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AT THE
BARS OF MEMORY

AND OTHER POEMS BY

Andrew Francis Lockhart

Truth and Light Publishing House

Milan, Illinois

Price 25 cents

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Wm. Lloyd Clark

TO MY MOTHER
In Grateful Appreciation of Her
Love and Faith in Me
During My Days
of Trial

DEC 13 1918

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“Andy” Lockhart

This little book of poems is issued by the Truth and Light Publishing House as an aid to Mr. Lockhart. I know him personally and to know him is to honor and admire him. He exposed the political heelers, boot-leggers, time servers and male harlots who were grafting and corrupting his state and making it a den of thieves. The account of his arrest, trial and the imposing of a sentence of three and one half years in the penitentiary at Leavensworth, Kans. is too long a story for this brief introductory.

Recently an aspirant to journalistic fame asked Brisbane what book to read in order that he become a master of vivid and vigorous English. The noted writer instantly advised the reading of “Pilgrims Progress” with the statement that the literature produced in jail was the literature that lived through the ages.

As I understand it some of the poems in this little volume were written by Lockhart while behind the bars of the penitentiary at Leavensworth, Kans. These verses will live long after the author has become dust and ashes. I think you will agree with me that the man who penned these lines never harbored a criminal thought.

He fought on the side of the poor, the oppressed and the outcast, and in his breast there is a heart as true and tender as ever vitalized a human life. The friends who understand the life of “Andy” Lockhart know that there was one near and dear to him who sleeps beneath the flowers in Summer and the snows in winter and that one is referred to in “The Hunger” and other poems in the following pages.

The fight for Lockhart's liberty will continue before the board of pardons and every copy of this book sold will help this friend of humanity a little in his fight for LIBERTY.

Fraternally yours,

WM. LLOYD CLARK.

AN APPRECIATION

In last Tuesday's issue of the American appeared "The Hunger" by Andrew Francis Lockhart, the poem considered by H. P. Lovecraft, a Boston critic, as equal to Riley's "An Old Sweetheart of Mine." Here is the critic's own opinion of Andy's poetry:

To Mr. Lockhart, on His Poetry

Whilst the town poet, dodd'ring in decay,
With hopeless drivell drives the Muse away,
Pleased with the clatt'ring of some formless line
That only he can fathom or define;
While sense and rhyme are banish'd as too hard
Till ev'ry chimney-sweep can turn a bard;
How great our joy to leave the free-verse throng,
And ease our ears with Lockhart's moving song!
Melodious Lockhart! Whose Aonian art
Transmits the pulsing of the simple heart;
Whose homely pen no languid soul dissects,
Whose polished line no cultur'd fog reflects;
From Grecian stores he bears no tinsel pelf,
Content to be a classic in himself!
Let feebler wits their cumbrous couplets weight
With dry allusion—dullness' specious freight,
Or deck with sounding words the empty length;
Of stilted odes, to hide their want of strength;
Our Milbank bard such formal trash disdains,
And fresh from Nature draws his rural strains
'Tis not for him in solitude to scan
The pedant's page, and shun the haunts of man;
'Tis not for him in books alone to trace
The moods and passions of our mortal race;
Close to mankind, his deft, experienced quill
Portrays his fellows with familiar skill.
No borrow'd sentiment or mimic rage
Stalks coldly through our poet's glowing page:
Fancy's true visions ev'ry line inspire,
And fill each melody with genuine fire,
Charm'd by the sound, the cynic stops to hear,
And sheds against his will the human tear,
What rising fame will future ages bring
To Lockhart, master of the lyric string?
With what fond honours will the minstrel move
Amongst the Muses of the Sacred grove?
Skill'd in sweet harmonies, supremely blest
With all the genius of his Native West,
His lofty brow deserves the laurel crown
That none hath worn, since Riley laid it down!

—H. P. Lovecraft.

FOREWORD

Let me sing the songs o' the Common Place,
As the whitenin' years roll by;
Let me trace the smiles o' each passin' face
Let me sound each sob an' sigh;
Let me echo the laughter o' children,
An' the liquid lyrics o' birds;
Let me sing the songs in the hearts o' men
The songs without notes or words!

Ever let me sing o' the love o' life,
Let me sing o' the days I knew
When youth was mine' an' joy was rife
An' friends were ever true;
Let me sing a song o' the Common Man—
The man o' the sweat an' grime—
Who follows the windin' caravan
Through the long, slow years o' Time!

* Let me sing the old time melodies—
The songs I used to know—
The sweet lullabies o' Slumberland Seas
On the shores o' Long Ago;
An' e'er let my humble pen indite
The songs that are seldom sung;
The old songs that I sought to sing an' write
In the days when my heart was young!

GOD BLESS THIS GOOD OLD WORLD

Trouble? Why, man, I have had my share
Of dolor an' want an' sorrow an' care;
I've hit the dirt, an' the ground was hard,
An' I've lost my spunk for a while, but pard—
This is a good old world!

Trouble? Why, man, you can go down the line,
An' the checks on the side are all checks o' mine.
I've stacked all my hopes on a play an' lost,
But though I've been jimmied an' double-crossed—
This is a good old world!

Trouble? Well maybe you've had a whole lot,
But there's always an end, an' like as not
You've hit the last load an' sailin' will be fine—
If you keep up your nerve, old friend o' mine—
This is a good old world!

Trouble? Why bless your old heart, Mister Man,
I've had 'bout as much as a fellow can!
I'm livin' yet, an' I'll be livin' when
The next bunch o' blues gets past me again—
God bless this good old world!

- AT THE BARS OF MEMORY

By Andrew Francis Lockhart

I love the daytime's beauties, an' its far-flung, smilin' skies,
An' all those other glories that are seen through mortal eyes:
But the evenin' with its solemn hush an' myriad glintin' stars
Just seems to bring me like the kine right up to memory's bars;
An' I live the old joys over, an' the tears o' long ago,
When I claimed the wealth o' life's rewards o' mirth an' youth
and woe,
An' across the mists o' fleetin' years from days that used to be,
I can catch the lilt o' low-sung songs my mother sang to me.

An' once again a truant from the humble little school,
I go splashin' in the waters of the Fair Grounds swimmin' pool;
An' old Tub an Jack an' Toop an' all the members of the clique
Are grinnin' at me where the vines are gnarled an' black an'
thick;

An' once more I follow fancies of a youngster free from care,
An' I'm diggin' caves an' dugouts; catchin' gophers with a
snare;

An' once more I am playin' "show," with a face all greasy black
To a crowd o' sunburned urchins in a tent o' gunny sack.

An' in the sweep o' fancy 'cross the spaces of the past,
I view the golden harvest of the grains my hands have cast;
An' the old familiar campus I knew just a while ago
Calls me back to shady spots where friendly trees are bendin'
low,

An' all the same old fellows pass along the same old ways
I used to love to follow in those other radiant days;
An' I pause in retrospection to gaze through crowdin' tears
At the haunts an' scenes that glorified the dreams o' yester
years.

An' through the gatherin' mists my truant, fancies once more
trace

The loveliness an' virtue of a sweet girl's hauntin' face,
An' across the span o' whit'nin' years between the Then an' Now
I press a tender kiss upon my sweetheart's yieldin' brow,
An' once again we wander in the twilight's purplin' haze,
An' I dream the old dreams over as we did in other days.

Dear girl, the stars o' countless nights have watch'd o'er you
asleep,

While I have walk'd the lonely road 'mongst shadows dark an'
deep.

Oh, I love the daytime's beauties; its far-flung, smilin' skies,
An' all those other glories that are seen through mortal eyes;
But the evenin' with its solemn hush an' myriad glintin' stars
Just seems to bring me like the kine right up to memory's bars;
An' across the spreadin' spaces with their sacred scenes an' plots
I catch the deathless fragrance o' Time's blue forget-me-nots;
An' in my achin' heart o' hearts I thank God for the night,
E'en though my dreams must vanish with the mornin's streakin'
light!

OLD SLEEPY TOWN

Little Curly Head is sleepy, an' his tired little eyes
Are heavy an' most as blinky as the stars up up in the skies;
He's tryin' to keep them open, but the lids keep pullin' down,
An his little feet are headed for the streets o' Sleepy Town!

Old Sleepy Town's a quiet place us old folks used to know—
Perhaps you have forgotten, for it was long, long ago—
When we used to seek its portals when the candle's yellow light
Was snuffed, an' mother whispered low: "Goodnight, my child,
goodnight!"

Old Sleepy Town is border'd by the emerald Sea o' Dreams,
An' the streets are pav'd with lollypops an' nuts an' choc'late
creams,
An' on each corner there's a stand, an' lemonade is free,
An' sugar-plums are hangin' from the maple-frostin' tree!

An' in the public fountain in the center o' the town,
The big bowl's overflowin' an' sweet nectar's runnin' down,
An' little naked kewpies on a great big caramel sled
Are coastin' right down mountains made o' cake an' ginger
bread!

Old Sleepy Town's a dear old place . . . We lov'd it long ago,
Long afore our heads were whitened with Time's never-failin'
snow;
An' just as we once lov'd it in the hallowed days now dead,
It is near an' dear to baby . . . to our little Curly Head!

LITTLE BLUE EYES

Little blue eyes blinking at me
So sleepily, so sleepily;
You are tir'd, I know, you want to sail
Away up where the moon-beams pale;
Little blue eyes blinking at me.

Little blue eyes blinking at me
So sleepily, so sleepily;
Sandman must have been 'round this way,
And caught my little one at play;
Little blue eyes blinking at me.

Little blue eyes are closed in sleep,
Silent and deep, silent and deep,
And 'way up there in pearl-scarr'd skies,
Two little stars like baby's eyes
Are winking and blinking at me!

CONTENTMENT

A touch of rose and a glint of gold;
A crystal star in the sea of pearl;
What matters it if the world grows cold
When the folds of night unfurl?

A friend or two for the living day;
And love for the worldly things worth while;
What matters it if the skies grow gray?
There is no chill in a soul-born smile!

An hour for joy; a moment for tears;
And golden beams to breast the gloom;
What matters it if the surging years
Are beating against an eternal tomb?

For life is real, and so much joy
Pervades each hour of the living day,
That sorrow is only the mild alloy
Which strengthens the fabric of mortal clay!

LET ME LIVE A WHILE

Oh, let me live a little while;
A fleeting, changeful day;
And teach me how to laugh and smile
When skies grow cold and gray!

Oh, let me learn the lessons hard,
The tasks of life's long school,
And let me soothe the hands deep scarr'd
Of those who broke some rule!

Oh, let me say a word of cheer
To those who struggle by,
And let me dry another's tear
When sorrow's train is nigh!

Oh, let me ease some troubled heart
With a kind word or two,
And let me cool the ache and smart
Of wrongs some others do!

Oh, let me bear the heavy cross
Borne by some falt'ring man,
And let his gain become my loss
In life's fine sifting pan!

Oh, let me live a little while;
A fleeting, changeful day;
And may the heavens glow and smile
When I am laid away!

TO A VAGRANT

Preacher? No, I ain't no preacher!
But as I saw you standin' there,
I thought I could trace
O'er a boy's happy face
A ringlet o' wind-toss'd hair.
An' I thought I could picture a mother
With a face like the heaven's dawn,
As she heard her child's pray'rs,
By his bedside upstairs
When the curtains at evenin' were drawn.

Preacher? No, I ain't no preacher!
But when I saw the glint in your eyes,
Wondered I if she knew
What had happened to you,
An' if you ever thought o' her sighs.
An' I wondered if you ever wrote her—
Yes, I know folks call you a bum—
But she's prayin' tonight
By the lamp's yellow light
For the boy, her boy, who don't come.

Preacher? No, I ain't no preacher!
But as I heard you laugh just now,
I thought I could trace
In the lines o' your face
The kisses she pressed on your brow:
An' I thought I could hear the babble
Of a wee, little chap in his glee,
As he galloped the course
On a white wooden horse
No higher'n his gran'daddy's knee.

Preacher? No, I ain't no preacher!
But I just couldn't help but see
How sweet-like you looked
Afore you went and booked
For the ports that can never be.
An' I just couldn't keep from wonderin'
If you weren't hungry tonight
To hear mother say:
"Dear Father, I pray"—
Back home in the yellow light.

Preacher? No, I ain't no preacher!
But I'm askin' you just the same,
As a mere passin' friend
Who has noticed your trend
Though he don't even know your name,
To go back to the woman who's waitin'
An' fill her old heart with joy—
An' kiss her wrinkled brow:
For though you're a man now,
In her eyes—you're only a boy!

TO A FRIEND O' MINE

He's got a care-free swagger when he trails along the street,
An' I reckon most folks would say he's as shiftless as can be;
An' his arms are always swingin' to the swingin' o' his feet,
An' he always keeps a-whistlin' an' just take it now from me
He's got a world o' sunshine in his dirty, freckled face,
An' his torn an' patched-up overalls an' shirt an' other things
Just cover up a body that is full o' tender grace
An' I'd pay him honest homage when I'd grudge the same to
kings!

He's got a face-free swagger an' his arms are long an' thin
An' I reckon God Almighty put the fire into his eyes
Just about the self-same time He put the sunshine in his grin,
An' filled his hair with sunbeams pluck'd from out the sum-
mer skies.
An' where he got his laughter, well say, I don't know where
But I've heard it in the meadow where the brook goes
idlin' by;
An' I've heard it in the willows 'round the old creek over there
Where I used to watch the shiners snappin' at a dragon-fly.

Tricky? Well, I guess he is, an' he will keep you guessin', too,
An' you couldn't get him mad or sore for all you'd try an'
plan;
He's full o' pep an' ginger, but I know he wouldn't do
A mean trick to the meanest chap you'd call a low-down man.
An' he's always there an' willin' to lend a helpin' hand,
An' he just loves to have you kinda notice him, an' say—
He'd make you like him, love him, an' he'd help you understand
The glory o' the night an' all the glories o' the day!

He's just a little shaver an' I don't suppose that you
Would ever stop to mark him if you'd meet him in a crowd:
But b'lieve me—he's the chap I'll doff my old sombrero to,
'Cause he's a friend o' mine an' honest Injun I am proud
To have him come an' greet me with his happy, boyish yell:
I'm glad to have him holler when he sees me passin' by,
An' all his songs an' whistled tunes just seem to weave a spell
That takes me back across the years, an' . . . durn that
leaky eye!

He's got a care-free swagger when he trails along the street,
An' I reckon most folks would say he's as shiftless as can be;
An' his arms are always swingin' to the swingin' o' his feet.
An' he always keeps a-whistlin' an' just take it now from
me—
He's got a world o' sunshine in his dirty, freckled face,
An' his torn an' patched-up overalls an' shirt an' other things
Just cover up a body that is full o' tender grace
An' I'd pay him honest homage when I'd grudge the same to
kings!

THE HUNGER

Sometimes when the curtains are lowered, an' the world is shut
away,
An' the embers glow in the fire-grate like the burnin' steps o'
day,
From the bounds o' the land o' spirits I feel you drawin' near
An' above the tickin' o' my clock I hear you whisper, "Dear!"

An' sometimes when I linger in the old, old garden spot
I seem to trace your tender face in a fair forget-me-not;
An' the gnawin' hunger o' my soul is lost for a little while
In the sacred recollection o' your sweet an' deathless smile.

An' sometimes in the star-lit night when the earth is hush'd an'
still,
An' the silver moon is pinion'd to a star above the hill,
My dream ships go a-sailin' o'er the Seas o' Yesterday
An' your fairy voice comes singin' like the birds across the way.

An' sometimes I seem to catch a glint o' sunny, golden hair
As the sunlight throws a shadow 'cross the room an' over there
Where you used to sit an' watch me bendin' o'er a yieldin' page;
But my pen is still'd an' rustin' . . . an' the time seems such
an age!

The dreams I built in olden days are lost in the dark o' grief,
An' like a wind-swept tree that craves for a single, clingin' leaf,
My soul is hungry for the touch of a soft, caressin' hand;
For the tender eyes of a lost one . . . who knew . . . an' could
understand!

A PRAYER

O give me the strength, dear God of heaven,
When the mighty test of courage comes—
Perchance in the rattle of steel and bronze,
And the roar and rumble of martial drums;
If Thou, O Creator, shouldst deem it meet
That I face the onward charging line—
Pray give me the strength to die like a man,
When they shall pierce this heart of mine!

O give me the strength, dear God of heaven,
When the great test shall come to me
In the solemn hush of the star-lit night
And where no mortal eyes can see;
O give me the strength to meet the test—
The courage of Thy heart divine,
To baffle the arts of the unseen powers
Seeking to rule this soul of mine!

HIS MASTER'S VOICE

When he swells up his chest and raises his chin,
And talks with a gusto that sounds like sin;
And boasts of his valor and strength and all
Save his yellow streak and his store of gall:
You may think he's a hero of countless affrays,
And a gallant knight of chivalric days,
Who has humbled a million men, bold and bad,
But it's only whisky that's talking, m'lad!

When he recites a wierd tale of conquests made,
Of tests of arms and the cold, steel blade;
Of escapades that make you shiver and shake
As your spine grows as cold as a coiling snake:
You may think he's a hero of some bloody war
Where men were butchered and slaughtered galore;
Where human life was a mere tinsel toy—
But it's only whisky that's talking, m' boy!

For whisky talks above the din of the crowd
In tones that are husky or falsetto loud:
A hero it makes of the cowardly knave,
And a creeping toad of the strong and brave;
And the man of wealth is poor when he's drunk
While the pauper counts bullion by the chunk:
And virtue and goodness are lost in the bad—
When whisky starts talking—and boasting—m' lad!

GIVE ME THE LOVE OF A CHILD

Oh, give me the love of a little child,
An' grant me the right to claim
The fond, soft pats o' his chubby hands
As he seeks to lisp my name!

Oh, give me the love of a little child,
An' grant me the pow'r to say
A prayer for him in the quiet night
When his toys are laid away!

Oh, give me the love of a little child,
When my eyes grow weak an' dim,
An' the golden sun o' life sinks down
O'er Eternity's purple rim!

Oh, give me the love of a little child,
An' I'll prize it evermore
When my lonely ship goes a-sailin' on
For a far an' misty shore!

IN PARTING

When time draws nigh to say goodbye
To those I prize and hold,
And the soul of me puts out to sea,
And earth grows dark and cold;
God grant me pow'r in that last hour
To wave a fond adieu
To those who grieve because I leave
From out the soundless blue.

And may they know as I must go
Across death's borderland,
I liv'd my days on life's highways
Seeking to understand;
Seeking to give to those who live
The flowers they have won
Ere they have found the plot of ground—
Sacred spot in the sun.

To those who weep for me asleep,
May God bring comfort there;
And may He bless with His caress
The heart that feels despair:
For I will wait within the gate
Where angel faces smile
To meet them when we meet again
In just a little while!

GROWING OLD

A little nearer the setting sun;
A little nearer to God and man;
More ready to help the falt'ring one
Who struggles behind life's caravan.

A little more used to changing fate;
A little more tender of heart toward those
Who once were wont to condemn and hate,
Who once paid the kindest act with blows.

Loving to live and let others live;
A little nearer the golden rule;
More apt to refuse—more willing to give
A hand to the strugglers in life's hard school.

More willing to count the many joys
That are mine in this sun-blest day;
More ready to leave the strife and noise
To watch little children at their play.

Growing old! But if it please God
As the changing seasons onward roll,
Let me follow the trail so many have trod
With Youth and Hope and Love in my soul!

THE VICTOR

When you stand alone on the field once more,
And your face is bruis'd and red with gore,
And a sickening feeling fills your breast
As the fires of day die out in the west;
Oh, can you look back with pride at your fight,
As the twilight glow filters into the night?
Was it worth the pain, and the heart-aches and all,
Was it worth the deep dregs of bitter gall?

Was it worth the hard test you had to meet?
Was the vict'ry gain'd, satisfaction complete?
Did you wage a fight on a worth while plan?
And what have you won in the eyes of man?
Was it worth the shedding of precious blood?
Was it worth the loss'ning of sorrow's flood?
Was the effort worth while? Can time erase
The deep scars you have cut in your heart and face?

- O victor alone on your battle field,
With your blunted sword and deep dented shield,
Look back o'er the past and count your gain
And tell me your conquests were not in vain:
Tell me the vict'ry your valor has won
Has earned you the right to a spot in the sun;
Tell me the sum of your spoils blood-wet
Is something more than a cross of regret!

LIFE

Just a little night-time,
An' then—the fadin' stars.
 A golden sheen
 An' blue between
The crimson mornin' bars!

Just an hour o' sunshine,
An' just an hour o' gloom.
 Just a few tears
 Then fleetin' years,
An' then—the narrow room!

Just a little sadness,
A moment o' regret;
 An' then comes peace—
 Our labors cease—
The sun of day has set!

Thus give our measur'd moments
Essence o' joy an' pain;
 An' may we feel
 Come woe or weal,
Life is ne'er liv'd in vain!

HIS REASONS

I 'spose you kind o' wonder why your daddy's always blue,
An' why he loves the comp'ny of a little tot like you;
Why he loves to run his fingers through your curly, golden hair
Afore he says goodnight when you have lisp'd your evenin'
pray'r.

An' I 'spose most folks are thinkin' that I'm just a wee bit queer,
'Cause I love to sit alone sometimes an' smoke my pipe out here
Where the hollyhocks are swayin' in the gently whisperin'
breeze

That seems to sob a requiem in the branches of the trees.

But listen, little dearie, just afore you close your eyes,
There's reason for my loneliness an' reason for my sighs;
There's reason why I love to pat your curly little head
An' listen to your baby pray'rs beside your trundle bed.
A long, long time ago a woman held you to her breast,
When your dream ships went a-sailin' in the harbor of the west;
She held you close an' watched the stars a-twinklin' in the skies,
An' you, babe, were the theme o' all her low-sung lullabis.

No, I guess you can't recall to mind that sweet an' kindly face,
An' time has still'd the melodies that bless'd this old home
place:

But just as though I might forget her tender eyes o' blue,
God left the depths o' heaven in the little eyes o' you;
An' He took a bit o' sunlight from His gardens over there
An' left it as a halo for your mother's golden hair,
An' He pluck'd the roses from her lips an' gave them all to
yours,
As sweet an' fresh an' fragrant as the dew that drapes the
moors.

An' I love to sit an' smoke an' dream o' days that are to be,
When you will bring the presence o' your mother back to me;
When you will bring the sunshine o' her sweet an' tender face
From out the halls o' heaven to this quiet, sacred place;
An' baby dear I'll keep you here until that final day
When she will call me to her from the place across the way;
An' that's why your daddy's lonely; that's why he's always
blue—
An' that's why he loves the comp'ny of a little tot like you!

YOU DIDN'T MEAN TO BE BAD

No, you didn't mean to be bad, little chap,
When you uttered that cross little word:
It was only a slip from an ill-guarded lip,
Yet somebody was iistenin', and' heard.
It hurt her a heap, 'cause I saw her tears fall—
She was cryin' for you, little lad;
An' her poor heart was achin' an' almost breakin'
Though you didn't mean to be bad.

No, you didn't mean to be bad, little chap.
When you rushed off an' wouldn't be kissed:
You were hustlin' to play with the gang 'cross the way,
But laddie, your lips were sore missed.
It hurt her a heap when you dashed through the door,
An' her patient blue eyes grew so sad;
She wanted to press that mother's caress—
But you didn't mean to be bad.

Oh, none o' us want to be bad, my boy.
But we do an' say so many things
Without thinkin' the rose a careless hand throws
May be bristlin' with briars an' stings.
An' many's the arrow we hurt with our might
Without aim—yet long after, my lad,
We find that our dart has pierced a heart—
An' we didn't mean to be bad!

NOW I'M OLD

I used to like to argue
'Bout tariff schedules an' planks;
Cost o' home production
An' the ideas o' cranks;
Used to roast the durn free-traders
When our wheat an' corn was sold
At near starvation prices—
But now I'm old!

I used to like to campaign
For the grand old G. O. P.;
Headed torch-light processions
Since eighteen eighty-three;
Smoked cigars that smelt like rubber
An' drove in the rain an' cold
To 'tend some rousin' rally—
But now I'm old!

I've walked an' talked a heap lot
For candidates galore;
I've fit for Lincoln's party
Ever since the Civil War;
Never got a job for workin'
Nor a bit o' minted gold—
Just a million broken promises
An' now—I'm old!

THE WEE, WEE LITTLE CHAP

He was just a wee, wee, little chap,
But he meant, Oh, so much to me!
An' since he went away the home don't seem
At all like it used to be.
I can't get used to the quiet room
That once seemed so chuck full o' joy
An' a lump keeps formin' in my throat
'Cause I want my boy!

His hands an' face were always soiled,
But it wa'n't because he was mean,
'Cause I knew that beneath the dirt an' grime
Both his little heart an' soul were clean.
His hair was always mussed an' snarl'd,
Like as though it never knew a comb,
But that curly head was the sunshine
Of our little home.

An' now when I sit in the quiet room
I seem to feel him near, an' somehow
I can trace his arms about my neck
As his phantom kisses brush my brow;
An' then—I just can't help listenin'
For the crash of a fumbled toy.
But the wind outside just sobs an' sighs—
For my little boy!

Lonely? Yes, an' I just nigh starved
For the glow of a little face;
For the grimy hands an' tangled hair
That once blessed this old home place.
An' I want to hear the patter
Of bare little feet on the stair
An' hear again his "Hel-lo Dad—
Me's comin' over there!"

He was just a wee, wee, little chap,
But he meant, Oh, so much to me!
An' since he went away the home don't seem
At all like it used to be.
I can't get used to the quiet room
That once seemed so chuck full o' joy
An' a lump keeps formin' in my throat
'Cause I want my boy!

SINCE THE BOYS WENT AWAY

I've been sittin' around all day, I have,
Just noddin' an' nappin' an' wonderin' when
The boys will be comin' back home again,
An' I have been wishin' they was here, I have.

Ain't no use tryin' to forget, it ain't,
'Cause they's gone an' let mother an' me—
An' we just can't help wonderin' where they be
'Cause they never write back to us, they don't.

There was curly-haired Jim, our pet, he was—
An' mother planned an' planned on him
Stayin' right here—little curly-haired Jim—
But he's gone to the front to fight, he has.

An' Sam, he always used to say, he did,
That he'd never leave us old folks alone
'Til our names was cut in a slab o' stone—
But he answered the call an' rode away, he did.

An' Billy—well, he was kind o' wild, he was,
An' he always wanted to rove an' roam;
He wa'n't contented in the old farm home—
But we cried when he went away, we did.

No, it ain't that we's selfish, no it ain't,
But it's lonesome out here on the old home place,
An' mother's growin' haggard in her eyes an' face
'Cause the boys don't never write, they don't.

I've been sittin' around all day, I have,
Just noddin' an' nappin' an' wonderin' when
The boys will be comin' back home again,
An' I have been wishin' they was here, I have.

MY HERITAGE

A little while to live an' learn ;
A little while to dream an' plan ;
A little while to long an' yearn
For things denied to humble man.

A little while to know an' feel
The comfort o' some faithful friends ;
A little while for woe an' weal ;
A little while to make amends.

A little while to doze an' nod ;
A little while to jest an' play ;
A little while to worship God
Along the broad an' sun-kiss'd way.

A little while to mourn an' weep ;
A little while to comfort those
Who suffer when the world's asleep,
Unconscious of all others' woes.

A little while to love an' bless
That kindly soul that gave me life ;
A little while just to caress
My mother's hand in hours o' strife.

A little while to toil an' slave
Ere all the tricklin' sands have run ;
A while to bless a grass-grown grave
Guarded by moon an' stars an' sun.

My heritage! To live each day
Subject to laws that men may frame ;
Just live . . . an' then slip away
To that far bourne from whence I came.

WHERE THE GRAPE VINE'S TWININ' STILL

Sometimes when I get lonely an' everything looks so blue
An' a something here away down in my heart cries out to you:
I walk down through the meadows an' past the old grindin' mill
An' down to the rickety rail-fence where the grape vine's
twinin' still.

I sort o' feel your presence when the wind sighs through the
trees,
Fragrant with musk, an' drowsy with the hum o' honey bees:
I seem to hear your whispers an' my old heart seems to thrill
Beneath the spell o' fancy, where the grape vine's twinin' still.

I can feel your soft caresses a-brushin' ag'in my cheek,
Soft as the touch o' dragon-flies on the bosom o' the creek:
An' I hear your low-sung melodies as the shadows darken the
hill,
An' the wind sobs in the thicket where the grape vine's twinin'
still.

I just can't think you've left me, 'cause I feel your wind-blown
hair
In the sunlight that filters an' flutters through the trees an'
everywhere;
An' I can hear your laughter in the little ripplin' rill
That flows beneath the rail-fence where the grape vine's twinin'
still.

Tonight my old heart is heavy, an' the call o' my soul's desire
Can't be found in the blue smoke circles that curl from this
friendly briar.
For as I retrace my footsteps an' pass the old grindin' mill,
I seem to leave my heart right there where the grape vine's
twinin' still.

TO A DEPARTED FRIEND

Just say that he lived a little while;
That he lov'd to laugh an' loved to smile;
That he lov'd the birds, the trees, the flowers;
That he bow'd in reverence to God's great powers.

Just say that he knew a few human laws;
That his own code was not without its flaws;
That he could discern between black an' white;
That he drew a line between wrong an' right.

Just say that he lived his sun-blest day—
An' fell asleep by the side o' the way
He lov'd to follow, ere conquerin' death
Touched the core o' his heart, an' stilled his breath.

Just say that his life was not without woe;
That he knew the heartaches most mortals know;
That he tried to be brave when things look'd gray;
That he knew what it meant to hit the clay.

Just say that he lived to love an' learn;
That he sought to give o' his best in turn;
That he learned the lessons in life's hard school;
That he tried to live close to the golden rule.

Just say that he loved the good things in life;
That he yearned for peace in hours o' strife;
That he made his fight on a clean-cut plan;
That he faced the issues like a man.

Just say that he lived a few fleetin' days,
Seekin' neither wealth nor fame nor praise;
That he liv'd until the shadows grew deep—
Lived a little while—an' then fell asleep.

TO A BABY

There's a something 'bout you, little chap,
That just makes me wish that you
Belonged to me—don't know what it is,
Unless it's your eyes o' blue
An' your little kewpie lips that curl
Like a rose bud damp with dew.

Maybe it's your little nose,
An' might be your pinkish ears,
An' maybe it's your soft, white cheeks
Where time will yet trace the years;
An' per'aps it's your gurglin' little laugh
When kisses have dried your tears.

There's a something 'bout you, little chap,
That I can't quite understand;
An' the heart o' me just seems to thrill
When your fingers clutch my hand,
An' a sort o' yearnin' fills my soul . . .
A hunger I can't command.

An' wuen you're dreamin' safe in your crib,
An' the house is wrapp'd in sleep,
I leave my work an' tip-toe soft
Cross the room to take a peep
At your sweet little features an' sometimes
I kiss you . . . an' then feel cheap!

An' then I go back to my study,
An' the scratchin' o' my pen
Is stilled in fond retrospection
Of sweet things that might have been;
An' a tear soils the ill-penned pages . . .
An' I am myself again!

WE LOVED HIM SO

He knew not the volumes o' long treasur'd lore,
Nor thought of the fray, with its hatred an' gore;
Cared little for honors an' places o' fame,
An' the world will ne'er thrill at the sound o' his name;
But he lov'd all mankind on the highway o' life;
He lov'd nature's wild haunts, far away from the strife;
He was kind to his fellows, the high an' the low;
An' his friends would oft whisper: "We all love him so!"

He liv'd in a house by the side of the road,
An' a hundred times over would share the sad load
Of a wanderin' pilgrim who stopp'd in the shade
For a moment o' rest. While the warm sunshine play'd
On the face of the man with his cheery, "hello"—
An' the travelers could not help lovin' him so.
They all lov'd him so, though the man knew it not
As he wav'd a farewell from his vine-cover'd cot.

He's sleepin' today beneath the shelterin' trees
That sob to the flow'rs, as the sweet summer breeze
Prints a kiss on the mound o'er the last restin' spot
Of the man that we lov'd, though he reckoned it not.
An' when the Great Author shall call the last roll
I know He will honor that friendly old soul,
Who gave o' his love an' would lighten the load
Of the man who walk'd by on the long, weary road!

L'ENVOI

When the curtain descends,
An' I've made my amends
For wrongs I may have done:
An' the echain' knell
Of the slow, tollin' bell
Proclaims my day is done;
O, lay me to sleep
In a grave that is deep.
Where trees are bendin' low;
Where the birds always sing
With the sweetness o' spring—
In life I lov'd them so!

Let me slumber out there
In the sweet perfumed air,
Beneath the verdant sod.
Just a spot 'neath the trees,
Where the wild honey bees
Toil where the daisies nod.
An' there leave me at rest
In earth's comfortin' breast,
Immune to pain an' woe;
Near the birds an' the flowers,
An' God's measureless powers:
In life I lov'd them so!

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