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OLD-FASHIONED ROSES

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OLD-FASHIONED ROSES

BY

JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY



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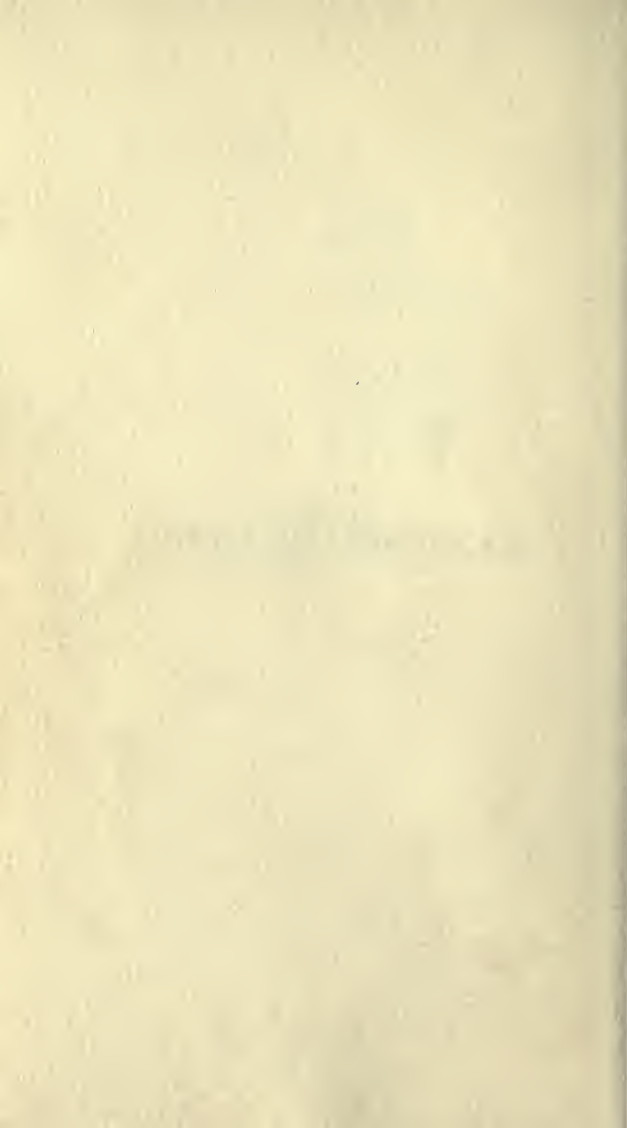
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JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

TO

MY MOTHER, ELIZABETH



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OLD-FASHIONED ROSES

OLD-FASHIONED ROSES.

[HOOSIER DIALECT.]

*They ain't no style about 'em,
And they're sort o' pale and faded ;
Yit the doorway here, without 'em,
Would be lonesomer, and shaded
With a good 'eal blacker shadder
Than the mornin'-glories makes,
And the sunshine would look sadder
For their good old-fashion' sakes.*

*I like 'em 'cause they kind o'
Sort o' make a feller like 'em ;
And I tell you, when I find a
Bunch out whur the sun kin strike 'em,
It allus sets me thinkin'
O' the ones 'at used to grow,
And peek in thro' the chinkin'
O' the cabin, don't you know.*

*And then I think o' mother,
And how she used to love 'em,
When they wuzn't any other,
'Less she found 'em up above 'em!
And her eyes, afore she shut 'em,
Whispered with a smile, and said
We must pick a bunch and put 'em
In her hand when she wuz dead.*

*But, as I wuz a sayin',
They ain't no style about 'em
Very gaudy or displayin',
But I wouldn't be without 'em,
'Cause I'm happier in these posies,
And the hollyhawks and sich,
Than the hummin' bird 'at noses
In the roses of the rich.*

THE DAYS GONE BY.

O the days gone by ! O the days gone by !
The apples in the orchard, and the pathway through the
rye ;
The chirrup of the robin, and the whistle of the quail
As he piped across the meadows sweet as any nightin-
gale ;
When the bloom was on the clover, and the blue was in
the sky,
And my happy heart brimmed over—in the happy days
gone by.

In the days gone by, when our naked feet were tripped
By the honeysuckle tangles where the water-lilies dipped,
And the ripples of the river lipped the moss along the
brink
Where the placid-eyed and lazy-footed cattle came to
drink,
And the tilting snipe stood fearless of the truant's way-
ward cry
And the splashing of the swimmer, in the days gone by.

O the days gone by ! O the days gone by !
The music of the laughing lip, the luster of the eye ;
The childish faith in fairies, and Aladdin's magic ring—
The simple, soul-reposing, glad belief in everything ;
When life was like a story holding neither sob nor sigh,
In the golden olden glory of the days gone by.

AN OLD SWEETHEART OF MINE.

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

The lamplight seems to glimmer with a flicker of sur-
prise,

As I turn it low, to rest me of the dazzle in my eyes,
And light my pipe in silence, save a sigh that seems to
yoke

Its fate with my tobacco, and to vanish with the smoke.

'Tis a fragrant retrospection, for the loving thoughts
that start

Into being are like perfumes from the blossom of the
heart ;

And to dream the old dreams over is a luxury divine—

When my truant fancies wander with that old sweetheart
of mine.

Though I hear, beneath my study, like a fluttering of
wings,

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

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

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

I can see the pink sun-bonnet and the little checkered
dress

She wore when first I kissed her, and she answered the
caress

With the written declaration that, "as surely as the vine
Grew round the stump," she loved me—that old sweet-
heart of mine !

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

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

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

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

A FRUIT-PIECE.

THE afternoon of summer folds
Its warm arms round the marigolds,
And, with its gleaming fingers, pets
The watered pinks and violets
That from the casement vases spill,
Over the cottage window-sill,
Their fragrance down the garden walks
Where droop the dry-mouthed hollyhocks.
How vividly the sunshine scrawls
The grape-vine shadows on the walls !
How like a truant swings the breeze
In high boughs of the apple-trees !
The slender free-stone lifts aloof,
Full languidly above the roof,
A hoard of fruitage, stamped with gold
And precious mintings manifold.

High up, through curled green leaves, a pear
Hangs hot with ripeness here and there.

Beneath the sagging trellis clings,
In lush, lack-luster clusterings,

Great torpid grapes, all fattened through
With moon and sunshine, shade and dew,

Until their swollen girths express
But forms of limp deliciousness—

Drugged to an indolence divine
With heaven's own sacramental wine.

THE LITTLE WHITE HEARSE.

As the little white hearse went glimmering by—
The man on the coal-cart jerked his lines,
And smutted the lid of either eye,
And turned and stared at the business signs ;
And the street-car driver stopped and beat
His hands on his shoulders, and gazed up street
Till his eye on the long track reached the sky—
As the little white hearse went glimmering by.

As the little white hearse went glimmering by—
A stranger petted a ragged child
In the crowded walks, and she knew not why,
But he gave her a coin for the way she smiled ;
And a bootblack thrilled with a pleasure strange,
As a customer put back his change
With a kindly hand and a grateful sigh,
As the little white hearse went glimmering by.

As the little white hearse went glimmering by—
A man looked out of a window dim,
And his cheeks were wet and his heart was dry,
For a dead child even were dear to him !

And he thought of his empty life, and said :—
“ Loveless alive, and loveless dead—
Nor wife nor child in earth or sky ! ”
As the little white hearse went glimmering by.

"CURLY LOCKS."

*Curly Locks! Curly Locks! wilt thou be mine?
Thou shalt not wash the dishes, nor yet feed the swine,
But sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam,
And feast upon strawberries, sugar and cream.*

Curly Locks ! Curly Locks ! wilt thou be mine ?
The throb of my heart is in every line,
And the pulse of a passion as airy and glad
In its musical beat as the little prince had !

Thou shalt not wash the dishes, nor yet feed the swine !
O, I'll dapple thy hands with these kisses of mine
Till the pink of the nail of each finger shall be
As a little pet blush in full blossom for me.

But sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam,
And thou shalt have fabric as fair as a dream,—
The red of my veins, and the white of my love,
And the gold of my joy for the braiding thereof.

And feast upon strawberries, sugar and cream
From a service of silver with jewels a gleam,—
At thy feet will I bide, at thy beck will I rise,
And twinkle my soul in the night of thine eyes !

Curly Locks ! Curly Locks ! wilt thou be mine ?
Thou shalt not wash the dishes, nor yet feed the swine,
But sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam,
And feast upon strawberries, sugar and cream.

"GOD BLESS US EVERY ONE!"

"God bless us every one!" prayed Tiny Tim,
Crippled, and dwarfed of body, yet so tall
Of soul, we tiptoe earth to look on him,
High towering over all.

He loved the loveless world, nor dreamed, indeed,
That it, at best, could give to him, the while,
But pitying glances, when his only need
Was but a cheery smile.

And thus he prayed, "God bless us every one!"
Enfolding all the creeds within the span
Of his child-heart; and so, despising none,
Was nearer saint than man.

I like to fancy God, in Paradise,
Lifting a finger o'er the rhythmic swing
Of chiming harp and song, with eager eyes
Turned earthward, listening—

The Anthem stilled—the angels leaning there
Above the golden walls—the morning sun
Of Christmas bursting flower-like with the prayer,
“ God bless us Every One !”

LITTLE TOMMY SMITH.

Dimple-cheeked and rosy-lipped,
With his cap-rim backward tipped,
Still, in fancy, I can see
Little Tommy smile on me—
 Little Tommy Smith.

Little unsung Tommy Smith—
Scarce a name to rhyme it with ;
Yet most tenderly to me
Something sings unceasingly—
 Little Tommy Smith.

On the verge of some far land
Still forever does he stand,
With his cap-rim rakishly
Tilted ; so he smiles on me —
 Little Tommy Smith.

Oh, my jaunty statuette
Of first love, I see you yet ;
Though you smile so mistily,
It is but through tears I see,
 Little Tommy Smith.

But with crown tipped back behind,
And the glad hand of the wind
Smoothing back your hair, I see
Heaven's best angel smile on me—
Little Tommy Smith.

AFTERWHILES.

WHERE are they—the Afterwhiles—
Luring us the lengthening miles
Of our lives? Where is the dawn
With the dew across the lawn
Stroked with eager feet the far
Way the hills and valleys are?
Where the sun that smites the frown
Of the eastward-gazer down?
Where the rifted wreathes of mist
O'er us, tinged with amethyst,
Round the mountain's steep defiles?
Where are all the afterwhiles?

Afterwhile—and we will go
Thither, yon, and to and fro—
From the stifling city-streets
To the country's cool retreats—
From the riot to the rest
Where hearts beat the placidest;
Afterwhile, and we will fall
Under breezy trees, and loll

In the shade, with thirsty sight
Drinking deep the blue delight
Of the skies that will beguile
Us as children—afterwhile.

Afterwhile—and one intends
To be gentler to his friends—
To walk with them, in the hush
Of still evenings, o'er the plush
Of home-leading fields, and stand
Long at parting, hand in hand :
One, in time, will joy to take
New resolves for someone's sake,
And wear then the look that lies
Clear and pure in other eyes—
He will soothe and reconcile
His own conscience—afterwhile.

Afterwhile—we have in view
A far scene to journey to,—
Where the old home is, and where
The old mother waits us there,
Peering, as the time grows late,
Down the old path to the gate.—
How we'll click the latch that locks
In the pinks and hollyhocks,

And leap up the path once more
Where she waits us at the door !—
How we'll greet the dear old smile,
And the warm tears—afterwhile !

Ah, the endless afterwhiles !—
Leagues on leagues, and miles on miles,
In the distance far withdrawn,
Stretching on, and on, and on,
Till the fancy is footsore
And faints in the dust before
The last milestone's granite face,
Hacked with : Here Beginneth Space.
O far glimmering worlds and wings,
Mystic smiles and beckonings,
Lead us, through the shadowy aisles,
Out into the afterwhiles.

HERR WEISER.

HERR WEISER !—Three-score-years-and-ten,—
A hale white rose of his countrymen,
Transplanted here in the Hoosier loam,
And blossomy as his German home—
As blossomy, and as pure and sweet
As the cool green glen of his calm retreat,
Far withdrawn from the noisy town
Where trade goes clamoring up and down,
Whose fret and fever, and stress and strife
May not trouble his tranquil life !

Breath of rest, what a balmy gust !—
Quit of the city's heat and dust,
Jostling down by the winding road,
Through the orchard ways of his quaint abode.—
Tether the horse, as we onward fare
Under the pear-trees trailing there,
And thumping the wooden bridge at night
With lumps of ripeness and lush delight,
Till the stream, as it maunders on till dawn,
Is powdered and pelted and smiled upon.

Herr Weiser, with his wholesome face,
And the gentle blue of his eyes, and grace
Of unassuming honesty,
Be there to welcome you and me !
And what though the toil of the farm be stopped
And the tireless plans of the place be dropped,
While the prayerful master's knees are set
In beds of pansy and mignonette,
And lily and aster and columbine,
Offered in love, as yours and mine ?—

What, but a blessing of kindly thought,
Sweet as the breath of forget-me-not !—
What, but a spirit of lustrous love
White as the aster he bends above !—
What, but an odorous memory
Of the dear old man, made known to me
In days demanding a help like his,—
As sweet as the life of the lily is—
As sweet as the soul of a babe, bloom-wise
Born of a lily in paradise.

THE BEAUTIFUL CITY.

THE Beautiful City! Forever
Its rapturous praises resound;
We fain would behold it—but never
A glimpse of its glory is found:
We slacken our lips at the tender
White breasts of our mothers to hear
Of its marvelous beauty and splendor:—
We see—but the gleam of a tear!

Yet never the story may tire us,
First graven in symbols of stone—
Rewritten on scrolls of papyrus,
And parchment, and scattered and blown
By the winds of the tongues of all nations,
Like a litter of leaves wildly whirled
Down the rack of a hundred translations,
From the earliest lisp of the world.

We compass the earth and the ocean,
From the Orient's uttermost light,
To where the last ripple in motion
Lips hem of the skirt of the night,—

But The Beautiful City evades us—
No spire of it glints in the sun—
No glad-bannered battlement shades us
When all our long journey is done.

Where lies it? We question and listen ;
We lean from the mountain, or mast,
And see but dull earth, or the glisten
Of seas inconceivably vast :
The dust of the one blurs our vision —
The glare of the other our brain,
Nor city nor island elysian
In all of the land or the main !

We kneel in dim fanes where the thunders
Of organs tumultuous roll,
And the longing heart listens and wonders,
And the eyes look aloft from the soul ;
But the chanson grows fainter and fainter,
Swoons wholly away and is dead ;
And our eyes only reach where the painter
Has dabbled a saint overhead.

The Beautiful City ! O mortal, .
Fare hopefully on in thy quest,
Pass down through the green grassy portal
That leads to the Valley of Rest,

There first passed the One who, in pity
Of all thy great yearning, awaits
To point out The Beautiful City,
And loosen the trump at the gates.

LOCKERBIE STREET.

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

There is such a relief, from the clangor and din
Of the heart of the town, to go loitering in
Through the dim, narrow walks, with the sheltering shade
Of the trees waving over the long promenade,
And littering lightly the ways of our feet
With the gold of the sunshine of Lockerbie street.

And the nights that come down the dark pathways of
dusk, -
With the stars in their tresses, and odors of musk
In their moon-woven raiments, bespangled with dews,
And looped up with lilies for lovers to use
In the songs that they sing to the tinkle and beat
Of their sweet serenadings through Lockerbie street.

O, my Lockerbie street ! You are fair to be seen—
Be it noon of the day, or the rare and serene
Afternoon of the night—you are one to my heart,
And I love you above all the phrases of art,
For no language could frame, and no lips could repeat
My rhyme-haunted raptures of Lockerbie street.

DAS KRIST KINDEL.

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

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

Like a fragrant incense rising, curled the smoke of my
cigar,
With the lamp-light gleaming through it like a mist-
enfolded star ;—

And as I gazed, the vapor like a curtain rolled away,
With a sound of bells that tinkled, and the clatter of a
sleigh.

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

He poised himself grotesquely, in an attitude of mirth,
On a damask-covered hassock that was sitting on the
hearth ;

And at a magic signal of his stubby little thumb,
I saw the fireplace changing to a bright proscenium.

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

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

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

'Twas a wondrous little fellow, with a dainty double
chin,
And chubby cheeks, and dimples for the smiles to
blossom in ;
And he looked as ripe and rosy, on his bed of straw and
reeds,
As a mellow little pippin that had tumbled in the weeds.
And I saw the happy mother, and a group surrounding
her,
That knelt with costly presents of frankincense and
myrrh ;
And I thrilled with awe and wonder, as a murmur on
the air
Came drifting o'er the hearing in a melody of prayer :—

*By the splendor in the heavens, and the hush upon the
sea,
And the majesty of silence reigning over Galilee,—*

*We feel Thy kingly presence, and we humbly bow the
knee
And lift our hearts and voices in gratefulness to Thee.*

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

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

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

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

THE ORCHARD LANDS OF LONG AGO.

THE orchard lands of Long Ago !
O drowsy winds, awake, and blow
The snowy blossoms back to me,
And all the buds that used to be !
Blow back along the grassy ways
Of truant feet, and lift the haze
Of happy summer from the trees
That trail their tresses in the seas
Of grain that float and overflow
The orchard lands of Long Ago !

Blow back the melody that slips
In lazy laughter from the lips
That marvel much if any kiss
Is sweeter than the apple's is.
Blow back the twitter of the birds—
The lisp, the titter, and the words
Of merriment that found the shine
Of summertime a glorious wine
That drenched the leaves that loved it so,
In orchard lands of Long Ago !

O memory ! alight and sing
Where rosy-bellied pippins cling,
And golden russets glint and gleam,
As, in the old Arabian dream,
The fruits of that enchanted tree
The glad Aladdin robbed for me !
And, drowsy winds, awake and fan
My blood as when it over-ran
A heart ripe as the apples grow
In orchard lands of Long Ago !

THE SOUTH WIND AND THE SUN.

O THE South Wind and the Sun !
How each loved the other one—
Full of Fancy—full of folly—
Full of jollity and fun !
How they romped and ran about,
Like two boys when school is out,
With glowing face, and lispng lip,
Low laugh, and lifted shout !

And the South Wind—he was dressed
With a ribbon round his breast
That floated, flapped and fluttered
In a riotous unrest,
And a drapery of mist,
From the shoulder and the wrist
Flowing backward with the motion
Of the waving hand he kissed.

And the Sun had on a crown
Wrought of gilded thistledown,
And a scarf of velvet vapor,
And a raveled-rainbow gown ;
And his tinsel-tangled hair,
Tossed and lost upon the air,
Was glossier and flossier
Than any anywhere.

And the South Wind's eyes were two
Little dancing drops of dew,
As he puffed his cheeks, and pursed his lips,
And blew and blew and blew !
And the Sun's—like diamond-stone,
Brighter yet than ever known,
As he knit his brows, and held his breath,
And shone and shone and shone !

And this pair of merry fays
Wandered through the summer days ;
Arm-in-arm they went together
Over heights of morning haze—
Over slanting slopes of lawn
They went on and on and on,
Where the daisies looked like star-tracks
Trailing up and down the dawn.

And where'er they found the top
Of a wheat-stalk droop and lop
They chucked it underneath the chin
And praised the lavish crop,
Till it lifted with the pride
Of the heads it grew beside,
And then the South Wind and the Sun
Went onward satisfied.

Over meadow-lands they tripped,
Where the dandelions dipped;
In crimson foam of clover-bloom,
And dripped and dripped and dripped ;
And they clinched the bumble-stings,
Gauming honey on their wings,
And bundling them in lily-bells,
With maudlin murmurings.

And the humming-bird, that hung
Like a jewel up among
The tilted honeysuckle-horns,
They mesmerized, and swung
In the palpitating air,
Drowsed with odors strange and rare,
And, with whispered laughter, slipped away
And left him hanging there.

And they braided blades of grass
Where the truant had to pass ;
And they wriggled through the rushes
And the reeds of the morass,
Where they danced, in rapture sweet,
O'er the leaves that laid a street
Of undulant mosaic for
The touches of their feet.

By the brook with mossy brink,
Where the cattle came to drink,
They trilled and piped and whistled
With the thrush and bobolink,
Till the kine, in listless pause,
Switched their tails in mute applause,
With lifted heads and dreamy eyes,
And bubble-dripping jaws.

And where the melons grew,
Streaked with yellow, green and blue,
These jolly sprites went wandering
Through spangled paths of dew ;
And the melons, here and there,
They made love to everywhere,
Turning their pink souls to crimson
With caresses fond and fair.

Over orchard walls they went,
Where the fruited boughs were bent
Till they brushed the sward beneath them
Where the shine and shadow blent ;
And the great green pear they shook
Till the sallow hue forsook
Its features, and the gleam of gold
Laughed out in every look.

And they stroked the downy cheek
Of the peach, and smoothed it sleek,
And flushed it into splendor ;
And, with many an elfish freak,
Gave the russet's rust a wipe—
Prankt the rambo with a stripe,
And the winesap blushed its reddest
As they spanked the pippins ripe.

Through the woven ambuscade
That the twining vines had made,
They found the grapes, in clusters,
Drinking up the shine and shade—
Plumpt, like tiny skins of wine,
With a vintage so divine
That the tongue of fancy tingled
With the tang of muscadine.

And the golden-banded bees,
Droning o'er the flowery leas,
They bridled, reined, and rode away
Across the fragrant breeze,
Till in hollow oak and elm
They had groomed and stabled them
In waxen stalls that oozed with dew
Of rose and lily-stem.

Where the dusty highway leads,
High above the wayside weeds
They sowed the air with butterflies
Like blooming flower-seeds,
Till the dull grasshopper sprung
Half a man's height up, and hung
Tranced in the heat, with whirring wings,
And sung and sung and sung !

And they loitered, hand in hand,
Where the snipe along the sand
Of the river ran to meet them
As the ripple meets the land,
Till the dragonfly, in light
Gauzy armor, burnished bright,
Came tilting down the waters
In a wild, bewildered flight.

And they heard the killdee's call,
And afar, the waterfall,
But the rustle of a falling leaf
They heard above it all ;
And the trailing willow crept
Deeper in the tide that swept
The leafy shallop to the shore,
And wept and wept and wept !

And the fairy vessel veered
From its moorings—tacked and steered
For the center of the current—
Sailed away and disappeared :
And the burthen that it bore
From the long-enchanted shore—
“ Alas ! the South Wind and the Sun ! ”
I murmur evermore.

For the South Wind and the Sun,
Each so loves the other one,
For all his jolly folly,
And frivolity and fun,
That our love for them they weigh
As their fickle fancies may,
And when at last we love them most,
They laugh and sail away.

THE LOST KISS.

I PUT by the half-written poem,
While the pen, idly trailed in my hand,
Writes on,—“ Had I words to complete it,
Who'd read it, or who'd understand ?”
But the little bare feet on the stairway,
And the faint, smothered laugh in the hall,
And the eerie-low lisp on the silence,
Cry up to me over it all.

So I gather it up—where was broken
The tear-faded thread of my theme,
Telling how, as one night I sat writing,
A fairy broke in on my dream,
A little inquisitive fairy—
My own little girl, with the gold
Of the sun in her hair, and the dewy
Blue eyes of the fairies of old.

'Twas the dear little girl that I scolded—

“ For was it a moment like this,”

I said, “ when she knew I was busy,

To come romping in for a kiss ?—

Come rowdying up from her mother,

And clamouring there at my knee

For ‘ One ’ittle kiss for my dolly,

And one ’ittle uzzer for me ! ’ ”

God pity the heart that repelled her,

And the cold hand that turned her away !

And take, from the lips that denied her,

This answerless prayer of to-day !

Take, Lord, from my mem’ry forever

That pitiful sob of despair,

And the patter and trip of the little bare feet,

And the one piercing cry on the stair !

I put by the half-written poem,

While the pen, idly trailed in my hand,

Writes on, “ Had I words to complete it,

Who’d read it, or who’d understand ? ”

But the little bare feet on the stairway,

And the faint, smothered laugh in the hall,

And the eerie-low lisp on the silence,

Cry up to me over it all.

IKE WALTON'S PRAYER.

I CRAVE, dear Lord,
No boundless hoard
Of gold and gear,
Nor jewels fine,
Nor lands, nor king,
Nor treasure-heaps of anything.—
Let but a little hut be mine
Where at the hearthstone I may hear
The cricket sing,
And have the shine
Of one glad woman's eyes to make,
For my poor sake,
Our simple home a place divine;—
Just the wee cot—the cricket's chirr—
Love, and the smiling face of her.

I pray not for
Great riches, nor
For vast estates, and castle-halls,—
Give me to hear the bare footfalls
Of children o'er
An oaken floor

New-rinsed with sunshine, or bespread
With but the tiny coverlet
And pillow for the baby's head ;
And, pray Thou, may
The door stand open and the day
Send ever in a gentle breeze,
With fragrance from the locust-trees,
And drowsy moan of doves, and blur
Of robin-chirps, and drone of bees,
With afterhushes of the stir
Of intermingling sounds, and then
The good-wife and the smile of her
Filling the silences again—
The cricket's call,
And the wee cot,
Dear Lord of all,
Deny me not !

I pray not that
Men tremble at
My power of place
And lordly sway,—
I only pray for simple grace
To look my neighbor in the face
Full honestly from day to day—
Yield me his horny palm to hold,
And I'll not pray
For gold ;—

The tanned face, garlanded with mirth,
It hath the kingliest smile on earth—
The swart brow, diamonded with sweat,
Hath never need of coronet.

And so I reach,
Dear Lord, to Thee,
And do beseech
Thou givest me
The wee cot, and the cricket's chirr,
Love, and the glad sweet face of her !

OUR KIND OF A MAN.

I.

THE kind of a man for you and me !
He faces the world unflinchingly,
And smites, as long as the wrong resists,
With a knuckled faith and force like fists :
He lives the life he is preaching of,
And loves where most is the need of love ;
His voice is clear to the deaf man's ears,
And his face sublime through the blind man's tears ;
The light shines out where the clouds were dim,
And the widow's prayer goes up for him ;
The latch is clicked at the hovel door,
And the sick man sees the sun once more,
And out o'er the barren fields he sees
Springing blossoms and waving trees,
Feeling, as only the dying may,
That God's own servant has come that way,
Smoothing the path as it still winds on
Through the golden gate where his loved have gone.

II.

The kind of a man for me and you !
However little of worth we do
He credits full, and abides in trust
That time will teach us how more is just.
He walks abroad, and he meets all kinds
Of querulous and uneasy minds,
And, sympathizing, he shares the pain
Of the doubts that rack us, heart and brain ;
And, knowing this, as we grasp his hand,
We are surely coming to understand !
He looks on sin with pitying eyes—
E'en as the Lord, since Paradise,—
Else, should we read, Though our sins should glow
As scarlet, they shall be white as snow ?—
And feeling still, with a grief half glad,
That the bad are as good as the good are bad,
He strikes straight out for the Right—and he
Is the kind of a man for you and me !

THE HARPER.

LIKE a drift of faded blossoms
Caught in a slanting rain,
His fingers glimpsed down the strings of his harp
In a tremulous refrain.

Patter, and tinkle, and drip, and drip !
Ah ! but the chords were rainy sweet !
And I closed my eyes and I bit my lip,
As he played there in the street.

Patter, and drip, and tinkle !
And there was the little bed
In the corner of the garret,
And the rafters overhead !

And there was the little window—
Tinkle, and drip, and drip !—
The rain above, and a mother's love,
And God's companionship !

THE RIPEST PEACH.

THE ripest peach is highest on the tree—
And so her love, beyond the reach of me,
Is dearest in my sight. Sweet breezes, bow
Her heart down to me where I worship now !

She looms aloft where every eye may see
The ripest peach is highest on the tree.
Such fruitage as her love I know, alas !
I may not reach here from the orchard grass.

I drink the sunshine showered past her lips
As roses drain the dewdrop as it drips.
The ripest peach is highest on the tree,
And so mine eyes gaze upward eagerly.

Why—why do I not turn away in wrath
And pluck some heart here hanging in my path?—
Love's lower boughs bend with them—but, ah me !
The ripest peach is highest on the tree.

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OLD AUNT MARY'S.

WASN'T it pleasant, O brother mine,
In those old days of the lost sunshine
Of youth—when the Saturday's chores were through,
And the "Sunday's wood" in the kitchen, too,
And we went visiting, "me and you,"
Out to Old Aunt Mary's?

It all comes back so clear to-day!
Though I am as bald as you are gray—
Out by the barn-lot, and down the lane,
We patter along in the dust again,
As light as the tips of the drops of the rain,
Out to Old Aunt Mary's!

We cross the pasture, and through the wood
Where the old gray snag of the poplar stood,
Where the hammering "red-heads" hopped awry,
And the buzzard "raised" in the "clearing"-sky,
And lolled and circled, as we went by
Out to Old Aunt Mary's.

And then in the dust of the road again ;
And the teams we met, and the countrymen ;
And the long highway, with sunshine spread
As thick as butter on country bread,
Our cares behind, and our hearts ahead
 Out to Old Aunt Mary's.

Why, I see her now in the open door,
Where the little gourds grew up the sides, and o'er
The clapboard roof !—And her face—ah, me !
Wasn't it good for a boy to see—
And wasn't it good for a boy to be
 Out to Old Aunt Mary's ?

And O my brother, so far away,
This is to tell you she waits to-day
To welcome us :—Aunt Mary fell
Asleep this morning, whispering, "Tell
The boys to come !" And all is well
 Out to Old Aunt Mary's.

ILLILEO.

ILLILEO, the moonlight seemed lost across the vales—
The stars but strewed the azure as an armor's scattered
scales ;
The airs of night were quiet as the breath of silken sails,
And all your words were sweeter than the notes of night-
ingales.

Illileo Legardi, in the garden there alone,
With your figure carved of fervor, as the Psyche carved
of stone,
There came to me no murmur of the fountain' under-
tone
So mystically, musically mellow as your own.

You whispered low, Illileo—so low the leaves were mute,
And the echoes faltered breathless in your voice's vain
pursuit ;
And there died the distant dalliance of the serenader's
lute :
And I held you in my bosom as the husk may hold the
fruit.

Illileo, I listened. I believed you. In my bliss,
What were all the worlds above me since I found you
thus in this?—

Let them reeling reach to win me—even Heaven I would
miss

Grasping earthward!—I would cling here, though I
clung by just a kiss.

All blossoms should grow odorless—and lilies all
aghast—

And I said the stars should slacken in their paces
through the vast,

Ere yet my loyalty should fail enduring to the last.—

So vowed I. It is written. It is changeless as the
past.

Illileo Legardi, in the shade your palace throws

Like a cowl about the singer at your gilded porticos,

A moan goes with the music that may vex the high
repose

Of a heart that fades and crumbles as the crimson of a
rose.

A BRIDE.

“O I AM weary!” she sighed, as her billowy
Hair she unloosed in a torrent of gold
That rippled and fell o’er a figure as willowy,
Graceful and fair as a goddess of old :
Over her jewels she flung herself drearily,
Crumpled the laces that snowed on her breast,
Crushed with her fingers the lily that wearily
Clung in her hair like a dove in its nest.
—And naught but her shadowy form in the mirror
To kneel in dumb agony down and weep near her !

“Weary?”—of what? Could we fathom the mystery?—
Lift up the lashes weighed down by her tears,
And wash with their dew one white face from her
history,
Set like a gem in the red rust of years?
Nothing will rest her—unless he who died of her
Strayed from his grave, and, in place of the groom,
Tipping her face, kneeling there by the side of her,
Drained the old kiss to the dregs of his doom.
And naught but that shadowy form in the mirror
To kneel in dumb agony down and weep near her !

SONG.

THERE is ever a song somewhere, my dear ;
There is ever a something sings always :
There's the song of the lark when the skies are clear,
And the song of the thrush when the skies are gray.
The sunshine showers across the grain,
And the bluebird trills in the orchard tree ;
And in and out, when the eaves drip rain,
The swallows are twittering ceaselessly.

There is ever a song somewhere, my dear,
Be the skies above or dark or fair,
There is ever a song that our hearts may hear—
There is ever a song somewhere, my dear—
There is ever a song somewhere !

There is ever a song somewhere, my dear,
In the midnight black, or the mid-day blue ;
The robin pipes when the sun is here,
And the cricket chirrup the whole night through.

The buds may blow and the fruit may grow,
And the autumn leaves drop crisp and sere ;
But whether the sun, or the rain, or the snow,
There is ever a song somewhere, my dear.

There is ever a song somewhere, my dear,
Be the skies above or dark or fair,
There is ever a song that our hearts may hear—
There is ever a song somewhere, my dear—
There is ever a song somewhere !

WHEN BESSIE DIED.

If from your own the dimpled hands had slipped,
And ne'er would nestle in your palm again ;
If the white feet into the grave had tripped—

WHEN Bessie died—

We braided the brown hair, and tied
It just as her own little hands
Had fastened back the silken strands
A thousand times—the crimson bit
Of ribbon woven into it
That she had worn with childish pride—
Smoothed down the dainty bow—and cried—
When Bessie died.

When Bessie died—

We drew the nursery blinds aside,
And, as the morning in the room
Burst like a primrose into bloom,
Her pet canary's cage we hung
Where she might hear him when he sung—
And yet not any note he tried,
Though she lay listening folded-eyed.

When Bessie died—
We writhed in prayer unsatisfied ;
We begged of God, and He did smile
In silence on us all the while ;
And we did see Him, through our tears,
Enfolding that fair form of hers,
She laughing back against His love
The kisses we had nothing of—
And death to us He still denied,
When Bessie died—

When Bessie died.

THE SHOWER.

THE landscape, like the awed face of a child,
Grew curiously blurred ; a hush of death
Fell on the fields, and in the darkened wild
The zephyr held its breath.

No wavering glamour-work of light and shade
Dappled the shivering surface of the brook ;
The frightened ripples in their ambushade
Of willows thrilled and shook.

The sullen day grew darker, and anon
Dim flashes of pent anger lit the sky ;
With rumbling wheels of wrath came rolling on
The storm's artillery.

The cloud above put on its blackest frown,
And then, as with a vengeful cry of pain,
The lightning snatched it, ript and flung it down
In raveled shreds of rain :

While I, transfigured by some wondrous art,
Bowed with the thirsty lilies to the sod,
My empty soul brimmed over, and my heart
Drenched with the love of God.

A LIFE-LESSON.

THERE ! little girl ; don't cry !
They have broken your doll, I know ;
And your tea-set blue,
And your play-house, too,
Are things of the long ago ;
But childish troubles will soon pass by.—
There ! little girl ; don't cry !

There ! little girl ; don't cry !
They have broken your slate, I know ;
And the glad, wild ways
Of your school-girl days
Are things of the long ago ;
But life and love will soon come by.—
There ! little girl ; don't cry !

There ! little girl ! don't cry !
They have broken your heart, I know ;
And the rainbow gleams
Of your youthful dreams
Are things of the long ago ;
But Heaven holds all for which you sigh.—
There ! little girl ; don't cry !

THE SCRAWL.

I WANT to sing something—but this is all—
I try and I try, but the rhymes are dull,
As though they were damp, and the echoes fall
Limp and unlovable.

Words will not say what I yearn to say—
They will not walk as I want them to ;
But they stumble and fall in the path of the way
Of my telling my love for you.

Simply take what the scrawl is worth —
Knowing I love you as sun the sod
On the ripening side of the great round earth
That swings in the smile of God.

AWAY.

I CANNOT say, and I will not say
That he is dead.—He is just away !

With a cheery smile, and a wave of the hand,
He has wandered into an unknown land,

And left us dreaming how very fair
It needs must be, since he lingers there.

And you—O you, who the wildest yearn
For the old-time step and the glad return,—

Think of him faring on, as dear
In the love of There as the love of Here :

And loyal still, as he gave the blows
Of his warrior-strength to his country's foes.—

Mild and gentle, as he was brave,—
When the sweetest love of his life he gave

To simple things :—Where the violets grew
Pure as the eyes they were likened to,

The touches of his hands have strayed
As reverently as his lips have prayed :

When the little brown thrush that harshly chirred
Was dear to him as the mocking-bird ;

And he pitied as much as a man in pain
A writhing honey-bee wet with rain.—

Think of him still as the same, I say :
He is not dead—he is just away !

WHO BIDES HIS TIME.

WHO bides his time, and day by day
Faces defeat full patiently,
And lifts a mirthful roundelay,
However poor his fortunes be,—
He will not fail in any qualm
Of poverty—the paltry dime
It will grow golden in his palm,
Who bides his time.

Who bides his time—he tastes the sweet
Of honey in the saltiest tear ;
And though he fares with slowest feet,
Joy runs to meet him, drawing near ;
The birds are heralds of his cause,
And like a never-ending rhyme,
The roadsides bloom in his applause,
Who bides his time.

Who bides his time, and fevers not
In the hot race that none achieves,
Shall wear cool-wreathen laurel, wrought
With crimson berries in the leaves ;

And he shall reign a goodly king,
And sway his hand o'er every clime,
With peace writ on his signet ring,
Who bides his time.

LAUGHTER HOLDING BOTH HIS SIDES.

AYE, thou varlet ! Laugh away !
All the world's a holiday !
Laugh away, and roar and shout
Till thy hoarse tongue lolleth out !
Bloat thy cheeks, and bulge thine eyes
Unto bursting ; pelt thy thighs
With thy swollen palms, and roar
As thou never hast before !
Lustier ! wilt thou ! peal on peal !
Stiftest ? Squat and grind thy heel—
Wrestle with thy loins, and then
Wheeze thee whiles, and whoop again !

AND THIS IS FAME.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

And once I saw a man who drew
 A gloom about him like a cloak,
And wandered aimlessly. The few
 Who spoke of him at all, but spoke

Disparagingly of a mind
The Fates had faultily designed :
Too indolent for modern times—
 Too fanciful, and full of whims—
For, talking to himself in rhymes,
 And scrawling never-heard-of hymns,
The idle life to which he clung
Was worthless as the songs he sung !
I saw him, in my vision, filled
 With rapture o'er a spray of bloom
 The wind threw in his lonely room ;
And of the sweet perfume it spilled
He drank to drunkenness, and flung
His long hair back, and laughed and sung
And clapped his hands as children do
At fairy tales they listen to ;
While from his flying quill there dripped
Such music on his manuscript
That he who listens to the words
May close his eyes and dream the birds
Are twittering on every hand
A language he can understand.
He journeyed on through life, unknown,
Without one friend to call his own ;
He tired. No kindly hand to press
The cooling touch of tenderness

Upon his burning brow, nor lift
To his parched lips God's freest gift—
No sympathetic sob or sigh
Of trembling lips—no sorrowing eye
Looked out through tears to see him die
And Fame her greenest laurels brought
To crown a head that heeded not.

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

THE BEETLE.

THE shrilling locust slowly sheathes
His dagger-voice, and creeps away
Beneath the brooding leaves where breathes
The zephyr of the dying day :
One naked star has waded through
The purple shallows of the night,
And faltering as falls the dew
It drips its misty light.
O'er garden-blooms,
On tides of musk,
The beetle booms adown the glooms
And bumps along the dusk.

The katydid is rasping at
The silence from the tangled broom :
On drunken wings the flitting bat
Goes staggering athwart the gloom :
The toadstool bulges through the weeds ;
And lavishly to left and right
The fire-flies, like golden seeds,
Are sown about the night.

O'er slumbrous blooms,
On floods of musk,
The beetle booms adown the glooms
And bumps along the dusk.

The primrose flares its baby-hands
Wide open, as the empty moon,
Slow lifted from the underlands,
Drifts up the azure-arched lagoon :
The shadows on the garden walk
Are frayed with rifts of silver light ;
And, trickling down the poppy-stalk,
The dewdrop streaks the night.

O'er folded blooms,
On swirls of musk,
The beetle booms adown the glooms
And bumps along the dusk.

THE BROOK-SONG.

LITTLE brook ! Little brook !
You have such a happy look—
Such a very merry manner, as you swerve and curve and
crook—

And your ripples, one and one,
Reach each other's hands and run
Like laughing little children in the sun !

Little brook, sing to me :
Sing about a bumblebee
That tumbled from a lily-bell and grumbled mumbingly,
Because he wet the film
Of his wings, and had to swim,
While the water-bugs raced round and laughed
at him !

Little brook—sing a song
Of a leaf that sailed along
Down the golden-braided center of your current swift and
strong,

And a dragonfly that lit
On the tilting rim of it,
And rode away and wasn't scared a bit.

And sing—how oft in glee
Came a truant boy like me,
Who loved to lean and listen to your lilting melody,
Till the gurgle and refrain
Of your music in his brain
Wrought a happiness as keen to him as pain.

Little brook—laugh and leap!—
Do not let the dreamer weep:
Sing him all the songs of summer till he sink in softest
sleep;
And then sing soft and low
Through his dreams of long ago—
Sing back to him the rest he used to know!

THE OLD MAN.

Lo ! steadfast and serene,
In patient pause between
The seen and the unseen,
 What gentle zephyrs fan
Your silken silver hair,—
And what diviner air
Breathes round you like a prayer,
 Old Man ?

Can you, in nearer view
Of Glory, pierce the blue
Of happy heaven through ;
 And, listening mutely, can
Your senses, dull to us,
Hear angel-voices thus,
In chorus glorious—
 Old Man ?

In your reposeful gaze
The dusk of Autumn days
Is blent with April haze,
 As when of old began

The bursting of the bud
Of rosy babyhood—
When all the world was good,
 Old Man.

And yet I find a sly
Little twinkle in your eye ;
And your whisperingly shy
 Little laugh is simply an
Internal shout of glee
That betrays the fallacy
You'd perpetrate on me,
 Old Man !

So just put up the frown
That your brows are pulling down !
Why, the fleetest boy in town,
 As he bared his feet and ran,
Could read with half a glance—
And of keen rebuke, perchance—
Your secret countenance,
 Old Man !

Now, honestly, confess :
Is an old man any less
Than the little child we bless
 And caress when we can ?

Isn't age but just a place
Where you mask the childish face
To preserve its inner grace,
Old Man ?

Hasn't age a truant day,
Just as that you went astray
In the wayward, restless way,
When, brown with dust and tan,
Your roguish face essayed,
In solemn masquerade,
To hide the smile it made,
Old Man ?

Now, fair, and square, and true,
Don't your old soul tremble through,
As in youth it used to do
When it brimmed and overran
With the strange, enchanted sights,
And the splendors and delights
Of the old "Arabian Nights,"
Old Man ?

When, haply, you have fared
Where glad Aladdin shared
His lamp with you, and dared
The Afrite and his clan ;

And, with him, clambered through
The trees where jewels grew—
And filled your pockets, too,
Old Man ?

Or, with Sinbad, at sea—
And in veracity
Who has sinned as bad as he,
Or would, or will, or can ?
Have you listened to his lies,
With open mouth and eyes,
And learned his art likewise,
Old Man ?

And you need not deny
That your eyes were wet as dry,
Reading novels on the sly !
And review them, if you can,
And the same warm tears will fall—
Only faster, that is all—
Over Little Nell and Paul,
Old Man !

O, you were a lucky lad—
Just as good as you were bad !
And the host of friends you had—
Charley, Tom, and Dick, and Dan ;

And the old school-teacher, too,
Though he often censured you ;
And the girls in pink and blue,
Old Man.

And—as often you have leant,
In boyish sentiment,
To kiss the letter sent
By Nelly, Belle, or Nan—
Wherein the rose's hue
Was red, the violet blue—
And sugar sweet—and you,
Old Man,—

So, to-day, as lives the bloom
And the sweetness, and perfume
Of the blossoms, I assume,
On the same mysterious plan
The Master's love assures,
That the self-same boy endures
In that hale old heart of yours,
Old Man.

TO ROBERT BURNS.

SWEET SINGER, that I loe the maist
O' ony, sin' wi' eager haste
I smackit bairn-lips ower the taste
 O' hinnied sang,
I hail thee, though a blessed ghaist
 In Heaven lang !

For, weel I ken, nae cantie phrase,
Nor courtly airs, nor lairdly ways,
Could gar me freer blame, or praise,
 Or proffer hand,
Where "Rantin' Robbie" and his lays
 Thegither stand.

And sae these hamely lines I send,
Wi' jinglin' words at ilka end,
In echoe of the sangs that wend
 Frae thee to me
Like simmer-brooks, wi' mony a bend
 O' wimplin' glee.

In fancy, as wi' dewy een,
I part the clouds aboon the scene
Where thou wast born, and peer atween,
 I see nae spot
In a' the Hielands half sae green
 And unforgot !

I see nae storied castle-hall,
Wi' banners flauntin' ower the wall,
And serf and page in ready call,
 Sae grand to me
As ane puir cotter's hut, wi' all
 Its poverty.

There where the simple daisy grew
Sae bonnie sweet, and modest, too,
Thy liltin' filled its wee head fu'
 O' sic a grace,
It aye is weepin' tears o' dew
 Wi' droopit face.

Frae where the heather bluebells fling
Their sangs o' fragrance to the Spring,
To where the lavrock soars to sing,
 Still lives thy strain,
For a' the birds are twittering
 Sangs like thine ain.

And aye, by light o' sun or moon,
By banks o' Ayr, or Bonnie Doon,
The waters lilt nae tender tune
 But sweeter seems
Because they poured their limpid rune
 Through a' thy dreams.

Wi' brimmin' lip, and laughin' ee,
Thou shookest even Grief wi' glee,
Yet had nae niggart sympathy
 Where Sorrow bowed,
But gavest a' thy tears as free
 As a' thy gowd.

And sae it is we loe thy name
To see bleeze up wi' sic a flame,
That a' pretentious stars o' fame
 Maun blink asklent,
To see how simple worth may shame
 Their brightest glent.

SONNETS

PAN.

THIS Pan is but an idle god, I guess,
 Since all the fair midsummer of my dreams
 He loiters listlessly by woody streams,
Soaking the lush glooms up with laziness ;
Or drowsing while the maiden-winds caress
 Him prankishly, and powder him with gleams
 Of sifted sunshine. And he ever seems
Drugged with a joy unutterable—unless
 His low pipes whistle hints of it far out
Across the ripples to the dragonfly
 That, like a wind-borne blossom blown about,
Drops quiveringly down, as though to die—
 Then lifts and wavers on, as if in doubt
 Whether to fan his wings or fly without.

DUSK.

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

JUNE.

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

SILENCE.

THOUSANDS and thousands of hushed years ago,
Out on the edge of Chaos, all alone
I stood on peaks of vapor, high upthrown
Above a sea that knew nor ebb nor flow,
Nor any motion won of winds that blow,
Nor any sound of watery wail or moan,
Nor lisp of wave, nor wandering undertone
Of any tide lost in the night below.
So still it was, I mind me, as I laid
My thirsty ear against mine own faint sigh
To drink of that, I sipped it, half afraid
'Twas but the ghost of a dead voice spilled by
The one starved star that tottered through the shade,
And came tiptoeing toward me down the sky.

PUCK.

O IT was Puck ! I saw him yesternight
Swung up betwixt a phlox-top and the rim
Of a low crescent moon that cradled him,
Whirring his rakish wings with all his might,
And pursing his wee mouth, that dimpled white
And red, as though some dagger keen and slim
Had stung him there, while ever faint and dim
His eerie warblings piped his high delight ;
Till I, grown jubilant, shrill answer made,
At which, all suddenly, he dropped from view ;
And peering after, 'neath the everglade,
What was it, do you think, I saw him do ?
I saw him peeling dewdrops with a blade
Of starshine sharpened on his bat-wing shoe.

SLEEP.

THOU drowsy god, whose blurred eyes, half awink,
 Muse on me,—drifting out upon thy dreams,
 I lave my soul as in enchanted streams,
Where reveling satyrs pipe along the brink,
And, tipsy with the melody they drink,
 Uplift their dangling hooves and down the beams
 Of sunshine dance like motes. Thy languor seems
An ocean-depth of love wherein I sink
 Like some fond Argonaut, right willingly,—
Because of wooing eyes upturned to mine,
 And siren-arms that coil their sorcery
About my neck, with kisses so divine,
 The heavens reel above me, and the sea
 Swallows and licks its wet lips over me.

HER HAIR.

THE beauty of her hair bewilders me—
 Pouring adown the brow, its cloven tide
 Swirling about the ears on either side,
And storming round the neck tumultuously :
Or like the lights of old antiquity
 Through mullioned windows, in cathedrals wide,
 Spilled moltenly o'er figures deified
In chastest marble, nude of drapery.
And so I love it.—Either unconfined ;
 Or plaited in close braidings manifold ;
Or smoothly drawn ; or indolently twined
 In careless knots whose coilings come unrolled
At any lightest kiss ; or by the wind
 Whipped out in flossy ravelings of gold.

TO THE CRICKET.

THE chiming seas may clang ; and Tubal Cain
May clink his tinkling metals as he may ;
Or Pan may sit and pipe his breath away ;
Or Orpheus wake his most entrancing strain
Till not a note of melody remain !—

But thou, O cricket, with thy roundelay,
Shalt laugh them all to scorn ! So wilt thou, pray,
Trill me thy glad song o'er and o'er again :

I shall not weary ; there is purest worth
In thy sweet prattle, since it sings the lone
Heart home again. Thy warbling hath no dearth
Of childish memories—no harsher tone
Than we might listen to in gentlest mirth,
Thou poor plebeian minstrel of the hearth.

THE SERENADE.

THE midnight is not more bewildering
To her drowsed eyes, than, to her ears, the sound
Of dim, sweet singing voices, interwound
With purl of flute and subtle twang of string,
Strained through the lattice, where the roses cling,
And, with their fragrance, waft the notes around
Her haunted senses. Thirsting beyond bound
Of her slow-yielding dreams, the lilt and swing
Of the mysterious, delirious tune,
She drains like some strange opiate, with awed eyes
Upraised against her casement, where, aswoon,
The stars fail from her sight, and up the skies
Of alien azure, rolls the full round moon
Like some vast bubble blown of summer noon.

WHEN SHE COMES HOME.

WHEN she comes home again ! A thousand ways
I fashion, to myself, the tenderness
Of my glad welcome : I shall tremble—yes ;
And touch her, as when first in the old days
I touched her girlish hand, nor dared upraise
Mine eyes, such was my faint heart's sweet distress.
Then silence : And the perfume of her dress :
The room will sway a little, and a haze
Cloy eyesight—soulsight, even—for a space :
And tears—yes ; and the ache here in the throat,
To know that I so ill deserve the place
Her arms make for me ; and the sobbing note
I stay with kisses, ere the tearful face
Again is hidden in the old embrace.

HOOSIER DIALECT

GRIGGSBY'S STATION.

PAP's got his patent right, and rich as all creation ;
But where's the peace and comfort that we all had
before ?

Le's go a-visitin' back to Griggsby's Station—
Back where we ust to be so happy and so pore !

The likes of us a-livin' here ! It's jest a mortal pity
To see us in this great big house, with cyarpets on the
stairs,
And the pump right in the kitchen ! And the city !
city ! city !—
And nothin' but the city all around us ever'wheres !

Climb clean above the roof and look from the steeple,
And never see a robin, nor a beech or ellow tree !
And right here in ear-shot of at least a thousan' people,
And none that neighbors with us, or we want to go
and see !

Le's go a-visitin' back to Griggsby's Station—

Back where the latch-string's a-hangin' from the door,
And ever' neighbor 'round the place is dear as a relation—

Back where we ust to be so happy and so pore !

I want to see the Wiggenses, the whole kit and bilin'

A-drivin' up from Shallor Ford to stay the Sunday
through ;

And I want to see 'em hitchin' at their son-in-law's and
pilin'

Out there at 'Lizy Ellen's like they ust to do !

I want to see the piece-quilts the Jones girls is makin' ;

And I want to pester Laury 'bout their freckled hired
hand,

And joke her 'bout the widower she come purt' nigh
a-takin',

Till her pap got his pension 'lowed in time to save his
land.

Le's go a-visitin' back to Griggsby's Station—

Back where they's nothin' aggervatin' anymore ;
Shet away safe in the woods around the old location—

Back where we ust to be so happy and so pore !

I want to see Marindy and he'p her with her sewin',
And hear her talk so lovin' of her man that's dead and
gone,

And stand up with Emanuel to show me how he's growin',
And smile as I have saw her 'fore she put her mournin'
on.

And I want to see the Samples, on the old lower
eighty—

Where John our oldest boy, he was tuk and burried—
for

His own sake and Katy's,—and I want to cry with Katy
As she reads all his letters over, writ from The War.

What's in all this grand life and high situation,
And nary pink nor hollyhawk bloomin' at the
door?—

Le's go a-visitin' back to Griggsby's Station—
Back where we ust to be so happy and so pore!

KNEE-DEEP IN JUNE.

I.

TELL you what I like the best—
'Long about knee-deep in June,
'Bout the time strawberries melts
On the vines—some afternoon
Like to jes' git out and rest,
And not work at nothin' else !

II.

Orchard's where I'd ruther be—
Needn't fence it in fer me !
Jes' the whole sky overhead,
And the whole airth underneath—
Sorto' so's a man kin breathe
Like he ort, and kindo' has
Elbow-room to keerlessly
Sprawl out len'thways on the grass,
Where the shadders thick and soft
As the kivvers on the bed
Mother fixes in the loft
Allus, when they's company !

III.

Jes' a sorto' lazein' there—
S'lazy, 'at you peek and peer
Through the wavin' leaves above,
Like a feller 'ats in love
And don't know it, ner don't keer !
Ever'thing you hear and see
Got some sort o' interest—
Maybe find a bluebird's nest
Tucked up there conveyently
Fer the boys 'ats apt to be
Up some other apple-tree !
Watch the swallers skootin' past
'Bout as peert as you could ast ;
Er the Bobwhite raise and whiz
Where some other's whistle is.

IV.

Ketch a shadder down below,
And look up to find the crow ;
Er a hawk away up there,
'Pearantly froze in the air !—
Hear the old hen squawk, and squat
Over every chick she's got,
Suddent-like !—And she knows where

That-air hawk is, well as you !—
 You jes' bet yer life she do !—
 Eyes a-glittering like glass,
 Waitin' till he makes a pass !

V.

Pee-wees' singin', to express
 My opinion, 's second class,
 Yit you'll hear 'em more er less ;
 Sapsucks gittin' down to biz,
 Weedin' out the lonesomeness ;
 Mr. Bluejay, full o' sass,
 In them base-ball clothes o' his,
 Sportin' 'round the orchard jes'
 Like he owned the premises !
 Sun out in the fields kin sizz,
 But flat on yer back, I guess,
 In the shade's where glory is !
 That's jes' what I'd like to do
 Stiddy fer a year er two !

VI.

Plague ! ef they aint sompin' in
 Work 'at kindo' goes agin

My convictions !—'long about
Here in June especially !—
Under some old apple tree,
Jes' a-restin' through and through,
I could git along without
Nothin' else at all to do
Only jes' a-wishin' you
Was a-gittin' there like me,
And June was eternity !

VII.

Lay out there and try to see
Jes' how lazy you kin be !—
Tumble round and souse yer head
In the clover-bloom, er pull
Yer straw hat acrost yer eyes,
And peek through it at the skies,
Thinkin' of old chums 'ats dead,
Maybe, smilin' back at you
In betwixt the beautiful
Clouds o' gold and white and blue !—
Month a man kin raily love—
June, you know, I'm talkin' of !

VIII.

March aint never nothin' new !—
Aprile's altogether too

Brash fer me ! and May—I jes'
'Bominate its promises,—

Little hints o' sunshine and
Green around the timber-land—
A few blossoms, and a few
Chip-birds, and a sprout er two—
Drap asleep, and it turns in
'Fore daylight and snows agin !—
But when June comes—Clear my throat

With wild honey ! Rench my hair
In the dew ! and hold my coat !
Whoop out loud ! and throw my hat !—
June wants me, and I'm to spare !
Spread them shadders anywhere,
I'll git down and waller there,
And obleeged to you at that !

LITTLE ORPHANT ANNIE.

LITTLE Orphant Annie's come to our house to stay
An' wash the cups and saucers up, and brush the crumbs
away,
An' shoo the chickens off the porch, an' dust the hearth,
an' sweep,
An' make the fire, an' bake the bread, an' earn her
board-an'-keep ;
An' all us other children, when the supper things is done,
We set around the kitchen fire an' has the mostest fun
A-list'nin' to the witch tales 'at Annie tells about,
An' the gobble-uns 'at gits you

Ef you

Don't

Watch

Out !

Onc't they was a little boy wouldn't say his pray'rs—
An' when he went to bed 'at night, away up stairs,

His mammy heerd him holler, an' his daddy heerd him
bawl,

An' when they turn't the kivvers down, he wasn't there
at all !

An' they seeked him in the rafter-room, an' cubby-hole,
an' press,

An' seeked him up the chimbly-flue, an' ever'wheres, I
guess,

But all they ever found was thist his pants an' round-
about !—

An' the gobble-uns 'll git you

Ef you

Don't

Watch

Out !

An' one time a little girl 'ud allus laugh an' grin,

An' make fun of ever' one an' all her blood-an'-kin,

An' onc't when they was "company," an' ole folks was
there,

She mocked 'em an' shocked 'em, an' said she didn't
care !

An' thist as she kicked her heels, an' turn't to run an'
hide,

They was two great big Black Things a-standin' by her
side,

An' they snatched her through the ceilin' 'fore she know'd
what she's about !

An' the gobble-uns 'll git you

Ef you

Don't

Watch

Out !

An' little Orphant Annie says, when the blaze is blue,
An' the lampwick sputters, an' the wind goes woo-oo !
An' you hear the crickets quit, an' the moon is gray
An' the lightnin'-bugs in dew is all squenched away,—
You better mind yer parents, and yer teachers fond and
dear,

An' churish them 'at loves you, an' dry the orphant's tear,
An' he'p the pore an' needy ones 'at clusters all about,
Er the gobble-uns 'll git you

Ef you

Don't

Watch

Out !

THE AIRLY DAYS.

OH ! tell me a tale of the airy days—
Of the times as they ust to be ;
“ Piller of Fire,” and “ Shakspeare’s Plays,”
Is a ’most too deep fer me !
I want plain facts, and I want plain words,
Of the good old-fashioned ways,
When speech run free as the songs of birds—
’Way back in the airy days.

Tell me a tale of the timber-lands,
And the old-time pioneers—
Somepin’ a poor man understands
With his feelin’s, well as ears :
Tell of the old log house,—about
The loft, and the puncheon floor—
The old fire-place, with the crane swung out,
And the latch-string through the door.

Tell of the things jest like they wuz—
They don't need no excuse !
Don't tetch 'em up like the poets does,
Till they're all too fine fer use !
Say they wuz 'leven in the family—
Two beds and the chist below,
And the trundle-beds 'at each helt three ;
And the clock and the old bureau.

Then blow the horn at the old back door
Till the echoes all halloo,
And the childern gethers home onc't more,
Jest as they ust to do ;
Blow fer Pap till he hears and comes,
With Tomps and Elias, too,
A-marchin' home, with the fife and drums,
And the old Red White and Blue !

Blow and blow—till the sound draps low
As the moan of the whipperwill,
And wake up Mother, and Ruth, and Jo,
All sleepin' at Bethel Hill ;
Blow and call till the faces all
Shine out in the back-log's blaze,
And the shadders dance on the old hewed wall,
As they did in the airy days.

LIKE HIS MOTHER USED TO MAKE.

“UNCLE JAKE’S PLACE,” ST. JO., MO., 1874.

“I WAS born in Indiany,” says a stranger, lank and
slim,

As us fellers in the restarunt was kindo’ guyin’ him,
And Uncle Jake was slidin’ him another punkin pie
And a’ extry cup o’ coffee, with a twinkle in his eye,—
“I was born in Indiany—more’n forty year ago—
And I hain’t ben back in twenty—and I’m workin’ back-
’ards slow ;

But I’ve et in ever’ restarunt twixt here and Santy Fee,
And I want to state this coffee tastes like gittin’ home,
to me !

“Pour us out another, Daddy,” says the feller, warmin’
up,

A-speakin’ ’crost a saucerful, as Uncle tuk his cup,—

“When I seed yer sign out yander,” he went on, to
Uncle Jake,—

“‘Come in and git some coffee like yer mother used to
make’—

I thought of *my* old mother, and the Posey county farm,
And me a little kid agin, a-hangin' in her arm,
As she set the pot a-bilin', broke the eggs and poured
'em in"—

And the feller kindo' halted, with a trimble in his chin :

And Uncle Jake he fetched the feller's coffee back, and
stood

As solemn, fer a minute, as a' undertaker would ;

Then he sorto' turned and tiptoed to'rds the kitchen door
—and next,

Here come his old wife out with him, a-rubbin' of her
specs—

And she rushes fer the stranger, and she hollers out, "It's
him !—

Thank God we've met him comin' !—Don't you know
yer mother, Jim ?"

And the feller, as he grabbed her, says,—“You bet I
hain't forgot—

But,” wipin' of his eyes, says he, “yer coffee's mighty
hot !”

THE LITTLE TOWN O' TAILHOLT.

YOU kin boast about yer cities, and their stiddy growth
and size,

And brag about yer county-seats, and business enter-
prise,

And railroads, and factories, and all sich foolery—

But the little Town o' Tailholt is big enough fer me !

You can harp about yer churches, with their steeples in
the clouds,

And gas about yer graded streets, and blow about yer
crowds ;

You kin talk about yer theatres, and all you've got to
see—

But the little Town o' Tailholt is show enough fer me !

They haint no style in our town—hit's little-like and
small—

They haint no *churches*, nuther,—jes' the meetin'-house
is all ;

They's no sidewalks, to speak of—but the highway's allus
free,

And the little Town o' Tailholt is wide enough fer me !

Some finds its discommodin'-like, I'm willin' to admit,
To hev but one post-office, and a womern keepin' hit,
And the drugstore, and shoeshop, and grocery, all
three—

But the little Town o' Tailholt is handy 'nough fer me!

You kin smile, and turn yer nose up, and joke and hev
yer fun,

And laugh and holler "Tail-holts is better holts 'n
none!"

Ef the city suits you better, w'y, hits where you'd ort
to be—

But the little Town o' Tailholt 's good enough fer me!

NOTHIN' TO SAY.

NOTHIN' to say, my daughter ! Nothin' at all to say—
Gyrls that's in love, I've noticed, ginerly has their way !
Yer mother did, afore you, when her folks objected to
me—

Yit here *I* am, and here *you* air ; and yer mother—where
is she ?

You look lots like yer mother : Purty much same in size ;
And about the same complected ; and favor about the
eyes :

Like her, too, about *livin'* here,—because *she* couldn't
stay

It'll 'most seem like you was dead—like her !—but I
hain't got nothin' to say !

She left you her little Bible—writ yer name acrost the
page—

And left her ear-bobs fer you, ef ever you come of age.
I've allus kep' 'em and gyuarded 'em, but ef yer goin'
away—

Nothin' to say, my daughter ! Nothin' at all to say !

You don't rikollect her, I reckon? No; you wasn't a year old then!

And now yer—how old air you? W'y, child, not "twenty!" When?

And yer nex' birthday's in Aprile? and you want to git married that day?

. . . . I wisht yer mother was livin'!—but—I hain't got nothin' to say!

Twenty year! and as good a gyrl as parent ever found!
There's a straw ketched onto yer dress there—I'll bresh it off—turn round.

(Her mother was jes' twenty when us two run away!)

Nothin' to say, my daughter! Nothin' at all to say!

THE OLD SWIMMIN'-HOLE AND SEVEN MORE POEMS

AUTHOR'S NOTE.

As far back into boyhood as the writer's memory may intelligently go, the "country poet" is most pleasantly recalled. He was, and is, as common as the "country fiddler," and as full of good old-fashioned music. Not a master of melody, indeed, but a poet, certainly—

“ Who, through long days of labor,
And nights devoid of ease,
Still heard in his soul the music
Of wonderful melodies.”

And it is simply the purpose of this concluding series of dialectic Studies to reflect the real worth of this homely child of Nature, and to echo faithfully, if possible, the faltering music of his song.

THE OLD SWIMMIN'-HOLE.

OH ! the old swimmin'-hole ! whare the crick so still and
deep

Looked like a baby-river that was layin' half asleep,
And the gurgle of the worter round the drift jest below
Sounded like the laugh of something we onc't ust to know
Before we could remember anything but the eyes
Of the angels lookin' out as we left Paradise ;
But the merry days of youth is beyond our control,
And it's hard to part ferever with the old swimmin'-hole.

Oh ! the old swimmin'-hole ! In the happy days of yore,
When I ust to lean above it on the old sickamore,
Oh ! it showed me a face in its warm sunny tide
That gazed back at me so gay and glorified,
It made me love myself, as I leaped to caress
My shadder smilin' up at me with sech tenderness.
But them days is past and gone, and old Time 's tuck his
toll
From the old man come back to the old swimmin'-hole.

Oh ! the old swimmin'-hole ! In the long, lazy days
When the hum-drum of school made so many run-a-ways,
How plesant was the jurney down the old dusty lane,
Whare the tracks of our bare feet was all printed so plain
You could tell by the dent of the heel and the sole
They was lots of fun on hands at the old swimmin'-hole.
But the lost joys is past ! Let your tears in sorrow roll
Like the rain that ust to dapple up the old swimmin'-
hole.

Thare the bullrushes growed, and the cat-tails so tall,
And the sunshine and shadder fell over it all ;
And it mottled the worter with amber and gold
Till the glad lilies rocked in the ripples that rolled ;
And the snake-feeder's four gauzy wings fluttered by
Like the ghost of a daisy dropped out of the sky,
Or a wownded apple-blossom in the breeze's control,
As it cut acrost some orchard to'rds the old swimmin'-
hole.

Oh ! the old swimmin'-hole ! When I last saw the place,
The scenes was all changed, like the change in my face ;
The bridge of the railroad now crosses the spot
Whare the old divin'-log lays sunk and fergot.
And I stray down the banks whare the trees ust to be—
But never again will their shade shelter me !
And I wish in my sorrow I could strip to the soul,
And dive off in my grave like the old swimmin'-hole.

THOUGHTS FER THE DISCOURAGED
FARMER.

THE summer winds is sniffin' round the bloomin' locus'
trees ;
And the clover in the pastur' is a big day fer the bees,
And they been a-swiggin' honey, above board and on the
sly,
Till they stutter in their buzzin', and stagger as they fly.
The flicker on the fence-rail 'pears to jest spit on his
wings
And roll up his feathers, by the sassy way he sings ;
And the hoss-fly is a-whettin'-up his forelegs fer biz,
And the off-mare is a-switchin' all of her tale they is !

You can hear the blackbirds jawin' as they foller up the
plow—
Oh, they bound to git their brekfast, and theyr not a-
carin' how ;
So they quarrel in the furies, and they quarrel on the
wing—
But theyr peaceabler in pot-pies than any other thing :

And it's when I git my shotgun drawed up in stiddy rest,
She's as full of tribbelation as a yaller-jacket's nest ;
And a few shots before dinner, when the sun's a-shinin'
right,
Seems to kindo-sorto sharpen up a feller's appetite !

They's been a heap o' rain, but the sun's out to-day,
And the clouds of the wet spell is all cleared away,
And the woods is all the greener, and the grass is greener
still ;

It may rain again to-morry, but I don't think it will.
Some says the crops is ruined, and the corn's drowneded
out,

And propa-sy the wheat will be a failure, without
doubt ;

But the kind Providence that has never failed us yet,
Will be on hands onc't more at the 'leventh hour, I bet !

Does the medder-lark complain, as he swims high and
dry

Through the waves of the wind and the blue of the sky ?

Does the quail set up and whistle in a disappointed way,

Er hang his head in silence, and sorrow all the day ?

Is the chipmuck's health a-failin' ? Does he walk, er
does he run ?

Don't the buzzards ooze around up thare jest like they've
allus done ?

Is they anything the matter with the rooster's lungs er
voice ?

Ort a mortal be complainin' when dumb animals rejoice ?

Then let us, one and all, be contented with our lot ;
The June is here this morning, and the sun is shinin'
hot.

Oh ! let us fill our harts up with the glory of the day,
And banish ev'ry doubt and care and sorrow far away !
Whatever be our station, with Providence fer guide,
Such fine circumstances ort to make us satisfied ;
Fer the world is full of roses, and the roses full of dew,
And the dew is full of heavenly love that drips fer me
and you.

A SUMMER'S DAY.

THE Summer's put the idy in
My head that I'm a boy again ;
 And all around's so bright and gay
 I want to put my team away,
 And jest git out whare I can lay
 And soak my hide full of the day !
But work is work, and must be done—
Yit, as I work, I have my fun,
Jest fancyin' these furries here
Is childhood's paths onc't more so dear :—
And so I walk through medder-lands,
 And country lanes, and swampy trails
Whare long bullrushes bresh my hands ;
 And, tilted on the ridered rails
 Of dead'nin' fences, " Old Bob White "
 Whistles his name in high delight,
And whirrs away. I wunder still,
Whichever way a boy's feet will—

Whare trees has fell, with tangled tops
Whare dead leaves shakes, I stop fer breth,
Heerin' the acorn as it drops—

H'istin' my chin up still as deth,
And watchin' clos't, with upturned eyes,
The tree whare Mr. Squirrel tries
To hide hisse'f above the limb,
But lets his own tale tell on him.

I wunder on in deeper glooms—
Git hungry, hearin' female cries
From old farm-houses, whare perfumes
Of harvest dinners seem to rise
And ta'nt a feller, hart and brane,
With memories he can't explain.

I wunder through the underbresh,
Whare pig-tracks, pintin' to'rds the crick,
Is picked and printed in the fresh
Black bottom-lands, like wimmern pick
Their pie-crusts with a fork, some way,
When bakin' fer camp-meetin' day.

I wunder on and on and on,
Till my gray hair and beard is gone,
And every wrinkle on my brow
Is rubbed clean out, and shaddered now

With curls as brown and fare and fine
As tenderls of the wild grape-vine
That ust to climb the highest tree
To keep the ripest ones fer me.
I wunder still, and here I am
Wadin' the ford below the dam—
The worter chucklin' round my knee
 At hornet-welt and bramle scratch,
And me a-slippin' 'crost to see
 Ef Tyner's plums is ripe, and size
The old man's wortermelon-patch,
 With juicy mouth and drouthy eyes.
Then, after sich a day of mirth
And happiness as worlds is worth—
 So tired that heaven seems nigh about,—
The sweetest tiredness on earth
 Is to git home and flatten out—
So tired you can't lay flat enough,
And sort o' wish that you could spred
Out like molasses on the bed,
And jest drip off the aidges in
The dreams that never comes again.

TO MY OLD NEGHBOR, WILLIAM
LEACHMAN.

FER forty year and better you have been a friend to me,
Through days of sore afflictions and dire adversity,
You allus had a kind word of counsel to impart,
Which was like a healin' 'intment to the sorrow of my
hart.

When I burried my first womern, William Leachman, it
was you
Had the only consolation that I could listen to—
Fer I knowed you had gone through it and had rallied
from the blow,
And when you said I'd do the same, I knowed you'd ort
to know.

But that time I'll long remember ; how I wundered here
and thare—
Through the settin'-room and kitchen, and out in the
open air—

And the snowflakes whirlin', whirlin', and the fields a
frozen glare,
And the neighbors' sleds and wagons congregatin' ev'ry-
whare.

I turned my eyes to'rds heaven, but the sun was hid
away ;
I turned my eyes to'rds earth again, but all was cold and
gray ;
And the clock, like ice a-crackin', clickt the icy hours in
two—
And my eyes 'd never thawed out ef it hadn't been fer
you !

We set thare by the smoke-house—me and you out thare
alone—
Me a-thinkin'—you a-talkin' in a soothin' undertone—
You a-talkin'—me a-thinkin' of the summers long ago,
And a-writin' " Marthy—Marthy " with my finger in the
snow !

William Leachman, I can see you jest as plain as I could
then ;
And your hand is on my shoulder, and you rouse me up
again ;
And I see the tears a-drippin' from your own eyes, as
you say :
" Be reconciled and bear it—we but linger fer a day ! "

At the last Old Settlers' Meetin', we went j'intly, you
and me—

Your hosses and my wagon, as you wanted it to be ;
And sence I can remember, from the time we've negh-
bored here,

In all sich friendly actions you have double-done your
sheer.

It was better than the meetin', too, that 9-mile talk we
had

Of the times when we first settled here and travel was so
bad ;

When we had to go on hoss-back, and sometimes on
" Shanks's mare,"

And " blaze " a road fer them behind that had to travel
thare.

And now we was a trottin' 'long a level gravel pike,
In a big two-hoss road-wagon, jest as easy as you like—
Two of us on the front seat, and our wimern-folks
behind,

A-settin' in theyr Win'sor cheers in perfect peace of
mind !

And we p'inted out old landmarks, nearly faded out of
sight :—

Thare they ust to rob the stage-coach ; thare Gash
Morgan had the fight

With the old stag-deer that pronged him—how he battled
fer his life,
And lived to prove the story by the handle of his knife.

Thare the first griss-mill was put up in the settlement,
and we
Had tuck our grindin' to it in the fall of Forty-three—
When we tuck our rifles with us, techin' elbows all the
way,
And a-stickin' right together ev'ry minute, night and
day.

Thare ust to stand the tavern that they called the "Tra-
velers' Rest,"
And thare, beyent the covered bridge, "The Counter-
fitters' Nest"—
Whare they claimed the house was ha'nted—that a man
was murdered thare,
And burried underneath the floor, er round the place
somewhere.

And the old Plank Road they laid along in Fifty-one er
two—
You know we talked about the times when that old road
was new :

How "Uncle Sam" put down that road and never taxed
the State
Was a problum, don't you rickollect, we couldn't
dimonstrate?

Ways was devious, William Leachman, that me and you
has past ;
But as I found you true at first, I find you true at last,
And, now the time's a-comin' mighty nigh our journey's
end,
I want to throw wide open all my soul to you, my
friend.

With the stren'th of all my bein', and the heat of hart
and brane,
And ev'ry livin' drop of blood in artery and vane,
I love you and respect you, and I venerate your name,
Fer the name of William Leachman and True Manhood's
jest the same !

WHEN THE FROST IS ON THE PUNKIN.

WHEN the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the
shock,
And you hear the kyouck and gobble of the struttin'
turkey-cock,
And the clackin' of the guineys, and the cluckin' of the
hens,
And the rooster's hallylooyer as he tiptoes on the fence ;
O it's then's the times a feller is a-feelin' at his best,
With the risin' sun to greet him from a night of peaceful
rest,
As he leaves the house, bare-headed, and goes out to feed
the stock,
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the
shock.

They's something kindo' hearty-like about the atmo-
sphere
When the heat of summer's over and the coolin' fall is
here—

Of course we miss the flowers, and the blossoms on the
trees,
And the mumble of the hummin'-birds and buzzin' of the
bees ;
But the air's so appetizin'; and the landscape through
the haze
Of a crisp and sunny morning of the airy autumn days
Is a pictur' that no painter has the colorin' to mock—
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the
shock.

The husky, rusty rustle of the tassels of the corn,
And the raspin' of the tangled leaves, as golden as the
morn ;
The stubble in the furries—kindo' lonesome-like, but
still
A-preachin' sermons to us of the barns they growed to
fill ;
The strawstack in the medder, and the reaper in the
shed ;
The hosses in theyr stalls below—the clover overhead !—
O, it sets my heart a-clickin' like the tickin' of a clock,
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the
shock !

MY PHILOSOFY.

I AINT, ner don't p'tend to be,
Much posted on filosofy ;
But thare is times, when all alone,
I work out idees of my own.
And of these same thare is a few
I'd like to jest refer to you—
Pervidin' that you don't object
To listen clos't and rickollect.

I allus argy that a man
Who does about the best he can
Is plenty good enough to suit
This lower mundane institute—
No matter ef his daily walk
Is subject fer his neighbor's talk,
And critic-minds of ev'ry whim
Jest all git up and go fer him !

I knowed a feller onc't that had
The yaller-janders mighty bad,
And each and ev'ry friend he'd meet
Would stop and give him some receet

Fer cuorin' of 'em. But he'd say
He kind o' thought they'd go away
Without no medicin', and boast
That he'd git well without one doste.

He kep' a yallerin' on—and they
Perdictin' that he'd die some day
Before he knowed it ! Tuck his bed,
The feller did, and lost his head,
And wundered in his mind a spell—
Then rallied, and, at last, got well ;
But ev'ry friend that said he'd die
Went back on him eternaly !

Its natchural enough, I guess,
When some gits more and some gits less,
Fer them-uns on the slimmest side
To claim it aint a fair divide ;
And I've knowed some to lay and wait,
And git up soon, and set up late,
To ketch some feller they could hate
Fer goin' at a faster gait.

The signs is bad when folks commence
A findin' fault with Providence,
And balkin' 'cause the earth don't shake
At ev'ry prancin' step they take.

No man is great till he can see
How less than little he would be
Ef stripped to self, and stark and bare
He hung his sign out anywhere.

My doctern is to lay aside
Contentions, and be satisfied :
Jest do your best, and praise er blame
That follers that, counts jest the same.
I've allus noticed grate success
Is mixed with troubles, more or less,
And it's the man who does the best
That gits more kicks than all the rest.

ON THE DEATH OF LITTLE MAHALA
ASHCRAFT.

“LITTLE Haly! Little Haly!” cheeps the robin in
the tree ;

“Little Haly!” sighs the clover, “Little Haly!” moans
the bee ;

“Little Haly! Little Haly!” calls the killdeer at twi-
light ;

And the katydids and crickets hollers “Haly” all the
night.

The sunflowers and the hollyhaws droops over the
garden fence ;

The old path down the gardenwalks still holds her foot-
prints’ dents ;

And the well-sweep’s swingin’ bucket seems to wait fer her
to come

And start it on its wortery errant down the old bee-gum.

The bee-hives all is quiet, and the little Jersey steer,
When any one comes nigh it, acts so lonesome like and
queer ;

And the little Banty chickens kind o' cutters faint and
low,
Like the hand that now was feedin' 'em was one they
didn't know.

They's sorrow in the wavin' leaves of all the apple-trees ;
And sorrow in the harvest-sheaves, and sorrow in the
breeze ;
And sorrow in the twitter of the swallers 'round the
shed ;
And all the song her red-bird sings is " Little Haly's
dead ! "

The medder 'pears to miss her, and the pathway through
the grass,
Whare the dewdrops ust to kiss her little bare feet as she
passed ;
And the old pin in the gate-post seems to kindo-sorto'
doubt
That Haly's little sunburnt hands 'll ever pull it out.

Did her father er her mother ever love her more'n me,
Er her sisters er her brother prize her love more tenderly ?
I question—and what answer ?—only tears, and tears
alone,
And ev'ry neighbor's eyes is full o' tear-drops as my own.

“Little Haly ! Little Haly !” cheeps the robin in the
tree ;
“Little Haly !” sighs the clover, “Little Haly !” moans
the bee ;
“Little Haly ! Little Haly !” calls the killdeer at twi-
light,
And the katydids and crickets hollers “Haly” all the
night.

THE CLOVER.

SOME sings of the lily, and daisy, and rose,
And the pansies and pinks that the summertime throws
In the green grassy lap of the medder that lays
Blinkin' up at the skyes through the sunshiny days ;
But what is the lily, and all of the rest
Of the flowers, to a man with a hart in his breast
That was dipped brimmin' full of the honey and dew
Of the sweet clover-blossoms his babyhood knew ?

I never set eyes on a clover-field now,
Er fool round a stable, er climb in the mow,
But my childhood comes back jest as clear and as plain
As the smell of the clover I'm sniffin' again ;
And I wunder away, in a bare-footed dream,
Whare I tangle my toes in the blossoms that gleam
With the dew of the dawn of the morning of love
Ere it wept o'er the graves that I'm weepin' above.

And so I love clover—it seems like a part
Of the sacerdest sorrows and joys of my hart ;
And wharever it blossoms, oh, thare let me bow
And thank the good God as I'm thankin' Him now ;

And I pray to Him still fer the stren'th, when I die,
To go out in the clover and tell it good-bye,
And lovin'ly nestle my face in its bloom
While my soul slips away on a breth of perfume.

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