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NEW VERSES OF HUMAN FOLKS

BY

JAMES W. FOLEY
II

▪ THE ▪
FRIENDLY
FOLEY
BOOK



R. D. HOSKINS, ART PUBLISHER
Bismarck, North Dakota

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1916

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no. 1.

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NOV 11 1916

TO DAVID E. MORGAN
Whose memory is one of my life's
best beloved treasures

THE FRIENDLY FOLEY BOOK

MELLOW FORTY

I BEEN sittin' here tonight,
Smokin' just by candle light;
Kind o' thinkin'—just about
Fur an' wide as all get-out;
Nothin' deep an' hard to do,
Just about th' same as you
Might if you was joggin' slow
Back some forty years or so
On th' way of Life.

An' say!
She's a good world, anyway!
Good t' travel, in an' out;
Good t' learn an' think about;
Good t' dream of an' t' smile,
Good t' figger what's worth while;
Good t' lend a helpin' hand,
Better still, t' understand.

II

'Pears like Wisdom, she ain't done
Much for us at Twenty-one.
Feller's got book-learnin', too,
Knows what makes th' sky so blue,
Knows what makes it rain an' snow,
Knows why everything is so.
Lord, how he does love t' spout
Streams of straight book-learnin' out!
Educated just immense,
Full of knowledge but no sense.
Wave his hand in air, just so,
Ready fer t' overthrow

MELLOW FORTY

Empires, continents an' kings,
An' th' old, established things;
Feller'd think, t' hear him scold,
He's th' Judgment Book unrolled,
Passin' Wisdom's last decree
On th' world, an' you an' me.

III.

Well, that's Youth! An' I recall
Mine; an' how I knowed most all
Of th' things from Genesis
Clean t' Revelations. Yes,
Ready t' stan' up an' throw
Rocks at Solon, Cicero,
Plato an' Demosthenes
An' such little lights as these.
Pass my judgment, quicker'n scat
On th' truth o' this an' that,
Spillin' wisdom from my cup
Faster'n worlds could soak it up.
Youth, since then I've kind o' found,
Youth ain't got no middle ground;
Goes whole-hog, or none at all
On all questions, great an' small;
Measures, like they do in school,
Life with Learnin's three-foot rule,
Every question's got t' be
Settled with a "Q.E.D."

IV.

Old Book-learnin's three-foot rule
Comes in mighty good in school,
I'll allow, an' has its place,
But it ain't th' human race
By no means, an' life don't look
Like it's printed in a book.

MELLOW FORTY

An' I'd like a rule t' show
What makes certain fellers so;
Why some husky, strappin' lout
In th' fight goes down an' out,
While some runty little jay
Lift's th' flag an' leads th' way.
Ain't no learnin' will amount
To a bean-hill that don't count
Human bein's, as they be,
X fer unknown quantity.
An' no learnin' is complete
That don't keep a feller sweet,
Ready t' come 't least half-ways,
Kind o' keerful what he says;
Always more'n half inclined
To be merciful an' kind;
Willin' t' admit that he
Might be wrong, an' to agree
With th' 'leven, ruther'n stay
Sot in his own stubborn way.

V.

Life ain't some book-learnin' fact,
Mathematic'y exact,
An' don't foller no set rule
Like a feller learns in school,
An' when he learns that, he's come
To be educated some.
Was a time once when I'd pass
Judgment, just like pullin' grass,
On my neighbors—knowed just what
Orto be an' orto not,
But as years have gone, somehow
I don't judge nobody now,
An' I don't want none t' be
Always ready t' judge me.

MELLOW FORTY

VI.

Thirty's better'n Twenty-one—
Wisdom's kind o' just begun
Then—a feller's gettin' ripe
Like a year-old meerschaum pipe
That you've smoked along an' brung
Where th' smoke don't burn your tongue,
An' y' sort o' like t' squint
Down th' bowl an' get a hint
How th' color's goin' t' show
In a couple years or so.
Then there's Forty—I dunno,
Forty ca'ms a feller so,
Makes him mellow-like an' mild;
More th' sperrit of th' child.
He just wants t' love an' live,
Help a little an' forgive;
Find what's really happiness;
Feel contented-like with less;
Judgment ain't as quick an' stern,
Willin'er, I think, t' learn;
Much more ready to admit
'Tother feller's view of it
Even if 'tain't his idee—
Leastways, it seems so t' me.

VII.

Understandin'! That's the thing!
Ain't no book 'll ever bring
That! You've got t' hit th' road
Carryin' a real man's load;
Struggle, as a feller must,
Throat plumb dry an' choked with dust:
Bein' tempted, slippin' some,
Needin' help, but bein' dumb;
Hopin', prayin'—wonderin' what

MELLOW FORTY

May be Truth an' may be not;
Wantin' sympathy an' cheer,
Wishin' There was only Here;
Needin' to be understood
As a feller half-ways good;
Fightin', strivin', as men do,
Failin', just like me an' you,
Great sometimes an' sometimes small,
But *so* human after all.

VIII.

Somethin' 'bout it—I dunno,
Forty ca'ms a feller so,
Leastways it seems so to me.
Hope at Fifty I can be
Ten years milder; ten more kind;
Ten more merciful inclined;
Ten years gladder just to live,
Ten more ready t' forgive;
Ten more! maybe them 'll bring
Understandin'—that's th' thing!

RHYMES OF THE FRIENDLY CHILDREN

THE SCHOOLBOY'S DREAM

I T was on Recitation Day,
And to the rostrum high
Ten schoolboys mounted, one by one,
Each with a bloodshot eye;
Each with a voice that shook with fear,
And blistered lips and dry.

That Midnight, in his troubled bed
One dreaming schoolboy lay.
Long since the village Curfew Told
The Knell of Parting Day,
And left the fields in darkness where
Maud Muller Raked the Hay.

The Midnight Passed; the boy Awoke;
That Bright Dream was his Last.
He waked to hear the Light Brigade
Charge, full Six Hundred, past;
His Brow was Wet with Honest Sweat
As he looked on aghast.

The Boy Stood on the Burning Deck
Whence All but Him had Fled;
The Flames that Leaped Above the Wreck
Shone Round Him o'er the Dead.
On Fame's Eternal Camping Ground
Their Silent Tents were Spread.

It was the Schooner Hesperus
That Sailed the Wintry Sea;
Near Linden, When the Sun was Low;
And, Rolling Rapidly,
Was Isar, and Untrodden Snow—
The Boy, Oh, Where was He?

THE SCHOOLBOY'S DREAM

He climbed far out upon the mast,
With Large and Sinewy Hand;
Far down below him he could see
The Village Smithy Stand
Beneath the Spreading Chestnut Tree,
And home and native land.

"Ho! Blacksmith!" cried the Boy aloft,
"Mark thou my crossbow well;
Hold firm the apple on thy head
Lest some disaster fell
Come to thee from this shaft I send—
For I am William Tell!"

"Shoot if You Must this Old Gray Head,"
The Village Blacksmith cried;
"But Spare Your Country's Flag," he said,
"For men have bled and died
Where Freedom, From Her Mountain Height,
Unfurled it, far and wide."

"The Melancholy Days Have Come,
The Saddest of the Year,"
The Boy replied in Accents Wild,
In which was little cheer;
"For Men May Come and Men May Go,
But I am prisoned here."

In the Signal Tower of the Old North Church
He saw a lantern shine;
'Twas the Midnight Ride of Paul Revere,
Hard by the foaming brine,
When he rode down From Bingen—
From Bingen on the Rhine.

"Friends, Romans, Countrymen!" he cried;
"To be or not to be?"

THE SCHOOLBOY'S DREAM

Then high up on the mast he spied
The Boy, far out at sea—
“It is the Little Peterkin
In very truth,” quoth he.

“Now Blessings on Thee, Little Man;
My Barefoot Boy,” he cried,
“Art, thou the Little Peterkin?”
“Nay, nay,” the Boy Replied;
“Look close and see that We are Seven,
Myself and six beside.

“One is the Village Blacksmith there,
And you are Paul Revere;
And one of us is William Tell;
Another one’s up here;
Three more upon this rostrum high
Will presently appear.

“So you must Give Me Liberty
Or Give Me Death!” he cried.
“Jump Boy—Far Out, and leave that wreck
Upon the foaming tide;
And I will catch you in my arms.”
So Paul Revere replied.

“Sail On, Sail On, Thou Ship of State,”
The Boy cried out, “Adieu!
The Muffled Drum’s Sad Roll Shall Beat
Thy sailor’s Last Tattoo.”
He leaped into the Ocean’s Arms,
A Brave but Fallen Few.

Below him was the burning deck
Where flames rolled hot and red—
Great stars he saw, and then sat up
To rub his aching head
When he waked up at last—for he
Had jumped right out of bed.

THE LAD AND THE DAD

MY friend, Johnny Jones, once played hookey from school,
(A quite reprehensible thing.)
In plain contravention of precept and rule,
(A most inexcusable thing.)
Played hookey with many a sly, backward look,
Till he found him a seat by the bank of a brook.
Where he skillfully wriggled a worm on a hook,
(A quite unforgivable thing.)

His desk was deserted, his slate lay there spurned,
(A clearly intolerable thing.)
His books all unread and his lessons unlearned,
(A quite unpermissible thing.)
He fished with some qualms when he thought of his sin
And the schoolroom where properly he should have been,
But, Oh, what his joy when he drew a fish in!
(Oh, surely a terrible thing.)

My friend, Johnny Jones, smelled of fish at the eve,
(Quite truly a dangerous thing.)
There was mud on his trousers and some on his sleeve,
(A quite unexplainable thing.)
So when he got home Father Jones crisply said:
"I'll see you a minute or two in the shed,"
And he whipped Johnny soundly and put him to bed,
(A parentally admirable thing.)

My friend, Jones the elder, one hot summer day,
(A natural, natural thing.)
Pulled down his desk top, pushed his papers away,
(A very explainable thing.)
He said as he pulled his desk shut with a jerk:
"I'm off for some place where the game fishes lurk,
I'm blessed if this life should be made just for work,"
(A really quite sensible thing.)

THE LAD AND THE DAD

So he left all his books and his papers and bills,

(You'll agree, an excusable thing,)

And took himself off to the woods and the hills,

(A surely forgivable thing.)

He fished with some qualms when he thought of the bills

And the papers and books—but the joy of the rills

And the brooks and the call of the woods and the hills,

(A quite understandable thing.)

He didn't play hookey—Oh, no, not at all;

('Twas a quite, Oh, quite usual thing),

And Johnny Jones did, as perhaps you recall

(That quite inexcusable thing.)

But the spirit of vagrancy Johnny Jones had

Was much the same spirit as that of his dad,

And I say there's small choice between Dad and the Lad,

(A really heretical thing.)

FUNNY LITTLE FOLKS

ONCE there was a little boy who never slammed a door,
And never took his stockings off and threw them on the
floor;

He never slid down banisters, and always wore his hat,
And never asked for pudding twice, or anything like that.

And once there was a little girl who wore her dress all day
And never got a spot on it when Mamma was away;
Her hair was never out of curl, her gowns were always neat,
Nor when her Mamma's back was turned did she run off down
street.

There was a little mouse, as well, that never tasted cheese
Or took a bite of anything but he said: "If you please;"
He never scampered here and there and all around the house,
The only one I ever knew as quiet as a mouse.

So, too, there was a little dog that never barked or whined;
He wore his head in front of him and had his tail behind;
Except for that he was unlike all other dogs I know,
For he had perfect manners and behaved himself just so.

There was a little pussy cat that never purred or mewed,
Or did a thing about the house or impolite or rude;
She was so well behaved a cat in everything, I'd grieve
To think she 'd ever taste her milk and not say, "by your leave."

The boy said "pray excuse me" every time he had to sneeze;
The cat said "by your leave," the little mouse said "if you please;"
The dog said "beg your pardon," if he passed from left to right,
And the little girl said "certainly," which surely was polite.

You may think I am joking, but it surely is not so,
For if you find the boy and girl I tell you of, I know
You'll find the dog and pussy cat and mouse of which I tell,
And find them all together, too—I know it very well.

A CHRISTMAS WARNING

YOU mustn't even whisper that
There is no Santa Claus,
Because he's near and he might hear,
And once I heard there was
A little boy that whispered that
But hung up, just the same,
His stocking to the chimney flue,
And *Santa never came.*

And once there was a little girl
Who only *thought* it, too,
She thought she hid, she thought she did,
What she thought; but he knew
She thought there was no Santa Claus,
And when he came to bring
His books and toys for girls and boys,
She *never got a thing.*

And if you said it right out loud
So any one could hear,
He might not bring a single thing,
And he might not come near
Your house at all, and your old doll
Is all you'd have, you see,
And he might not bring what he's got
For your whole family.

And every day you want to say
Your longest prayers all through,
And be polite as if he might
Be looking straight at you;
And go to bed when Mamma said
And never scold or fret,
And say you *know that he is so,*
And *my! The things you get!*

THE HOLIDAY

GREEN were the fields where Adventure, forth faring,
Heard from the grass the plump meadow lark's tune;
Broad was the elm tree where Slumber lay, sharing
Shade with the chittering song birds at noon;
Plumed willows nodded, and canopied over
Shallows for laving bare feet, in a pool
Fringed to the thickets about it with clover,
Pebbled and clear and deliciously cool.

Eyes wide with wonder at endless surprises,
Upspringing everywhere bare feet may pass;
As where a rainbow-hued butterfly rises
Out of some dew-crystalled cave of the grass;
Or the brown grasshopper, stirred from his hollow,
Whirrs him along in his blundering haste,
Prisoned at last for a fat perch to swallow
On a barbed fishing hook temptingly placed.

Brave was that hour of those stout-hearted scrambles
Through the bush-tangle a briar-strewn way,
Into the thicket of blackberry brambles
Where the big berries to hunger fell prey;
Caps were brimmed full ere the vandals departed,
Red lips from berry juice drippingly brown,
Legs with long scratches ached sharply and smarted,
Juice from smeared chins to clean waists dripping down.

Deep shadows out of the eerie dusk falling,
Twilight and dark and a startled bat's whirr;
Weird in the half-dark a distant owl calling,
And the dry cricket's occasional chirr;
Two pairs of bare feet grown wearied with roaming,
Hark! There's a merry tune Mother knows well,
Whistled by berry stained lips, through the gloaming,
Lips with bold tales of adventure to tell.

THE HOLIDAY

Ten Years and Eight Years, two hearts light with laughter;
Now side by side in the manner of chums;
Now one before and one running on after,
One waiting now till the other one comes;
Some make-believe the long way's end beguiling,
Merry cries echoing shrill through the gloam,
And in the open door, Mother waits smiling—
Peace and the night—and the boys coming home!

THE HERO

HE has the pitching arm. With sordid laugh
He sees the batsmen wither and like chaff
Fly hitless and forlorn upon the wind
Of his rare speed. Now shrill hurrahs are dinned
From friendly throats and then a frenzied shout:
"Hi, Jimmy! Two gone! Fan the next one out!"
And on the desert reef of Jimmy's wit
The batsman strives and starves—without a hit.

Now Jimmy drops his glove upon the ground
With careless grace. He hears the frenzied sound
With which his loyal worshippers acclaim
His prowess, and his lip-delighting name
Shrieked from a score of open throats, while he
Stalks from the box quite unconcernedly,
Slips his red sweater on and mingles then
As though of common clay, with common men.

But all the dignity of his twelve years
Is brought to bear upon the storm of cheers
That with impassive countenance he may
Stand firm—the unspoiled hero of the day.
And now, Napoleonically, aside,
He turns from other men—with measured stride,
Apart, conspicuously, to and fro
He walks, and hears the praising ebb and flow.

From a great stick of licorice he bites
A goodly chew, and diligently smites
His ungloved hands together as though they
Were hard to keep in leash until the play;
And well he knows the lass who watches him
From somewhere in the crowd, her blue eyes dim
With tears of happy pride that she should be
The chosen one of earth for such as he.

THE HERO

The game is done. No hits, no runs! They bear
Him on their boyish shoulders forth from there.
Oh, Jimmy Brown! In twelve short years to come
To such a pitch of fame as this! But dumb
The shouters seem to be, when someone stands
With her blue apron twisting in her hands,
And whispers hoarsely: "Jimmy, you won't be
Too famous never, will you, to like me?"

THE BUSY MOTHER

MAMMA, can't I have some cake?
Can't John Jones have some pie?
Can't we come in, just us, and take
An apple by and by
If we both wipe our feet off clean,
Like you told us to do?
And if we run across Bill Green,
Can't Billy have one, too?

Mamma, have you seen my hat,
The one I wear to play?
Do you know where I put my bat
And ball the other day?
Can't Johnny wear my other shoes
Till his own shoes get dry?
Do you mind, Mamma, if we use
Your old broom by and by?

We want to use the broom to sweep
The home-plate off, you see.
And Mamma, we want you to keep
Our things for John and me,
So we won't lose them when we play,
Our knife and marbles, too,
Won't you please put them all away
Just like you always do?

If Billy Green should come and knock
At the back kitchen door,
Tell him we're in the vacant block
Right next to Johnson's store.
And will you let him have my shoes,
My old ones, so 's to play?
He can't play barefoot or we'll lose,
He's got to pitch today.

THE BUSY MOTHER

And would you mind if Johnny came ,
To supper when we're through?
If Bill should pitch a dandy game
Can't I bring him home, too?
If Bill comes to the kitchen door
Won't you give him some pie
To make him strong and curve 'em more?
Thanks, Ma. Good Bye! Good Bye!

THE WIDE AWAKE

MOST other days I'm fast asleep
As I can be, in bed,
Till some one calls in through my door:
"Wake up, you sleepy head."
But Christmas morning no one needs
To call in through my door,
I'm wide awake as I can be
At half past three or four.

On school days in the Winter time
It's hardly even light
At half past seven or eight o'clock,
You almost think it's night
When you wake up a little bit,
And see it dark still then,
So you shut both your eyes and soon
You're sound asleep again.

No matter if you go to bed
At half past eight or nine,
When morning comes and eight o'clock
You still are sleeping fine;
You never hear them shake the fire
Or any other noise,
I guess there's nothing in the world
Can sleep as much as boys.

Most other days you hate to stir
'Cause it's so warm in bed;
And when you put your stockings on
You sit and nod your head
Until you're half asleep again,
But Christmas day from three
Of four o'clock at night you're just
As nervous as can be.

THE WIDE AWAKE

And you can hear the clock strike five
And six and seven and eight;
And all the time you're wide awake,
So you can hardly wait
Till it's a little light outside,
And yet you must not go
Downstairs at five or six, because
Your mother told you so.

Most other days your mother comes
And calls before you stir,
But Christmas morning you're the one
Who goes to waken her.
Because although you slept till eight
For the whole year before,
On Christmas morning you're awake
At half past three or four.

THE ROISTERERS

WHAT'S this tumult? What's this riot?
What's this earthquake that I hear?
Who will quell this mob, or try it,
That comes madly marching near?
What's this hurricane that's blowing?
What's this heavy, martial tread?
What's this stream of youngsters, flowing,
Leaping, bouncing out of bed?

What's this roar of shouts and laughter?
This volcano? How it roars!
How it rattles floor and rafter!
How it slams and bangs the doors!
How it rumbles down the stairway!
Through the hall now hear it sweep,
Till I think we're in a fair way
To be tumbled in a heap.

What's this flood that leaps and chatters,
Dances, ripples, eddies, whirls?
Who sent forth these mad-as-hatters,
Bumping, jumping boys and girls?
Who let loose this helter-skelter?
When did Bedlam burst its bounds,
Till I hold my ears to shelter
Them from these drum-splitting sounds?

Nephew, brother, sister, cousin,
Sort, kind, manner and degree,
Why there must be full a dozen!
What! You say no more than three?
Why, I thought to hear them jumping,
Bouncing, sprawling over head,
That the childhood world was bumping,
Climbing, falling out of bed.

THE ROISTERERS

I was wakened without warning
By this riot, romp and roar.
I forgot 'twas Christmas morning
When I heard them shake the floor,
Lift the roof, and each one trying
To be down the stairs ahead,
As though this whole world were flying,
Sprawling, falling out of bed.

THE RETURN OF THE DREAMER

I HEARD, half nodding in my chair,
 A rap upon my door,
 And bade come in who might be there,
 Ashamed that my floor
Should be so littered and ill kept;
 And then he opened wide
My study door as I half slept
 And softly stepped inside.

His face was freckled with the sun,
 His legs bare from the knee,
His trousers rested on their one
 Support unsteadily;
He lifted off a worn straw hat
 From tangled, uncombed hair,
But he had eyes to tell me that
 His soul was fine and fair.

I closed and laid aside the book
 That rested on my knee;—
His face had a familiar look
 That interested me.
The turned-up nose, the bare, brown knee,
 The straw hat he had thrown
Aside, the smile, the voice—yes, he
 Was someone I had known.

Then in my lap he sat him down,
 In a familiar way,
Nor seemed to fear that I would frown
 On him or say him nay;
“We made a pledge one time,” said he,
 “A promise and a prayer,
As long ago as Memory,
 Do you remember where?”

THE RETURN OF THE DREAMER

“We made it with the dew at morn,
When noontime’s splendors gleamed;
When wearied with our play and worn,
Beneath some bough we dreamed.
Where brooks above their pebbles purred,
Abreast the hilltops, too;
A pledge of service to the world,
Of steadfast faith and true.”

“We pledged it when with pillowed head,
And wearied from much play,
We both lay fast asleep in bed
And dreamed of that Someday,
When we should falter not or weep
But count life’s glory fair,
If we the pledge might always keep,
The promise and the prayer.”

“I feared somehow our faith might be
Less steadfast with the years,
That sorrow might cloud memory
And hope grow faint with tears;
So I am come again to you
From Sometime and Somewhere
To bid you say the pledge anew,
The promise and the prayer.”

He smiled and slipped down from my knee—
And then I knew his name,
And bade him stay and dream with me,
But quickly as he came
He went out by my study door,
The soul of him so fair,
And left me all alone once more,
Alone, and dreaming there.

THE TATTLE BIRD

THERE is a little Tattle Bird
That flies about and sings,
That watches children when they play
And tells my mother things;
I've never seen the Tattle Bird
But I'm quite sure it 's true,
Because my mother seems to know
Quite all the things I do.

I try to do the best I can
And mind the things I'm told,
To play my games politely
And to be not rude or bold,
But if I leave the yard and go
Some place I should not be,
I'm very sure the Tattle Bird
Will go and tell on me.

My mother holds one finger up
When I come in from play,
And says she 's very much surprised
That I should disobey;
And I am just as much surprised
And ask how does she know,
But she just says the Tattle Bird
Flew in and told her so.

I always want the things I say
To be exactly true,
But sometimes I forget to tell
Quite all the things I do;
And Mother looks right in my eye
And doesn't say a word—
I wonder if it can be there
She sees the Tattle Bird.

THE COMFORTER

DON'T fret, my boy. You've worked that sum
Ten times, to make the answer come
And still the answer does not look
Like that one printed in the book.

A little boy I used to know
Oh, very many years ago,
Had just such sums, and such a brow
All wrinkled up, as you have now.

I know the sums are long and hard,
That birds are calling from the yard,
And boys are waiting somewhere, too,
To swim or fish or play with you.
A little boy, about your size
Long years ago, wished he were wise
Enough to do that very sum,
And still the answer would not come.

Don't grieve, my boy, that time they call
You to come in from playing ball,
To mind the baby or to run
An errand that must now be done;
A little boy in years gone by
Heaved just that same, rebellious sigh,
And dashed from out his eye a tear,
Oh, much the same as you have here.

I know the game was nearly won
For you and yours, when you must run
The errand or must go to care
For baby, and it seems unfair;
A little boy about your age
Was years ago in such a rage
As you are and he knew just how
Your heart is near to breaking now.

THE COMFORTER

Don't quite despair because they made
You miss the circus' gay parade
By sending you to do some chore,
And left your heart with aching sore ;
A little boy about like you
Once missed a brilliant pageant, too,
And wept in bitterness and had
A fear he'd nevermore be glad.

Don't scold, my boy, and think they come
To you alone—the stubborn sum,
The call, the interrupted game,
And other sorrows much the same ;
A little boy of long ago
Has heart and memory to know,
And sympathy as well to share
Each boyish sorrow you may bear.

ABSENT

I THOUGHT I heard up through the gloaming,
A whistle sound shrill;
A merry lad, come home from roaming,
By wood and by hill;
Someway the house seems dark and lonely,
The dead leaves are stirred
Outside, and the whistle was only
The cry of a bird.

I thought I heard soft footsteps falling
Just outside the door,
And waited to hear someone calling
A greeting once more;
I look where the lamplight is shining
By porchstep and rail,
And there is a dog—*his* dog—whining,
And wagging his tail.

I thought I heard book pages turning
Not far from my chair,
And half look, with heart-hungry yearning,
But no one is there;
The breeze somehow stirred in the curtain,—
So fancy deceives,
And I, with a fancy uncertain,
Thought some one turned leaves.

SKETCHES OF WESTERN FOLK

A MATTER OF LAW

HE beat up his wife somethin' awful,
The boys put th' feller in jail
And argued on whether to hang him
Or just ride him out on a rail.

For a woman in our town's a lady—
Your own wife or not—never mind,
And most of the boys were for hangin'
As fittin' for him and his kind.

But our town is real law-abidin',
So the boys for the law's sake agreed
To give him a hearin' quite lawful,
Although much too good for his breed.

And if the decision was hangin',
They said they 'd assent and obey,
And if it was not they would listen,
And then string him up anyway.

So the court was advised in the mornin'
Of his crime and the boys' state of mind,
And warned that an adverse decision
Might class the whole court with his kind.

For bein' a court out in our town
Has dignities, honors and joys,
So long as the court sees the wisdom
Of standin' in good with the boys.

So the final decision was hangin'
In a week, which the law held was right,
But for fear he might die in the meantime
The boys did their duty that night.

A MATTER OF LAW

For a woman in our town 's a lady—
Your own wife or not—we don't care—
And the law and the court and the people
Want everything done on the square.

A PERIL OF THE TRAIL

 | COME joggin' down the trail just idly sort o' roamin',
 Seen a feller ridin' like th' devil 's on his track,
 Passed me t'other side the creek, a-headed for Wyomin',
 Usin' both his quirt an spurs and never lookin' back.
I let out a yell at him, and he just went a-gunnin',
 Cut loose once or twice at me, quite much to my surprise,
Cut loose once or twice at me, but kept right on a-runnin',
 And I run the other way, as maybe you surmise.

I come ridin' into town, rejoicin' that he missed me
 When he cut his hardware loose and passed the time of day;
One of them lead love pills came so close it might 'a' kissed me
 If I had my head a little turned the other way.
I was sure plumb harmless, so he wasn't in no danger,
 I just hollered friendly-like to cheer him on his ride,
Why the devil should he want to shoot a perfect stranger,
 Just a joggin' down the creek and on the other side.

Out in front the county jail I seen the Sheriff workin',
 Postin' up a handbill, and he seemed to be some stirred:
"Thousand dollars offered for arrestin' Bad Bill Durkin,
 'Live or dead, don't matter which it is, but dead preferred."
So, I says to me, says I, I understand the shellin',
 Next time I'm a-riding out, you got a white man's word,
If I know myself I ain't a-goin' to do no yellin'
 At some feller ridin' fast and labeled: "Dead Preferred."

THE PEACEMAKER

HE come, red hot, about some hay
He leased th' right fer, way last May,
So he said when he come to me
Because I cut th' hay, y' see;
I was a-whistlin' some old tune
On my back porch right after noon,
An' I says: "Hello, Tom!" says I,
An' he says: "Ye're a swindler, Hi!"

An' I says: "Think so?"—not much hot,
An' he says: "That's th' truthful what!"
An' I says: "Mebbe! Mebbe not!"

That 's all I said, an' whistled on,
An' he just ranted, like he'd gone
Clean off his head, an' shook his fist,
An' acted th' contraryist.
"I spoke fer that hay first," says I,
An' he says: "No y' didn't, Hi;
I'm goin' t' have th' law on you
Before y' git that hay in, too!"

An' I says: "Think so?" kind o' dry,
An' he says: "Sure as shootin', Hi!"
An' I says: "Mebbe! Better try!"

That 's all I said an' whistled more
Of that same tune he heard before;
An' I just let him have his say:
I didn't care—I had th' hay!
An' he says: "Hi, I'm fightin' mad,
An' when I'm fightin' mad, I'm bad,
An' when I'm bad I'm apt to do
Some damage to somebody, too!"

THE PEACEMAKER

An' I says: "Are ye?" kind o' slow,
An' he says: "Just exactly so!"
An' I says: "Mebbe! I dunno!"

That's all I said, an' whistled some
Just like I did before he come;
An' when he see I wasn't hot
At anything, th' worse he got;
Good nature didn't seem to be
Th' medicine fer him, I see;
An' he says: "Stow that tune away,
I come to talk about that hay!"

An' I says: "Did ye?" when he's through;
An' he says: "Yes, an' *you* will, too!"
An' I says: "Mebbe! See 'f I do."

An' I just whistled on, an' when
I struck th' end I'd start again,
An' then he swung out straight at me,
But why he did I can't yet see;
An' I just dodged, an' he swung 'roun',
An' lost his balance an' fell down,
So I just set on him an' say!
He swore he'd make me eat that hay!

An' I says: "Will ye?" when I got
Him fast, an' he says: "That's just what!"
An' I says: "Mebbe ! Mebbe not!"

THE PEACEMAKER

That's all I said, an' I set there
On him an' whistled that same air;
An' finally he just come to
Himself an' laughed, an' I did, too;
So we got up an' had our laugh,
An' I says: "Tom, let's half-an'-half
On that there hay—let's Golden Rule;"
An' he says: "I'm a durned old fool!"

An' I says: "Are ye?" kind o' slow,
An' he says: "Surest thing you know!"
An' I says: "Mebbe! I guess so!"

THE ETIQUETTE OF THE DANCE

THE boys don't figger much on social graces,
But they can dance
About as well as folks in other places
With half a chance.

And they make up in heart what may be lackin';
I've seen the store
Sold plumb clean out of brushes and shoe-blackin'
The night before.

They may not know quite all about behavin',
But they learn quick,
An' they know the necessity fer shavin'
And lookin' slick.

From flannel shirt to tall, white, standin' collar
Ain't all a smile,
But when one feller leads the rest must foller
To be in style.

And when the openin' quadrille is ready,
Take it from me,
The boys are just as clean and slick and steady
As men can be.

And any feller gits full or unsightly,
And mills about,
Gits warned a couple times or so, politely,
And then throwed out.

We dont have nothin' impolite or shady,
You got a right
To dance with spurs, but don't you trip no lady,
It ain't polite.

THE ETIQUETTE OF THE DANCE

There ain't no special shirt to wear or collar,
Or kind of clothes,
But one rule everybody 's got to foller:
No hardware goes.

We got another rule—a pretty sound one,
That suits the floor:
We have 'bout three square dances to one round one
Or maybe four.

There aint no lower classes here or upper,
That's Cowtown's creed,
So take the girl you danced with last to supper,
And don't stampede.

QUICKSILVER BILL

A BOUT th' oneasiest feller that you could imagine was Bill,
We called him Quicksilver for nick-name because he could
never stay still;
An' Quicksilver Bill was as res'less a feller as ever I
knowed;
Was never in one place much longer 'n it took to be hittin' th' road.
He was always a-huntin' new places an' newer adventures with
vim;
Columbus, LaSalle or De Soto had nothin' whatever on him;
He was just like th' sun—movin' Westward an' Westward an'
Westward, until
He traveled right with th' horizon—he just simply couldn't stay
still.

I think he came up first from Texas, a-trail-herdin' cattle from
there;
He liked th' job 'cause it kep' movin—a *still* job 'd a-queered him
for fair;
He wound up in eastern Montana along in the Eighties, I think,
Before any drink was invented but booze at a quarter a drink.
Th' Plains was n't then must congested, an' life wasn't smoother 'n
lard
It took some six weeks of close ridin' t' round up a corporal's guard,
But Quicksilver Bill, he got res'less, along in th' Spring o' th' year
An' said that he guessed he'd be movin' out *West* where they had
a *Frontier!*

We heard of him next dealin' faro an' minin' a bit on th' side,
Way out in th' Rockies near Denver; but some foolish faro-shark
died
Direc'ly in front of Bill's table one night when some cussin' was
done,
For Bill's trigger finger gits nervous whenever he handles a gun.

QUICKSILVER BILL

There wasn't much evidence on it, th' boys at th' faro-bank said,
'Cept Bill's forty-four was still smokin' an' one foolish feller was
dead;

Just pure circumstantial you'd call it! But Rangers went lookin'
fer Bill,

An' Bill split th' Western horizon—he just simply couldn't stay
still

He turned up in Frisco some later, as bouncer, barkeeper an' host
To wayfarin' folks who were out to be wrecked on th' Barbary
Coast,

An' Bill was some wrecker, I reckon—at least when he cleared his
gun deck

Fer action th' chances was splendid fer somebody bein' a wreck.

I don't know just how it all started, but somebody held out the Ace,
An' Bill proved to be his last illness before he got out of th' place;

A quite justifiable killin', as all of th' boys must have knowed,
An' Bill was right, morally speakin', but his rights was left out of
th' Code.

He blowed into Nome some weeks after with two notches cut in
his gun,

An' fur enough West in his travels to see a real, live settin'-sun;
He mushed through th' Pass to th' Diggin's an' staked out a
pig-in-a-poke,

An' got himself frozen an' shot at an' grub-staked an' sick an' dead-
broke,

Till life in that run-down condition lost much of its gladness an'
zest:

"It's comin' to me, though," Bill muttered—"I'm the feller that
ought to go *West*;

What business have I got in Klondike? There ain't any West
over here!

I'm goin' t' pull out an' go somewhere—somewhere where they
got a *Frontier*!"

QUICKSILVER BILL

An' where is th' West do you ask me? Is it where th' Missouri
flows down?
Is it where th' blue Snohomish tumbles, or where th' Sierras are
brown?
Is it where th' high peaks are snow-crested or where th' Cascades
brim with haze?
Is it where th' sequoias touch Heaven or Yosemite's cataract plays?
Is it where beats th' white-capped Pacific along California's shore?
Is it where th' two hemispheres reach out to touch hands in greetin'
once more?
Is it where th' white breakers are foamin' an' where th' great waves
roar an' spill?
I don't know—but this I can tell you: It's where you'll find Quick-
silver Bill!

+

THE ORIGINAL OLD-TIMERS

○ LD timers, Pardner? We got two, you bet;
They was here when I come and they're livin' here yet.

They follered the first white man out to the West
And they've both lasted longer than all of the rest.

Some die with their boots on and some die in bed,
But them two old timers won't never be dead.

So long as the West is the West, unless men
Go back on their habits and git born again.

And one of them sets up to cheer you at night,
And one of them wakes you when dawn's gittin' bright.

Their names? Certain, Pardner—I'll tell you, of course:
One's name 's Al. K. Hall and one 's name 's R. E. Morse.

THE WRECK

DOC, kind o' handle me gentle.
I'm sure crippled up as you'll find,
Ridin' a plumb, temper'mental
Broncho—so handle me kind.
Oh, I ain't all in, I reckon,
I got some chances to live,
But I feel like somethin' that's peeled off,
Mashed up and then run through a sieve.

Doc, I'm sure busted, I tell you,
Busted both outside and in,
Jaw broke and arm broke and leg broke,
And lost about half o' my skin.
Gi' me a whiff of that dope stuff,
Makes me feel kind o' resigned,
Now go ahead with your splintin',
Doc, but please handle me kind.

Doc, I can ride him, by Godfrey,
Ride him straight up, fair and square,
Ride anything that's four-legged,
Eats hay and oats and wears hair.
He never threw me straight pitchin'.
He never loosed up my hold,
So when he found out he couldn't,
By Godfrey, he laid down and *rolled*.

Doc, I dont want 'em plumb gentle.
That's more 'n a broncho can be,
But *rollin'*—that's pure temper'mental,
And that 's just what happened to me;
So gi' me a drink, Doc—another—
Half-hitch th' loose bones you find,
Pass me a whiff of that dope stuff,
Doc, an' please handle me kind.

VERSES OF OCCASION

THE BUILDING OF THE BRIDGE

(Read at the opening for traffic of the Red Trail bridge at Medora, July 24, 1916.)

Ye are the builders of empire, who bridge all the rivers that flow,
Who tunnel the hills with your pathways as Westward and West-
ward ye go;
Who ridge all the hillsides with furrows and bring down your
grain to the mill,
Who go forth with stout hearts and singing to bend the wild lands
to your will.
And this is the empire ye builded and this is the river ye span,
And these are the fields ye made fertile and here rise the dreams
that ye plan;
And this is the West where ye planned them—the West that has
given to thee
The spirit that thrills in a people grown sturdy and steadfast and
free.

And what will ye give of the spirit—give back to the West where
it grew?
Will ye give souls for service as steadfast as skies of Dakota are
blue?
Will ye stand firm for right and for freedom as these rugged hills
have stood long?
Will ye honor the wild lands ye master with purpose that still shall
be strong
For freedom, what foes may assail it? Aye, these be the dreams
that we dream,
To last while these hills shall stand steadfast, and down the long
course of the stream
The waters shall flow on unceasing! For this is the empire ye
made,
And so shall ye honor it—free men, with strong hearts and souls
unafraid.

THE BUILDING OF THE BRIDGE

And do ye naught else in your building but link the one shore to
the shore?

Nay, men of the west—ye are doing a thousand and thousand times
more;

Ye are linking the Past with the Future—the grandeur of all that
was free

To every great hope and rare glory of what the new West is to be.
Ye are bringing the strength of the plainsmen, the courage of all
that was old

To make stout the hearts of your children and bid them in spirit
be bold

To cherish the West's own tradition for ever in deed and in dream;
And the West ye shall link to new freedom by the bridge that ye
fling o'er the stream.

A VISIT WITH RILEY

(Written on the occasion of the last visit with James Whitcomb Riley at his home in Indianapolis in November, 1915.)

I 'VE been down to see Jim Riley as I've always wanted to,
Walked right up to the old front door and some one let us
through;
You've maybe heard of Lockerbie—it's noted and to spare,
It's not much of a street perhaps, but, well—Jim Riley's there.
Found Jim a-settin' by the fire, right close beside the grate
Been out a-drivin' in his car—some care, too, I may state;
Walked right up and shook hands with him, like old friends might,
you know;
Pulled my big chair up to the fire and heard him say, "Hello."

Well, then I passed the time o' day, and Jim, he talked some too,
Of fellows that we used to know, the same as me and you;
Of Bob Burdette and folks like him—you know 'em, I expect,
The class of folks I sort o' think must be the Lord's elect.
And sometimes Jim'd smile a bit at somethin' he'd recall,
And sometimes, well, I thought a tear was gettin' ripe to fall;
'Twas gettin' sort o' dark outside, and things got kind o' blurred,
So we just set and set awhile and didn't say a word.

And then the strangest, queerest thing! I thought I saw them there,
The folks the children love so well, all standin' 'round his chair;
First Little Orphant Annie came and stood beside of Jim,
With great big eyes so full of love that shined right down on him.
She wasn't scared a bit, I know—just seemed to want to be
Where she could watch some over him—and pretty soon I see
A little boy stand by her side by Jim's chair, close to mine,
Got curved by Jim somehow, I guess, of curv'ture of the spine.

A VISIT WITH RILEY

And then I see Aunt Mary come from somewhere, I don't know,
Walked right up back of where Jim sat, so quiet like and slow
I hardly heard her step at all—and lay a lovin' hand
On Jim's gray hair, like he's a boy in Bread-and-Sugar Land.
Say—I could smell the roses there that used to bloom and climb
Along about knee-deep in June in some old summer time,
Somewhere near when Aunt Mary lived, and Jim, I guess he see
A lot of things back there that wasn't quite as plain to me.

And I see some one standin' there, a girl, and I surmise
Perhaps some old sweetheart of his, from lookin' in her eyes;
I sort o' wondered who she was and where she might be now,
You know how fancy kind o' runs in times like that somehow.
And then I got to wonderin' if Jim'd ever know
The blessin' of those simple folks in all this world o' show
And sham sometimes, and how about a dozen times a year
Folks like to open up a book and bring 'em kind o' near.

Well, maybe not; I can't just say. But, anyhow, I do.
And now the light was dim outside and thicker shadows grew.
The faces sort o' faded out—I looked beside the chair,
But every one of 'em was gone, an' just Jim settin' there.
I got a chokin' in my throat—I always do sometimes
When I meet good and human folks, in real life or in rhymes,
And then I said, a-lookin' there to where Jim Riley was:
“Good-by, Jim—take keer yerself.” And, Lord, I hope he does!

THE JUST AND MERCIFUL JUDGE

(Read at memorial services for the late David E. Morgan,
Judge of the Supreme Court of North Dakota.)

I LOVED him because he was human—as human a man as you'll
find;
Real to the core of his being, with a soul that was blessed
and kind;
Friend of the needy in trouble; cheer of the struggler in strife;
Sowing the seeds that bring blossoms all down the way of his life;
Gentle of speech and in manner, modest and simple and true,
Leaving this world of ours better just for his having passed
through;
Stranger to lie and deception; gracious with mercy and mild,
With the strength of a man, heart of woman, and the soul, still
unspoiled, of a child.

And so when the strife is all over, and all of our trials and tears;
When life is cast up in the balance, and all of the deeds of our
years
Are weighed up and counted and measured; when each of us steps
to the bar
To answer the roll call of Judgment, and comes to see Things as
they Are;
God grant us a Judge who's like he was—somebody who just un-
derstands
The soul of a man well as he did, and put the whole case in his
hands;
And Mercy shall write the Opinion that comes down to us from
above,
And Kindness concur in the findings, and their Greater Seal shall
be Love.

SONGS IN MERRY MOOD

THE CIRCUS OF YORE

SAY, does the circus unload as of yore,
When we boys were up at three-thirty or four,
With good-bye to sleeping,
When daylight was peeping,
And dawn was just creeping
The eastern hills o'er?

So gently the door
We opened and shut, while the unbroken snore
Of parents still sleeping we heard; and before
The train had stopped gliding
Its way to the siding,
We stood there to greet it, to meet it, to beat it
By five or ten minutes, and catch the first roar
Of man-eating lion or tiger, whose rage
Resounded, re-echoed and rattled his cage.

With growl and with howl at the first peep of day
The cages came down and went rolling away,
With creaking and shrieking,
With clatter and noise,
With stamping and tramping,
Past open-mouthed boys,
Bare-legged, bare-footed, bare-headed and brown,
Come fleetly, completely, from all parts of town;
Who stood by and wondered
That nobody blundered
While great horses thundered
With load upon load,
Their dust-billowed way down the hoof-beaten road
Where tents rose and fluttered
As though by some uttered
Key-word of enchantment; and elephants strode
Ahead, never swerving, their trunks curled and curving,
The cheering deserving

THE CIRCUS OF YORE

We gave, nor once veering
Until disappearing at last in the tent,
Where lions and tigers and leopards all went,
Where trumpeting, roarings and howlings were blent;
With shrill monkeys seeming
To revel in screaming
As though they were dreaming of cocoanut palms,
Or waiting impatient the afternoon's alms
Of deftly tossed peanuts; and venting their rage
In riotous screams from the unopened cage.

How birds harshly uttered
Their cries as they fluttered
Inside on their perches, while great cages rolled
With unsteady lurches, and left them to scold.

Such crashing, such clashing,
Such blood-sweaters splashing,
With hordes of men dashing
With tempers on edges,
With ropes and with sledges,
While banners were snapping,
Great canvasses flapping,
In loud, thunder-clapping
And ear-splitting din;
Such stakes driven in
By sledges down-swinging,
Up-springing, bang-binging,
With shouts welkin-ringing,
Great chariots flinging
Their dust up in billows as madly uprolled,
Like monster-wheeled Juggernauts, cream white and gold.

THE CIRCUS OF YORE

In thick dust, throat-parching,
The camels were marching,
And horses, neck-arching,
With each sort of beast
Of which we 'd no word of,
Unknown and unheard of,
From oldest to youngest and greatest to least,
To make, by the pillage
Of jungles, some village
An unprecedented and eye-filling feast.

And heads there were bobbing
Of boys, and hearts throbbing,
To see this sleep-robbing, spectacular dawn,
Whose marvels marched, creaked, shouted, wheeled and rolled on,
As though the last wonder would never be gone.
And souls there were, stirring and frothing like yeast
With gladness each joy-laden minute increased.

Say, tell me quite truly
If I am unduly
The boy, who was newly
Arisen from bed
To see all this wonder?
And do my thoughts blunder,
Or was n't it all pretty much as I've said?

THE GENERAL PROPOSAL

IF I TRACKED in some mud on the carpet,
Could you smile and with never a word,
Could you see it was brushed up, nor harp it
Until of my error I heard
A dozen times ere I could hush it?
If I dropped cigar ash on the floor,
Could you note it with silence and brush it,
As when I came courting before?

If I chanced to be late for my dinner,
Could you keep it all warm, with a smile,
And serve it with cheer and no inner
And hidden reproving the while?
If I stepped on your train, could you sweetly
Accept my regrets, as you do
From Tom, Dick or Jack, and completely
Make me a life debtor to you?

If I chanced to be silent, just wishing
To think and to smoke my cigar,
Could you let me, and not keep on fishing
To know why moods are as they are?
If to overlook something unclever
I'd ask you, and you should agree,
Could you do it, and never, no never,
Recall it to heap shame on me?

Could you walk by my side, be the weather
Of rain or of shine, and help bear
The burdens we might have together
If I should do quite all my share?
Could you treat me as though I were equal
In all that I want and I do,
And not spoil the tale in the sequel
Of Marriage to Courtship? Could you?

THE GENERAL PROPOSAL

Say, honest and true—could you take me,
As just a fair, square sort of man
The Lord made, and not try to make me
To fit some whim, notion or plan?
If my sins were just small ones and human,
Could you smile and forgive them the way
You did when we courted?—Rare woman,
I'm yours for all time—name the day!

THE HIGHER LIFE

THE Uptodateville Husbands' Club, it pleases me to state,
Has worked domestic miracles, as I shall now relate;
And married folk swept far apart, have come again to be
Safe anchored in the havens of serene tranquility.

The Uptodateville Women's Club, I may as well confess,
Stands second to no Women's Club in any land, I guess;
Its forum 's piled with shackles of a mental slavery
That Uptodateville women bore, before they were set free.

There was a time, I grieve to say, not many years ago,
When Uptodateville women's brows were, well—distinctly low,
And their horizons bounded, say, by pots of pork and beans,
By ribs of beef and roasted fowls and bread and spinach greens.

All this in the Benighted Past, as women often say
In public speech when they hold forth to speak on Founders' day,
When those first Pilgrim Heroines are lauded to the skies
Who saw the Canaan of the Free with clear, unwinking eyes.

So Uptodateville women rose from shackled limbs and bound,
To wings that spread in lofty flights to altitudes profound,
Of speech and thought and broader view, and every week the more
They came to rise above the height of just one week before.

They shredded Drama to the husk, and delved into its law
With keen and clear analysis from Shakespeare down to Shaw,
And when there was a point obscure they called, and not in vain,
The local dramatists to come and make the meaning plain.

Once Browning had his day in Club, and when they let him out,
No woman in the Club but knew what he was all about,
For Miss Melissa Mangelwort, the poet laureate
Of Uptodateville talked on him—what more is there to state?

THE HIGHER LIFE

They had their Days for Music, too, when Wagner forth and back
Was turned this way and that, and shaken like an empty sack,
Till there was nothing left of him of reed or string or brass
But any one who ran might read and know as she should pass.

The Civic Life was much discussed and many foggy mists
Of doubt dispelled by papers from great Sociologists,
Until the Uptodateville Slums of problems were bereft
At first, and in the course of time there were not any left.

So I might amplify the ways of Club activity—
But surely I have told enough so you can plainly see
The scales that fell from women's eyes in quantities profuse,
And hear the shackles fall, perhaps, that Freedom had knocked
loose.

Now I confess—I do with shame—that Uptodateville men
Lagged far behind in things of Art, of note and brush and pen,
And you might find, and not half search the thrifty village o'er,
Full many a man who had not read Rabindranath Tagore.

And men there were who did not know their sculpture, as I live,
Whose sense of form and shape and grace was crudely primitive;
Who thought the Uptodateville Band a symphony in brass,
When its best harmonies were small and its ensemble crass.

So came the women up to be the more and more refined,
But wedded to unthinking men, to art and culture blind,
And scarce a man was in the town, as you might search it through,
Whose wife or sweetheart, I may say, found him worth talking to.

And many a man sat through his meals in silence, nor he heard
From her who once was his fond wife a single friendly word.
Where once he read his paper o'er his coffee cup, quite dumb,
She read some Paper for her Club this week or one to come.

THE HIGHER LIFE

Ignoring him, I say, the while, except betimes to pour
A cup of coffee out for him, but knowing him no more
Than if he were a stranger, quite, and pouring quite the most
Of coffee up his sleeve and arm since she was so engrossed.

It is, I hold, no little thing to have your coffee poured
Up sleeve and arm, but infinitely worse to be ignored
So Uptodateville Husbands met, and formed a club to do
Art, Drama, Music, Civic Life—and be Worth Talking To.

And though they bear' a handicap, still they have come to know
The Elemental Things of Life, and some of them may go
To Lectures on the Real in Art, Tone Shade and Color Sense,
And talk of these things to their wives with *some* intelligence.

The Uptodateville Husbands' Club proves this much, I am sure,
That men are slow to catch the glow of Spirit in the Pure,
And need the lash of scorn sometimes to rouse them from soul-
trance,
But may be made Worth Talking To if given half a chance.

THE INTERRUPTED PRAYER

I SAT in my pew
And he sat just in front,
Where I laid down my hat
Underneath, as my wont;
And when he knelt to pray
My heart went pit-a-pat,
For his two feet someway
He had thrust in my hat.

When I laid my hat there
It was not in my mind
That he might somehow kneel
With both feet straight behind;
But he did, as I say,
I saw sole, heel and spat,
When he knelt down to pray
With both feet in my hat.

I am prayerful, myself,
I am that way inclined,
But to things of the flesh
I can hardly be blind,
And the prayer in my book
Grew somehow stale and flat,
When I happened to look
At his feet in my hat.

'Twas a stylish new hat
That I kept with much care,
It was edged round with silk
And it gave me an air
Of distinction and dash,
And I thought as I sat
That it cost too much cash
To have feet in my hat.

THE INTERRUPTED PRAYER

And the Rector intoned
Things I needed to hear,
But I sat there and groaned
With an unheeding ear,
For, say, how can a prayer
Be but idle and flat,
When a sinner 's in front
With his feet in your hat?

And the prayer said: "Now, Lord,
Guide our footsteps aright,"
To which I could subscribe
With my heartiest might;
And I added a clause
That I deemed to be pat:
"Please, Lord, won't you guide
His feet out of my hat."

And I know for the truth
That you miss half the power
Of the finest of prayer,
Of its richness and flower,
And the rector's appeal
Seems dull, idle and flat,
When a sinner's in front
With his feet in your hat.

IN THE SPIRIT OF THE MASTER

HYMN OF PRAISE

FATHER of mine who mayst Thou be,
What glory in Thy love for me;
Thy green turf for my carpet laid,
Thy trees outspread for rest and shade;
Thy music in the flow of seas,
Thy summer skies for canopies;
Thy birds for song to cheer my way,
Thy flowers that glorify my day;
Thy bees to sip my flowers, and be
My exemplars in industry.

Father of mine, bid me be glad
For every song the wild bird had;
Teach me the beauty Thou has set
In every rose and violet;
Help me, by patient industry
To be companion with the bee,
And let me pass each day an hour
In gratitude for wayside flower,
A skylark's song, the drip of rain,
And for the sickle in the grain.

IF I PITY NOT

IF I be to no pity stirred
By sorrow, and speak not the word
That Love commands me, were I less
A slave to guilty selfishness—

If I hear not the piteous cry
Of pain, and, heedless, pass them by,
The faint and sick of heart, nor slake
The thirst of men for pity's sake—

If not in Love my touch has lain
With pity on the brow of pain,
If mercy did not walk with me
In Love's abiding ministry—

Then, with what agony I cry,
Bid Thou the eyes of men be dry;
What my soul craves of love, withhold,
Make Thou the heart of pity cold;
Let mercy pass me by, nor slake
The thirst of me for pity's sake;
And as my swollen lips shall bleed,
Teach Thou me pity by its need!

THE MASTER'S KISS

BECAUSE of every piteous prayer
 Wrung from thy soul in bleak despair;
 For every blush of shame that dyes
 Thy cheek, and for thy downcast eyes;
For every sin and blot and stain,
For all the tears that flow again
In hidden sorrow, grief or shame;
For that thy seared flesh leaped to flame
When sin laid on thee, white and hot,
A brand, like God's accusing blot
Upon the brow of Cain; for this
And every scar and cicatrice,
I love thee and I pity thee,
Because I knew Gethsemane!

And as I kiss thee—kiss the blot
Where lay that white brand, white and hot,
And as I feel thy tears like rain,
And as I read thy soul, in pain
That writhes and cries aloud—I bless
That night when I was comfortless;
When hope from all the hours was fled,
When joy lay by me, stark and dead,
When men knew only hate, and cried
That I be scourged and crucified.

How could I love and pity thee
Had I not known Gethsemane?

LOVE THE SORROWFUL

I N a dream I walked with Thee
When Thou wert in Galilee.

Heard Thy voice and knew the spell
Of Thy truth in parable.

Felt Thy touch upon my head
And was calmed and comforted.

Looked into those eyes that shone
Like the very soul of dawn.

Shone with love on me, and light,
As an elder brother's might.

Felt Thy cloak about me drawn
Closer as the night came on.

Saw Thy presence and the spell
Where Love wrought Thy miracle.

Heard the music, thunderous, roll
From the organ of Thy soul.

Music that uplifted men
Fallen from Heaven to Heaven again.

Thou wert all of Love's desire
Flaming as a white-hot fire.

Hot, Thy spirit utterly
Fused the souls of men with Thee.

LOVE THE SORROWFUL

Thou wert close by me and kept
Vigil near me while I slept.

Once I saw Thee look with tears
Over all the waste of years.

Heard Thee cry with such a cry,
As held all of agony:

"Thou art ever crucified,
Love—yet Oh, abide! abide!

Fearful art thou, Death—but, Oh,
Love, I would not let thee go!"

In my waking dreams, with Thee
Let me walk, by Galilee!

MARY AT THE CROSS

BENEATH the sun that pitilessly swung
In its relentless arc of fire, with tongue
Swollen thick and dry, by Hell's own torment cursed,
You smiled at me and smiled, and did not thirst
The time you looked on me; and I saw there
In those great eyes, a spirit grown so fair
And full of love it drenched the Hill with dew.
The cross, the sun, and life and me and you.

Once when the sun of Hope was near to death
And from dread's hoary caverns, white, a breath
Froze strong men's marrow in the bones, grown chill
As hopeless life, I saw those great eyes fill
With such a flame of love as made me bold
To whisper: "Master, know I am not cold,
Since from your eyes love's fire has warmed me through,
And made the sun, at dying, flame anew."

So by your faith grows now the spirit strong
To master circumstance, and with a song
Roll back the army of our foes and be
The conquerors of stubborn destiny;
The javelin falls, the arrows hurtless roll
When we are greaved and armored of your soul!

THE LEAST OF THESE

I SANG Thee songs of praise that hushed the seas,
Made spheres in space resound with harmonies
No universe had heard, in all the swing
Of planets, since was soul breathed on the thing
That once was dust in space; and as I sang
I thought the very universes rang
In concord.

Faint, afar, I heard a cry
Of one despairing child of Thine that I
Had left un comforted when I would bring
In haste to Thee my songs of praise to sing.

And now, my Master, all my song that filled
The universes with Thy praise, is stilled
By one low cry of pain—a piteous word
That as I sang along my way I heard
But faintly—scarce at all. Yet now so clear
It sounds to Thee, my song upon Thine ear
Falls shrill, discordant—and when pity flamed
Upon Thy cheek, I stood ashamed—ashamed!

THE BROTHERS

I N HASTE I struck him down; in that mad strife
For place and power and riches men call life.
What mattered he to me? I knew him not
Save that he barred my pathway at the spot
Where Failure and Success cross ways. He fell
And I passed on, for all the ranks of Hell
Must not prevail against me, so I swore.
I saw him fall, but looked that way no more,
For I was sick to see him, with his eyes
Upturned, in wonder, to the unfriendly skies.

That night I dreamed. The fire was red and warm,
The great walls thick, nor need I fear the storm
The while I slept. But Someone at the door
Cried loud and cried again and cried once more.
I flung it wide. Close at my feet there lay
The corpse of him who fell where crossed the way
Of Failure and Success—his eyes upturned
In wonder still—those pleading eyes that burned
Into my soul. Who brought him to me said:
“It is thy Brother, Friend—struck down and dead
By someone on the road—no man was near
Save me, who loved him!” Shone love’s holiest tear
Upon the hand He kissed. Whispering, He said:
“Thy Brother, Friend—struck down this day—and dead!”

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THE TASK

TALK not of death, nor dream too much beyond
The rose's blush, the water's brink, the frond
Of tropic palm, the glacier, or the sky
That may be mist, or shroud infinity—
Thy work is here, not there; is near, not far.
Why seek to fathom space or plumb a star
When there are mouths to feed and souls to save
And hearts to sooth so far this side the grave?
That same wise providence that bade us be
Bids death and rest—mayhap Eternity—
That not a dread or hope of mine shall move
From its unalterable fact, or prove
What is or what is not—So let us do
The work, as faithful artisans and true,
And as for sleep at last in this poor shell
What matters when or where, if we sleep well!



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