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Just Me

BY

OWEN WHITE



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Just Me

Just Me
and
Other Poems

BY

OWEN WHITE

EL PASO, TEXAS
THE McMATH COMPANY

1924



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H. S. J. J.
1924

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by
W. S. McMath and Owen White



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POGRAPHY IS BY J. CARL HERTZOG.

This copy is number

To "MIKE,"

WITHOUT WHOSE LOVE AND HELP
AND ENCOURAGEMENT THESE
POEMS WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN
PUBLISHED.

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Preface

I do not like the obscure thought. I like to see the plain truth brought directly out upon the page, devoid of all that camouflage which many poets use. So I, who have no wish to mystify, will always call a spade a spade. There are no tricks about my trade. I am a poet whose appeal is made direct. I'll not conceal my thoughts beneath some pretty phrase that can be read in different ways. I'll not dress up the things I say to suit the fashion of the day. And so, unless you're satisfied with simple truth, then cast aside this little book, because in it you'll surely find some verse to fit the thought that your pet idol may, like all the rest, have feet of clay.

Owen White.

Just Me

I've traveled this world over,
I know it, good and bad.
I've had as many pleasures
As a fellow ever had.

I've dallied with the Ladies,
I've bibbed my bit o' wine,
I've paid but scant attention
To the rigid social line.

I've always tried to do the things
The World has said I shouldn't,
And what the World has said to do
I've always said "I wouldn't."

And yet it seems I haven't been
As bad as I might be;
Because some people who've advised
Have also envied me.

And so I think I'm justified,
And I can keep on grinning,
And live my life my own sweet way
And do my own sweet sinning.

And, as for you, who've never dared
To steep your soul in sin,
You have my warmest sympathy:
It's time you should begin.

The Poet

Forever at peace with the God of Things,
Voicing his joy in the songs he sings,
He sits and tinkers at his rhymes,
For young and old, and if at times

He can bring a smile to a little child,
Or know that his verses have beguiled
Some weary hour for one in pain,
The poet's toil has not been vain.

For a poet's thoughts are not his own;
By some vagrant wind a seed is blown
To his fertile brain and then blossoms there
A flower which all the world may share.

R

ealism

A golden sunbeam
In the summer air
Perched on my nose
And left—a freckle there.

A honey-laden bee
On busy wing,
Paused to salute me
With—a cordial sting.

The brilliant colors
Of a vine awoke
My love for flowers—
'Twas a poison oak.

A passing shower came,
It cooled the heat,
It also wet the grass
And—my poor feet.

I sniffed the perfumed
Pollen from the breeze
And—now I stay at home
And sneeze.

Repartee

*L*AST night I picked a glow worm
From his warm bed of sod,
And curtly I inquired, "Sir,
What use are you to God?"

The glow worm gravely flashed his lamp,
'Twas palpably a wink,
Which said as plainly as could be,
"As much as you, I think."

My Favorite *B*ootlegger

Called this morning and unburdened himself and

If I could call up the World tonight
By phone from the planet Mars;
If I could drop a card to the World
From one of the distant stars;
If I could wireless from the Sun,
Or wig-wag from the Dipper,
To this Old Ball a-spinning here
Like a dissipated skipper,
I wouldn't have a lot to say
Because I'd merely tell
The World in good, old English,
That the World could go to Hell!

Them Was the Days

I'd like to draw a picture of the good old, early days,
When a baile was a baile and there warn't no cabarets;
When fellers drank their liquor straight and when the only plan
Of what you call "salvation" was to meet yer feller man
On the dead-square, honest level, with a gun hooked on yer hip,
And always a-bein' careful o' the words that passed yer lip.

Them was the days, I'm tellin' yer, when men was really men,
When Right was right and when there warn't no fancy "upper ten."
Men went to hell just like they pleased, and women went there, too,
But they done it in the open and the hypocrites was few.
They didn't stand no chance at all, fer in that game o' Life
Men dealt the cards from off the top or else they got the knife.

Them warn't the days when russet shoes and tailored pants was wore;
Them warn't the days when statute books said "Sinner, sin no more;"
Them warn't the days when money said "The weak shall rule the strong;"
Them warn't the days when this man said to that one, "This is wrong;"
Them was the days when each man knew the daily chance he took,
He read the other feller's eye, he didn't read the Book;
Them was the days, I'm tellin' yer, when boys grew into men
Without no help from nowhere, and I wish they'd come again!

At the Old Timers' Ball

Shet yer eyes and wander backwards to jest fifty years ago;
To the time when this here city was one short adobe row.
Now then, look down at the corner, where the light's a-streakin' out,
Where you hear a fiddle squeakin' and you hear the fellers shout.

Yes, that place, that's Old Ben Dowell's, where a baile's goin' on,
And it ain't no place fer preachers but, when all's been said and done,
Them boys what's in there a-dancin' are a plumb good hearted lot,
They don't mean no harm by nothin' and in this here Hell's half lot

They're jest a-startin' something. Now then, open up yer eyes
And take in this scene around you. Wouldn't this be some surprise
To the boys from Old Ben Dowell's who, just fifty years ago,
Started up this great big baile from the end of 'dobe row?

The Buffalo

(*Sic transit gloria mundi*)

YOU gaze at the crowd without taking offense,
You stupidly blink through your barbed wire fence,
You brush at the flies and you trample your hay,
But I wonder do you ever think of the day
When your ancestors roamed, in uncounted herds,
O'er the great western plains, as free as the birds.

But first came the Red Man and then came the White,
And you, who had not been equipped for the fight,
Succumbed in the struggle and now here you stand
And, docile, you wait to be fed by the hand
Which robbed you of all your rightful domain;
Which dotted the land with the bones of your slain.

You cherish no grudge and you feel no regret,
As a relic of greatness they've made you a pet,
They shelter and feed you, and this is ideal.
But this is the present; it's wrong and unreal.
Your ancestors lived, but you, through the fence,
Gaze stupidly forth without taking offense.

The Ysleta Mission

Throughout slow passing years your whitened walls
Have watched the growth of Souls. Your Vesper calls,
When first they smote upon the Indian's ear,
Aroused in him a dread: an unknown fear.
But Patience and the loving toil of those
Bold Fathers through whose efforts you arose,
Assuaged their fear and, through the lessening dark,
The untaught natives saw the glimmering spark
Which Faith awakes in every human soul.
Your funeral bells have marked with solemn toll
The passing of the Fathers, but their light
Upon your ancient Altars, burning bright,
Now sends its rays far from your whitened walls,
And every evening when your Vesper falls
Upon the convert's ear, he bows his head
And breathes a blessing on your Saintly Dead.

The Indian

The bountiful plains and the fullness thereof
Were yours till the White Man arrived with a shove.
He pushed you on West to a place where the land
Is mainly a mixture of cactus and sand.
But, then he decided he needed that, too,
And he said, "move along," and what could you do?
You went to the hills where your respite was brief;
He wanted those also, and, in the belief
That you could oppose him you questioned the right
Of Supremacy which is the claim of the White.

The West is the land of miraculous change:
The Buffalo first disappeared from the range.
To you he succumbed. Then, you and your bow
Gave way to the strong, irresistible flow
Of the White Man who *built* as he carried his quest
For an Empire into the heart of the West.
Now the land which you claimed by a primitive right
Is no longer yours; the inscrutable might
Of the Natural Law in its unchanging plan
Has written your doom in the annals of man.

The Pioneer

Virile and rough and hardy and strong,
He crossed the Plains and the way was long.
But he was the kind of man who takes
The biggest chance for the biggest stakes.

He lived in a World alone with God,
Beneath his feet was the virgin sod,
And with his axe he blazed the way
For the weaker sons of the future day.

He travelled slow but he travelled far;
He marked the spots where our cities are;
With the onward turn of his wagon wheel
He marked the trail for our roads of steel.

*But, he marked his own trail with his bones,
He gave his life, and no pointed stones
Rise up in the Desert to say that "Here
Is the resting place of a Pioneer."*

The Burro

HERE'S How to you, my flop-eared friend!
You did your stubborn best.
You led us o'er the stony trails
Throughout this barren West;
Your tough old hide withstood our blows,
Your back up-bore our loads,
The even tenor of your way
Was not concerned with roads.

Through blazing heat, o'er jagged rocks,
You calmly plugged along,
And wagged your ears and every morn
Awoke us with your song.
You wrecked our Christianity
By teaching us to swear,
You almost wrecked our sanity
With your indifferent air.

But in the end the game was yours,
You knew your business best.
You knew that Patience was the thing
We needed in our quest.
You held us to an even pace,
You curbed our raging lust,
Till finally, guided by your tail,
We came upon the "dust."

So, How, to you, my thick-skinned friend,
With your obdurate ways:
Without your patient tail to guide
And lead us through the maze
Of western trails and western hills
We'd not have found the way
To such complete prosperity
As we enjoy today.

The Prospector

NO, I don't care a damn about the "love light in her eyes,"
Nor about the wond'rous beauty of the "warm Italian skies."
I cannot throw poetic fits about some winsome face,
Nor can I have hysterics o'er a piece of ancient lace.

Such things do not appeal to me. I'll let some other pen
Pay tribute to the beautiful while mine shall write of men;
Shall write about such men as you—the kind I've known the best,
The big, broad-visioned, stalwart men who found and made the West.

I can turn back in fancy and see you at the tail
Of a most obdurate burro on a most ungodly trail;
And the language that you're using is most ungodly, too,
And as rugged in its contour as the hills you're working through.

Then next I see you in the East: a fair, up-standing man,
Explaining to the money lords a money making plan.
'Twas then that your real toil began, for digging in the rocks
Was easy in comparison to digging in *their* socks.

But when you'd finally pried 'em loose from several stacks of "blues"
It didn't take you very long to shed your Sunday shoes
And get back into miner's boots and go to work, while *they*
Sat back in their upholstered ease and wondered "will it pay?"

And did it pay? The answer can be read in smelter smoke,
In thriving western cities and in happy, smiling folk.
It can be read in copper lines that link the parted seas,
In railroads and in ship yards and ten thousand factories!

It can be read in dividends, in furs and limousines,
In private yachts, and costly gems upon *their* social queens;
It can be read in men at work and also men at play,
It can be read in everything and everywhere today.

And all of this I can trace back to those forgotten days
When you were calling on the Lord to help you mend the ways
Of a most obdurate burro on a most ungodly trail,
And were hurling maledictions at his unoffending tail.

So, I don't give a damn about, as I have said before,
The dainty or the beautiful. I much prefer to roar
About the deeds of manly men, the men I've known the best,
The big, broad-visioned, stalwart men, like YOU, who made the West!

In the Beginning

SIXTEEN feet of a raw-hide lash
Hung to a shaft of seasoned ash,
This, and a semi-occasional damn
Were the only weapons which Smoky Sam
Used when he carried our "daily mail"
Over the rough Old Spanish Trail.

For a *driver* wasn't supposed to fight,
And Sam never did until, one night
A lone bad-man with a forty-five,
Held up Sam's stage. But *he* didn't thrive,
And Sam, when he rattled in next day,
Said, "Well, it happened this-a-way:

"You see, I didn't 'stick mine up';
It ain't the custom, but when that pup
Unloosed an insultin' remark or two
At a gal aboard, well, through and through
It riled me so that I couldn't resist
A sort of an impulse in my wrist,

"And this old whip-lash, through the dark,
Went wrigglin' out till it found the mark
And twisted itself around that gun
And I snatched her back and then, we run,
For into these brutes I pours the lash,
Till here we are with your mail and cash."

Now those were the days when a "dobe" shack
Was our humble home, and a wagon track
Which wound along through the thick mesquite
Was all there was to our single street;
And the quickest man with the gun or knife
Was the man who lived to his span of life.

But we stuck it out while our "daily mail"
Came once a week down the Spanish Trail,
And we worked and struggled and built a Bank,
And now we think that it's time to thank
That sixteen feet of raw-hide lash
Which saved for us *the original cash*.

The Round-up

Warble something to 'em, Puncher,
Annie Laurie, Old Black Joe,
Or if these don't come right handy,
Anything you chance to know.

For the steer, he ain't no critic,
He ain't got no fancy ear,
All he wants is something soulful.
Yes, the critters they are queer.

Sing it, Cowboy, they're a-millin'.
Watch that locoed brown one there,
Like as not he'll start a ruckus
And stampede this bunch fer fair.

All they need is something tuneful,
Something joyful, wild and free,
Try 'em out with that old anthem,
"Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie-e."

That's it, Cowboy, you're a-shoutin',
See 'em stop and look around.
There ain't nothin' to it, Puncher,
That shore is some soothin' sound.

The Smelter

Hotter than any revivalist's Hell,
Vomiting smoke and a sulphurous smell;
Overalled Demons, bare to the waist,
Sweating and toiling in feverish haste,
Feeding and tending this modern Moloch,
Servant of Man in his Conquest of Rock.

Pouring out metal in ingot and bar,
Metal, Man's weapon in Commerce and War,
Metal, which makes man supreme on the Earth,
Metal, Man's measure of Value and Worth.
Such is the Smelter, the modern Moloch,
Servant of Man in his Conquest of Rock.

Such is the Smelter, and here in the West
Deeper and deeper we carry our quest;
Gouging Earth's pockets and stripping her veins,
Feeding his gullet, then taking our gains
Back from the vent of this modern Moloch,
Servant of Man in his Conquest of Rock.

The Mountains

The Spirit which you gave has made the West!
You hurled your challenge and forth to the quest
The Strong Men came. They found you hard and cold,
They grew the same and, in their war for gold,
They matched their Will against your stubborn Rock
And back and forth you gave and took the shock.

You breed in Man his spirit of attack,
And then, in vain, you strive to drive him back.
Your stubbornness is his. Nor you nor he
Will ever cry "Enough." No mastery
Will either one concede. Men strike their blows
Inspired by the Strength which you oppose.

The Rio Grande

Of all the dammed things that I know
I am the dammedest. In my flow,
From the Rockies to the Sea,
I was once the boundary
'Twixt *mañana* and today:
'Twas no straight and narrow way,
But, when I got too erratic,
Then in language diplomatic,
They said: "Now's the time to dam it,
'Way up in the rocks let's jam it."
So now I, who used to be
An erratic boundary,
Am the dammedest thing I know of,
Am a thing they make a show of;
For I'm neither lake nor river,
I am dammed to be forever
In their scheme of Reclamation,
Just a source of irrigation.

Lariat Lou

Puncher Lariat Lou entered town on a lope,
Whooping and howling and swinging his rope;
He was mellow and happy and feeling quite free,
And the first thing he saw was a Heathen Chinee.

Now the Chink, as all people of culture admit,
Is legitimate prey for a cowboy who's lit,
But nevertheless some discretion should be
Exercised in selecting your Heathen Chinee.

Some Chinese, I'm told, are quite docile and mild,
While others, I hear, are quite easily riled,
And, as Soo Wah was one whose humorous sense
Was quite undeveloped, he made no pretense

At being amused, when both of his feet
Were jerked from beneath him and on down the street
He was dragged at the heels of a loping cayuse
Whose rider was known as the Knight of the Noose.

But, humor grows stale and so Lariat Lou
At last stopped his horse and dismounted and Soo,
As he rose from the alkalai dust of the road,
Advanced upon Lou in a manner which showed

That although his race was sorely oppressed,
There still lingered somewhere, deep down in his chest,
A longing to spatter the earth with the gore
Of Lariat Lou. And the way that he swore

Will long be remembered by all who were there;
It caused us to stop and to listen and stare;
For from out of the mouth of that Heathen Chinee
Came a fine Irish brogue that was pitched in a key

That all of us knew. We had heard it before:
'Twas the voice of the idolized Mary McShore,
'Twas the voice of the girl we all wanted to woo,
And *she* had been roped by that Lariat Lou.

No pen can do justice to all that ensued;
In a manner of speaking the county was strewed,
Not only with remnants of Lariat Lou,
But also with all the rest of us who

Had stood on the corner and whooped with delight
As the "Heathen" went by in her soul stirring flight.
And here ends my tale, but, a note should be made:
Miss Mary was *not* at that night's masquerade.

Whiskey Pete

(In Three "Seens")

The first time that I seen him
Was astride a pinto hoss,
He was actin' sort-o' peevish
And a-lookin' mighty cross.

And then, when next I seen him
He was lopin' through the door
Of a Mexican *cantina*,
And, it must-a made 'em sore,

Because when next I seen him
He was ridin' in a box.
For he'd died with all his boots on
But I can't be sure o' sox.

Old Kate

We all stayed late at the bar that night
But there wasn't much drinking done;
And nobody riffled the poker decks
And the wheel it wasn't spun.

We were only waiting to hear from Doc,
Who'd gone on a hurry call.
We knew who 'twas was cashing in
And we couldn't leave, that's all.

It was two o'clock when the Doc came in
And his face looked drawn and old
As he motioned us up to have a drink,
And we didn't have to be told.

We drank and waited, Doc finally spoke—
"She's dead, and boys, I'll state
That the portals of heaven are swinging wide
To admit Old Dashing Kate.

"They say she wasn't respectable,
At least the women do,
But 'respectability' is not there
Though you read the Bible through.

"But Kate believed in Sweet Charity,
And in helping the poor and weak,
And in always speaking the hide-bound truth
Whenever she had to speak.

"And her mind wasn't filled with evil thoughts
And her soul wasn't full of pride,
And she didn't covet her neighbor's goods,
Yet, a Magdalene she died.

"Now I know Old Kate, for in practice here
I've lots of poor on the list,
And she's always been the first to say,
'Please, Doc, can't I assist?'

"And she'd get the coin from drunken sports
And say with a smile to me,
'Doc, ain't there a lot of change gets loose
When the boys go on a spree?'

“‘But I guess that I’d better rake it in
And pass it along to you
And let you spend it among the poor
In a way that I’d like to do.

“‘But you know that I ain’t respectable
And maybe they’d spurn my gift,
So use it where it is needed most
And don’t tell them who gave the lift.’

*“Yes, they say she wasn’t respectable,
At least the women do,
But ‘respectability’ is not there
Though you read the Bible through.*

*“And it isn’t the kind of a life we lead,
We’re children of circumstance,
It’s the things we do in spite of that
That get us the final chance.*

“I believe in the ultimate judgment, boys,
And I think they’ll let Kate in,
For she closed her game and she paid all bets,
And she owes for her single sin.”

To Dr. James Douglas

The rugged contrasts of a desert land,
Where mountains rise from wastes of shim’ring sand;
The vasty solitudes which space unrolls
To overwhelm and to oppress the souls
Of meagre minded men, were but to you
A source of inspiration. Your broad view
Foresaw the coming of the present age
When prisoned lightnings would become the page
Of human industry. Your piercing eye
Searched out Earth’s treasures where they underlie
The hard-faced rocks, and your constructive brain
Saw smelter stacks arise and in their train
You saw the Great Southwest. Today your dream
Is an accomplished fact. A steady stream
Of world-wide commerce flows across the land
Which was before a waste of worthless sand;
The sturdy hills have yielded to your stroke
And from a hundred furnaces the smoke
Arises and across the blazing sun
In tribute writes these words: “The West is Won.”

To the Hen

(This lyric did NOT win the Harper Poetry Contest for 1923)

AND now, my trusty fountain pen,
Sing, sing the praises of the Hen.
Because what would our breakfasts be
If she should quit? Or where would we,
Without her, get, in Southern style,
All garnished with an Afric smile,
Those fricassees which reach a spot
That nothing else from pan or pot
Has ever reached or ever will?
And so, though other Bards may trill,
Or coo or warble in their praise
Of nightingales, or maybe jays,
I still will let my fountain pen
Pour forth its pæan to the Hen.

The Cross Word

The cross word never won a friend,
It never earned a cent,
It never made a house a home,
It never brought content.

It never made a poor man laugh,
Nor made a rich one grin;
It never caused an honest act,
Nor kept a soul from sin.

It never made a baby coo,
Nor made a sick girl smile,
It never pleased the virtuous,
It never helped the vile.

And so the cross word is about
The one thing on this earth
That we could well eliminate
Because it has no worth.

Oahu

They lived by the light of the Lamp of Love,
And not by the laws of man;
And the longer they lived the better they loved,
For not since the world began
Were there ever men with finer hearts
Or women more free from guile
Than those happy people who lived and loved
On Oahu's tropic isle.

Their skin was the color of brown sea mud,
Their hair like shining jet,
And none could read or write a line
And none wore clothes, but yet
Their souls were as white as the driven snow
For they didn't know how to sin,
And they didn't learn till an evil tide
Brought the White Man drifting in.

The White Man came with his Bottle and Book,
His face a fathom long,
And solemnly gave instruction in
The ways of Right and Wrong.
For the things that they had thought were right
By the Book were mortal sin,
And the simple souls of the Book partook
And washed it down with Gin.

Now some there were who loved the Book
But far more loved the Gin.
" 'Tis the will of God," the White Man said,
"These souls were born to sin,
For they reject the Saving Grace
Which we hold forth in vain;
But what is thus their future loss
Will be our present gain."

The White Man then forthwith forgot
He'd come to save their souls,
And trafficked with them for their lands
And made them sign the scrolls.
They signed the scrolls with heathen marks
Before a Christian's God,
And thus did White Men trade their Gin
For Oahu's soil and sod.

And many a tide has ebb'd and flow'd
On Oahu's isle since then,
But never so evil a tide as that
Which brought those pious men
A-drifting in with Bottle and Book
And face a fathom long,
Who solemnly gave instruction in
The ways of Right and Wrong.

To Nayan

HAD I Aladdin's Lamp and Magic Ring
I'd rub and rub and when my rub should bring
The Genie to my feet I thus would speak:
"Go forth, Oh Genie, and my best friend seek.
You'll know her by her purity of mind,
Her spotless soul, her love of human kind.
You'll find in her one, who unto the end,
Will be to me Life's rarest gift, a Friend.
Then, Genie, guard her life. Let naught befall
To cast one shadow on it. Make it all
That she would have it be. Spread at her feet
The joys most rare on earth. Ne'er let her meet
With aught of disappointment, pain or grief;
Surround her with true friends; let her belief
In them ne'er falter and, unto the end,
Preserve me worthy to be called her Friend."

Ze Geests

Ze poudre? Oui. Ze demoiselle
She like so verre much ze smell.
Eet geev her jus ze right to be
Ze meestress of ze men. Oui, oui.

Ze perfume? Oom-la-la, eet ees
Ze essence of ze blossom leeves.
Eet makes ze men love—Oh, so much,
Eet ees ze Cupid's final touch.

Ze sweet-meats? Oui. Ze demoiselle
She likes ze sweet-meats verre well.
She say ze sweet-meat she like best
Ees just ze kees. Ees zat ze jest?

The Failure

He's just turned four and thirty,
Which they say are half his days;
They tell him he's a failure
And they criticize his ways.

They point to other fellows
Who they say have made a pile,
They look at him with pity,
And they say he ain't worth while.

He's just turned four and thirty,
And he hasn't any home,
Save in the hearts of people
From Magellan up to Nome.

For somehow, most folks like him
And it may be 'cause he's not
A-drawin' lines of friendship
By what he thinks they've got.

He's just turned four and thirty,
And he's hale and hearty yet;
His appetite's a wonder
And his stomach ain't a pet;

He don't lie awake to figure
What his income's going to be;
He's got the answer ready,
And it's satisfactory.

When he says, "Say, Bill, I like you,"
You can know he's speaking true,
And can grip his hand in friendship,
Like a fellow ought to do.

He's just turned four and thirty,
He's been *living* all the time;
He don't idolize the dollar
And don't deify the dime;

He knows what folks are thinking,
And he says: "Yes, boys, I guess
It's true that I'm a failure,
But, *this life's a grand success!*"

Seventeen and Forty

I'm a man of nearly forty,
You're a girl of seventeen;
You're an artist, I'm a poet,
So the years that lie between
Our Seventeen and Forty
Are not years to chill our hearts;
For Time has no fettered meaning
For the Children of the Arts.

Forty, in poetic fancy,
Can go back to Seventeen;
Can exult with all his being
In her joy of Life and Scene;
Can invest all things with beauty,
Find some love in every heart;
Understandingly can Forty
Look on Seventeen's young art.

Forty loves the youth and freshness,
Loves the pleasure and the zest,
Loves the ardor and the candor,
Seventeen shows in her quest
For that something, dim, elusive,
Which must be the Artist's goal,
Which gives Art its best incentives,
Which illumines the Artist's soul.

'Tis this quest, this constant searching,
For the ultimate, last Truth,
Which gives Art its deeper meaning,
Which preserves the Artist's youth.
Forty is not one day older
In this quest than Seventeen,
And his thoughts span lightly over
The few years that intervene.

Forty has no lost illusions,
Art can take no backward look;
'Tis the future, bright with promise,
Not the past, which makes our book.
Seventeen, take heed from Forty,
Let your yesterdays lie dead,
Always feeling that the morrow
Will reveal the Truth ahead.

My Inspiration

The days have drifted by,
The weeks have flown,
The years have rolled along,
Nor have I known
The meaning of it all.
I've only quaffed
The foam from Life's sweet cup
And gaily laughed.

But now all things are changed,
For I can feel
The power of your coming.
Yes, I'll steal
From you the inspiration
Which I lack,
And with it win your heart.
Nor give it back.

Why is this?

There was a time when I could look
Upon a bulging hip
Without a flicker of the eye,
Or twitching of the lip.

But in those days I knew full well
That what was carried there
Was just a trusty forty-five,
And so I didn't care.

But now when e'er I see a man
A-bulging in the rear
My soul turns green with envy
And my lips get dry and sere.

The Old Man of the Sea

“Friend, won’t you lend me a quarter, please,
I’m broke and I’m awful dry?”
So I shoved him over a two-bit piece
And he drank and began to cry.

“Here, here,” says I, “this will not do,
This will not do at all.
You’ve had two-bits and you’ve had a drink
And now you start a squall.”

Then he looked me up and he looked me down
And solemnly said to me:
“Dear friend, I am really not a bum,
I’m the Old Man of the Sea.

“For can’t you,” he said, “see my long green hair
As it floats on yonder wave,
And don’t you notice the purple light
Of my eyes in yonder cave?”

Then he waved his arms and he cried,
“Now, there, don’t you feel the ocean rock;
And he blew his breath and he shrieked,
“O-ho, don’t you feel the storm wind’s shock?”

“And now,” he said, “as I stamp my feet
Down hard on the ocean’s floor,
Don’t you feel the whole earth shake and reel
In a quake from shore to shore?”

At that I bought him another drink
And said: “Bo, get in form
To go through the whole damn thing at once
And kick us up a storm.”

Then he waved his arms and he stamped his feet,
And he screamed, as he blew his breath,
“A-ha, a-ha, see there, see there,
See the ships go down to death.”

So he laughed and danced and screamed and yelled,
And at last fell to the floor,
When the storm was spent and the night was rent
With the sound of a lusty snore.

And he slept it out on the floor, I guess,
But the thought oft comes to me:
I wonder how many more there are
Who are Old Men of the Sea.

The Result

(1940)

*S*AINT PETER stood before the Gate and clanged his bunch of keys:
“And who,” he said to Gabriel, “and who and what are these?
Anæmic souls they seem to be who fain would enter in,
Inquire of them Gabriel, if they have done no sin.”

Then straightway from the crowd stepped forth a man of humble air,
Who said, “We are Americans and we are in despair,
We’ve been to Hell but have been told that Hell can have no place
For people who have flouted the Devil to his face.

“So now, although ’tis not our choice, we stand at Heaven’s door,
And claim that we are without sin and entrance we implore.
We have not sinned, we could not sin, we dared not sin on Earth,
To sin with us was legal crime; up here what are we worth?”

Saint Peter shoved his halo back and smiled a pitying smile,
“It cannot be,” he firmly said, “for though ye have no guile
Ye are poor legislated souls who had no chance to sin,
Ye therefore have no merit and ye cannot enter in.

“My Pearly Gates cannot swing wide to those who’re good because
They’ve been controlled by statute books and sumptuary laws,
And if you could go back to earth I’d send this word by you—
My crowns are not for those who don’t but are for those who DO.

“Ye cannot make poor human laws to replace Holy Writ,
Men must be good not for the law but for the love of it.
The Devil’s views are like to mine, we both regret your case,
But plainly there’s no room for you except in vacant space.”

Then sadly the Americans turned back upon the road,
Poor legislated souls were they who bore no kind of load.
And now like unto Tomlinson, betwixt the Worlds they dwell,
Not good enough for Heaven and not bad enough for Hell.

A Song

You came to me in robes of purest white,
I clasped you in my arms. A wild delight
Suffused my soul. I kissed your eyes,
Your lips, your breasts. No Paradise
Can ever hold for me such honeyed bliss
As then was mine. For you gave me a kiss!

I feel it yet. My heart, Oh God, stood still,
My senses reeled; then came to me the thrill
That told me I was loved. But, what is love?
No words of mine can tell. But from above
I hear sweet strains of music and my soul,
Upon rose petals, drifts unto its goal.

To the Ladies

*(With apologies, not to them, but to the author of
"Nothing to Wear")*

NOW the chronicle says that the day being hot
Eve went to the family ice chest and got
A nice cold lemonade and a beautiful straw
And the one through the other did soothingly draw.

And while Eve was seated there in the shade,
Absorbing by suction her cold lemonade,
Her Adam drove up, all swollen with pride,
In a new motor car and suggested a ride.

But Eve gave an audible hem and haw,
Produced a most horrible sound with the straw,
And said, "No, my dear, I really don't dare
To go out today for I've nothing to wear."

But Adam insisted and Eve finally said,
With a petulant toss of her pretty red head,
That she'd go but she knew the whole world would stare
At a woman who faced it with nothing to wear.

Now why this remark should have made such a hit
We cannot surmise, but still we admit
That it was the truth and that may be why
You ladies today have adopted Eve's cry.

For it don't seem to make any difference at all,
Though it be in the winter, the summer or fall,
Though the weather be bad or the weather be fair,
You still all go out though you've nothing to wear.

Sometimes we poor men think it all a mistake
And imagine that you must be clothed, but you wake
Us out of our dreams when you loudly declare
That really and truly you've nothing to wear.

At that, we might doubt you, until at some ball
We're gathered and there get a glimpse of you all,
And then, with the facts all before us, laid bare,
We have to agree that you've nothing to wear.

To *New York City*

I tramped your city pavements till I wore my shoe soles thin,
I knew your city people and I knew your city sin.
I stood beneath your "poet's arch," the "Village" all around,
And with a proper reverence I viewed that hallowed ground.

I lunched with stage celebrities and dined with men who wrote,
I acquired indigestion at the dago table d'hote;
I danced my afternoons away with girls who didn't care,
And who were quite Bohemian and frolicksome and fair.

I wore the proper thing in clothes, partook of stylish food,
I assumed a blasé manner and a temperamental mood,
In fact, I tried your City out, gave it the acid test,
And then I gladly turned my face back to my native West.

And, though we have no arches and no long haired coterie,
And there are not any studios in which we sip our "tea,"
Yet there's sunshine here a-plenty, and just outside the door
I hear my horse's nicker. But, if I say any more

'Twill make you want to join me, and, b'gosh, I wish you would,
For the birds are flying southward and the shooting's getting good,
And you'll find a hearty welcome here although no gay soubrettes
Will be sitting 'round a-smoking of their perfumed cigarettes.

They're cutting alfalfa now, the perfume fills the air,
But you can't tell the time o' day by what the people wear,
And though we have no subway down to Forty-second street,
Still, living in the big Southwest is pretty hard to beat.

My Love

My Love is like the honey bee,
My Love will never stay with me.
It stings me once and then it dies,
Which means—another enterprise.

A Heart Throb

Backward, turn backward
Oh Time in your flight!
Give me some booze again,
 Just for tonight.

Let me feel good again,
Do what I would again,
Be a real guy again,
 Just for tonight.

Conchita

*W*HEN the Yucca bloom was holding
Up its head, all white and pure,
It was then I met Conchita,
And I loved her—I am sure.

Never was a sweeter maiden,
 And when now the desert wind
Wraps me in its warm caresses
 I can feel her arms entwined
Softly 'round me and can hear her
 Whisper to me, sweet and low,
"Yo te amo, mi querido,
 Yet you leave me, yet you go."

But the Yucca bloom had fallen,
 Dropped its whiteness to the ground,
So I left my sweet Conchita,
 Knowing not what love I'd found.

Misunderstood

I took my love from out my heart
And held her in my hand:
She looked at me quite gravely
And she said: "I understand,

You want to look me over
Because I'm sweet and pure,
Because I'm true and honest
And you know that I'll endure."

"Why, no," I said, and put her back,
"You're wrong as you are fair;
I only wanted to be sure
You hadn't bobbed your hair."

Reciprocity

I want to sit and look at you.
It's something that I have to do,
Because—well, just because in me
You strike some chords of sympathy
Which no one else can make resound,
Which no one else has ever found;
And so, at least that part of me
Belongs to you who've set it free.

And so I have to look at you.
It is a thing I have to do,
Because—well, just because down deep
Within your eyes, and half asleep,
I see a something which may be
A something that I can set free;
And if I can, then, will it be
A something that belongs to me?

Mount *F*ranklin

Unawed by your grim silence and your frown,
Man, in his impudence, builds up a town
Within the very shadows which you cast
And, in his pride, he says, "This town will last."

To build his town Man tugs and tears at you;
He mars your noble face, and in the few
Short years that each man lives he takes some part
Of your great strength into his puny heart.

Man claims much credit for the things he's done;
He points with pride to tiny scars upon
Your rock-ribbed sides and, babbling in his glee,
He passes on. While you, who've stood to see

Ten million ages pass, and who will stand
To see ten million more, look down in grand
And patient majesty upon the town
Which you have built with pebbles from your crown.

The *D*ifference

'Tis five years now
Since "Over There" I stood upon the brow
Of a bold hill
And looked across a plain at thousands slain,
For that was War,
And those who died knew all that it was for
And there were no regrets,
For that was War.

Today I stand
Upon a hill, here in my native land,
While down below,
Through all its bitter strife men cling to life,
For this is Peace,
And ever, with no moment of surcease,
Man's selfish cries ring out.
Yes, this is Peace.

The *R*ight to Die

For those who died on the other side
Is the banquet table laid,
And the good red wine from the fruitful vine
Flows free in the Land of Shade.

With cup to lip, in fellowship,
They drink and the toast they drain:
"To Hope and Truth and abounding Youth,"
Is balm to a Nation's pain.

Their right to die to defeat a lie
Is a right their fathers won,
And every mound in their camping ground
Speaks now to a living son:

"Be not afraid for you are made
Of the stuff that makes a man;
To you we give the right to live,
As the birthright of the clan.

"'Tis yours by right of the bitter fight,
'Tis yours by the bursting shell;
By the red blood spilled, by the foemen killed
At the yawning gates of Hell.

"'Tis yours by the breath that choked in death,
'Tis yours by the eyes that dimmed,
By the mothers' tears, by the frightful years,
By the wicked Hate they hymned.

"For some must give that some may live,
But ever the thought must be
That the right to die to defeat a lie
Is the right that keeps men free!"

The Cow Puncher *and* *The Uplift*

He sat on his heels and rolled his own.
But that was in years gone by
When he was a young and virile chap
And mirth was in his eye.

And in those days he was glad to shake
The hand of the world at large
And he didn't give a puncher's damn
For the two words "cash" and "charge."

But white faced steers on the range increased,
And the price began to climb
And he married a girl with a social "bug"
And then in the course of time

He shook his boots for some fancy "kicks,"
And "changed" with the time of day,
And learned to handle some parlor French
And believed that the word "entre"

Meant something a man could buy for cash
And thus his puny soul
Kept shriveling up till it blew away
And left in its place a hole

Which, except for a lot of social junk,
Is bare from end to end,
And nowhere in it is there a trace
Of the stuff that makes a Friend.

Philosophy

From out of his heart a message went,
To everybody the word was sent:
And this is the way the message read,
And this is just what the message said:
"The way to be happy is to be good,
To always do just as you should.
But, don't be mistaken and take your cue
From somebody else as to what to do;
For nobody knows, like you, yourself,
Just what you've got on your mental shelf,
And so, no matter what people say,
The way to be good is to do the way
You think you ought and, if you're wrong,
You'll find it out before very long
And can make it right. And then you know,
Nobody can say: 'I told you so.'"

Contentment

Don't talk to me
Of poverty,
Because I am
Just what I am
And I don't give
A single damn
About this thing
That you call wealth.
I have my songs,
I have my health,
I have a soul
That is my own;
I *live* my life,
And I atone
To no man here
For what I do.
And, when it's time
To say "Adieu"
To this old World
I think I'll take
As much away
As those who make
At least ten times
As much as I,
And so, we're even
When we die.

To Joshua Reynolds

Where forest trees are grouped there's always one
Which, in its silent struggle for the sun,
Has overtopped its kind. Around its base,
With equal opportunity for space,
The lesser trees spring up; they come and go,
The secret is not their's of how to grow.

And in the West, when it was wild and free,
Each man who came to try was like a tree;
All chances were the same, yet, but a few
Spread out in root and branch and thrived and grew.

Across the azure sky-line of the West
Those few stand out today; above the crest
Of mediocre multitudes they rise,
Uplifted by undaunted enterprise.

Men are Many and Kings are Few

My muse has fled from me tonight,
I cannot work and I cannot write;
I have no plot and I have no theme,
I can only sit and smoke and dream.

But I cannot dream of the things that were,
I can only think of the things that are:
I can only think of the world at war
And wonder and wonder what it's for.

Is it right that this dreadful thing should be,
Is it right to you, is it right to me?
Is the world the plaything of a King,
Is Life at last but a useless thing?

And the answer to all of this is "No,"
The Right is right and the Wrong must go,
The World is Man's and the King is naught,
And life is God's great embodied Thought.

For Men are many and Kings are few,
And The World belongs to me and you,
And the War will end when the Kings are done
And the many stand, a United One!

April, 1917.

Jim

“No, Parson, I’ll say it ain’t no use
For you to talk to Jim,
For you see your clay ain’t mixed the way
Of what’s inside of him.

“You take your word from the printed page
And tell folks what to do,
But Jim’s one man you never can
Convince with a line or two.

“For Jim, he’s a regular thoroughbred,
He drinks and he’s hard and rough,
But with all of that you can bet your hat
He’s almost good enough.

“And Parson, I reckon you ain’t heard tell
Of the time when the yaller-jack
Was a-raging here in pretty near
Every doggone village shack

“There was somebody either sick or dead,
And the ‘good’ folks, black and white,
All pulled their freight for another state,
But Jim put up a fight.

“The Doctors left and the Preachers too,
It warn’t no use, they thought,
But Jim just grinned and drank and sinned,
And did what he said he ought.

“And Parson, Jim didn’t discriminate,
He nursed ’em, black and white,
And he buried the dead and he even read
For each a funeral rite.

“So, I just reckon it wouldn’t do
For you to talk to Jim,
For he’s queer that way and what you’d say
Might not set well on him,

“And like as not he’d cuss you out
And ask you *where* in hell
Do the ‘good’ folks fry because he’ll try
To get in a different cell.

“And Parson, I think he’ll get one too,
In a cool and quiet spot,
While some ‘chaste’ souls will lie on coals
That are everlasting hot.”

The Land of Summer Time



HY no, this isn't living. Lord, it makes me sick
To talk to *me* of living in your cities made of brick,
With your streets laid down in asphalt and your houses in a row,
Of course this isn't living, but then, how could *you* know?

And what can *you* know of loving: in your cold, steam heated flat,
With your telephone a-ringing and your built-in this and that;
With the cost always to figure no matter where you go,
Of course this isn't loving, but then, how could *you* know?

You're solemn, sane and sober in your town of stone and brick,
Where to love is a convention and to live is just a trick,
Come, join me in my cruising and *I'll* take you to a clime
Where the lovers all are living. 'Tis the Land of Summer Time.

'Tis the land where azure heavens arch their skies above your head,
'Tis the land where fragrant flowers drop their petals on your bed,
'Tis the land for men and maidens who were born to love and live,
Not the land for city people who were made to take and give.

There the roads are only palm lanes, the grass lies soft and green,
Every strong man is a ruler and for every man his queen;
Their crowns are woven flowers and their laws are writ in rhyme—
Come, follow and *I'll* lead you to the Land of Summer Time.

'Tis there you can be happy and 'tis there you can be true,
For "Thou Shalt Not" isn't written in the land *I'll* take you to,
And there there is no sinning, 'tis Knowledge makes the crime,
And Love takes the place of Knowledge in the Land of Summer Time.

A Question of Shape

The books all say the world is round,
To me it has been square;
The papers mention men as crooks
But nearly everywhere
I've found men to be straight, and then
You say that life is flat,
But I have found it full of bumps
And so, good folks, that's that.

*A*long the Street

The girls we meet along the street:
Petite and sweet,
Neat, hard to beat,
But Oh, you feet!
On girls we meet along the street.

We stand and gaze in mild amaze:
The gay arrays
Which she displays
Will almost craze
Us as we gaze in mild amaze!

Her winning wile was once her smile,
But now Dame Style
Says "for a while
Limbs shall beguile
These creatures vile who smirk and smile."

So now she uses socks and shoeses
Trims her limbs in brilliant hueses,
And displays to our viewses
More or less—just as she chooses!

In *J*uarez

Yes I, poor fool, was there. I saw her dance;
I caught the invitation in her glance,
And, being fogged with wine, my brain said "Go,"
And so I went. That was a week ago
And six days of that week I think I've spent
In asking my weak self, "Do you repent?"

My strong self says I do not think I do;
The wrong we did was ours; just we two
Must pay the price of our passing sin—
If price there is—so why should I begin
To harbour vain regrets when I well know
That if I'm asked again, again I'll go?

Uncle John--A Narrative

(PART ONE)

TODAY, as a middle aged man,
When I walk along the street
And see the children at play
It naturally carries me back
To the time when I was a child myself.
And it makes me think,
How different, how very different,
My life was from what theirs is.

The blue-coated messenger boy
Who sits on a bench in the back of the office
And reads, between trips,
About Indian massacres and stage robbers,
And Bowie-knives and pistols and bad men,
And while he reads
Feels little chills go up and down his back,
Is living through, in his imagination,
The very things that, when I was a child,
I lived through in reality.

The very first recollection that I have of anything
Is one of being taken up in the night
And carried away by my Mother to an adobe house—
It was all white-washed inside
And lighted with one candle—
Where we stayed with the rest of the women and their children
While Dad and the other men fought off the Indians.
All of my childhood was just like that.
And I can remember how on one Sunday,
When we always had company for dinner,
Four men came, and they were *gentlemen*, too,
And even though each one had “killed his man,”
And we all knew it,
What difference did that make?

And then there was Uncle John.
I love to think about Uncle John.
I believe that he had been nearly every kind
Of a peace officer that there was.

And I can remember that once I met him limping along,
With blood all over one leg,

And I stopped and said:

“Hello, Uncle John, what’s the matter?”

And he answered: “Where’s your Dad, Son,
I want him to take this bullet out of my leg
That Bull Outcalt just got through putting there.”

You see, Dad was a doctor

And that’s how I knew everybody.

Then, not long after this,

I was coming along the road one night

About ten o’clock and I saw Uncle John.

He was sitting on a beer keg

Out in front of the Acme saloon,

And his officer’s star,

Which was a gold one that the people had given him,

Was all shiny in the moonlight.

“Good night, Uncle John,” I said.

And he grunted back at me: “Get along home, Kid,
It’s too late for you to be out.”

And just then two men came

And passed by Uncle John and went in the saloon.

I stood for a minute and talked

And then, as I started up the road,

Uncle John got up from the beer keg

And went inside.

A second later

I heard just one pistol shot

And I turned and ran back to see what it was.

As I went in the door

Uncle John was just putting his gun away

And on the floor was one of the men

Who had just come in a minute before.

He had a pistol in his hand

But he was stone dead and, in spite of the blood on his face,

I recognized him.

His name was John Weston Harless,

And that very week he had held up a man I knew

Who was dealing a faro game down in the Gem;

And had boasted about it afterwards

And said that nobody could arrest him for it,

Or get the drop on him.

Well, Harless had been shot right in the back of the head

And even though Uncle John was a peace officer,

He had to be tried for murder.

It didn’t make any difference

That Harless was undesirable
And that everybody was glad to get rid of him.
Shooting him wasn't wrong,
But shooting him in the back of the head was,
And so Uncle John had to be tried.

Dad, being a doctor, was called in as an expert
To tell about the course of the bullet
And, even though he and Uncle John
Had been friends for years,
Dad had to tell the truth and swear
That the bullet had gone in from behind.
But Dad's testimony wasn't all that there was:
If it had been it would have been "good night" for Uncle John.

The rest of it showed that when Uncle John
Pushed open the saloon door and went in
Harless saw him in the mirror back of the bar.
He knew right away what was coming
And reached for his gun,
But Uncle John beat him to it.

And I can remember how, all the time after that,
Dad and Uncle John used to laugh
And tell about how Dad's testimony
Almost hung one of his best friends.

(PART TWO)

AND then there was another time;
The time when Buckskin Joe
Came down from the Red River country
And told everybody how bad *he* was.
But of course nobody paid any attention to him.
It didn't make any difference
How bad he *said* he was so long as he wasn't.

But one day, and I can remember
That it was about ten o'clock in the morning,
I heard a lot of shooting
Down at the Boss saloon corner
And of course I ran down there as hard as I could.
When I reached the saloon somebody said:
"Buckskin Joe's cleaned out the place."

And I reckon he had, too,
Because everybody who was generally on the inside,
Even Old Man Rice, who owned it,
Was on the outside and none of them

Seemed to be trying to get back in.
They were just waiting
And I knew what they were waiting for.

It was Uncle John, and here he came.
For an old man he was running pretty fast, too,
Holding his right hand on his hip,
To keep his gun from jolting out,
And panting like a dog.
When he got to where the crowd was
He didn't ask anybody any questions;
He just pushed open the swinging door and started in
And I was right at his heels.

"Stay out of this, Kid," he said,
"You might get hurt," and so I stopped
And just peeked through the crack of the door.
Inside there wasn't anybody but Buckskin Joe and the bartender;
There were four or five bullet holes in the mirror
And a lot of broken bottles on the shelf,
And Buckskin Joe was just pouring himself another drink
When Uncle John went in.

Joe saw him coming through the door and he shot quick—
Uncle John hadn't even pulled a gun yet—
But Joe missed and, quick as a flash,
Uncle John ducked down back of one end of the bar.
Buckskin Joe was standing close to the other end
And he ducked, too, because
As Uncle John went down he took a crack at him
That knocked his hat off.
Then there they were:
One at each end of the bar
And the bartender in between them
And no way in the world for him to make a get-away.

This bar-tender was a fat man, too,
His name was Bill Weatherby,
But before the shooting was over,
And it didn't last but a minute or two,
He didn't look any thicker than a sandwich.
You see, Uncle John and Buckskin Joe
Went right on shooting at each other,
Clean forgetting about Bill,
Who was just standing there pretty near in the line of fire,
And that's why he got so flat in such a few minutes.

Well, I watched through the crack in the door,
Thinking every minute that somebody would get hurt,

But nobody did.
Every time Uncle John stuck his head up,
Or showed a part of himself anywhere,
Buckskin Joe'd take a crack at him.
And it was the same way with Uncle John,
Whenever he'd see Buckskin Joe
Sticking out anywhere he'd shoot at him.
And then, all of a sudden,
And it looked just like plain suicide,
Uncle John just stood straight up
And walked out from behind the bar
And right towards Buckskin Joe.

My heart stopped beating right then,
And I shut my eyes; I didn't want to see it happen.
But in a second or two I looked again
And I was just in time to see Uncle John
Dragging Joe out from behind his end of the bar.
Uncle John had him by the collar,
And he came, too, without much struggling.
Then, poking his six-shooter
Up alongside of Joe's ear,
Uncle John marched him right out into the crowd in the front
And then it was funny.
Uncle John just naturally proceeded
To kick that bad man all over the road.
And you know that in those days
There wasn't anything quite as humiliating
To a gun-man as to have to stand up and be kicked,
And Uncle John made Buckskin Joe stand up
And take it while he gave him the boot.

Of course it was violent exercise for an old man,
Like Uncle John, and it didn't last long,
But it was long enough, because
Buckskin Joe wasn't ever a bad man again.
He stayed in town for a long time after that
And never even toted a gun.

Then, after it was all over,
And Uncle John had started back down the road,
I caught up with him and I said:
"Say, Uncle John, weren't you awful scared? I was."
"Scared," he said, "of course not;
What was there to be scared of?"
"Oh, nothing, I guess," I answered,
"But anyhow, Uncle John,
When you walked out from back of the bar

And right down on Buckskin Joe
How'd you know that he wasn't
Going to shoot your head off right then?"
"Easy enough, Kid, easy enough,
I just counted his shots
And after his sixth one come I just walked out
And went over and got him."
"Oh," I said, "I see now, and you'd saved one
In your own gun to get the drop with."

Uncle John grinned. "No," he said,
"I didn't save none. Mine was all gone first
But Joe didn't know it. If he'd a-known it
He sure would have taken the play away from me.
But you see, Kid, these bad men,
These gun-toters, they never have any brains.
They know how to shoot but they don't know how to think,
And so, just because Joe hadn't counted my shots,
I puts an empty gun up alongside of his ear
And takes him out and boots him all over the street.
No, Son, bad men haven't got any brains,
That's why they're bad."

The Church I Like

I like the Church that God has built in every honest heart;
The Church that He would like to have become a working part
Of everybody's daily life. I like that Church because
It's one that's built on age-long Truth and not on written laws.

I like the Church that I can see in every honest life;
The Church that makes men stand up clean, no matter what the
strife;
The Church that goes with men to work, that goes with them to play,
That has a place within each home, and *fills it every day.*

A Chichimec Tale

TARIACURI, whose name you'll agree
Is cannabalistic to quite a degree,
Was a Chichimec Indian who lived on the shore
Of the Lake of Patzcuaro but, what is much more,
He was a Cacique who wore on his head
Enough gaudy plumage to feather a bed.
And Tariacuri, as then was the fashion,
At trivial things would fly into a passion;
He'd roar and he'd rave till his twenty-three wives
Were kept in continual fear of their lives.

But, this is no tale of domestic disaster:
It's far worse than that. A wife he could plaster
Securely away in a nice 'dobe wall
And forget her and get him another, and all
Of his twenty-three wives couldn't stir up the fury
We find in the heart of Old Tariacuri.

Now Hist'ry is dumb as to what it was for.
It merely asserts that this guy went to war
With a neighboring tribe whose Cacique, one Cando,
Wore fancier feathers than he in his bandeaux.

And the war it was long and many were eaten,
Baked, boiled and fried but, being unbeaten,
Both sides kept it up until men fit to eat
Found it rather unsafe to appear on the street.

Cacique Cando had a brother, Axhitl,
Large, round and fat, who, viewed as a victual,
Was just such a morsel as savages do
Esteem very highly when served as ragout.

But Axhitl was not like the rest of his bunch;
He did not like war and one day a hunch
Came to him to go over to Tariacuri
To try to assuage that old savage's fury.
So carefully dressing himself in his hat—
On lesser occasions he wore less than that—
He departed alone on his errand of peace,
And he was successful, he made the war cease.

Again Hist'ry fails us for it doesn't say
What Axhitl did to determine the fray.
But he did it, we know, because the day after
The grim sounds of war were all changed to laughter,
And Tariacuri, his anger appeased,
Sent a message to Cando which read: "I'd be pleased
To have you come over and join me at dinner."
And Cando, who daily had been growing thinner,
Replied, "I'll be there," and over he went,
And many more with him and all were content.

The dinner was quite a *recherché* affair,
For most of the guests had on something to wear;
Just a bead or a feather, not much, to be sure,
But enough when we think of the temperature.

The viands were served and words cannot tell
How they tickled the palate and tempted the smell.
And Cando—who sat at the right of the host—
Of all of the eaters, that eater ate most.
He ate with abandon and gusto and joy,
While Tariacuri, who watched the old boy,
With an ever increasing grin of delight,
Kept filling his plate until—came a bite
Which stopped at half mast because Cando's jaws
Had come down on a bone. He, removing the cause,
Glanced casually at it and then—the glance froze.
He looked at his host and he solemnly rose.

He rose to his feet and he cried, "Hah, this thing,
That I've found in the stew; this handsome ear-ring,
Is the one that Axhitl wore two days ago.
Am I wrong, am I right, Oh, can it be so,
That here in your house I am eating my brother?"
Quoth Tariacuri, "Sure, it is no other."

And now, did these savages fly to their arms?
Did Cando swear vengeance and war's wild alarms
Once more break the silence around Lake Patzcuaro?
The Hist'ry says "No," but yet there was sorrow
In Cando's rude heart, for though quite unable
Some two hours later to rise from the table,
He still, from the depths of digestive commotion,
Cried out in a tone of fraternal devotion:
"Oh, sav'ry Axhitl, the worst of your sins
Was committed at birth. You should have been twins."

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