A Cracked Fiddle

Langbridge

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Frederick Langbridge

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A CRACKED FIDDLE.

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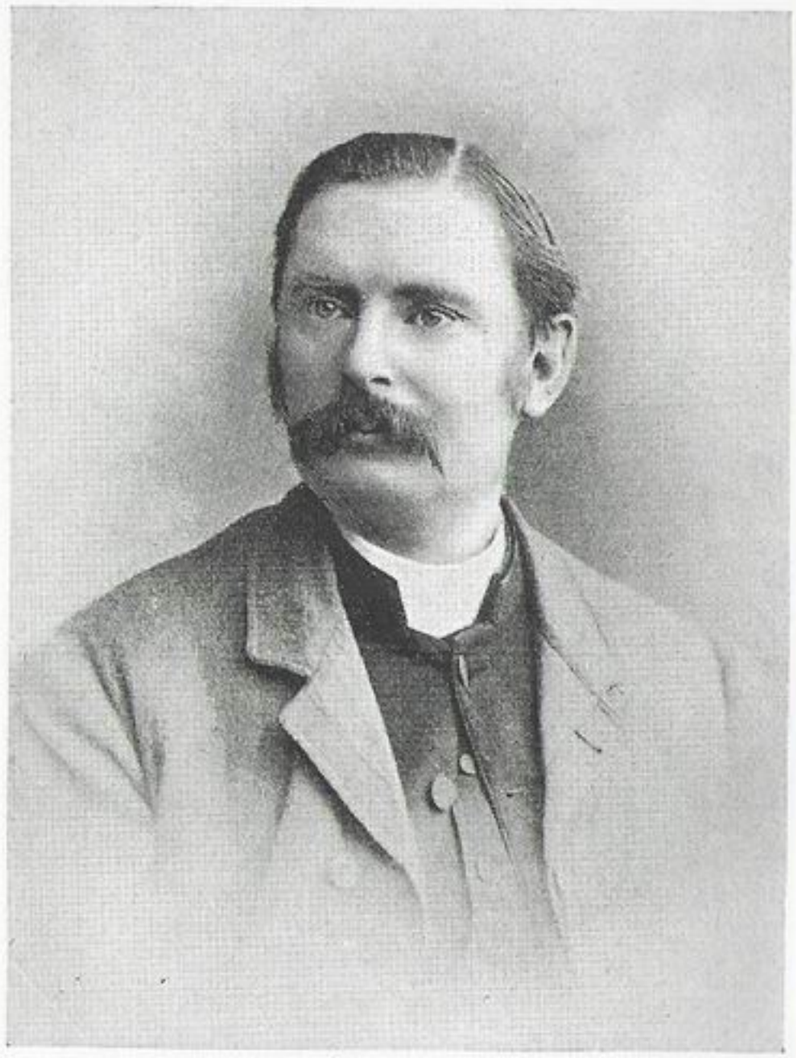

Very truly yours,
Frederick Langbridge

A CRACKED FIDDLE:

BEING

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS

OF

FREDERICK LANGBRIDGE.

LIMERICK:
G. McKERN AND SONS, 113, GEORGE-STREET.

LONDON:
METHUEN & CO., 18, BURY-STREET, W.C.

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To

E. L. W.,

Cordially and Gratefully.

CONTENTS.

Ballads, Stories, and Studies:

	PAGE
Blind Boy's Bridge	13
The Unforgiven Sin	19
After Ten Years	23
Mike Baldwin	26
The Ballad of the Blind Beggar	31
Squire	35
A Couple of Ducks	41
Carrying out Instructions	45
A Lay of a Cracked Fiddle	48
The Demon of the Pit	53
How the Light came to Jim	58
Going into the House	68
Exit Tommy	74
The Gift of the Bells	78
Town Flowers	81
A City Courtship	83
Christ in the City	85
In the Churchyard	89
The Parson's Comforter	92
A Regular Bad 'Un	95
A One-day Queen	99
Saturday Night	101
An Ex-Tempore Prayer	103

In Dialect :

	PAGE
Sent Back by the Angels	107
Sammy	115
Joe's Bespeak	125
Seth Baker	127
Joe to the Rescue	132
Job Sanderson's Mind : a Bit of it ...	134
A Street Sermon	139

In Brogue :

Teddy O'Teague	143
Andy Byrne	147
The Black Coach of Dunmoyle	151
The Way Thady Came Round	157

Lyrics of Love, etc. :

A Dedication	167
Tom and Kitty	170
I mean to Wait for Jack	172
A Bunch of Cowslips	174
Courtship	176
My Own Girl...	177
Doctor Dan's Secret	179
Gold and Silver	180
Quite by Chance	182
A Modern Pastoral	183
That Dream of Ours	184
Before Parting	185
The Magic Key	186
You'll Never Guess	187
The Matter Ended There	188

LYRICS OF LOVE, ETC.—*Continued.*

	PAGE
If I Must Love	189
A Song for the Girl I Love	190
Her Last Posy	191
It May be So	193
My One Love	194

Landscapes, Seasons, and Flowers :

An Old Blusterer	199
The Darling of the Year	199
Green Fields and Young Faces	200
June is Come	200
Junes Long Fled	201
Clock, Dull Preacher	202
Sweet Hours Fly	202
Days of Dream	203
A Lost Song	203
An Autumn Picture	204
Firelight Dreams	204
Ah, Long Ago	205
Epilogue	206

Ballads, Stories, and Studies.

Blind Boy's Bridge.

YOUNG Johnny's face was dark or bright
  In the fall or rise of the gleams,
As he crouched at the set of the winter night
  Dreaming a blind boy's dreams.

He started and turned, then listened hard ;
  The fixed eyes did not change ;
'Twas his father's step that came from the yard,
  But the step fell halt and strange.

He rose and stood on the great stone floor ;
  He hearkened, ear and hand ;
The steps dragged on to a rod of the door,
  Then staggered to a stand.

Blind Johnny pulled the great door wide,
  Oh, the poor weak mite was he !
" Are you hurt ?" he cried, at his father's side ;
  And his hands stretched out to see.

Then, groaning deep, the woodman spoke :
  " Hurt sore as a man may be ;
Go, bring a clout from the dresser of oak,
  And bind it over my knee."

Oh ! lightly Johnny's fingers ran,
  And felt the dresser o'er ;
He brought the clout to the wounded man,
  And knelt upon the floor.

"Bind tight," said the woodman, low and thick,
"Bind tight as e'er you may;
Bind firm and quick, for I'm turning sick,
And my life runs fast away."

Blind Johnny strained with all his strength,
And the ends together drew;
He tied them fast in a knot at length,
But the blood came spouting through.

"'Tis three long miles by ghyll and moss
To reach the doctor's door;
For hardly a crow might the river cross
By the ribbon that threads it o'er.

Yet only a surgeon's hand may bind
A wound that bleeds so free.
Hark to the wind! oh, lad! I'm blind,
I'm drifting out to sea."

Down on the bench the woodman lay;
His face rose stark and white;
Blind Johnny crept from the room away,
And stood in the winter night.

The night was dark, with never a star,
The night was black and bleak;
And through the gaps in the glowering scar
The wind came shriek on shriek.

He felt his way by the white stone wall,
He neither walked nor ran:
The road was trapped with many a fall
For even a seeing man.

Yet on he went, and kept his feet;
His hands were watchful eyes;
He reached the moss with its graves of peat,
Black under the dusky skies.

And when the wind rushed out with a yell
To lift him on its blast,
Flat on his face blind Johnny fell
Till the madman-fit was past.

And still as he rose and held his course
When the deafening gust was o'er,
The growl of the force, sullen and hoarse,
Swelled to a fiercer roar.

His feet sink soft in the oozy sedge,
He feels for the one starved tree;
The floods spread out from the river's edge
High as a tall man's knee.

His feet go sounding down the bank;
Like hands they probe and try;
The river is crossed by a single plank,
And the starved ash grows thereby.

A single plank that hums and shakes,
All slimed and coated o'er,
That dips and rakes in each gust that breaks,
Eight rods from shore to shore.

First Johnny stoops to loose his shoes;
He swings and flings them wide;
Splash, splash, they fall in the reedy ooze
At the edge of the widening tide.

Now on the plank blind Johnny stands ;
He waits for the gust to go ;
Then onward he creeps with swaying hands,
And feeling footsteps slow.

The wet plank thrills like a springing-board ;
The white force bursts around ;
If all the cannon of Hell had roared,
He had not heard a sound.

And when the wind springs out of the night
To sweep him o'er the fall,
Against its might he leans outright,
As on a solid wall.

The plank, like wire it doubles and springs,
It tosses him to and fro ;
His bare feet slip on the slimy things
That twine from toe to toe.

His wet hair flaps and beats his face,
As now he waits and stands,
Then creeps again with the feeling pace,
And the swaying, balancing hands.

And now by the rise of the plank he feels
His walk is half-way done,
When out of the gully rips and squeals
A blast like ten in one.

It grasps his throat, it tugs his hair,
It smites him in the teeth ;
It thrusts him here, and it whirls him there,
It drags him from beneath.

He shrieks and falls, but his fingers grip ;
They clutch the edge of the plank,
And there as he hangs they start and slip
On the slimy grasses dank.

With spouting spray his face is struck ;
His senses turn and reel ;
The waters under him tear and suck,
And hold him, toe and heel.

And still each quivering finger clings ;
He clings and wavers still,
Like the corpse that swings from the gibbet-rings,
High on the smuggler's hill.

And now he lifts with all his strength,
His arm curves swift and free ;
His chest is over the plank at length,
He mounts it knee by knee.

Onward again he's moving now,
He crawls with leg and hand,
Till he feels the wet sedge lash his brow,
And knows he has gained the land.

He drags through the mud, he reels through the flood,
His feet on the turf fly fast ;
A clamber and fall from the high stone wall,—
He is out in the road at last.

And now he beats at the doctor's door,
And now with swinging rein,
The doctor rides, with the child before,
By gap and moss and lane.

Oh, a race for life that night was run,
And a score of deaths were braved;
By the breadth of a hair the race was won,
And the woodman's life was saved.

To-day, if you stand on the Brathay's bank,
Or gaze from the Black Pike's ridge,
The peasant will point to the slippery plank,
And call it the Blind Boy's Bridge.

The Unforgiven Sin.

THE sin I had wrought I knew right well
Would sink ten souls in bottomless hell;
I prayed, and my prayer drave back from the skies,
Dust in my teeth and brine in my eyes.

I had a wife—a soul, ah me!
Tender and white as lilies be.
Her bosom dried up, her cheeks fell in,
Breathing and lying beside my sin.

The death in her eyes began to yearn;
I knew she would go when the night did turn.
I knelt and prayed to her sharpening face,
As drowning men to the Mother of Grace:

"Your spirit chafes—it will not stay;
But one more wrench and it breaks away.
The gates for you wide open stand,
And Christ leans forward to take your hand.

"Oh, when you come so near, so near,
He cannot turn aside His ear;
Weary Him ever, and take no nay,
To let my sin be purged away.

"Creeping on earth, all bent and old,
Or dry bleached bones in the wormy mould,
Or feeding hell's fire with my unburnt sins,
Send me a sign that His grace begins."

Her fingers pressed, her long arm fell;
Her face was a beautiful thin sea-shell.
I felt the poplars shake and sigh,
And the darkness move as her soul went by:

My goods to feed the poor I sold;
I mated with none save hunger and cold;
Daily my back with the scourge I tore,
And my knees with praying were lame and sore.

I took my staff within my hand;
I journeyed afoot through many a land;
Frost and fire by bitter turn
Into my bones did bite and burn.

I came to a town where the sky was sick,
And the mottled air was curdled thick;
The doors stood wide, and the whole had fled,
And the dying were left to bury the dead.

The air I breathed was plague-struck breath,
My light was the glare in the eyes of death;
Black lips I cleansed from the oozy gout,
And writhen bodies I straightened out.

Spotted like toads the corpses lay;
I carried them one by one away;
Under the blurred and blistered sun
Slowly I buried them one by one.

But there came no sign, and I rose again,
And wandered on with the heart of Cain,
Tending on beggars and wights forlorn,
And glad if my wages were blows and scorn.

I was fain of the stocks and the rotting cell;
Full sweet on my back the scourging fell;
I drank of the gutter, and had for fare
What offal the dogs of the town might spare.

Ever and ever I wandered on;
I came to a leper town anon;
And there I dwelt till the years were nine,
Hoarding my flakes and waiting a sign.

Scaly and crippled and blear of sight,
Shrunken and bent to half my height,
A loathing and sore in the eyes of men,
I finished my three score years and ten.

Then I knelt me down and lifted my eyes
Up to the hard and brazen skies,
Crying, "O God, I am sure this day
My sin shall never be purged away.

"Thine eye, O God, of a surety knows
My foulness, my fasting, my stripes and blows,
These years that I might have lain soft in bed,
And poured my wine and broken my bread.

"Men have I seen whose sin was great
Turning to thee when the time was late,
And, after light penance and dole of alms,
Ending in triumph, yea, filled with psalms.

"Yea, I have seen the robber rest
With hands laid cross-wise over his breast,
And peace on his forehead as full and deep
As comes to the babe in his chrisom sleep.

"I blame Thee not, who am sores and dust;
Yea, God Thou art and Thy way is just—
Though my prayer is made gall these fifty years,
And mine eyes are baked that they shed no tears.

"My sin abideth. Amen, I say:
Burn me in hell for ever and aye;
Yet once and no more Thy gates undo
The space of an inch that this prayer come through.

"Grant that my sin, whose bud was sweet,
Whose fruit in loathing my soul must eat,
Have power to turn one sinner's face,
That he come not down to my woful place."

I spoke, and behold! the skies were blue;
Mine eyes were wet with a blessèd dew;
While a hand stretched over the vault afar
And kindled the light of the evening star.

Pardoned, yea, pardoned! behold the sign!
God, was this tender spirit mine?
My sin had slipped from my withered soul
As a slough from a serpent, and left me whole.

And now I am bathed in the good God's smile:
Sweet death shall come in a little while,
And my soul shall pass through the shining gate
As white as the soul of my love who waits.

After Ten Years.

THE moor! the moor! the bitter moor!
  Fierce gusts that come and go;
A sick moon's light on a waste of white,
  And a maddening dance of snow;—

A reeling dance that troubles the air
  With a daze and a giddy dream;
And a woman that stares with a drowning stare
  At a far-off window's gleam;—

A light that seems to toss and turn,
  To dip and rise and flee,
As a light may burn that hangs astern
  On a wild night at sea.

"A little longer, God," she prays,
  With faint and moaning cry;
"Till I reach the blaze of the window rays—
  Then let me drop and die.

"Grant me, dear God, one little prayer—
  One only boon of grace—
To feel the light of the window there,
  Shine on my dying face!

The sharp flakes cling and burn and sting—
  The light—the light is gone;
Nay, it flashes again like a starry rain;
  She stares and staggers on.

"Not yet to fall; O God, not yet!"—
Her lips are wild and white;
Her arms reach out and her fingers fret
As though to clutch the light.

Oh, saved! the light has caught her now;
It draws her, heart and feet;
She is moving there on an angel's stair,
A ladder of radiant heat.

She stops—her hand is on the sill—
She stands, and dares not look;
"Oh hush! a voice—nay, heart, be still—
That reads from the Holy Book.

"She lives! she lives! she is not dead—
She lives in the olden place!
Now let me gaze on the dear grey head,
And the blessèd, blessèd face.

"Ah, very pale, and sad and thin—
My guilt has worn it so—
But the soul shines sweet and pure within
As all those years ago.

"Oh, hush! she speaks." *The time is long!*
Ten years since Mary went.
When shall the Angels joy in song
O'er her that doth repent?"

Is it a hand that lifts her gown?
O God, her heart is weak;—
Is it a tear that splashes down
Her white and withered cheek?

"Mother!"—she hardly dares to turn—
A dream is light of wing;—
"Mother!"—oh, hearts that leap and yearn!
Oh, hands that twine and cling!

"My Mary! come to lay your head
Where it used to lie of yore;
Oh, Mary, ten long years have fled,
And I've never barred the door.

"My darling! far from home you've trod,
A weary, weary track;
But I clung in prayer to the feet of God—
My prayers have brought you back."

"Mother," she answers through her tears,
That flow so rich and fast,
"I have felt them draw me all these years—
I had to come at last."

The New Year Bells! the New Year Bells!
Oh, hark the crash of sound!
"The dead is alive," it throbs and swells,
"And the lost is found."

Mike Baldwin.

MIKE BALDWIN—Mike Baldwin—
His eyes are fierce and bright;
And why hath he hied by the bleak hillside
In the teeth of the wild March night?

His eyes are fixed and gleedy-red,
His cheeks are ashy-white;
And why doth he steal with tip-toe tread
In the dead of the coal-black night?

No moon, no star; no stirring thing
In moor or meadow round;
Yet he harks and hides and creeps and glides
By bush and tree and mound.

One hand to-night is touch and sight,
To warn and fend and guide;
The other—what doth it clutch so tight—
The hand against his side?

Ah, somewhat there he keeps with care;
I wot its touch is sweet;
In the thought of his heart it hath good part,
And answers beat for beat.

A wind comes shrill across the hill;
It roars and bursts and drops;
He is sidling now by a furzy brow
That meets a stunted copse.

He glides, he bides, he cowers and hides
In cover of bush and brake;
The copse is a mark of deeper dark,
Whose edges swing and shake.

He gains the copse, he parts the boughs,
He looks not left or right;
The open is near when a light springs clear,
A breadth of ruddy light.

Down on his knees Mike Baldwin falls;
He holds a knife on high,
And lifts the glare of his eyes and calls
On the God of the midnight sky.

"Lo, God, the knife is warm as life,
Beneath my heart-beats laid;
But it craves for a heat more rich and sweet
To wet its droughty blade.

"Thou knowest, God, Thou knowest well,
The thing this man hath done;
How fair a name he hath brought to shame
In the eye of the noonday sun.

"Her little head, so warm and brown,
That every beam caressed—
Thou knowest how it would nestle down
Like a soft dove on my breast.

"Thou knowest, God, how young she was,
How glad and pure and bright;
Thou knowest where in her long brown hair
She hides her shame this night.

"And he, O God—his head is high;
He feels nor breath nor blame;
But Thou art just, and in fair full trust
His blood of Thee I claim.

"Deliver him, God, to my hand this night;
Sure will I smite and well;
So sure and deep he shall start in sleep,
And wake in the hiss of Hell.

"Make answer, O God, from earth or sky;
Give pledge that his soul is mine!"
The wind comes by with a wrathful cry;
He rises—"Lo, the sign!"

Onward again Mike Baldwin creeps,
And looks not left or right;
His fierce eyes glare at the window there,
Where flickers and falls the light.

Soft as the tread of the misty dead
His crouching footsteps fall;
The mastiff howls with uplifted head
As he climbs the courtyard wall.

Mike Baldwin gazes on the light:
"O God, I thank Thy grace;
I shall see as I smite the sharp steel bite,
And the death-pang writhe his face."

Thick boughs towards the casement lean,
Around a vine doth cling;
A climber may bridge the gap between
With a stride and half a spring.

The wind comes round with a snoring gust;
Or ever the gust is still,
Mike Baldwin's face to the pane is thrust,
His foot is on the sill.

Into the gloom of the dim-lit room
Deep pierce his yearning eyes;
A flicker is shed across the bed—
The sleeping face he spies.

Not long the catch his skill withstands;
Dark doth his shadow loom,
As the casement parts before his hands
And he lights within the room.

No stir, no breath; 'tis the hush of death—
What are the sleeper's dreams,
As the hand doth glide to the croucher's side,
As the knife crawls forth and gleams?

And now once more with a snarl and roar
The wind from its covert leaps;
There creaks no tread, but over the bed
A lengthening shadow creeps.

The arm doth rise—the hungering eyes
Are coals that redly glow;
His heart's desire is a flash of the fire
To light the face's throe.

Up leaps the flame . . . why hangs the knife?—
Mike Baldwin's face turns sick;
His brow is wet with the ooze of sweat,
And his set jaw loose doth click.

The hand that holds the trembling steel
  Falls slowly to its place,
While the other hand creeps forth to feel
  The sleeper's quiet face.

He touches; then, with filmy eyes,
  Reels backward from the bed;
"O, God of Heaven!" Mike Baldwin cries,
  "Dead!"

A minute's space he keeps his place,
  A man whom fear doth craze;
Then over the dead he bows his head:
  Mike Baldwin weeps and prays.

The Ballad of the Blind Beggar.

A BLIND man sat for alms one day,
  Amid the city's roar;
And none of them that passed that way
  Had seen his face before.
He did not sue with clamorous cries,
  Nor stretch abroad his palms;
Only the darkness of his eyes
  Did crave good Christians' alms.

The schoolboy passed with noisy laugh,
  The sempstress hummed a lay;
The old man crept upon his staff,
  And did not look that way.
The miser mused upon his gold,
  The spendthrift on his lust;
The dame drew close her vesture's fold,
  In delicate disgust.

The city magnate ambled by,
  With reverend paunch and round;
And as he met the rayless eye,
  He pursed his lips and frowned.
The deep projector formed his schemes;
  The clerk must keep his time;
The peevish poet nursed his dreams,
  Or struggled for a rhyme.

Not far from where the blind man sate
  A solemn mansion stood—
A solid house, with brazen plate,
  And palings tall and good;
And anxious men, with formal coats,
  The door swung to and fro:
You heard the rustle of the notes
  In hands that let it go.

The doctor drove at formal pace,
  His arms across his chest,
To welcome in a baby-face,
  Or speed a parting guest.
Along the pavement creaked the wain,
  With all the day to spare;
The cabman whipped to catch the train,
  And earn an extra fare.

The lady cantered, gay and fast,
  Her footman somewhere near;
The actress whipped her ponies past,
  With bells that jingled clear.
On road and path were crush and roar,
  And tramp of horse and man;—
The tide had reached the full at four,
  And now the ebb began.

And still the blind man kept his place,
  While life throbbed hot and loud,
One patient, mute, unchanging face,
  Amid the changing crowd.

Anon a child would stop to stare,
  A grim policeman frown;
But few had time or pence to spare,
  Of all the bustling town.

A wretched girl was rustling by,
  In faded splendours dressed,
That told to every casual eye
  What calling she professed.
She paused, a pitying word to speak,
  And while she lingered there
The tear-drops smeared her painted cheek,
  Her poor lips moved in pray'r.

With gaunt white face and footsore tread,
  A tramp was limping past,
And he had bought a slice of bread
  To break his long day's fast.
At that same place he slacked his pace,
  To eat his sorry meal,
And felt a gaze upon his face
  In sightless mute appeal.

"Poor friend," he said, "I have to spare,
  And thou shalt dine with me;
And thou, my lass, shalt have thy share—
  The bread will serve for three."
While idlers stopped, their sport to make,
  Those outcasts took their seat.
The blind man blessed the bread and brake,—
  And so they three did eat.

And while he blessed the slice of bread,
  Lo, all men grew aware,
A halo spread around His Head,
  His vesture glittered fair.
He passed—there fell a moment's hush
  Upon the city's roar,
Then waxed again the whirl and rush,
  And all was as before.

Squire.

FREE-HANDED?—ay, I ought to know—
  Free-handed to a fault;
But—God forgive me—speaking so
  Beside the Courcy vault—
A headstrong man, and proud and stern;
  A man that could not flinch,
And pain nor pity e'er might turn
  The breadth of half an inch.

The Squire! I think I see him now—
  The figure tall and spare,
The clean-cut lips, the dinted brow,
  The straight-brushed blue-grey hair;
You'd but to glance at head and face—
  At set of neck and limb,
To know you'd move the square old Place
  Almost as soon as him.

Before that steady, steel-bright eye,
  The stoutest rogue would blench;
You never heard a witness lie
  When Squire was on the bench.
The vagrant, primed with piteous tale,
  Ere half the case was heard,
Would shake his head and go to gaol
  Without a whine or word.

No footman's leather, housemaid's broom—
  Presumed to scamp or shirk;
I never saw the loutish groom
  That dawdled at his work.

A change came o'er the very pug,
  When Squire was in the house;
The cat sat upright on the rug,
  Or sniffed to find a mouse.

We served him aye in fear and awe,
  From stiff old Steward down,—
His word was fate, his whim was law—
  We quailed before his frown:
His very praise would make us feel
  Like prisoners in the dock—
But strong the ale, and full the meal,
  And wages—like the clock.

But Clare!—Miss Clare—the little witch!
  She knew no fear, not she—
She'd catch his paper with a twitch,
  And jump upon his knee.
She'd push aside his half-writ note,
  Or rouse him from a doze,
And lead him off to make a boat,
  Or cut a monthly rose.

Ah, then his face was good to see—
  'Twas something sweet and strange—
'Twas near a miracle to me,—
  The swift and lovely change.
That look—so yearning-like and soft—
  To see that look on *him*—
I tell you, many a time and oft
  It's made my glasses dim.

Well, well, the years slipped smoothly by;
  Miss Clare was woman grown;
And now she changed,—we knew not why—
  She sat and walked alone.
And when she sauntered through the court,—
  I took great heed of that—
Old Blucher tugged and whined for nought—
  He never coaxed a pat.

One night, sir,—simplest words are best—
  The bell was rung at eight;
The Squire was standing, ready dressed,—
  "Miss Clare?" He would not wait.
He loitered o'er his wine alone,
  He rose and stalked to bed—
And no Miss Clare, and nothing known,
  And not a whisper said.

Next day he sat as cold and stern,
  As hard and cold as steel;
He took *her* letter in its turn,
  I watched him break the seal.
I saw no deepening of the frown,
  No change from white to red,
But when he laid the letter down,
  My God!—his face was dead.

An artist, sir, that went and came,
  A stroller, here and there;
And she, the last of all the name,
  The proud old house's heir!

A heavy blow, a deadly blight,
  But wrongs weren't made to live;
And, Squire, you read those words at night,
  "Forgive, as we forgive."

He never faltered, ne'er forgave—
  The lass he loved so kind;
Ah, Squire, I stand beside your grave,
  And call you harsh and blind!
He never saw her face in life,
  She would not plead or sue;
No, no, the peddling painter's wife
  Was Courcy through and through.

He made no sign, he shed no tear,
  He held his stately height;
But, oh! the change of one short year!
  The grizzled head was white.
I saw the suffering in his eyes,
  I heard the firm voice shake;
Ah, sir, the soft hearts bend and rise,
  The stern ones stand—and break.

So year by year he failed and broke,
  But slowly, slowly still;
He would not yield, like other folk,
  That man of granite will.
And now he tottered in and out,
  Dim eyes and drooping head;
When sudden tidings came about,
  Miss Clare—Miss Clare was dead.

We went together. There she lay—
  Yes, dead, sir; dead and cold;
Broken with grief at life's half-way,
  A woman worn and old.
I marked the sharp and weary face,
  Framed in the thick, grey hair,
And thinking of her girlish grace,
  I wept—ah, poor Miss Clare!

But Squire—dear heart! I see him now:
  He scanned the poor thin cheek,
Then pressed his hand against his brow,
  And moved his lips to speak.
He stopped: and then the quiet clay
  He heeded nothing more,
But turned him from the bed away,
  And only watched the door.

It opened in a little space,
  And there before us stood
A girl, with all the April grace
  Of budding maidenhood.
The same sweet lips, with rosy pout,
  The tender white and red,
The harebell eyes—ah, who could doubt?—
  The daughter of the dead.

The Squire—he raised his white old head,
  And, as he watched her so,
I saw across his features spread
  That look of long ago.

'Twas more than mortal heart could stand,
My tears splashed down in showers;
"Come, child," he said, and took her hand,
"We'll go and see your flowers."

We gave to earth the dust that slept—
He did not understand—
He only saw his darling wept,
And faster held her hand.
The gravel on the coffin brass
Fell rattling harsh and slow;
He thought, "I'll take my little lass
Where clouds of bluebells grow."

We brought her back to Courcy Place,
And she was happy there;
The daughter with the mother's face,
A second, gentler Clare.
And he, with eyes made soft with tears,
Would watch her work or play;
And all the twenty bitter years
Were mist that rolls away.

Once only, just before he died,
His mind grew clear a space,
His dim eyes opened bright and wide,
A glory lit his face;
A look divinely glad and fair,
Where all sweet thoughts were blent,
"She calls"—he said, "I'm coming, Clare:"
He stretched his arms—and went.

A Couple of Ducks:

BEING THE STORY OF A LITTLE WEDDING THAT DID NOT COME OFF.

"I THINK," says he, "I think, my dear—
You know we're often walking,
And certain busy people here
Spend half their time in talking:—"

"They do!" she cries, "(I name no names);
They're watching, now, I'm certain—
Yes, that's their long red nose that flames
Between the blind and curtain."

"I think it might be well, you see,
To be—in fact—united;
You wouldn't mind, dear?" "Mind?" says she,
"No, I should be delighted.

"But, Tom," she adds, "we won't be rash—
Your appetite's tremendous;
We ought to have a little cash
Besides what aunt would send us."

"Well, that would come to half-a-crown;"
He laughs with satisfaction;
"But, here! my pet, let's put it down—
I'll work it by sub(s)traction."

They mount a stile, and take their seat,
With faces sweetly solemn;
She thinks, and swings her sandalled feet,
The while he heads the column.

"It's little *I* shall bring you, dear,"
She murmurs, sorely smitten;
"I've nothing but my dolls, I fear,
And half the tabby kitten.

"I *should* be rich"—'tis hard to speak—
"But Jane goes telling tales so;
They stop my twopence every week—
Because—I—bite my nails so!"

He gives her head a loving pat—
The showery face grows sunny;
"My own," he says, "why talk like that?
We've really heaps of money.

"Three shillings in my box to-day!
That's not so bad to start with;
And when my hen begins to lay,
There'll be the eggs to part with.

"My 'lowance is but small, no doubt,
But still it's quite a fixture—
And then I'm paid when teeth come out,
And when I take my mixture.

"No need for us to aim at show
With balls and such pretences—
And making one of two you know,
Will much reduce expenses.

"We shan't want coal, for sticks will burn—
But ah! there's plates—and knockers—
And clothes"—"No, dearest, frocks will turn,
And so will knickerbockers."

"Then buns—and shrimps—and humming-tops—
And dolly-tubs—and stables!"
"Of course," says she, "and acid drops—
We shan't want chairs or tables."

"No, not at first—we'll do with stiles;
But, then, there's jam and custard!—
And beef!"—"Oh, no, not beef," she smiles;
"That runs away with mustard."

"We must have dogs—to eat the fat—
And soap, you know—for shaving—
And mousetraps"—"No, we'll keep a cat;"—
"Ah, trust a wife for saving!

"We cannot keep a coach and pair,
Or live in style precisely;
But still, I think, with proper care,
We ought to manage nicely."

"Yes, Tom," she says, with modest charm,
Her blushes mounting thicker;
"Then, darling, if you'll take my arm,
We'll go and find the vicar."

The gravelled path behold them tread,
With manly stride and trip-toe;
They gain the porch, with roses red,—
He pulls the bell—on tip-toe.

Trim Mary bids them, with a smile,
  Be seated in the study;
Then enters, in a little while,
  The vicar, round and ruddy.

"And so, my dears, you've come to pay
  A little morning visit?"
"We've come on business, please, sir!"—"Eh?
  On business? well, what is it?"

The boy, withour restraint or fuss,
  Says, "If you do not mind, sir,
We want you just to marry us—
  Perhaps you'll be so kind, sir."

The parson stares in mute surprise
  For full a minute after,
Then takes his glasses from his eyes,
  And shakes with silent laughter.

"I'm grieved, upon my word," says he,
  "To break such charming plans up;
But weddings can't take place, you see,
  Till folks have put the banns up.

"What, pretty bride, dissolved in tears?
  Don't cry, my little treasure!
If you'll come back—in twenty years—
  I'll marry you with pleasure!"

Carrying Out Instructions.

HIS name wears faint upon the stone,
  The grass grows rank above him,
And Dick and I remain alone
  Of all who used to love him.
Yet memory keeps—and always will—
  Among its hoarded riches
My Uncle's shining face, his frill,
  His broadbrim and his breeches.

Dear Uncle Ben! how oft he'd rush,
  With flying tails, bare-headed—
The quivering fork within the gush
  Of stuffing left embedded—
And burst amid the carters' smocks,
  And stay the lash from whipping,
And—having threatened gaol and stocks—
  Conclude with general tipping!

And oh! that day when every eye
  Was fixed in fascination,
As arm-in-arm two forms went by
  With lurch and wild gyration.
One toper—here was nothing new—
  Was Peter Cripps, the baker;
But t'other—*did* one's eyes speak true?—
  Dear heart! it *was* the Quaker!

He'd tell the tale a hundred times,
  With sudden cracks of laughter
That made his seals ring little chimes
  For full a minute after.

And John, the man, must needs exclaim,
As solemn as a statue,
"Escortin' drunkards 'ome! for shame!
Lor', sir, I wonder *at* you!"

Good John had come to Uncle Ben
A raw-boned lad ungainly,
And made small scruple now and then
To speak his counsel plainly.
The mention of those early days
Recalls a queer disaster,
The outcome of a formal phrase
Of John's old-fashioned master.

Said Uncle, "John, if gentry call,
Be sure thou doest rightly;
Thou'lt carry them across the hall,
And seat them here politely.
And then—when thou hast raised the blind,
And, may be, drawn the curtain—
Thou'lt bring their cards in: dost thou mind?"
Said John, "I do for certain."

My Uncle dined at two o'clock;
Dessert was on the table,
When—rat-tat-tat—a mighty knock
Brought footsteps from the stable.
"I hope," said Uncle, "John is neat,
It's early yet for calling—"
He stopped, and bounded in his seat;
"Why, bless us! what's this brawling?'

He pulled the door ajar in haste,
And there stood John the giant,
His arms around the parson's waist,
Who fought and yelled, defiant.
"It ain't no use to carry on,
And make these blessed ructions;
He bid me carry you," said John,
"And I'll obey instructions."

And there—the while my Uncle gazed,
A paralysed beholder—
The wriggling, red divine he raised,
And flung him o'er his shoulder.
He slammed him in an elbow-chair;
Then, standing at attention,
Enquired, with grave and stolid air,
"What name, sir, shall I mention?"

The outraged parson stamped away,
Rejecting explanation,
And Uncle Ben thenceforward lay
'Neath excommunication.
And when the tale was told anon,
With chuckled interjections,
"It was'nt my mistake," said John;
"I carried out directions."

A Lay of a Cracked Fiddle.

WHEN I was quite a tiny mite,
  And life a joyful ditty,
I used to know a poor old wight
  Who fiddled through the city.
Alas! it's thirty years ago—
  Time *is* so quaint and flighty!
And now I've mites myself, you know,
  And not so very mity.
And he's unvexed by flat and sharp:
  He's guessed the awful riddle,
And, haply, got a golden harp
  In place of that old fiddle.

And yet, methinks, I see him now—
  So clear the memory lingers—
His long grey hair, his puckered brow,
  His trembling, grimy fingers;
The comforter that dangled down
  Beyond his waist a long way;
The beaver hat with battered crown,
  He'd pause to brush—the wrong way;
The brown surtout that still could brag
  Its buttons down the middle,
And, crowning all, the greenish bag
  That held the sacred fiddle.

Two tunes he played, and only two,
  One over, one beginning;
"God Save the Queen's" collapse we knew
  Was "Kitty Clover's" inning.
How startlingly the bow behaved—
  Curvetted, jerked, and bounded—
The while our gracious Queen was saved,
  And knavish tricks confounded!
And oh! the helpless, hopeless woe,
  Brimful and running over,
In (*very* slow) the o—o—oh
  Of bothering Kitty Clover!

And so he'd jerk and file and squeak
  Like twenty thousand hinges,
While every sympathetic cheek
  Was racked with shoots and twinges.
The lawyer left his lease or will,
  The workman stopped his hammer,
The druggist ceased to roll the pill,
  And ran to calm the clamour.
From doors and windows jingled down
  A dancing shower of copper,
Accompanied by many a frown,
  And sometimes speech improper.

He gathered up the grudging dole,
  And sought a different station,
But always with a bitter soul,
  And deep humiliation.
For what though music win you pence,
  If praise it fail to win you?

If fees are paid to hurry hence,
And never to continue?
"Bad times for art," he'd sometimes say
To any youthful scholar;
"They'd rather grub for brass to-day,
Than listen to Apoller."

And so with quaint, pathetic face,
Aggrieved and disappointed,
The minstrel moved from place to place,
And mourned the times disjointed.
His hat was browner than of yore,
His grizzled head was greyer,
And none had ever cried, "Encore,"
Or praised the poor old player.
I came to feel (and was not wrong)—
His day was nearly over—
He'd not be bothered very long
By cruel Kitty Clover.

One day, within a shady square,
Where people lounged or sat round,
He'd played his second woful air,
And now he took the hat round.
He met with many a gibe and grin,
With coarser disaffection,
The while he tottered out and in,
Receiving the collection.
At length he stopped, with downcast eye,
Beneath a lime-tree's cover,
Where sat a maiden, sweet and shy,
Beside her handsome lover.

Half-hidden in her leafy place,
The modest little sitter
Just glanced into the fiddler's face,
And read his story bitter.
Unskilled in life and worldly ways,
By womanhood's divining,
She knew the minstrel's soul for praise
And sympathy was pining.
Herself with all a heart could need,
No dearest dream denied her,
She felt her gentle spirit bleed
For that poor wretch beside her.

She hung her head a little while,
Then, growing somewhat bolder,
She rose, and with a blush and smile,
Just touched the minstrel's shoulder.
"How charmingly you play," she said;
"How nice to be so clever!
My friend and I" (her cheeks grew red)
"Could sit entranced for ever.
I've taken lessons—all in vain:
My touch is simply hateful.
Oh! if you'd play those tunes again,
I'd be so very grateful."

He rosined up his rusty bow
(His eyes were brimming over),
Then (o—o—oh!) meandered slow
Through endless "Kitty Clover."
He'd suffered many a cruel wrong
Amid a sordid nation;

He'd waited wearily and long—
  At last the compensation!
What cared he now for snub and sneer
  From churlish fools around him?
In those sweet eyes he saw a tear,
  And felt that fame had crowned him.

And you, my friends, may laugh or frown,
  And still I'll risk the saying,
That angels stooped from glory down
  To hear the fiddler playing.
And He that holds the golden pen,
  That chief of all the bright ones,
Who registers the deeds of men,
  The wrong ones and the right ones—
He oped the book, and did record
  A sweet and gracious deed there—
A deed performed to Christ the Lord
  That He shall smile to read there.

The Demon of the Pit:

A BALLAD OF THE BOARDS.

IF you chance to make a sally
  Through the region of Soho,
You may pass a frightful alley
  That is known as Eden Row;
And among the children playing
  On the cobble pavement there,
There is one that's worth surveying,
  For she's really very fair.
She's a perfect darling—bless her!
  And she has such charming ways
That the passers-by address her
  With a word or two of praise;
And enthusiastic stoppers
  Are occasionally known
To present the child with coppers—
  Having darlings of their own;
Whereupon she'll call her cronies,
  Who are always pretty near,
And invest in proud polonies,
  Or imperial ginger-beer:
She will call her friends and cronies,
  Who make answer with a cheer,
And invest in proud polonies,
In the fat and fair polonies,
In the rich and rare polonies,
  Or imperial ginger-beer.

So when next you're not too busy,
  Let me beg of you to go,
And inquire for little Lizzy
  In her grimy Eden Row;
You will find her, sweet and dimply
  On a doorstep sitting down,
And she'll look an angel simply
  In her short and shabby gown.
Now I fancy few, if any,
  Who have seen my little pet,
And have tipped her with a penny,
  Which she laughed aloud to get,
Have imagined for a second
  That this charming little fay
Must decidedly be reckoned
  Quite a "woman of the day."
It has never crossed their fancy
  For a moment, I'll engage,
That the child was Miss Delancy
  Of the Pandemonium Stage—
It would never cross the fancy,
  If one pondered for an age,
That the child was Miss Delancy,
The surprising Miss Delancy,
The prodigious Miss Delancy,
  Of the Pandemonium Stage.

Though herself no hint affording
  Of the footlights' lurid fame,
Each adjacent shop and hoarding
  Is emblazoned with her name:
See—"Aërial flights of fancy!
  Pyrotechnic blaze of wit!

With Miss Juliet Delancy
  As the Demon of the Pit!
Though the boldest might have faltered
  At an outlay half as large,
Yet the prices are unaltered—
  There will be no extra charge!
Amid plaudits loud as thunder,
  And emotion past control,
The astounding Infant Wonder
  Will sustain her famous rôle.
In a *mise* where all entrances,
  The most unexampled hit
Is Miss Juliet Delancy's,
  As the Demon of the Pit;
While the *tout ensemble* entrances,
  It is owned the choicest grit
Is Miss Juliet Delancy's—
The enormous Miss Delancy's,
The astounding Miss Delancy's,—
  As the Demon of the Pit!"

* * * *

While the eye delighted ranges
  Through the Halls of Dazzling Light,
Lo! the scene by magic changes
  To the Rayless Realms of Night.
Through the caverns weird and gloomy
  Of that Stygian world below,
You may see (the stage is roomy)
  All the marshalled goblins go.
Then the lights burn dim and bluely,
  And the music dies away,

And the thunder rumbles truly
  In a very awful way.
There's a yet more frightful rumble,
  There's a chord from wind and strings,
And the goblins prostrate tumble
  As their chief before them springs.
You may hear John whisper Nancy—
  And his accents shake a bit—
"It's Miss Juliet Delancy
  As the Demon of the Pit."
You may hear him say to Nancy—
  And they tremble where they sit—
"It's Miss Juliet Delancy,
The enormous Miss Delancy,
The astounding Miss Delancy,
  As the Demon of the Pit!"

So until the Opening closes,
  With just here and there a pause,
Miss Delancy flits and poses
  'Mid tumultuous applause;
While a matron, short and snuffy,
  With a face that's not unkind,
And a cold that's always stuffy,
  Waits resignedly behind.
See! the supers nudge each other,
  And the fairy tells the gnome,
"That there's Miss Delancy's mother,
  As will stay to take her 'ome."
So at ten, or shortly after,
  While the Monstrous Little Joe
Is evoking shrieks of laughter,
  They are trudging to Soho.

Then they've tripe, as light to dream on,
  Or it may be chops instead,
And the weary little Demon—
  Goes contentedly to bed.
They have something light to dream on,
  And the childish prayer is said,
And the weary little Demon
Not at all a wicked Demon,
But a sleepy, blinking Demon—
  Is put quietly to bed.

How the Light came to Jim.

A CHRISTMAS RHYME.

NEVER were sweeter eyes
Than the eyes of our Jim—
Tender and large and wise,
And blue with the delicate dyes,
Dreamy and dim,
Of harebells that are seen
On a dusty strip of green
By the high-road's rim.
Watching him there
In his little chair,
You only thought how sweet they were,
How pure and kind.
It was not till you saw him rise and go
Coasting by couch and table so,
With fingers falling as light as snow,
That ever a thought would cross your mind,
The beautiful eyes were blind.

Once they had looked on the skies,
Blue through the smoke-clouds black,
Had seen the thin moon rise
Over the chimney-stack;
Had watched the rain-drops patter down,
Laying the dust of the droughty town;
And when, on few and favoured days,
I had led the child on country ways,

Had grown all dim with soft delight,
To see the wonderful hawthorn white,
And the great crows black on the dusty road,
And the merry sparrows, pert and quick,
Flirting away with a single flick
Into the hedgerows green and thick,
Where they and their chattering friends abode;
And the delicate country smoke-wreaths, curled
Filmy and slow;—
Once they had looked on the happy world,
And loved it so.
Once they had looked on a face that bent,
With soft brown hair on a thoughtful brow,
Had scanned each line with a full content—
Each light and shadow that came and went.
Alas! that the hands must *feel* it now!
All beautiful sights were left behind,
For Jim was blind.

Seven nights he lay,
And tossed on his bed,
The curls shorn away
That laughed round his head;
Ah! the tears shed!
Ah! the prayers said!
As through the long night
We moved with footsteps light,
Or sat by his bed!
He spoke in wandering words
Of hedgerows in spring,
Of wild-flowers and birds,
And of many a sweet thing.
He talked about his games,

His plans and his aims,
His little playmates' names
  In turn he would speak;
But he did not know his mother,
When, with sobs she could not smother,
  She kissed his hot cheek,
Or sang his pet hymn,
Or called him her Jim.

Ever the fever strengthened;
  He toiled hard for breath;
Over him lengthened—lengthened
  The thick shadow of death.
And ever up to the sky
Rose an agonised cry,
  "Father, Father of mercy,
Blessed Father on high,
Don't let Jim die!"

Somewhere in the blue
  Opes a little gate;
Prayers glide through,
  And are not made to wait.
'Mid the harpings clear,
  And the shouts of joy,
The Father could hear,
  And think of our boy.
Yes, our Father heard,
And spake the saving word:
Slowly, slowly, backward the dark shadow crept,
    And Jim slept;

Woke very weak,
  But quite clear and calm—
Wholesome pale cheek
  And sweet cold palm.

Sitting up in bed,
  In his nightgown white;
"Mother," Jim said,
  "'Tis a dark night—
No star, no moon—
Will it be morning soon?
  I want to see the light."

We knew it all then—
  We let the tears run;
We whispered, "Amen!
  His will be done."
Our own little Jim,
  Our one little son!—
Thenceforth for ever,
  Till all things were done,
    Gold light and grey light,
    Midnight and daylight,
To him were as one—
  All one to him—
  All dark to Jim!

For e'en while he spoke,
  After gusts of rain,
The glad sun broke
  Through the shrouded pane;
And one dusty ray
Found a chink and lay

Over Jim's shoulder,
And another, yet bolder,
Settled on his hair,
And made a glory there--
And Jim did not know.
Ah, woe, woe!
Till the last sand was run,
Till the last hour was done,
Thenceforth for ever
To our little son,
Gold light and grey light,
Midnight and daylight,
Were even as one—
All one to him—
All dark to Jim.

And so for a while,
For two summers after,
We had Jim's smile,
But nevermore his laughter.
He did not care to play—
He'd sit the whole day,
Thinking, thinking, there,
In his little low chair.

Oft, to while the time
That lagged so dull and slow,
His mother sang to Jim
Ballad or childish hymn,
Or told him tale or rhyme
Of days long ago.
He always listened well,
But never listened so--
Never with such a look—

As when she used to tell
Tales from the Holy Book:—
Tales of that One who came,
Wearing our frame,
Son of man by name,
Son of God by right;
The Saviour good and kind,
Who spake the word of might,
That made the dumb to talk;
And the lame to leap and walk;
Who said to the blind,
"Have thou thy sight."

"Mother," once he said,
Going to bed,
"Though He lives so far,
Beyond the highest star,
And we are here below,
Jesus still can see us
Just the same, you know;—
He pitied Bartimæus
Long ago.
Oh, if He can see,
Won't He pity me?
Though He's far, He's near;—
Don't you think He'll hear,
If I ask Him right?
Mother when I pray,
Don't you think I may
Ask Him every day
To give me my sight?"
Thenceforward every night

His mother used to hark,
  While Jim in his bedgown white,
Stretched his hands in the dark,
  Praying for light.

And so the weeks went on—
  While Jim at the chimney-side
    Sat, silent and weak,
    His hand propping his cheek,
The starlings had gathered and gone,
  The leaves had shrivelled and died;
And though the days were bright,
There was frost every night;
  And the year began to glide
  Into Christmastide.

And still, as the day drew near
  Of the blessed Saviour's birth,
Jim grew more eager to hear
From the lips of his mother dear
  How Jesus had come to earth,
And how each Christmas Day
Christians were wont to say
The Saviour came again,
Made in the likeness of men.

"Mother," one day he said
(Too weak to rise from bed),
"Mother, I have guessed,
  And I'm sure I'm not wrong
Why Jesus thought it best
  To keep me so long.
He did not think it right—
  Heaven's so far away—

To send me my sight
By any angel bright;
    He'll *bring* it, dear mother,
    Himself and no other,
  When He comes on Christmas Day."
  Nothing that we could say
  Might shake the fancy's sway;
Daily in force and might
    It waxed and grew,
  Until to our bitter grief,
  It became a fixed belief,
    And Jimmy said he *knew*
Jesus would come in the night
And bring him back his sight;
He would wake and see the light
    On Christmas Day.

We could not foretoken—
  Who, indeed, could deem?—
The Lord Himself had spoken;
  That He, the Supreme,
  In vision or in dream,
    In premonition dim,
His purposes had broken
    Darkly unto him—
    To our little Jim?

Christmas Eve found us,
  And Jimmy very ill;
The night closed around us,
  And we were watching still.
On the hour-hand crept,
And still he dozed or slept.

At last the slow twelfth stroke
From many a clock we heard,
And—ding-a-ding-a-ding—
The bells began to ring;
Jimmy's eyelids stirred,
But he never woke.

At length each patient sitter
In the cold so bitter,
Felt the night turn,
Felt the morning yearn;
Heard the cocks crow,
Heard the birds twitter,
Saw the light grow,
Making the taper
Faintlier burn,
Till the wall-paper
Each might discern.
Now grew a flush,
Faint in the East;
Then, with a rush,
The morning increased—
The night was outworn.
There, by the bed,
We whispered low, and said,—
"'Tis Christmas morn—
The Christ is born!"

Jim had been dozing;
But lo! while we spoke,
His great eyes unclosing,
Sudden he woke,

While o'er his features thin,
Bright from the soul within,
A glory broke.
He half rose in bed;
He stretched out his hands;—
"*He* is come," he said;
"Knocking, he stands.
Hark! don't you hear?
Louder than before—
Mother, mother dear,
Open the door.
He comes with footstep light—
He is bending over me;
He says, 'Receive thy sight'—
Mother, I CAN SEE!"

His arms grew slack;
His smile grew dim!
Quietly he sank back.
Farewell to Jim!
Kiss the tranquil brow;
Seal the eyes fast;
No more darkness now—
Jim can see at last!

Going into the House:

OR, THE LITTLE CRUTCH.

TAKE it, and pay what's due;
  Take all but the walls and floor:
I'd no one to leave it to,
  For my children are gone before.
You may carry off bed and chair,
  Whatever your hands can clutch;
But oh! for the Lord's sake spare,
  Spare me the little crutch.

Ah yes! it was just your joke!
  It wouldn't have sold for much—
So old, and the handle broke,
  My poor little hunchback's crutch.
I must have something to kiss,
  To quiet my aching breast;
As long as He leaves me this,
  I'll say that the Lord knows best.

But oh! He has tried me sore!
  I'm old and well-nigh blind;
Seven children I bore,
  And none of them's left behind.
Seven children I had,
  And six were sturdy and tall,
And one was a hunchback lad—
  And the Lord has taken all.

Hard have I wrought and fared—
  The neighbours can prove it true;
As long as my sight was spared,
  I knitted the night half through.
A little would do for me—
  It was only my chair and bed;
It was only an ounce of tea,
  A twopenny loaf of bread.

Oh, don't you hurry and scold!
  You must let me have my cry;
I am old, sir, very old,
  And I thought ere this to die.
I hoped that my time would come
  To sleep with the quiet dead,
Or ever I touched a crumb
  Of the shameful workhouse bread.

I've sat for a day and night,
  When money was bad to earn,
With never a sup nor bite,
  And scarcely a stick to burn.
But I thought, "It will soon be o'er;
  It cannot be long," I said—
And now, when I'm past fourscore,
  To ask for the workhouse bread!

I've managed, and pinched, and wrought—
  Past eighty, and well-nigh blind—
But I've paid for the things I've bought,
  And when was the rent behind?

Of decent folks I came,
  I've ever held up my head,
And oh! the shame, the shame,
  To eat of the workhouse bread.

There, take whatever you find—
  I couldn't have kept it long!—
But I know that the Lord is kind,
  And nothing He does is wrong.
I'm going this afternoon,
  To the House that's square and big;
I shall move to a small one soon—
  A house that the spade shall dig.

So take it, and pay what's due,
  And leave me a naked floor;
I'd none to bequeath it to,
  For my children are gone before.
Carry it off in your cart,
  Whatever your hands can clutch,
For the Lord has moved your heart
  To leave me the little crutch.

Seven children I've had,
  And six were sturdy and tall,
And one was a hunchback lad,
  And he was the pet of all.
The others could shift and fight—
  They were healthy and stout of limb;
But my poor little hunchback mite—
  His mother was all to him.

They are all of them dead and gone:
  There was David, and Jane, and Grace,
There was Willy, and Dick, and John—
  I can hardly recall a face.
But the one that was weak and ill,
  The poor little hunchback mite,
He lives in my heart, sir, still—
  He never has left me quite.

For oft when the nights are cold—
  Too bitter to go to bed—
I sit in the chair and hold
  The dear little crutch instead.
And, "Charlie," I say, "I'm sad,
  I'm lonesome and cold, my dear;
Won't you come from your grave, my lad,
  And sit with your mother here?"

I never have long to wait,
  For there, in the gusts that blow,
Is the swing of the wicket-gate,
  The sharp little voice I know;
And my heart will flutter and jump,
  And beautiful tears run o'er,
As—clump, clump, clump,—
  His crutch goes over the floor.

He sits on the hearth-stone there,
  And lays his head in my lap,
And I finger his curly hair,
  My own little loving chap.

And he talks to me blithe and light,
  Of his book and his childish play,
Till we feel the turn of the night,
  And he has to limp away.

And whenever the Trump is blown,
  And I rise from my workhouse grave,
To stand at the great white Throne,
  With them that the Lord shall save,
Not pale, as he was, and thin,
  But healthy, and tall, and straight,
Impatient to lead me in,
  He'll stand at the golden gate.

He'll stand at the gate, my dear!
  And laugh as he lets me through:
And he'll whisper, "It's lovely here,
  But, Mammy, I've wanted you."
And the blest will wonder much
  (He being so tall and strong)
When I hand to my boy the crutch
  I've kept for him all along.

So, when we have laughed and cried,
  And gazed in each other's face,
We shall wander, side by side,
  Through the beautiful, happy place.
And, though he won't need it then,
  Grown straight in the lovely climes,
He'll shoulder his crutch again,
  For sake of the dear old times.

And oh! in the days that flow,
  So peaceful and warm up there,
With never a stitch to sew,
  And victuals to eat and spare,
He'll feign that he limps a touch,
  To mind us of days of yore,
And his mother will hear his crutch
  Ring clear on the golden floor.

Exit Tommy.

"TOMMY must leave us to-night," we said,
Moving so softly about his bed.
Though seven sweet years he had borne our name,
His Father above had the better claim.

His poor little curls had been shorn away,
And his tiny face was old and grey;
Cold was his hand and moist his brow,
And his voice was only a whisper now.

Tommy lay there with his great round eyes,
And we, the watchers, were old and wise,
But a deepening light in those eyes we saw,
That touched our grief with a tender awe.

A message had come from the King of kings—
We heard the sound of the angel's wings,
We caught faint whispers and glimmerings dim,
But the words and the touch were for only him.

Much had we pondered, and probed, and read,
Had questioned the living, invoked the dead;
"What is Death's secret?" had cried—while he,
The child of seven, went forth to see.

We might follow him down to the awful shore,
Be drenched and stunned with the spray and roar,
But we must linger, with wavings fond,
While he would sail to the land beyond.

We felt that the angel who held his hand
And led him down to the misty strand,
Was telling him now, in whispers low,
What sights he would see, and whither go.

But hush! the voice from the little bed,
And the watchful mother bent her head.
"Mammy, I know that I'm soon to die,
And I want to wish them all good-bye.

"I shouldn't like anything here to say,
'He didn't shake hands when he went away;
He was glad to be off to his harp and wings
And couldn't remember his poor old things.'

"In Heaven I never should feel content
If I hadn't been kind before I went;
So let me take leave of them, great and small,
Animals, people, and toys, and all."

So the word went forth, and in no great while
The servants entered in solemn file,
The stout old cook and the housemaid Rose,
And the aproned boy with his smutted nose.

Then each of the women, with streaming cheek,
Bent over and kissed him and could not speak;
But he said that they must not grieve and cry
For they'd meet again in the happy sky.

'Twas longer and harder to deal with Jim—
The child grew grave as he looked at him,
For he thought to himself, "He bets and swears,
And I hardly believe that he says his prayers."

"Oh, Jim, dear Jim, if you do such things
You'll never be dressed in a harp and wings."
He talked to the boy as a father should,
And begged him hard to be grave and good.

The lad lounged out with a brazen air
And whistled derisively down the stair,
But they found him hid in the hole for coal,
Sobbing and praying in grief of soul.

Old Rover came next, sedate and good,
And gazed at his master and understood.
Then up we carried, in order due,
Maria, the cat, and her kittens two.

Proud purred the mother, and arched her back,
And vaunted her kittens, one white, one black;
And the sweet white kitten was good and still,
But the black one played with his nightgown's frill.

He stroked them all with his poor weak hand,
But he felt that they could not understand.
He smiled, however, and was not vext,
And bade us bring him the rabbit next.

He welcomed Punch with a loving smile,
And hugged him close in his arms awhile,
And we knew (for the dear child's eyes grew dim)
How grievous it was to part with him.

His mother he bade, with tearful cheek,
Give Punch his carrot three days a week,
With lettuce-leaves on a cautious plan,
And only just moisten his daily bran.

Then next we brought to him, one by one,
His drum and his trumpet, his sword and gun;
And we lifted up for his fondling hand
His good grey steed on the rocking-stand.

Then close to his feet we placed a tray,
And we set his armies in array;
And his eyes were bright with fire and dew
As we propped him up for his last review.

His ark came next, and pair by pair
Passed beasts of the earth and fowls of the air;
He kissed good Japhet, and Ham, and Shem,
And waved his hands to the rest of them.

But we saw that his eyes had lost their fire,
And his dear little voice begun to tire;
He lay quite still for a little while,
With eyes half-closed and a peaceful smile.

Then, "Mammy," he said, and never stirred,
And his mother bent for the whispered word;
"Give him his carrot each second day,"
Our Tommy murmured, and passed away.

The Gift of the Bells.

HARK to the chimes! through the snowflakes driven,
  They have clanged in gusts since the early morn,
"Lo, unto us a Child is given!
  Lo, unto us a Son is born."
Oh! as you taste of the season's cheer,
  Or talk to your friend of the olden times,
There is never a sound so good to hear
  As the swell and ebb of the Christmas chimes!

But *he* was a poor little homeless boy,
  With hardly a rag to cover a limb,
And the swinging bells, with their clang of joy,
  Had little enough to do with *him*.
He bent his head to the hurtling blast,
  He staggered along through the drifts of snow;
The clouds were rolling to Westward past;
  What should he do? Where should he go?

There is hardly a star in the glowering sky;
  The mists have swallowed the ghost-like land;
He turns him round with a start and cry—
  Something is touching his poor cold hand.
Is it a ghost? Well, no—not that—
  Two soft eyes shine through the gloom and fog;
He feels a head that is good to pat:
  "We're brothers," says Joe, "you poor lost dog."

Sad are their prospects—sad indeed—
  Never had earth such a friendless pair;
Only on this they are well agreed—
  Their fortunes, whatever they be, to share.
Forward they go, and a little while
  Each gathers heart from the other's sight;
But the road winds onward, mile on mile,
  And deeper and colder grows the night.

"Doggy," says Joe, "I'm tired—are you?"
  "Indeed, I am," say the tail and eyes.
"Doggy," says Joe, I'm hungry too;"
  "I'm famishing, Joe," the dog replies.
"Doggy," says Joe, "I can do no more,"
  And there, together for comfort curl'd,
They sink and lie at a rich man's door,
  Two famishing things in a feasting world.

* * * * *

The farmer sat in his easy-chair—
  There were comfort and affluence all around;
But he could not care for the jovial fare,
  And the Christmas bells had a mocking sound.
His own dear lad from his heart was riven—
  Why did the bells ring on in scorn,
"Lo, unto us a Child is given,
  Lo, unto us a Son is born?"

His wife bent over and kissed his brow,
  She placed her hand in his own to rest;
"Father, our darling is happy now—
  Cannot you say that the Lord knows best?"

He gazed at the chair where the boy had sat;
"Mother," he sobbed, "we are all alone!"
Hark! from the night what sound was that?
Again it comes—'tis a feeble moan.

They carried him in, all cold and white;
They made him sit in the dead boy's seat;
And there in the glow and the ruddy light,
They wrapped his limbs, and they chafed his feet.
And soon he opened his eyes and smiled,
And ate the food that they vied to bear;
"How kind you are," said the happy child,
"But Doggy, you know, must have his share."

"Dear child," they said, "you shall be our own,
In place of the lad that has gone before;
And our home no more shall be sad and lone,
Our hearts shall be empty and cold no more."
Hark to the chimes! through the snowflakes driven,
They ring—no more with a sound of scorn—
"Lo, unto us a Child is given,
Lo, unto us a Son is born!"

LIMERICK CITY LIBRARY
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Town Flowers.

GO, traverse some dreary quarter,
The home of us toiling folk—
A desert of brick and mortar,
'Neath skies of unlifting smoke:
Can we hope in that sullen dun light?
Can we breathe in that stagnant air?
Is there ever a ray of sunlight?
Ah, yes, there are children there.

There, under the factory shadows,
There, out in the squalid street,
As gay as in cowslip-meadows,
Run pattering, dancing feet;
And the jubilant laughter pealing
From spirits that know not care
Is a Gospel of hope and healing
To souls that would else despair.

Thank God! in these weary places,
For blossoming dreams and joys;
For the fair, unfurrowed faces
Of blithe little girls and boys;
For the pure and the saving leaven
Of innocent smiles and tears;
And the air that from childhood's heaven
Blows over our sinful years.

Oh, deep beyond gauge or guessing,
In lives that are coarse and low,
Are the grace and the tender blessing
The hands of a child bestow!
They consecrate every trial,
They lighten the labour sore,
And they teach us that self-denial
Is noblest of human lore.

All day we are thrusting, wrestling,
Each eager to grasp and get;
At evening the child comes nestling,
Our helpless and pleading pet;
And the cynical lore of living
Must melt in a nobler creed;
Not getting, we feel, but giving
Is blessing and gain indeed.

No drunkard, or rogue, or scorner
So hard and so all defiled
But keeps in his heart some corner
Still soft to a little child.
And, nursing his pet of seven,
And stroking his shining hair,
He is yet within touch of Heaven,
And kin to the Father there.

A City Courtship.

THE proper place for courting,
By the story-books' reporting,
Is some lane or meadow pathway out of sight of town;
With the sweetness blowing over
From the fields of beans and clover,
And the skylark dropping nestward as the sun goes down.

But I've met my little Sally
At the mouth of Dawson's alley,
And we've walked along together towards the dome of Paul's
'Mid the jostling crowd that passes
'Neath the flaring lamps and gases,
And the shouting of the drivers and the newsboys' calls.

And the lily-of-the-valley
That I gave my little Sally
Was the faded penny bouquet that a flower-girl sells.
She has never seen one growing,
As it's easy to be showing,
For their birthplace is the dreamland that's beyond Bow Bells.

Oh, it pains me in our walking,
All the oaths and shameful talking,
And the folks that brush her passing, and the glances bold;
But though evil things may touch her,
They can never hurt or smutch her,
And she turns the dirt to sweetness, as a flower the mould.

It is not in country places,
'Mid the fields and simple faces,
Out of sight and sound of evil, that a pure heart grows;
It is here in London City,
In the sin and shame and pity,
For the pure heart draws its pureness from the wrong it knows.

When my Sally's sweetness found me
I was like the clods around me,
I was coarse and low and selfish as the beast that dies;
But her grace began to win me,
And my heart was changed within me,
And I learned to pray from looking in my darling's eyes.

Christ in the City.

GOD had come to His earth to bless it,
Wrapt in a clod of the clay of men;—
Where was the human heart to guess it,
Smitten with wonder and worship then?
Angels must carol it, stars must shine it,
Breezes must waft it, and waves must roll;
Might no spirit of man divine it?
Only one marvelling mother's soul.

Christ was born!—the eternal ages
Treasure like that had none to keep;
Christ was born!—and of swains and sages
Never a sleeper turned in sleep.
Dreams, perchance, through their slumbers drifted,
But dreams of lucre or dreams of love—
Dreams of aught but the dark veil lifted,
Angels bending the stall above.

Years have melted, as snowflakes soundless
Falling by night in a river wide;
Twenty centuries swell the boundless
Mystical, merging, ghostly tide.
Empires have risen—o'er empires perished
Booms the bittern, or scores the plough;
The seed, downtrod, and by no man cherished,
Hath leaves for the health of the nations now.

He, thrust forth to the stall and manger,
  Son of the carpenter, Nazarene,
Friend of publicans, lifelong stranger,
  Yielding His spirit the thieves between—
Lo! His cross on our brow is printed;
  It fashions the shrines wherein we pray;
But what if the snow by His feet were dinted—
  Christ's come back to His earth to-day?

Lo, He is come! yea, come! behold Him,
  One of the suffering millions here;
Vulgar and worn are the weeds that fold Him,
  Seamed is His face with toil and tear.
Token is none the Christ to show me—
  Hands nail-printed, or haloed brow;
"Once," He murmurs, "they did not know Me—
  Blood-bought souls, will ye know Me now?"

Hark! with a jubilant crash and golden
  Break the bells into Christmas peals;
Blent with the worshippers, unbeholden,
  Into the Church that lone One steals.
Pulpit and arch and pillars hoary
  Emblem and quaint device adorn;
Royally scrolled is the Christmas story,
  "Lo, unto us a Child is born."

Now with a resonant long vibration
  Swells the organ, and, robed in white,
Choristers chant with exultation
  The song of the shepherds on Christmas night.

"Soon," saith the preacher, "is Christ's returning,
  Throned in Majesty, robed in cloud!"
Doth any take heed of the wistful yearning
  Of one lone Stranger amid the crowd?

Clattering boots and tongues a-going,
  The workhouse-children file down the street,
The tidings of joy in each young face glowing—
  Once of pudding and twice of meat.
Eyes that with lingering gaze behold them
  Soften, yet deepen, their Christmas glee;
Words come back that their mothers told them—
  "Suffer the children to come to me."

Crouched in a lethargy dull and weary,
  Spreading out suppliant trembling palms,
Motionless, mute, 'mid the passers cheery,
  A blind man sits by tbe road for alms.
One and no more in that dense-lived city,
  Stoppeth a moment to gaze and mark;
His look is a look of love and pity—
  The blind man's soul is no longer dark.

Over a bed is a mourner kneeling,
  Kissing a heedless brow and cheek,
Touching a heart that hath no more feeling,
  Praying a sealèd lip to speak;
Lo, a hand that her own is pressing
  Wakens no terror and no surprise;
Loosed at length are the founts of blessing,
  A star shines out in the inky skies.

Fadeth the glow where the sun hath sunken;
  Gin-palace doors stand open wide;
Bestial revel and uproar drunken
  Rise from the roystering crew inside.
Glare the mirrors and flare the glasses—
  Enter—the palace hath royal cheer;
"What shall it be, lads?"—chink the glasses,
  Christmas cometh but once a year.

Palsied age against boyhood crushes;
  Women are there, with glances bold,
Piteous women, with painted blushes
  And laughter curdling the heart-blood cold.
Lo, with a sorrowful gaze and tender,
  Standeth that Onein the din and glare;
Magdalen, flaunting her tawdry splendour,
  Thinks of her mother, and breathes a prayer.

* * * *

Hearken, O men! rejoicers, mourners,
  Toilers and triflers, and men of fame,
Ye that lurk in the darksome corners,
  Maidens fenced from a breath of shame;
CHRIST is walking the throngèd city,
  High-street and square and reeking lane,
Yearning, pleading, with eyes of pity—
  Must it be written, "And still in vain?"

In the Churchyard.

WE'LL rest us on yonder bench—
  It's a long two mile we've trod,
And I'm getting in years, my wench,
  Though I keep my health, thank God!
I like to hear the chimes,
  And the rooks in the great elm tree;
They mind me of olden times,
  And they well-nigh talk to me.

The neighbour folks mean kind,
  But the days are days of change;
I've drifted a bit behind,
  And I'm growing lone and strange.
It's just a word and a nod,
  And with that the greeting ends;
But here, on this green old sod,
  I feel I'm among my friends.

I wander from stone to stone—
  Each stone is a kindly face;
For all that I've loved and known
  Have moved to this quiet place;
And the old grief wets my eyes,
  And I laugh at the brave old jest,
With my hearty friend who lies
  With the mound above his breast.

Last week, in the market square,
I stopped, for I seemed to find,
In the strange new faces there,
Just one that I called to mind;
I beckoned the lassie near—
She opened her eyes and smiled;
"She's buried, sir, forty year,
And I am her daughter's child!"

Ay, ay! wherever I roam,
I'm lonely and lost and queer:
I never feel right at home,
Except with the tombstones here;
But the day is well nigh sped,
And the night draws on apace;
And I'm fain to lay my head
On the turf of this friendly place.

I've wrought full hard in my day—
As the poor old squire could tell;
Some look to naught but the pay—
I looked to the work as well.
I'm not a scholar like you—
I never could read or write—
But, whatever I found to do,
I did it with main and might.

That bit of a text I knew—
No other beside, I doubt—
And I've laboured my whole life through,
To follow that one text out;

For I hold God cannot abide
That a man should scamp or shirk,
And feels a sort of a pride
In a tidy job of work.

And on Sundays, there i' the pew,
While parson would pray or read,
And I did not know what to do,
But followed the gentry's lead,
I hoped that the Lord would see
My furrow was straight and fair,
And reckon it up to me
As a bit of a hymn or pray'r.

I've passed the allotted span—
Whenever I get my call,
You'll find me a spot if you can,
Along o' the old south wall.
No need, my wench, to cry,
For an old man's rest is sweet;
But don't forget where I lie—
I shall like to feel your feet.

The Parson's Comforter.

A PHOTOGRAPH FROM LIFE.

THE parson goes about his daily ways
  With all the parish troubles in his head,
And takes his Bible out, and reads and prays,
  Beside the sufferer's chair, the dying bed.

Whate'er the secret skeleton may be—
  Doubt, drink, or debt—that keeps within his lair,
When parson comes, the owner turns the key,
  And lets him out to "squeak and gibber" there.

It seems a possibility unguessed—
  Or little borne in mind, if haply known—
That he who cheers in trouble all the rest
  May now and then have troubles of his own.

Alas! God knows, he has his foe to fight,
  His closet-atomy, severe and grim;
All others claim his comfort as of right,
  But, hapless parson! who shall comfort *him?*

A friend he has to whom he may repair
  (Besides that One who carries all our grief),
And when his load is more than he can bear
  He seeks his comforter, and finds relief.

He finds a cottage, very poor and small,
  The meanest tenement where all are mean;
Yet decency and order mark it all:—
  The panes are bright, the step severely clean.

He lifts the latch—his comforter is there,
  Propt in the bed, where now for weeks she stays,
Or, haply, seated knitting in her chair,
  If this be one of those rare "better days."

A tiny woman, stunted, bent, and thin;
  Her features sharp with pain that always wakes;
The nimble hand she holds the needles in
  Is warped and wrenched by dire rheumatic aches.

Sometimes she gets a grateful change of pain,
  Sometimes for half a day she quits her bed;
And—lying, sitting, crawled to bed again—
  Always she knits: her needles are her bread.

Too well she knows what 'tis a meal to miss;
  Often the grate has not a coal of fire;
She has no hope of better things than this:
  The future darkens, suffering grows more dire.

Where will they take her, if betide it should
  Her stiffened hand the needles cannot ply?
Not to the workhouse—God is very good;
  He knows her weakness—He will let her die.

Sometimes, but seldom, neighbours hear her moan,
  Wrung by some sudden stress of fiercer pain;
Often they hear her pray, but none has known,
  No single soul has heard her lips complain.

The parson enters, and a gracious smile
  Over the poor pinched features brightly grows;
She lets the needles rest a little while;
  "You're kindly welcome, sir!"—ah! that he knows·

He takes the Book, and opens at the place—
  No need to ask her which her favourite psalm;
And, as he reads, upon her tortured face
  There comes a holy rapture, deep and calm.

She murmurs softly with him as he reads
  (She can repeat the Psalter through at will):
"He feeds me in green pastures, and He leads,
  He leads me forth beside the waters still.

"Yea, through death's shadowy valley though I tread,
  I will not fear, for Thou dost show the way;
Thy holy oil is poured upon my head,
  Thy loving-kindness follows me for aye."

The reading's done, and now the prayer is said;
  He bids farewell, and leaves her to her pain;
But grace and blessing on his soul are shed—
  He goes forth comforted and strong again.

He takes his way, on divers errands bound,
  Abler to plead, and warn, and comfort woes;
That is the darkest house on all his round,
  And yet, be sure, the happiest house he knows.

Will it not ease, poor soul, thy restless bed,
  And make thee more content, if that can be,
To know that from thy suffering balm is shed,
  That comforts him who comes to comfort thee?

A Regular Bad 'Un.

YES, Sammy's a sad 'un,
  A radical he;
A regular bad 'un,
  As ever you see.
His riot and tearing
  And banging about
Is really past bearing—
  It's wearing me out.
And rambling and roaming,
  And larks in the lane—
Your cleaning and combing
  Is labour in vain.
And as for his pinner—
  It's ruin, I vow;
Clean on for his dinner—
  And look at it now!
And scrubbing the tiles, ma'am,
  And dusting the things—
It ain't worth your whiles, ma'am,
  For mud as he brings.
And growing, and poking
  His toes through his shoes!
Without any joking
  We ought to be Jews.
Whatever's unlawful—
  Beer, blacking, or ink—
I tell you it's awful
  The things as he'll drink.

Then lost, and run over,
And choking, and fights—
My life ain't no clover
A-getting such frights.
It's mischief and shindy
Week, Sunday and all—
That hole in the windy
Was him and his ball.
And then there's his dad, ma'am,
A-taking his part,
And spoiling the lad, ma'am,
With toffee and tart.
No use now—not any—
A-climbing my knees!
And axing a penny!
Hear that, if you please!
You're allus a-stuffin' *
And spoiling your tea;
No penny, you ruffin,
No penny from me.
It's a rod I'll be buying—
I'm sober, I am;—
I've set him off crying!
Ah, mother's pet lamb!
Look here now! what's this, lad?
Then give me a kiss, lad—
My own little Sam!
A change in the house, ma'am—
A sad 'un—you'll find;

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* This *g* is silent throughout, but I have not attempted exact phoneticism—F. L.

All still as a mouse, ma'am;
I'll draw up the blind.
No, no! I ain't fretting—
He doeth all well!
But, as for forgetting—
Ah, mothers can tell!
Yes, these is my riches,
My jewels and gold—
The jacket and breeches
I made him of old.
I brush 'em and air 'em
And lay 'em out right,
As though he would wear 'em,
O' Saturday night.
But no little Sammy
Comes running anon,
A-calling out, "Mammy,
Just look at 'em on!"
When the housework is ending,
Tow'rds three of the clock,
I still sit a-mending
Some little grey sock.
And sometimes—through thirsting
And longing so sore—
I *hear* him come bursting
And banging the door,
And jump up to hold him
And feed on his smiles—
Oh, how could I scold him
For soiling the tiles!

All the gold ever minted
  I'd gladly give o'er
To see his foot printed
  In mud on the floor.
There's the bed where I laid him,
  My precious, at night,
And the quilt as I made him,
  So cosy and light.
And now as he's lying
  Down under the mould,
I'm waking and crying
  A-thinking he's cold.
I know as it's blindness—
  Rebellious I am;
The Shepherd in kindness
  Has folded His lamb;
But oh! how I miss him,
And hunger to kiss him,
  My own little Sam!

A One-Day Queen.

ONE morn in every summertide
The sparrows' early twitterings chide
    Miss Polly's lateness;
She sighs and turns, and wakes at last
To sense of rapture deep and vast,
    And sudden greatness.

With conscious, coy, yet stately air,
She comes (two feet on every stair),
    A radiant Polly;
And, marching through the breakfast-room,
The birthday salvoes round her boom
    In straggling volley.

To her, the day's unchallenged queen,
Each subject, be he great or mean,
    Due tribute renders;
She cuts the string, unfurls the wraps,
And bares, 'mid deep drawn "Oh's" and claps,
    Successive splendours.

What's done or set aside to-day
Depends, it hardly boots to say,
    On Polly's high word;
Who speaks of copies, scales or sums—
That malapert thenceforth becomes
    A scoff and byword.

What shall the festal pudding be?
It hangs on Polly's sole decree—
Cook waits direction;
Her Highness speaks the word of power,
And naught in raisins, eggs, or flour
Can urge objection.

Through all the grovelling year beside
A fork and spoon (to humble pride)
Lift meat or bone up;
One day of rich and throbbing life
She wields, in awful joy, a knife—
Divinely grown up.

To her pertains that royal round
The birthday cake, its summit crowned
With brave devices;
She sits, in queenly state, aloof,
And deals, *sans* comment or reproof,
Capricious slices.

One day she wears her birthday-crown,
Then, all unsceptred, topples down
To common earth-day;
Three hundred days and sixty-four
Must crawl their sordid course before
Another birthday.

Saturday Night.

THE little ones—scrubbed from top to toe—
Each fresh as a pin,
Are just tucked in,
And dinting the bolster three a-row.
The baby (where did he get that cough?)
Stares solemnly round, and won't go off;
Grandmother still, with her tidying face,
Hovers about from place to place;
While Johnny and May, by Father's rule,
Look over their text for to-morrow's school.

The tick of the clock comes slow and dull;
There deepens apace,
With healing grace,
A sense of completion, order, lull.
Father, weary enough, sits there,
Propping his arms on the elbow-chair,
Conscious ever, with vague content,
Of the fresh, damp, pungent Saturday scent,
And drinking deep into soul and chest
The air of freedom and space and rest.

Oh, rare—when you wake with a start and shock,
And half uprise,
The sleep in your eyes,
And feel for the matches to see the clock—
The thought, "Why, it's Sunday! not to-day!—
I can wait for the light this once in a way.

No whistle this morning, harsh and short,
With a threat of fines in its rasping snort!"
And so in the pillows to burrow deep
For two more exquisite hours of sleep!

And rare, too, after a week of dirt,
The ooze of oil,
And the sweat of toil,
To stretch your hand for your spotless shirt;
To button a collar round your throat,
And gloat on the gloss of a broad-cloth coat;
To saunter here, and dally there,
In the smokeless, leisurely Sunday air;
And to drink your tea (three cups to-day)
In a gracious, spacious, epicure way.

And rare to gather the gloves and books,
And summon a mite
To left and right,
With a glance of pride at your wife's good looks;
To sit in the pew—no more a "hand,"
But a soul that can listen and understand;
To feel that the smoke rolls off the blue,
And a Father's face looks smiling through,
While a voice on the heart falls kind and blest,
"Come, and behold I will give you rest!"

An Ex-Tempore Prayer.

PUTTING up my glasses,
What did I behold?
Two tiny lasses
Kneeling on the mould;
Hair flowing brightly—
Curls of brown hair—
Eyelids shut tightly,
And hands clasped in pray'r.

Why were they praying
In the garden there?
What were they saying?—
I must hear the pray'r.
So, with sly motion,
As puss towards a bird,
I stole on their devotion,
And not a curl stirred.

Then I listened, hidden:
"Oh, Lord," Rosie said,
"You know that we're forbidden
To step on the bed.
Of course I didn't mean it,
But what will Mother think?
O Lord, *have* you seen it?
I've broke the sweet pink.

"Oh, it is so frightful
To hurt mother's flowers!
No one has such spiteful
Hard hearts as ours.
Keep us, do, in pity
From dreadful sins like these!
"Amen," said Kitty,
And jumped from her knees.

Ten minutes after,
What did I hear?
Little shrieks and laughter
Ringing out clear;
Three saucy noses
And three shiny heads
Playing "Ring o' Roses"
Right through the beds!

In Dialect.

(The Common Speech of the Great Towns of the Midlands.)

Sent Back by the Angels.

"A LITTLE bit queer"—my Mary!
"Her roof not quite in repair!"
And it's *that*, you think, with a nod and wink,
As you sit in my easy chair!
Drop it, I say, old feller—
Drop it, I tell you, do,
Or language, I doubt, I shall soon let out
I'd rather not use to you.

Shake hands, and I ax your pardon—
'Twas chaffing I knowed you were;
But a hint or a slur or a joke on *her*
Is a thing as I can't abear.
And what if she has her fancies?
Why, so has us all, old chap;
Not many's the roof as is reg'lar proof,
If a bit of a whim's a gap.

She's up to the nines, my Mary;
Lord bless her, she keeps us right!
It's up with her gown and the house scrubbed down
As certain as Friday night.
Is it rheumatiz, cough, lumbager?
Is anything queer inside?
She'll physic you up with a sup in a cup
As tickles the doctor's pride.

Is it mending of socks or trousers,
Or starching your best cravat?
Is it letting alone the joint with the bone,
And choosing the goose that's fat?
She hasn't her likes, my Mary—
And never put out nor riled;
She hasn't a fad, and she never had—
Excepting about the child.

Six years we was wed, and over,
And never a cradle got—
And nowheres, I swear, a more dotinger pair
On baby and tiny tot;
So when of a winter morning
At last we was 'ma and dad,
No Royal Princess had the welcome, I guess,
As our little stranger had.

Lord, wasn't she Christmas sunshine
To gladden the childless place!
She was nothing in size, with tremenjous eyes,
And the oldest-fashioned face.
She'd stare at the folks that knowing,
Laid over the nurse's knee,
As I'd laugh, and I'd say, in a joking way,
"She's older nor you nor me."

And wasn't she nuts to Mary!
Just picter her, them as can,
A-doing her best with her mother's breast
For Alexandrina Ann!

It was so as we'd named the baby,
By way of a start in life,
From parties, I knew, as could help her through—
The Queen and my uncle's wife.

And wasn't the baby fêted!
She lay in her bassinet
With muslin and lace on her tiny face,
As ever growed smaller yet.
But it wasn't in lace nor coral
To bribe her to linger here;
I looks in her eyes, and "She's off," I sighs,
"She's off to her proper sp'ere."

Her treasures was all around her,
But she was too wise and grave
For the pug on the shelf and, as big as herself,
The doll as her grand'ma gave.
She wanted the stars for playthings,
Our wonderful six-weeks' guest;
So, with one little sigh, she closed her eye
And woke on an angel's breast.

And how did the missus take it?
Most terrible calm and mild;
With a face a'most like a bloodless ghost,
She covered the sleeping child.
There was me, like a six-foot babby,
A-blubbering long and loud.
While she sat there in the rocking-chair,
A-sewing the little shroud.

I couldn't abide to see it—
The look in her tearless eye;
I touches her so, and I whispers low,
"My darlingest, can't you cry?"
She gave me a smile for answer,
Then over her work she bowed,
And all through the night her needle bright
Went sewing the little shroud.

In the grey of the winter morning,
The sun like a ball of flame,
Sent up like a toy by a whistling boy,
The mite of a coffin came.
He reckoned it only a plaything—
A drum or a horse-and-cart—
The box that had space, O Father of Grace,
To bury a mother's heart!

Great God, such a shaller coffin,
And yet so awful deep!
I placed it there by the poor wife's chair,
And I thinks, "At last she'll weep."
But she rose with never a murmur,
As calm as a spectre thin,
And—waxy and cold and so light to hold—
She places the baby in.

Then, moving with noiseless footfall,
She reaches from box and shelf
The little 'un's mug, and the china pug,
And the doll that was big as herself.

Then—God! it was dread to watch her—
All white in her crape-black gown,
With her own cold hands, my Mary stands,
And fastens the coffin down.

I carried the plaything coffin,
Tucked under my arm just so;
And she stood there at the head of the stair,
And quietly watched us go.
So parson he comes in his nightgown,
And says that as grass is man;
And earth had trust of the pinch of dust
That was Alexandrina Ann.

I was trying to guess the riddle
I never could answer pat—
What the Wisdom and Love as is planning above
Could mean by a life like that;
And I'd got my foot on the doorstep,
When, scaring my mournful dream,
Shrill, wild and clear, there tore on my ear
The sound of a maniac* scream.

The scream of a raving maniac,
But, Father of death and life!
I listened and knew, the madness through,
The voice of my childless wife.
One moment I clutched and staggered,
Then down on my bended knee,
And up to the sky my wrestling cry
Went up for my wife and me.

---

* Pronounce Mān-yac.

I went to her room and found her;
She sat on the floor, poor soul!
Two burning streaks on her death-pale cheeks,
And eyes that were gleeds of coal.
And now she would shriek and shudder,
And now she would laugh aloud,
And now for awhile, with an awful smile,
She'd sew at a little shroud.

Dear Lord! through the day and darkness,
Dear Lord! through the endless night,
I sat at her side, while she shrieked and cried,
And I thought it would ne'er be light.
And still, through the blackness, thronging
With shapes that was dread to see,
My shuddering cry to the God on high
Went up for my girl and me.

At last through the winder, morning
Came glimmering cold and pale;
And faint, but clear, to my straining ear
Was carried a feeble wail.
I went to the door in wonder,
And there, in the dawning day,
All swaddled and bound in a bundle round,
A sweet little baby lay.

It lay on the frosty doorstep,
A peart little two months' child;
Dumfounded and slow, I raised it so,
And it looked in my face and smiled.

And so, as I kissed and loved it,
I grajuly growed aware
As the Father in bliss had sent us this,
The answer to wrestling pray'r.

In wonder and joy and worship,
With tears that were soft and blest,
I carried the mite, and, still and light,
I laid it on Mary's breast.
I didn't know how she'd take it,
So goes on an artful tack:
"The little 'un cried for her mother's side,
And the angels has sent her back!"

My God! I shall ne'er forget it,
Though spared for a hundred years—
The soft delight on her features white,
The rush of her blissful tears.
The eyes that was hard and vacant
Grew wonderful sweet and mild,
As she cries, "Come rest on your mammy's breast,
My own little angel child!"

And so from that hour my darling
Grew happy and strong and well;
And the joy that I felt as to God I knelt
Is what I can noways tell.
There's parties as sneers and tells you
There's nothing but clouds up there;
I answers 'em so, "There's a God, I *know*,
And a Father that heareth pray'r."

And what if my Mary fancies
The babe is a child of light—
Our own little dear sent back to us here!—
And mayn't she be somewheres right?
Here, Mary, my darling, Mary!
A friend has come into town;
Don't mind for her nose nor changing her clo'es,
But bring us the angel down.

Sammy:

A VERY SORROWFUL BALLAD ABOUT HIM AND HIS CART.

THAT poor little go-cart yonder,
So cranky, and mean, and old—
I tell you, I wouldn't swop it
For double its weight in gold.
It's a bit of my own contriving,
And far from a clever job;
They'd sell you one twice as handsome
For somewheres about five-bob.
But—laugh if you like, old feller!
I know as it do seem queer—
I've kep' that poor little go-cart
For many a weary year.
I've kep' it, sacred and holy,
When—Heaven forgive my sin!—
I've popped my boots and my blanket
For sake of the cursed gin.
And whenever I get the summons
To give up the key, and go
To jine my own little Sammy,
That's wanted me long, I know,
They'll find as I've left directions
The box shall be deep and wide
That, close to my heart, that poor little cart
May tenderly rest inside.

He was our little kid, was Sammy—
  The first and the last we had;
And only the Lord knows rightly
  The way as we loved that lad.
There was parties as kep' their dog-cart,
  And counted us naught but skim,
Whose youngsters hadn't, I tell you,
  Such wittles nor togs as him.
With new-laid eggs for his breakfast,
  And jam that thick on his bread—
Why, fighting-cocks wasn't in it,
  Regarding the way he fed.
His hair in tight little ringlets,
  And dressed in his sailor-suit,
His trousers flapping so knowing
  A-top of his lace-up boot,
And the name of his ship, the "JINGO,"
  Wrote out on his cap so bold,
He was really a perfec' pictur'—
  Our stout little eight-year old.
A-trotting to church between us,
  And prattling in childish joy,
He was one in a crowd, and our hearts was proud
  Of our brave little sailor-boy.

But summat went wrong with Sammy—
  Quite slow-like the child fell off;
There was nothing as you could p'int to—
  He hadn't no pain nor cough;
But somehow he failed and faded—
  His feet, so merry and gay,
As danced like rain on the pavement,
  Got dragginger day by day.

And—he! such a chattering magpie!—
  He'd reggerler lost his tongue;
And, Lord! when his mother dressed him,
  How baggy his jacket hung!
The doctor he come to see him,
  And listened agen his chest,
And sent him bottles with caps on,
  And coloured his very best;
And he'd chicken and calf's-fut jelly,
  And beautiful black beef-tea,
And we took him down by the 'scursion,
  And got six hours at the sea;
And if melted gold could have helped him
  To even the smallest start,
The hat on my head, and the clothes on the bed,
  I'd have sold with a thankful heart.

It wasn't no use, God help us!
  He drooped and he pined away—
For all the world like the blackbird
  I brought him from town one day.
And, coming sometimes to meet me
  A bit of the way down street,
It hurted, to see how weary
  He crawled on his little feet.
And I thinks to myself one evening,
  "To pleasure his precious heart,
And keep him out in the sunshine,
  I'll make him a sort of cart—
A nice little bit of a go-cart,
  With wheels, and a handle too,
To drive his self out, God bless him!
  As poor little cripples do."

So, after my work hours nightly,
When Sammy was safe in bed,
I tinkered the toy together,
And painted it blue and red.
And I tell you I got my payment
When, out on the horse-road there,
I sees him ride in his pomp and pride
As grand as the great Lord Mayor.

You never see nothing like it—
The way as it pleased the kid;
More good than a score of bottles
One ride in the go-cart did.
His cheeks was as red as roses,
When—coming to get my meals—
He clattered along to meet me,
A-guiding the rum old wheels.
I was glad in my heart to see him—
I tell you my eyes would swim,
To think no hand but his daddy's
Had tinkered the fad for him.
And sometimes I'd cheer his mammy,
A-smoking my pipe at night,
And say as our fears and fancies
Was only a foolish fright.
"He's getting the roses back, 'ma,
He's growing quite strong and fain;
He'll soon be our jolly sailor
A-rolling to church again."
She'd answer, knitting her stocking,
"Yes, father, he'll soon be well;"
But I'd see as her smile died out in a while,
And often a tear-drop fell.

It wasn't a great while arter
As terrible times began;
I couldn't no ways remember
The likes on 'em, boy or man.
For sixteen weeks of the winter,
Save just for a turn or two,
I was loafing about the entry,
With nothing on earth to do.
And—Lord! in that cruel weather,
'Twas hard on the shivering souls!
It was sixpence for every scuttle—
A couple of fires—of coals.
'Twas a shilling a pound for bacon,
However you'd growl or beg;
'Twas twopence for every bloater,
'Twas twopence for every egg.
And whenever you went o' Fridays
Your few little things to get,
Dear heart! they were bad to look at,
The faces of folks you met.
And, running against your neighbours,
It cut like a knife to see
That all as they'd buy for the week's supply,
Was a loaf and an ounce of tea.

I'd never been much on drinking,
Save just of a Friday night;
And the wife was a rare good woman
For keeping us right and tight.
So—spite of the youngster's bottles
A-pumping us raythe dry—
We'd still in the good wife's stocking
A couple of pounds laid by.

Life isn't *all* beer and skittles—
I never was one to fuss,
And I knew as the shoe pinched others
More sharper a deal than us.
It was easy to knock off butter,
And do with your breakfast plain,
And say as there *was* a turning
To even the longest lane.
And, though me and the wife might often
Have plenty of room inside,
The little 'un lived in clover—
He'd never been once denied.
And still as the gloom got deeper,
We'd comfort ourselves and say,
"The darkest, a sight, of the hours of night
Is the hour before the day."

But daylight was long a-coming—
My God! it was hard to bear—
To look in the eyes that loved you
And feel there was hunger there!
To sit while the wife was scrubbing,
Or tidying up a bit,
And see how it tired and dragged her—
How often she'd have to sit!
God bless her! she never fretted,
She never complained nor cried,
But oft in her sleep she'd moan like,
A-turning from side to side.
I felt as my heart was breaking,
And, last, in my grief of soul,
I followed the chaps around me,
And fled to the flowing bowl.

I didn't know where to look to,
I couldn't abide to think,
And the last half-crown in the stocking
Would deaden my brain with drink.
I was laid in my bed, God help me!
I couldn't tell when nor how;
But all night through there was tears, I knew,
A-wetting my cheek and brow.

Old feller, from that day forrud,
To tip it you straight and square,
I booked first-class to perdition,
And terrible soon got there.
For welly a month together,
Spun reggerler off the reel,
I soaked myself through with sperrits,
And never had one good meal.
I'd have my fits of repentance,
And now and again I'd sign—
But it wasn't in pumps and pledges
To put out a fire like mine.
Why what's your buns and your ribbons
To seven devils within,
A-gnawring your very witals,
And yelling aloud for gin? *

* I hope I shall not be charged with any desire to throw cold water on the labour of the Temperance Societies—except in the friendliest sense possible. The case I am representing is not, unfortunately, by any means a wholly fictitious one. The temperance pledge has reclaimed many drunkards, but one is sorrowfully compelled to admit that in cases of confirmed dipsomania, any kind of voluntary renunciation of alcohol is wholly inefficacious.

Overcoat, chair, and blanket—
One after one they went,
To quiet the fiends within me,
As never would be content.
Till things they come to a crisis—
I finds myself laying here,
And feels like the duds just out of the suds,
Most terrible weak and queer.

Well, laying quite still and wacant,
And looking across the street,
The wife she comes to my bedside,
To bring me a bit to eat—
A cup of hot tea she'd made me,
Along with a slice of bread;—
But I waves them off in disgust, like,
A-turning away my head.
Not ten minutes arter, Sammy,
Comes dragging his go-cart—so;
Then mounts out there on the level,
And lastly perceeds to go.
But, Lord! he had failed that dreadful
He hardly could walk at all,
And his fastest pace on the go-cart
Was only a wobbly crawl.
I thinks to myself, quite weak-like,
"He'll never be hale and strong!"
And then I goes on to wonder
What kep' him away so long,
And last, I begins to whimper—
It cut me that deep to think
I never had known how ill he'd grown,
Along of the cursed drink.

But feeling that weak and helpless,
That desperate queer and bad,
I soon dropped into a doze, like,
Forgetting the thoughts I had.
But when I awoke, old feller,
I thought I was dreaming still,
For the house was full of the hodour
Of summat upon the grill;
And I hears, not very long arter,
The pop of a blessed cork,
The bustle of busy footsteps,
The clatter of knife and fork.
I rubs my eyes in amazement,
And doesn't know what to say,
When the wife comes up to the bedside
A-bearing a little tray—
A roll and a slice of butter
A bottle of sherry-wine,
And a chop as had dropped from heaven,
Its hodour was that divine.
She props me up with the piller,
The tray on my knee she claps,
While Sammy breaks out, and dances about,
The maddest of little chaps.

God bless him, my little Sammy,
And shew him a father's love,
Till, pardoned and fit for glory,
I clasp him again above!
I cried when his mother told me,
As if I must break my heart;—
To tempt his daddy with dainties,
He'd been and he'd sold his cart—

He'd sold it for two-and-a-tanner,
  He'd bought me the wine and chop,
He'd carried 'em home in triumph,
  But trembling, and fit to drop.
So that's the end of the story!—
  The terrible times passed o'er,
And slowly we growed to prosper,
  And stand as we stood afore.
And I learned in the matter of drinking,
  To lean on Another's strength,
And though I had many a back-fall,
  I conquered the fiend at length;
And as for the little go-cart—
  I reckon it's pretty plain
I spent my very fust savings
  In buying it back again.
But Sammy . . . he failed and faded . . .
  He's left me an empty heart! . . .
There, now you know why I prize it so,
  That poor little broken cart.

Joe's Bespeak.

A PANTALOON'S STORY.

THERE wasn't a place for gold nor pray'rs—
  We'd six big bobbies to keep 'em back—
They was nursin' each other in stalls and chairs,
  And the pit was a reg'lar sardine-pack.
A chap got dazed with the din and glare,
And the sea of faces ev'rywhere.
And now and agen a woman 'u'd shriek—
It was always so at Joe's Bespeak.
There was never a clown a patch on Joe—
I've played with the lot, and I hought to know.

Why, he'd more reppertee in them bandy shins
  Than parties I know in their bumptious brains;
He'd tip you one of his rummy grins,
  And you'd suffer from hawful hinternal pains;
Look in his face, and you'd laugh and cry;
Twig him wink, and you'd want to die;
'Ear him do the Little Pig's Squeak,
And bed was your place for the rest of the week.
There was never a clown a patch on Joe—
I've played with the lot, and I hought to know.

The 'ouse was one continooal roar—
  When he tumbled in for his third recall,
They rose, *on massy*, from roof to floor,
  And bellered like Bedlam, nobs and all.

The curtain fell, and they stopped to shout
And 'oller "Joe," till the lights was hout.
There was ninety pound, sir, silver and gold—
More nor we reckoned the 'ouse 'u'd 'old.
There was never a clown a patch on Joe—
I've played with the lot, and I hought to know.

Joe never stopped to reckon the blunt,
  Nor change his togs, nor nothin' o' that,
But he buttoned his long old coat in front,
  And hover his heyebrows jammed his 'at.
We'd counted on glasses—or fizz, may'ap,
For Joe was a hopen-'anded chap—
But through the 'ollerin' roughs houtside
I twigged him wriggle and dive and slide,
And I says to myself, I says, just so,
"I doubt there's summat amiss with Joe!"

I collared my 'at, and I follered him straight,
  And I see him stop at the door, and stand
(Old Mother Cobble's, at Number Height),
  And he pulled the bell with a shaky 'and.
The light of the lamp on the door fell slick,
And I watched his face turn white and sick;
But he never spoke as the woman said,
"Dead, sir—mother and child—just dead!"
Well, Joe went to 'em a year ago—
There was never a clown a patch on Joe.

Seth Baker.

STOW it, I say, for it's waste of breath;
  I know as you means it well;
But the eye sees clear when it's filmed with death,
  And the thing as I sees is Hell!
I know of the Blood for sinners shed,
  And the pardon full and free,
And the Grace that washes snow-white the red,
  But there ain't no Grace for me!

Stop! let me speak, for the time is short;
  You wasn't fetched here to spout.
I'm none of your Hallelujah sort:
  White chokers and me falls out.
But you ain't, not you, of the smug-faced crew,
  All Glory and white of eye;
I trust you, parson; by snakes, I do!
  So listen before I die.

I'm bound, I am, for the brimstone lake,
  With its horrible reek and stench;
For the worms as writhe and the flames as quake,
  And the thirst you can noways squench.
I don't make out as I likes the trip,
  But I tell you all the same,
I means to start with a good stiff lip,
  And a step as shows I'm game.

I'm game to the bottom—curse the cough!
  It saws me through and through—
And if ever my pals takes on to scoff,
  And say as I sent for you—
I fetched you away to jabber and pray,
  And show me the road to die—
"He was game to the bottom," just you say,
  And choke the fools with their lie.

I'm quiet—all right—I am, I swear;
  No, I won't let out no more.
Just give me a pull of the brandy there—
  Is there nobody nigh the door?
Are you sure as there's never a listening sneak?
  Then give me your hand to ketch;
Bend down while I speak, for I'm horful weak,
  And the words is hard to fetch.

Here's a newspaper under my head, you see,
  What tells, with a heap of lies,
Seth Baker was tried in 'sixty-three
  At the Worcester County 'Size.
Don't spout it aloud, for it's waste of breath;
  I can give you the pith, I can;
The sentence of death was passed on Seth
  For knifing a pollis-man!

You remember it? No? Why, the world went mad!
  'Twas a nine-days'-wonder case;
They talked of the lad, and the ways he had
  His pluck and his handsome face.

It wasn't right proved how the blood was spilt,
  And they'd easy have pulled him through;
But the stoopid young fool confessed his guilt—
  So what could the lawyer do?

Petitions was signed—for the lad was young—
  Imploring the Queen for grace;
But the end of it all was, Seth was hung,
  In spite of his youth and face.
And I stood there, in the struggling square,
  And stared in the prisoner's eye;
I saw them cover his face, so fair,
  And fasten his hempen tie!

Yes, I stood there, in the death-still square,
  And met Seth Baker's eye;
I heard him mutter a tag of pray'r;
  I saw—I saw him die!
He took the drop with a rare good pluck,
  With never a shake nor whine;—
And the knife in the peeler's heart that stuck,
  It wasn't not Seth's, but mine!

It happened along of a wench, you see—
  Young Seth was a-courtin' Kate;
But—so rum is a she—she took to me,
  And jilted my handsome mate.
So we got spliced,—but I used her bad;
  It was nothin' but drink and row;
But she's getting paid back for the time she had,
  A-singing in glory now!

Well, Seth was a chap as was always soft—
  He reggerler drove me wild;
For he'd foller and say to me, oft and oft,
  "Be kind to your wife and child!"
But he gave it up, and he let me go—
  No preachin' would keep me straight;
And he got to know as it meant a blow
  And a worser time for Kate!

I was always in drink; I was deep in debt;
  I was sacked from my job of work;
And then I got in with a poachin' set,
  As nothin' at all would shirk.
We'd many a spree, my pals and me,
  And many a right good bag;
And we packed the game to town, you see,
  And fuddled away the swag.

We was out one night—I was settin' a snare;
  Afore you could reckon three,
A peeler was out of some cursed lair,
  And grapplin' along of me.
He called for the rest—I was devilish pressed,
  I didn't know what to do;
I draws my knife, and the peeler's breast
  I drives it through and through.

He staggered and fell with a horful yell;
  I hadn't no sense nor breath;
And the ruck tears on, like the fiends of hell,
  In a game of life and death.

I staggered and tript; I was well-nigh gript;
  When, out of the fir-trees dim,
A bloke crep' soft, and behind me slipt,
  And the peelers makes for him.

I couldn't tell how—and I can't tell now—
  Seth come in the nick of time;
Unless he was there on the scent of a row,
  To resker his pal from crime.
He touches my arm, and he says, says he,
  As he points to the belt of fir,
"Crawl in on your knee—no matter for me;
  It's all for the sake of Her!"

I've told it you, parson, straight and fair,
  With devil a slur or lie;
And I stood there, in the death-still square,
  And saw Seth Baker die!
I know of the Blood for sinners shed,
  And the pardon full and free;
But the Grace that washes snow-white the red,
  It isn't no go for me!

A lifer in Hell is the sentence spoke
  On a soul so mean and grim . . .
Yet tell us the tale of that dying bloke,
  And Christ as went bail for him . . .
Just mutter a prayer . . . I know it well,
  This here is the grip of death . . .
It ain't as I want to beg off Hell!
  I'm sorry I done it . . . Seth!

Joe to the Rescue,*

I SHALL never forget till I say good-bye
How the darned old tinder did blaze and fly;
It was touch-and-go for me and Brown
To carry the poor young mother down—
Stiff as a statter, all deadly white,
Yet hugging her week-old baby tight;
And my heart stopped short when I heard 'em cry,
"There's another little 'un left to die."

The smoke rolled up like the reek of hell,
And the rotten rafters cracked and fell.
I clears my eyes, and I looks, and lo!
One foot on the ladder, I sees old Joe.
'Twas a madman's game, and me and Jack
We grips his arm, and we holds him back:
"It's death, old feller!"—"It may be so,
But it ain't no harm to try," says Joe.

* * * *

Lord! it was summat to split your ears,
The laughing and sobbing, the shrieks and cheers,

* Set to music, under the title of *Brave Old Joe*, by Louis Diehl, and published by Joseph Williams, Berners Street.

As, blackened and bruised, yet safe and sound,
Steps Joe with the little 'un round by round.
He kind o' sighed and he kind o' smiled,
And he says to himself, as he kissed the child,
"Dead twenty years—my youngest, Jim—
And he'd just the curls and the cheeks of him."

Job Sanderson's Mind:

A BIT OF IT.

WHEN I was a tiny toddler,
A poor little six years' tot,
And said each night, in my bedgown white,
The bit of a prayer I'd got;
I was just as sure that Our Father then
Took in each word to "ever Amen,"
As I was that my mother did—hearing the pray'r,
And helping me out with it here and there.

"God bless dear father and mother,
And brothers and sisters too;
And give me a mind to be good and kind,
And to do what I ought to do."
Full often as I was kneeling there
There was fingers a-stroking my curly hair;
For anything I could understand,
It was likely enough Our Father's hand.

He lived in them great blue heavens,
Most terrible far and high—
More higher a deal, I could see and feel,
Than ever a kite could fly.
But He warn't a bit too far away
To know whatever we'd do or say;

And when we was good, He was proud and fain,
And when we was naughty, it gave Him pain.

He lived in them great blue heavens,
The night was His curtains drawn;
He called the sun when the dark was done,
And the cock as crowed at dawn.
'Twas Our Father's hand, when the nights was fine,
As twinkled the stars, and made 'em shine;
At sunset—Lord! I could almost swear
I'd peeped into heaven, and seen Him there.

He lived in them great far heavens,
But (mother had told me so)
His arm came through from the shining blue,
And planted the flow'rs below.
The good little birds by Him was fed
With berries, and grubs, and crumbs of bread;
Cock Robin it was as He loved the best,
And He hated the boys as stole his nest.

Of course He'd a deal to manage,
With sunshine, and snow, and spring,
And the cherry-bim as looked to Him
For every mortal thing.
But all the same, oh! just the same,
He had time for me, and my book and game;
And He couldn't abide to see me fight,
And it did Him good when my sums come right.

We'd one little blue-eyed sister
As never was fain nor strong;
From the hour of her birth she was not for earth,
And we couldn't detain her long.

She closed her eyes, and she went to rest,
All waxy-white on our mother's breast.
A great black tail on my hat was wound,
And I watched them lower her underground.

But it wasn't our little sister
As slept in the churchyard mould,
As slumbered there when the days was fair,
And when they grew dark and cold.
I cried at first, and was sorely pained,
Till I went to mother, and she explained;
It was only her body as lay in the loam—
Our sister had gone to Our Father's home.

Our sister was there, in Heaven,
So happy, and good, and gay,
With a crown on her brow, and a harp somehow
She'd managed to learn to play.
So all in the dark I didn't cry,
For dear little sister was somewhere by;
Being borne, like a bird, on her shining wings,
She took no notice of doors and things.

Our Father, I say, and Heaven,
And dear little sister there,
Was as real to me as yourself, I see
A-sitting in yonder chair.
I *might* enquire with a puzzled frown,
Was there really a Queen and a London town?
But Heaven and God—it's a sing'lar lad
That'll ax—has he ever a home and dad?

And now there are folks as tells you—
They'se nothing but old wives' lore—
That, whenever I die, I shall rot and lie,
And never come up no more;
That there ain't no Heaven for folks to go,
There's nothing but "forces" and "laws" to show;
And, instead of a God, with a father's glance,
There's—summat or other, as comes to chance.

It's a gospel of Dirt and Nothing
They preach in these thinking days;
But the lessons I got as a tiny tot—
Well, somehow, they sticks and stays.
To me them skies (whatever they tells)
Is still the home where Our Father dwells,
And still, when I kneels and says my prayers,
I think as Our Father hears and cares.

I couldn't—I won't believe it!
Old feller, my soul would bust—
What, hold in my heart, as my friends depart,
That they ends in the churchyard dust?
Believe that the one as in yearning love
First taught me to pray to the God above,
Instead of watching from yonder skies,
Is gone into gases!—Get out! it's lies.

When I looks on this Wale of Weeping
(It's David as calls it so),
With its heads that ache, and its hearts that break,
Its hopes as is all no go;

Where one to the primest cuts is born,
And one to the 'tater-peels and scorn;
Where youngsters thieve for their daily crust,
And women go wrong because they must;—

If there isn't no great Hereafter,
Unrav'ling the tangled thread,
No Trumpet blown, and no Great White Throne,
No Judge of the quick and dead;—
If there isn't a Hand as holds the clue,
And runs His purpose the jumble through;—
If it isn't God's world (and He'll see things square)
Why, it *is* the Devil's, and that I'll swear.

A Street Sermon.

WHAT? God fight shy of the city?
It's t'other side up, I guess;
If ever you want to find Him,
Whitechapel's the right address.
Alleys and slums—He knows 'em all
In the weary leagues of blackened wall;
And all the hearts that beat therein,
And all their sorrow and want and sin—
Magdalens, thieves and virgins white—
Lie folded safe in His arms at night.

He don't let go of the city;
He's fond of the country air,
And meadows and hawthorn hedges,
But nobody wants Him there.
It's just because the town is bad,
And its drains is foul and its lives is sad;
It's just because of the bitter cry
That rises up to the quiet sky;
It's just because of its sin and woe,
He sticks to it tight and He won't let go.

So, what though seven devils
Is worrying up and down,
Finding Hell ain't so home-like
As the streets of London town?—

Make no mistake! make no mistake!
They may be pushing and wide-awake,
But God gets up with the wink of light,
And His shutters is hardly put up all night.
Folks may chatter, but there! you bet,
He ain't played out in the city yet.

Look out for God in the city!
  Fog, and east wind, and damp,
He's trudging the crowded pavement
  Shouldered by rogue and tramp.
He couldn't look out on the sinful town,
And know its troubles and not come down!
And spite of the powers of night and Hell
Working agen him hard and well,
He's weaving his purpose sure and fast,
And He'll gather *them* into His love at last.

In Brogue.

Teddy O'Teague.

IS it contradic' me ye would thin? Begorra, 'tis mighty queer
An' Teddy an' me own cousins and neighbours for twinty year.
'Twas often he'd walk the disthance, an' walkin' he was that day,
When Riley whips round the corner, a-dhrivin' the mottled gray.

"Bad weather," says Ted, "intirely; 'tis murther an' all on the crops;
When 'tis time for diggin' the praties they're divle a thing but tops."
"I'm kilt wid it, just," says Riley; "'tis bound for the fair ye are,—
Thin why would ye splash your tails, sir, an' on'y meself in the cyar?"

So Teddy gets up foreninst him, an, lavin' the baste to walk,
The compliments passed betwixt thim, an' neighbourly dacent talk.
An' thin says Riley, "There's rumours—but shure 'tis nothin but thrash—
Ye've been buying butther of Ryan—ye niver would be so rash."

"Why wouldn't I thin?" says Teddy; "'tis known at market an' fair
There isn't the butther to bate it that's churned in the County Clare.

A paltry couple of firkins was all that iver I got;
This day if he brings a score, sir, bedad, but I'll take the lot."

"Whist! shure 'tis trason ye're talkin.' 'Tis shame on ye, Teddy O'Teague;
Would ye meddle wid boycotted butther, an' fly in the face of the League?
Shure, I am your friend as spakes thim, so 'tint to the words I say,
If ye look at that butther of Ryan's, 'tis mischief there'll be this day."

"'Tis long that we're friends," says Teddy; "did iver I give ye a lie?
If Ryan brings twinty firkins, each wan of the score I'll buy;
If iver a hand is lifted, if iver a word is said,
I swear by the Mother of Heaven I'll shtrike the spalpeen dead.

"Take a feel o' the stick, Mick Riley; 'tis blackthorn sasoned an' thrue;
There's sorra a skull in nathur but that'll walk shmiling t'rough.
If any one manes to thry it, bedad, 'tis rason an' sinse
He'll dhrive to the spot in his coffin, an' save the double expinse.

"No harm to expriss it pleasant, though sorra a joke I mane;
Will ye mintion to thim as sent ye the views that I intertain?
Faix, thin, but the mare's a threasure,—ye'll take the looks of a dhrop?
I feel a sort of a dhryness at sight of O'Flaherty's shop."

They laid the dust, and they parted; an' there on the market-ground,
There was farmers gathered by fun'rals from twinty parishes round;
There was tastin' an' chaff an' dhrinkin', an' hapes o' butther was sold;
An' Peter Ryan, poor divle, stood lost and out in the cold.

Thin on by the line o' car'ges, linin' the market-square,
O'Teague wint sniftin' an' gaugin', an' purchasin' here an' there;
Till he came to the spot where Ryan, the heart of him broken stood,—
"Now, Peter," says he, "we'll thry it, an' see if the butther's good."

He laid the stick on the cart, thin, convanient to his hand,
Wid a turn of the eye around him the neighbours could undershtand;
There was fidgetin' sticks amongst thim, and shufflin 'of scores o' feet,
An' looks that it bothered the butther to keep itself cool an sweet.

Then Teddy he pulls the gauge out, an' into the cask it goes,
An' he snifts as aisy an' shmilin' as Biddy shmellin' a rose.
He gives it a lick wid his tongue thin, an' squirts the juice on the floor,—
"Five firkins? says he; "I'll take thim—I wish they was twinty more."

Och, murther! ye heard the curses a-rowling inside thim there:
Ye persaved thim closin' around him—the sticks was up in the air;

Thin Teddy, he takes the blackthorn, an' shwings it up
for the shtrike—
Me sowl! if I live till I'm buried, I niver shall see the like!

They melted away before him like mist whin the sun
peeps out;
There wasn't the shmell of a spalpeen for twinty good
yards about;
So whistling a chune an' shmilin', he walks from the
square away,
An' he broke the boycottin' fairly, did Teddy O'Teague
that day.

Andy Byrne.

[Tim Delany, a small Munster landlord, come over to England to sell cattle, is sitting in the tap-room of a public-house in the market town.]

WELL, ye're afther cappin' stories, and, bedad, Sirs,
Whigs and Tories,
Aich wan still paints the isle of Saints as Satan's isle
all t'rough,
But I hould 'tis lasteways fittin' that ye all should be
admittin'
That it the divle *has* his faults, he's aqual virtues too.

I was dhrivin' home wan night, Sirs, whilst the oats was
turnin' white, Sirs,
Whin some wan stips across the wall, an' bids me stop
the gig:
"Fine evenin', thin, but cowld, Sir, an' might I make so
bould Sir,
As ax if ye'd be plased at all to buy a darlin' pig?"

"Why, Andy, what's the rason at this same conthrairy
sason
Ye'd part the pig, so small an' all, an' divle a thing but
lean?"
"Och, shure," says he replyin', "I've the misthress lyin'
dyin,
An' ordered nourishmint, she is—an that's the way I
mean."

Me hand was in my coat thin, an' I pulled him out a note thin,
" My boy," says I, " to take the pig 'ud be the worst o' crimes.
Ye'll not refuse a lift thin,—shure it shan't be called a gift thin ;
'Tis lent, my frind, till God shall sind ould Ireland betther times."

I gave the horse the whip so, an' gave the boy the slip so,
An' lookin' back along the track 'twas there I seen him stand ;
Bedad, the fool was cryin', for his cuff his eyes was dhryin',
An' all the while he helt the note like dhramin' in his hand.

Well, wan evenin' in Decimber, that 'tis like I'll long remimber,
I'd druv the mare to Kiltea fair, an' now I'd raiched the turn.
There was half a moon to guide me, an' beyant the wall beside me
There rose a head all shagg'd an' red—the head of Andy Byrne.

I'd me finger an the thrigger, but I rayalized the figger ;
"Bedad, me lad, ye'd nea'ly had a taste of lead this day !"
"Whist, whist," says he ; come near now—they're waiting an ye here now—
Four barr'ls an all—aich side the wall ; raich home the other way."

He vanished like a sprite, Sirs, an'—was I wrong or right, Sirs ?—
I turned the horse, an' changed me course, an' july raiched me door ;

An' whin all was nicely fixt, Sirs, an' the glass o' punch was mixt, Sirs,
The whole affair seemed just a scare,—a dhrame, an' nothin' more.

Well, it might be two hours later, an' me hand was on the grater—
I take it so, ye'll have to know, wid limon just a squaze ;
I persaved a knockin'loud, Sirs, an' the manials in a crowd, Sirs,—
"What's all this row ? be aisy now ! yer manners, if ye plase."

Och, bedad, 'twas soon I heard, Sirs,—an' bitther was the word, Sirs —
" 'Tis Andy's wife "—"They've took his life "—" He's kilt, Sir, t'rough an' t'rough ; '
"'Tis for you that he's inquirin' "—" Shure the crathur's just expirin'—"
" Och, wirra, wirra, cruel day ! whativer will I do ? "

Thin out we turned togedder in the bitther murtherin' wedder—
The field across, an' o'er the moss, an' up to Andy's door ;
Och, the white face, sharp an' failin', an' the bits o' child'en wailin'—
A cruel sight we seen that night ! God send the likes no more !

Well, we powered a dhrop o' brandy down the throat of poor ould Andy,
An' thin he sighed, and opened wide his blue eyes dim wid death ;
So I propt his head to rest it, an' I saised his hand an' prest it ;
" 'Twas murtherin' kind to come," says he, wid gaps betwixt for breath.

"Och, me boy," says I, "it kills me—'tis wid grief an' shame it fills me—
To think I saved me by yer word, an' left ye there to die ;
Though ye wanst were just a pisant, ye're a marthyr shure at prisent,—
Saint Pather meet ye at the gate, an' ax ye in on high."

Thin says he, "Don't give it mintion—shure it isn't worth attintion,
'Twas just a compliment—och! there!—the breath is hard to git ;
Faith, ye helped me in disthriss, Sir, an' ye saved my Molly—yis, Sir—
'Tis more I'd do, wid freedom too, an' still not pay the dibt."

Thin he lay back, tired wid spakin'—whin the morrer's morn was breakin',
He wint where daylight niver fades, an' lift the wife in night ;
But, bedad! ye're all mistaken if ye think that she's forsaken,
Small want she'll feel for fire an' meal while I've the sup an' bite.

So whilst ye're tellin' stories of ould Ireland's vanisht glories—
How Satan's won the Isle of Saints, an scattered all his foes—
Why, 'tis this I mane to say, Sirs—let the divle have fair play, Sirs,
For if his skin is black as sin, less need to cork his nose.

The Black Coach of Dunmoyle.

THE LEGEND OF AN IRISH HOUSE.

AH, thin, why wouldn't I know it? Wait, now, till I hould the mare ;
Shtand up on the 'boord, your honour—the house is forninst you there ;
An', seein' ye're afther shpakin' of legends of Irish soil,
There's wan o' thim, more by token, belongs to that same Dunmoyle.

'Tis a pitiful sight intirely—'deed, thin, I could turn my face
An' weep for the disolation that sits on the fine ould place,
Wid sorra a sound or whisper, or curl o' the shmoke to rise,
An 'the winders shtarin' before thim as blank as a dead man's eyes.

Och, wirra, Dunmoyle in ruins! I knew it from six year ould,
An' the bounty an' shtate an' splindour is not to be dhramed nor tould ;
Wid hunters packin' the shtables, an' gintry t'rongin' the hall,
An' "give it a name, thin, Patsy," whiniver I chanced to call.

There's a bit of a shtrame round yonder—in summer 'twas always dhry,
An', afther the winter sittin's, ye needn't be wond'hrin' why,

For the whiskey flowed perinnial, an' laughter an' jokes likewise—
'Twas enough to make saints an' marthyrs ax lave out of Paradise.

A noble ould house intirely, that wint where its fathers trod,
Uphouldin' its proud thraditions, an' lavin' expinse to God,
Receivin' the rint when plasin', an' dhrivin' about the town,
Supportin' the thrade of Ireland, an' puttin' the orders down.

Och, wirra! the hall is empty, 'tis grass where the bloods was tied,
An' the beautiful hounds is scattered all over the counthry side,
An' the fox goes loafin' and loungin', wid divle a thing to do
But pray for a glimpse o' scarlet an' sound of a view-halloo!

An' himself in lodgings in Dublin, an' hirin' a spavined hack
Jist wanst or twice in the sason to hunt wid a stranger pack;
An' Master Gerald, God save him! an exile beyant the seas,
Wid naygurs an' timperance haythins, an' Turks an' Antipodes.

An' Miss Mary—ochone, the craythur!—the crown an' the flower of all,
That niver looked twice at a shillin' nor wanst at a five-fut wall—

It murthers my heart, mavourneen, to think o' yez cowld an' still,
Wid the first little babe beside ye, above on the bitther hill.

I'm waitin' upon your honour—ah, 'tisn't a mile to go;
Tin minutes 'll do it aisy; I'll lave her to walk it, so;
An', thankin' your honour's kindness for callin' my memory back,
I'll reshume the thrid of my story, not shtrayin' from off the thrack.

I disrimimber the date, thin, but toward the dead o' the year,
The rumour wint t'rough the counthry that things at Dunmoyle was queer—
That some black-hearted attorney, by manes of a deed he got,
Was schamin' agin the Master—the divle chastise the lot.

'Twas known there was mortgages lying, for, shure, on an ould estate,
Thim things is the coorse o' nater, like jewuls, an' arms, an' plate;
But that iver a scrap o' parchment should harden a low-bred thief,
To shpake short to the rale ould ginthry was past all dhrame o' belief.

Begorra, the tale was thrue, thin, an' next that iver I heard
Was, Master Richard in Dublin comes down by his honour's word—

For the thing *should* be, God save him! but, murther, it hurts me now—
Six-fut an' his rigiment's glory, an' sold like a horse or cow!

There was new folks come to Kilmurry, maintainin' a great parade,
An' plottin' to pass for ginthry—but, faix, they was only thrade;
An' the lady was short an' saller, an' hard in manner an' face—
But there! it was fixed betune 'em to rescue the fine ould place.

So, thin, there was great rejoicings, but sorra a wan but knew
His heart was acrass the counthry wid sweet Miss Annie Carew.
If he seen 'em but wanst togedder, begorra, the child should swear
That naters is made like stockin's, an' they was the proper pair.

So at last 'twas the eve o' the weddin', wid everything cut an' dhried,
An' the house just quinched wid the ginthry assimbled from far an' wide.
Och, murther! the hot collations an' shpoutin' o' grand champagne!
An' Master Richard, the bridegroom, was due by the evenin' thrain.

They kep' up a brave appearance, but wirrah, the mirth was cowld;
A weddin'? Bedad, an oction, an' misery bought an' sould.

So, shpite of the lights an' music, an' healths to the yaller bride,
The dhrink sat bleak on the system, the smilin' was all outside.

"What's keepin' himself?" was whispered, an' suddent, upon the word,
The sound of the gates thrun open, the crunch of the wheels, was heard.
An', disregardin a shudder that wandered along his skin,
The Master he makes for the entrance to welcome the bridegroom in.

An' what did he see?—God help us—why, slowly he seen approach,
All plumed wid its noddin' feathers, a great black funeral coach;
An' the dhriver, a tall dim figure, not payin' the laste regard,
He druv by the porch in silence, and shtops in the great stone yard.

The Master, he stares an' staggers, then, shpakin' quite hoarse an' thick,
He cries, "Some t'undherin' rascal is playin' a cursed thrick!"
An' round to the place he totters, an' there in the court-yard wide
Is silence an' mist an' darkness—an' sorra a thing beside.

An' thin he remembers the legend, an' "Richard," he cries, "my son,
The pride o' my heart, my firstborn—the will of the Lord be done!

A black an' sorrowful endin' to schamin' an' hopes an' toil !
'Tis wake you we will, not wed you, for the Black Coach seeks Dunmoyle ! "

'Deed, thin, an' 'twas thrue, the warning—that evenin' the word was brought ;
Dropped dead, he did, at the station, as suddent as light or thought.
An' the lawyer closed upon thim, wid niver the why nor how,
An' the house shlipt down into ruins, the same as you see it now.

Ah, troth, an' I'm not denyin'—your honour is surely right ;
Thim legends is mostly fancies to startle the girls at night ;
But this wan is thrue as gospel, and the lawyer, curse his sowl,
May look for rint from his tenants, the weasel, an' bat, an' owl.

The way Thady came round.

" Och, Docthor," said Thady,
" Och, Docthor," he said,
" Come near me,
To hear me—
Dhraw up to the bed,
For I'm greatly disthrest
Wid a pain in the chest,
An' aich breath that I dhraw,
Faith, it jags like a saw,
An' the cough when it takes me,
It shakes me an' breaks me—
Och, murther ! the head !
'Tis achin'
Past shpakin',
An' weighty as lead."

Thin says Biddy, bewailin',
" Och, Docthor McCann,
He's ailin',
An' failin',
The honest poor man !
Shure, his heart is just bruk
Wid a wakeness he tuk,
An' a shmotherin' lately
Desthroys him complately.
This fortni't he's lyin'—
My Thady is dyin'.

Ye'd know by his face
He was very far t'rough;
An', alone in the place,
Meself an' the seven—
Och, Mother of Heaven!
Thin what will I do?

"Whist! whist!" says the docthor,
An', takin' his seat,
He reckoned,
Aich second,
The strin'th of his beat.
An' thin he began,
Did Docthor McCann,
To thravel around him,
An' hearken, an' sound him.
Begorra, he'd thump
Inside o' the shirt
Till ye'd see the bhoy jump;
Thin he'd ax, "Does it hurt?"
So, explorin' inside him,
He plied him
An' thried him
In every part,
Till he knew him
All t'rough him,
An' had him by heart.

Thin, havin' him measured,
He lifted the head,
An' "Thady
O'Grady,
'Tis lowness," he said.

I've an ile will contest
Thim pains in the chest,
An' the med'cine I'll mix ye
Will shpeedily fix ye.
That dose ye'll be dhrinkin'
Like winkin',
I'm thinkin'—
'Tis greatly admired!"
An', laughin'
An' chaffin',
The docthor retired.

"Hear that, thin!" says Thady;
"The watch in his hand—
Shure, it needs no explainin'—
My moments remainin'
He measured like sand.
An pokin'
His jokin'!—
Ye'd fancy, bedad!
A man's constitution
Enjoyed dissolution,
The way that he had.
Bad 'cess to the cad—
But lave him alone,
For his manners is bad,
An' his heart is a shtone."

Well, he sent him the bottle—
A quart at the laste;
At once 'an when needed
(The writin' proceeded)
Dilute to the taste.

But when Biddy dhrew close
To preschribe him the dose,
Says he, on the fidget,
"Away wid it, Bridget!
What use to be tasin'?
'Tis only displasin';
I need no assistance
In chlosin' existence—
I'll soon be relased;
Och, murther the cough thin!—
Let Andy be off thin,
An' bring me the praist."
Not a shmell nor a taste—
He turned round in the bed;
An' the bottle was placed
On the shelf overhead.

Thin sorra a word—
'Twas dozin' or sleep;
But we listened and heard
That his breathin' grew deep.
Thin the head on the roll—
To an' fro, to an' fro—
Och! we knew that his soul
Was just frettin' to go.
An' the wind it got high,
An' it snowed an' it snowed;
Black coals for a sky
An' the drift for a road.
Not a sign, not a mark,
Not your hand up of light—
'Twould be lonely and dark
For his spirit that night!

Thin, welcome as May,
There's the lift o' the latch,
An' Father O'Shea
Shtips under the thatch,
Wan half him all white
An' drinched to the thigh,
But Heaven's own light
In his blessed blue eye.
Four miles—heaven bless him!
No throuble disthress him!—
By hollow an' height,
Four miles he had thrudged it;
Not wan of him grudged it—
A saunther he judged it—
The dog of a night!
Thin, whilst we was kneelin',
Sweet comfort an' healin'
Around us came shtealin'
From angels in flight: . . .
An' duly
An' truly
He gave him the Rite.

Wid the candle just blessed
In his fingers a-glow,
Lay the bhoy, takin' rest,
Like a flake o' the snow.
An' we shtood by him there,
An' wid sorrowful hearts—
Just timin' our pace
To the look in his face—
Repated the pray'r
For the soul that departs.

Well, at nine, as I'd guess,
  There's a creak o' the door,
An' the docthor, no less,
  Shtands out on the floor;
An' "Murther!" he cries,
  Wid a shake to the hat,
An' a blink o' the eyes,
  "What's happened him, Pat?
Faith, I thought by the light
  Ye was houldin' a ball,
An' he hadn't the right
  To be giddy at all,
      But shtartin',
      Departin'—
  There, let me get close;
Shure, ye gave him the brandy
I sent him by Andy
  The quart at a dose!"

      Och, t'undher!
      The wonder!
'Twas raisin' the dead;
      For Thady
      O'Grady
Rose up in the bed.
"Och, musha," he whispered,
  "Och, musha," he said,
      "Was I goin',
      Not knowin'
  It shtood by my head?
There! reach it an' lave it
  Betune me two hands:

      Shure, wather
      Is slaughther—
'Tis chrame as it shtands!"

      He gripped it
      An' sipped it
An' tipped it wid joy;
      An' brightness
      An' tightness
  Came back to the bhoy.
Says Thady, just dhryin'
  The side of the mouth,
"Begorra, but dyin'
  Awakens the drouth!"

"Wid himself, thin, quite hearty
  An' beamin' agin,
To break up the party,"
Says Peter McCarthy,
  "I'd hould it a sin.
There's Andy will pop
  To the little shebeen;
      'Tis the shop
      For a dhrop
  Of the proper potheen."

Not wan but was willin'—
  'Twas said an' 'twas done;
Aich laid down his shillin'
  To furnish the fun.
An' we kep' up the revel
  Wid singin' an' cheer

An' shmokin'
An' jokin'
Till mornin' was clear.
An' lithest
An' blithest,
An' king o' the clan,
Was Thady
O'Grady—
The won'erful man!

Lyrics of Love, etc.

A Dedication.

WHEN Authors indite, or Compilers select,
It's surely a matter of reason and right
To indicate clearly the class they expect
To welcome their work with effusive delight.
So, waiving all circumlocutory fuss,
Meanderings, mazes, and lurchings askew,
My aim and intention I specify thus—
This book is for You.

Poor Damon, sunk deep in the quagmire of love,
Fast losing in girth, while increasing in sighs,
For whom all the blue of the world-arch above
Laughs saucily forth from two mischievous eyes,
I come to the rescue—by hook or by crook,
I'll pull you, old fellow, triumphantly through;
The whole art of wooing's set forth in my book—
The book is for You.

And you, little Phyllis, whose tip-tilted nose
Goes up a good inch when of Damon we speak,
Yet whose quick-beating heart is so hard to compose
If Damon but whisper, "The tea's rather weak;"
I bring you a trifle of sweets to the sweet,
With nutmeg and lemon the whole to imbue;
Here's Love's Vade-mecum, revised and complete—
The book is for You.

And you, Master Cynic, who turn with a sneer
From Damon reproaching his mistress unkind,
Averring the fever is brief, though severe,
And never leaves anything nasty behind,
I'll vow that you treasure a shawl-pin or muff,
A tress of bright hair, in some secret purlieu,
So, spite of your second-hand cynical stuff,
The book is for You.

And you, Sir, who say that life's glamour is o'er—
You doziest, prosiest, plumpest of men ;
Who have long ago reckoned that troublesome score—
The second that comes of the three score and ten—
Whose lads will soon wander each Jack to his Jill,
Whose girls will soon hear the Old Story anew—
Their mother's your sweetheart—confess it, Sir—still ;
The book is for You

And you, for whom life—once so glowing and sweet—
Is only a dream of a dream that is fled ;
Whose shivering spirit still crouches for heat
O'er the ashes of hopes that lie whitened and dead ;
O you for whom earth has no blossom beside
One flower that revives not, though tears be its dew,
O loving and faithful, O tender and tried !
The book is for You.

And you who, too happy for comment or praise,
By the spell of a ring on a delicate hand,
Have passed from the earth and its commonplace ways
To a beautiful, love-litten, mystical land :—
O triumphing Bridegroom and rose-hearted Bride,
One perfected soul by the merging of two,
Disdain not the garland my fingers have tied—
The book is for You.

From the smooth-pated sage to the ringleted elf,
From the judge on the bench to the rogue at the bar,
From the clown to whom bacon is poetry's self
To the exquisite being who dines on a star,
From the beauty with pearls on her pearlier breast
To the beauty whose gems are a nose-ring or two
Love rules ;—so, without reservation or test,
The book is for YOU.

Tom and Kitty.

WHERE two white cots o'erarched with shade
  Their pale-blue smoke-wreaths blent,
There played and strayed a boy and maid,
  Companions well-content.
Together schoolward, shine or wet,
  They trudged the cart-ruts through;
Above one book their ringlets met;
  One apple served the two.
And oft across the hedge you'd hear,
  Or through the door ajar,
"Is Tommy here?—then, never fear!
  My Kitty won't be far."

If Tommy's knuckles chanced to ache,
  As school-boys' knuckles do,
The dominie, for pity's sake,
  Would nobble Kitty's too.
When Tommy tumbled in the pond,
  And gasped, with horror mute,
His playmate fond his visage conned,
  Then promptly followed suit.
When Tommy smoked beneath the rick
  His furtive first cigar,
They both crawled homeward, deadly sick—
  For Kitty was not far.

But years flowed by with silent stream,
  And work must follow play;
Behind them like a land of dream
  Their vale of childhood lay.
Her needle now must Kitty ply
  To earn a humble fee;
And Tom must sigh a long good-bye—
  For Tom is off to sea.
"To-night," she sobbed, "you'll sail away
  Beyond the harbour-bar;
But when you pray, look up and say,
  "'My Kitty is not far.'"

Two years went by—for him, two years
  Of range and change and stir;
Of hopes and fears, of pray'rs and tears,
  And patient toil for her.
And then, beside the old lych-gate,
  The neighbours, looking out,
Beheld a sailor walk and wait,
  A cheery lad and stout.
"'Tis Tom," one said; "he's getting wed—
  God bless the honest tar!"
Another gravely shook her head:
  "Then Kitty won't be far!"

"I Mean to Wait for Jack."

A LESSON FOR LOVERS.

SWEET Kate at Wyndham's Dairy, and Jack of Oldham Mill—
Oh, long they woo'd and fond they coo'd, a faithful Jack and Jill!
But times were bad for lass and lad, and sadly both confess'd
'Twas not the thing to buy the ring, before they'd lined the nest.
"Courage, lad!" said Katie. "Yes, we'll have to wait;
But though, my dear, it's twenty year, I'll take no other mate."

But England wanted Jacky, for war was in the air,
And arms more grim were press'd on him than Katie's bonny pair.
So all through Spain, in rough campaign, he chivied bold Mossoo,
And fired his gun and made him run like fun at Waterloo.
When the lads came round her, Katie bade them pack.
"There's girls enow* for you to woo; I mean to wait for Jack."

---

* Pronounce *enoo*, as commonly in the Midlands.

The grey in Katie's ringlets was mingling with the brown,
When, bump-a-thump, an eager stump came pegging through the town.
"It's me, you see, come back," says he, "except a leg or so;
And safe and sound here's twenty pound; so let the parson know."
Jangle, jingle, jangle! set the bells a-chime,
And health and bliss to love like this that bravely bides its time.

A Bunch of Cowslips.

POLLY and I were sweethearts,
As all the neighbours know;
Polly and I were sweethearts
Twenty years ago.

Polly was made of dimples,
So winsome and wee and fair,
And if ever you missed a sunbeam,
You'd find it in Polly's hair;
And her eyes had something in them
She never knew how to say;
And I looked at my sweet little darling
'Till she looked my heart away.
Polly and I were sweethearts,
As all the neighbours know;
Polly and I were sweethearts
Twenty years ago.

Oh, it was rare on Sundays,
With Polly upon my arm,
To stroll through the Castle Meadows,
Or round by the Gable Farm;
To talk of the house we'd furnish,
And the ring I'd have to give,
And the love that we'd bear for each other,
As long as we both should live.

Polly and I were sweethearts,
As all the neighbours know;
Polly and I were sweethearts
Twenty years ago.

Polly grew weak and weary,
And the roses paled on her cheek;
She looked like an April primrose,
When the wind blows hard and bleak.
I prayed to Our Father in Heaven,
And Our Father kept me brave;—
Yes, that's what I want with the cowslips—
To lay them on Polly's grave.
Polly and I were sweethearts,
As all the neighbours know;
Polly and I were sweethearts
Twenty years ago.

Courtship.

IT chanced, they say, upon a day,
A furlong from the town,
That she was strolling up the way
As he was strolling down—
She humming low, as might be so,
A ditty sweet and small;
He whistling loud a tune, you know,
That had no tune at all.
It happened so—precisely so—
As all their friends and neighbours know.

As I and you perhaps might do,
They gazed upon the ground;
But when they'd gone a yard or two
Of course they both looked round.
They both were pained, they both explained
What caused their eyes to roam;
And nothing after that remained
But he should see her home.
It happened so—precisely so—
As all their friends and neighbours know.

Next day to that 'twas common chat,
Admitting no debate,
A bonnet close beside a hat
Was sitting on a gate.
A month, not more, had bustled o'er,
When, braving nod and smile,
One blushing soul came through the door
Where two went up the aisle.
It happened so—precisely so—
As all their friends and neighbours know.

My Own Girl.

FIFTEEN shillings—no more, Sir—
The wages I weekly touch;
For labour steady and sore, Sir,
It isn't a deal to much.
Your money has wings in the City,
And vanishes left and right;
But I hand a crown to Kitty
As sure as Saturday night.
Bless her, my own, my wee!
She's better than gold to me.

She lives in a reeking court, Sir,
With roguery, drink, and woe;
But Kitty has never a thought, Sir,
That isn't as white as snow.
She has not a thought or feeling
An angel would blush to meet;
I love to think of her kneeling,
And praying for me so sweet.
Bless her, my own, my wee!
She's better than gold to me.

I must be honest and simple,
I must be manful and true;
Or how could I pinch her dimple,
Or gaze in her frank eyes' blue?

I feel not anger, but pity,
When workmates go to the bad;
I say, "They've never a Kitty!
They'd all keep square if they had."
Bless her, my own, my wee!
She's better than gold to me.

One day she will stand at the altar,
Modest, and white, and still,
And forth from her lips will falter
The beautiful low "I will."
Our home shall be bright and pretty
As ever a poor man's may;
And my soft little dove, my Kitty,
Shall nest in my heart for aye.
Bless her, my own, my wee!
She's better than gold to me.

Doctor Dan's Secret.

A HEARTY old man is Doctor Dan
As any in Romford Town,
With his cheery grin, and his threefold chin,
And his jolly old shining crown.
And friends who have proved what his quarters are
Right willingly stay to dine;
They have faith in his cook and his fat cigar
And his bottle of vintage wine.
"It's a queer little crib," says Doctor Dan,
"But cozy enough for a single man."

As they lounge at ease, and toast their knees,
The host, with a laugh, will say,
"My kingdom's small, but over it all
I reign with a despot's sway.
No serious dame may freeze my joke
With a glance of her awful eye,
Nor cough rebuke from a cloud of smoke,
Nor put the decanter by.
"I feel in my heart," says Doctor Dan,
"For that poor white slave, the married man."

But as soon as the last good-bye is said,
And he fears not ring or knock,
He walks to his desk, with a solemn tread,
And quietly turns the lock.
The tear-mists rise in his brave blue eyes,
As he stands and gazes there;
It is gold—bright gold—in his hand that lies—
But the gold of a lost love's hair.
"It was only a dream," says Doctor Dan,
"But the waking has left me a lonely man."

Gold and Silver.

ALONG her father's field they strayed,
All flecked with cowslips yellow,
A little dainty gold-haired maid,
A sturdy nine-year fellow.
And there love's course they two began,
(Ah, thorny path for treading!)
And vowed when they were maid and man
The town should see a wedding.
Their golden curls were blown and blent,
Through wafts of fragrance treading;
"And oh!" they murmured, well content,
"'Twill be a golden wedding!"

"'Tis time," said he, "to claim her vow,"
And forth he went and found her;
But she was grown a beauty now,
And half the town was round her.
"I see," said he, "you don't want me!"—
Though tears were ripe for shedding,
"I'm glad your eyes are good," says she—
Ah, where's that golden wedding?
He flung away, and left her there,
Such heart-sore teardrops shedding,
And gossips cried, in blank despair,
"He's spoiled the rarest wedding!"

He sailed the seas, he beat the French,
Two-score good years he tarried,
And then he thought, "That little wench—
I wonder if she's married?"
Next week a bluff old tar rolled past,
The gabled High Street threading,
And ancient gossips crowed, "At last
We're like to have the wedding!"
She'd waited for him forty years—
The grey their locks was threading;
And some with smiles, and some with tears,
Beheld their silver wedding.

Quite by Chance.

SHE flung the parlour window wide
  One eve of mid-July,
And he, as fate would have it tide,
  That moment sauntered by.
His eyes were blue and hers were brown,
  With drooping fringe of jet;
And he looked up as she looked down,
  And so their glances met.
    Things as strange, I dare to say,
    Happen somewhere every day.

A mile beyond the straggling street,
  A quiet pathway goes;
And lovers there are wont to meet,
  As all the country knows.
Now she one night at half-past eight
  Had sought that lonely lane,
When *he* came up, by will of fate,
  And so they met again.
    Things as strange, I dare to say,
    Happen somewhere every day.

The parish church, so old and gray,
  Is quite a sight to see;
And he was there at ten one day,
  And so, it chanced, was she.
And while they stood, with cheeks aflame,
  And neighbours liked the fun,
In stole and hood the parson came,
  And made the couple one.
    Things as strange, I dare to say,
    Happen somewhere every day.

A Modern Pastoral.

I WATCH them stand, a pensive pair,
  Beside the sedgy pond;
And He is tall, and She is fair,
  And both of them are fond.
But though they talk, as people may,
  Of topics far and near,
This is not what he wants to say,
  Nor what she fain would hear.

There's nothing in the maiden's eyes
  To make a man despond,
Yet words upon the lips that rise
  Will never go beyond.
And when he talks of cheapened hay,
  Or rising coals and beer,
That is not what he wants to say,
  Nor what she fain would hear.

They're turning back—for Hesper blinks
  Above them in the blue;
And "Now or never," Damon thinks,
  "Her father's door's in view."
He takes her hand—he has his way,
  He cries, "I love you, dear!"
Ah, that is what he meant to say,
  And what she longed to hear!

That Dream of Ours.

O, the young love was sweet, dear,
That dainty dream of ours,
When we could not keep our feet, dear,
From dancing thro' the flow'rs.
When hopes and gay romances
Were thick as leaves in Spring,
And cares were old folks' fancies,
And joy the solid thing.
Of all youth's visions blest, dear,
Of all its golden dow'rs,
O, the young love was best, dear,
That dainty dream of ours.

O, the old love is sweet, dear,
These chill October days,
When we tread with faltering feet, dear,
The sere and silent ways;
When earth has lost its glory,
And heav'n has lost its blue,
And life's a sober story,
And care a comrade true.
Tho' hopes no longer cheat, dear,
And dreams have lost their sway,
O, the old love is sweet, dear,
That gilds the Autumn day.

Before Parting.

OH, love me with your soul, my sweet,
For just a little space;
Let our two spirits, shuddering, meet
In fast and fond embrace.
That I, when memories o'er me roll,
May say—For one sweet hour
She loved me—loved me, flesh and soul,
With every pulse's power.
For love's a flower of rare perfume,
That bourgeons free and well,
But ah! they wrong its dainty bloom
Who call it immortelle.

For when to-night your lips are free,
And all our kisses o'er,
Oh, we will love eternally—
For three long months or more.
Then I shall find that other eyes
Can melt, and glow, and shine;
And you, that other lips have lies
As passionate as mine.
For love's a flower of rare perfume,
That bourgeons free and well,
But ah! they wrong its dainty bloom
Who call it immortelle.

The Magic Key.

RIPPLE and foam, O streamlet,
  Dimple and dance along!
Your accents are familiar
  As mother's cradle song.

Cloudlet, wandering lonely
  Over the waste of blue,
You tell me all your secrets,
  And I tell mine to you.

Ah, little maiden linnet,
  Embowered in yonder tree,
D'ye think to hide your love-thoughts
  From one who loves like me?

O sunshine and starshine,
  And tender twilight hour,
And wide-eyed cottage-children,
  And tree and hedgerow-flower—

You know that I love my darling,
  And love is the magic key
That opens the heart of nature,
  And bares her soul to me.

You'll Never Guess.

I KNOW two eyes—two soft brown eyes,
  Two eyes as sweet and dear
As ever danced with gay surprise,
  Or melted with a tear.
In whose fair rays a heart may bask—
  Their shadowed rays serene—
But, little maid, you must not ask
  Whose bonny eyes I mean.

I know a voice of faëry tone,
  Like brooklet in the June,
That sings, to please itself alone,
  A little old-world tune;
Whose accents haunt the listening ear
  And will not leave it free;
But I shall never tell you, dear,
  Whose accents they may be.

I know a golden-hearted maid
  For whom I built a shrine,
A quiet nook of murmurous shade,
  Deep in this heart of mine;
And in that leafy cool recess
  To make her home she came;
But oh! you'd never, never guess
  That little maiden's name.

The Matter Ended There.

WHEN the lavish Spring had squandered
  All her wealth of bloom and shade,
Down a leafy lane I wandered,
  And I met a little maid.
Oh, she set my bosom burning
  With her modest, winsome air!
But she left me at the turning—
  And the matter ended there.

But I grew a frequent comer
  In that little lonely lane,
And, ere Spring joined hands with Summer
  I had met the maid again.
But, O tranquil sky above me,
  You beheld a life's despair,
For she said she could not love me—
  And the matter ended there.

There were dainty frost-flowers freighting
  Every blade of churchyard grass,
And the village-girls were waiting
  For a bridal-train to pass.
And they had not long to linger
  Ere there came a blushing pair;
And the ring was on her finger—
  And the matter ended there.

If I Must Love.

IF I must love as lovers love in story,
  Let no false witch-fire tempt my soul astray;
Let me adore the star of purest glory
  That ever hushed the night to gaze and pray.

Be her young heart a shrine of tender greenness,
  Where glad hopes sing, mild charities breathe sweet;
Stained by no high-road dust of pride or meanness,
  But dimpled o'er with prints of children's feet.

Fair, too, must be the casket for my jewel—
  Sweet hair, sweet eyes, lips sweet all sweets above;
Then be the maiden kind or be she cruel,
  I shall have loved the thing God made for love.

A Song For the Girl I Love.

A SONG for the girl I love—
God love her!
A song for the eyes of tender shine,
And the fragrant mouth that melts on mine;
The shimmering tresses uncontroll'd
That clasp her neck with tendril gold;
The blossom mouth and the dainty chin,
And the little dimples out and in—
The girl I love—
God love her!

A song for the girl I loved—
God love her!
A song for the eyes of faded light,
And the cheek whose red rose waned to white;
The quiet brow, with its shadow and gleam,
And the dark hair drooped in a long deep dream;
The small hands crossed for their churchyard rest,
And the lilies dead on her sweet dead breast.
The girl I loved—
God love her!

Her Last Posy.

IN the rarest of English valleys
A motherless girl ran wild,
And the greenness and silence and gladness
Were soul of the soul of the child.
The birds were her gay little brothers,
The squirrels her sweethearts shy;
And her heart kept tune with the rain-drops,
And sailed with the clouds in the sky.
And angels kept coming and going,
With beautiful things to do;
And wherever they left a footprint
A cowslip or primrose grew.

She was taken to live in London,
So thick with pitiless folk,
And she could not smile for its badness,
And could not breathe for its smoke.
And now, as she lay on her pallet,
Too weary and weak to rise,
A smile of ineffable longing
Brought dews to her faded eyes:
"Oh me, for a yellow cowslip,
A pale little primrose dear!
Won't some kind angel remember,
And pluck one and bring it here?"

They bought her a bunch of cowslips;
  She took them with fingers weak,
And kissed them, and stroked them, and
    loved them,
  And laid them against her cheek.
"It was kind of the angels to send them,
  And, now I'm too tired to pray,
If God looks down on the cowslips,
  He'll know what I want to say."
They buried them in her bosom,
  And when she shall wake and rise,
Why may not the flowers be quickened,
  And bloom in her happy skies?

It May be so.

THEY say the world's a weary place,
  Where tears are never dried,
Where pleasures pass like breath on glass,
  And only woes abide.
It may be so—I cannot know—
  Yet this I dare to say,
My lot has had more glad than sad,
  And so it has to-day.

They say that love's a cruel jest;
  They tell of woman's wiles—
That poison dips in pouting lips,
  And death in dimpled smiles.
It may be so—I cannot know—
  Yet sure of this I am,
One heart is found above the ground
  Whose love is not a sham.

They say that life's a bitter curse—
  That hearts are made to ache,
That jest and song are gravely wrong,
  And health a vast mistake.
It may be so—I cannot know—
  But let them talk their fill;
I like my life, and love my wife,
  And mean to do so still.

My One Love.

I LOVED him in my dawning years,
  Far years divinely dim;
My blithest smiles, my hottest tears,
  Were evermore for him.
My dreaming when the day began,
  The latest thought I had,
Was still some little loving plan
  To make my darling glad.

They deemed he lacked the conquering wiles
  That other children wear;
To me his face in frowns or smiles
  Was never aught but fair.
They said that self was all his goal,
  He knew no thought beyond;
To me no living human soul
  Was half so true and fond.

Full many a love was mine ere now,
  In life's capricious May,
And many a lightly-whispered vow
  The breezes bore away.
But looking back on friends betrayed,
  And lovers left to rue,
I yet can say, "In shine or shade
  He ever found me true."

In love's eclipse, in friendship's dearth,
  In grief and feud and bale,
My heart has learnt the priceless worth
  Of one that cannot fail.
And, come what must, or come what may,
  Nor love, nor praise, nor pelf
Shall tempt my faith from thee to stray,
  My sweet, my own—Myself.

Landscapes, Seasons, and Flowers.

An Old Blusterer.

WITH snores, and roars, and banging of the doors,
With moaning in the chimneys, and creaking in the floors;
With flaps, and slaps, and knocks like runaway raps,
And twisting round of petticoats, and snatching bows and caps,
With whisking off of clean shirts, ready for the starch,
Bursting twenty ways at once, here's old March.
March, we do not mind you!
Bluster while you stay.
April trips behind you,
And then comes May,
Lengthening eves, and opening leaves, and rose-faced May.

The Darling of the Year.

APRIL, my April,
Ever fresh and dear,
Sweet sixteen among the months,
Darling of the year!
Ere your smile can flash and die,
Lo, a tear o'ertakes it;
Ere the tear is fully globed
Dainty laughter shakes it.
Loose your curls upon the wind—
That shall 'tice the swallow;
Press your lips upon the spray
And the rose shall follow.

Green Fields & Young Faces.

GREEN fields and young faces,
  Soft sky and flowers—
Ah, in far-off, faëry places,
  Once they were ours !

Now, when cares and wrinkles thicken,
  Brown locks are grey,
Do the hedgerows somewhere quicken,
  Flushing with May ?

Are the buttercups as golden ?
  Do the harebells chime,
In those meadows of the olden
  Blessed time ?

Look, how cold those skies above us—
  Ah me, to walk
Where the cowslips know and love us
  And the sparrows talk !

Hush ! the wistful children heed us,
  Pausing in their play ;
Darlings, take our hands and lead us—
  You know the way.

June is Come.

HAWTHORN snows are turning pink !
All the air is wine to drink ;—
June is come—my lassie, think
  In that word what joy reposes !

Rarer for an early shower,
Like the heart of some sweet flower,
  See, the golden day uncloses !
    Blow a kiss to sorrow—
    Let him call to-morrow ;
  Come and gather roses.

Junes Long Fled.

OH, do you remember, say,
  Junes long fled ?
How the golden sunshine lay
  On your golden head ?

All sweet wafts and murmurs blent
  O'er the sense would come ;
O the rich sweetwilliam scent,
  And the drowsy hum !

All the sky was built of blue,
  Rain could never fall ;
All the glad world looked to you,
  King and core of all.

Every daisy laughed and stirred,
  Pleased to have you near,
Every sparrow kept a word
  For your private ear.

Gone away! gone away!
  Summers now are cold;—
Shall we find you *there* one day,
  Lost Junes of old?

Clock, Dull Preacher.

CLOCK, dull preacher, there dost stand
  At thy crabb'd employment,
Pointing out with shaking hand
  Texts against enjoyment;—
"Tick! the good sun sinks apace;
  Tack! the daisy closes;"—
Stop his pulse and hide his face—
  Smother him with roses.

Sweet Hours Fly.

AH me! well-a-day!
  Sweet hours fly;
Bright rose on yonder spray
  E'en thou must die.

Look, look! a little gust—
  The poor leaves lie!
Give not to-morrow trust—
  Sweet hours fly.

Days of Dream.

ROSES, roses everywhere!
  Bare and burnished sky;
Lovely languors in the air—
  That's July.

Cherries tepid in the sun,
  Slow bees droning by;
All rich perfumes merged in one—
  That's July.

Golden glamour, gauzy steam!
  Hearts that ask not why
All is sweet and all a dream—
  That's July.

A Lost Song.

THERE was a little fairy bird,
  One far-receded year,
That sang to me the sweetest word
  That ever ravished ear.
The lanes were green, my heart was young,
  The world was quick with May;
And there, amidst the roses hung,
  He trilled that haunting lay.
It stirs my heart with lovely pain
  Beneath this Autumn sky;—
Ah me! to hear it once again—
  But once—before I die!

An Autumn Picture.

THE bracken is burning read,
  The bramble is scarlet and gold;
There's a scent of leaves that are dead;
  The roses litter the mould.
The fields that rustled with corn
  Are spiky and cropt to sight;
And misty are dusk and morn,
  And the sun sets red at night.
The sun sets red and round,
  And the dark has a breath that nips;
The last pear plumps on the ground,
  And splits to its dead-black pips.

Firelight Dreams.

DREAMS! dreams!
  How they come and go!
Breezy moorlands, mellow gleams,
  Moons of long ago.

Grey old heads win back their gold;
  Down the tangled lane
Feet long stilled beneath the mould,
  Crush the flowers again.

Through the land of might-have-been,
  Blows a perfumed gust,
While I gather with my queen,
  Roses turned to dust.

Ah! that bright and fearless brow!
  Ah! those thronging schemes!
What is left an old man now?
  Dreams—dreams!

Ah! Long Ago.

I COULD hear the harebells blue
  Shake their music dainty-bold;
And I knew, ah! well I knew—
  Where the rainbows stored their gold;
And the friendly laughing elves
Held me one among themselves.
All the world was bathed in bliss;
Nothing ever came amiss;
Life was sweeter than a kiss,
  Brighter than a rose in blow;
When was this? when was this?
  Ah! long ago.

Epilogue.

Oh, the sea, with glory kissed,
Flashed to gold and amethyst!
Oh, the skies were torn apart,
Leaf by leaf of quickening glows,
Till we viewed the very heart
Of Heaven's dazzling rose!

* * * *

Yonder—far away—I said,
We shall find that glory fled.

THE END.

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