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Mencken, H. L.
(Henry Louis)
Ventures into verse

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1903a



**VENTURES INTO
VERSE**

BY


HENRY LOUIS MENCKEN

100

THE HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF BOSTON
FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT
TO THE PRESENT TIME
BY
JOHN MITCHELL
OF THE BOSTON BAR
AND
JOHN W. LITTLE
OF THE BOSTON BAR
IN TWO VOLUMES
VOL. I.
BOSTON: PUBLISHED BY
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1865.

Ventures into Verse

Being Various BALLADS, BALLADES, RONDEAUX,
TRIOLETS, SONGS, QUATRAINS, ODES *and*
ROUNDELS ♡ All rescued from *the*
POTTERS' FIELD *of* Old Files *and* here
Given DECENT BURIAL ♡ [Peace to Their Ashes]

BY

Henry Louis Mencken

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS & OTHER THINGS
By CHARLES S. GORDON & JOHN SIEGEL



MARSHALL, BEEK & GORDON :: NEW
YORK :: LONDON :: TORONTO :: SYDNEY
BALTIMORE ♡ FIRST (*and Last*) EDITION

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W A R N I N G

MOST of the verses that follow have been printed before and the author wishes to acknowledge his thanks for permission to reproduce them, to the editors and publishers of *The Bookman*, *Life*, *The New England Magazine*, *The National Magazine* and the *Baltimore Morning Herald*. Some are imitations—necessarily weak—of the verse of several men in whose writings he has found a good deal of innocent pleasure. The others, he fears, are more or less original.

PRELIMINARY REBUKE

Don't shoot the pianist; he's doing his best.

Gesundheit! Knockers! have your Fling!
Unto an Anvilfest you're bid;
It took a Lot of Hammering,
To build Old Cheops' Pyramid!

Ventures into Verse

BY HENRY L. MENCKEN

TO R. K.*

Prophet of brawn and bravery!

Bard of the fighting man!

You have made us kneel to a God of Steel,

And to fear his church's ban;

You have taught the song that the bullet sings—

The knell and the crowning ode of kings;

The ne'er denied appeal!

Prophet of brain and handicraft!

Bard of our grim machines!

You have made us dream of a God of Steam,

And have shown what his worship means

In the clanking rod and the whirring wheel

A life and a soul your songs reveal,

And power and might supreme.

Bard of the East and mystery!

Singer of those who bow

To the earthen clods that they call their gods

And with god-like fees endow;

You have shown that these heed not the suppliant's plea,

Nor the prayers of the priest and devotee,

Nor the vestal's futile vow.

Singer, we ask what we cannot learn

From our wise men and our schools;

Will our offered slain from our gods obtain

But the old reward of fools?

Will our man-made gods be like their kind?

If we bow to a clod of clay enshrined

Will we pray our prayers in vain?

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Ventures into Verse

THE SONG OF THE OLDEN TIME

Powder and shot now fight our fights
And we meet our foes no more,
As face to face our fathers fought
In the brave old days of yore ;
To the thirteen inch and the needle gun,
To the she-cat four-point-three
We look for help when the war-dogs yelp
And the foe comes o'er the sea !

*Oho ! for the days of the olden time,
When a fight was a fight of men !
When lance broke lance and arm met arm—
There were no cowards then ;
Sing ho ! for the fight of the olden time,
When the muscles swelled in strain,
As the steel found rest in a brave man's breast
And the axe in a brave man's brain !*

The lance-point broke on the armor's steel,
And the pike crushed helmet through,
And the blood of the vanquished, warm and red,
Stained the victor's war-steed, too !
A fight was a fight in the olden time—
Sing ho, for the days bygone !—
And a strong right arm was the luckiest charm,
When the foe came marching on !

*Oho ! for the days of the olden time,
When a fight was a fight of men !
When lance broke lance and arm met arm—
There were no cowards then !
Sing ho ! for the fight of the olden time,
When the muscles swelled in strain,
As the steel found rest in a brave man's breast
And the axe in a brave man's brain !*

Ventures into Verse

THE SPANISH MAIN

Between the tangle of the palms,
There gleaming, like a star-strewn plain,
All smiling, lies the sea of calms,
And calls to us to fare amain ;
And calls us, as with smile and gem,
She called that bold, upstanding brood,
Whose bones, when she had done with them,
Upon her shores she strewed.

Between the tangle of the palms,
By day the gleam is on the swell,
And drifting zephyrs, bearing balms,
Her tales of joy and riches tell,
And when the winds of night are free
Long, glimmering ripples wander by
As if the stars where in the sea,
Instead of in the sky.

And they went forth in ships of war
Girt up in all foolhardiness,
To take their toll from out her store,
Beguiled and snared by her caress;
And we go forth in cargo ships
To wrest her treasures bloodlessly,
And buy the nectar from her lips,
Our fairy goddess, she !

Where once their galleons blundered by
Our cargo ships are on their way,
And where their galleons rotting lie,
Our cargo ships are wrecked today.
For ever, 'till the world is done,
And all good merchantmen go down,
And dies the wind, as pales the sun,
Her smile will mask her frown.



Ventures into Verse

THE TRANSPORT GEN'RAL FERGUSON*

The transport Gen'ral Ferguson, she left the
Golden Gate,
With a thousand rookies sweatin' in her hold ;
An' the sergeants drove an' drilled them, an' the
sun it nearly killed them,—
Till they learned to do whatever they were told.

The transport Gen'ral Ferguson, she lay at Honolu',
An' the rookies went ashore an' roughed the town,
So the sergeants they corralled them, and with butt
and barrel quelled them,—
An' they limped aboard an' set to fryin' brown.

The transport Gen'ral Ferguson, she steamed
to-ward the south,
And the rookies sweated morning, noon and night ;
'Till the lookout sighted land, and they cheered
each grain o' sand,—
For their blood was boilin' over for a fight.

The transport Gen'ral Ferguson, she tied up at
the dock,
An' each rookie lugged his gun an' kit ashore,
An' a train it come and took 'em where the tropic
sun could cook 'em,—
An' the sergeants they could talk to them of war.

The transport Gen'ral Ferguson, she had her bot-
tom scraped,
For the first part of her labor it was done,
An' the rookies chased the Tagals and the Tagals
they escaped,—
An' the rookies set and sweated in the sun.

*Copyright, 1902, by the *Life* Publishing Company

Ventures into Verse

The transport Gen'ral Ferguson, she loafed around
awhile,
An' the rookies they was soldier boys by now,
For it don't take long to teach 'em—where the
Tagal lead can reach 'em—
All about the which and why and when and how.

The transport Gen'ral Ferguson, she headed home
again,
With a thousand heavy coffins in her hold ;
They were soldered up and stenciled, they were
numbered and blue penciled,—
And the rookies lay inside 'em stiff and cold.

The transport Gen'ral Ferguson, she reached the
Golden Gate,
An' the derrick dumped her cargo on the shore ;
In a pyramid they piled it—and her manifest they
filed it,
In a pigeon-hole with half a hundred more.

The transport Gen'ral Ferguson, she travels up
and down,
A-haulin' rookies to and from the war ;
Outward-bound they sweat in Kharki ; homeward
bound they come in lead
And they wonder what they've got to do it for.

The transport General Ferguson, she's owned by
Uncle Sam,
An' maybe Uncle Sam could tell 'em why,
But he don't—and so he takes 'em out to fight,
and sweat, and swear,
An' brings them home for plantin' when they die.

Ventures into Verse

A WAR SONG

The wounded bird to its blasted nest,
 (Sing ho! for the joys of war!)
When the sun of its life veers o'er to the West,
 (Sing ho! for the war, for the war!)
The wounded fox to its cave in the hill,
And the blood-dyed wolf to the snow-waste chill,
And the mangled elk to the wild-wood rill,
 (Sing ho! for the price of war!)

The nest-queen harks to her master's hurts,
 (Sing ho! for the wounds of war!)
And the she-fox busies with woodland worts,
 (Sing ho! for the end of war!)
The she-wolf staunches the warm red flood,
And the doe is besmeared with the spurting blood,
For 'tis ever the weak that must help the strong,
Though they have no part in the triumph song,
And their glory is brief as their work is long—
 (Sing ho! for the saints of war!)



Ventures *into* Verse

FAITH

The Gawd that guided Moses
Across the desert sand,
The Gawd that unter Joner
Put out a helping hand,
The Gawd that saved these famous men
From death on land an' sea,
Can spare a minute now an' then
To take a peep at you an' me.

The Gawd of Ol' Man Adam
An' Father Abraham,
Of Joshua an' Isaaih,
Of lion an' of lamb,
Of kings, an' queens, an' potentates,
An' chaps of pedigree,
Wont put a bar acrost the Gate
When Gabr'el toots fer you an' me.

The Gawd that made the ocean
An' painted up the sky,
The Gawd that sets us livin'
An' takes us when we die,
Is just the same to ev'ry man,
Of high or low degree,
An' no one's better treated than
Poor little you and little me.

Ventures into Verse

THE BALLAD OF SHIPS IN HARBOR

*Clatter of shears and derrick,
Rattle of box and bale,
The ships of the earth are at their docks,
Back from the world-round trail—
Back from the wild waste northward,
Back from the wind and the lea,
Back from the ports of East and West,
Back from the under sea.*

Here is a bark from Rio,
Back—and away she steals!
Here, from her trip, is a clipper ship
That showed the sea her heels—
South to the Gallapagos,
Down, due south, to the Horn,
And up, by the Windward Passage way,
On the breath of the balm-wind borne.

There, standing down the channel,
With a smoke wake o'er her rail,
Is a ship that goes to Zanzibar
Along the world-round trail,
'Ere seven suns have kissed her
She may pound on Quoddy Head—
A surf-tossed speck of melting wreck,
Deep-freighted with her dead.

And see that gaunt Norwegian,
Greasy, grimy and black—
She sails today for Yeddo Bay;
Who knows but she comes not back?
And there is a low decked Briton,

Ventures into Verse

And yonder a white-winged Dane—
Oh, a song for the ships that put to sea
And come not back again!

*Clatter of shears and derrick,
Rattle of box and bale,
The ships of the earth are home today,
Tomorrow they shall sail;
Cleared for the dawn and the sunset,
Cleared for the wind and the lea;
World-round and back, by the olden track—
Playthings of the sea.*



Ventures into Verse

THE ORF'CER BOY

"He was a gran' bhoy!"—*Mulvaney.*

Now 'e aren't got no whiskers
An' 'e's only five foot 'igh,
(All the same 'e is a' orf'cer hof the Queen!)
Oh, 'is voice is like a loidy's
An' 'e's so polite an' shy!
(All the same 'e serves 'Er Majesty the Queen!)
It is only 'bout a year ago 'e left 'is mother's
knee,
It is only 'bout a month ago 'e come acrost
the sea,
It is only 'bout a week that 'e 'as been a-
leadin' me.
(That's the way 'e serves 'Er Majesty the
Queen!)

'E is such a little chappie,
Bein' only five foot 'igh,
That you'd wonder how 'is likes could serve
the Queen;
You would think that when 'e 'eard the guns
'E'd just set down an' cry—
A-forgettin' ev'rythink about the Queen;
But by all that's good an' holy, you'd be
extraord'ny wrong,
'Cos 'e doesn't like no singin' 'arf as good 's
the Gatlin's song,
An' 'e fights as though 'e'd been a-fightin'
twenty times as long
As any other man that serves the Queen!

Ventures into Verse

If you'd seen him when we got to where
The Modder's deep an' wet,
You'd a-knowed 'e was a' orf'cer hof the
Queen!
There's a dozen of the enemy
That ain't forgot 'im yet—
For 'e run 'is sword clean through 'em for the
Queen!
Oh, 'e aren't much on whiskers an' 'e aren't
much on 'eight,
An' a year or two ago 'e was a-learnin' for
to write,
But you bet your soldier's shillin' 'e's the
devil in a fight—
An' 'ed die to serve 'Er Majesty the Queen!

Ventures into Verse

THE FILIPINO MAIDEN

Her father we've chased in the jungle,
And her brother is full of our lead ;
 Her uncles and cousins
 In yellow half-dozens
We've tried to induce to be dead ;
 And while we have shot at their shadows,
They've done the same favor for us—
 But, by George, she's so sweet
 That we'd rather be beat
Than to have her mixed up in the fuss.

Oh! isn't her blush like the roses?
And aren't her eyes like the stars?
 And whenever she smiles
 Don't you think you are miles
From the rattle and roar of the wars?
 Would you take the three stars of a general
If she'd say "Leave the stars and take me?"
 Oh! we've stolen sweet kisses from thousands
 of misses,
But hers are the sweetest that be.

Her name may be Ahlo or Nina,
Or Zanez or Lalamaloo;
 She may smoke the cigars
 Of the chino bazars,
And prefer black maduros to you;
 She may speak a wild six-cornered lingo,
And say that your Spanish is queer,
 But you'll never mind this
 When she gives you a kiss
And calls you her "zolshier poy dear."

Ventures *into* Verse

Oh! isn't her blush like the roses?
And aren't her eyes like the stars?
And whenever she smiles
Don't you think you are miles
From the rattle and roar of the wars?
Would you take the three stars of a general
If she'd say "Leave the stars and take me?"
Oh! I've stolen sweet kisses from thousands
of misses,
But her's are the sweetest for me!



THE VIOLET

As in the first pale flush of coming dawn
We see a promise of the glorious sun,
So in the violet's misty blue is drawn
A shadowy likeness of the days to be,
The days of cloudless skies and poesie,
When Winter's done.

Ventures into Verse

THE TIN-CLADS*

The small gunboats captured from the Spaniards and facetiously called "tin-clads" by the men of the land forces, are of great value in the offensive operations against the insurgents along the coast.
—[MANILLA DISPATCH]

*Their draft is a foot and a half,
And a knot and a half is their speed,
Their bows are as blunt as the stern of a punt
And their boilers are wonders of greed;
Their rudders are always on strike,
Their displacement is thirty-two tons,
They are armored with tin—to the dishpan
they're kin—
But their Maxims are A number ones,
(Ask Aggie!)
Their Maxims are murderous guns!*

When from out the towns and villages, and out the
jungle, too,
We have chased the Filipinos on the run,
Toward the river swamps they foot it—towards the
swamps we can't go through—
And we're doubtful if we've lost the fight or won;
Then when all are safe in hiding in the slimy mud
and reeds,
From the river 'cross the swamp we hear a sound;
It's the sputter and the rattle of the automatic feeds
On the tin-protected cruisers—how they pound—
(Sweet sound!)
They that save us being losers—Rah! the tin-pro-
tected cruisers!
Hear their rattling Maxims pound, pound, pound!

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Ventures into Verse

When the guns have done their work, and the Tagals
come our way,

(I admit they much prefer us to the guns,)

Why, we finish up what's left—ten in every dozen lay

Dead as Noah, in the swampy pools and runs;

Then the Maxims stop their rattle and we know that
midst the reeds,

Half a hundred Filipinos on the ground

Are a-looking at the sky, with a glassy, sightless eye,

And the other half—or most of them—are drowned.

'Twas the tin-protected cruisers—How they pound!

(Sweet sound!)

They that saved us being losers—Rah! the tin-pro-
tected cruisers!

How their rattling Maxims pound, pound, pound!

Their draft is a foot and a half

And a knot and a half is their speed,

Their bows are as blunt as the stern

of a punt,

And their engines are wonders, indeed.

Their rudders are always on strike,

Their bunkers hold two or three tons,

They are armored with tin—to the meat-can

they're kin—

But their Maxims are A number ones,

(Ask Aggie!)

Their Maxims are murderous guns;

(Go ask him!)

Their Maxims are Death's younger sons.

Ventures into Verse

SEPTEMBER

A dash of scarlet in the dark'ning green,
A minor echo in the night-wind's wail,
And faint and low, the swirling boughs between,
The last, sad carol of the nightingale.



ARABESQUE

(An English Version of an old Turkish Lyric.)

The tinkling sound of the camel's bell
Comes softly across the sand,
And the nightingale by the garden well
Still warbles his saraband,
But the night goes by and the dawn-winds blow
From the glimmering East and the Hills of Snow,
And I wait, sweetheart, I wait alone,
For a smile from thee, my own!

Awake! e'er the gong of the muezzin
Peals forth for another day;
E'er its loveless, barren toil begin
But a smile from you I pray!
But a smile from your soul-enslaving eyes,—
As brightly dark as the midnight skies,—
But a smile, I pray! Awake! sweetheart,
Awake! my own, my own!

ESSAYS IN OLD
FRENCH FORMS



Ventures into Verse

A BALLADE OF PROTEST*

(To the address of Master Rudyard Kipling, Poetaster)

For long, enjoyed, we've heard you sing
Of politics and army bills,
Of money-lust and cricketing,
Of clothes and fear and other things;
Meanwhile the palm-trees and the hills
Have lacked a bard to voice their lay;
Poet, ere time your lyre string stills,
Sing us again of Mandalay!

Unsung the East lies glimmering,
Unsung the palm trees toss their frills,
Unsung the seas their splendors fling,
The while you prate of laws and tills.
Each man his destiny fulfills;
Can it be yours to loose and stray;
In sophist garb to waste your quills?—
Sing us again of Mandalay!

Sing us again in rhymes that ring,
In Master-Voice that lives and thrills.
Sing us again of wind and wing,
Of temple bells and jungle thrills;
And if your Pegasus e'er wills
To lead you down some other way,
Go bind him in his olden thills—
Sing us again of Mandalay!

Master, regard the plaint we bring,
And hearken to the prayer we pray.
Lay down your law and sermoning—
Sing us again of Mandalay!

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Ventures *into* Verse

A FRIVOLOUS RONDEAU

"I co'd rehearse

A lyric verse."—*The Hesperides.*

A lyric verse I'll make for you,
Fair damsel that the many woo,
 'Twill be a sonnet on your fan—
 That aid to love from quaint Japan—
And "true" will rhyme with "eyes of blue."

Ah! me, if you but only knew
The toil of setting out to hew
 From words—as I shall try to do—
 A lyric verse.

Fleet metric ghosts I must pursue,
And dim rhyme apparitions, too—
 But yet, 'tis joyfully I scan,
 And reckon rhymes and think and plan
For there's no cheaper present than
 A lyric verse.

Ventures into Verse

THE RHYMES OF MISTRESS DOROTHY

Roundel—

Bemaled by ev'ry hurrying churl
And deafened by the city's brawl,
A helm-less craft I helpless swirl
A down the street.

With battered hat I trip and sprawl
And like a toy tee-to-tum swirl,
To end my strugglings with a fall—

But what care I for knock and whirl?—
Egad! I heed them not at all;
For here comes Dolly—sweetheart girl!—
A down the street!

Triolet—

The light that lies in Dolly's eyes
Is sun and moon and stars to me;
It dims the splendor of the skies—
The light that lies in Dolly's eyes—
And me-ward shining, testifies
That Dolly's mine, fore'er to be—
The light that lies in Dolly's eyes
Is sun and moon and stars to me!

Roundelay—

Oh, Dolly is my treasury—
What more of wealth could I desire?
Her lips are rubies set for me,
And there between (sweet property!)
A string of pearls to smiles conspire;
With Dolly as my treasury,
What more of wealth could I desire?

Ventures into Verse

And when have men of alchemy
Yet dreamed of gems like those I see
 In Dolly's eyes, as flashing fire,
 They bid the envious world admire?—
Oh, Dolly is my treasury!
 What more of wealth could I desire?

And then her hair!—there cannot be
Such gold beyond the Purple Sea
As this of mine—unpriced and free!
Oh, Dolly is my treasury,
 My sweetheart and my heart's desire!



A FEW LINES

Few roses like your cheeks are red,
 Few lilies like your brow are fair;
Few vassals like your slave are led,
Few roses like your cheeks are red,
Few dangers like your frown I dread;
 Few rubies to your lips compare,
Few roses like your cheeks are red,
 Few lilies like your brow are fair.

Ventures *into* Verse

A RONDEAU OF TWO HOURS

"It's a cinch."—*Plato*.

From four to six milady fair
Is chic and sweet and debonair,
For then it is, with smiles and tea,
She fills the chappy mob with glee
(The jays but come to drink and stare).

A rose is nestled in her hair,
Like Cupid lurking in his lair—
Few of the jays remain heart free
From four to six.

Oh let them come—I would not care
If all the men on earth were there;
For when they go she smiles on me,
And, just because she loves me, she
Makes all the ringers take their share
From four to six.

Ventures into Verse

AN ANTE-CHRISTMAS RONDEAU

"'Tis a sad story, mates."—*Marie Corelli.*

It's up to me—the winds are chill
And snow clouds drift from o'er the hill,
At dawn the rime is on the grass,
At five o'clock we light the gas,
And long gone is the daffodil.

Jack Frost draws flowers upon the glass
And blasts the growing ones—alas!
Whene'er he comes to scar and kill,
It's up to me.

I run not in the croaker class,
But when I see the autumn pass,
Of crushing woes I have my fill—
To buy a Christmas gift for Jill
A horde of gold I must amass—
It's up to me.



Ventures *into* Verse

ROUNDEL

If love were all and we could cheat
All gods but Cupid of their due,
Our joy in life would be complete.

We'd only live that we might woo,
(Instead, as now, that we might eat,)
And ev'ry lover would be true,—
If love were all.

Yet, if we found our bread and meat
In kisses it would please but few,
Soon life would grow a cloying sweet,
If love were all.

Ventures into Verse

IN VAUDEVILLE

In vaudeville the elder jest
Remains the one that's loved the best ;
 For 'tis the custom of the stage
 To venerate and honor age
And look upon the old as blest.

Originality's a pest
That artist's labor hard to best—
 Conservatism is the rage
 In vaudeville.

The artist's arms are here expressed :
A slapstick argent as a crest
 (It is an ancient heritage),
A seltzer siphon gules—the wage
Of newness is a lengthy rest
 In vaudeville.

Ventures *into Verse*

THE RONDEAU OF RICHES

If I were rich and had a store
Of gold doubloons and louis d'or—
 A treasure for a pirate crew—
 Then I would spend it all for you—
My heart's delight and conqueror!

About your feet upon the floor,
Ten thousand rubies I would pour—
 Regardless of expense, I'd woo
 If I were rich.

But as I'm not, I can but soar
Mid fancy's heights and ponder o'er
 The things that I would like to do;
 And as I pass them in review
It strikes me that you'd love me more
 If I were rich.

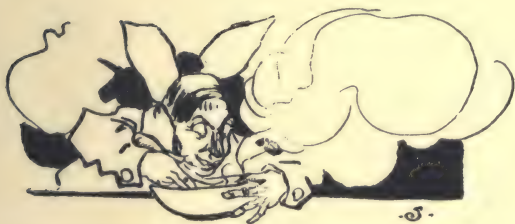
Ventures into Verse

IN EATING SOUP

In eating soup, it's always well
To make an effort to excel
The unregenerate who sop
With bread the last surviving drop
As if to them but one befell.

And if it burn you do not yell,
Or stamp or storm or say "Oh!—well!"—
From social grandeur you may flop
In eating soup.

And if the appetizing smell
Upon you cast a witch's spell,
To drain your plate pray do not stop,
And please, I pray you, do not slop!
A gurgling sound's a social knell
In eating soup.



Ventures into Verse

LOVE AND THE ROSE

The thorn lives but to shield the rose;
Coquetry may but shelter love!
(This consolation Hope bestows).
The thorn lives but to shield the rose;
Though blood from many a thorn wound flows
I'll pluck the rose that blows above—
The thorn lives but to shield the rose,
Coquetry may but shelter love!

Love me more or not at all,
Half a rose is less than none;
Hear the wretch you hold in thrall!
Love me more or not at all!
Dilletante love will pall,
I would have you wholly won;—
Love me more or not at all;
Half a rose is less than none!

Ventures into Verse

A RONDEAU OF STATESMANSHIP

In politics it's funny how
A man may tell you one thing now
 And say tomorrow that he meant
 To voice a different sentiment
And vow a very different vow.

The writ and spoken laws allow
Each individual to endow
 His words with underground intent
 In politics.

Thus he who leads in verbal prow-
Ness sports the laurel on his brow—
 So if you wish to represent
 The acme of the eminent,
Learning lying ere you make your bow
 In politics.

SONGS *of* THE CITY



Ventures into Verse

SONGS OF THE CITY

I—*Auroral**

Another day comes journeying with the sun,
The east grows ghastly with the dawning's gleam,
And e'er the dark has flown and night is done
The alley pavements with their many teem.

Another day of toil and grief and pain;
Life surely seems not sweet to such as these!
Yet they live toiling that they may but gain
The right to life and all life's miseries.

II—*Madrigal*

Ah! what were all the running brooks
From ocean-side to ocean-side,
And what were all the chattering wrens
That wake the wood with song,
And what were all the roses red
In all the flowery meadows wide,
And what were all the fairy clouds
That 'cross the heavens throng—
And what were all the joys that bide
In meadow, wood and down,
To me, if I were at your side
Within the joyless town?

III—*Within the City Gates*

We can but dream of murmuring rills
Mad racing down the wooded hills,
Of meadow flowers and balmy days
When robin sings his amorous lays;
And lost among the city's ways,
To us it is not given to gaze
In wonder as the morning haze

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Ventures into Verse

Lifts from the sea of daffodils,—
Of all but those on window-sills
 We can but dream.

IV—*April*

At dawn a gay gallant comes to the eaves
 And trills a song unto his lady fair,
And then, above the reach of boyish thieves,
 A building nest sways in the balmy air;
One day a flower upon a window sill
 Puts forth a bud, and as its beauty grows
 The sun—gay prodigal!—with life-light glows,
 The while he reads the doom of storms and
 snows;
And then—and then—there comes the spring-
 time's thrill!

V—*The Coming of Winter*

A chill, damp west wind and a heavy sky,
 With clouds that merge in one gray, darkling sea,
The last red leaves of autumn flutter by,
 Wrest from the dead twigs of the street-side tree;
And then there comes an eddy cloud of white,
 First dim, then blotting everything below;
Up to the eaves the sparrows haste in flight—
 And thus upon the town descends the snow.

VI—*The Snow*

A song of birds adown a mine's dark galleries,
 A scent of roses 'mid a waste of moor and fen,
A gush of sparkling waters from the desert sands,—
 So comes the snow upon the town, an alien.

Ventures into Verse

VII—*Nocturne*

How like a warrior on the battlefield
The city sleeps, with brain awake, and eyes
That know no closing. Ere the first star
dies

It rises from its slumber, and with shield
In hand, full ready for the fray,
Goes forth to meet the day.

OTHER VERSES



Ventures *into* Verse

A MADRIGAL

How can I choose but love you,
Maid of the witching smile ?
Your eyes are as blue as the skies above you ;
How can I choose but love you, love you,
You and your witching smile ?
For the red of your lips is the red of the rose,
And the white of your brows is the white
of the snows,
And the gold of your hair is the splendor
that glows
When the sun gilds the east at morn.
And the blue of your eyes
Is the blue of the skies
Of an orient day new-born ;
And your smile has a charm that is balm to
the soul,
And your pa has a bar'l and a many-plunk
roll,
So how can I choose but love you, love you,
Love you, love you, love you ?

Ventures into Verse

A BALLAD OF LOOKING

He looked into her eyes, and there he saw
No trace of that bright gleam which poets say
Comes from the faery orb of love's sweet day,
No blushing coyness causes her to withdraw
Her gaze from his. He looked and yet he knew
No joy, no whirling numbness of the brain,
No quickening heart-beat. Then he looked
again,
And once again, unblushing, she looked too.

He looked into her eyes—with interest he
Stared at them through a magnifying prism.
For he was but an oculist, and she
Was being treated for astigmatism.



WHEN THE PIPE GOES OUT

A maiden's heart,
And sighs profuse,
A father's foot,
And—what's the use?

Ventures into Verse

A PARADOX

Dan Cupyd drewe hys lyttle bowe,
And strayght ye arrowe from it flewe,
Although its course was rather lowe,
I thought 'twould pass above my heade—
In stature I am shorte, you knowe.

But soone upon my breast a stayne
Of blood appeared, and showed ye marke
Whereat ye boy god tooke hys aime;
I staggered, groaned and then—I smyled!
Egad! it was a pleasante payne!



Ventures into Verse

THE SONG OF THE SLAPSTICK

Why is a hen? (Kerflop!) Haw, haw!

 Toot, goes the slide trombone;

Why is a hen? (And a swat in the jaw!)

 And the ushers laugh alone.

Why is a— (Bang!) — is a— (Biff!) Ho, ho!

 Boom! goes the sad French horn;

Why is a hen? (Kerflop!) Do you know?—

 And the paid admissions mourn!

Vhy iss a hen? Yes? No? (Kerflop?)

 Bang! goes the man at the drum;

Vhy iss a hen? (And a knock at the top!)

 And the press agent's stricken dumb;

Vhy iss a— (Thud!) —iss a— (Flop!) —iss
 a hen?

 Hark! how the supers laugh!

Vhy iss a— (Bing! Bang! Boom!) —and then

 The slapstick's bust in half!

 (Curtain)

Ventures into Verse

IL PENSEROSO

Love's song is sung in ragtime now
And kisses sweet are syncopated joys,
The tender sign, the melancholy moan,
The soft reproach and yearning up-turned gaze
Have passed into the caves without the gates
And in their place, to serve love's purposes,
Bold profanations from the music halls
Are working overtime.

In days of old the amorous swain would sigh
And say unto his lady love the while
He pressed her to his heaving low-cut vest,
"Dost love me, sweet?" And she, with many
 a blush,
Would softly answer, "Yes, my cavalier!"
Now to his girl the ragtime lover says,
The while he strums his marked-down mandolin
"Is you ma lady love?" and she, his girl,
Makes answer thus: "Ah is!"

Gadzooks! it makes me sad! I see the doom
Of Cupid, and upon the battered air
I hear a rumor floating. It is this:
That when the boy shuffles to the grave
'Tis Syncopated Sambo that will get
His job!

* * * * *

Ah, me! What sadness resteth on my soul!

Ventures into Verse

FINIS

There was a man that delved in the earth
For glittering gems and gold,
And whatever lay hidden that seemed of worth
He carefully seized and sold;
So his days were long and his store was great,
And ever for more he sighed,
'Till kings bowed down and he ruled in state—
And after awhile he died.

*Oh, blithesome and shrill the wails re-
sound!*

*Oh, gaily his children moan!
And the end of it all was a hole in the
ground
And a scratch on a crumbling stone.*

There was a man that fought for the right,
And never a friend had he,
'Till after the dark there dawned the light
And the world could know and see;
Oh, long was the fight and comfortless,
But great was the fighter's pride,
And a victor he rose from the storm and stress—
And after awhile he died.

*Oh, great was the fame but newly found
Of the man that fought alone!
And the end of it all was a hole in the
ground
And a scratch on a crumbling stone.*

Ventures into Verse

There was a man that dreamed a dream,
And his pen it served his brain;
And great was his art and great his theme
And long was his laurelled reign;
But after awhile the world forgot
And his work was pushed aside,
(For to serve and wait is the mortal lot)
And then, in the end, he died.

*Oh! brown on his brow were the bays
that bound
And far was his glory flown!
And the end of it all was a hole in the
ground
And a scratch on a crumbling stone.*



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