

The book cover is a deep red color with a fine, woven texture. It features a large, embossed floral design in the center, consisting of a central stem that branches out into several large, stylized leaves or petals. The design is symmetrical and intricate. The title "Meeting Fancies" is printed in a gold, cursive font within a circular area of the embossed design. At the bottom, the author's name "William F. Kirk" is printed in a gold, cursive font within a decorative, horizontal frame.

*Meeting
Fancies*

William F. Kirk

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Fleeting Fancies

By
William F. Kirk



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To "Clarinda"

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Roll Call in Corea

Slowly died the last red sunbeam, slowly came the hush of night
Where the moon-illuminated stronghold of the bearded Muscovite
Broke the landscape's rolling contour in a fair Korean vale;
Many a warrior's heart was heavy, many a warrior's cheek was pale.
For the bloody fight was o'er,
Silenced was the cannon's roar,
 All was quiet as a form without a soul;
And, before the call of taps,
Several noncommissioned chaps
 Volunteered half-heartedly to call the roll.

Major Hitthedopesky, present,
 Major Fourflushoffsky, here,
Brave old Spikethegunsky, absent,
 Bugler Blowsky standing near.
Punkeroff is here, and Sniffsky,
Pretzelvich and Michael Stiffsky,
Up spake Quartermaster Biffsky:
 "Can't lose me, boys, never fear!"

Present, too, were Bobtailstraightsky,
 Acesupsky, Blufferoff,
Cushioncaromsky, Pingpongsky,
 Vladimir Onelungeroff;
Butterinsky, Maltesecatky,
Lageroff and Antifatsky
Ivan Caseyatthebatsky
 And the selfish Feetintroff.

Not to mention many more, with appellations much the same,
Who retorted "Here" and "Present" when the time to answer came.

• • • • •

Slowly spread the crimson sunrise, and the birdies in the trees
Sang a song that sounded hullv to the Muscovite main squeeze.

"By my beardsky!" muttered he,

"'Twas a glorious victoree!

Valiant Spikethegunsy had to go, poor soul!

But the only other chap

Was the noncommissioned yap

Who succumbed to lockjaw when he called the roll!"

The Old Autograph Album

Among the relics of the past,
The links of Memory's clinging chain
That, with its meshes, binds me fast
To days that cannot come again,
There is no prize more precious than
This booklet; thoughtfully I scan
Its yellow pages, scribbled o'er
By many whom I knew of yore.
Here a refrain expressing love
Beneath the picture of a dove,
And there a half-sarcastic quip,
All traced in childish penmanship.

"If you love me as I love you,
No knife can cut our love in two."
'Neath that trite sentiment I see
A name once passing dear to me.
Across the past my memory flies—
I see a pair of laughing eyes;
I press a little hand that lay
Within my own, that summer day.
Again our childish vow we take—
Oh that I might, for old time's sake,
Once more those little fingers grasp
That since have felt an angel's clasp.
"No knife can cut our love in two,"
Still, it was but an earthly strand,
And what a knife could never do
Was, as a higher power planned,
Accomplished by the Reaper's hand.

O treasured names! O Memory!
What were existence without thee?
For art thou not the magic key

With which we penetrate the seal
That locks away the musty past
And, in our leisure moments, steal
Great solace from that storeroom vast?
Bereft of thee, how man would grope
Into the future's unknown scope,
As, up some storm-swept, rocky slope,
The shipwrecked mariner doth crawl,
Before him, dread uncertainty,
Behind, the cruel, yawning sea—
And darkness hanging over all.

The Wooden Indian

Behold the wooden Indian
Who stands outside the door,
And guards with frown and hatchet
The old tobacco store.
He never beat a grocery bill,
He never told a lie;
He never took a longing look
At bourbon, fizz, or rye.

Behold the wooden Indian—
A mass of oak and paint.
He never made a crooked move;
In faith, he is a saint.
He never bought a stack of chips
And sat into a game;
He never rushed a chorus girl
Nor flirted with a dame.

Behold the wooden Indian
Who, on the other hand,
Was never known to help the poor
That fill our glorious land;
Who never heard the piteous cry
Of him that starved alone;
Who never gave a hungry dog
So much as one small bone.

Behold the wooden Indian
(And clay is much like wood)
Who never did a bit of harm
Nor yet a bit of good.
His family is not extinct,
In fact, one often meets
A lot of wooden Indians
A-walking on the streets!

The New Stenographer

I have a new stenographer—she came to work today;
She told me that she wrote the Graham system.
Two hundred words a minute seemed to her, she said, like play,
And word for word at that—she never missed 'em.
I gave her some dictation—a letter to a man;
And this, as I remember it, was how the letter ran:

“Dear Sir: I have your favor, and in reply would state
That I accept the offer in yours of recent date.
I wish to say, however, that under no condition
Can I afford to think of your free lance proposition.
I shall begin tomorrow to turn the matter out.
The copy will be ready by August 10th, about.
Material of this nature should not be rushed unduly.
Thanking you for your favor, I am yours very truly.”

She took it down in shorthand with apparent ease and grace;
She didn't call me back, all in a flurry.
Thought I: “At last I have a girl worth keeping round the place!”
Then said: “Now write it out—you needn't hurry.”
The Remington she tackled, now and then she struck a key,
And after thirty minutes this is what she handed me:

“Dear Sir: I have the feever and in a Pile i Sit
And I except the Offer as you Have reasoned it,
I wish to see however That under any condishun
Can I for to think of a Free Lunch preposishun?
I Shal be in tomorrow To, turn the mother out,
The cap will be red and Will cosst \$10 about.
Mateeriu of this nation should not rust N. Dooley
Thinking you have the Feever I am Yours very Truey?.”

Marbles

Ragged, rugged little urchins, playing marbles in the street,
Oftentimes I pause to watch you as you eagerly compete
For the white and colored “commies” trampled in the slush and snow,
And I think about the playmates of the days of long ago.
I remember how my marbles, piled in gay, fantastic heaps,
Sometimes vanished slowly, surely, in the dizzy whirl of “keeps.”
And I recollect the rapture that was mine when lucky play
Sent me from the game a winner—not so often, by the way.

One there was who used to capture all the agates in my sack,
Then by dint of careless playing he would always give them back.
Dear old chum, your boyish triumphs marked the end of your success;
As you grew, capricious Fortune e’er denied you her caress.
With a heart too big for scheming and a mind too high for greed,
You departed for a playground where I know you will succeed.
As I watch the noisy youngsters something seems to dim my sight
And I see you as I saw you when the Reaper won the fight.

Ragged, rugged little urchins, playing marbles in the street,
I am thinking of the journey that awaits your busy feet.
Carefully I scan the features of the winners in the strife.
And I think about the trials in the marble game of Life.
You will not for aye be pitted ’gainst the rivals of today,
Frolic, for the game is easy—time enough for rougher play.
May the vain regret that smites you when you lose your colored toys
Be the worst that e’er assails you. God be with you, little boys.

Russia vs. Japan

Now unleash the dogs of war,
Sic 'em, Towserosky!
That's what Russia's aching for—
Soon we'll know who's bossky.
Here, Mikado—sic 'em, you!
Chew the Czar's old shinsky;
Fight like Hades—fight it through,
And you stand to winsky!
Bow! Wow!
At 'em, now,
Till they are all insky!

Come Mikado—go it, lad!
Fight for old Japansky!
Put a crimp in Adam Zad,
Walking like a mansky!
Make no truce with Adam Zad—
That would only vex us;
Shoot, and shoot to kill, B'gad!
Like they do in Texas.
Bow! Wow!
Soak 'em now,
In the solar plexus!

Now unleash the dogs of war,
Sic 'em, Towserosky!
Do not bluff Mikado, or
Yours will be the lossky!
Says J. Bull, the referee,
“Now, ere you begin it,
You can hit with one arm free—
May the better win it!”
Bow! Wow!
Sic 'em now!
Glad we aren't in it!

Ballade of Brown Earth

We spurn the dust beneath our feet
 What time we linger, one brief day;
The steeds of Destiny are fleet,
 They whirl us swiftly on our way;
 We live, laugh, love—and then we pray,
A church bell tolls its requiem slow.
 Brown earth, though scorned by human clay,
Into thy depths all men must go.

The flower spreads its fragrance sweet
 And sings a silent song of May;
Its advent joyfully we greet;
 We pluck it in our wanton play,
 Nor reck that once a seedlet lay
In thy cold clasp—and even so,
 Brown earth, the Law we must obey;
Into thy depths all men must go.

The mold of emperors will meet
 The dust of God's unknown array;
A universal winding sheet,
 Nor sage nor serf can tell thee nay.
 A moment o'er thy face we stray
Ere Fate resolves the dice to throw,
 And then, brown earth, the price we pay—
Into thy depths all men must go.

L'ENVOI.

Sand in the hour glass, slip away;
 We cannot stem the fateful flow.
Brown earth, we tremble 'neath thy sway—
 Into thy depths all men must go.

As a Rule

In the morning when I rise
I remark with sundry sighs:
“I must ginger up today—
To much time I’ve thrown away.
I must cut out all the frills,
Frown upon the pace that kills,
Knuckle down with might and main,
And some lost ground thus regain.”
So soliloquizing, I
Eat my breakfast on the fly;
Then my ardor seems to cool,
As a rule.

In the evening I retire,
Troubled with forebodings dire,
Vowing that another day
Will behold me on the way
To success and wealth—two things
That persistent plugging brings.
“Yes,” I mutter, “starting in
Right away, I’ll strive like sin.
Art is long and time is brief
And I will not come to grief;
For I’ll sever all the ties
That I know demoralize.”
But before another day
Has completely passed away,
I begin to make complaint.
At my self-imposed restraint
I am kicking like a mule—
As a rule.

As a rule,
In this great terrestrial school.

.....
Lessons taught by aches and sorrow
Must be learned again tomorrow.
Learned tomorrow, will they stay
Mastered in the future? Nay!
Preachers say, with solemn zest,
Man is but a child, at best;
This comparison is flat—
Man, methinks, is worse than that:
He is just a plain damphool—
As a rule.

“Cross Your Heart”

When we were boys together, Bill, you were my bosom friend;
We used to fish together up the creek, around the bend.
And you and I were wont to tramp o’er many a weary mile,
Armed with those rusty muskets, fifty years behind the style.
You were a born romancer, Bill, and well do I recall
How, when you told your yarns, I used to greet you with this stall:

“Cross your heart,
Black and blue!
Show me, now,
That it’s true!”

I recollect the readiness with which you “crossed your heart,”
And told another story with the same convincing art.
Of course I could not doubt you after you had stood the test
And traced the sign I asked for on your sunburnt, blistered breast;
And thus you used to get away with many a weird old tale—
One time you even made me think that you had caught a whale!

“Cross your heart,
Black and blue!
Show me, now,
That it’s true!”

Tonight I sit alone and conjure up those happy hours
When you and I, barefooted lads, roamed wild among the flowers.
And, looking back, I love to think I never doubted you,
For under all your fancies beat a heart courageous, true.
Both day and night I’ve seen that sight—the boy—the cracking ice,
The cries for help—the brave response—and you—you paid the price!

“Cross your heart,
Cold and still,
Lay your hands—
Dear old Bill!”

The Man that Grinds

Now this is the song of the man that grinds—
The song of the hero unsung,
Who slaves through the day in a resolute way
For meager results and indifferent pay
And praise from a flattering tongue.

The first flush of dawn sees him right at his post,
The sun bids farewell to him there;
His comrades forsake him for pleasanter fields,
But seldom he falters and never he yields,
And always he faces despair.

The plutocrat gloats o'er his store of gold
Late wrenched from unfortunate hands;
He chuckles and schemes, and greedily dreams,
And watches the shimmering, soul-stunting streams
Of wealth that he proudly commands.

The genius seeks madly for further acclaim,
For laurels and evergreen bays;
He mumbles his lines, and for eulogy pines,
And ever he chases the phantom that shines
In Fame's dim and tortuous maze.

But this is the song of the man that grinds—
The song of the hero unknown,
Who adds two and two, and never gets through
Until, when his loved ones have bidden adieu,
He wearily comes to his own.

A Little Man

A little man dwelt in a little town
A little over twenty years ago;
He gained a little portion of renown
Within the little crowd he used to know.
He wed a little maid when twenty-one,
And later on they had a little son.

This little man had little to regret,
He had but little patience with the weak;
When others fell, his eyes were never wet,
With sinners he had little time to speak.
Instead, he went to church a little late
And dropped a little nickel in the plate.

He drank a little coffee now and then,
But little stronger liquid passed his lips;
He mingled little with Bohemian men;
Life's wine he drank in stingy little sips.
When travelers came to him for food or bed,
With little pain he shook his little head.

He made a little fortune rapidly
By grinding labor out of little arms
And by foreclosing a variety
Of little mortgages on little farms.
He died—and 'neath the weeping willow bough,
A little worm is working on him now.

The Song of the Hammer

At the home of a dame devout,
Who in mission work always led,
The sewing society sat about,
Plying their needles and thread;
And in a melodious key,
Without hesitation or stammer,
Incessantly and relentlessly,
They sang the “Song of the Hammer”:

Knock, knock, knock,
With never a halt or pause;
Knock, knock, knock,
Without provocation or cause.
Characters white as snow
Are daubed with spots of black,
While these righteous, merciful sisters sew
To cover the heathen’s back.

Knock, knock, knock,
None whom they know is spared;
Knock, knock, knock,
How their neighbor’s faults are aired!
The absent members, too,
Come in for their share of abuse,
While these worthy dames, with much ado,
Sew shirts for the heathen’s use.

Knock, knock, knock,
While the hours are dragging slow;
Knock, knock, knock,
Till they all get up to go.
Their work for the day is o’er,
Their duty done with zest,
And when each is at home alone once more.

She'll trim up all the rest!

Oh men with sisters dear,

With wives and sweethearts glad!

Did you ever happen to hear

Them giving their friends the gad?

If not, sneak home some day

And list to the sewing club's clamor,

As they sing that old, familiar lay

Entitled "The Song of the Hammer."

The Jokesmith's Prayer

I do not ask for lasting fame—
I seek not for the gift sublime,
That wins the flattering acclaim
Of those who love immortal rhyme.
I only pray that what I write
May help to “knit care’s raveled sleeve,”
That it may curve, with laughter light,
The white, drawn lips of those that grieve.

I do not ask for riches great,
I do not long for pomp and power;
The emperor that sits in state
Is helpless at the fateful hour.
I only pray that when the Night
Has closed my eyes, no longer clear,
Upon the marble they will write:
“We laughed with him when he was here.”

Ballade of Better Days

How goes the world with you, old boy?
Has everything been breaking right,
Or has that fleeting phantom Joy
Danced nimbly just beyond your sight?
Think you it is an up-hill fight—
The fight you wage for gold or bays?
No matter—let your heart be light,
And sing a song of better days.

What though associates enjoy
The pleasures of the Sybarite—
The sweets with which you fain would cloy
Your seldom pampered appetite.
Though disappointment may invite
Your thoughts to grope in Sorrow's maze,
Look to the stars beyond the night,
And sing a song of better days.

Dame Fortune sometimes loves to toy,
Ere at the door she ends her flight;
Ulysses tarried long at Troy
Before it yielded to his might;
The path that leads to yonder height
Winds through forbidden, rockstrewn ways,
But journey toward the summit white,
And sing a song of better days.

L'ENVOI.

Laugh at the moping cynic's fright,
Stand where the morning sunlight plays,
Pray that the future may be bright,
And sing a song of better days!

When Baby Sang

When Baby sang, we never knew
 How sweet a melody it was—
How dear to us that “Goo la goo”
 Would grow in time to come, because
We did not understand how soon
 Our hearts were doomed to feel the pang
That comes when Death has claimed a boon—
We scarcely heard the plaintive tune
 When Baby sang.

When Baby sang the angels knew
 It was a song too sweet by far
For human ears, and “Goo la goo”
 Now echoes where the seraphs are.
We see the tiny silken shroud,
 We hear the tolling church-bell’s clang—
And then—and then we weep aloud—
We were too cold, we were too proud
 When Baby sang.

Fimmie's Reply

“Please give me,” said the teacher, as she rubbed her tired eyes,
“The names of some great Irishmen, my dears,”
And when a hand waved frantically, she noticed with surprise
The grimy paw was Jimmie McAleer’s!
'Twas something new for Jimmie to be interested when
A question was before the house, and so:
“Well, Jimmie,” said the teacher, “name your famous Irishmen.”
He proudly answered, “Here’s a few I know:

“McGinnity and Hogan,
Mike Kelley, Dicky Cogan,
Jim Collins, Wild Bill Donovan, and Ryan;
McGill and McIntyre,
Spike Shannon and McGuire,
McCarthy, Dolan, Daly, and O’Brien;
Jiggs Donahue, McBride,
Waddell, the Phillie’s pride,
McFarland, Muggs McGraw, and B. McGuirk;
Maloney, Grady, Lally,
Jack Sullivan, O’Malley,
Pat Flaherty, J. Hurley, Eddie Burke,
McCormick and McConnell,
McGilligan, O’Donnell,
McGinley, McNamara, and McGann;
Hugh Duffy and McMackin,
McHale, McGee, McCracken,
O’Neill, McQuaid, McManus, and McMahan!”

“Why, Jimmie!” cried the teacher, “Just wait a moment, please—
What did those folks you mention ever do?
How is it that you didn’t give me any names like these:
Tom Moore, Parnell, and Robert Emmet, too?”
“Gee whiz!” exclaimed the urchin, “I never seen dem guys,
I named de warmest members in de mess;
De fellers you are boostin’ fer can’t be so very wise—
Dey must ’ave played in some bush league, I guess!”

Mae

I.

Once a pretty maid named Mae
(Entre nous) was heard to say:

II.

“Single blessedness is tough;
I have stood it long enough.

III.

“Just as sure as my name’s Mae
I shall marry, right away!”

IV.

In due time, this little dame
Lost the “e” off her front name!

If I Were You

If I were you,
Believe me, I would never do
The many thoughtless, foolish things
That you do constantly; no stings
Of conscience would my soul annoy,
I'd be, in short, a model boy;
Admired by all, brave, noble, true—
If I were you.

If I were you,
My errors would indeed be few.
I'd never look upon the wine,
With no warm members would I dine;
My character would show no flaw,
I'd cut out billiards, pool, and "draw."
At times I'd tackle, I suppose,
A jolly game of dominoes,
But nothing worse—it would not do,
If I were you!

If I were you,
The many people that I knew
In boyhood days, would speak my name
With reverence, and swell my fame.
I'd live in story and in song
As one who could do nothing wrong.
I am, alas, like other men,
And fall down sadly now and then,
Striking the pavement with a slam,
But that's because I'm what I am.
I'd be the best that ever grew—
If I were you.

Incidental Expenses

We have heard it alleged that salvation is free;
Well, so, for that matter, is lunch.
But it costs us some money to get where they be,
And that's no illogical hunch!

Man's Limitations

A man may strive for Fame, and win the prize;
He may become distinguished, rich, and Wise;
But he will never pass that Point where he
Is Flustered by a pair of Goo-Goo eyes.

In Days of Old

In days of old it must have been
Quite hard to be a baby;
There were no patent malted foods
To build up tissues, maybe.
There were no mixtures guaranteed
To check eczema's itching;
No system of massage that could
Create complexions witching.

In days of old it must have been
Quite hard to be a girl;
There were no network costumes then
To make men's senses whirl.
There were no beauty talks to hear,
No iced drinks to taste;
There were no calisthenics for
Diminishing the waist.

In days of old it must have been
Quite hard to be a youth;
No guide to courtship could be found,
Compiled by Antie Ruth.
No "How to Live on Ten a Week,
And Keep a Family, Too."
Without these old, familiar hints,
What could the poor yaps do?

In days of old it must have been
Quite hard to be a man;
There was no way to build a home
On the installment plan.
In days of old it must have been
Quite hard to live at all;
Still, in the past much ice was cut
On this terrestrial ball.

Fashion in the Philippines

Dusky queens
In the far-off Philippines
As a rule
Keep quite cool;
For they wear, yes, they do,
Costumes very peekaboo.
Underneath the bamboo tree
Where the blundering bumble bee
Bums and buzzes, there they sit
Wearing raglans, aber nit.
They believe
Mother Eve
Had the right idea of dress,
And they have few skirts to press;
Oh, the costumes they possess!
Decollette?
I should say.
Talk about your peekaboo
For the breeze to whistle through!
Nine-tenths peek and one-tenth boo—
Yes, indeed, we envy you,
Dusky queens
In the far-off Philippines.

Life

What is life
After all?
Care and strife,
Rise and fall.
Lofty dreams
Soon dispelled,
Cherished schemes
Rudely felled.
Love and spurn,
Kiss and thrust,
Then return
To the dust.
Care and strife,
Rise and fall,
What is life
After all?

Politics in Serbia

There's scandal, awful scandal, in the country o'er the sea,
That recently discarded a distasteful king and queen;
There's talk of sneaking bribery, and boodlers, yes, sir-ee!
And selfish schemes the like of which are very seldom seen.
It surely beats the dickens,
In fact, it beats the band;
The plot forever thickens
And spreads on every hand.
Like coons that prowl for chickens,
These politicians bland,
Are steeping in corruption the Skupshtina!

It seems that Julep Jagovich was working for a bill
Revoking ad valorem rates—a specious measure which
Would tend to wrong God's patient poor, and also help to fill
The coffers of the magnates, and that Georgie Graftarich
Remarked, "I need the money,
And I will plug for you;
Just sign the checks, my honey,
I'll see what I can do."
With these manoeuvres funny,
This toga-wearing crew,
Is steeping in corruption the Skupshtina!

Assemblyman Whitesealovich, while partially lit up,
Unwittingly confessed that Jagovich had handed him
A tidy little bank roll, and had asked him out to sup,
And saturated him with wine, and said "Please help us, Jim."
'Tis really very shocking,
There's bound to be a roar;
Each politician's stocking
With swag is running o'er;
Despite the people's knocking,
Fat lobbyists galore,
Are steeping in corruption the Skupshtina!

The Lights of the City

I see them twinkling across the hills,
Where a far-off city lies;
Like sunbeams glinting on rippling rills
They dance before my eyes;
And I ask myself, is Paradise
Beyond that distant line,
Or Hades, haunted by sobs and sighs,
Where the lights of the city shine?

The sound of silvery laughter seems
To echo from over there,
Suggesting nothing but rapturous dreams
And freedom from cruel care—
Then I hear a cry of intense despair,
A piteous, pleading whine;
Gaunt poverty crawls o'er the thoroughfare
Where the lights of the city shine.

And then I know, as I should have known,
That, search for it as we may,
There is no spot where pleasure alone
Holds undisputed sway.
The joy that may consecrate your today,
The grief that may darken mine,
Walk hand in hand o'er the crowded way,
Where the lights of the city shine.

A Fallen Dynasty

Like a lightning flash from an azure sky
Came the summons that turned a king to clay,
And Pity and Sorrow hastened by
The shambles where Servia's monarch lay;
He who had walked the downward way,
And dragged in the mire a nation's throne,
Till in his ears rang the slogan "Slay!"
And stained with crimson, he fell alone.

Alone? Ah, no! At the ruler's side
A scarlet woman lay cold and still;
The reaper caressed his bawdy bride
With clammy kisses that thrill and kill,
And royal blood, in a sickening rill,
Flowed sluggishly over the marble floor—
A suffering people had shown their will,
A dissolute leader's reign was o'er.

The Winners

The world doesn't always rely on the chaps
That put up the smoothest appearance;
They're often, indeed, very commonplace yaps,
Sans intellect, sans perseverance.
After all, we are judged in our journey through life
By the gray matter under our hoods,
And the men that win out in the strenuous strife
Are the men that deliver the goods.

A man may be dignified, pompously so,
Distinguished and ultra-impressive;
His neighbors may deem him the whole blooming show,
And call him a leader progressive.
But sooner or later his boom will collapse,
And back he will jog to the woods.
The battles are won, from reveillé to taps,
By the men that deliver the goods!

The Umpire's Rubaiyat

I.

A Book of Rules, a frown upon my brow,
An indicator, a good Eye, and thou
Beside me, shrieking "Lobster, thou art Rank!"
Oh this, methinks, were agony enow.

II.

Strange, is it not, that when I call a Strike
I 'rouse in every Breast sincere dislike;
Yet if I call that self-same curve a Ball
I am abused by Tom and Dick and Mike.

III.

What boots it though a Player be tagged out
Beyond the slightest shadow of a Doubt?
The very instant that I Wave my hand,
From stand and Bleachers comes a threat'ning shout.

IV.

I sometimes think that when my race is run,
When three Strikes have been called, and, all undone,
I hear St. Peter read the Riot Act,
I'll kick on his Decision, just for fun!

Her Smile

She smiles on me—a fleeting smile
That struggles through a wall of tears;
It lingers for the briefest while,
Then disappears.
But while it lurks in those dear eyes
My soul floats into paradise.

She is not always at my side
When thus she smiles; though she and I
Were parted by the ocean wide,
Her smile would fly
Across the rolling, restless sea
To meet the yearning eyes of me.

She smiles on me—God, who am I
That such an angel thus should deign
To hear my humble, heart-born cry?
Madly I drain
The wine-filled cup of ecstasy
That sparkles when she smiles on me.

Dust

I.

I stood within an old, deserted room,
Long given over to the spider's play,
And watched the busy insect at his loom
While dropped the sun behind the hills away.

II.

Brown dust lay scattered on the mold'ring floor,
Dust filled each nook in that drear, silent place—
And as I gazed, a million fragments more
Fell noiselessly through scarce-resisting space.

III.

Long time I stood in meditation deep,
Then asked my soul, "What are these grains of dust
That in the confines of this chamber sleep
Eternally, 'mid draperies of must?"

IV.

My soul made answer: "This deserted room
O'er which the dying crimson sunlight plays
Is thy past life. The dust motes in its tomb
Are but the ghosts of fruitless yesterdays."

The End

I asked a laughing little lad
 “What is the end of all this fun?”
His upturned eyes grew wide and sad,
 He answered “Gee, I just begun!
I s’pose that when I have to die
 If I am good I’ll prob’ly go
To Heaven—I dunno jes’ why,
 But anyhow Ma told me so!”

I asked a solemn clergyman
 “What is the end, sir—can you tell?”
He answered pompously “I can!
 For Christians, heaven; for sinners, hell!
Repent, ere yet it is too late;
 No longer let black sin besmirch
Your weary soul; see! yonder gate
 Leads to the one and only church!”

I asked a soul without a name,
 With paint upon her stolid face:
“What is the end of all this shame?
 What lies beyond this primrose pace?”
She paused a moment. From her hand
 The wineglass fell, and then she laughed;
“The end?” she sneered, “a bed of sand,
 And possibly a marble shaft.”

I asked a sage “What is the end?”
 He shook a head as white as snow,
And calmly answered me, “My friend,
 You ask in vain—I do not know!”
This was the answer of the seer,
 And hopelessly I turned to go,
The echo ringing in my ear:
 “I do not know; I do not know!”

On the Rods

Now the hoary monarch Winter sways his scepter o'er the land,
Now a thousand flowing rivers turn to flint at his command.
Tinkling sleighbells all about us ring a song of praise for him,
And we shudder in his presence, for his smile is gray and grim.
Yet we have no cause to fear him; the unfortunates he prods
Are the ragged, frozen creatures who are riding on the rods—
 Underneath, upon the rods,
 Stolid, sullen, clinging clods!

Lounging in the Pullman palace, you are longing for the end
Of the journey you are making; does it pall upon you, friend?
Down beneath your rugs and cushions, down beneath the coach's floor,
Hanging blindly to the shafting, dazed and maddened by the roar
Of the flying train are others, flayed and cursed of the gods,
Praying for the termination of the journey on the rods—
 Underneath, upon the rods,
 Stolid, sullen, clinging clods!

Sometimes muscles lose their power, when the frost is biting deep,
Sometimes cold benumbs the senses of the men that dare not sleep.
Sometimes by the tourist dozing in his berth is felt a jar,
And a roll of rags and sinews whizzes from the flying car.
Some pedestrian, next morning, as along the ties he plods,
Finds the form of him who parted from his brothers on the rods—
 Underneath, upon the rods,
 Stolid, sullen, clinging clods!

Shov'lin' Snow

I'm glad it's gittin' winter,
Because I like to sling
A heap o' good hard snowballs,
An' skate, an' everything.
But gee! I ain't so happy,
At six o'clock or so,
When Pa he comes an' calls me
An' starts me shov'lin' snow.

I hate to git up early,
An' scrape off every walk,
But Pa he jes' says "Hustle!"
He won't stand no back talk.
So when the storm gits started
It makes me sore; I know
I won't git any breakfast
Till I'm through shov'lin' snow.

I've got to clean the front walk.
An' clean the back walk, too,
An' dig around the porches
Till both my hands is blue.
Sometimes I feel like swearin',
An' wish that I could go
To Afriky—them niggers
Git out o' shov'lin' snow.

Well, anyhow, I'd rather
Be me than Jimmie Black;
He fell off their big woodshed
Last year, an' hurt his back.
He sets up in his window
An' waves at me—I know
He'd like to come right over
An' help me shov'lin' snow.

The River

Past dingy shops and grimy, slimy walls,
Past tall, gaunt buildings frowning on the brink,
The sluggish river crawls upon its way,
Bearing, upon its scum-caked breast, the foulness
Of all the city. Underneath the bridge
It creeps, and reaches up its cruel maw
For her who stands alone, irresolute—
For her who tasted of the Dead Sea fruit
And feels the ashes still on her white lips.
She pauses, yet the river does not fear,
For it has seen that same wild look before,
On faces mirrored in its calm expanse,
And well it knows its pale, slim bride will come!

Ballade of Crimson Light

See! In the west the sun goes down,
Leaving, to mark its stately flight,
A gorgeous, scintillating crown
To deck awhile the brow of Night—
A crown that fades from mortal sight
Slowly, as fades the sheen of dew.
Gaze long upon that crimson light—
Brothers, it is the life-blood's hue!

Look yonder, where the tunnel's frown
Awees, as a gulf in Hades might!
O'er faces soot-begrimed and brown
There sweeps a wave of ashy white,
For eagle eyes have read aright
The danger signal, deadly, true;
Gaze long upon that crimson light—
Brothers, it is the life-blood's hue!

Now come we to the tawdry town,
Where lurks the Lust-worm's searing blight;
Bold Shame stalks forth, in tinsel gown,
Cold, purchased kisses to invite;
And red, red beacons, burning bright,
Dance wantonly before our view;
Gaze long upon that crimson light—
Brothers, it is the life-blood's hue.

L'ENVOI.

Prince! When you stood upon the height,
Watching the rainbow, thus spake you:
Gaze long upon that crimson light—
Brothers, it is the life-blood's hue!

The Message of the Snow

Uster sorter like the snow,
That was many years ago,
When I was a rompin' kid—
Liked the winter then, I did.
Uster take my sled at night,
When the stars was shinin' bright,
And go slidin' on the hill,
Me and Jack and little Phil.

Uster sorter like the snow,
When my beard began ter grow.
Twenty-three, and six feet two—
Kinder figured I would do!
Bought a linen collar and
A Jim-slicker four-in-hand;
Combed my hair and shined my boots,
Like them citified galoots;
Went ter call on little Grace,
Schoolma'am down ter Griggsby's place.
In the cutter at my side,
'Peared like she enjoyed the ride,
With the sleighbells jinglin' loud,
Me a-feelin' mighty proud.
And the moon a-lookin' down,
From the hill, behind the town.

Uster sorter like the snow
Them glad days, but I dunno
That I care ter see it now—
Fact is, I dunno jes' how
Ter express it, but the snow
Seems ter whisper, kinder low,
Jes' the words she tried ter say
When she found she couldn't stav.

And it allers looks so white,
Like her face that winter night,
When they called me ter the bed,
And she raised her golden head
Long enough ter say goodbye,
Me a-tryin' not ter cry.
Uster sorter like the snow,
That was many years ago.

“Has-beens”

An old reporter faced the blinding sleet,
He went the rounds, this stolid “also-ran,”
As plods the sentry on his dreary beat,
A broken-down, discouraged, heartsick man;
Time was when he presided o’er a sheet—
For many years he stayed up in the van;
Then, somehow, came the oft-encountered slip,
But he was good, before he lost his grip!

Boisterous rooters at a baseball game
Laughed when a fielder fumbled easy flies;
They jeered and hooted at a man whose name
They had for years been proud to idolize;
Awhile he held the pinnacle of fame,
Till the descent, far swifter than the rise,
Began—he sadly took the downward trip,
But he was good, before he lost his grip!

A ragged mountebank amused the crowd,
Who recked not, as they saw his mirthless smile,
That once he stood, with head in deference bowed,
Before a splendid audience, the while
Their wild applause resounded, long and loud—
Another idol soon became the style;
Distinction’s cup passed to another lip,
But he was good, before he lost his grip!

Thousands have striven, reached the hazy goal,
Lingered awhile with pardonable pride,
Then, leaving hope forever on the knoll,
Have tottered feebly down the other side
Unwatched. Alas! Full many a hungry soul
Yearns for the fickle plaudits now denied—
Yearns for acclaim, and gets a cruel slur;
God bless the “has-beens,” just for what they were!

A Left-Handed Compliment

When Ham was born the neighbors came,
Full many a scandal-slinging dame;
They viewed the mug of little Ham,
And watched the squirming youngster jam
His coal-black paws into his eyes—
His color caused untold surprise.
His heavy lips, his kinky hair,
Made all these worthy matrons stare.
Old Noah, who was standing near,
Remarked with pride, “Ain’t he a dear?”
“He is,” they said, “the little cad
Is just the picture of his dad!”

Some Good Counsel

If you have a chance to lie,
 Pass it up;
It will hurt you by and by—
 Pass it up.
If you have a chance to shine
As director in a mine,
They'll preserve the notes you sign;
 Pass it up.

If a man asks you to drink,
 Pass it up;
Disregard his tempting wink,
 Pass it up.
If you're asked to take a hand
In a game with gamblers bland,
Though you think you understand,
 Pass it up!

If you're asked to play the races,
 Pass it up;
'Tis a pastime that disgraces—
 Pass it up;
If a maid with big black eyes
Your acquaintance seems to prize,
And her winning tactics tries—
 Suit yourself!

Wanted—A Subject

Here I am
Typewriter in lap,
Plenty of paper,
Plenty of words,
All kinds of time—
And no idees!
Let's see,
What shall I write?
Shall I begin a stately ode to Night?
No—I prefer to tackle something light,
Something that sorter writes itself, you see—
In that event the public can't blame me.
I think I'll try
A little skit
About the sky
And clouds that flit
Serenely by—
No, that's not it!

I'll start
All over again
And let Imagination
Run things to suit herself.
I'll tell about the wedding
Of the lily and the rose;
That's such a fresh, new subject,
Ne'er touched in verse or prose.
Once there was a lily
Growing in a dell—
That settles it!
A rhymester
Who will sing about a lily
Growing in a dell
Ought to be fired out of the union.

Guess I'll give it up.
Maybe you'll think
After reading this
That I haven't written anything—
And you'll be right!

September

Crimson leaves,
 Bracing weather,
Golden sheaves,
 Rusting heather.
County fairs,
 State fairs, too;
Apples, pears,
 Ripe clear through.
Hazy skies,
 Frosty air;
Paradise
 Everywhere!

In Limerick Land

I.

In Limerick land the rhymester strays
Like a happy child o'er flower-strewn ways.
He spurns the sonnet, the stately ode,
The ballade, the musical villanelle;
His Pegasus gallops along the road
And the ragtime ring of a tinkling bell
Floats through the air on every hand
In laughing, liling, Limerick land.

It is never a resonant ring,
The ring of the song that we sing;
It ripples along,
A quaint little song,
And the subject is any old thing!

II.

In Limerick land no sorrow dwells,
We hear no tolling of funeral bells.
The songs of death, of the sable hearse,
Must ever be couched in stately verse.
The deeds of heroes, the clash of arms,
The grim recital of War's alarms
Make deathless themes for songsters grand—
We sing not thus in Limerick land.

It is never a resonant ring,
The ring of the song that we sing;
It ripples along,
A quaint little song,
And the subject is any old thing!

The Belles

From the lakeside come the belles,
 Charming belles;
What a tale of summer bliss each pretty maiden tells!
Now to ball and tea they hustle
Every day and every night;
Now the dress designers hustle
Making waist, skirt, jacket, bustle,
Till the bill is out of sight—
How they soak, soak, soak,
Till poor dad is nearly broke;
Little sundries make it steeper and the total daily swells
For the belles, belles, belles, belles,
 Belles, belles, belles—
For the dainty, dashing, dimpled little belles!

See the tan upon the belles,
 Blistered belles!
See their cunning little forearms, browner far than chestnut shells.
Clad in gowns decollété,
Do they wish this tinge to stay?
Heavens, no!
Now that they've returned to town
They are busy taking off that coat of brown—
It must go!
Soon 'twill disappear, they hope,
And with acid, sand, and soap,
And with various cosmetics that the wily druggist sells,
They are tubbing, scrubbing, rubbing,
Busy belles, belles, belles,
Belles, belles, belles, belles,
All these sunburnt, tawny, freckled little belles.

See the flirting little belles,
 Fickle belles!

As the lovesick young recruit his tale of adoration tells;
At the lake each gay coquette
Longed for suitors, and you bet
Here in town
Percy Smythe and Harold Brown,
Algie Whyte and Willie Smyle
Will be strung in proper style;
They are neither man nor woman,
They are neither brute nor human,
They are Its!
That's right, girlies, give 'em fits!
Yes, they'll rapidly grow dippy 'neath the fascinating spells
Of the belles, belles, belles, belles,
 Belles, belles, belles,
Of the nifty little, shifty little belles!

Perdita

Pride of the music hall was she,
Wild and wanton and fair to see,
With great, dark eyes that smiled on me.

Perdita! Ah, it was years ago,
In a stragglng village in Mexico,
That, lip to glass, I drank her health—
That, lip to lip, I felt the wealth
Of her rich, warm love, the love that reigns
Supreme in proud, Castilian veins.
Lightly I sipped the bubbling wine,
Lightly I called her “Love of mine!”
And thought, as oft in the misty past,
“’Tis an idle dream, and it cannot last.”
True, she vowed that her love was deep,
That in her heart she would ever keep
My image sacred—how could I know?
She had often told
A tale as bold—
This light-o’-love down in Mexico.

But I knew, and sadly the years have flown—
Would to God I had never known!
High ran the game in the gambling hell
And the ivory ball that rolled and fell
Doubled my store at every turn—
 There at my side Perdita stood,
 Queen of a hardened, satanic brood,
Thrilled with a love I was yet to learn.
Dame Fortune smiled, and I could not lose;
Stack after stack of reds and blues
Passed to my side with each swift spin
 Till the scowling wretch behind the wheel
Hissed, with a Spanish oath. “Cash in!”

And then—a shriek and a flash of steel!
I saw the knife as in a dream—
I felt it not, but I heard a scream
As a willowy form sank from my breast
And slim, cold fingers half caressed
My bloodless cheeks. . . . I aimed full well,
Then a murderer's soul sneaked straight to hell.
And Perdita's blood, like purple wine,
Ebb'd, as she whispered "Love of mine!"

Pride of the music hall was she,
Wild and wanton and fair to see,
With great, dark eyes that smiled on me.

Hide and Seek

The years roll by too swiftly—boyhood's days
Seem, when I think of them, exceeding near;
Strange pranks, indeed, the memory sometimes plays—
Tonight I see the old red barn, and hear
A childish voice exclaiming "Don't you peek!"
Hurrah! It is a game of hide and seek.
 "Eenie, meenie, minie, mo,
 Ketch a nigger by the toe!
 If he hollers, let him go;
 Eenie, meenie, minie, mo!"

"There, Jimmie's it! Now hurry up and blind!"
Then comes the scampering for a sheltered nook;
Some hurry far away, some sneak behind
The barn where Jimmie stands; he must not look.
Each crouches like a panther in his lair,
While "it's" shrill voice rings through the evening air:
 "Five, ten, fifteen, twenty,
 Twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five, forty.
 Ready or not, you shall be caught.
 All around the goal is caught!"

Then lynx-eyed Jimmie starts upon the trail;
Here comes a youngster that he doesn't see,
Who, highly pleased that foxy Jim should fail
To spot him, pants out, "One, two, three for me!"
Then Jimmie for his negligence atones
By shrieking, "One, two, three for Billy Jones!"

Old Father Time has not been harsh with me,
And good Dame Fortune now and then has smiled,
But I would give up all, if I might be
Once more a rough-and-tumble, romping child;
If I might mingle with old comrades dear.

And, as in days gone by, this jingle hear:

“Eenie, meenie, minie, mo,
Ketch a nigger by the toe!
If he hollers, let him go;
Eenie, meenie, minie, mo!”

When Love is Dead

When Love is dead the heart grows sad and weary,
The birds no longer twitter in the trees;
Each passing day seems dismal, dark and dreary,
No transient, fleeting pleasure can appease.
Perhaps to all the world we pass for jesters,
But sorrow's arrow, with its poisoned head,
Has sunk into the soul, and there it festers
When Love is dead.

When Love is dead great tears unshed
Make bright eyes lose their luster;
With muffled drum sad mem'ries come
And 'round the soul they cluster.
The heart is but a haunted hut;
The sun of joy can never
Shine through the door and warm it o'er
When Love is dead forever.

Ballade of a Magdalen

Some bars there be that the felons shake—
 Bars in the dungeon gaunt and gray;
Easy to rattle and hard to break,
 Grim and unyielding guardians they,
 Till the ages bid them to be the prey
Of the Worm that turneth all things to dust.
 Bars of the world, that block my way—
These are the bars that will never rust!

Ere the martyr went to the torturing stake
 By ponderous bars he was held at bay;
But the scantiest toll was theirs to take,
 For the jailer came at the break of day,
 And a saint walked forth from the cell to pray,
While the barriers crumbled, as barriers must;
 Bars of the world, that block my way—
These are the bars that will never rust!

Strong are the bars where the madmen wake
 The echoes with riotous roundelay—
Where mumbling maniacs strive to make
 Their exit, eager to gouge and slay;
 But the rivets yield and the bolts decay
'Neath the steady siege of the Worm's fierce lust.
 Bars of the world, that block my way—
These are the bars that will never rust!

L'ENVOI.

Prince, with a curse the price I pay—
 With a curse, a sob, and a dagger thrust.
Bars of the world, that block my way—
 These are the bars that will never rust!

The Kid Behind the Pins

And now the bowling expert for the alleys makes a hike
And diligently strives to get a spare, if not a strike.
Frame after frame, game after game, until his arm is numb
And blisters come to irritate his tired, aching thumb.
Which leads my Muse to warble of a hustling, humble one—
'Tis not the much-praised, loudly-touted man behind the gun,
Nor yet the power behind the throne—the gentleman that skins
These often-mentioned worthies is the kid behind the pins.

The man behind the gun, of course, deserves his meed of praise,
And surely has received it in a multitude of ways.
That he was brave we all admit; that he shot straight we grant,
So straight, in fact, that there are now few Spanish ships extant;
Yet he was not one whit more brave than the perspiring lad
Who faces death for twelve long hours for one small, stingy scad,
Who flinches not when lignum vitæ balls bounce off his shins;
And so, say I, all honor to the kid behind the pins.

The power behind the throne has made his mark in histor-ee,
And potentates have trembled when he set his anger free.
Earl Warwick was a crackajack—he fought in proper style
And made our old friend Ed. the Fourth jump sidewise for awhile.
But ah! he saw his finish at the battle of Barnet.
Whereas the hero of this lay is doing business yet.
So let us pause a moment ere the strenuous game begins,
And breathe a benediction on the kid behind the pins.

When the Frost is on the Pumpkin

(With Apologies to the Reader)

When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the cow,
And the hungry hog is callin' to his tootsy-wootsy sow,
And the hen is in the hennery, layin' eggs to beat the band,
Wal, it's then that I'm the maddest, merriest Reuben in the land.
For the sun is shinin' brightly, in the same ol' sassy way,
And the cellar's full o' taters, and the barn is full o' hay,
And I am full of cider, hard as granite, I'll allow,
When the frost is on the punkin and the fodder's in the cow.

Thar's somethin' kinder doublelike about the things I see—
I see a dozen buildin's whar thar's only two er three;
But, gosh! I ain't no quitter! Fill the tumbler to the brim;
I'll gulp it down, by ginger, though my sight's a-gettin' dim.
I'm done with my fall plowin', and the threshin's over, too,
And so I might as well tank up a little—wouldn't you?
So give us—hic—anuzzer shwig! Lesh drive dull care away
When fro-frosh is on—hic—punkin, and cidersh in ja-jay!

“Good Fellows”

Come, lads, fill up your glasses—
The sun is in the east;
Drink to the winsome lasses
With whom we love to feast.
The sun is in the east, lads,
Come, let us scoff at death!
With wine to cheer we do not fear
The Reaper’s icy breath.

Come, lads, fill up your glasses—
The sun shines overhead;
And though time swiftly passes
The wine is ruby red.
The sun is overhead, lads,
Come, let us drink again!
Fill up, fill up the faithful cup—
Ho, all ye merry men!

Come, lads, fill up your glasses—
The sun is in the west;
The thought of death harasses
Each seared and haunted breast.
The sun is in the west, lads,
And night is drawing nigh.
Upon the brink we drink, we drink—
For thus “good fellows” die.

The Prodigal Son

I once wrote a beautiful poem
Entitled "The Prodigal Son."
I showed it to friends, who pronounced it
The best thing I ever had done.
Some said it was perfectly splendid,
And others said, "Isn't it grand?"
I sent it away to a journal,
The biggest and best in the land.

I wondered how much they would pay me,
And what I would do with the check;
We poets, you know, find it tiresome—
This raking in coin by the peck.
Till finally, one autumn morning,
I came to the office and learned
That during the night, while I slumbered,
The Prodigal Son had returned!

The Dream and the Song

As I slept one night a vision
Came softly to cheer my soul;
'Twas the face of a lovely woman
That into my presence stole.
The face of a Grecian goddess,
The eyes of a fairy queen,
Lustrous and passing tender,
Orbs of Venus, I ween.
And still I can see the halo
That shone o'er that beauteous head,
Though when I rose from my night's repose
The vision itself was dead.

And so, when the minor poet
Strikes softly his timid lyre,
Though lurks in his gentle ballad
No trace of immortal fire,
I hark to the song he fashions,
It finds in my heart a place
Beside the undying memory
Of that beautiful vision-face.
For oft we cherish the music
Of the songs that the poets dream,
Though buried deep their lost lines sleep
'Neath Oblivion's mighty stream.

The Man that Laughs First

You've all heard the trite little motto
That he who laughs last laughs the best;
Be that as it may 'tis a half-hearted way
Of greeting a friend's merry jest.
Perhaps it is wise to be solemn—
To sit back with lips tightly pursed,
Till all of the rest have applauded with zest,
But here's to the man that laughs first.

Of course I am twisting the motto
To suit this melodious lay;
But many I've found who twist it around
In just this identical way.
Pray go to the play if you doubt it,
And wait for the laughter to burst;
The number is vast that waits to laugh last,
So here's to the man that laughs first.

We all like the rollicking fellow
Who sees, in a jiffy, the point;
Who throws back his head and laughs "on the dead,"
Till his features are all out of joint.
The man that laughs last, I imagine,
With a weak sense of humor is cursed;
Let's laugh while we may—'tis but for a day,
So here's to the man that laughs first.

Ballade of a Soldier's Fate

I was a warrior undismayed
 When first I heard the bugle call—
When first, a glittering cavalcade,
 The foemen came, an armed wall
 Like to the columns led by Saul;
I sprang, the ramparts to defend.
 Tonight I am a conquered thrall—
I pray Thee, Father, speed the end!

One of my comrades was afraid;
 I cursed him as he sought to crawl
Far from the awful fusillade;
 I wept not when a flying ball
 Had laid him low; I saw them haul
His form away—poor, craven friend!
 Tonight I do regret it all—
I pray Thee, Father, speed the end.

Against me was the world arrayed,
 The world, and Satan in his stall;
My trusty sword he bade me trade
 For weapons from his arsenal—
 Lust, wine, the wanton's tinsel shawl!
On these he taught me to depend.
 Fight? Nay, 'tis but a drunken brawl—
I pray Thee, Father, speed the end.

L'ENVOI.

Prince! As the purple shadows fall
 I give thee back what thou didst lend.
Night creeps around me like a pall—
 I pray Thee, Father, speed the end!

Now and Then

All of us commit mistakes
 Now and then;
Some of us make serious breaks
 Now and then.
We are apt to set the pace
In this bustling, worldly race
With more recklessness than grace,
 Now and then.

We are fond of breaking out
 Now and then,
And we go too far, no doubt,
 Now and then.
Yes, indeed, 'tis nothing new
To be sorry, through and through,
For the foolish things we do
 Now and then.

Well, we only really live
 Now and then;
Others' faults we can forgive
 Now and then.
At our own, then, let us wink;
Of Life's sea we'd tire, I think,
If we didn't sort o' sink
 Now and then.

As to Orpheus

When Orpheus played upon his lyre
The sun and moon stood still;
With ecstasy and heavenly fire
He seemed all hearts to thrill.
Wild beasts crept 'round him, quite subdued,
With reverence for his art imbued;
And, if Mythology be true,
He took a lonely journey to
The realms of Hades, to set free
His wife, the fair Eurydice.
Full well he knew that he could play
Such music as would even sway
The heart of Pluto, gloomy cuss,
And tame his watchdog, Cerberus.

In the next flat to mine there dwells
A youth who loves to play
His violin; the discord swells
And falls the livelong day.
He plays the "Intermezzo" and
Such classic stuff to beat the band.
He also plays in lighter veins,
For instance, "Hiawatha's" strains
At midnight through the keyhole creep
And rob me of much needed sleep.
I am quite sure this long-haired kid
Could do about what Orpheus did.
At least, his backer I would be,
And buy him an asbestos suit,
If he would hustle down the chute
And look for fair Eurydice!

What Would I Do

(*A Poem of Passion.*)

What would I do
If you, my own, should hail me through
The gloom of twelve long, weary days—
If you should somehow make a raise
And call, you swell of all dear swells,
With twelve cents worth of caramels,
What would I do?

What would I do
If you in sweet abandon threw
Your wiry arms around my neck
And raked in kisses by the peck?
If you, perchance, should whisper low,
“I love you—that is all I know!”
And, as in those glad days of old,
My form in your embrace enfold,
(Strangle hold barred)—if you should kiss
My yearning lips, and deftly miss
The mole contiguous thereto,
What would I do?

What would I do?
Pardon me if I weep a few!
These tears are weak, but you have strayed
To where, mayhap, some fairer maid
More intellectual than I
Softly adjusts your quarter tie.
But if you were to come again,
I would forget the awful pain
Your fickleness has made for me,
And, honey, I would cling to thee
Till thy dear neck was black and blue—
That's what I'd do!

Abou T. Lipton

Abou T. Lipton (may his tribe increase!)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw an angel with a fountain pen
Scribbling upon a sheet of foolscap. Then,
Regaining his composure, Tom sat up,
And asked the angelic one to have a cup
Of his best tea. The angel shook his head,
“I’m on the water wagon now,” he said.
Abou T. Lipton waved his hand; “I see,
But, by the way, what writest thou?” said he.
The heavenly vision answered, “Well, I write
Here on this little sheet, in black and white,
The man whose boat will get the needed place—
The winner in the coming yachting race.”
The gallant Lipton brightened up. “Pray tell,”
He queried, “does the name begin with L?”
“I’m sorry,” said his guest. “It is a shame,
But as things stand, I cannot write your name.”
T. Lipton made reply, “Would I were It,
But put me down as one who never quit!”

The angel wrote and vanished. The next night
He called on Tom again, but not to write.
Said he, “I have, on this large, handsome chart
(A fine example of the engraver’s art)
The names of some true sportsmen, just the best.”
And lo, T. Lipton’s name led all the rest!

Ye Gentle Critic

Down in the pasture, near the creek,
A cricket chirped his little lay;
A jackass heard the effort meek
Whenas, by chance, he ceased to bray.
He waited till the song was o'er,
Listening in amazement dumb,
And though he would have stood for more,
He only said, "It's pretty bum!"

And thus the rhymester's roundelays
Are often styled by some that list;
Perhaps he strives for gold or bays,
Perhaps he seeks but to exist.
Heed not the critical harangue,
Sing on, O bards, enjoyed by some.
Remember, when the cricket sang,
The jackass said, "It's pretty bum!"

Hiawatha on Baseball

“Then, again,” said Hiawatha,
“I am somewhat interested
In this baseball proposition.
I’m a red-hot, ranting rooter,
Very fond of pitcher’s battles,
Fond of extra-inning contests,
Always out to kill the umpire
When he makes a bum decision.
It is claimed, my little dearies,
That this pastime was invented
By a gent named Father Chadwick,
Who was aided and abetted
By old Grandad Adrian Anson.
Should you ask me who discovered
And originated baseball,
I would tell you in a jiffy,
It was Skin-the-Sassy-Muskrat
Of the tribe of the Ojibways,
Of the sporty old Ojibways,
Who received their correspondence
Where the falls of Minnehaha
Gleam and gurgle in the sunlight.
This young Skin-the-Sassy-Muskrat
Was a thoroughbred from way back,
Very game was he, and nifty.
He could sit in for an evening,
And corral the red and blue ones.
He could guzzle firewater
Like a dry old dromedary
Stocking up at an oasis,
And it never seemed to touch him.
After scheming for a fortnight,
All the braves he called around him,
And explained his proposition.

Then two teams were straightway chosen,
One was called the Mighty Mudhens,
Captain, Skin-the-Sassy-Muskrat;
And the other, Heap Bad Actors,
Captain, Big-Chief-Bite-the-Features.
On a level stretch of meadow,
Near the shores of Gitchie Gummie,
These two factions came together.
Buck-Afraid-of-His-Reflection
Volunteered to act as umpire;
Up came Skin-the-Sassy-Muskrat,
Swung at several wild pitches,
Hit the ozone with his war club;
'Batter out!' the umpire shouted.
Whereupon the Mighty Mudhens,
Led by Skin-the-Sassy-Muskrat,
Scalped the luckless arbitrator:
Then they made him run the gauntlet.
This, my children, is the story,
Of the rise and fall of baseball
In the land of the Ojibways."

Hiawatha on Titles

“I am vexed,” said Hiawatha,
“Vexed and likewise disappointed,
When I read about the barons,
Earls, and dukes, and other nobles,
That go broke at penny ante,
Bridge, and baccarat, and faro—
Go flat broke, then run their faces.
When they can no longer borrow
They take passage on a steamer,
Come to Newport, nail an heiress,
And return to get their watches
From the thrifty three-ball merchants.
Yes, indeed, ’tis easy money;
In exchange for some cheap title
That they could not trade in Europe
For a fair-sized clubhouse sandwich,
They secure perhaps a million
Of some rich old butcher’s money,
And, to boot, his charming daughter.
It was different, very different,
When we Injuns ran the country.
For example, I remember
When I used to spend my evenings
At the arrowmaker’s wigwam,
Singing love duets, and making
Goo-goo eyes at Minnehaha.
Once there was a mighty chieftain
From the land of the Shellgamos,
Came to see the arrowmaker;
Came to ask him for his daughter,
And he told the arrowmaker:
‘Big-Chief-Chickenfeed they call me;
I am poor, but a patrician—
You can tell from my appearance.

My aristocratic instep,
That I am no common piker,
But a fine, blueblooded noble,
And, although your Minnehaha
Has no pedigree to speak of,
Never mind—I need the money.’
Then the ancient arrowmaker
Took a long drag at his peace pipe,
And replied about as follows:
‘Big-Chief-Chickenfeed, my daughter
Loves a brave named Hiawatha,
Who, although he is no noble,
With an empty, gold brick title,
Can support my Minnehaha,
While, if your wife, she would have to
Draw on me or take in washing.
Get thee gone into the forest—
Back into the woods primeval!’
Thus it was that Minnehaha
Sidestepped a distinguished husband.”

A Cluster of Zimerick's

I.

A colonel, while drinking his liquor,
At a feudist's loud boasts chanced to sniquor;
The colonel now sleeps
'Neath the daisies for keeps;
He was quick, but the feudist was quiquor!

II.

A granger who came from Twin Views
Sat in with a nice stack of bliews.
Ere the midnight bell tolled
His feet grew so cold
That he had to stuff hay in his shiew!

III.

A verdant young Reub from Quebec
Attempted to work a cold dec.
He was caught at the deed
By a miner from Creede,
And awoke with a hole in his nec!

IV.

That granite-faced dub called the Sphinx
Has missed many thousands of drinx,
But equals, perhaps,
A great many chaps,
In the number of thunks that he thinx!

The Norse Nightingale

Speak Gently

Speak yentle; it ban better far
 To rule by love dan fear;
Ef yu speak rough, yu stand nice chance
 To get gude smash on ear.

Speak yentle to the coal-man—he
 Ban easy to get mad;
Ef yu ant getting any coal,
 By Yinger! Dat ban bad!

Speak yentle to the alderman
 Ven he ban feeling blue,
And maybe, ven he turn gude trick,
 He skol whack op vith yu.

Speak yentle to yure lady friends,
 And give gude lots of bunk,
Ef yu skol lak to getting chance
 To put yure clothes in trunk.

Speak yentle to Yim Yeffries, tu,
 Ay tenk dis ban gude hunch—
Den yu ant need to put yure face
 On Maester Yeffries' punch!

Speak yentle everywhere yu go,
 And people skol forget
That yu ban vatching for gude chance
 Tu vinning every bet!

Horatius at the Bridge

Horatius ban brave yentleman,
Who vatch big bridge at night;
It ban gude many years ago,
Ay ant got date yust right.
Dar ban some foxy geezers
Who march away from home,
And tenk they having qvite gude chance
To raise some hal in Rome.

Lars Porsena ban starting it—
Ay tenk Lars ban a Svede;
He raise 'bout tousand soldiers,
And put himself in lead.
Then he began tu marching,
And all his frends march tu,
Till they skol come almost to Rome,
Var dey skol rest a few.

Then op spake Maester Horatius,
Captain of dis har gate:
“To every yackass on dis earth
Death coming sune or late.
So how can ay die better,
Than vatching bridge, yu say?
Now, who skol standing on my front,
And vatching bridge vith me?”

Then Maester Laertus Larson,
A scrapper fine ban he,
Say, “Ay skol standing on yure back,
But not on front, by Yee!”
And old Herminius Hermanson—
He ban gude fighter, tu,
Sav. “Av skol taking little smash

At dese har Svedes with yu!”

So ven dis Maester Porsena
Ban come to big bridge gate,
He sees three husky lumberyacks,
And know he come tu late.
But Lars, he ant ban qvitter,
He send bout saxteen men
To taking bridge—by Yiminy,
Dey ant come back again!

While old Horatius and his frends
Ban vatching bridge so gude,
Some aldermen on oder shore
Ban sawing planty vood.
Ay tal yu, ven dese boodlers
Ban start to tear things down,
Dar ant no better vorkers
Novere in whole dam town!

So ven dis bridge start falling,
Horatius’ frends yump back,
And he skol stand alone, dar—
He ban brave lumberyack.
Then he yump into Tiber,
And say, “Ay skol svim home!”
Dis har ban how Horatius
Skol turn gude trick for Rome!

Olaf

Yust two years ago last venter
Ay meet Olaf op in camp;
Ve ban lumberyacks togedder,
Every morning ve skol tramp
Bout sax miles yust after breakfast
Till ve come to big pine trees;
Den our straw boss he skol make us
Vork lak little busy bees.

Olaf, he ban yolly faller,
He skol taling yoke all day;
Sometimes he sing dis har ragtime,
Yust to passing time away.
And at night, ven ve ban smoking
After supper, he skol make
All us lumberyacks to laughing
Till our belts skol nearly break.

Me and Olaf bunked together,
And sometimes he taling me
Bout his vife and little Torger,
Who ban living cross big sea.
“Ay ban saving dough,” say Olaf,
“And next summer, ef ay can,
Ay skol send for vife and baby;
Den ay ban a happy man!”

One night Olaf getting letter
Ven ve coming back to camp;
He yust tal me “Little Torger!”
And his eyes ban gude and damp.
Dis ban how ay know vy Olaf
Never taling no more yoke—
Vy he yust sit down at night time,
Close by me, var he skol smoke.

Little Steena Yohnson

Ay ban tenking lots of yu,
Little Steena Yohnson,
Ay ban sure yu love me true,
Little Steena Yohnson.
Oder geezers lak to play
In yure yard, but yu skol say,
“Ay don’t lak yu fallers, nay!”
Little Steena Yohnson.

Some day yu skol be my vife,
Little Steena Yohnson;
Ay ban glad, yu bet yure life,
Little Steena Yohnson.
Ay ban vork lak nigger, tu,
Yumping ’round vith treshing crew—
Ay skol building home for yu,
Little Steena Yohnson.

Maybe ve skol saving dough,
Little Steena Yohnson;
Back to Norvay ve skol go,
Little Steena Yohnson.
Back vere dis har midnight sun
Shining lak a son of a gun;
Ant yu tenk dis har ban fun,
Little Steena Yohnson?

Excelsior

The shades of night ban falling fast
Ven tru Dakota willage passed
Young faller who skol carry flag
And yell, so loud sum he can brag,
“Excelsior!”

Ay ant know yust vat he skol mean,
But yust lak dis har talk machine
He keep on saying, night and day
(Ay s’pose to passing time away),
“Excelsior!”

Sven Svenson tal me dis har guy
Ban crazy; den he tal me why.
He say dis faller once ban gay
And happy; den he never say
“Excelsior!”

But after while, say Sven, he meet
A chorus girl who look quite sweet,
And marry her, and den find out
Vat making her so plump and stout—
“Excelsior!”

So now poor faller have to go
Lak lunatic, tru ice and snow;
He tenk about his old girl May,
And dis ban all vich he can say:
“Excelsior!”

Father William

“Yu ban old, Fader Olaf,” a young geezer say,
“Yure hair it ban whiter sum snow;
Ay lak yu to tal me how yu keep so young—
By Yudas! Ay ant hardly know.”

“Ven ay ban a young kid,” Fader Olaf he say,
“Ay never hang out in saloon;
Ay never ban smoking dese har cigarettes,
Or sitting on sofa and spoon!”

“Yu ban slim, Fader Olaf,” the young faller say,
“Old fallers ban mostly dam fat;
Yu measure bout twenty-sax inches round vaist—
Vat for ban the reason of that?”

“In the days of my youth,” Fader Olaf reply,
“Ay ant drenk no lager from cup;
Ay let all my friends fight dis bourbon and rye,
And always pass breakfast fude up!”

“Fader Olaf, yure eyes ban so bright sum a star,
Yu ant vear no glasses at all;
Ay lak yu to tal me glide reason for dis;
Ay hope yu don’t give me no stall.”

“All the days of my life,” Fader Olaf den say,
“Ay never ban going to shows,
And straining my eyes vatching dese chorus girls,
Vich ant vearing wery much clo’es!”

Den young faller say, “Fader Olaf, ay tenk
Yu ban full of ginger, old pal;
But yu had to missing gude times all yure life,
So ay skol keep on raising hal!”

Curfew Shall not Ring Tonight

England's sun ban slowly setting on big hilltops, far away,
Dis har sun ban tired of standing, so it lak to sat, yu say;
And yust ven dis sun ban setting, it shine hard on Yosephine;
She ban talking to the sexton, and ban feeling purty mean.
“Now,” she tal him, “yust be careful . . . ay skol fix it op all right;
Yust one teng ay lak to tal yu—Curfew skol not reng tonight!”

Val, the sun yust keep on setting, and the sexton start for bell;
“Vait a minute!” Yosie tal him; sexton answer, “Vat tu ’ell?”
“Val,” she say, “ay having sveetheart who ban over har in yail,
Ay ban vorking hard for money, nuff so ay can pay his bail;
But it ant no use to du it, and dis har old yudge skol write
That he dies ven bell start going—Curfew skol not reng tonight!”

Den, yu say, dis Maester sexton he can't hearing Yosephine;
He ban vork in boiler factory ven he ban about saxteen,
And it mak him deaf lak blazes, so he go and grabbing rope,
But Miss Yosephine ant qvitter—she ant losing any hope.
No sir—she run op in bell tower, yust so fast sum she can run,
And she tak gude hold on bell tongue, and hang on lak son of a gun!

Maester sexton he keep renging, but dis bell ant reng, yu say,
For Miss Yosephine ban op dar; she ant ban no country yay!
Ay yust bet yu she get groggy, for her yob ban purty tough,
But the bell don't “dingle dangle”—it ant even making bluff.
“Val, by yinger!” say the sexton, “dis har rope ban awful tight.”
Yosephine look down and tal him, “Curfew skol not reng tonight!”

Purty soon it ban all over—sexton he ban start for town,
And Miss Yosie rest a minute—den ay s'pose she coming down.
Anyho she go next morning for gude talk vith some poleece,
And she yolly Maester Cromwell—he ban Yustice of the Peace.
“Gude for yu!” say Maester Cromwell, “ay skol let him live, all right,
Yust because yu fule dis sexton—Curfew skol not reng tonight!”

The Day is Done

The day ban done, and darkness
 Falling from vengs of night,
Lak fedder flying from ruster,
 Ven he ban having fight.
Ay see the lights of willage
 Shinning tru rain and mist,
And ay skol feel dam sleepy,
 Lak fallers playing whist!

Come, read tu me some wersed,
 Ay ant care vat yu read,
Yust so it ant bout trouble,
 Or hearts vich ache and bleed.
Ay lak dese har nice yingles
 Bout sun and trees and grass,
But ven it com to heartache,
 Yerusalem! Ay skol pass!

Read from some humble geezer,
 Whose songs ban sweet to hear—
Who making, from his poetry,
 Bout saxteen cents a year.
Ay lak to hear his yingles,
 Ay tal yu, dey ban fine;
Dis har ban vy ay lak dem—
 Dey ban so much lak mine!

Such songs have gude, nice sound—
 Dey making sorrow fly;
Dey coming lak glass of seltzer
 Vich follows drenk of rye.
And night skol be full of music,
 And tengs ve lak to forget
Skol fold op tents lak Yipsies
 And sneaking away, yu bet!

Maude Muller

Maude Muller, on nice summer day,
Raked in meadows sweet vith hay.

Her eyes ban sharp lak gude sharp knife,
She ban nice girl, ay bet yure life!

Before she ban dar wery long
She start to sening little song.

The Yudge came riding down big hill
In nice red yumping ottomobill.

Maude say, "Hello, Yudge—how ban yu?"
The Yudge say, "Maudie, how y' du?"

He say, "Skol yu tak little ride?
Ef yu skol lak to, yump inside."

So Maude and Yudge ride bout sax miles,
And Yudge skol bask in Maude's sweet smiles.

The Yudge say, "Skol yu be my pal?"
Den ottomobill bust all to hal!

Den Maude ban valking bout half vay,
Back to meadows sweet vith hay.

"Ay luv yu still, dear," say the Yudge,
But Maude she only say, "O fudge!"

Of all sad vords that men skol talk,
The saddest ban, "Valk, yu sucker, valk!"

“Yim”

Dar ban a little faller,
Ay tenk his name ban Yim,
And nearly every morning
Ay used to seeing him.
He used to stand in gatevay,
And call me Svede, and ay
Ant lak to hear dis nickname,
Ay ban a Norsk, yu say.

But he ban little faller,
Ay tenk bout sax years old,
And so ay used to lak him—
He ban too small to scold.
Ay used to say, “Val, Yimmie,
Ay ant ban Svede, but yu
Can call me Svede—ay lak yu
And ant care vat yu du.”

By Yeorge! Ay’m glad, ay tal yu,
Dat ay ban gude to him,
Because one venter morning
Ay ant see little Yim.
And next day funeral vagon
Com driving op to door,
And Yim, poor little faller,
Can’t call me Svede no more!

Charge of the Light Brigade

Yoyfully, yoyfully,
Yoyfully onvard,
In dis har walley of death
Rode the sax hundred!
It ban a cinch, ay tenk,
Some geezer blundered.
“Hustle! Yu Light Brigade!
Yump!” Maester Olson said;
Den in the walley of death
Go the sax hundred!

Cannon on right of dem,
Cannon on left of dem,
Cannon on top of dem
Wolleyed and t’undered;
Smashed vith dis shot and shal,
Dey ant do wery val;
Most of dem ketching hal—
Nearly sax hundred!

Yes, all dem sabres bare
Flash purty gude in air;
Each faller feel his hair
Standing—no vonder!
Yudas! It ant ban yob
For any coward slob,
Fighting dis Russian mob—
Ay tenk ay vudn’t stand
Yeneral’s blunder.

Cannon on right of dem,
Cannon on top of dem,
Cannon behind dem, tu,
Wolleved and t’undered.

Finally say Captain Brenk,
“Ve got enuff, ay tenk!
Let’s go and getting drenk.”
’Bout twenty-sax com back
Out of sax hundred!

Ven skol deir glory fade?
It ban gude charge dey made—
 Every von vondered.
Every von feeling blue—
’Cause dey ban brave old crew,
Yolly gude fallers, tu,
 Dis har sax hundred!

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *Fleeting Fancies* by William F. Kirk]