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1901







RACING RHYMES



RACING RHYMES
& OTHER VERSES

By ADAM LINDSAY GORDON
SELECTED AND ARRANGED
By T. O. GUEN



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In Memoriam

(A. L. GORDON)

AT rest ! Hard by the margin of that sea
Whose sounds are mingled with his noble
verse,

Now lies the shell that never more will house
The fine, strong spirit of my gifted friend.
Yea, he who flashed upon us suddenly,
A shining soul with syllables of fire,
Who sang the first great songs these lands can
claim

To be their own ; the one who did not seem
To know what royal place awaited him
Within the Temple of the Beautiful,
Has passed away ; and we who knew him, sit
Aghast in darkness, dumb with that great grief,
Whose stature yet we cannot comprehend :
While over yonder churchyard, hearsed with pines,
The night-wind sings its immemorial hymn,
And sobs above a newly-covered grave.

In Memoriam

The bard, the scholar, and the man who lived
That frank, that open-hearted life which keeps
The splendid fire of English chivalry
From dying out ; the one who never wronged
A fellow-man ; the faithful friend who judged
The many, anxious to be loved of him,
By what he saw, and not by what he heard,
As lesser spirits do ; the brave great soul
That never told a lie, or turned aside
To fly from danger ; he, I say, was one
Of that bright company this sin-stained world
Can ill afford to lose.

They did not know,
The hundreds who had read his sturdy verse,
And revelled over ringing major notes,
The mournful meaning of the undersong
Which runs through all he wrote, and often takes
The deep autumnal, half-prophetic tone
Of forest winds in March ; nor did they think
That on that healthy-hearted man there lay
The wild specific curse which seems to cling
For ever to the Poet's twofold life !

To Adam Lindsay Gordon, I who laid
Two years ago on Lionel Michael's grave

In Memoriam

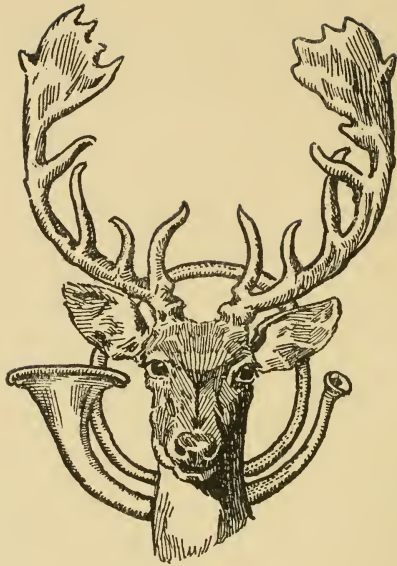
A tender leaf of my regard ; yea I,
Who culled a garland from the flowers of song
To place where Harpur sleeps ; I, left alone,
The sad disciple of a shining band
Now gone ! to Adam Lindsay Gordon's name
I dedicate these lines ; and if 't is true
That past the darkness of the grave, the soul
Becomes omniscient, then the bard may stoop
From his high seat to take the offering,
And read it with a sigh for human friends,
In human bonds, and grey with human griefs.

And having wove and proffered this poor wreath,
I stand to-day as lone as he who saw
At nightfall, through the glimmering moony mists,
The last of Arthur on the wailing mere,
And strained in vain to hear the going voice.

HENRY KENDALL.

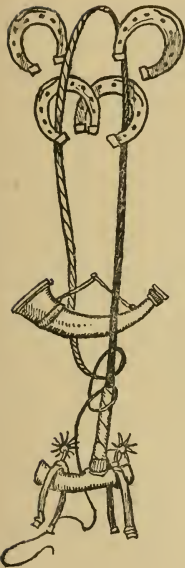
*“ Question not, but live and labour
Till yon goal be won,
Helping every feeble neighbour,
Seeking help from none ;
Life is mostly froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone —
Kindness in another’s trouble,
Courage in your own.*

*“ Courage, comrades, this is certain,
All is for the best —
There are lights behind the curtain —
Gentles, let us rest.
As the smoke-rack veers to seaward,
From ‘ the ancient clay,’
With its moral drifting leeward,
Ends the wanderer’s lay.”*



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RACING RHYMES

AND OTHER VERSES

HOW WE BEAT THE FAVOURITE

A LAY OF THE LOAMSHIRE HUNT CUP

“**A**YE, squire,” said Stevens, “they back him
at evens ;
The race is all over, bar shouting, they
say ;
The Clown ought to beat her ; Dick Neville is sweeter
Than ever — he swears he can win all the way.

Racing Rhymes

“ A gentleman rider — well, I ’m an outsider,
But if he ’s a gent who the mischief’s a jock ?
You swells mostly blunder, Dick rides for the plunder,
He rides, too, like thunder — he sits like a rock.

“ He calls ‘ hunted fairly ’ a horse that has barely
Been stripp’d for a trot within sight of the hounds,
A horse that at Warwick beat Birdlime and Yorick,
And gave Abdelkader at Aintree nine pounds.

“ They say we have no test to warrant a protest ;
Dick rides for a lord and stands in with a steward ;
The light of their faces they show him — his case is
Prejudged and his verdict already secured.

“ But none can outlast her, and few travel faster,
She strides in her work clean away from The Drag ;
You hold her and sit her, she could n’t be fitter,
Whenever you hit her she ’ll spring like a stag.

“ And p’rhaps the green jacket, at odds though
they back it,
May fall, or there ’s no knowing what may turn up.
The mare is quite ready, sit still and ride steady,
Keep cool ; and I think you may just win the
cup.”

How We Beat the Favourite

Dark-brown with tan muzzle, just stripped for the
tussle,

Stood Iseult, arching her neck to the curb,
A lean head and fiery, strong quarters and wiry,
A loin rather light, but a shoulder superb.

Some parting injunction, bestowed with great unction,
I tried to recall, but forgot like a dunce,
When Reginald Murray, full tilt on White Surrey,
Came down in a hurry to start us at once.

“Keep back in the yellow! Come up on Othello!
Hold hard on the chestnut! Turn round on The
Drag!
Keep back there on Spartan! Back you, sir, in
tartan!
So, steady there, easy,” and down went the flag.

We started, and Kerr made strong running on
Mermaid,
Through furrows that led to the first stake-and-
bound,
The crack, half extended, look'd bloodlike and
splendid,
Held wide on the right where the headland was
sound.

Racing Rhymes

I pulled hard to baffle her rush with the snaffle,
 Before her two-thirds of the field got away ;
All through the wet pasture where floods of the last
 year
 Still loitered, they clotted my crimson with clay.

The fourth fence, a wattle, floor'd Monk and Blue-
 bottle ;
 The Drag came to grief at the blackthorn and
 ditch,
The rails toppled over Redoubt and Red Rover,
 The lane stopped Lycurgus and Leicestershire
 Witch.

She passed like an arrow Kildare and Cock Sparrow,
 And Mantrap and Mermaid refused the stone
 wall ;
And Giles on The Greyling came down at the paling,
 And I was left sailing in front of them all.

I took them a burster, nor eased her nor nursed her
 Until the Black Bullfinch led into the plough,
And through the strong bramble we bored with a
 scramble —
 My cap was knocked off by the hazel-tree
 bough.

How We Beat the Favourite

Where furrows looked lighter I drew the rein
tighter —

Her dark chest all dappled with flakes of white
foam,

Her flanks mud bespattered, a weak rail she
shattered —

We landed on turf with our heads turn'd for
home.

Then crash'd a low binder, and then close behind
her

The sword to the strokes of the favourite shook ;
His rush roused her mettle, yet ever so little

She shorten'd her stride as we raced at the
brook.

She rose when I hit her. I saw the stream glitter,
A wide scarlet nostril flashed close to my knee,
Between sky and water The Clown came and caught
her,

The space that he cleared was a caution to see.

And forcing the running, discarding all cunning,

A length to the front went the rider in green ;

A long strip of stubble, and then the big double,

Two stiff flights of rails with a quickset between.

Racing Rhymes

She raced at the rasper, I felt my knees grasp her,
I found my hands give to her strain on the bit ;
She rose when The Clown did — our silks as we
 bounded
Brush'd lightly, our stirrups clash'd loud as we lit.

A rise steeply sloping, a fence with stone coping —
The last — we diverged round the base of the hill ;
His path was the nearer, his leap was the clearer,
I flogg'd up the straight, and he led sitting still.

She came to his quarter, and on still I brought her,
And up to his girth, to his breast-plate she drew ;
A short prayer from Neville just reach'd me, " The
 devil !"
He mutter'd — lock'd level the hurdles we flew.

A hum of hoarse cheering, a dense crowd careering,
All sights seen obscurely, all shouts vaguely heard ;
" The green wins ! " " The crimson ! " The multi-
 tude swims on,
And figures are blended and features are blurr'd.

" The horse is her master ! " " The green forges
 past her ! "
" The Clown will outlast her ! " " The Clown
 wins ! " " The Clown ! "

How We Beat the Favourite

The white railing races with all the white faces,
The chestnut outpaces, outstretches the brown.

On still past the gateway she strains in the straightway,
Still struggles, "The Clown by a short neck at
most,"

He swerves, the green scourges, the stand rocks
and surges,
And flashes, and verges, and flits the white post.

Aye ! so ends the tussle, — I knew the tan muzzle
Was first, though the ring-men were yelling
"Dead heat !"

A nose I could swear by, but Clarke said, "The
mare by
A short head." And that's how the favourite
was beat.

THE ROLL OF THE KETTLEDRUM

OR, THE LAY OF THE LAST CHARGER

*“ You have the Pyrrhic dance, as yet,
Where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone ?
Of two such lessons, why forget
The nobler and the manlier one ? ”* — BYRON.

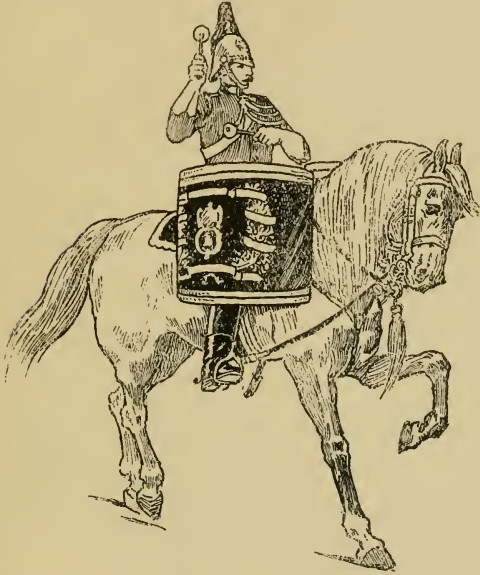
ONE line of swart profiles, and bearded lips
dressing,
One ridge of bright helmets, one crest
of fair plumes,
One streak of blue sword-blades all bared for the
fleshing,
One row of red nostrils that scent battle-fumes.

Forward ! the trumpets were sounding the charge,
The roll of the kettledrum rapidly ran,
That music, like wild-fire spreading at large,
Madden'd the war-horse as well as the man.

Forward ! still forward ! we thunder'd along,
Steadily yet, for our strength we were nursing ;
Tall Ewart, our serjeant, was humming a song,
Lance-corporal Black Will was blaspheming and
cursing.

The Roll of the Kettledrum

Open'd their volley of guns on our right,
Puffs of grey smoke, veiling gleams of red flame,
Curling to leeward, were seen on the height,
Where the batteries were posted, as onward we
came.



Spreading before us their cavalry lay,
Squadron on squadron, troop upon troop ;
We were so few, and so many were they —
Eagles wait calmly the sparrow-hawk's stoop.

Racing Rhymes

Forward ! still forward ! steed answering steed
Cheerily neigh'd while the foam flakes were
toss'd

From bridle to bridle — the top of our speed
Was gain'd, but the pride of our order was lost.

One was there, leading by nearly a rood,
Though we were racing he kept to the fore,
Still as a rock in his stirrups he stood,
High in the sunlight his sabre he bore.

Suddenly tottering, backwards he crash'd,
Loudly his helm right in front of us rung ;
Iron hoofs thunder'd, and naked steel flash'd
Over him — youngest, where many were young.

Now we were close to them, every horse striding
Madly ; — St. Luce pass'd with never a groan ; —
Sadly my master look'd round — he was riding
On the boy's right, with a line of his own.

Thursting his hand in his breast or breast-pocket,
While from his wrist the sword swung by a
chain,
Swiftly he drew out some trinket or locket,
Kiss'd it (I think) and replaced it again.



The Roll of the Kettledrum

Burst, while his fingers reclosed on the haft,
 Jarring concussion and earth shaking din,
Horse 'counter'd horse, and I reel'd, but he laughed,
 Down went his man, cloven clean to the chin !

Wedged in the midst of that struggling mass,
 After the first shock, where each his foe singled,
Little was seen save a dazzle, like glass
 In the sun, with gray smoke and black dust
 intermingled.

Here and there redden'd a pistol shot, flashing
 Through the red sparkle of steel upon steel !
Redder the spark seem'd, and louder the clashing,
 Struck from the helm by the iron-shod heel !

Over fallen riders, like wither'd leaves strewing
 Uplands in autumn, we sunder'd their ranks ;
Steeds rearing and plunging, men hacking and
 hewing,
 Fierce grinding of sword-blades, sharp goading
 of flanks.

Short was the crisis of conflict soon over —
 Being too good (I suppose) to last long —
Through them we cut, as the scythe cuts the clover,
 Batter'd and stain'd we emerged from their throng.

Racing Rhymes

Some of our saddles were emptied, of course ;
To heaven (or elsewhere) Black Will had been
carried !

Ned Sullivan mounted Will's riderless horse,
His mare being hurt, while ten seconds we tarried.

And then we reformed, and went at them once
more,
And ere they had rightly closed up the old
track,
We broke through the lane we had open'd before,
And as we went forward e'en so we came back.

Our numbers were few, and our loss far from small,
They could fight, and, besides, they were twenty
to one ;
We were clear of them all when we heard the
recall,
And thus we returned, but my tale is not done.

For the hand of my rider felt strange on my bit,
He breathed once or twice like one partially
choked,
And sway'd in his seat, then I knew he was hit ; —
He must have bled fast, for my withers were
soak'd,

The Roll of the Kettledrum

And scarcely an inch of my housing was dry ;
I slacken'd my speed, yet I never quite stopp'd,
Ere he patted my neck, said, "Old fellow, good-bye !"
And dropped off me gently, and lay where he
dropp'd !

Ah, me ! after all, they may call us dumb creatures —
I tried hard to neigh, but the sobs took my breath,
Yet I guessed, gazing down at those still, quiet
features,
He was never more happy in life than in death.

.

Two years back, at Aldershot, Elrington mentioned
My name to our colonel one field-day. He
said,
" ' Count,' ' Steeltrap,' and ' Challenger ' ought to be
pensioned ;"
" Count " died the same week, and now " Steel-
trap " is dead.

That morning our colonel was riding " Theresa,"
The filly by " Teddington " out of " Mistake ; "
His girls, pretty Alice and fair-hair'd Louisa,
Were there on the ponies he purchased from
Blake.

Racing Rhymes

I remember he pointed me out to his daughters,
Said he, "In this troop I may fairly take pride,
But I've none left like him in my officers' quarters,
Whose life-blood the mane of old 'Challenger'
dyed."

Where are they — the war-steeds who shared in our
glory,
The "Lanercost" colt, and the "Acrobat" mare,
And the Irish division, "Kate Kearney" and
"Rory,"
And rushing "Roscommon," and eager "Kildare,"

And "Freeny," a favourite once with my master,
And "Warlock," a sluggard, but honest and true,
And "Tancred," as honest as "Warlock," but
faster
And "Blacklock," and "Birdlime," and "Molly
Carew"? —

All vanish'd, what wonder! twelve summers have
passed
Since then, and my comrade lies buried this
day —
Old "Steeltrap," the kicker — and now I'm the last
Of the chargers who shared in that glorious fray.

.

The Roll of the Kettledrum

Come, "Harlequin," keep your nose out of my
manger,

You'll get your allowance, my boy, and no more ;
Snort ! "Silvertail," snort ! when you've seen as
much danger

As I have, you won't mind the rats in the straw.

.

Our gallant old colonel came limping and halting,
The day before yesterday, into my stall ;
Oh ! light to the saddle I've once seen him vaulting,
In full marching order, steel broadsword and
all.

And now his left leg than his right is made shorter
Three inches, he stoops, and his chest is unsound ;
He spoke to me gently, and patted my quarter,
I laid my ears back and look'd playfully round.

For that word kindly meant, that caress kindly
given,
I thank'd him, though dumb, but my cheerfulness
fled ;
More sadness I drew from the face of the living
Than years back I did from the face of the
dead.

Racing Rhymes

For the dead face, upturn'd, tranquil, joyous, and
fearless,

Look'd straight from green sod to blue fathomless
sky

With a smile ; but the living face, gloomy and
tearless,

And haggard and harass'd, look'd down with a sigh.

Did he think on the first time he kiss'd Lady Mary?

On the morning he wing'd Horace Greville the
beau?

On the winner he steer'd in the grand military?

On the charge that he headed twelve long years ago?

Did he think on each fresh year, of fresh grief the
herald?

On lids that are sunken, and locks that are gray?

On Alice, who bolted with Brian Fitzgerald?

On Rupert, his first-born, dishonor'd by "play"?

On Louey, his darling, who sleeps 'neath the cypress,

That shades her and one whose last breath gave
her life?

I saw those strong fingers hard over each eye press —

Oh ! the dead rest in peace when the quick toil
in strife !

.

The Roll of the Kettledrum

Scoff, man ! egotistical, proud, unobservant,
 Since I with man's grief dare to sympathise thus ;
Why scoff? — fellow-creature I am, fellow-servant
 Of God : can man fathom God's dealings with us ?

The wide gulf that parts us may yet be no wider
 Than that which parts you from some being more
 blest ;
And there may be more links 'twixt the horse and
 his rider
 Than ever your shallow philosophy guess'd.

You are proud of your power, and vain of your
 courage,
 And your blood, Anglo-Saxon, or Norman, or Celt ;
Though your gifts you extol, and our gifts you
 disparage,
 Your perils, your pleasures, your sorrows we 've
 felt.

We, too, sprung from mares of the prophet of
 Mecca,
 And nursed on the pride that was born with the
 milk,
And filtered through " Crucifix," " Beeswing,"
 " Rebecca,"
 We love sheen of scarlet and shimmer of silk.

Racing Rhymes

We, too, sprung from loins of the Ishmaelite
stallions,

We glory in daring that dies or prevails ;
From 'counter of squadrons, and crash of battalions,
To rending of blackthorns, and rattle of rails.

In all strife where courage is tested and power,
From the meet on the hill-side, the horn-blast,
the find,

The burst, the long gallop that seems to devour
The champaign, all obstacles flinging behind,

To the cheer and the clarion, the war-music
blended

With war-cry, the furious dash at the foe,
The terrible shock, the recoil, and the splendid
Bare sword, flashing blue, rising red from the
blow.

I've borne *one* through perils where many have
seen us,

No tyrant, a kind friend, a patient instructor,
And I've felt some strange element flashing between
us,

Till the saddle seem'd turn'd to a lightning
conductor.

The Roll of the Kettledrum

Did he see? could he feel through the faintness,
the numbness,

While linger'd the spirit half-loosed from the
clay,

Dumb eyes seeking his in their piteous dumbness,
Dumb quivering nostrils, too stricken to neigh?

And what then? the colours reversed, the drums
muffled,

The black nodding plumes, the dead march, and
the pall,

The stern faces, soldier-like, silent, unruffled,
The slow sacred music that floats over all!

Cross carbine and boarspear, hang bugle and
banner,

Spur, sabre, and snaffle, and helm — Is it well?

Vain 'scutcheon, false trophies of Mars and
Diana, —

Can the dead laurel sprout with the live
immortelle?

It may be, — we follow, and though we inherit

Our strength for a season, our pride for a span,

Say! vanity are they? vexation of spirit?

Not so, since they serve for a time horse and man.

Racing Rhymes

They serve for a time, and they make life worth
living,

In spite of life's troubles — 't is vain to despond ;
Oh, man ! *we* at least, *we* enjoy, with thanksgiving,
God's gifts on this earth, though we look not
beyond.

You sin, and *you* suffer, and we, too, find sorrow,
Perchance through *your* sin — yet it soon will be
o'er ;

We labour to-day, and we slumber to-morrow,
Strong horse and bold rider ! — and *who knoweth*
more ?

.

In our barrack-square shouted Drill-sergeant
M'Cluskie,
The roll of the kettledrum rapidly ran,
The colonel wheel'd short, speaking once, dry and
husky,
“ Would to God I had died with your master, old
man ! ”

THE RACE

ON the hill they are crowding together,
In the stand they are crushing for room,
Like midge-flies they swarm on the heather,
They gather like bees on the broom ;
They flutter like moths round a candle —
Stale similes, granted, what then?
I've got a stale subject to handle,
A very stale stump of a pen.

Hark ! the shuffle of feet that are many,
Of voices the many-tongued clang —
“ Has he had a bad night ? ” “ Has he any
Friends left ? ” — How I hate your turf slang ;
'T is stale to begin with, not witty,
But dull and inclined to be coarse,
But bad men can't use (more 's the pity)
Good words when they slate a good horse.

Heu ! heu ! quantus equis (that 's Latin
For “ bellows to mend ” with the weeds),
They 're off ! lights and shades ! silk and satin !
A rainbow of riders and steeds !

Racing Rhymes

And one shows in front, and another
Goes up and is seen in his place,
Sic transit (more Latin) — Oh ! bother,
Let's get to the end of the race.

.
See, they come round the last turn careering,
Already Tait's colours are struck,
And the green in the vanguard is steering,
And the red's in the rear of the ruck !
Are the stripes in the shade doom'd to lie long ?
Do the blue stars on white skies wax dim ?
Is it Tamworth or Smuggler ? 'T is Bylong
That wins — either Bylong or Tim.

As the shell through the breach that is riven
And sapp'd by the springing of mines,
As the bolt from the thunder-cloud driven,
That levels the larches and pines,
Through yon mass parti-colour'd that dashes
Goal-turn'd, clad in many-hued garb,
From rear to van, surges and flashes
The yellow and black of The Barb.

Past The Fly, falling back on the right, and
The Gull, giving way on the left,
Past Tamworth, who feels the whip smite, and
Whose sides by the rowels are cleft ;

The Race

Where Tim and the chestnut together
Still bear of the battle the brunt,
As if eight stone twelve were a feather,
He comes with a rush to the front.

Tim Whiffler may yet prove a Tartar,
And Bylong's the horse that can stay,
But Kean is in trouble, and Carter
Is hard on the satin-skin'd bay ;
And The Barb comes away unextended,
Hard held, like a second Eclipse,
While behind, the hoof-thunder is blended
With the whistling and crackling of whips.

EPILOGUE

He wins ; yes, he wins upon paper,
He has n't yet won upon turf,
And these rhymes are but moonshine and vapour,
Air-bubbles and spume from the surf.
So be it, at least they are given
Free, gratis, for just what they're worth,
And (whatever there may be in heaven),
There's little worth much upon earth.

Racing Rhymes

When, with satellites round them, the centre
Of all eyes, hard press'd by the crowd,
The pair, horse and rider, re-enter
The gate, 'mid a shout long and loud,
You may feel as you might feel, just landed
Full length on the grass from a clip
Of a vicious cross-counter, right-handed,
Or upper-cut whizzing from hip.

And that's not so bad if you're pick'd up
Discreetly, and carefully nursed ;
Loose teeth by the sponge are soon lick'd up,
And next time you *may* get home first.
Still I'm not sure you'd like it exactly
(Such tastes as a rule are acquired),
And you'll find in a nutshell this fact lie,
Bruised optics are not much admired.

Do I bore you with vulgar allusions?
Forgive me, I speak as I feel,
I've ponder'd and made my conclusions —
As the mill grinds the corn to the meal ;
So man striving boldly but kindly,
Ground piecemeal in Destiny's mill,
At his best, taking punishment kindly,
Is only a chopping-block still.

The Race

Are we wise? Our abstruse calculations
Are based on experience long ;
Are we sanguine? Our high expectations
Are founded on hope that is strong ;
Thus we build an air-castle that crumbles
And drifts, till no traces remain,
And the fool builds again while he grumbles,
And the wise one laughs, building again.

“ How came they to pass, these rash blunders,
These false steps so hard to defend? ”
Our friend puts the question and wonders ;
We laugh and reply, “ Ah ! my friend,
Could you trace the first stride falsely taken,
The distance misjudged, where or how,
When you pick'd yourself up, stunn'd and shaken,
At the fence 'twixt the turf and the plough? ”

In the jar of the panel rebounding !
In the crash of the splintering wood !
In the ears to the earth shock resounding !
In the eyes flashing fire and blood !
In the quarters above you revolving !
In the sods underneath heaving high !
There was little to aid you in solving
Such questions — the how or the why.

Racing Rhymes

And Destiny, steadfast in trifles,
Is steadfast for better or worse
In great things, it crushes and stifles,
And swallows the hopes that we nurse.
Men wiser than we are may wonder,
When the future they cling to so fast,
To the roll of that Destiny's thunder,
Goes down with the wrecks of the past.

The past ! the dead past ! that has swallow'd
All the honey of life and the milk,
Brighter dreams than mere pastimes we 've follow'd,
Better things than our scarlet or silk ;
Aye, and worse things — that past is it really
Dead to us who again and again
Feel sharply, hear plainly, see clearly
Past days with their joy and their pain ?

Like corpses embalm'd and unburied
They lie, and in spite of our will,
Our souls, on the wings of thought carried,
Revisit their sepulchres still ;
Down the channels of mystery gliding,
They conjure strange tales, rarely read,
Of the priests of dead Pharaohs presiding
At mystical feasts of the dead.

The Race

Weird pictures arise, quaint devices,
Rude emblems, baked funeral meats,
Strong incense, rare wines, and rich spices,
The ashes, the shrouds, and the sheets ;
Does our thralldom fall short of completeness
For the magic of a charnel-house charm,
And the flavour of a poisonous sweetness,
And the odour of a poisonous balm ?

And the links of the past — but, no matter,
For I'm getting beyond you, I guess,
And you'll call me "as mad as a hatter"
If my thoughts I too freely express ;
I subjoin a quotation, pray learn it,
And with the aid of your lexicon tell us
The meaning thereof, "*Res discernit
Sapiens, quas confundit asellus.*"

Already green hillocks are swelling,
And combing white locks on the bar,
Where a dull, droning murmur is telling
Of winds that have gather'd afar ;
Thus we know not the day, nor the morrow,
Nor yet what the night may bring forth,
Nor the storm, nor the sleep, nor the sorrow,
Nor the strife, nor the rest, nor the wrath.

Racing Rhymes

Yet the skies are still tranquil and starlit,
The sun 'twixt the wave and the west
Dies in purple, and crimson, and scarlet,
And gold ; let us hope for the best,
Since again from the earth his effulgence
The darkness and damp-dews shall wipe,
Kind reader, extend your indulgence
To this the last lay of "The Pipe."

WOLF AND HOUND

*The hills like giants at a hunting lay,
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay.*

BROWNING.

YOU 'LL take my tale with a little salt,
But it needs none, nevertheless ;
I was foil'd completely, fairly at fault,
Dishearten'd, too, I confess.

At the splitters' tent I had seen the track
Of horse-hoofs fresh on the sward,
And though Darby Lynch and Donovan Jack
(Who could swear through a ten-inch board)
Solemnly swore he had not been there,
I was just as sure that they lied,
For to Darby all that is foul was fair,
And Jack for his life was tried.

We had run him for seven miles and more
As hard as our nags could split ;
At the start they were all too weary and sore,
And his was quite fresh and fit.

Racing Rhymes

Young Marsden's pony had had enough
On the plain, where the chase was hot ;
We breasted the swell of the Bittern's Bluff,
And Mark could n't raise a trot ;
When the sea, like a splendid silver shield,
To the south-west suddenly lay ;
On the brow of the Beetle the chestnut reel'd,
And I bid good-bye to M'Crea —
And I was alone when the mare fell lame,
With a pointed flint in her shoe,
On the Stony Flats : I had lost the game,
And what was a man to do ?

I turned away with no fixed intent
And headed for Hawthorndell ;
I could neither eat in the splitters' tent
Nor drink at the splitters' well ;
I knew that they gloried in my mishap,
And I cursed them between my teeth —
A blood-red sunset through Brayton's Gap
Flung a lurid fire on the heath.

Could I reach the Dell? I had little reck,
And with scarce a choice of my own
I threw the reins on Miladi's neck —
I had freed her foot from the stone.

Wolf and Hound

That season most of the swamps were dry,
And after so hard a burst
In the sultry noon of so hot a sky
She was keen to appease her thirst —
Or by instinct urged or impelled by fate —
I care not to solve these things —
Certain it is that she took me straight
To the Warrigal water springs.

I can shut my eyes and recall the ground
As though it were yesterday —
With a shelf of the low, grey rocks girt round,
The springs in their basin lay ;
Woods to the east and wolds to the north
In the sundown sullenly bloom'd ;
Dead black on a curtain of crimson cloth
Large peaks to the westward loomed.
I led Miladi through weed and sedge,
She leisurely drank her fill ;
There was something close to the water's edge,
And my heart with one leap stood still,

For a horse's shoe and a rider's boot
Had left clean prints on the clay ;
Some one had watered his beast on foot.
'T was he — he had gone. Which way?

Racing Rhymes

Then the mouth of the cavern faced me fair,
As I turned and fronted the rocks ;
So, at last, I had pressed the wolf to his lair,
I had run to his earth the fox.

I thought so. Perhaps he was resting. Perhaps
He was waiting, watching for me.
I examined all my revolver caps,
I hitched my mare to a tree —
I had sworn to have him, alive or dead,
And to give him a chance was loth ;
He knew his life had been forfeited —
He had even heard of my oath.
In my stocking'd soles to the shelf I crept,
I crawl'd safe into the cave —
All silent — if he was there he slept
Not there. All dark as the grave.

Through the crack I could hear the leaden hiss !
See the livid face through the flame !
How strange it seems that a man should miss
When his life depends on his aim !
There could n't have been a better light
For him, nor a worse for me.
We were coop'd up, caged like beasts for a fight,
And dumb as dumb beasts were we.

Wolf and Hound

Flash ! flash ! bang ! bang ! and we blazed away,
And the grey roof reddened and rang ;
Flash ! flash ! and I felt his bullet flay
The tip of my ear. Flash ! bang !
Bang ! flash ! and my pistol arm fell broke ;
I struck with my left hand then —
Struck at a corpse through a cloud of smoke —
I had shot him dead in his den !

THE SICK STOCKRIDER

HOLD hard, Ned ! Lift me down once more,
and lay me in the shade.
Old man, you 've had your work cut out
to guide

Both horses, and to hold me in the saddle when I
sway'd,

All through the hot, slow, sleepy, silent ride.
The dawn at "Moorabinda" was a mist rack dull
and dense,

The sunrise was a sullen, sluggish lamp ;
I was dozing in the gateway at Arbutnot's bound'ry
fence,

I was dreaming on the Limestone cattle camp.
We crossed the creek at Carricksford, and sharply
through the haze,

And suddenly the sun shot flaming forth ;
To southward lay "Katâwa," with the sandpeaks all
ablaze,

And the flush'd fields of Glen Lomond lay to
north.

The Sick Stockrider

Now westward winds the bridle path that leads to
Lindisfarm,

And yonder looms the double-headed Bluff;
From the far side of the first hill, when the skies are
clear and calm,

You can see Sylvester's woolshed fair enough.
Five miles we used to call it from our homestead to
the place

Where the big tree spans the roadway like an
arch;

'T was here we ran the dingo down that gave us
such a chase

Eight years ago — or was it nine? — last March.

'T was merry in the glowing morn, among the gleam-
ing grass,

To wander as we 've wandered many a mile,
And blow the cool tobacco cloud, and watch the
white wreaths pass,

Sitting loosely in the saddle all the while.

'T was merry 'mid the black woods, when we spied
the station roofs,

To wheel the wild scrub cattle at the yard,
With a running fire of stockwhips and a fiery run of
hoofs;

Oh! the hardest day was never then too hard!

Racing Rhymes

Aye ! we had a glorious gallop after " Starlight " and
his gang,

When they bolted from Sylvester's on the flat ;
How the sun-dried reed-beds crackled, how the
flint-strewn ranges rang

To the strokes of " Mountaineer " and " Acrobat."'
Hard behind them in the timber, harder still across
the heath,

Close beside them through the tea-tree scrub we
dash'd ;

And the golden-tinted fern leaves, how they rustled
underneath !

And the honeysuckle osiers, how they crash'd !

We led the hunt throughout, Ned, on the chestnut
and the grey,

And the troopers were three hundred yards behind,
While we emptied our six-shooters on the bush-
rangers at bay,

In the creek with stunted box-tree for a blind !
There you grappled with the leader, man to man
and horse to horse,

And you roll'd together when the chestnut rear'd ;
He blazed away and missed you in that shallow
watercourse —

A narrow shave — his powder singed your beard !

The Sick Stockrider

In these hours when life is ebbing, how those days
when life was young

Come back to us ; how clearly I recall
Even the yarns Jack Hall invented, and the songs
Jem Roper sung ;

And where are now Jem Roper and Jack Hall?
Aye ! nearly all our comrades of the old colonial
school,

Our ancient boon companions, Ned, are gone ;
Hard livers for the most part, somewhat reckless as
a rule,

It seems that you and I are left alone.

There was Hughes, who got in trouble through that
business with the cards,

It matters little what became of him ;
But a steer ripp'd up MacPherson in the Cooraminta
yards,

And Sullivan was drown'd at Sink-or-swim ;
And Mostyn — poor Frank Mostyn — died at last a
fearful wreck,

In “ the horrors,” at the Upper Wandinong,
And Carisbrooke, the rider, at the Horsefall broke
his neck,

Faith ! the wonder was he saved his neck so
long !

Racing Rhymes

Ah! those days and nights we squandered at the
Logans' in the glen —

The Logans, man and wife, have long been dead.
Elsie's tallest girl seems taller than your little Elsie
then ;
And Ethel is a woman grown and wed.

I've had my share of pastime, and I've done my
share of toil,
And life is short — the longest life a span ;
I care not now to tarry for the corn or for the oil,
Or for the wine that maketh glad the heart of
man.

For good undone and gifts misspent and resolutions
vain,
'Tis somewhat late to trouble. This I know —
I should live the same life over, if I had to live
again ;
And the chances are I go where most men go.

The deep blue skies wax dusky, and the tall green
trees grow dim,
The sward beneath me seems to heave and fall ;
And sickly, smoky shadows through the sleepy sun-
light swim,
And on the very sun's face weave their pall.

The Sick Stockrider

Let me slumber in the hollow where the wattle
blossoms wave,
With never stone or rail to fence my bed ;
Should the sturdy station children pull the bush
flowers on my grave,
I may chance to hear them romping overhead.



BANKER'S DREAM

OF chases and courses dogs dream, so do
horses —

Last night I was dozing and dreaming,
The crowd and the bustle were there, and the rustle
Of the silk in the autumn sky gleaming.

The stand throng'd with faces, the broadcloth and
laces,

The booths, and the tents, and the cars,
The bookmakers' jargon, for odds making bargain,
The nasty stale smell of cigars.

We formed into line, 'neath the merry sunshine,
Near the logs at the end of the railing ;
"Are you ready, boys? Go!" cried the starter,
and low
Sank the flag, and away we went sailing.

Banker's Dream

In the van of the battle we heard the stones rattle,
Some slogging was done, but no slaughter,
A shout from the stand, and the whole of our band
Skimm'd merrily over the water.



Two fences we clear'd, and the roadway we
near'd,
When three of our troop came to trouble ;
Like a bird on the wing, or a stone from a sling,
Flew Cadger, first over the double.

Racing Rhymes

And Western was there, head and tail in the air,
And Pondon was there, too — what noodle
Could so name a horse? I should feel some remorse
If I gave such a name to a poodle.

In and out of the lane, to the racecourse again,
Craig's pony was first, I was third,
And Ingleside lit in my tracks, with the bit
In his teeth, and came up "like a bird."

In the van of the battle we heard the rails rattle,
Says he, "Though I don't care for shunning
My share of the raps, I shall look out for gaps,
When the light weight's away with the running."

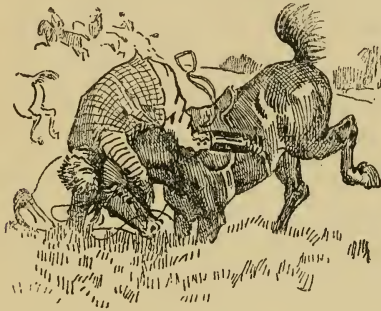
At the fence just ahead, the outsider still led,
The chestnut play'd follow my leader,
Oh! the devil a gap, he went into it slap,
And he and his jock took a header.

Says Ingleside, "Mate, should the pony go straight,
You've no time to stop or turn restive ;"
Says I, "Who means to stop? I shall go till I
drop ;"
Says he, "Go it, old cuss, gay and festive."

Banker's Dream

The fence stiff and tall, just beyond the log wall,
We cross'd, and the walls, and the water, —
I took off too near, a small made fence to clear,
And just touch'd the grass with my snorter.

At the next post and rail up went Western's bang
tail,
And down (by the very same token)



To earth went his nose, for the panel he chose
Stood firm and refused to be broken.

I dreamt some one said that the bay would have made
The race safe, if he'd *stood* a while longer ;
If he had, — but, like if, there the panel stands stiff —
He stood, but the panel stood stronger.

Racing Rhymes

In and out of the road, with a clear lead still show'd
The violet fluted with amber ;
Says Johnson, " Old man, catch him now if you can,
'T is the second time round, you 'll remember."



At the road once again, pulling hard on the rein,
Craig's pony popp'd in and popp'd out ;
I followed like smoke, and the pace was no joke,
For his friends were beginning to shout.

And Ingleside came to my side, strong and game,
And once he appear'd to outstrip me,
But I felt the steel gore, and I shot to the fore,
Only Cadger seem'd likely to whip me.

In the van of the battle I heard the logs rattle,
His stroke never seem'd to diminish,
And thrice I drew near him, and thrice he drew clear,
For the weight served him well at the finish.

Banker's Dream

Ha ! Cadger goes down, see, he stands on his crown —
Those rails take a power of clouting —
A long sliding blunder — he 's up — well, I wonder
If now it 's all over but shouting.

All loosely he 's striding, the amateur 's riding
All loosely, some reverie lock'd in
Of a "vision in smoke," or a "wayfaring bloke,"
His poetical rubbish concocting.

Now comes from afar the faint cry, "Here they are,"
"The violet winning with ease,"
"Fred goes up like a shot," "Does he catch him or
not?"
"Level money, I 'll take the cerise."

To his haunches I spring, and my muzzle I bring
To his flank, to his girth, to his shoulder ;
Through the shouting and yelling I hear my name
swelling,
The hearts of my backers grow bolder.

Neck and neck ! head and head ! staring eye ! nos-
tril spread !
Girth and stifle laid close to the ground !
Stride for stride ! stroke for stroke ! through one
hurdle we 've broke !
On the splinters we 've lit with one bound.

Racing Rhymes

And "Banker for choice" is the cry, and one voice
Screams, "Six to four once upon Banker ;"
"Banker wins," "Banker's beat," "Cadger wins,"
"A dead heat" —
"Ah ! there goes Fred's whalebone a flanker."

Springs the whip with a crack ! nine stone ten on
his back,
Fit and light he can race like the devil ;
I draw past him — 't is vain ; he draws past me again,
Springs the whip ! and again we are level.

Steel and cord do their worst, now my head struggles
first !
That tug my last spurt has expended —
Nose to nose ! lip to lip ! from the sound of the
whip
He strains to the utmost extended.

How they swim through the air, as we roll to the
chair,
Stand, faces, and railings flit past ;
Now I spring . . .
from my lair, with a snort and a stare,
Rous'd by Fred with my supper at last.

THE FIELDS OF COLERAINE

ON the fields of Col'raine there 'll be labour
in vain
Before the Great Western is ended,
The nags will have toil'd, and the silks will be soil'd,
And the rails will require to be mended.

For the gullies are deep, and the uplands are steep,
And the mud will of purls be the token,
And the tough stringey-bark, that invites us to lark,
With impunity may not be broken.

Though Ballarat 's fast, and they say he can last,
And that may be granted hereafter,
Yet the judge 's decision to the Border division
Will bring neither shouting nor laughter.

And Blueskin, I 've heard that he goes like a bird,
And I 'm told that to back him would pay me ;
He 's a good bit of stuff, but not quite good enough,
“ *Non licuit credere famæ.*”

Racing Rhymes

Alfred ought to be there, we all of us swear
By the blood of King Alfred, his sire ;
He 's not the real jam, by the blood of his dam,
So I sha'n't put him down as a flyer.

Now, Hynam, my boy, I wish you great joy,
I know that when fresh you can jump, sir ;
But you 'll scarce be in clover when you 're ridden
all over,
And punish'd from shoulder to rump, sir.

Archer goes like a shot, they can put on their pot,
And boil it to cover expenses ;
Their pot will boil over, the run of his Dover
He 'll never earn over big fences.

There 's a horse in the race, with a blaze on his face,
And we know he can gallop a docker ;
He 's proved himself stout, of his speed there 's no
doubt,
And his jumping 's according to Cocker.

When Hynam 's outstripp'd, and when Alfred is
whipp'd,
To keep him in sight of the leaders,
While Blueskin runs true, but his backers looked
blue,
For his rider 's at work with the bleeders ;

The Fields of Coleraine

When his carcass of beef brings "the bullock" to
grief,

And the rush of the tartan is ended ;

When Archer's in trouble — who's that pulling
double,

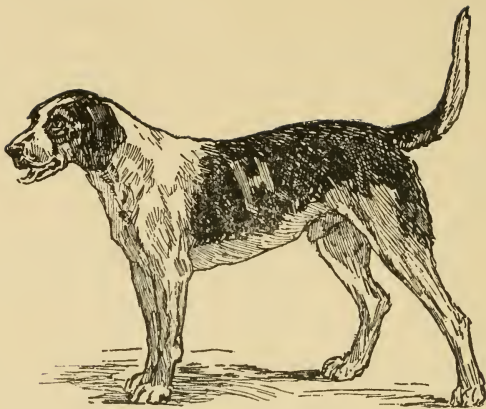
And taking his leaps unextended ?

He wins all the way, and the rest — sweet, they say,

Is the smell of the newly-turn'd plough, friend ;

But you smell it too close when it stops eyes and
nose,

And you can't tell your horse from your cow,
friend.



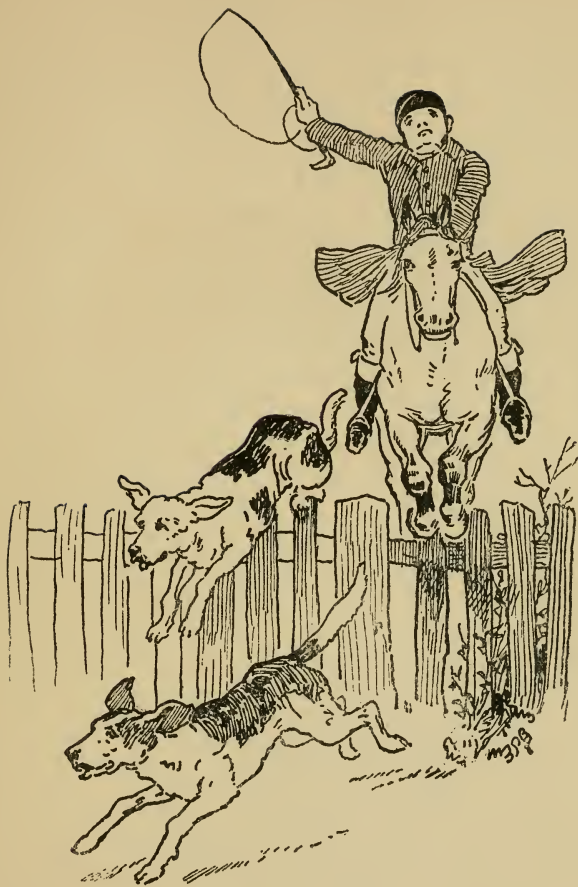
A HUNTING SONG

HERE 'S a health to every sportsman, be he
stableman or lord,
If his heart be true, I care not what his
pocket may afford ;

And may he ever pleasantly each gallant sport
pursue,

If he takes his liquor fairly, and his fences fairly, too.

He cares not for the bubbles of Fortune's fickle tide,
Who like Bendigo can battle, and like Olliver can
ride.



A Hunting Song

He laughs at those who caution, at those who chide
he 'll frown,

As he clears a five-foot paling, or he knocks a peeler
down.

The dull, cold world may blame us, boys ! but what
care we the while,

If coral lips will cheer us, and bright eyes on us
smile ?

For beauty's fond caresses can most tenderly repay
The weariness and trouble of many an anxious day.

Then fill your glass, and drain it, too, with all your
heart and soul,

To the best of sports — The Fox-hunt, The Fair
Ones, and The Bowl,

To a stout heart in adversity through every ill to
steer,

And when fortune smiles a score of friends like
those around us here.





BY FLOOD AND FIELD

[A LEGEND OF THE COTTSWOLD]

*“ They have saddled a hundred milk-white steeds,
They have bridled a hundred black.”*

OLD BALLAD.

*“ He turned in his saddle, now follow who dare.
I ride for my country, quoth. . . .”*

LAWRENCE.

I REMEMBER the lowering wintry morn,
And the mist on the Cotswold hills,
Where I once heard the blast of the hunts-
man’s horn,
Not far from the seven rills.
Jack Esdale was there, and Hugh St. Clair,
Bob Chapman, and Andrew Kerr,
And big George Griffiths on Devil-May-Care,
And — black Tom Oliver.
And one who rode on a dark brown steed,
Clean jointed, sinewy, spare,
With the lean game head of the Blacklock breed,

By Flood and Field

And the resolute eye that loves the lead,
And the quarters massive and square —
A tower of strength, with a promise of speed
(There was Celtic blood in the pair).



I remember how merry a start we got,
When the red fox broke from the gorse,
In a country so deep, with a scent so hot,
That the hound could outpace the horse ;
I remember how few in the front rank show'd,
How endless appeared the tail,
On the brown hill side, where we cross'd the road,
And headed for the vale.

Racing Rhymes

The dark brown steed on the left was there,
On the right was a dappled grey,
And between the pair, on a chestnut mare,
The duffer who writes this lay.
What business had "this child" there to ride?
But little or none at all;
Yet I held my own for a while in "the pride
That goeth before a fall."
Though rashness can hope for but one result,
We are heedless when fate draws nigh us,
And the maxim holds good, "*Quem perdere vult
Deus, dementat prius.*"

The right hand man to the left hand said,
As down in the vale we went,
"Harden your heart like a millstone, Ned,
And set your face as flint;
Solid and tall is the rasping wall
That stretches before us yonder;
You must have it at speed or not at all,
'T were better to halt than to ponder,
For the stream runs wide on the take-off side,
And washes the clay bank under;
Here goes for a pull, 't is a madman's ride,
And a broken neck if you blunder."

By Flood and Field

No word in reply his comrade spoke,
Nor waver'd, nor once looked round,
But I saw him shorten his horse's stroke
As we splash'd through the marshy ground ;
I remember the laugh that all the while
On his quiet features play'd : —
So he rode to his death, with that careless smile,
In the van of the " Light Brigade ; "

So stricken by Russian grape, the cheer
Rang out, while he toppled back,
From the shattered lungs as merry and clear
As it did when it roused the pack.
Let never a tear his memory stain,
Give his ashes never a sigh,
One of many who perished, NOT IN VAIN,
AS A TYPE OF OUR CHIVALRY —

I remember one thrust he gave to his hat,
And two to the flanks of the brown,
And still as a statue of old he sat,
And he shot to the front, hands down ;
I remember the snort and the stag-like bound
Of the steed six lengths to the fore,
And the laugh of the rider, while landing sound,
He turned in his saddle and glanced around ;
I remember — but little more,

Racing Rhymes

Save a bird's-eye gleam of the dashing stream,
A jarring thud on the wall,
A shock and the blank of a nightmare's dream —
I was down with a stunning fall.



IN UTRUMQUE PARATUS

[A LOGICAL DISCUSSION]

*“ Then hey for boot and horse, lad !
And round the world away !
Young blood will have its course, lad !
And every dog his day ! ”*

C. KINGSLEY.

THERE 'S a formula which the west coun-
try clowns
Once used, ere their blows fell thick,
At the fairs on the Devon and Cornwall downs,
In their bouts with the single-stick.
You may read a moral, not far amiss,
If you care to moralise,
In the crossing guard, where the ash-plants kiss,
To the words “ God spare our eyes.”
No game was ever yet worth a rap
For a rational man to play,
Into which no accident, no mishap,
Could possibly find its way.

If you hold the willow, a shooter from Wills
May transform you into a hopper,
And the football meadow is rife with spills,
If you feel disposed for a cropper ;

Racing Rhymes

In a rattling gallop with hound and horse
You may chance to reverse the medal
On the sward, with the saddle your loins
across,
And your hunter's loins on the saddle ;
In the stubbles you'll find it hard to frame .
A remonstrance firm, yet civil,
When oft as "our mutual friend" takes aim,
Long odds may be laid on the rising game,
And against your gaiters level ;
There's danger even where fish are caught
To those who a wetting fear ;
For what's worth having must aye be bought,
And sport's like life and life's like sport —
"It ain't all skittles and beer."

The honey bag lies close to the sting,
The rose is fenced by the thorn,
Shall we leave to others their gathering,
And turn from clustering fruits that cling
To the garden wall in scorn?
Albeit those purple grapes hang high,
Like the fox in the ancient tale,
Let us pause and try, ere we pass them by,
Though we, like the fox, may fail.

In Utrumque Paratus

All hurry is worse than useless ; think

On the adage, “ ’T is pace that kills ; ”

Shun bad tobacco, avoid strong drink,

Abstain from Holloway’s Pills ;

Wear woollen socks, they ’re the best you ’ll
find ;

Beware how you leave off flannel ;

And, whatever you do, don’t change your
mind

When once you have picked your panel ;

With a bank of cloud in the south south-east,

Stand ready to shorten sail ;

Fight shy of a corporation feast ;

Don’t trust to a martingale ;

Keep your powder dry, and shut one eye,

Not both, when you touch your trigger ;

Don’t stop with your head too frequently

(This advice ain’t meant for a nigger) ;

Look before you leap, if you like, but if

You mean leaping, don’t look long,

Or the weakest place will soon grow stiff,

And the strongest doubly strong ;

As far as you can, to every man,

Let your aid be freely given,

And hit out straight, ’t is your shortest plan,

When against the ropes you ’re driven.

Racing Rhymes

Mere pluck, though not in the least sublime,
Is wiser than blank dismay,
Since "No sparrow can fall before its time,"
And we're valued higher than they ;
So hope for the best and leave the rest
In charge of a stronger hand,
Like the honest boors in the far-off west,
With the formula terse and grand.

They were men for the most part rough and rude,
Dull and illiterate,
But they nursed no quarrel, they cherished no feud,
They were strangers to spite and hate ;
In a kindly spirit they took their stand,
That brothers and sons might learn
How a man should uphold the sports of his land,
And strike his best with a strong right hand,
And take his strokes in return.
" 'T was a barbarous practice," the Quaker cries,
" 'T is a thing of the past, thank Heaven " —
Keep your thanks till the combative instinct dies
With the taint of the olden leaven !
Yes, the times are changed, for better or worse,
The prayer that no harm befall,
Has given its place to a drunken curse,
And the manly game to a brawl.

In Utrumque Paratus

Our burdens are heavy, our natures weak,
Some pastime devoid of harm
May we look for? "Puritan elder, speak!"
"Yea, friend, peradventure thou mayest seek
Recreation singing a psalm."
If I did, your visage so grim and stern
Would relax in a ghastly smile,
For of music I never one note could learn,
And my feeble minstrelsy would turn
Your chant to discord vile.

Tho' the Philistine's mail could naught avail,
Nor the spear like a weaver's beam,
There are episodes yet in the Psalmist's tale,
To obliterate which his poems fail,
Which his exploits fail to redeem.
Can the Hittite's wrongs forgotten be?
Does HE warble "*Non nobis Domine,*"
With his monarch in blissful concert, free
From all malice to flesh inherent;
Zeruiah's offspring, who served so well,
Yet between the horns of the altar fell —
Does HIS voice the "*Quid gloriaris*" swell,
Or the "*Quare fremuerunt?*"
It may well be thus where DAVID sings,

Racing Rhymes

And Uriah joins in the chorus,
But while earth to earthy matters clings,
Neither you nor the bravest of Judah's kings
As a pattern can stand before us.



LEX TALIONIS

[A MORAL DISCOURSE]

TO beasts of the field, and fowls of the air,
And fish of the sea alike,
Man's hand is ever slow to spare,
And ever ready to strike ;
With a license to kill, and to work our will,
In season by land or by water,
To our heart's content we may take our fill
Of the joys we derive from slaughter.

And few, I reckon, our rights gainsay
In this world of rapine and wrong,
Where the weak and the timid seem lawful prey
For the resolute and the strong ;
Fins, furs, and feathers, they are and were
For our use and pleasure created,
We can shoot, and hunt, and angle, and snare,
Unquestioned, if not unsated.

Racing Rhymes

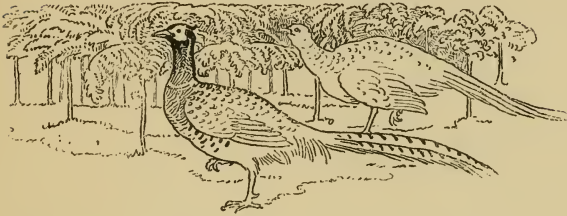
I have neither the will nor the right to blame,
Yet to many (though not to all)
The sweets of destruction are somewhat tame,
When no personal risks befall ;



Our victims suffer but little, we trust
(Mere guess-work and blank enigma) —
If they suffer at all, our field sports must
Of cruelty bear the stigma.
Shall we, hard-hearted to their fates, thus
Soft-hearted shrink from our own,
When the measure we mete is meted to us,
When we reap as we 've always sown?

Lex Talionis

Shall we who for pastime have squandered life,
Who are styled "the Lords of Creation,"
Recoil from our chance of more equal strife,
And our risk of retaliation?



Though short is the dying pheasant's pain,
Scant pity you well may spare,
And the partridge slain is a triumph vain,
And a risk that a child may dare ;
You feel, when you lower the smoking gun,
Some ruth for yon slaughtered hare,
And hit or miss, in your selfish fun
The widgeon has little share.

But you've no remorseful qualms or pangs
When you kneel by the grizzly's lair,
On that conical bullet your sole chance hangs,
'T is the weak one's advantage fair,
And the shaggy giant's terrific fangs
Are ready to crush and tear ;

Racing Rhymes

Should you miss, one vision of home and friends,
Five words of unfinish'd prayer,
Three savage knife stabs, so your sport ends
In the worrying grapple that chokes and rends ;
Rare sport, at least, for the bear.

Short shrift ! sharp fate ! dark doom to dree !
Hard struggle, though quickly ending !
At home or abroad, by land or sea,
In peace or war, sore trials must be,
And worse may happen to you or to me,
For none are secure, and none can flee
From a destiny impending.

Ah ! friend, did you think when the *London* sank,
Timber by timber, plank by plank,
In a cauldron of boiling surf,
How alone at least, with never a flinch,
In a rally contested inch by inch,
You could fall on the trampled turf?
When a livid wall of the sea leaps high,
In the lurid light of a leaden sky,
And bursts on the quarter railing ;
While the howling storm-gust seems to vie
With the crash of splintered beams that fly,
Yet fails too oft to smother the cry
Of women and children wailing?

Lex Talionis

Then those who listen in sinking ships,
To despairing sobs from their lov'd one's lips,
Where the green wave thus slowly shatters,
May long for the crescent-claw that rips
The bison into ribbons and strips,
And tears the strong elk to tatters.
Oh ! Sunderings short of body and breath !
Oh ! " battle and murder and sudden death ! "
Against which the Liturgy preaches ;
By the will of a just, yet a merciful Power,
Less bitter, perchance, in the mystic hour,
When the wings of the shadowy angel lower,
Than man in his blindness teaches !



FINIS EXOPTATUS

[A METAPHYSICAL SONG]

*“ There’s something in this world amiss
Shall be unriddled by and by.”*

TENNYSON.

BOOT and saddle, see, the slanting
Rays begin to fall,
Flinging lights and colours flaunting
Through the shadows tall.

Onward ! onward ! must we travel ?
When will come the goal ?
Riddle I may not unravel,
Cease to vex my soul.

Harshly break those peals of laughter
From the jays aloft,
Can we guess what they cry after ?
We have heard them oft ;
Perhaps some strain of rude thanksgiving
Mingles in their song,
Are they glad that they are living ?
Are they right or wrong ?

Finis Exoptatus

Right, 't is joy that makes them call so,
 Why should they be sad?
Certes ! we are living also,
 Shall not we be glad?
Onward ! onward ! must we travel?
 Is the goal more near?
Riddle we may not unravel,
 Why so dark and drear?

Yon small bird his hymn outpouring
 On the branch close by,
Recks not for the kestrel soaring
 In the nether sky,
Though the hawk with wings extended
 Poises over head,
Motionless as though suspended
 By a viewless thread.
See, he stoops, nay, shooting forward
 With the arrow's flight,
Swift and straight away to nor'ward
 Sails he out of sight.
Onward ! onward ! thus we travel,
 Comes the goal more nigh?
Riddle we may not unravel,
 Who shall make reply?

Racing Rhymes

Eastward ! in the pink horizon,
 Fleecy hillocks shame
This dim range dull earth that lies on,
 Tinged with rosy flame.
Westward ! as a stricken giant
 Stoops his bloody crest,
And though vanquish'd, frowns defiant,
 Sinks the sun to rest.
Distant, yet approaching quickly,
 From the shades that lurk,
Like a black pall gathers thickly,
 Night, when none may work.
Soon our restless occupation
 Shall have ceas'd to be ;
Units ! in God's vast creation,
 Ciphers ! what are we ?
Onward ! onward ! oh ! faint-hearted ;
 Nearer and more near
Has the goal drawn since we started ;
 Be of better cheer.

Preacher ! all forbearance ask, for
 All are worthless found,
Man must aye take man to task for
 Faults while earth goes round.

Finis Exoptatus

On this dank soil thistles muster,
Thorns are broadcast sown ;
Seek not figs where thistles cluster,
Grapes where thorns have grown.

Sun and rain and dew from heaven,
Light and shade and air,
Heat and moisture freely given,
Thorns and thistles share.
Vegetation rank and rotten
Feels the cheering ray ;
Not uncared for, unforgotten,
We, too, have our day.

Unforgotten ! though we cumber
Earth, we work His will.
Shall we sleep through night's long slumber
Unforgotten still ?
Onward ! onward ! toiling ever,
Weary steps and slow,
Doubting oft, despairing never,
To the goal we go !

CUI BONO

OH! wind that whistles o'er thorns and
 thistles,
 Of this fruitful earth like a goblin elf;
Why should he labour to help his neighbour
 Who feels too reckless to help himself?
The wail of the breeze in the bending trees
 Is something between a laugh and a groan ;
And the hollow roar of the surf on the shore
 Is a dull, discordant monotone ;
I wish I could guess what sense they express,
 There 's a meaning, doubtless, in every sound,
Yet no one can tell, and it may be as well —
 Whom would it profit? — The world goes round !

On this earth so rough, we know quite enough,
 And, I sometimes fancy, a little too much ;
The sage may be wiser than clown or than kaiser,
 Is he more to be envied for being such?
Neither more nor less, in his idleness
 The sage is doom'd to vexation sure ;
The kaiser may rule, but the slippery stool,
 That he calls his throne, is no sinecure ;

Cui Bono

And as for the clown, you may give him a crown,
 Maybe he'll thank you, and maybe not,
And before you can wink, he may spend it in
 drink —

 To whom does it profit? — We ripe and rot !

Yet under the sun much work is done
 By clown and kaiser, by serf and sage ;
All sow and some reap, and few gather the heap
 Of the garner'd grain of a by-gone age.
By sea or by soil man is bound to toil,
 And the dreamer, waiting for time and tide,
For awhile may shirk his share of the work,
 But he grows with his dream dissatisfied ;
He may climb to the edge of the beetling ledge,
 Where the loose crag topples and well-nigh reels
'Neath the lashing gale, but the tonic will fail —
 What does it profit? — Wheels within wheels !

Aye ! work we must, or with idlers rust,
 And eat we must our bodies to nurse ;
Some folk grow fatter — what does it matter?
 I'm blest if I do — quite the reverse ;
'T is a weary round to which we are bound,
 The same thing over and over again ;
Much toil and trouble, and a glittering bubble,
 That rises and bursts, is the best we gain ;

Racing Rhymes

And we murmur, and yet 't is certain we get

What good we deserve — can we hope for
more? —

They are roaring, those waves, in their echoing
caves —

To whom do they profit? — Let them roar!

WORMWOOD AND NIGHTSHADE

THE troubles of life are many,
The pleasures of life are few ;
When we sat in the sunlight, Annie,
I dreamt that the skies were blue —
When we sat in the sunlight, Annie,
I dreamt that the earth was green ;
There is little colour, if any,
'Neath the sunlight now to be seen.

Then the rays of the sunset glinted
Through the blackwood's emerald bough
On an emerald sward, rose-tinted,
And spangled, and gemm'd ; — and now
The rays of the sunset redden
With a sullen and lurid frown,
From the skies that are dark and leaden,
To earth that is dusk and brown.

Racing Rhymes

To right and to left extended,
The uplands are blank and drear,
And their neutral tints are blended
With the dead leaves sombre and sere ;
The cold, gray mist from the still side
Of the lake creeps sluggish and sure,
Bare and bleak is the hill-side,
Barren and bleak the moor.

Bright hues and shapes intertwined,
Fair forms and rich colours ; — now
They have flown — if e'er they existed —
It matters not why or how.
It matters not where or when, dear,
They have flown, the blue and the green ;
I thought on what might be then, dear,
Now I think on what might have been.

What might have been ! — words of folly ;
What might be ! — speech for a fool ;
With mistletoe round me, and holly,
Scarlet and green, at Yule.
With the elm in the place of the wattle,
And in lieu of the gum, the oak,
Years back I believed a little,
And as I believed I spoke.

Wormwood and Nightshade

Have I done with those childish fancies?

They suited the days gone by,
When I pulled the poppies and pansies,
When I hunted the butterfly,
With one who has long been sleeping,
A stranger to doubts and cares,
And to sowing that ends in reaping
Thistles, and thorns, and tares.

What might be ! — the dreams were scatter'd,
As chaff is toss'd by the wind,
The faith has been rudely shattered,
That listen'd with credence blind ;
Things were to have been, and therefore
They were, and they are to be,
And will be ; — we must prepare for
The doom we are bound to dree.

Ah, me ! we believe in evil,
Where once we believed in good,
The world, the flesh, and the devil
Are easily understood ;
The world, the flesh, and the devil,
Their traces on earth are plain ;
Must they always riot and revel
While footprints of man remain ?

Racing Rhymes

Talk about better and wiser,
Wiser and worse are one,
The sophist is the despiser
Of all things under the sun ;
Is nothing real but confusion ?
Is nothing certain but death ?
Is nothing fair save illusion ?
Is nothing good that has breath ?

Some sprite, malignant and elfish,
Seems present, whispering close,
"All motives of life are selfish,
All instincts of life are gross ;
And the song that the poet fashions,
And the love-bird's musical strain,
Are jumbles of animal passions,
Refined by animal pain."

The restless throbbings and burnings
That hope unsatisfied brings,
The weary longings and yearnings
For the mystical better things,
Are the sands on which is reflected
The pitiless moving lake,
Where the wanderer falls dejected
By a thirst he never can slake.

Wormwood and Nightshade

A child blows bubbles that glitter,
He snatches them, they disperse ;
Yet childhood's folly is better,
And manhood's folly is worse ;
Gilt baubles we grasp at blindly
Would turn in our hands to dross ;
'T is a fate less cruel than kindly
Denies the gain and the loss.

And as one who pursues a shadow,
As one who hunts in a dream,
As the child who crosses the meadow,
Enticed by the rainbow's gleam,
I — knowing the course was foolish,
And guessing the goal was pain,
Stupid, and stubborn, and mulish —
Followed and follow again.

The sun over Gideon halted,
Holding aloof the night,
When Joshua's arm was exalted,
Yet never retraced his flight ;
Nor will he turn back, nor can he,
He chases the future fast ;
The future is blank — oh, Annie !
I fain would recall the past.

Racing Rhymes

There are others toiling and straining
 'Neath burdens graver than mine —
They are weary, yet uncomplaining —
 I know it, yet I repine ;
I know it, how time will ravage,
 How time will level, and yet
I long with a longing savage,
 I regret with a fierce regret.

You are no false ideal,
 Something is left of you,
Present, perceptible, real,
 Palpable, tangible, true ;
One shred of your broken necklace,
 ' One tress of your pale, gold hair —
And a heart so utterly reckless,
 That the worst it would gladly dare.

There is little pleasure, if any,
 In waking the past anew ;
My days and nights have been many,
 Lost chances many I rue —
My days and nights have been many ;
 Now I pray that they be few,
When I think on the hill-side, Annie,
 Where I dreamt that the skies were blue.

ARS LONGA

[A SON OF PILGRIMAGE]

OUR hopes are wild imaginings,
Our schemes are airy castles,
Yet these, on earth, are lords and kings,
And we their slaves and vassals ;
You dream, forsooth, of buoyant youth,
Most ready to deceive is,
But age will own the bitter truth,
“ *Ars longa, vita brevis.*”

.

DAWN

ON skies still and starlit
White lustres take hold,
And gray flushes scarlet,
And red flashes gold.
And sun-glories cover
The rose, shed above her,
Like lover and lover
They flame and unfold.

CONFITEOR

“ **H**AVE my ears been closed to the prayer
of the poor,
Or deaf to the cry of distress?
Have I given little, and taken more?
Have I brought a curse to the widow's door?
Have I wrong'd the fatherless?
Have I steep'd my fingers in guiltless gore,
That I must perforce confess? ”

“ Have thy steps been guided by purity
Through the paths with wickedness rife?
Hast thou never smitten thine enemy?
Hast thou yielded naught to the lust of the eye,
And naught to the pride of life?
Hast thou pass'd all snares of pleasures by?
Hast thou shunn'd all wrath and strife? ”

“ Nay, certes ; a sinful life I 've led,
Yet I 've suffered, and lived in hope ;
I may suffer still, but my hope has fled —
I 've nothing now to hope or to dread,
And with fate I can fairly cope ;
Were the waters closing over my head.
I should scarcely catch at a rope. ”

Confiteor

“ Dost suffer? thy pain may be fraught with grace,
Since never by works alone
We are saved ; — the penitent thief may trace
The wealth of love in the Saviour’s face,
To the Pharisee rarely shown ;
And the Magdalene’s arms may yet embrace
The foot of the jasper throne.”

.

QUARE FATIGASTI

TWO years ago I was thinking
On the changes that years bring forth ;
Now I stand where I then stood drinking
The gust and the salt sea froth ;
And the shuddering wave strikes, linking
With the wave subsiding and sinking,
And clots the coast herbage, shrinking,
With a hue of the white cere-cloth.

Is there aught worth losing or keeping?
The bitters or sweets men quaff?
The sowing or the doubtful reaping?
The harvest of grain or chaff?
Or squandering days or heaping,
Or waking seasons or sleeping,
The laughter that dries the weeping,
Or the weeping that drowns the laugh?

Quare Fatigasti

For joys wax dim and woes deaden,
We forget the sorrowful biers,
And the garlands glad that have fled in
The merciful march of years ;
And the sunny skies, and the leaden,
And the faces that pale or redden,
And the smiles that lovers are wed in
Who are born and buried in tears.

And the myrtle bloom turns hoary,
And the blush of the rose decays,
And sodden with sweat and gory
Are the hard won laurels and bays ;
We are neither joyous nor sorry
When time has ended our story,
And blotted out grief and glory,
And pain, and pleasure, and praise.

Weigh justly, throw good and bad in
The scales, will the balance veer
With the joys or the sorrows had in
The sum of a life's career ?
In the end, spite of dreams that sadden
The sad, or the sanguine madden,
There is nothing to grieve or gladden,
There is nothing to hope or fear.

Racing Rhymes

“Thou hast gone astray,” quoth the preacher,

“In the gall of thy bitterness,”

Thou hast taught me in vain, oh, teacher!

I neither blame thee nor bless;

If bitter is sure and sweet sure,

These vanish with form and feature —

Can the creature fathom the creature

Whose Creator is fathomless?

Is this dry land sure? Is the sea sure?

Is there aught that shall long remain,
Pain, or peril, or pleasure,

Pleasure, or peril, or pain?

Shall we labour or take our leisure,

And who shall inherit treasure,

If the measure with which we measure

Is meted to us again?

I am slow in learning, and swift in

Forgetting, and I have grown

So weary with long sand sifting;

T’wards the mist where the breakers moan

The rudderless bark is drifting,

Through the shoals and the quicksands shifting —

In the end shall the night-rack lifting,

Discover the shores unknown?

THE SWIMMER

A LITTLE season of love and laughter,
Of light and life, and pleasure and pain,
And a horror of outer darkness after,
And dust returneth to dust again.
Then the lesser life shall be as the greater,
And the lover of life shall join the hater,
And the one thing cometh sooner or later,
And no one knoweth the loss or gain.

NO NAME

*A stone upon her heart and head,
But no name written on that stone ;
Sweet neighbours whisper low instead,
This sinner was a loving one.*

MRS. BROWNING.

'**T**IS a nameless stone that stands at your
head —

The gusts in the gloomy gorges whirl
Brown leaves and red till they cover your bed —
Now I trust that your sleep is a sound one, girl !

I said in my wrath, when his shadow cross'd
From your garden gate to your cottage door,
"What does it matter for one soul lost?
Millions of souls have been lost before."

Yet I warn'd you — ah ! but my words came true —
"Perhaps some day you will find him out."
He who was not worthy to loosen your shoe,
Does his conscience therefore prick him? I doubt.

No Name

You laugh'd and were deaf to my warning voice —
Blush'd and were blind to his cloven hoof —
You have had your chance, you have taken your
choice —
How could I help you, standing aloof?

He has prosper'd well with the world — he says
I am mad — if so, and if he be sane,
I, at least, give God thanksgiving and praise
That there lies between us one difference plain.

You in your beauty above me bent
In the pause of a wild west country ball —
Spoke to me — touched me without intent —
Made me your servant for once and all.

Light laughter rippled your rose-red lip,
And you swept my cheek with a shining curl,
That stray'd from your shoulder's snowy tip —
Now I pray that your sleep is a sound one, girl !

From a long way off to look at your charms
Made my blood run redder in every vein,
And he — he has held you long in his arms,
And has kiss'd you over and over again.

Racing Rhymes

Is it well that he keeps well out of my way?
If we met, he and I — we alone — we two —
Would I give him one moment's grace to pray?
Not I, for the sake of the soul he slew.

A life like a shuttlecock may be toss'd
With the hand of fate for a battledore ;
But it matters much for your sweet soul lost,
As much as a million souls and more.

And I know that if, here or there, alone,
I found him, fairly and face to face,
Having slain his body, I would slay my own,
That my soul to Satan his soul might chase.

He hardens his heart in the public way —
Who am I? I am but a nameless churl ;
But God will put all things straight some day —
Till then may your sleep be a sound one, girl !

THICK-HEADED THOUGHTS

'**T**IS a wicked world we live in ;
Wrong in reason, wrong in rhyme ;
But no matter : we 'll not give in
While we still can come to time.

Strength 's a shadow ; Hope is madness ;
Love, delusion ; Friendship, sham ;
Pleasure fades away to sadness,
None of these are worth a d——n.

There is naught on earth to please us ;
All things at the crisis fail.
Friends desert us, bailiffs tease us —
(To such foes we give leg-bail).

But a stout heart still maintaining,
Quells the ills we all must meet,
And a spirit fear disdaining
Lays our troubles at our feet.

So we 'll ne'er surrender tamely
To the ills that throng us fast.
If we must die, let 's die gamely ;
Luck may take a turn at last.

THE THREE FRIENDS

(FROM THE FRENCH)

THE sword slew one in deadly strife ;
One perished by the bowl ;
The third lies self-slain by the knife ;
For three the bells may toll —

I loved her better than my life,
And better than my soul.

Aye, father ! hast thou come at last ?
'T is somewhat late to pray ;
Life's crimson tides are ebbing fast,
They drain my soul away ;
Mine eyes with film are overcast,
The lights are waning grey.

This curl from her bright head I shore,
And this her hands gave mine ;
See, one is stained with purple gore,
And one with poison'd wine ;
Give these to her when all is o'er —
How serpent-like they twine !

The Three Friends

We three were brethren in arms,
And sworn companions we ;
We held this motto, " Whoso harms
The one shall harm the three ! "
Till, matchless for her subtle charms,
Beloved of each was she.

(These two were slain that I might kiss
Her sweet mouth. I did well ;
I said, " There is no greater bliss
For those in heaven that dwell ; "
I lost her ; then I said, " There is
No fiercer pang in hell ! ")

We have upheld each other's rights,
Shared purse, and borrow'd blade ;
Have stricken side by side in fights ;
And side by side have prayed
In churches. We were Christian knights,
And she a Christian maid.

We met at sunrise, he and I,
My comrade — 't was agreed
The steel our quarrel first should try,
The poison should succeed ;
For two of three were doom'd to die,
And one was doomed to bleed.

Racing Rhymes

We buckled to the doubtful fray,
At first, with some remorse ;
But he who must be slain, or slay,
Soon strikes with vengeful force.
He fell ; I left him where he lay,
Among the trampled gorse.

Did passion warp my heart and head
To madness? And, if so,
Can madness palliate bloodshed? —
It may be — I shall know
When God shall gather up the dead
From where the four winds blow.

We met at sunset, he and I —
My second comrade true ;
Two cups with wine were brimming high,
And one was drugg'd — we knew
Not which, nor sought we to descry ;
Our choice by lot we drew.

And there I sat with him to sup :
I heard him blithely speak
Of by-gone days — the fatal cup
Forgotten seemed — his cheek
Was ruddy : father, raise me up,
My voice is waxing weak.

The Three Friends

We drank ; his lips turned livid white,
His cheeks grew leaden ash ;
He reel'd — I heard his temples smite
The threshold with a crash !
And from his hand, in shivers bright,
I saw the goblet flash.

The morrow dawned with fragrance rare,
The May-breeze, from the west,
Just fann'd the sleepy olives, where
She heard and I confess'd ;
My hair entangled with her hair,
Her breast strained to my breast.

On the dread verge of endless gloom
My soul recalls that hour ;
Skies languishing with balm of bloom,
And fields aflame with flower ;
And slow caresses that consume,
And kisses that devour.

Ah ! now with storm the day seems rife,
My dull ears catch the roll
Of thunder, and the far sea strife,
On beach and bar and shoal —
I loved her better than my life,
And better than my soul.

Racing Rhymes

She fled ! I cannot prove her guilt,
Nor would I an I could ;
See, life for life is fairly spilt !
And blood is shed for blood ;
Her white hands neither touched the hilt,
Nor yet the potion brew'd.

Aye ! turn me from the sickly south,
Towards the gusty north ;
The fruits of sin are dust and drouth,
The end of crime is wrath —
The lips that pressed her rose-like mouth
Are choked with blood-red froth.

Then dig the grave-pit deep and wide,
Three graves thrown into one,
And lay three corpses side by side,
And tell their tale to none ;
But bring her back in all her pride
To see what she hath done.

FROM THE WRECK

TURN out, boys." — "What 's up with our
super to-night?

The man 's mad. — Two hours to day-
break I 'd swear —

Stark mad — why, there is n't a glimmer of light."

"Take Bolinbroke, Alec, give Jack the young
mare ;

Look sharp. A large vessel lies jamm'd on the reef,
And many on board still, and some wash'd on
shore.

Ride straight with the news — they may send some
relief

From the township ; and we — we can do little
more.

You, Alec, you know the near cuts ; you can cross

The ' Sugarloaf ' ford with a scramble, I think ;
Don't spare the blood filly, nor yet the black horse ;
Should the wind rise, God help them ! the ship
will soon sink.

Racing Rhymes

Old Peter 's away down the paddock, to drive
The nags to the stockyard as fast as he can —
A life and death matter ; so, lads, look alive.”
Half-dress'd in the dark to the stockyard we ran.

There was bridling with hurry, and saddling with haste,
Confusion and cursing for lack of a moon ;
“ Be quick with these buckles, we 've no time to
waste ; ”
“ Mind the mare, she can use her hind legs to
some tune.”
“ Make sure of the crossing-place ; strike the old
track,
They 've fenced off the new one ; look out for the
holes
On the wombat hills.” “ Down with the slip rails ;
stand back.”
“ And ride, boys, the pair of you, ride for your
souls.”

In the low branches heavily laden with dew,
In the long grasses spoiling with deadwood that
day,
Where the blackwood, the box, and the bastard oak
grew,
Between the tall gum-trees we gallop'd away —

From the Wreck

We crash'd through a brush fence, we splash'd
through a swamp —

We steer'd for the north near "The Eaglehawk's
Nest" —

We bore to the left just beyond "The Red Camp,"
And round the black tea-tree belt wheel'd to the
west —

We cross'd a low range sickly scented with musk
From wattle-tree blossom — we skirted a marsh —
Then the dawn faintly dappled with orange the dusk,
And peal'd overhead the jay's laughter note harsh,
And shot the first sunstreak behind us, and soon
The dim dewy uplands were dreamy with light ;
And full on our left flash'd "The Reedy Lagoon,"
And sharply "The Sugarloaf" rear'd on our right
A smother'd curse broke through the bushman's
brown beard,
He turn'd in his saddle, his brick-colour'd cheek
Flush'd feebly with sundawn, said, "Just what I
fear'd ;
Last fortnight's rainfall has flooded the creek."

Black Bolinbroke snorted, and stood on the brink
One instant, then deep in the dark, sluggish swirl
Plunged headlong. I saw the horse suddenly sink,
Till round the man's armpits the waves seem'd to
curl.

Racing Rhymes

We followed, — one cold shock, and deeper we sank

Than they did, and twice tried the lading in vain ;

The third struggle won it ; straight up the steep bank

We stagger'd, then out on the skirts of the plain.

The stockrider, Alec, at starting had got

The lead, and had kept it throughout ; 't was his
boast

That through thickest of shrub he could steer like a
shot,

And the black horse was counted the best on the
coast.

The mare had been awkward enough in the dark,

She was eager and headstrong, and barely half
broke ;

She had had me too close to a big stringy-bark,

And had made a near thing of a crooked sheoak.

But now on the open, lit up by the morn,

She flung the white foam-flakes from nostril to neck,

And chased him — I hatless, with shirt-sleeves all torn

(For he may ride ragged who rides from a wreck) —

And faster and faster across the wide heath

We rode till we raced. Then I gave her her head.

And she — stretching out with the bit in her teeth

She caught him, outpaced him, and passed him,
and led.

From the Wreck

We neared the new fence ; we were wide of the
track ;

I look'd right and left — she had never been tried
At a stiff leap. 'T was little he cared on the black.

“ You 're more than a mile from the gateway,” he
cried.

I hung to her head, touched her flank with the spurs
(In the red streak of rail not the ghost of a gap) ;
She shortened her long stroke, she pricked her
sharp ears,

She flung it behind her with hardly a rap —
I saw the post quiver where Bolingbroke struck,
And guessed that the pace we had come the last
mile

Had blown him a bit (he could jump like a buck).

We galloped more steadily then for a while.

The heath was soon pass'd, in the dim distance lay
The mountain. The sun was just clearing the tips
Of the ranges to eastward. The mare — could she
stay ?

She was bred very nearly as clean as Eclipse ;
She led, and as oft as he came to her side,
She took the bit free and untiring as yet ;
Her neck was arched double, her nostrils were wide,
And the tips of her tapering ears nearly met —

Racing Rhymes

“You ’re lighter than I am,” said Alec at last ;
“The horse is dead beat and the mare is n’t
blown.

She must be a good one — ride on and ride fast,
You know your way now.” So I rode on alone.

Still galloping forward we pass’d the two flocks
At M’Intyre’s hut and M’Allister’s hill —
She was galloping strong at the Warrigal Rocks —
On the Wallaby Range she was galloping still —
And over the wasteland and under the wood,
By down and by dale, and by fell and by flat,
She gallop’d, and here in the stirrups I stood
To ease her, and there in the saddle I sat
To steer her. We suddenly struck the red loam
Of the track near the troughs — then she reeled
on the rise —
From her crest to her croup covered over with
foam,
And blood-red her nostrils and bloodshot her eyes,
A dip in the dell where the wattle fire bloomed —
A bend round a bank that had shut out the view —
Large framed in the mild light the mountain had
loomed,
With a tall, purple peak bursting out from the
blue.

From the Wreck

I pull'd her together, I press'd her, and she
Shot down the decline to the Company's yard,
And on by the paddocks, yet under my knee
I could feel her heart thumping the saddle-flaps
hard.

Yet a mile and another, and now we were near
The goal, and the fields and the farms flitted past ;
And 'twixt the two fences I turned with a cheer ;
For a green, grass-fed mare 't was a far thing and
fast ;

And labourers, roused by her galloping hoofs,
Saw bare-headed rider and foam-sheeted steed ;
And shone the white walls and the slate-coloured roofs
Of the township. I steadied her then — I had
need —

Where stood the old chapel (where stands the new
church —
Since chapels to churches have changed in that
town).

A short, sidelong stagger, a long, forward lurch,
A slight choking sob, and the mare had gone down.
I slipp'd off the bridle, I slackened the girth,
I ran on and left her and told them my news ;
I saw her soon afterwards. What was she worth?
How much for her hide? She had never worn
shoes.

THE ROMANCE OF BRITOMARTE

AS RELATED BY SERGEANT LEIGH ON THE NIGHT HE
GOT HIS CAPTAINCY AT THE RESTORATION

I 'LL tell you a story : but pass the “jack,”
And let us make merry to-night, my men.
Aye, those were the days when my beard was
black —

I like to remember them now and then ;
Then Miles was living, and Cuthbert there —
On his lip was never a sign of down ;
But I carry about some braided hair,
That has not yet changed from the glossy brown
That it show'd the day when I broke the heart
Of the bravest of destriers, “ Britomarte.”

Sir Hugh was slain (may his soul find grace !)
In the fray that was neither lost nor won
At Edgehill — then to St. Hubert's Chase
Lord Goring despatched a garrison —
But men and horses were ill to spare,
And ere long the soldiers were shifted fast.
As for me, I never was quartered there
Till Marston Moor had been lost ; at last,

The Romance of Britomarte

As luck would have it, alone, and late
In the night, I rode to the northern gate.

I thought, as I pass'd through the moonlit park,
On the boyish days I used to spend
In the halls of the knight lying stiff and stark —
Thought on his lady, my father's friend
(Mine, too, in spite of my sinister bar,
But with that my story has naught to do) ;
She died the winter before the war —
Died giving birth to the baby Hugh.
He pass'd ere the green leaves clothed the bough,
And the orphan girl was the heiress now.

When I was a rude and reckless boy,
And she a brave and beautiful child,
I was her page, her playmate, her toy ;
I have crown'd her hair with the field-flowers
wild,
Cowslip and crow-foot, and colt's-foot bright ;
I have carried her miles when the woods were
wet,
I have read her romances of dame and knight ;
She was my princess, my pride, my pet.
There was then this proverb us twain between,
For the glory of God and Gwendoline.

Racing Rhymes

She had grown to a maiden wonderful fair,
But for years I had scarcely seen her face.
Now, with troopers Holdsworth, Huntly, and Clare,
Old Miles kept guard at St. Hubert's Chase,
And the chatelaine was a Mistress Ruth,
Sir Hugh's half-sister, an ancient dame ;
But a mettlesome soul had she forsooth,
As she show'd when the time of her trial came.
I bore despatches to Miles and to her,
To warn them against the bands of Kerr.

And mine would have been a perilous ride
With the rebel horsemen — we knew not where
They were scattered over that country side, —
If it had not been for my brave brown mare.
She was iron-sinew'd and satin-skinn'd,
Ribb'd like a drum and limb'd like a deer,
Fierce as the fire and fleet as the wind ;
There was nothing she could n't climb or clear.
Rich lords had vex'd me, in vain, to part,
For their gold and silver, with Britomarte.

Next morn we muster'd scarce half a score
With the serving men, who were poorly arm'd ;
Five soldiers, counting myself, no more ;
And a culverin, which might well have harm'd

The Romance of Britomarte

Us, had we used it, but not our foes —

When, with horses and foot, to our doors they came,
And a psalm-singer summon'd us (through his nose),

And deliver'd — “This, in the people's name,
Unto whoso holdeth this fortress here,
Surrender! or bide the siege — John Kerr.”

'T was a mansion built in a style too new,

A castle by courtesy — he lied

Who called it a fortress, yet 't is true,

It had been indifferently fortified ;

We were well provided with bolt and bar ;

And while I hurried to place our men,

Old Miles was called to a council of war

With Mistress Ruth and with *her*, and when

They had argued loudly and long, those three,

They sent, as a last resource, for me.

In the chair of state sat erect Dame Ruth ;

She had cast aside her embroidery :

She had been a beauty, they say, in her youth,

There was much fierce fire in her bold black eye.

“Am I deceived in you both?” quoth she.

“If one spark of her father's spirit lives

In this girl here so, this Leigh, Ralph Leigh,

Let us hear what counsel the springald gives.”

Racing Rhymes

Then I stammer'd, somewhat taken aback —
(Simon, you ale-swiller, pass the "jack").

The dame wax'd hotter — "Speak out, lad, say,
Must we fall in that canting caitiff's power?
Shall we yield to a knave and a turncoat? Nay,
I had liever leap from our topmost tower.
For a while we can surely await relief:

Our walls are high and our doors are strong."
This Kerr was indeed a canting thief —
I know not rightly, some private wrong
He had done Sir Hugh, but I know this much,
Traitor or turncoat he suffered as such.

Quoth Miles, "Enough! your will shall be done;
Relief may arrive by the merest chance,
But your house ere dusk will be lost and won;
They have got three pieces of ordnance."
Then I cried, "Lord Guy, with four troops of
horse,
Even now is biding at Westbrooke town;
If a rider could break through the rebel force,
He would bring relief ere the sun goes down;
Through the postern door could I make one
dart,
I could baffle them all upon Britomarte."

The Romance of Britomarte

Miles mutter'd, "Madness!" Dame Ruth look'd
grave,

Said, "True, though we cannot keep one hour
The courtyard, no, nor the stables save,

They will have to batter piecemeal the tower,
And thus — " But suddenly she halted there.

With a shining hand on my shoulder laid,
Stood Gwendoline. She had left her chair,

And, "Nay, if it needs must be done," she said,
"Ralph Leigh will gladly do it, I ween,
For the glory of God and of Gwendoline."

I had undertaken a heavier task

For a lighter word. I saddled with care,
Nor cumber'd myself with corselet nor casque

(Being loth to burden the brave brown mare).

Young Clare kept watch on the wall — he cried,

"Now, haste, Ralph! this is the time to seize;
The rebels are round us on every side,

But here they straggle by twos and threes."

Then out I led her, and up I sprung,

And the postern door on its hinges swung.

I had drawn this sword — you may draw it and feel,

For this is the blade that I bore that day —

There's a notch even now on the long grey steel,

A nick that has never been rasped away.

Racing Rhymes

I bow'd my head and I buried my spurs,
 One bound brought the gliding green beneath ;
I could tell by her back-flung, flatten'd ears,
 She had fairly taken the bit in her teeth —
(What, Jack, have you drain'd your namesake dry,
Left nothing to quench the thirst of a fly?).

These things are done, and are done with, lad,
 In far less time than your talker tells.
The sward with their hoof-strokes shook like mad,
 And rang with their carbines and petronels ;
And they shouted, " Cross him and cut him off,"
 " Surround him," " Seize him," " Capture the
 clown,
Or kill him," " Shall he escape to scoff
 In your faces? " " Shoot him or cut him down."
And their bullets whistled on every side :
Many were near us and more were wide.

Not a bullet told upon Britomarte ;
 Suddenly snorting, she launched along ;
So the osprey dives where the seagulls dart,
 So the falcon swoops where the kestrels throng ;
And full in my front one pistol flash'd,
 And right in my path their sergeant got.
How our jack-boots jarr'd, how our stirrups clash'd,
 While the mare like a meteor past him shot ;

The Romance of Britomarte

But I clove his skull with a ^hackstroke clean,
For the glory of God and of Gwendoline.

And, as one whom the fierce wind storms in the
face

With spikes of hail and with splinters of rain,
I, while we fled through St. Hubert's Chase,
Bent till my cheek was amongst her mane.
To the north full a league of the deer-park lay,
Smooth, springy turf, and she fairly flew,
And the sound of their hoof-strokes died away,
And their far shots faint in the distance grew.
Loudly I laughed, having won the start,
At the folly of following Britomarte.

They had posted a guard at the northern gate —
Some dozen of pikemen and musketeers.
To the tall park palings I turn'd her straight ;
She veer'd in her flight as the swallow veers.
And some blew matches, and some drew swords,
And one of them wildly hurl'd his pike,
But she clear'd by inches the oaken boards,
And she carried me yards beyond the dyke ;
Then gaily over the long green down
We gallop'd, heading for Westbrooke town.

Racing Rhymes

The green down slopes to the great grey moor,
The grey moor sinks to the gleaming Skelt —
Sudden and sullen, and swift and sure,
The whirling water was round my belt.
She breasted the bank with a savage snort,
And a backward glance of her bloodshot eye,
And Our Lady of Andover's flashed like thought,
And flitted St. Agatha's nunnery,
And the firs at The Ferngrove fled on the right,
And the Falconer's Tower on the left took flight.

And over the Ravenswold we raced —
We rounded the hill by The Hermit's Well —
We burst on the Westbrooke Bridge — "What haste?
What errand?" shouted the sentinel.
"To Beelzebub with the Brewer's knave!"
"*Carolus Rex* and he of the Rhine!"
Galloping past him, I got and gave
In the gallop password and countersign,
All soak'd with water and soil'd with mud,
With the sleeve of my jerkin half drench'd in blood.

Now, Heaven be praised that I found him there —
Lord Guy. He said, having heard my tale,
"Leigh, let my own man look to your mare.
Rest and recruit with our wine and ale ;

The Romance of Britomarte

But first must our surgeon attend to you ;

You are somewhat shrewdly stricken, no doubt."

Then he snatched a horn from the wall and blew,

Making "Boot and Saddle" ring sharply out.

"Have I done good service this day?" quoth I.

"Then I will ride back in your troop, Lord Guy."

In the street I heard how the trumpets peal'd,

And I caught the gleam of a morion

From the window — then to the door I reel'd ;

I had lost more blood than I reckon'd upon ;

He eyed me calmly with keen grey eyes —

Stern grey eyes of a steel-blue grey —

Said, "The wilful man can never be wise,

Nathless the wilful man must have his way."

And he pour'd from a flagon some fiery wine,

I drain'd it and straightway strength was mine.

I was with them all the way on the brown —

"Guy to the rescue!" "God and the king!"

We were just in time, for the doors were down ;

And did n't our sword-blades rasp and ring?

And did n't we hew, and did n't we hack?

The sport scarce lasted minutes ten —

(Aye, those were the days when my beard was black ;

I like to remember them now and then) —

Racing Rhymes

Though they fought like fiends, we were four to
one,
And we captured those that refused to run.

We have not forgotten it, Cuthbert, boy !
That supper scene when the lamps were lit ;
How the women (some of them) sobbed for joy,
How the soldiers drank the deeper for it ;
How the dame did honours, and Gwendoline,
How grandly she glided into the hall,
How she stoop'd with the grace of a girlish queen,
And kiss'd me gravely before them all ;
And the stern Lord Guy, how gaily he laugh'd,
Till more of his cup was spilt than quaff'd.

Brown Britomarte lay dead in her straw
Next morning — we buried her — brave old
girl !
John Kerr, we tried him by martial law,
And we twisted some hemp for the trait'rous
churl ;
And she — I met her alone — said she,
“ You have risked your life, you have lost your mare,
And what can I give in return, Ralph Leigh ? ”
I replied, “ One braid of that bright brown
hair.”

The Romance of Britomarte

And with that she bow'd her beautiful head,
"You can take as much as you choose," she said.

And I took it — it may be, more than enough —
 And I shore it rudely, close to the roots.
The wine or wounds may have made me rough,
 And men at the bottom are merely brutes.
Three weeks I slept at St. Hubert's Chase ;
 When I woke from the fever of wounds and
 wine
I could scarcely believe that the ghastly face
 That the glass reflected was really mine.
I sought the hall — where a wedding *had been* —
The wedding of Guy and of Gwendoline.

The romance of a grizzled old trooper's life
 May make you laugh in your sleeves : laugh out,
Lads ; we have most of us seen some strife ;
 We have all of us had some sport, no doubt.
I have won some honour and gain'd some gold,
 Now that our king returns to his own ;
If the pulses beat slow, if the blood runs cold,
 And if friends have faded and loves have flown,
Then the greater reason is ours to drink,
And the more we swallow the less we shall think.

Racing Rhymes

At the battle of Naseby, Miles was slain,
And Huntly sank from his wounds that week ;
We left young Clare upon Worcester plain —
How the “ Ironside ” gash’d his girlish cheek.
Aye, strut, and swagger, and ruffle anew,
Gay gallants, now that the war is done !
They fought like fiends (give the fiend his due) —
We fought like fops, it was thus they won.
Holdsworth is living for aught I know,
At least he was living two years ago.

And Guy — Lord Guy — so stately and stern,
He is changed, I met him at Winchester ;
He has grown quite gloomy and taciturn.
Gwendoline ! — why do you ask for her ?
Died, as her mother had died before —
Died giving birth to the baby Guy !
Did my voice shake ? Then am I fool the more.
Sooner or later we all must die :
But at least, let us live while we live to-night,
The *days* may be dark, but the *lamps* are bright.

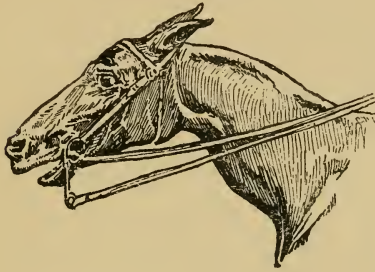
For to me the sunlight seems worn and wan :
The sun, he is losing his splendour now —
He can never shine as of old he shone
On her glorious hair and glittering brow.

The Romance of Britomarte

Ah ! those *days that were*, when my beard was black,
Now I have only the *nights that are*.

What, landlord, ho ! bring in ~~your~~ haste burnt sack,
And a flask of your fiercest usquebaugh.

You, Cuthbert ! surely you know by heart
The story of *her* and of Britomarte.



TO MY SISTER

LINES WRITTEN BY THE LATE A. L. GORDON
ON FOURTH AUGUST, 1853,
BEING THREE DAYS BEFORE HE SAILED FOR AUSTRALIA

ACROSS the trackless seas I go,
No matter when or where,
And few my future lot will know,
And fewer still will care.

My hopes are gone, my time is spent,
I little heed their loss,
And if I cannot feel content,
I cannot feel remorse.

My parents bid me cross the flood,
My kindred frowned at me ;
They say I have belied my blood,
And stained my pedigree.
But I must turn from those who chide,
And laugh at those who frown ;
I cannot quench my stubborn pride,
Nor keep my spirits down.

To My Sister

I once had talents fit to win
Success in life's career,
And if I chose a part of sin,
My choice has cost me dear.
But those who brand me with disgrace
Will scarcely dare to say
They spoke the taunt before my face,
And went unscathed away.

My friends will miss a comrade's face,
And pledge me on the seas,
Who shared the wine-cup or the chase,
Or follies worse than these.
A careless smile, a parting glass,
A hand that waves adieu,
And from my sight they soon will pass,
And from my memory too.

I loved a girl not long ago,
And, till my suit was told,
I thought her breast as fair as snow,
'T was very near as cold ;
And yet I spoke, with feelings more
Of recklessness than pain,
Those words I never spoke before,
Nor never shall again.

Racing Rhymes

Her cheek grew pale, in her dark eye
I saw the tear-drop shine ;
Her red lips faltered in reply,
And then were pressed to mine.
A quick pulsation of the heart !
A flutter of the breath !
A smothered sob ! — and thus we part,
To meet no more till death.

And yet I may at times recall
Her memory with a sigh ;
At times for me the tears may fall
And dim her sparkling eye.
But absent friends are soon forgot,
And in a year or less
'T will doubtless be another's lot
Those very lips to press !

With adverse fate we best can cope
When all we prize has fled ;
And where there 's little left to hope,
There 's little left to dread !
Oh, time glides ever quickly by !
Destroying all that 's dear ;
On earth there 's little worth a sigh,
And nothing worth a tear !

To My Sister

What fears have I? What hope in life?
What joys can I command?
A few short years of toil and strife
In a strange and distant land !
When green grass sprouts above this clay
(And that might be ere long),
Some friends may read these lines and say,
The world has judged him wrong.

There is a spot not far away
Where my young sister sleeps,
Who seems alive but yesterday,
So fresh her memory keeps ;
For we have played in childhood there
Beneath the hawthorn's bough,
And bent our knee in childish prayer
I cannot utter now !

Of late so reckless and so wild,
That spot recalls to me
That I was once a laughing child,
As innocent as she ;
And there, while August's wild flow'rs wave,
I wandered all alone,
Strewed blossoms on her little grave,
And knelt beside the stone.

Racing Rhymes

I seem to have a load to bear,
A heavy, choking grief;
Could I have forced a single tear
I might have felt relief.
I think my hot and restless heart
Has scorched the channels dry,
From which those sighs of sorrow start
To moisten cheek and eye.

Sister, farewell ! farewell once more
To every youthful tie !
Friends ! parents ! kinsmen ! native shore !
To each and all good-bye !
And thoughts which for the moment seem
To bind me with a spell,
Ambitious hope ! love's boyish dream !
To you a last farewell !

DE TE

A BURNING glass of burnish'd brass,
The calm sea caught the noontide
rays,
And sunny slopes of golden grass
And wastes of weed-flower seem to blaze.
Beyond the shining silver greys,
Beyond the shades of denser bloom,
The sky-line girt with glowing haze,
The farthest, faintest forest gloom,
And the everlasting hills that loom.

We heard the hound beneath the mound,
We scared the swamp hawk hovering nigh —
We had not sought for that we found —
He lay as dead men only lie,
With wan cheek whitening in the sky,
Through the wild heath flowers, white and red
The dumb brute that had seen him die,
Close crouching, howl'd beside the head,
Brute burial service o'er the dead,

Racing Rhymes

The brow was rife with seams of strife —
 A lawless death made doubly plain
The ravage of a reckless life ;
 The havoc of a hurricane
Of passions through that breadth of brain,
 Like headlong horses that had run
Riot, regardless of the rein —
 “ Madman, he might have lived and done
 Better than most men,” whisper'd one.

The beams and blots that Heaven allots
 To every life with life begin.
Fool ! would you change the leopard's spots,
 Or blanch the Ethiopian's skin ?
What more could he have hoped to win,
 What better things have thought to gain,
So shapen — so conceived in sin ?
 No life is wholly void and vain,
 Just and unjust share sun and rain.

Were new life sent, and life misspent
 Wiped out (if such to God seemed good),
Would he (being as he was) repent,
 Or could he, even if he would,
Who heeded not things understood

De Te

(Though dimly) even in savage lands
By some who worship stone or wood,
Or bird or beast, or who stretch hands
Sunward on shining Eastern sands?

And crime has cause. Nay, never pause
Idly to feel a pulseless wrist ;
Brace up the massive, square-shaped jaws,
Unclench the stubborn, stiff'ning fist,
And close those eyes through film and mist,
That kept the old defiant glare ;
And answer, wise Psychologist,
Whose science claims some little share
Of truth, what better things lay there?

Aye! thought and mind were there, — some
kind
Of faculty that men mistake
For talent when their wits are blind, —
An aptitude to mar and break
What others diligently make.
This was the worst and best of him —
Wise with the cunning of the snake,
Brave with the she wolf's courage grim,
Dying hard and dumb, torn limb from limb.

Racing Rhymes

And you, Brown, you 're a doctor ; cure
You can't, but you can kill, and he —
“ *Witness his mark* ” — he signed last year,
And now he signs John Smith, J. P.
We'll hold our inquest *now*, we three ;
I'll be your coroner for once ;
I think old Oswald ought to be
Our foreman — Jones is such a dunce, —
There's more brain in the bloodhound's
sconce.

No man may shirk the allotted work,
The deed to do, the death to die ;
At least I think so, — neither Turk,
Nor Jew, nor infidel am I, —
And yet I wonder when I try
To solve one question, may or must,
And shall I solve it by-and-by,
Beyond the dark, beneath the dust?
I trust so, and I only trust.

Aye, what they will, such trifles kill.
Comrade, for one good deed of yours,
Your history shall not help to fill
The mouths of many brainless boors.

De Te

It may be death absolves or cures
The sin of life. 'T were hazardous
To assert so. If the sin endures,
Say only, "God, who has judged him thus,
Be merciful to him and us."

THE RHYME OF JOYOUS GARDE

LORD CHRIST ! have patience a little while :
I have sinn'd because I am utterly vile,
Having light, loving darkness rather.
And I pray Thee deal with me as Thou wilt,
Yet the blood of Thy foes I have freely spilt,
And, moreover, mine is the greater guilt,
In the sight of Thee and Thy Father.

GONE

GOD grant that whenever, soon or late,
Our course is run and our goal is
reach'd,
We may meet our fate as steady and straight
As he whose bones in yon desert bleach'd ;
No tears are needed — our cheeks are dry,
We have none to waste upon living woe ;
Shall we sigh for one who has ceased to sigh,
Having gone, my friends, where we all must go ?





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