

JACOB BROWN

AND OTHER POEMS

By HENRY T. STANTON

AUTHOR OF "THE MONEYLESS MAN, AND OTHER POEMS"

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PREFACE.

IF any apology is necessary for the gathering together of these articles in verse, it should come from another source than the author. Those who have honored me by reading my first volume will discover a marked difference in the character of the two books, and it may be to my prejudice with some of them; but a close observation has taught me that humor is more graciously received by the general reader than mere fine sentiment. If anything in these pages shall leave an impression that I have indulged a less worthy spirit, it must be regarded as growing out of an inability to make myself clearly understood. I have conceived no satire. I have given no individuality or special direction to any line in the book, and those who know me best will readily acquit me of any design to be other than amiable and delicate in every allusion.

My inclination has been, and still is to a far different accomplishment, but like most persons who love music, some songs I sing for myself and some for the audience. These are for those who like them.

HENRY T. STANTON.

(iii)

This Volume

Is TENDERLY INSCRIBED

TO

HIS SWEETHEART

BY

HER HUSBAND.

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JACOB BROWN

AND OTHER POEMS

JACOB BROWN.

WITH a most unhappy thinking,
Forward bent, and deeper sinking
In the cushions of his chair,
Jacob Brown sits in his study,
Silent, gloomy-browed, and moody—
Quite a picture of despair.

Out beyond him stand the steeples,
O'er the sected, *casted* peoples,
Of a slumb'rous, shadowed town,
Reaching upward till their slimness
Loses outline in the dimness
Of a night-sky, clouded down.

Still beyond—a patch of river,
That the vista lends no quiver,
 Lieth like a leaden plate ;
Whilst a straying, faint air dandles
With the distant chamber-candles,
 And the street-lamps scintillate.

From their brawling in the beakers,
He has seen the pleasure-seekers
 Swaying homeward to their cells ;
He has heard the startled hours,
From the sounding, hollow towers,
 Give their death-cry on the bells.

It is just the time for sinking
Under great excess of thinking,
 And the secret time for tears ;
It is just the time for sorrow
To be yearning for the morrow,
 From the watch-place at her biers.

Oh, ye million quiet sleepers,
Who have closed your weary peepers
 On an evening's purple light !
Little reck ye of the number
Of your kind that can not slumber
 Through the horrors of the night !

Little reck ye of the peoples
Staring outward on the steeples
Of your dreamy city's wards ;
Men who haunt the silent places,
With the shadow on their faces,
Like an army's outer guards !

Jacob Brown had cast no missile
At the social law's epistle,
Nor had ever harmed a dove ;
He was simply in the illness
And the sleep-defying stillness
Of a trying case of love.

Many times had gone his distress
To the proud heart of his mistress,
In expression, honest, plain ;
Many times he went appealing
To her tenderness of feeling,
And as many times in vain.

Tho' the bee, in every hour,
May forsake a chosen flower,
Where the sweets are yielded not ;
Tho' it go and nearly smother
In the sweetness of another,
With the chosen one forgot—

Jacob Brown's was not the nature
To possess this vapid feature,
 And to seek another dear ;
He had set his altar burning,
And his sighs were ever turning
 All its incense out to her.

With his fingers interlacing,
There he sat the city facing,
 In a vacant staring o'er—
Brooding on the dead devices
He had brought to break her ices
 In the bitter days before.

Whilst a heavy gloom invaded
Every crevice there, and shaded
 From the world his deep despair,
With a bitterness of thinking,
He was slowly, deeper sinking
 In the cushions of his chair,

When from out the chamber silent
Of his prisoned heart, servilent,
 Came a most unhappy tone ;
Something spoken to the inner :
“ *I would give my soul to win her,*”
 'Twixt a whisper and a groan.

It is said the King of Evil
Is exceeding free and civil
 To the heart that utters this,
And His Majesty Infernal,
To possess a soul eternal,
 Offers anything that 's his.

Whilst it can not be that ladies
Give their angel selves to Hades,
 For the wicked devil's sake,
Yet, the fact we can not smother,
That our pretty, primal mother
 Had a fancy for the "snake."

Jacob Brown was somewhat flurried,
When he found that Satan hurried
 There to close a trade with him ;
For he could not be mistaken,
When he felt his shoulder shaken
 By a person rather dim.

It was scarcely worth his turning,
When there came a sort of burning
 From the presence at his back ;
And it needed not the vision
To perfect a quick decision :
 " It 's the Gentleman in Black !"

“ You can have the lady, Jacob—
I am come the trade to make up
By a very fair device ;
I have thought of something better,
Since you want a wife, to get her
At a less expensive price.

“ If you give me daily labor,
For yourself, or for your neighbor—
Keep me constantly at work—
I will run the sooty legions
Of my underlying regions
With a deputy or clerk.

“ Just agree to keep me busy,
Or to make me faint and dizzy
With a task I can not do,
And I'll never hope in Hades—
Though you take a score of ladies,
For an after-time with you.

“ But be sure you keep me going,
Like a flood of water flowing
In and out a fountain's bowl—
Never pause a single minute—
Give me work and keep me in it,
Or I take and keep your soul.”

Brown reflected just a little

On the questionable title

Under which he'd hold his wife—

Just a little—then responded :

“Sir, consider that we're bonded—

It's a bargain, made for life.”

* * * * *

It may smack a bit of treason

To the monarch Human Reason,

When we undertake to say

Of the lesser things that burrow

For their livings in the furrow :

“ They are truly better clay.”

That the very mole who scratches

Underneath the paths and patches,

Having neither point nor plan,

Born, denied the eyes Elysian,

In his perfect lack of vision,

Is a greater thing than man !

It may smack, I say, of treason

To this reigning thing, called Reason,

Thus to ruffle up its pride ;

Thus to bear its courtly ermine,

To the shoulders of the vermin,

And to put its rule aside ;

But the human mind that reaches
Over cultivated stretches,
 To the very far-away.
Often dedicates to sorrow
All its glorified to-morrow,
 For an aureate to-day ;

And this heritor of treasure,
For a momentary pleasure,
 Barters off its sacred right,
Sinks a joyous sunny after,
For a single day of laughter,
 In an unremitting night :

Men are truly born immortal,
But they struggle to the portal
 With the blindness of the moles—
They partake of all the features
Of the under-going creatures,
 That have neither sight nor souls.

Having attributes of power
Far beyond the common hour
 Of their probatory time,
They prefer the baser level
Of a passage to the devil,
 To the path they ought to climb.

* * * * *

Now an early day came, bringing
That peculiar, pleasant ringing,
 From the sanctuary bells,
And the Ganymedes of Autumn
Gathered up her wines and brought 'em
 From the outer-lying dells.

And the very streets, in bustle,
Kept a silken under-rustle
 In their red leaves bedded down—
It was sighing Nature shedding
All her splendor for the wedding
 Of the happy Jacob Brown.

Now the priest is in the chancel,
Ready robed to blot and cancel
 All of Jacob's sadder life ;
And the twain come at the altar,
There to stammer and to falter
 O'er the vows of man and wife.

“ Who does give him here the woman? ”
This was cruel and inhuman
 To the happy, guilty man ;
For, he thought if any mortal
Only knew—the fact would startle,
 And the world forbid the ban.

He alone could tell the giver,
But a sudden rush of fever
 Made his tongue exceeding dry,
And the blood came up to blind him,
Whilst a hollow voice behind him
 Uttered indistinctly—" *I!*"

It was answered rather lowly,
With an interval, and slowly,
 Like a whisper at his back ;
Though the bride herself was rather
Of opinion 't was her father—
 'T was the " Gentleman in Black."

But it came at last to marriage,
And the bride went to her carriage,
 Down a smiling line of friends ;
Here and there a little blissing,
In the way of squeezing, kissing,
 As the common wedding ends.

Brown had quite ignored the devil,
Whilst his joyous wedding revel
 Yet was only partly through ;
It was scarcely in the vesper.
When he heard a hollow whisper :
 " Give me something now to do."

They were laughing then, and wining,
In the pleasantry of dining,
And the bride began to sing ;
Brown responded from his chalice :
“ Go and build me now a palace
Fit to entertain a king.”

Ah ! we seldom note a fleeting
Of the moments at our eating,
Though the dial shadow 's true—
They were sitting still at dinner,
When he came again—the sinner—
“ Give me something *else* to do.”

Brown was startled, but responded :
“ Are we not together bonded ?
This is jesting now and fun.
You must go and do my bidding—
Build the palace for my wedding.”
Quoth the devil : “ It is done !”

“ What !” said Brown, his pulse diminished,
“ Is it builded ? Is it finished ?
Wall and roof, and ceil and floor ?”
Said the devil : “ Jacob, truly,
I have done your labor duly,
And am waiting here for more.”

Brown was object then of pity.
"Go," said he, "and build a city
 Full of palaces and piles—
Build me columns, build me arches,
Plant me cedars, lindens, larches,
 On a hundred thousand miles!"

When the company was fleeing,
And at twelve o'clock the tea-ing
 Found the party very slim;
When the timid bride, uncertain,
Sought the hiding of a curtain
 In her chamber's shadow dim,

Brown was sitting there and boasting
Of her beauty in the toasting
 With the still-remaining few,
Full of joy, and all a flutter,
When he heard the devil utter:
 "Give me something *else* to do."

This was torment dreadful, horrid,
And the atmosphere grew torrid
 Though the Autumn night was late.
"Am I waking? Is it real?
Can he take a grand ideal
 And so readily create?"

At his elbow darkly standing,
Satan waited his commanding,
 And his shoulder leaning o'er,
Whispered: "Wasting time is pity;
I have built your splendid city—
 Done my duty—give me more!"

"Demon! go and take the motion
From the pulses of the ocean—
 Go and make the billows still!
Go to all the whitened beaches,
Tell the sands in all their reaches—
 Count the leaves on every hill."

Thus the spirit kept him worried,
Always haunted, always hurried,
 Till a twelvemonth struggled by;
Finding work to give this sinner,
Kept him wearing thin and thinner—
 He was ready near to die.

Worst of all, unhappy error!
Brown, too late, had found a terror
 In his costly lady's tongue;
In their little year of marriage
She had quite another carriage,
 And another song she sung.

It was now the "old, old story,"
Of a woman in the glory
Of her kingdom over man ;
She had passed the time of wiling,
Of her sunlight and her smiling,
And the reigning-day began.

With the woman always rating,
Always scolding him and prating
Of the gloomy life he led,
Was it strange the wretched fellow
Should be growing thin and sallow,
And be longing to be dead ?

It was just about the coming
Of a mellow Autumn gloaming,
With its dewy, fruity air ;
Jacob Brown again was sinking,
With a bitterness of thinking,
In the cushions of his chair.

Out before him rose the steeples
Over all the happy peoples
Of the underlying town ;
He was gazing, gloomy, moody,
When within his silent study
Stalked the stately Lady Brown.

“ Always moping, always sighing—
You are very slow at dying—
 Will it never, never be?
I would joy to see you buried—
Every day that we are married
 Is a misery to me.”

He had scarce attention centered,
When the devil slowly entered
 From a gloomy passage through,
And, with true politeness, waiting
For a pause about her prating—
 “ Give my something *else* to do !”

Jacob rather liked the civil,
Quiet manner of the devil,
 When his wife about him hung,
So he answered rather slowly,
In a whisper, timid, lowly :
 “ Please to stop the lady’s tongue !”

But, alas ! the spell was ended,
And the devil, shocked, offended,
 Out the open window flew ;
He was fairly there defeated,
For he groaned as he retreated :
 “ *That is work I can not do !*”

“This is truly most surprising!”
Uttered Jacob, there uprising :
 “Pray, your majesty, come back!”
But the fatal word was spoken,
And the bond of union broken
 With the “Gentleman in Black.”

Down he settled then, and sighing :
“I am ready now for dying—
 I have nothing left in life—
I have lost my friend—the devil,
And am in this world of evil
 At the mercy of my wife.”

After that, within his study,
Silent, gloomy-browed, and moody,
 With his hands before his eyes,
Jacob muttered, as a muser :
“*I would give my soul to lose her!*”
 —But the devil did not rise.



OUT OF THE OLD YEAR INTO THE NEW.

I.

OUT of his jacket and into his blouse,
Out of the lanes where linger the cows,
Up from the stream where shy trout rise
To the silent fall of the snaring flies;
Squaring his shoulders, stroking his chin,
Eying the boot with the breech-leg in,
The boy-child pippeth the egg so well,
That Man comes out of the broken shell.

What shall he do in his life begun?—
Go to the bank where the brook-trout run?
Go to the close and follow the cows
The homeward way from the slopes they browse?
Snare in the thicket? Trap in the field?
Ride on the sweep at the cider yield?
“Lord of Creation!” What shall he do
Out of his Old Year into his New?

Fuller the coveys than ever before—
 Hare in the warren, fish at the shore—
 The seed of the rag-weed falls full fast,
 But trapping days of the boy are past.
 'The snows may come, but free is the hare
 To hold his track in the hiding tare—
 The hare-race now with the boy is done ;
 The hound-race hard with the man begun.

Aye, square your shoulders and stroke your chin,
 The days of labor are crowding in.
 You play no hide-and-seek in the mows ;
 You beat no way with the browsing cows—
 Ho! for the sickle and scythe and spade !
 Into the sun-heat out of the shade—
 Start in the furrow, travel it true
 Out of the Old Year into the New.

II.

Out of her under-coat, red and small,
 And out of her bib and her overall ;
 Hiding the rise of her ankles fair
 With trailing drape of a fuller wear ;
 Binding her breast to steadier place
 In silken bonds of the corset-lace,
 The girl-child endeth her days of bliss,
 And Woman comes from the chrysalis.

What shall she do in her life begun?—
Gather the buds that blow in the sun?
Fashion her garlands to quaint design
Under the glint of the fielder's tine?
Loiter the meadows and romp and cry,
As the mower goes in the golden rye?
Blossom of girlhood! What shall she do
Out of the Old Year into the New?

Go to the brook for the yestreen girl,
With her sundown hat and leaf-brown curl;
Go to the glass of the opalymph
And widen your eyes, oh, new-born nymph!
The meadow is sweet with fresh-cut hay,
The odor the same as yesterday,
But never you'll tread, with singing blithe,
The scented bed of the mower's scythe.

You loosen your zone and turn your eye
To gleaning girls in the golden rye;
But tighten it now, and turn away,
It's only a glimpse of yesterday—
The distaff stands in the window-light,
There's west to weave in the warp to-night;
The rye-field way is not for you,
Out of the Old Year into the New.

III.

Woman and man, at the start of life,
A sunburnt spouse and a peach-checked wife,
Kneeling and swearing the words that bind
The twain in bonds of the archer blind ;
Plucking the flowers they nursed so true
In the gloaming walk where wild ones grew ;
A man and woman with life begun,
Who were two but now, and now but one ;—

What will they do at their life's outstart ?—
Meet in the meadow and smile and part ?
Walk in the sundown aisles of the day,
Study the shades of the twilight gray ?
Ramble the fields where the roses are
When the foot falls dry and sun shines fair ?
What will the twain in the blood-rite do
Out of the Old Year into the New ?

When flax is ripe for the spinning-wheel
There's nothing left for the honey-meal ;
In other bloom where the dew food lies
Must loiter the bees with laden thighs—
Now gather the flax and break it bright,
The distaff's still in the window-light ;
Gather and garner it under roof,
For still the warp is waiting the woof.

Be true to your plow and sweep your scythe
With sinew strong and muscle lithe ;
A cradle rocks on the homestead floor,
One stranger there, and a chance for more ;
Go deep in the sod and turn full fair,
For youth is coming the yield to share.
Mother and father, there 's more to do
Out of your Old Year into your New.

IV.

Master and dame, at the close of life,
A toil-bent spouse and a child-worn wife ;
Sitting at eve in their westward stoop,
Watching the sun to the westward droop ;
Sitting alone, in their oaken chairs,
Waiting the twilight, gray as their hairs ;
Olden and worn and ending the run
Of days like that of the dying sun.

Ah, still, as the sun that leaves the plain,
They sink at the verge, to rise again ;
Making the course from gold to gray,
They turn the arc of a single day,
And sink in the eve to rise again,
In world of beauty, or world of bane.
Mother and father, what world for you
Out of the Old Day into New ?

Look to the life that is laid before,
In fields beyond on the faint-lined shore ;
It's not a measure of labor now,
A question of bread, and beaded brow ;
A question of fields, and buds, and bloom,
Of days of shining, and days of gloom ;
You'll answer the Maker's graver one,
Not what *shall* you do—WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

Ah, woman and man, there lies the test
For human souls of their final rest—
What are your hopes and what are your fears ?
What have you done in the dry, dead years ?
What do you claim as a just reward
At the hand of Him—the gracious Lord ?
Mercy and love be given to you,
Out of the Old Life into the New.



DOWN THE ROAD.

THE overhead blue of the summer is gone,
The overhead canopy gray'd ;
The damp and the chill of the winter is on,
And the dust of the highway laid.
I sit in the glare of the simmering beech,
At the hearth of the old abode,
And I look with a sigh at the comfortless reach
Of the farm-lands down the road.

The wind is astir in the camp of the grain,
The tents of the grenadier corn ;
The sentinel stalk at the break of the lane
Hath a wearisome look and lorn ;
Yet it has n't been long since into the blades
The sap of the summer-time flowed,
When I and my ox-team loitered the shades
Of the oak-trees down the road.

There was n't a day that I did n't go by
The house at the swell of the hill—
The cattle had broken the close of the rye,
Or something was wanted at mill ;
And Kitty—she stood in the porch at her wheel,
And the gold to her shoulder flowed ;
And what did I care for the "turn of the meal,"
Or the rye-field down the road ?

In the seeding-time, when I followed the plow
And furrowed the mellow ground,
There was n't that labor-like sweat of the brow
That honestest husbandry crowned ;
For the fairy was there at her wheel and spun
As I plowed or planted or sowed,
And my labor was never right faithfully done
In the grain-fields down the road.

And then in the heat of the harvesting-day,
When the sickle and scythe went through,
It was only the veriest time for play
That ever a harvester knew ;
For there was the maid at the humming wheel yet
Just fronting the swath that I mowed,
And the scythe ran slow, for my eyes were set
On the old porch down the road.

Then the autumn at last came into the year,
And life took a mellower mood :
We gathered the grain, and the quail with a whirr
Went out of the field to the wood.
And I tried to be steady and brisk ; but still
It was hard to be plying the goad
When my indolent oxen balked at the hill
By the farm-house down the road.

Now Kitty has eyes of the tenderest blue,
And hair of the glossiest gold,
But never a word of my loving so true
To Kitty have ever I told.
And the winter is here and the winter may go
And still I can carry the load—
The green of the spring cometh after the snow
In the grain-fields down the road.



WEEDS.

BENT at the gate in her weeds,
A trifle reduced and whiter--
Some say of her heart: "It bleeds;"
Some say of her heart: "It's lighter."

A woman of mind and soul,
And strong to the utmost straining—
How should I know if her dole
Be dole, or only a feigning?

Once I was weak to believe,
And said: "God pity us madam!
You be a blossom of Eve,
And I be a scion of Adam."

The tide in her cheek ran red—
Red as the East in the morning.
"Sir, I be a wife," she said,
In passion, and pride, and scorning.

Forbidden, the ripe, fair fruit—
Forbidden, but near to reaching.
I stood in the garden mute,
Abashed and stung with the teaching.

A queen in her weeds is she,
By the gate, in shadow leaning.
Now tell me if mask it be,
Or grief in the real meaning?

I pass on the other side,
I make an obeisance to her—
I wonder if he who died
Was wiser than I, and—knew her.



GOING TO SCHOOL.

THIS knowledge we find in the flow of the street,
From faces we see and from figures we meet,
That men in their callow, their ripening and rime
Are under the rod of the pedagogue TIME ;
And this we deduce, by a logical rule :
However we go, we are going to school.

Now, here is a brown little urchin of ten,
Half hidden from sight in the sea of the men ;
A steady-eyed, stout little lad in his looks,
Tied up like his burdensome bundle of books,
So mitted and buttoned that any poor fool
May see, at a glance, he is going to school.

Then here is a chap with a worrying stock
Of wonderful wrangles from Bacon and Locke,
Who, having been polished and plated and pearled,
Somewhere at a college, comes out in the world,
And, mixing with men in the slime of its pool,
Is forced to admit he is going to school.

And here is a priest, with the saintliest face—
A pauper in pocket, a Cræsus in grace ;
He enters the pulpit, and opens the book,
As wise as an owl and as grave as a rook ;
But spite of the penitents bent at his stool,
And though he may teach, he is going to school

And there is a bridegroom with beautiful bride—
The fact of her beauty is never denied ;
He's proud of his purpose and promise in life,—
Is proud of his manhood, and proud of his wife :
How long will he be under petticoat rule
Till he says to himself, " I am going to school !"

And here is a chance to look into the glass
Of the wearisome eye of a woman you pass ;
Her purpose is gone and her promise is dead,
Her life is a skein of the slenderest thread,
And sorrow is winding it fast on a spool—
Her husband's a sot, and she's going to school.

But here is a person—no longer a slave
To the pedagogue Time—at the brink of the grave.
His course in the school of the world he has run,
His summer is over, his session is done ;
And now, as he dies in the driftings at Yule,
His children may say, " He is going to school !"

“A MENSÁ ET THORO.”

BOTH of us guilty and both of us sad—
And this is the end of passion!
And people are silly—people are mad,
Who follow the lights of Fashion;
For she was a belle, and I was a beau,
And both of us giddy-headed—
A priest and a rite—a glitter and show,
And this is the way we wedded.

There were wants we never had known before,
And matters we could not smother;
And poverty came in an open door,
And love went out at another:
For she had been humored—I had been spoiled,
And neither was sturdy-hearted—
Both in the ditches and both of us soiled,
And this is the way we parted.

MY MOTHER AND I.

WE were finishing tea—my mother and I—
Exactly at half after eight ;
The noise in the kettle went down to a sigh,
The muffin grew cold on the plate ;
I looked in the cup as I toyed with a spoon,
Attempting to balance it clear,
And said to myself: “ It ’s the last afternoon
Of the very last day of the year ;
I ’ll see if my fortune—for better, for worse—
By drops of the tea will be told,”
And then, like a boy, I began to rehearse
What I tried when I was n’t so old.

“ Why, John,” said my mother, a manifest smile
Just lighting her lips and her eyes,
“ You seem to be dropping a very long while,
The handle is slow to arise.”
My arm gave a lurch and it flooded the bowl,
And down to the bottom it fell ;
I ’m forty ! but farther than that from the goal,
If tea-drippings honestly tell.

“No use for such folly at my time of life.”

Then I quietly said in reply :

“It is n't for me to be taking a wife

As long as it's—mother and I.”

Then something got under my lid like a mote ;

I rose at recalling my sire,

And parting the points of a pigeon-tailed coat,

Extended my palms to the fire.

Then one after one of the last forty years,

I soberly mustered them up ;

A little of laughter, a little of tears,

And the fortunes I tried in the cup.

My mother, still dreamily keeping her seat,

Was thinking, no doubt of the one

Who left her, a stalk of the yellowing wheat,

To ripen alone in the sun.

The picture is clearly domestic, I know,

And homely and common withal,

A celibate, just in his midsummer glow,

A widow, somewhat in her fall ;

She is sixty and past, but having the air

Of one who had reigned in her day—

A trifle subdued, and the dusk of her hair

Just broken with glintings of gray.

My mother's my sweetheart, my glory, my queen,
My only true woman in life ;
I wonder sometimes what an ass I have been
To ever have dreamed of a wife.

I said it was half after eight, and the eve
Of the very last day of the year ;
The ghosts of my life at the time, I believe,
I had soberly called to appear.
A fig for the past ! Let the closets of time
Forever their skeletons hide ;
There's nothing to gain from the mold and the grime,
And the ghosts of the things that have died.
So, breaking the chain of my mother's duress
In the prison of days that were dead,
I gave her the query : " Pray, what is your guess
Concerning the twelvemonth ahead ? "

It staggered her some, but she rallied at last,
And the sweet of her smiling arose ;
" Well, John, if you're wanting your horoscope cast,
I'm a proper old witch, I suppose "—
That's she, on the laughing and bantering side,
When she passes from winter to spring.
" Do n't trouble yourself about me," I replied,
" For my destiny's not in your ring ;

“I come to the brink of your beaker of age
For a drop of its wine's overcharge,
'A cross on your palm' for an honest presage
Of the world and the people at large.”

“In any event, you would have me a witch
Whilst yet in the flush of my prime.
Ah, well, we are both of us knotting a stich,
To-night, in the stocking of time.
And John, let me say of the stitches just here,
Their making's perfection of art ;
Unless there's a flaw in the yarn of the year
We never can tell them apart.
I look on the stich we are finishing now,
By others as evenly laid,
And feel it's a trifle to estimate how
The stich of to-morrow 'll be made.

“That's witchery, fair as the best you have known,
And as true as the best you will see ;
From nature to-day it is readily shown
What nature to-morrow will be.”
Then, leaving the table, she came to a seat
In the cushioned old rocker of state,
And crossing her arms and extending her feet,
Looked musingly into the grate.

She burnished a thought I refused to express,
When I banished the past from my brain,
Tho' cleverly said, I am free to confess
It was not what I hoped to obtain.

Continuing then : " It may do very well
To be earnestly looking ahead
For the something to buy, or something to sell,
In the matter of making our bread.
We're not like the sparrows that gather the crumbs
Sown over the snow in the street ;
We put in our fingers to pull out the plums
From the pie of the Earth—if we eat.
We may not foretell what the season will bring
By a rule of the previous yield ;
A chill may go down to the germ in the spring,
Or summer may ashen the field.

" I do not refer to the physical world,
With its bees, and its ants, and its moles ;
But the surface of time that's blackened and pearled
By a tireless passage of souls.
The age, to my mind, is no better, no worse,
Than it was in the century gone ;
Though we act in this year, 't is to simply rehearse
For the play of a year coming on.

“ The Father of All is abroad everywhere,
But the bad ‘ little master ’ is free ;
There ’s evil and good in proportionate share,
And long as we live it will be.

“ Now, mark it, my son, there are sections of Earth
In excellence greatly advanced ;
But equally, places much lessened in worth
With ignorance sadly enhanced.
We fluctuate, some in the scale, it is true—
How could we be mortal without it ?—
But taking the whole of our pilgrimage through,
There ’s always a sameness about it.
What guess could I make on the twelvemonth ahead
Except on the basis of others ?
Men know that their bodies in time will be dead,
Because they have buried their brothers.”

Then mother looked earnestly back in the blaze,
And studied the glow of the coals ;
No doubt they gave pictures of beautiful days
To her, but to me they were ghouls.
So I turned and abraded a match on the wall,
And I lighted a Cuba cigar,
And I said to myself: “ There ’s a doubt after all
As to what sort of creatures we are.

“Here’s mother, so good that the angels above
Might safely kneel down at her feet ;
And I, of her blood, and her life, and her love,
Not more than the dust of the street.”



THE SPRING.

OUT of the hill there issued a spring,
And into a moss'd retreat ;
Lucent and cool, with eddy and swing,
It came at our feet.

Violet beds a trifle a-stir,
And stray leaves driven about ;
A low, sweet noise to me and to her
As the stream ran out.

Two great broad elms beclouded the sky
And meted the ether through ;
What care to us if a midnight dye
Flowed over the blue ?

Tremulous arms that circled me there,
And pluvial eyes afloat ;
And wanton tides of vagabond hair—
They flooded my throat!

Then down the way the waters went,
Together went I and she ;
And on, and on, we followed the bent
Till into the sea.

The wide, high sea ! Oh, frail are the helms,
And heavy the billows' fling !
Oh, to go back to the spreading elms
Where issued the spring !



TRUE VERSION.

A LITTLE vine about an oak
Its lissom thread has run,
To find, beyond the shadow-cloak,
A fruitage in the sun.

A scapeling from the prison-ground—
Through heat and shower free—
Now tenderly it twines around
The roughness of the tree;

And soon upon the upper air
Its pliant jesses swing,
Till, in the shine, it comes to bear,
The children of the Spring.

Proud mother to the multibloom,
The canopy and cloak—
That floods with such a rare perfume
The precincts of the oak.

On steely wings the yellow bees
Ply in and out the place ;
The oriole there shakes the lees
Of blossoms to her face.

Now mellow Autumn days are here,
The ripening days and brown ;
The leaves upon the trees are sere,
The limbs are leaning down—

In clusters hang the winy globes
Above the nether way,
The vine is in its purple robes,
The tree is in its gray.

Then Winters pass, and Spring on Spring,
With blossoms blown and shed,
The vine has grown a massy thing—
The sturdy oak is *dead*—

And silent, on the greening earth,
A weighted monarch lies,
The proudest of her forest birth,
The noblest one that dies.

No longer in the golden shine
Her glowing life shall be,
Until the widowed arms shall twine
Another fated tree.

And this, in season, too, shall die,
And all that she encloaks ;
And still shall come the widow's cry,
"Bring on your sturdy oaks !"



DRAWING IT FINE.

IN a shining cloud of meshes,
Where a marge of Summer rushes
To a noisy water dipt,
Dwelt a prim, maternal spider,
With her grim, brown spouse beside her,
Like two mummies in a crypt.

And except, perhaps, the shimmer
Of a sunset's silver tremor,
There was not the slightest breath—
Not the faintest undulation,
In the pendant, hooded station,
Where they simulated death.

Every tentacle enfolded,
Much as if the parts were molded,
Or were carven so from stone;
There they sat, without emotion,
Staring down a woven ocean,
From the funnel of their cone.

—When the dry, drawn spider's forces
Puts its legion pulsate courses
Thus successfully to rout,
Well, indeed, may Science marvel
How it is this crimson travel
Of the venous-tide goes out.

We have no such tragic actors
As these adept tissue-factors—
Since they never rant or rave—
And there's not a thing in nature
Wearing such a perfect feature
Of the unrelenting grave.

True, they *act* this tableau merely,
But they mimic death so nearly—
Being rigid there and still—
That the blinded insect rushes
Down the silence of their meshes
To escape some lesser ill.

So these consorts sat in quiet,
Watching ever for the diet
To their finished talent due;
Waiting patiently and stilly
For the wingéd things and silly
That were intermitting through.

By-and-by, upon her vision
Came a light of clear decision,
 And the sober matron spoke
(She had something like that human,
Active impulse of a woman,
 In her tongue—the common joke) :

“Having trained our girl and taught her,
As a spider should her daughter,
 All the proper things in life,
It is time she had our blessing—
Though the thought is sore distressing—
 As some decent person’s wife.

“I am sure the maid is able,
Now, to run her line of cable,
 Unassisted, from the spool ;
And as weaver, and as spinner,
That there ’s more than common in her,
 I believe, upon my soul !

“Only yesterday, I saw her,
For our neighbor, Mistress Drawer,
 Darning places in her net ;
Busy there in giving issue
To the fine-t solar tissue
 I have ever noticed yet.

“ She is skilled in all the graces
Of the most exquisite laces—
Quite invisible to me—
And I think such work would kill me,
With my eyes so very filmy,
I could never, never see.

“ There 's a wanton mass of bushes
Just above our line of rushes,
Where to spread the maiden's net ;
So, good man, though sad to miss her,
Let us bless the child and kiss her,
Whilst our lives are steady yet.”

And the grim old spider listened,
Till upon his optics glistened
Something not unlike a tear ;
And with quite a man's agreeing
To a woman's way of seeing,
Answered : “ As you think, my dear.”

Then the mother called her daughter
From a-sporting on the water,
In a little bay below ;
And the ladylike young spider
Came and settled down beside her,
To the sorrow of her beau ;

For she ceased at once her skating,
Left the gallant there awaiting,
 Made a courtesy and flew—
Just as every little woman,
When she hears her mother summon,
 Ought undoubtedly to do.

It was charming in the tunnel,
Of their silver-sided funnel,
 Thus the family to see ;
Sitting close to one another
Were the father and the mother
 And the daughter—happy three !

There their plans were all unfolded,
And the maiden's future molded
 In the fancy of the dame ;
In the matted brier trellis
She should have her silver palace
 And be given up to Fame.

But alas ! like every other
Living thing--that has a mother—
 How these fancies went astray !
All the goodly things we nurture
For the overburdened future
 Pass too fleetingly away.

So it was, this callow weaver,
When her mamma let her leave her,
Went a little bit too fast ;
Though she made a fair beginning
With her cunning kind o' spinning,
It was not a kind to last.

She was full of life, and agile,
But her shining threads were fragile
And defective in their length ;
For she made her woofing wider
Than her warping justified her,
And the fabric wanted strength.

We have seen a thousand ladies
On a rapid way to Hades
By this very common force,
And exactly like the spinner
They persist in drawing finer,
When they ought to draw it coarse.

'T is peculiar to the human—
Where the debutant 's a woman—
To exceed the parent marge ;
She rejects the frugal spirit
She should properly inherit,
And essays to "go it large."

And the rule is just as certain,
When it's time to lift the curtain
 On the drama of her days,
She has found her light ambition
At the margin of perdition,
 Through the saddest sort o' ways.

Now, the highest aim that filled her—
And the very thing that killed her—
 Was her foolish love for show;
For our pulsing spider lady
Could n't keep her palace shady
 In the brier-patch below.

But she made her nicest hitches
On some pendulating switches,
 That her glory might be seen;
And she loitered with her lover
All its silver terrace over,
 With the leisure of a queen.

And, as might have been expected,
She was readily detected
 By a bandit living near,
For the wily robber sparrow,
Coming downward like an arrow,
 Made a quiet meal of her.

And the prim maternal spider,
With her grim, brown spouse beside her,
Sits a silent mummy yet;
And the breaking of each morrow
Brings her such a meed of sorrow,
As she never can forget.

She is full of sad upheavals,
From the crater of her evils,
For the wrong she did her child,
When she taught her only graces
In the art of making laces,
By a vanity beguiled.

So the two unhappy tenants
Of the cone are doing penance,
And their bosoms both are wrung;
He has chronic gout to bother,
And this wicked, wicked mother
Has paralysis of tongue.



MURDER.

HIS wine of life, drawn past its lees,
Had stained the grasses red,
Where, under laden date-palm trees,
A man laid newly dead.

The motley of a summer day—
The shadow set in light—
With sharp-defined existence lay
Imprinted on the sight.

A hush was in the fruity bloom,
Where late attrition made
An atmosphere of spice-perfume
The distances pervade.

The Naiad of a lucent brook
That loitered in the place,
Went outward with a frightened look
Upon a whited face.

An utter, utter stillness there ;
A silence and a pain ;
A terror in the marching air,
That halted by the slain.

The world was young and virgin then
To common blight and ill,
And Nature, in the outraged glen,
Stood, horrified and still.

And this was fruit from Eden-seeds
In serpent-trailings lain !
The meek and mild-way'd Abel bleeds
Whilst, pulseful, wanders Cain.

The dove and robin only keep
A record of that day.
The world did pause awhile and weep
Above the mortal clay ;

But soon the world went on, went by
The rotting gold-haired thing—
The very wind came gleeful nigh—
The brook learned soon to sing.

With song the dove was sweetly blest,
And down the long-ago,
The robin held upon its breast
The driftings of the snow ;

But under Abel's date-palm trees
The dove forgot its tone,
And since, o'er other lands and seas,
It makes its plaintive moan ;

And there, when pulsing sadly, stood
The robin by the slain,
His plumage caught from Abel's blood
Its never-fading stain.

Thus Deity hath marked the crime
For cycles passing round—
The blood that flowed in Adam's time
Is crying from the ground—

For this is why the dove declares
Its tearful, sad unrest ;
And this is why the robin wears
The red upon its breast.

METEMPSYCHOSIS.

LET me go back to the maze
Where light to my life returns ;
Let me lift out of their urns
Ashes of splendid days.

Oh, days of the far-gone years ;
Oh, days of mist-hidden time—
Days of the rust and the rime,
Be risen above your biers !

Give me the scepter again ;
Give me the ermine and crown ;
Press the front outward and down,
Make my lost royalty plain.

I fall in a life so mean—
I sink in the slough of this ;
Oh, give me the days of bliss,
Make me again a queen !

THE RED CROSS.

SIR Knights, beyond the river there,
And down the distance gray,
In courtly robes, with saber bare—
A soldier takes his way—
The scion of a royal house,
A prince of knightly signs,
Has gone among the sentinels
That tread the Persian lines.

A mission from the broken swords,
And bended heads of them
That hold the ruined walls and wards,
Of wrecked Jerusalem.
Now mark the stately front he bears—
His martial sway and grace—
A heart that feels—a soul that dares—
Is speaking in his face.

Ah, proud Zerubbabel, take heed—
The Persian guards advance,
The *countersign* must serve thy need,
And not thy princely glance—
Grasp well thy sword and be prepared
To meet the 'larum cry,
“An enemy! What ho! The guard!
An enemy—a spy!”

Now clash like flints their sabers' steel
In jealous ward and pass,
Our Prince has made the Persians feel
Through corselet and cuirass;
But not his single arm can hold
The numbers there at bay—
With half his prowess yet untold
The guards have gained the day.

And from the royal shoulders there
They strip the em'rald down,
They mock the knightly prince and heir
Unto the Jewish crown.
They deck him in the meaner gown
That holds the prison stains,
And weigh his lordly person down
With shackles and with chains.

And there, before their sovereign lord,
 Within his presence hall,
Zerubbabel attends the guard,
 The proudest of them all.
With peerless brow and steady eye—
 His only visage known—
He fronts the monarch seated high,
 Darius on his throne.

Well may the Knights that stand around,
 Their plumed helmets raise.
Beneath the robe, the court has found
 Another royal gaze ;
And though, in chains, Zerubbabel
 The meaner soldiers bring—
The truly great, may pause to tell—
 Now *which is here the King.*

Then from his place Darius speaks,
 And in the kinder way,
Of one whose mental vision seeks
 A long-departed day.
He calls to mind the early friend,
 That knew his tender youth,
The one whose higher aim and end
 Was in the holy truth.

But ermined garb and scepter strong
Had made the King forget,
That he who scorned to do a wrong
Held steady purpose yet ;
And to Zerubbabel he said,
“ We knew thee once of old,
A goodly Prince—a royal head,
A knightly man and bold,

“ A member of that mystic clan,
A MASON firm and true,
The highest type of noble man,
A kingdom ever knew ;
Now give us here the secret things
Thy silent brothers hold,
And thou shalt be the friend of kings
In purple and in gold.”

Then sudden flush'd the Prince's face,
And proudly 'rose his head,
As if to scorn the shameful grace
In what Darius said ;
“ My sovereign master, know that I
Am subject to thy will,
*Then banish me, or bid me die—
I hold my honor still.*”

Then ran the blood in kingly veins
With rapid pulse and play—
“What ho! the guard! strike off his chains!
Strike off his chains, I say,
Now give him back the em’rald thing
And sword of honor bright,
And make it known the Prince and King
Shall banquet here to-night.

“Zerubbabel, thou teachest now
The lesson of our youth,
The grandest crown for kingly brow
Is courage, honor, truth!
Now make thy secret wishes known
The dearest and the best,
And by our sovereign word and throne
Is granted thy request.”

“Oh, King, my trodden people there
In ruined arches kneel,
And pray thee in thy might to spare
From adversary’s steel;
And, Sire, I come from ruined halls,
To crave a boon for them—
That thou wilt build the domes and walls,
Of old Jerusalem.”

A SPECIAL PLEA.

PRUE and I together sat
Beside a running brook ;
The little maid put on my hat,
And I the forfeit took.

“Desist,” she cried : “It is not right,
I’m neither wife nor sister ;”
But in her eye there shone such light,
That twenty times I kiss’d her.

(66)



THE MIDNIGHT ROSE.

THERE is a flower that loves to shun
The kisses of the morning sun;
There is a rose that never knew
The sparkle of the morning dew.

But when the mellow evening dies
Upon the glinting summer skies,
It gently breaks the sepal close
And opens out—a perfect rose.

Oh, ye who wander down the days,
In crocus, fern, and fennel ways,
There has not broken on your sight
The rose that glorifies the night!

Go call the buttercup that yields
Its gold florescence to the fields—
Go gather all your noons disclose,
But leave to me my midnight rose!

SELF-SACRIFICE.

It is in that edge of Winter
When the frost its silver splinter
Throws along the window-glass;
When upon the crusty border,
In a cruel, sad disorder,
Hang the brown lines of the grass—

It is in that time for sighing,
When the dry things underlying,
Give their crisping to the feet;
When the wrecks of vernal races,
With their painted, brazen faces,
Go abandoned in the street—

It is in that sober weather
When the fowls are more in feather,
And the furs are thicker grown,
That the world shrinks under cover
From the dun clouds reaching over,
And the cares of life are known.

Only such as keep in storage
Goodly bins, from Summer forage,
 May the barren days defy ;
For the dreamy thing that lingers
With the blossom in its fingers,
 When the Winter comes, may die.

But in many living creatures
There's an impulse of their natures,
 Over care of life and self,
And to save some thriftless neighbor,
Man will yield his fruits of labor,
 Though it sacrifice himself.

Here's a case that is not common
Even in the higher human,
 Though from underneath his house—
'T is a simple illustration,
From the lower tribe and nation,
 Of an antiquated mouse.

It was in that edge of Winter,
When the frost began to splinter
 Into pictures on the glass—
When the red along the heather
Told a rapid change of weather,
 That the matter came to pass.

And 't was in a tunneled entry
From a kitchen to a pantry,
 At the noontide of the day—
Though the place was gloomy rather—
That the antiquated father
 Had a solemn thing to say.

So they came from every quarter,
Male and female, son and daughter,
 There to hearken to the sage ;
And with quiet, sober faces,
There assumed such proper places
 As accorded rank and age.

It was not a common meeting,
Where they scramble over seating,
 Making every kind of noise ;
For the maids were prim and steady—
Each and every one a lady—
 And a decent set of boys.

There was no outrageous stamping,
Like a stud of horses tramping
 On a shaky bridge of rails ;
But they sat respectful, stilly,
Doing nothing rude or silly,
 With their faces, feet, or tails.

When the latest mouse had entered,
With attention duly center'd,
 And all noises under ban,
From his chill and dusky corner,
Like an aged and shaken mourner,
 Thus the patriarch began :

“ I have called you here together,
At the dawn of Winter weather,
 For a purpose fixed and strong ;
And you see I'm frail—I tremble,
For I can not now dissemble,
 That my days may not be long.

“ Through the Summer, daily—nightly—
I have sought to teach you rightly
 How to manage for your food ;
And I'd like to guide you longer,
For there's naught in life that's stronger
 Than this holy tie of blood.

“ But, my children, I am going
Where the bread of life is growing,
 In the GOOD PLACE up above ;
And I leave you now in sorrow,
To the mercies of to-morrow,
 With a legacy of love.

“ You will find it somewhat harder
To be keeping up your larder,
As the bleaker days go by.
And I will not be your burden—
And I pray this as a *guerdon*—
Just to turn away and die.

“ So, my darlings, come and kiss me—
You will sometimes sigh and miss me,
But I know 't is for the best.
Let your hearts be light and cheery,
For I 'm going where the weary
And the laden are at rest.”

Ere the sage had finished speaking,
There began a bitter squeaking
All around about the place ;
And a troop of tearful misses
Came and covered o'er with kisses
All the beard upon his face.

Then he gave such admonition
As befitted their condition,
And he urged them not to cry ;
And he said : “ All life is sorrow,”
And that maybe they to-morrow
Would be going off to die.

And his sturdy sons protested
That he never should be wrested
 From the kindness of their care ;
That they 'd undergo the squeezes
Of all crevices, for cheeses,
 And for other dainty fare.

He should nibble at his leisure
From their fullest store and treasure,
 And should never come to want ;
That they 'd fill the tunneled entry
From the kitchen to the pantry,
 And that nothing should be scant.

But in vain was all persuasion—
He had taken that occasion
 Just to speak a sad good-by ;
He would hear no further pressing,
So he gave them all his blessing,
 And he tottered out to die.

Now, most truly, this was noble,
Though 't was sore and bitter trouble
 Thus to see the parent go ;
For the winds without grew bolder,
And they whistled shriller, colder,
 Of the coming ice and snow.

Through the dark, unfriendly weather,
Went they foraging together,
 All the little orphan'd mice ;
And their ways were illy chosen,
For their feet and tails were frozen
 On the bleak plateau of ice.

Sad indeed their lives, and trying,
Full of sore distress and sighing
 For a father's guidance bold,
And they wept such tears as only
Little orphans, wretched, lonely,
 Weep for parents in the mold.

By the wicked, cunning kitten
Some where caught and badly bitten ;
 Others met their fate in traps ;
Some were lying in the gutter,
Dead of poisoned bread and butter,
 And from other sad mishaps.

When at last there came a murmur
From the trees, denoting Summer,
 They were very few indeed ;
All were caught, or killed, or frozen—
All, except, perhaps, a dozen,
 Now in dire distress and need.

True, they held their tunneled entry
To the old haunts in the pantry,
 Where the shelving ran below ;
But above the cornice, higher,
Though 't was greatly their desire,
 They had never dared to go.

Now, at last, their need was sorer,
So they sent a bold explorer
 To the very topmost shelf ;
One who swore to find the upper
With its narrow chance for supper,
 Though he sacrificed himself.

Up he clambers, now, and squeezes
Right between some bigger cheeses
 Than he 'd ever seen before,
And he signaled with a squeak, a
Something very like Eureka ;
 To the orphans on the floor ;

And they raised their tails and started,
Very brisk and happy-hearted,
 Up the angle of the wall ;
Some were breathing like a furnace,
And they overcame the cornice
 In a fever, one and all.

Though the mice were not so many,
Yet the biggest cheese of any
 Was their object of attack ;
And a mouse who ran around it,
Just to circumscribe and bound it,
 Found it open at the back.

It was hard and heavy-crusted,
Very green outside and musted,
 And they thought it not a sin,
When their strongest, and their oldest,
And their biggest and their boldest
 Brother orphan ventured in.

So they all began to follow,
And they gathered in the hollow
 Of the new-discovered house,
And within—oh, melancholy !
Very sleek, and fat, and jolly,
 Sat that gray, paternal mouse.

This is where he came, in sorrow,
When he left them to the morrow
 With his legacy of love !
This the heaven he was seeking,
When he left his children, squeaking
 Of the "*Good Place up above!*"

He who would not be a burden—
He who prayed it is a guerdon
Just to totter out and freeze—
He had tottered out the entry,
To the " Good Place " in the pantry,
And had " frozen to " a cheese.



THE LOST CURL.*

WAS it the ghost of a beautiful girl
Flitting away from the sun,
That out of its binding of amber and pearl,
Lost, in the morning, a light-brown curl,
Just as the night was done?

Lured by the glow of the Christ-night's moon,
Came she out of her crypt,
To patter the streets in her crystal shoon,
Where the spars of frost, like the dews of June,
Lay over the way she tript?

Was it the ghost of a girl that died,
Ripe for the sphere of wife,
Just as the bloom of the oranges sighed
To hide in the hair of the brown-curled bride,
Whiten and freshen her life?

* Lost, in this city, on Ann or Main street, Christmas morning, a long, light-brown curl. The finder will please leave it at this office.—*Kentucky Yeoman*.

Whoever shall find it, that light-brown curl,
At break of the Christ-day lost,
With moon in its amber and frost in its pearl,
Must go to the grave of a beautiful girl,
And ask for a brown-haired ghost.



CULEX IN CARMINE.

WHEN some migratory clouds,
Broke upon the leafy shrouds,
Where the insects lay in crowds,

And a melancholy rain,
On the sounding window-pane,
Beats its funeral refrain,

Through a crevice in the sash,
Where the splatter and the dash,
Made his purpose very rash,

A mosquito, lean and thin,
From the drowning and the din,
Undertook to flutter in ;

And a crazy shutter's swing,
Made the hanging blossoms fling,
Such a flood upon his wing,

That he rather fell than flew,
And was fairly driven through,
By the gusty wind that blew—

Thus succeeding in his flight,
From the unrelenting night,
In a wet and wretched plight.

'T was the chamber of a maid,
Who, her perfectness displayed—
In a measure—disarrayed ;

For a taper in the gloom,
Of the curtained, quiet room,
Showed a woman in her bloom—

And the mellow light was shed,
On her bosom and her head,
In the splendor of her bed.

In a golden current there,
Ran her undulating hair,
From the polished shoulder bare.

As the whitest foam that flees,
Up the beaches from the seas,
Lay the lace of her *chemise* ;

And the billows of her breast,
In the pillows there imprest,
Kept an ocean-like unrest.

Ah, 't was well indeed for her,
That the only viewer near,
Was the poor mosquito here ;

And 't was better still for him,
That his vision should be dim,
In the halo of the glim.

For the splendid creature there,
With the gilding on her hair,
Lay magnificently fair,

And the smallest insect's eyes,
Seeing such a paradise,
Might be blinded with surprise.

On the inner window-case,
With his humid wing and face,
He had anything but grace ;

Whilst the mad, reminding rain,
To the vibratory pane,
Brought its horrible refrain.

There upon the window-sill,
He was sitting, dreary, still,
In the terror of a chill;

But within his little soul,
He was grateful for the hole
That allowed him such a goal.

So he brushed his little eye,
Saying, "Maybe by and by
I'll be comfortably dry."

And exactly as he planned
With his stoicism grand,
Both his dripping wings were fanned,

For a breeze appeared to flout
In the chamber all about,
And the taper there went out.

Then his eyes began to mark,
By their tiny inner spark,
What there was within the dark.

It was very plain that he,
With a candle burning free,
Found it difficult to see.

But his eyes, denied their sight
In the waxen taper light,
Were exceeding good at night.

By and by, at last he tried,
With a flutter at his side,
And his little wings were dried ;

And the still existing breeze
Brought a very pleasant ease,
To the bending of his knees.

Then he fervently exclaimed !
“ Now I wish I may be blamed
If I 'm either wet or lamed.”

And he tried a tune of his 'n,
Quite a striking kind of buzzin',
“ I 'm your Cousin, Cousin, Cousin !”

And as joyously he sings,
All around about he flings,
“ Cousin, Cousin,” with his wings.

Then he went upon a raid,
Through the heavy-curtained shade,
'Till he came upon the maid.

And its meet and proper here
That a reason should appear
Why he tarried there with her.

So, the fact is simply this,
When he came upon the Miss,
He was famished for a kiss.

Now, the coldest man we know,
Coming on the Houri so,
For the very same would "go."

And it is n't fair to think,
A mosquito on the brink
Of a nectar-cup—won't drink.

Splendid type of angel sleep !
Fairer than the pillows' heap,
Lying there in silence deep—

Who will blame him while he dips
From the vintage of her lips,
Redder wine than Bacchus sips ?

Less impassioned things of earth,
Seeing such, would know their worth,
Feel it in a fever birth.

Any statue, wanting life,
Nearing lips so passion-rife,
Soon would wake to pulsing strife.

So the glad mosquito sank
Joyous on the fruity tank,
And to utter fullness drank.

Better far the cruel rain,
Thrumming on the window-pane,
Fell upon his wing again—

Better far the shutter's swing,
Caught his cousin-crying wing,
Never more to let it sing.

Better he had known a drouth
In the marshes of the South,
Than the nectar of her mouth.

Early morning, fair and sweet,
Found him helpless on a sheet—
Glassy eye and icy feet.

Butterfly and humble-bee,
For the coroner's decree,
Early came the corpse to see —

Laid him out upon the floor,
Scanned his body o'er and o'er
As it never was before.

After consultation slow,
Pro and con, and so and so,
There they let the insects know :

“ This mosquito, lying dead,
By the female in that bed,
Pizined was with carmine red.”



THE COURT OF BERLIN.

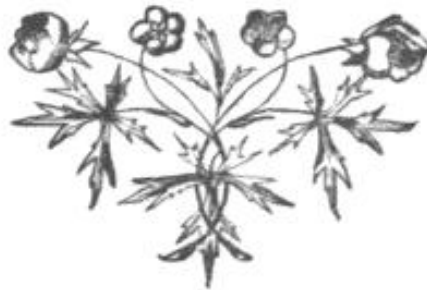
KING Frederick of Prussia grew nervous and ill
When pacing his chamber one day,
Because of the sound of a crazy old mill
That clattered so over the way.

“Ho, miller!” cried he, “What sum shall you take
In lieu of that wretched old shell?
It angers my brain, and it keeps me awake”—
Said the miller, “I want not to sell.”

“But you must,” said the King—in a passion for once—
“But I won’t,” said the man in a heat.
“Gods! this to my face? Ye are daft or a dunce—
We can raze your old mill to the street.”

“Aye, true, my good sire, if such be your mood,”
Then answered the man with a grin;
“But never you ’ll move it the tenth of a rood
As long as there ’s law at Berlin.”

“ Good, good,” said the King—for the answer was grand,
As opposing the Law to the Crown—
“ We bow to the Court, and the mill it shall stand,
Though even the palace come down.”



THE LAST LEAF.

AT last I find the slighted page,
On which no favored name
Is dedicate to fame.

I write my own, and from this age,
Go out the splendid years
With trooping knights of her's.

What more could life's ambition crave,
Than just to write and live?
What more can labor give?

Hereby I rise from out the grave,
And take a life in stone
For one of dust unknown.

MAY IN MASON, 1775.

WHERE Limestone, with her gathered rills,
A rocky passage follows ;
Where Lawrence, breaking through the hills,
Beats down the lonesome hollows ;
The woods were dark and dense above,
The canes were dank below,
When houseless lay the city's cove
An hundred years ago.

In narrow way, by gulch and knoll,
The brown deer broke his bearing ;
The grey wolf made the sloping mole
An ambush for his faring ;
The stately elk, with antlers wide,
The nose-down buffalo,
Their lickward way went side by side,
An hundred years ago.

The blue Ohio, gulfward bound,
Ran ripples on the border.
Where nature gave the wanton ground
Her winning, wild disorder.
Nor sound of bell, nor sigh of steam,
Nor oar-sweep creaking slow—
The river lay a liquid dream
An hundred years ago.

The web-fowl nested in the sloo
Beside the sliding otter ;
The red maid, in her bark canoe,
Just skimmed the slumb'rous water ;
The red man took the wareless game
With sinew-twanging bow,
Till Kenton's cracking rifle came,
An hundred years ago.

An hundred years! What time! What change!
To him who kept the tally,
Till balder grew the bounding range,
And busy grew the valley.
There floats the smoke of forge and mill,
That tireless ply below,
Where stood the white cane, stark and still,
An hundred years ago.

The willows died upon the shore,
The beeches lost their glory ;
The giant, white-barked sycamore
But lingers still in story.
Now smoother ways go down the bank,
To meet the water's flow—
It never knew a steamer's plank
An hundred years ago.

These fallow lands that laugh to-day
In summer's mulling juices,
From wanton sleep and idle play,
Were brought to truer uses ;
And daring hands were on the plow
That broke the primal row,
To see the tasseled corn-tops bow,
An hundred years ago.

The settler found his savage foes,
In every copse appearing,
And death was in the smoke that rose,
Above the early clearing ;
The toil was hard, the danger great,
The progress doubtful, slow ;
But these were men who made the State
An hundred years ago.

Now closures grand and pastures green
Are blocked about the Granges,
And goodly herds and homes are seen
Along the olden ranges—
The busy city rings with toil,
The steamers come and go—
God bless the brawn that broke the soil
An hundred years ago.

No longer in her bark canoe,
The red maid skims the river ;
The web-fowl's nestling from the sloo
Has winged away forever ;
A single line these lands abrade,
The lick-bound buffalo
Has left till now, the trace he made
An hundred years ago.

So let us leave our trace behind,
And wear it broader, deeper,
That coming man may bring to mind
The courses of the sleeper—
That after days may see our toil
And women praise us so ;
As brawny men who broke the soil
An hundred years ago.

PYTHIAN LINES.

SIR Knights, when first to social ways
Our early fathers turned,
Ere in the rude, primeval days
Their forest altars burned ;
Before the Druids felt the dawn
Of reason at their feasts,
Or brought to shoulders bare and brawn
The pelts of preying beasts ;

Before the compact of our kind,
By which, to human rules,
Was bent the sway of savage mind
In germinating schools,
Man kept his law of *force* above,
And lived by strength alone,
Nor kindred claim, nor common love
Nor civil bond was known.

The faint traditions of the past,
 Brought up the tongues of TIME
Through maze of race, and creed, and *caste*,
 In dust, and rust, and rime,
Have told how in the Asia-plains
 A virgin sod was thrown,
How from its sparsely scattered grains
 A cultured world has grown.

The gray, historic stones that stand
 Along the backward aisles,
To point the progress of the land,
 As though by measured miles,
Are weather-stained, and still, and stark,
 And crumbling to the base,
But still their iron closures mark
 The onward reach of Grace.

Thus, step by step, the world has grown,—
 The civil creed prevailed ;
Its grand estate, to-day, is shown
 For other heirs entailed,
And generations yet to come
 Shall backward turn with smiles
To point the solid shaft and dome
 We structure in the aisles.

Whilst yet the Christian era slept
 Unopened to the years,
And savage bands their victims swept
 To pagan sepulchres ;
Some faith from man to man was plight,
 Some sympathies were born,
And human kind from out the night,
 Beheld the break of morn.

From ancient and heroic Greece ;
 From 'neath the walls of Rome ;
From times of war and times of peace,
 Our stately fables come.
The annals of the olden world—
 For honor now avails—
And give, in vellum scrolls unfurled,
 Their mythic moral tales.

Of one of these was born the tie
 That binds the Pythic clan ;
Was caught the heat of honor high
 That weldeth man to man—
From out the forge of primal days
 We hear the hammer's beat,
Where metal to the metal lays
 And makes the bond complete.

Ye Pythic Pages here, who wear
The myrtle in your breasts ;
Ye proved Esquires who proudly bear
The shield above your crests ;
Ye brave, chivalric Knights, whose feet
Have borne the test of steel,
Who wear your helmets now to meet
The foes of common weal.

The misty days that lie beyond
This cycle of your lives,
Shall keep the record of your bond
In golden-bound archives ;
Shall tune for you their sweetest reeds,
And lengthen and prolong
The music-story of your deeds,
To everlasting song.

As hostages ye stand to-day,
Confiding to the last ;
That yet shall come, from down the way
The Damons of the past
Though steeds may fail and foes may snare,
And leagues may intervene ;
No wall shall stay the friends that wear
The sprigs of myrtle green.

Then keep your friendship pure and true,
With caution wear your shields ;
No foes shall strike their lances through
The brave hearts in the fields ;
And when the living days have died
And rited been and knelled,
All coming Knights shall note with pride
The confidence ye held.



THE CROWN ON GUARD

THE Emperor Solyman, holding his Pleas,
On taking the town of Belgrade,
Observing a woman, bent down on her knees,
Demanded what trouble she had?

“ My liege, I am widowed, alone, and in dole—
Last night, as I lay in my sleep,
Your soldiers came into my closure and stole
The whole of my poultry and sheep.”

“ Why slept you so well—and the robbers about ?”
Then Solyman said with a sneer.

“ Oh, sire, when the Emperor watcheth without,
How can a poor woman have fear ?”



OUR DEAD.

AND still a mindful people turns
To such as wear their crosses,
Beneath a way of waving ferns
And interwoven mosses.

And still, with knots and crates of bloom,
With soonest blowing roses,
They come to break the night of gloom
That o'er the hero closes.

Here yet, by fingers deft from love,
The wild vine's tendril's matted,
In tribute wreaths and crowns are wove,
And lissom garlands plaited.

Here yet, the new-strewn immortelles
Of memory are saying,
As tender-fresh as if the bells
A dying chime were playing.

And years have been, and years may be,
And still shall gather yearly
The fettered souls beside the free—
The dead they love so dearly.

And still shall freshest garlands fall
From loving hands in showers,
O'er fragments of the crumbled wall
That closed the Land of Flowers.

Here sleep the brave, the good, the true,
The trusting and the daring ;
The great, that in their living grew
The laurels they are wearing.

The battle-stains are on their breasts,
The battle-currents clotted—
An index on the outer vests
Of inner men unspotted.

An hundred mounds are circled near—
An hundred heroes under ;
An hundred knights that ne'er shall hear
Again the battle's thunder.

But o'er the turf in drooping fold,
 With broken staff, a banner
Shall keep their knightly prowess told
 In true chivalric manner.

Among the mounds are some whose names
 Upon the stones are missing—
Who fell in front too soon for Fame's
 As for the mother's kissing.

The brave "unknown" in martial pride
 And honored here and knighted ;
We only know a hero died—
 A soldier's home was blighted.

Be still, sad bells ! Where Hanson lies
 Ten thousand tongues are telling ;
The wailing of a people rise
 Beyond an iron knelling.

What need to wake a mournful tone
 Upon an anthem organ,
Whilst broken rusts the sword that shone
 Above the plume of Morgan ?

What founts Kentucky starts for one,
Of all her dead the newest ;
For Breckinridge—her peerless son,
Her proudest and her truest !

There shrouded lies her latest gift
To God, and Fame, and Story,
Whose going left a golden rift
Upon the skies of glory.

It may not be that in our day
Yon blighted land will blossom—
The land for which their coats of gray
Grew crimson on the bosom ;

But time will come at last for all,
When from these mounds of ours
The Master hand shall build the wall
That closed the Land of Flowers.



PARSON GILES.

IT was not from dearth of churches,
In the plain of vernal birches,
And its marge of uplands brown,
That the Sabbath crowds were gathered,
And their scores of horses tethered
In the precincts of the town.

It was not that zealous trying
In the chancels there, was dying,
Or the watch-lamps burning low ;
That the wooded fanes were slighted,
And their silent aisles benighted
By a worship wandered fro.

It was not from weaker passion
For the press of morbid fashion
On the virtue of the place ;
Nor for any solace sweeter
Than the sacred music-meter,
And the cup of perfect grace.

There was such a world of teaching
In the earnest, honest preaching
 Of the pleasant Parson Giles,
That a Sabbath morning's ringing
Of his service bell was bringing
 All the country in for miles.

From the sweat and strain of tillage,
They were turning to the village,
 Through its avenues and lanes ;
Making desolate the granges
Of the outer-sleeping ranges,
 And the inner-sweeping plains.

Not because his words were burning
With a brilliancy of learning,
 In an ignorance and gloom ;
Not because he went in roses
Through his sermons to their closes,
 With a scatter of perfume ;

But for reason that a feeling
Came, the real man revealing
 In his preaching's every part ;
Till the eyes about him glistened
With a fervor, as they listened
 To the droppings of his heart.

Now it chances, in our courses,
That we meet these stronger forces,
 Though the circumstance is rare ;
And we note, through sharp attrition
With a cunning world's ambition,
 Who its real giants are.

Men of Adam's form and feature
Seek to rise above the creature,
 And to spurn their brother clods ;
Egots, saying to the masses :
" Ye are dying things and asses—
 We are living things and gods ! "

These are of that wearing real,
But the wanton, frail ideal,
 That so often leads astray,
And the glamoured world, in sorrow,
Sees the fouling mold to-morrow,
 Of its thing divine to-day.

For the truer, better sample
Of the Maker's cunning ample
 Cometh not from such as these ;
Not from such as give their faces
To the peopled corner-places,
 With the faith of Pharisees :

Rather men, whose finer natures
Turn their pulses to the creatures
 Of an ever-falling kind,
Such as bend beside the kneeling,
More with plenitude of feeling
 Than with plenitude of mind.

To the trusting eyes of woman
Parson Giles was more than human—
 Good beyond the better ken ;
As his simple thoughts were worded,
So his ways in life were guarded,
 And he held respect of men.

For the souls that went in blindness
He was full of tender kindness,
 And he sought the beaten way,
That to such his clearer vision
Might delineate the grand Elysian
 Of the shining final day.

So a Sabbath morning's ringing
Of his service bell was bringing
 All the country in for miles—
There was such a world of teaching
In the earnest, honest preaching,
 Of the pleasant Parson Giles.

Dwelling in the Christian manor,
Billy Jones, the village tanner,
 Stood without the temple door—
He, alone, of all the people,
In the shadow of its steeple,
 Never knelt upon the floor.

Not because he held in scorning
Any service on the morning
 Of the blessed Sabbath day ;
For the time had been, with Billy,
When his life ran not so illy,
 And his boyhood knew to pray.

Those who saw his daily going
With the silent, certain flowing
 Of an open ocean's tide,
Truly said that something other
Than the teaching of his mother,
 Turned his compass-point aside.

It was clear to every neighbor,
There was frequent, heavy labor
 In the breathing of his wife,
And the village knew a reason
For the tawny tanner's treason
 To the promise of his life.

Not to deal in further hinting,
Billy bore the scourge of vinting,
Like a self-abusing monk,
And his plain, unsteady swaying,
Gave an honest ground for saying
He was very often drunk.

So he kept beyond the reaching
Of the Parson's better teaching,
Never coming in his wake—
Giving up the spirits, drinking
From a cup of sober thinking,
For the morbid stomach's sake.

All the deacons and the members
Saw the rapid dying embers
In the wicked tanner's soul;
And the case was gravely mooted
As to who was better suited
There to win him from the bowl.

Brother Brown, his nearest neighbor,
"Couldn't undertake the labor,
Having failed already twice;
But he saw redemption in him,
And if any man could win him,
It was surely brother Price."

“ You must single out another,”
Answered quietly the brother,
“ I have made the effort too ;
I have sought him working, walking,
And have done a sight of talking,
Till I saw it would n't do.”

Then it was that Deacon Carson
Made a mention of the Parson,
As the proper one of all—
Better suited, better able,
To dispel the shadow sable
Hiding Billy like a pall.

So the Parson took the office,
Feeling not unlike a novice
In a case so trying hard ;
And he seized that very minute
To establish and begin it,
Going down to Billy's yard.

“ I believe, sir, you'll excuse me,
And I think you'll not refuse me,
What I very seldom pray—
For I rather shrink from drumming—
Will you favor me by coming
To my preaching Sabbath day ?”

Billy Jones was not in liquor,
Yet his voice was somewhat thicker
 Than a sober man's should be ;
And his nerves were slightly shaken,
Though, perhaps, he had n't taken
 Of his measures more than three.

And he seemed a little worried,
For he turned the skin he curried,
 In a foolish sort of way ;
Looking sidelong at his measure—
“ I will give myself the pleasure,
 Sir, to hear you Sabbath day.”

When the Sunday morning's ringing
Of the meeting-bell was bringing
 All the people with its tones,
Unto one it came appalling,
For the tanner heard it calling
 Very plainly : “ Bil-ly Jones.”

“ Bil-ly Jones,” it said, so truly,
That the tanner answered duly
 And he sought the chapel door ;
And the eyes of all were centered,
As, with timid step, he entered
 Where he never did before.

Parson Giles felt highly honored
When he saw the sinner cornered,
 For, at least, the coming hour,
And he prayed with greater fervor
For the soul of Satan's server,
 And he preached with greater power.

In a sermon, terse and graphic,
He besieged the liquor traffic,
 And he held its terror up,
Till he painted every sorrow
That the human soul could borrow
 From the Satan of the Cup.

Somewhat late that Sabbath even,
When a cloud went up the heaven
 Like a gloomy, hooded monk,
There was heard the heavy mutter
Of a being in the gutter—
 Billy Jones was very drunk.

Thus a hope of saving smothers
In the deacons and the brothers :
 “ He is lost in Satan's wiles—
He is gone beyond the reaching
Of the most effective preaching
 Of the godly Parson Giles.”

But the Parson saw his beacons
Giving light beyond the deacons
 And the brothers of the place ;
There was something rather winning
In the man's defiant sinning—
 And a courage in his face.

So he sought again the tanner,
With another sort of banner
 Than the pennant of his church—
Like the youth of proud desire,
Crying "Higher ! Higher ! Higher !"
 Till he perished in the search.

"William Jones, I come to offer
What an honest man may proffer
 With a noble aim and end ;
I would like to know you better,
Through the sacred bond and fetter
 Of a true and steadfast friend."

Billy, then and there, was batting
Down the tannin in his vatting,
 With a not unsteady hand ;
Looking much as if he could n't—
Or, most likely, if he would n't—
 Just exactly understand.

“It is not a worthless present,
Said the Parson, looking pleasant—
 “Not a simple work of art;
But the dearest thing that nature
Ever gives a human creature—
 I am come to give my heart.”

Perhaps from out the tumor
Of his vices, Billy's humor
 Of the lower order came—
Though he very seldom fretted,
Yet he spoke and soon regretted,
 With a quite apparent shame.

“Have you such a might of yearning
Just to stop the little burning
 In the soul of such an elf?
If you have, I'll tell you, Parson,
Its the clearest case of arson—
 I have set the match myself.”

Then he went on thumping, thumping,
With his heavy pestle bumping
 In the corners of the vat—
“So he does n't like my drinking ;”
Billy then was doubtless thinking—
 “Wonder what he thinks of that !”

But the Parson not responding,
Billy felt a certain bonding,
 Though he did n't see the band ;
And he turned upon the preacher—
“ You shall be my friend and teacher ;
 Here 's a wicked devil's hand.”

Then began a true alliance
' Twixt the two, in sin's defiance ;
 And the Parson's Sabbath tones,
When his mellow bells were calling,
Never failed to have a falling
 On the ear of Billy Jones.

But, at intervals, a ripple
Of the tanner's olden tippie
 Made a music in his throat,
Till its sullen under-towing
Set him to the breakers going,
 In a very crazy boat.

More than once, the common treason
Of his stomach to his reason,
 Bore him out upon the night ;
And his morrow's homeward swaying
Set the neighbors all a-saying,
 “ Billy Jones is in a plight.”

Yet the Parson never faltered ;
Billy, sure, was somewhat altered,
 And it very clearly seemed,
That with little harder trying,
He might keep the man from dying,
 And he yet might be redeemed.

So the bonds were closer riven,
And the Parson's pulses given
 More than ever to the man ;
In the change of time and weather,
They were still allied together,
 And their ways together ran.

Now and then, but far less frequent,
Billy found the olden sequent
 In the gutters of the town ;
And the Parson, constant near him,
Did the best to guide and cheer him,
 And to save his falling down.

But at last the race is ended,
And his broken life is mended ;
 And the country round for miles
Gives the meed of earnest praising
To the hand that did the raising,
 And the heart of Parson Giles.

So a Sabbath morning's ringing
Of his meeting-bell was bringing
 All the people with its tones ;
And the bell was never calling
But the Parson's voice was falling
 On the ear of Billy Jones.

When the winter days were coming,
And the chilly breezes humming
 In the birches and the pines,
When the riven leaves were shoaling
To the valleys in their rolling
 From the barren mother vines.

In the dead of night a groaning,
Heard above the common moaning,
 Brought the people to their doors ;
For the voice was surely human,
And it sounded so uncommon,
 That they gathered out in scores.

In the open highway lying,
It was "sure a mortal dying,"
 From the wailing and the groans ;
But a little nearer vision
Brought the piteous decision—
 " He is drunk, and—*Billy Jones.*"

“How is that,” said Deacon Carson,
“He was here to find the Parson
 But a little time ago?
Are you surely not mistaken?”
And the voice came to the Deacon
 With a melancholy “No.”

“Bring him in and let us see him;
We are sure it can not be him,”
 Said a dozen men or more—
So they raised the swaying body
In its atmosphere of toddy,
 And they brought it to the door.

Where the lamp-light’s lurid streaming
Fell upon it with the beaming
 Of a very demon’s smiles,
And their souls in horror fluttered
When the blanching Deacon uttered:
 “God of Heaven! PARSON GILES!”

Thus it was, the quiet village,
And its outer bound of tillage,
 Saw the rise of Billy Jones.
From the bitter slough of drinking;
He was now of sober-thinking
 And a man of steady tones.

In their goodness they had sought him,
They had bargained for and bought him,
 All the country round for miles—
They had caught him will-he, nil-he,
And were owners now of Billy,
 At the price of—Parson Giles.

Thus the Parson won the tanner
With another sort of banner,
 Than the pennant of his church—
Like the boy of bold desire
Crying “Higher! Higher! Higher!”
 He has perished in the search.



OMNIPOTENS VERITAS.

NOT the slightest breath of air
Made a murmur anywhere
In her majesty's *parterre* ;

Not a zephyr in the bounds
Of the pretty palace grounds
Went its odorating rounds ;

In the atmosphere's embrace,
All the roses of the place
Took a paleness in the face ;

From the staring noon-sun rude,
All the Calla lilies nude,
Leaned away in lassitude.

It was such a brazen day,
That the fishes would not play
From the hidings where they lay ;

For the pool—a perfect glass
In the framework of the grass—
Never felt a ripple pass,

And the under-peering trout,
From the water-plants about,
Did not dare to glitter out,

When they could not choose but see,
From the fading *fleur-de-lis*,
Such a mirrored misery.

We would always rather not
Find it quite so burning hot
In the most inviting spot ;

But it's one of Nature's ways
Thus to sprinkle in her days
Just a little bit of blaze ;

So that folk may keep an eye
To the chances, by and by,
For the weather—when they die.

Hidden in the deeper shades—
Loosened robes and lissom braids—
Lay the royal lady's maids ;

Hidden from the greater heat,
In the leafier retreat,
Under dropping blossoms sweet,

Where a pretty pink and green
Came the earth and sky between,
Lay Her Majesty—the Queen!

And it's quite enough to know
That the meshy, misty flow
Of her lace was very low—

Quite enough, beyond a doubt,
Were it you or I without,
To be putting us to rout;

For there's nothing half so rude
As the spirit to intrude
On a lady's solitude.

But the branches disengage
To a pretty, dapper page,
With his privilege of age;

Till beyond the jealous vines
He may see the lissom lines
Of the royal feminines.

(I confess a sort of spleen
For these fellows of fifteen—
They 're so very slow to wean.)

“If your Majesty so please,
Here 's a man from over seas
With a show of cunning fleas.”

There was dearth of every sort
Of entertainment then, or sport,
In the precincts of the court ;

For the days were coated o'er
With a burning, hot glamour,
And the nights—a stupid bore.

So the startled ladies rose
From their semi sort of doze,
In a scantiness of clo'es ;

And with pretty shoulders bare,
To the apparition there
They returned the sudden stare.

“Cunning fleas ! now tell us, pray,”
Said the maids in disarray—
“Cunning fleas—and what are they ?”

Then the dapper chap replied,
With a show of knowledge, pride,
“ They are insects taught to ride—

“ Taught to hop about and dance,
At a motion or a glance,
And their native place is France.”

And his terminating word—
Quite the plainest one they heard—
Touched a very tender chord ;

Not a touch—a perfect wrench,
For a woman, wife or wench,
Covets anything that 's French.

So they prayed the Queen that she—
Since they 'd never seen a flea—
Very gracious now should be.

And the languid lady Bess,*
Hitching up her foamy dress,
Very graciously said—Yes.

* This incident, in a slightly modified form, is said to have actually occurred at the court of Queen Elizabeth, though it is sometimes located elsewhere.

And the man from over seas,
With his educated fleas,
Came and fell upon his knees—

Fell upon the grassy place,
With a very French grimace.
Which was understood as grace;

And his tiny team appears,
Twenty Liliputian deers,
In their homeopathic gears.

And they move around a sheet,
Now advance and now retreat,
With a carriage all complete,

Whilst a wonder and surprise
Is besprinkled on the skies
Of a dozen splendid eyes.

And "their graces" crowd about,
In a timid sort of doubt,
Lest a flea should struggle out;

Lest the whiteness of a breast
Should invite a little guest
To a refuge and a rest.

(They were apt to tempt him so
In the vicinage and show
Of their laces lying low.)

And it happened so at last,
As the carriage rattled past
That a flea became unfast.

The little wretch upon her,
A pretty maid of honor,
Was suddenly a goner.

Now it may have been the chance,
That the rascal in his dance
Caught the pretty woman's glance;

And it may have been that lie
In a very slight degree,
Was a humanated flea;

For it should n't give surprise
If a splendid woman's eyes
Such a thing should humanize,

So to cause him break a trace
To be roving in the lace
Of a fair forbidden place,

When, perhaps, the insect knew,
What the Bible holds as true,
That "no man would there pursue."

We are very apt to be
On the side of those that flee
To the land of liberty ;

But the master claimed his own,
Though the little slave had gone
To a vastly freer zone.

To another place of shade,
Very nervous and afraid,
Ran the startled, blushing maid—

Left the others in the lurch,
And beneath a friendly birch,
Went to instituting search.

How her nimble fingers flew
All the sacred places through,
Is denied to me and you.

We may only fancy where,
In the lacy meshes there,
He was captured in despair.

We may only wish to be,
For a little time, the flea,
In his land of liberty.

But a tardy moment past,
Now the lady comes at last,
Holding something very fast.

And the fellow takes her hand
With a smile exceeding bland,
At the honor "vere grande."

He recovers now his flea
From the palpitating she,
In a perfect ecstasy.

But all joys are ever fleet,
And this triumph in retreat
Left a misery complete.

For his face was overtost
With the sudden white of frost—
"Zis is not ze flea I lost!"

Now the world was out of tune
On the sultry afternoon
Of that brazen day in June,

But it 's one of Nature's ways
Thus to sprinkle in her days
Just a little bit of blaze,

So that folks may keep an eye
To the chances, by and by,
For the weather *when they die!*

In the days of green or brown,
Let us keep our vices down,
That we may not miss the crown :

Let us keep *our* bosoms free
From the world's iniquity,
And give up the proper flea.



“FROM ME TO YOU.”

I MUST not write—'t is better here
To let the pure, white page appear!
I must not speak—the gossip-air
Might give an echo everywhere;
No words of love, however true,
Should ever pass from me to you.

I must not whisper how, at night,
I meet you in the still starlight.
I must not whisper how it seems
I love you dearly in my dreams.
Nay, nay, I'm sure it would not do—
Such words as these from me to you.

What if I met you in the grove,
And held your hand and to!d my love?
What if you turned away and wept
Or spoke me tender whilst I slept?
It is not wrong to dream, 't is true,
But should I tell my dream to you?

What if I pressed your finger-tips,
And gathered sweetness from your lips?
What if I lingered still and placed
An arm about a slender waist?
Say, would you have the dream come true,
Such love as this from me to you.

Awake, I could not dare to seek
The peachy softness of your cheek—
Awake, you might not even brook
The sweet appealing of a look.
I will not speak—until it be
The look has come from you to me.



GAMBRINUS.

WHEN the leaves began to settle
In a crimson, crisp and brittle,
On the bosom of the Rhine,
Somewhat cold, and more than sober,
Came the gold and gray October,
To the land of fruit and vine.

Here and there, along the fallow,
Tangled hops hung dry and yellow
In the Autumn's failing sun ;
And the ravaged grape-fields, lying
Over all the fells, were sighing :
" This the vintager hath done."

Ravaged truly, for the juices
Of the clusters, down the sluices
Of the presses, ran to must ;
And the gnarly tendons, riven
Of their substance, thus were given
To the griming and the rust.

It was sadder, far, than sober,
When the golden, cold October,
 Breaking down the North's incline,
Hurtled South—a crashing missile,
To the frond, and fruit and thistle,
 Of the silent-going Rhine.

It was not so good a season
For the callow man's unreason,
 As the throbbing days of spring ;
When the blood-valves start and flutter,
And the eyes grow dense to utter
 What the tongue is slow to sing.

But, beneath a browning maple,
Where the sun, in yellow dapple,
 Made its flecking at his feet,
Somewhat branch-inclosed, and hooded,
Young Gambrinus lay and brooded
 In a bitterness complete.

For it seemed this stormy feature
Kept its tiding in his nature,
 Spite of all the Autumn's chill,
And his saps of love were going
In a ceaseless, fever-flowing
 To the *fraulein* at the mill.

Sweet-eyed Gretchen—fresh and splendid,
In her lines of beauty, blended
 Twixt the woman and the girl ;
Fair-faced Gretchen, blithe and riant—
Graced of form and lithe and pliant,
 As the winding of her curl.

Keeping watch to intercept her,
As the singing mill-maid kept her
 Leafy way around the hill ;
He was planning how to freshen
Then his suit, with some expression,
 Than his strongest—stronger still.

Time on time, with fervid passion,
He had tried his speech to fashion
 So to fill her with his dole ;
So to bring her coy defiance,
Into love's distraught alliance—
 Hand to hand, and soul to soul.

“ Hear my plea, O ! cruel Gretchen ! ”
Words of heat he sought to etch in
 Lines of fire on his brain ;
When her notes, all clear, all sweetness,
Toned and round to all completeness,
 Fell upon him like the rain.

Starting up, he stood and met her,
As she broke the leafy fetter
Of her crisping careless way :
“Gretchen!”—That was all he uttered
Lost the rest—he faltered, muttered—
Tongue and eye and brain astray.

There before him, proudly taking
Freer lines of queenly making,
Giving sense of strong surprise ;
Full her regal presence spurned him,
And her scorning withered, burned him
Through the furnace of her eyes.

“Get you gone! I make no trothing
With a kerl who counts for nothing—
Stand aside and let me pass!”
Oh, the sudden, sudden stinging!
Back he shrank—and she went singing
Down the Autumn’s faded grass.

Then the reddened sun went over,
And, anon, the silent river
Caught the moon-spears glinting down ;
And the gray-stalked water lily,
And the tinted wood lay stilly,
And the mead and distant town.

On a rock, the Rhine o'erreaching,
Stood Gambrinus, death beseeching
 From the silent underflow—
Fixed of purpose: "I am nothing—
Be my wooing—be my trothing,
 With the waters here below."

Not so fast, good friend, I pray you—
There be reason to delay you—
 Would you make a time to die?
Would you culminate this fever
Into dismal pain forever,
 And the Deity defy.

"Take my word—it's worse than folly,
Thus to yield to melancholy,
 And to nullify your life—
With a plunge, to make it shorter
By a single day, in water
 For a woman—not a wife.

"I admit—did Hymen's mangle
Press you sorely, you would strangle
 With a better show of grace;
But to break your brimming cruses
Just because a maid refuses,
 Is a most outrageous case.

“ You must live sir—live to shame her—
 (You could never live to tame her
 In the propagating bond),
Live to have her sigh and sue you
With a longing to beshrew you
 When you cease to be so fond.

“ For myself, it isn't pleasant
 To deter you, but at present
 I am rather full below ;
And I find it awkward firing
For the tide that 's never tiring,
 Never ceasing in its flow.

“ You may live in peace and pleasure—
 Pride and glory without measure,
 For the coming thirty years
I will make you wiser, richer
Than the maid who broke the pitcher,
 And who wept the pearly tears.

“ You shall live, I swear, to fetch
 Such a rare remorse to Gretchen,
 That she 'll come and sue ' the kerl,'
And when you find you 've caught her,
You can spurn the miller's daughter,
 And mayhap, the Kaiser's girl.”

Now, of course, Gambrinus hearkened,
For the way was dank and darkened,
 To the quiet underneath ;
So he forced a smile, and turning :
“ I prefer remoter burning,
 And accept the further death.”

“ Well, good friend, the pact is settled,
Be you proud and proper mettled,
 When the miller's maid appears ;
Shuu all women—keep you steady ;
Be you brave and—be you ready
 At the end of thirty years.”

Then the form in green grew faded,
Till the last faint line was shaded,
 And the last light shadow fled ;
And the saved and lost Gambrinus,
Plus his life, and Gretchen minus,
 Wandered home and went to bed.

Now, Gambrinus was a fiddler,
Or, in equal words, an idler,
 For he kept no honest call,
And his fitter days for sowing,
Were declining fast and going
 Very fleetly into fall.

He had wasted days for graping,
In a dreamy, dreary scraping
 Over vibratory strings,
When he might have borne the clusters
To the brawny, lusty musters,
 To the end of better things.

But the morrows come, and gilders
Crowd upon him till he wilders
 In the rocks about the fells ;
And, the devil for his Mentor—
He became the glad inventor
 Of the music-making bells.

All around the hills with rhyming,
Then his chiming bells went climbing,
 Flinging ringings on the Rhine,
And the people paused, admiring,
As his bells went on aspiring
 To a melody divine.

Gretchen sat and ceased her singing,
When the belfry bells were swinging,
 For they gave her cruel pain ;
And she sighed : “ O, lost, lost lover !
Make thine Autumn plainting over !
 Speak me tender once again.”

But he heard her not, nor sought her,
And she walked beside the water,
 Halting, songless and alone ;
And the golden-grown October
Found her saddened, now, and sober,
 To the maples making moan.

Later still, a fuller measure
Gives he now to Teuton pleasure—
 More than all his tender bells—
In a grotto, green, and shady,
There the amber lager made he
 From the barley on the fells.

Lager! bright and clear and creamy—
Lager, ripe and rare and dreamy—
 Oh, the cool, delicious draught!
Never came such royal liquor
To his lips, as filled the beaker
 That the noble Kaiser quaft.

Soon the court grew all unsteady
From the foaming ewers heady—
 For the lords and ladies drank—
And the Queen,* who tried to stand hers,
Dubbed Gambrinus, Count of Flanders—
 And they recognized his rank.

*According to the mythic story, Gambrinus was made Count of Flanders, by the Kaiserin.

Riches, honors on him thickened,
 Till the spirit in him quickened
 Underneath his merry chimes ;
 And his life ran leal and rarely
 In among the bins of barley,
 Like a symphony of rhymes.

Never sought he now to fashion
 Any speech of burning passion,
 Underneath the maple bough ;
 But his days went on right lightly,
 And his lager cheered him nightly,
 Neither *fraulin-bound* nor *frau*.

Gretchen prayed in vain some token
 Of the Autumn-fever, broken,
 In the fervid days of old—
 She was free to spurn the trothing
 “Of the kerl who counts for nothing—”
 Not the Count who counts the gold.

Many *fraulins*, fair and gentle,
 Bowed their braids beneath his lintel,
 With the tender flush that tells ;
 But he sat and sipped his lager
 With the Kaiser or the burgher,
 And he listened to his bells.

By and by, the years were wasted,
And his merry days had hasted
 Very nearly to their close ;
And his corner-clock was picking
Out the seconds with its ticking,
 As he fell into a doze.

Satan told the time as fairly
As the brewer bought his barley ;
 Not a measure less or more,
Duly marked he all, and reckoned
Every day and hour and second,
 From the thirty years before.

“ Hither, varlet ! slave ! imp ! Vinus !
Go, inform the Count Gambrinus,
 That the moon is on the Rhine—
That I wait him at the river,
Flowing free and full forever,
 For his soul is mine—is mine ! ”

Vinus went, and sharply tapping,
Broke the stillness of his napping,
 As the door was open thrown—
“ You 're the Devil's man, I augur,
Take a seat and have some lager—
 I was sound asleep, I own. ”

“Quite correct,” responded Vinus,
I am here, Sir Count Gambrinus,
On a mission from the Crown ;
But, I very freely toast you,
May the Devil spit and roast you
Very done and very brown.”

“You ’re facetious—try another,”
And the count began to smother
From the sulphur in the air ;
And he felt Belial’s skewer,
Though he filled the pewter ewer
Much as if he did n’t care.

“By great Pluto ! I am thinking
This is most delicious drinking,
Full of life and laugh and song ;”
“Try some more, sir—my own making.”
“Would you care, sir, for my taking,
Say—a dozen kegs along ?”

“Care ! you ninny ! get ’em ready ;
Do I look so stiff and steady ?
Fill my pewter up again.”
Here he drank and paused a little :
“By the great red middle kittle
You ’re a grander man than Cain !”

Then he filled and kept on filling,
 And the count was more than willing,
 For his moments now were gold.

“Try another! take the pitcher,
 You will find it riper, richer—
 Do you mind its being cold?”

“Fill her up! By Death! I’ll stand her,
 May you prove a sal-a-man-der!”
 Here he fairly toppled o’er;
 “Fill the pitcher—fill her level,
 I’m as drouthy as the—Devil,
 Just a little, lit—tle more!”

Then Gambrinus kept on pouring,
 Till his visitor was snoring,
 And the night was wearing on;
 “I will keep my vigil by him,
 I will wait and watch and ply him
 Till the breaking of the dawn.”

* * * * *

On the morrow when the shiver
 Of the sunshine on the river
 Made the Rhenish border bright,
 Vinus waked, and stared, and wondered:
 “Into what rare region blundered
 I from everlasting night?”

“Have another mug of beer, sir,
We are quiet, private here, sir,”
Said Gambrinus, speaking low.
“Who are you, sir? By old Harry!
He’s the chap I came to carry
To the kingdom down below.”

“Take a mug to make you steady—
I’m the man, and here, and ready,”
And he made a sober bow—
“Ready, are you? Poor, frail human!
Why, I’d rather take a—woman
Than to face the Devil now.”

“Get you there as best you can, sir,
I will never go to answer
For my failure in the trust.”
“Try another,” said the brewer,
Holding up a brimming ewer;
But he vanished in a gust.

Then the years went on renewing,
With the brewer at his brewing
Still beneath his chiming bells;
And the sad, sore-hearted maiden,
With a great regret o’erladen,
Lingered still along the fells.

Then they crowned him King of Lager—
All of Satan's scheming maugre—
And he grew to fullness grand ;
And he drank : " God save the Kaiser !
I 'm a better man and wiser,
Light of heart and free of hand."

Then, for Gretchen, pale and pretty,
He was filled at last with pity,
And he thought to ease her pain ;
" I will wed her," said Gambrinus—
" To that pleasant fellow, Vinus,
Should he come this way again."



THE GROVE AT ST. ELMO.

THE Grove at St. Elmo, by moonlight, is fair—
Cool shadows, green curtains, long grass, and
fresh air—

(I envy the man who is domiciled there)—
Beneath it the city, dull, smoky, and gray,
The river in glimpses, and hills either way.
Those beautiful hills, tree-covered and blue,
In the mist of the morning—and here, looking through
The tangle of vines, as the shine of the moon
Falls over the summits, all golden as June,
Though late in the August—I wonder how long
It will be till the true poet comes with his song—
The Rhine hath its castles of art; its bridges, the Thames;
The Hudson, its somnolent hollows—all names
Writ strongly in picture—but, standing alone,
The cliffs of Kentucky are nearly unknown.
If Taylor should come to St. Elmo, and sketch
The undulant range of its westernmost stretch,
And tell in his song, as he told of Cashmere,
The eye of the world would be wandering here.

St. Elmo ! I sit in the cool of its vines,
Strung to a voice of the tenderest lines—
Strung to the sweetest accord of a song—
A heart-cry of passion—"How long? how long?"
Over me glitters the white, bright star,
Riding the sky in the distance far,
Riding the sky and filling the sphere
With a sense of light and a song of her.
Vine after vine, goes out of the yard,
Up to the curve of the gray Mansard
Of the beautiful house—lines of art
Over St. Elmo and over my heart.
I hear in the grove, as I linger yet,
The steady play of the parlor jet,
The steady fall and the music-play
Of a western window's fountain spray ;
I hear it fall in a tinkle brief,
Over the ivy's waxen leaf ;
Over the cypress, frail and fair ;
Over the cups of fuchsias rare ;
Fresh and sweet, and pure and cool
As the drip of the moss in the mountain pool.

The grove of St. Elmo, laid leafy and still,
The moonlight fair—the grass-grown hill—
I could lie all night in the glow and gaze
As the stars go down in the Eastern haze.

THE PHOTOGRAPH.*

AND was there more of tenderness express
Than ever yet my tongue had dared to speak,
When I but took thy shadow to my breast—
When I but touched the semblance of thy cheek ?

I do not know—I did not mean to wound—
I could not soil the whiteness of thy life ;
I see too clear the margin and the bound ;
I hold too high the sacred name of wife.

And yet, Irene—how sweet the name—it seems
That all the currents of my soul are thine ;
For I have called thee darling in my dreams,
And felt the pressure of thy lips to mine.

* The person for whom these verses were written had impulsively and boyishly kissed the photograph of a married lady, in her presence, very naturally giving offense. The author was invoked to make an apology in rhyme, and the lady pronounced the apology far worse than the offense. I submit the question to the tribunal of the public.

Forgive me, that I sin so in my sleep—
I would not that the dream should ever end ;
Nor would I have thee turn away and weep
To find the guilty lover in thy friend.

This life is but a shadow at the best,
And every day is but a hope denied ;
And I would take thee silent to my breast,
And call thee darling, darling, if I died.



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NOTES.

JACOB BROWN, from which this little volume takes its name, is a rhyme designed to make laughter from its very broadness. It was sold to Mr. Frank Leslie several years ago, and appeared with handsome illustrations in one of his popular journals. I am much indebted to the wide circulation of his paper for its apparent popularity.

TRUE VERSION was written at the instance of a charming lady, who wondered why I had not employed the figure of the vine and the oak, so common to poetry, in representing man and woman. She had been widowed long enough to fully authorize me in expressing a belief that the vine generally killed the tree. So, at her suggestion, I wrote the lines down to the last stanza, which is due to her own spirit of humor.

The **MIDNIGHT ROSE** and the **LAST LEAF** were written to the lady referred to above. Many of her friends will recognize the direction of the **Midnight Rose**, from a familiar knowledge of her social economy.

METEMPSYCHOSIS was an impromptu to a lady friend, from the rare beauty of whose weird ideas the writer has drawn largely. The lines are printed without her consent, but he hopes not without her approval.

The **LOST CURL** speaks for itself. The fair girl who sustained this serious misfortune, should be happy in the possession of many more natural attractions.

CULEX IN CARMINE was written for a lady who was good enough to pardon the ideal invasion of a sacred place for the rightful punishment which ensued. If the moral of this poem is at all obscure, the author will be happy to make it plain upon personal application.

PARSON GILES is printed here with timidity. Upon its first appearance—in questionable shape—it inspired a friendly but rather severe criticism from one well calculated to discriminate between a pleasant humor and a doubtful propriety. I refer to the cultivated and world-known Dr. H. A. M. Henderson, in whose personal regard I desire always to be held blameless. In the controversy which ensued through the columns of the *Courier-Journal* and the *Kentucky Freeman*, I am at liberty to say there was nothing acrimonious and that the relation of friendship has never been disturbed between us. I print the poem, not in defiance of his opinion, but in defense of my own; for as long as I remain conscious of no design to reflect upon the character of the cloth, the mere jarring of a few ill-selected words should not harm me in his opinion or in that of any individual of the class of society to which he belongs, and which I respect more sincerely than any other.

WEEDS is purely an imaginative poem, based upon the uncharitable view which many persons take of a real distress. It is ever a source of comment among gossiping people when a woman is left alone in the world, and kind-hearted people and ill-natured people are alike free in expression.

SELF-SACRIFICE approaches satire a little nearer than any other of these compositions, but it was not designed to be so, and I disclaim any attempt to cast reproach upon any venerable gentleman.

GAMBRINUS is a mere metrical rendering of an old German story, found in a volume entitled "Myths and Myth-makers," by a graceful author whose name I have been ungrateful to forget.

MAY IN MASON was written for the Centennial of corn-planting by Simon Kenton, in Mason county, at the celebration of which I was honored by an invitation to participate.

The RED CROSS will be better understood and appreciated by those who have been stricken with the bare blade, and who have participated with me in libations never to be forgotten.

PYTHIAN LINES were written for a brotherhood in whose bonds I am proud to be known. When they were announced as in hand for publication, an unscrupulous Bohemian, who is ever ready to sacrifice a friend at the shrine of a witticism, took occasion to remark he was "glad to discover something *pithy* in this author's verses."

DRAWING IT FINE was intended to point a moral as well as to inspire a smile. If both are not obvious, I have clearly missed an aim.

