong,
Crimes that flaunted like a poppy,
Foul abuses going strong
(Quite invaluable copy,
Set to song).

Now with every dawning morrow
I observe that goodness stamps
Half mankind, and (ah, the sorrow !)
Even see suspected scamps
Still returning, when they borrow,
Books and gamps.

Virtue all about me thickens ;
Toleration hourly grows ;
Where is now the type that sickens ?
Where's the canker in the rose ?
Goodness, or maybe the dickens,
Only knows.

DISILLUSIONED

Anyhow the fancies dwindle
Which obsessed a youthful bard ;
Rage no longer can enkindle
 Scorching satires that regard
All things as a high old swindle—
 This is hard.

THE PERFECT CONFIDANT

(AN APPLICATION OF ONE OF THE TRIUMPHS OF
MODERN PROGRESS TO THE NEEDS OF A ROMANTIC
TEMPERAMENT)

I NEVER use the little hutches
That house the public telephone
For ringing people up, though such is
Their estimable aim, I own ;

For when I did I used to blunder ;
My heart is in Pierian springs ;
I never was much shakes at under-
Standing machinery and things.

Too often in a state of fever
(Induced by the celestial flame)
I clapped my ear to the receiver,
And talked into the what's-its-name.

THE PERFECT CONFIDANT

It took me hours to get my number ;
I used to hear strange voices round
Breathing the lotus-chant of slumber,
“ An intermittent buzzing sound.”

And, when I did get on to some one
After eternities of doubt,
A far-off voice, a faint and rum one,
Informed me that the boss was out.

Also I did not like the crazes
Of those who worked this wondrous beast :
They used the most astounding phrases
That were not English in the least.

Deaf to the language that was Johnson's
They made me say “ One-double-O,”
Meaning a hundred (which was non-sense),
And did they heed my censure? No.

I had no time to stop and bicker,
And so I cried, “ The Muses call.
Farewell ! I feel the heavenly flicker !
I shall not use your wires at all.”

THE PERFECT CONFIDANT

But sometimes, when I break the bubble
Of happiness, and life is drear,
When I am fain to pour my trouble
Into a soft and shell-like ear ;

When I can find no handier harbours,
I foot it from the rough world's rage
To one of these delightful arbours
And make therein my hermitage.

Gently removing the transmitter
(But placing nothing in the slot)
I tell of love's sweet fruit grown bitter,
Of faith forlorn, of vows forgot.

I tell how sweet, in urban clamour,
It is to find this fairy dell ;
I take great pains about my grammar,
I say I like their little bell.

I mourn the lapse of time that worsens
An intellect unmatched of yore ;
I simply disregard the persons
Who congregate outside the door.

THE PERFECT CONFIDANT

I say that snow-white hairs are gleaming
Fast on these (once how auburn !) locks,
But youth returns and hope and dreaming
Inside their admirable box.

“ Here I should like to live for ever,
And pour my tale of troubles out,
You are so young, so fair, so clever,
So full of sympathy,” I shout.

Alas ! that urban toil and squalor
Should interrupt a trance so sweet !
Some idiot nabs me by the collar
And hales me, struggling, to the street.

TO MY PIPE

(UPON THE OCCASION OF A PERIODICAL EXPURGATION)

THE rose, whose sweetness fills your grain,
Too wildly flowers, unless we trim it ;
All happiness may turn to pain
And prove "the limit."

And music rare, whose rising swell
Enchants the soul, may soar, my poppet,
Till some one has to go and tell
The brutes to stop it.

Such is the case, I trow, with you ;
Those lees of elegiac ferment.
That ripe luxuriance is due
For disinterment.

Not once nor twice my so-called friends
Have chaffed the swan-song in your channel
(Poor smokers of inferior blends,
Their pipes are scrannel).

TO MY PIPE

Little I care for what they say ;
But I myself have found your wheezes
A thought too rich, too rare to-day—
Like German cheeses.

So with the fond regret of one
Who finds the blessed daylight struck dim
Because his heart's adored, his Sun,
Has been and chucked him,

And, though his life henceforth must be
Hollow and tasteless, tries to scrimmage
Out of gates of memory
Her glorious image,

I gird me to the bitter strife,
And excavate your clotted splendour
(Using a hat-pin and a knife)
Into the fender.

A SCORE OFF THE WEATHER

YE winds that are wasting the hedges,
Ye squalls that have blotted the hills,
And have doomed us to toy with the edges
Of ivory pills,
You may laugh, but I tell you, by thunder,
You make the most horrible blunder
If you think that I minded this morning the moan
of the rills.

Not a protest of misery move I,
Nor gird at the heavenly powers ;
Nay, rather, O Jupiter Pluvi !
Come on with your showers ;
Blow, hurricanes ! tempests, be bigger !
And, James, will you pass me that jigger ?
We shan't have to go to the Thompsons' at Tettleby
Towers.

A SCORE OFF THE WEATHER

All night I was needlessly racking
This brain for a decent excuse,
And still with the dawn it was lacking,
But, praised be Zeus,
I shan't have that pow-wow to suffer ;
Old Thompson's a bore and a duffer ;
His wife is a snob, and the girl is a regular goose.

And the place is miles off, and too many's
The times they have tortured me there,
And there may, or there mayn't, be some tennis,
And what should I wear ?
And I hate, I detest garden parties,
And Dora (the queen of my heart) is—
She mentioned it yesterday evening—invited else-
where.

So here's to the blizzards that soften
The links to a suety mould ;
They have rained on us rather too often ;
This time they were sold.
Did you see that remarkable cannon—
The way that it twisted and ran on ?
We shan't have to go to the Thompsons'. Oh,
morning of gold !

THE OATEN PIPE

(AN IDYLL OF LEMON SQUASH)

SWEET are the songs of summer, sweet
The loud cicala in the vale ;
The " lunch-score cricket " in the street,
The cuckoo and the nightingale.

The hit half-volley's sounding smack,
The murmur of the yellow bees ;
The cry of " Fore," the sudden crack
Of opened bottles—sweet are these.

But sweeter than them all I count
The cadence of the hollow reed,
The practicable pump or fount
That irrigates my throat with mead.

Sad are the songs of summer, too,
The nightingale is bound to stop ;
The swiipe descending from the blue
In steady hands too oft will drop.

THE OATEN PIPE

But saddest of the sounds I know
In summer's joy the deepest flaw,
Is that which tells the glass is low,
The swan-song of the empty straw !

THE SENTIMENTAL SUNDOWNER

[“Nine bags of hairpins, which he had picked up in the course of his walks, were found on a tramp who was sent to jail at Manchester for begging.”]

ROMANTIC vagrant ! Not for you
The common loot your fellows prized ;
The bantam unmolested crew,
The orchard apple you despised :
But evermore 'neath harvest moons
You sought the tracks of bygone spoons.

Oft in the lane where Strephon stroked
The wavelets of Neaera's hair,
Your wandering feet to light have poked
Some mute memorial of the fair :
Your chaste delight it was to bone
Remains of idylls not your own.

Full oft (when mastiff's made you shunt)
You loved beneath some kindly stack,
To muse which staple held the front
Of Chloe's hair, and which the back :

THE SENTIMENTAL SUNDOWNER

And laved the mud in roadside brooks
From Araminta's coupling-hooks.

“High in the hair of Winifred”
“This clamp,” you used to think, “was
screwed,”
“This other tacked (to hide the red)
A golden tuft on Ermyntude.”
And every humble piece of wire
Suffused your heart with amorous fire.

Alas! for laws that count it sin
When troubadour demands a crust,
And run the rare knight errant in!
Yet even so at times I trust
They'll let you dream once more, and hug
Your hoard of skewers there in jug!

BACK TO THE LISTS

[Lines written before the suggestion they contain was adopted to a certain extent by the building of the Brooklands motor-tracks.]

WHEN tilting Knights on grassy tract,
Measured their lances and their length,
But life was hard for those who lacked
The simple *savoir faire* of strength :
When Justices left jokes to Dagonet,
And no one kept an auto-wagonet :

Your villein seldom suffered loss,
But lived at peace the while his lord
Would very likely run across
Some errant blade of Arthur's board,
Who loved upon the turf to chance a lot,
Gawaine or Lamorak or Lancelot,

And surely it were fairer now
If visored fiends with armour clad,

BACK TO THE LISTS

Who mince the ruminating cow
And make staid roosters leap like mad,
(And more they do that I in mercy veil
Unknightly deeds unknown to Percevale,)

If these should on some forest lawn,
Holding a tournament of cars,
Feuter and foin from early dawn
Till all beheld amazing stars.
And to and fro with oil to plenish all
Shunted Sir K (O2) the Seneschal.

Then might we sing like bards of yore
How well Sir Panhard fought his whack,
And bested with a buffet sore
Sir Tête de Motomaniacque,
Shelling his brain like peas that stocked a pod
About his 80 h.p. Octopod.

THE YOUNG IDEA

[An answer to some of the charges recently levelled at the scholastic curriculum.]

Is this the way to wean and nurse
 Bantlings of bright imagination ?
Was e'er a system so perverse
 As Public School-boys' education ?
The smart but flashy sort of child
 We fatten (sic) with mental fodder,
Leaving illiterate and wild
 The dull (but really soulful) plodder.

By flowery ways he ought to win,
 Plucking the blooms that shine the fairest,
Instead of which we keep him in
 To cram the uses of the aorist :
The soft Virgilian cadences
 The music (strongly-winged) of Homer,
These he should know or knowledge is
 (The papers say) a mere misnomer.

THE YOUNG IDEA

But hark, oh Critic, back a spell !
Conceive yourself with kindly yearning
As tutor to the Upper Shell
Setting ajar the gates of learning ;
Think how the disappointment hurts
When just as fervour thrills your marrow
Across the room from Thompson tert,
There slowly steals a paper arrow.

You pause and mark that Brown unmoved
By visions of a mental *τροφή*
Has surreptitiously improved
The shining hour with almond toffee ;
The tear that gleams in Jones' eye
(Jones who appeared your brightest scholar !)
Is due to this, that Johnson *mi*
Has rammed a pencil down his collar.

No : you will soon give up again,
And turn with angry mien to hammer
Some simple rules by dint of cane
Through heads incapable of glamour :
The repetition day by day,
The good old rhymes that never vary,—
And Smith will stop behind to say
“ Amo ” infinitive “ Amare.”

THE YOUNG IDEA

More pained than they you'll realise,
 From knowledge of the side that's seamy,
There as they bend in suppliant wise,
 Floored on the future of ἴσθημι,
That no amount of mental joy
 In beauty, taken by his betters,
Can wean the crasser sort of boy
 From sheer contempt for human letters.

THE DEAD WASP

[Miss Black-Hawkins, in an article in *The National Review*, has explained that wasps can be easily tamed and make delightful pets.]

OUR household is riven in two with trouble,
And Jimmy is tearing the locks from his head,
And Mother and Madge with grief bent double,
For Charlie is dead.

I see him, the delicate waif—how sunny,
How sweet was his smile, as he hovered and
poked
His dear little head in a spoonful of honey—
And now he has croaked.

He came through the window, a golden-gowned
fairy,
One day in the summer, on murmurous wing ;
I remember my father remarking to Mary,
“Don't move—or he'll sting.”

THE DEAD WASP

We trained him with kindness—I wove him a collar,

The butler would take him for walks on a lead ;
He would beg you for dainties, as bright as a dollar,
And how he would feed !

We once had a beautiful earwig named Peto :

That faded—as all that is beautiful must ;
And so did Alphonso, our Spanish mosquito—
He also is dust.

But Charles was the best of them all—and though
widish

The world, it has nothing of cheer to produce,
Since Charlie fell over the top of a pie-dish
And drowned in the juice.

THE SIREN

[“The beauties of London are essentially those which appeal to the artist rather than to the man in the street.”—*The Lady.*]

OH, Covent Garden, at the break of day !
Oh, Piccadilly, when the vault is blue !
Victoria, with your tender tints of grey,
Praed-street and Paddington and Waterloo,
And Brixton Rise,
How veiled your beauties are from vulgar eyes !

There is a Bank, where wild time doubtless goes ;
There is a Strand, where elfin voices wail ;
Sweet avenues bedecked with flowery hose,
And Dryads thronging to the remnant sale,
Whom none may see
Save children of the Muses—chaps like me !

Mysterious murmurs in the evening shade
Tell how the droning taxi leaves his lair ;

THE SIREN

And tinkling music in the leaf-set glade
Of some lone crescent or deserted square
Denotes the fact
That men may flout unscathed the Street Cries Act.

Ah, London, London ! to the artist's soul
You have a poignant charm too deep for words ;
Let others choose the loud Atlantic's roll,
Or rustic meadows filled with munching herds ;
I mean to stay
At Clapham Junction for my holiday !

MY IDEAL SHOP

(A WHOLLY IMAGINARY ADVENTURE)

UP the colonnades of marble
Mutely to the shrine I went.
(If you deem the truth I garble
Let the clown indulge his bent.)
'Neath the dome, I say, were gushing
Founts and fat commissionaires,
Lyre-birds through the palms were flushing,
On the floor were Edward bears.

First I saw the Picture Gallery,
Gay with masterpieces worth
More than many a prince's salary,
Showing from the dawn of earth
All the modes of fashion shapers,
All the arts of men that weave—
Starting with those simple drapers
Adam and his consort Eve.

MY IDEAL SHOP

Next I took the Foreign Office,
Filled with diplomats profound,
Tried the restaurant where coffees
And Parisian cates abound.
Then the Boxing School that teaches
Maidens for their furs to spar,
Then the hospital where leeches
Tend the wounded warrior's scar.

Angels seized me by the lapel,
Led me by mosaic paths
Through the library and chapel,
Tennis courts and Turkish baths.
Last I saw the Mausoleum,
Where they lay the souls on whom
Death descends from strife to free 'em
Fainting in the bargain room.

* * * *

So it was the vision ended
(Fairy grots and fays complete),
All too soon exclaiming "splendid,"
I debouched upon the street.
Found the trifling need forgotten
Whence my wondrous fortune flowed,
And procured my reel of cotton
Later in the Fulham Road.

THE LOST ACTOR

[A Chicago showman offered £50 reward for the discovery and return of a performing flea which had vanished from his troupe.]

WHETHER of wounded pride you felt the pain,
Failing to earn the meed of men's applause,
I cannot at this distance o'er the main
Exactly tell; it may have been the cause;
Or possibly they billed you far too low,
And angered, till he left the cast in choler,
One who by rights was boss of all the show,
Its HICKS, its BEERBOHM TREE, its BARD, its
WALLER.

But anyhow you skipped; and was it wise
To leave the lamps of Drama and forsake
The cultured sets that counted you a prize,
Merely to keep some Philistine awake?
O nimble-footed sprite! O Ariel!
Why did you quit your company of stormers
To front a frowning world that cannot tell
Nocturnal visitants from star performers?

THE LOST ACTOR

If haply (forced by hunger) you should fare
 Into some strange inhospitable crib,
Have you the mime's expression and his air,
 The speaking optic and the tongue that's glib?
Yours is no mantle of the furry sort,
 No ebon cane, no eyeglass, and no ringlet,
Nothing to prove divinity, in short,
 And advertise (when off) the mummer-kinglet.

They shall not know you by your sad sweet smile,
 Your hagged countenance, but merely keep
Hunting you up and down with anxious guile
 Because you come to mar their beauty sleep;
'Tis likely you will fall, with none to say
 That this poor fretted shape imparted rapture
(The Hamlet of some Lilliputian play)
 To crowded houses nightly, ere his capture.

This only I may hope, that, when you bound
 In sweet *insouciance* to plant a kiss
On some prone sleeper, he will turn him round,
 Saying, "No amateur could prance like this;"
And, when the chase is o'er (you shall not stem
 The march of doom for aye, however gallant),
Utter above your grave this requiem:—
 " He was an artist; he had genuine talent."

TO THE GOD OF LOVE

COME to me, Eros, if you needs must come
This year, with milder twinges ;
Aim not your arrow at the bull's-eye plumb,
But let the outer pericardium
Be where the point impinges.

Garishly beautiful I watch them wane,
Like sunsets in a pink west,
The passions of the past ; but O their pain !
You recollect that nice affair with Jane ?
We nearly had an inquest.

I want some mellower romance than these,
Something that shall not waken
The bosom of the bard from midnight ease,
Nor spoil his appetite for breakfast, please
(Porridge and eggs and bacon).

TO THE GOD OF LOVE

Something that shall not steep the soul in gall,
Nor plant it *in excelsis*,
Nor quite prevent the bondman in its thrall
From biffing off the tee as good a ball
As anybody else's ;

But rather when the world is dull and gray
And everything seems horrid,
And books are impotent to charm away
The leaden-footed hours, shall make me say,
“ My hat ! ” (and strike my forehead).

“ I am in love, O circumstance how sweet !
O ne'er to be forgot knot ! ”
And praise the damsel's eyebrows, and repeat
Her name out loud, until it's time to eat,
Or go to bed or what not.

This is the kind of desultory bolt,
Eros, I bid you shoot me ;
One with no barb to agitate and jolt,
One where the feathers have begun to moult—
Any old sort will suit me.

THE CALL

How nobly on that pious afternoon

I started forth, how splendidly arrayed !
In silken hat and patent leather shoon,
And creases sharp on either pantaloon,
And robe befringed with braid.

To call on Mrs. Thompson, 92

Carnarvon Terrace (terraces be blowed !),
I happened on a 'bus of pleasing hue,
And travelling on its top admired the view
And reached Carnarvon Road.

There first of all a faint forgetfulness

(Born of the dying leaves that fringed the
path)

Took me of Mrs. Thompson's true address ;

"What was the actual site ?" I murmured,
" Bless !"

I had it in my bath.

THE CALL

“I knew it all the morning, I could swear
I nursed it when I started, unforgot ;
Yonder is 92 Carnarvon Square,
A fine commodious house: she might live
there.”

She might, but she did not.

I flushed Carnarvon Avenue, I clomb
Carnarvon Hill, I ventured to explore
Carnarvon Flats, imperious pleasure dome,
Where Alf, the sacred porter, stood at home
Behind his burnished door.

So hour by hour I trod the mazy round,
And mild policemen watched compassionate
As gravel sweep on gravel sweep I ground,
And servants bade me bootlessly rebound
From gate to clanging gate.

On half a score of bells I smote amain,
From half a score of mansions turned to
flee ;
Where'er Carnarvon wove its winding bane
(Except Carnarvon Terrace), racked with pain
I trumpeted for tea.

THE CALL

This was a month ago, and time does fly ;
Therefore I've penned these verses of regret,
Hoping that, if they chance to catch her eye,
They may explain to Mrs. Thompson why
I have not called there yet.

THE BURDEN OF THE CELIBATE

[The *Court Journal* seriously renews the suggestion that bachelors should be subject to a tax.]

FORGIVE me, Delia, if a swain,
Who lately left your life for ever,
Ungallantly obtrudes again
The heartstrings that you chose to sever ;
But may I have that verbal smack,
My once adored, in white and black ?

Not that I mean, as maidens do,
When Strephon shirks the Love God's collars,
To heal a bosom hacked in two
By coming down on you for dollars ;
The knightly male would scorn to peach
On faithless fairs, or sue for breach.

But if in time to come the State
Sets taxes on the stubborn hermit,
In proof that I desired a mate,
I ask you, Delia, to confirm it ;
And doubtless it will ease my dole
To claim a rebate on the toll !

TERMINOLOGICAL EXACTITUDE

[*Witness.* "He is under the L.C.C."]

Judge Bacon. "What is that?"

Witness. "The London County Council."

Fragment from a case in the Whitechapel County Court.

So different from the elder BACON
Whose cryptograms were horrid hard
(And thus his verses got mistaken
For those of BILL—a minor bard),
The namesake of that nimble beak
Repudiates the verbal freak,
He will not have the language shaken,
The wells of English marred.

To him abbreviated titles
Are crude as crimson to a bull,
He stipulates for long recitals
Because they are so beautiful ;
The *nom de guerre* or name for short
Annoys him like a legal tort ;
Contractions corrugate his vitals
And nicknames warp his wool.

TERMINOLOGICAL EXACTITUDE

Suppose a felon, forced by famine
To pilfer crumpets for his tea,
Were brought before him to examine,
How pained his gentle heart would be
To hear that solecistic use,
Whereby, in circles sadly loose,
A shop for eating bread and jam in
Is called an A.B.C.

Where other men would come a cropper
By asking how to reach the Zoo,
He'd buttonhole the nearest copper
And bid him state a case (or two)
On travelling by the Underground
To Regent's Park (the Northward bound),
And bridle (as is only proper)
At words like Bakerloo.

Then, England, while you have such judges
The *toupet* and the robe to don,
Whoever fakes, whoever fudges,
The law shall not be put upon ;
'Tis men like these in every sphere
Who still uphold by acts sincere
The British flag that never budges,
The glorious Union John.

A PLEA FOR UNSELFISHNESS

THICK as the leaves in autumn down they flutter,
Two at a blow by one dark morning's post :
Missives that make me weep into the butter,
And shed from nerveless hands the untasted
toast ;
Letters to say some poor good fellow
Has fallen into " the sere and yellow,"
Has got engaged—has given up the ghost.

A melancholy train—like carts of coke hauled
Up to the hymeneal pyre they go :
Was there some magic in the summer (so-called)
That made them pop like that ? I do not know.
But anyhow the fools are bottled,
Caught by the neck and fairly throttled,
And o'er their graves the orange-flower shall
blow.

A PLEA FOR UNSELFISHNESS

Not that I blame them wholly—men are mortal :
And who shall say what loveliness, what wiles
Have made them dare the irrevocable portal
And set their feet towards the blessed aisles ?
But what I do complain of, demme,
Is when they paint their Blanche or Emmie :
Their lack of human feeling—that's what riles.

As if 'twere not enough to lose *in toto*
A fairly decent friend (for all his faults),
When some young thing (oh ! yes, I've seen her
photo)
Has haled him to the matrimonial vaults :
As though 'twere bliss, or even pleasant
To have to buy a wedding present
Here in the hourly hail of duns' assaults ;

That then on top of this they'd have me listen—
Well read, at any rate—meander through,
Till tears of boredom on my eyelash glisten,
Their raptures on the radiant object who,
Since ADAM first commenced his farming,
Is “ quite the most divinely charming,”
They all say that—of course it must be true.

A PLEA FOR UNSELFISHNESS

And (not a hint of care nor trouble taken
To have the sorrow of our parting eased)
They hurl their bombshell in my eggs and bacon,
They tell me how their hearts to heaven are seized
(He scarcely knows, does poor dear Simpson !
If life in other spheres yet limps on),
And then, ye gods, they ask me to be pleased.

No, no, my comrades, this is rather too much :
If ye have dared to tread the bridal track
Into the jaws of death, the Stygian gloom-hutch,
Think of the souls on earth who cry " Alack !"
When next my breakfast table bristles
With these funereal epistles,
Let them be short at least and edged with black.

CUPID'S PARTERRE

CORINNA, when your faultless lines enchant
My ravished optics (though it's rude to stare),
I gaze and fondly picture ev'ry plant
That sheds its perfume on the summer air.

I mark the maiden-glory of the rose,
The stature of the holly-hock ; in you
The musk carnation delicately blows
Beside the periwinkle's poignant blue.

I see the stainless lily that defies
Presumptuous whitewash with a painter's
brush,
The pink that swoons, the peony that sighs,
Amidst the throng of Flora's annual crush.

And if you ask me, dear, why you recall
That multitude of blooms—I tell you flat
It is because you wear them nearly all,
Within the monstrous circuit of your hat!

THE PHILOMELOGRAPH

[“ During the coming winter the nightingale’s song will be heard on the gramophone.”—*Evening Paper.*]

BROWN Attic bird, this is indeed a pleasure !

No more in darkling woods to wait about,
But all day long to have your liquid measure
Emerging from a corrugated spout ;

Thrice happy thought ! the youngsters whisper,
“ Daddy,

Turn on the nightingale ”—and lo ! you play,
Rending the calm that follows “ *Yip-i-addy*
I-ay-i-ay.”

Ah me, what ecstasies the pagan poets

Have missed by dying early ! What wild treats
Till now have never been recorded ! Oh, it’s

A shame to think of COLERIDGE and KEATS :
That he (the last), who loved your swift efface-
ments

In labyrinthine gloom, could never write
On what you sounded like through Earl’s Court
casements,

Ope to the night ;

THE PHILOMELOGRAPH

Could never fade away when cares were pricking
Through parlour windows where the firelight
gleams,
And Jones pretends he likes your guttural clicking
Far better than the latest comic themes ;
Could never feel that voice (if thus translated)
On Ruth, amidst the alien corn-sheaves sad,
Worse than all else would probably have grated—
It was too bad.

But we are happier ; we can hear it mingle
With “ all the well-known operatic stars ; ”
Ay, and with all the catchy tunes that jingle
In music-halls and restaurants and bars.
What sounds shall smite the air, what vocal *mêlée*,
When wails for Itylus shall lead the van,
Fighting (across the way) demands for KELLY,
KELLY from Man !

And, oh ! unhappy bride beloved of Procne—
You whom a lurid past forbade to frisk,
Eternally remorseful ! now the cockney
Can buy your wood-notes on a metal-disc ;
Whate'er to ancient Greece you do (or did) owe,
If but the griefs within your bosom pent
Can utterly outmourn the *Merry Widow*,
I am content.

ODE TO AUTUMN

[The fault of most of the classical compositions on this theme is that the writers of them were born in towns, and failed to catch the right bucolic spirit.]

SEASON, when the skies are fainter,
Spirit of the golden sheaves,
Whom the mythologic painter
Up in London town conceives
Not inelegantly bodiced
In a gown that's far from modest,
Principally made of flowers and leaves.

Autumn, would you have me utter,
When I see your boons dispersed,
Lots of laudatory butter,
Me of Little Medlinghurst?
Hymn you like the writing fellows
Whom romantic moonshine mellows,
Folks that ain't been country-born and nursed?

ODE TO AUTUMN

Shall I mention how Demeter
Gathers in the girded shucks?
How the happy peasants greet her
Laughing as the laden trucks
Leave their trails, as bright as guineas,
Hanging from the roadside spinneys?
No, that's not the way we talk in Bucks.

Yellow grain and bursting berry—
Think you these would make us glad?
Was there ever time so merry
British hearts could not be sad?
Bravely though the wheat be smiling,
Some one's oats are always spiling,
Turmuts too be ruination bad.

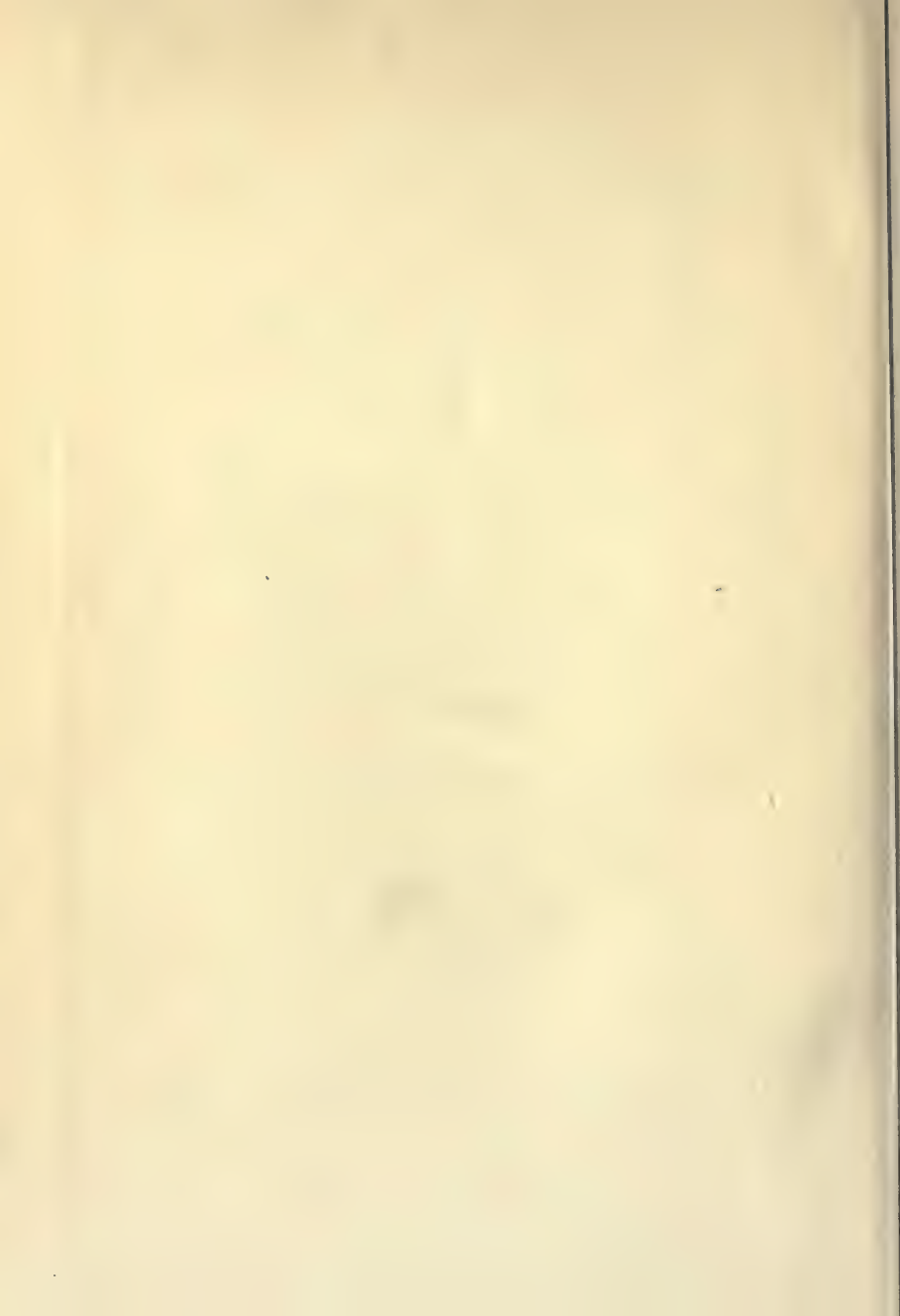
So it is through all the county;
Times in Pulborough is hard;
Notwithstanding "Ceres' bounty"
There's a mort of mangels marred;
Let the city poets render
Tributes to your blazing splendour.
Much they know of England, says the bard.

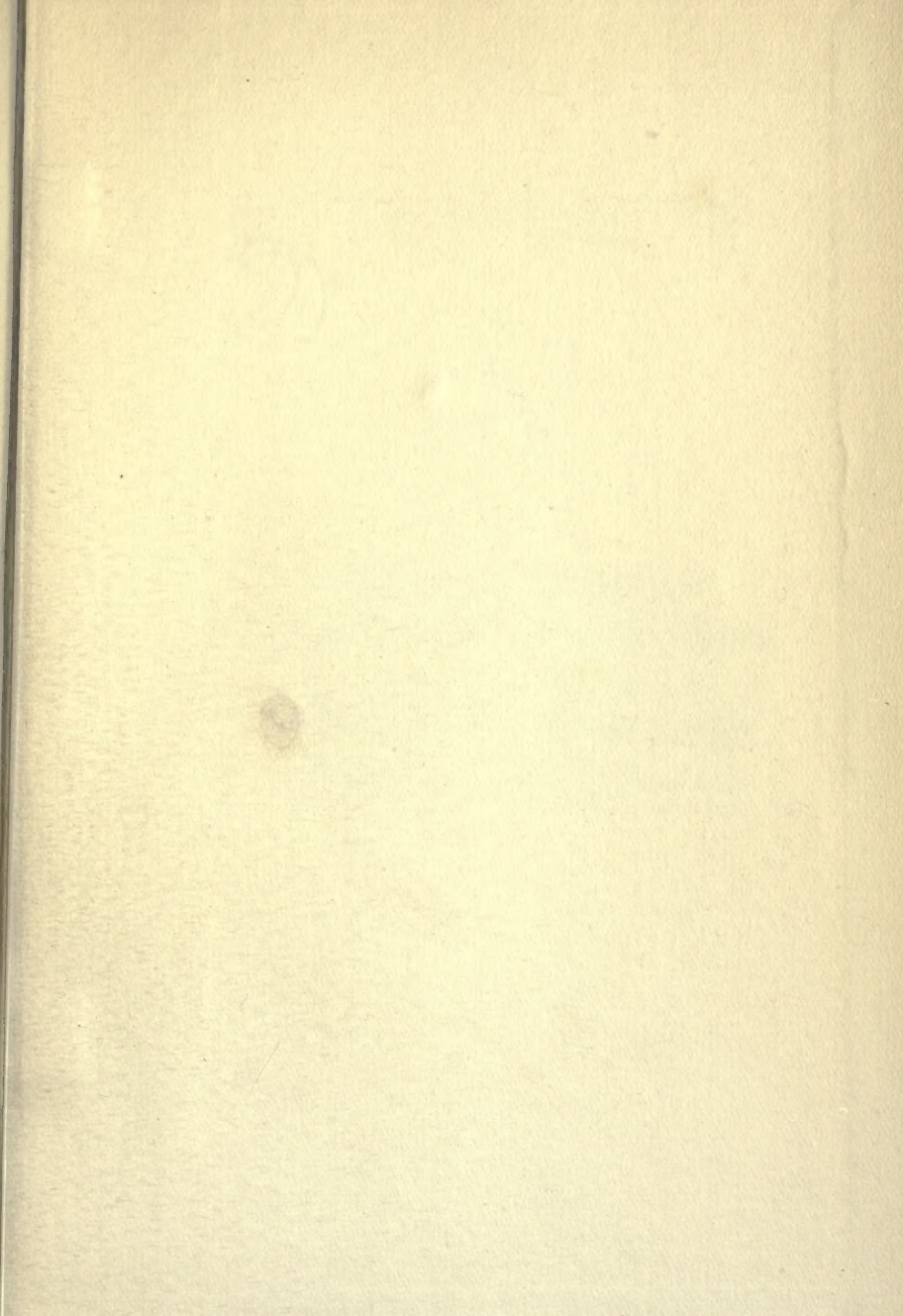
Ay, and if you choose to tumble
"Cornucopias" about

ODE TO AUTUMN

Till there bain't no ground to grumble,
Still the future hangs in doubt :
 We'd be laying up, remember,
 Sartin sure for next September,
Either too much rain or too much drought.

THE END







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Knox, Edmund George Valpy
The brazen lyre

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