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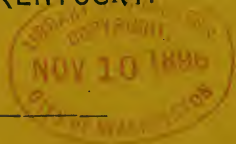


A RHYMING

— BY —

JOSEPH S. COTTER.

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY.



---

THE NEW SOUTH PUB. CO.,  
517 W. Walnut St.,  
Louisville, Ky.





A RHYMING

BY

JOSEPH S. COTTER.

"Though old the thought and oft expressed,  
'Tis his at last who says it best ;  
I'll try my fortune with the rest."

—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

THE NEW SOUTH PUB. CO.,  
517 W. Walnut St.,  
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TO MY WIFE.

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*Louisville*  
*Ky.*

**PRELUDE.**

---

Discerning reader, you will quickly find  
That here's a rhymmer of the lowly kind,  
Applaud his little sallies, if you can;  
And, if you can't, just treat him like a man  
Whose aspiration wanders through the sky  
Without genius to bear it company.

## THE VOICE OF THE OCEAN.

---

(TO THE REV. JOHN H. FRANK.)

---

As I stood beside the ocean,  
Gazing silently  
At the wild waves in commotion,  
Thus it spoke to me:

“Thousands now are sweetly sleeping  
In my wide embrace,  
While my waves are slowly creeping  
O'er each silent face.

“In the dark primeval ages  
That so long have flown  
Holy men and mighty sages  
Loved to sleep in stone.

“So vast sepulchres were hollowed  
By the hands of slaves,  
And by thousands they were followed  
To their rocky graves.

“But the loved ones whom my billows  
Now are raging o'er  
Sank to sleep on briny pillows,  
Mid my awful roar.”

## THE BACHELOR.

---

(TO PROF. W. T. PEYTON.)

---

The bachelor was old and sad,  
His life was fast decaying;  
'Tis said he oft grew raving mad  
While o'er the past surveying.

He dwelt within a little hut,  
Surrounded by starvation;  
No woman called upon him but  
By special invitation.

There lived with him a little boy  
Who loved to romp and tumble  
And see how much he could destroy  
To hear the old man grumble.

He broke his pipe and spilled his snuff  
And beat upon the kettle  
Until, in truth, it was enough  
To stir a preacher's mettle.

At last the old man holloed out:  
"You surely are inhuman;  
I'd sooner far be buffed about  
And bothered by a woman."

His words flew by like wind-tossed chaff  
And only tickled Harry,  
Who answered with a boyish laugh:  
“Then, sir, why don't you marry?”

“Now, boy, the question that you ask  
Is somewhat out of season,  
But yet it is an easy task  
To give to you the reason.

“When I was in my eighteenth year  
And not a little frisky  
I stopped at everything to peer  
No matter how'er risky.

“A few miles from my father's farm,  
Between two little ditches,  
I heard there dwelt, secure from harm,  
Two very pretty witches.

“Then, thought I, this cannot be so,  
Such talk is so deceiving;  
But to convince myself I'll go,  
For 'seeing is believing.'

“So off I started, all alone.  
Adown that muddy hollow;  
But would have stopped had I but known  
What was destined to follow.

“At last I saw the ruined cot  
Between the little ditches,  
And paused to think whether or not  
’Twas wise to see the witches.

“Then slowly crept on hands and feet:  
Don’t think I meant to creep in,  
Or with them face to face to meet,  
But simply for to peep in.

“Soon as I reached an open crack  
I gazed steadfastly through it:  
But, ah ! a burden met my back  
That made me doubly rue it.

“Somehow I did not care to stay  
For any further pleasure;  
But when at last I got away  
I had a double measure.

“And from that time on down to this,  
Although it proves inhuman,  
I never could find happiness  
In being near a woman.”

## THE STRANGE MAN.

(TO PROF. F. L. WILLIAMS.)

There lived a man of low degree  
Far in a land obscure  
Who daily thanked the fates that he  
Was born so very poor.

“The multitudes of wicked men  
Who plan and steal and lie  
Can never rob my wallet when  
I am too poor to buy.

“Kind is the fate that will not let  
Great riches bother me  
And so the poorer that I get  
The happier I will be.”

He swore this by as many gods  
As ever lived of old,  
Meanwhile he turned the heavy clods  
In search of precious gold.

He sang a rustic Genevieve  
At the approach of dawn,  
Then slept until the dewy eve  
And danced upon the lawn.

He never mingled with the throng  
Until the day grew dim



He did not like a single song  
That was not sung by him.

Whatever made all other folks  
The cup of sorrow quaff  
Seemed unto him but witty jokes  
To make men sing and laugh.

And so he lived for many a year  
And sang his own rude hymns;  
And still the people far and near  
Wondered at his strange whims.

Some said his eyes would never view  
The fast-approaching fall;  
And others swore by all they knew  
He would not die at all.

Straightway, on hearing this, grim Death  
Passed king and artisan  
And most politely took the breath  
Away from this strange man.

But as the people gazed on him  
And thought him stark and dead,  
He cried: "I'll give you one more whim  
While on my dying bed:

"Play loudly on the fife and drum,  
Let flags of triumph wave;  
And let the jolly peasants come  
And dance up on my grave."

## MAN DOES NOT KNOW.

---

[TO PROF. C. W. HOUSER.]

---

Man does not know. He daily looks  
around him  
And tries to master earth and air and  
skies;  
But some mysterious power has firmly  
bound him  
Unto a plane from which he may not rise.

Man does not know. He plunges into  
science  
As urchins plunge into the wcoing  
wave;  
Yet nature's highest works still bid  
defiance  
And rear up bulwarks that he may not  
brave.

Man does not know. He says that on to  
morrow  
He will be in a state of ecstasy;  
But when it comes his head is bowed with  
sorrow  
And he is in the depths of misery.

Man does not know. He tries to look  
 before him  
 And view the bright side of his future  
 way,  
 Yet who can tell but what this may throw  
 o'er him  
 A veil to hide the bright side of to-day ?

Man does not know. He claims to have a  
 spirit  
 (And may he never cease believing so)  
 That some far day or other will inherit  
 Eternal pleasure or eternal woe.

Man does not know. Has he a valid  
 reason  
 To deem this ignorance a grave offense?  
 To look for anything before its season  
 Shows there is urgent need of common  
 sense.

Man does not know. Suppose he were  
 partaker,  
 Of all that now lies hidden from his  
 sight,  
 Not even meeting with his blessed Maker  
 Could thrill his bosom with a new delight.

Man does not know. Yet why should he  
take pleasure

In doubting what perchance he can not  
see?

Or why should he believe there is no  
treasure

Awaiting mortals in eternity?

Man does not know. Each day he is  
receiving

Assistance from a power out of sight;

So he should never, never cease believing

That God will some day bring it all to  
light.

Man does not know. O Thou Almighty  
Power,

As thy great ways are past man's find-  
ing out,

Do teach him day by day and hour by  
hour

That lofty faith that overpowers doubt.

## SONNET.

---

Oliver Wendell Holmes.

---

Who can hold up the intellect and say:  
‘From here to there scampers a vein of wit  
With laughing humor by the side of it,  
Assisting cold philosophy to play  
The game of thinking?’ Not a single ray  
That boldly shines therefrom will e’er admit  
Of close analysis. So, bit by bit  
We fall to guessing out the mind’s true way  
Of forming wholes. O, astute analyst,  
And royal merchant in the mart of song,  
Because of this we see as through a mist  
Thy charming whole. Yet know to thee  
belong,  
Howe’er they be arranged, the God-like  
three—  
Wit, humor and sublime philosophy.

**WILLIAM D. GALLAGHER.**

---

Thou who didst bid thy fellow-man  
Stand up erect in deed and thought,  
As nobly spent thy little span  
As any human being ought.

The life that smoothly glides along,  
And takes its toll of eighty years,  
And sparkles with the purest song,  
Proclaims itself the peer of peers.

Because of its pure warp and woof  
Shall men toil on more earnestly,  
And hold its lessons up in proof  
Of man's avowed divinity.

And out of it shall spring the seeds  
Of holy actions, and the strife  
That terminates in evil deeds  
Shall vanish in the nobler life.

So shall the world grow better through  
Thy toil, O, poet of the West,  
While thou art with the gifted few  
Taking thy long and quiet rest.

TO THE MEMORY OF THE REV.  
ANDREW HEATH.

---

Though no more we hear the voice,  
And behold no more the face  
Of the people's worthy choice  
In the old accustomed place,

From his virtue each inherits  
Strength and patience to endure,  
While he, in the land of spirits,  
Dwelleth with the good and pure.

Men may fill exalted stations  
And be known from pole to pole  
As the idols of the nations,  
Yet be base in heart and soul.

Not by hue or form of faces,  
Not by fluent tongue or pen,  
Nor by high nor lowly places,  
Can we judge the worth of men.

The delight in generous giving,  
Strength to battle with despair,  
Lofty aims, and upright living,  
Prove the hero everywhere.

## DESCRIPTION OF A KENTUCKY SCHOOL HOUSE.

---

(TO WILLIAM H. STEWARD ESQ.)

---

In a hill-bound and somewhat rustic pocket,  
Like a rough picture in a costly locket  
With scarcely room enough to train a mouse,  
Stand a few boards the trustees call a house.  
The floor and ground meet on the western  
side,

But on the east a drove of hogs might hide  
And make their beds within the mellow  
ground,

And dwell day after day and not be found.  
The windows that front on the east and west  
Are much like pockets in a ragged vest—  
Pockets that have been worn out long ago,  
And cling about the garment just for show.  
Like to a hole cut in a massive bin  
Is the large door at which you enter in,  
And once within, you need not peep about



To find the many places to look out,  
For on each side, in front and at your back.  
Yes, everywhere you look you'll see a crack.  
Close to the wall a pulpit stands in view,  
(For this is both a church and school-house  
too)

And here and there, fastened with wooden  
cleats,

Are a few boards the pupils use for seats.  
About the middle of the time-worn floor,  
And on a straight line with the barn-like  
door,

Silently stands a large old stove. Of yore  
They say it heated, but it heats no more.

A blackboard hangs upon the southern wall,  
And all day long the curtains rise and fall  
With every gust of wind. And that is all.

## HER WAY IS THE WORLD'S WAY.

(TO DR. F. G. FOWLER.)

“Jane, drive the cows to the grassy hill,  
 And call the pigs together;  
 And take a sack of corn to the mill,  
 For this is pleasant weather.

“And don't go moping along the road  
 A-trying to lose your shadow;  
 And don't go hopping along like a toad  
 From the corn-field to the meadow.

“And when you reach the dusty mill,  
 And see that crazy miller,  
 Say: ‘No, no, no, you never will  
 Make me a clever tiller’”

Jane drove the cows to the grassy hill,  
 And called the pigs together,  
 And took the sack of corn to the mill  
 All in that pleasant weather.

But did not mope along the road  
 A-trying to lose her shadow,

And did not hop along like a toad  
From the corn-field to the meadow.

But when she reached the dusty mill  
And saw the crazy miller,  
She said: "Yes, yes, I know you will  
Make me a clever tiller."

She put the sack of corn away,  
And then with pleasure tarried;  
And ere the close of that bright day  
She and the miller married.

"I'll drive the cows to the grassy hill  
And call the pigs together,"  
Her mother said, "and go to the mill  
In any kind of weather;

"For daughter Jane has married a man  
Who is the wisest of wise millers;  
And I believe my soul in one day he can  
Make the cleverest of tillers."

## MR. GOODY'S GOAT.

---

Old Mr. Goody had a goat  
That was quiet and genteel;  
His mustache started on his chin  
And ended on his heel.

This goat thought he was just as smart  
As anything could be;  
He said no other goat alive  
Knew half so much as he.

He knew that corn is made to grow,  
And eggs are made to hatch;  
But, lo, he never yet had seen  
The thing you call a match.

So, one day as he pondered o'er  
The many things he knew,  
He chanced to see this very thing  
Lying plainly in his view.

Said he: "Of all the things I've seen  
Not one of them I've feared;

So I will take this something up  
And hang it in my beard."

Just then a monkey came along,  
And sneeringly he spoke:  
"The thing that dangles from your beard  
Was clearly made to smoke."

"And how?" the goat made quick reply,  
The monkey said: "Just so;"  
And gave the match a kind of stroke  
That monkeys only know.

And in a trice there stood a goat  
As beardless as a flea,  
And one that thought the smallest thing  
Knew just as much as he.

**OLD BILLY OF MAIN STREET FAME.**

---

Man with his mind, strong and refined,  
Gazes from earth to heaven;  
And thinks straightway each precious ray  
Has unto him been given.

And so his pride soon sets aside  
That feeling pure and tender  
That makes him feel each creature's weal,  
And be its staunch defender.

And hardened thus, superfluous  
Seems many a thing that meets him;  
And blinded so, he fails to know  
The good in much that greets him.

He oft perchance, in ignorance,  
Slights Nature's classic features;  
And peers around in scorn profound  
Upon the lower creatures.

The will of God is in the clod  
That decks the lowliest valley;

And his great soul from pole to pole  
Chimes ever musically.

Then howe'er low man's keen may go  
It finds undying beauty;  
And a sense of this augments his bliss,  
And gives him faith in duty.

Then why refuse to court the Muse  
For one who so discreetly  
Wove day to day in such a way  
He lived almost completely ?

A rhyme or two I'm sure would be due  
To any human being  
Who could toil so long and seldom go wrong  
Not even to disagreeing.

Billy's deeds should be writ by one whose wit  
Is ever high and holy,  
And not by me who clumsily  
Plods on so melancholy.

Now, I frankly declare that exactly where  
To begin is a point that troubles;

For start where I will there's a surplus still  
 Behind that recedes and doubles.

For fear I may get too far in the debt  
 Of Hannibal, Cæsar or some one,  
 I'll find me a point be it marrow or joint:  
 Poor Billy, you see, is the dumb one.

He never would shirk. 'Twas his nature to  
 work  
 Right on for himself and his neighbor;  
 For somehow he knew as all wise men do  
 There's dignity in labor.

Alas, and alack, when the time came to  
 back,  
 (Billy hated the idea of fighting,)  
 If his neighbor was slow or impatient to go,  
 He just halted and gave him a biting.

And his nature was such that he leaned  
 over much  
 To the side that was burdened with  
 weakness:



And in spite of his race, you could cleverly  
trace

Through this make-up the jewel of  
meekness.

Well, his faults were so few and his virtues  
so true,

I disdain to comment on the first ones;  
For the records of time have embalmed in  
smooth rhyme

Kings and queens who did worse and then  
worst ones.

And the second so rose as to clearly disclose  
The fact that kind Nature has given  
To the down-trodden brute, though his  
reason be mute,

A relationship honored in Heaven.

## LILY.

---

(TO SARAH.)

---

She was the prettiest little maid  
That ever tripped along,  
Or sat beneath the pleasant shade  
To sing an evening song.

The raven locks of curly hair,  
The simple, childish grace,  
Combined to make surpassing fair  
That sweet, angelic face.

And ever at her work she sang  
Some simple, rustic lay  
Until the cliffs around her rang  
With its sweet melody.

Her cot, beneath a rocky hill,  
Stood by an aged tree ;  
And far below a little rill  
Ran rippling to the sea.

Along its banks she often strayed  
To fill her lap with flowers,

Or in some grassy cranny played  
At building fairy towers.

Now, sunny April came to wake  
All nature from its sleeping ;  
And here and there a little brake  
Above the soil was peeping.

And Lily thought the gentle spring  
Did never fairer seem,  
And hurried through her work to sing  
Beside the little stream.

While sitting on its grassy brink.  
Singing her rustic lay,  
She saw the songsters light and drink,  
Then quickly flit away.

Just then some school-boys came along  
Upon the farther shore ;  
And straightway did she cease the song  
To row them safely o'er.

She tried to take the little boat  
Across the stream in vain,  
And sank beneath the current swift,  
And never rose again.

MARY.

---

When you roam the garden over,  
When you trip across the lea,  
When you play amid the clover,  
Mary, do you think of me ?

When you sit beside the fire  
In the closing of the year,  
Have you still the same desire  
That once made my presence dear ?

When the banquet hall is lighted  
For the youthful and the gay,  
And you are with the invited,  
Do you sigh that I'm away ?

When you hear that some disaster  
Has befallen ship and crew,  
Do you wish the hours were faster  
That will bring me back to you ?

And, if I perchance should perish,  
While upon the briny sea,  
Mary, will you ever cherish  
All the gifts you have from me ?

## ON A SUICIDE.

---

Here lies a man who took his own sweet life  
 With that world-famous instrument—a wife.

---

## ON A PROUD MAN.

---

Here lies a man whose soul was so  
 Puffed up with pride it couldn't grow.  
 Yet, may be, in the life to be  
 The fates will give it liberty,  
 And let it reach, through steps severe,  
 The size it fancied it had here.

---

## MODERN HOMILETICS.

---

Now, firstly, from my text I stray  
 To where my discourse is begun;  
 And then I just say on and say  
 Until, well, I am done.

MY SONG.  

---

I sang me a song, a tiny song,  
A song that was sweet to my soul,  
And set it a-float on the sea of chance  
In search of a happy goal.

I said to my song: "Go on, go on  
And lodge in a tender spot  
Of some human soul where the fires of hate  
And selfishness are not."

My song went on but a little space  
And hied it back to me;  
And fell at my feet in a sorry plight—  
The victim of cruelty.

I gazed a moment and quickly saw  
Just how it had come about,  
A cruel critic had caught my song  
And probed the soul of it out.

O. poor indeed is the human mind  
(And why was it ever wrought?)  
That can thrive on husk in the form of  
words,  
And not on a sturdy thought.

















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