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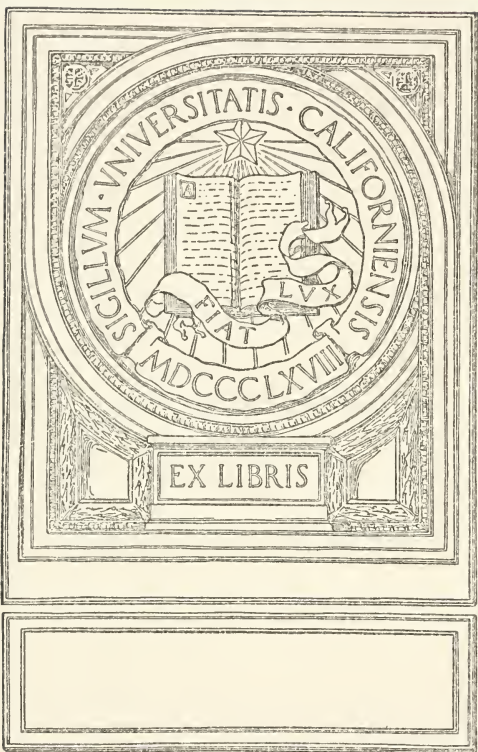
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*The Loom of
Life*

Cotton Noe

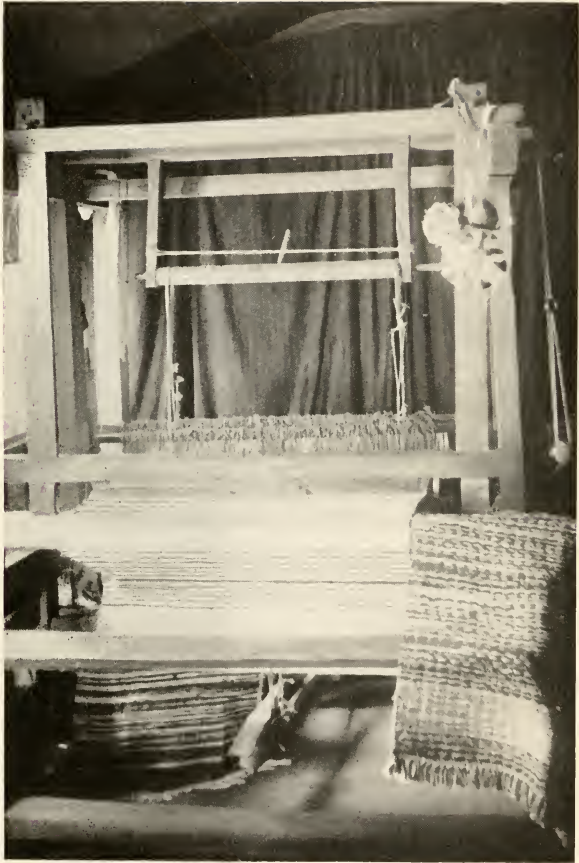


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THE OLD-FASHIONED LOOM

THE LOOM OF LIFE

COTTON NOE



RICHARD G. BADGER

THE GORHAM PRESS

BOSTON

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To
Mother, Wife and Sister

M191850

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PROEM

*Warp and woof from the loom of Life—
A fabric wrought in endless strife:—
Lights and shadows, night and day,
A thousand tints of gold and gray—
Ten thousand shades in leaf and bloom,
WARP and WOOF from Life's great Loom.*

A SKEIN OF SILVER

THE OLD-FASHIONED LOOM

The old log house where Margaret lived, whose
roof had mossy grown,
Reposed amid its clump of trees, a queen upon her
throne.

The landscape round smiled proudly and the
flowers shed sweet perfume,
When Margaret plied the shuttle of the rude old-
fashioned loom.

The world has grown fastidious—demands things
ever new—
But we could once see beauties in the rainbow's
every hue;
The bee could then find nectar in a common clover
bloom,
And simple hearts hear music in the shuttle of the
loom.

The picture that my memory paints is never seen
to-day—
The April sun of by-gone years has lost its bright-
est ray:
A fancy-wrought piano in a quaint, antique old
room,
But Margaret sang her sweetest to the music of
the loom.

She wore a simple home-spun dress, for Marga-
ret's taste was plain,
Yet life was like a song to her, with work a sweet
refrain.
The sunshine filled her days with joy, night's
shadows brought no gloom,

When Margaret plied the shuttle of the old, old-
fashioned loom.

Her warp of life was toiling hard, but love its
beauteous woof,
The web she wove, a character beyond the world's
reproof.
O girls of wealth and beauty vain, who dress in
rich costume,
How sweet the shuttle's music of this rare old-
fashioned loom.

The world may grow fastidious in art and nature
too,
And say there is no beauty in the rainbow's
every hue;
And yet the bee finds nectar in a common clover
bloom,
And I still love the music of the old, old-fashioned
loom.

THE OLD OLD CLOCK

Dear old Old Clock, thy grave tick tock
I heard in my childhood days,
In the solemn night, when the fire burned bright,
And the lamp cast feeble rays;
When grandmother close by the mantlepice,
Sat dozing or knitting, or carding fleece,
Or watching the dying blaze;
When mother was young and her beautiful hair
Had never a silver thread;
When her life was fair as her love was rare,
In the years that have swiftly sped.

Thy grave tick tock, dear old Old Clock,
Unchanged through the changing years,
Still beating time in a ceaseless rhyme
To the dirge of the rolling spheres,—
Unmindful that she by the mantlepice
Is gone with her knitting and carding fleece,—
Unmoved by our sorrowing tears—
Brings back the days when mother's hair
Had never a silver thread,
And the life still fair in its beauty rare
When the snows had crowned her head.

THE OLD SPINNING WHEEL

A cabin! It nestled amid the green hills
Where grew no bramble or thistle,—
Mid meadows melodious with music and trills
And song that the wild-throated mocking bird
spills
On the air from his marvelous whistle.
No carpets were seen on the broad puncheon
floors,
No paintings that wealth would reveal;
But a statue was there that Art can not know,
That filled the rude room with a musical glow,—
'Twas Ruth at the Old Spinning Wheel!

Long years have passed by; its music was stilled
At rattle and whirr of machinery.
And the pea-fowl now screams where the mocking
bird trilled,
And the landscape is dead where once the heart
thrilled
At wildwood and picturesque scenery.
The opera may boast the diva of song,
To me she makes no appeal;
To flute obligato my heart is still dumb,
But oh! for the song and musical hum
Of Ruth and the Old Spinning Wheel!

She lived but a simple, plain rustic life,
Yet charming in sooth was her beauty.
In her untutored heart was love ever rife,
The seat of no conflict, no struggle or strife
'Twixt a selfish will and duty.
I bow at her altar of beauty and truth,

At the shrine of her heart do I kneel,
With a prayer no mortal ever lifted above,
Till my soul is atune with the music of love
She sings to the Old Spinning Wheel!

This unlettered maiden was poor, but high-bred,
Oh, women of fashion, far above you!
And I thrilled at the graceful poise of her head
And the radiant smile of my love when she said,
“Why James, you know that I love you.”
Nymph-like her lithe form swayed as in dance,
I awkwardly sat at the reel—
A moment's surcease of monotonous thrum,—
Melodious the lull in the song and the hum
Of Ruth and the Old Spinning Wheel!

The glow of the incandescent light
Has banished the tallow candle;
And the ox-cart is gone at steam's rapid flight,
But Love is too subtle, is too recondite
For Learning or Genius to handle.
All honor to Science, let her keep her mad pace,
I abate not a tittle her zeal;
But the splendors of life can never efface
The picture of Ruth in plain rustic grace
Who wrought at the Old Spinning Wheel!

THE OLD WATER MILL

"Twas grinding day at the Old Water Mill,
But holiday with me,
For I knew ere I reached the foot of the hill
And heard the voice of the happy rill,
The miller's beautiful child was there
That wore the tresses of sun-lit hair
And smile of witchery;
And the twittering swallows awhirl in the air,
Told in their ecstasy
That Rachel, the Golden Daffodil,
Was blooming again by the Old Water Mill.

Together we cross the moss-covered log
That spans the old mill race,
And we hear through the mists and rising fog
The boom of the dam, the croak of the frog,
That wakes, on the banks of the glinting stream,
The violet tranced in her winter dream,
Where lights and shadows lace;
And the cowslip, like the meteor's gleam,
Darts from her hiding-place,
While the cataracts leap in their haste to fill
The floats of the wheel at the Old Water Mill.

We sit by the dam of the placid stream
And watch the whirl and churn
Of the pouring floods that bubble and steam
And glitter and flash in the bright sunbeam,
While steadily rolls the dripping wheel
That slowly grinds the farmers' meal,
Who restless wait their turn;
But the lights in the miller's face reveal

Never the least concern,
Who takes his toll, and whistles until
The hopper is drained at the Old Water Mill.

To-day we passed where the Old Water Mill
Had stood in the long ago,
But the cataracts leap no more on the hill,
And the boom of the roaring dam is still,
For the gleaming stream in its grief went dry,
When the ruthless hand of Art passed by
And laid the Old Mill low;
And the violets, cold in death, now lie
Wrapped in the glistening snow;
And the biting air is crisp and chill
Around the ruins of the Old Water Mill.

And now we sit by the River of Time
And gaze at the waves below,
But its brink is covered by frost and rime,
And we hear on the wind a muffled chime
Proclaiming the end of a brief sojourn:
Yet the floods of life still whirl and churn
As the currents ebb and flow:—
By the rolling wheel we wait our turn
Calm, but ready to go!
The hopper is drained, but unmoved still,
The Miller who grinds in Time's Water Mill.

WATERLOO

A meeting-house, no church at all,
With stained cathedral glass,
With lofty spire and arching hall,
And terraced lawns of grass:
No organ peals, no chanting choir,
No frescoed walls that men admire
Had this old meeting-house;
But roses wild their petals piled
About its sacred door,
And locust bloom shed rich perfume,
Upon the air, galore,
Around the meeting-house.

It stood upon a limpid stream
My childhood thought divine,
Whose waters pure did ever gleam
Like shimmering shine of wine;
It stood, alas! but stands no more
Upon the bank or pebbly shore
Of sunny Pleasant Run;
Yet in my dreams, it often seems
I see thee, Waterloo,
And see the flash of beaded splash
Upon the waters too,
While crossing Pleasant Run.

Yes, in my dreams, I often hear
The songs they used to sing—
Those solemn lays of reverent fear,
When Christ indeed was King:
Then sinners bowed when prayer was led
By some poor saint the ravens fed
At holy Waterloo.

How free from lust, the simple trust
Of soul that worshipped there;
How free from guile were men erstwhile
Whose creed was song and prayer,
The creed of Waterloo.

The meeting days were always fair—
God smiled on Waterloo!
And mother rode the dark brown mare,
And took the mule colt, too;
For fashion then did not beguile
A mother's heart with worldly wile,
Ah! happy days ago!
Oh! days no more when mothers wore
Sunhood and riding skirt,
And fathers dressed their Sunday best,
A plain check-cotton-shirt,—
Ah! happy days ago!

The sunlight dances on the hills
That shelter Waterloo;
I see the gold of daffodils
That bloom the meadow through—
The hour has come, for meeting's broke,
And now the simple country folk
Are leaving Waterloo!
The horses neigh; away, away!
Away, but not for home;
Grandma to-day, will smile and say,
"My boy, my boy has come."
Oh, blessed Waterloo!

IN THE HAPPY LONG AGO

Yes, I see him, still he's sitting
By his little cabin door!
Ah! but Dinah's gone! She left him
For the shining, golden shore;
Left old Isham where he's dreaming
With his head bowed deep and low,
Thinking only now of Dinah,
And the happy long ago.

Long the kinky wool was creamy,
Now as white as any snow;
And his eyes are red and dreamy,
Thinking of the long ago.
Massa sleeps beneath the ivy,
Missus, where the daisies blow;
Near them Dinah, and old Isham's
Dreaming of the long ago;—

Thinking of the days when Dinah
Won old Missus' heart and praise,
By her wondrous dainty cooking,
And her charming well-bred ways:—
When his own black arm was brawny—
Swift the step that now is slow—
When he stole the heart of Dinah,
In the happy long ago.

What care they for big corn shuckings?—
Negroes versed in modern lore—
“What a fool is poor old Isham
Dozing by his cabin door!”
Ah! I know why Isham's dreaming
Where the gourd-vines twine and grow;
He is living still with Dinah,
In the happy long ago!

THE OLD DRINKING GOURD

A deep alcove where clambering vine
 Enfashioned wreathes of green festoon,
 Where through the long, long afternoon
No ray of summer's sultry shine
 E'er kissed the rustic grape-vine swing:
High up the purpling muscadine
 Clung close to where the waters poured,
 And he saw the glint of the redbird's wing
 In the crystal wave of the mossy spring,
 As she stooped for the Old Drinking Gourd.

The odor tint of elder bloom
 The zephyrs wafted through the spray.
 Was fresh as dew at dawn of day,
Caught in the geometric loom,
 Arachne plies with subtle hand:
A pigeon bathed his snowy plume,
 A fading speck the vulture soared;
 And a tide swept in across the sand
 As they stood on the brink of the golden
 strand
And drank from the Old Drinking Gourd.

* * * * *

A palace wrought of art sublime
 Where antique paintings haunt the walls,
 And gilded foot as silent falls
In depths of plush, as flight of time,
 And liquid music softer blows
Than Hymen's mellow golden chime:
 They plighted troth beneath the sword
 Of the knight that wore the blood red rose;
 But they drank of the cup that never flows
From the bowl of the Old Drinking Gourd.

Now sunset spills his scarlet dyes
Through fleecy rifts of snowy cloud,
And night puts on her ebon shroud,
And stars look out of wintry skies:
Still spacious halls with revels ring
Where chivalry with beauty vies,
And red-wine flows at festive board.
But oh! for the cove where the redbirds
sing
By the crystal wave of the mossy spring,
And a draught from the Old Drinking Gourd.

A SPOOL OF SILK

SOLITUDE

To live alone where man nor beast e'er stood,
Ten-thousand miles beyond the site of home;
To walk at night the catacombs of Rome,
Or dwell within some deep death-haunted wood;
To feel like Bonaparte with power endued,
Yet doomed to sleep beneath the starry dome,
And listen to the ocean chafe and foam,—
Not this, not all of these, is solitude.

But oh, to be alone within the hive
Of teeming life, where thousands live and move
And have their shallow beings,—there to strive
With doubt and faith, and feel the soul expand
Beyond the utmost reach of those we love,
And know that they can never understand.

LOVE'S TRIUMPH

*To Hart's Triumph of Chastity
(destroyed by fire)*

Ah, shattered form, thy beauty, chaste as frost,
Once held in thrall the heart of lord and swain.
While Cupid sped his strongest shafts in vain
Thou didst not dream the price thy triumph cost,
Or know thy charm would be forever lost,
When Time with jealous wind or flood should
stain
Thy snowy brow in grime, or part in twain
Thy marble heart in fervent holocaust!

Thy spell is gone; but oh, the maid whose heart
Was riven by the little wing-ed god
That dipped his arrow in the scarlet stream
Of my own life, shall triumph over Art
And Time,—my love, whose ardent pulsing
blood
Shall quicken other lives and reign supreme!

MY GUIDING STAR

Adrift alone on life's bleak ocean waste,
Through starless nights and dreary sunless
days;

Wherever currents led o'er pathless maze,
I plied the oars of aimless toil, and faced
Defeat impatiently, nor ever traced
One ray of hope along the murky haze
Of life's horizon, till I caught the blaze
Of one lone star, whose light was virgin-chaste.

But now I sail through seas where fortune smiles,
And not a cloud the brilliant sky doth mar;
For, ever twinkling near that blazing light,
A little orb my every care beguiles:
My radiant wife is that lone guiding star,
My laughing blue-eyed boy its satellite!

AFTER READING
SAMUEL MINTURN PECK'S
RHYMES AND ROSES

The drowsy drone of honey-laden bees,
The popped breath of gardens blooming fair,
The scent of elder blossoms, sweet and rare,
Come stealing in on balmy southern breeze;
And dying lays, whose long lost melodies
Still haunt old storied ruins everywhere,
Are dimly floating through the fragrant air—
I dream beneath the blooming apple trees:

A merry orchestra of nymphs and fays
Has gathered in the pine-tree's elfin shade,
With naid shell and fairy reed and string,
While Minturn Peck the magic baton sways.
And when the band his "Rhymes and Roses"
played,
The dryads' voices made the woodlands ring!

THERE'S NOTHING
DARK ABOUT HER BUT HER HAIR

There's nothing dark about her but her hair!
Her liquid eyes, as blue as Grecian seas,
Affect me, like a moonlit southern breeze,
From off the fields of sweet magnolias rare;
Her sympathetic soul is pure and fair
And spotless as the petals of a rose:
Her gown is like a drift of northern snows—
There's nothing dark about her but her hair!

But oh, her hair, ye priests, ye gods, her hair!
Those silken strands of raveled midnight wove
Into a Cupid's mesh, a net of love!
Ah, I confess that I'm entangled there!
But Susan's life's as spotless as a dove,—
There's nothing dark about her but her hair.

BLIND TOM

Oh, happy, sad, mysterious, wondrous soul!
Imprisoned in a living dungeon deep
The fates have bound thee; but they can not
keep
For ay that spirit in their dark control
Who hear'st the music of the spheres that roll
Through silent time; those beauteous orbs that
sweep
Through space and glitter in the boundless deep,
Will yet thy blind, benighted life console.

What sin didst thou commit, or whom offend?
That doomed thee to a carnal cell so gross
That scarce a hint of what thou really art
Has ever reached the world,—who couldst transcend
In matchless music, purged of all thy dross,
The great Beethoven or divine Mozart.

A SONNET OF THE SEASON

The carol in my heart I send to you:

It comes from out the depths of brooding time
To cheer and bless in every place and clime;
To purge the false, to chasten and subdue;
To lift the drooping life, inspire the true
To nobler deeds and thoughts of love sublime.
This anthem—which I sing in sonnet rhyme—
Judean shepherds heard and angels knew!

And now we fear no longer war's alarms,

For red-eyed Mars has fled at last our home:
Christ took the little children in his arms
And blessed them, saying, Suffer them to come
To me that all the sons of men may find
My kingdom here within the child-like mind.

EUTERPE

O lyric muse, thou didst not tune alone
The lyre that loving Orpheus smote
With subtle touch and struck the golden note
That pierced dread Pluto's heart of stone,
And won again Eurydice his own;
Nor yet Erate's lute, nor Sappho's throat
That thrilled the ear in Grecian isles remote,
Where Homer sang, and Art had built her throne:

But thou, Euterpe, touched blind Milton's tongue,
And swept the thousand chords of Shakespeare's
soul;
Woke Byron from his hours of idle dream,
And then he sang mankind a deathless song.
But thou at last didst reach the lyric goal
Of art in Tennyson's immortal theme.

SCARLET DAYS

To F. W. B. Family.

Those scarlet days come back to me to-night
Across the span of many happy years—
Dreams, haunted by the music of the spheres,
And glowing skies of gold and chrysolite.
The world of science bursting on my sight,
And words of wisdom falling on my ears,
The rhythmic thought of poets, priests, and seers.
Wrought in my life a spell of wild delight.

Not all: three figures—Faith and Hope and Love—
I see them still through years of mist and haze—
Hope crowned with light, and Faith of godly
ken;
And Love was like a meek unconscious dove.
Dear God, although I count those scarlet days,
To-night I would not have them back again.

HER EYES ARE BROWN

Her eyes are brown, oh, Edith's eyes are brown!
I will not boast the midnight of her hair,
Nor yet because her radiant cheek is fair,
And like the touch of autumn's thistle down;
I will not swear I have not seen her frown;
She may be rich and proud and debonair,
For aught I know, I'm sure I do not care:
But oh, her eyes, her eyes are Edith's crown!

I've gazed upon the stars of northern skies,
And breathed the perfume of the southern
breeze;
I've listened to the boom of far-off seas
On mystic shores; I've seen the full moon rise
Through branch and bloom of old magnolia
trees!
There's nothing like the thrill of Edith's eyes!

THE NATURALIST

The shouts of happy boys he does not hear,
Nor knows that wretched men must toil for
bread;
The tragedy of life he has not read,
Or deems it but the comedy of fear:

He never lifts his eyes above the ground
To gaze upon the glittering world of stars;
The poet's richest music only mars
The rasping of the locust's strident sound.

And yet I've never seen a wilder light
Glow in the beauteous eyes of dawning love,
Than flashes from this strange man's soul at sight
Of some rare flower he finds in mountain cove:
Mere fungus, or the poisonous, dank mushroom,
Enchants him more than rich magnolia bloom!

DEDICATION

(*To H. H. T.*)

O soul responsive to the subtlest thought
That flashes o'er the mind's electric wire,
Or ever swept the strings of fancy's lyre
To music learned in schools where Shakespeare
taught:

O thou who knowest the springs whence Sappho
caught

Love's brimming cup that did her song inspire,
Yet dost my plain, unlettered muse admire,
Who lived in better days when maidens wrought—

To thee, I dedicate my fondest rhymes

In memory of happy days of yore,
Together on the Cumberland, where Ruth,
The charming rustic maid of olden times

First won our love, less for her lack of lore,
Than for her sweet simplicity and truth.

NEARING THE MERIDIAN

(*To M. E. W.*)

I dream to-night of happy childhood days;
I see two humble homes and thrill with joy;
The years come back when I was but a boy,
And you had ringlets for the gods to praise:
The old Old Swing, the fields of golden maize;
The moving pictures in the clouds above;
The mating birds, their nests, their songs of
love—
All this, dear Lord, through years of mist and
haze!

And then I turn and look beyond the Shade,
And those who wrought for us are waiting there:
Our mothers with their crowns of silver hair,
And radiant smiles of love that will not fade;
Our fathers with the keys to all the creeds
Are there still strong in faith and pure in deeds.

OUR PILGRIMAGE

(To the Canterbury Club)

The merry band that started long ago
Upon their journey to a-Becket's saintly shrine,
Were happy that a poet's pen divine
Inspired by all a genial wit can know,
Or sympathetic human heart bestow,
Recorded in immortal rhythmic line,
As sweet as breath of old Provençal wine,
Their pilgrim tales and songs of joy and woe.

We start to-night upon our pilgrimage,
Who worship at a holier shrine than they—
The living temple of the sacred muse :
May she who is our patron saint infuse,
Illume our souls ; and raise some Pen, I pray,
To leave the world a noble heritage.

ANTE NUPTIAL

(To a Physician engaged to a Nurse)

When young Dan Cupid dipped his fiery shaft
Deep in the liquid blue of Psyche's eyes,
Then took three strands of raveled midnight
skies
And strung his silver bow with these, and laughed,
Thy doom, O son of Esculapius' craft,
Was sealed:—the fatalest dart that flies
Is Eros' bolt, and surest of its prize—
And now, physician, take thy healing draft.

Ah, no; it is not unto death, but life,
That thou art sick, although pierced through the
heart!
Wondrous disease that no physician's art
Can heal, that will not yield to surgeon's knife,—
A blessed wound that ever must grow worse.
How fortunate, O man, that she's a nurse!

DR. MILES SAUNDERS

He held the key to every mystic door
Of Egypt's shrine; he knew the sacred rite
Of druid, sage and seer; and loved the light
Of Babylonian and Assyrian lore:
He saw old Enoch when he walked with God;
He watched Elijah smite the prophets dead;
He knew the Israelites whom Moses led;
And looked upon the bloom of Aaron's rod!

And yet this man who gazed on gods and kings,
And saw and felt whatever mortal can,
Was like his Christ, the lowly Son of Man,
A tender minister in humble things.
He had a royal mind, a priestly ken;
But best of all he loved and helped young men.

A SOLILOQUY

(*To F. K. G.*)

The beauteous sun sank to an awful gloom;
The stars came out and mocked at my despair;
The flowers that thronged the wayside smiling
fair,

Had lost the subtle charm of scent and bloom:
The world was dull and vapid as the tomb.

I watched a myriad lovers, pair by pair,
And heard their shouts of joy burst on the air,
Until my heart grew callous at its doom.

When ten and seven weary cycles passed,
The pent-up sunshine of a thousand years
Burst on the scene and filled the hills and
vales

With light and love and song and fairy tales,
And dried the very source and fount of tears.
Ye gods, the light of love, at last, at last!

GOLD AND GOSSAMER

TO THE MOCKING BIRD

Whence is thy song,
Voluptuous soul of the amorous South!
Oh! whence the wind, the rain, the drouth;
The dew of eve; the mists of morn;
The bloom of rose; the thistle's thorn;
Whence light of love; whence dark of scorn;
Whence joy; whence grief; Death, born of
wrong—
Ah! whence is *life* ten-thousand passions throng?—
Thence is thy song!

Thou singest the rage of jealous Moor,
The passionate love of Juliet;
Thy villainous art can weave a net
With shreds of song, that never yet
Hath lover escaped, however noble and pure.
Ophelia's broken heart is thine,
And Desdemona's, true and good;
Thou paintest the damn-ed spot of blood
That will not not out in stain or line!
Oh Lear! Oh Fool! Oh Witch! Macbeth!
And wondrous Hamlet in a breath!
Who knows thy heart? thy song? thy words?
Thou Shakespeare in the realm of birds!

A RONDEL

October, queen of autumn days,
 With green and crimson leaves is crowned;
 Her russet cheeks are sun-embrowned,
Her hair all golden in the haze:

She sits upon a throne ablaze,
 Her limbs with royal robes are gowned—
October, queen of autumn days,
 With green and crimson leaves encrowned.

But now o'erwhelmed in sad amaze
 She hears a far-off rising sound;
 The hills and booming seas resound;
The plaintive wind her requiem plays—
October, queen of autumn days.

THE PLAY IS O'ER

The play is o'er! Great Wolsey's dead—
That scarlet power once England's dread;
And lustful Henry's brutal sin
Hath slain the noble Catharine,—
More stainless wife was never wed.

Anne Boleyn shares the royal bed
And wears upon her graceless head
The good queen's crown without chagrin—
The play is o'er!

A few brief months have swiftly sped,
The faithless consort's blood is shed.
What means the mighty noise within?
The trumpet's blare, the cymbal's din?
Jane Seymour's to the altar led,—
The play is o'er!

A RONDEAU

His heart was pure: he loved the child
That dwelt among untrodden ways
And dared to lift his voice in praise
Of humblest wight in highlands wild.

Poor, wretched man by sin defiled,
He sang in sympathetic lays—
His heart was pure.

The blithe cuckoo and daisy mild,
The daffodils, like elfin fays,
The mystery of sunset haze
O'er barren moors, his pen beguiled—
His heart was pure.

THE RED BIRD

Animated, flashing, flame of scarlet,
Teasing, tantalizing, madcap varlet,
Glooming, glinting through the boughs,
Making, breaking lover's vows;
Dashing leader of the choir,
Standing on the topmost spire,
Scintillating song and fire,

 Calls me: *Come up—come up—higher, higher,
 higher!*

Daytime meteor trailing light,
Like a shooting star at night—
Just a moment of delight,

 Followed by a mad desire:
But the flaming flash of scarlet,
Tantalizing madcap varlet,
Hiding from my aching sight—

 This time just a little nigher—
Laughing from his le fy height,

 Mocks me: *Come up—come up—higher, higher,
 higher!*

SUNSET IN BREATHITT

Through purple haze of evening mountain mist,
A spiral thread of dark blue smoke arose
From hidden cove and rugged steep defile;
While like a ball of blood o'er some far magic
isle,
The sun a moment hung in deep repose,
Above a placid sea of amethyst,
In mystic prophecy of death and doom,—
Then dropped and splashed the sky with crimson
spray and spume!

EYES DIVINE

His eyes divine were shot with light
Like flashes in a northern night,
Magnetic gleam that wrought a spell
On whom its star-like shimmer fell—
A spell of wonder and delight;—

Enchantment such as gods excite
With glowing depths of chrysolite,
Or blooming beds of asphodel—
His eyes divine!

In metaphysics recondite,
In realms of verse by royal right
Of Genevieve and Christabel
The first upon the mystic shell;
And yet his greatest charm and might
Were eyes divine!

JACK FROST

In a pixy chariot, drawn,
Not by deer, but elfin fawn,
Thou hast come, Jack Frost and gone.

Silently, unheralded,
O'er the earth thy chariot sped;
Dear Jack Frost, where hast thou fled?

Thou the child's and poet's friend,
Brings't us blessings without end,
Joys the world can not transcend.

Naught but beauty now remains—
Flowers, ferns and fairy fanes,
Wrought upon the window panes;

Fields and forests all aglow,—
Colors only thou dost know:
How the heart doth overflow!

Purple clusters thine and mine,
Winter-wild and muscadine,
Bursting with the wine of vine!

Haws, persimmons, berries red,
Nuts the earth have overspread—
Dear Jack Frost, why hast thou fled?

Old Chris we hail with all his boast,
His jolly fun and merry cost,
But oh, we love Jack Frost, Jack Frost!

AD AQUILAM

“Bird of the broad and sweeping wing,”
O bird of whom the poets sing,
O emblem of the noblest thing
Of which mankind can boast!
Didst thou but know thy image decked
That which commands the world’s respect,
And makes kings kneel as slaves abject
To it, their god, almost:

Then thou wouldst soar to greater height
Than e’er attained by birds of flight,
To show the eagle’s power and might,
With wings unfurled and stiff;
And at that dizzy height survey
The sea and land without dismay,
Till weary, sink at close of day
Upon thy mountain cliff:

And there secure from all the world,
Nestle, with plumed wings closely furled
That sustained thee and o’er earth whirled
Thee with a haughty air.
Ambitions would disturb thy dreams,
The night air shudder with thy screams,
And like the human soul that teems
With vain-glorious care,

Thy heart would ache, thy soul would long,
To move the world, to sway the throng,
Or be the hero of the song
Of some great epi^o pen.
’Tis well, O bird that thou art free
To soar the air, ’tis well with thee,
’Tis well that thou hast eyes to see,
But not the human ken.

THE ICE-KING IN THE SOUTH

He came, proud monarch of the Land of Snows,
Triumphant, in his argent chariot, decked
 With jewels mined in regions of the polar zones!
He came! his fifty snow steeds were swift
As howling north-winds, and their flowing manes
 Were flecked with diamonds brighter than
 Brazillian stones!

He came! To celebrate his triumph, first
He spread a fleecy mantle o'er the earth—
 A frozen shroud symbolic of the Death he
 wrought.

And then to every pendent branch he hung
A glittering sword,—the tyrant's right to rule,—
 Demanding greater homage than ever warrior
 sought.

More brilliant pageant than the Ice-King's in
The Land of Flowers, never graced return
 Of oriental monarch from victorious wars.
But oh! beneath the sparkle and the gleam
Of crystal beauty beats an icy heart,
 And a sullen silence his splendid triumph mars;
The waterfalls that leap from jutting ledge
In happy song, are speechless as the tomb,
 And every melody that haunts the woods and
 streams
Has vanished from the earth, and Nature's voice
That erstwhile woke the matin in the mead
 Is silent now as music of forgotten dreams.

Back to thy home in the icy Land of Snows,
O tyrant czar! No cringing southern heart
 Pays honor to thy rich magnificence and power.

Back with thy splendor and thy glistening gems!
This is the land where every freeman bows
 But to the Queen alone, whose sceptre is the
 flower.

Back, that our sovereign may usher in
The reign of love with sunshine and with song,
 And drive away the gloom from every southern
 hearth.

Back rude invader! to Siberian climes!
And let our royal daughter, Spring, return
 To fill with happiness and beauty all the earth.

FETTERED

Within the tented dome where pheasant rare,
 With brilliant plumage caught the public gaze,
 Or magpie won applause by vulgar phrase
Picked up from idle crowd that thronged the fair,
A pensive nightingale, unnoticed there,
 In silence sat and heard men's lavish praise
 Of these, yet all unmindful dreamed of lays
In freedom she might pour upon the air.

HELEN OF TROY

Helen of Troy, thy face was fair,
And fair thy radiant golden hair,
Thy form, in every molded part,
But not thy false and fickle heart,
Helen of Troy.

Betrayed by Aphrodite's wiles,
Oenone's life lost all its smiles,
And tasted sorrow to the lees,
When Paris sailed for sunset seas,
Where reigned the queen of all the isles.

Thy beauty, poignant as a dart,
Drove god-like men to wild despair,
And lit the skies with lurid glare:
But oh, thy false and fickle heart,
Helen of Troy!

COW BELLS

Oh, the distant muffled tinkling
Of the cow bells in the vale,
When the dawning stars are twinkling
And the silent dews are sprinkling
Fresh the daisies in the dale.
How they flood the soul with music
Sad as song of nightingale—
Tinkling melodies of magic,
Vague, uncertain, longing, tragic,—
Just the cow bells in the vale!

HOLLYHOCKS

It may not be quite orthodox
To say so in society,
And yet I think the hollyhocks,
Of every known variety,
That bloom and bless the humble home,
Are sisters sweet of charity,—
Fair nuns that wear a beauteous cowl,—
God's priestesses unto the soul
That lives in righteous poverty.

BURNS

Acrostic

Warm-hearted bard, in thee I find
Infinite soul, irradiant mind;
Long-suffering worth and love refined
Lent thee their ken.
In Robert Burns the heart enshrined
E'en mice and men.

ROBERT LOVEMAN

He knows Will Shakespeare's human heart
And feels his godlike brain;
And sings his soul a kindred part
In rondeau and quatrain.

BOOKS

'Tis early morn and on the green
The children are at play;
The sunlight falls in sparkling sheen,
Their hearts are blithe and gay:
A shadow flits across the scene—
The hour has come that sadness brings,
The master rings, the master rings,
'Tis books!

'Tis late at eve, and o'er the green
The weary toilers pass;
The shadows fall, the sky's serene,
And dew is on the grass:
A light breaks in upon the scene—
The hour has come that gladness brings,
The Master rings, the Master rings,
'Tis books!

SONGS UNSUNG

Unvoic-ed songs that always die
On the strings of the harp that gives them birth,
The flutter of hope, a breath, a sigh,
The song nor asks nor gives a why—
The poet's song he deems most worth.

The silent music of the heart is sweet
To listen to. The slow and measured beat
Of the imprisoned soul that finds a voice
In melodious sound it may rejoice
Us much; but that which sometimes plays on
strings
Too fine to sympathize with words e'er sings
The sweetest melodies, though never heard
Except by ear of him whose soul is stirred.

THE RAINBOW'S END

In childhood's fairy hour I watched a bow
The Titian Sun had painted in the skies,
And marveled at its wondrous hues and dyes,
And held my breath in silence at its glow;
"The hand of God," I cried, "Divine, I know!"
And at the thought the tears stood in my eyes.
But when I heard that awful pack of lies
About the pot of gold, I said, "'S that so!"

LINEN AND LACE

DOWN LOVER'S LANE

Down Lover's Lane the creamy spray
Of elder blooms enchants the way,
And dappled shadows sport and play,
 Down Lover's Lane!
Here happy redbirds glint and gloom,
The wildrose sheds a sweet perfume,
But death oft lurks in leaf and bloom,
 Down Lover's Lane.

BENEATH THE CHESTNUT TREE

Long years ago in childhood's hour,
 Beneath an old Beech Tree,
A sweeter and a daintier flower
 Than ever graced a lea,
Unfolded all its beauteous bloom
And shed its rich and rare perfume
 Alone, alone for me.

The dewdrop sparkling on the rose
 Is fresh and fair to see;
I love the lily when it blows
 And rocks the cradled bee;
But fairer than the diamond dew
Or lily, was the flower that grew
 Beneath the old Beech Tree.

Rose-petaled with a golden fringe,
 And calyx to agree;
A dash of sea-foam and a tinge
 Of sky in harmony;
The subtle perfume sunny smiles,
And sunnier love, though but a child's,
 Beneath an old Beech Tree.

One morn I sought the cooling shade
 With heart as light and free
As snowy whitecap ever played
 Upon the bounding sea;
But she, the fairy child, was gone,—
The flower that grew for me alone—
 Beneath the old Beech Tree.

The brooks still ran the hills among
 And babbled on in glee;
The birds still mated, loved and sung

In tuneful melody:
But all the soul of song was lost;
My flower had withered with the frost
 Beneath the old Beech Tree.

The years ran on in golden sands
 For lovers rapidly;
The flowers waved their magic wands
 And smiled still joyously:
But love's enchanting power was gone
For me whom Death had left alone
 Beneath the old Beech Tree.

* * * * * *

The moonlight sifting through the leaves
 Fell soft and silvery,
As threads that sly Arachne weaves
 With artful modesty;
It fell and wove a mystic veil
About her face; my cheek grew pale
 Beneath the Chestnut Tree.

A breathless moment, all was still;
 A deep solemnity
Hung over earth,—and then a thrill
 Of love and mystery—
An odor of a rare perfume,
The sweetest flower that e'er did bloom
 Beneath the Chestnut Tree!

The brooks now run the hills among
 And babble on in glee;
For love brought back the soul of song
 Beneath the Chestnut Tree;—
Brought back, while moonlit breezes blew
The sweetest flower that ever grew,
 Alone, alone for me.

JACK AND JILL

We played beside the little rill
That flows to larger river;
We heard the mating mock-birds trill,
The robins piped upon the hill,
And Cupid strung his little bow and filled his
little quiver:
Then she, we played, was little Jill,
And I was Jack, her lover.

But floating down the little stream
Toward the larger river,
The rippling of the waves did seem
The fading music of a dream,
For Cupid broke his silver bow and lost his
golden quiver;
And Jill forgot the hour supreme
When I was Jack, her lover.

NATURA

O beauteous maid, my heart is thine;
I lay its dearest offering at thy feet;
I burn its sweetest incense on thy shrine,
For thou, sweet maid, art all divine,
For worship thou art meet.

Let those who never felt the glow
That summer suns have spread o'er flowery
meads,
Whose hearts have never thrilled at arch-ed
bow,
Or when the cascade's crystal flow
Is sparkling into beads,

Deny thy charms. To me thy smile
Is sweeter boon than untried worlds can
yield;
No creed of priests can ever lure me while
Thy wondrous love so free from guile,
Is everywhere revealed.

The severing clouds at early dawn
Blush red as roses bursting into bloom
At thy deft touch; and on the dewy lawn
The drapery of night withdrawn
I find no hint of gloom.

And when at noon the streets I quit
For dappled shade or thickest leafy bower,
Then, blushing, thou dost come with me to
sit
And read the poems thou hast writ
In leaf and tint of flower.

At evening walking arm in arm
With thee through glen or by the river's
brink,
I watch the shades descend o'er distant farm
And still the world has lost no charm
That soul can wish or think.

The loom of fancy never wove
Beneath the starlit skies of southern seas
A dream of beauty thy enchanting love
On hill or stream or sheltered cove,
Or on the open leas

Has not supplied; and thou, sweet maid,
Dost never weary, but from day to day,
And season unto season, every shade
In sky or cloud is new inlaid
With colors soft or gay.

Yon mountain late enrobed in snow
Thou clothest now in dress of shimmering
green;
Ere long another garb wilt thou bestow
Upon her, lest thy lover grow
Aweary of the scene.

And when the sheen of summer sky
Shall fade into October's sombre gray,
And Autumn's gayest flowers a-withered lie,
For me yon mountain thou wilt tie
Into a rare bouquet.

HER EYES

I dare not look again!

 In those vast depths of infinite blue
 There are visions of joy and love as true
As ever haunted a poet's ken.

 This sordid earth's my lot;
 Those dreams must be forgot—
I dare not look again.

I dare not look again!

 Those dreams must be forgot
 The infinite blue, with its love so true
And the visions I dare not pen.

 This sordid earth's my lot.
Heavens! might I but look again!

THE ROSE OF LOVE

The flowers closed their autumn bloom
Awhile the bleak winds blew,
And meekly bowing to their doom
They lay in shroud of frozen gloom
The whole long winter through.

There's ever been the same sad tale
To tell of Nature's loves;
Her artful methods never fail
To win the hearts they once assail,
Though she inconstant proves.

Last spring I heard the whisperings low
To modest Daffodil
That won her smile ere yet the snow
Had melted and begun its flow
Adown the little rill.

And soon her soft caresses proved
Too much for Meadow Rue;
And next Anemone was moved;
Spring Beauty whom the nymphs had loved
In shady woods to woo.

But some less trustful, still were slow
To yield their loves' perfume,
Till, melted by the summer's glow,
They let their pent-up passions flow
Through many colored bloom.

But Nature soon withdrew her smile:
I saw their petals pale

And droop, now conscious of the guile
Their fickle lover used the while
She wooed them in the vale.

* * * * *

All winter I had breathed upon
The clos-ed bud of love;
Its milk-white petals, one by one
At last unfolded in the sun
My heart had longed to prove.

And when it reached its full broad blow
It shed a fragrance sweet
From out its bosom liliated snow,—
And incense that the gods I know
Had smiled with joy to greet.

* * * * *

And Nature now begins again
Her courtship with the flowers;
She chants in groves her minstrel strain,
She smiles, and frowns, and weeps in rain
Of gentle April showers.

And while she tries with song of thrush
Once more those hearts to move,
I've seen her oft relentless crush,—
My bud still blooms forever fresh—
It is the *Rose of Love!*

MY JEWELS

His little Blue Dress is hidden away
From the eyes of the vulgar world,—
And the dear little Shoes,—more precious are
they
Than silver or gold empearled—
Jewels that lure like the stars above,
Hidden from all but the eyes of love.

I watched him oft with a mother's heart
As he played with his dear little toys;
But now he is gone, and I sit apart
And muse of those vanished joys;—
Dream of his eyes and his beautiful hair,
And thrill with the love of a sweet despair.

The gaze of the vulgar world today
Would only my jewels abuse;
And this is the reason I hid them away,—
The little Blue Dress and the Shoes:
And I pray that in death my eyes may caress
The dear little Shoes and the little Blue Dress.

A RECOLLECTION

Clouds of sorrow cannot hide
Gleams of sunshine gilding hours
Of happy memory, sweet as flowers
Ever blooming by the wayside,
 Thronged with thorn and thistle.
Reapers binding sheaves of plenty,
Think the golden dreams of twenty
 Thrill them deepest; and the whistle
Of some lone love-dreaming bird
In the meadow, wakes to memory
Notes now hushed, but sweeter than the
 Ear of mortal ever heard.

'Neath the cliffs near by the river
Long cymes of honey-suckle grew,
Odorous in the air; and the violet, too,
 Entangling with the phlox, and ever
 Entessellated beds of petal'd mosaic
Stretching out before us, rich
As the drapery of a dream in which
 The toil of life was not prosaic.
Neither can the hungry ear
Enfashion music softer, sweeter,
Drawn from lyre, than the meter-
 Rippling cascade trinkling near.

THE MOONSHINERS

Where the trailing arbutus filled the cove
With a perfume as sweet as the breath of love,
And the mountain ivy's astral bloom
Made radiant light of the darkest gloom,
A maiden dwelt as stainless the while
As the baytree's bloom in the steep defile;
And she loved a youth with a heart as true
As ever has beaten for me or you.

Soon summer passed and the autumn came
With its goldenrod and its sumac flame,
With its tinge of frost and its blood-red blush
That made every shrub a burning bush.
Then love became passion for maiden and youth;
All vision had vanished and life was now truth;
And they heard a voice in the flaming tree
Which told them that marriage was nature's
decreed.

When the spring beauties came and winter had
fled
Sue Winn and Josh Bell were happily wed;
And the cowslips that bloomed in the side of the
glen
Were fragrant as roses in the gardens of men.
Their home was a cabin, the mountain above
Was rugged and rough, and their fortune was love:
But a cabin with love and vigor and health
Is better than sin in a palace of wealth.

The seasons passed by and a few brief years
Brought bountiful crops to these mountaineers;

And their children that played round the great
hollyhocks
Wore the sunniest curls and the cleanest of frocks;
And old-fashioned sunflowers smiled at their door
Midst beautiful pinks and pansies galore;
And the mountain redbirds flashed and flew
Around the rude cabin of Josh and Sue.

Ah, little you know, ye daughters of Jove,
The sweetness of poverty wedded to love;
Untrammelled by fashion, unsated by sin,
With the feeling that life and the dewdrop are kin.
Ah, little you know who dwell among men
The freedom and freshness of mountain and glen,
Where the Diva of Nature gives her grand matinee
In the opera of Love from a rich elder spray!

Yet the earth holds few spots where the winds
never blow,
And summer's not followed by the bleak winter
snow:
But the harvest will fail both the rich and the
poor
In the deep fertile valley, on the thin heathy moor.
Thus Susan grew ill and Joshua found
His corn crop was short, his wheat was unsound,
That drouth and disease had stricken his home
With a hand that poverty couldn't overcome.

Ah, little you care who dwell high above
For the hardships of poverty wedded to love;
Whose awful temptations you never can know,
When the unfeeling winds of adversity blow;
When the loved one is lying all helpless abed,

And children are crying and begging for bread.
Yes, little you dream, ye rich sons of Jove
Of the trials of love in a rough mountain cove.

Josh Bell battled bravely, and fought sin and
wrong
And the mighty temptation with a heart true and
strong;
But Susan grew weaker, till bright bloomed the
rose
That ever the blanched cheek of consumption
shows.
“I must save her,” he cried, “Oh, God, let the
cost
Be my life; if she dies, I am lost, I am lost!”
And Joshua Bell smote his breast with a blow
That only the frenzy of a lover can know.

At a deep hour of night when the hoot of the owl
Made the dark glen as lonesome as haunt of a cowl,
Josh Bell left his cabin for a cave in the hill,
And began the erection of a small mountain still.
For weeks here he labored at midnight alone,
With a firm resolution and a heart like a stone:
Then his own golden corn he had gathered in sheaf,
He now husked in darkness and stole like a thief.

Ah, Joshua Bell, the world does not know
The depth of thy grief, the weight of thy woe,—
The conflict of conscience and love in thy breast,
The struggle of duty and shame unconfessed.
Thy act is a crime in the eyes of the law,
No matter the motive, it weighs not a straw;
No matter the liquid distilled be as dew
That drips from the stem and chalice of rue.

But the comforts of life that lessen the pain
Of those whom we love, ease conscience and brain;
And Josh half forgot the cave in the hill,
And the white sparkling liquor that flowed from the
still,
When Sue smiled and said, "By thy great sacrifice
Of unceasing toil and love without price,
I am better to-day; with return of the spring
We can labor together where the brown thrushes
sing."

Thus Josh kept his secret, and the daffodils came
That bloom but for those unworthy of blame;
And Sue never knew that the gold and the gain
Was purchased with liquor distilled from their
grain.

But the sleuth-hounds of law found the cave in
the hill

At a late hour of night and raided the still;
Then surrounded the cabin, and woke Josh and
Sue

And demanded surrender of the moonshiners, too.

With Winchester rifle Josh leaped from his couch,
"I'll never surrender, nor cower, nor crouch
To cowardly villains that plunder the poor,
In the guise of the law; who crosses my door,
Had best make his peace with the angels above;
By my life I'll protect the darlings I love."
Like a lion at bay, the flash of his eye,
Told the brave mountaineer would shield them or
die.

But the torch of the raiders lit a red flame that
stung

The stout hearted Josh like a vile adder's tongue,
Till he rushed from his cabin in madness and swore
He would save Sue and children or sleep never-
more.

But a flash from a rifle sent a ball through his
brain,

And Joshua Bell never breathed once again.

And his loved ones perished in the flame and the
smoke

Of his own little cabin he had hewn from the oak.

When the morning has climbed up the high
eastern hill

And the sunlight is dancing on ripple of rill,

The coroner summons a jury and feigns

An inquest of law o'er the ghastly remains.

The verdict is heard with whoop and hurrah:

"These moonshiners died at the hands of the law;

Let all men beware," the coroner cried,

"The murder of outlaws is just homicide."

SILHOUETTES

The flickering carbon threw a stream
Of bluish light over the sleety street.
Men and women everywhere were hurrying home-
ward,

Shivering for the comfort that was gleaming
Through many a window from blazing hearths
within.

The freezing rain was biting like an adder.

Down the icy thoroughfare,

Muffled deep in furs and ulster,

Madly rushed the Wall-street banker,

Plunging through the storm and shadow,

Impatient for the shelter of his mansion.

No wonder that he heeded not the darkling figure

Of a little homeless waif that crouched

Beneath the jutting frieze and cornice

Of a rich Corinthian window;—

No wonder, for the night was bitter,

And his mansion yet two blocks away!

No wonder either that the wanderer

Neither saw nor heard the banker,

Though his tread was swift and heavy,

For a mighty storm was raging!

Yet above the noise and howling

Of the wind and rain and tempest,

The outcast heard the shoeless footfall

Of a little homeless brother,

Lost amid the blinding shadows.

And soon they slept, secure and thankful,

Though the maddening storm grew fiercer,—

Slept, but dreamed:

The window rose a richer mansion

Than ever sheltered Wall-street banker—

A castle wrought of childish fancy,
More beautiful than the pen of romance
Has pictured of the days of chivalry.
But their little dreaming childhood,
Painted no baronial robber,
Saw no haughty plumed tiara,
Heard no clank in Norman donjon.
In the palace, dream-constructed,
Where the little waifs lay nestled
In each other's arms fraternal,
Love had built a shining altar,
War had laid aside his armor,
And the knights that there assembled
Were their little homeless brothers,
Gathered from the ranks of sorrow,
Orphans, outcasts, gamin, wanderers.

WADE

Out of the infinite depths of love,
 Floated a spirit song,
Plaintive and sad as coo of dove,
 Burdened for sin and wrong;
So tender and sweet the melody,
None heard that song but he.

Out of the days of childhood joys,
 Faded the smile of light;
The sun that dazzled other boys,
 For him was never bright:
The birds sang sweet on every tree—
All heard their songs but he.

Out of the realms of infinite light,
 A song of infinite glee;
The faded smile of joy grew bright,
 “Mother is waiting for thee.”
So tender and sweet the melody,
None heard that song but he.

A SONG

In the mountains of Kentucky,
Where the ivy's astral bloom
And the laurel's waxen petals
Shed a rich and rare perfume;
Where the purple rhododendron
And the wild forget-me-not
Bloom in amorous profusion
Round a little mossy grot.
It was there I left Rowena,
She is waiting now for me,
While I linger here impatient,
For my love I long to see.
Oh, but soon I know I'll see her,
And never more we'll part—
In the mountains of Kentucky,
Lives my own, my true sweetheart.

Refrain

She's a fairy, I'll admit, a little airy;
But her eyes are like the blue Aegean sea:
And her auburn hair, it would drive you to
despair,
For Rowena's heart is true to none but me.

In the mountains of Kentucky,
Though the grass may not be blue,
Yet the streams are swift and sparkling,
And Rowena's heart is true:
And I love the lofty mountains,
And the deep and darkling coves,
Where the redbirds gloom and glimmer,
And Rowena lives and loves.

'Tis the home, they say, of feudist,
Where the hand of man is red;
But I know a hundred places,
Where blood's as wanton shed:
Yet no spot in all creation
Has a sky of such a hue—
In the mountains of Kentucky
Lives my sweetheart pure and true.

Refrain

In the Blue-grass of Kentucky
Now Rowena waits for me,
With a brood of little fairies
That my heart so longs to see;
For their eyes are bright and sparkling
As the drops of diamond dew—
In the Blue-grass of Kentucky,
Live my sweethearts pure and true:
Yes, I love the lofty mountains,
And the deep and darkling cove,
Where the redbirds gloom and glimmer,
And the sky is bright above;
But one spot to me is dearer
Than all the world apart,
In the Blue-grass of Kentucky,
Lives my own, my true sweetheart.

Refrain

THE BLOOM OF LOVE!

(Double Acrostic)

Romance by the little stream,
Where the wild-rose blooms so fair;
Oh, who would mar that happy dream
I see enacted there?
Beauteous orioles are they—
Little timid, tongueless birds—
Each listening to the voiceless lay,
Love strives to put in words.
Roses drop their petals round;
In the air a sweet perfume;
Till time no longer baffles sound—
Eternal love hath burst its bloom!

MY MUSE

Oh! couldst thou know her faithful art!
When troubled dreams disturb the brain,
Though rattling sleet be on the pane,
Beneath the window of my heart,
I hear her cheering strain—
My *Muse* who never will depart
For life's cold wintry rain.

A HANK OF HOMESPUN

THE SCHOOL OF SKINNY

Have you never heard the story of the good old
country school
With its rude split-bottomed benches and its
ancient *dunce's stool*?
Where Webster's Blue-back Speller was the only
standard text,
And supplied the place of grammar that our late
forefathers vexed;
Where they never heard of Latin or the Greek
subjunctive mode,
But sang their mult'plication like a patriotic ode?

The Master, he was skinny, with a lean and hungry
look,
And a countenance as placid as a frozen winter
brook;
His brow was broad and Grecian, and his eye was
snell and keen,
And his head was stuffed with knowledge of a
dozen books, I ween;
And they say his nose was Roman as the bill of
any hawk,
And his boys were all perfection, for they had to
walk the chalk.

And yet I've often wondered if they really always
walked,
And sat upright like statues, and never laughed or
talked,
For I've often heard my father say the model of
the school
Got licked at least three times a day as a pretty
general rule,

And lament the good old method, as a lost, forgotten art,
Of imparting knowledge in a way that made a fellow *smart*.

I wish we had the secret now of making boys walk
Instead of always watching for a chance to throw
some chalk;
But the art, I think, was buried with the Blue-
back Spelling Book,
And the piercing eye of Skinny, that no mortal
boy could brook;
'Twas buried with the benches and the ancient
dunce's stool
And the grease-glazed paper windows of the good
old country school.

It may be through psychology and molly-coddle
stuff,
We often talk in institutes, we've lost the power
to bluff;
Perhaps 'twas Pestalozzi, Froebel and John Her-
bart
Who robbed the wand of Skinny of its pedagogic
art;
We'll not discuss philosophy, but we know about
the chalk,
That no theoretic dream of man can make a boy
walk.

ONE-ARMED JOE

Ricollect ol' *One-Armed Joe*?
Lost it grindin' cane.
Same blame feller 't used to go
Round with Lizy Jane
Grindin' sorghum ever fall.
Lizy Jane wuz Joe's ol' mare;
Never showed her at a fair,
But blame 'f she couldn't beat all
Rinsters to an an ol' cane sweep
That ever stepped a mile. Never fat,
Ring-bone an' bob-tail an' all that,
But law! she made the cane-mill weep!

An' us chillern, we'd allus go
Over where they's grindin' cane
An' git to ride ol' Lizy Jane,
An' hear the jokes of *One-Armed Joe*;
An' maybe git the sorghum skimmin's,
Thwuzzent allus so many wimmins
Bossin' round, cause *One-Armed Joe*,
He loved us chillern bettern them.
(Bet he wears a diadem
In the world where preachers go).

Joe had grit and feelin's, too,
An' they wuzzent nothin' he couldn't do,
'Cept to do another harm:
Ketch a possum, kill a bear,
Cuss an' dance, or lead in prayer;
Jump a rope, or skin a cat,
Make a speech or guess a riddle,
Sing a song, or play the fiddle—

No, Joe couldn't quite do that,
Cause *One-Armed Joe* had lost an arm,
But that's all he couldn't do.

One night dogs treed a coon
Up a leanin' poplar tree;
Joe could by the glimmerin' moon
See the leanin' poplar leant:
Jerked his coat and up he went;
Ketched the possum, let him go,
Slipped his holts and hollered, "Oh!"
An' down into eternity
Limp and warm, fell poor old *Joe*!

Don't remember *One-Armed Joe*?
Feller I'll bet the angels know!

WES PERKINS

I've read of Bob Burdett,
And Billin's, Twain, and Bret
And the whole endurin' set
Of funny men, I guess;
But I never yit have found,
No matter how renowned,
A wit that's ever downed
Our Perkins, boys call Wes.

You sildom ketch him lyin';
Not much for speechifyin';
And he 'pears just half-way tryin'
When he does git off his wit:
But dogged if th'aint blame'd few
'Ll probe you through and through,
As Wes is sure to do,
For he allus makes a hit.

He's a humble sort of feller
With an eye as soft and meller
As an apple golden yeller
In the mild September sun:
Kinder quare and unconcerned,
Like he didn't kere a derved,
But many a feller's learned
That Wes is in for fun.

Cheap wits don't make no noise
'Bout Wes, 'cause he destroys
Their wisdom, which annoys
The humorist, more or less.
Unless your jokes 'll fit
You'd best reserve your wit,
And entirely omit,
'Fore Perkins, boys call Wes.

THE FIRST MESS OF GREENS

You may boast of landscapes golden
 With the harvest's ripenin' grain,
Or of Autumn pensive foldin'
 All her flowers to sleep again;
But to me the woods a-ringin'
 With the notes of happy birds
When the April buds is springin'
 Is a song too sweet for words:
And the beautifullest, since you ask it,
 In art or nature's scenes,
Is Kate with knife and basket,
 A-getherin' of greens.

It pears to lift the veil of years
 And opens up to view,
A scene that brings me soothin' tears
 As sweet as tender dew
To grass that suns have withered dry:
 I can see her jist as plain,
Though Father Time has dimmed my eye,
 And ricollect the pain,
I suffered while she paused a-thinkin'
 What such an answer means;
And the "Stay and help us, John," a-winkin'
 "Eat our first mess of greens."

I've heard my neighbor Johnson say
 His choice was chicken pie;
And Perkins lows he likes to stay
 His stomach with a fry:
And Jones, he says, says he, "I think
 Good old Kentucky rye

Suits me the best; give me a drink,
Whenever I am dry.”
But I have never tasted meat,
Nor cabbage, corn nor beans,
Nor fluid food one half as sweet
As that first mess of greens.

It's not the pictur' near as much
As the thoughts that gethers round,
That always gives the paintin' such
Distinction and renown.
There's nothin' in a grassy knoll
So beautiful to see,
And yit I think within my soul
It beats a flowery lea.
And oh, I git *Munkasket*,
If I only had the means,
To paint me Kate with basket
A-getherin' of greens.

WES BANKS

Wes Banks, you know, he teaches school,
Has taught for nigh on forty year,
And I jist want to say right here,
That though he may not fit your rule,
Wes Banks, by jings, he ain't no fool.
And if you bet your dough 'gin Wes,
You'll want your money back, I guess.

Wes Banks, he never wears a tie—
Them things, you know, some call cravats,
Nor collar neither, and jist that's
The very tarnal reason why
I bet on Wes, and that's no lie:
No man can lead Wes by the nose
If he don't wear the latest clothes.

Wes Banks, you know, I'm speakin' uv:
He lives way out on old Line Fork,
As good a place as in New York;
Out where the birds sing lays of love,
The wren, the thrush, the turtle dove—
Sometimes, it seems, because of Wes,
Who loves their music, more or less.

Wes claims that now for forty year
He has prescribed strong peachtree tea
For cusses, which he says that he
Could not intrest except by fear:
Wes makes this claim while standing here
Before his boys now teaching school,
Who can't remember such a rule.

Now Wes, he's awful in his speech:
He says I "seed" and "done" and "haint,"

And lots of things that's wrong and queer;
But many's them who pray and preach
And go to school and learn to teach
And wear a darned sight better clothes,
Still never learn what Wesley knows.

Well, Wes ain't much at institutes;
Don't like to make a public talk,
And demonstrate with board and chalk.
No, he ain't much on sich disputes;
But Wes at school gits down and roots:
Up here Wes Banks is jist a wag,
With striped candy in a bag.

Old Wes is poor as money goes,
But rich in love and charity;
His heart goes out in sympathy
To barefoot boy with bleeding toes,
And girls in torn and tattered clothes;
And with his heart goes Wes's coin,
To heal the wound and gird the loin.

And this is why tonight I rise
To speak how Wesley Bank's life
Through forty years of schoolroom strife
By living truth has conquered lies,
And made his students good and wise:
You can't size Wes by looks or speech,
No more than some by what they preach.

PHILOSOPHY AT A BANQUET

Old Socrates who thought he knew
A philosophic thing or two,
Believed that man was made to walk
Or lounge about the streets and talk
Of life and death and virtues true,
And what a fellow ought to do;
While poor Xantippe, so I'm told,
Remained at home to drudge and scold.

But Epicurus seemed to think
That man was made to eat and drink,
A doctrine quite as orthodox,
I sometimes think, as old man Soc's;
For what philosophy 's complete
That can not take an hour to eat?
I like old Socry, to be sure,
But here I'm just an Epicure.

ANENT HALLEY'S COMET

Oh, how sick of Halley's comet!
Almost makes me want to vomit.
Can't pick up a magazine,
Halley's comet isn't seen.
When the weary day is done,
Still no peace unless you shun
Every living soul you meet
Talking comet on the street.
Should you occupy the pews,
See the Hipp or read the news,
Fall asleep and chance to dream,
Halley's comet still the theme.
Dust to-day got in my eye,—
Halley's comet passing by.
Both the sense of sound and sight,
Suffering from this comet's blight.
When the days were hot and dry,
Halley's comet passing by.
All through April frost and rain,
Halley's comet raising Cain.
Who so seeks for faith or knowledge
Goes to church or enters college,
Hears naught else but this discussed,—
Shooting stars and comet dust.
Taft and Teddy 'swell be dead,
Like Old England's monarch *Ed*,—
Just as well as be forgot
Midst this meteoric rot.
Automobile passes by,
Like a comet in the sky,
Leaving in its awful trail,
Wreaths of smoke just like a tail;
See a fellow sniff the air,

Stop, turn pale, and trembling, swear:
“Wonder now has science lied?
That gas smells like cyanide.”
Learned, ign’rant, rich and poor,
All are full of comet lore.
Life had charms that once were sweet;
Earth, hast now no safe retreat?
If this talk will not abate,
Lord, I pray this be our fate;
May this globe dissolve or fail,
Passing through the comet’s tail!

