

# THIS SINGING WORLD

CENTURY EDITION





THIS  
SINGING  
WORLD

FOR CHILDREN

MODERN POEMS  
SELECTED BY  
LOUIS UNTERMAYER

Century Edition  
Pete Matthews Jr

*This Singing World*

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CENTURY EDITION  
PETE MATTHEWS JR

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Century Edition

for

Generations of my family who loved it:

*Geneth - Hillie*

*Dad - Jane - Til*

*Myself - Dan - Andrea*

*Morgan - Alex*

*Sam - Ben - Mateo*

And with love to

*Karen*

*This Singing World*

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# Introduction

## Introduction to the Century Edition

*This Singing World* was originally published in 1923. This excellent compilation may represent the height of an era of poetry in print. Through radio and modern media, music incorporates and adds dimension to most of the modern poetry that I appreciate. It's not the same, but it can be as moving.

Some of these poems are funny, some are moving, some just make you think. Others provide insights into how people thought back then. Many people would consider some offensive now; T. A. Daly's poems in Italian-American dialect head that list for me. Do try the dialect work of Paul Laurence Dunbar, the son of former slaves. Notice the rural and nautical nostalgia in poems that would appeal to the increasing city populations – and purchasers.

I hope you enjoy this Century Edition as much as I have enjoyed reading it – *aloud* – as I worked on it. While designed for young people, I think it's well suited to everyone. If, like me, you seldom read poetry, some of these poems should still resonate with you.

\* \* \* \* \*

On a screen, each line in the Table of Contents is a link; page numbers in the text, such as below and in Note headings, are also links.

“About *This Singing World*” on page 349 provides more historical context and describes how I created this edition. This book is in the public domain. However, if you base further publications on my work, please credit me:

Pete Matthews Jr – <https://3nt.xyz>

## **Original Introduction**

### TO THE READER HIMSELF (OR HERSELF)

You won't like all of these poems. Even though I'm not sure just who you are, you couldn't possibly care for every single one of them. Nobody could. There are, in this remarkable world, as many different tastes as there are flavors. And that is why I have included not only so many poems but so many *kinds* of poems. Perhaps you're especially fond of music. Then you will read many of these verses for the sheer sound of them: for the throb and beat of the rhymes, for the little, tinkling feet that tap their toes to an even measure, for the tunes that shape themselves as the words sing out with even more melody than meaning. Perhaps – am I right? – you are something of a dreamer. You can see castles in the clouds, pictures in the dying fire; you know that the wayside fern often conceals a frightened fairy and that every twilight has its own pet phantom. You will find them all here – friendly beasts, babies with fairy-laughter, dinkey-birds in amfalula trees, enchanted shirts and singing mermaids – all in a world of phantasy whose colors are lovelier and livelier than those the eye can see. Perhaps you are a boy who, with one eye on your homework and the other on the batting averages, has always considered poetry a sort of childish sugar-candy – “a sentimental lollipop” (I've heard you say it!) “for silly girls.” Now, wait a moment. Read the ballads of Rudyard Kipling (You have? Well, read them again!), listen to the rousing voices in the “Heroic Heart,” spend a few minutes with the writers who will help you discover the everyday magic in “Common Things.” Perhaps, however, you don't like to be talked to quite so seriously – at least, not all the time. Well, nobody can prevent your turning to the hop-skip-and-a-leap of the “Laughing Legends,” or the galloping nonsense in “Rhyme without Reason.” Perhaps – terrible thought! – you don't like to read at all, but prefer romping and swinging along in the pure joy of out-of-doors. Don't think you can escape so easily! See if you don't feel the wind on your forehead and



## *Introduction*

the blood racing in your veins when you hear the marches in the section called “Open Roads” and the breezy trumpets blowing out of the “Breath of the Earth and Sea.”

But whatever else you may look for (and, I hope, find), I think you will take pleasure not only in the sounds and the stories, but in the words themselves. The men and women who wrote the pieces in this book – in fact, all poets who ever lived – have enjoyed finding words to carry their feelings to others, and people have always enjoyed following the words. To-day there seem to be more people who wish to shape their thoughts into many different arrangements of words, and more people who share their enjoyment. Most of the poems in this book were written by living poets (all of them appeared during the last seventy years) – and so it is *this* singing world – your world as well as theirs – that is between these covers. Sometimes I think the poems are as much alive as the persons who wrote them – just as Oliver Twist and Robinson Crusoe and Hamlet and D’Artagnan and Danny Deever and Gulliver are as real as any man we know. Thomas Carlyle once said that every fine poem was, at bottom, a kind of biography, the life of a man – “and,” he went on, “it may also be said, there is no life of man but is a heroic poem of some sort, rhymed or unrhymed.”

And that, I suppose, is the Moral of this Introduction. (Every introduction, you know, must have one!) If we want to make it simpler, all these sentences could be boiled down to a four-word problem in arithmetic:

$$*Poetry + People = Education + Enjoyment*$$

At any rate, they are four good words. They seem, like things equal to the same thing, equal to each other. They are, everywhere, and especially in this book, closely related. Let them stand together.

*Louis Untermeyer*

*This Singing World*



*Introduction*

**A Foreword**

Child, do not throw this book about;  
Refrain from the unholy pleasure  
Of cutting all the pictures out!  
Preserve it as your chiefest treasure.

Child, have you never heard it said  
That you are heir to all the ages?  
Why, then, your hands were never made  
To tear these beautiful thick pages!

Your little hands were made to take  
The better things and leave the worse ones.  
They also may be used to shake  
The Massive Paws of Elder Persons.

And when your prayers complete the day,  
Darling, your little tiny hands  
Were also made, I think, to Pray  
For men that lose their fairylands.

*Hilaire Belloc*

*This Singing World*

# **Songs of Awakening**

*This Singing World*



**“The Year’s at the Spring” \***

*(From “Pippa Passes”)*

The year’s at the spring,  
And day’s at the morn;  
Morning’s at seven;  
The hillside’s dew-pearled;  
The lark’s on the wing;  
The snail’s on the thorn;  
God’s in his heaven –  
All’s right with the world.

*Robert Browning*

\* See [Note 1](#).

**Dawn and Dark**

God with His million cares  
Went to the left or right,  
Leaving our world; and the day  
Grew night.

Back from a sphere He came  
Over a starry lawn,  
Looked at our world; and the dark  
Grew dawn.

*Norman Gale*

*This Singing World*

## **Spring Song \***

I love daffodils.  
I love Narcissus when he bends his head.  
I can hardly keep March and Spring and Sunday and daffodils  
Out of my rhyme of song.  
Do you know anything about the spring  
When it comes again?  
God knows about it while winter is lasting.  
Flowers bring him power in the spring,  
And birds bring it and children.  
He is sometimes sad and alone  
Up there in the sky trying to keep his worlds happy.  
I bring him songs  
When he is in his sadness, and weary.  
I tell him how I used to wander out  
To study stars and the moon he made,  
And flowers in the dark of the wood.  
I keep reminding him about his flowers he has forgotten,  
And that snowdrops are up.  
What can I say to make him listen?  
“God,” I say,  
“Don’t you care!  
Nobody must be sad or sorry  
In the spring-time of flowers.”

*Hilda Conkling*  
(Written at the age of six)

\* See Note 2.



## **April Winds**

In Spring the day is early  
And wakes a rosy world,  
Where all the twigs are pearly  
And every bud's uncurled.  
The birds are up and singing  
Before they can be seen, –  
*And April winds are winging  
Their way to make earth green.*

In Spring the sun grows pleasant,  
To prove that he is fond,  
He scatters for a present  
Gold pieces in each pond.  
He sets the bell-flowers ringing  
With perfumed melodies, –  
*And April winds run swinging  
Among the startled trees.*

In Spring the night is starry;  
Sleep taps upon the door  
And not a heart is sorry  
Though daylight is no more;  
It knows the night is bringing  
Dreams for another day,  
*And April winds are singing  
The silent hours away.*

*Michael Lewis*

*This Singing World*

## **Song**

April, April,  
Laugh thy girlish laughter;  
Then, the moment after,  
Weep thy girlish tears,  
April, that mine ears  
Like a lover greetest,  
If I tell thee, sweetest,  
All my hopes and fears.  
April, April,  
Laugh thy golden laughter,  
But, the moment after,  
Weep thy golden tears!

*William Watson*

## **Sunrise**

The east is yellow as a daffodil.  
Three steeples – three stark swarthy arms – are thrust  
Up from the town. The gnarled poplars thrill  
Down the long street in some keen salty gust –  
Straight from the sea and all the sailing ships –  
Turn white, black, white again, with noises sweet  
And swift. Back to the night the last star slips.  
High up the air is motionless, a sheet  
Of light. The east grows yellower apace,  
And trembles: then, once more, and suddenly,  
The salt wind blows, and in that moment's space  
Flame roofs, and poplar-tops, and steeples three;  
From out the mist that wraps the river-ways,  
The little boats, like torches, start ablaze.

*Lizette Woodworth Reese*

## **Who Calls? <sup>1</sup>**

“Listen, children, listen, won’t you come into the night?  
The stars have set their candle gleam, the moon her lanthorn light.  
I’m piping little tunes for you to catch your dancing feet.  
There’s glory in the heavens, but there’s magic in the street.  
There’s jesting here and carnival: the cost of a balloon  
Is an ancient rhyme said backwards, and a wish upon the moon.  
The city walls and city streets! – you shall make of these  
As fair a thing as country roads and blossomy apple trees.”

“What watchman calls us in the night, and plays a little tune  
That turns our tongues to talking now of April, May and June?  
Who bids us come with nimble feet and snapping finger tips?”  
“I am the Spring, the Spring, the Spring with laughter on my lips.”

*Frances Clarke*

<sup>1</sup> Elinor Remick Warren (1900-1991) set this poem to music, published in 1937. Warren (pianist) and Marie Gibson (soprano) released it in 1987, on the album *Art Songs by Elinor Remick Warren*.

*This Singing World*



# **Breath of the Earth and Sea**



SEA-FEVER

## **Sea-Fever \***

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,  
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by,  
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's  
    shaking,  
And a grey mist on the sea's face, and a grey dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide  
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;  
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,  
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,  
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like a  
    whetted knife;  
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover,  
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over. <sup>1</sup>

*John Masefield*

\* See [Note 3](#).

<sup>1</sup> trick: a watch (turn on duty) at sea.

## **Who Has Seen the Wind?**

Who has seen the wind?  
    Neither I nor you:  
But when the leaves hang trembling,  
    The wind is passing thro'.

Who has seen the wind?  
    Neither you nor I:  
But when the trees bow down their heads,  
    The wind is passing by.

*Christina Georgina Rossetti*

## **Nature's Friend**

Say what you like,  
All things love me!  
I pick no flowers –  
That wins the Bee.

The Summer's Moths  
Think my hand one –  
To touch their wings –  
With Wind and Sun.

The garden Mouse  
Comes near to play;  
Indeed, he turns  
His eyes away.

The Wren knows well  
I rob no nest;  
When I look in,  
She still will rest.

The hedge stops Cows,  
Or they would come  
After my voice  
Right to my home.

The Horse can tell,  
Straight from my lip,  
My hand could not  
Hold any whip.

Say what you like  
All things love me!  
Horse, Cow, and Mouse,  
Bird, Moth, and Bee.



## **God's World \***

O World, I cannot hold thee close enough!  
Thy winds, thy wide grey skies!  
Thy mists that roll and rise!  
Thy woods, this autumn day, that ache and sag  
And all but cry with colour! That gaunt crag  
To crush! To lift the lean of that black bluff!  
World, World, I cannot get thee close enough!

Long have I known a glory in it all,  
But never knew I this;  
Here such a passion is  
As stretcheth me apart. Lord, I do fear  
Thou'st made the world too beautiful this year.  
My soul is all but out of me, – let fall  
No burning leaf; prithee, let no bird call.

*Edna St. Vincent Millay*

\* See Note 4.

## **Storm**

You crash over the trees,  
you crack the live branch –  
the branch is white,  
the green crushed,  
each leaf is rent like split wood.

You burden the trees  
with black drops,  
you swirl and crash –  
you have broken off a weighted leaf  
in the wind,  
it is hurled out,  
whirls up and sinks,  
a green stone.

*“H. D.”*

## **The Storm**

There came a wind like a bugle;  
It quivered through the grass,  
And a green chill upon the heat  
So ominous did pass  
We barred the windows and the doors  
As from an emerald ghost;  
The doom's electric moccasin  
That very instant passed.  
On a strange mob of panting trees,  
And fences fled away,  
And rivers where the houses ran  
The living looked that day.  
The bell within the steeple wild  
The flying tidings whirled.  
How much can come  
And much can go,  
And yet abide the world!

*Emily Dickinson*

## **Autumn**

The morns are meeker than they were,  
The nuts are getting brown;  
The berry's cheek is plumper,  
The rose is out of town.  
  
The maple wears a gayer scarf,  
The field a scarlet gown.  
Lest I should be old-fashioned,  
I'll put a trinket on.

*Emily Dickinson*

## **First Frost**

A sparkling sunset, oranged to gold,  
Rings like a bell of sorrow told,  
Across the night of whistling cold;  
For now an arm swings near and far  
The brittle lamp of every star.  
The flowers grow in the garden pied  
Velvet, imperial, laughing-eyed,  
While on them all hovers a breath,  
The whistling frost of silver death.  
I grieve to see the wine-red crowd  
And watch and watch them, tall and proud,  
And tell them that tonight death comes,  
Beating the stars like kettle drums.  
For the last time I kiss their breasts,  
The lovely golden fleeting guests,  
Made sad to think on morning's shore  
Their beauty will be nevermore.  
I grieve to see them fall and die  
Where kindled, burning, sparkling high  
The stars make mirrors of the sky.  
I bid them farewell in their sleep,  
Wrapped now in snowy silver seas,  
For they, immortal, will but leap  
Like us, to a more marvelous peace.  
And here I sit by them and view  
The solid sky as white frost comes,  
Knocking the winds to silver dew,  
Beating the stars like kettle drums.

*Edwin Curran*

## **Velvet Shoes \***

Let us walk in the white snow  
In a soundless space;  
With footsteps quiet and slow,  
At a tranquil pace,  
Under veils of white lace.

I shall go shod in silk,  
And you in wool,  
White as a white cow's milk,  
More beautiful  
Than the breast of a gull.

We shall walk through the still town  
In a windless peace;  
We shall step upon the white down,  
Upon silver fleece,  
Upon softer than these.

We shall walk in velvet shoes;  
Wherever we go  
Silence will fall like dews  
On white silence below.  
We shall walk in the snow.

*Elinor Wylie*

\* See Note 5.

## **Song of Summer \***

Dis is gospel weathah sho' –  
Hills is sawt o' hazy.  
Meddahs level ez a flo'  
Callin' to de lazy.  
Sky all white wif streaks o' blue,  
Sunshine softly gleamin'  
D'ain't no wuk hit's right to do,  
Nothin's right but dreamin'.

Dreamin' by a rivah side  
Wif de watahs glist'nin',  
Feelin' good an' satisfied  
Ez you lay a-list'nin'  
To de little nakid boys  
Splashin' in de watah,  
Hollerin' fu' to 'spress deir joys  
Jes' lak youngsters ought to.

Squir'l a-tippin' on his toes,  
So't to hide an' view you;  
Whole flocks o' camp-meetin' crows  
Shoutin' hallelujah.  
Peckahwood erpon de tree  
Tappin' lak a hammah;  
Jaybird chattin' wif a bee,  
Tryin' to teach him grammah.

Breeze is blowin' wif perfume,  
Jes' enough to tease you;  
Hollyhocks is all in bloom,  
Smellin' fu' to please you.  
Go 'way, folks, an' let me 'lone,  
Times is getting' dearah –  
Summah's settin' on de th'one,  
An' I'm a-layin' neah huh!

*Paul Laurence Dunbar*

\* See Note 6.

*This Singing World*

## **Harvest Sunset**

Red gold of pools,  
Sunset furrows six o'clock,  
And the farmer done in the fields  
And the cows in the barns with bulging udders.  
Take the cows and the farmer,  
Take the barns and bulging udders.  
Leave the red gold of pools  
And sunset furrows six o'clock.  
The farmer's wife is singing.  
The farmer's boy is whistling.  
I wash my hands in red gold of pools.

*Carl Sandburg*

## **Fog**

The fog comes  
on little cat feet.

It sits looking  
over harbor and city  
on silent haunches  
and then moves on.

*Carl Sandburg*

## **Glimpse in Autumn**

Ladies at a ball  
Are not so fine as these  
Richly brocaded trees  
That decorate the fall.

They stand against a wall  
Of crisp October sky,  
Their pluméd heads held high,  
Like ladies at a ball.

*Jean Starr Untermeyer*

## **Home-Coming**

When I stepped homeward to my hill  
Dusk went before with quiet tread;  
The bare laced branches of the trees  
Were as a mist about its head.

Upon its leaf-brown breast, the rocks  
Like great grey sheep lay silent-wise;  
Between the birch trees' gleaming arms,  
The faint stars trembled in the skies.

The white brook met me half-way up  
And laughed as one that knew me well,  
To whose more clear than crystal voice  
The frost had joined a crystal spell.

The skies lay like pale-watered deep.  
Dusk ran before me to its strand  
And cloudily leaned forth to touch  
The moon's slow wonder with her hand.

*Léonie Adams*

## **The Sea Gypsy**

I am fevered with the sunset,  
I am fretful with the bay,  
For the wander-thirst is on me  
And my soul is in Cathay.

There's a schooner in the offing,  
With her topsails shot with fire,  
And my heart has gone aboard her  
For the Islands of Desire.

I must forth again to-morrow!  
With the sunset I must be  
Hull down on the trail of rapture  
In the wonder of the Sea.

*Richard Hovey*

## **A Wanderer's Song**

A wind's in the heart of me, a fire's in my heels,  
I am tired of brick and stone and rumbling wagon-wheels;  
I hunger for the sea's edge, the limits of the land,  
Where the wild old Atlantic is shouting on the sand.

Oh, I'll be going, leaving the noises of the street,  
To where a lifting foresail-foot is yanking at the sheet;  
To a windy, tossing anchorage where yawls and ketches<sup>1</sup> ride,  
Oh, I'll be going, going, until I meet the tide.

And first I'll hear sea-wind, the mewling of the gulls,  
The clucking, sucking of the sea about the rusty hulls,  
The songs at the capstan in the hooker warping out,  
And then the heart of me'll know I'm there or thereabout.

Oh, I am tired of brick and stone, the heart of me is sick,  
For windy green, unquiet sea, the realm of Moby Dick;  
And I'll be going, going, from the roaring of the wheels,  
For a wind's in the heart of me, a fire's in my heels.

*John Masefield*

<sup>1</sup> Yawls and ketches: two-masted boats.



## **Ballade of a Ship**

Down by the flash of the restless water  
The dim White Ship like a white bird lay;  
Laughing at life and the world they sought her,  
And out she swung to the silvering bay.  
Then off they flew on their roustering way,  
And the keen moon fired the light foam flying  
Up from the flood where the faint stars play,  
And the bones of the brave in the wave are lying.

'Twas a king's fair son with a king's fair daughter,  
And full three hundred beside, they say, –  
Revelling on for the lone, cold slaughter  
So soon to seize them and hide them for aye;  
But they danced and they drank and their souls grew gay,  
Nor ever they knew of a ghoul's eye spying  
Their splendor a flickering phantom to stray  
Where the bones of the brave in the wave are lying.

Through the mist of a drunken dream they brought her  
(This wild white bird) for the sea-fiend's prey:  
The pitiless reef in his hard clutch caught her,  
And hurled her down where the dead men stay.  
A torturing silence of wan dismay –  
Shrieks and curses of mad souls dying –  
Then down they sank to slumber and sway  
Where the bones of the brave in the wave are lying.

### **ENVOY**

Prince, do you sleep to the sound alway  
Of the mournful surge and the sea-birds' crying? –  
Or does love still shudder and steel still slay,  
Where the bones of the brave in the wave are lying?

*Edwin Arlington Robinson*

## **Old Ships**

There is a memory stays upon old ships,  
A weightless cargo in the musty hold, –  
Of bright lagoons and prow-caressing lips,  
Of stormy midnights, – and a tale untold.  
They have remembered islands in the dawn,  
And windy capes that tried their slender spars,  
And tortuous channels where their keels have gone.  
And calm blue nights of stillness and the stars.

Ah, never think that ships forget a shore,  
Or bitter seas, or winds that made them wise;  
There is a dream upon them, evermore;  
And there be some who say that sunk ships rise  
To seek familiar harbors in the night,  
Blowing in mists, their spectral sails like light.

*David Morton*

## **High Tide**

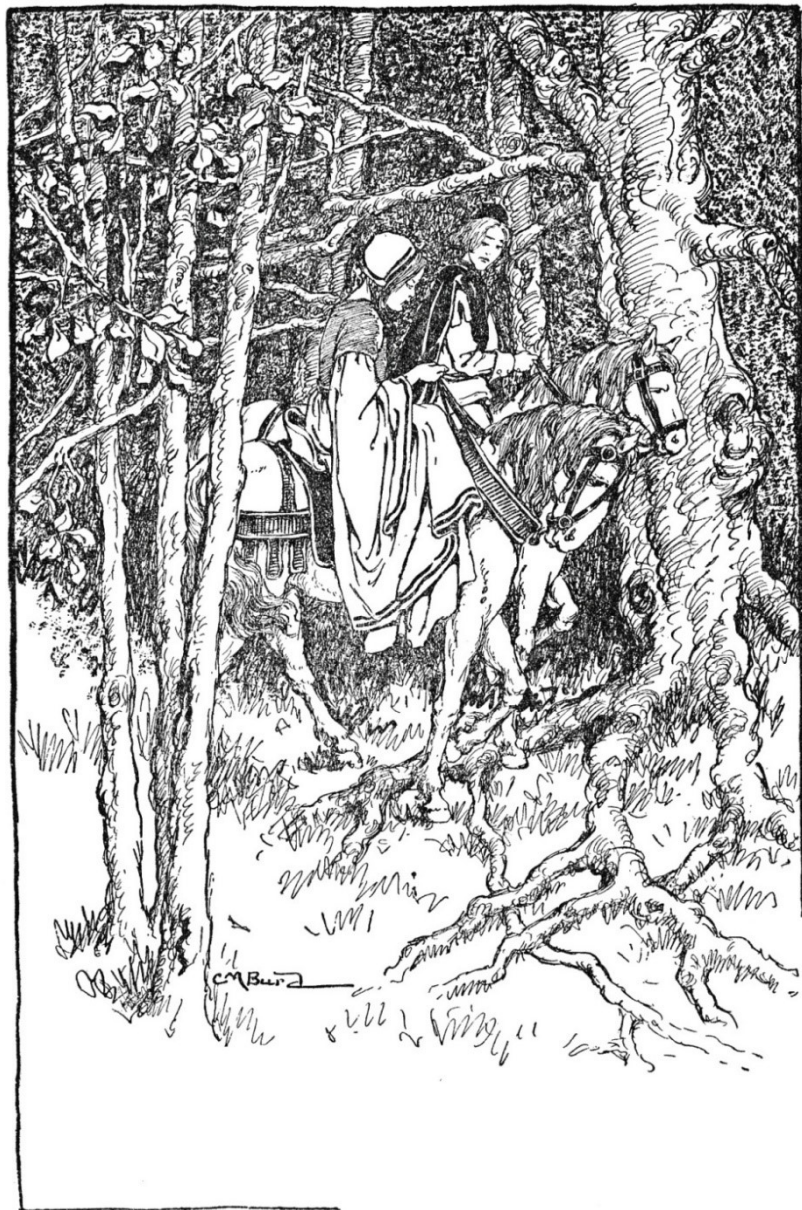
I edged back against the night.  
The sea growled assault on the wave-bitten shore.  
And the breakers,  
Like young and impatient hounds,  
Sprang, with rough joy on the shrinking sand.  
Sprang – but were drawn back slowly,  
With a long, relentless pull,  
Whimpering, into the dark.

Then I saw who held them captive;  
And I saw how they were bound  
With a broad and quivering leash of light,  
Held by the moon,  
As, calm and unsmiling,  
She walked the deep fields of the sky.

*Jean Starr Untermeyer*

# Open Roads

*This Singing World*



## **The Joys of the Road**

Now the joys of the road are chiefly these:  
A crimson touch on the hard-wood trees;

A vagrant's morning wide and blue,  
In early fall, when the wind walks, too;

A shadowy highway cool and brown,  
Alluring up and enticing down

From rippled water to dappled swamp,  
From purple glory to scarlet pomp;

The outward eye, the quiet will,  
And the striding hart from hill to hill;

The tempter apple over the fence;  
The cobweb bloom on the yellow quince;

The palish asters along the wood,  
A lyric touch of the solitude;

An open hand, an easy shoe,  
And a hope to make the day go through, -

Another to sleep with, and a third  
To wake me up at the voice of a bird;

The resonant, far-listening morn,  
And the hoarse whisper of the corn;

The crickets mourning their comrades lost,  
In the night's retreat from the gathering frost;

(Or is it their slogan, plaintive and shrill,  
As they beat on their corselets, valiant still?)

*This Singing World*

A hunger fit for the kings of the sea,  
And a loaf of bread for Dickon and me;

A thirst like that of the Thirsty Sword,  
And a jug of cider on the board;

An idle noon, a bubbling spring,  
The sea in the pine-tops murmuring;

A scrap of gossip at the ferry;  
A comrade neither glum nor merry,

Asking nothing, revealing naught,  
But minting his words from a fund of thought,

A keeper of silence eloquent,  
Needy, yet royally well content,

Of the mettled breed, yet abhorring strife,  
And full of the mellow juice of life,

No fidget and no reformer, just  
A calm observer of ought and must,

A lover of books, but a reader of man,  
No cynic and no charlatan,

Who never defers and never demands,  
But, smiling, takes the world in his hands, –

Seeing it good as when God first saw  
And gave it the weight of his will for law.

And O the joy that is never won,  
But follows and follows the journeying sun,

By marsh and tide, by meadow and stream,  
A will-o'-the-wind, a light-o'-dream,

*Open Roads*

Delusion afar, delight anear,  
From morrow to morrow, from year to year,

A jack-o'-lantern, a fairy fire,  
A dare, a bliss, and a desire!

The racy smell of the forest loam,  
When the stealthy, sad-heart leaves go home;

(O leaves, O leaves, I am one with you,  
Of the mould and the sun and the wind and the dew!)

The broad gold wake of the afternoon;  
The silent fleck of the cold new moon;

The sound of the hollow sea's release  
From stormy tumult to starry peace;

With only another league to wend;  
And two brown arms at the journey's end!

These are the joys of the open road –  
For him who travels without a load.

*Bliss Carman*

*This Singing World*





**The Song of the  
Ungirt Runners \* <sup>1</sup>**

We swing ungirded hips,  
    And lightened are our eyes;  
The rain is on our lips,  
    We do not run for prize.  
We know not whom we trust  
    Nor whitherward we fare,  
But we run because we must  
    Through the great wide air.

The waters of the seas  
    Are troubled as by storm.  
The tempest strips the trees  
    And does not leave them warm.  
Does the tearing tempest pause?  
    Do the tree-tops ask it why?  
So we run without a cause  
    Neath the big bare sky.

The rain is on our lips,  
    We do not run for prize.  
But the storm the water whips  
    And the wave howls to the skies.  
The winds arise and strike it  
    And scatter it like sand,  
And we run because we like it  
    Through the broad bright land.

*Charles Hamilton Sorley*

\* See [Note 7](#).

<sup>1</sup> ungirt: having the belt or restricting garments removed or loosened.

## **The West Wind**

It's a warm wind, the west wind, full of birds' cries;  
I never hear the west wind but tears are in my eyes.  
For it comes from the west lands, the old brown hills,  
And April's in the west wind, and daffodils.

It's a fine land, the west land, for hearts as tired as mine,  
Apple orchards blossom there, and the air's like wine.  
There is cool green grass there, where men may lie at rest,  
And the thrushes are in song there, fluting from the nest.

“Will ye not come home, brother? ye have been long away,  
It's April, and blossom time, and white is the may;  
And bright is the sun, brother, and warm is the rain, –  
Will ye not come home, brother, home to us again?”

“The young corn is green, brother, where the rabbits run,  
It's blue sky, and white clouds, and warm rain and sun.  
It's song to a man's soul, brother, fire to a man's brain,  
To hear the wild bees and see the merry spring again.

“Larks are singing in the west, brother, above the green wheat,  
So will ye not come home, brother, and rest your tired feet?  
I've a balm for bruised hearts, brother, sleep for aching eyes,”  
Says the warm wind, the west wind, full of birds' cries.

It's the white road westwards is the road I must tread  
To the green grass, the cool grass, and rest for heart and head,  
To the violets and the warm hearts and the thrushes' song,  
In the fine land, the west land, the land where I belong.

*John Masefield*

## **To the Winter Wind**

Wind of the winter, drive the ships home,  
From tropic islands  
Whirl the grey cloudrack,  
Spatter the rocks with foam

Blind wind of the night,  
Raging, careering,  
Shriek to me through the keyhole,  
Shout to me down the chimney,  
Whistle and moan through the pinewood out of sight.

Bring Christmas here,  
The log on the hearth,  
The cattle in stall.  
Pile by the housedoor  
The snowdrift, untroubled.  
Put ice on the wall.

*John Gould Fletcher*

## **Wander-Thirst**

Beyond the East the sunrise, beyond the West the sea,  
And East and West the wander-thirst that will not let me be;  
It works in me like madness, dear, to bid me say good-bye;  
For the seas call and the stars call, and oh! the call of the sky.

I know not where the white road runs, nor what the blue hills are,  
But a man can have the Sun for friend, and for his guide a star;  
And there's no end of voyaging when once the voice is heard,  
For the river calls and the road calls, and oh! the call of a bird!

Yonder the long horizon lies, and there by night and day  
The old ships draw to home again, the young ships sail away;  
And come I may, but go I must, and, if men ask you why,  
You may put the blame on the stars and the sun and the  
white road and the sky.

*Gerald Gould*

## **I Want to Go Wandering**

I want to go wandering. Who shall declare  
I will regret if I dare?

To the rich days of age –  
    To some mid-afternoon –  
A wide fenceless prairie,  
    A lonely old tune,  
Ant-hills and sunflowers,  
    And sunset too soon.

Behind the brown mountain  
    The sun will go down;  
I shall climb, I shall climb,  
    To the sumptuous crown;  
To the rocks of the summit,  
    And find some strange things: –  
Some echo of echoes  
    When the thunder-wind sings;  
Old Spanish necklaces,  
    Indian rings,  
Or a feeble old eagle  
    With great, dragging wings.  
He may leave me and soar;  
    But if he shall die,  
I shall bury him deep  
    While the thunder-winds cry.

And there, as the last of my earth-nights go:  
What is the thing I shall know?

With a feather cast off from his wings  
I shall write, be it revel or psalm,  
Or whisper of redwood, or cypress, or palm, –  
The treasure of dream that he brings.

## *Open Roads*

The soul of the eagle will call,  
Whether he lives or he dies: –

The cliff and the prairies call,  
The sage-bush and starlight sing,  
And the songs of my far-away Sangamon call  
From the plume of the bird of the Rockies,  
And midnight's omnipotent wing –  
The last of my earth-nights will ring  
With cries from a far haunted river,  
And all of my wandering,  
    Wandering,  
    Wandering,  
    Wandering. . . .

*Vachel Lindsay*

## **Do You Fear the Wind?**

Do you fear the force of the wind,  
The slash of the rain?  
Go face them and fight them,  
Be savage again.  
Go hungry and cold like the wolf,  
Go wade like the crane:  
The palms of your hands will thicken,  
The skin of your cheeks will tan,  
You'll grow ragged and weary and swarthy,  
    But you'll walk like a man!

*Hamlin Garland*

## **I Hear the Woodlands Calling**

I hear the woodlands calling, and their red is like the blare  
Of trumpets in the air,  
Where rebel Autumn plants her tents and crowns her gypsy hair.

I hear her beauty calling glad, with crimson and with gold,  
As oft it called of old;  
And I must forth and greet her there and clasp her close and hold.

As yesterday, again to-day, my heart will run to her,  
The gypsy wanderer,  
Through scarlet of the berry-pod and purple of the burr.

The vines that vision forth her cheeks shall tell me where she lies,  
Soft gazing at the skies;  
And I will steal upon her dreams and look into her eyes.

The sumach that repeats her lips shall tell me where she smiles,  
Who still my heart beguiles,  
And I will speak her face to face and lounge with her for miles.

A riot and a tangle there, a blur of gold and gray;  
She surely went this way –  
Or, so it seems, the maples cry, the cloudy asters say.

Oh, I must up and strike the trail, that often I have gone,  
At sunset and at dawn,  
Where all the beauty of the world puts all her splendor on.

I hear her bugles on the hills; I see her banners blowing,  
And all her campfires glowing, –  
The campfires of her dreams, – and I – I must be up and going.

*Madison Cawein*

## **The Road to Anywhere**

Across the places deep and dim,  
And places brown and bare,  
It reaches to the planet's rim -  
The Road to Anywhere.

Now east is east, and west is west,  
But north lies in between,  
And he is blest whose feet have prest  
The road that's cool and green.

The road of roads for them that dare  
The lightest whim obey,  
To follow where the moose or bear  
Has brushed his headlong way.

The secrets that these tangles house  
Are step by step revealed,  
While, to the sun, the grass and boughs  
A store of odors yield.

More sweet these odors in the sun  
Than swim in chemists' jars;  
And when the fragrant day is done,  
Night - and a shoal of stars.

Oh, east is east, and west is west,  
But north lies full and fair;  
And blest is he who follows free  
The Road to Anywhere.

*Bert Leston Taylor*

*This Singing World*

## **Afternoon on a Hill**

I will be the gladdest thing  
Under the sun!  
I will touch a hundred flowers  
And not pick one.

I will look at cliffs and clouds  
With quiet eyes,  
Watch the wind bow down the grass,  
And the grass rise.

And when lights begin to show  
Up from the town,  
I will mark which must be mine,  
And then start down!

*Edna St. Vincent Millay*



## **Common Things**



## **The Pasture**

I'm going out to clean the pasture spring;  
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away  
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):  
I sha'n't be gone long. – You come too.

I'm going out to fetch the little calf  
That's standing by the mother. It's so young,  
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.  
I sha'n't be gone long. – *You come too.*

*Robert Frost*

## **Simplicity**

How happy is the little stone  
That rambles in the road alone,  
And doesn't care about careers,  
And exigencies never fears;  
Whose coat of elemental brown  
A passing universe put on;  
And independent as the sun,  
Associates or glows alone,  
Fulfilling absolute decree  
In casual simplicity.

*Emily Dickinson*

## **Pedigree**

The pedigree of honey  
Does not concern the bee;  
A clover, any time, to him  
Is aristocracy.

*Emily Dickinson*

## **Loveliest of Trees**

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now  
Is hung with bloom along the bough,  
And stands about the woodland ride <sup>1</sup>  
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,  
Twenty will not come again,  
And take from seventy springs a score,  
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom  
Fifty springs are little room,  
About the woodlands I will go  
To see the cherry hung with snow.

*A. E. Housman*

<sup>1</sup> Woodland ride: a road cut through a forest or in a wood.

## **The First Dandelion**

Simple and fresh and fair from winter's close emerging,  
As if no artifice of fashion, business, politics, had ever been,  
Forth from its sunny nook of sheltered grass – innocent,  
    golden, calm as the dawn,  
The spring's first dandelion shows its trustful face.

*Walt Whitman*

## **Dandelion**

O Little Soldier with the golden helmet,  
What are you guarding on my lawn?  
You with your green gun  
And your yellow beard,  
Why do you stand so stiff?  
There is only the grass to fight!

*Hilda Conkling*

*(Written at the age of eight)*

## **To the Fringed Gentian**

Thou blossom bright with autumn dew,  
And colored with the heaven's own blue,  
That openest when the quiet light  
Succeeds the keen and frosty night.

Thou comest not when violets lean  
O'er wandering brooks and springs unseen,  
Or columbines, in purple dressed,  
Nod o'er the ground-bird's hidden nest.

Thou waitest late and com'st alone,  
When woods are bare and birds are flown,  
And frosts and shortening days portend  
The aged year is near his end.

Then doth thy sweet and quiet eye  
Look through its fringes to the sky,  
Blue - blue - as if that sky let fall  
A flower from its cerulean wall.

I would that thus, when I shall see  
The hour of death draw near to me,  
Hope, blossoming within my heart,  
May look to heaven as I depart.

*William Cullen Bryant*

## **Daisies**

Over the shoulders and slopes of the dune  
I saw the white daisies go down to the sea,  
A host in the sunshine, an army in June,  
The people God sends us to set our hearts free.

The bobolinks rallied them up from the dell,  
The orioles whistled them out of the wood;  
And all of their singing was, "Earth, it is well!"  
And all of their dancing was, "Life, thou art good!"

*Bliss Carmon*

## **The Hungry Heart**

My heart, being hungry, feeds on food  
The fat of heart despise.  
Beauty where beauty never stood,  
And sweet where no sweet lies  
I gather to my querulous need,  
Having a growing heart to feed.

It may be, when my heart is dull,  
Having attained its girth,  
I shall not find so beautiful  
The meagre shapes of earth,  
Nor linger in the rain to mark  
The smell of tansy through the dark.

*Edna St. Vincent Millay*

<sup>1</sup> This is the original title of the poem, as published in *Vanity Fair*, February 1921. Millay won a Pulitzer Prize in 1923 for *The Harp Weaver and Other Poems* (1922), which contained this poem as "My Heart, Being Hungry." – multiple internet sources

## **To a Snowflake**

What heart could have thought you? –  
Past our devisal  
(O filigree petal!)  
Fashioned so purely,  
Fragilely, surely,  
From what Paradisal  
Imagineless metal,  
Too costly for cost?  
Who hammered you, wrought you,  
From argentine vapor? –

“God was my shaper.  
Passing surmised,  
He hammered, He wrought me,  
From curled silver vapor,  
To lust of his mind: –  
Thou couldst not have thought me!  
So purely, so palely,  
Tinily, surely,  
Mightily, frailly,  
Insculped and embossed,  
With His hammer of wind,  
And His graver of frost.”

*Francis Thompson*

## **Song for a Little House**

I'm glad our house is a little house,  
Not too tall nor too wide:  
I'm glad the hovering butterflies  
Feel free to come inside.

Our little house is a friendly house,  
It is not shy or vain;  
It gossips with the talking trees,  
And makes friends with the rain.

And quick leaves cast a shimmer of green  
Against our whited walls,  
And in the phlox, the courteous bees  
Are paying duty calls.

*Christopher Morley*

## **Prayer for this House**

May nothing evil cross this door,  
And may ill-fortune never pry  
About these windows; may the roar  
And rains go by.

Strengthened by faith, the rafters will  
Withstand the battering of the storm.  
This hearth, though all the world grow chill  
Will keep you warm.

Peace shall walk softly through these rooms,  
Touching your lips with holy wine,  
Till every casual corner blooms  
Into a shrine.

Laughter shall drown the raucous shout  
And, though the sheltering walls are thin,  
May they be strong to keep hate out  
And hold love in.

*Louis Untermeyer*



## **Escape at Bedtime**

The lights from the parlor and kitchen shone out  
Through the blinds and the windows and bars;  
And high overhead and all moving about,  
There were thousands of millions of stars.  
There ne'er were such thousands of leaves on a tree,  
Nor of people in church or the Park,  
As the crowds of the stars that looked down upon me,  
And that glittered and winked in the dark.

The Dog, and the Plough, and the Hunter, and all,  
And the star of the sailor, and Mars,  
These shone in the sky, and the pail by the wall  
Would be half full of water and stars.  
They saw me at last, and they chased me with cries,  
And they soon had me packed into bed;  
But the glory kept shining and bright in my eyes,  
And the stars going round in my head.

*Robert Louis Stevenson*

## **The Day Is Done \***

The day is done, and the darkness  
Falls from the wings of Night,  
As a feather is wafted downward  
From an eagle in his flight.

I see the lights of the village  
Gleam through the rain and the mist,  
And a feeling of sadness comes o'er me  
That my soul cannot resist:

A feeling of sadness and longing,  
That is not akin to pain,  
And resembles sorrow only  
As the mist resembles the rain.

\* See [Note 8](#).

*This Singing World*

Come, read to me some poem,  
Some simple and heartfelt lay,  
That shall soothe this restless feeling,  
And banish the thoughts of day.

Not from the grand old masters,  
Not from the bards sublime,  
Whose distant footsteps echo  
Through the corridors of Time.

For, like strains of martial music  
Their mighty thoughts suggest  
Life's endless toil and endeavor;  
And to-night I long for rest.

Read from some humbler poet,  
Whose songs gushed from his heart,  
As showers from the clouds of summer,  
Or tears from the eyelids start;

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

Such songs have power to quiet  
The restless pulse of care,  
And come like a benediction  
That follows after prayer.

Then read from the treasured volume  
The poem of thy choice,  
And lend to the rhyme of the poet  
The beauty of thy voice.

And the night shall be filled with music,  
And the cares that infest the day,  
Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,  
And as silently seal away.

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

## **The Street Musician**

He plays for all the little side-streets, while  
    A worn, half-wistful smile  
Kindles his face when people passing here  
    Stop and draw near.

So slight a note . . . and yet the thundering town  
    Has failed to roar it down;  
Under the huge despairs, the shattering blows,  
    It lifts and grows.

Incongruous, unbidden and absurd;  
    And yet the street is stirred.  
As men behold, for all its dark disguise,  
    The Dream arise!

*Anonymous*

## **A Wasted Day**

I spoiled the day;  
    Hotly, in haste,  
All the calm hours  
    I gashed and defaced.

Let me forget,  
    Let me embark  
- Sleep for my boat -  
    And sail through the dark.

Till a new day  
    Heaven shall send,  
Whole as an apple,  
    Kind as a friend.

*Frances Cornford*

## **The Commonplace**

The commonplace I sing;  
How cheap is health! how cheap nobility!  
The open air I sing, freedom, toleration,  
(Take here the mainest lesson – less from books – less from  
the schools,)  
The common day and night – the common earth and waters,  
Your farm – your work, trade, occupation,  
The democratic wisdom underneath, like solid ground for all.

*Walt Whitman*



# Places



## **The House on the Hill**

They are all gone away,  
The House is shut and still,  
There is nothing more to say.

Through broken walls and gray  
The winds blow bleak and shrill:  
They are all gone away.

Nor is there one to-day  
To speak them good or ill:  
There is nothing more to say.

Why is it then we stray  
Around that sunken sill?  
They are all gone away.

And our poor fancy-play  
For them is wasted skill:  
There is nothing more to say.

There is ruin and decay  
In the House on the Hill:  
They are all gone away,  
There is nothing more to say.

*Edwin Arlington Robinson*

## **The Lake Isle of Innisfree**

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;  
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey bee,  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,  
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;  
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,  
And evening full of the linnet's wings. <sup>1</sup>

I will arise and go now, for always night and day  
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;  
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements gray,  
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

*William Butler Yeats*

<sup>1</sup> A linnet is a mainly brown and gray finch with a reddish breast and forehead, found across Europe and neighboring lands.

## **The Waves of Breffny**

The grand road from the mountain goes shining to the sea,  
And there is traffic on it and many a horse and cart,  
But the little roads of Cloonagh are dearer far to me  
And the little roads of Cloonagh go rambling through my heart.

A great storm from the ocean goes shouting o'er the hill,  
And there is glory in it; and terror on the wind:  
But the haunted air of twilight is very strange and still,  
And the little winds of twilight are dearer to my mind.

The great waves of the Atlantic sweep storming on their way,  
Shining green and silver with the hidden herring shoal;  
But the little waves of Breffny have drenched my heart in spray,  
And the little waves of Breffny go stumbling through my soul.

*Eva Gore-Booth*



## **Tewksbury Road**

It is good to be out on the road, and going one knows  
not where,  
Going through meadow and village, one knows not  
whither nor why;  
Through the grey light drift of the dust, in the keen cool  
rush of the air,  
Under the flying white clouds, and the broad blue lift  
of the sky;

And to halt at the chattering brook, in the tall green  
fern at the brink  
Where the harebell grows, and the gorse, and the  
foxgloves purple and white;  
Where the shy-eyed delicate deer troop down to the  
pools to drink,  
When the stars are mellow and large at the coming  
on of the night.

O! to feel the warmth of the rain, and the homely smell  
of the earth,  
Is a tune for the blood to jig to, a joy past power of  
words;  
And the blessed green comely meadows seem all a-  
ripple with mirth  
At the lilt of the shifting feet, and the dear wild cry  
of the birds.

*John Masefield*

## **Interior**

The little moths are creeping  
    Across the cottage pane;  
On the floor the chickens gather,  
    And they make talk and complain.

And she sits by the fire  
    Who has reared so many men;  
Her voice is low like the chickens'  
    With the things she says again.

“The sons that come back do be restless,  
    They search for the thing to say;  
Then they take thought like the swallows,  
    And the morrow brings them away.

“In the old, old days, upon Innish,  
    The fields were lucky and bright,  
And if you lay down you'd be covered  
    By the grass of one soft night.”

She speaks and the chickens gather,  
    And they make talk and complain,  
While the little moths are creeping  
    Across the cottage pane.

*Padraic Colum*

## **Keepsake Mill**

Over the borders, a sin without pardon,  
    Breaking the branches and crawling below,  
Out through the breach in the wall of the garden,  
    Down by the banks of the river, we go.

Here is the mill with the humming of thunder,  
    Here is the weir with the wonder of foam,  
Here is the sluice with the race running under –  
    Marvellous places, though handy to home!

Sounds of the village grow stiller and stiller,  
    Stiller the note of the birds on the hill;  
Dusty and dim are the eyes of the miller,  
    Deaf are his ears with the moil <sup>1</sup> of the mill.

Years may go by, and the wheel in the river  
    Wheel as it wheels for us, children, to-day,  
Wheel and keep roaring and foaming for ever  
    Long after all of the boys are away.

Home from the Indies and home from the ocean,  
    Heroes and soldiers we all shall come home;  
Still we shall find the old mill wheel in motion,  
    Turning and churning that river to foam.

You with the bean that I gave when we quarrelled,  
    I with your marble of Saturday last,  
Honoured and old and all gaily apparelled,  
    Here we shall meet and remember the past.

*Robert Louis Stevenson*

<sup>1</sup> Moil: noisy labor, drudgery.

*This Singing World*

## **Full Moon**

*(Santa Barbara)*

I listened, there was not a sound to hear  
In the great rain of moonlight pouring down,  
The eucalyptus trees were carved in silver,  
And a light mist of silver lulled the town.

I saw far off the gray Pacific bearing  
A broad white disk of flame,  
And on the garden-walk a snail beside me  
Tracing in crystal the slow way he came.

*Sara Teasdale*

## **Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening**

Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though;  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.

*Robert Frost*

## **A Brook in the City**

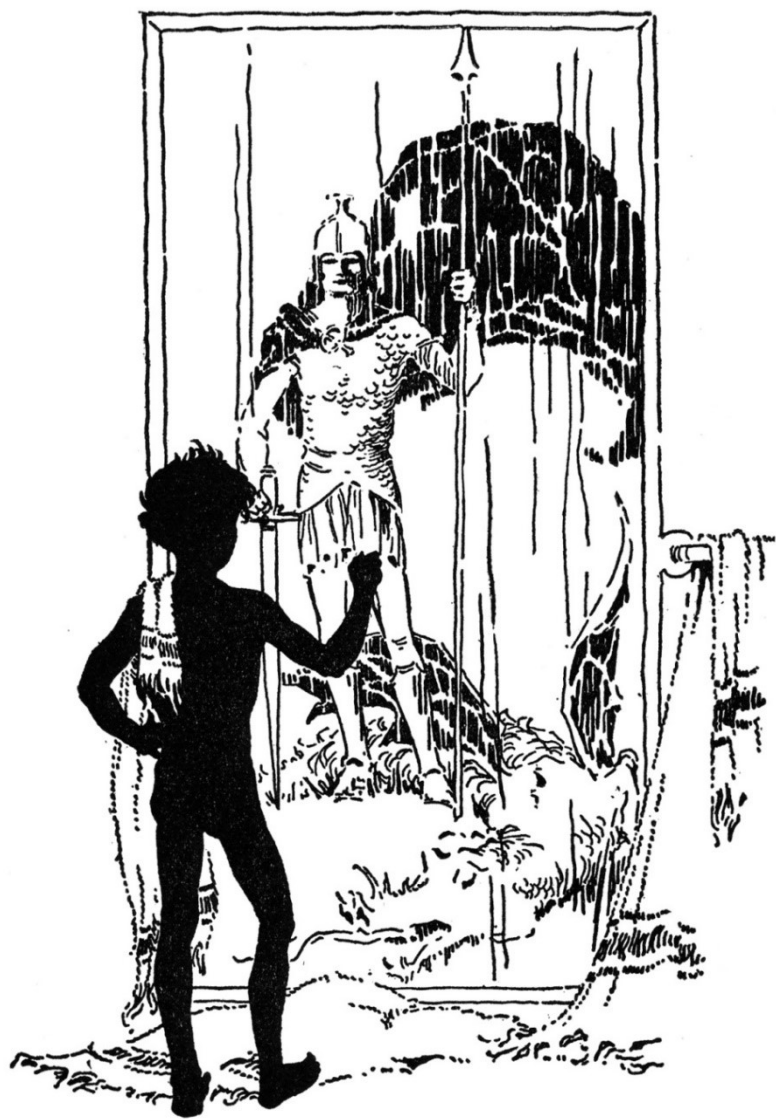
The farm house lingers, though averse to square  
With the new city street it has to wear  
A number in. But what about the brook  
That held the house as in an elbow-crook?  
I ask as one who knew the brook, its strength  
And impulse, having dipped a finger length  
And made it leap my knuckle, having tossed  
A flower to try its currents where they crossed.  
The meadow grass could be cemented down  
From growing under pavements of a town;  
The apple trees be sent to hearth-stone flame.  
Is water wood to serve a brook the same?  
How else dispose of an immortal force  
No longer needed? Staunch it at its source  
With cinder loads dumped down? The brook was thrown  
Deep in a sewer dungeon under stone  
In fetid darkness still to live and run –  
And all for nothing it had ever done  
Except forget to go in fear perhaps.  
No one would know except for ancient maps  
That such a brook ran water. But I wonder  
If from its being kept forever under,  
These thoughts may not have risen that so keep  
This new-built city from both work and sleep.

*Robert Frost*

*This Singing World*



## **Children and Other People**



TEN YEARS OLD



## **Ten Years Old**

A city child, rooms are to him no mere  
Places to live in. Each one has a clear  
Color and character of its own. His toys  
And tumbled books made the small bed-room seem  
The place to build a practicable dream.  
He likes the brilliant parlor and enjoys  
Nothing so much as bringing other boys  
To romp among the delicate furniture,  
And brush within an inch of ivories, lamps,  
And other things not held by iron clamps,  
Like Chinese vases, neatly insecure.  
His father's library with its heavy tone  
Seldom detains him, for he has his own.  
He views the kitchen with a hungry eye  
And loafs about it, nibbling on the stray  
Dry crumbs of gossip that may drop his way  
Standing so innocently inattentive. Sly  
And with a squirrel's curiosity,  
Careless of barred or sacred corners, he  
Hunts back of shelves until he finds the key  
With which to open bureau-drawers and pry  
Into forbidden desks and cupboards – there  
Are scores of mysteries forbidden, new,  
And so well hidden, they need looking through.  
But most of all he likes the bath-room where  
The panel mirror shows his four feet two,  
Where, with a towel or bath-robe, he can strike  
A hundred attitudes not only like  
His printed heroes but the gods themselves.

*This Singing World*

Stripping himself he dreams and dances there,  
The pink embodiment of Peter Pan.  
Or changing to an older superman  
He turns to Siegfried brandishing his sword  
And Jason snatching at the Golden Fleece.  
The figures crowd around him and increase:  
Now he is David battling for the Lord,  
Mixing his battle-cries with psalms of peace.  
Now he is Mowgli, at the cobra's hoard  
With black Bagheera. Swiftly he has drawn  
Excalibur from its invisible sheath.  
He is Ulysses on his native heath,  
Tristram, Tom Sawyer and Bellerophon;  
Cadmus about to sow the dragon's teeth;  
The shining Parsifal who knew no sin;  
Sir Launcelot and Huckleberry Finn;  
George Washington and Captain Hook and Thor;  
Hansel awaking in the magic wood;  
Frank Merriwell, John Silver, Robin Hood –  
He is all these and half a hundred more.  
He scowls and strides, he utters harsh commands;  
Great armies follow him to new-born lands,  
Battling for treasures lost or glories gone.  
None can withstand the thunder of his frown;  
His eye is terrible; the walls go down.  
Cries of the conquered mingle with the cheers.  
While through the clash and battle-smoke he hears –  
*“Richard! Get through! And put your stockings on!”*

*Louis Untermeyer*

## **A Baby's Feet**

A baby's feet, like sea-shells pink,  
    Might tempt, should heaven see meet,  
An angel's lips to kiss, we think,  
    A baby's feet.

Like rose-hued sea-flowers toward the heat  
    They stretch and spread and wink  
Their ten soft buds that part and meet.

No flower-bells that expand and shrink  
    Gleam half so heavenly sweet,  
As shine on life's untrodden brink  
    A baby's feet.

*A. C. Swinburne*

## **“One, Two, Three!”**

It was an old, old, old, old lady,  
    And a boy that was half-past three;  
And the way that they played together  
    Was beautiful to see.

She couldn't go romping and jumping,  
    And the boy no more could he;  
For he was a thin little fellow,  
    With a thin little twisted knee.

They sat in the yellow sunlight,  
    Out under the maple tree;  
And the game they played I'll tell you,  
    Just as it was told to me.

*This Singing World*

It was Hide-and-Go-Seek they were playing,  
    Though you'd never have known it to be –  
With an old, old, old, old lady,  
    And a boy with a twisted knee.

The boy would bend his face down  
    On his little sound right knee,  
And he guessed where she was hiding  
    In guesses One, Two, Three.

“You are in the china closet!”  
    He would laugh and cry with glee –  
It wasn't the china closet,  
    But he still had Two and Three.

“You are up in papa's big bedroom,  
    In the chest with the queer old key!”  
And she said: “You are *warm* and, *warmer*;  
    But you are not quite right,” said she.

“It can't be the little cupboard  
    Where mamma's things used to be –  
So it must be in the little clothes-press, gran'ma,”  
    And he found her with his Three.

Then she covered her face with her fingers,  
    That were wrinkled and white and wee,  
And she guessed where the boy was hiding,  
    With a One and a Two and a Three.

And they never had stirred from their places  
    Right under the maple tree –  
This old, old, old, old lady  
    And the boy with the lame little knee –  
This dear, dear, dear, dear old lady,  
    And the boy who was half-past three.

*Henry Cuyler Bunner*

## **Bible Stories**

The room was low and small and kind;  
And in its cupboard old,  
The shells were set out to my mind;  
The cups I loved with rims of gold.

Then, with that good gift which she had,  
My mother showed at will,  
David, the ruddy Syrian lad,  
With his few sheep upon a hill;

A shop down a rude country street,  
The chips strewn on the floor,  
And faintly keen across the heat;  
The simple kinsfolk at the door;

Mary amid the homely din,  
As slim as violet;  
The little Jesus just within,  
About His father's business set.

My mother rose, and then I knew  
As she stood smiling there,  
Her gown was of that gentle blue  
Which she had made the Virgin wear.

How fair the very chairs were grown!  
The gilt rose on each back  
Into a Syrian rose was blown,  
And not our humble gold and black.

That week long, in our acres old,  
Lad David did I see;  
From out our cups with rims of gold,  
The little Jesus supped with me.

*Lizette Woodward Reese*

## **The Children's Hour**

Between the dark and the daylight,  
When the night is beginning to lower,  
Comes a pause in the day's occupations,  
That is known as the Children's Hour.

I hear in the chamber above me  
The patter of little feet,  
The sound of a door that is opened,  
And voices soft and sweet.

From my study I see in the lamplight,  
Descending the broad hall-stair,  
Grave Alice, and laughing Allegra,  
And Edith with golden hair.

A whisper, and then a silence:  
Yet I know by their very eyes  
They are plotting and planning together  
To take me by surprise.

A sudden rush from the stairway,  
A sudden raid from the hall!  
By three doors left unguarded  
They enter my castle wall!

They climb up into my turret  
O'er the arms and back of my chair;  
If I try to escape, they surround me;  
They seem to be everywhere.

They almost devour me with kisses,  
Their arms about me entwine,  
Till I think of the Bishop of Bingen  
In his Mouse-Tower on the Rhine!

\* See Note 9.

*Children and Other People*

Do you think, O blue-eyed banditti,  
Because you have scaled the wall,  
Such an old mustache as I am  
Is not a match for you all!

I have you fast in my fortress,  
And will not let you depart,  
But put you down in the dungeon  
In the round-tower of my heart.

And there will I keep you forever,  
Yes, forever and a day,  
Till the walls shall crumble to ruin,  
And moulder in dust away.

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

## **A Child's Prayer**

*(Ex Ore Infantium)*

Little Jesus, wast Thou shy  
Once, and just so small as I?  
And what did it feel like to be  
Out of Heaven, and just like me?  
Didst Thou sometimes think of *there*,  
And ask where all the angels were?  
I should think that I would cry  
For my house all made of sky;  
I would look about the air,  
And wonder where my angels were;  
And at waking 'twould distress me –  
Not an angel there to dress me!

*This Singing World*

Hadst Thou ever any toys,  
Like us little girls and boys?  
And didst Thou play in Heaven with all  
The angels, that were not too tall,  
With stars for marbles? Did the things  
Play *Can you see me?* through their wings?

Didst Thou kneel at night to pray,  
And didst Thou join Thy hands, this way?  
And did they tire, sometimes, being young?  
And make the prayer seem very long?  
And dost Thou like it best, that we,  
Should join our hands to pray to Thee?  
(I used to think, before I knew,  
the prayer not said unless we do.)  
And did Thy Mother at the night  
Kiss Thee, and fold the clothes in right?  
And didst Thou feel quite good in bed,  
Kissed, and sweet, and Thy prayers said?

Thou canst not have forgotten all  
That it feels like to be small:  
And Thou know'st I cannot pray  
To Thee in my father's way –  
When Thou wast so little, say  
Could'st Thou talk Thy Father's way? –  
So, a little Child, come down  
And hear a child's tongue like Thy own;  
Take me by the hand and walk,  
And listen to my baby-talk.  
To Thy Father show my prayer  
(He will look, Thou art so fair),  
And say: "O Father, I, Thy Son,  
Bring the prayer of a little one."

And He will smile, that children's tongue  
Has not changed since Thou wast young!

*Francis Thompson*



## **The Janitor's Boy \***

Oh, I'm in love with the janitor's boy,  
And the janitor's boy loves me;  
He's going to hunt for a desert isle  
In our geography.

A desert isle with spicy trees  
Somewhere near Sheepshead Bay;  
A right nice place, just fit for two,  
Where we can live alway.

Oh, I'm in love with the janitor's boy,  
He's as busy as he can be;  
And down in the cellar he's making a raft  
Out of an old settee.

He'll carry me off, I know that he will,  
For his hair is exceedingly red,  
And the only thing that occurs to me  
Is to dutifully shiver in bed.

The day that we sail, I shall leave this brief note,  
For my parents I hate to annoy:  
"I have flown away to an isle in the bay  
With the janitor's red-haired boy."

*Nathalia Crane*

\* See [Note 10](#).

## **The Day of the Circus Horse**

It was a fiery circus horse  
That ramped and stamped and neighed,  
Till every creature in its course  
Fled, frightened and dismayed.  
The chickens on the roadway's edge  
Arose and flapped their wings,  
And making for the sheltering hedge  
Flew off like crazy things.

Nor iron gates nor fences barred  
That mettled steed's career.  
It galloped right across our yard  
And filled us all with fear;  
And when it tossed its head and ran  
Straight through the pantry door,  
Cook almost dropped her frying-pan  
Upon the kitchen floor!

It neighed and pranced and wheeled about  
And scampered off, but then  
We scarcely saw the creature out  
When it was in again.  
And so throughout the livelong day  
Through house and yard and street,  
That charger held its fearsome way  
And only stopped to eat.

But when, at dusk, a little lame,  
It slowly climbed the stairs,  
Behold! a gentle lady came  
And made it say its prayers.  
Now, what a wondrous change you see!  
'Sh! Come and take a peep –  
Here lies, as tame as tame can be,  
A little boy, asleep!

## **The Land of Story-Books**

At evening when the lamp is lit,  
Around the fire my parents sit;  
They sit at home and talk and sing,  
And do not play at anything.

Now, with my little gun, I crawl  
All in the dark along the wall,  
And follow round the forest track  
Away behind the sofa back.

There, in the night, where none can spy,  
All in my hunter's camp I lie,  
And play at books that I have read  
Till it is time to go to bed.

These are the hills, these are the woods,  
These are my starry solitudes;  
And there the river by whose brink  
The roaring lions come to drink.

I see the others far away  
As if in firelit camp they lay,  
And I, like to an Indian scout,  
Around their party prowled about.

So, when my nurse comes in for me,  
Home I return across the sea,  
And go to bed with backward looks  
At my dear land of story-books.

*Robert Louis Stevenson*

## **A Recollection**

My father's friend came once to tea.  
He laughed and talked. He spoke to me.  
But in another week they said  
That friendly pink-faced man was dead.

"How sad . . ." they said, "the best of men."  
So said I too, "How sad" ; but then  
Deep in my heart I thought with pride,  
"I know a person who has died!"

*Frances Cornford*

## **What is the Grass?**

A child said What is the grass? fetching it to me with full hands;  
How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more  
than he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green  
stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,  
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropped,  
Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we may  
see and remark and say *Whose?*

*Walt Whitman*

## **Helga**

The wishes on this child's mouth  
Came like snow on marsh cranberries;  
The tamarack kept something for her;  
The wind is ready to help her shoes.  
The north has loved her; she will be  
A grandmother feeding geese on frosty  
Mornings; she will understand  
Early snow on the cranberries  
Better and better then.

*Carl Sandburg*

## **For Arvia**

*(On Her Fifth Birthday)*

You Eyes, you large and all-inquiring Eyes,  
That look so dubiously into me,  
And are not satisfied with what you see,  
Tell me the worst and let us have no lies;  
Tell me the secret of your scrutinies,  
And of myself. Am I a Mystery?  
Am I a Boojum – or just Company?  
What do you say? What do you think, You Eyes?

You say not; but you think, beyond a doubt;  
And you have the whole world to think about,  
With very little time for little things.  
So let it be; and let it all be fair –  
For you, and for the rest who cannot share  
Your gold of unrevealed awakenings.

*Edwin Arlington Robinson*

## **Tired Tim**

Poor tired Tim! It's sad for him.  
He lags the long bright morning through,  
Ever so tired of nothing to do;  
He moons and mopes the livelong day,  
Nothing to think about, nothing to say;  
Up to bed with his candle to creep,  
Too tired to yawn, too tired to sleep:  
Poor tired Tim! It's sad for him.

*Walter de la Mare*

## **Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore**

Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore –  
No doubt you have heard the name before –  
Was a boy who never would shut a door;

The wind might whistle, the wind might roar,  
And teeth be aching and throats be sore,  
But still he never would shut the door.

His father would beg, his mother implore,  
“Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore,  
We really *do* wish you would shut the door!”

Their hands they wrung, their hair they tore;  
But Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore  
Was deaf as the buoy out at the Nore.

When he walked forth the folks would roar,  
“Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore  
Why don’t you think to shut the door?”

They rigged out a Shutter with sail and oar,  
And threatened to pack off Gustavus Gore  
On a voyage of penance to Singapore.

But he begged for mercy, and said, “No more!  
Pray do not send me to Singapore  
On a Shutter, and then I will shut the door!”

“You will?” said his parents; “then keep on shore!  
But mind you do! For the plague is sore  
Of a fellow that never will shut the door,  
Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore!”

*William Brighty Rands*

## **To Dick, on His Sixth Birthday**

Tho' I am very old and wise,  
And you are neither wise nor old,  
When I look far into your eyes,  
I know things I was never told:  
I know how flame must strain and fret  
Prisoned in a mortal net;  
How joy with over-eager wings,  
Bruises the small heart where he sings;  
How too much life, like too much gold,  
Is sometimes very hard to hold. . . .  
All that is talking – but I know  
This much is true, six years ago  
An angel living near the moon  
Walked thru the sky and sang a tune  
Plucking stars to make his crown –  
And suddenly two stars fell down,  
Two falling arrows made of light.  
Six years ago this very night  
I saw them fall and wondered why  
The angel dropped them from the sky –  
But when I saw your eyes I knew  
The angel sent the stars to you.

*Sara Teasdale*





## **Seumas Beg**

A man was sitting underneath a tree  
Outside the village, and he asked me what  
Name was upon this place, and said that he  
Was never here before. He told a lot  
Of stories to me too. His nose was flat.  
I asked him how it happened, and he said  
The first mate of the Mary Ann done that  
With a marlin-spike one day, but he was dead,  
And jolly good job too; and he'd have gone  
A long way to have killed him, and he had  
A gold ring in one ear; the other one  
“Was bit off by a crocodile, bedad.”  
That's what he said. He taught me how to chew.  
He was a real nice man. He liked me, too.

*James Stephens*

## **Miss T.**

It's a very odd thing –  
As odd as can be –  
That whatever Miss T. eats  
Turns into Miss T.;  
Porridge and apples,  
Mince, muffins and mutton,  
Jam, junket, jumbles –  
Not a rap, not a button  
It matters; the moment  
They're out of her plate,  
Though shared by Miss Butcher  
And sour Mr. Bate;  
Tiny and cheerful,  
And neat as can be,  
Whatever Miss T. eats  
Turns into Miss T.

*Walter de la Mare*

## **Mr. Wells**

On Sunday morning, then he comes  
    To church, and everybody smells  
The blacking and the toilet soap  
    And camphor balls from Mr. Wells.

He wears his whiskers in a bunch,  
    And wears his glasses on his head.  
I mustn't call him Old Man Wells –  
    No matter – that's what Father said.

And when the little blacking smells  
    And camphor balls and soap begin,  
I do not have to look to know  
    That Mr. Wells is coming in.

*Elizabeth Madox Roberts*

## **The Watcher**

She always leaned to watch for us,  
    Anxious if we were late,  
In winter by the window,  
    In summer by the gate;  
And though we mocked her tenderly,  
    Who had such foolish care,  
The long way home would seem more safe  
    Because she waited there.

Her thoughts were all so full of us,  
    She never could forget!  
And so I think that where she is  
    She must be watching yet,

Waiting till we come home to her,  
    Anxious if we are late –  
Watching from Heaven's window,  
    Leaning from Heaven's gate.

*Margaret Widdemer*

## **Bill Peters**

Bill Peters was a hustler  
From Independence town;  
He warn't a college scholar  
Nor man of great renown,  
But Bill had a way o' doin' things  
An' doin' 'em up brown.

Bill druv the stage from Independence  
Up to the Smokey Hill;  
An' everybody knowed him thar  
As Independence Bill -  
Thar warn't no feller on the route  
That druv with half the skill.

Bill druv four pair of horses,  
Same as you'd drive a team,  
An' you'd think you was a-travelin'  
On a railroad druv by steam;  
An' he'd git thar on time, you bet,  
Or Bill 'ud bust a seam.

He carried mail an' passengers,  
An' he started on the dot,  
An' them teams o' his'n, so they say,  
Was never known to trot;  
But they went it in a gallop  
An' kept their axles hot.

When Bill's stage 'ud bust a tire,  
Or something 'ud break down,  
He'd hustle round an' patch her up  
An' start off with a bound;  
An' the wheels o' that old shack o' his  
Scarce ever touched the ground.

*This Singing World*

An' Bill didn't 'low no foolin',  
An' when Injuns hove in sight,  
An' bullets rattled at the stage,  
He druv with all his might.  
He'd holler, "Fellers, give 'em hell!  
I ain't got time to fight."

Then the way them wheels 'ud rattle,  
An' the way the dust 'ud fly,  
You'd think a million cattle  
Had stampeded an' gone by.  
But the mail 'ud get thar just the same,  
If the horses had to die!

He druv the stage for many a year  
Along the Smokey Hill,  
An' a pile o' wild Comanches  
Did Bill Peters have to kill –  
An' I reckon if he had got luck  
He'd be a-drivin' still.

But he chanced one day to run agin  
A bullet made o' lead,  
Which was harder than he bargained for  
An' now poor Bill is dead;  
An' when they brung his body home  
A barrel o' tears was shed.

*American Cowboy Ballad*  
(Collected by John A. Lomax)

## **Father William**

“You are old, Father William,” the young man said,

“And your hair has become very white;

And yet you incessantly stand on your head –

Do you think, at your age, it is right?”

“In my youth,” Father William replied to his son,

“I feared it might injure the brain;

But now that I’m perfectly sure I have none,

Why, I do it again and again.”

“You are old,” said the youth, “as I mentioned before,

And have grown most uncommonly fat;

Yet you turned a back-somersault in at the door –

Pray, what is the reason for that?”

“In my youth,” said the sage, as he shook his gray locks,

“I kept all my limbs very supple

By the use of this ointment – one shilling the box –

Allow me to sell you a couple.”

“You are old,” said the youth, “and your jaws are too weak

For anything tougher than suet;

Yet you finished the goose, with the bones and the beak;

Pray, how did you manage to do it?”

“In my youth,” said his father, “I took to the law,

And argued each case with my wife;

And the muscular strength which it gave to my jaw,

Has lasted the rest of my life.”

“You are old,” said the youth, “one would hardly suppose

That your eye was as steady as ever;

Yet you balanced an eel on the end of your nose –

What made you so awfully clever? “

“I have answered three questions and that is enough,”

Said his father; “don’t give yourself airs!

Do you think I can listen all day to such stuff?

Be off, or I’ll kick you downstairs!”

*Lewis Carroll*



THE SHEPHERDESS

## **The Shepherdess**

She walks – the lady of my delight –  
A shepherdess of sheep.  
Her flocks are thoughts. She keeps them white;  
She guards them from the steep;  
She feeds them on the fragrant height,  
And folds them in for sleep.

She roams maternal hills and bright,  
Dark valleys safe and deep.  
Into that tender breast at night  
The chastest stars may peep.  
She walks – the lady of my delight –  
A shepherdess of sheep.

She holds her little thoughts in sight,  
Though gay they run and leap.  
She is so circumspect and right;  
She has her soul to keep.  
She walks – the lady of my delight –  
A shepherdess of sheep.

*Alice Meynell*

## **The Runner**

On a flat road runs the well-train'd runner,  
He is lean and sinewy with muscular legs,  
He is thinly clothed, he leans forward as he runs,  
With lightly closed fists and arms partially rais'd.

*Walt Whitman*

## **Leetla Giuseppina**

Joe Baratta's Giuseppina

She's so cute as she can be;

Justa com' here from Messina,

Weeth da resta family.

Joe had money in da banka –

He been savin' for a year –

An' he breeng hees wife, Bianca,

An' da three small children here.

First ees baby, Catarina

Nexta Paolo (w'at you call

Een da Inglaice langwadge "Paul"),

An' da smartest wan of all – Giuseppina!

Giuseppina justa seven,

But so smart as she can be;

Wida-wake at night-time even,

Dere's so mooch dat's strange to see.

W'at you theenk ees most surprise her?

No; ees not da buildin's tall;

Eef, my frand, you would be wisa

You mus' theenk of som'theeng small.

Eet's an ant! W'en first she seena

Wan ot dem upon da ground,

How she laughed an' danced around:

"O! 'Formica' he has found Giuseppina!

"O!" she cried to heem, "Formica"

(Dat's Italian name for heem),

"How you getta here so queecka?

For I know you no can sweem;

An' you was not on da sheepa,

For I deed not see you dere.

How you evva mak' da treepa?

Only birds can fly een air.

How you gat here from Messina?

O! at las' I ondrastand!

You have dugga through da land

Jus' to find your leetla frand, Giuseppina!"



## **The Young Mystic**

We sat together close and warm,  
My little tired boy and I –  
Watching across the evening sky  
The coming of the storm.

No rumblings rose, no thunders crashed,  
The west-wind scarcely sang aloud;  
But from a huge and solid cloud  
The summer lightnings flashed.

And then he whispered, “Father, watch;  
I think God’s going to light His moon –”  
“And when, my boy” . . . “Oh, very soon.  
I saw Him strike a match!”

*Louis Untermeyer*

## **The Old Lady**

The old, old lady  
that nobody knows  
sits in the garden  
shelter and sews.

Save for her restless  
fingers she  
is cold and still  
as ivory.

The chestnut-blossom  
blown on her dress  
seems only a sculptor’s  
cleverness.

*Humbert Wolfe*

## **The Last Leaf \***

I saw him once before,  
As he passed by the door,  
    And again  
The pavement stones resound,  
As he totters o'er the ground  
    With his cane.

They say that in his prime,  
Ere the pruning-knife of Time  
    Cut him down,  
Not a better man was found  
By the Crier on his round  
    Through the town.

But now he walks the streets,  
And he looks at all he meets  
    Sad and wan,  
And he shakes his feeble head,  
That it seems as if he said,  
    “They are gone.”

The mossy marbles rest  
On the lips that he has prest  
    In their bloom,  
And the names he loved to hear  
Have been carved for many a year  
    On the tomb.

My grandmamma has said –  
Poor old lady, she is dead  
    Long ago –  
That he had a Roman nose,  
And his cheek was like a rose  
    In the snow.

\* See [Note 11](#).

*Children and Other People*

But now his nose is thin,  
And it rests upon his chin  
    Like a staff,  
And a crook is in his back,  
And a melancholy crack  
    In his laugh.

I know it is a sin  
For me to sit and grin  
    At him here;  
But the old three-cornered hat,  
And the breeches, and all that,  
    Are so queer!

And if I should live to be  
The last leaf upon the tree  
    In the spring,  
Let them smile, as I do now,  
At the old forsaken bough  
    Where I cling.

*Oliver Wendell Holmes*

## **Portrait by a Neighbor**

Before she has her floor swept  
Or her dishes done,  
Any day you'll find her  
A-sunning in the sun!

It's long after midnight  
Her key's in the lock,  
And you never see her chimney smoke  
Till past ten o'clock.

She digs in her garden  
With a shovel and a spoon,  
She weeds her lazy lettuce  
By the light of the moon,

She walks up the walk  
Like a woman in a dream,  
She forgets she borrowed butter  
And pays you back cream!

Her lawn looks like a meadow,  
And if she mows the place  
She leaves the clover standing  
And the Queen Anne's lace!

*Edna St. Vincent Millay*

## In Praise of Johnny Appleseed \*

(Lived 1775 - 1847)

### I. OVER THE APPALACHIAN BARRICADE

In the days of President Washington,  
The glory of the nations,  
Dust and ashes,  
Snow and sleet,  
And hay and oats and wheat,  
Blew west,  
Crossed the Appalachians,  
Found the glades of rotting leaves, the soft deer-pastures,  
The farms of the far-off future  
In the forest.  
Colts jumped the fence,  
Snorting, ramping, snapping, sniffing,  
With gastronomic calculations,  
Crossed the Appalachians,  
The east walls of our citadel,  
And turned to gold-horned unicorns,  
Feasting in the dim farms of the forest.  
Stripedest, kickingest kittens escaped,  
Caterwauling “Yankee Doodle Dandy,”  
Renounced their poor relations,  
Crossed the Appalachians,  
And turned to tiny tigers  
In the humorous forest.  
Chickens escaped  
From farmyard congregations  
Crossed the Appalachians.  
And turned to amber trumpets  
On the ramparts of our Hoosiers’ nest <sup>1</sup> and citadel,  
Millennial heralds  
Of the foggy, mazy forest.

*To be read like old  
leaves on the elm  
tree of Time.  
Sifting soft winds  
with sentence and  
rhyme.*

\* See [Note 12](#).

<sup>1</sup> “Hoosier’s Nest” is a famous poem written in 1830 by John Finley of Richmond, Indiana.

*This Singing World*

The smallest, blindest puppies toddled west  
While their eyes were coming open,  
And, with misty observations,  
Crossed the Appalachians,  
Barked, barked, barked  
At the glow-worms and the marsh lights and the lightning-bugs,  
And turned to ravening wolves  
Of the forest.  
Crazy parrots and canaries flew west,  
Drunk on May-time revelations,  
Crossed the Appalachians,  
And turned to delirious, flower-dressed fairies  
Of the lazy forest.  
Haughtiest swans and peacocks swept west,  
And, despite soft derivations,  
Crossed the Appalachians,  
And turned to blazing warrior souls  
Of the forest,  
Singing the ways  
Of the Ancient of Days.  
And the “Old Continentals <sup>2</sup>  
In their ragged regimentals,”  
With bard’s imaginations,  
Crossed the Appalachians.  
And  
A boy  
Blew west  
And with prayers and incantations,  
And with “Yankee Doodle Dandy,”  
Crossed the Appalachians,  
And was “young John Chapman,”  
Then  
“Johnny Appleseed, Johnny Appleseed,”  
Chief of the fastnesses, dappled and vast,  
In a pack on his back,  
In a deer-hide sack,  
The beautiful orchards of the past,  
The ghosts of all the forests and the groves –

<sup>2</sup> Continentals: soldiers of the American revolutionary army.

*Children and Other People*

In that pack on his back,  
In that talisman sack,  
To-morrow's peaches, pears and cherries,  
To-morrow's grapes and red raspberries,  
Seeds and tree souls, precious things,  
Feathered with microscopic wings,  
All the outdoors the child heart knows,  
And the apple, green, red, and white,  
Sun of his day and his night –  
The apple allied to the thorn,  
Child of the rose.  
Porches untrod of forest houses  
All before him, all day long,  
“Yankee Doodle” his marching song;  
And the evening breeze  
Joined his psalms of praise  
As he sang the ways  
Of the Ancient of Days.  
Leaving behind august Virginia,  
Proud Massachusetts, and proud Maine,  
Planting the trees that would march and train  
On, in his name to the great Pacific,  
Like Birnam wood to Dunsinane,<sup>3</sup>  
Johnny Appleseed swept on,  
Every shackle gone,  
Loving every sloshy brake,  
Loving every skunk and snake,  
Loving every leathery weed,  
Johnny Appleseed, Johnny Appleseed,  
Master and ruler of the unicorn-ramping forest,  
The tiger-mewing forest,  
The rooster-trumpeting, boar-foaming, wolf-ravening forest,  
The spirit-haunted, fairy-enchanted forest,  
Stupendous and endless,  
Searching its perilous ways  
In the name of the Ancient of Days.

<sup>3</sup> Shakespeare: “Macbeth shall never vanquished be until / Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill / Shall come against him.” Later, his enemy's army comes through Birnam Wood and each soldier cuts a large branch to hide himself....

**II. THE INDIANS WORSHIP HIM, BUT HE HURRIES ON**

Painted kings in the midst of the clearing  
Heard him asking his friends the eagles  
To guard each planted seed and seedling.  
Then he was a god, to the red man's dreaming;  
Then the chiefs brought treasures grotesque and fair, –  
Magical trinkets and pipes and guns,  
Beads and furs from their medicine-lair, –  
Stuck holy feathers in his hair,  
Hailed him with austere delight,  
The orchard god was their guest through the night.  
While the late snow blew from bleak Lake Erie,  
Scourging rock and river and reed,  
All night-long they made great medicine  
For Jonathan Chapman,  
Johnny Appleseed,  
Johnny Appleseed;  
And as though his heart were a wind-blown wheatsheaf,  
As though his heart were a new-built nest,  
As though their heaven house were his breast,  
In swept the snow-birds singing glory.  
And I hear his bird heart beat its story,  
Hear yet how the ghost of the forest shivers,  
Hear yet the cry of the gray, old orchards,  
Dim and decaying by the rivers,  
And the timid wings of the bird-ghosts beating,  
And the ghosts of the tom-toms beating, beating.

But he left their wigwams and their love.  
By the hour of dawn he was proud and stark,  
Kissed the Indian babes with a sigh,  
Went forth to live on roots and bark  
Sleep in the trees, while the years howled by –

*While you read, hear  
the hoof-beats of  
deer in the snow.  
And see, by their  
track, the footprints  
we know.*

Calling the catamounts by name,  
And buffalo bulls no hand could tame,  
Slaying never a living creature,  
Joining the birds in every game,  
With the gorgeous turkey gobblers mocking,



## Children and Other People

With the lean-necked eagles boxing and shouting;  
Sticking their feathers in his hair, –  
Turkey feathers,  
Eagle feathers, –  
Trading hearts with all beasts and weathers  
He swept on, winged and wonder-crested,  
Bare-armed, barefooted, and bare-breasted.

The maples, shedding their spinning seeds,  
Called to his appleseeds in the ground,  
Vast chestnut-trees, with their butterfly nations.  
Called to his seeds without a sound.

*While you read, see  
conventions of deer  
go by.  
The bucks toss their  
horns, the fuzzy  
fawns fly.*

And the chipmunk turned a “summerset,”  
And the foxes danced the Virginia reel;  
Hawthorn and crab-thorn bent, rain-wet,  
And dropped their flowers in his night-black hair;  
And the soft fawns stopped for his perorations;  
And his black eyes shone through the forest-gleam,  
And he plunged young hands into new-turned earth,  
And prayed dear orchard boughs into birth;  
And he ran with the rabbit and slept with the stream.  
And so for us he made great medicine,  
And so for us he made great medicine,  
In the days of President Washington.

### III. JOHNNY APPLESEED’S OLD AGE

Long, long after,  
When settlers put up beam and rafter,  
They asked of the birds: “Who gave this fruit?  
Who watched this fence till the seeds took root?  
Who gave these boughs?” They asked the sky,  
And there was no reply.  
But the robin might have said,  
“To the farthest West he has followed the sun,  
His life and his empire just begun.”

*To be read like faint  
hoot-beats of fawns  
long gone.  
From respectable  
pasture, and park  
and lawn,  
And heart-beats of  
fawns that are  
coming again,  
When the forest,  
once more, is the  
master of men.*

*This Singing World*

Self-scourged, like a monk, with a throne for wages,  
Stripped like the iron-souled Hindu sages,  
Draped like a statue, in strings like a scarecrow,  
His helmet-hat an old tin pan,  
But worn in the love of the heart of man,  
Hairy Ainu, wild man of Borneo, Robinson Crusoe – Johnny  
    Appleseed;  
And the robin might have said,  
“Sowing, he goes to the far, new West,  
With the apple, the sun of his burning breast –  
The apple allied to the thorn,  
Child of the rose.”

Washington buried in Virginia,  
Jackson buried in Tennessee,  
Young Lincoln, brooding in Illinois,  
And Johnny Appleseed, priestly and free,  
Knotted and gnarled, past seventy years,  
Still planted on in the woods alone.  
Ohio and young Indiana –  
These were his wide altar-stone,  
Where still he burnt out flesh and bone.

Twenty days ahead of the Indian,  
    twenty years ahead of the white man;  
At last the Indian overtook him,  
    at last the Indian hurried past him;  
At last the white man overtook him,  
    at last the white man hurried past him;  
At last his own trees overtook him,  
    at last his own trees hurried past him.  
Many cats were tame again,  
Many ponies tame again,  
Many pigs were tame again,  
Many canaries tame again;  
And the real frontier was his sun-burnt breast.

*Children and Other People*

From the fiery core of that apple, the earth,  
Sprang apple-amaranths divine.  
Love's orchards climbed to the heavens of the West,  
And snowed the earthly sod with flowers.  
Farm hands from the terraces of the blest  
Danced on the mists with their ladies fine  
And Johnny Appleseed laughed with his dreams,  
And swam once more the ice-cold streams.

And the doves of the spirit swept through the hours,  
With doom-calls, love-calls, death-calls, dream-calls;  
And Johnny Appleseed, all that year,  
Lifted his hands to the farm-filled sky,  
To the apple-harvesters busy on high;  
And so once more his youth began,  
And so for us he made great medicine –  
Johnny Appleseed, medicine-man.

Then  
The sun was his turned-up broken barrel,  
Out of which his juicy apples rolled,  
Down the repeated terraces,  
Thumping across the gold,  
An angel in each apple that touched the forest mold,  
A ballot-box in each apple,  
A state capital in each apple,  
Great high schools, great colleges,  
All America in each apple,  
Each red, rich, round, and bouncing moon  
That touched the forest mold.  
Like scrolls and rolled-up flags of silk,  
He saw the fruits unfold,  
And all our expectations in one wild-flower written dream,  
Confusion and death-sweetness, and a thicket of crabthorns,  
Heart of a hundred midnights, heart of the merciful morns.  
Heaven's boughs bent down with their alchemy  
Perfumed airs, and thoughts of wonder.  
And the dew on the grass and his own cold tears  
Were one in brooding mystery,  
Though death's loud thunder came upon him,

*This Singing World*

Though death's loud thunder struck him down –  
The boughs and the proud thoughts swept through the thunder,  
Till he saw our wide nation, each State a flower,  
Each petal a park for holy feet,  
With wild fawns merry on every street,  
With wild fawns merry on every street,  
The vista of ten thousand years, flower-lighted and complete.

Hear the lazy weeds murmuring, bays and rivers whispering,  
From Michigan to Texas, California to Maine;  
Listen to the eagles, screaming, calling,  
“Johnny Appleseed, Johnny Appleseed,”  
There by the doors of old Fort Wayne.  
In the four-poster bed Johnny Appleseed built,  
Autumn rains were the curtains, autumn leaves were the quilt.  
He laid him down sweetly, and slept through the night,  
Like a bump on a log, like a stone washed white,  
There by the doors of old Fort Wayne.

*Vachel Lindsay*



# **Birds and Beasts**



THE KERRY COW

## **The Kerry Cow**

It's in Connacht in Munster that yourself might travel wide,  
And be asking all the herds you'd meet along the country-side,  
But you'd never meet a one could show the likes of her till now,  
Where she's grazing in a Leinster field – my little Kerry cow.

If herself went to the cattle fairs she'd put all cows to shame,  
For the finest poets of the land would meet to sing her fame;  
And the young girls would be asking leave to stroke her satin coat,  
They'd be praising and caressing her, and calling her a dote.

If the King of Spain gets news of her he'll fill his purse with gold,  
And set sail to ask the English King where she is to be sold.  
But the King of Spain may come to me, a crown upon his brow.  
It is he may keep his golden purse – and I my Kerry cow.

The priest maybe will tell her fame to the Holy Pope of Rome,  
And the cardinals' college send for her to leave her Irish home;  
But it's heart-broke she would be itself to cross the Irish sea,  
'Twould be best they'd send a blessing to my Kerry cow and me.

When the Ulster men hear tell of her, they'll come with swords an'  
    pikes,  
For it's civil war there'll be no less if they should see her likes,  
And you'll read it on the paper of the bloody fight there's been,  
An, the Orangemen they're burying in fields of Leinster green.

There are red cows that's contrary, and there's white cows quare  
    and wild,  
But my Kerry cow is biddable, an' gentle as a child.  
You may rare up kings and heroes on the lovely milk she yields,  
For she's fit to foster generals to fight our battlefields.

In the histories they'll be making they've a right to put her name  
With the horse of Troy and Oisin's hounds and other beasts of  
    fame.

And the painters will be painting her beneath the hawthorn bough  
Where she's grazing on the good green grass – my little Kerry cow.

*W. M. Letts*

## **The Runaway \***

Once, when the snow of the year was beginning to fall,  
We stopped by a mountain pasture to say "Whose colt?"  
A little Morgan had one forefoot on the wall,  
The other curled at his breast. He dipped his head  
And snorted to us. And then he had to bolt.  
We heard the miniature thunder where he fled  
And we saw him or thought we saw him dim and gray,  
Like a shadow against the curtain of falling flakes.  
"I think the little fellow's afraid of the snow.  
He isn't winter-broken. It isn't play  
With the little fellow at all. He's running away.  
I doubt if even his mother could tell him, 'Sakes,  
It's only weather.' He'd think she didn't know.  
Where is his mother? He can't be out alone."  
And now he comes again with a clatter of stone  
And mounts the wall again with whited eyes  
And all his tail that isn't hair up straight.  
He shudders his coat as if to throw off flies.  
"Whoever it is that leaves him out so late,  
When other creatures have gone to stall and bin,  
Ought to be told to come and take him in."

*Robert Frost*

\* See Note 13.



## **A Cow at Sullington**

She leaves the puddle where she drinks,  
And comes toward the roadway bar  
And looks into our eyes, and thinks  
What curious animals we are!

*Charles Dalmon*

## **The Mocking-Bird**

*Hear! hear! hear!*  
Listen! the word  
Of the mocking-bird!  
*Hear! hear! hear!*  
*I will make all clear;*  
*I will let you know*  
*Where the footfalls go*  
*That through the thicket and over the hill*  
*Allure, allure.*  
How the bird-voice cleaves  
Through the weft of leaves  
With a leap and a thrill  
Like the flash of a weaver's shuttle, swift and sudden and sure!

And lo, he is gone – even while I turn  
The wisdom of his runes to learn.  
He knows the mystery of the wood,  
The secret of the solitude;  
But he will not tell, he will not tell,  
For all he promises so well.

*Richard Hovey*

## **The Blackbird**

The nightingale has a lyre of gold,  
The lark's is a clarion call,  
And the blackbird plays but a boxwood flute,  
But I love him best of all.

For his song is all of the joy of life,  
And we in the mad, spring weather,  
We two have listened till he sang  
Our hearts and lips together.

*W. E. Henley*

## **Cock-a-Doodle-Do**

My neighbor has a herd, my neighbor has a flock,  
But I have a barn with a gilt weathercock.

I have no horses, I have no hay,  
But I have a weathercock, gilt and gay.

My neighbor has a flock, my neighbor has a herd,  
But I have a beautiful bright tin bird.

And when I am dead, this will be said:  
He had a weathercock on his shed;  
He had no herd, he had no flock,  
But he had a barn with a gilt weathercock;  
He had no horses, he had no hay,  
But he had a weathercock, gilt and gay;  
His neighbor had a flock, his neighbor had a herd,  
But he had a beautiful bright tin bird!

*Richard Kirk*

## **The Kingfisher**

It was the Rainbow gave thee birth,  
And left thee all her lovely hues;  
And, as her mother's name was Tears,  
So runs it in thy blood to choose  
For haunts the lonely pools, and keep  
In company with trees that weep.

Go you and, with such glorious hues,  
Live with proud Peacocks in green parks;  
On lawns as smooth as shining glass,  
Let every feather show its mark;  
Get thee on boughs and clap thy wings  
Before the windows of proud kings.

Nay, lovely Bird, thou art not vain;  
Thou hast no proud ambitious mind;  
I also love a quiet place  
That's green, away from all mankind;  
A lonely pool, and let a tree  
Sigh with her bosom over me.

*W. H. Davies*

## **Chickadee**

The chickadee in the appletree  
Talks all the time very gently.  
He makes me sleepy.  
I rock away to the sea-lights.  
Far off I hear him talking  
The way smooth bright pebbles  
Drop into water . . .  
Chick-a-dee-dee-dee . . .

*Hilda Conkling*

*(Written at the age of six)*

## **Two Sparrows**

Two sparrows, feeding,  
heard a thrush  
sing to the dawn.  
The first said "Tush!

"In all my life  
I never heard  
a more affected  
singing-bird."

The second said  
"It's you and me,  
who slave to keep  
the likes of he."

"And if we cared,"  
both sparrows said,  
"we'd do that singing  
on our head."

The thrush pecked sideways,  
and was dumb.  
"And now," they screamed,  
"he's pinched our crumb!"

*Humbert Wolfe*

## **The Rabbit**

When they said the time to hide was mine,  
I hid back under a thick grape vine.  
And while I was still for the time to pass,  
A little gray thing came out of the grass.

He hopped his way through the melon bed  
And sat down close by a cabbage head.  
He sat down close where I could see,  
And his big still eyes looked hard at me,

His big eyes bursting out of the rim,  
And I looked back very hard at him.

*Elizabeth Madox Roberts*

## **Fireflies**

Little lamps of the dusk,  
    You fly low and gold  
When the summer evening  
    Starts to unfold,  
So that all the insects,  
    Now, before you pass,  
Wilt have light to see by  
    Undressing in the grass.

But when night has flowered,  
    Little lamps a-gleam,  
You fly over tree-tops  
    Following a dream.  
Men wonder from their windows  
    That a firefly goes so far –  
They do not know your longing  
    To be a shooting star.

*Carolyn Hall*



DOLPHINS IN BLUE WATER

## **Dolphins in Blue Water \***

Hey! Crackerjack – jump!  
Blue water,  
Pink water,  
Swirl, flick, flitter;  
Snout into a wave-trough,  
Plunge, curl.  
Bow over,  
Under,  
Razor-cut and tumble.  
Roll, turn –  
Straight – and shoot at the sky,  
All rose-flame drippings.  
Down ring,  
Drop,  
Nose under,  
Hoop,  
Tail,  
Dive,  
And gone;  
With smooth over-swirlings of blue water,  
Oil-smooth cobalt,  
Slipping, liquid lapis lazuli,  
Emerald shadings,  
Tintings of pink and ochre.  
Prismatic slidings  
Underneath a windy sky.

*Amy Lowell*

\* See Note 14.

## **Cat's Meat**

Ho, all you cats in all the street;  
Look out, it is the hour of meat:

The little barrow is crawling along,  
And the meat-boy growling his fleshy song.

Hurry, Ginger! Hurry, White!  
Don't delay to court or fight.

Wandering Tabby, vagrant Black,  
Yamble from adventure back!

Slip across the shining street,  
Meat! Meat! Meat! Meat!

Lift your tail and dip your feet;  
Find your penny – Meat! Meat!

Where's your mistress; learn to purr:  
Pennies emanate from her.

Be to her, for she is Fate,  
Perfectly affectionate.

(You, domestic Pinkie-Nose,  
Keep inside and warm your toes.)

Flurry, flurry in the street –  
Meat! Meat! Meat! Meat!

*Harold Monro*





## **At Night**

On moony nights the dogs bark shrill  
Down the valley and up the hill.

There's one is angry to behold  
The moon so unafraid and cold,  
Who makes the earth as bright as day,  
But yet unhappy, dead, and gray.

Another in his strawy lair  
Says: "Who's a-howling over there?  
By heavens, I will stop him soon  
From interfering with the moon!"

So back he barks, with throat upthrown:  
"You leave our moon, our moon alone!"  
And other distant dogs respond  
Beyond the fields, beyond, beyond. . . .

*Frances Cornford*

## **The Grasshopper**

The Grasshopper, the Grasshopper,  
I will explain to you: –  
He is the Brownies' racehorse,  
The fairies' Kangaroo.

*Vachel Lindsay*



*FWI*

## **Chanticleer**

Of all the birds from East to West  
That tuneful are and dear,  
I love that farmyard bird the best,  
They call him Chanticleer.

*Gold plume and copper plume,  
Comb of scarlet gay;  
'Tis he that scatters night and gloom,  
And whistles back the day!*

He is the sun's brave herald  
That, ringing his blithe horn,  
Calls round a world dew-pearled  
The heavenly airs of morn.

O clear gold, shrill and bold!  
He calls through creeping mist  
The mountains from the night and cold  
To rose and amethyst.

He sets the birds to singing,  
And calls the flowers to rise;  
The morning cometh, bringing  
Sweet sleep to heavy eyes.

*Gold plume and silver plume,  
Comb of coral gay;  
'Tis he packs off the night and gloom,  
And summons home the day!*

Black fear he sends it flyng,  
Black care he drives afar;  
And creeping shadows sighing  
Before the morning star.

*Birds and Beasts*

The birds of all the forest  
Have dear and pleasant cheer,  
    But yet I hold the rarest  
The farmyard Chanticleer.

*Red cock or black cock,  
    Gold cock or white,  
The flower of all the feathered flock;  
    He whistles back the light!*

*Katharine Tynan*

## **Red Rooster**

Red rooster in your gray coop,  
O stately creature with tail-feathers red and blue,  
Yellow and black,  
You have a comb gay as a parade  
On your head:  
You have pearl trinkets  
On your feet:  
The short feathers smooth along your back  
Are the dark color of wet rocks,  
Or the rippled green of ships  
When I look at their sides through water.  
I don't know how you happened to be made  
So proud, so foolish,  
Wearing your coat of many colors,  
Shouting all day long your crooked words,  
Loud . . . sharp . . . not beautiful!

*Hilda Conkling  
(Written at the age of seven)*

## **The Hens**

The night was coming very fast;  
It reached the gate as I ran past.

The pigeons had gone to the tower of the church  
And all the hens were on their perch,

Up in the barn, and I thought I heard  
A piece of a little purring word.

I stopped inside, waiting and staying,  
To try to hear what the hens were saying.

They were asking something, that was plain,  
Asking it over and over again.

One of them moved and turned around,  
Her feathers made a ruffled sound,

A ruffled sound, like a bushful of birds,  
And she said her little asking words.

She pushed her head close into her wing,  
But nothing answered anything.

*Elizabeth Madox Roberts*

# **Fairies and Phantoms**



LITTLE ORPHANT ANNIE

## **Little Orphant Annie**

Little Orphant Annie's come to our house to stay,  
An' wash the cups and saucers up, an' 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-lis'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 kivers 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 chimney-flue, an' ever'wheres, I guess;  
But all they ever found was thist his pants an' roundabout! <sup>1</sup>  
An' the Gobble-uns 'll git you  
    Ef you  
        Don't  
            Watch  
                Out!

<sup>1</sup> roundabout: a short coat or jacket worn by men or boys, especially in the nineteenth century.

*This Singing World*

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 knowed 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' cherish 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!

*James Whitcomb Riley*



## **The Fairies**

Up the airy mountain,  
Down the rushy glen,  
We daren't go a-hunting  
For fear of little men;  
Wee folk, good folk,  
Trooping all together;  
Green jacket, red cap,  
And white owl's feather!

Down along the rocky shore  
Some make their home,  
They live on crispy pancakes  
Of yellow tide-foam;  
Some in the reeds  
Of the black mountain lake,  
With frogs for their watch-dogs,  
All night awake.

High on the hill-top  
The old King sits;  
He is now so old and gray,  
He's nigh lost his wits.  
With a bridge of white mist  
Columbkil he crosses  
on his stately journeys  
From Slieveleague to Rosses;

Or going up with music  
On cold, starry nights,  
To sup with the Queen  
Of the gay Northern Lights.  
They stole little Bridget  
For seven years long;  
When she came down again  
Her friends were all gone.

*This Singing World*

They took her lightly back,  
    Between the night and morrow,  
They thought that she was fast asleep,  
    But she was dead with sorrow.  
They have kept her ever since  
    Deep within the lake,  
On a bed of flag leaves,  
    Watching till she wake.

By the craggy hill-side,  
    Through the mosses bare,  
They have planted thorn-trees  
    For pleasure here and there.  
Is any man so daring  
    As dig them up in spite,  
He shall find their sharpest thorns  
    In his bed at night.

Up the airy mountain,  
    Down the rushy glen,  
We daren't go a-hunting  
    For fear of little men;  
Wee folk, good folk,  
    Trooping all together;  
Green jacket, red cap,  
    And white owl's feather!

*William Allingham*

## **The Fairies**

There are fairies at the bottom of our garden!

It's not so very, very far away;

You pass the gardener's shed and you just keep straight ahead –

I do so hope they've really come to stay.

There's a little wood, with moss in it and beetles,

And a little stream that quietly runs through;

You wouldn't think they'd dare to come merry-making there –

Well, they do.

There are fairies at the bottom of our garden!

They often have a dance on summer nights;

The butterflies and bees make a lovely little breeze,

And the rabbits stand about and hold the lights.

Did you know that they could sit upon the moonbeams

And pick a little star to make a fan,

And dance away up there in the middle of the air?

Well, they can.

There are fairies at the bottom of our garden!

You cannot think how beautiful they are;

They all stand up and sing when the Fairy Queen and King

Come gently floating down upon their car.

The King is very proud and *very* handsome;

The Queen – now can you guess who that could be

(She's a little girl all day, but at night she steals away)?

Well – it's Me!

*Rose Fyleman*

## **Fairy-Music**

When fiddlers play their tunes, you may sometimes hear,  
Very softly chiming in, magically clear,  
Magically high and sweet, the tiny crystal notes  
Of fairy voices bubbling free from tiny fairy throats.

When the birds at break of day chant their morning prayers,  
Or on sunny afternoons pipe ecstatic airs,  
Comes an added rush of sound to the silver din –  
Songs of fairy troubadours gaily joining in.

When athwart the drowsy fields summer twilight falls,  
Through the tranquil air there float elfin madrigals,  
And in wild November nights, on the winds astride,  
Fairy hosts go rushing by, singing as they ride.

Every dream that mortals dream, sleeping or awake,  
Every lovely fragile hope – these the fairies take,  
Delicately fashion them and give them back again  
In tender, limpid melodies that charm the hearts of men.

*Rose Fyleman*

## **I'd Love to Be a Fairy's Child**

Children born of fairy stock  
Never need for shirt or frock,  
Never want for food or fire,  
Always get their heart's desire:  
Jingle pockets full of gold,  
Marry when they're seven years old.

Every fairy child may keep  
Two strong ponies and ten sheep;  
All have houses, each his own,  
Built of brick or granite stone;  
They live on cherries; they run wild –  
I'd love to be a Fairy's child.

*Robert Graves*

## Suppose

Suppose . . . and suppose that a wild little Horse of Magic  
Came cantering out of the sky,  
With bridle of silver and into the saddle I mounted  
To fly - and to fly.

And we stretched up into the air, fleeting on in the sunshine,  
A speck in the gleam  
On galloping hoofs, his mane in the wind out-flowing,  
As if in a dream.

Suppose and suppose, when the gentle star of evening  
Came crinkling into the blue,  
A magical castle we saw in the air, like a cloud of moonlight,  
As onward we flew.

And across the green moat on the drawbridge we foamed and  
we snorted,  
And there was a beautiful Queen  
Who smiled at me strangely; and spoke to my wild little  
Horse, too -  
A lovely and beautiful Queen.

Suppose and suppose she cried to her delicate maidens,  
“Behold my daughter - my dear!”  
And they crowned me with flowers, and then on their harps  
sate playing,  
Solemn and clear.

And magical cakes and goblets were spread on the table;  
And at the window the birds came in;  
Hopping along with bright eyes, pecking crumbs from the  
platters,  
And sipped of the wine.

*This Singing World*

And splashing up – up to the roof, tossed fountains of crystal;  
And Princes in scarlet and green  
Shot with their bows and arrows, and kneeled with their  
dishes  
Of fruits for the Queen.

And we walked in a magical garden with rivers and bowers,  
And my bed was of ivory and gold;  
And the Queen breathed soft in my ear a song of  
enchantment,  
And I never grew old . . .

And I never, never came back to the earth, oh, never and  
never;  
How mother would cry and cry.  
There'd be snow on the fields then and all these sweet flowers  
in the winter  
Would wither and die . . .

Suppose . . . and suppose . . .

*Walter de la Mare*

## **The Shadow People**

Old lame Bridget doesn't hear  
Fairy music in the grass  
When the gloaming's <sup>1</sup> on the mere <sup>2</sup>  
And the shadow people pass;  
Never hears their slow, grey feet  
Coming from the village street  
Just beyond the parson's wall,  
Where the clover globes are sweet  
And the mushroom's parasol  
Opens in the moonlit rain.  
Every night I hear them call  
From their long and merry train.  
Old lame Bridget says to me,  
"It is just your fancy, child."  
She cannot believe I see  
Laughing faces in the wild,  
Hands that twinkle in the sedge <sup>3</sup>  
Where the finny minnows quiver,  
Shaping on a blue wave's ledge  
Bubble foam to sail the river.  
And the sunny hands to me  
Beckon ever, beckon ever.  
Oh! I would be wild and free  
And with the shadow people be.

*Francis Ledwidge*

<sup>1</sup> gloaming: twilight (Scottish heritage)

<sup>2</sup> mere: an expanse of standing water: lake  
(chiefly British)

<sup>3</sup> sedge: a grasslike plant with triangular stems  
and inconspicuous flowers, growing typically in  
wet ground.





## **The Satyrs and the Moon**

Within the wood behind the hill  
The moon got tangled in the trees.  
Her splendor made the branches thrill  
And thrilled the breeze.

The satyrs <sup>1</sup> in the grotto bent  
Their heads to see the wondrous sight.  
“It is a god in banishment  
That stirs the night!”

The little satyr looked and guessed:  
“It is an apple that one sees,  
Brought from that garden of the West,  
Hesperides.”

“It is a cyclops’ <sup>2</sup> glaring eye.”  
“A temple dome from Babylon.”  
“A Titan’s cup of victory.”  
“A little sun.”

The tiny satyr jumped for joy,  
And kicked his hoofs in utmost glee.  
“It is a wondrous silver toy: –  
Bring it to me!”

A great wind whistled through the blue  
And caught the moon and tossed it high;  
A bubble of pale fire it flew  
Across the sky.

The satyrs gasped and looked and smiled,  
And wagged their heads from side to side,  
Except their shaggy little child,  
Who cried and cried.

*Herbert S. Gorman*

<sup>1</sup> satyrs = fabled creatures, the upper half being the body of a man, the lower half being a goat.

<sup>2</sup> cyclops = in ancient mythology, a giant with one eye in the middle of the forehead.

## **Disenchantment \***

Here is the German  
    Fairy forest;  
And here I turn in,  
    I, the poorest  
Son of an aging  
    Humble widow.  
The light is fading;  
    Every shadow  
Conceals a kobold,  
    A gnome's dark eye,  
Or even some troubled  
    Loreley.  
A ruined castle  
    Invites me to prowl;  
Its only vassal  
    A frightened owl  
(Most likely a princess  
    Under a spell) –  
And what light dances  
    Behind that well?  
Perhaps great riches  
    Are hidden there,  
Perhaps a witch's  
    Magic snare.  
I walk up boldly,  
    Though my breath falters;  
But no one holds me,  
    Nothing alters  
Except the dying  
    Phosphorescence

\* See Note 15.

*Fairies and Phantoms*

Where the rocks lie in  
    Broken crescents.  
These rocks are haunted  
    Everyone says,  
And here the enchanted  
    Dragon obeys  
Only the youngest  
    Son of a widow  
Who waits the longest,  
    Fearing no shadow  
Of any uncommon  
    Phantom in metal,  
But dares to summon  
    The Thing to battle.  
I've said my vespers,  
    I've tightened my gloves;  
The forest whispers  
    And chuckles and moves.  
Darker and closer  
    The stillness surges –  
Not even the ghost of  
    A rabbit emerges.  
I rattle my weapons,  
    I call and I call . . .  
But nothing happens,  
    Nothing at all.  
  
    Nothing at all.

*Louis Untermeyer*

*This Singing World*



ADVENTURE

## **Adventure**

Black wave the trees in the forest  
And a rough wind hurries by,  
But the swineherd's toddling daughter  
Knows where fallen pine-cones lie.

And girt in a snowy apron  
She scampers, alert and gay,  
To the hidden pool in the hollow  
Where the wan witch people play.

They smile, the wee wrinkled women,  
They creep to her pinafore;  
And lay in her lap strange treasures  
Trolls brought from the ocean's floor.

And they marvel at her blonde tresses  
And braid them with scented fern;  
And they lave her dusty, brown ankles  
With snow water from the burn.

But nobody listens, or heeds them,  
The swineherd hews a new trail,  
The swineherd's wife in the cottage  
Pours the sour milk from the pail.

And little Gerta lags homeward  
Dream shod through the shadows deep;  
Her eyelids heavy with wonder –  
They whisper, "She's been asleep."

*Laura Benét*

## The Elf and the Dormouse



Under a toadstool  
Crept a wee Elf,  
Out of the rain  
To shelter himself.

Under the toadstool,  
Sound asleep,  
Sat a big Dormouse  
All in a heap.

Trembled the wee Elf,  
Frightened, and yet  
Fearing to fly away  
Lest he got wet.

To the next shelter –  
Maybe a mile!  
Sudden the wee Elf  
Smiled a wee smile.

Tugged till the toadstool  
Topped in two.  
Holding it over him,  
Gaily he flew.

Soon he was safe home,  
Dry as could be.  
Soon woke the Dormouse –  
“Good gracious me!

“Where is my toadstool?”  
Loud he lamented.  
– And that’s how umbrellas  
First were invented.

*Oliver Herford*

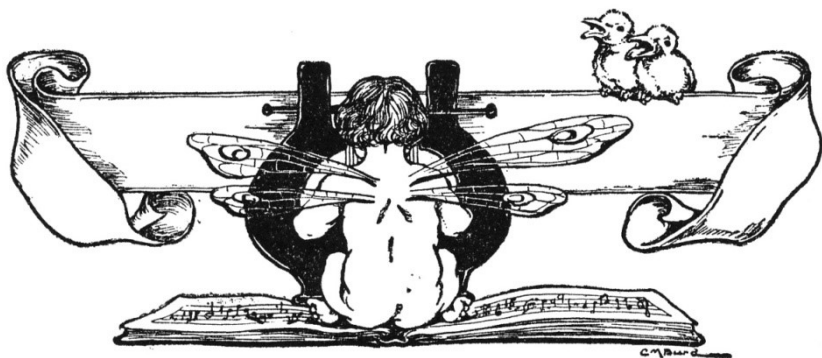
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many other authors presented here.

# Words and Music

\*

\* See Note 16.

*This Singing World*





## Ode

We are the music-makers,  
And we are the dreamers of dreams,  
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,  
And sitting by desolate streams;  
World-losers and world-forsakers,  
On whom the pale moon gleams:  
Yet we are the movers and shakers  
Of the world for ever, it seems.

With wonderful deathless ditties  
We build up the world's great cities,  
And out of a fabulous story  
We fashion an empire's glory:  
One man with a dream, at pleasure,  
Shall go forth and conquer a crown;  
And three with a new song's measure  
Can trample an empire down.

We, in the ages lying,  
In the buried past of the earth,  
Built Nineveh with our sighing,  
And Babel itself with our mirth;  
And o'erthrew them with prophesying  
To the old of the new world's worth;  
For each age is a dream that is dying,  
Or one that is coming to birth.

*Arthur O'Shaughnessy*



## **To Helen**

Helen, thy beauty is to me  
Like those Nicaean barks <sup>1</sup> of yore,  
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,  
The weary, wayworn wanderer bore  
To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,  
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,  
Thy Naiad airs, have brought me home  
To the glory that was Greece  
And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche  
How statue-like I see thee stand,  
The agate lamp within thy hand!  
Ah, Psyche, from the regions which  
Are Holy Land!

*Edgar Allan Poe*

<sup>1</sup> Nicean barks: The way-worn wanderer was Dionysos or Bacchus, after his renowned conquests. His native shore was the Western Horn, called the Amalthean Horn. And the Nicean barks were vessels sent from the island Nysa, to which in infancy Dionysos was conveyed to screen him from [the goddess] Rhea. The perfumed sea was the sea surrounding Nysa, a paradisaal island. – infoplease.com

## **A Birthday**

My heart is like a singing bird  
Whose nest is in a watered shoot; <sup>1</sup>  
My heart is like an apple tree  
Whose boughs are bent with thickest fruit;  
My heart is like a rainbow shell  
That paddles in a halcyon sea –  
My heart is gladder than all these,  
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down,  
Hang it with vair <sup>2</sup> and purple dyes,  
Carve it in doves, and pomegranates,  
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;  
Work it in gold and silver grapes,  
In leaves, and silver fleurs-de-lys,  
Because the birthday of my life  
Is come, my love is come to me.

*Christina Georgina Rossetti*

<sup>1</sup> Watered shoot – a young branch which shoots out from a larger bough.

<sup>2</sup> Vair – variegated silver and blue.

## **Song**

“Oh! Love,” they said, “is King of Kings,  
And Triumph is his crown.  
Earth fades in flame before his wings,  
And Sun and Moon bow down.” –  
But that, I knew, would never do;  
And Heaven is all too high.  
So whenever I meet a Queen, I said,  
I will not catch her eye.

“Oh! Love,” they said, and “Love,” they said,  
“The gift of Love is this;  
A crown of thorns about thy head,  
And vinegar to thy kiss!” –  
But Tragedy is not for me;  
And I’m content to be gay.  
So whenever I spied a Tragic Lady,  
I went another way.

And so I never feared to see  
You wander down the street,  
Or come across the fields to me  
On ordinary feet.  
For what they’d never told me of,  
And what I never knew;  
It was that all the time, my love,  
Love would be merely you.

*Rupert Brooke*

## **“The Night Will Never Stay”**

The night will never stay,  
The night will still go by,  
Though with a million stars  
You pin it to the sky,  
Though you bind it with the blowing wind  
And buckle it with the moon,  
The night will slip away  
Like sorrow or a tune.

*Eleanor Farjeon*

## **How Many Times**

How many times do I love thee, dear?  
Tell me how many thoughts there be  
In the atmosphere  
Of a new-fall'n year,  
Whose white and sable hours appear  
The latest flake of Eternity;  
So many times do I love thee, dear.

How many times do I love, again?  
Tell me how many beads there are  
In a silver chain  
Of the evening rain,  
Unravelling from the tumbling main,  
And threading the eye of a yellow star:  
So many times do I love again.

*Thomas Lovell Beddoes*

## **Blow, Bugle, Blow**

The splendor falls on castle walls  
    And snowy summits old in story;  
The long light shakes across the lakes,  
    And the wild cataract leaps in glory.  
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,  
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O, hark, O, hear! how thin and clear  
    And thinner, clearer, farther going!  
O, sweet and far from cliff and scar  
    The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!  
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying,  
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,  
    They faint on hill or field or river;  
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,  
    And grow for ever and for ever.  
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,  
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

*Alfred Tennyson*

## **For Them All**

At night through the city in a song  
Like a cloud I drift along.

I slip into the shop-girl's room,  
Soothing her eyes amid the gloom.

I smooth the wrinkles on the cheek  
Of the white mother, worn and meek,

Where the laborer sits at rest,  
I pour sweet dreams into his breast.

The old man and the little child  
Bending o'er the page have smiled.

Into the lover's heart I stream,  
Like the beloved in a dream.

The poet and the lover, too,  
I drench with beauty through and through.

I am Beauty's, and I move  
Lonely amid those I love.

O, poet, lover, mother, child!  
For love of you my heart is wild.

Out of this very page I cry  
Up to your spirits: this is I!

Are we together here at last?  
O catch me up before 'tis past!

O hold me close against your breast!  
There alone, at last, I rest.

*John Hall Wheelock*



## **The Words**

Little Words that wear silk dresses  
And go to tea-parties:  
“How darling!” “How perfectly dear!”  
“You really did? . . . Marvelous!”  
When they come away,  
They take off their little silk mittens  
And fold up their poke bonnets.  
Then they are pansies and violets.  
And some carry fragrance  
Of mignonette in their pockets.

Out in the world are their cousins:

Tall Words that rise up like towers.  
Slender Words ticking the hours.  
Feather Words that mount seeds  
In the flower pods.  
Weather Words that count beads  
On the hour-rods.  
Merry Words that muse.  
Tarry Words that lose.  
Cloudy Words that send the rain.  
Rowdy Words that tend a pain.  
Linnet Words that seek a rare clime.  
Minute Words that keep a fair time.  
Morning Words that comb the hair high.  
Adorning Words that roam the air nigh.  
Wing Words that sing the little loves.  
Spring Words that bring the little doves.  
Mother Words that string the lyre.  
Brother Words that bring the fire.  
Willow Words that bind the nest.  
Pillow Words that find a rest.  
Long Words that bird the sleep.  
Song Words that herd the sheep.  
And when the fair “Good Night” is said,  
Some Words climb the stair  
And rhyme in turn to bed. *Opal Whitely*

## **Light**

The night has a thousand eyes,  
And the day but one;  
Yet the light of the bright world dies  
With the dying sun.

The mind has a thousand eyes,  
And the heart but one;  
Yet the light of a whole life dies  
When love is done.

*F. W. Bourdillon*

## **The Singer**

If I had peace to sit and sing,  
Then I could make a lovely thing;  
But I am stung with goads and whips,  
So I build songs like iron ships.

Let it be something for my song,  
If it is sometimes swift and strong.

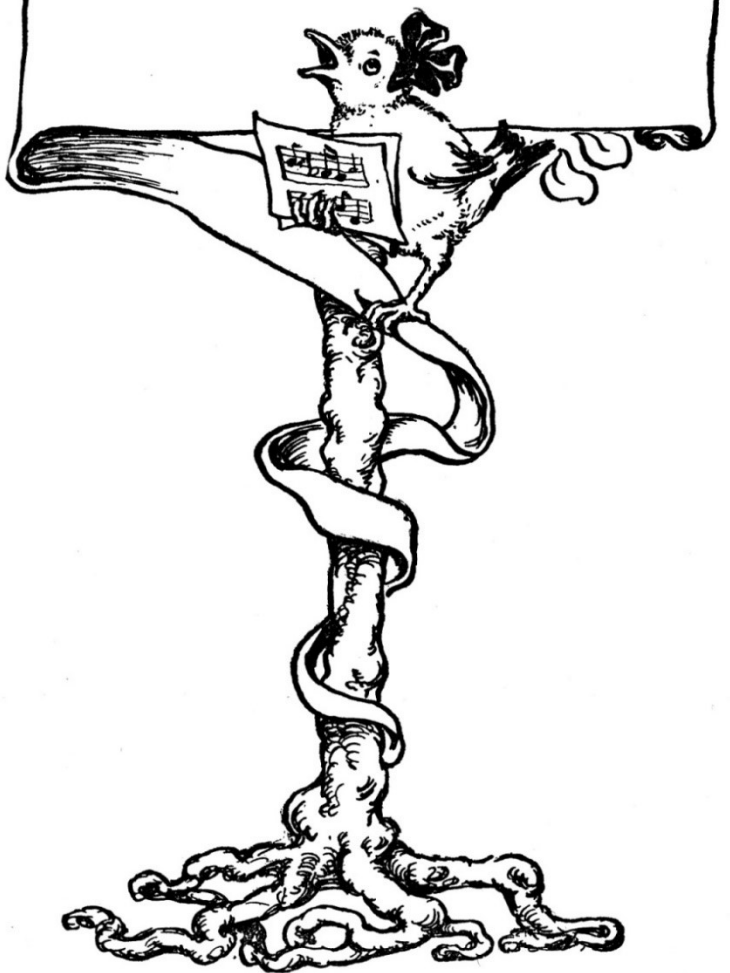
*Anna Wickham*



# **Whims and Fantasies**



*WHIMS AND  
FANTASIES*



## **Four Moon Poems**

### **EUCLID**

Old Euclid drew a circle  
On a sand-beach long ago.  
He bounded and enclosed it  
With angles thus and so.  
His set of solemn greybeards  
Nodded and argued much  
Of arc and of circumference,  
Diameter and such.  
A silent child stood by them  
From morning until noon  
Because they drew such charming  
Round pictures of the moon.

### **WHAT THE RATTLESNAKE SAID**

The moon's a little prairie-dog.  
He shivers through the night.  
He sits upon his hill and cries  
For fear that I will bite.

The sun's a broncho. He's afraid  
Like every other thing,  
And trembles, morning, noon and night,  
Lest I should spring, and sting!

### **THE MOON'S THE NORTH WIND'S COOKY**

*(What the Little Girl Said).*

The Moon's the North Wind's Cooky.  
He bites it, day by day,  
Until there's but a rim of scraps  
That crumble all away.

The South Wind is a baker,  
He kneads clouds in his den,  
And bakes a crisp new moon that . . . *greedy*  
*North . . . Wind . . . eats . . . again!*

*This Singing World*

**YET GENTLE WILL THE GRIFFIN BE**

*(What Grandpa told the Children)*

The moon? It is a griffin's egg,  
Hatching to-morrow night.  
And how the little boys will watch  
With shouting and delight  
To see him break the shell and stretch  
And creep across the sky.  
The boys will laugh. The little girls,  
I fear, may hide and cry.  
Yet gentle will the griffin be,  
Most decorous and fat,  
And walk up to the milky way . . .  
And lap it like a cat.

*Vachel Lindsay*

**A Phantasy of Heaven**

Perhaps he plays with cherubs now,  
Those little, golden boys of God,  
Bending, with them, some silver bough,  
The while a seraph, head a-nod,  
  
Slumbers on guard; how they will run  
And shout, if he should wake too soon, –  
As fruit more golden than the sun  
And riper than the full-grown moon,  
  
Conglobed in clusters, weighs them down,  
Like Atlas heaped with starry signs.  
And, if they're tripped, heel over crown,  
By hidden coils of mighty vines, –  
  
Perhaps the seraph, swift to pounce,  
Will hale them, vexed, to God – and He  
Will only laugh, remembering, once  
He was a boy in Galilee!

*Harry Kemp*

## **A Hillside Thaw**

To think to know the country and not know  
The hillside on the day the sun lets go  
Ten million silver lizards out of snow.  
As often as I've seen it done before  
I can't pretend to tell the way it's done.  
It looks as if some magic of the sun  
Lifted the rug that bred them on the floor  
And the light breaking on them made them run.  
But if I thought to stop the wet stampede,  
And caught one silver lizard by the tail,  
And put my foot on one without avail,  
And threw myself wet-elbowed and wet-kneed  
In front of twenty others' wriggling speed, –  
In the confusion of them all aglitter  
And birds that joined in the excited fun  
By doubling and redoubling song and twitter,  
I have no doubt I'd end by holding none.

It takes the moon for this. The sun's a wizard  
By all I tell; but so's the moon a witch.  
From the high west she makes a gentle cast  
And suddenly without a jerk or twitch  
She has her spell on every single lizard.  
I fancied when I looked at eight o'clock  
The swarm still ran and scuttled just as fast.  
The moon was waiting for her chill effect.  
I looked at ten: the swarm was turned to rock  
In every life-like posture of the swarm,  
Transfixed on mountain slopes almost erect.  
Across each other and side by side they lay.  
Was wrought through trees without a breath of storm  
To make a leaf, if there had been one, stir.  
It was the moon's. She held them until day,  
One lizard at the end of every ray.  
The thought of my attempting such a stay!

*Robert Frost*

## **Apparitions**

### **I**

Such a starved bank of moss  
Till, that May-morn,  
Blue ran the flash across:  
Violets were born!

### **II**

Sky – what a scowl of cloud  
Till, near and far,  
Ray on ray split the shroud:  
Splendid, a star!

### **III**

World – how it walled about  
Life with disgrace  
Till God's own smile came out:  
That was thy face!

*Robert Browning*

## **Three Pictures**

### **WISTARIA BLOSSOMS**

I see them on my trellises and walls  
And straightway dream of distant waterfalls;  
But when to distant waterfalls I roam  
I dream of my wistarias at home.

### **ALMOND BLOSSOMS**

A rosy cloud of the dawn I see  
Entangled there in the almond tree!

### **A SNOWFALL ON PLUM TREES**

#### **AFTER THEY HAD BLOOMED**

It is, indeed, a pleasant thing to know  
Twice-flowering plum trees in my garden grow.

*Charles Dalmon*



## **Apes and Ivory**

Apes and ivory, skulls and roses, in junks of old Hong-Kong,  
Gliding over a sea of dreams to a haunted shore of song,  
Masts of gold, and sails of satin, shimmering out of the East,  
Oh, Love has little need of you now to make his heart a feast.

Or is it an elephant, white as milk and bearing a severed head  
That tatters his broad soft wrinkled flanks in tawdry patches of red,  
With a negro giant to walk beside and a temple dome above,  
Where ruby and emerald shatter the sun, – is it these that should  
    please my love?

Or is it a palace of pomegranates, where ivory-limbed young slaves  
Lure a luxury out of the noon in the swooning fountain's waves;  
Or couch like cats and sun themselves on the warm white marble  
    brink?

Oh, Love has little to ask of these, this day in May, I think.

Is it Lebanon cedars or purple fruits of the honeyed southern air,  
Spikenard, saffron, roses of Sharon, cinnamon, calamus, myrrh,  
A bed of spices, a fountain of waters, or the wild white wings of a  
    dove,

Now, when the winter is over and gone, is it these that should  
    please my love?

The leaves outburst on the hazel-bough and the hawthorn's heaped  
    with flower,

And God has bidden the crisp clouds build my love a lordlier tower,  
Taller than Lebanon, whiter than snow, in the fresh blue skies  
    above;

And the wild rose wakes in the winding lanes of the radiant land I  
    love.

*Apes and ivory, skulls and roses, in junks of old Hong-Kong,  
Gliding over a sea of dreams to a haunted shore of song,  
Masts of gold, and sails of satin, shimmering out of the East,  
Oh, Love has little need of you now to make his heart a feast.*

*Alfred Noyes*

## **Chimes**

Brief, on a flying night  
From the shaken tower,  
A flock of bells take flight,  
And go with the hour.

Like birds from the cote to the gales,  
Abrupt – O hark!  
A fleet of bells set sails,  
And go to the dark.

Sudden the cold airs swing,  
Alone, aloud,  
A verse of bells takes wing  
And flies with the cloud.

*Alice Meynell*

## **A Tree at Dusk**

With secrets in their eyes the blue-winged Hours  
Rustle through the meadow  
Dropping shadow.

Yawning among red flowers,  
The Moon Child with her golden hoop  
And a pink star drifting after,  
Leans to me where I droop.

I hear her delicate, soft laughter,  
And through my hair her tiny fingers creep. . . .

I shall sleep.

*Winifred Welles*

## **Variations on an Old Nursery Rhyme**

The King of China's daughter  
So beautiful to see  
With her face like yellow water, left  
Her nutmeg tree.

Her little rope for skipping  
She skipped and gave it me –  
Made of painted notes of singing-birds  
Among the fields of tea.

I skipped across the nutmeg grove, –  
I skipped across the sea;  
But neither sun nor moon, my dear,  
Has yet caught me.

*Edith Sitwell*

## **Sea Shell**

Sea Shell, Sea Shell,  
Sing me a song, O please!  
A song of ships, and sailor men,  
And parrots, and tropical trees,

Of islands lost in the Spanish Main  
Which no man ever may find again,  
Of fishes and corals under the waves,  
And sea-horses stabled in great green caves.

Sea Shell, Sea Shell,  
Sing of the things you know so well.

*Amy Lowell*

*This Singing World*

**Dick Said \***

*(Concerning Heaven)*

Well, Heaven's hard to understand –  
But it's a kind of great, big land  
    All full of gold and glory;  
With rivers green and pink and red,  
And houses made of gingerbread  
    Like in the fairy story.

The floors they use are made of clouds;  
And there are crowds and crowds and crowds  
    Who sing and dance till seven.  
But then they must keep still because  
God and the Dream-Man and Santa Claus  
    Sleep in the big House of Heaven.

God, He sleeps on the first two floors;  
And the Dream-Man sleeps above Him and snores,  
    A tired-out story-teller;  
And Santa Claus, who hates the noise,  
He sleeps on the roof with all his toys –  
    And the angels live in the cellar.

Now, the angels never sleep a wink,  
They're much too busy to stop and think  
    Or play on harps and guitars.  
They're always cleaning the sun at night,  
And all day long, to keep them bright,  
    They polish the moon and the stars.

They clean the streets and they tidy the rooms,  
And they sweep out Heaven with a million brooms,  
    And they hurry each other when they nod,  
And they work so fast that they almost fall –  
But God just sits and never works at all;  
    And that's because He's God!

*Louis Untermeyer*

\* See [Note 17](#).

## **Ballade of Blue China \***

There's a joy without canker or cark,<sup>1</sup>  
There's a pleasure eternally new,  
'Tis to gloat on the glaze and the mark  
Of china that's ancient and blue;  
Unchipp'd all the centuries through  
It has pass'd since the chime of it rang,  
And they fashion'd it, figure and hue,  
In the reign of the Emperor Hwang.

These dragons (their tails, you remark,  
Into bunches of gillyflowers grew), –  
When Noah came out of the ark,  
Did these lie in wait for his crew?  
They snorted, they snapp'd and they slew;  
They were mighty of fin and of fang,  
And their portraits Celestials drew  
In the reign of the Emperor Hwang.

Here's a pot with a cot in a park,  
In a park where the peach-blossoms blew,  
Where the lovers eloped in the dark,  
Lived, died, and were changed into two  
Bright birds that eternally flew  
Through the boughs of the may, as they sang;  
'Tis a tale was undoubtedly true  
In the reign of the Emperor Hwang.

### **ENVOY**

Come, snarl at my ecstasies, do,  
Kind critic, your “tongue has a tang,”  
But – a sage never heeded a shrew  
In the reign of the Emperor Hwang.

*Andrew Lang*

\* See [Note 18](#).

<sup>1</sup> Canker or cark – distress or care.

## **The Dinkey-Bird**

In an ocean, 'way out yonder  
    (As all sapient people know),  
Is the land of Wonder-Wander,  
    Whither children love to go; ,  
It's their playing, romping, swinging,  
    That give great joy to me  
While the Dinkey-Bird goes singing  
    In the amfalula tree!

There the gum-drops grow like cherries  
    And taffy's thick as peas –  
Caramels you pick like berries  
    When, and where, and how you please;  
Big red sugar-plums are clinging  
    To the cliffs beside that sea  
Where the Dinkey-Bird is singing  
    In the amfalula tree.

So when children shout and scamper  
    And make merry all the day,  
When there's naught to put a damper  
    To the ardor of their play;  
When I hear their laughter ringing,  
    Then I'm sure as sure can be  
That the Dinkey-Bird is singing  
    In the amfalula tree.

For the Dinkey-Bird's bravuras  
    And staccatos are so sweet –  
His roulades, appoggiaturas, <sup>1</sup>  
    And robustos so complete,  
That the youth of every nation –  
    Be they near or far away –  
Have especial delectation  
    In that gladsome roundelay. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> appoggiaturas: the little twists, runs and shades in singing.

<sup>2</sup> roundelay: a simple song or poem with a refrain; a circle dance.

## *Whims and Fantasies*

Their eyes grow bright and brighter –  
    Their lungs begin to crow,  
Their hearts get light and lighter,  
    And their cheeks are all aglow;  
For an echo cometh bringing  
    The news to all and me,  
That the Dinkey-Bird is singing  
    In the amfalula tree.

I'm sure you'd like to go there  
    To see your feathered friend –  
And so many goodies grow there  
    You would like to comprehend!  
*Speed, little dreams, your winging*  
    *To that land across the sea*  
*Where the Dinkey-Bird is singing*  
    *In the amfalula tree!*

*Eugene Field*

## **Our Two Gardens**

We have two gardens. One is sweet  
With flowers, and one grows things to eat.  
My father calls them, just for fun,  
The Mary and the Martha one.

*Richard Kirk*

## **Theology**

The blade is sharp, the reaper stout,  
And every daisy dies.  
Their souls are fluttering about –  
We call them butterflies.

*Joyce Kilmer*

## **I Wonder What it Feels Like to Be Drowned? \***

Look at my knees,  
That island rising from the steamy seas!  
The candle's a tall lightship; my two hands  
Are boats and barges anchored to the sands,  
With mighty cliffs all round;  
They're full of wine and riches from far lands. . . .  
I wonder what it feels like to be drowned?

I can make caves,  
By lifting up the island and huge waves  
And storms, and then with head and ears well under  
Blow bubbles with a monstrous roar like thunder,  
A bull-of-Bashan sound.  
The seas run high and the boats split asunder. . . .  
I wonder what it feels like to be drowned?

The thin soap slips  
And slithers like a shark under the ships.  
My toes are on the soap-dish – that's the effect  
Of my huge storms; an iron steamer's wrecked!  
The soap slides round and round;  
He's biting the old sailors, I expect. . . .  
I wonder what it feels like to be drowned?

*Robert Graves*

\* See [Note 19](#).



## **Tales and Ballads**

*This Singing World*



## **Little Breeches \***

I don't go much on religion,  
I never ain't had no show;  
But I've got a middlin' tight grip, sir,  
On the handful o' things I know.  
I don't pan out on the prophets  
And free-will, and that sort of thing, –  
But I believe in God and the angels,  
Ever since one night last spring.

I come into town with some turnips,  
And my little Gabe came along, –  
No four-year-old in the county  
Could beat him for pretty and strong,  
Peart and chipper and sassy,  
Always ready to swear and fight, –  
And I'd larnt him to chaw terbacker  
Just to keep his milk-teeth white.

The snow come down like a blanket  
And I passed by Taggart's store;  
I went in for a jug of molasses  
And left the team at the door.  
They scared at something and started, –  
I heard one little squall,  
And hell-to-split over the prairie  
Went team, Little Breeches and all.

Hell-to-split over the prairie,  
I was almost froze with skeer;  
But we roused up some torches,  
And sarched for 'em far and near.  
At last we struck hosses and wagon,  
Snowed under a soft white mound,  
Upsot, dead beat, – but of little Gabe  
No hide nor hair was found.

\* See Note 20.

## *This Singing World*

And here all hope soured on me,  
Of my fellow-critter's aid, -  
I jest flopped down on my marrow-bones,  
Crotch-deep in the snow, and prayed.

. . . . .  
By this, the torches was played out,  
And me and Isrul Parr  
Went off for some wood to a sheepfold  
That he said was somewhar thar.

We found it at last, and a little shed  
Where they shut up the lambs at night.  
We looked in and seen them huddled thar,  
So warm and sleepy and white;  
And thar sot Little Breeches and chirped,  
As peart as ever you see,  
"I want a chaw of terbacker,  
And that's what's the matter of me."

How did he git thar? Angels.  
He could never have walked in that storm.  
They jest scooped down and toted him  
To whar it was safe and warm.  
And I think that saving a little child,  
And bringing him to his own,  
Is a derved sight better business  
Than loafing around The Throne. *John Hay*

## **Danny Deever**

"What are the bugles blowin' for?" said Files-on-Parade.  
"To turn you out, to turn you out," the Color-Sergeant said.  
"What makes you look so white, so white?" said Files-on-Parade.  
"I'm dreadin' what I've got to watch," the Color-Sergeant said.  
"For they're hangin' Danny Deever, you can 'ear the Dead March  
play,  
The regiment's in 'ollow square - they're hangin' him to-day;  
They've taken of his buttons off an' cut his stripes away,  
An' they're hanging Danny Deever in the mornin'."

*Tales and Ballads*

“What makes the rear-rank breathe so ’ard!” said Files-on-Parade.

“It’s bitter cold, it’s bitter cold,” the Color-Sergeant said.

“What makes that front-rank man fall down?” says Files-on-Parade.

“A touch of sun, a touch of sun,” the Color-Sergeant said.

“They are hangin’ Danny Deever, they are marchin’ of ’im round,  
They ’ave ’altd Danny Deever by ’is coffin on the ground;  
An’ ’e’ll swing in ’arf a minute for a sneakin’ shootin’ hound –  
O they’re hangin’ Danny Deever in the mornin’.”

“ ’Is cot was right ’and cot to mine,” said Files-on-Parade.

“ ’E’s sleepin’ out an’ far to-night,” the Color-Sergeant said.

“I’ve drunk ’is beer a score o’ times,” said Files-on-parade.

“ ’E’s drinkin’ bitter beer alone,” the Color-Sergeant said,  
“They are hangin’ Danny Deever, you must mark ’im to is place,  
For ’e shot a comrade sleepin’ – you must look ’im in the face;  
Nine ’undred of is county an’ the regiment’s disgrace,  
While they’re hangin’ Danny Deever in the mornin’.”

“What’s that so black agin’ the sun?” said Files-on-parade.

“It’s Danny fightin’ ’ard for life,” the Color-Sergeant said.

“What’s that that whimpers over’ead?” said Files-on-Parade.

“It’s Danny’s soul that’s passin’ now,” the Color-sergeant said.

“For they’re done with Danny Deever, you can ’ear the quick-step  
play,

The regiment’s in column, an’ they’re marchin’ us away;

Ho! the young recruits are shakin’, an’ they’ll want their beer to-  
day,

After hangin’ Danny Deever in the mornin’.”

*Rudyard Kipling*



JOHN SILVER

## **The Ballad of John Silver**

We were schooner-rigged and rakish, with a long and lissome hull,  
And we flew the pretty colours of the cross-bones and the skull;  
We'd a big black Jolly Roger flapping grimly at the fore,  
And we sailed the Spanish Water in the happy days of yore.

We'd a long brass gun amidships, like a well-conducted ship,  
We had each a brace of pistols and a cutlass at the hip;  
It's a point which tells against us, and a fact to be deplored,  
But we chased the goodly merchant-men and laid their ships  
    aboard.

Then the dead men fouled the scuppers and the wounded filled the  
    chains,  
And the paint-work all was spatter-dashed with other people's  
    brains,  
She was boarded, she was looted, she was scuttled till she sank  
And the pale survivors left us by the medium of the plank.

O! then it was (while standing by the taffrail on the poop)  
We could hear the drowning folk lament the absent chicken-coop;  
Then, having washed the blood away, we'd little else to do  
Than to dance a quiet hornpipe as the old salts taught us to.

O! the fiddle on the fo'c's'le, and the slapping naked soles,  
And the genial 'Down the middle, Jake, and curtsey when she rolls!'  
With the silver seas around us and the pale moon over-head,  
And the look-out not a-looking and his pipe-bowl glowing red.

Ah! the pig-tailed, quidding pirates and the pretty pranks we  
    played,  
All have since been put a stop-to by the naughty Board of Trade;  
The schooners and the merry crews are laid away to rest,  
A little south the sunset in the Islands of the Blest.

*John Masefield*

## **Tubby Hook**

(About two-thirds of a mile below Spuyten Duyvil, at the old settlement of Inwood from where the Dyckman Street ferry carries picnic-parties across the Hudson to the Palisades, there is a rock-edged cape which, before filling-in operations changed its rounded outline, by its appearance alone justified its old Dutch name of “Tobbe Hoeck” – the Cape of the Tub – now rendered “Tubby Hook.”)

Mevrouw von Weber was brisk though fat;  
She loved her neighbor, she loved her cat,  
She loved her husband; but, here’s the rub –  
Beyond all conscience she loved her tub!

She rubbed and scrubbed with strange delight,  
She scrubbed and rubbed from morn till night;

Her earthly hope  
Was placed in soap;

Her walls and chimneypiece fairly shone,  
Her skirts were starched so they stood alone!  
By mop and duster and broom she swore.

She scrubbed the floor  
Until she wore

The oak in channels from door to door.

The flood she reveled in never ebbed,

And hill to dale  
Retold the tale

That both her hands and feet were webbed!

Now Hans, her husband, was mild and meek;

He let her scrub through the livelong week;

But when the sud of her washtub churned

On Easter Sunday! – the earthworm turned.

“Nay, vrouw,”<sup>1</sup> quoth he,

“Let labor be!

This day when all of the world’s at feast

Thou’lt wash no more – in *my* house, at least!”

<sup>1</sup> Vrouw: wife



*Tales and Ballads*

She stopped her toil at her lord's command.  
Without a sound  
She flaunted round  
And took her tub to the river strand,  
Where Hans, who followed in dark dismay,  
Could hear her vow,  
His angry vrouw,  
"I'll wash and wash till Judgment Day!"

Along a river that leaped in flame  
The Sailing Witches of Salem came.  
(They ride the waters, that evil crew,  
Wherever the Duyvil<sup>2</sup> hath work to do.)  
And every witch in a washtub sat,  
And every witch had a coal-black cat  
That steered the course with a supple tail,  
shift for a sail,  
A shell to bale,  
A thread to reef when the wind blew strong,  
A broom to whurry the bark along.

They hailed the vrouw on her spit of sand;  
She waved them back with a soapy hand.  
Cried one whose face was a Chinese mask,  
"This dame is sworn to a goodly task!  
Come, friends that ride on the crested swell,  
We'll charm the spot with a lasting spell  
That here she'll stay  
And scour away,  
And never rest till the Judgment Day!"  
With cries to Satan and Beelzebub  
They shaped the cape like an upturned tub! –  
Beneath its dome and the shifting sands  
That busy vrouw at her washtub stands,  
While day and night  
She bends her might  
To scrub the fur of a black cat white!

<sup>2</sup> Duyvil – the Dutch word for devil

*This Singing World*

When down the river the norther scuds  
The waves are flecked with the rising suds.  
When clouds roll black as a Dutchman's hat  
You'll hear the wail of the injured cat!

So heed her fall,  
Good housewives all,  
And take this truth from a ragged song –  
That super-cleanliness *may* go wrong!

*Arthur Guiterman*

**Drake's Drum \***

Drake he's in his hammock an' a thousand mile away,  
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?)  
Slung between the round shot in Nombre Dios Bay,  
An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe.  
Yarnder lumes the island, yarnder lie the ships,  
Wi' sailor lads adancin' heel-an'-toe,  
An' the shore-lights flashin', an' the night-tide dashin'  
He sees et arl so plainly as he saw et long ago.

Drake he was a Devon man, an' ruled the Devon seas,  
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?),  
Rovin' tho' his death fell, he went wi' heart at ease,  
An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe,  
"Take my drum to England, hang et by the shore,  
Strike et when your powder's runnin' low;  
If the Dons sight Devon, I'll quit the port o' Heaven,  
An' drum them up the Channel as we drummed them long ago."

Drake he's in his hammock till the great Armadas come,  
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?),  
Slung atween the round shot, listen' for the drum,  
An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe.  
Call him on the deep sea, call him up the Sound,  
Call him when ye sail to meet the foe;  
Where the old trade's plyin' an' the old flag's flyin',  
They shall find him, ware an' wakin', as they found him long  
ago.

*Henry Newbolt*

\* See Note 21.

## **The Horse Thief \***

There he moved, cropping the grass at the purple canyon's lip.

His mane was mixed with the moonlight that silvered his snow-white side,

For the moon sailed out of a cloud with the wake of a spectral ship.

I crouched and I crawled on my belly, my lariat coil looped wide.

Dimly and dark the mesas <sup>1</sup> broke on the starry sky.

A pall covered every color of their gorgeous glory at noon.

I smelt the yucca and mesquite, and stifled my heart's quick cry,

And wormed and crawled on my belly to where he moved against the moon!

Some Moorish barb was that mustang's sire. His lines were beyond all wonder.

From the prick of his ears to the flow of his tail he ached in my throat –and eyes.

Steel and velvet grace! As the prophet says, God had “clothed his neck with thunder.”

Oh, marvelous with the drifting cloud he drifted across the skies!

And then I was near at hand – crouched, and balanced, and cast the coil;

And the moon was smothered in cloud, and the rope through my hands with a rip!

But somehow I gripped and clung, with the blood in my brain a-boil, –

With a turn round the rugged tree-stump there on the purple canyon's lip.

Right into the stars he reared aloft, his red eye rolling and raging.

He whirled and sunfished and lashed, and rocked the earth to thunder and flame.

He squealed like a regular devil horse. I was haggard and spent and aging-

Roped clean, but almost storming clear, his fury too fierce to tame.

\* See [Note 22](#).

<sup>1</sup> Mesas – the Spanish word for plateau or high tableland.

*This Singing World*

And I cursed myself for a tenderfoot moon-dazzled to play the part,  
But I was doubly desperate then, with the posse <sup>2</sup> pulled out from  
town,

Or I'd never have tried it. I only knew I must get a mount and a  
start.

The filly had snapped her foreleg short. I had had to shoot her  
down.

So there he struggled and strangled, and I snubbed him around the  
tree.

Nearer, a little nearer – hoofs planted, and lolling tongue –  
Till a sudden slack pitched me backward. He reared right on top of  
me.

Mother of God-that moment! He missed me . . . and up I swung.

Somehow, gone daft completely and clawing a bunch of his mane,  
As he stumbled and tripped in the lariat, there I was – up and  
astride

And cursing for seven counties! And the mustang? *Just insane!*  
Crack-bang! went the rope; we cannoned off the tree – then –  
gods, that ride!

A rocket – that's all, a rocket! I dug with my teeth and nails.

Why, we never hit even the high spots (though I hardly  
remember things),

But I heard a monstrous booming like a thunder of flapping sails  
When he spread – well, call me a liar! – when he spread those  
wings, those wings!

So white that my eyes were blinded, thick-feathered and wide  
unfurled,

They beat the air into billows. We sailed, and the earth was  
gone.

Canyon and desert and mesa withered below, with the world.  
And then I knew that mustang; for I – was Bellerophon!

<sup>2</sup> Posse – (pronounced p<sup>ó</sup>ssee) a group of people banded  
together to assist the sheriff in tracking down a  
criminal.

*Tales and Ballads*

Yes, glad as the Greek, and mounted on a horse of the elder gods,  
With never a magic bridle or a fountain-mirror nigh!

*My chaps and spurs and holster must have looked it? What's the odds?*

I'd a leg over lightning and thunder, careering across the sky!

And forever streaming before me, fanning my forehead cool,  
Flowed a mane of molten silver; and just before my thighs  
(As I gripped his velvet-muscle ribs, while I cursed myself for a fool),

The steady pulse of those pinions – their wonderful fall and rise!

The bandanna I bought in Bowie blew loose and whipped from my neck.

My shirt was stuck to my shoulders and ribboning out behind.  
The stars were dancing, wheeling and glancing, dipping with smirk and beck.

The clouds were flowing, dusking and glowing. We rode a roaring wind.

We soared through the silver starlight to knock at the planets' gates.

New shimmering constellations came whirling into our ken.  
Red stars and green and golden swung out of the void that waits  
For man's great last adventure; the Signs took shape – and then

I knew the lines of that Centaur the moment I saw him come!

The musical box of the heavens all round us rolled to a tune  
That tinkled and chimed and trilled with silver sounds that struck you dumb,

As if some archangel were grinding out the music of the moon.

Melody-drunk on the Milky Way, as we crept and soared hilarious,  
Full in our pathway, sudden he stood – the Centaur of the Stars,  
Flashing from head and hoofs and breast! I knew him for Sagittarius.

He reared, and bent and drew his bow. He crouched as a boxer spars.

*This Singing World*

Flung back on his haunches, weird he loomed – then leapt – and the  
dim void lightened.

Old White Wings shied and swerved aside, and fled from the  
splendor-shod.

Through a flashing welter of worlds we charged. I knew why my  
horse was frightened.

He *had* two faces – a dog's and a man's – that Babylonian god!

Also, he followed us real as fear. Ping! went an arrow past.

My broncho buck-jumped, humping high. We plunged . . . I  
guess that's all!

I lay on the purple canyon's lip, when I opened my eyes at last –  
Stiff and sore and my head like a drum, but I broke no bones in  
the fall.

So you know – and now you may string me up. Such was the way  
you caught me.

Thank you for letting me tell it straight, though you never could  
greatly care.

For I took a horse that wasn't mine! . . . But there's one the heavens  
brought me,

And I'll hang right happy, because I know he is waiting for me  
up there.

From creamy muzzle to cannon-bone, by God, he's a peerless  
wonder!

He is steel and velvet and furnace-fire, and death's supremest  
prize,

And never again shall be roped on earth that neck that is "clothed  
with thunder. . . ."

String me up, Dave! Go dig my grave! I *rode him across the  
skies!*

*William Rose Benét*

## **The First Story**

Mid seaweed on a sultry strand, ten thousand years ago,  
A sun-burned baby sprawling lay, a-playing with his toe.

The babe was dreaming of the day that he might swing a club,  
When lo! He saw a fishy thing, a-squirming in the mud.

The creature was an octopus, and dangerous to pat,  
But the prehistoric infant never stopped to think of that.

The baby's fingernails were sharp, his appetite was prime,  
He clutched that deep-sea monster, for 'twas nearing supper-time.

Oh! Suddenly, from out the pulp a fluid black did flow,  
'Twas flavored like a barberry wine and gave a sort of glow;

It squirted in the baby's eyes; it made him gasp and blink,  
But to that octopus he held, and drank up all the ink.

The ink was in the baby – he was bound to write a tale;  
So he wrote the first of stories with his little fingernail!

*Nathalia Crane*

## **The Slave's Dream**

Beside the ungathered rice he lay,  
His sickle in his hand;  
His breast was bare, his matted hair  
Was buried in the sand.  
Again, in the mist and shadow of sleep,  
He saw his Native Land.

Wide through the landscape of his dreams  
The lordly Niger flowed;  
Beneath the palm-trees on the plain  
Once more a king he strode;  
And heard the tinkling caravans  
Descend the mountain-road.

*This Singing World*

He saw once more his dark-eyed queen  
    Among her children stand;  
They clasped his neck, they kissed his cheeks,  
    They held him by the hand! –  
A tear burst from the sleeper's lids  
    And fell into the sand.

And then at furious speed he rode  
    Along the Niger's bank;  
His bridle-reins were golden chains,  
    And, with a martial clank,  
At each leap he could feel his scabbard of steel  
    Smiting his stallion's flank.

Before him, like a blood-red flag,  
    The bright flamingoes flew;  
From morn till night he followed their flight,  
    O'er plains where the tamarind grew,  
Till he saw the roofs of Caffre huts,  
    And the ocean rose to view.

At night he heard the lion roar,  
    And the hyæna scream,  
And the river-horse, as he crushed the reeds  
    Beside some hidden stream;  
And it passed, like a glorious roll of drums,  
    Through the triumph of his dream.

The forests, with their myriad tongues,  
    Shouted of liberty;  
And the Blast of the Desert cried aloud,  
    With a voice so wild and free,  
That he started in his sleep and smiled  
    At their tempestuous glee.

He did not feel the driver's whip,  
    Nor the burning heat of the day;  
For Death had illumined the Land of Sleep,  
    And his lifeless body lay  
A worn-out fetter, that the soul  
    Had broken and thrown away!

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*



## **From the Day-Book of a Forgotten Prince**

My father is happy or we should be poor,  
His gateway is wide and the folk of the moor  
Come singing so gaily right up to the door.

We live in a castle that's dingy and old;  
The casements are broken, the corridors cold;  
The larder is empty, the cook is a scold.

But father can dance and his singing is loud.  
From meadow and highway there's always a crowd  
That gathers to hear him, and this makes him proud.

He roars out a song in a voice that is sweet,  
Of grandeur that's gone, rare viands to eat,  
And treasure that used to be laid at his feet.

He picks up his robe, faded, wrinkled and torn,  
Though banded in ermine, moth-eaten and worn,  
And held at the throat by a twisted old thorn.

He leaps in the air with a rickety grace,  
And a kingly old smile illumines his face,  
While he fondles his beard and stares off into space.

The villagers laugh, then look quickly away,  
And some of them kneel in the orchard to pray.  
I often hear whispers: "The old king is fey!"

But after they're gone we shall find, if you please,  
White loaves and a pigeon and honey and cheese,  
And wine that we drink while I sit on his knees.

And then, while he sups, he will feed me and tell  
Of Mother, whom men used to call "The Gazelle,"  
And of glorious times before the curse fell.

*This Singing World*

At last he will sink, half-asleep, to the floor;  
The rafters will echo his quivering snore. . . .  
I go to find cook through the slack, oaken door.

\* \* \* \*

*My father is happy or we should be poor;  
His gateway is wide and the folk at the moor  
Come singing so gaily right up to the door.*

*Jean Starr Untermeyer*

## **The Sands of Dee**

‘O Mary, go and call the cattle home,  
And call the cattle home,  
And call the cattle home  
Across the sands of Dee;’  
The western wind was wild and dank with foam,  
And all alone went she.

The western tide crept up along the sand,  
And o’er and o’er the sand,  
And round and round the sand,  
As far as eye could see.  
The rolling mist came down and hid the land:  
And never home came she.

‘Oh! is it weed, or fish, or floating hair –  
A tress of golden hair,  
A drowned maiden’s hair  
Above the nets at sea?  
Was never salmon yet that shone so fair  
Among the stakes on Dee.’

They rowed her in across the rolling foam,  
The cruel crawling foam,  
The cruel hungry foam,  
To her grave beside the sea:  
But still the boatmen hear her call the cattle home  
Across the sands of Dee.

*Charles Kingsley*

## **The Ballad of East and West \***

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,  
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;  
But there is neither East nor west, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,  
When two strong men stand face to face, tho' they come from the  
ends of the earth!

Kamal is out with twenty men to raise the Border side,  
And he has lifted the Colonel's mare that is the Colonel's pride:  
He has lifted her out of the stable-door between the dawn and the  
day,

And turned the calkins <sup>1</sup> upon her feet, and ridden her far away.  
Then up and spoke the colonel's son that led a troop of the Guides:  
"Is there never a man of all my men can say where Kamal hides?"  
Then up and spoke Mahommed Khan, the son of the Ressaldar,  
"If ye know the track of the morning-mist, ye know where his  
pickets are.

"At dusk he harries the Abazai – at dawn he is into Bonair,  
"But he must go by Fort Bukloh to his own place to fare,  
"So if ye gallop to Fort Bukloh as fast as a bird can fly,  
"By the favor of God ye may cut him off ere he win to the Tongue of  
Jagai,

"But if he be past the Tongue of Jagai, right swiftly turn ye then,  
"For the length and the breadth of that grisly plain is sown with  
Kamal's men.

"There is rock to the left, and rock to the right, and low lean thorn  
between,  
"And ye may hear a breech-bolt snick where never a man is seen."

The colonel's son has taken a horse, and a raw rough dun was he,  
With the mouth of a bell and the heart of Hell, and the head of the  
gallows-tree.

The colonel's son to the Fort has won, they bid him stay to eat –  
Who rides at the tail of a Border thief, he sits not long at his meat.

\* See Note 23.

<sup>1</sup> Calkins – sharp points of iron on the shoe of a horse, put there to prevent slipping.

*This Singing World*

He's up and away from Fort Bukloh as fast as he can fly,  
Till he was aware of his father's mare in the gut of the Tongue of Jagai,

Till he was aware of his father's mare with Kamal upon her back,  
And when he could spy the white of her eye, he made the pistol crack.

He has fired once, he has fired twice, but the whistling ball went wide.

"Ye shoot like a soldier," Kamal said. "Show now if ye can ride."  
It's up and over the Tongue of Jagai, as blown dust-devils go,  
The dun he fled like a stag of ten, but the mare like a barren doe.  
The dun he leaned against the bit and slugged his head above,  
But the red mare played with the snaffle-bars, as a maiden plays with a glove.

There was rock to the left and rock to the right, and low lean thorn between,

And thrice he heard a breech-bolt snick tho' never a man was seen.

They have ridden the low moon out of the sky, their hoofs drum up the dawn,

The dun he went like a wounded bull, but the mare like a new-roused fawn.

The dun he fell at a water-course - in a woeful heap fell he,  
And Kamal has turned the red mare back, and pulled the rider free.  
He has knocked the pistol out of his hand - small room was there to strive,

"Twas only by favor of mine," quoth he, "ye rode so long alive:  
"There was not a rock for twenty mile, there was not a clump of tree,

"But covered a man of my own men with his rifle cocked on his knee.

"If I had raised my bridle-hand, as I have held it low,  
"The little jackals that flee so fast, were feasting all in a row:  
"If I had bowed my head on my breast, as I have held it high,  
"The kite that whistles above us now were gorged till she could not fly."

Lightly answered the Colonel's son: "Do good to bird and beast,  
"But count who come for the broken meats before thou makest a feast.

*Tales and Ballads*

“If there should follow a thousand swords to carry my bones away,  
“Belike the price of a jackal’s meal were more than a thief could pay.

“They will feed their horse on the standing crop, their men on the  
garnered grain,  
“The thatch of the byres will serve their fires when all the cattle are  
slain.

“But if thou thinkest the price be fair, – thy brethren, wait to sup,  
“The hound is kin to the jackal-spawn, – howl, dog, and call them  
up!

“And if thou thinkest the price be high, in steer and gear and stack,  
“Give me my father’s mare again, and I’ll fight my own way back!”  
Kamal has gripped him by the hand and set him upon his feet.

“No talk shall be of dogs,” said he, “when wolf and grey wolf meet.  
“May I eat dirt if thou hast hurt of me in deed or breath;  
“What dam of lances brought thee forth to jest at the dawn with  
Death?”

Lightly answered the colonel’s son: “I hold by the blood of my clan:  
“Take up the mare for my father’s gift – by God, she has carried a  
man!”

The red mare ran to the colonel’s son, and, nuzzled against his  
breast,

“We be two strong men,” said Kamal then, “but she loveth the  
younger best.

“So she shall go with a lifter’s dower my turquoise-studded rein,  
“My broidered saddle and saddle-cloth, and silver stirrups twain.”

The colonel’s son a pistol drew and held it muzzle-end,

“Ye have taken the one from a foe,” said he; “will ye take the mate  
from a friend?”

“A gift for a gift,” said Kamal straight, “A limb for the risk of a limb.  
“Thy father has sent his son to me, I’ll send my son to him!”

With that he whistled his only son, that dropped from a mountain-  
crest –

He trod the ling like a buck in spring, and he looked like a lance in  
rest.

“Now here is thy master,” Kamal said, “who leads a troop of the  
Guides,

*This Singing World*

“And thou must ride at his left side as shield on shoulder rides.  
“Till Death or I cut loose the tie, at camp and board and bed,  
“Thy life is his – thy fate it is to guard him with thy head.  
“So thou must eat the White Queen’s meat, and all her foes are  
    thine,  
“And thou must harry thy father’s hold for the peace of the  
    Borderline,  
“And thou must make a trooper tough and hack thy way to power –  
“Belike they will raise thee to Ressaldar when I am hanged in  
    Peshawur.”

They have looked each other between the eyes, and there they found  
    no fault,  
They have taken the Oath of the Brother-in-Blood on leavened bread  
    and salt:  
They have taken the oath of the Brother-in-Blood on fire and fresh-  
    cut sod,  
On the hilt and the halt of the Khyber knife, and the Wondrous  
    Names of God.  
The Colonel’s son he rides the mare and Kamal’s boy the dun,  
And two have come back to Fort Bukloh where there went forth but  
    one.  
And when they drew to the Quarter-Guard, full twenty swords flew  
    clear –  
There was not a man but carried his feud with the blood of the  
    mountaineer.  
“Ha’ done! ha’ done!” said the Colonel’s son. “Put up the steel at  
    your sides!  
“Last night ye had struck at a Border thief – to-night ’tis a man of  
    the Guides!”

*Oh, East is East, and West is West, and, never the two shall meet,  
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God’s great Judgment Seat;  
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,  
When two strong men stand face to face, tho’ they come from the  
    ends of the earth.*

*Rudyard Kipling*

## **The Blessèd Damozel \***

The blessed damozel leaned out  
From the gold bar of Heaven;  
Her eyes were deeper than the depth  
Of waters stilled at even;  
She had three lilies in her hand,  
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,  
No wrought flowers did adorn,  
But a white rose of Mary's gift,  
For service meetly worn;  
Her hair that lay along her back  
Was yellow like ripe corn.

Herseemed <sup>1</sup> she scarce had been a day  
One of God's choristers;  
The wonder was not yet quite gone  
From that still look of hers;  
Albeit, to them she left, her day  
Had counted as ten years.

It was the rampart of God's house  
That she was standing on;  
By God built over the sheer depth  
The which is Space begun;  
So high, that looking downward thence  
She scarce could see the sun.

It lies in Heaven, across the flood  
Of ether, as a bridge,  
Beneath, the tides of day and night  
With flame and darkness ridge  
The void, as low as where this earth  
Spins like a fretful midge. <sup>2</sup>

\* See Note 24.

<sup>1</sup> Herseemed: It seemed to her.

<sup>2</sup> Midge – a tiny insect.

*This Singing World*

Around her, lovers, newly met  
    'Mid deathless love's acclaims,  
Spoke evermore among themselves  
    Their heart-remembered names;  
And the souls mounting up to God  
    Went by her like thin flames.

And still she bowed herself and stooped  
    Out of the circling charm;  
Until her bosom must have made  
    The bar she leaned on warm,  
And the lilies lay as if asleep  
    Along her bended arm.

From the fixed place of Heaven she saw  
    Time, like a pulse, shake fierce  
Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove  
    Within the gulf to pierce  
Its path; and now she spoke as when  
    The stars sang in their spheres.

The sun was gone now; the curled moon  
    Was like a little feather  
Fluttering far down the gulf; and now  
    She spoke through the still weather.  
Her voice was like the voice the stars  
    Had when they sang together.

(Ah sweet! Even now, in that bird's song,  
    Strove not her accents there,  
Fain to be hearkened? When those bells  
    Possessed the mid-day air,  
Strove not her steps to reach my side  
    Down all the echoing stair?)

"I wish that he were come to me,  
    For he will come," she said.  
"Have I not prayed in Heaven? – on earth,  
    Lord, Lord, has he not pray'd?  
Are not two prayers a perfect strength?  
    And shall I feel afraid?"



*Tales and Ballads*

“When round his head the aureole clings,  
And he is clothed in white,  
I’ll take his hand and go with him  
To the deep wells of light;  
As unto a stream we will step down,  
And bathe there in God’s sight.

“We two will stand beside that shrine,  
Occult, withheld, untrod,  
Whose lamps are stirred continually  
With prayer sent up to God;  
And see our prayers, granted, melt  
Each like a little cloud.

“We two will lie i’ the shadow of  
That living mystic tree  
Within whose secret growth the Dove  
Is sometimes felt to be,  
While every leaf that His plumes touch  
Saith His Name audibly.

And I myself will teach to him,  
I myself, lying so  
The songs I sing here; which his voice  
Shall pause in, hushed and slow,  
And find some knowledge at each pause,  
Or some new thing to know.

“We two,” she said, “will seek the groves  
Where the lady Mary is,  
With her five handmaidens, whose names  
Are five sweet symphonies,  
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,  
Margaret and Rosalys.

“He shall fear, haply, and be dumb:  
Then will I lay my cheek  
To his, and tell about our love,  
Not once abashed or weak:  
And the dear Mother will approve  
My pride, and let me speak.

*This Singing World*

“Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,  
    To Him round whom all souls  
Kneel, the clear-ranged unnumbered heads  
    Bowed with their aureoles;  
And angels meeting us shall sing  
    To their citherns and citoles.<sup>3</sup>

“There will I ask of Christ the Lord  
    Thus much for him and me: –  
Only to live as once on earth  
    With Love, only to be,  
As then awhile, for ever now  
    Together, I and he.”

She gazed and listened and then said,  
    Less sad of speech than mild, –  
“All this is when he comes.” She ceased.  
    The light thrilled towards her, filled  
With angels in strong level flight.  
    Her eyes prayed, and she smil’d.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path  
    Was vague in distant spheres:  
And then she cast her arms along  
    The golden barriers,  
And laid her face between her hands,  
    And wept. (I heard her tears.)

*Dante Gabriel Rossetti*

<sup>3</sup> citherns and citoles: stringed instruments like the zither and guitar.

## **How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix \***

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;  
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;  
“Good speed!” cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;  
“Speed!” echoed the wall to us galloping through;  
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,  
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace  
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place;  
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,  
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique <sup>1</sup> right,  
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,  
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

’Twas moonset at starting; but while we drew near  
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;  
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;  
At Düffeld, ’twas morning as plain as could be;  
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,  
So Joris broke silence with, “Yet there is time!”

At Aerschot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,  
And against him the cattle stood black every one,  
To stare thro’ the mist at us galloping past,  
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,  
With resolute shoulders, each butting away  
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray.

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back  
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track;  
And one eye’s black intelligence, – ever that glance  
O’er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!  
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon  
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

\* See [Note 25](#).

<sup>1</sup> Pique: in this connection, “pique” is part of the saddle.

*This Singing World*

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, "Stay spur!  
"Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,  
"We'll remember at Aix" – for one heard the quick wheeze  
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,  
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,  
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

So we were left galloping, Joris and I,  
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;  
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,  
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff;  
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,  
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!

"How they'll greet us!" and all in a moment his roan  
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;  
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight  
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,  
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,  
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,  
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,  
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,  
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer;  
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,  
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

And all I remember is, friends flocking round  
As I sate with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground,  
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,  
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,  
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)  
Was no more than his due who brought good news from Ghent.

*Robert Browning*

## **The Charge of the Light Brigade \***

Half a league, half a league,  
Half a league onward,  
All in the valley of Death  
    Rode the six hundred.  
“Forward the Light Brigade!  
Charge for the guns!” he said,  
Into the valley of Death  
    Rode the six hundred.

“Forward, the Light Brigade!”  
Was there a man dismay’d?  
Not tho’ the soldier knew  
    Some one had blunder’d.  
Theirs not to make reply,  
Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs but to do and die.  
Into the valley of Death  
    Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,  
Cannon to left of them,  
Cannon in front of them  
    Volley’d and thunder’d;  
Storm’d at with shot and shell,  
Boldly they rode and well,  
Into the jaws of Death,  
Into the mouth of hell  
    Rode the six hundred.

\* See [Note 26](#).

*This Singing World*

Flash'd all their sabres bare,  
Flash'd as they turned in air  
Sabring the gunners there.  
Charging an army, while  
    All the world wonder'd.  
Plunged in the battery-smoke  
Right thro' the line they broke.  
Cossack and Russian  
Reel'd from the sabre-stroke  
Shatter'd and sunder'd.  
Then they rode back, but not,  
    Not the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,  
Cannon to left of them,  
Cannon behind them  
    Volley'd and thunder'd;  
Storm'd at with shot and shell,  
While horse and hero fell,  
They that had fought so well  
Came thro' the jaws of Death,  
Back from the mouth of hell,  
All that was left of them,  
    Left of six hundred.

When can their glory fade?  
O the wild charge they made!  
All the world wonder'd.  
Honor the charge they made!  
Honor the Light Brigade,  
    Noble six hundred!

*Alfred Tennyson*

## **The Puritan's Ballad**

My love came up from Barnegat,  
The sea was in his eyes;  
He trod as softly as a cat  
And told me terrible lies.

His hair was yellow as new-cut pine  
In shavings curled and feathered;  
I thought how silver it would shine  
By cruel winters weathered.

But he was in his twentieth year,  
This time I'm speaking of;  
We were head over heels in love with fear  
And half a-feared of love.

My hair was piled in a copper crown –  
A devilish living thing,  
And the tortoise-shell pins fell down, fell down,  
When that snake uncoiled to spring.

His feet were used to treading a gale  
And balancing thereon;  
His face was brown as a foreign sail  
Threadbare against the sun.

His arms were thick as hickory logs  
Whittled to little wrists;  
Strong as the teeth of terrier dogs  
Were the fingers of his fists.

Within his arms I feared to sink  
Where lions shook their manes,  
And dragons drawn in azure ink  
Leapt quickened by his veins.

Dreadful his strength and length of limb  
As the sea to foundering ships;  
I dipped my hands in love for him  
No deeper than their tips.

But our palms were welded by a flame  
The moment we came to part,

*This Singing World*

And on his knuckles I read my name  
Enscrolled within a heart.

And something made our wills to bend  
As wild as trees blown over;  
We were no longer friend and friend,  
But only lover and lover.

“In seven weeks or seventy years –  
God grant it may be sooner! –  
I’ll make a handkerchief for your tears  
From the sails of my captain’s schooner.

We’ll wear our loves like wedding rings  
Long polished to our touch;  
We shall be busy with other things  
And they cannot bother us much.

When you are skimming the wrinkled cream  
And your ring clinks on the pan,  
You’ll say to yourself in a pensive dream,  
’How wonderful a man!’

When I am slitting a fish’s head  
And my ring clanks on the knife,  
I’ll say with thanks, as a prayer is said,  
’How beautiful a wife!’

And I shall fold my decorous paws  
In velvet smooth and deep,  
Like a kitten that covers up its claws  
To sleep and sleep and sleep.

Like a little blue pigeon you shall bow  
Your bright alarming crest;  
In the crook of my arm you’ll lay your brow  
To rest and rest and rest.”

*Will he never come back from Barnegat  
With thunder in his eyes,  
Treading as soft as a tiger cat,  
To tell me terrible lies?*

*Elinor Wylie*



## Whoopee Ti Yi Yo <sup>1</sup>

As I was a-walking one morning for pleasure,  
I spied a cow-puncher all riding along;  
His hat was throwed back and his spurs was a-jingling,  
And he approached me, a-singing this song:

*Whoopee ti yi yo, git along, little dogies, <sup>2</sup>*  
*It's your misfortune, and none of my own.*  
*Whoopee ti yi yo, git along, little dogies,*  
*For you know Wyoming will be your new home.*

Early in spring we round up the dogies,  
Mark 'em and brand 'em and bob off their tails;  
Round up the horses, load up the chuck-wagon,  
Then throw the dogies upon the old trail.

It's whooping and yelling and driving the dogies;  
Oh, how I wish you would all go on!  
It's whooping and punching and "Go on, little dogies,  
For you know Wyoming will be your new home."

Oh, you'll be soup for Uncle Sam's Injuns, –  
It's "beef, heap beef," I hear them cry.  
Git along, git along, git along, little dogies,  
You're going to be beef steers by and by.

*Whoopee ti yi yo, git along, little dogies,*  
*It's your misfortune, and none of my own.*  
*Whoopee ti yi yo, git along, little dogies,*  
*For you know Wyoming will be your new home.*

*American Cowboy Ballad*

<sup>1</sup> Try the tune for "Streets of Laredo" with this. – Pete

<sup>2</sup> dogies: young cattle.

## **Father Gilligan**

The old priest Peter Gilligan  
Was weary night and day,  
For half his flock were in their beds,  
Or under green sod lay.

Once while he nodded on a chair,  
At the moth-hour of eve,  
Another poor man sent for him,  
And he began to grieve.

“I have no rest, nor joy, nor peace,  
For people die and die;”  
And after cried he, “God forgive!  
My body spake, not I!”

And then, half-lying on the chair,  
He knelt, prayed, fell asleep;  
And the moth-hour went from the fields,  
And stars began to peep.

They slowly into millions grew,  
And leaves shook in the wind;  
And God covered the world with shade,  
And whispered to mankind.

Upon the time of sparrow-chirp  
When the moths came once more,  
The old priest Peter Gilligan  
Stood upright on the floor.

“*Mavrone, Mavrone!* the man has died,  
While I slept on the chair;”  
He roused his horse out of its sleep,  
And rode with little care.

*Tales and Ballads*

He rode now as he never rode,  
By rocky lane and fen;  
The sick man's wife opened the door:  
"Father! you come again!"

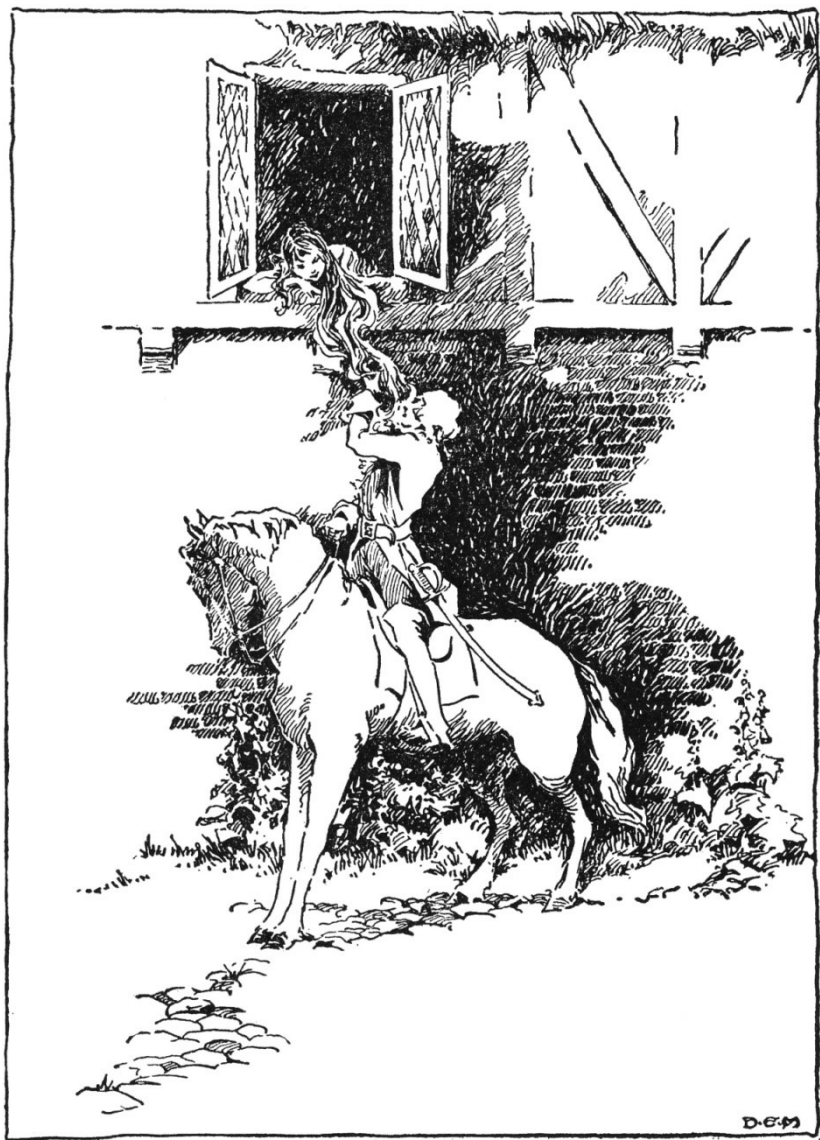
"And is the poor man dead?" he cried'  
"He died an hour ago."  
The old Priest Peter Gilligan  
In grief swayed to and fro.

"When you were gone he turned and died,  
As merry as a bird."  
The old Priest Peter Gilligan  
He knelt him at that word.

"He who hath made the night of stars  
For souls who tire and bleed,  
Sent one of His great angels down  
To help me in my need.

"He who is wrapped in purple robes,  
With planets in his care'  
Had pity on the least of things  
Asleep upon a chair."

*William Butler Yeats*



THE HIGHWAYMAN

## **The Highwayman \***

### **PART ONE**

The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees,  
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,  
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,  
And the highwayman came riding –

Riding – riding –

The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door.

He'd a French cocked-hat on his forehead, a bunch of lace at his  
chin,

A coat of the claret velvet, and breeches of brown doe-skin;  
They fitted with never a wrinkle: his boots were up to the thigh!  
And he rode with a jewelled twinkle,

His pistol butts a-twinkle,

His rapier hilt a-twinkle, under the jewelled sky.

Over the cobbles he clattered and clashed in the dark inn-yard,  
And he tapped with his whip on the shutters, but all was locked and  
barred;

He whistled a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there  
But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,

Bess, the landlord's daughter,

Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

And dark in the dark old inn-yard a stable-wicket creaked  
Where Tim the ostler <sup>1</sup> listened; his face was white and peaked;  
His eyes were hollows of madness, his hair like mouldy hay,  
But he loved the landlord's daughter,

The landlord's red-lipped daughter.

Dumb as a dog he listened, and he heard the robber say –

“One kiss, my bonny sweetheart, I'm after a prize to-night,  
But I shall be back with the yellow gold before the morning light;  
Yet, if they press me sharply, and harry me through the day,  
Then look for me by moonlight,

Watch for me by moonlight,

I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way.”

\* See Note 27. <sup>1</sup> Ostler: one who takes care of the horses, a groom.

*This Singing World*

He rose upright in the stirrups; he scarce could reach her hand,  
But she loosened her hair i' the casement! His face burnt like a  
brand

As the black cascade of perfume came tumbling over his breast;  
And he kissed its waves in the moonlight,

(Oh, sweet black waves in the moonlight!)

Then he tugged at his rein in the moonlight, and galloped away to  
the West.

**PART TWO**

He did not come in the dawning; he did not come at noon;  
And out o' the tawny sunset, before the rise o' the moon,  
When the road was a gipsy's ribbon, looping the purple moor,  
A red-coat troop came marching –

Marching – marching –

King George's men came marching, up to the old inn-door.

They said no word to the landlord, they drank his ale instead,  
But they gagged his daughter and bound her to the foot of her  
narrow bed;

Two of them knelt at her casement with muskets at their side!  
There was death at every window;

And hell at one dark window;

For Bess could see, through her casement, the road that *he* would  
ride.

They had tied her up to attention, with many a sniggering jest;  
They had bound a musket beside her, with the barrel beneath her  
breast!

“Now keep good watch!” and they kissed her. She heard the dead  
man say –

*Look for me by moonlight;*

*Watch for me by moonlight;*

*I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way!*

*Tales and Ballads*

She twisted her hands behind her; but all the knots held good!  
She writhed her hands till her fingers were wet with sweat or blood!  
They stretched and strained in the darkness, and the hours crawled  
    by like years,  
Till, now, on the stroke of midnight,  
    Cold, on the stroke of midnight,  
The tip of one finger touched it! The trigger at least was hers!

The tip of one finger touched it; she strove no more for the rest!  
Up, she stood up to attention, with the barrel beneath her breast,  
She would not risk their hearing; she would not strive again;  
For the road lay bare in the moonlight;  
    Blank and bare in the moonlight;  
And the blood of her veins in the moonlight throbbed to her love's  
    refrain.

*Tlot-tlot; tlot-tlot!* Had they heard it? The horse-hoofs ringing  
    clear;  
*Tlot-tlot; tlot-tlot,* in the distance? Were they deaf that they did not  
    hear?  
Down the ribbon of moonlight, over the brow of the hill,  
The highwayman came riding,  
    Riding, riding!  
The red-coats looked to their priming! She stood up straight and  
    still!

*Tlot-tlot,* in the frosty silence! *Tlot-tlot,* in the echoing night!  
Nearer he came and nearer! Her face was like a light!  
Her eyes grew wide for a moment; she drew one last deep breath,  
Then her finger moved in the moonlight,  
    Her musket shattered the moonlight,  
Shattered her breast in the moonlight and warned him – with her  
    death.

*This Singing World*

He turned; he spurred to the West; he did not know who stood  
Bowed, with her head o'er the musket, drenched with her own red  
blood!

Not till the dawn he heard it, his face grew grey to hear  
How Bess, the landlord's daughter,  
The landlord's black-eyed daughter,  
Had watched for her love in the moonlight, and died in the darkness  
there.

Back, he spurred like a madman, shrieking a curse to the sky,  
With the white road smoking behind him and rapier brandished  
high!  
Blood-red were his spurs i' the golden noon; wine-red was his velvet  
coat,  
When they shot him down on the highway,  
Down like a dog on the highway,  
And he lay in his blood on the highway, with the bunch of lace at his  
throat.

\* \* \* \* \*

*And still of a winter's night, they say, when the wind is in the trees,  
When the moon is a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,  
When the road is a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,  
A highwayman comes riding -  
Riding - riding -  
A highwayman comes riding, up to the old inn-door.*

*Over the cobbles he clatters and clangs in the dark inn-yard;  
He taps with his whip on the shutters, but all is locked and barred;  
He whistles a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there  
But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,  
Bess, the landlord's daughter,  
Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.*

*Alfred Noyes*



# Laughing Legends



THE LOST SHOE

## **The Lost Shoe \***

Poor little Lucy  
By some mischance,  
Lost her shoe  
As she did dance:  
'Twas not on the stairs,  
Not in the hall;  
Not where they sat  
At supper at all.  
She looked in the garden,  
But there it was not;  
Henhouse, or kennel,  
Or high dovecote.  
Dairy and meadow,  
And wild woods through  
Showed not a trace  
Of Lucy's shoe.  
Bird nor bunny  
Nor glimmering moon  
Breathed a whisper  
Of where 'twas gone.  
It was cried and cried,  
Oyez and Oyez!  
In French, Dutch, Latin,  
And Portuguese.  
Ships the dark seas  
Went plunging through,  
But none brought news  
Of Lucy's shoe;  
And still she patters  
In silk and leather;  
O'er snow, sand, shingle,  
In every weather;

\* See Note 28.

*This Singing World*

Spain, and Africa,  
Hindustan,  
Java, China,  
And lamped Japan;  
Plain and desert,  
She hops – hops through,  
Pernambuco  
To gold Peru;  
Mountain and forest,  
And river too,  
All the world over  
For her lost shoe.

*Walter de la Mare*

## **Jim**

There was a Boy whose name was Jim;  
His Friends were very good to him.  
They gave him Tea, and Cakes, and Jam,  
And slices of delicious Ham,  
And Chocolate with pink inside  
And little Tricycles to ride,  
And read him Stories through and through,  
And even took him to the Zoo –  
But there it was the dreadful Fate  
Befell him, which I now relate.

You know – at least you ought to know,  
For I have often told you so –  
That Children never are allowed  
To leave their Nurses in a Crowd;  
Now this was Jim's especial Foible,  
He ran away when he was able,  
And on this inauspicious day  
He slipped his hand and ran away!

*Laughing Legends*

He hadn't gone a yard when – Bang!  
With open Jaws, a Lion sprang,  
And hungrily began to eat  
The Boy: beginning at his feet.  
Now, just imagine how it feels  
When first your toes and then your heels,  
And then by gradual degrees,  
Your shins and ankles, calves and knees,  
Are slowly eaten, bit by bit.  
No wonder Jim detested it!

No wonder that he shouted “Hi!”  
The Honest Keeper heard his cry,  
Though very fat he almost ran  
To help the little gentleman.  
“Ponto!” he ordered as he came  
(For Ponto was the Lion's name),  
“Ponto!” he cried, with angry Frown,  
“Let go, Sir! Down, Sir! Put it down!”  
The Lion made a sudden stop,  
He let the Dainty Morsel drop,  
And slunk reluctant to his Cage,  
Snarling with Disappointed Rage.  
But when he bent him over Jim,  
The Honest Keeper's Eyes were dim.  
The Lion having reached his Head,  
The Miserable Boy was dead!

When Nurse informed his Parents, they  
Were more Concerned than I can say: –  
His Mother, as She dried her eyes,  
Said, “Well – it gives me no surprise,  
He would not do as he was told!”  
His Father, who was self-controlled,  
Bade all the children round attend  
To James's miserable end,  
And always keep a-hold of Nurse  
For fear of finding something worse.

*Hilaire Belloc*

## **The Twins**

In form and feature, face and limb,  
I grew so like my brother,  
That folks got taking me for him,  
And each for one another.  
It puzzled all our kith and kin,  
It reached an awful pitch;  
For one of us was born a twin,  
Yet not a soul knew which.

One day (to make the matter worse),  
Before our names were fixed,  
As we were being washed by nurse  
We got completely mixed;  
And thus, you see, by Fate's decree,  
(Or rather nurse's whim),  
My brother John got christened *me*,  
And I got christened *him*.

This fatal likeness even dogg'd  
My footsteps when at school,  
And I was always getting flogg'd,  
For John turned out a fool.  
I put this question hopelessly  
To every one I knew –  
What *would* you do, if you were me,  
To prove that you were *you*?

Our close resemblance turned the tide  
Of my domestic life;  
For somehow my intended bride  
Became my brother's wife.  
In short, year after year the same  
Absurd mistake went on;  
And when I died – the neighbors came  
And buried brother John!

*Henry S. Leigh*

## **The Little Peach**

A little peach in the orchard grew –  
A little peach of emerald hue;  
Warmed by the sun and wet by the dew,  
It grew.

One day, passing the orchard through,  
That little peach dawned on the view  
Of Johnnie Jones and his sister Sue –  
Those two.

Up at the peach a club he threw –  
Down from the tree on which it grew  
Fell the little peach of emerald hue –  
Mon dieu!

She took a bite and he a chew,  
And then the trouble began to brew –  
Trouble the doctor couldn't subdue –  
Too true!

Under the turf where the daisies grew  
They planted John and his sister Sue,  
And their little souls to the angels flew –  
Boo-hoo!

But what of the peach of emerald hue,  
Warmed by the sun and wet by the dew?  
Ah, well, its mission on earth was through –  
Adieu!

*Eugene Field*

## **Robinson Crusoe's Story \***

The night was thick and hazy  
When the "Piccadilly Daisy"  
Carried down the crew and captain in the sea;  
And I think the water drowned 'em;  
For they never, never found 'em,  
And I know they didn't come ashore with me.

Oh! 'twas very sad and lonely  
When I found myself the only  
Population on this cultivated shore;  
But I've made a little tavern  
In a rocky little cavern,  
And I sit and watch for people at the door.

I spent no time in looking  
For a girl to do my cooking,  
As I'm quite a clever hand at making stews;  
But I had that fellow Friday,  
Just to keep the tavern tidy,  
And to put a Sunday polish on my shoes.

I have a little garden  
That I'm cultivating lard in,  
As the things I eat are rather tough and dry;  
For I live on toasted lizards,  
Prickly pears, and parrot gizzards,  
And I'm really very fond of beetle-pie.

The clothes I had were furry,  
And it made me fret and worry  
When I found the moths were eating off the hair;  
And I had to scrape and sand 'em,  
And I boiled 'em and I tanned 'em,  
Till I got the fine morocco suit I wear.

\* See Note 29.



*Laughing Legends*

I sometimes seek diversion  
In a family excursion  
With the few domestic animals you see;  
And we take along a carrot  
As refreshment for the parrot,  
And a little can of jungleberry tea.

Then we gather as we travel,  
Bits of moss and dirty gravel,  
And we chip off little specimens of stone;  
And we carry home as prizes  
Funny bugs, of handy sizes,  
Just to give the day a scientific tone.

If the roads are wet and muddy  
We remain at home and study, –  
For the Goat is very clever at a sum, –  
And the Dog, instead of fighting,  
Studies ornamental writing,  
While the Cat is taking lessons on the drum.

We retire at eleven,  
And we rise again at seven;  
And I wish to call attention, as I close,  
To the fact that all the scholars  
Are correct about their collars,  
And particular in turning out their toes.

*Charles E. Carryl*

## **Thomson Green and Harriet Hale**

*Oh, list to this incredible tale  
Of Thomson Green and Harriet Hale;  
Its truth in one remark you'll sum -*

*"Twaddle twaddle twaddle twaddle twaddle twaddle twum!"*

Oh, Thomson Green was an auctioneer,  
And made three hundred pounds a year;  
And Harriet Hale, most strange to say,  
Gave pianoforte lessons at a sovereign a day.

Oh, Thomson Green, I may remark,  
Met Harriet Hale in Regent's Park,  
Where he, in a casual kind of way,  
Spoke of the extraordinary beauty of the day.

They met again, and strange though true,  
He courted her for a month or two,  
Then to her Pa he said, says he,  
"Old man, I love your daughter and your daughter worships me!"

Their names were regularly banned,  
The wedding day was settled, and  
I've ascertained by dint of search  
They were married on the quiet at St. Mary Abbott's Church.

Oh, list to this incredible tale  
Of Thomson Green and Harriet Hale,  
Its truth in one remark you'll sum -  
"Twaddle twaddle twaddle twaddle twaddle twaddle twum!"

That very selfsame afternoon  
They started on their honeymoon,  
And (oh, astonishment!) took flight  
To a pretty little cottage close to Shanklin, Isle of Wight.

*Laughing Legends*

They led a weird and reckless life,  
They dined each day, this man and wife,  
(Pray disbelieve it, if you please)  
On a joint of meat, a pudding, and a little bit of cheese.

In time came those maternal joys  
Which take the form of girls or boys  
And, strange to say, of each they'd one –  
A tiddy-iddy daughter, and a tiddy-iddy son.

Oh, list to this incredible tale  
Of Thomson Green and Harriet Hale,  
Its truth in one remark you'll sum –  
“Twaddle twaddle twaddle twaddle twaddle twum!”

My name for truth is gone, I fear,  
But, monstrous as it may appear,  
They let their drawing-room one day  
To an eligible person in the cotton-broking way.

For thirty years this curious pair  
Hung out in Canonbury Square,  
And somehow, wonderful to say!  
They loved each other dearly in a quiet sort of way.

Well, Thomson Green fell ill and died;  
For just a year his widow cried,  
And then her heart she gave away  
To the eligible lodger in the cotton-broking way.

*Oh, list to this incredible tale  
Of Thomson Green and Harriet Hale.  
Its truth in one remark you'll sum –  
“Twaddle twaddle twaddle twaddle twaddle twum!”*

*W. S. Gilbert*

## **The Hero Cockroach \***

*(In the manner of the earlier Kipling)*

The Cockroach stood by the mickle wood in the flush of the astral  
dawn,  
And he sniffed the air from the hidden lair where the Khyber  
swordfish spawn;  
The bilge and belch of the glutton Welsh as they smelted their  
warlock cheese  
Surged to and fro where the grinding floe wrenched at the  
Headland's knees.

*Half seas over! Under – up again!  
And the barnacles white in the moon!  
The pole star's chasing its tail like a pup again,  
And the dish runs away with the spoon!*

The waterspout came bellowing out of the red horizon's rim,  
And the gray Typhoon and the black Monsoon surged forth to the  
fight with him,  
With threefold might they surged to the fight for they hated the  
great bull Roach; –  
And they cried, "Begod!" as they lashed the sod, "And here is an Egg  
to Poach!

"We will bash his mug with his own raw lug new-stripped from off  
his dome,  
For there is no law but tooth and claw to the nor' nor' east of Nome!  
The Punjaub Gull shall have his skull ere he goes to the burning  
ghaut, <sup>1</sup>

\* See [Note 30](#).

<sup>1</sup> In India, a ghaut is a ghat; in this context, a ghat is the series of steps leading down to a cremation place along the banks of a river. – Wikipedia

*Laughing Legends*

For we have no time for aught but crime where the jungle lore is  
taught!

Across the dark the Afghan Shark is whining for his head –  
There shall be no rule but death and drool till the deep red maws  
are fed!”

*Half seas under! Up! and down again!  
And her keel was blown off in a squall!  
Girls, we misdoubt that we'll ever see town again –  
Haul, boys! Haul, boys! Haul!*

The Cockroach spat – and he tilted his hat and he grinned through  
the lowering murk,  
The Cockroach felt in his rangoon belt for his good Bengali dirk,  
He reefed his mast against the blast and he bent his mizzen free  
And he flung the cleats of his binnacle sheets in the teeth of the  
yeasty sea!

He opened his mouth and he sluiced his drouth <sup>2</sup> with his last good  
can of swipes –  
“Begod!” he cried, “they come in pride, but they shall go home with  
the gripes!”  
“Begod,” he said, “if they want my head it is here on top of my  
chine –  
It shall never be said that I doffed my head for the boast of a  
heathen line!”  
And he scorned to wait but he dared his fate and loosed his bridle  
rein  
And leapt to close with his red-fanged foes in the trough of the  
howling main!

*Half seas over! Down again and up!  
And the cobra is wild with her fleas –  
The rajah whines to the pukka's pup,  
And there's dirt in the Narrow Seas!*

<sup>2</sup> drouth: drought or thirst

*This Singing World*

From Hell to Nome the blow went home where the Cockroach  
struck his foe,

From Nome to Hell the mongeese yell as they see the black blood  
flow;

The hawsers snort from the firing port as the conning chains give  
way

And the chukkers <sup>3</sup> roar till they rouse the boar on the hills of  
Mandalay; –

And the Cockroach said as he tilted his head: “Now, luff! you  
beggars, luff!

Begod,” says he, “it is easy to see ye cannot swallow my duff!

I have tickled ye, I have pickled ye, I have scotched your mizzen  
brace,

And the charnel shark in the outer dark shall strip the nose from  
your face –

“Begod,” says he, “it is easy to see that the Narrow Seas are mine,  
So creep ye home to your lair at Nome and patch your guts with  
twine!

Begod” (says he) “it is easy to see who rules this bloody bight –  
Come ye again, my merry men, whenever ye thirst for fight!”

*Half seas over! Stop! She is queasy!*

*The Cockroach has dropped in the stew!*

*Honestly, fellows, this stuff is easy!*

*The trouble's to tell when you're through.*

*Don Marquis*

<sup>3</sup> chukker: One of the six playing periods, each 7½  
minutes long, of a game of polo. – Wiktionary  
[Are you any wiser? ☺ ]

## **The Yarn of the Nancy Bell \***

'Twas on the shores that round our coast  
From Deal to Ramsgate span  
That I found alone, on a piece of stone,  
An elderly naval man.

His hair was weedy, his beard was long,  
And weedy and long was he,  
And I heard this wight on the shore recite,  
In a singular minor key:

“Oh, I am a cook and a captain bold,  
And the mate of the *Nancy* brig,  
And a bo'sun tight, and a midshipmite,  
And the crew of the captain's gig.”

And he shook his fists and he tore his hair,  
Till I really felt afraid;  
For I couldn't help thinking the man had been drinking,  
And so I simply said:

“Oh, elderly man, it's little I know  
Of the duties of men of the sea,  
And I'll eat my hand if I understand  
How you can possibly be

“At once a cook, and a captain bold,  
And the mate of the *Nancy* brig,  
And a bo'sun tight, and a midshipmite,  
And the crew of the captain's gig.”

Then he gave a hitch to his trousers, which  
Is a trick all seamen l'arn,  
And having got rid of a thumping quid,  
He spun this painful yarn:

“ 'Twas in the good ship Nancy Bell,  
That we sailed to the Indian sea,  
And there on a reef we come to grief,  
Which has often occurred to me.

\* See Note 31.

*This Singing World*

“And pretty nigh all o’ the crew was drowned  
    (There was seventy-seven o’ soul),  
And only ten of the *Nancy’s* men  
    Said ‘Here!’ to the muster roll.

“There was me and the cook and the captain bold,  
    And the mate of the *Nancy* brig,  
And the bo’sun tight, and a midshipmite,  
    And the crew of the captain’s gig.

“For a month we’d neither wittles nor drink,  
    Till a-hungry we did feel,  
So, we drewed a lot, and, accordin’, shot  
    The captain for our meal.

“The next lot fell to the *Nancy’s* mate,  
    And a delicate dish he made;  
Then our appetite with the midshipmite  
    We seven survivors stayed.

“And then we murdered the bo’sun tight,  
    And he much resembled pig;  
Then we wittled free, did the cook and me,  
    On the crew of the captain’s gig.

“Then only the cook and me was left,  
    And the delicate question, ‘Which  
Of us two goes to the kettle?’ arose,  
    And we argued it out as sich.

(‘For I loved that cook as a brother, I did,  
    And the cook he worshiped me;  
But we’d both be blowed if we’d either be stowed  
    In the other chap’s hold, you see.

“ ‘I’ll be eat if you dines off me,’ says Tom,  
    ‘Yes, that,’ says I, ‘you’ll be’ –  
‘I’m boiled if I die, my friend,’ quoth I,  
    And ‘Exactly so,’ quoth he.



*Laughing Legends*

“Says he, ‘Dear James, to murder me  
Were a foolish thing to do,  
For don’t you see that you can’t cook *me*,  
While I can – and will – cook you!’

“So, he boils the water, and takes the salt  
And the pepper in portions true  
(Which he never forgot), and some chopped shallot,  
And some sage and parsley too.

“ ‘Come here,’ says he, with a proper pride,  
Which his smiling features tell,  
‘ ’Twill soothing be if I let you see  
How extremely nice you’ll smell.’

“And he stirred it round and round and round,  
And he sniffed at the foaming froth;  
When I ups with his heels, and smothers his squeals  
In the scum of the boiling broth.

“And I eat that cook in a week or less,  
And – as I eating be  
The last of his chops, why I almost drops,  
For a vessel in sight I see.

\* \* \* \* \*

“And I never larf, and I never smile,  
And I never lark nor play,  
But I sit and croak, and a single joke  
I have – which is to say:

“Oh, I am a cook and a captain bold,  
And the mate of the *Nancy* brig,  
And a bo’sun tight, and a midshipmite,  
And the crew of the captain’s gig!”

*W. S. Gilbert*

## **Ellen McJones Aberdeen**

Macphairson Clonglocketty Angus McClan  
Was the son of an elderly labouring man;  
You've guessed him a Scotchman, shrewd reader, at sight,  
And p'r'aps altogether, shrewd reader, you're right.

From the bonnie blue Forth to the beastly Deeside,  
Round by Dingwall and Wrath to the mouth of the Clyde,  
There wasn't a child or a woman or man  
Who could pipe with Clonglocketty Angus McClan.

No other could wake such detestable groans,  
With reed and with chaunter <sup>1</sup> – with bag and with drones: <sup>2</sup>  
All day and all night he delighted the chieils  
With sniggering pibrochs <sup>3</sup> and jiggety reels.

He'd clamber a mountain and squat on the ground,  
And the neighbouring maidens would gather around  
To list to his pipes and to gaze in his een,  
Especially Ellen McJones Aberdeen.

All loved their McClan, save a Sassenach <sup>4</sup> brute,  
Who came to the Highlands to fish and to shoot;  
He dressed himself up in a Highlander way;  
Tho' his name it was Pattison Corby Torbay.

Torbay had incurred a good deal of expense  
To make him a Scotchman in every sense;  
But this is a matter, you'll readily own,  
That isn't a question of tailors alone.

A Sassenach chief may be bonily built,  
He may purchase a sporran,<sup>5</sup> a bonnet, and kilt;  
Stick a skean <sup>6</sup> in his hose – wear an acre of stripes –  
But he cannot assume an affection for pipes.

<sup>1</sup> The shrill, tenor pipe in the bagpipe.

<sup>2</sup> The large tube of the bagpipe that gives the deep, droning sound.

<sup>3</sup> A wild, exciting music.

<sup>4</sup> Saxon – an Englishman.

<sup>5</sup> The furry pouch worn by Highlanders in front of the kilt.

<sup>6</sup> A short sword.

## *Laughing Legends*

Clonglocketty's pipings all night and all day  
Quite frenzied poor Pattison Corby Torbay;  
The girls were amused at his singular spleen,  
Especially Ellen McJones Aberdeen.

"Macphairson Clonglocketty Angus, my lad,  
With pibrochs and reels you are driving me mad.  
If you really must play on that cursed affair,  
My goodness! play something resembling an air."<sup>7</sup>

Boiled over the blood of Macphairson McClan –  
The Clan of Clonglocketty rose as one man;  
For all were enraged at the insult, I ween –  
Especially Ellen McJones Aberdeen.

"Let's show," said McClan, "to this Sassenach loon  
That the bagpipes can play him a regular tune.  
Let's see," said McClan, as he thoughtfully sat,  
" '*In my Cottage*' is easy – I'll practice at that."

He blew at his "*Cottage*," and blew with a will,  
For a year, seven months, and a fortnight, until  
(You'll hardly believe it!) McClan, I declare,  
Elicited something resembling an air.

It was wild – it was fitful – as wild as the breeze –  
It wandered about into several keys;  
It was jerky, spasmodic, and harsh, I'm aware;  
But still it distinctly suggested an air!

The Sassenach screamed, and the Sassenach danced,  
He shrieked in his agony – bellowed and pranced,  
And the maidens who gathered rejoiced at the scene,  
Especially Ellen McJones Aberdeen.

<sup>7</sup> An *air* is a song-like vocal or instrumental composition [such as in the "Savoy Operas" of Gilbert and Sullivan]. – Wikipedia

*This Singing World*

“Hech gather, hech gather, hech gather around;  
And fill a’ ye lugs wi’ the exquisite sound.  
An air fra’ the bagpipes – beat that if ye can:  
Hurrah for Clonglocketty Angus McClan!”

The fame of his piping spread over the land:  
Respectable widows proposed for his hand,  
And maidens came flocking to sit on the green –  
Especially Ellen McJones Aberdeen.

One morning the fidgetty Sassenach swore  
He’d stand it no longer – he drew his claymore,<sup>8</sup>  
And (this was, I think, extremely bad taste)  
Divided Clonglocketty close to the waist.

Oh! loud were the wailings for Angus McClan,  
Oh! deep was the grief for that excellent man –  
The maids stood aghast at the horrible scene,  
Especially Ellen McJones Aberdeen.

It sorrowed poor Pattison Corby Torbay  
To find them “take on” in this serious way;  
He pitied the poor little fluttering birds,  
And solaced their souls with the following words: –

“Oh, maidens,” said Pattison, touching his hat,  
“Don’t blubber, my dears, for a fellow like that;  
Observe I’m a very superior man,  
A much better fellow than Angus McClan.”

They smiled when he winked and, addressed them as “dears,”  
And they all of them vowed, as they dried up their tears,  
A pleasanter gentleman never was seen –  
Especially Ellen McJones Aberdeen.

*W. S. Gilbert*

<sup>8</sup> A large, double-edged sword.

## **The Darned Mounseer**

I shipped, d'ye see, in a Revenue sloop,  
And, off Cape Finistere,  
    A merchantman we see,  
    A Frenchman, going free,  
So we made for the bold Mounseer.  
    D'ye see?  
We made for the bold Mounseer!

But she proved to be a Frigate – and she up with her ports,  
And fires with a thirty-two!  
    It come uncommon near,  
    But we answered with a cheer,  
Which paralysed the Parley-voo,  
    D'ye see?  
Which paralysed the Parley-voo!

Then our Captain he up and he says, says he,  
    “That chap we need not fear, –  
    We can take her, if we like,  
    She is sartin for to strike,  
For she's only a darned Mounseer,  
    D'ye see?  
She's only a darned Mounseer!

But to fight a French fal-lal! – it's like hittin' of a gal –  
It's a lubberly thing for to do;  
    For we, with all our faults,  
    Why, we're sturdy British salts,  
While she's but a Parley-voo,  
    D'ye see?  
A miserable Parley-voo!”

*This Singing World*

So we up with our helm, and we scuds before the breeze,  
As we gives a compassionating cheer;  
    Froggee answers with a shout  
    As he sees us go about,  
Which was grateful of the poor Mounseer,  
    D'ye see?  
Which was grateful of the poor Mounseer!

And I'll wager in their joy they kissed each other's cheek  
    (Which is what them furriners do),  
    And they blessed their lucky stars  
    We were hardy British tars  
Who had pity on a poor Parley-voov'  
    D'ye see?  
Who had pity on a poor Parley-voov'!

*W. S. Gilbert*

## **Da Greata BasaBall**

O! greata game ees basaball  
For yo'nga 'Merican.  
But, O! my frand, ees not at all  
Da theeng for Dagoman.<sup>1</sup>

O! lees'en, pleas', I tal to you  
About wan game we play  
W'en grass ees green, an' sky ees blue  
An' eet ees holiday.  
Spagatti say: "We taka treep  
For play da ball, an' see  
Wheech side ees ween da champanesheep  
For Leetla Eetaly."  
So off for Polo Groun' we go  
Weeth basaball an' bat,  
An' start da greata game, but, O!  
Eet ees no feenish yat!  
Spolatro ees da boss for side  
Dat wait for catch da ball;  
Spagatti nine ees first dat tried  
For knock eet over wall.  
An' so Spagatti com' for bat.  
Aha! da greata man!  
Da han's he got; so beeg, so fat,  
Ees like two bonch banan'!  
Spolatro peetch da ball, an' dere  
Spagatti's bat ees sweeng,  
An' queeck da ball up een da air  
Ees fly like annytheeng.  
You know een deesa game ees man  
Dat's call da "lafta-fiel'."  
Wal, dees wan keep peanutta-stan'  
An' like for seettin' steell.

<sup>1</sup> Dagoman: The word "dago," as a nickname for Italians, came into use through the mistake of American sailors who associated "Diego," "Santiago" and other similar names and ports with Spaniards and Italians.

*This Singing World*

An' dough dees ball Spagatti heet  
Ees passa by hees way,  
He don'ta care a leetla beet  
Eef eet ees gon' all day.

Da "centra-fielda man" – you know  
Dat's nex' to heem – he call:  
"Hi! why you don'ta jompa, Joe,  
An' *run* an' gat da ball?"  
But Joe he justa seetta steell  
Teell ball ees outa sight.  
Dees mak' so mad da centra-fiel'  
He ees baygeen to fight.  
Den com'sa nudder man – you see,  
I don'ta know hees name,  
Or how you call dees man, but he  
Ees beeg man een da game.  
He ees da man dat mak' da rule  
For 'play da gama right,  
An' so he go for dose two fool  
Out een da fiel' dat fight.  
He push da centra-fielda 'way –  
An' soocha names he call! –  
An' den he grabba Joe an' say:  
"Com', *run* an' gat da ball."  
But Joe he growl an' tal heem: "No!  
Ees not for me at all.  
Spagatti *heet* da ball, an' so  
Spagatti *gat* da ball!"

O! greata game ees basaball  
For yo'nga 'Merican.  
But, O! my frand, ees not at all  
Da theeng for Dagoman.

*T. A. Daly*



## **The Cruel Moon**

The cruel Moon hangs out of reach  
Up above the shadowy beech.  
Her face is stupid, but her eye  
Is small and sharp and very sly.  
Nurse says the Moon can drive you mad?  
No, that's a silly story, lad!  
Though she be angry, though she would  
Destroy all England if she could,  
Yet think; what damage can she do  
Hanging there so far from you?  
Don't heed what frightened nurses say:  
Moons hang much too far away.

*Robert Graves*

## **The Milk Jug**

*(The Kitten Speaks)*

The Gentle Milk Jug blue and white  
I love with all my soul –  
She pours herself with all her might  
To fill my breakfast bowl.

All day she sits upon the shelf,  
She does not jump or climb –  
She only waits to pour herself  
When 'tis my supper-time.

And when the Jug is empty quite,  
I shall not mew in vain,  
The Friendly Cow, all red and white,  
Will fill her up again.

*Oliver Herford*



*FWI*

## **Song against Children**

O the barberry bright, the barberry bright!  
It stood on the mantelpiece because of the height.  
Its stems were slender and thorny and tall  
And it looked most beautiful against the grey wall.  
But Michael climbed up there in spite of the height  
And he ate all the berries off the barberry bright.

O the round holly wreath, the round holly wreath!  
It hung in the window with ivy beneath.  
It was plump and prosperous, spangled with red  
And I thought it would cheer me although I were dead.  
But Deborah climbed on a table beneath  
And she ate all the berries off the round holly wreath.

O the mistletoe bough, the mistletoe bough!  
Could anyone touch it? I did not see how.  
I hung it up high that it might last long,  
I wreathed it with ribbons and hailed it with song.  
But Christopher reached it, I do not know how,  
And he ate all the berries off the mistletoe bough.

*Aline Kilmer*

## **Suffering**

I sat down on a bumble bee  
    In Mrs. Jackson's yard.  
I sat down on a bumble bee:  
    The bee stung good and hard.

I sat down on a bumble bee  
    For just the briefest spell,  
And I had only muslin on,  
    As anyone could tell.

I sat down on a bumble bee,  
    But I arose again;  
And now I know the tenseness of  
    Humiliating pain.

*Nathalia Crane*

## **De Appile Tree \***

Dat's a mighty quare tale 'bout de Appile-tree  
In de Pa'dise gyarden whar Adam run free,  
Whar de butterflies drunk honey wid ol' Mammy Bee.  
Talk 'bout good times! I bet you he had 'em -

Adam -

Ol' man Adam un' de Appile-tree.

He woke one mornin' wid a pullin'at his sleeve;  
He open one eye, an' dar wuz Eve;  
He shuck her han', wid "Honey, don't you grieve!"  
Talk 'bout good times! I bet you dey had 'em -

Adam -

Adam an' Eve un' de Appile-tree.

Den Eve tuck a bite er de Appile fruit,  
An' Adam he bit, an' den dey scoot  
(Dar's whar de niggers l'arned de quick callyhoot),  
An' run an' hid behime de fig-tree.  
Talk about troubles! I bet you dey had 'em -

Adam -

Adam an' Eve behime de fig-tree.

Dey had der frolics an' dey had der flings,  
An' den atter dat der fun tuck wings.  
Honey mighty sweet, but bees got stings.  
Talk about hard times! I bet you dey had 'em -

Adam -

Adam an' Eve behime de fig-tree.

Kaze out er dat gyarden dey had fer ter skin,  
Fer ter look fer de crack whar Satan crope in.  
Dey s'arch fur an' wide, an' dey s'arch mighty well -  
Eve she knowed, but she 'fuse fer ter tell.  
Ol' Satan's trail wuz all rubbed out,  
'Ceppin' a track er two whar he walked about.  
Talk about troubles! Well, I bet you dey had 'em -

Adam -

Adam an' Eve an' all der kin.

\* See Note 32.

*This Singing World*

An' when dey got back, de gate wuz shot,  
An' dat wuz de pay what Adam got.  
In dat gyarden he went no mo';  
De overseer gi' 'im a shovel ant a hoe,  
A mule an' plow, an' a swingletree.<sup>1</sup>  
Talk about hard times! I bet you dey had 'em –  
Adam –

An' all er his chillun, bofe slave an' free;  
Dey had 'em –  
Bekaze er de fruit er de Appile-tree.

An' de chillun er Adam, an' de chillun's kin,  
Dey all got smeared wid de pitch er Sin;  
Dey shot der eyes ter de big hereatter,  
An' flung Sin aroun' wid a tur'ble splatter,  
An' collogued wid Satan, an' dat what de matter.  
An' troubles – well, I bet you dey had 'em –  
Adam –

De chillun er Adam dat fergit ter pray –  
Dey had 'em –  
An' dey keep on a-had'n 'em down ter dis day!

But dat wa'n't de last er de Appile-tree,  
Kazn she scatter her seeds bofe fur an' free,  
An' dat's what de matter wid you an' me.  
I knows de feelin's what fotch on de Fall,  
De red Appile an' ol' Satan's call –  
Lor' bless yo' soul, I know 'em all!  
I'm kinder lopsided an' pidjin-toed,  
But watch me keep in de middle er de road,  
Kaze de troubles I got is a mighty big load.  
Talk about troubles! I got 'em an' had 'em,  
An' I know mighty well dat I cotch 'em fum Adam  
An' de Appile-seeds what he scatter so free –  
Adam –

Adam an' Eve an' de Appile-tree.

*Joel Chandler Harris*

<sup>1</sup> Same as singletree or whiffletree; part of a horse's harness.

## **Lilliput Levee**

Where does Pinafore Palace stand?  
Right in the middle of Lilliput-Land!  
There the Queen eats bread-and-honey,  
There the King counts up his money!

Oh, the Glorious Revolution!  
Oh, the Provisional Constitution!  
Now that the children, clever bold folks,  
Have turned the tables upon the Old Folks!

Easily the thing was done,  
For the children were more than two to one;  
Brave as lions, quick as foxes,  
With hoards of wealth in their money-boxes!

They seized the keys, they patrolled the street,  
They drove the policeman off his beat,  
They built barricades, they stationed sentries –  
You must give the word, when you come to the entries!

They dressed themselves in the Riflemen's clothes,  
They had pea-shooters, they had arrows and bows,  
So as to put resistance down –  
Order reigns in Lilliput-town!

They made the baker bake hot rolls;  
They made the wharfinger send in coals,  
They made the butcher kill the calf,  
They cut the telegraph-wires in half.

They went to the chemist's, and with their feet  
They kicked the physic all down the street;  
They went to the school-room and tore the books,  
They munched the puffs at the pastrycook's.

*This Singing World*

They sucked the jam, they lost the spoons,  
They sent up several fire-balloons,  
They let off crackers, they burnt a guy,  
They piled a bonfire ever so high.

They offered a prize for the laziest boy,  
And one for the most Magnificent toy;  
They split or burnt the canes offhand,  
They made new laws in Lilliput-land.

*Never do to-day what you can  
Put off till to-morrow, one of them ran;  
Late to bed and late to rise*  
Was another law which they did devise.

They passed a law to have always plenty  
Of beautiful things: we shall mention twenty:  
A magic lantern for all to see,  
Rabbits to keep, and a Christmas-tree,

A boat, a house that went on wheels,  
An organ to grind, and sherry at meals,  
Drums and wheelbarrows, Roman candles,  
Whips with whistles let into the handles,

A real live giant, a roc to fly,  
A goat to tease, a copper to shy,  
A garret of apples, a box of paints,  
A saw and a hammer, and no complaints.

Nail up the door, slide down the stairs,  
Saw off the legs of the parlor chairs –  
That was the way in Lilliput-land,  
The children having the upper hand.

*Laughing Legends*

They made the Old Folks come to school,  
And in pinafores, – that was the rule, –  
Saying, *Eener-deener-diner-duss*,  
*Kattler-wheeler-whiler-wuss*;

They made them learn all sorts of things  
That nobody liked. They had catechisings;  
They kept them in, they sent them down  
In class, in school, in Lilliput-town.

O but they gave them tit-for-tat!  
Thick bread-and-butter, and all that;  
Stick-jaw pudding that tires your chin,  
With the marmalade spread ever so thin!

They governed the clock in Lilliput-land,  
They altered the hour or the minute-hand,  
They made the day fast, they made the day slow,  
Just as they wished the time to go.

They never waited for king or for cat;  
They never wiped their shoes on the mat;  
Their joy was great; their joy was greater;  
They rode in the baby's perambulator!

There was a Levee in Lilliput-town,  
At Pinafore Palace. Smith and Brown,  
Jones and Robinson had to attend –  
All to whom they cards did send.

Every one rode in a cab to the door;  
Every one came in a pinafore;  
Lady and gentleman, rat-tat-tat,  
Loud knock, proud knock, opera hat!

*This Singing World*

The place was covered with silver and gold,  
The place was as full as it ever could hold;  
The ladies kissed her Majesty's hand,  
Such was the custom in Lilliput-land.

His Majesty knighted eight or ten,  
Perhaps a score, of the gentlemen,  
Some of them short and some of them tall –  
*Arise, Sir What's-a-name What-do-you-call!*

Conjuring tricks with the poker and tongs,  
Riddles and forfeits, singing of songs;  
One fat man, too fat by far,  
Tried "Twinkle, twinkle, little star."

His voice was gruff, his pinafore tight,  
His wife said, "Mind, dear, sing it right,"  
But he forgot, and said Fa-la-la!  
The Queen of Lilliput's own papa!

She frowned, and ordered him up to bed:  
He said he was sorry; she shook her head;  
His clean shirt-front with his tears was stained –  
But discipline *had* to be maintained.

The Constitution! The Law! The Crown!  
Order reigns in Lilliput-town!  
The Queen is Jill, the King is John.  
I trust the Government will get on.

*William Brighty Rands*



## **Fables in Foolscap**



## **The Cap That Fits**

SCENE. – *A Salon with blue and white Panels. Outside, persons pass and re-pass upon a terrace.*

HORTENSE.

ARMANDE.

MONSIEUR LOYAL.

HORTENSE (*behind her fan*)

Not young, I think.

ARMANDE (*raising her eye-glass*)

And faded, too: –

*Quite faded!* Monsieur, what say you?

M. LOYAL

Nay, I defer to you. In truth,  
To me she seems all grace and youth.

HORTENSE

Graceful? You think it? What, with hands  
That hang like this (*with a gesture*).

ARMANDE

And how she stands!

M. LOYAL

Nay, I am wrong again. I thought  
Her air delightfully untaught!

HORTENSE

But you amuse me –

M. LOYAL

Still her dress, –  
Her dress at least, you *must* confess –

*This Singing World*

ARMANDE

Is odious simply! Jacotot  
Did not supply that lace, I know;  
And where, I ask, has mortal seen  
A hat unfeathered!

HORTENSE

Edged with green!

M. LOYAL

The words remind me. Let me say  
A Fable that I heard to-day.  
Have I permission?

BOTH (*with enthusiasm*)

Monsieur, pray.

M. LOYAL

*Myrtila (lest a Scandal rise,  
The Lady's Name I thus disguise),  
Dying of Ennui, once decided, -  
Much on Resource herself she prided, -  
To choose a Hat. Forthwith she flies  
On that momentous Enterprise.  
Whether to Petit or Legros,  
I know not: only this I know; -  
Head-dresses then, of any Fashion,  
Bore Names of Quality or Passion.*

*Myrtila tried them, almost all;  
"Prudence," she felt, was somewhat small;  
"Retirement" seemed the Eyes to hide;  
"Content," at once, she cast aside.  
"Simplicity," - 'twas out of place;  
"Devotion," - for an older face:  
Briefly, Selection smaller grew,  
"Vexatious! odious!" - none would do!*

*Fables in Foolscap*

*Then, on a sudden, she espied  
One that she thought she had not tried.;  
Becoming, rather, – “edged with green,” –  
Roses in yellow, Thorns between.  
“Quick! Bring me that!” ’Tis brought. “Complete  
Divine, Enchanting, Tasteful, Neat,”  
In all the Tones. “And this you call – ?”  
“Ill-nature, Madame. It fits all.”*

HORTENSE

A thousand thanks! So naively turned!

ARMANDE

So useful too, – to those concerned!  
’Tis yours?

M.LOYAL

Ah, no, – some cynic wit’s;  
And called (I think) –  
*(Placing his hat upon his breast.)*  
“The Cap that Fits.”

*Austin Dobson*

## **The Enchanted Shirt**

*Fytte*<sup>1</sup> *ye Firste*: wherein it shall be shown how ye Truth is too mightie a Drugge for such as be of feeble temper.

The King was sick. His cheek was red  
And his eye was clear and bright;  
He ate and drank with a kingly zest,  
And peacefully snored at night.

But he said he was sick, and a king should know,  
And doctors came by the score.  
They did not cure him. He cut off their heads  
And sent to the schools for more.

At last two famous doctors came,  
And one was as poor as a rat, –  
He had passed his life in studious toil,  
And never found time to grow fat.

The other had never looked in a book;  
His patients gave him no trouble,  
If they recovered they paid him well,  
If they died their heirs paid double.

Together they looked at the royal tongue,  
As the King on his couch reclined;  
In succession they thumped his august chest,  
But no trace of disease could find.

The old sage said, “You’re as sound as a nut.”  
“Hang him up,” roared the King in a gale,  
In a ten-knot gale of royal rage;  
The other leech grew a shade pale;  
But he pensively rubbed his sagacious nose,  
And thus his prescription ran, –  
The King will be well, if he sleeps one night  
In the Shirt of a Happy Man.

<sup>1</sup> fyttte: a song, ballad or story, or section of one (archaic variant of fit).

*Fables in Foolscap*

*Fytte ye Second: teleth of ye search for ye Shirte and how it was nighe founde but was notte, for reasons which are sayd or sung.*

Wide o'er the realm the couriers rode,  
And fast their horses ran,  
And many they saw, and to many they spoke,  
But they found no Happy Man.

They found poor men who would fain be rich,  
And rich who thought they were Poor;  
And men who twisted their waists in stays,  
And women that short hose wore.

They saw two men by the roadside sit,  
And both bemoaned their lot;  
For one had buried his wife, he said,  
And the other one had not.

At last as they came to a village gate,  
A beggar lay whistling there;  
He whistled and sang and laughed and rolled  
On the grass in the soft June air.

The weary couriers paused and looked  
At the scamp so blithe and gay;  
And one of them said, "Heaven save you, friend!  
You seem to be happy to-day."

"O yes, fair sirs," the rascal laughed  
And his voice rang free and glad,  
"An idle man has so much to do  
That he never has time to be sad."

"This is our man," the courier said;  
"Our luck has led us aright.  
"I will give you a hundred ducats, friend,  
For the loan of your shirt to-night."

*This Singing World*

The merry blackguard lay back on the grass,  
And laughed till his face was black;  
“I would do it, God wot,” and he roared with the fun,  
“But I haven’t a shirt to my back.”

*Fytte ye Thirde: Shewing how Hys Majestie ye King  
came at last to sleepe in a Happie Man his Shirte.*

Each day to the King the reports came in  
Of his unsuccessful spies,  
And the sad panorama of human woes  
Passed daily under his eyes.

And he grew ashamed of his useless life,  
And his maladies hatched in gloom;  
He opened his windows and let the air  
Of the free heaven into his room.

And out he went in the world and toiled  
In his own appointed way;  
And the people blessed him, the land was glad,  
And the King was well and gay.

*John Hay*



## **The Blind Men and the Elephant**

*(A Hindoo Fable)*

It was six men of Indostan  
To learning much inclined,  
Who went to see the Elephant  
(Though all of them were blind),  
That each by observation  
Might satisfy his mind.

The *First* approached the Elephant,  
And happening to fall  
Against his broad and sturdy side,  
At once began to bawl:  
“God bless me! but the Elephant  
Is very like a wall!”

The *Second*, feeling of the tusk,  
Cried, “Ho! what have we here  
So very round and smooth and sharp?  
To me ’tis mighty clear  
This wonder of an Elephant  
Is very like a spear!”

The *Third* approached the animal,  
And happening to take  
The squirming trunk within his hands,  
Thus boldly up and spake:  
“I see,” quoth he, “the Elephant  
Is very like a snake!”

The *Fourth* reached out an eager hand,  
And felt about the knee.  
“What most this wondrous beast is like  
Is mighty plain,” quoth he;  
“’Tis clear enough the Elephant  
Is very like a tree!”

*This Singing World*

The *Fifth* who chanced to touch the ear,  
Said: "E'en the blindest man  
Can tell what this resembles most;  
Deny the fact who can,  
This marvel of an Elephant  
Is very like a fan!"

The *Sixth* no sooner had begun  
About the beast to grope,  
Than, seizing on the swinging tail  
That fell within his scope,  
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant  
Is very like a rope!"

And so these men of Indostan  
Disputed loud and long,  
Each in his own opinion  
Exceeding stiff and strong,  
Though each was partly in the right,  
And all were in the wrong!

*Moral*

So oft in theologic wars,  
The disputants, I ween,  
Rail on in utter ignorance  
Of what the others mean,  
*And prate about an Elephant  
Not one of them has seen!*

*John Godfrey Saxe*

## **The Vainglorious Oak and the Modest Bulrush \***

A bulrush stood on a river's rim,  
And an oak that grew near by  
Looked down with cold *hauteur*<sup>1</sup> on him,  
And addressed him this way: "Hi!"  
The rush was a proud patrician, and  
He retorted, "Don't you know,  
What the veriest boor should understand,  
That 'Hi' is low?"

This cutting rebuke the oak ignored.  
He returned, "My slender friend,  
I will frankly state that I'm somewhat bored  
With the way you bow and bend."  
"But you quite forget," the rush replied,  
"It's an art these bows to do,  
An art I wouldn't attempt if I'd  
Such boughs as you."

"Of course," said the oak, "in my sapling days  
My habit it was to bow,  
But the wildest storm that the winds could raise  
Would never disturb me now.  
I challenge the breeze to make me bend,  
And the blast to make me sway."  
The shrewd little bulrush answered, "Friend,  
Don't get so gay."

\* See [Note 33](#).

<sup>1</sup> *hauteur*: this is French for haughtiness, snobbery, conceited pride.

*This Singing World*

And the words had barely left his mouth  
When he saw the oak turn pale,  
For, racing along south-east-by-south,  
Came ripping a raging gale.  
And the rush bent low as the storm went past,  
But stiffly stood the oak,  
Though not for long, for he found the blast  
No idle joke.

\* \* \* \* \*

Imagine the lightning's gleaming bars,  
Imagine the thunder's roar,  
For that is exactly what eight stars  
Are set in a row here for!  
The oak lay prone when the storm was done,  
While the rush, still quite erect,  
Remarked aside, "What under the sun  
Could one expect?"

And *The Moral*, I'd have you understand,  
Would have made La Fontaine blush,  
For it's this: Some storms come early, and  
Avoid the rush!

*Guy Wetmore Carryl*

## **The Embarrassing Episode of Little Miss Muffet**

Little Miss Muffet discovered a tuffet,  
    (Which never occurred to the rest of us)  
And, as 'twas a June day, and just about noonday,  
    She wanted to eat – like the best of us:  
Her diet was whey, and I hasten to say  
    It is wholesome and people grow fat on it.  
The spot being lonely, the lady not only  
    Discovered the tuffet, but sat on it.

A rivulet gabbled beside her and babbled,  
    As rivulets always are thought to do,  
And dragon-flies sported around and cavorted,  
    As poets say dragon-flies ought to do;  
When, glancing aside for a moment, she spied  
    A horrible sight that brought fear to her,  
A hideous spider was sitting beside her,  
    And most unavoidably near to her!

Albeit unsightly, this creature politely  
    Said: “Madam, I earnestly vow to you,  
I’m penitent that I did not bring my hat. I  
    Should otherwise certainly bow to you.”  
Though anxious to please, he was so ill at ease  
    That he lost all his sense of propriety,  
And grew so inept that he clumsily stepped  
    In her plate – which is barred in Society.

This curious error completed her terror;  
    She shuddered, and growing much paler, not  
Only left tuffet, but dealt him a buffet  
    Which doubled him up in a sailor-knot.  
It should be explained that at this he was pained:  
    He cried: “I have vexed you, no doubt of it!  
Your fist’s like a truncheon.” “You’re still in my  
    luncheon,”  
Was all that she answered. “Get out of it!”

*This Singing World*

And *The Moral* is this: Be it madam or miss  
To whom you have something to say,  
You are only absurd when you get in the curd  
But you're rude when you get in the whey!

*Guy Wetmore Carryl*

## **Henry King**

The Chief Defect of Henry King  
Was chewing little bits of String.  
At last he swallowed some which tied  
Itself in ugly Knots inside.

Physicians of the Utmost Fame  
Were called at once; but when they came  
They answered, as they took their Fees,  
“There is no Cure for this Disease.

“Henry will very soon be dead.”  
His Parents stood about his Bed  
Lamenting his Untimely Death,  
When Henry, with his Latest Breath,

Cried, “Oh, my Friends, be warned by me,  
That Breakfast, Dinner, Lunch, and Tea  
Are all the Human Frame requires. . . .”  
With that, the Wretched Child expires.

*Hilaire Belloc*

## **Leetla Giorgio Washeenton \***

You know w'at for ees school keep out  
    Dees holiday, my son?  
Wal, den, I gona tal you 'bout  
    Dees Giorgio Washeenton.  
Wal, Giorgio was leetla keed  
    Ees leeve long time ago,  
An' he gon' school for learn to read  
    An' write hees nam', you know.  
He moocha like for gona school  
    An' learna hard all day,  
Baycause he no gat time for fool  
    Weeth bada keeds an' play.  
Wal, wan cold day w'en Giorgio  
    Ees steell so vera small,  
He start from home, but he ees no  
    Show up een school at all!  
O! my! hees Pop ees gatta mad  
    An' so he tal hees wife:  
"Som' leetla boy ees gon' feel bad  
    To-day, you bat my life!"  
An' den he grab a beega steeck  
    An' gon' out een da snow  
An' lookin' all aroun' for seek  
    Da leetla Giorgio.  
Ha! w'at you theenk? Firs' theeng he see  
    Where leetla boy he stan',  
All tangla up een cherry tree,  
    Weeth hatchet een hees han'.  
"Ha! w'at you do?" hees Pop he say,  
    "W'at for you busta rule  
An' stay away like dees for play  
    Eenstead for gon' to school?"

\* See Note 34.

*This Singing World*

Da boy ees say: "I no can lie,  
An' so I speaka true.  
I stay away from school for try  
An' gat som' wood for you.  
I theenka deesa cherry tree  
Ees gooda size for chop,  
An' so I cut heem down, you see,  
For justa help my Pop."  
Hees Pop he no can gatta mad,  
But looka please' an' say:  
"My leetla boy, I am so glad  
You taka holiday."

Ees good for leetla boy, you see,  
For be so bright an' try  
For help hees Pop; so den he be  
A granda man bimeby.  
So now you gatta holiday  
An' eet ees good, you know,  
For you gon' do da sama way  
Like leetla Giorgio.  
Don't play so mooch, but justa stop,  
Eef you want be som' good,  
An' justa help your poor old Pop  
By carry home some wood;  
An' mebbe so like Giorgio  
You grow for be so great  
You gona be da President  
Of dese Unita State'.

*T. A. Daly*



## **How Brer Tarrypin Learned to Fly**

Brer Tarrypin tired er prom'nadin' roun',  
An' he lay in de sun right flat on de groun';  
His foots wuz col', an' his eyes wuz red,  
An' it look like sump'in done bunged up his head;  
But he watch Brer Buzzard a-sailin' in de sky,  
An' he wisht fum his heart dat he could fly –  
Fil-a-ma-looner-leener! fil-a-ma-leener-li!

He frown an' he grunt, he grunt an' he groan,  
He sniffle an' snuffle, he wheeze an' he moan;  
He drapt a big tear in de acorn-cup,  
An' de bug run out, he gobble 'im up;  
Brer Buzzard flew'd, an' he flew'd mighty high,  
He flop his wings an' he wink his eye –  
Fil-a-ma-looner-leener! fil'a-ma-leener-li!

He see Brer Tarrypin layin' flat,  
An' he chuckle ter hisse'f, "Oh-ho! look at dat!  
It's a mighty funny place fer ter make a bed,  
An' he may be sick, an' he may be dead!"  
So he drap down slow, an' he drap down sly,  
But Tarrypin watchin' wid his red eye –  
Fil-a-ma-looner-leener! fil-a-ma-leener-li!

Buzzard, he lit a little up de slope,  
An' hit de gait call de buzzard-lope,  
An' den Brer Tarrypin tuck in his head  
An' lay des like he done gone ter bed.  
Brer Buzzard he holler, "He! he-hi!"  
An' Tarrypin 'spon', "Ah-yi! ay-yi!"  
Fil-a-ma-looner-leener! fil-a-ma-leener-li!

*This Singing World*

“You keep yo-se’f shot up in yo’ shell,”  
Brer Buzzard ’low, “but I hope you er well?”  
Brer Tarrypin say he feelin’ ez smart  
Ez what a man kin wid a swelled-up heart,  
An’ a liver all blue, an’ a blood-red eye;  
An’ Tarrypin ’spon’, “Ah-yi! ah-yi!”  
Fil-a-ma-looner-leener! fil-a-ma-leener-li!

“Better git de doctor!” Brer Buzzard say;  
“He’ll kyo yo, sho, ef dey’s any way.”  
“I done been saw ’im,” Brer Tarrypin ’low,  
“An’ he up an’ tol’ me dat my onliest how  
Is to fin’ somebody dat’ll tote me high  
An’ turn me loose so I’ll l’arn how ter fly” –  
Fil-a-ma-looner-leener! fil-a-ma-leener-li!

Brer Buzzard, he say, “Why, bless you, chile!  
You kin count on me!” an’ he smole a smile.  
“When it comes ter heft you er right smart chunk,  
But I speck I kin tote you” – an’ den he wunk.  
“I’ll tote you low, an’ I’ll tote you high;  
I’ll tote you past, an’ I’ll tote you by” –  
Fil-a-ma-looner-leener! fil-a-ma-leener-li!

He ruffle his fedders, an’ he flop his wings,  
Wid “Dis is de trouble dat frien’ship brings;  
But I’ll take it all an’ ax fer mo’,  
Ef so be I kin git you ter go.”  
Brer Tarrypin study, an’ look at de sky,  
Kaze his heart wuz sot on l’arnin’ ter fly –  
Fil-a-ma-looner-leener! fil-a-ma-leener-li!

*Fables in Foolscap*

Down on his hunkers Brer Buzzard squat,  
An' on his back Brer Tarrypin got;  
'Twuz slip an' fall, but he got on,  
An' de nex news you know dey bofe wuz gone!  
A-sailin' low, an' a-sailin' high,  
A-sailin' fur, an' a-sailin' nigh -  
Fil-a-ma-looner-leener! fil-a-ma-leener-li!

"Now, how shill I l'arn?" Brer Tarrypin say.  
Brer Buzzard 'spon', "I'll show you de way.  
I'm a-flyin' high, but I'll start down,  
Den you turn loose an' sail all roun'."  
Brer Tarrypin say - an' he shot his eye -  
"Ef we go much higher we'll 'sturb de sky!"  
Fil-a-ma-looner-leener! fil-a-ma-leener-li!

Tarrypin turn loose an' down he come,  
Wid a *blip* an' a *blap* an' a *blim-blam-blum!*  
He come wid a squeal, he come wid a squall -  
Dey ain't nobody y'ever had sech a fall!  
An' a mighty good reason: he wuz up so high  
Dat when he hit de groun' he wuz dead, mighty nigh -  
Fil-a-ma-looner-leener! fil-a-ma-leener-li!

Buzzard he foller fer ter see it done well,  
Wid "La, ol' frien'! it seem like you fell!  
An' all you hatter do wuz ter flop yo' wings!"  
Tarrypin groan; he say, "By jings!  
I know one thing, an' dat ain't two -  
I know one thing wid my fil-a-ma-loo!  
I know one thing, an' I know it right -  
I know how ter fly, but I dunner how ter light!  
Sump'n' n'er tol' me ez I sail in de sky,  
'L'arn how ter light 'fo' you l'arn how ter fly!" "  
Fil-a-ma-looner-leener! fil-a-ma-leener-li!

*Joel Chandler Harris*

## **Fable**

The mountain and the squirrel  
Had a quarrel,  
And the former called the latter "Little Prig";  
Bun replied,  
"You are doubtless very big;  
But all sorts of things and weather  
Must be taken in together,  
To make up a year  
And a sphere.  
And I think it no disgrace  
To occupy my place.  
If I'm not so large as you,  
You are not so small as I,  
And not half so spry.  
I'll not deny you make  
A very pretty squirrel track.  
Talents differ; all is well and wisely put;  
If I cannot carry forests on my back,  
Neither can you crack a nut."

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

## **The Tree \***

I am four monkeys.  
One hangs from a limb,  
tail-wise,  
chattering at the earth;  
another is cramming his belly with cocoanut;  
the third is up in the top branches,  
quizzing the sky;  
and the fourth –  
he's chasing another monkey.  
How many monkeys are you?

*Alfred Kreyborg*

\* See Note 35.

## **Voices**

O, there were lights and laughter  
And motions to and fro  
Of people as they enter  
And people as they go. . . .

And there were many voices  
Vying at the feast,  
But mostly I remember  
Yours – who spoke the least.

*Witter Bynner*



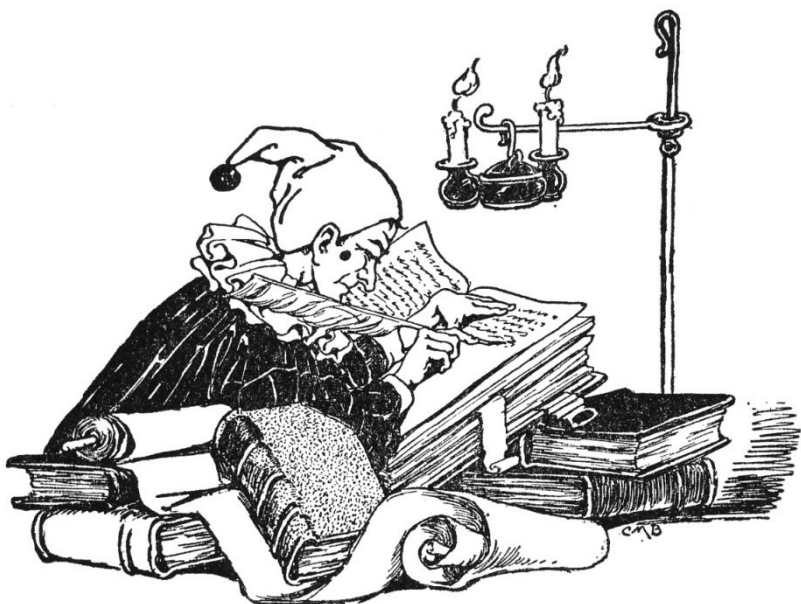
*FWI*

*This Singing World*



## **Rhyme Without Reason**

*This Singing World*





## **Topsy-Turvy World**

If the butterfly courted the bee,  
    And the owl the porcupine;  
If churches were built in the sea,  
    And three times one was nine;  
If the pony rode his master,  
    If the buttercups ate the cows,  
If the cats had the dire disaster  
    To be worried, sir, by the mouse;  
If Mamma, sir, sold the baby  
    To a gypsy for half a crown;  
If a gentleman, sir, was a lady, –  
    The world would be Upside-down!  
If any or all of these wonders  
    Should ever come about,  
I should not consider them blunders,  
    For I should be Inside-out:

### *Chorus*

Baa-baa, black wool  
    Have you any sheep?  
Yes, sir, a packfull,  
    Creep, mouse, creep!  
Four-and-twenty little maids  
    Hanging out the pie,  
Out jumped the honey-pot,  
    Guy Fawkes, Guy!  
Cross latch, cross latch,  
    Sit and spin the fire;  
When the pie was opened,  
    The bird was on the brier!

*William Brighty Rands*

## **The Owl and the Pussy-Cat \***

The Owl and the Pussy-Cat went to sea  
In a beautiful pea-green boat,  
They took some honey, and plenty of money,  
Wrapped up in a five-pound note.  
The Owl looked up to the stars above,  
And sang to a small guitar,  
“O lovely Pussy! O Pussy, my love,  
What a beautiful Pussy you are,  
You are!  
What a beautiful Pussy you are!”

Pussy said to the Owl, “You elegant fowl!  
How charmingly sweet you sing!  
O let us be married! too long we have tarried:  
But what shall we do for a ring?”  
They sailed away for a year and a day,  
To the land where the Bong-tree grows,  
And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood,  
With a ring at the end of his nose,  
His nose,  
With a ring at the end of his nose.

“Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling  
Your ring?” Said the Piggy, “I will.”  
So they took it away, and were married next day  
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.  
They dined on mince, and slices of quince,  
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;  
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,  
They danced by the light of the moon,  
The moon,  
They danced by the light of the moon.

*Edward Lear*

\* See [Note 36](#).

## **Little Billee**

There were three sailors of Bristol city  
Who took a boat and went to sea.  
But first with beef and captain's biscuits  
And pickled pork they loaded she.

There was gorging Jack and guzzling Jimmy,  
And the youngest he was little Billee.  
Now when they got as far as the Equator  
They'd nothing left but one split pea.

Says gorging Jack to guzzling Jimmy,  
"I am extremely hungaree."  
To gorging Jack says guzzling Jimmy,  
"We've nothing left, us must eat we."

Says gorging Jack to guzzling Jimmy,  
"With one another we shouldn't agree!  
There's little Bill, he's young and tender,  
We're old and tough, so let's eat he.

"Oh, Billy, we're going to kill and eat you,  
So undo the button of your chemie."  
When Bill received this information  
He used his pocket-handkerchie.

"First let me say my catechism,  
Which my poor mammy taught to me."  
"Make haste, make haste," says guzzling Jimmy,  
While Jack pulled out his snickersnee.<sup>1</sup>

So Billy went up to the main-topgallant mast,  
And down he fell on his bended knee.  
He scarce had come to the twelfth commandment  
When up he jumps. "There's land I see:

<sup>1</sup> snickersnee: (archaic) a knife for cutting and thrusting.

*This Singing World*

“Jerusalem and Madagascar,  
And North and South Amerikee:  
There’s the British flag a-riding at anchor,  
With Admiral Napier, K. C. B.”

So when they got aboard the Admiral’s  
He hanged fat Jack and flogged Jimmee;  
But as for little Bill he made him  
The captain of a Seventy-three!

*William Makepeace Thackeray*

## **The Yak**

As a friend to the children commend me the Yak.  
You will find it exactly the thing:  
It will carry and fetch, you can ride on its back,  
Or lead it about with a string.

The Tartar who dwells on the plains of Thibet  
(A desolate region of snow)  
Has for centuries made it a nursery pet,  
And surely the Tartar should know!

Then tell your papa where the Yak can be got,  
And if he is awfully rich  
He will buy you the creature – or else he will not.  
(I cannot be positive which.)

*Hilaire Belloc*

## **The Snark \***

*(From "The Hunting of the Snark")*

"Come, listen, my men, while I tell you again  
The five unmistakable marks  
By which you may know, wheresoever you go,  
The warranted genuine Snarks.

"Let us take them in order. The first is the taste,  
Which is meagre and hollow, but crisp:  
Like a coat that is rather too tight in the waist,  
With a flavour of Will-o-the-wisp.

"Its habit of getting up late you'll agree  
That it carries too far, when I say  
That it frequently breakfasts at five-o'clock tea,  
And dines on the following day.

"The third is its slowness in taking a jest.  
Should you happen to venture on one,  
It will sigh like a thing that is deeply distressed:  
And it always looks grave at a pun.

"The fourth is its fondness for bathing-machines,  
Which it constantly carries about,  
And believes that they add to the beauty of scenes –  
A sentiment open to doubt.

"The fifth is ambition. It next will be right  
To describe each particular batch:  
Distinguishing those that have feathers, and bite,  
From those that have whiskers, and scratch.

"For, although common Snarks do no manner of harm,  
Yet I feel it my duty to say  
Some are Boojums –" The Bellman broke off in alarm,  
For the Baker had fainted away.

*Lewis Carroll*

\* See Note 37.

## **The Baker's Tale**

*(From "The Hunting of the Snark")*

They roused him with muffins – they roused him with ice –  
They roused him with mustard and cress –  
They roused him with jam and judicious advice –  
They set him conundrums to guess.

When at length he sat up and was able to speak,  
His sad story he offered to tell;  
And the Bellman cried "Silence! Not even a shriek!"  
And excitedly tingled his bell.

There was silence supreme! Not a shriek, not a scream,  
Scarcely even a howl or a groan,  
As the man they called "Ho!" told his story of woe  
In an antediluvian tone.

"My father and mother were honest, though poor –"  
"Skip all that!" cried the Bellman in haste.  
"If it once becomes dark, there's no chance of a Snark –  
We have hardly a minute to waste!"

"I skip forty years," said the Baker, in tears,  
"And proceed without further remark  
To the day when you took me aboard of your ship  
To help you in hunting the Snark.

"A dear uncle of mine (after whom I was named)  
Remarked, when I bade him farewell –"  
"Oh, skip your dear uncle," the Bellman exclaimed,  
As he angrily tingled his bell.

"He remarked to me then," said that mildest of men,  
" 'If your Snark be a Snark that is right:  
Fetch it home by all means – you may serve it with greens  
And it's handy for striking a light.

*Rhyme Without Reason*

“ ‘You may seek it with thimbles – and seek it with care;  
You may hunt it with forks and hope;  
You may threaten its life with a railway-share;  
You may charm it with smiles and soap –’ “

(“That’s exactly the method,” the Bellman bold  
In a hasty parenthesis cried,  
“That’s exactly the way I have always been told  
That the capture of Snarks should be tried!”)

“ ‘But oh, beamish nephew, beware of the day,  
If your Snark be a Boojum! For then  
You will softly and suddenly vanish away,  
And never be met with again!’

“It is this, it is this that oppresses my soul,  
When I think of my uncle’s last words;  
And my heart is like nothing so much as a bowl  
Brimming over with quivering curds!

“It is this, it is this –” “We have had that before!”  
The Bellman indignantly said.  
And the Baker replied, “Let me say it once more.  
It is this, it is this, that I dread!

“I engage with the Snark – every night after dark –  
In a dreamy delirious fight:  
I serve it with greens in those shadowy scenes,  
And I use it for striking a light:

“But if ever I meet with a Boojum, that day,  
In a moment (of this I am sure),  
I shall softly and suddenly vanish away –  
And the notion I cannot endure!”

*Lewis Carroll*

## **How to Tell the Wild Animals**

If ever you should go by chance  
    To jungles in the East;  
And if there should to you advance  
    A large and tawny beast,  
If he roars at you as you're dyin'  
You'll know it is the Asian Lion.

Or if some time when roaming round,  
    A noble wild beast greets you,  
With black stripes on a yellow ground,  
    Just notice if he eats you.  
This simple rule may help you learn  
The Bengal Tiger to discern.

If strolling forth, a beast you view,  
    Whose hide with spots is peppered,  
As soon as he has lept on you,  
    You'll know it is the leopard.  
'Twill do no good to roar with pain,  
He'll only lep and lep again.

If when you're walking round your yard,  
    You meet a creature there,  
Who hugs you very, very hard,  
    Be sure it is the Bear.  
If you have any doubt, I guess  
He'll give you just one more caress.

Though to distinguish beasts of prey  
    A novice might nonplus,  
The Crocodiles you always may  
    Tell from Hyenas thus:  
Hyenas come with merry smiles;  
But if they weep, they're Crocodiles.



*Rhyme Without Reason*

The true Chameleon is small,  
A lizard sort of thing;  
He hasn't any ears at all,  
And not a single wing.  
If there is nothing on the tree,  
'Tis the Chameleon you see.

*Carolyn Wells*

## **The Lion**

The Lion, the Lion, he dwells in the waste,  
He has a big head and a very small waist;  
But his shoulders are stark, and his jaws they are grim,  
And a good little child will not play with him.

*Hilaire Belloc*



## **Words \***

Now, speech is very curious:  
You never know what minute  
A word will show a brand-new side,  
With brand-new meaning in it.  
This world could hardly turn around,  
If some things acted like they sound.

Suppose the April flower-beds,  
Down in the garden spaces,  
Were made with green frog-blanket spreads  
And caterpillar-cases;  
Or oak trees locked their trunks to hide  
The countless rings they keep inside!

Suppose from every pitcher-plant  
The milk-weed came a-pouring;  
That tiger-lilies could be heard  
With dandelions roaring,  
Till all the cat-tails, far and near,  
Began to bristle up in fear!

What if the old cow blew her horn  
Some peaceful evening hour,  
And suddenly a blast replied  
From every trumpet-flower,  
While people's ears beat noisy drums  
To "Hail, the Conquering Hero Comes!"

If barn-yard fowls had honey-combs,  
What should we think, I wonder?  
If lightning-bugs should swiftly strike,  
Then peal with awful thunder?  
And would it turn our pink cheeks pale  
To see a comet switch its tail?

*Nancy Byrd Turner*

\* See [Note 38](#).

## **Contrary Mary**

You ask why Mary was called contrary?  
Well, this is why, my dear:  
She planted the most outlandish things  
In her garden every year;

She was always sowing the queerest seed,  
And when advised to stop,  
Her answer was merely, "No, indeed –  
Just wait till you see my crop!"

And here are some of the crops, my child  
(Although not nearly all):  
Bananarcissus and cucumberries,  
And violettuce small;  
Potatomatoes, melonions rare,  
And rhubarberries round,  
With porcupineapples prickly-rough  
On a little bush close to the ground.

She gathered the stuff in mid-July  
And sent it away to sell –  
And now you'll see how she earned her name,  
And how she earned it well.  
Were the crops hauled off in a farmer's cart?  
No, not by any means,  
But in little June-buggies and automobeetles  
And dragonflying-machines!

*Nancy Byrd Turner*

## **Nonsense Rhymes**

### **I**

*ON DIGITAL EXTREMITIES:*

*A Poem, and a Gem It Is!*

I'd Rather have Fingers than Toes;  
I'd Rather have Ears than a Nose;  
    And As for my Hair,  
    I'm Glad it's All There;  
I'll be Awfully Sad, when it Goes!

*This Singing World*

**II**

*THE FLOORLESS ROOM: A Novel Sort  
Of Argument Without Support.*

I Wish that my Room had a Floor!  
I don't so Much Care for a Door,  
    But this Crawling Around  
    Without Touching the Ground  
Is getting to be Quite a Bore!

**III**

*THE SUNSET: Picturing the Glow  
It Casts upon a Dish of Dough.*

The Sun is Low, to Say the Least,  
    Although it is Well-Red;  
Yet, Since it Rises in the Yeast,  
    It Should be Better Bred!

**IV**

*THE WINDOW PAIN: a Theme Symbolic,  
Pertaining to the Melon Colic.*

The Window has Four Little Panes;  
    But One have I –  
The Window Pains are in its Sash;  
    I Wonder Why!

**V**

*THE PURPLE COW'S Projected Feast:  
Reflections on a Mythic Beast,  
Who's quite Remarkable, at Least.*

I never saw a Purple Cow,  
    I never hope to see one;  
But I can tell you, anyhow,  
    I'd rather see than be one!

*Gelett Burgess*

## **A Medley**

Little Jack Horner sat in the corner  
Eying the pies all day,  
While little Miss Muffet sat on her tuffet  
Eating her curds and whey.  
Old Mother Hubbard then went to the cupboard  
To give him a pie and bun,  
When out walked a spider and sat down beside her –  
So this little pig had none!

*Michael Lewis*

## **Limeratomy**<sup>1</sup>

### *The Face*

As a beauty I'm not a great star,  
There are others more handsome by far,  
But my face, I don't mind it,  
Because I'm behind it –  
'Tis the folks in the front that I jar.

### *The Hands*

The hands they were made to assist  
In supplying the features with grist.  
There are only a few –  
As a rule about two –  
And are hitched to the end of the wrist.

### *The Smile*

No matter how grouchy you're feeling,  
You'll find the smile more or less healing.  
It grows in a wreath  
All around the front teeth –  
Thus preserving the face from congealing,

*Anthony Euwer*

<sup>1</sup> Limeratomy: a word invented by the author, combining *limerick* and *anatomy*.

## **Five Limericks by Famous Writers**

### **IN QUEBEC**

There was once a small boy in Quebec  
Stood buried in snow to his neck.

When asked: "Are you friz?"

He said: "Yes, I is,

But we don't call this cold in Quebec."

*Rudyard Kipling*

### **AN EXTRAVAGANCE**

The Reverend Henry Ward Beecher  
Called a hen a most elegant creature.

The hen, pleased with that,

Laid an egg in his hat, -

And thus did the hen reward Beecher!

*Oliver Wendell Holmes*

### **THE VICAR OF BRAY**

An indolent vicar of Bray

His roses allowed to decay;

His wife, more alert.

Bought a powerful squirt,

And said to her spouse, "Let us spray!"

*Langford Reed*

### **AN UNRHYMED LIMERICK <sup>1</sup>**

There was an old man of St. Bees,

Who was stung in the arm by a wasp,

When asked, "Does it hurt?"

He replied, "No, it doesn't,

I'm so glad it wasn't a hornet."

*W. S. Gilbert*

<sup>1</sup> See the first limerick by Edward Lear, on page 274.

**WEAR AND TEAR**

There was an old man of the Cape,  
Who made himself garments of crêpe.  
When asked, "Do they tear?"  
He replied, "Here and there,"  
But they're perfectly splendid for shape!"

*Robert Louis Stevenson*

**The Glad Young Chamois**

How lightly leaps the youthful chamois <sup>1</sup>  
From rock to rock and never misses!  
I always get all cold and clamois  
When near the edge of precipisses.

Confronted by some yawning chasm,  
He bleats not for his sire or mamois  
(That is, supposing that he has'm)  
But yawns himself – the bold young lamois!

He is a thing of beauty always;  
And when he dies, a gray old ramois,  
Leaves us his horns to deck our hallways;  
His skin cleans teaspoons, soiled or jamois.

I shouldn't like to be a chamois,  
However much I am his debtor.  
I hate to run and jump; why, damois,  
'Most any job would suit me bebtor!

*Burgess Johnson*

<sup>1</sup> Of course you know that, no matter how it is spelled, chamois is pronounced shammy.

## **Nonsense Limericks**

There was an Old Man in a tree  
Who was horribly bored by a Bee;  
    When they said, "Does it buzz?"  
    He replied, "Yes, it does!  
It's a regular brute of a Bee."

\*

There was a Young Lady of Norway,  
Who casually sat in a Doorway;  
    When the door squeezed her flat,  
    She exclaimed, "What of that?"  
This courageous Young Lady of Norway.

\*

There was an Old Man who said, "How  
Shall I flee from this horrible Cow?  
    I will sit on this stile,  
    And continue to smile,  
Which may soften the heart of that Cow."

\*

There was an Old Man of Cape Horn,  
Who wished he had never been born;  
    So he sat on a Chair  
    Till he died of despair,  
That dolorous Man of Cape Horn.

\*

There was a Young Lady whose eyes  
Were unique as to color and size;  
    When she opened them wide,  
    People all turned aside,  
And started away in surprise.

\*

There was an Old Man with a beard,  
Who said, "It is just as I feared! -  
    Two Owls and a Hen,  
    Four Larks and a Wren,  
Have all built their nests in my beard!"

*Edward Lear*



## Three Famous Limericks

### I

There was a young lady of Niger  
Who smiled as she rode on a tiger;  
They returned from the ride  
With the lady inside,  
And the smile on the face of the tiger.

### II

The poor benighted Hindoo,  
He does the best he kindo;  
He sticks to caste  
From first to last;  
For pants he makes his skindo.

### III

A lady there was of Antigua,  
Who said to her spouse, "What a pig you are!"  
He answered, "My queen,  
Is it manners you mean,  
Or do you refer to my figuah?"

*Cosmo Monkhouse*

## Five Puzzlers <sup>1</sup>

She frowned and called him Mr.,  
Because in sport he kr.;  
And so in spite  
That very night  
This Mr. kr. sr.

\*

<sup>1</sup> Here is where you must use your cleverness and imagination.

*This Singing World*

An unpopular youth of Cologne,  
With a pain in his stomach did mogne.  
    He heaved a great sigh  
    And said, "I would digh,"  
But the loss would be only my ogne."

\*

There was a young lady named Wemyss,<sup>2</sup>  
Who, it semys, was troubled with dremys.  
    She would wake in the night,  
    And, in terrible fright,  
Shake the bemyss of the house with her scremys.

\*

There was a young servant at Drogheda,<sup>3</sup>  
Whose mistress had deeply annogheda,  
    She proceeded to swear  
    In language so rare  
That afterwards no one emplougheda.

\*

There was a young poet  
of Trinity  
who, though he could trill  
                                  like a linnet  
he could never complete any  
poem with feet –  
Saying "Idiots! Can't you see  
that what I'm specializing in  
happens to be  
Free  
                                  Verse.

*Anonymous*

<sup>2</sup> Believe it or not, but in England the name Wemyss is pronounced "Weems"!

<sup>3</sup> And in Ireland, Drogheda is pronounced – But no! You must guess this one without any help from me.

## Four Tricky Limericks

### I

A tutor who tooted the flute  
Tried to tutor two tooters to toot.  
Said the two to the tutor,  
“Is it harder to toot or  
To tutor two tooters to toot?”

### II

A canner, exceedingly canny,  
One morning remarked to his granny,  
“A canner can can  
Anything that he can,  
But a canner can’t can a can, can-he?”

### III

There was a young fellow named Tait,  
Who dined with his girl at 8.08;  
But I’d hate to relate  
What that fellow named Tait  
And his tete-a-tete ate at 8.08. <sup>1</sup>

### IV

Said a bad little youngster named Beauchamp: <sup>2</sup>  
“Those jelly-tarts, how shall I reauchamp?  
To my parents I’d go,  
But they always say ‘No,’  
No matter how much I beseauchamp.”

*Carolyn Wells*

<sup>1</sup> *tête-à-tête*: a private conversation between two persons, usually in an intimate setting – or here, a partner in one. Literally head-to-head to the French, they say “tett-ah-tett.” With poetic license, it’s “tate-ah-tate” here, rhyming with Tait.

<sup>2</sup> Pronounced “Beecham” !

## **A Delightful Dozen**

There once was a pious young priest  
Who lived almost wholly on yeast;  
    “For,” he said, “it is plain  
    We must all rise again,  
And I want to get started, at least.”

\*

When you think of the hosts without No.  
Who are slain by the deadly cuco.,<sup>1</sup>  
    It’s quite a mistake  
    Of such food to partake,  
It results in a permanent slo.

\*

The bottle of perfume that Willie sent  
Was highly displeasing to Millicent;  
    Her thanks were so cold  
    They quarrelled, I’m told,  
Through that silly scent Willie sent Millicent.

\*

A fly and a flea in a flue  
Were imprisoned, so what could they do?  
    Said the fly, “Let us flee!”  
    “Let us fly!” said the flea,  
So they flew through a flaw in the flue.

\*

There was a faith-healer of Deal  
Who said, “Although pain isn’t real,  
    If I sit on a pin  
    And it punctures my skin,  
I dislike what I *fancy* I feel.”

\*

There once was a man of Calcutta  
Who spoke with a terrible stutter.  
    At breakfast he said,  
    “Give me b-b-bread,  
And b-b-b-b-b-b-b-butter.”

<sup>1</sup> Now, if No. represents the word Number, cuco. – But this is almost too simple.

*Rhyme Without Reason*

\*

There was an old man of Blackheath,  
Who sat on his set of false teeth.

Said he, with a start,  
“O Lord, bless my heart!  
I’ve bitten myself underneath!”

\*

There was a young man of Bengal  
Who went to a fancy-dress ball,

He went, just for fun,  
Dressed up as a bun,  
And a dog ate him up in the hall.

\*

There was an old man of Peru,  
Who dreamt he was eating his shoe,

He woke in the night  
In a terrible fright, –  
And found it was perfectly true!

\*

There was a young lady of Lynn,  
Who was so uncommonly thin

That when she essayed  
To drink lemonade,  
She slipped through the straw and fell in.

\*

There was an old man of Tarentum,  
Who gnashed his false teeth till he bent ’em.

When they asked him the cost  
Of what he had lost,  
He replied, “I can’t say, for I rent ’em.”

\*

There was a young man who was bitten  
By forty-two cats and a kitten,

Cried he, “It is clear  
My end is quite near,  
No matter; I’ll die like a Briton!”

*Anonymous*

*This Singing World*



*FWI*

## **Croons and Lullabies**

*This Singing World*





## **Wynken, Blynken, and Nod**

Wynken, Blynken, and Nod one night  
Sailed off in a wooden shoe –  
Sailed on a river of crystal light,  
Into a sea of dew.  
‘Where are you going, and what do you wish?’  
The old moon asked the three.  
‘We have come to fish for the herring-fish  
That live in this beautiful sea;  
Nets of silver and gold have we!’  
Said Wynken, Blynken, and Nod.

The old moon laughed and sang a song,  
As they rocked in the wooden shoe,  
And the wind that sped them all night long,  
Ruffled the waves of dew.  
The little stars were the herring-fish  
That lived in that beautiful sea –  
‘Now cast your nets wherever you wish –  
But never afeared are we;’  
So cried the stars to the fishermen three:  
Wynken, Blynken, and Nod.

All night long their nets they threw  
For the fish in the twinkling foam –  
Then down from the sky came the wooden shoe,  
Bringing the fishermen home;  
’Twas all so pretty a sail, it seemed  
As if it could not be;  
And some folks thought ’twas a dream they’d dreamed  
Of sailing that beautiful sea –  
But I shall name you the fishermen three:  
Wynken, Blynken, and Nod.

*This Singing World*

Wynken and Blynken are two little eyes,  
And Nod is a little head,  
And the wooden shoe that sailed the skies  
Is a wee one's trundle-bed.  
So shut your eyes while mother sings  
Of wonderful sights that be,  
And you shall see the beautiful things  
As you rock in the misty sea,  
Where the old shoe rocked the fishermen three:  
Wynken, Blynken, and Nod.

*Eugene Field*

## **Sweet and Low**

Sweet and low, sweet and low,  
Wind of the western sea,  
Low, low, breathe and blow,  
Wind of the western sea!  
Over the rolling waters go,  
Come from the dying moon' and blow,  
Blow him again to me;  
While my little one, while my pretty one sleeps.

Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,  
Father will come to thee soon;  
Rest, rest, on mother's breast,  
Father will come to thee soon;  
Father will come to his babe in the nest,  
Silver sails all out of the west  
Under the silver moon;  
Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one, sleep.

*Alfred Tennyson*

## **Young and Old**

When all the world is young, lad,  
    And all the trees are green;  
And every goose a swan, lad,  
    And every lass a queen;  
Then hey for boot and horse, lad,  
    And round the world away;  
Young blood must have its course, lad,  
    And every dog his day.

When all the world is old, lad,  
    And all the trees are brown;  
And all the sport is stale, lad,  
    And all the wheels run down;  
Creep home, and take your place there,  
    The spent and maimed among:  
God grant you find one face there,  
    You loved when all was young.

Charles Kingsley

## **Lullaby \***

Bedtime's come fu' little boys.  
    Po' little lamb.  
Too tiahed out to make a noise,  
    Po' little lamb.  
You gwine t' b'have to-morrer sho'?  
Yes, you tole me dat befo',  
Don't you fool me, chile, no mo',  
    Po' little lamb.

\* See Note 39.

*This Singing World*

You been bad de livelong day,  
Po' little lamb.

Th'owin' stones an' runnin' 'way,  
Po' little lamb.

My, but you's a-runnin' wil',  
Look jes' lak some po' folks' chile;  
Mam' gwine whup you atter while,  
Po' little lamb.

Come hyeah! you mos' tiahed to def,  
Po' little lamb.

Played yo'se'f clean out o' bref,  
Po' little lamb.

See dem han's now – sich a sight!  
Would you evah b'lieve dey's white?  
Stan' still 'twell I wash 'em right,  
Po' little lamb.

Jes' cain't hol' yo' haid up straight,  
Po' little lamb.

Hadn't oughter played so late,  
Po' little lamb.

Mammy don' know whut she'd do,  
Ef de chillun's all lak you;  
You's a caution now fu' true,  
Po' little lamb.

Lay yo' haid down in my lap,  
Po' little lamb.

Y'ought to have a right good slap,  
Po' little lamb'

You been runnin' roun' a heap.  
Shet dem eyes an' don't you peep  
Dah now, dah now, go to sleep,  
Po' little lamb.

*Paul Laurence Dunbar*

## **The Ship O' Bed**

When I was young, I had a bed  
That was no bed at all,  
But a good great ship with seven masts  
And seamen brown and tall.

Each seaman had a lantern white  
To light us past the bars,  
And all of them knew old sea-songs,  
And their eyes were like the stars.

The stars rolled millions overhead,  
But seven were made fast,  
The brightest and the best of all,  
Upon each mighty mast.

Four Captains had my starry bed,  
I named them in my prayer,  
Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,  
With golden beards and hair.

But the Pilot, whom I loved the best  
Because he called me *Sir*  
And played the games I liked to play,  
Was good Saint Christopher.

Out we broke our sails which seemed  
Like patches that the moon  
Makes upon a quiet floor  
When crickets sing their tune.

And we were off to seek a Dame  
Who would be kind to me  
And turn each sailor's heart to gold,  
The Lady of the Sea!

I think she lived beyond the place  
Where fish grow crowns of gold  
And where there are so many tales  
That all are never told.

*This Singing World*

The wind blew very wonderful,  
    Throwing foam like snow,  
Yet always let us hear the call  
    Of sea-chicks peeping low.

Out the yellow beards all flew  
    Of Matthew, Luke and John,  
But Mark's flew longest of them all  
    And was coloured like the dawn.

The fish took wing and played about  
    Each opal sail and sang  
Of goose-girls and the currant-fruits  
    That on the bun-trees hang.

When flowers came above the waves  
    We knew the port was nigh;  
We could see a silver town  
    Rising up hard by.

Down came our sails, each sailor bowed  
    And plucked his cap to me. . . .  
'Twas day, and there my Mother stood,  
    The Lady of the Sea!

*Robert P. Tristram Coffin*

## **O Captain! My Captain! \***

*(In Memory of Abraham Lincoln)*

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,  
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,  
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,  
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;  
    But O heart! heart! heart!  
    O the bleeding drops of red,  
    Where on the deck my Captain lies,  
    Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;  
Rise up – for you the flag is flung – for you the bugle trills,  
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths – for you the shores  
    acrowding,  
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;  
    Here Captain! dear father!  
    This arm beneath your head!  
    It is some dream that on the deck,  
    You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,  
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,  
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,  
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;  
    Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells!  
    But I with mournful tread,  
    Walk the deck my Captain lies,  
    Fallen cold and dead.

*Walt Whitman*

\* See [Note 40](#).

## **Requiem**

Under the wide and starry sky  
Dig the grave and let me lie:  
Glad did I live and gladly die,  
And I laid me down with a will.  
This be the verse you 'grave for me:  
*Here he lies where he long'd to be;*  
*Home is the sailor, home from the sea,*  
*And, the hunter home from the hill.*

*Robert Louis Stevenson*

## **Up-Hill**

Does the road wind up-hill all the way?  
*Yes, to the very end.*  
Will the day's journey take the whole long day?  
*From morn to night, my friend.*  
But is there for the night a resting-place?  
A roof for when the slow dark hours begin?  
May not the darkness hide it from my face?  
*You cannot miss that inn.*  
Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?  
*Those who have gone before.*  
Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?  
*They will not keep you standing at that door.*  
Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?  
*Of labor you shall find the sum.*  
Will there be beds for me and all who seek?  
*Yea, beds for all who come.*

*Christina Georgina Rossetti*



## **Nod**

Softly along the road of evening,  
In a twilight dim with rose,  
Wrinkled with age, and drenched with dew  
Old Nod, the shepherd, goes.

His drowsy flock streams on before him,  
Their fleeces charged with gold,  
To where the sun's last beam leans low  
On Nod the shepherd's fold.

The hedge is quick and green with briar,  
From their sand the conies <sup>1</sup> creep;  
And all the birds that fly in heaven  
Flock singing home to sleep.

His lambs outnumber a noon's roses,  
Yet, when night's shadows fall,  
His blind old sheep-dog, Slumber-soon,  
Misses not one of all.

His are the quiet steps of dreamland,  
The waters of no-more-pain,  
His ram's bell ring 'neath an arch of stars,  
'Rest, rest, and rest again.'

*Walter de la Mare*

<sup>1</sup> Conies: rabbits



## **Crossing the Bar** \*

Sunset and evening star,  
And one clear call for me!  
And may there be no moaning of the bar,  
When I put out to sea.

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,  
Too full for sound and foam,  
When that which drew from out the boundless deep  
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,  
And after that the dark!  
And may there be no sadness or farewell,  
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place  
The flood may bear me far,  
I hope to see my Pilot face to face  
When I have crost the bar.

*Alfred Tennyson*

\* See [Note 41](#).

## **Stars to Hitch to**



## **In After Days**

In after days when grasses high  
O'ertop the stone where I shall lie,  
    Though ill or well the world adjust  
    My slender claim to honored dust,  
I shall not question or reply.

I shall not see the morning sky;  
I shall not hear the night-wind's sigh;  
    I shall be mute, as all men must  
    In after days!

But yet, now living, fain were I  
That some one then should testify,  
    Saying – “He held his pen in trust  
    To Art, not serving shame or lust.”  
Will none? – Then let my memory die  
    In after days!

*Austin Dobson*

## **Primer Lesson**

Look out how you use proud words.  
When you let proud words go, it is not  
    easy to call them back.  
They wear long boots, hard boots;  
    they walk off proud; they can't  
    hear you calling –  
Look out how you use proud words.

*Carl Sandburg*

## **The Song of Honor \***

*(Condensed Version)*

I climbed a hill as light fell short,  
And rooks came home in scramble sort,  
And filled the trees and flapped and fought  
And sang themselves to sleep;  
An owl from nowhere with no sound  
Swung by and soon was nowhere found,  
I heard him calling half-way round,  
Holloing loud and deep;  
A pair of stars, faint pins of light,  
Then many a star, sailed into sight,  
And all the stars, the flower of night,  
Were round me at a leap;  
To tell how still the valleys lay  
I heard a watchdog miles away, –  
And bells of distant sheep.

I heard no more of bird or bell,  
The mastiff in a slumber fell,  
I stared into the sky,  
As wondering men have always done  
Since beauty and the stars were one  
Though none so hard as I.  
It seemed, so still the valleys were,  
As if the whole world knelt at prayer,  
Save me and me alone;  
So pure and wide that silence was  
I feared to bend a blade of grass,  
And there I stood like stone.

\* See Note 42.

*Stars to Hitch to*

There, sharp and sudden, there I heard –  
*Ah! some wild lovesick singing bird  
Woke singing in the trees?  
The nightingale and babble-wren  
Were in the English greenwood then,  
And you heard one of these?*

The babble-wren and nightingale  
Sang in the Abyssinian vale  
That season of the year!

Yet, true enough, I heard them plain,  
I heard them both again, again,  
As sharp and sweet and clear  
As if the Abyssinian tree  
Had thrust a bough across the sea,  
Had thrust a bough across to me  
With music for my ear!

I heard them both, and oh! I heard  
The song of every singing bird  
That sings beneath the sky,  
And with the song of lark and wren  
The song of mountains, moths and men  
And seas and rainbows vie!  
I heard the universal choir,  
The Sons of Light, exalt their Sire  
With universal song,  
Earth's lowliest and loudest notes,  
Her million times ten million throats  
Exalt Him loud and long,  
And lips and lungs and tongues of Grace  
From every part and every place  
Within the shining of His face,  
The universal throng.

*This Singing World*

I heard the hymn of Being sound  
From every well of honor found  
In human sense and soul:  
The song of poets when they write  
The testament of Beauty sprite  
Upon a flying scroll,  
The song of painters, when they take  
A burning brush for Beauty's sake  
And limn her features whole -

The song of men divinely wise  
Who look and see in starry skies  
Not stars so much as robins' eyes,  
And when these pale away,  
Hear flocks of shiny Pleiades  
Among the plums and apple trees  
Sing in the summer day -

The song of all both high and low  
To some blest vision true,  
The song of beggars when they throw  
The crust of pity all men owe  
To hungry sparrows in the snow,  
Old beggars hungry too -  
The song of kings of kingdoms when  
They rise, above their fortune, Men,  
And crown themselves anew -

The song of courage, heart and will  
And gladness in a fight,  
Of men who face a hopeless hilt  
With sparkling and delight,  
The bells and bells of song that ring  
Round banners of a cause or king  
From armies bleeding white -

\* \* \* \* \*



*Stars to Hitch to*

I heard it all, each, every note  
Of every lung and tongue and throat,  
Ay, every rhythm and rhyme  
Of everything that lives and loves  
And upward, ever upward moves  
From lowly to sublime!  
Earth's multitudinous Sons of Light,  
I heard them lift their lyric might  
With each and every charming sprite  
That lit the sky that wondrous night  
As far as eye could climb!

I heard it all, I heard the whole  
Harmonious hymn of Being roll  
Up through the chapel of my soul  
And at the altar die,  
And in the awful quiet then  
Myself I heard, Amen, Amen,  
Amen I heard me cry!  
I heard it all and then although  
I caught my flying senses, oh,  
A dizzy man was I!  
I stood and stared; the sky was lit,  
The sky was stars all over it;  
I stood, I knew not why,  
Without a wish, without a will,  
I stood upon that silent hill  
And stared into the sky until  
My eyes were blind with stars and still  
I stared into the sky.

*Ralph Hodgson*

## **Fourth of July Ode**

### **I**

Our fathers fought for Liberty,  
They struggled long and well,  
History of their deeds can tell –  
But did they leave us free?

### **II**

Are we free from vanity,  
Free from pride, and free from self,  
Free from love of power and pelf,<sup>1</sup>  
From everything that's beggarly?

### **III**

Are we free from stubborn will,  
From low hate and malice small,  
From opinion's tyrant thrall?  
Are none of us our own slaves still?

### **IV**

Are we free to speak our thought,  
To be happy, and be poor,  
Free to enter Heaven's door,  
To live and labor as we ought?

### **V**

Are we then made free at last  
From the fear of what men say,  
Free to reverence To-day,  
Free from the slavery of the Past?

### **VI**

Our fathers fought for liberty,  
They struggled long and well,  
History of their deeds can tell –  
But *ourselves* must set us free.

*James Russell Lowell*

<sup>1</sup> pelf: money, especially when gained in a dishonorable way.

## **The Arrow and the Song**

I shot an arrow into the air,  
It fell to earth, I knew not where  
For, so swiftly it flew, the sight  
Could not follow it in its flight.

I breathed a song into the air,  
It fell to earth, I knew not where;  
For who has sight so keen and strong,  
That it can follow the flight of song?

Long, long afterward, in an oak  
I found the arrow, still unbroke;  
And the song, from beginning to end,  
I found again in the heart of a friend.

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

## **A Psalm of Life**

Tell me not, in mournful numbers,  
Life is but an empty dream! –  
For the soul is dead that slumbers,  
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life is earnest!  
And the grave is not its goal;  
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,  
Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,  
Is our destined end or way;  
But to act, that each to-morrow  
Find us farther than today.

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,  
And our hearts, though stout and brave,  
Still, like muffled drums, are beating  
Funeral marches to the grave.

## *This Singing World*

In the world's broad field of battle,  
In the bivouac of Life,  
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!  
Be a hero in the strife!

Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!  
Let the dead Past bury its dead!  
Act, – act in the living Present!  
Heart within, and God o'erhead!

Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And, departing, leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time;

Footprints, that perhaps another,  
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,  
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,  
Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing,  
With a heart for any fate;  
Still achieving, still pursuing,  
Learn to labor and to wait.

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

## **Thunderstorms**

My mind has thunderstorms,  
That brood for heavy hours:  
Until they rain me words,  
My thoughts are drooping flowers  
And sulking, silent birds.

Yet come, dark thunderstorms,  
And brood your heavy hours;  
For when you rain me words,  
My thoughts are dancing flowers  
And joyful singing birds.

*W. H. Davies*

## **The Example \***

Here's an example from  
A Butterfly;  
That on a rough, hard rock  
Happy can lie;  
Friendless and all alone  
On this unsweetened stone.

Now let my bed be hard,  
No care take I;  
I'll make my joy like this  
Small Butterfly;  
Whose happy heart has power  
To make a stone a flower.

*W. H. Davies*

\* See Note 43.

## **Leisure**

What is this life if, full of care,  
We have no time to stand and stare.  
  
No time to stand beneath the boughs  
And stare as long as sheep or cows.  
  
No time to see, when woods we pass,  
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.  
  
No time to see, in broad daylight,  
Streams full of stars, like stars at night.  
  
No time to turn at Beauty's glance,  
And watch her feet, how they can dance.  
  
No time to wait till her mouth can  
Enrich that smile her eyes began.  
  
A poor life this if, full of care,  
We have no time to stand and stare.

*W. H. Davies*

*This Singing World*

## **Happy Wind**

Oh, happy wind, how sweet  
Thy life must be!  
The great, proud fields of gold  
Run after thee:  
And here are flowers, with heads  
To nod and shake;  
And dreaming butterflies  
To tease and wake.  
Oh, happy wind, I say,  
To be alive this day.

*W. H. Davies*

## **Epic**

“Little dew  
On a leaf,  
What are you?  
Know you grief?”

“Little dust  
On a thorn,  
Wherefore must  
We be born?”

“Little breath  
Of an air,  
After death  
You blow – where?”

Said the dew,  
Said the dust,  
Said the blue:  
“We can trust.”

*Virginia Moore*

**If – \***

If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too:  
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream – and not make dreams your master;  
If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim,  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two impostors just the same:  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
And lose, and start again at your beginnings  
And never breathe a word about your loss:  
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew  
To serve your turn long after they are gone,  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with Kings – nor lose the common touch,  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
If all men count with you, but none too much:  
If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And – which is more – you'll be a Man, my son!

*Rudyard Kipling*

\* See Note 44.

## **The Enduring**

If the autumn ended  
Ere the birds flew southward,  
If in the cold with weary throats  
They vainly strove to sing,  
Winter would be eternal;  
Leaf and bush and blossom  
Would never once more riot  
In the spring.

If remembrance ended  
When life and love are gathered,  
If the world were not living  
Long after one is gone,  
Song would not ring, nor sorrow  
Stand at the door in evening;  
Life would vanish and slacken,  
Men would be changed to stone.

But there will be autumn's bounty  
Dropping upon our weariness,  
There will be hopes unspoken  
And joys to haunt us still;  
There will be dawn and sunset  
Though we have cast the world away,  
And the leaves dancing  
Over the hill.

*John Gould Fletcher*



## **The Tuft of Flowers**

I went to turn the grass once after one  
Who mowed it in the dew before the sun.

The dew was gone that made his blade so keen  
Before I came to view the levelled scene.

I looked for him behind an isle of trees;  
I listened for his whetstone on the breeze.

But he had gone his way, the grass all mown,  
And I must be, as he had been, - alone,

“As all must be,” I said within my heart,  
“Whether they work together or apart.”

But as I said it, swift there passed me by  
On noiseless wing a bewildered butterfly,

Seeking with memories grown dim over night .  
Some resting flower of yesterday's delight.

And once I marked his flight go round and round,  
As where some flower lay withering on the ground.

And then he flew as far as eye could see,  
And then on tremulous wing came back to me.

I thought of questions that have no reply,  
And would have turned to toss the grass to dry;

But he turned first, and led my eye to look  
At a tall tuft of flowers beside a brook,

A leaping tongue of bloom the scythe had spared  
Beside a reedy brook the scythe had bared.

I left my place to know them by their name,  
Finding them butterfly-weed when I came.

The mower in the dew had loved them thus,  
By leaving them to flourish, not for us,

Nor yet to draw one thought of ours to him,  
But from sheer morning gladness at the brim.

## *This Singing World*

The butterfly and I had lit upon,  
Nevertheless, a message from the dawn,  
That made me hear the wakening birds around,  
And hear his long scythe whispering to the ground,  
And feel a spirit kindred to my own;  
So that henceforth I worked no more alone;  
But glad with him, I worked as with his aid,  
And weary, sought at noon with him the shade;  
And dreaming, as it were, held brotherly speech  
With one whose thought I had not hoped to reach.  
“Men work together,” I told him from the heart,  
“Whether they work together or apart.”

*Robert Frost*

## **Hate**

My enemy came nigh,  
And I  
Stared fiercely in his face.  
My lips went writhing back in a grimace,  
And stern I watched him with a narrow eye.  
Then, as I turned away, my enemy,  
That bitter heart and savage, said to me:  
“Some day, when this is past,  
When all the arrows that we have are cast,  
We may ask one another why we hate,  
And fail to find a story to relate.  
It may seem to us then a mystery  
That we could hate each other.”

Thus said he,  
And did not turn away,  
Waiting to hear what I might have to say  
But I fled quickly, fearing if I stayed  
I might have kissed him as I would a maid.

*James Stephens*

## **Recessional \***

God of our fathers, known of old –  
    Lord of our far-flung battle line –  
Beneath whose awful hand we hold  
    Dominion over palm and pine –  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget – lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies –  
    The Captains and the Kings depart –  
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,  
    An humble and a contrite heart.  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget – lest we forget!

Far-called our navies melt away –  
    On dune and headland sinks the fire –  
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday  
    Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!  
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,  
Lest we forget – lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power we loose  
    Wild tongues that have not thee in awe –  
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,  
    Or lesser breeds without the Law –  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget – lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust  
    In reeking tube and iron shard – <sup>1</sup>  
All valiant dust that builds on dust,  
    And guarding calls not Thee to guard.  
For frantic boast and foolish word,  
Thy Mercy on Thy People, Lord!

*Amen.*

*Rudyard Kipling*

\* See [Note 45](#).

<sup>1</sup> reeking tube and iron shard: gun and bullet.

## **A Prayer**

Teach me, Father, how to go  
Softly as the grasses grow;  
Hush my soul to meet the shock  
Of the wild world as a rock;  
But my spirit, propt with power,  
Make as simple as a flower.  
Let the dry heart fill its cup,  
Like a poppy looking up;  
Let life lightly wear her crown,  
Like a poppy looking down.

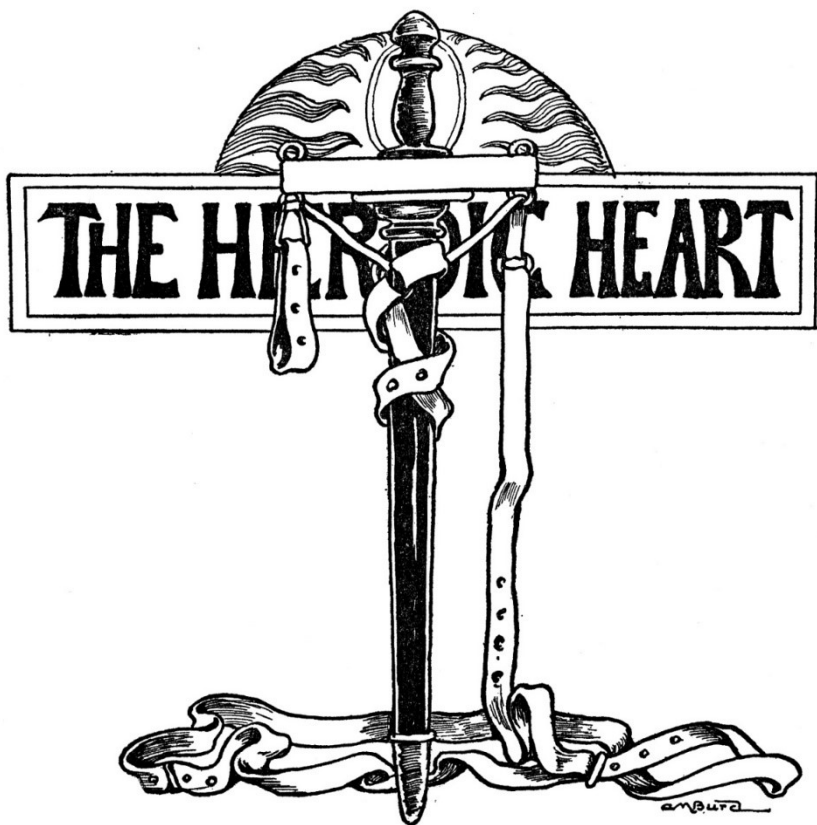
Teach me, Father, how to be  
Kind and patient as a tree.  
Joyfully the crickets croon  
Under shady oak at noon;  
Beetle, on his mission bent,  
Tarries in that cooling tent.  
Let me, also, cheer a spot,  
Hidden field or garden grot –  
Place where passing souls can rest  
On the way and be their best.

*Edwin Markham*



## **The Heroic Heart**

*This Singing World*



## **Opportunity**

This I beheld, or dreamed it in a dream: –  
There spread a cloud of dust along a plain;  
And underneath the cloud, or in it, raged  
A furious battle, and men yelled; and swords  
Shocked upon swords and shields. A prince's banner  
Wavered, then staggered backward, hemmed by foes.  
A craven hung above the battle's edge,  
And thought, "Had I a sword of keener steel –  
That blue blade that the king's son bears, – but this  
Blunt thing – !" he snapt and flung it from his hand,  
And lowering crept away and left the field.  
Then came the king's son, wounded, sore bestead,<sup>1</sup>  
And weaponless, and saw the broken sword,  
Hilt-buried in the dry and trodden sand,  
And ran and snatched it, and with battle-shout  
Lifted afresh he hewed his enemy down,  
And saved a great cause that heroic day.

*Edward Rowland Sill*

<sup>1</sup> bestead: (pronounced bee-stedd) beset; in difficulty or distress [as in the King James Version Bible, not the dictionary].

## **Columbus**

Behind him lay the grey Azores,  
    Behind the Gates of Hercules;  
Before him not the ghost of shores,  
    Before him only shoreless seas.  
The good mate said: "Now must we pray,  
    For lo! the very stars are gone.  
Brave Admiral, speak, what shall I say?"  
    "Why, say 'Sail on! sail on! and on!'"

*This Singing World*

“My men grow mutinous day by day;  
My men grow ghastly wan and weak.”  
The stout mate thought of home; a spray  
Of salt wave washed his swarthy cheek.  
“What shall I say, brave Admiral, say,  
If we sight naught but seas at dawn?”  
“Why, you shall say at break of day,  
‘Sail on! sail on! sail on! and on!’ ”

They sailed and sailed, as winds might blow,  
Until at last the blanched mate said,  
“Why, now not even God would know  
Should I and all my men fall dead.  
These very winds forget their way,  
For God from these dread seas is gone.  
Now speak, brave Admiral, speak and say” –  
He said: “Sail on! sail on! and on!”

They sailed. They sailed. Then spake the mate:  
“This mad sea shows his teeth to-night.  
He curls his lip, he lies in wait,  
With lifted teeth, as if to bite!  
Brave Admiral, say but one good word:  
What shall we do when hope is gone?”  
The words leapt like a leaping sword:  
“Sail on! sail on! sail on! and on!”

Then, pale and worn, he kept his deck,  
And peered through darkness. Ah, that night  
Of all dark nights! And then a speck –  
A light! a light! a light! a light!  
It grew, a starlit flag unfurled!  
It grew to be Time’s burst of dawn.  
He gained a world; he gave that world  
Its grandest lesson: “On! sail on!”

*Joaquin Miller*



## **Incident of the French Camp \***

I

You know we French stormed Ratisbon;  
A mile or so away  
On a little mound, Napoleon  
Stood on our storming-day;  
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,  
Legs wide, arms locked behind,  
As if to balance the prone brow  
Oppressive with its mind.

II

Just as perhaps he mused, "My plans  
That soar, to earth may fall,  
Let once my army-leader, Lannes,  
Waver at yonder wall," –  
Out 'twixt the battery smokes there flew  
A rider, bound on bound,  
Full-galloping; nor bridle drew  
Until he reached the mound.

III

Then off there flung in smiling joy,  
And held himself erect  
By just his horse's mane, a boy:  
You hardly could suspect –  
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,  
Scarce any blood came through)  
You looked twice ere you saw his breast  
Was all but shot in two.

IV

"Well," cried he, "Emperor, by God's grace,  
We've got you Ratisbon!  
The Marshal's in the market-place,  
And you'll be there anon  
To see your flag-bird flap his vans  
Where I, to heart's desire,  
Perched him!" The chief's eye flashed: his plans  
Soared up again like fire.

\* See Note 46.

*This Singing World*

V

The chief's eye flashed; but presently  
Softened itself, as sheathes  
A film the mother-eagle's eye  
When her bruised eaglet breathes:  
"You're wounded!" – "Nay," the soldier's pride  
Touched to the quick, he said,  
"I'm killed, Sire!" And his chief beside,  
Smiling, the boy fell dead.

*Robert Browning*

## **Climb**

My shoes fall on the house-top that is so far beneath me,  
I have hung my hat forever on the sharp church spire,  
Now what shall seem the hill but a moment of surmounting,  
The height but a place to dream of something higher!

Wings? Oh, not for me. I need no other pinions  
Than the beating of my heart within my breast;  
Wings are for the dreamer with a bird-like longing,  
Whose dreams come home at eventide to nest.

The timid folk beseech me, the wise ones warn me,  
They say that I shall never grow to stand so high;  
But I climb among the hills of cloud and follow vanished lightning,  
I shall stand knee-deep in thunder with my head against the sky.

Tiptoe, at last, upon a pinnacle of sunset,  
I shall greet the death-like evening with laughter from afar;  
Nor tremble in the darkness nor shun the windy midnight,  
For by the evening I shall be a star.

*Winifred Welles*



FWI

## **Measure Me, Sky!**

Measure me, sky!

Tell me I reach by a song  
Nearer the stars;  
I have been little so long.

Weigh me, high wind!

What will your wild scales record?  
Profit of pain,  
Joy by the weight of a word.

Horizon, reach out!

Catch at my hands, stretch me taut,  
Rim of the world:  
Widen my eyes by a thought.

Sky, be my depth,

Wind, be my width and my height,  
World, my heart's span;  
Loneliness, wings for my flight!

*Leonora Speyer*

## **For Those Who Fail \***

“All honor to him who shall win the prize,”  
The world has cried for a thousand years;  
But to him who tries and who fails and dies,  
I give great honor and glory and tears.

O great is the hero who wins a name,  
But greater many and many a time  
Some pale-faced fellow who dies in shame,  
And lets God finish the thought sublime.

O great is the man with a sword undrawn,  
And good is the man who refrains from wine;  
But the man who fails and yet fights on,  
Lo, he is the twin-brother of mine!

*Joaquin Miller*

\* See Note 47.

**Invictus** \*

Out of the night that covers me,  
    Black as the Pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever Gods there be  
    For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance  
    I have not winced or cried aloud,  
Under the bludgeonings <sup>1</sup> of chance  
    My head is bloody but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
    Looms but the horror of the shade;  
And yet the menace of the years  
    Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,  
    How charged with punishment the scroll –  
I am the master of my fate,  
    I am the captain of my soul.

*W. E. Henley*

\* See Note 48.

<sup>1</sup> bludgeonings: blows.

*This Singing World*



[INVICTUS]

## **After-Words**





## A Few After-Words

This is strictly between us. Like the Foreword, these few After-Words are little pieces of a talk that we might have if we ever meet each other any place outside of the pages of this book. Even if we have to have this talk in print rather than in person, it is *our* talk – and if your parents or your uncles or your teachers “listen in” they do so at their peril! Grown-ups – I myself happen to be one of them – are curious creatures; they know that “Life is real, Life is earnest,” but they forget that Life is also a great many other things. I am afraid that some of them will frown and shake their heads if they overhear us. And so, rather than offend them, I invite them – to stay away. All of this, as I said before, is between you and me and the printer.

In the first place – (*are you sure we are alone?*) – I don’t believe that poetry can be “taught.” Or rather, I ought to say, poetry should not be taught. A poem should be read – out loud, to get the full flavor of it. Poetry can be an indoor sport or a sharing of your own pleasure with someone else. It can be made an adventure by discovering a new poem or finding something new in an old one. But when a poem becomes a Lesson in Grammar or is used (Heaven forbid!) as a Word-Study, it ceases to be a poem at all and becomes a combination of a crossword puzzle and a problem in arithmetic. I once heard a well-known educator make a speech on “How to Read a Poem in the Class Room.” He spoke for a solid hour – a very solid hour – and he showed how much could be learned from reading by “system.” One by one he outlined a poem’s different “values”; he showed how a poem could be read for (a) its idea, (b) its structure, (c) its “underlying principle,” (d) its “significance to our own experiences,” (e) its “relation to other reading,” and so on. He talked about poetry for sixty minutes and he never once mentioned the word “enjoyment.” And it is, first of all, *enjoyment* that we must have if we are to care at all for poetry – or, for that matter, any other art.

If I say that pleasure must be your guide, I do not mean that the same thing will be pleasing to everyone. In this collection there will be – I hope – some poems you will want to read over

## *This Singing World*

and over again; there will be – I fear – some that you will not want to read at all. And this is one of the things I want to whisper in your ear: don't force yourself to like any of these poems just because they happen to be printed in this book. Maybe you will like some of them better later on; others you may like less as you grow up. In any case, do not be ashamed of your choice. To care for a poem completely, you must fall in love with it at first sight. You cannot follow the model of a certain instructor who, at the beginning of the term said, "We will read each poem three times – first for Plot, second for Syntax, and third for Beauty." You can imagine that there was not much "Beauty" left when the students had picked the poems to pieces for the third time!

Finally (*are you still listening?*), I don't believe it is even necessary for you to be able to define every single word in order to feel the delight of verse. When you listen to music, you don't ask what every single note *means*. So, to a great extent, the *melody* of a poem may affect us almost as much as the *meaning*. About the best advice to readers – and writers – of poetry might be given by reversing the words of the Duchess in "Alice in Wonderland": "Take care of the sounds and the sense will take care of itself." This is not to be taken to mean that poetry is only a kind of word-music. Poetry not only can sing, but it can paint pictures, tell stories, describe characters, make you laugh, carry you to distant times and places, and (if you will let it!) be a guide to life.

But I am talking too much – and from your yawns I can see that you agree with me. Well, I will say no more about what poetry is or may be. I will let you find that out for yourself – possibly you already have found it out in these pages. You won't mind, I know, if I look over your shoulder while you read. Once in a while I may even interrupt your reading to point out some interesting fact which may be new to you. That, at any rate, is what the following *Notes* will try to do. If, on the other hand, you wish to be quite alone, and don't like to be interrupted, there is a very simple way of treating these *Notes*. Just skip them.

L. U.

# Notes

## Note 1

*The Year's at the Spring* (page 9)

This is sung by Pippa, a peasant girl who is the heroine in the play "Pippa Passes." Some day, most likely, you will read the whole of this play, which was written by one of the greatest of English poets. Before you read it, I hope you will become acquainted with other poems by Browning (you will find three more famous ones in this volume), poems which have sung their way into the hearts of many thousands. Among the others – and you can find them in most collections – are the courageous "Hervé Riel," the merry "Pied Piper of Hamelin," the exquisite "Home Thoughts from Abroad," and the galloping "Cavalier Tunes."

## Note 2

*Spring Song* (page 10)

This poem was written by little Hilda Conkling at the age of six. Hilda was born in the Catskill Mountains in 1910, so she is not quite so little now. Long before she could write, almost from the time that she could babble, she "talked" tiny poems to her mother (who is also a poet) and Mrs. Conkling put these poetic scraps down on paper. When Hilda was not quite ten, her first book, *Poems by a Little Girl*, was published. Her second volume, *Shoes of the Wind*, contains many poems that you will enjoy and quite a few that I think will startle you with their beauty.

## Note 3

*Sea-Fever* (page 17)

Sea-Fever was written at the peak of the power of the British Empire, which then included scores of possessions across the globe, prominently including Canada, India, Australia, much of Africa and all of Ireland. As an island nation, the sea has always been important to Britain, both economically and militarily – and here, nostalgically.

## *This Singing World*

The “Sea-Fever” illustration opposite this poem appeared in the Revised Edition, captioned “Sea Fever” – without hyphen or poem. Apparently, John Masefield’s famous poem was intended at one time to appear, and I have added it to the Century Edition. The word “go” was originally missing from the first line of each stanza. Because Masefield himself reads “go” in each stanza in the YouTube video titled “John Masefield ‘Sea Fever’ famous poem READ BY THE POET HIMSELF,” and generations of British school children learned it that way, I have included “go.” Sometimes the hyphen is omitted from the title, but because I have seen Masefield himself use the hyphen, I titled it Sea-Fever.

### **Note 4**

*God’s World* (page 19)

The author of this poem is one of the most famous lyric poets of today. (What? Oh, the word “lyric” is taken from an old Greek word; in ancient times, poems used to be sung or chanted to the accompaniment of a lyre. Therefore, a lyric poet is one whose poetry sings.) Edna St. Vincent Millay is known wherever English is spoken, but this exquisite poem – full of an intense love of earth and its beauties – was written when she was an unknown girl (nineteen years of age) in a village on the coast of Maine. Her longer poem, “Renasceance” (which you will find in most collections of modern American poetry), is one of the most thrilling revelations you have ever read. It is a poem you can come back to again and again. Many people admire her “Ballad of the Harp-Weaver” (in *Yesterday and Today*) even more. This ballad is a tale of a mother’s love and her sacrifice for her young son. Why not read both poems and see which you like better?

### **Note 5**

*Velvet Shoes* (page 22)

Did you ever read such a *white* poem? Notice how many words and phrases bring out the silver purity of the snow. And what an atmosphere of quiet these lines create! It is so hushed that you can hardly read the lines above a whisper. You can actually feel yourself pressing the soft snow, treading it down as if you really had on “velvet shoes.” It would be interesting, by the way, to compare this poem by Elinor Wylie, whose stories are as brightly tinted as her verse, with Walter de la Mare’s “Silver.”

## Note 6

*Song of Summer* (page 23)  
The initial edition featured drawings by Florence Wyman Ivins, and I have included some of them in this edition. This one is among those I found inappropriate: Paul Laurence Dunbar was the son of slaves, yet the three boys (behind the bush) are clearly white. – Pete



## Note 7

*The Song of the Ungirt Runners* (page 35)  
Charles Hamilton Sorley, who wrote this poem, was a young English poet, born in 1895, who died when he was just twenty [a British Army officer, killed at the Battle of Loos, October 1915]. Had he lived, it seems likely that he would have been one of the most prominent of living poets; he was wise beyond his years and his serious poetry has the nobility which many older poets might envy. “The Song of the Ungirt Runners” is one of his most invigorating pieces. The very lines have a swing and stride of their own. It is no particular goal or “cause” which the poet celebrates; he delights – as we do – in the pure joy of speed and active muscles: “we run *because we like it* through the broad bright land.”

## Note 8

*The Day is Done* (page 51)  
Of course you already have heard the name of the author of this poem, so it is unnecessary for me to tell you that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow is the most famous of the great group known as “The New England poets,” a group which existed about the time of the Civil War. Other notable members were Emerson, Whittier, [James Russell] Lowell, and Holmes, but Longfellow’s work is not only the

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best but by far the most popular. Besides his poem in this collection there are a score of others which will appeal to you – possibly you know some of them already. “Evangeline,” “Hiawatha,” and the “Courtship of Miles Standish” are almost as well known as the nursery rhymes on which we were all brought up. And there are a dozen shorter poems – I leave you to discover them for yourselves – which have become “classics.”

### **Note 9**

*The Children’s Hour* (page 72)

Longfellow’s first wife, Mary Storer Potter, died in 1835 at the age of 22. After a 7-year courtship, he married Frances ‘Fanny’ Appleton in 1843. They had six children: Charles Appleton (1844–1893), Ernest Wadsworth (1845–1921), Fanny (1847–1848), Alice Mary (1850–1928), Edith (1853–1915), and Anne Allegra (1855–1934). (According to a detailed but unsubstantiated legend, the Bishop of Bingen was devoured by an army of mice.) – Wikipedia

### **Note 10**

*The Janitor’s Boy* (page 75)

“The Janitor’s Boy,” as well as other poems by its author in this volume, was written by Nathalia Crane, about whom there has been so much discussion. Nathalia Clara Ruth Crane – to give her her full name – was born in New York City in 1913 and began to write when she was about eight years old, typing out her verses on her own little machine. At the age of nine she sent some of her lines to the poetry editor of a paper, who printed them because of their own charm, never dreaming that a child had composed them. In 1924, when Nathalia was a little over ten, her first book, *The Janitor’s Boy and Other Poems* (containing the three poems in this collection), appeared. Her second volume, *Lava Lane*, was published in the fall of 1925. After this second book had been greatly praised by the critics, a literary storm broke out in the newspapers. Many people granted that Nathalia might have written some of the lighter and more humorous pieces, but they refused to believe that any child could have produced the remarkably serious poetry credited to her. Nevertheless, most of the critics – including myself – believed that Nathalia was, as she claimed to be, the author of her work. It is true that many of her ideas and phrases are “advanced”; it is also true that many of her poems are finer

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than the poetry of most grown-ups. But the music which the boy Mozart wrote at ten is better than the music of most “mature” composers; Pamela Bianco, known all over the world, drew some of her greatest designs at thirteen; and there is today a Polish boy-wonder who, as a nine-year-old chess-player, has beaten most of the experts. But, after all, the important thing is not whether a girl by the name of Nathalia Crane has written this winsome and sometimes exquisite poetry. The important thing is that it has been written.

### Note 11

*The Last Leaf* (page 92)



Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894) wrote this famous poem in 1831 or 1832, inspired by Major Thomas Melville, a participant in the Boston Tea Party. [To protest England’s imposition of a tax on tea, colonists dressed as Indians boarded ships in Boston Harbor and dumped the tea overboard, on December 13, 1773, almost 60 years earlier.]

My Dad took this poem to heart, remarking on it to me as an adult, two or three times: he did not want to be the last leaf.

The author wrote “I determined to write in a measure which would at once betray any copyist.” For much more about this poem, including this image and the author’s words, see:

<http://www.ibiblio.org/eldritch/owh/ll.html> – highly readable text

<http://www.ibiblio.org/eldritch/owh/llpix.html> – images

## **Note 12**

*In Praise of Johnny Appleseed* (page 95)

Although the story of “Johnny Appleseed” has become a legend and the details of his life and wanderings will never be known, there seems no doubt that this fabled seed-sower actually existed. His name, according to the authorities, was John Chapman; he was born in New England (some say in Massachusetts) about 1775; he came West when he was a young man and noticed the lack of fruit trees throughout the country. Then began his long pilgrimage. Leaving the Alleghenies on foot, he walked alone through the wilderness – which, later, was to become the great mid-West – dropping seeds of apple, pear and cherry wherever he went, planting orchards in the midst of forests so that future generations might enjoy their fruits. He feared nothing, not even the Indians, who, at first, were suspicious of him, later regarded him as unbalanced, and finally, when he lived among them, accepted him as their friend. He died, far from civilized surroundings, in a savage spot which is now Fort Wayne, Indiana, in 1843 or 1845.

New incidents are continually being told of “Johnny Appleseed,” new episodes are still being “discovered” about him. No treatment of the legend, however, is more vivid and at the same time more imaginative than this poem by Vachel Lindsay. It is a half humorous, half heroic retelling of our first and (with the exception of Uncle Remus) our only American myth.

## **Note 13**

*The Runaway* (page 106)

Robert Frost, as you may have heard, is the most prominent of the new New England poets. (When you grow older, you will hear more about him and the other present-day New England writers, Edwin Arlington Robinson and Amy Lowell.) Someone has said his poetry is carved out of his native granite, and it is true that you can feel the rocky hills of New Hampshire in his lines. But Robert Frost has also written many smaller and less “stony” verses; his lyrics (do you remember the word?) of farm and field are as intimate as a personal talk. Could there be a more delightful invitation than “The Pasture” which you will find at the beginning of the section, *Common Things*? And in “The Runaway” can’t you picture the frightened little colt who has never seen snow before and runs back



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and forth trying to escape these queer white flies? If you haven't already read "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (in the section *Places*) you might read it now. It is about nothing in particular – just a tired man and a tired horse going slowly home at nightfall – but you can see every snowflake settling upon the boughs, you can even hear how the silence of the woods is made greater by the sound of the little harness bells. And how soothing the rhymes are. This poem, I sometimes think, might be called "a New England lullaby."

### Note 14

*Dolphins in Blue Water* (page 113)

This poem was written by Amy Lowell, one of the best known of recent American poets, who died in 1925. Later on, when you study modern American literature, you will hear much more of her. She had many interesting ideas about the making of poetry and became a great influence in her day. Although she wrote many poems in rhyme and a regular meter – which means a poem with a steady beat, like a marching tune – she was fondest of "free verse." Free verse, instead of having a single steady pulse, has many different beats. This poem is an excellent example. The varied line-lengths make us read the poem in a sharp and rapid manner – giving the very effect of dolphins leaping in and out of the waves. Many readers feel that free verse can describe things better than the older kind of poetry; other people miss the regular rhythm. What is your opinion – if you have one?

### Note 15

*Disenchantment* (page 132)

This poem is supposed to represent the feelings of an American boy walking alone at twilight in a German forest. (I ought to know what the boy is *supposed* to feel because – I might as well admit it – I wrote the poem.) As a child, this boy had been brought up on Grimm's "Household Tales" and many other fairy stories, so that when he visited Germany and entered one of its dark and mysterious woods, he was quite ready to be enchanted. He was even ready – and hoping – to be somewhat frightened. Little bits of old legends mixed themselves up in his mind and, as the dusk grew deeper, he seemed to become one of those youngest sons to whom

something always happens. He waited. . . waited. . . But the rest of it you will have to read for yourself.

(For those of you who care about such things, I might confide that most of this poem is not written in “true” rhymes but in a sort of “half-rhyme” which some people have called “assonance.”)

### **Note 16**

*Words and Music* (starting page 137)

In this section the music is even more important than the words. These are songs, the “notes” of which are golden vowels and chiming consonants. Poems like the “Ode,” “To Helen,” “A Birthday,” and “Blow, Bugle, Blow” are pure melodies – and, although they all mean something definite and deep, the meaning is the lesser part, like the libretto or “book” of an opera. “We are the music-makers,” cries the poet, speaking for all his fellow-singers.

### **Note 17**

*Dick Said* (page 158)

Dick actually said these lines when he was about seven years old, one day when he was living in the country with his parents. He had just heard a few Bible stories, had been to his first opera (which was the fairy tale of “Hänsel and Gretel”), was thinking of Christmas, and it was getting near seven o’clock, his bed-time. All of these things became very much mixed in his little mind, and so it is not strange that his ideas of Heaven were also a little confused. At any rate he told these thoughts to his father – who happens to be me <sup>1</sup> – and his father added the rhymes, several commas, and one exclamation point. . . . And here you are!

<sup>1</sup> (To be grammatical – and can anything be more important than grammar – I suppose the “me” should be “I.”)

### **Note 18**

*Ballade of Blue China* (page 159)

The word “ballade” looks very much like the word “ballad” but the two are very different. A *ballad*, (without the “e”) is a story-poem that can be either long or short; its principal feature is that it tells some sort of tale in rather simple measures. A *ballade* is always the same in length and structure and is one of the strictest of the forms

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which originated in France in the Middle Ages. If you are interested in the way poems are made, you will notice that all the verses of the ballade (with the “e”) are built on the same set of rhymes, and – to make it harder – no two rhymes are repeated anywhere in the poem. The “envoy” (conclusion) is a sort of half-verse with the same rhyme scheme, and the last line of each verse (called the *refrain* or chorus) is the same throughout. (Another poem in the same form is the “Ballade of a Ship” on page 27.) But before you study the form of this poem – if you study it at all – enjoy these verses for their own sake.

### Note 19

*I Wonder What it Feels Like to Be Drowned?* (page 162)

This poem, by a young English writer of great charm, may need a little explanation. Most poets get their inspiration walking along a country road, wandering in the woods, or standing silently beneath the stars. In this poem, however, Robert Graves is thinking his thoughts sitting in a bath-tub. And his bath-tub, I hasten to say, is not the long, white-enamelled, oblong trough in which we bathe. In common with most Englishmen who live in the country, – and Robert Graves lives in a fairy-like cottage in the tiny village of Islip – his bath-tub is really a tub; nothing more than a small, round, tin affair in which he must crouch in a few inches of water. That is why his knees seem like an “island rising from the steamy seas.” Instead of a modern electric light, he has a candle beside him like “a tall lightship” and the sides of the little tub seem to him like “mighty cliffs.” Although the thought of all these things makes the poet wonder “what it feels like to be drowned,” I have a notion that he is not very frightened by the idea.

[In the *Favorites*, Karen and her friend Elizabeth adapted the poem, removing the last line of each stanza, “I wonder what it feels like to be drowned?” We changed the title of that poem to “In the Bath.”]

### Note 20

*Little Breeches* (page 165)

They say that this actually happened out west during the gold rush in the days of the famous ‘Forty-Niners. (1849 was the date when gold was discovered in California and everyone rushed out to make his fortune overnight.) The author, John Hay, never admitted

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whether the poem was founded on an incident in real life or whether he had made up the entire story. Hay was a very famous man in his day, one of the greatest Secretaries of State [under McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt] we have ever had – and, being a noted diplomat, I suppose he was afraid to admit anything.

### **Note 21**

*Drake's Drum* (page 172)

Sir Francis Drake (c. 1540 – 28 Jan 1596) was an English explorer, sea captain, privateer, slave trader, naval officer, and politician, known best for his circumnavigation of the world in a single expedition, from 1577 to 1580. His privateering led King Philip II of Spain to brand him a pirate, *El Draque*, offering a reward of 20,000 ducats for his capture or death (around \$8 million in 2015). As a vice admiral, he was second-in-command of the English fleet in the victorious battle against the Spanish Armada in 1588. He was buried at sea off the coast of Portobelo; not in his hammock, but in a sealed, lead-lined coffin, dressed in his full armor. Shortly before he died, he ordered his snare drum, which had been on the circumnavigation, to be taken to Buckland Abbey; he vowed that if England were ever in danger and someone were to beat the drum, he would return to defend the country. According to legend, it can be heard to beat at times when England is at war or significant national events take place. – Wikipedia

### **Note 22**

*The Horse Thief* (page 173)

This, as I scarcely need tell you, never could have happened. The beginning of the story seems actual enough and at first you will be tempted to believe that the tale is “true.” A man is crawling through the long grass at night. He has committed some wrong (just what we do not know) and has escaped from his pursuers. But his enemies are tracking him down and there seems little hope for him. Suddenly he sees, white in the moonlight, a dazzling and beautifully built horse. His own filly had broken her fore-leg and he had been forced to shoot her. Here is a way out. He flings his lariat, ropes the wild steed, leaps on the shining mustang . . . and finds he is mounted on Pegasus, the fabled wingèd horse of the poets! It may be a little difficult for you to believe in the wild ride which followed, how the mythical animal flew among the stars,

carried its rider shoulder to shoulder with the constellations, and finally threw him back to earth. But, unless you care absolutely nothing for adventures, I am sure you will enjoy this impossible ride – just because it is impossible.

### Note 23

*The Ballad of East and West* (page 181)

This is one of the most famous story-poems of our day. Its author, Rudyard Kipling, is most likely known to you because of his many other works. (After you have read the poems by Kipling in this book, you should look up his “Mandalay,” “Fuzzy-Wuzzy” “Gunga-Din” and half a dozen more which may be found in many collections.) If you do not already know the *Just-So Stories* and *The Jungle Books*, you have a great treat in store for you. The little boy, Mowgli, who appears as the young hero of the jungle, is one of the most delightful lads in all literature; and when you are a little older you will delight in Kim, who is a sort of older cousin of Mowgli, wandering in the great country of India which Kipling knows so well.

“The Ballad of East and West” needs no words from me. It tells its own vivid story of how “two strong men,” one from England and one a native-born Indian, differing in every way, find a common brotherhood when they meet face to face. I do not think you will have any trouble with the queer names which may seem difficult at first, but which are really not as hard as they look. They are all names of different people and places in India and are pronounced just the way they are spelled. It might be interesting to compare the story of this race with the equally rapid ride in Browning’s “How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix.”

### Note 24

*The Blessèd Damozel* (page 185)

Some one – I sha’n’t tell you her name – advised me to leave this poem out. “It is,” she insisted, “much too sad, and young people can’t bear sadness.” But she was a lady who had been sad most of her life and could not listen to any music or poetry which was not gay. But you and I, who are happy most of the time, can stand a drop of sadness once in a while. Besides, this poem is so lovely – its expression is so tender and its words are so musical – that we

almost forget that the story concerns a girl who has died, waiting in Heaven until her lover comes to join her.

### **Note 25**

*How they Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix* (page 189)

Many people have tried to find some event in history to correspond with this poem. But there is none. No one will ever know what good news was being brought from one tiny town in the Netherlands to another. (Lokeren, Boom, Düffeld, Mecheln, Aerschot, Hasselt, Looz, and Dalhem are all towns on the ninety-mile road between Ghent [now in Belgium, its own country after 1830] and Aix [now Aachen, Germany].) Browning does not tell his readers what the city of Aix was supposed to be saved from; he was far more interested in the *effect* of his galloping lines. He wanted to make us actually hear the hoof-beats of the three horses, to feel the excitement as two of them fall dead by the way and the steed, Roland, reaches the goal alone. If there is another poem which races along at such a breakneck pace, I don't know where it is. If you find one, be sure to let me know its name.

### **Note 26**

*The Charge of the Light Brigade* (page 191)

Unlike "How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix," this poem tells an actual historic event. From 1854 to 1856 the little Greek fishing village of Balaklava was the headquarters of the British army during [the siege of Sevastopol in] the Crimean War. On October 25, 1854, 600 crack cavalry troopers went forth against a huge army. The English horsemen knew that the battle was hopeless; they were surrounded by a far greater force with "cannon to right of them and cannon to left of them." But they did not hesitate. "Someone had blundered," some officer had given the wrong command or had received false information. But on they charged, "into the Valley of Death," giving the world one of its most glorious examples of heroism in history. [This followed the similarly heroic - but successful - Charge of the Heavy Brigade, about which Tennyson also wrote, and the crucial defense of Balaklava by the "Thin Red Line" earlier on the same day of battle. Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) was poet laureate to Queen Victoria from 1850 to 1892. - Wikipedia]

## Note 27

*The Highwayman* (page 199)

This is not only one of the best liked but one of the most thrilling of modern ballads. (I did explain, didn't I, that a ballad has been defined as "a simple, spirited poem in short stanzas in which some popular story is vividly told"?) There are many reasons, it seems to me, why "The Highwayman" is such a favorite. First of all, the beat and swing of its lines are so decided that every reader is carried along as if he were actually seated on the same horse with the daring hero. Second, the picture element in the poem is so pronounced that every detail stands out boldly and the reader seems to be carried back to a scene in old England a hundred years ago. Last, and most important, the tale itself – the story of a dashing adventurer and his sweetheart who died by her own hand in an effort to save him – will always affect us, especially the epilogue with its meeting of the ghostly lovers whose bond was so great that it brought them together even after death.

## Note 28

*The Lost Shoe* (page 205)

This, also, is a kind of ballad, but since it appears in the section called *Laughing Legends*, you will not take it too seriously. Strangely enough, the author of these skipping verses, Walter de la Mare, is one of the most serious poets alive. In a few years, I hope you will read his magical volume *The Listeners* and the remarkable novel *Memoirs of a Midget*. "Nod" and one or two of his other haunting melodies are in this collection – as you probably have discovered. But Walter de la Mare is many kinds of a poet; when he stops being serious – and this happens frequently – he writes some of the most delicious nursery and nonsense verses imaginable. If you doubt this, dip into *Peacock Pie*, which is a sort of modern Mother Goose – *plus!*

## Note 29

*Robinson Crusoe's Story* (page 210)

Here again we are not to take the story-teller too seriously. In fact, I advise you not to take him seriously at all. The author, Charles E. Carryl, was a great lover of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and he had read the famous *Alice* books to his little boy

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some dozens of times until the child knew them by heart. Then the father determined to furnish new entertainment for little Guy and he wrote *Davy and the Goblin*

[<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/25031/25031-h/25031-h.htm>], which was supposed to be an account of what happened after reading *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. More than 20,000 copies of this book were sold and its success was due not only to the madcap mixture of real people, old stories turned up and down, the queer confession of Robin Hood (who turns out to be the father of little Red Riding Hood!) butter-scotchmen, and other curious creatures, but to the delicious rhymes of which "Robinson Crusoe's Story" is one. *The Admiral's Caravan* is almost if not quite as merry as *Davy and the Goblin* and there are two poems in it which several people – I, for one – consider among the best of their kind. No, I shall not tell you which they are – you must find them for yourself. . . . By the way, Carryl's little son, Guy, of whom I have already told you, grew up to be a poet in his own right, and you will find two of his cleverest verses in this very book. If you care to hear more about him, turn to Note 33.

### **Note 30**

*The Hero Cockroach* (page 214)

This is a parody or burlesque of Kipling's hearty ballads. Although the poem itself is sheer nonsense, it has a certain resemblance to "The Ballad of East and West," especially in its rhythm and rhyme; and, though it is impossible to make head or tail of the story, we are pulled along almost as sharply as we are by Kipling's own lines – plus a continual tickling in the ribs. . . . Don Marquis has been running a daily newspaper "column" for many years and is the author of almost a dozen books, half of which are extremely serious and half of them anything but!

### **Note 31**

*The Yarn of the "Nancy Bell"* (page 217)

It is, of course, wrong of me to spoil your pleasure in this beautifully bloodthirsty ballad by saying anything about it. But there is one bit of information which is not generally known. When these verses, which have become famous all over the world, were originally offered to the English humorous weekly, *Punch*, they were rejected by the Editor on the ground that they were "too



cannibalistic for its readers' tastes." . . . Later, these lines and more than fifty other similar poems were published under the title *The Bab Ballads*, one of the most glorious mirth-provoking collections ever made [[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The Bab Ballads](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Bab_Ballads)]. *The Bab Ballads* would be sufficient to make the name of its author, W. S. Gilbert, immortal. But Gilbert has another hold on fame since he was the author of the many librettos to which Arthur Sullivan wrote his ever popular music. Among the Gilbert and Sullivan comic operas, which are as fascinating today as when they were written fifty years ago, one thinks at once of *The Mikado*, *Pinafore*, *Patience* and *The Pirates of Penzance*.

### Note 32

*De Appile-Tree* (page 229)

This, as you will see at once, is the way the story of Adam and Eve appears to an old darky on a Southern plantation. The time is supposed to be before the Civil War and the old slave, who has a strong religious streak in him, has his own ideas about what Eden must have been like. The author, Joel Chandler Harris, has written some of the world's best tales of Negro life, and his "humanized" animals in *Uncle Remus and His Friends* and *Uncle Remus, His Songs and His Sayings* will live as long as American literature exists. (If you do not know these enchanting books, ask for them for your next Christmas present.) Uncle Remus himself is more than a "character"; he is an immortal.

Harris's legacy has largely been ignored by academia, in part due to the Uncle Remus character, use of dialect, and plantation setting. Harris's books exerted a profound influence on storytellers at home and abroad, yet the Uncle Remus tales effectively have no critical standing. ... [Being white,] Harris's critical reputation in the 20th and 21st centuries has been wildly mixed, as he was accused of appropriating African-American culture. – Wikipedia

### Note 33

*The Vainglorious Oak and the Modest Bulrush* (page 245)

I have already spoken (in Note 29) of Charles E. Carryl's little son, Guy, for whom *Davy and the Goblin* was written. His full name was Guy Wetmore Carryl and even before he was out of college it was evident that he would become a master of light verse. He died just as he had turned thirty; had he lived, he would surely have

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risen to a height as great as W. S. Gilbert or Lewis Carroll. His best work may be found in three diverting volumes: *Fables for the Frivolous*, in which the fables of Aesop are turned upside down, *Mother Goose for Grown-Ups*, in which the nursery rhymes go on a wild spree, and *Grimm Tales Made Gay*, in which the old fairy tales are made to dance and jump through all sorts of rhymed hoops. [All three are online for free at [gutenberg.org](http://gutenberg.org) and other locations.] To make matters still worse – or better – Carryl always supplied a Moral to all the poems in these books – and then added a pun, a humorous word-twist, to each Moral!

Jean de La Fontaine collected fables from a wide variety of sources, both Western and Eastern, and adapted them into French free verse. They were issued under the general title of *Fables* in several volumes from 1668 to 1694 and are considered classics of French literature. Humorous, nuanced and ironical, they were originally aimed at adults but then entered the educational system and were required learning for school children.

– Wikipedia

### **Note 34**

*Leetla Giorgio Washeenton* (page 249)

I need not tell you that this is not the true story of George Washington and the famous cherry-tree episode. It is what T. A. Daly supposes an Italian immigrant would think about his own boy and our first President. It is an old man speaking, a peasant born in Italy who has lived in America for some years but not quite long enough to get everything quite straight. . . . If you like this poem – and I will be horribly disappointed if you don't – you should read all of Mr. Daly's poems in this book as well as other pieces of Italian-American life, such as "Mia Carlotta," "Between Two Loves," and "Da Leetla Boy," which may be found in other collections.

### **Note 35**

*The Tree* (page 254)

When this poem was first published, it raised a perfect storm among the critics. Some said it was "atrocious," others thought it "merely unintelligible." It seems perfectly simple to me – and I am sure it seems so to you. We have all been told hundreds of times that each of us has "several personalities." There are hours when we are contented to loaf, to "hang from a limb"; there are moments when we imagine we are poets, "quizzing the sky"; there are times

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when we are full of activity; and there are days when . . . Well, how many monkeys are *you*?

### Note 36

*The Owl and the Pussy-Cat* (page 260)

I wish I had room to quote *all* the nonsense verses by Edward Lear. (I have managed to squeeze in six of his Nonsense Limericks near the end of this section.) But if I did print all of the Lear lines that I want to, this book would be filled with nothing else. And I *must* make room for others! But as soon as you can find Lear's own volume, enlivened with his side-splitting illustrations, give yourself a happy half-hour with "The Jumblies," "The Pobble Who Has No Toes," "The Yonghy-Bonghy-Bo" and the other laughable lyrics.

### Note 37

*The Snark* (page 263)



Bathing machines were used from the eighteenth through the early twentieth centuries, primarily for women. – Pete

If you can make any sense out of this or the next poem, you will do more than any other reader ever has done. The whole point of these two selections (and they are parts of a much longer poem) is that they have no point! Or, rather, they have no sense. I need not tell you that the author is the same Lewis Carroll who wrote the famous Alice books nor add that you should not be ashamed at laughing out loud – even at such “witless lines.” It was a really wise person who concluded that:

“A little nonsense now and then  
Is relished by the best of men.”

### Note 38

*Words* (page 268)

Nancy Byrd Turner (1880-1971) was a descendant of both Thomas Jefferson and Pocahontas. I researched “green frog-blanket spreads / And caterpillar-cases” in the second stanza, both online and by

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asking friends. If you search the web for “frogged coat image”, you will see one kind of frogging – perhaps a blanket can be frogged (although frogging while knitting means unraveling it). A caterpillar case is a cocoon, corresponding to a pillow case. Of course, there may be frogs and caterpillars in a garden bed. Keep thinking – there is a lot here. – Pete

### **Note 39**

*Lullaby* (page 285)

As you read this lullaby, you must imagine an old darky mammy rocking her little kinky-haired pickaninny to sleep. [The behavior, white hands and pretend threats indicate this was the master’s child.] The place is a little cabin in the far South and the time is shortly before the Civil War. . . . The author, Paul Laurence Dunbar, knew his characters well, for he himself was born the son of Negro slaves. As a young boy he had dreams of being a poet, but he had to struggle for years before he became known. Even when he was writing the poems which have become so popular, he had to earn his living as an elevator boy. Many of the loveliest things he wrote were written at this time and are contained in his *Lyrics of the Hearthside* and *Lyrics of Love and Laughter*.

### **Note 40**

*O Captain! My Captain!* (page 289)

This has been called “one of the tenderest lyric elegies ever written.” (An elegy is a song of mourning, a poem written on the death of some friend or beloved person.) These lines show how much our greatest President meant to our greatest poet. Whitman speaks of Lincoln throughout the poem as the captain of some vessel, but it does not need much imagination to know that the ship referred to is the “Ship of State.” As the poem was written just after the assassination, we know at once that when the poet says “our fearful trip is done,” he is speaking of the end of the long and bitterly fought Civil War.... [Well over 650,000 Americans died in this war over slavery, more than 2 out of every 100 Americans at the time, and more than in all our other wars combined.] Walt Whitman, whom the entire world considers America’s “most characteristic and prophetic genius,” wrote principally in a loosely rolling measure – something between “regular” poetry and a rich,

musical prose – this poem being one of the very few he ever wrote in rhyme.

### Note 41

*Crossing the Bar* (page 292)

is an 1889 poem by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. It is considered that Tennyson wrote it in elegy; the narrator uses an extended metaphor to compare death with crossing the “sandbar” between the river of life, with its outgoing “flood”, and the ocean that lies beyond death, the “boundless deep”, to which we return. Shortly before he died, Tennyson told his son Hallam to “put ‘Crossing the Bar’ at the end of all editions of my poems.” – Wikipedia [In his honor, I have moved it to the end of this section.]

The moaning of the bar would be waves crashing or rattling on it. At a receding high tide, the water might pass silently over the bar, and carry you out to sea. Of course, you know who the Pilot is.

### Note 42

*The Song of Honor* (page 296)

This, surely, is “a star to hitch to.” Here is a lovely list of all that is brave and beautiful, uniting to give us “courage to endure.” Even if its “message” were not so inspiring, the poem would move us by its pure loveliness of picture and sound. Some day, not too far off, I hope you will discover the rest of Ralph Hodgson’s exquisite poems, especially “The Bull,” which can be found in *Yesterday and Today*.

### Note 43

*The Example* (page 303)

As a rule I hate “moral verses” or poems that try to “teach a lesson.” But somehow, even though there is preaching in this poem, I like it. One reason why it appeals so strongly to me is because it is so straightforward and so simple. Its author, W. H. Davies, you see, is a very direct and simple person who writes about little things without any airs – almost without any thought – the very way a robin sings his few clear notes. Another reason why “The Example” charms me is because its “lesson” is conveyed in such a little space. Wouldn’t we enjoy *all* sermons more if they were as short as this one?

## **Note 44**

*If* – (page 305)

You may remember that I have already told you a little about the author of this poem, Rudyard Kipling. Kipling is, as I think I remarked, particularly known for his swinging ballads and tales of life in distant India. “If –” is one of his more recent poems and shows that he can interest us with a “lecture” as well as with a story. Although the poem is only a few years old, it already has become universally popular and you can see it hung on as many walls as pictures of George Washington or Whistler’s Mother. Some of the things that Kipling advises us to do in these verses are fairly easy; others strike me as particularly difficult. Which of these “ifs” would *you* find hardest?

## **Note 45**

*Recessional* (page 309)

Here is another poem by Rudyard Kipling, showing a still different side of his talents. “Recessional” was written in 1897 during Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee which celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of her rule. A hundred poems were written in honor of her glory and the power of the British Empire. All of them were, of course, full of praise – and all of them are forgotten. The only one which has lived is this “Recessional” – and it is a *critical* poem. By that I mean it questions the idea of mere pomp and power. Kipling warns his country not to be too proud of its strength and reminds it that Nineveh and Tyre – mighty cities in their day – are no more than drifting dust. Kings, towers, navies “melt away”; the one thing that outlasts them all is “an humble and a contrite heart.” I do not think it needs the concluding “Amen” to make us realize that this is one of the noblest prayers of our time.

[Kipling wrote at the height of the British Empire; Untermeyer wrote after the first of two world wars that changed the whole world order.]

## **Note 46**

*Incident of the French Camp* (page 315)

This story of quiet heroism is said to be founded on an actual incident which happened at the siege of Ratisbon by Napoleon in 1809. It is a vivid and dramatic picture and needs no word of

explanation except to say that Ratisbon is the German city of Regensburg, an ancient town of Bavaria, and that Lannes was one of Napoleon's leading generals. The boy's name is unknown – but Browning has kept his spirit brightly alive.

### Note 47

*For Those Who Fall* (page 318)

An entire novel might be written about the career of Joaquin Miller, a California poet who was neglected in his own country and, after an almost hopeless search, found fame in England. (You will find an account of his varied life, with some of his poems, in *Modern American Poetry*.) This poem is one of his little known pieces and might be read in connection with his "Columbus" (in this same section), which is known everywhere. One poem celebrates the man who succeeds and the other glorifies the struggler who fails. Which seems to you to be the more "heroic"?

### Note 48

*Invictus* (page 319)

It would be an impertinence for me to say anything about these famous, stirring lines except to tell you, if you do not already know it, that "Invictus" is a Latin word, meaning "invincible." Here we have the high courage of the "unconquerable soul," the last two lines containing more actual "inspiration" than a hundred volumes on "How to Succeed"!

## **A Final After-Word**

This book, as I have reminded you too often, is made up of poems most of which are either new or recent – nothing in this collection being more than seventy years of age and most of the selections being not even old enough to vote. But much of the greatest poetry belongs to the distant past – and I hope that, if you have liked the verses in this volume, you will dip into pages of the writers whose works are classics. Later on, you will grow to know (and, I believe, love) them more closely; but even now you might turn to the collected poetry of William Blake, John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Robert Burns, Lord Byron, Edgar Allan Poe, Robert Browning, Alfred Tennyson – all of which you will find in any library, no matter how small. If you want to “sample” these authors, you will find selections from their work (and from the works of many other notables) in two collections which are among the best ever made: *The Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrical Poems*, edited by Francis T. Palgrave, and *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, edited by Arthur T. Quiller-Couch.

If you want closer acquaintance with *more recent poetry*, there are many collections (usually called “anthologies”) which will interest you. Nowadays the number of these anthologies has increased so rapidly that a mere list of them would take up at least six pages. Some of the best, besides the two older ones mentioned in the paragraph above, are:

*The Home Book of Modern Verse*, edited by Burton E. Stevenson.

*Golden Numbers*, edited by Kate Douglas Wiggin and Nora Archibald Smith.

*The Cambridge Book of Poetry for Children*, edited by Kenneth Grahame.

*The Listening Child*, edited by Lucy Thacher. (Revised Edition.)

*Rainbow Gold*, edited by Sara Teasdale.

*Poems for Youth*, edited by William Rose Benét.

*Come Hither*, edited by Walter de la Mare.

And, if you don't think me too immodest for suggesting it,

*Yesterday and Today*, edited by Louis Untermeyer.



## A Final After-Word

If you are particularly interested in *old ballads and story-poems*, the following two collections contain most of the world's finest tales in verse:

*The Oxford Book of Ballads*, edited by Arthur T. Quiller-Couch.  
*Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, edited by Lord Bishop Percy.

You will also find many ballads and exciting adventures in the works of modern poets. If your appetite has not been satisfied by the two collections just mentioned, I would recommend:

*Collected Poems* (especially the section "Barrack Room Ballads"),  
by Rudyard Kipling.  
*Collected Poems*, by Alfred Noyes.  
*Ballads*, by John Hay.  
*Ballads of Old New York*, by Arthur Guiterman.

If you care more for quiet than for excitement, you will most likely prefer what is known as *nature poetry*. Some of the loveliest descriptions of field and farm, mountain and meadow, "brooks and blossoms" are in the following books:

*Hesperides*, by Robert Herrick.  
*Poems*, by William Wordsworth.  
*Complete Poems*, by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.  
*Selected Poems*, by W. H. Davies.

The mention of Longfellow reminds me that he is not only one of America's leading "nature poets," but one of the first to write actually American poems. You will find other verses about Indians, early Colonial life and accounts of the Revolutionary days in:

*Complete Poems*, by John Greenleaf Whittier.  
*Complete Poems*, by Oliver Wendell Holmes.  
*Complete Poems*, by Ralph Waldo Emerson.  
*Complete Poems*, by James Russell Lowell.

In one of the notes, I already have spoken of *The Bab Ballads* as among the most rib-tickling poems ever written. If you enjoy *poems with chuckles* (and now and then a hearty laugh) you might look through:

*A Nonsense Anthology*, edited by Carolyn Wells.  
*A Book of Humorous Verse*, edited by Carolyn Wells.

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*Nonsense Books*, by Edward Lear.

*The Burgess Nonsense Book*, by Gelett Burgess.

Closely related to the poetry of humor is *dialect verse*. You will be surprised to see what different poets have done with “broken English.” The first book listed below is Negro dialect verse written by a Negro who himself was the son of slaves; the second is written in a laughable “German-English”; the third is in the country twang of the mid-Western farmer; the fourth is in a half-humorous, half-pathetic Italian-American speech.

*Poems*, by Paul Laurence Dunbar.

*Hans Breitmann’s Ballads*, by Charles Godfrey Leland.

*Complete Works*, by James Whitcomb Riley.

*Carmina*, and *McAroni Ballads*, by T. A. Daly.

Every section of America has had its own singer. The “laureate” of New England is Robert Frost, as is proved by his *North of Boston* and *New Hampshire*; the Far West has been celebrated by Bret Harte and Joaquin Miller; DuBose Heyward and Hervey Allen have told many tales of the South in their *Carolina Chansons*; Vachel Lindsay and Carl Sandburg give us many pictures of Illinois and the mid-Western states; even far Alaska has found a voice in Robert W. Service’s *The Spell of the Yukon*. Listen and you will, like Whitman, “hear America singing.”

With which last word, I take my books, my hat, your right hand – and my leave. And so, until we meet again, good-bye . . . and Good Luck!



## About *This Singing World*

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

**Horses and Automobiles.** In 1915, there were about 20 million horses in the United States, perhaps the peak. By 1959, the number had declined to 4.5 million; by 2005, the number had increased to 9 million, due to recreational use. By the 1920s, the famous Ford Model T automobile had been surpassed by other models; production stopped in 1927, because many used cars were better than a new Model T, and the new car market was saturated.

**Post-War Policies.** “The Great War” ended in November, 1918. The 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution of the United States was ratified January 16, 1919, and prohibition of alcoholic beverages became effective with the Volstead Act, January 17, 1920. Prohibition would continue until the 21<sup>st</sup> amendment was ratified, December 5, 1933. Women gained the right to vote when the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment was ratified on August 18, 1920.

**Radio and Music.** The first commercial license for a radio station was issued to KDKA in Pittsburgh on November 2, 1920. By 1931, a majority of U. S. households owned at least one radio receiver – at the depth of the Great Depression. Electrical disc-playing machines appeared on the market in the late 1920s, often combined with a radio receiver. Recorded music changed everything, and that’s how most people get their poetry now.

**Public Domain.** The 1926 second copyright on *This Singing World* expired in January, 2022, so I am allowed to publish this wonderful collection of verse.

### FAMILY HISTORY WITH THE BOOK

The hard-to-find revised edition of *This Singing World* came down to me from my father, whose family had it when he grew up in Douglaston, New York City. In high school, I repaired its binding; well-loved by my family, it is now

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completely broken. (Fortunately, all the contents, well-indented on the pages, are intact.)

Seeing its dilapidated condition, my wife, Karen, found a replacement online, as a Christmas present: a first printing of the first edition. However, poems that we love in the revised edition are missing from the first.

### **THE FIRST AND REVISED EDITIONS**

In the revised edition, all the illustrations were replaced with those by C. M. Burd and Decie Merwin. “A Few After-Words,” “Notes” (on 41 poems) and “A Final After-Word” were added. Almost a hundred poems from the first edition were removed, and these 22 were inserted:

The Arrow and the Song, The Charge of the Light Brigade, Cock-a-Doodle-Do!, Day Is Done, The Day of the Circus Horse, A Delightful Dozen, Disenchantment, Epic, The First Story, Five Limericks by Famous Authors, Five Puzzlers, How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix, The Janitor’s Boy, Limeratomy, Our Two Gardens, A Psalm of Life, Suffering, Thomson Green and Harriet Hale, To the Fringed Gentian, Tubby Hook, Two Sparrows, The Vicar of Bray.

The effect of the revision was to improve the overall quality, improve the illustrations, retain the original form factor and binding, and reduce the number of pages – presumably improving the finances. A separate junior edition from 1926, illustrated by Decie Merwin, may exist.

### **THE CENTURY EDITION**

Most of the content in the century edition of *This Singing World* is intended to be as published by Louis Untermeyer. Only a few of the outtakes from the original edition – I read them all – were worthy of being reinstated in this anthology for young people:

Drake’s Drum (Henry Newbolt)  
The Blind Men and the Elephant (John Godfrey Saxe)  
How to Tell the Wild Animals (Carolyn Wells)  
Words (Nancy Byrd Thomas)

## *About This Singing World*

Sea-Fever (John Masefield) was to have been included in the revised edition, so I added it.

From the first edition, I included some of the better artwork by Florence Wyman Ivins, noted *FWI* at the lower right of each image.

The methods I employed in creating this book are described on my web site, under About > Publication Notes.

You may be interested in my large format paperback, *This Singing World – Favorites from the Century Edition*, also available on my web site, under Ideas > Poetry.

This book is in the public domain and is freely available on my site. However, if you base further publications on my work, please credit me:

Pete Matthews Jr – <https://3nt.xyz>

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