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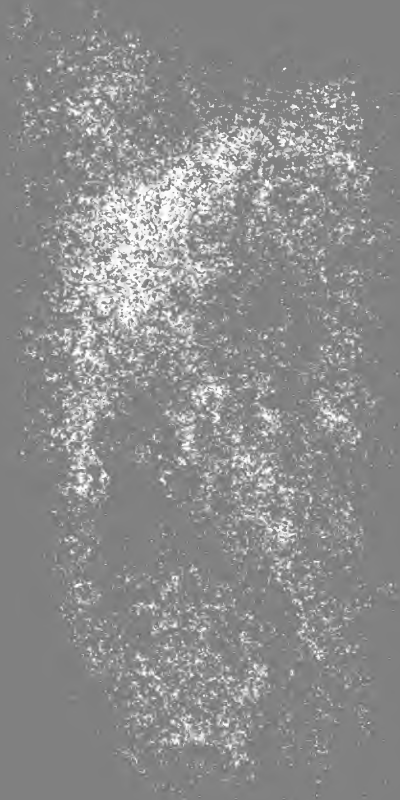
A RHYMING

— 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 upon 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,
How'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 how'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.

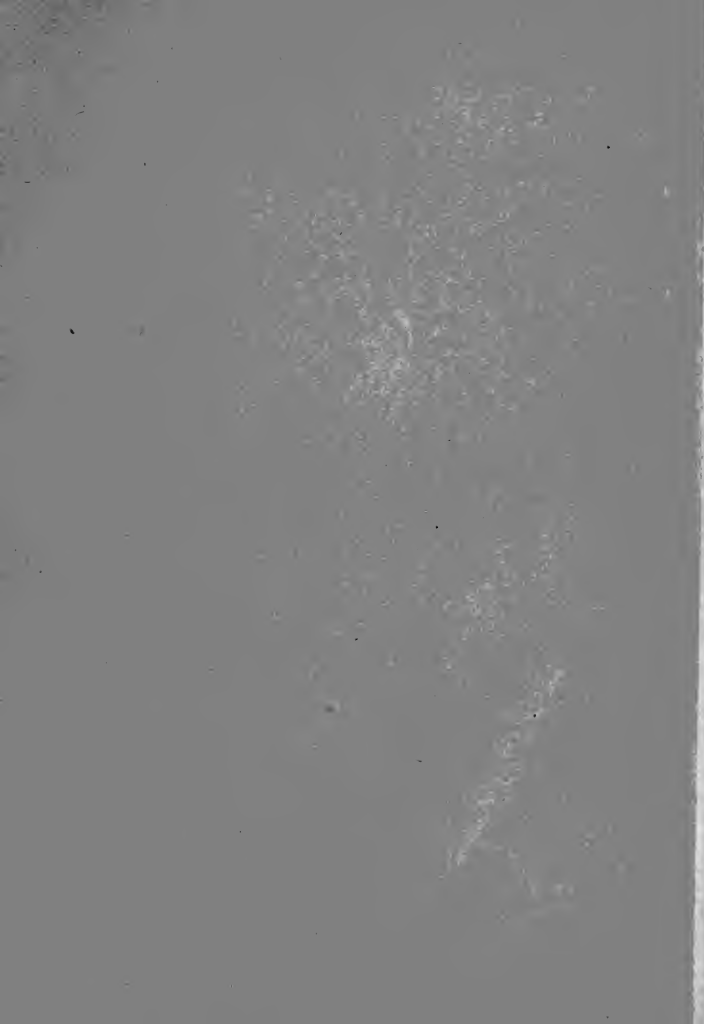
I sang me a song, a tiny song,
A song that was sweet to my soul,
And set it a-float on the sea of chance
In search of a happy goal.

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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