

Black Beetles in Amber

Ambrose Bierce

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[Illustration: AMBROSE BIERCE.]

BLACK BEETLES IN AMBER

BY

AMBROSE BIERCE

1892

THE ORDER IN WHICH THE BEETLES ARE SHOWN

IN EXPLANATION

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A COMMUTED SENTENCE

A LIFTED FINGER

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ON STONE

A WREATH OF IMMORTELLS

IN EXPLANATION

Many of the verses in this book are republished, with considerable alterations, from various newspapers. The collection includes few not relating to persons and events more or less familiar to the people of the Pacific Coast--to whom the volume may be considered as especially addressed, though, not without a hope that some part of the contents may be found to have sufficient intrinsic interest to commend it to others. In that case, doubtless, commentators will be "raised up" to make exposition of its full meaning, with possibly an added meaning read into it by themselves.

Of my motives in writing, and in now republishing, I do not care to make either defense or explanation, except with reference to those persons who since my first censure of them have passed away. To one having only a reader's interest in the matter it may easily seem that the verses relating to those might more properly have been omitted from this collection. But if these pieces, or, indeed, if any considerable part of my work in literature, have the intrinsic worth which by this attempt to preserve some of it I have assumed, their permanent suppression is impossible, and it is only a question of when and by whom they shall be republished. Some one will surely search them out and put them in circulation.

I conceive it the right of an author to have his fugitive work collected in his lifetime; and this seems to me especially true of one whose work, necessarily engendering animosities, is peculiarly exposed to challenge as unjust. That is a charge that can be best examined before time has effaced the evidence. For the death of a man of whom I may have written what I venture to think worthy to live I am no way responsible; and, however sincerely I may regret it, I can hardly be expected to consent that it shall affect my fortunes. If the satirist who does not accept the remarkable doctrine that while condemning the sin he should spare the sinner were bound to let the life of his work be coterminous with that of his subject his were a lot of peculiar hardship.

Persuaded of the validity of all this, I have not hesitated to reprint even certain "epitaphs" which, once of the living, are now of the dead, as all the others must eventually be. The objection inheres in all forms of applied satire--my understanding of whose laws and liberties is at least derived from reverent study of the masters. That in respect of matters herein mentioned I have but followed their practice can be shown by abundant instance and example.

AMBROSE BIERCE.

THE KEY NOTE

I dreamed I was dreaming one morn as I lay
In a garden with flowers teeming.
On an island I lay in a mystical bay,
In the dream that I dreamed I was dreaming.

The ghost of a scent--had it followed me there
From the place where I truly was resting?
It filled like an anthem the aisles of the air,
The presence of roses attesting.

Yet I thought in the dream that I dreamed I dreamed
That the place was all barren of roses--
That it only seemed; and the place, I deemed,
Was the Isle of Bewildered Noses.

Full many a seaman had testified
How all who sailed near were enchanted,
And landed to search (and in searching died)
For the roses the Sirens had planted.

For the Sirens were dead, and the billows boomed
In the stead of their singing forever;
But the roses bloomed on the graves of the doomed,
Though man had discovered them never.

I thought in my dream 'twas an idle tale,
A delusion that mariners cherished--
That the fragrance loading the conscious gale
Was the ghost of a rose long perished.

I said, "I will fly from this island of woes."
And acting on that decision,
By that odor of rose I was led by the nose,
For 'twas truly, ah! truly, Elysian.

I ran, in my madness, to seek out the source
Of the redolent river--directed
By some supernatural, sinister force
To a forest, dark, haunted, infected.

And still as I threaded ('twas all in the dream
That I dreamed I was dreaming) each turning
There were many a scream and a sudden gleam
Of eyes all uncannily burning!

The leaves were all wet with a horrible dew
That mirrored the red moon's crescent,
And all shapes were fringed with a ghostly blue,
Dim, wavering, phosphorescent.

But the fragrance divine, coming strong and free,
Led me on, though my blood was clotting,

Till--ah, joy!--I could see, on the limbs of a tree,
Mine enemies hanging and rotting!

CAIN

Lord, shed thy light upon his desert path,
And gild his branded brow, that no man spill
His forfeit life to balk thy holy will
That spares him for the ripening of wrath.

Already, lo! the red sign is descried,
To trembling jurors visibly revealed:
The prison doors obediently yield,
The baffled hangman flings the cord aside.

Powell, the brother's blood that marks your trail--
Hark, how it cries against you from the ground,
Like the far baying of the tireless hound.
Faith! to your ear it is no nightingale.

What signifies the date upon a stone?
To-morrow you shall die if not to-day.
What matter when the Avenger choose to slay
Or soon or late the Devil gets his own.

Thenceforth through all eternity you'll hold
No one advantage of the later death.
Though you had granted Ralph another breath
Would he to-day less silent lie and cold?

Earth cares not, curst assassin, when you die;
You never will be readier than now.
Wear, in God's name, that mark upon your brow,
And keep the life you purchased with a lie!

AN OBITUARIAN

Death-poet Pickering sat at his desk,
Wrapped in appropriate gloom;
His posture was pensive and picturesque,
Like a raven charming a tomb.

Enter a party a-drinking the cup
Of sorrow--and likewise of woe:
"Some harrowing poetry, Mister, whack up,
All wrote in the key of O.

"For the angels has called my old woman hence
From the strife (where she fit mighty free).
It's a nickel a line? Cond--n the expense!
For wealth is now little to me."

The Bard of Mortality looked him through
In the piercingest sort of a way:
"It is much to me though it's little to you--
I've taken a wife to-day."

So he twisted the tail of his mental cow
And made her give down her flow.
The grief of that bard was long-winded, somehow--
There was reams and reamses of woe.

The widower man which had buried his wife
Grew lily-like round each gill,
For she turned in her grave and came back to life--
Then he cruel ignored the bill!

Then Sorrow she opened her gates a-wide,
As likewise did also Woe,
And the death-poet's song, as is heard inside,
Is sang in the key of O.

A COMMUTED SENTENCE

Boruck and Waterman upon their grills
In Hades lay, with many a sigh and groan,
Hotly disputing, for each swore his own
Were clearly keener than the other's ills.
And, truly, each had much to boast of--bone
And sinew, muscle, tallow, nerve and skin,
Blood in the vein and marrow in the shin,
Teeth, eyes and other organs (for the soul
Has all of these and even a wagging chin)
Blazing and coruscating like a coal!
For Lower Sacramento, you remember,
Has trying weather, even in mid-December.

Now this occurred in the far future. All
Mankind had been a million ages dead,
And each to her reward above had sped,
Each to his punishment below,--I call
That quite a just arrangement. As I said,
Boruck and Waterman in warmest pain
Crackled and sizzed with all their might and main.
For, when on earth, they'd freed a scurvy host
Of crooks from the State prison, who again
Had robbed and ravaged the Pacific Coast
And (such the felon's predatory nature)
Even got themselves into the Legislature.

So Waterman and Boruck lay and roared
In Hades. It is true all other males
Felt the like flames and uttered equal wails,
But did not suffer them; whereas they bored
Each one the other. But indeed my tale's
Not getting on at all. They lay and browned
Till Boruck (who long since his teeth had ground
Away and spoke Gum Arabic and made
Stump speeches even in praying) looked around
And said to Bob's incinerated shade:
"Your Excellency, this is mighty hard on

The inventors of the unpardonable pardon."

The other soul--his right hand all aflame,
For 'twas with that he'd chiefly sinned, although
His tongue, too, like a wick was working woe
To the reserve of tallow in his frame--
Said, with a sputtering, uncertain flow,
And with a gesture like a shaken torch:
"Yes, but I'm sure we'll not much longer scorch.
Although this climate is not good for Hope,
Whose joyous wing 'twould singe, I think the porch
Of Hell we'll quit with a pacific slope.
Last century I signified repentance
And asked for commutation of our sentence."

Even as he spoke, the form of Satan loomed
In sight, all crimson with reflections's fire,
Like some tall tower or cathedral spire
Touched by the dawn while all the earth is gloomed
In mists and shadows of the night time. "Sire,"
Said Waterman, his agitable wick
Still sputtering, "what calls you back so quick?
It scarcely was a century ago
You left us." "I have come to bring," said Nick,
"St. Peter's answer (he is never slow
In correspondence) to your application
For pardon--pardon me!--for commutation."

"He says that he's instructed to reply
(And he has so instructed me) that sin
Like yours--and this poor gentleman's who's in
For bad advice to you--comes rather high;
But since, apparently, you both begin
To feel some pious promptings to the right,
And fain would turn your faces to the light,
Eternity seems all too long a term.
So 'tis commuted to one-half. I'm quite
Prepared, when that expires, to free the worm
And quench the fire." And, civilly retreating,
He left them holding their protracted meeting.

A LIFTED FINGER

[The _Chronicle_ did a great public service in whipping
---- and his fellow-rascals out of office.--_M.H. de Young's
Newspaper_.]

What! _you_ whip rascals?--_you_, whose gutter blood
Bears, in its dark, dishonorable flood,
Enough of prison-birds' prolific germs
To serve a whole eternity of terms?
You, for whose back the rods and cudgels strove
Ere yet the ax had hewn them from the grove?
You, the De Young whose splendor bright and brave
Is phosphorescence from another's grave--

Till now unknown, by any chance or luck,
Even to the hearts at which you, feebly struck?
You whip a rascal out of office?--_you_
Whose leadless weapon once ignobly blew
Its smoke in six directions to assert
Your lack of appetite for others' dirt?

Practice makes perfect: when for fame you thirst,
Then whip a rascal. Whip a cripple first.
Or, if for action you're less free than bold--
Your palms both brimming with dishonest gold--
Entrust the castigation that you've planned,
As once before, to woman's idle hand.
So in your spirit shall two pleasures join
To slake the sacred thirst for blood and coin.
Blood? Souls have blood, even as the body hath,
And, spilled, 'twill fertilize the field of wrath.
Lo! in a purple gorge of yonder hills,
Where o'er a grave a bird its day-song stills,
A woman's blood, through roses ever red,
Mutely appeals for vengeance on your head.
Slandered to death to serve a sordid end,
She called you murderer and called me friend.

Now, mark you, libeler, this course if you
Dare to maintain, or rather to renew;
If one short year's immunity has made
You blink again the perils of your trade--
The ghastly sequence of the maddened "knave,"
The hot encounter and the colder grave;
If the grim, dismal lesson you ignore
While yet the stains are fresh upon your floor,
And calmly march upon the fatal brink
With eyes averted to your trail of ink,
Counting unkind the services of those
Who pull, to hold you back, your stupid nose,
The day for you to die is not so far,
Or, at the least, to live the thing you are!

Pregnant with possibilities of crime,
And full of felons for all coming time,
Your blood's too precious to be lightly spilt
In testimony to a venial guilt.
Live to get whelpage and preserve a name
No praise can sweeten and no lie unshame.
Live to fulfill the vision that I see
Down the dim vistas of the time to be:
A dream of clattering beaks and burning eyes
Of hungry ravens glooming all the skies;
A dream of gleaming teeth and foetid breath
Of jackals wrangling at the feast of death;
A dream of broken necks and swollen tongues--
The whole world's gibbets loaded with De Youngs!

1881.

TWO STATESMEN

In that fair city by the inland sea,
Where Blaine unhived his Presidential bee,
Frank Pixley's meeting with George Gorham sing,
Celestial muse, and what events did spring
From the encounter of those mighty sons
Of thunder, and of slaughter, and of guns.
Great Gorham first, his yearning tooth to sate
And give him stomach for the day's debate,
Entering a restaurant, with eager mien,
Demands an ounce of bacon and a bean.
The trembling waiter, by the statesman's eye
Smitten with terror, hastens to comply;
Nor chairs nor tables can his speed retard,
For famine's fixed and horrible regard
He takes for menace. As he shaking flew,
Lo! the portentous Pixley heaved in view!
Before him yawned invisible the cell,
Unheard, behind, the warden's footsteps fell.
Thrice in convention rising to his feet,
He thrice had been thrust back into his seat;
Thrice had protested, been reminded thrice
The nation had no need of his advice.
Balked of his will to set the people right,
His soul was gloomy though his hat was white,
So fierce his mien, with provident accord
The waiters swarmed him, thinking him a lord.
He spurned them, roaring grandly to their chief:
"Give me (Fred. Crocker pays) a leg of beef!"
His wandering eye's deluminating flame
Fell upon Gorham and the crisis came!
For Pixley scowled and darkness filled the room
Till Gorham's flashing orbs dispelled the gloom.
The patrons of the place, by fear dismayed,
Sprang to the street and left their scores unpaid.
So, when Jove thunders and his lightnings gleam
To sour the milk and curdle, too, the cream,
And storm-clouds gather on the shadowed hill,
The ass forsakes his hay, the pig his swill.
Hotly the heroes now engaged--their breath
Came short and hard, as in the throes of death.
They clenched their hands, their weapons brandished high,
Cut, stabbed, and hewed, nor uttered any cry,
But gnashed their teeth and struggled on! In brief,
One ate his bacon, t'other one his beef.

MATTER FOR GRATITUDE

[Especially should we be thankful for having escaped the ravages of the yellow scourge by which our neighbors have been so sorely afflicted.--_Governor Stoneman's Thanksgiving Proclamation._]

Be pleased, O Lord, to take a people's thanks
That Thine avenging sword has spared our ranks--
That Thou hast parted from our lips the cup
And forced our neighbors' lips to drink it up.
Father of Mercies, with a heart contrite
We thank Thee that Thou goest south to smite,
And sparest San Francisco's loins, to crack
Thy lash on Hermosillo's bleeding back--
That o'er our homes Thine awful angel spread
His wings in vain, and Guaymas weeps instead.

We praise Thee, God, that Yellow Fever here
His horrid banner has not dared to rear,
Consumption's jurisdiction to contest,
Her dagger deep in every second breast!
Catarrh and Asthma and Congestive Chill
Attest Thy bounty and perform Thy will.
These native messengers obey Thy call--
They summon singly, but they summon all.
Not, as in Mexico's impested clime,
Can Yellow Jack commit recurring crime.
We thank Thee that Thou killest all the time.

Thy tender mercies, Father, never end:
Upon all heads Thy blessings still descend,
Though their forms vary. Here the sown seeds yield
Abundant grain that whitens all the field--
There the smit corn stands barren on the plain,
Thrift reaps the straw and Famine gleans in vain.
Here the fat priest to the contented king
Points out the contrast and the people sing--
There mothers eat their offspring. Well, at least
Thou hast provided offspring for the feast.
An earthquake here rolls harmless through the land,
And Thou art good because the chimneys stand--
There templ'd cities sink into the sea,
And damp survivors, howling as they flee,
Skip to the hills and hold a celebration
In honor of Thy wise discrimination.

O God, forgive them all, from Stoneman down,
Thy smile who construe and expound Thy frown,
And fall with saintly grace upon their knees
To render thanks when Thou dost only sneeze.

THREE KINDS OF A ROGUE

I

Sharon, ambitious of immortal shame,
Fame's dead-wall daubed with his illustrious name--
Served in the Senate, for our sins, his time,
Each word a folly and each vote a crime;
Law for our governance well skilled to make
By knowledge gained in study how to break;

Yet still by the presiding eye ignored,
Which only sought him when too loud he snored.
Auspicious thunder!--when he woke to vote
He stilled his own to cut his country's throat;
That rite performed, fell off again to sleep,
While statesmen ages dead awoke to weep!
For sedentary service all unfit,
By lying long disqualified to sit,
Wasting below as he decayed aloft,
His seat grown harder as his brain grew soft,
He left the hall he could not bring away,
And grateful millions blessed the happy day!
Whate'er contention in that hall is heard,
His sovereign State has still the final word:
For disputatious statesmen when they roar
Startle the ancient echoes of his snore,
Which from their dusty nooks expostulate
And close with stormy clamor the debate.
To low melodious thunders then they fade;
Their murmuring lullabies all ears invade;
Peace takes the Chair; the portal Silence keeps;
No motion stirs the dark Lethean deeps--
Washoe has spoken and the Senate sleeps.

II

Lo! the new Sharon with a new intent,
Making no laws, but keen to circumvent
The laws of Nature (since he can't repeal)
That break his failing body on the wheel.
As Tantalus again and yet again
The elusive wave endeavors to restrain
To slake his awful thirst, so Sharon tries
To purchase happiness that age denies;
Obtains the shadow, but the substance goes,
And hugs the thorn, but cannot keep the rose;
For Dead Sea fruits bids prodigally, eats,
And then, with tardy reformation--cheats.
Alert his faculties as three score years
And four score vices will permit, he nears--
Dicing with Death--the finish of the game,
And curses still his candle's wasting flame,
The narrow circle of whose feeble glow
Dims and diminishes at every throw.
Moments his losses, pleasures are his gains,
Which even in his grasp revert to pains.
The joy of grasping them alone remains.

III

Ring up the curtain and the play protract!
Behold our Sharon in his last mad act.
With man long warring, quarreling with God,
He crouches now beneath a woman's rod
Predestined for his back while yet it lay
Closed in an acorn which, one luckless day,
He stole, unconscious of its foetal twig,

From the scant garner of a sightless pig.
With bleeding shoulders pitilessly scored,
He bawls more lustily than once he snored.
The sympathetic Comstocks droop to hear,
And Carson river sheds a viscous tear,
Which sturdy tumble-bugs assail amain,
With ready thrift, and urge along the plain.
The jackass rabbit sorrows as he lopes;
The sage-brush glooms along the mountain slopes;
In rising clouds the poignant alkali,
Tearless itself, makes everybody cry.
Washoe canaries on the Geiger Grade
Subdue the singing of their cavalcade,
And, wiping with their ears the tears unshed,
Grieve for their family's unlucky head.
Virginia City intermits her trade
And well-clad strangers walk her streets unflayed.
Nay, all Nevada ceases work to weep
And the recording angel goes to sleep.
But in his dreams his goose-quill's creaking fount
Augments the debits in the long account.
And still the continents and oceans ring
With royal torments of the Silver King!
Incessant bellowings fill all the earth,
Mingled with inextinguishable mirth.
He roars, men laugh, Nevadans weep, beasts howl,
Plash the affrighted fish, and shriek the fowl!
With monstrous din their blended thunders rise,
Peal upon peal, and brawl along the skies,
Startle in hell the Sharons as they groan,
And shake the splendors of the great white throne!
Still roaring outward through the vast profound,
The spreading circles of receding sound
Pursue each other in a failing race
To the cold confines of eternal space;
There break and die along that awful shore
Which God's own eyes have never dared explore--
Dark, fearful, formless, nameless evermore!

Look to the west! Against yon steely sky
Lone Mountain rears its holy cross on high.
About its base the meek-faced dead are laid
To share the benediction of its shade.
With crossed white hands, shut eyes and formal feet,
Their nights are innocent, their days discreet.
Sharon, some years, perchance, remain of life--
Of vice and greed, vulgarity and strife;
And then--God speed the day if such His will--
You'll lie among the dead you helped to kill,
And be in good society at last,
Your purse unsilvered and your face unbrassed.

A MAN

Pennoyer, Governor of Oregon,

Casting to South his eye across the bourne
Of his dominion (where the Palmiped,
With leathers 'twixt his toes, paddles his marsh,
Amphibious) saw a rising cloud of hats,
And heard a faint, far sound of distant cheers
Below the swell of the horizon. "Lo,"
Cried one, "the President! the President!"
All footed webwise then took up the word--
The hill tribes and the tribes lacustrine and
The folk riparian and littoral,
Cried with one voice: "The President! He comes!"
And some there were who flung their headgear up
In emulation of the Southern mob;
While some, more soberly disposed, stood still
And silently had fits; and others made
Such reverent genuflexions as they could,
Having that climate in their bones. Then spake
The Court Dunce, humbly, as became him: "Sire,
If thou, as heretofore thou hast, wilt deign
To reap advantage of a fool's advice
By action ordered after nature's way,
As in thy people manifest (for still
Stupidity's the only wisdom) thou
Wilt get thee straight unto to the border land
To mark the President's approach with such
Due, decent courtesy as it shall seem
We have in custom the best warrant for."

Pennoyer, Governor of Oregon,
Eyeing the storm of hats which darkened all
The Southern sky, and hearing far hurrahs
Of an exulting people, answered not.
Then some there were who fell upon their knees,
And some upon their Governor, and sought
Each in his way, by blandishment or force,
To gain his action to their end. "Behold,"
They said, "thy brother Governor to South
Met him even at the gateway of his realm,
Crook-kneed, magnetic-handed and agrin,
Backed like a rainbow--all things done in form
Of due observance and respect. Shall we
Alone of all his servitors refuse
Swift welcome to our master and our lord?"

Pennoyer, Governor of Oregon,
Answered them not, but turned his back to them
And as if speaking to himself, the while
He started to retire, said: "He be damned!"

To that High Place o'er Portland's central block,
Where the Recording Angel stands to view
The sinning world, nor thinks to move his feet
Aside and look below, came flocking up
Inferior angels, all aghast, and cried:
"Pennoyer, Governor of Oregon,
Has said, O what an awful word!--too bad
To be by us repeated!" "Yes, I know,"
Said the superior bird--"I heard it too,
And have already booked it. Pray observe."

Splitting the giant tome, whose covers fell
Apart, o'ershadowing to right and left
The Eastern and the Western world, he showed
The newly written entry, black and big,
Upon the credit side of thine account,
Pennoyer, Governor of Oregon.

Y'E FOE TO CATHAYE

O never an oathe sweares he,
And never a pig-taile jerkes;
With a brick-batte he ne lurkes
For to buste y'e crust, perdie,
Of y'e man from over sea,
A-synging as he werkes.
For he knows ful well, y's youth,
A tricke of exceeding worth:
And he plans withouten ruth
A conflagration's birth!

SAMUEL SHORTRIDGE

Like a worn mother he attempts in vain
To still the unruly Crier of his brain:
The more he rocks the cradle of his chin
The more uproarious grows the brat within.

SURPRISED

"O son of mine age, these eyes lose their fire:
Be eyes, I pray, to thy dying sire."

"O father, fear not, for mine eyes are bright--
I read through a millstone at dead of night."

"My son, O tell me, who are those men,
Rushing like pigs to the feeding-pen?"

"Welcomers they of a statesman grand.
They'll shake, and then they will pocket; his hand."

"Sagacious youth, with the wondrous eye,
They seem to throw up their headgear. Why?"

"Because they've thrown up their hands until, O,
They're so tired!--and dinners they've none to throw."

"My son, my son, though dull are mine ears,
I hear a great sound like the people's cheers."

"He's thanking them, father, with tears in his eyes,
For giving him lately that fine surprise."

"My memory fails as I near mine end;
How _did_ they astonish their grateful friend?"

"By letting him buy, like apples or oats,
With that which has made him so good, the votes
Which make him so wise and grand and great.
Now, father, please die, for 'tis growing late."

POSTERITY'S AWARD

I'd long been dead, but I returned to earth.
Some small affairs posterity was making
A mess of, and I came to see that worth
Received its dues. I'd hardly finished waking,
The grave-mould still upon me, when my eye
Perceived a statue standing straight and high.

'Twas a colossal figure--bronze and gold--
Nobly designed, in attitude commanding.
A toga from its shoulders, fold on fold,
Fell to the pedestal on which 'twas standing.
Nobility it had and splendid grace,
And all it should have had--except a face!

It showed no features: not a trace nor sign
Of any eyes or nose could be detected--
On the smooth oval of its front no line
Where sites for mouths are commonly selected.
All blank and blind its faulty head it reared.
Let this be said: 'twas generously eared.

Seeing these things, I straight began to guess
For whom this mighty image was intended.
"The head," I cried, "is Upton's, and the dress
Is Parson Bartlett's own." True, _his_ cloak ended
Flush with his lowest vertebra, but no
Sane sculptor ever made a toga so.

Then on the pedestal these words I read:
"_Erected Eighteen Hundred Ninety-seven_"
(Saint Christofer! how fast the time had sped!
Of course it naturally does in Heaven)
"_To_ ----" (here a blank space for the name began)
"_The Nineteenth Century's Great Foremost Man_!"

"_Completed_" the inscription ended, "_in
The Year Three Thousand_"--which was just arriving.
By Jove! thought I, 'twould make the founders grin
To learn whose fame so long has been surviving--

To read the name posterity will place
In that blank void, and view the finished face.

Even as I gazed, the year Three Thousand came,
And then by acclamation all the people
Decreed whose was our century's best fame;
Then scaffolded the statue like a steeple,
To make the likeness; and the name was sunk
Deep in the pedestal's metallic trunk.

Whose was it? Gentle reader, pray excuse
The seeming rudeness, but I can't consent to
Be so forehanded with important news.
'Twas neither yours nor mine--let that content you.
If not, the name I must surrender, which,
Upon a dead man's word, was George K. Fitch!

AN ART CRITIC

Ira P. Rankin, you've a nasal name--
I'll sound it through "the speaking-trump of fame,"
And wondering nations, hearing from afar
The brazen twang of its resounding jar,
Shall say: "These bards are an uncommon class--
They blow their noses with a tube of brass!"
Rankin! ye gods! if Influenza pick
Our names at christening, and such names stick,
Let's all be born when summer suns withstand
Her prevalence and chase her from the land,
And healing breezes generously help
To shield from death each ailing human whelp!
"What's in a name?" There's much at least in yours
That the pained ear unwillingly endures,
And much to make the suffering soul, I fear,
Envy the lesser anguish of the ear.

So you object to Cytherea! Do,
The picture was not painted, sir, for you!
Your mind to gratify and taste address,
The masking dove had been a dove the less.
Provincial censor! all untaught in art,
With mind indecent and indecent heart,
Do you not know--nay, why should I explain?
Instruction, argument alike were vain--
I'll show you reasons when you show me brain.

THE SPIRIT OF A SPONGE

I dreamed one night that Stephen Massett died,
And for admission up at Heaven applied.
"Who are you?" asked St. Peter. Massett said:

"Jeems Pipes, of Pipesville." Peter bowed his head,
Opened the gates and said: "I'm glad to know you,
And wish we'd something better, sir, to show you."
"Don't mention it," said Stephen, looking bland,
And was about to enter, hat in hand,
When from a cloud below such fumes arose
As tickled tenderly his conscious nose.
He paused, replaced his hat upon his head,
Turned back and to the saintly warden said,
O'er his already sprouting wings: "I swear
I smell some broiling going on down there!"
So Massett's paunch, attracted by the smell,
Followed his nose and found a place in Hell.

ORNITHANTHROPOS

"Let John P. Irish rise!" the edict rang
As when Creation into being sprang!
Nature, not clearly understanding, tried
To make a bird that on the air could ride.
But naught could baffle the creative plan--
Despite her efforts 'twas almost a man.
Yet he had risen--to the bird a twin--
Had she but fixed a wing upon his chin.

TO E.S. SALOMON

Who in a Memorial Day oration protested bitterly against
decorating the graves of Confederate dead.

What! Salomon! such words from you,
Who call yourself a soldier? Well,
The Southern brother where he fell
Slept all your base oration through.

Alike to him--he cannot know
Your praise or blame: as little harm
Your tongue can do him as your arm
A quarter-century ago.

The brave respect the brave. The brave
Respect the dead; but you--you draw
That ancient blade, the ass's jaw,
And shake it o'er a hero's grave.

Are you not he who makes to-day
A merchandise of old renown
Which he persuades this easy town
He won in battle far away?

Nay, those the fallen who revile

Have ne'er before the living stood
And stoutly made their battle good
And greeted danger with a smile.

What if the dead whom still you hate
Were wrong? Are you so surely right?
We know the issue of the fight--
The sword is but an advocate.

Men live and die, and other men
Arise with knowledges diverse:
What seemed a blessing seems a curse,
And Now is still at odds with Then.

The years go on, the old comes back
To mock the new--beneath the sun.
Is nothing new; ideas run
Recurrent in an endless track.

What most we censure, men as wise
Have reverently practiced; nor
Will future wisdom fail to war
On principles we dearly prize.

We do not know--we can but deem,
And he is loyalest and best
Who takes the light full on his breast
And follows it throughout the dream.

The broken light, the shadows wide--
Behold the battle-field displayed!
God save the vanquished from the blade,
The victor from the victor's pride!

If, Salomon, the blessed dew
That falls upon the Blue and Gray
Is powerless to wash away
The sin of differing from you.

Remember how the flood of years
Has rolled across the erring slain;
Remember, too, the cleansing rain
Of widows' and of orphans' tears.

The dead are dead--let that atone:
And though with equal hand we strew
The blooms on saint and sinner too,
Yet God will know to choose his own.

The wretch, whate'er his life and lot,
Who does not love the harmless dead
With all his heart and all his head--
May God forgive him--I shall not.

When, Salomon, you come to quaff
The Darker Cup with meeker face,
I, loving you at last, shall trace
Upon your tomb this epitaph:

"Draw near, ye generous and brave--
Kneel round this monument and weep:
It covers one who tried to keep
A flower from a dead man's grave."

DENNIS KEARNEY

Your influence, my friend, has gathered head--
To east and west its tides encroaching spread.
There'll be, on all God's foot-stool, when they meet,
No clean spot left for God to set His feet.

FINIS AETERNITATIS

Strolling at sunset in my native land,
With fruits and flowers thick on either hand,
I crossed a Shadow flung athwart my way,
Emerging on a waste of rock and sand.

"The apples all are gone from here," I said,
"The roses perished and their spirits fled.
I will go back." A voice cried out: "The man
Is risen who eternally was dead!"

I turned and saw an angel standing there,
Newly descended from the heights of air.
Sweet-eyed compassion filled his face, his hands
A naked sword and golden trumpet bare.

"Nay, 'twas not death, the shadow that I crossed,"
I said. "Its chill was but a touch of frost.
It made me gasp, but quickly I came through,
With breath recovered ere it scarce was lost."

'Twas the same land! Remembered mountains thrust
Grayed heads asky, and every dragging gust,
In ashen valleys where my sons had reaped,
Stirred in familiar river-beds the dust.

Some heights, where once the traveler was shown
The youngest and the proudest city known,
Lifted smooth ridges in the steely light--
Bleak, desolate acclivities of stone.

Where I had worshiped at my father's tomb,
Within a massive temple's awful gloom,
A jackal slunk along the naked rock,
Affrighted by some prescience of doom.

Man's vestiges were nowhere to be found,

Save one brass mausoleum on a mound
(I knew it well) spared by the artist Time
To emphasize the desolation round.

Into the stagnant sea the sullen sun
Sank behind bars of crimson, one by one.
"Eternity's at hand!" I cried aloud.
"Eternity," the angel said, "is done.

For man is ages dead in every zone;
The angels all are dead but I alone;
The devils, too, are cold enough at last,
And God lies dead before the great white throne!

'Tis foreordained that I bestride the shore
When all are gone (as Gabriel did before,
When I had throttled the last man alive)
And swear Eternity shall be no more."

"O Azrael--O Prince of Death, declare
Why conquered I the grave?" I cried. "What rare,
Conspicuous virtues won this boon for me?"
"You've been revived," he said, "to hear me swear."

"Then let me creep again beneath the grass,
And knock thou at yon pompous tomb of brass.
If ears are what you want, Charles Crocker's there--
Betwixt the greatest ears, the greatest ass."

He rapped, and while the hollow echoes rang,
Out at the door a curst hyena sprang
And fled! Said Azrael: "His soul's escaped,"
And closed the brazen portal with a bang.

THE VETERAN

John Jackson, once a soldier bold,
Hath still a martial feeling;
So, when he sees a foe, behold!
He charges him--with stealing.

He cares not how much ground to-day
He gives for men to doubt him;
He's used to giving ground, they say,
Who lately fought with--out him.

When, for the battle to be won,
His gallantry was needed,
They say each time a loaded gun
Went off--so, likewise, he did.

And when discharged (for war's a sport
So hot he had to leave it)
He made a very loud report,
But no one did believe it.

AN "EXHIBIT"

Goldenson hanged! Well, Heaven forbid
That I should smile above him:
Though truth to tell, I never did
Exactly love him.

It can't be wrong, though, to rejoice
That his unpleasing capers
Are ended. Silent is his voice
In all the papers.

No longer he's a show: no more,
Bear-like, his den he's walking.
No longer can he hold the floor
When I'd be talking.

The laws that govern jails are bad
If such displays are lawful.
The fate of the assassin's sad,
But ours is awful!

What! shall a wretch condemned to die
In shame upon the gibbet
Be set before the public eye
As an "exhibit"?--

His looks, his actions noted down,
His words if light or solemn,
And all this hawked about the town--
So much a column?

The press, of course, will publish news
However it may get it;
But blast the sheriff who'll abuse
His powers to let it!

Nay, this is not ingratitude;
I'm no reporter, truly,
Nor yet an editor. I'm rude
Because unruly--

Because I burn with shame and rage
Beyond my power of telling
To see assassins in a cage
And keepers yelling.

"Walk up! Walk up!" the showman cries:
"Observe the lion's poses,
His stormy mane, his glooming eyes.
His--hold your noses!"

How long, O Lord, shall Law and Right
Be mocked for gain or glory,

And angels weep as they recite
The shameful story?

THE TRANSMIGRATIONS OF A SOUL

What! Pixley, must I hear you call the roll
Of all the vices that infest your soul?
Was't not enough that lately you did bawl
Your money-worship in the ears of all?[A]
Still must you crack your brazen cheek to tell
That though a miser you're a sot as well?
Still must I hear how low your taste has sunk--
From getting money down to getting drunk?[B]

Who worships money, damning all beside,
And shows his callous knees with pious pride,
Speaks with half-knowledge, for no man e'er scorns
His own possessions, be they coins or corns.
You've money, neighbor; had you gentle birth
You'd know, as now you never can, its worth.

You've money; learning is beyond your scope,
Deaf to your envy, stubborn to your hope.
But if upon your undeserving head
Science and letters had their glory shed;
If in the cavern of your skull the light
Of knowledge shone where now eternal night
Breeds the blind, poddy, vapor-fatted naughts
Of cerebation that you think are thoughts--
Black bats in cold and dismal corners hung
That squeak and gibber when you move your tongue--
You would not write, in Avarice's defense,
A senseless eulogy on lack of sense,
Nor show your eagerness to sacrifice
All noble virtues to one loathsome vice.

You've money; if you'd manners too you'd shame
To boast your weakness or your baseness name.
Appraise the things you have, but measure not
The things denied to your unhappy lot.
He values manners lighter than a cork
Who combs his beard at table with a fork.
Hare to seek sin and tortoise to forsake,
The laws of taste condemn you to the stake
To expiate, where all the world may see,
The crime of growing old disgracefully.

Religion, learning, birth and manners, too,
All that distinguishes a man from you,
Pray damn at will: all shining virtues gain
An added luster from a rogue's disdain.
But spare the young that proselyting sin,
A toper's apotheosis of gin.
If not our young, at least our pigs may claim
Exemption from the spectacle of shame!

Are you not he who lately out of shape
Blew a brass trumpet to denounce the grape?--
Who led the brave teetotalers afield
And slew your leader underneath your shield?--
Swore that no man should drink unless he flung
Himself across your body at the bung?
Who vowed if you'd the power you would fine
The Son of God for making water wine?

All trails to odium you tread and boast,
Yourself enamored of the dirtiest most.
One day to be a miser you aspire,
The next to wallow drunken in the mire;
The third, lo! you're a meritorious liar![C]
Pray, in the catalogue of all your graces,
Have theft and cowardice no honored places?

Yield thee, great Satan--here's a rival name
With all thy vices and but half thy shame!
Quick to the letter of the precept, quick
To the example of the elder Nick;
With as great talent as was e'er applied
To fool a teacher and to fog a guide;
With slack allegiance and boundless greed,
To paunch the profit of a traitor deed,
He aims to make thy glory all his own,
And crowd his master from the infernal throne!

[Footnote A: We are not writing this paragraph for any other purpose than to protest against this never ending cant, affectation, and hypocrisy about money. It is one of the best things in this world--better than religion, or good birth, or learning, or good manners.--_The Argonaut_.]

[Footnote B: Now, it just occurs to us that some of our temperance friends will take issue with us, and say that this is bad doctrine, and that it is ungentlemanly to get drunk under any circumstances or under any possible conditions. We do not think so.--_The same_.]

[Footnote C: The man or woman who, for the sake of benefiting others, protecting them in their lives, property, or reputation, sparing their feelings, contributing to their enjoyment, or increasing their pleasures, will tell a lie, deserves to be rewarded.--_The same_.]

AN ACTOR

Some one ('tis hardly new) has oddly said
The color of a trumpet's blare is red;
And Joseph Emmett thinks the crimson shame
On woman's cheek a trumpet-note of fame.
The more the red storm rises round her nose--

The more her eyes averted seek her toes,
He fancies all the louder he can hear
The tube resounding in his spacious ear,
And, all his varied talents to exert,
Darkens his dullness to display his dirt.
And when the gallery's indecent crowd,
And gentlemen below, with hisses loud,
In hot contention (these his art to crown,
And those his naked nastiness to drown)
Make such a din that cheeks erewhile aflame
Grow white and in their fear forget their shame,
With impudence imperial, sublime,
Unmoved, the patient actor bides his time,
Till storm and counter-storm are both allayed,
Like donkeys, each by t'other one outbrayed.
When all the place is silent as a mouse
One slow, suggestive gesture clears the house!

FAMINE'S REALM

To him in whom the love of Nature has
Imperfectly supplanted the desire
And dread necessity of food, your shore,
Fair Oakland, is a terror. Over all
Your sunny level, from Tamaletown
To where the Pestuary's fragrant slime,
With dead dogs studded, bears its ailing fleet,
Broods the still menace of starvation. Bones
Of men and women bleach along the ways
And pampered vultures sleep upon the trees.
It is a land of death, and Famine there
Holds sovereignty; though some there be her sway
Who challenge, and intrenched in larders live,
Drawing their sustentation from abroad.
But woe to him, the stranger! He shall die
As die the early righteous in the bud
And promise of their prime. He, venturesome
To penetrate the wilds rectangular
Of grass-grown ways luxuriant of blooms,
Frequented of the bee and of the blithe,
Bold squirrel, strays with heedless feet afar
From human habitation and is lost
In mid-Broadway. There hunger seizes him,
And (careless man! deeming God's providence
Extends so far) he has not wherewithal
To bate its urgency. Then, lo! appears
A mealery--a restaurant--a place
Where poison battles famine, and the two,
Like fish-hawks warring in the upper sky
For that which one has taken from the deep,
Manage between them to dispatch the prey.
He enters and leaves hope behind. There ends
His history. Anon his bones, clean-picked
By buzzards (with the bones himself had picked,
Incautious) line the highway. O, my friends,

Of all felonious and deadlywise
Devices of the Enemy of Souls,
Planted along the ways of life to snare
Man's mortal and immortal part alike,
The Oakland restaurant is chief. It lives
That man may die. It flourishes that life
May wither. Its foundation stones repose
On human hearts and hopes. I've seen in it
Crabs stewed in milk and salad offered up
With dressing so unholily compound
That it included flour and sugar! Yea,
I've eaten dog there!--dog, as I'm a man,
Dog seethed in sewage of the town! No more--
Thy hand, Dyspepsia, assumes the pen
And scrawls a tortured "Finis" on the page.

THE MACKAIAD

Mackay's hot wrath to Bonyng, direful spring
Of blows unnumbered, heavenly goddess, sing--
That wrath which hurled to Hellman's office floor
Two heroes, mutually smeared with gore,
Whose hair in handfuls marked the dire debate,
And riven coat-tails testified their hate.
Sing, muse, what first their indignation fired,
What words augmented it, by whom inspired.

First, the great Bonyng comes upon the scene
And asks the favor of the British Queen.
Suppliant he stands and urges all his claim:
His wealth, his portly person and his name,
His habitation in the setting sun,
As child of nature; and his suit he won.
No more the Sovereign, wearied with his plea,
From slumber's chain her faculties can free.
Low and more low the royal eyelids creep,
She gives the assenting nod and falls asleep.
Straightway the Bonynges all invade the Court
And telegraph the news to every port.
Beneath the seas, red-hot, the tidings fly,
The cables crinkle and the fishes fry!
The world, awaking like a startled bat,
Exclaims: "A Bonyng? What the devil's that?"
Mackay, meanwhile, to envy all attent,
Untaught to spare, unable to relent,
Walks in our town on needles and on pins,
And in a mean, revengeful spirit--grins!

Sing, muse, what next to break the peace occurred--
What act uncivil, what unfriendly word?
The god of Bosh ascending from his pool,
Where since creation he has played the fool,
Clove the blue slush, as other gods the sky,
And, waiting but a moment's space to dry,
Touched Bonyng with his finger-tip. "O son,"

He said, "alike of nature and a gun,
Knowest not Mackay's insufferable sin?
Hast thou not heard that he doth stand and grin?
Arise! assert thy manhood, and attest
The uncommercial spirit in thy breast.
Avenge thine honor, for by Jove I swear
Thou shalt not else be my peculiar care!"
He spake, and ere his worshiper could kneel
Had dived into his slush pool, head and heel.
Full of the god and to revenges nerved,
And conscious of a will that never swerved,
Bonyng set sail: the world beyond the wave
As gladly took him as the other gave.
New York received him, but a shudder ran
Through all the western coast, which knew the man;
And science said that the seismic action
Was owing to an asteroid's impaction.

O goddess, sing what Bonyng next essayed.
Did he unscabbard the avenging blade,
The long spear brandish and porrect the shield,
Havoc the town and devastate the field?
His sacred thirst for blood did he allay
By halving the unfortunate Mackay?
Small were the profit and the joy to him
To hew a base-born person, limb from limb.
Let vulgar souls to low revenge incline,
That of diviner spirits is divine.
Bonyng at noonday stood in public places
And (with regard to the Mackays) made faces!
Before those formidable frowns and scowls
The dogs fled, tail-tucked, with affrighted howls,
And horses, terrified, with flying feet
O'erthrew the apple-stands along the street,
Involving the metropolis in vast
Financial ruin! Man himself, aghast,
Retreated east and west and north and south
Before the menace of that twisted mouth,
Till Jove, in answer to their prayers, sent Night
To veil the dreadful visage from their sight!

Such were the causes of the horrid strife--
The mother-wrongs which nourished it to life.
O, for a quill from an archangel's wing!
O, for a voice that's adequate to sing
The splendor and the terror of the fray,
The scattered hair, the coat-tails all astray,
The parted collars and the gouts of gore
Reeking and smoking on the banker's floor,
The interlocking limbs, embraces dire,
Revolving bodies and deranged attire!

Vain, vain the trial: 'tis vouchsafed to none
To sing two millionaires rolled into one!
My hand and pen their offices refuse,
And hoarse and hoarser grows the weary muse.
Alone remains, to tell of the event,
Abandoned, lost and variously rent,
The Bonyng nethermost habiliment.

A SONG IN PRAISE

Hail, blessed Blunder! golden idol, hail!--
Clay-footed deity of all who fail.
Celestial image, let thy glory shine,
Thy feet concealing, but a lamp to mine.
Let me, at seasons opportune and fit,
By turns adore thee and by turns commit.
In thy high service let me ever be
(Yet never serve thee as my critics me)
Happy and fallible, content to feel
I blunder chiefly when to thee I kneel.
But best felicity is his thy praise
Who utters unaware in works and ways--
Who _laborare est orare_ proves,
And feels thy suasion wheresoe'er he moves,
Serving thy purpose, not thine altar, still,
And working, for he thinks it his, thy will.
If such a life with blessings be not fraught,
I envy Peter Robertson for naught.

A POET'S FATHER

Welcker, I'm told, can boast a father great
And honored in the service of the State.
Public Instruction all his mind employs--
He guides its methods and its wage enjoys.
Prime Pedagogue, imperious and grand,
He waves his ferule o'er a studious land
Where humming youth, intent upon the page,
Thirsting for knowledge with a noble rage,
Drink dry the whole Pierian spring and ask
To slake their fervor at his private flask.
Arrested by the terror of his frown,
The vaulting spit-ball drops untimely down;
The fly impaled on the tormenting pin
Stills in his awful glance its dizzy din;
Beneath that stern regard the chewing-gum
Which writhed and squeaked between the teeth is dumb;
Obedient to his will the dunce-cap flies
To perch upon the brows of the unwise;
The supple switch forsakes the parent wood
To settle where 'twill do the greatest good,
Puissant still, as when of old it strove
With Solomon for spitting on the stove
Learned Professor, variously great,
Guide, guardian, instructor of the State--
Quick to discern and zealous to correct
The faults which mar the public intellect
From where of Siskiyou the northern bound

Is frozen eternal to the sunless ground
To where in San Diego's torrid clime
The swarthy Greaser swelters in his grime--
Beneath your stupid nose can you not see
The dunce whom once you dandled on your knee?
O mighty master of a thousand schools,
Stop teaching wisdom, or stop breeding fools.

A COWARD

When Pickering, distressed by an "attack,"
Has the strange insolence to answer back
He hides behind a name that is a lie,
And out of shadow falters his reply.
God knows him, though--identified alike
By hardihood to rise and fear to strike,
And fitly to rebuke his sins decrees,
That, hide from others with what care he please,
Night sha'n't be black enough nor earth so wide
That from himself himself can ever hide!
Hard fate indeed to feel at every breath
His burden of identity till death!--
No moment's respite from the immortal load,
To think himself a serpent or a toad,
Or dream, with a divine, ecstatic glow,
He's long been dead and canonized a crow!

TO MY LIARS

Attend, mine enemies of all degrees,
From sandlot orators and sandlot fleas
To fallen gentlemen and rising louts
Who babble slander at your drinking bouts,
And, filled with unfamiliar wine, begin
Lies drowned, ere born, in more congenial gin.
But most attend, ye persons of the press
Who live (though why, yourselves alone can guess)
In hope deferred, ambitious still to shine
By hating me at half a cent a line--
Like drones among the bees of brighter wing,
Sunless to shine and impotent to sting.
To estimate in easy verse I'll try
The controversial value of a lie.
So lend your ears--God knows you have enough!--
I mean to teach, and if I can't I'll cuff.

A lie is wicked, so the priests declare;
But that to us is neither here nor there.
'Tis worse than wicked, it is vulgar too;
N'importe--with that we've nothing here to do.
If 'twere artistic I would lie till death,

And shape a falsehood with my latest breath.
Parrhasius never more did pity lack,
The while his model writhed upon the rack,
Than I for my collaborator's pain,
Who, stabbed with fibs again and yet again,
Would vainly seek to move my stubborn heart
If slander were, and wit were not, an art.
The ill-bred and illiterate can lie
As fast as you, and faster far than I.
Shall I compete, then, in a strife accurst
Where Allen Forman is an easy first,
And where the second prize is rightly flung
To Charley Shortridge or to Mike de Young?

In mental combat but a single end
Inspires the formidable to contend.
Not by the raw recruit's ambition fired,
By whom foul blows, though harmless, are admired;
Not by the coward's zeal, who, on his knee
Behind the bole of his protecting tree,
So curves his musket that the bark it fits,
And, firing, blows the weapon into bits;
But with the noble aim of one whose heart
Values his foeman for he loves his art
The veteran debater moves afield,
Untaught to libel as untaught to yield.
Dear foeman mine, I've but this end in view--
That to prevent which most you wish to do.
What, then, are you most eager to be at?
To hate me? Nay, I'll help you, sir, at that.
This only passion does your soul inspire:
You wish to scorn me. Well, you shall admire.

'Tis not enough my neighbors that you school
In the belief that I'm a rogue or fool;
That small advantage you would gladly trade
For what one moment would yourself persuade.
Write, then, your largest and your longest lie:
You sha'n't believe it, howsoe'er you try.
No falsehood you can tell, no evil do,
Shall turn me from the truth to injure you.
So all your war is barren of effect;
I find my victory in your respect.
What profit have you if the world you set
Against me? For the world will soon forget
It thought me this or that; but I'll retain
A vivid picture of your moral stain,
And cherish till my memory expire
The sweet, soft consciousness that you're a liar
Is it your triumph, then, to prove that you
Will do the thing that I would scorn to do?
God grant that I forever be exempt
From such advantage as my foe's contempt.

"PHIL" CRIMMINS

Still as he climbed into the public view
His charms of person more apparent grew,
Till the pleased world that watched his airy grace
Saw nothing of him but his nether face--
Forgot his follies with his head's retreat,
And blessed his virtues as it viewed their seat.

CODEx HONORIS

Jacob Jacobs, of Oakland, he swore:
"Dat Solomon Martin--I'll haf his gore!"
Solomon Martin, of Oakland, he said:
"Of Shacob Shacobs der bleed I vill shed!"
So they met, with seconds and surgeon at call,
And fought with pistol and powder and--all
Was done in good faith,--as before I said,
They fought with pistol and powder and--shed
Tears, O my friends, for each other they marred
Fighting with pistol and powder and--lard!
For the lead had been stolen away, every trace,
And Christian hog-product supplied its place.
Then the shade of Moses indignant arose:
"Quvicker dan lighdnings go vosh yer glose!"
Jacob Jacobs, of Oakland, they say,
Applied for a pension the following day.
Solomon Martin, of Oakland, I hear,
Will call himself Colonel for many a year.

TO W.H.L.B.

Refrain, dull orator, from speaking out,
For silence deepens when you raise the shout;
But when you hold your tongue we hear, at least,
Your noise in mastering that little beast.

EMANCIPATION

Behold! the days of miracle at last
Return--if ever they were truly past:
From sinful creditors' unholy greed
The church called Calvary at last is freed--
So called for there the Savior's crucified,
Roberts and Carmany on either side.

The circling contribution-box no more
Provokes the nod and simulated snore;

No more the Lottery, no more the Fair,
Lure the reluctant dollar from its lair,
Nor Ladies' Lunches at a bit a bite
Destroy the health yet spare the appetite,
While thrifty sisters o'er the cauldron stoop
To serve their God with zeal, their friends with soup,
And all the brethren mendicate the earth
With viewless placards: "We've been _so_ from birth!"

Sure of his wage, the pastor now can lend
His whole attention to his latter end,
Remarking with a martyr's prescient thrill
The Hemp maturing on the cheerless Hill.
The holy brethren, lifting pious palms,
Pour out their gratitude in prayer and psalms,
Chant _De Profundis_, meaning "out of debt,"
And dance like mad--or would if they were let.

Deeply disguised (a deacon newly dead
Supplied the means) Jack Satan holds his head
As high as any and as loudly sings
His _jubilate_ till each rafter rings.
"Rejoice, ye ever faithful," bellows he,
"The debt is lifted and the temple free!"
Then says, aside, with gentle cachination:
"I've got a mortgage on the congregation."

JOHNDONKEY

[There isn't a man living who does not have at least a
sneaking reverence for a horse-shoe.--_Evening Post_.]

Thus the poor ass whose appetite has ne'er
Known than the thistle any sweeter fare
Thinks all the world eats thistles. Thus the clown,
The wit and Mentor of the country town,
Grins through the collar of a horse and thinks
Others for pleasure do as he for drinks,
Though secretly, because unwilling still
In public to attest their lack of skill.
Each dunce whose life and mind all follies mar
Believes as he is all men living are--
His vices theirs, their understandings his;
Naught that he knows not, all he fancies, _is_.
How odd that any mind such stuff should boast!
How natural to write it in the _Post_!

HELL

The friends who stood about my bed
Looked down upon my face and said:

"God's will be done--the fellow's dead."

When from my body I was free
I straightway felt myself, ah me!
Sink downward to the life to be.

Full twenty centuries I fell,
And then alighted. "Here you dwell
For aye," a Voice cried--"this is Hell!"

A landscape lay about my feet,
Where trees were green and flowers sweet.
The climate was devoid of heat.

The sun looked down with gentle beam
Upon the bosom of the stream,
Nor saw I any sign of steam.

The waters by the sky were tinged,
The hills with light and color fringed.
Birds warbled on the wing unsinged.

"Ah, no, this is not Hell," I cried;
"The preachers ne'er so greatly lied.
This is Earth's spirit glorified!"

"Good souls do not in Hades dwell,
And, look, there's John P. Irish!" "Well,"
The Voice said, "that's what makes it Hell."

BY FALSE PRETENSES

John S. Hittell, whose sovereign genius wields
The quill his tributary body yields;
The author of an opera--that is,
All but the music and libretto's his:
A work renowned, whose formidable name,
Linked with his own, repels the assault of fame
From the high vantage of a dusty shelf,
Secure from all the world except himself;--
Who told the tale of "Culture" in a screed
That all might understand if some would read;--
Master of poesy and lord of prose,
Dowered, like a setter, with a double nose;
That one for Erato, for Clio this;
He flushes both--not his fault if we miss;--
Judge of the painter's art, who'll straight proclaim
The hue of any color you can name,
And knows a painting with a canvas back
Distinguished from a duck by the duck's quack;--
This thinker and philosopher, whose work
Is famous from Commercial street to Turk,
Has got a fortune now, his talent's meed.
A woman left it him who could not read,
And so went down to death's eternal night

Sweetly unconscious that the wretch could write.

LUCIFER OF THE TORCH

O Reverend Ravlin, once with sounding lung
You shook the bloody banner of your tongue,
Urged all the fiery boycotters afield
And swore you'd rather follow them than yield,
Alas, how brief the time, how great the change!--
Your dogs of war are ailing all of mangle;
The loose leash dangles from your finger-tips,
But the loud "havoc" dies upon your lips.
No spirit animates your feeble clay--
You'd rather yield than even run away.
In vain McGlashan labors to inspire
Your pallid nostril with his breath of fire:
The light of battle's faded from your face--
You keep the peace, John Chinaman his place.
O Ravlin, what cold water, thrown by whom
Upon the kindling Boycott's ruddy bloom,
Has slaked your parching blood-thirst and allayed
The flash and shimmer of your lingual blade?
Your salary--your salary's unpaid!

In the old days, when Christ with scourges drave
The Ravlins headlong from the Temple's nave,
Each bore upon his pelt the mark divine--
The Boycott's red authenticating sign.
Birth-marked forever in surviving hurts,
Glowing and smarting underneath their shirts,
Successive Ravlins have revenged their shame
By blowing every coal and flinging flame.
And you, the latest (may you be the last!)
Endorsed with that hereditary, vast
And monstrous rubric, would the feud prolong,
Save that cupidity forbids the wrong.
In strife you preferably pass your days--
But brawl no moment longer than it pays.
By shouting when no more you can incite
The dogs to put the timid sheep to flight
To load, for you, the brambles with their fleece,
You cackle concord to congenial geese,
Put pinches of goodwill upon their tails
And pluck them with a touch that never fails.

THE "WHIRLIGIG OF TIME"

Dr. Jewell speaks of Balaam
And his vices, to assail 'em.
Ancient enmities how cruel!--
Balaam cudgeled once a Jewell.

A RAILROAD LACKEY

Ben Truman, you're a genius and can write,
Though one would not suspect it from your looks.
You lack that certain spareness which is quite
Distinctive of the persons who make books.
You show the workmanship of Stanford's cooks
About the region of the appetite,
Where geniuses are singularly slight.
Your friends the Chinamen are understood,
Indeed, to speak of you as "belly good."

Still, you can write--spell, too, I understand--
Though how two such accomplishments can go,
Like sentimental schoolgirls, hand in hand
Is more than ever I can hope to know.
To have one talent good enough to show
Has always been sufficient to command
The veneration of the brilliant band
Of railroad scholars, who themselves, indeed,
Although they cannot write, can mostly read.

There's Towne and Fillmore, Goodman and Steve Gage,
Ned Curtis of Napoleonic face,
Who used to dash his name on glory's page
"A.M." appended to denote his place
Among the learned. Now the last faint trace
Of Nap. is all obliterate with age,
And Ned's degree less precious than his wage.
He says: "I done it," with his every breath.
"Thou canst not say I did it," says Macbeth.

Good land! how I run on! I quite forgot
Whom this was meant to be about; for when
I think upon that odd, unearthly lot--
Not quite Creedhaymonds, yet not wholly men--
I'm dominated by my rebel pen
That, like the stubborn bird from which 'twas got,
Goes waddling forward if I will or not.
To leave your comrades, Ben, I'm now content:
I'll meet them later if I don't repent.

You've writ a letter, I observe--nay, more,
You've published it--to say how good you think
The coolies, and invite them to come o'er
In thicker quantity. Perhaps you drink
No corporation's wine, but love its ink;
Or when you signed away your soul and swore
On railroque battle-fields to shed your gore
You mentally reserved the right to shed
The raiment of your character instead.

You're naked, anyhow: unragged you stand
In frank and stark simplicity of shame.

And here upon your flank, in letters grand,
The iron has marked you with your owner's name.
Needless, for none would steal and none reclaim.
But "Leland \$tanford" is a pretty brand,
Wrought by an artist with a cunning hand
But come--this naked unreserve is flat:
Don your habiliment--you're fat, you're fat!

THE LEGATEE

In fair San Francisco a good man did dwell,
And he wrote out a will, for he didn't feel well,
Said he: "It is proper, when making a gift,
To stimulate virtue by comforting thrift."

So he left all his property, legal and straight,
To "the cursedest rascal in all of the State."
But the name he refused to insert, for, said he;
"Let each man consider himself legatee."

In due course of time that philanthropist died,
And all San Francisco, and Oakland beside--
Save only the lawyers--came each with his claim
The lawyers preferring to manage the same.

The cases were tried in Department Thirteen,
Judge Murphy presided, sedate and serene,
But couldn't quite specify, legal and straight,
The cursedest rascal in all of the State.

And so he remarked to them, little and big--
To claimants: "You skip!" and to lawyers: "You dig!"
They tumbled, tumultuous, out of his court
And left him victorious, holding the fort.

'Twas then that he said: "It is plain to my mind
This property's ownerless--how can I find
The cursedest rascal in all of the State?"
So he took it himself, which was legal and straight.

"DIED OF A ROSE"

A reporter he was, and he wrote, wrote he:
"The grave was covered as thick as could be
With floral tributes"--which reading,
The editor man he said, he did so:
"For 'floral tributes' he's got for to go,
For I hold the same misleading."
Then he called him in and he pointed sweet
To a blooming garden across the street,
Inquiring: "What's them a-growing?"

The reporter chap said: "Why, where's your eyes?
Them's floral tributes!" "Arise, arise,"
The editor said, "and be going."

A LITERARY HANGMAN

Beneath his coat of dirt great Neilson loves
To hide the avenging rope.
He handles all he touches without gloves,
Excepting soap.

AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR

As through the blue expanse he skims
On joyous wings, the late
Frank Hutchings overtakes Miss Sims,
Both bound for Heaven's high gate.

In life they loved and (God knows why
A lover so should sue)
He slew her, on the gallows high
Died pious--and they flew.

Her pinions were bedraggled, soiled
And torn as by a gale,
While his were bright--all freshly oiled
The feathers of his tail.

Her visage, too, was stained and worn
And menacing and grim;
His sweet and mild--you would have sworn
That she had murdered him.

When they'd arrived before the gate
He said to her: "My dear,
'Tis hard once more to separate,
But you can't enter here.

"For you, unluckily, were sent
So quickly to the grave
You had no notice to repent,
Nor time your soul to save."

"'Tis true," said she, "and I should wail
In Hell even now, but I
Have lingered round the county jail
To see a Christian die."

A CONTROVERSIALIST

I've sometimes wished that Ingersoll were wise
To hold his tongue, nor rail against the skies;
For when he's made a point some pious dunce
Like Bartlett of the _Bulletin_ "replies."

I brandish no iconoclastic fist,
Nor enter the debate an atheist;
But when they say there is a God I ask
Why Bartlett, then, is suffered to exist.

Even infidels that logic might resent,
Saying: "There's no place for his punishment
That's worse than earth." But humbly I submit
That he would make a hell wherever sent.

MENDAX

High Lord of Liars, Pickering, to thee
Let meaner mortals bend the subject knee!
Thine is mendacity's imperial crown,
Alike by genius, action and renown.
No man, since words could set a cheek aflame
E'er lied so greatly with so little shame!
O bad old man, must thy remaining years
Be passed in leading idiots by their ears--
Thine own (which Justice, if she ruled the roast
Would fasten to the penitential post)
Still wagging sympathetically--hung
the same rocking-bar that bears thy tongue?

Thou dog of darkness, dost thou hope to stay
Time's dread advance till thou hast had thy day?
Dost think the Strangler will release his hold
Because, forsooth, some fibs remain untold?
No, no--beneath thy multiplying load
Of years thou canst not tarry on the road
To dabble in the blood thy leaden feet
Have pressed from bosoms that have ceased to beat
Of reputations margining thy way,
Nor wander from the path new truth to slay.
Tell to thyself whatever lies thou wilt,
Catch as thou canst at pennies got by guilt--
Straight down to death this blessed year thou'lt sink,
Thy life washed out as with a wave of ink.
But if this prophecy be not fulfilled,
And thou who killest patience be not killed;
If age assail in vain and vice attack
Only by folly to be beaten back;
Yet Nature can this consolation give:
The rogues who die not are condemned to live!

THE RETROSPECTIVE BIRD

His caw is a cackle, his eye is dim,
And he mopes all day on the lowest limb;
Not a word says he, but he snaps his bill
And twitches his palsied head, as a quill,
The ultimate plume of his pride and hope,
Quits his now featherless nose-of-the-Pope,
Leaving that eminence brown and bare
Exposed to the Prince of the Power of the Air.
And he sits and he thinks: "I'm an old, old man,
Mateless and chickless, the last of my clan,
But I'd give the half of the days gone by
To perch once more on the branches high,
And hear my great-grand-daddy's comical croaks
In authorized versions of _Bulletin_ jokes."

THE OAKLAND DOG

I lay one happy night in bed
And dreamed that all the dogs were dead.
They'd all been taken out and shot--
Their bodies strewed each vacant lot.

O'er all the earth, from Berkeley down
To San Leandro's ancient town,
And out in space as far as Niles--
I saw their mortal parts in piles.

One stack upreared its ridge so high
Against the azure of the sky
That some good soul, with pious views,
Put up a steeple and sold pews.

No wagging tail the scene relieved:
I never in my life conceived
(I swear it on the Decalogue!)
Such penury of living dog.

The barking and the howling stilled,
The snarling with the snarler killed,
All nature seemed to hold its breath:
The silence was as deep as death.

True, candidates were all in roar
On every platform, as before;
And villains, as before, felt free
To finger the calliope.

True, the Salvationist by night,
And milkman in the early light,
The lonely flutist and the mill

Performed their functions with a will.

True, church bells on a Sunday rang
The sick man's curtain down--the bang
Of trains, contesting for the track,
Out of the shadow called him back.

True, cocks, at all unheavenly hours,
Crew with excruciating powers,
Cats on the woodshed rang and roared,
Fat citizens and fog-horns snored.

But this was all too fine for ears
Accustomed, through the awful years,
To the nocturnal monologues
And day debates of Oakland dogs.

And so the world was silent. Now
What else befell--to whom and how?
Imprimis, then, there were no fleas,
And days of worth brought nights of ease.

Men walked about without the dread
Of being torn to many a shred,
Each fragment holding half a cruse
Of hydrophobia's quickening juice.

They had not to propitiate
Some curst kioodle at each gate,
But entered one another's grounds,
Unscared, and were not fed to hounds.

Women could drive and not a pup
Would lift the horse's tendons up
And let them go--to interject
A certain musical effect.

Even children's ponies went about,
All grave and sober-paced, without
A bulldog hanging to each nose--
Proud of his fragrance, I suppose.

Dog being dead, Man's lawless flame
Burned out: he granted Woman's claim,
Children's and those of country, art--
all took lodgings in his heart.

When memories of his former shame
Crimsoned his cheeks with sudden flame
He said; "I know my fault too well--
They fawned upon me and I fell."

Ah! 'twas a lovely world!--no more
I met that indisposing bore,
The unseraphic cynogogue--
The man who's proud to love a dog.

Thus in my dream the golden reign
Of Reason filled the world again,

And all mankind confessed her sway,
From Walnut Creek to San Jose.

THE UNFALLEN BRAVE

Not all in sorrow and in tears,
To pay of gratitude's arrears
The yearly sum--
Not prompted, wholly by the pride
Of those for whom their friends have died,
To-day we come.

Another aim we have in view
Than for the buried boys in blue
To drop a tear:
Memorial Day revives the chin
Of Barnes, and Salomon chimes in--
That's why we're here.

And when in after-ages they
Shall pass, like mortal men, away,
Their war-song sung,
Then fame will tell the tale anew
Of how intrepidly they drew
The deadly tongue.

Then cull white lilies for the graves
Of Liberty's loquacious braves,
And roses red.
Those represent their livers, these
The blood that in unmeasured seas
They did not shed.

A CELEBRATED CASE

Way down in the Boom Belt lived Mrs. Roselle;
A person named Petrie, he lived there as well;
But Mr. Roselle he resided away--
Sing tooral iooral iooral iay.

Once Mrs. Roselle in her room was alone:
The flesh of her flesh and the bone of her bone
Neglected the wife of his bosom to woo--
Sing tooral iooral iooral ioo.

Then Petrie, her lover, appeared at the door,
Remarking: "My dear; I don't love you no more."
"That's awfully rough," said the lady, "on me--
Sing tooral iooral iooral iee."

"Come in, Mr. Petrie," she added, "pray do:

Although you don't love me no more, I love you.
Sit down while I spray you with vitriol now--
Sing tooral iooral iooral iow."

Said Petrie: "That liquid I know won't agree
With my beauty, and then you'll no longer love me;
So spray and be "--O, what a word he did say!--
Sing tooral iooral iooral iay.

She deluged his head and continued to pour
Till his bonny blue eyes, like his love, were no more.
It was seldom he got such a hearty shampoo--
Sing tooral iooral iooral ioo.

Then Petrie he rose and said: "Mrs. Roselle,
I have an engagement and bid you farewell."
"You see," she began to explain--but not he!--
Sing tooral, iooral, iooral iee.

The Sheriff he came and he offered his arm,
Saying, "Sorry I am for disturbin' you, marm,
But business is business." Said she, "So they say--
Sing tooral, iooral, iooral iay."

The Judge on the bench he looked awfully stern;
The District Attorney began to attorn;
The witnesses lied and the lawyers--O my!--
Sing tooral, iooral, iooral iyi.

The chap that defended her said: "It's our claim
That he loved us no longer and told us the same.
What else than we did could we decently do?--
Sing tooral, iooral, iooral ioo."

The District Attorney, sarcastic, replied:
"We loved you no longer--that can't be denied.
Not having no eyes we may dote on you now--
Sing tooral, iooral, iooral iow."

The prisoner wept to entoken her fears;
The sockets of Petrie were flooded with tears.
O heaven-born Sympathy, bully for you!--
Sing tooral, iooral, iooral ioo.

Four jurors considered the prisoner mad,
And four thought her victim uncommonly bad,
And four that the acid was all in his eye--
Sing rum tiddy iddity iddity hi.

COUPLETS

Intended for Inscription on a Sword Presented to Colonel
Cutting of the National Guard of California.

I am for Cutting. I'm a blade

Designed for use at dress parade.
My gleaming length, when I display
Peace rules the land with gentle sway;
But when the war-dogs bare their teeth
Go seek me in the modest sheath.
I am for Cutting. Not for me
The task of setting nations free.
Let soulless blades take human life,
My softer metal shuns the strife.
The annual review is mine,
When gorgeous shopmen sweat and shine,
And Biddy, tip-toe on the pave,
Adores the cobble-trotting brave.
I am for Cutting. 'Tis not mine
To hew amain the hostile line;
Not mine all pitiless to spread
The plain with tumuli of dead.
My grander duty lies afar
From haunts of the insane hussar,
Where charging horse and struggling foot
Are grimed alike with cannon-soot.
When Loveliness and Valor meet
Beneath the trees to dance, and eat,
And sing, and much beside, behold
My golden glories all unfold!
There formidably are displayed
The useful horrors of my blade
In time of feast and dance and ballad,
I am for cutting chicken salad.

A RETORT

As vicious women think all men are knaves,
And shrew-bound gentlemen discourse of slaves;
As reeling drunkards judge the world unsteady
And idlers swear employers ne'er get ready--
Thieves that the constable stole all they had,
The mad that all except themselves are mad;
So, in another's clear escutcheon shown,
Barnes rails at stains reflected from his own;
Prates of "docility," nor feels the dark
Ring round his neck--the Ralston collar mark.
Back, man, to studies interrupted once,
Ere yet the rogue had merged into the dunce.
Back, back to Yale! and, grown with years discreet,
The course a virgin's lust cut short, complete.
Go drink again at the Pierian pool,
And learn--at least to better play the fool.
No longer scorn the draught, although the font,
Unlike Pactolus, waters not Belmont.

A VISION OF RESURRECTION

I had a dream. The habitable earth--
Its continents and islands, all were bare
Of cities and of forests. Naught remained
Of its old aspect, and I only knew
(As men know things in dreams, unknowing how)
That this was earth and that all men were dead.
On every side I saw the barren land,
Even to the distant sky's inclosing blue,
Thick-pitted all with graves; and all the graves
Save one were open--not as newly dug,
But rather as by some internal force
Riven for egress. Tombs of stone were split
And wide agape, and in their iron decay
The massive mausoleums stood in halves.
With mildewed linen all the ground was white.
Discarded shrouds upon memorial stones
Hung without motion in the soulless air.
While greatly marveling how this should be
I heard, or fancied that I heard, a voice,
Low like an angel's, delicately strong,
And sweet as music.

--"Spirit," it said, "behold
The burial place of universal Man!
A million years have rolled away since here
His sheeted multitudes (save only some
Whose dark misdeeds required a separate
And individual arraignment) rose
To judgment at the trumpet's summoning
And passed into the sky for their award,
Leaving behind these perishable things
Which yet, preserved by miracle, endure
Till all are up. Then they and all of earth,
Rock-hearted mountain and storm-breasted sea,
River and wilderness and sites of dead
And vanished capitals of men, shall spring
To flame, and naught shall be for evermore!
When all are risen that wonder will occur.
'Twas but ten centuries ago the last
But one came forth--a soul so black with sin,
Against whose name so many crimes were set
That only now his trial is at end.
But one remains."

Straight, as the voice was stilled--
That single rounded mound cracked lengthwise
And one came forth in grave-clothes. For a space
He stood and gazed about him with a smile
Superior; then laying off his shroud
Disclosed his two attenuated legs
Which, like parentheses, bent outwardly
As by the weight of saintliness above,
And so sprang upward and was lost to view
Noting his headstone overthrown, I read:
"Sacred to memory of George K. Fitch,
Deacon and Editor--a holy man
Who fell asleep in Jesus, full of years

And blessedness. The dead in Christ rise first."

MASTER OF THREE ARTS

Your various talents, Goldenson, command
Respect: you are a poet and can draw.
It is a pity that your gifted hand
Should ever have been raised against the law.
If you had drawn no pistol, but a picture,
You would have saved your throttle from a stricture.

About your poetry I'm not so sure:
'Tis certain we have much that's quite as bad,
Whose hardy writers have not to endure
The hangman's fondling. It is said they're mad:
Though lately Mr. Brooks (I mean the poet)
Looked well, and if demented didn't show it.

Well, Goldenson, I am a poet, too--
Taught by the muses how to smite the harp
And lift the tuneful voice, although, like you
And Brooks, I sometimes flat and sometimes sharp.
But let me say, with no desire to taunt you,
I never murder even the girls I want to.

I hold it one of the poetic laws
To sing of life, not take. I've ever shown
A high regard for human life because
I have such trouble to support my own.
And you--well, you'll find trouble soon in blowing
Your private coal to keep it red and glowing.

I fancy now I see you at the Gate
Approach St. Peter, crawling on your belly,
You cry: "Good sir, take pity on my state--
Forgive the murderer of Mamie Kelly!"
And Peter says: "O, that's all right--but, mister,
You scribbled rhymes. In Hell I'll make you
blister!"

THERSITES

So, in the Sunday papers __you__, Del Mar,
Damn, all great Englishmen in English speech?
I am no Englishman, but in my reach
A rogue shall never rail where heroes are.

You are the man, if I mistake you not,
Who lately with a supplicating twitch
Plucked at the pockets of the London rich
And paid your share-engraver all you got.

Because that you have greatly lied, because
You libel nations, and because no hand
Of officer is raised to bid you stand,
And falsehood is unpunished of the laws,

I stand here in a public place to mark
With level finger where you part the crowd--
I stand to name you and to cry aloud:
"Behold mendacity's great hierarch!"

A SOCIETY LEADER

"The Social World"! O what a world it is--
Where full-grown men cut capers in the German,
Cotillion, waltz, or what you will, and whizz
And spin and hop and sprawl about like mermen!
I wonder if our future Grant or Sherman,
As these youths pass their time, is passing his--
If eagles ever come from painted eggs,
Or deeds of arms succeed to deeds of legs.

I know they tell us about Waterloo:
How, "foremost fighting," fell the evening's
dancers.
I don't believe it: I regard it true
That soldiers who are skillful in "the Lancers"
Less often die of cannon than of cancers.
Moreover, I am half-persuaded, too,
That David when he danced before the Ark
Had the reporter's word to keep it dark.

Ed. Greenway, you fatigue. Your hateful name
Like maiden's curls, is in the papers daily.
You think it, doubtless, honorable fame,
And contemplate the cheap distinction gaily,
As does the monkey the blue-painted tail he
Believes becoming to him. 'Tis the same
With men as other monkeys: all their souls
Crave eminence on any kind of poles.
But cynics (barking tribe!) are all agreed
That monkeys upon poles performing capers
Are not exalted, they are only "treed."
A glory that is kindled by the papers
Is transient as the phosphorescent vapors
That shine in graveyards and are seen, indeed,
But while the bodies that supply the gas
Are turning into weeds to feed an ass.

One can but wonder sometimes how it feels
To be an ass--a beast we beat condignly
Because, like yours, his life is in his heels
And he is prone to use them unbenignly.
The ladies (bless them!) say you dance divinely.
I like St. Vitus better, though, who deals

His feet about him with a grace more just,
And hops, not for he will, but for he must.

Doubtless it gratifies you to observe
Elbowy girls and adipose mamas
All looking adoration as you swerve
This way and that; but prosperous papas
Laugh in their sleeves at you, and their ha-has,
If heard, would somewhat agitate your nerve.
And dames and maids who keep you on their
shelves
Don't seem to want a closer tie themselves.

Gods! what a life you live!--by day a slave
To your exacting back and urgent belly;
Intent to earn and vigilant to save--
By night, attired so sightly and so smelly,
With countenance as luminous as jelly,
Bobbing and bowing! King of hearts and knave
Of diamonds, I'd bet a silver brick
If brains were trumps you'd never take a trick.

EXPOSITOR VERITATIS

I Slept, and, waking in the years to be,
Heard voices, and approaching whence they came,
Listened indifferently where a key
Had lately been removed. An ancient dame
Said to her daughter: "Go to yonder caddy
And get some emery to scour your daddy."

And then I knew--some intuition said--
That tombs were not and men had cleared their shelves
Of urns; and the electro-plated dead
Stood pedestaled as statues of themselves.
With famous dead men all the public places
Were thronged, and some in piles awaited bases.

One mighty structure's high facade alone
Contained a single monumental niche,
Where, central in that steep expanse of stone,
Gleamed the familiar form of Thomas Fitch.
A man cried: "Lo! Truth's temple and its founder!"
Then gravely added: "I'm her chief expounder."

TO "COLONEL" DAN. BURNS

They say, my lord, that you're a Warwick. Well,
The title's an absurd one, I believe:
You make no kings, you have no kings to sell,
Though really 'twere easy to conceive

You stuffing half-a-dozen up your sleeve.
No, you're no Warwick, skillful from the shell
To hatch out sovereigns. On a mare's nest, maybe,
You'd incubate a little jackass baby.

I fancy, too, that it is naught but stuff,
This "power" that you're said to be "behind
The throne." I'm sure 'twere accurate enough
To represent you simply as inclined
To push poor Markham (ailing in his mind
And body, which were never very tough)
Round in an invalid's wheeled chair. Such menial
Employment to low natures is congenial.

No, Dan, you're an impostor every way:
A human bubble, for "the earth," you know,
"Hath bubbles, as the water hath." Some day
Some careless hand will prick your film, and O,
How utterly you'll vanish! Daniel, throw
(As fallen Woolsey might to Cromwell say)
Your curst ambition to the pigs--though truly
'Twould make them greater pigs, and more unruly.

GEORGE A. KNIGHT

Attorney Knight, it happens so sometimes
That lawyers, justifying cut-throats' crimes
For hire--calumniating, too, for gold,
The dead, dumb victims cruelly unsouled--
Speak, through the press, to a tribunal far
More honorable than their Honors are,--
A court that sits not with assenting smile
While living rogues dead gentleman revile,--
A court where scoundrel ethics of your trade
Confuse no judgment and no cheating aid,--
The Court of Honest Souls, where you in vain
May plead your right to falsify for gain,
Sternly reminded if a man engage
To serve assassins for the liar's wage,
His mouth with vilifying falsehoods crammed,
He's twice detestable and doubly damned!

Attorney Knight, defending Powell, you,
To earn your fee, so energetic grew
(So like a hound, the pride of all the pack,
Clapping your nose upon the dead man's track
To run his faults to earth--at least proclaim
At vacant holes the overtaken game)
That men who marked you nourishing the tongue,
And saw your arms so vigorously swung,
All marveled how so light a breeze could stir
So great a windmill to so great a whirr!
Little they knew, or surely they had grinned,
The mill was laboring to raise the wind.

Ralph Smith a "shoulder-striker"! God, O hear
This hardy man's description of thy dear
Dead child, the gentlest soul, save only One,
E'er born in any land beneath the sun.
All silent benefactions still he wrought:
High deed and gracious speech and noble thought,
Kept all thy law, and, seeking still the right,
Upon his blameless breast received the light.

"Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints," he cried
Whose wrath was deep as his comparison wide--
Milton, thy servant. Nay, thy will be done:
To smite or spare--to me it all is one.
Can vengeance bring my sorrow to an end,
Or justice give me back my buried friend?
But if some Milton vainly now implore,
And Powell prosper as he did before,
Yet 'twere too much that, making no ado,
Thy saints be slaughtered and be slandered too.
So, Lord, make Knight his weapon keep in sheath,
Or do Thou wrest it from between his teeth!

UNARMED

Saint Peter sat at the jasper gate,
When Stephen M. White arrived in state.

"Admit me." "With pleasure," Peter said,
Pleased to observe that the man was dead;

"That's what I'm here for. Kindly show
Your ticket, my lord, and in you go."

White stared in blank surprise. Said he
"I _run_ this place--just turn that key."

"Yes?" said the Saint; and Stephen heard
With pain the inflection of that word.

But, mastering his emotion, he
Remarked: "My friend, you're too d---- free;

"I'm Stephen M., by thunder, White!"
And, "Yes?" the guardian said, with quite

The self-same irritating stress
Distinguishing his former yes.

And still demurely as a mouse
He twirled the key to that Upper House.

Then Stephen, seeing his bluster vain
Admittance to those halls to gain,

Said, neighborly: "Pray tell me. Pete,

Does any one contest my seat?"

The Saint replied: "Nay, nay, not so;
But you voted always wrong below:

"Whate'er the question, clear and high
You're voice rang: ' _I _,' ' _I _,' ever ' _I _.'"

Now indignation fired the heart
Of that insulted immortal part.

"Die, wretch!" he cried, with blanching lip,
And made a motion to his hip,

With purpose murderous and hearty,
To draw the Democratic party!

He felt his fingers vainly slide
Upon his unappareled hide

(The dead arise from their "silent tents"
But not their late habiliments)

Then wailed--the briefest of his speeches:
"I've left it in my other breeches!"

A POLITICAL VIOLET

Come, Stanford, let us sit at ease
And talk as old friends do.
You talk of anything you please,
And I will talk of you.

You recently have said, I hear,
That you would like to go
To serve as Senator. That's queer!
Have you told William Stow?

Once when the Legislature said:
"Go, Stanford, and be great!"
You lifted up your Jovian head
And everlooked the State.

As one made leisurely awake,
You lightly rubbed your eyes
And answered: "Thank you--please to make
A note of my surprise.

"But who are they who skulk aside,
As to get out of reach,
And in their clothing strive to hide
Three thousand dollars each?

"Not members of your body, sure?
No, that can hardly be:

All statesmen, I suppose, are pure.
What! there are rogues? Dear me!"

You added, you'll recall, that though
You were surprised and pained,
You thought, upon the whole, you'd go,
And in that mind remained.

Now, what so great a change has wrought
That you so frankly speak
Of "seeking" honors once unsought
Because you "scorned to seek"?

Do you not fear the grave reproof
In good Creed Haymond's eye?
Will Stephen Gage not stand aloof
And pass you coldly by?

O, fear you not that Vrooman's lich
Will rise from earth and point
At you a scornful finger which
May lack, perchance, a joint?

Go, Stanford, where the violets grow,
And join their modest train.
Await the work of William Stow
And be surprised again.

THE SUBDUED EDITOR

Pope-choker Pixley sat in his den
A-chewin' upon his quid.
He thought it was Leo Thirteen, and then
He bit it intenser, he did.

The amber which overflow from the cud
Like rivers which burst out of bounds--
'Twas peculiar grateful to think it blood
A-gushin' from Papal wounds.

A knockin' was heard uponto the door
Where some one a-waitin' was.
"Come in," said the shedder of priestly gore,
Arrestin' to once his jaws.

The person which entered was curly of hair
And smilin' as ever you see;
His eyes was blue, and uncommon fair
Was his physiognomee.

And yet there was some'at remarkable grand--
And the editor says as he looks:
"Your Height" (it was Highness, you understand,
That he meant, but he spoke like books)--

"Your Height, I am in. I'm the editor man
Of this paper--which is to say,
I'm the owner, too, and it's always ran
In the independentest way!

"Not a damgaloot can interfere,
A-shapin' my course for me:
This paper's (and nothing can make it veer)
Pixleian in policee!"

"It's little to me," said the sunny youth,
"If journals is better or worse
Where I am to home they won't keep, in truth,
The climate is that perverse.

"I've come, howsomever, your mind to light
With a more superior fire:
You'll have naught hencefor'ard to do but write,
While I sets by and inspire.

"We'll make it hot all round, bedad!"
And his laughture was loud and free.
"The devil!" cried Pixley, surpassin' mad.
"Exactly, my friend--that's me."

So he took a chair and a feather fan,
And he sets and sets and sets,
Inspirin' that humbled editor man,
Which sweats and sweats and sweats!

All unavailin' his struggles be,
And it's, O, a weepin' sight
To see a great editor bold and free
Reducted to sech a plight!

"BLACK BART, Po8"

Welcome, good friend; as you have served your term,
And found the joy of crime to be a fiction,
I hope you'll hold your present faith, stand firm
And not again be open to conviction.

Your sins, though scarlet once, are now as wool:
You've made atonement for all past offenses,
And conjugated--'twas an awful pull!--
The verb "to pay" in all its moods and tenses.

You were a dreadful criminal--by Heaven,
I think there never was a man so sinful!
We've all a pinch or two of Satan's leaven,
But you appeared to have an even skinful.

Earth shuddered with aversion at your name;
Rivers fled backward, gravitation scorning;
The sea and sky, from thinking on your shame,

Grew lobster-red at eve and in the morning.

But still red-handed at your horrid trade
You wrought, to reason deaf, and to compassion.
But now with gods and men your peace is made
I beg you to be good and in the fashion.

What's that?--you "ne'er again will rob a stage"?
What! did you do so? Faith, I didn't know it.
Was _that_ what threw poor Themis in a rage?
I thought you were convicted as a poet!

I own it was a comfort to my soul,
And soothed it better than the deepest curses,
To think they'd got one poet in a hole
Where, though he wrote, he could not print, his verses.

I thought that Welcker, Plunkett, Brooks, and all
The ghastly crew who always are begriming
With villain couplets every page and wall,
Might be arrested and "run in" for rhyming.

And then Parnassus would be left to me,
And Pegasus should bear me up it gaily,
Nor down a steep place run into the sea,
As now he must be tempted to do daily.

Well, grab the lyre-strings, hearties, and begin:
Bawl your harsh souls all out upon the gravel.
I must endure you, for you'll never sin
By robbing coaches, until dead men travel.

A "SCION OF NOBILITY"

Come, sisters, weep!--our Baron dear,
Alas! has run away.
If always we had kept him here
He had not gone astray.

Painter and grainer it were vain
To say he was, before;
And if he were, yet ne'er again
He'll darken here a door.

We mourn each matrimonial plan--
Even tradesmen join the cry:
He was so promising a man
Whenever he did buy.

He was a fascinating lad,
Deny it all who may;
Even moneyed men confess he had
A very taking way.

So from our tables he is gone--

Our tears descend in showers;
We loved the very fat upon.
His kidneys, for 'twas ours.

To women he was all respect
To duns as cold as ice;
No lady could his suit reject,
No tailor get its price.

He raised our hope above the sky;
Alas! alack! and O!
That one who worked it up so high
Should play it down so low!

THE NIGHT OF ELECTION

"O venerable patriot, I pray
Stand not here coatless; at the break of day
We'll know the grand result--and even now
The eastern sky is faintly touched with gray.

"It ill befits thine age's hoary crown--
This rude environment of rogue and clown,
Who, as the lying bulletins appear,
With drunken cries incarnadine the town.

"But if with noble zeal you stay to note
The outcome of your patriotic vote
For Blaine, or Cleveland, and your native land,
Take--and God bless you!--take my overcoat."

"Done, pard--and mighty white of you. And now
guess the country'll keep the trail somehow.
I aint allowed to vote, the Warden said,
But whacked my coat up on old Stanislow."

THE CONVICTS' BALL

San Quentin was brilliant. Within the halls
Of the noble pile with the frowning walls
(God knows they've enough to make them frown,
With a Governor trying to break them down!)
Was a blaze of light. 'Twas the natal day
Of his nibs the popular John S. Gray,
And many observers considered his birth
The primary cause of his moral worth.
"The ball is free!" cried Black Bart, and they all
Said a ball with no chain was a novel ball;
"And I never have seed," said Jimmy Hope,
"Sech a lightsome dance withouten a rope."
Chinamen, Indians, Portuguese, Blacks,

Russians, Italians, Kanucks and Kanaks,
Chilenos, Peruvians, Mexicans--all
Greased with their presence that notable ball.
None were excluded excepting, perhaps,
The Rev. Morrison's churchly chaps,
Whom, to prevent a religious debate,
The Warden had banished outside of the gate.
The fiddler, fiddling his hardest the while,
"Called off" in the regular foot-hill style:
"Circle to the left!" and "Forward and back!"
And "Hellum to port for the stabbard tack!"
(This great _virtuoso_, it would appear,
Was Mate of the _Gatherer_ many a year.)
"_Ally man_ left!"--to a painful degree
His French was unlike to the French of Paree,
As heard from our countrymen lately abroad,
And his "_doe cee doe_" was the gem of the fraud.
But what can you hope from a gentleman barred
From circles of culture by dogs in the yard?
'Twas a glorious dance, though, all the same,
The Jardin Mabilie in the days of its fame
Never saw legs perform such springs--
The cold-chisel's magic had given them wings.
They footed it featly, those lades and gents:
Dull care (said Long Moll) had a helly go-hence!

'Twas a very aristocratic affair:
The _creme de la creme_ and _elite_ were there--
Rank, beauty and wealth from the highest sets,
And Hubert Howe Bancroft sent his regrets.

A PRAYER

Sweet Spirit of Cesspool, hear a mother's prayer:
Her terrors pacify and offspring spare!
Upon Silurians alone let fall
(And God in Heaven have mercy on them all!)
The red revenges of your fragrant breath,
Hot with the flames invisible of death.
Sing in each nose a melody of smells,
And lead them snoutwise to their several hells!

TO ONE DETESTED

Sir, you're a veteran, revealed
In history and fable
As warrior since you took the field,
Defeating Abel.

As Commissary later (or
If not, in every cottage

The tale is) you contracted for
A mess of pottage.

In civil life you were, we read
(And our respect increases)
A man of peace--a man, indeed,
Of thirty pieces.

To paying taxes when you turned
Your mind, or what you call so,
A wide celebrity you earned--
Saphira also.

In every age, by various names,
You've won renown in story,
But on your present record flames
A greater glory.

Cain, Esau, and Iscariot, too,
And Ananias, likewise,
Each had peculiar powers, but who
Could lie as Mike lies?

THE BOSS'S CHOICE

Listen to his wild romances:
He advances foolish fancies,
Each expounded as his "view"--
Gu.

In his brain's opacous clot, ah
He has got a maggot! What a
Man with "views" to overwhelm us!--
Gulielmus.

Hear his demagogic clamor--
Hear him stammer in his grammar!
Teaching, he will learn to spell--
Gulielmus L.

Slave who paid the price demanded--
With two-handed iron branded
By the boss--pray cease to dose us,
Gulielmus L. Jocosus.

A MERCIFUL GOVERNOR

Standing within the triple wall of Hell,
And flattening his nose against a grate
Behind whose brazen bars he'd had to dwell
A thousand million ages to that date,

Stoneman bewailed his melancholy fate,
And his big tear-drops, boiling as they fell,
Had worn between his feet, the record mentions,
A deep depression in the "good intentions."

Imperfectly by memory taught how--
For prayer in Hell is a lost art--he prayed,
Uplifting his incinerated brow
And flaming hands in supplication's aid.
"O grant," he cried, "my torment may be stayed--
In mercy, some short breathing spell allow!
If one good deed I did before my ghosting,
Spare me and give Delmas a double roasting."

Breathing a holy harmony in Hell,
Down through the appalling clamors of the place,
Charming them all to willing concord, fell
A Voice ineffable and full of grace:
"Because of all the law-defying race
One single malefactor of the cell
Thou didst not free from his incarceration,
Take thou ten thousand years of condonation."

Back from their fastenings began to shoot
The rusted bolts; with dreadful roar, the gate
Laboriously turned; and, black with soot,
The extinguished spirit passed that awful strait,
And as he legged it into space, elate,
Muttered: "Yes, I remember that galoot--
I'd signed his pardon, ready to allot it,
But stuck it in my desk and quite forgot it."

AN INTERPRETATION

Now Lonergan appears upon the boards,
And Truth and Error sheathe their lingual swords.
No more in wordy warfare to engage,
The commentators bow before the stage,
And bookworms, militant for ages past,
Confess their equal foolishness at last,
Reread their Shakspeare in the newer light
And swear the meaning's obvious to sight.
For centuries the question has been hot:
Was Hamlet crazy, or was Hamlet not?
Now, Lonergan's illuminating art
Reveals the truth of the disputed "part,"
And shows to all the critics of the earth
That Hamlet was an idiot from birth!

A SOARING TOAD

So, Governor, you would not serve again
Although we'd all agree to pay you double.
You find it all is vanity and pain--
One clump of clover in a field of stubble--
One grain of pleasure in a peck of trouble.
'Tis sad, at your age, having to complain
Of disillusion; but the fault is whose
When pigmies stumble, wearing giants' shoes?

I humbly told you many moons ago
For high preferment you were all unfit.
A clumsy bear makes but a sorry show
Climbing a pole. Let him, judicious, sit
With dignity at bottom of his pit,
And none his awkwardness will ever know.
Some beasts look better, and feel better, too,
Seen from above; and so, I think, would you.

Why, you were mad! Did you suppose because
Our foolish system suffers foolish men
To climb to power, make, enforce the laws,
And, it is whispered, break them now and then,
We love the fellows and respect them when
We've stilled the volume of our loud hurrahs?
When folly blooms we trample it the more
For having fertilized it heretofore.

Behold yon laborer! His garb is mean,
His face is grimy, but who thinks to ask
The measure of his brains? 'Tis only seen
He's fitted for his honorable task,
And so delights the mind. But let him bask
In droll prosperity, absurdly clean--
Is that the man whom we admired before?
Good Lord, how ignorant, and what a bore!

Better for you that thoughtless men had said
(Noting your fitness in the humbler sphere):
"Why don't they make him Governor?" instead
Of, "Why the devil did they?" But I fear
My words on your inhospitable ear
Are wasted like a sermon to the dead.
Still, they may profit you if studied well:
You can't be taught to think, but may to spell.

AN UNDRRESS UNIFORM

The apparel does not proclaim the man--
Polonius lied like a partisan,
And Salomon still would a hero seem
If (Heaven dispel the impossible dream!)
He stood in a shroud on the hangman's trap,
His eye burning holes in the black, black cap.
And the crowd below would exclaim amain:
"He's ready to fall for his country again!"

THE PERVERTED VILLAGE

AFTER GOLDSMITH

Sweet Auburn! liveliest village of the plain,
Where Health and Slander welcome every train,
Whence smiling innocence, its tribute paid,
Retires in terror, wounded and dismayed--
Dear lovely bowers of gossip and disease,
Whose climate cures us that thy dames may tease,
How often have I knelt upon thy green
And prayed for death, to mitigate their spleen!
How often have I paused on every charm
With mingled admiration and alarm--
The brook that runs by many a scandal-mill,
The church whose pastor groans upon the grill,
The cowthorn bush with seats beneath the shade,
Where hearts are struck and reputations flayed;
How often wished thine idle wives, some day,
Might more at whist, less at the devil, play.

Unblest retirement! ere my life's decline
(Killed by detraction) may I witness thine.
How happy she who, shunning shades like these,
Finds in a wolf-den greater peace and ease;
Who quits the place whence truth did earlier fly,
And rather than come back prefers to die!
For her no jealous maids renounce their sleep,
Contriving malices to make her weep;
No iron-faced dames her character debate
And spurn imploring mercy from the gate;
But down she lies to a more peaceful end,
For wolves do not calumniate, but rend--
Sinks piecemeal to their maws, a willing prey,
While resignation lubricates the way,
And all her prospects brighten at the last:
To wolves, not women, an approved repast.

1884.

MR. SHEETS

The Devil stood before the gate
Of Heaven. He had a single mate:
Behind him, in his shadow, slunk
Clay Sheets in a perspiring funk.
"Saint Peter, see this season ticket,"
Said Satan; "pray undo the wicket."
The sleepy Saint threw slight regard
Upon the proffered bit of card,

Signed by some clerical dead-beats:
"Admit the bearer and Clay Sheets."
Peter expanded all his eyes:
"Clay Sheets?"--well, I'll be damned!" he cries.
"Our couches are of golden cloud;
Nothing of earth is here allowed.
I'll let you in," he added, shedding
On Nick a smile--"but not your bedding."

A JACK-AT-ALL-VIEWS

So, Estee, you are still alive! I thought
That you had died and were a blessed ghost
I know at least your coffin once was bought
With Railroad money; and 'twas said by most
Historians that Stanford made a boast
The seller "threw you in." That goes for naught--
Man takes delight in fancy's fine inventions,
And woman too, 'tis said, if they are French ones.

Do you remember, Estee--ah, 'twas long
And long ago!--how fierce you grew and hot
When anything impeded the straight, strong,
Wild sweep of the great billow you had got
Atop of, like a swimmer bold? Great Scott!
How fine your wavemanship! How loud your song
Of "Down with railroads!" When the wave subsided
And left you stranded you were much divided.

Then for a time you were content to wade
The waters of the "robber barons'" moat.
To fetch, and carry was your humble trade,
And ferry Stanford over in a boat,
Well paid if he bestowed the kindly groat
And spoke you fair and called you pretty maid.
And when his stomach seemed a bit unsteady
You got your serviceable basin ready.

Strange man! how odd to see you, smug and spruce,
There at Chicago, burrowed in a Chair,
Not made to measure and a deal too loose,
And see you lift your little arm and swear
Democracy shall be no more! If it's a fair
And civil question, and not too abstruse,
Were you elected as a "robber baron,"
Or as a Communist whose teeth had hair on?

MY LORD POET

"Who drives fat oxen should himself be fat;"
Who sings for nobles, he should noble be.

There's no _non sequitur_, I think, in that,
And this is logic plain as a, b, c.
Now, Hector Stuart, you're a Scottish prince,
If right you fathom your descent--that fall
From grace; and since you have no peers, and since
You have no kind of nobleness at all,
'Twere better to sing little, lest you wince
When made by heartless critics to sing small.
And yet, my liege, I bid you not despair--
Ambition conquers but a realm at once:
For European bays arrange your hair--
Two continents, in time, shall crown you Dunce!

TO THE FOOL-KILLER

Ah, welcome, welcome! Sit you down, old friend;
Your pipe I'll serve, your bottle I'll attend.
'Tis many a year since you and I have known
Society more pleasant than our own
In our brief respites from excessive work--
I pointing out the hearts for you to dirk.
What have you done since lately at this board
We canvassed the deserts of all the horde
And chose what names would please the people best,
Engraved on coffin-plates--what bounding breast
Would give more satisfaction if at rest?
But never mind--the record cannot fail:
The loftiest monuments will tell the tale.

I trust ere next we meet you'll slay the chap
Who calls old Tyler "Judge" and Merry "Cap"--
Calls John P. Irish "Colonel" and John P.,
Whose surname Jack-son speaks his pedigree,
By the same title--men of equal rank
Though one is belly all, and one all shank,
Showing their several service in the fray:
One fought for food and one to get away.
I hope, I say, you'll kill the "title" man
Who saddles one on every back he can,
Then rides it from Beersheba to Dan!
Another fool, I trust, you will perform
Your office on while my resentment's warm:
He shakes my hand a dozen times a day
If, luckless, I so often cross his way,
Though I've three senses besides that of touch,
To make me conscious of a fool too much.
Seek him, friend Killer, and your purpose make
Apparent as his guilty hand you take,
And set him trembling with a solemn: "Shake!"

But chief of all the addle-witted crew
Conceded by the Hangman's League to you,
The fool (his dam's acquainted with a knave)
Whose fluent pen, of his no-brain the slave,
Strews notes of introduction o'er the land

And calls it hospitality--his hand
May palsy seize ere he again consign
To me his friend, as I to Hades mine!
Pity the wretch, his faults howe'er you see,
Whom A accredits to his victim, B.
Like shuttlecock which battledores attack
(One speeds it forward, one would drive it back)
The trustful simpleton is twice unblest--
A rare good riddance, an unwelcome guest.
The glad consignor rubs his hands to think
How duty is commuted into ink;
The consignee (his hands he cannot rub--
He has the man upon them) mutters: "Cub!"
And straightway plans to lose him at the Club.
You know, good Killer, where this dunce abides--
The secret jungle where he writes and hides--
Though no exploring foot has e'er upstirred
His human elephant's exhaustless herd.
Go, bring his blood! We'll drink it--letting fall
A due libation to the gods of Gall.
On second thought, the gods may have it all.

ONE AND ONE ARE TWO

The trumpet sounded and the dead
Came forth from earth and ocean,
And Pickering arose and sped
Aloft with wobbling motion.

"What makes him fly lop-sided?" cried
A soul of the elected.
"One ear was wax," a rogue replied,
"And isn't resurrected."

Below him on the pitted plain,
By his abandoned hollow,
His hair and teeth tried all in vain
The rest of him to follow.

Saint Peter, seeing him ascend,
Came forward to the wicket,
And said: "My mutilated friend,
I'll thank you for your ticket."

"The _Call_," said Pickering, his hand
To reach the latch extended.
Said Peter, affable and bland:
"The free-list is suspended--"

"What claim have you that's valid here?"
That ancient vilifier
Reflected; then, with look austere,
Replied: "I am a liar."

Said Peter: "That is simple, neat

And candid Anglo-Saxon,
But--well, come in, and take a seat
Up there by Colonel Jackson."

MONTAGUE LEVERSON

As some enormous violet that towers
Colossal o'er the heads of lowlier flowers--
Its giant petals royally displayed,
And casting half the landscape into shade;
Delivering its odors, like the blows
Of some strong slugger, at the public nose;
Pride of two Nations--for a single State
Would scarce suffice to sprout a plant so great;
So Leverson's humility, outgrown
The meaner virtues that he deigns to own,
To the high skies its great corolla rears,
O'ertopping all he has except his ears.

THE WOFUL TALE OF MR. PETERS

I should like, good friends, to mention the disaster which befell
Mr. William Perry Peters, of the town of Muscatel,
Whose fate is full of meaning, if correctly understood--
Admonition to the haughty, consolation to the good.

It happened in the hot snap which we recently incurred,
When 'twas warm enough to carbonize the feathers of a bird,
And men exclaimed: "By Hunky!" who were bad enough to swear,
And pious persons supervised their adjectives with care.

Mr. Peters was a pedagogue of honor and repute,
His learning comprehensive, multifarious, minute.
It was commonly conceded in the section whence he came
That the man who played against him needed knowledge of the game.

And some there were who whispered, in the town of Muscatel,
That besides the game of Draw he knew Orthography as well;
Though, the school directors, frigidly contemning that as stuff,
Thought that Draw (and maybe Spelling, if it pleased him) was enough.

Withal, he was a haughty man--indubitably great,
But too vain of his attainments and his power in debate.
His mien was contumelious to men of lesser gift:
"It's only _me_, " he said, "can give the human mind a lift.

"Before a proper audience, if ever I've a chance,
You'll see me chipping in, the cause of Learning to advance.
Just let me have a decent chance to back my mental hand
And I'll come to center lightly in a way they'll understand."

Such was William Perry Peters, and I feel a poignant sense
Of grief that I'm unable to employ the present tense;
But Providence disposes, be our scheming what it may,
And disposed of Mr. Peters in a cold, regardless way.

It occurred in San Francisco, whither Mr. Peters came
In the cause of Education, feeling still the holy flame
Of ambition to assist in lifting up the human mind
To a higher plane of knowledge than its Architect designed.

He attended the convention of the pedagogic host;
He was first in the Pavilion, he was last to leave his post.
For days and days he narrowly observed the Chairman's eye,
His efforts ineffectual to catch it on the fly.

The blessed moment came at last: the Chairman tipped his head.
"The gentleman from ah--um--er," that functionary said.
The gentleman from ah--um--er reflected with a grin:
"They'll know me better by-and-by, when I'm a-chipping in."

So William Perry Peters mounted cheerfully his feet--
And straightway was aglow with an incalculable heat!
His face was as effulgent as a human face could be,
And caloric emanated from his whole periphery;

For he felt himself the focus of non-Muscatelish eyes,
And the pain of their convergence was a terror and surprise.
As with pitiless impaction all their heat-waves on him broke
He was seen to be evolving awful quantities of smoke!

"Put him out!" cried all in chorus; but the meaning wasn't clear
Of that succoring suggestion to his obfuscated ear;
And it notably augmented his incinerating glow
To regard himself excessive, or in any way _de trop_.

Gone was all his wild ambition to lift up the human mind!--
Gone the words he would have uttered!--gone the thought that lay behind!
For "words that burn" may be consumed in a superior flame,
And "thoughts that breathe" may breathe their last, and die a death of shame.

He'd known himself a shining light, but never had he known
Himself so very luminous as now he knew he shone.
"A pillar, I, of fire," he'd said, "to guide my race will be;"
And now that very inconvenient thing to him was he.

He stood there all irresolute; the seconds went and came;
The minutes passed and did but add fresh fuel to his flame.
How long he stood he knew not--'twas a century or more--
And then that incandescent man levanted for the door!

He darted like a comet from the building to the street,
Where Fahrenheit attested ninety-five degrees of heat.
Vicissitudes of climate make the tenure of the breath
Precarious, and William Perry Peters froze to death!

TWIN UNWORTHIES

Ye parasites that to the rich men stick,
As to the fattest sheep the thrifty tick--
Ed'ard to Stanford and to Crocker Ben
(To Ben and Ed'ard many meaner men,
And lice to these)--who do the kind of work
That thieves would have the honesty to shirk--
Whose wages are that your employers own
The fat that reeks upon your every bone
And deigns to ask (the flattery how sweet!)
About its health and how it stands the heat,--
Hail and farewell! I meant to write about you,
But, no, my page is cleaner far without you.

ANOTHER PLAN

Editor Owen, of San Jose,
Commonly known as "our friend J.J."
Weary of scribbling for daily bread,
Weary of writing what nobody read,
Slept one day at his desk and dreamed
That an angel before him stood and beamed
With compassionate eyes upon him there.

Editor Owen is not so fair
In feature, expression, form or limb
But glances like that are familiar to him;
And so, to arrive by the shortest route
At his visitor's will he said, simply: "Toot."
"Editor Owen," the angel said,
"Scribble no more for your daily bread.
Your intellect staggers and falls and bleeds,
Weary of writing what nobody reads.
Eschew now the quill--in the coming years
Homilize man through his idle ears.
Go lecture!" "Just what I intended to do,"
Said Owen. The angel looked pained and flew.

Editor Owen, of San Jose,
Commonly known as "our friend J.J."
Scribbling no more to supply his needs,
Weary of writing what nobody reads,
Passes of life each golden year
Speaking what nobody comes to hear.

A POLITICAL APOSTATE

Good friend, it is with deep regret I note
The latest, strangest turning of your coat;
Though any way you wear that mental clout

The seamy side seems always to be out.
Who could have thought that you would e'er sustain
The Southern shotgun's arbitrary reign!--
Your sturdy hand assisting to replace
The broken yoke on a delivered race;
The ballot's purity no more your care,
With equal privilege to dark and fair.
To Yesterday a traitor, to To-day
You're constant but the better to betray
To-morrow. Your convictions all are naught
But the wild asses of the world of thought,
Which, flying mindless o'er the barren plain,
Perceive at last they've nothing so to gain,
And, turning penitent upon their track,
Economize their strength by flying back.

Ex-champion of Freedom, battle-lunged,
No more, red-handed, or at least red-tongued,
Brandish the javelin which by others thrown
Clove Sambo's heart to quiver in your own!
Confess no more that when his blood was shed,
And you so sympathetically bled,
The bow that spanned the mutual cascade
Was but the promise of a roaring trade
In offices. Your fingering now the trigger
Shows that you _knew_ your Negro was a nigger!
Ad hominem this _argumentum_ runs:
Peace!--let us fire another kind of guns.

I grant you, friend, that it is very true
The Blacks are ignorant--and sable, too.
What then? One way of two a fool must vote,
And either way with gentlemen of note
Whose villain feuds the fact attest too well
That pedagogues nor vice nor error quell.
The fiercest controversies ever rage
When Miltons and Salmasii engage.
No project wide attention ever drew
But it disparted all the learned crew.
As through their group the cleaving line's prolonged
With fiery combatants each field is thronged.
In battle-royal they engage at once
For guidance of the hesitating dunce.
The Titans on the heights contend full soon--
On this side Webster and on that Calhoun,
The monstrous conflagration of their fight
Startling the day and splendoring the night!
Both are unconquerable--_one_ is right.
Will't keep the pigmy, if we make him strong,
From siding with a giant in the wrong?
When Genius strikes for error, who's afraid
To arm poor Folly with a wooden blade?
O Rabelais, you knew it all!--your good
And honest judge (by men misunderstood)
Knew to be right there was but one device
Less fallible than ignorance--the dice.
The time must come--Heaven expedite the day!--
When all mankind shall their decrees obey,
And nations prosper in their peaceful sway.

TINKER DICK

Good Parson Dickson preached, I'm told,
A sermon--ah, 'twas very old
And very, very, bald!
'Twas all about--I know not what
It was about, nor what 'twas not.
"A Screw Loose" it was called.

Whatever, Parson Dick, you say,
The world will get each blessed day
Still more and more askew,
And fall apart at last. Great snakes!
What skillful tinker ever takes
His tongue to turn a screw?

BATS IN SUNSHINE

Well, Mr. Kemble, you are called, I think,
A great divine, and I'm a great profane.
You as a Congregationalist blink
Some certain truths that I esteem a gain,
And drop them in the coffers of my brain,
Pleased with the pretty music of their chink.
Perhaps your spiritual wealth is such
A golden truth or two don't count for much.

You say that you've no patience with such stuff
As by Renan is writ, and when you read
(Why do you read?) have hardly strength enough
To hold your hand from flinging the vile screed
Into the fire. That were a wasteful deed
Which you'd repent in sackcloth extra rough;
For books cost money, and I'm told you care
To lay up treasures Here as well as There.

I fear, good, pious soul, that you mistake
Your thrift for toleration. Never mind:
Renan in any case would hardly break
His great, strong, charitable heart to find
The bats and owls of your myopic kind
Pained by the light that his ideas make.
'Tis Truth's best purpose to shine in at holes
Where cower the Kembles, to confound their souls!

A WORD TO THE UNWISE

[Charles Main, of the firm of Main & Winchester, has ordered a grand mausoleum for his plot in Mountain View Cemetery.--_City Newspaper_.]

Charles Main, of Main & Winchester, attend
With friendly ear the chit-chat of a friend
Who knows you not, yet knows that you and he
Travel two roads that have a common end.

We journey forward through the time allowed,
I humbly bending, you erect and proud.
Our heads alike will stable soon the worm--
The one that's lifted, and the one that's bowed.

You in your mausoleum shall repose,
I where it pleases Him who sleep bestows;
What matter whether one so little worth
Shall stain the marble or shall feed the rose?

Charles Main, I had a friend who died one day.
A metal casket held his honored clay.
Of cyclopean architecture stood
The splendid vault where he was laid away.

A dozen years, and lo! the roots of grass
Had burst asunder all the joints; the brass,
The gilded ornaments, the carved stones
Lay tumbled all together in a mass.

A dozen years! That taxes your belief.
Make it a thousand if the time's too brief.
'Twill be the same to you; when you are dead
You cannot even count your days of grief.

Suppose a pompous monument you raise
Till on its peak the solar splendor blaze
While yet about its base the night is black;
But will it give your glory length of days?

Say, when beneath your rubbish has been thrown,
Some rogue to reputation all unknown--
Men's backs being turned--should lift his thieving hand,
Efface your name and substitute his own.

Whose then would be the monument? To whom
Would be the fame? Forgotten in your gloom,
Your very name forgotten--ah, my friend,
The name is all that's rescued by the tomb.

For memory of worth and work we go
To other records than a stone can show.
These lacking, naught remains; with these
The stone is needless for the world will know.

Then build your mausoleum if you must,
And creep into it with a perfect trust;
But in the twinkling of an eye the plow
Shall pass without obstruction through your dust.

Another movement of the pendulum,
And, lo! the desert-haunting wolf shall come,
And, seated on the spot, shall howl by night
O'er rotting cities, desolate and dumb.

ON THE PLATFORM

When Dr. Bill Bartlett stepped out of the hum
Of Mammon's distracting and wearisome strife
To stand and deliver a lecture on "Some
Conditions of Intellectual Life,"
I cursed the offender who gave him the hall
To lecture on any conditions at all!

But he rose with a fire divine in his eye,
Haranguing with endless abundance of breath,
Till I slept; and I dreamed of a gibbet reared high,
And Dr. Bill Bartlett was dressing for death.
And I thought in my dream: "These conditions, no doubt,
Are bad for the life he was talking about."

So I cried (pray remember this all was a dream):
"Get off of the platform!--it isn't the kind!"
But he fell through the trap, with a jerk at the beam,
And wiggled his toes to unburden his mind.
And, O, so bewitching the thoughts he advanced,
That I clung to his ankles, attentive, entranced!

A DAMPENED ARDOR

The Chinatown at Bakersfield
Was blazing bright and high;
The flames to water would not yield,
Though torrents drenched the sky
And drowned the ground for miles around--
The houses were so dry.

Then rose an aged preacher man
Whom all did much admire,
Who said: "To force on you my plan
I truly don't aspire,
But streams, it seems, might quench these beams
If turned upon the fire."

The fireman said: "This hoary wight
His folly dares to thrust
On us! 'Twere well he felt our might--
Nay, he shall feel our must!"
With jet of wet and small regret
They laid that old man's dust.

ADAIR WELCKER, POET

The Swan of Avon died--the Swan
Of Sacramento'll soon be gone;
And when his death-song he shall coo,
Stand back, or it will kill you too.

TO A WORD-WARRIOR

Frank Pixley, you, who kiss the hand
That strove to cut the country's throat,
Cannot forgive the hands that smote
Applauding in a distant land,--

Applauding carelessly, as one
The weaker willing to befriend
Until the quarrel's at an end,
Then learn by whom it was begun.

When North was pitted against South
Non-combatants on either side
In calculating fury vied,
And fought their foes by word of mouth.

That devil's-camisade you led
With formidable feats of tongue.
Upon the battle's rear you hung--
With Samson's weapon slew the dead!

So hot the ardor of your soul
That every fierce civilian came,
His torch to kindle at your name,
Or have you blow his cooling coal.

Men prematurely left their beds
And sought the gelid bath--so great
The heat and splendor of your hate
Of Englishmen and "Copperheads."

King Liar of deceitful men,
For imposition doubly armed!
The patriots whom your speaking charmed
You stung to madness with your pen.

There was a certain journal here,
Its English owner growing rich--
Your hand the treason wrote for which
A mob cut short its curst career.

If, Pixley, you had not the brain

To know the true from false, or you
To Truth had courage to be true,
And loyal to her perfect reign;

If you had not your powers arrayed
To serve the wrong by tricky speech,
Nor pushed yourself within the reach
Of retribution's accolade,

I had not had the will to go
Outside the olive-bordered path
Of peace to cut the birch of wrath,
And strip your body for the blow.

Behold how dark the war-clouds rise
About the mother of our race!
The lightnings gild her tranquil face
And glitter in her patient eyes.

Her children throng the hither flood
And lean intent above the beach.
Their beating hearts inhibit speech
With stifling tides of English blood.

"Their skies, but not their hearts, they change
Who go in ships across the sea"--
Through all centuries to be
The strange new land will still be strange.

The Island Mother holds in gage
The souls of sons she never saw;
Superior to law, the law
Of sympathetic heritage.

Forgotten now the foolish reign
Of wrath which sundered trivial ties.
A soldier's sabre vainly tries
To cleave a spiritual chain.

The iron in our blood affines,
Though fratricidal hands may spill.
Shall Hate be throned on Bunker Hill,
Yet Love abide at Seven Pines?

A CULINARY CANDIDATE

A cook adorned with paper cap,
Or waiter with a tray,
May be a worthy kind of chap
In his way,
But when we want one for Recorder,
Then, Mr. Walton, take our order.

THE OLEOMARGARINE MAN

Once--in the county of Marin,
Where milk is sold to purchase gin--
Renowned for butter and renowned
For fourteen ounces to the pound--
A bull stood watching every turn
Of Mr. Wilson with a churn,
As that deigning worthy stalked
About him, eying as he walked,
El Toro's sleek and silken hide,
His neck, his flank and all beside;
Thinking with secret joy: "I'll spread
That mammal on a slice of bread!"

Soon Mr. Wilson's keen concern
To get the creature in his churn
Unhorsed his caution--made him blind
To the fell vigor of bullkind,
Till, filled with valor to the teeth,
He drew his dasher from its sheath
And bravely brandished it; the while
He smiled a dark, portentous smile;
A deep, sepulchral smile; a wide
And open smile, which, at his side,
The churn to copy vainly tried;
A smile so like the dawn of doom
That all the field was palled in gloom,
And all the trees within a mile,
As tribute to that awful smile,
Made haste, with loyalty discreet,
To fling their shadows at his feet.
Then rose his battle-cry: "I'll spread
That mammal on a slice of bread!"

To such a night the day had turned
That Taurus dimly was discerned.
He wore so meek and grave an air
It seemed as if, engaged in prayer
This thunderbolt incarnate had
No thought of anything that's bad:
This concentrated earthquake stood
And gave his mind to being good.
Lightly and low he drew his breath--
This magazine of sudden death!
All this the thrifty Wilson's glance
Took in, and, crying, "Now's my chance!"
Upon the bull he sprang amain
To put him in his churn. Again
Rang out his battle-yell: "I'll spread
That mammal on a slice of bread!"

Sing, Muse, that battle-royal--sing
The deeds that made the region ring,
The blows, the bellowing, the cries,
The dust that darkened all the skies,
The thunders of the contest, all--

Nay, none of these things did befall.
A yell there was--a rush--no more:
El Toro, tranquil as before,
Still stood there basking in the sun,
Nor of his legs had shifted one--
Stood there and conjured up his cud
And meekly munched it. Scenes of blood
Had little charm for him. His head
He merely nodded as he said:
"I've spread that buttermilk upon
A slice of Southern Oregon."

GENESIS

God said, "Let there be Crime," and the command
Brought Satan, leading Stoneman by the hand.
"Why, that's Stupidity, not Crime," said God--
"Bring what I ordered." Satan with a nod
Replied, "This is _one_ element--when I
The _other_--Opportunity--supply
In just equivalent, the two'll affine
And in a chemical embrace combine
And Crime result--for Crime can only be
Stupiditate of Opportunity."
So leaving Stoneman (not as yet endowed
With soul) in special session on a cloud,
Nick to his sooty laboratory went,
Returning soon with t'other element.
"Here's Opportunity," he said, and put
Pen, ink, and paper down at Stoneman's foot.
He seized them--Heaven was filled with fires and thunders,
And Crime was added to Creation's wonders!

LLEWELLEN POWELL

Villain, when the word is spoken,
And your chains at last are broken
When the gibbet's chilling shade
Ceases darkly to enfold you,
And the angel who enrolled you
As a master of the trade
Of assassination sadly
Blots the record he has made,
And your name and title paints
In the calendar of saints;
When the devils, dancing madly
In the midmost Hell, are very
Multitudinously merry--
Then beware, beware, beware!--
Nemesis is everywhere!
You shall hear her at your back,

And, your hunted visage turning,
Fancy that her eyes are burning
Like a tiger's on your track!
You shall hear her in the breeze
Whispering to summer trees.
You shall hear her calling, calling
To your spirit through the storm
When the giant billows form
And the splintered lightning, falling
Down the heights of Heaven, appalling,
Splendors all the tossing seas!
On your bed at night reclining,
Stars into your chamber shining
As they roll around the Pole,
None their purposes divining,
Shall appear to search your soul,
And to gild the mark of Cain
That burns into your tortured brain!
And the dead man's eyes shall ever
Meet your own wherever you,
Desperate, shall turn you to,
And you shall escape them never!

By your heritage of guilt;
By the blood that you have spilt;
By the Law that you have broken;
By the terrible red token
That you bear upon your brow;
By the awful sentence spoken
And irrevocable vow
Which consigns you to a living
Death and to the unforgiving
Furies who avenge your crime
Through the periods of time;
By that dread eternal doom
Hinted in your future's gloom,
As the flames infernal tell
Of their power and perfection
In their wavering reflection
On the battlements of Hell;
By the mercy you denied,
I condemn your guilty soul
In your body to abide,
Like a serpent in a hole!

THE SUNSET GUN.

Off Santa Cruz the western wave
Was crimson as with blood:
The sun was sinking to his grave
Beneath that angry flood.

Sir Walter Turnbull, brave and stout,
Then shouted, "Ho! lads; run--
The powder and the ball bring out

To fire the sunset gun.

"That punctual orb did ne'er omit
To keep, by land or sea,
Its every engagement; it
Shall never wait for me."

Behold the black-mouthed cannon stand,
Ready with charge and prime,
The lanyard in the gunner's hand.
Sir Walter waits the time.

The glowing orb sinks in the sea,
And clouds of steam aspire,
Then fade, and the horizon's free.
Sir Walter thunders: "Fire!"

The gunner pulls--the lanyard parts
And not a sound ensues.
The beating of ten thousand hearts
Was heard at Santa Cruz!

Off Santa Cruz the western wave
Was crimson as with blood;
The sun, with visage stern and grave,
Came back from out the flood.

THE "VIDUATE DAME"

'Tis the widow of Thomas Blythe,
And she goeth upon the spree,
And red are cheeks of the bystanders
For her acts are light and free.

In a seven-ounce costume
The widow of Thomas Blythe,
Y-perched high on the window ledge,
The difficult can-can tryeth.

Ten constables they essay
To bate the dame's halloing.
With the widow of Thomas Blythe
Their hands are overflowing,

And they cry: "Call the National Guard
To quell this parlous muss--
For all of the widows of Thomas Blythe
Are upon the spree and us!"

O long shall the eerie tale be told
By that posse's surviving tithe;
And with tears bedewed he'll sing this rude
Ballad of the widow of Thomas Blythe.

FOUR OF A KIND

ROBERT F. MORROW

Dear man! although a stranger and a foe
To soft affection's humanizing glow;
Although untaught how manly hearts may throb
With more desires than the desire to rob;
Although as void of tenderness as wit,
And owning nothing soft but Maurice Schmitt;
Although polluted, shunned and in disgrace,
You fill me with a passion to embrace!
Attentive to your look, your smile, your beck,
I watch and wait to fall upon your neck.
Lord of my love, and idol of my hope,
You are my Valentine, and I'm
A ROPE.

ALFRED CLARKE JR.

Illustrious son of an illustrious sire--
Entrusted with the duty to cry "Fire!"
And call the engines out, exert your power
With care. When, looking from your lofty tower,
You see a ruddy light on every wall,
Pause for a moment ere you sound the call:
It may be from a fire, it may be, too,
From good men's blushes when they think of you.

JUDGE RUTLEDGE

Sultan of Stupids! with enough of brains
To go indoors in all uncommon rains,
But not enough to stay there when the storm
Is past. When all the world is dry and warm,
In irking comfort, lamentably gay,
Keeping the evil tenor of your way,
You walk abroad, sweet, beautiful and smug,
And Justice hears you with her wonted shrug,
Lifts her broad bandage half-an-inch and keeps
One eye upon you while the other weeps.

W.H.L. BARNES

Happy the man who sin's proverbial wage
Receives on the instalment plan--in age.
For him the bulldog pistol's honest bark
Has naught of terror in its blunt remark.
He looks with calmness on the gleaming steel--
If e'er it touched his heart he did not feel:
Superior hardness turned its point away,
Though urged by fond affinity to stay;
His bloodless veins ignored the futile stroke,

And moral mildew kept the cut in cloak.
Happy the man, I say, to whom the wage
Of sin has been commuted into age.
Yet not _quite_ happy--hark, that horrid cry!--
His cruel mirror wounds him in the eye!

RECONCILIATION

Stanford and Huntington, so long at outs,
Kissed and made up. If you have any doubts
Dismiss them, for I saw them do it, man;
And then--why, then I clutched my purse and ran.

A VISION OF CLIMATE

I dreamed that I was poor and sick and sad,
Broken in hope and weary of my life;
My ventures all miscarrying--naught had
For all my labor in the heat and strife.
And in my heart some certain thoughts were rife
Of an unsummoned exit. As I lay
Considering my bitter state, I cried:
"Alas! that hither I did ever stray.
Better in some fair country to have died
Than live in such a land, where Fortune never
(Unless he be successful) crowns Endeavor."

Then, even as I lamented, lo! there came
A troop of Presences--I knew not whence
Nor what they were: thought cannot rightly name
What's known through spiritual evidence,
Reported not by gross material sense.
"Why come ye here?" I seemed to cry (though naught
My sleeping tongue did utter) to the first--
"What are ye?--with what woful message fraught?
Ye have a ghastly look, as ye had burst
Some sepulcher in memory. Weird creatures,
I'm sure I'd know you if ye had but features."

Some subtle organ noted the reply
(Inaudible to ear of flesh the tone):
"The Finest Climate in the World am I,
From Siskiyou to San Diego known--
From the Sierra to the sea. The zone
Called semi-tropical I've pulled about
And placed it where it does most good, I trust.
I shake my never-failing bounty out
Alike upon the just and the unjust."
"That's very true," said I, "but when 'tis shaken
My share by the unjust is ever taken."

"Permit me," it resumed, "now to present
My eldest son, the Champagne Atmosphere,
And others to rebuke your discontent--
The Mammoth Squash, Strawberry All the Year,
The fair No Lightning--flashing only here--
The Wholesome Earthquake and Italian Sky,
With its Unstriking Sun; and last, not least,
The Compos Mentis Dog. Now, ingrate, try
To bring a better stomach to the feast:
When Nature makes a dance and pays the piper,
To be unhappy is to be a viper!"

"Why, yet," said I, "with all your blessings fine
(And Heaven forbid that I should speak them ill)
I yet am poor and sick and sad. Ye shine
With more of splendor than of heat: for still,
Although my will is warm, my bones are chill."
"Then warm you with enthusiasm's blaze--
Fortune waits not on toil," they cried; "O then
Join the wild chorus clamoring our praise--
Throw up your beaver and throw down you pen!"
"Begone!" I shouted. They bewent, a-smirking,
And I, awakening, fell straight a-working.

A "MASS" MEETING

It was a solemn rite as e'er
Was seen by mortal man.
The celebrants, the people there,
Were all Republican.

There Estee bent his grizzled head,
And General Dimond, too,
And one--'twas Reddick, some one said,
Though no one clearly knew.

I saw the priest, white-robed and tall
(Assistant, Father Stow)--
He was the pious man men call
Dan Burns of Mexico.

Ah, 'twas a high and holy rite
As any one could swear.
"What does it mean?" I asked a wight
Who knelt apart in prayer.

"A mass for the repose," he said,
"Of Colonel Markham's"----"What,
Is gallant Colonel Markham dead?
'Tis sad, 'tis sad, God wot!"

"A mass"--repeated he, and rose
To go and kneel among
The worshipers--"for the repose
Of Colonel Markham's tongue."

FOR PRESIDENT, LELAND STANFORD

Mahomet Stanford, with covetous stare,
Gazed on a vision surpassingly fair:
Far on the desert's remote extreme
A mountain of gold with a mellow gleam
Reared its high pinnacles into the sky,
The work of _mirage_ to delude the eye.
Pixley Pasha, at the Prophet's feet
Piously licking them, swearing them sweet,
Ventured, observing his master's glance,
To beg that he order the mountain's advance.
Mahomet Stanford exerted his will,
Commanding: "In Allah's name, hither, hill!"
Never an inch the mountain came.
Mahomet Stanford, with face aflame,
Lifted his foot and kicked, alack!
Pixley Pasha on the end of the back.
Mollified thus and smiling free,
He said: "Since the mountain won't come to me,
I'll go to the mountain." With infinite pains,
Camels in caravans, negroes in trains,
Warriors, workmen, women, and fools,
Food and water and mining tools
He gathered about him, a mighty array,
And the journey began at the close of day.
All night they traveled--at early dawn
Many a wearisome league had gone.
Morning broke fair with a golden sheen,
Mountain, alas, was nowhere seen!
Mahomet Stanford pounded his breast,
Pixley Pasha he thus addressed:
"Dog of mendacity, cheat and slave,
May jackasses sing o'er your grandfather's grave!"

FOR MAYOR

O Abner Doble--whose "catarrhal name"
Budd of that ilk might envy--'tis a rough
Rude thing to say, but it is plain enough
Your name is to be sneezed at: its acclaim
Will "fill the speaking trump of future fame"
With an impeded utterance--a puff
Suggesting that a pinch or two of snuff
Would clear the tube and somewhat disinflate.
Nay, Abner Doble, you'll not get from me
My voice and influence: I'll cheer instead,
Some other man; for when my voice ascends a
Tall pinnacle of praise, and at high C
Sustains a chosen name, it shan't be said

My influence is naught but influenza.

A CHEATING PREACHER

Munhall, to save my soul you bravely try,
Although, to save my soul, I can't say why.
'Tis naught to you, to me however much--
Why, bless it! you might save a million such
Yet lose your own; for still the "means of grace"
That you employ to turn us from the place
By the arch-enemy of souls frequented
Are those which to ensnare us he invented!
I do not say you utter falsehoods--I
Would scorn to give to ministers the lie:
They cannot fight--their calling has estopped it.
True, I did not persuade them to adopt it.
But, Munhall, when you say the Devil dwells
In all the breasts of all the infidels--
Making a lot of individual Hells
In gentlemen instinctively who shrink
From thinking anything that you could think,
You talk as I should if some world I trod
Where lying is acceptable to God.
I don't at all object--forbid it Heaven!--
That your discourse you temperately leaven
With airy reference to wicked souls
Cursing impenitent on glowing coals,
Nor quarrel with your fancy, blithe and fine,
Which represents the wickedest as mine.
Each ornament of style my spirit eases:
The subject saddens, but the manner pleases.
But when you "deal damnation round" 'twere sweet
To think hereafter that you did not cheat.
Deal, and let all accept what you allot 'em.
But, blast you! you are dealing from the bottom!

A CROCODILE

Nay, Peter Robertson, 'tis not for you
To blubber o'er Max Taubles for he's dead.
By Heaven! my hearty, if you only knew
How better is a grave-worm in the head
Than brains like yours--how far more decent, too,
A tomb in far Corea than a bed
Where Peter lies with Peter, you would covet
His happier state and, dying, learn to love it.

In the recesses of the silent tomb
No Maunderings of yours disturb the peace.
Your mental bag-pipe, droning like the gloom
Of Hades audible, perforce must cease

From troubling further; and that crack o' doom,
Your mouth, shaped like a long bow, shall release
In vain such shafts of wit as it can utter--
The ear of death can't even hear them flutter.

THE AMERICAN PARTY

Oh, Marcus D. Boruck, me hearty,
I sympathize wid ye, poor lad!
A man that's shot out of his party
Is mighty onlucky, bedad!
An' the sowl o' that man is sad.

But, Marcus, gossoon, ye deserve it--
Ye know for yerself that ye do,
For ye j'ined not intendin' to sarve it,
But hopin' to make it sarve you,
Though the roll of its members wuz two.

The other wuz Pixley, an' "Surely,"
Ye said, "he's a kite that wall sail."
An' so ye hung till him securely,
Enactin' the role of a tail.
But there wuzn't the ghost of a gale!

But the party to-day has behind it
A powerful backin', I'm told;
For just enough Irish have j'ined it
(An' I'm m'anin' to be enrolled)
To kick ye out into the cold.

It's hard on ye, darlint, I'm thinkin'--
So young--so American, too--
Wid bypassers grinnin' an' winkin',
An' sayin', wid ref'rence to you:
"Get onto the murtherin' Joo!"

Republicans never will take ye--
They had ye for many a year;
An' Dimocrats--angels forsake ye!--
If ever ye come about here
We'll brand ye and scollop yer ear!

UNCOLONELED

Though war-signs fail in time of peace, they say,
Two awful portents gloom the public mind:
All Mexico is arming for the fray
And Colonel Mark McDonald has resigned!
We know not by what instinct he divined
The coming trouble--may be, like the steed

Described by Job, he smelled the fight afar.
Howe'er it be, he left, and for that deed
Is an aspirant to the G.A.R.
When cannon flame along the Rio Grande
A citizen's commission will be handy.

THE GATES AJAR

The Day of Judgment spread its glare
O'er continents and seas.
The graves cracked open everywhere,
Like pods of early peas.

Up to the Court of Heaven sped
The souls of all mankind;
Republicans were at the head
And Democrats behind.

Reub. Lloyd was there before the tube
Of Gabriel could call:
The dead in Christ rise first, and Reub.
Had risen first of all.

He sat beside the Throne of Flame
As, to the trumpet's sound,
Four statesmen of the Party Came
And ranged themselves around--

Pure spirits shining like the sun,
From taint and blemish free--
Great William Stow was there for one,
And George A. Knight for three.

Souls less indubitably white
Approached with anxious air,
Judge Blake at head of them by right
Of having been a Mayor.

His ermine he had donned again,
Long laid away in gums.
'Twas soiled a trifle by the stains
Of politicians' thumbs.

Then Knight addressed the Judge of Heaven:
"Your Honor, would it trench
On custom here if Blake were given
A seat upon the Bench?"

'Twas done. "Tom Shannon!" Peter cried.
He came, without ado,
In forma pauperis was tried,
_And was acquitted, too!

Stow rose, remarking: "I concur."
Lloyd added: "That suits _us_."

I move Tom's nomination, sir,
Be made unanimous."

TIDINGS OF GOOD

Old Nick from his place of last resort
Came up and looked the world over.
He saw how the grass of the good was short
And the wicked lived in clover.

And he gravely said: "This is all, all wrong,
And never by me intended.
If to me the power should ever belong
I shall have this thing amended."

He looked so solemn and good and wise
As he made this observation
That the men who heard him believed their eyes
Instead of his reputation.

So they bruited the matter about, and each
Reported the words as nearly
As memory served--with additional speech
To bring out the meaning clearly.

The consequence was that none understood,
And the wildest rumors started
Of something intended to help the good
And injure the evil-hearted.

Then Robert Morrow was seen to smile
With a bright and lively joyance.
"A man," said he, "that is free from guile
Will now be free from annoyance.

"The Featherstones doubtless will now increase
And multiply like the rabbits,
While jailers, deputy sheriffs, police,
And writers will form good habits.

"The widows more easily robbed will be,
And no juror will ever heed 'em,
But open his purse to my eloquent plea
For security, gain, or freedom."

When Benson heard of the luck of the good
(He was eating his dinner) he muttered:
"It cannot help _me_, for 'tis understood
My bread is already buttered.

"My plats of surveys are all false, they say,
But that cannot greatly matter
To me, for I'll tell the jurors that they
May lick, if they please, my platter."

ARBORICULTURE

[Californians are asking themselves how Joaquin Miller will make the trees grow which he proposes to plant in the form of a Maltese cross on Goat Island, in San Francisco Bay.--_New York Graphic_.]

You may say they won't grow, and say they'll decay--
Say it again till you're sick of the say,
Get up on your ear, blow your blaring bazoo
And hire a hall to proclaim it; and you
May stand on a stump with a lifted hand
As a pine may stand or a redwood stand,
And stick to your story and cheek it through.
But I point with pride to the far divide
Where the Snake from its groves is seen to glide--
To Mariposa's arboreal suit,
And the shaggy shoulders of Shasta Butte,
And the feathered firs of Siskiyou;
And I swear as I sit on my marvelous hair--
I roll my marvelous eyes and swear,
And sneer, and ask where would your forests be
To-day if it hadn't been for me!
Then I rise tip-toe, with a brow of brass,
Like a bully boy with an eye of glass;
I look at my gum sprouts, red and blue,
And I say it loud and I say it low:
"They know their man and you bet they'll grow!"

A SILURIAN HOLIDAY

'Tis Master Fitch, the editor;
He takes an holiday.
Now wherefore, venerable sir,
So resolutely gay?

He lifts his head, he laughs aloud,
Odzounds! 'tis drear to see!
"Because the Boodle-Scribbler crowd
Will soon be far from me.

"Full many a year I've striven well
To freeze the caitiffs out
By making this good town a Hell,
But still they hang about.

"They maken mouths and eke they grin
At the dollar limit game;
And they are holpen in that sin
By many a wicked dame.

"In sylvan bowers hence I'll dwell
My bruised mind to ease.
Farewell, ye urban scenes, farewell!
Hail, unfamiliar trees!"

Forth Master Fitch did bravely hie,
And all the country folk
Besought him that he come not nigh
The deadly poison oak!

He smiled a cheerful smile (the day
Was straightway overcast)--
The poison oak along his way
Was blighted as he passed!

REJECTED

When Dr. Charles O'Donnell died
They sank a box with him inside.

The plate with his initials three
Was simply graven--"C.O.D."

That night two demons of the Pit
Adown the coal-hole shunted it.

Ten million million leagues it fell,
Alighting at the gate of Hell.

Nick looked upon it with surprise,
A night-storm darkening his eyes.

"They've sent this rubbish, C.O.D.--
I'll never pay a cent!" said he.

JUDEX JUDICATUS

Judge Armstrong, when the poor have sought your aid,
To be released from vows that they have made
In haste, and leisurely repented, you,
As stern as Rhadamanthus (Minos too,
And AEeacus) have drawn your fierce brows down
And petrified them with a moral frown!
With iron-faced rigor you have made them run
The gauntlet of publicity--each Hun
Or Vandal of the public press allowed
To throw their households open to the crowd
And bawl their secret bickerings aloud.
When Wealth before you suppliant appears,
Bang! go the doors and open fly your ears!
The blinds are drawn, the lights diminished burn,

Lest eyes too curious should look and learn
That gold refines not, sweetens not a life
Of conjugal brutality and strife--
That vice is vulgar, though it gilded shine
Upon the curve of a judicial spine.
The veiled complainant's whispered evidence,
The plain collusion and the no defense,
The sealed exhibits and the secret plea,
The unrecorded and unseen decree,
The midnight signature and--_chink! chink! chink!_--
Nay, pardon, upright Judge, I did but think
I heard that sound abhorred of honest men;
No doubt it was the scratching of your pen.

O California! long-enduring land,
Where Judges fawn upon the Golden Hand,
Proud of such service to that rascal thing
As slaves would blush to render to a king--
Judges, of judgment destitute and heart,
Of conscience conscious only by the smart
From the recoil (so insight is enlarged)
Of duty accidentally discharged;--
Invoking still a "song o' sixpence" from
The Scottish fiddle of each lusty palm,
Thy Judges, California, skilled to play
This silent music, through the livelong-day
Perform obsequious before the rich,
And still the more they scratch the more they itch!

ON THE WEDDING OF AN AERONAUT

Aeronaut, you're fairly caught,
Despite your bubble's leaven:
Out of the skies a lady's eyes
Have brought you down to Heaven!

No more, no more you'll freely soar
Above the grass and gravel:
Henceforth you'll walk--and she will chalk
The line that you're to travel!

A HASTY INFERENCE

The Devil one day, coming up from the Pit,
All grimy with perspiration,
Applied to St. Peter and begged he'd admit
Him a moment for consultation.

The Saint showed him in where the Master reclined
On the throne where petitioners sought him;
Both bowed, and the Evil One opened his mind

Concerning the business that brought him:

"For ten million years I've been kept in a stew
Because you have thought me immoral;
And though I have had my opinion of you,
You've had the best end of the quarrel.

"But now--well, I venture to hope that the past
With its misunderstandings we'll smother;
And you, sir, and I, sir, be throned here at last
As equals, the one to the other."

"Indeed!" said the Master (I cannot convey
A sense of his tone by mere letters)
"What makes you presume you'll be bidden to stay
Up here on such terms with your betters?"

"Why, sure you can't mean it!" said Satan. "I've seen
How Stanford and Crocker you've nourished,
And Huntington--bless me! the three like a green
Umbrageous great bay-tree have flourished.

They are fat, they are rolling in gold, they command
All sources and well-springs of power;
You've given them houses, you've given them land--
Before them the righteous all cower."

"What of that?" "What of that?" cried the Father of Sin;
"Why, I thought when I saw you were winking
At crimes such as theirs that perhaps you had been
Converted to my way of thinking."

A VOLUPTUARY

Who's this that lispeth in the thickening throng
Which crowds to claim distinction in my song?
Fresh from "the palms and temples of the South,"
The mixed aromas quarrel in his mouth:
Of orange blossoms this the lingering gale,
And that the odor of a spicy tale.
Sir, in thy pleasure-dome down by the sea
(No finer one did Kubla Khan decree)
Where, Master of the Revels, thou dost stand
With joys and mysteries on either hand,
Dost keep a poet to report the rites
And sing the tale of those Elysian nights?
Faith, sir, I'd like the place if not too young.
I'm no great bard, but--I can hold my tongue.

AD CATTONUM

I know not, Mr. Catton, who you are,
Nor very clearly why; but you go far
To show that you are many things beside
A Chilean Consul with a tempting hide;
But what they are I hardly could explain
Without afflicting you with mental pain.
Your name (gods! what a name the muse to woo--
Suggesting cats, and hinting kittens, too!)
Points to an origin--perhaps Maltese,
Perhaps Angoran--where the wicked cease
From fiddling, and the animals that grow
The strings that groan to the tormenting bow
Live undespoiled of their insides, resigned
To give their name and nature to mankind.
With Chilean birth your name but poorly tallies;
The test is--Did you ever sell tamales?

It matters very little, though, my boy,
If you're from Chile or from Illinois;
You can't, because you serve a foreign land,
Spit with impunity on ours, expand,
Cock-turkeywise, and strut with blind conceit,
All heedless of the hearts beneath your feet,
Fling falsehoods as a sower scatters grain
And, for security, invoke disdain.
Sir, there are laws that men of sense observe,
No matter whence they come nor whom they serve--
The laws of courtesy; and these forbid
You to malign, as recently you did,
As servant of another State, a State
Wherein your duties all are concentrate;
Branding its Ministers as rogues--in short,
Inviting cuffs as suitable retort.

Chileno or American, 'tis one--
Of any land a citizen, or none--
If like a new Thersites here you rail,
Loading with libels every western gale,
You'll feel the cudgel on your scurvy hump
Impinging with a salutary thump.
'Twill make you civil or 'twill make you jump!

THE NATIONAL GUARDSMAN

I'm a gorgeous golden hero
And my trade is taking life.
Hear the twittle-twittle-tweero
Of my sibillating fife
And the rub-a-dub-a-dum
Of my big bass drum!
I'm an escort strong and bold,
The Grand Army to protect.
My countenance is cold
And my attitude erect.
I'm a Californian Guard

And my banner flies aloft,
But the stones are O, so hard!
And my feet are O, so soft!

THE BARKING WEASEL

You say, John Irish, Mr. Taylor hath
A painted beard. Quite likely that is true,
And sure 'tis natural you spend your wrath
On what has been least merciful to you.
By Taylor's chin, if I am not mistaken,
You like a rat have recently been shaken.

To wear a beard of artificial hue
May be or this or that, I know not what;
But, faith, 'tis better to be black-and-blue
In beard from dallying with brush and pot
Than to be so in body from the beating
That hardy rogues get when detected cheating.

You're whacked about the mazzard rather more
Of late than any other man in town.
Certes your vulnerable back is sore
And tender, too, your corrigible crown.
In truth your whole periphery discloses
More vivid colors than a bed of posies!

You call it glory! Put your tongue in sheath!--
Scars got in battle, even if on the breast,
May be a shameful record if, beneath,
A robber heart a lawless strife attest.
John Sullivan had wounds, and Paddy Ryan--
Nay, as to that, even Masten has, and Bryan.

'Tis willingly conceded you've a knack
At holding the attention of the town;
The worse for you when you have on your back
What did not grow there--prithee put it down!
For pride kills thrift, and you lack board and lodging,
Even while the brickbats of renown you're dodging.

A REAR ELEVATION

[He can speak with his eyes, his hands, arms, legs, body--nay,
with his very bones, for he turned the broad of his back upon
us in "Conrad," the other night, and his shoulder-blades
spoke to us a volume of hesitation, fear, submission,
desperation--everything which could haunt a man at the moment
of inevitable detection.--_A "Dramatic Critic."_]]

Once Moses (in Scripture the story is told)

Entreated the favor God's face to behold.
Compassion divine the petition denied
Lest vision be blasted and body be fried.
Yet this much, the Record informs us, took place:
Jehovah, concealing His terrible face,
Protruded His rear from behind a great rock,
And edification ensued without shock.
So godlike Salvini, lest worshipers die,
Averting the blaze of his withering eye,
Tempers his terrors and shows to the pack
Of feeble adorers the broad of his back.
The fires of their altars, which, paled and declined
Before him, burn all the more brightly behind.
O happy adorers, to care not at all
Where fawning may tickle or lip-service fall!

IN UPPER SAN FRANCISCO

I heard that Heaven was bright and fair,
And politicians dwelt not there.

'Twas said by knowing ones that they
Were in the Elsewhere--so to say.

So, waking from my last long sleep,
I took my place among the sheep.

I passed the gate--Saint Peter eyed
Me sharply as I stepped inside.

He thought, as afterward I learned,
That I was Chris, the Unreturned.

The new Jerusalem--ah me,
It was a sorry sight to see!

The mansions of the blest were there,
And mostly they were fine and fair;

But O, such streets!--so deep and wide,
And all unpaved, from side to side!

And in a public square there grew
A blighted tree, most sad to view.

From off its trunk the bark was ripped--
Its very branches all were stripped!

An angel perched upon the fence
With all the grace of indolence.

"Celestial bird," I cried, in pain,
"What vandal wrought this wreck? Explain."

He raised his eyelids as if tired:

"What is a Vandal?" he inquired.

"This is the Tree of Life. 'Twas stripped
By Durst and Siebe, who have shipped

"The bark across the Jordan--see?--
And sold it to a tannery."

"Alas," I sighed, "their old-time tricks!
That pavement, too, of golden bricks--

"They've gobbled that?" But with a scowl,
"You greatly wrong them," said the fowl:

"'Twas Gilleran did that, I fear--
Head of the Street Department here."

"What! what!" cried I--"you let such chaps
Come here? You've Satan, too, perhaps."

"We had him, yes, but off he went,
Yet showed some purpose to repent;

"But since your priests and parsons filled
The place with those their preaching killed"--

(Here Siebe passed along with Durst,
Psalming as if their lungs would burst)--

"He swears his foot no more shall press
('Tis cloven, anyhow, I guess)

"Our soil. In short, he's out on strike--
But devils are not all alike."

Lo! Gilleran came down the street,
Pressing the soil with broad, flat feet!

NIMROD

There were brave men, some one has truly said,
Before Atrides (those were mostly dead
Behind him) and ere you could e'er occur
Actaeon lived, Nimrod and Bahram-Gur.
In strength and speed and daring they excelled:
The stag they overtook, the lion felled.
Ah, yes, great hunters flourished before you,
And--for Munchausen lived--great talkers too.
There'll be no more; there's much to kill, but--well,
You have left nothing in the world to tell!

CENSOR LITERARUM

So, Parson Stebbins, you've released your chin
To say that here, and here, we press-folk ail.
'Tis a great thing an editor to skin
And hang his faulty pelt upon a nail
(If over-eared, it has, at least, no tail)
And, for an admonition against sin,
Point out its maculations with a rod,
And act, in short, the gentleman of God.

'Twere needless cruelty to spoil your sport
By comment, critical or merely rude;
But you, too, have, according to report,
Despite your posing as a holy dude,
Imperfect spiritual pulchritude
For so severe a judge. May't please the court,
We shall appeal and take our case at once
Before that higher court, a taller dunce.

Sir, what were you without the press? What spreads
The fame of your existence, once a week,
From the Pacific Mail dock to the Heads,
Warning the people you're about to wreak
Upon the human ear your Sunday freak?--
Whereat the most betake them to their bed
Though some prefer to slumber in the pews
And nod assent to your hypnotic views.

Unhappy man! can you not still your tongue
When (like a luckless brat afflict with worms,
By cruel fleas intolerably stung,
Or with a pang in its small lap) it squirms?
Still must it vulgarize your feats of lung?
No preaching better were, the sun beneath,
If you had nothing there behind your teeth.

BORROWED BRAINS

Writer folk across the bay
Take the pains to see and say--
All their upward palms in air:
"Joaquin Miller's cut his hair!"
Hasten, hasten, writer folk--
In the gutters rake and poke,
If by God's exceeding grace
You may hit upon the place
Where the barber threw at length
Samson's literary strength.
Find it, find it if you can;
Happy the successful man!
He has but to put one strand
In his beaver's inner band
And his intellect will soar
As it never did before!

While an inch of it remains
He will noted be for brains,
And at last ('twill so befall)
Fit to cease to write at all.

THE FYGHTYNGE SEVENTH

It is the gallant Seventh--
It fyghteth faste and free!
God wot the where it fyghteth
I ne desyre to be.

The Gonfalon it flyeth,
Seeming a Flayme in Sky;
The Bugel loud yblowen is,
Which sayeth, Doe and dye!

And (O good Saints defende us
Agaynst the Woes of Warr)
Drawn Tongues are flashing deadly
To smyte the Foeman sore!

With divers kinds of Riddance
The smoaking Earth is wet,
And all afflowe to seaward goe
The Torrents wide of Sweat!

The Thunder of the Captens,
And eke the Shouting, mayketh
Such horrid Din the Soule within
The boddy of me quayketh!

Who fyghteth the bold Seventh?
What haughty Power defyeth?
Their Colonel 'tis they drubben sore,
And dammen too his Eyes!

INDICTED

Dear Bruner, once we had a little talk
(That is to say, 'twas I did all the talking)
About the manner of your moral walk:
How devious the trail you made in stalking,
On level ground, your law-protected game--
"Another's Dollar" is, I think, its name.

Your crooked course more recently is not
So blamable; for, truly, you have stumbled
On evil days; and 'tis your luckless lot
To traverse spaces (with a spirit humbled,
Contrite, dejected and divinely sad)

Where, 'tis confessed, the walking's rather bad.

Jordan, the song says, is a road (I thought
It was a river) that is hard to travel;
And Dublin, if you'd find it, must be sought
Along a highway with more rocks than gravel.
In difficulty neither can compete
With that wherein you navigate your feet.

As once George Gorham said of Pixley, so
I say of you: "The prison yawns before you,
The turnkey stalks behind!" Now will you go?
Or lag, and let that functionary floor you?
To change the metaphor--you seem to be
Between Judge Wallace and the deep, deep sea!

OVER THE BORDER

O, justice, you have fled, to dwell
In Mexico, unstrangled,
Lest you should hang as high as--well,
As Haman dangled.

(I know not if his cord he twanged,
Or the King proved forgiving.
'Tis hard to think of Haman hanged,
And Haymond living.)

Yes, as I said: in mortal fear
To Mexico you journeyed;
For you were on your trial here,
And ill attorneyed.

The Law had long regarded you
As an extreme offender.
Religion looked upon you, too,
With thoughts untender.

The Press to you was cold as snow,
For sin you'd always call so.
In Politics you were _de trop_,
In Morals also.

All this is accurately true
And, faith! there might be more said;
But--well, to save your thrapple you
Fled, as aforesaid.

You're down in Mexico--that's plain
As that the sun is risen;
For Daniel Burns, down there, his chain
Drags round in prison.

ONE JUDGE

Wallace, created on a noble plan
To show us that a Judge can be a Man;
Through moral mire exhaling mortal stench
God-guided sweet and foot-clean to the Bench;
In salutation here and sign I lift
A hand as free as yours from lawless thrift,
A heart--ah, would I truly could proclaim
My bosom lighted with so pure a flame!
Alas, not love of justice moves my pen
To praise, or to condemn, my fellow men.
Good will and ill its busy point incite:
I do but gratify them when I write.
In palliation, though, I'd humbly state,
I love the righteous and the wicked hate.
So, sir, although we differ we agree,
Our work alike from persecution free,
And Heaven, approving you, consents to me.
Take, therefore, from this not all useless hand
The crown of honor--not in all the land
One honest man dissenting from the choice,
Nor in approval one Fred. Crocker's voice!

TO AN INSOLENT ATTORNEY

So, Hall McAllister, you'll not be warned--
My protest slighted, admonition scorned!
To save your scoundrel client from a cell
As loth to swallow him as he to swell
Its sum of meals insurgent (it decries
All wars intestinal with meats that rise)
You turn your scurril tongue against the press
And damn the agency you ought to bless.
Had not the press with all its hundred eyes
Discerned the wolf beneath the sheep's disguise
And raised the cry upon him, he to-day
Would lack your company, and you would lack his pay.

Talk not of "hire" and consciences for sale--
You whose profession 'tis to threaten, rail,
Calumniate and libel at the will
Of any villain who can pay the bill--
You whose most honest dollars all were got
By saying for a fee "the thing that's not!"
To you 'tis one, to challenge or defend;
Clients are means, their money is an end.
In my profession sometimes, as in yours
Always, a payment large enough secures
A mercenary service to defend
The guilty or the innocent to rend.
But mark the difference, nor think it slight:
We do not hold it proper, just and right;

Of selfish lies a little still we shame
And give our villainies another name.
Hypocrisy's an ugly vice, no doubt,
But blushing sinners can't get on without.
Happy the lawyer!--at his favored hands
Nor truth nor decency the world demands.
Secure in his immunity from shame,
His cheek ne'er kindles with the tell-tale flame.
His brains for sale, morality for hire,
In every land and century a licensed liar!

No doubt, McAllister, you can explain
How honorable 'tis to lie for gain,
Provided only that the jury's made
To understand that lying is your trade.
A hundred thousand volumes, broad and flat,
(The Bible not included) proving that,
Have been put forth, though still the doubt remains
If God has read them with befitting pains.
No Morrow could get justice, you'll declare,
If none who knew him foul affirmed him fair.
Ingenious man! how easy 'tis to raise
An argument to justify the course that pays!

I grant you, if you like, that men may need
The services performed for crime by greed,--
Grant that the perfect welfare of the State
Requires the aid of those who in debate
As mercenaries lost in early youth
The fine distinction between lie and truth--
Who cheat in argument and set a snare
To take the feet of Justice unaware--
Who serve with livelier zeal when rogues assist
With perjury, embracery (the list
Is long to quote) than when an honest soul,
Scorning to plot, conspire, intrigue, cajole,
Reminds them (their astonishment how great!)
He'd rather suffer wrong than perpetrate.
I grant, in short, 'tis better all around
That ambidextrous consciences abound
In courts of law to do the dirty work
That self-respecting scavengers would shirk.
What then? Who serves however clean a plan
By doing dirty work, he is a dirty man!

ACCEPTED

Charles Shortridge once to St. Peter came.
"Down!" cried the saint with his face aflame;
"'Tis writ that every hardy liar
Shall dwell forever and ever in fire!"
"That's what I said the night that I died,"
The sinner, turning away, replied.
"What! you said that?" cried the saint--"what! what!
You said 'twas so writ? Then, faith, 'tis not!

I'm a devil at quoting, but I begin
To fail in my memory. Pray walk in."

A PROMISED FAST TRAIN

I turned my eyes upon the Future's scroll
And saw its pictured prophecies unroll.

I saw that magical life-laden train
Flash its long glories o'er Nebraska's plain.

I saw it smoothly up the mountain glide.
"O happy, happy passengers!" I cried.

For Pleasure, singing, drowned the engine's roar,
And Hope on joyous pinions flew before.

Then dived the train adown the sunset slope--
Pleasure was silent and unseen was Hope.

Crashes and shrieks attested the decay
That greed had wrought upon that iron way.

The rusted rails broke down the rotting ties,
And clouds of flying spikes obscured the skies.

My coward eyes I drew away, distressed,
And fixed them on the terminus to-West,

Where soon, its melancholy tale to tell,
One bloody car-wheel wobbled in and fell!

ONE OF THE SAINTS

Big Smith is an Oakland School Board man,
And he looks as good as ever he can;
And he's such a cold and a chaste Big Smith
That snowflakes all are his kin and kith.
Wherever his eye he chances to throw
The crystals of ice begin to grow;
And the fruits and flowers he sees are lost
By the singeing touch of a sudden frost.
The women all shiver whenever he's near,
And look upon _us_ with a look austere--
Effect of the Smithian atmosphere.
Such, in a word, is the moral plan
Of the Big, Big Smith, the School Board man.
When told that Madame Ferrier had taught
Hernani in school, his fist he brought
Like a trip-hammer down on his bulbous knee,
And he roared: "Her Nanny? By gum, we'll see

If the public's time she dares devote
To the educatin' of any dam goat!"
"You do not entirely comprehend--
Hernani's a play," said his learned friend,
"By Victor Hugo--immoral and bad.
What's worse, it's French!" "Well, well, my lad,"
Said Smith, "if he cuts a swath so wide
I'll have him took re'glar up and tried!"
And he smiled so sweetly the other chap
Thought that himself was a Finn or Lapp
Caught in a storm of his native snows,
With a purple ear and an azure nose.
The Smith continued: "I never pursue
Immoral readin'." And that is true:
He's a saint of remarkably high degree,
With a mind as chaste as a mind can be;
But read!--the devil a word can he!

A MILITARY INCIDENT

Dawn heralded the coming sun--
Fort Douglas was computing
The minutes--and the sunrise gun
Was manned for his saluting.

The gunner at that firearm stood,
The which he slowly loaded,
When, bang!--I know not how it could,
But sure the charge exploded!

Yes, to that veteran's surprise
The gun went off sublimely,
And both his busy arms likewise
Went off with it, untimely.

Then said that gunner to his mate
(He was from Ballyshannon):
"Bedad, the sun's a minute late,
Accardin' to this cannon!"

SUBSTANCE VERSUS SHADOW

So, gentle critics, you would have me tilt,
Not at the guilty, only just at Guilt!--
Spare the offender and condemn Offense,
And make life miserable to Pretense!
"Whip Vice and Folly--that is satire's use--
But be not personal, for _that's_ abuse;
Nor e'er forget what, 'like a razor keen,
Wounds with a touch that's neither felt nor seen."
Well, friends, I venture, destitute of awe,

To think that razor but an old, old saw,
A trifle rusty; and a wound, I'm sure,
That's felt not, seen not, one can well endure.
Go to! go to!--you're as unfitted quite
To give advice to writers as to write.
I find in Folly and in Vice a lack
Of head to hit, and for the lash no back;
Whilst Pixley has a pow that's easy struck,
And though good Deacon Fitch (a Fitch for luck!)
Has none, yet, lest he go entirely free,
God gave to him a corn, a heel to me.
He, also, sets his face (so like a flint
The wonder grows that Pickering doesn't skin't)
With cold austerity, against these wars
On scamps--'tis Scampery that he abhors!
Behold advance in dignity and state--
Grave, smug, serene, indubitably great--
Stanford, philanthropist! One hand bestows
In alms what t'other one as justice owes.
Rascality attends him like a shade,
But closes, woundless, o'er my baffled blade,
Its limbs unsevered, spirit undismayed.
Faith! I'm for something can be made to feel,
If, like Pelides, only in the heel.
The fellow's self invites assault; his crimes
Will each bear killing twenty thousand times!
Anon Creed Haymond--but the list is long
Of names to point the moral of my song.
Rogues, fools, impostors, sycophants, they rise,
They foul the earth and horrify the skies--
With Mr. Huntington (sole honest man
In all the reek of that rascalion clan)
Denouncing Theft as hard as e'er he can!

THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC MORALS

The Senate met in Sacramento city;
On public morals it had no committee
Though greatly these abounded. Soon the quiet
Was broken by the Senators in riot.
Now, at the end of their contagious quarrels,
There's a committee but no public morals.

CALIFORNIA

[The Chinaman's Assailant was allowed to walk quietly
away, although the street was filled with
pedestrians.--_Newspaper_.]

Why should he not have been allowed
To thread with peaceful feet the crowd

Which filled that Christian street?
The Decalogue he had observed,
From Faith in Jesus had not swerved,
And scorning pious platitudes,
He saw in the Beatitudes
A lamp to guide his feet.

He knew that Jonah downed the whale
And made no bones of it. The tale
That Ananias told
He swore was true. He had no doubt
That Daniel laid the lions out.
In short, he had all holiness,
All meekness and all lowliness,
And was with saints enrolled.

'Tis true, some slight excess of zeal
Sincerely to promote the weal
Of this most Christian state
Had moved him rudely to divide
The queue that was a pagan's pride,
And in addition certify
The Faith by making fur to fly
From pelt as well as pate?

But, Heavenly Father, thou dost know
That in this town these actions go
For nothing worth a name.
Nay, every editorial ass,
To prove they never come to pass
Will damn his soul eternally,
Although in his own journal he
May read the printed shame.

From bloody hands the reins of pow'r
Fall slack; the high-decisive hour
Strikes not for liars' ears.
Remove, O Father, the disgrace
That stains our California's face,
And consecrate to human good
The strength of her young womanhood
And all her golden years!

DE YOUNG--A PROPHECY

Running for Senator with clumsy pace,
He stooped so low, to win at least a place,
That Fortune, tempted by a mark so droll,
Sprang in and kicked him to the winning pole.

TO EITHER

Back further than
I know, in San
Francisco dwelt a wealthy man.
So rich was he
That none could be
Wise, good and great in like degree.

'Tis true he wrought,
In deed or thought,
But few of all the things he ought;
But men said: "Who
Would wish him to?
Great souls are born to be, not do!"

One thing, indeed,
He did, we read,
Which was becoming, all agreed:
Grown provident,
Ere life was spent
He built a mighty monument.

For longer than
I know, in San
Francisco lived a beggar man;
And when in bed
They found him dead--
"Just like the scamp!" the people said.

He died, they say,
On the same day
His wealthy neighbor passed away.
What matters it
When beggars quit
Their beats? I answer: Not a bit.

They got a spade
And pick and made
A hole, and there the chap was laid.
"He asked for bread,"
'Twas neatly said:
"He'll get not even a stone instead."

The years rolled round:
His humble mound
Sank to the level of the ground;
And men forgot
That the bare spot
Was like (and was) the beggar's lot.

Forgotten, too,
Was t'other, who
Had reared the monument to woo
Inconstant Fame,
Though still his name
Shouted in granite just the same.

That name, I swear,
They both did bear

The beggar and the millionaire.
That lofty tomb,
Then, honored--whom?
For argument here's ample room.

I'll not debate,
But only state
The scamp first claimed it at the Gate.
St. Peter, proud
To serve him, bowed
And showed him to the softest cloud.

DISAPPOINTMENT

The Senate woke; the Chairman's snore
Was stilled, its echoes balking;
The startled members dreamed no more,
For Steele, who long had held the floor,
Had suddenly ceased talking.

As, like Elijah, in his pride,
He to his seat was passing,
"Go up thou baldhead!" Reddy cried.
Then six fierce bears ensued and tried
To sunder him for "sassing."

Two seized his legs, and one his head,
The fourth his trunk, to munch on;
The fifth preferred an arm instead;
The last, with rueful visage, said:
"Pray what have _I_ for luncheon?"

Then to that disappointed bear
Said Steele, serene and chipper,
"My friend, you shall not lack your share:
Look in the Treasury, and there
You'll find his other flipper."

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF THEFT

In fair Yosemite, that den of thieves
Wherein the minions of the moon divide
The travelers' purses, lo! the Devil grieves,
His larger share as leader still denied.

El Capitan, foreseeing that _his_ reign
May be disputed too, beclouds his head.
The joyous Bridal Veil is torn in twain
And the crepe steamer dangles there instead.

The Vernal Fall abates her pleasant speed

And hesitates to take the final plunge,
For rumors reach her that another greed
Awaits her in the Valley of the Sponge.

The Brothers envy the accord of mind
And peace of purpose (by the good deplored
As honor among Commissioners) which bind
That confraternity of crime, the Board.

The Half-Dome bows its riven face to weep,
But not, as formerly, because bereft:
Prophetic dreams afflict him when asleep
Of losing his remaining half by theft.

Ambitious knaves! has not the upper sod
Enough of room for every crime that crawls
But you must loot the Palaces of God
And daub your filthy names upon the walls?

DOWN AMONG THE DEAD MEN

Within my dark and narrow bed
I rested well, new-laid:
I heard above my fleshless head
The grinding of a spade.

A gruffer note ensued and grew
To harsh and harsher strains:
The poet Welcker then I knew
Was "snatching" my remains.

"O Welcker, let your hand be stayed
And leave me here in peace.
Of your revenge you should have made
An end with my decease."

"Hush, Mouldyshanks, and hear my moan:
I once, as you're aware,
Was eminent in letters--known
And honored everywhere.

"My splendor made all Berkeley bright
And Sacramento blind.
Men swore no writer e'er could write
Like me--if I'd a mind.

"With honors all insatiate,
With curst ambition smit,
Too far, alas! I tempted fate--
I _published_ what I'd writ!

"Good Heaven! with what a hunger wild
Oblivion swallows fame!
Men who have known me from a child
Forget my very name!

"Even creditors with searching looks
My face cannot recall;
My heaviest one--he prints my books--
Oblivious most of all.

"O I should feel a sweet content
If one poor dun his claim
Would bring to me for settlement,
And bully me by name.

"My dog is at my gate forlorn;
It howls through all the night,
And when I greet it in the morn
It answers with a bite!"

"O Poet, what in Satan's name
To me's all this ado?
Will snatching me restore the fame
That printing snatched from you?"

"Peace, dread Remains; I'm not about
To do a deed of sin.
I come not here to hale you out--
I'm trying to get in."

THE LAST MAN

I dreamed that Gabriel took his horn
On Resurrection's fateful morn,
And lighting upon Laurel Hill
Blew long, blew loud, blew high and shrill.
The houses compassing the ground
Rattled their windows at the sound.
But no one rose. "Alas!" said he,
"What lazy bones these mortals be!"
Again he plied the horn, again
Deflating both his lungs in vain;
Then stood astonished and chagrined
At raising nothing but the wind.
At last he caught the tranquil eye
Of an observer standing by--
Last of mankind, not doomed to die.
To him thus Gabriel: "Sir, I pray
This mystery you'll clear away.
Why do I sound my note in vain?
Why spring they not from out the plain?
Where's Luning, Blythe and Michael Reese,
Magee, who ran the _Golden Fleece?_
Where's Asa Fisk? Jim Phelan, who
Was thought to know a thing or two
Of land which rose but never sank?
Where's Con O'Connor of the Bank,
And all who consecrated lands
Of old by laying on of hands?

I ask of them because their worth
Was known in all they wished--the earth.
Brisk boomers once, alert and wise,
Why don't they rise, why don't they rise?"
The man replied: "Reburied long
With others of the shrouded throng
In San Mateo--carted there
And dumped promiscuous, anywhere,
In holes and trenches--all misfits--
Mixed up with one another's bits:
One's back-bone with another's shin,
A third one's skull with a fourth one's grin--
Your eye was never, never fixed
Upon a company so mixed!
Go now among them there and blow:
'Twill be as good as any show
To see them, when they hear the tones,
Compiling one another's bones!
But here 'tis vain to sound and wait:
Naught rises here but real estate.
I own it all and shan't disgorge.
Don't know me? I am Henry George."

ARBOR DAY

Hasten, children, black and white--
Celebrate the yearly rite.
Every pupil plant a tree:
It will grow some day to be
Big and strong enough to bear
A School Director hanging there.

THE PIUTE

Unbeautiful is the Piute!
Howe'er bedecked with bravery,
His person is unsavory--
Of soap he's destitute.

He multiplies upon the earth
In spite of all admonishing;
All censure his astonishing
And versatile unworth.

Upon the Reservation wide
We give for his inhabiting
He goes a-jackass rabbiting
To furnish his inside.

The hopper singing in the grass
He seizes with avidity:

He loves its tart acidity,
And gobbles all that pass.

He penetrates the spider's veil,
Industriously pillages
The toads' defenseless villages,
And shadows home the snail.

He lightly runs to earth the quaint
Red worm and, deftly troweling,
He makes it with his boweling
Familiarly acquaint.

He tracks the pine-nut to its lair,
Surrounds it with celerity,
Regards it with asperity--
Smiles, and it isn't there!

I wish he'd open up a grin
Of adequate vivacity
And carrying capacity
To take his Agent in.

FAME

He held a book in his knotty paws,
And its title grand read he:
"The Chronicles of the Kings" it was,
By the History Companee.
"I'm a monarch," he said
(But a tear he shed)
"And my picter here you see.

"Great and lasting is my renown,
However the wits may flout--
As wide almost as this blessed town"
(But he winced as if with gout).
"I paid 'em like sin
For to put me in,
But it's O, and O, to be out!"

ONE OF THE REDEEMED

Saint Peter, standing at the Gate, beheld
A soul whose body Death had lately felled.

A pleasant soul as ever was, he seemed:
His step was joyous and his visage beamed.

"Good morning, Peter." There was just a touch
Of foreign accent, but not overmuch.

The Saint bent gravely, like a stately tree,
And said: "You have the advantage, sir, of me."

"Renan of Paris," said the immortal part--
"A master of the literary art.

"I'm somewhat famous, too, I grieve to tell,
As controversialist and infidel."

"That's of no consequence," the Saint replied,
"Why, I myself my Master once denied.

"No one up here cares anything for that.
But is there nothing you were always at?

"It seems to me you were accused one day
Of _something_--what it was I can't just say."

"Quite likely," said the other; "but I swear
My life was irreproachable and fair."

Just then a soul appeared upon the wall,
Singing a hymn as loud as he could bawl.

About his head a golden halo gleamed,
As well befitted one of the redeemed.

A harp he bore and vigorously thumbed,
Strumming he sang, and, singing, ever strummed.

His countenance, suffused with holy pride,
Glowed like a pumpkin with a light inside.

"Ah! that's the chap," said Peter, "who declares:
'Renan's a rake and drunkard--smokes and swears.'

"Yes, that's the fellow--he's a preacher--came
From San Francisco. Mansfield was his name."

"Do you believe him?" said Renan. "Great Scott!
Believe? Believe the blackguard? Of course _not!_"

"Just walk right in and make yourself at home.
And if he pecks at you I'll cut his comb.

"He's only here because the Devil swore
He wouldn't have him, for the smile he wore."

Resting his eyes one moment on that proof
Of saving grace, the Frenchman turned aloof,

And stepping down from cloud to cloud, said he:
"Thank you, monsieur,--I'll see if he'll have _me_."

[Apparently the Cleveland _Leader_ is not a good judge of poetry.--_The Morning Call_.]

That from _you_, neighbor! to whose vacant lot
Each rhyming literary knacker scourges
His cart-compelling Pegasus to trot,
As folly, fame or famine smartly urges?

Admonished by the stimulating goad,
How gaily, lo! the spavined crow-bait prances--
Its cart before it--eager to unload
The dead-dog sentiments and swill-tub fancies.

Gravely the sweating scavenger pulls out
The tail-board of his curst imagination,
Shoots all his rascal rubbish, and, no doubt,
Thanks Fortune for so good a dumping-station.

To improve your property, the vile cascade
Your thrift invites--to make a higher level.
In vain: with tons of garbage overlaid,
Your baseless bog sinks slowly to the devil.

"Rubbish may be shot here"--familiar sign!
I seem to see it in your every column.
You have your wishes, but if I had mine
'Twould to your editor mean something solemn.

A QUESTION OF ELIGIBILITY

It was a bruised and battered chap
The victim of some dire mishap,
Who sat upon a rock and spent
His breath in this ungay lament:

"Some wars--I've frequent heard of such--
Has beat the everlastin' Dutch!
But never fight was fit by man
To equal this which has began
In our (I'm in it, if you please)
Academy of Sciences.
For there is various gents belong
To it which go persistent wrong,
And loving the debates' delight
Calls one another names at sight.
Their disposition, too, accords
With fighting like they all was lords!
Sech impulses should be withstood:
'Tis scientific to be good.

"'Twas one of them, one night last week,
Rose up his figure for to speak:
'Please, Mr. Chair, I'm holding here

A resolution which, I fear,
Some ancient fossils that has bust
Their cases and shook off their dust
To sit as Members here will find
Unpleasant, not to say unkind.'
And then he read it every word,
And silence fell on all which heard.
That resolution, wild and strange,
Proposed a fundamental change,
Which was that idiots no more
Could join us as they had before!

"No sooner was he seated than
The members rose up, to a man.
Each chap was primed with a reply
And tried to snatch the Chairman's eye.
They stomped and shook their fists in air,
And, O, what words was uttered there!

"The Chair was silent, but at last
He hove up his proportions vast
And stilled them tumults with a look
By which the undauntedest was shook.
He smiled sarcastical and said:
'If Argus was the Chair, instead
Of me, he'd lack enough of eyes
Each orator to recognize!
And since, denied a hearing, you
Might maybe undertake to do
Each other harm before you cease,
I've took some steps to keep the peace:
I've ordered out--alas, alas,
That Science e'er to such a pass
Should come!--I've ordered out--the gas!'

"O if a tongue or pen of fire
Was mine I could not tell entire
What the ensuin' actions was.
When swollered up in darkness' jaws
We fit and fit and fit and fit,
And everything we felt we hit!
We gouged, we scratched and we pulled hair,
And O, what words was uttered there!
And when at last the day dawn came
Three hundred Scientists was lame;
Two hundred others couldn't stand,
They'd been so careless handled, and
One thousand at the very least
Was spread upon the floor deceased!
'Twere easy to exaggerate,
But lies is things I mortal hate.

"Such, friends, is the disaster sad
Which has befel the Cal. Acad.
And now the question is of more
Importance than it was before:
Shall vacancies among us be
To idiots threw open free?"

FLEET STROTHER

What! you were born, you animated doll,
Within the shadow of the Capitol?
'Twas always thought (and Bancroft so assures
His trusting readers) it was reared in yours.

CALIFORNIAN SUMMER PICTURES

THE FOOT-HILL RESORT

Assembled in the parlor
Of the place of last resort,
The smiler and the snarler
And the guests of every sort--
The elocution chap
With rhetoric on tap;
The mimic and the funny dog;
The social sponge; the money-hog;
Vulgarian and dude;
And the prude;
The adiposing dame
With pimply face aflame;
The kitten-playful virgin--
Vergin' on to fifty years;
The solemn-looking sturgeon
Of a firm of auctioneers;
The widower flirtatious;
The widow all too gracious;
The man with a proboscis and a sepulcher beneath.
One assassin picks the banjo, and another picks his teeth.

AT ANCHOR

The soft asphaltum in the sun;
Betrays a tendency to run;
Whereas the dog that takes his way
Across its course concludes to stay.

THE IN-COMING CLIMATE

Now o' nights the ocean breeze
Makes the patient flinch,
For that zephyr bears a sneeze
In every cubic inch.
Lo! the lively population
Chorusing in sternutation
A catarrhal acclamation!

A LONG-FELT WANT

Dimly apparent, through the gloom
Of Market-street's opaque simoom,
A queue of people, parti-sexed,
Awaiting the command of "Next!"
A sidewalk booth, a dingy sign:
"Teeth dusted nice--five cents a shine."

TO THE HAPPY HUNTING GROUNDS

Wide windy reaches of high stubble field;
A long gray road, bordered with dusty pines;
A wagon moving in a "cloud by day."
Two city sportsmen with a dove between,
Breast-high upon a fence and fast asleep--
A solitary dove, the only dove
In twenty counties, and it sick, or else
It were not there. Two guns that fire as one,
With thunder simultaneous and loud;
Two shattered human wrecks of blood and bone!
And later, in the gloaming, comes a man--
The worthy local coroner is he,
Renowned all thereabout, and popular
With many a remain. All tenderly
Compiling in a game-bag the debris,
He glides into the gloom and fades from sight.
The dove, cured of its ailment by the shock,
Has flown, meantime, on pinions strong and fleet,
To die of age in some far foreign land.

SLANDER

FITCH:

"All vices you've exhausted, friend;
So all the papers say."

PICKERING:

"Ah, what vile calumnies are penned!--
'Tis just the other way."

JAMES L. FLOOD

As oft it happens in the youth of day
That mists obscure the sun's imperfect ray,
Who, as he's mounting to the dome's extreme,
Smites and dispels them with a steeper beam,

So you the vapors that begirt your birth
Consumed, and manifested all your worth.
But still one early vice obstructs the light
And sullies all the visible and bright
Display of mind and character. You write.

FOUR CANDIDATES FOR SENATOR

To flatter your way to the goad of your hope,
O plausible Mr. Perkins,
You'll need ten tons of the softest soap
And butter a thousand firkins.
The soap you could put to a better use
In washing your hands of ambition
Ere the butter's used for cooking your goose
To a beautiful brown condition.

* * * * *

"The Railroad can't run Stanford." That is so--
The tail can't curl the pig; but then, you know,
Inside the vegetable-garden's pale
The pig will eat more cabbage than the tail.

* * * * *

When Sargent struts by all the lawmakers say:
"Right--left!" It is fair to infer
The right will get left, nor polar the day
When he makes that thing to occur.

Not so, not so, 'tis a joke, that cry--
Foolish and dull and small:
He so bores them for votes that they mean to imply
He's a drill-Sargent, that is all.

* * * * *

Gods! what a sight! Astride McClure's broad back
Estee jogs round the Senatorial track,
The crowd all undecided, as they pass,
Whether to cheer the man or cheer the ass.
They stop: the man to lower his feet is seen
And the tired beast, withdrawing from between,
Mounts, as they start again, the biped's neck,
And scarce the crowd can say which one's on deck.

A GROWLER

Judge Shafter, you're an aged man, I know,
And learned too, I doubt not, in the law;

And a head white with many a winter's snow
 (I wish, however that your heart would thaw)
Claims reverence and honor; but the jaw
That's always wagging with a word malign,
 Nagging and scolding every one in sight
As harshly as a jaybird in a pine,
 And with as little sense of wrong and right
As animates that irritable creature,
Is not a very venerable feature.

You damn all witnesses, all jurors too
 (And swear at the attorneys, I suppose,
But _that's_ commendable) "till all is blue";
 And what it's all about, the good Lord knows,
 Not you; but all the hotter, fiercer glows
Your wrath for that--as dogs the louder howl
 With only moonshine to incite their rage,
And bears with more ferocious menace growl,
 Even when their food is flung into the cage.
Reform, your Honor, and forbear to curse us.
Lest all men, hearing you, cry: "_Ecce ursus_"!

AD MOODIUM

Tut! Moody, do not try to show
 To gentlemen and ladies
That if they have not "Faith," they'll go
 Headlong to Hades.

Faith is belief; and how can I
 Have that by being willing?
This dime I cannot, though I try,
 Believe a shilling.

Perhaps you can. If so, pray do--
 Believe you own it, also.
But what seems evidence to you
 I may not call so.

Heaven knows I'd like the Faith to think
 This little vessel's contents
Are liquid gold. I see 'tis ink
 For writing nonsense.

Minds prone to Faith, however, may
 Come now and then to sorrow:
They put their trust in truth to-day,
 In lies to-morrow.

No doubt the happiness is great
 To think as one would wish to;
But not to swallow every bait,
 As certain fish do.

To think a snake a cord, I hope,

Would bolden and delight me;
But some day I might think a rope
Would chase and bite me.

"Curst Reason! Faith forever blest!"
You're crying all the season.
Well, who decides that Faith is best?
Why, Mr. Reason.

He's right or wrong; he answers you
According to your folly,
And says what you have taught him to,
Like any polly.

AN EPITAPH

Hangman's hands laid in this tomb an
Imp of Satan's getting, whom an
Ancient legend says that woman
Never bore--he owed his birth
To Sin herself. From Hell to Earth
She brought the brat in secret state
And laid him at the Golden gate,
And they named him Henry Vrooman.
While with mortals here he stayed,
His father frequently he played.
Raised his birth-place and in other
Playful ways begot his mother.

A SPADE

[The spade that was used to turn the first sod in the
construction of the Central Pacific Railroad is to be
exhibited at the New Orleans Exposition.--_Press Telegram_.]

Precursor of our woes, historic spade,
What dismal records burn upon thy blade!
On thee I see the maculating stains
Of passengers' commingled blood and brains.
In this red rust a widow's curse appears,
And here an orphan tarnished thee with tears.
Upon thy handle sanguinary bands
Reveal the clutching of thine owner's hands
When first he wielded thee with vigor brave
To cut a sod and dig a people's grave--
(For they who are debauched are dead and ought,
In God's name, to be hid from sight and thought.)
Within thee, as within a magic glass,
I seem to see a foul procession pass--
Judges with ermine dragging in the mud
And spotted here and there with guiltless blood;

Gold-greedy legislators jingling bribes;
Kept editors and sycophantic scribes;
Liars in swarms and plunderers in tribes;
They fade away before the night's advance,
And fancy figures thee a devil's lance
Gleaming portentous through the misty shade,
While ghosts of murdered virtues shriek about my blade!

THE VAN NESSIAD

From end to end, thine avenue, Van Ness,
Rang with the cries of battle and distress!
Brave lungs were thundering with dreadful sound
And perspiration smoked along the ground!
Sing, heavenly muse, to ears of mortal clay,
The meaning, cause and finish of the fray.

Great Porter Ashe (invoking first the gods,
Who signed their favor with assenting nods
That snapped off half their heads--their necks grown dry
Since last the nectar cup went circling by)
Resolved to build a stable on his lot,
His neighbors fiercely swearing he should not.
Said he: "I build that stable!" "No, you don't,"
Said they. "I can!" "You can't!" "I will!" "You won't!"
"By heaven!" he swore; "not only will I build,
But purchase donkeys till the place is filled!"
"Needless expense," they sneered in tones of ice--
"The owner's self, if lodged there, would suffice."
For three long months the awful war they waged:
With women, women, men with men engaged,
While roaring babes and shrilling poodles raged!

Jove, from Olympus, where he still maintains
His ancient session (with rheumatic pains
Touched by his long exposure) marked the strife,
Interminable but by loss of life;
For malediction soon exhausts the breath--
If not, old age itself is certain death.
Lo! he holds high in heaven the fatal beam;
A golden pan depends from each, extreme;
This feels of Porter's fate the downward stress,
That bears the destiny of all Van Ness.
Alas! the rusted scales, their life all gone,
Deliver judgment neither pro nor con:
The dooms hang level and the war goes on.
With a divine, contemptuous disesteem
Jove dropped the pans and kicked, himself, the beam:
Then, to decide the strife, with ready wit,
The nickel that he did not care for it
Twirled absently, remarking: "See it spin:
Head, Porter loses; tail, the others win."
The conscious nickel, charged with doom, spun round,
Portentously and made a ringing sound,
Then, staggering beneath its load of fate,

Sank rattling, died at last and lay in state.

Jove scanned the disk and then, as is his wont,
Raised his considering orbs, exclaiming: "Front!"
With leisurely alacrity approached
The herald god, to whom his mind he broached:
"In San Francisco two belligerent Powers,
Such as contended round great Ilion's towers,
Fight for a stable, though in either class
There's not a horse, and but a single ass.
Achilles Ashe, with formidable jaw
Assails a Trojan band with fierce hee-haw,
Firing the night with brilliant curses. They
With dark vituperation gloom the day.
Fate, against which nor gods nor men compete,
Decrees their victory and his defeat.
With haste, good Mercury, betake thee hence
And salivate him till he has no sense!"

Sheer downward shot the messenger afar,
Trailing a splendor like a falling star!
With dimming lustre through the air he burned,
Vanished, nor till another sun returned.
The sovereign of the gods superior smiled,
Beaming benignant, fatherly and mild:
"Is Destiny's decree performed, my lad?--
And has he now no sense?" "Ah, sire, he never had."

A FISH COMMISSIONER

Great Joseph D. Redding--illustrious name!--
Considered a fish-horn the trumpet of Fame.
That goddess was angry, and what do you think?
Her trumpet she filled with a gallon of ink,
And all through the Press, with a devilish glee,
She sputtered and spattered the name of J.D.

TO A STRAY DOG

Well, Towser (I'm thinking your name must be Towser),
You're a decentish puppy as puppy dogs go,
For you never, I'm sure, could have dined upon trowser,
And your tail's unimpeachably curled just so.

But, dear me! your name--if 'tis yours--is a "poser":
Its meaning I cannot get anywise at,
When spoken correctly perhaps it is Toser,
And means one who toses. Max Muller, how's that?

I ne'er was ingenious at all at divining
A word's prehistorical, primitive state,

Or finding its root, like a mole, by consigning
Its bloom to the turnep-top's sorrowful fate.

And, now that I think of it well, I'm no nearer
The riddle's solution than ever--for how's
My pretty invented word, "tose," any clearer
In point of its signification than "trowse"?

So, Towser (or Toser), I mean to rename you
In honor of some good and eminent man,
In the light and the heat of whose quickening fame you
May grow to an eminent dog if you can.

In sunshine like his you'll not long be a croucher:
The Senate shall hear you--for that I will vouch.
Come here, sir. Stand up. I rechristen you Goucher.
But damn you! I'll shoot you if ever you gouch!

IN HIS HAND

De Young (in Chicago the story is told)
"Took his life in his hand," like a warrior bold,
And stood before Buckley--who thought him behind,
For Buckley, the man-eating monster is blind.
"Count fairly the ballots!" so rang the demand
Of the gallant De Young, with his life in his hand.
'Tis done, and the struggle is ended. No more
He havocs the battle-field, gilt with the gore
Of slain reputations. No more he defies
His "lying opponents" with deadlier lies.
His trumpet is hushed and his belt is unbound--
His enemies' characters cumber the ground.
They bloat on the war-plain with ink all asoak,
The fortunate candidates perching to croak.
No more he will charge, with a daring divine,
His foes with corruption, his friends by the line.
The thunders are stilled of the horrid campaign,
De Young is triumphant, and never again
Will he need, with his life in his hand, to roar:
"Count fair or, by G----, I will die on your floor!"
His life has been spared, for his sins to atone,
And the hand that he took it in washed with cologne.

A DEMAGOGUE

"Yawp, yawp, yawp!
Under the moon and sun.
It's aye the rabble,
And I to gabble,
And hey! for the tale that is never done.

"Chant, chant, chant!
To woo the reluctant vote.
I would I were dead
And my say were said
And my song were sung to its ultimate note.

"Stab, stab, stab!
Ah! the weapon between my teeth--
I'm sick of the flash of it;
See how the slash of it
Misses the foeman to mangle the sheath!

"Boom, boom, boom!
I'm beating the mammoth drum.
My nethermost tripe
I blow into the pipes--
It's oh! for the honors that never come!"

'Twas the dolorous blab
Of a tramping "scab"--
'Twas the eloquent Swift
Of the marvelous gift--
The wild, weird, wonderful gift of gab!

IGNIS FATUUS

Weep, weep, each loyal partisan,
For Buckley, king of hearts;
A most accomplished man; a man
Of parts--of foreign parts.

Long years he ruled with gentle sway,
Nor grew his glory dim;
And he would be with us to-day
If we were but with him.

Men wondered at his going off
In such a sudden way;
'Twas thought, as he had come to scoff
He would remain to prey.

Since he is gone we're all agreed
That he is what men call
A crook: his very steps, indeed,
Are bent--to Montreal.

So let our tears unhindered flow,
Our sighs and groans have way:
It matters not how much we Oh!--
The devil is to pay.

FROM TOP TO BOTTOM

[Japan has 73,759 Buddhist priests, "most of whom," says a Christian missionary, "are grossly ignorant, and many of them lead scandalous lives."]

O Buddha, had you but foreknown
The vices of your priesthood
It would have made you twist and moan
As any wounded beast would.
You would have damned the entire lot
And turned a Christian, would you not?

There were no Christians, I'll allow,
In your day; that would only
Have brought distinction. Even now
A Christian might feel lonely.
All take the name, but facts are things
As stubborn as the will of kings.

The priests were ignorant and low
When ridiculed by Lucian;
The records, could we read, might show
The same of times Confucian.
And yet the fact I can't disguise
That Deacon Rankin's good and wise.

'Tis true he is not quite a priest,
Nor more than half a preacher;
But he exhorts as loud at least
As any living creature.
And when the plate is passed about
He never takes a penny out.

From Buddha down to Rankin! There,--
I never did intend to.
This pen's a buzzard's quill, I swear,
Such subjects to descend to.
When from the humming-bird I've wrung
A plume I'll write of Mike de Young.

AN IDLER

Who told Creed Haymond he was witty?--who
Had nothing better in this world to do?
Could no greased pig's appeal to his embrace
Kindle his ardor for the friendly chase?
Did no dead dog upon a vacant lot,
Bloated and bald, or curdled in a clot,
Stir his compassion and inspire his arms
To hide from human eyes its faded charms?

If not to works of piety inclined,
Then recreation might have claimed his mind.
The harmless game that shows the feline greed

To cinch the shorts and make the market bleed[A]
Is better sport than victimizing Creed;
And a far livelier satisfaction comes
Of knowing Simon, autocrat of thumbs.[B]
If neither worthy work nor play command
This gentleman of leisure's heart and hand,
Then Mammon might his idle spirit lift
By hope of profit to some deed of thrift.
Is there no cheese to pare, no flint to skin,
No tin to mend, no glass to be put in,
No housewife worthy of a morning visit,
Her rags and sacks and bottles to solicit?
Lo! the blind sow's precarious pursuit
Of the aspiring oak's familiar fruit!--
'Twould more advantage any man to steal
This easy victim's undefended meal
Than tell Creed Haymond he has wit, and so
Expose the state to his narcotic flow!

[Footnote A: "Pussy Wants a Corner."]

[Footnote B: "Simon Says Thumbs Up."]

THE DEAD KING

Hawaii's King resigned his breath--
Our Legislature guffawed.
The awful dignity of death
Not any single rough awed.
But when our Legislators die
All Kings, Queens, Jacks and Aces cry.

A PATTERN SONG

There was a cranky Governor--
His name it wasn't Waterman.
For office he was hotter than
The love of any lover, nor
Was Boruck's threat of aiding him
Effective in dissuading him--
This pig-headed, big-headed, singularly self-conceited Governor Nonwaterman.

To citrus fairs, _et caetera_,
He went about philandering,
To pride of parish pandering.
He knew not any better--ah,
His early education had
Not taught the abnegation fad--
The wool-witted, bull-witted, fabulously feeble-minded king of gabble-gandering!

He conjured up, _ad libitum_,

With postures energetical,
One day (this is prophetical)
His graces, to exhibit 'em.
He straddled in each attitude,
Four parallels of latitude--
The slab-footed, crab-footed, galloping gregarian, of presence unaesthetical!
An ancient cow, perceiving that
His powers of agility
Transcended her ability
(A circumstance for grieving at)
Upon her horns engrafted him
And to the welkin wafted him--
The high-rolling, sky-rolling, hurtling hallelujah-lad of peerless volatility!

A CALLER

"Why, Goldenson, you're looking very well."
Said Death as, strolling through the County Jail,
He entered that serene assassin's cell
And hung his hat and coat upon a nail.
"I think that life in this secluded spot
Agrees with men of your trade, does it not?"

"Well, yes," said Goldenson, "I can't complain:
Life anywhere--provided it is mine--
Agrees with me; but I observe with pain
That still the people murmur and repine.
It hurts their sense of harmony, no doubt,
To see a persecuted man grow stout."

"O no, 'tis not your growing stout," said Death,
"Which makes these malcontents complain and scold--
They like you to be, somehow, scant of breath.
What they object to is your growing old.
And--though indifferent to lean or fat--
I don't myself entirely favor _that_."

With brows that met above the orbs beneath,
And nose that like a soaring hawk appeared,
And lifted lip, uncovering his teeth,
The Mamikellikiller coldly sneered:
"O, so you don't! Well, how will you assuage
Your spongy passion for the blood of age?"

Death with a clattering convulsion, drew
His coat on, hatted his unmeated pow,
Unbarred the door and, stepping partly through,
Turned and made answer: "I will _show_ you how.
I'm going to the Bench you call Supreme
And tap the old women who sit there and dream."

THE SHAFTER SHAFTE

Well, James McMillan Shafter, you're a Judge--
At least you were when last I knew of you;
And if the people since have made you budge
I did not notice it. I've much to do
Without endeavoring to follow, through
The miserable squabbles, dust and smudge,
The fate of even the veteran contenders
Who fight with flying colors and suspenders.
Being a Judge, 'tis natural and wrong
That you should villify the public press--
Save while you are a candidate. That song
Is easy quite to sing, and I confess
It wins applause from hearers who have less
Of spiritual graces than belong
To audiences of another kidney--
Men, for example, like Sir Philip Sidney.

Newspapers, so you say, don't always treat
The Judges with respect. That may be so
And still no harm done, for I swear I'll eat
My legs and in the long hereafter go,
Snake-like, upon my belly if you'll show
All Judges are respectable and sweet.
For some of them are rogues and the world's laughter's
Directed at some others, for they're Shafter's.

THE MUMMERY

THE TWO CAVEES

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

| | |
|--------------|--------------------------------|
| FITCH | _a Pelter of Railroques_ |
| PICKERING | _his Partner, an Enemy to Sin_ |
| OLD NICK | _a General Blackwasher_ |
| DEAD CAT | _a Missile_ |
| ANTIQUUE EGG | _Another_ |

RAILROQUES, DUMP-CARTERS. NAVVIES and Unassorted SHOVELRY in the Lower Distance

Scene--The Brink of a Railway Cut, a Mile Deep.

Time--1875.

FITCH:

Gods! what a steep declivity! Below
I see the lazy dump-carts come and go,
Creeping like beetles and about as big.
The delving Paddies--

PICKERING:

Case of _infra dig._

FITCH:

Loring, light-minded and unmeaning quips
Come with but scant propriety from lips
Fringed with the blue-black evidence of age.
'Twere well to cultivate a style more sage,
For men will fancy, hearing how you pun,
Our foulest missiles are but thrown in fun.

(_Enter Dead Cat._)

Here's one that thoughtfully has come to hand;
Slant your fine eye below and see it land.
(_Seizes Dead Cat by the tail and swings it in act to throw._)

DEAD CAT (_singing_):

Merrily, merrily, round I go--
Over and under and at.
Swing wide and free, swing high and low
The anti-monopoly cat!

O, who wouldn't be in the place of me,
The anti-monopoly cat?
Designed to admonish,
Persuade and astonish
The capitalist and--

FITCH (_letting go_):_

Scat!
(_Exit Dead Cat._)

PICKERING:

Huzza! good Deacon, well and truly flung!
Pat Stanford it has grassed, and Mike de Young.
Mike drives a dump-cart for the villains, though
'Twere fitter that he pull it. Well, we owe
The traitor one for leaving us!--some day
We'll get, if not his place, his cart away.
Meantime fling missiles--any kind will do.
(_Enter Antique Egg._)
Ha! we can give them an _ovation_, too!

ANTIQUUE EGG:

In the valley of the Nile,
Where the Holy Crocodile
Of immeasurable smile
Blossoms like the early rose,
And the Sacred Onion grows--
When the Pyramids were new
And the Sphinx possessed a nose,

By a storkess I was laid
In the cool papyrus shade,
Where the rushes later grew,
That concealed the little Jew,
 Baby Mose.

Straining very hard to hatch,
I disrupted there my yolk;
And I felt my yellow streaming
 Through my white;
And the dream that I was dreaming
Of posterity was broke
 In a night.
Then from the papyrus-patch
By the rising waters rolled,
Passing many a temple old,
I proceeded to the sea.
Memnon sang, one morn, to me,
And I heard Cambyses sass
The tomb of Ozymandias!

FITCH:

O, venerablest orb of all the earth,
God rest the lady fowl that gave thee birth!
Fit missile for the vilest hand to throw--
I freely tender thee mine own. Although
As a bad egg I am myself no slouch,
Thy ripper years thy ranker worth avouch.
Now, Pickering, please expose your eye and say
If--whoop!--

 (Exit egg.)
I've got the range.

PICKERING:

 Hooray! hooray!
A grand good shot, and Teddy Colton's down:
It burst in thunderbolts upon his crown!
Larry O'Crocker drops his pick and flies,
And deafening odors scream along the skies!
Pelt 'em some more.

FITCH:

 There's nothing left but tar--
wish I were a Yahoo.

PICKERING:

 Well, you are.
But keep the tar. How well I recollect,
When Mike was in with us--proud, strong, erect--
Mens conscia recti--flinging mud, he stood,
Austerely brave, incomparably good,
Ere yet for filthy lucre he began
To drive a cart as Stanford's hired man,
That pitch-pot bearing in his hand, Old Nick
Appeared and tarred us all with the same stick.
 (Enter Old Nick).

I hope he won't return and use his arts
To make us part with our immortal parts.

OLD NICK:

Make yourself easy on that score my lamb;
For both your souls I wouldn't give a damn!
I want my tar-pot--hello! where's the stick?

FITCH:

Don't look at _me_ that fashion!--look at Pick.

PICKERING:

Forgive me, father--pity my remorse!
Truth is--Mike took that stick to spank his horse.
It fills my pericardium with grief
That I kept company with such a thief.

(_Endeavoring to get his handkerchief, he opens his coat and
the tar-stick falls out. Nick picks it up, looks at the culprit
reproachfully and withdraws in tears._)

FITCH (_excitedly_):

O Pickering, come hither to the brink--
There's something going on down there, I think!
With many an upward smile and meaning wink
The navvies all are running from the cut
Like lunatics, to right and left--

PICKERING:

Tut, tut--

'Tis only some poor sport or boisterous joke.
Let us sit down and have a quiet smoke.
(_They sit and light cigars._)

FITCH (_singing_):

When first I met Miss Toughie
I smoked a fine cigyar,
An' I was on de dummy
And she was in de cyar.

BOTH (_singing_):

An' I was on de dummy
And she was in de cyar.

FITCH (_singing_):

I couldn't go to her,
An' she wouldn't come to me;
An' I was as oneasy
As a gander on a tree.

BOTH (_singing_):

An' I was as oneasy
As a gander on a tree.

FITCH (_singing_):

But purty soon I weakened
An' lef' de dummy's bench,
An' frew away a ten-cent weed
To win a five-cent wench!

BOTH (_singing_)

An' frew away a ten-cent weed
To win a five-cent wench!

FITCH:

Is there not now a certain substance sold
Under the name of fulminate of gold,
A high explosive, popular for blasting,
Producing an effect immense and lasting?

PICKERING:

Nay, that's mere superstition. Rocks are rent
And excavations made by argument.
Explosives all have had their day and season;
The modern engineer relies on reason.
He'll talk a tunnel through a mountain's flank
And by fair speech cave down the tallest bank.

(_The earth trembles, a deep subterranean explosion is heard
and a section of the bank as big as El Capitan starts away and
plunges thunderously into the cut. A part of it strikes De
Young's dumpcart abaft the axletree and flings him, hurtling,
skyward, a thing of legs and arms, to descend on the distant
mountains, where it is cold. Fitch and Pickering pull themselves
out of the debris and stand ungraveling their eyes and
noses._)

FITCH:

Well, since I'm down here I will help to grade,
And do dirt-throwing henceforth with a spade.

PICKERING:

God bless my soul! it gave me quit a start.
Well, fate is fate--I guess I'll drive this cart.
(_Curtain._)

METEMPSYCHOSIS

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

ST. JOHN _a Presidential Candidate_
MCDONALD _a Defeated Aspirant_
MRS. HAYES _an Ex-President_
PITTS-STEVENs _a Water Nymph_

Scene--A Small Lake in the Alleghany Mountains.

ST. JOHN:

Hours I've immersed my muzzle in this tarn
And, quaffing copious potations, tried
To suck it dry; but ever as I pumped
Its waters into my distended skin
The labor of my zeal extruded them
In perspiration from my pores; and so,
Rilling the marginal declivity,
They fell again into their source. Ah, me!
Could I but find within these ancient hills
Some long extinct volcano, by the rains
Of countless ages in its crater brimmed
Like a full goblet, I would lay me down
Prone on the outer slope, and o'er its edge
Arching my neck, I'd siphon out its store
And flood the valleys with my sweat for aye.
So should I be accounted as a god,
Even as Father Nilus is. What's that?
Methought I heard some sawyer draw his file
With jarring, stridulous cacophany
Across his notchy blade, to set its teeth
And mine on edge. Ha! there it goes again!

Song, within.

Cold water's the milk of the mountains,
And Nature's our wet-nurse. O then,
Glue thou thy blue lips to her fountains
Forever and ever, amen!

ST. JOHN:

Why surely there's congenial company
Aloof--the spirit, I suppose, that guards
This sacred spot; perchance some water-nymph
Who laving in the crystal flood her limbs
Has taken cold, and so, with raucous voice
Afflicts the sensitive membrane of mine ear
The while she sings my sentiments.

(Enter Pitts-Stevens.)
Hello!

What fiend is this?

PITTS-STEVENs:

'Tis I, be not afraid.

ST. JOHN:

And who, thou antiquated crone, art thou?
I ne'er forget a face, but names I can't

So well remember. I have seen thee oft.
When in the middle season of the night,
Curved with a cucumber, or knotted hard
With an eclectic pie, I've striven to keep
My head and heels asunder, thou has come,
With sociable familiarity,
Into my dream, but not, alas, to bless.

PITTS-STEVENSON:

My name's Pitts-Stevens, age just seventeen years;
Talking teetotaler, professional
Beauty.

ST. JOHN:

What dost them here?

PITTS-STEVENSON:

I'm come, fair sir,
With paint and brush to blazon on these rocks
The merits of my master's nostrum--so:
(Paints rapidly.)
"McDonald's Vinegar Bitters!"

ST. JOHN:

What are they?

PITTS-STEVENSON:

A woman suffering from widowhood
Took a full bottle and was cured. A man
There was--a murderer; the doctors all
Had given him up--he'd but an hour to live.
He swallowed half a glassful. He is dead,
But not of Vinegar Bitters. A wee babe
Lay sick and cried for it. The mother gave
That innocent a spoonful and it smoothed
Its pathway to the tomb. 'Tis warranted
To cause a boy to strike his father, make
A pig squeal, start the hair upon a stone,
Or play the fiddle for a country dance.
(Enter McDonald, reading a Sunday-school book.)
Good morrow, sir; I trust you're well.

MCDONALD:

H'lo, Pitts!
Observe, good friends, I have a volume here
Myself am author of--a noble book
To train the infant mind (delightful task!)
It tells how one Samantha Brown, age, six,
A gutter-bunking slave to rum, was saved
By Vinegar Bitters, went to church and now
Has an account at the Pacific Bank.
I'll read the whole work to you.

ST JOHN:

Heaven forbid!
I've elsewhere an engagement.

PITTS-STEVENSON:

I am deaf.

MCDONALD _(reading regardless):_

"Once on a time there lived"----

(Enter Mrs. Hayes.)

Behold our queen!

ALL:

Her eyes upon the ground
Before her feet she low'rs,
Walking, in thought profound,
As 'twere, upon all fours.
Her visage is austere,
Her gait a high parade;
At every step you hear
The sloshing lemonade!

MRS. HAYES _(to herself):_

Once, sitting in the White House, hard at work
Signing State papers (Rutherford was there,
Knitting some hose) a sudden glory fell
Upon my paper. I looked up and saw
An angel, holding in his hand a rod
Wherewith he struck me. Smarting with the blow
I rose and (cuffing Rutherford) inquired:
"Wherefore this chastisement?" The angel said:
"Four years you have been President, and still
There's rum!"--then flew to Heaven. Contrite, I swore
Such oath as lady Methodist might take,
My second term should medicine my first.
The people would not have it that way; so
I seek some candidate who'll take my soul--
My spirit of reform, fresh from my breast,
And give me his instead; and thus equipped
With my imperious and fiery essence,
Drive the Drink-Demon from the land and fill
The people up with water till their teeth
Are all afloat.

(St. John discovers himself)
What, _you_?

ST. JOHN:

Aye, Madam, I'll
Swap souls with you and lead the cold sea-green
Amphibians of Prohibition on,
Pallid of nose and webbed of foot, swim-bladdered,
Gifted with gills, invincible!

Enough,
Stand forth and consummate the interchange.

Though fortunes vary let all be merry,
And then if e'er a disaster befall,
At Styx's ferry is Charon's wherry
In easy call.

Upon a ripple of golden tipple
That tipsy ship'll convey you best.
To king and cripple, the bottle's the nipple
Of Nature's breast!

(_Curtain_.)

SLICKENS

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

| | |
|-----------|---------------|
| HAYSEED | _a Granger_ |
| NOZZLE | _a Miner_ |
| RINGDIVVY | _a Statesman_ |
| FEEGOBBLE | _a Lawyer_ |
| JUNKET | _a Committee_ |

Scene--Yuba Dam.

Feegobble, Ringdivvy, Nozzle.

NOZZLE:

My friends, since '51 I have pursued
The evil tenor of my watery way,
Removing hills as by an act of faith--

RINGDIVVY:

Just so; the steadfast faith of those who hold,
In foreign lands beyond the Eastern sea,
The shares in your concern--a simple, blind,
Unreasoning belief in dividends,
Still stimulated by assessments which,
When the skies fall, ensnaring all the larks,
Will bring, no doubt, a very great return.

ALL (_singing_):

O the beautiful assessment,
The exquisite assessment,
The regular assessment,
That makes the water flow.

RINGDIVVY:

The rascally-assessment!

FEEGOBBLE:

The murderous assessment!

NOZZLE:

The glorious assessment
That makes my mare to go!

FEEGOBBLE:

But, Nozzle, you, I think, were on the point
Of making a remark about some rights--
Some certain vested rights you have acquired
By long immunity; for still the law
Holds that if one do evil undisturbed
His right to do so ripens with the years;
And one may be a villain long enough
To make himself an honest gentleman.

ALL (_singing_):

Hail, holy law,
The soul with awe
Bows to thy dispensation.

NOZZLE:

It breaks my jaw!

RINGDIVVY:

It qualms my maw!

FEEGOBBLE:

It feeds my jaw,
It crams my maw,
It is my soul's salvation!

NOZZLE:

Why, yes, I've floated mountains to the sea
For lo! these many years; though some, they say,
Do strand themselves along the bottom lands
And cover up a village here and there,
And here and there a ranch. 'Tis said, indeed,
The granger with his female and his young
Do not infrequently go to the dickens
By premature burial in slickens.

ALL (_singing_):

Could slickens forever
Choke up the river,
And slime's endeavor
Be tried on grain,
How small the measure
Of granger's treasure,
How keen his pain!

RINGDIVVY:

"A consummation devoutly to be wished!"
These rascal grangers would long since have been

Submerged in slimes, to the last man of them,
But for the fact that all their wicked tribes
Affect our legislation with their bribes.

ALL (_singing_):

O bribery's great--
'Tis a pillar of State,
And the people they are free.

FEEGOBBLE:

It smashes my slate!

NOZZLE:

It is thievery straight!

RINGDIVVY:

But it's been the making of me!

NOZZLE:

I judge by certain shrewd sensations here
In these callosities I call my thumbs--
thrilling sense as of ten thousand pins,
Red-hot and penetrant, transpiercing all
The cuticle and tickling through the nerves--
That some malign and awful thing draws near.

(_Enter Hayseed._)

Good Lord! here are the ghosts and spooks of all
The grangers I have decently interred,
Rolled into one!

FEEGOBBLE:

Plead, phantom.

RINGDIVVY:

You've the floor.

HAYSEED:

From the margin of the river
(Bitter Creek, they sometimes call it)
Where I cherished once the pumpkin,
And the summer squash promoted,
Harvested the sweet potato,
Dallied with the fatal melon
And subdued the fierce cucumber,
I've been driven by the slickens,
Driven by the slimes and tailings!
All my family--my Polly
Ann and all my sons and daughters,
Dog and baby both included--

All were swamped in seas of slickens,
Buried fifty fathoms under,
Where they lie, prepared to play their
Gentle prank on geologic
Gents that shall exhume them later,
In the dim and distant future,
Taking them for melancholy
Relics antedating Adam.
I alone got up and dusted.

NOZZLE:

Avaunt! you horrid and infernal cuss!
What dire distress have you prepared for us?

RINGDIVVY:

Were I a buzzard stooping from the sky
My craw with filth to fill,
Into your honorable body I
Would introduce a bill.

FEEGOBBLE:

Defendant, hence, or, by the gods, I'll brain thee!--
Unless you saved some turneps to retain me.

HAYSEED:

As I was saying, I got up and dusted,
My ranch a graveyard and my business busted!
But hearing that a fellow from the City,
Who calls himself a Citizens' Committee,
Was coming up to play the very dickens,
With those who cover up our farms with slickens,
And make himself--unless I am in error--
To all such miscreants a holy terror,
I thought if I would join the dialogue
I maybe might get payment for my dog.

ALL (_Singing_):

O the dog is the head of Creation,
Prime work of the Master's hand;
He hasn't a known occupation,
Yet lives on the fat of the land.
Adipose, indolent, sleek and orbicular,
Sun-soaken, door matted, cross and particular,
Men, women, children, all coddle and wait on him,
Then, accidentally shutting the gate on him,
Miss from their calves, ever after, the rifted out
Mouthful of tendons that doggy has lifted out!
(_Enter Junket_.)

JUNKET:

Well met, my hearties! I must trouble you
Jointly and severally to provide
A comfortable carriage, with relays

Of hardy horses. This Committee means
To move in state about the country here.
I shall expect at every place I stop
Good beds, of course, and everything that's nice,
With bountiful repast of meat and wine.
For this Committee comes to sea and mark
And inwardly digest.

HAYSEED:

Digest my dog!

NOZZLE:

First square my claim for damages: the gold
Escaping with the slickens keeps me poor!

RINGDIVVY:

I merely would remark that if you'd grease
My itching palm it would more glibly glide
Into the public pocket.

FEEGOBBLE:

Sir, the wheels
Of justice move but slowly till they're oiled.
I have some certain writs and warrants here,
Prepared against your advent. You recall
The tale of Zaccheus, who did climb a tree,
And Jesus said: "Come down"?

JUNKET:

Why, bless your souls!
I've got no money; I but came to see
What all this noisy babble is about,
Make a report and file the same away.

NOZZLE, RINGDIVVY, FEEGOBBLE, HAYSEED:

How'll that help _us_? Reports are not our style
Of provender!

JUNKET:

Well, you can gnaw the file.

(_Curtain._)

"PEACEABLE EXPULSION"

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

MOUNTWAVE _a Politician_

HARDHAND _a Workingman_
TOK BAK _a Chinaman_
SATAN _a Friend to Mountwave_

CHORUS OF FOREIGN VOTERS.

MOUNTWAVE:

My friend, I beg that you will lend your ears
(I know 'tis asking a good deal of you)
While I for your instruction nominate
Some certain wrongs you suffer. Men like you
Imperfectly are sensible of all
The miseries they actually feel.
Hence, Providence has prudently raised up
Clear-sighted men like me to diagnose
Their cases and inform them where they're hurt.
The wounds of honest workingmen I've made
A specialty, and probing them's my trade.

HARDHAND:

Well, Mister, s'pose you let yer bossest eye
Camp on my mortal part awhile; then you
Jes' toot my sufferin's an' tell me what's
The fashionable caper now in writhes--
The very swellest wiggle.

MOUNTWAVE:

 Well, my lad,
'Tis plain as is the long, conspicuous nose
Borne, ponderous and pendulous, between
The elephant's remarkable eye-teeth
 (_Enter Tok Bak._)
That Chinese competition's what ails _you_.

BOTH (_Singing_):

O pig-tail Celestial,
O barbarous bestial,
Abominable Chineee!
Simian fellow man,
Primitive yellow man,
Joshian devotee!
Shoe-and-cigar machine,
Oleomargarine
You are, and butter are we--
Fat of the land are we,
Salt of the earth;
In God's image planned to be--
Noble in birth!
You, on the contrary,
Modeled upon very
Different lines indeed,
Show in conspicuous,
Base and ridiculous
Ways your inferior breed.

Wretched apology,
Shame of ethnology,
Monster unspeakably low!
Fit to be buckshot--
Be you 'steboycotted.
Vanish--vamoose--mosy--Go!

TOK BAK:

You listen me! You beatee the big dlum
An' tell me go to Flowly Kingdom Come.
You all too muchee fool. You chinnee heap.
Such talkee like my washee--belly cheap!

(_Enter Satan._)

You dlive me outee clunty towns all way;
Why you no tackle me Safflisco, hay?

SATAN:

Methought I heard a murmuring of tongues
Sound through the ceiling of the hollow earth,
As if the anti-coolie ques----ha! friends,
Well met. You see I keep my ancient word:
Where two or three are gathered in my name,
There am I in their midst.

MOUNTWAVE:

O monstrous thief!

To quote the words of Shakespeare as your own.
I know his work.

HARDHAND:

Who's Shakespeare?--what's his trade?

I've heard about the work o' that galoot
Till I'm jest sick!

TOK BAK:

Go Sunny school--you'll know
Mo' Bible. Bime by pleach--hell-talkee. Tell
'Bout Abel--mebby so he live too cheap.
He mebby all time dig on lanch--no dlink,
No splee--no go plocession fo' make vote--
No sendee money out of clunty fo'
To helpee llishmen. Cain killum. Josh
He catchee at it, an' he belly mad--
Say: "Allee Melicans boycottee Cain."
Not muchee--you no pleachee that:
You all same lie.

MOUNTWAVE:

This cuss must be expelled.
(_Draws pistol_.)

MOUNTWAVE, HARDHAND, SATAN (_singing_):

For Chinese expulsion, hurrah!
To mobbing and murder, all hail!
Away with your justice and law--
We'll make every pagan turn tail.

CHORUS OF FOREIGN VOTERS:

Bedad! oof dot tief o'ze world--
Zat Ivan Tchanay vos got hurled
In Hella, da debil he say:
"Wor be yer return pairmit, hey?"
Und gry as 'e shaka da boot:
"Zis haythen haf nevaire been oot!"

HARDHAND:

Too many cooks are working at this broth--
I think, by thunder, t'will be mostly froth!
I'm cussed ef I can sarvy, up to date,
What good this dern fandango does the State.

MOUNTWAVE:

The State's advantage, sir, you may not see,
But think how good it is for me.

SATAN:

And me.

(_Curtain_.)

ASPIRANTS THREE

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

QUICK:
DE YOUNG _a Brother to Mushrooms_

DEAD:
SWIFT _an Heirloom_
ESTEE _a Relic_

IMMORTALS:
THE SPIRIT OF BROKEN HOPES. THE AUTHOR.

MISCELLANEOUS:
A TROUPE OF COFFINS. THE MOON. VARIOUS COLORED FIRES.

Scene--The Political Graveyard at Bone Mountain.

DE YOUNG:

This is the spot agreed upon. Here rest
The sainted statesman who upon the field
Of honor have at various times laid down
Their own, and ended, ignominious,
Their lives political. About me, lo!
Their silent headstones, gilded by the moon,
Half-full and near her setting--midnight. Hark!
Through the white mists of this portentous night
(Which throng in moving shapes about my way,
As they were ghosts of candidates I've slain,
To fray their murderer) my open ear,
Spacious to maw the noises of the world,
Engulfs a footstep.

(_Enter Estee from his tomb._)

Ah, 'tis he, my foe,
True to appointment; and so here we fight--
Though truly 'twas my firm belief that he
Would send regrets, or I had not been here.

ESTEE:

O moon that hast so oft surprised the deeds
Whereby I rose to greatness!--tricksy orb,
The type and symbol of my politics,
Now draw my ebbing fortunes to their flood,
As, by the magic of a poultice, boils
That burn ambitions with defeated fires
Are lifted into eminence.

(_Sees De Young._)

What? you!

Faith, if I had suspected you would come
From the fair world of politics wherein
So lately you were whelped, and which, alas,
I vainly to revisit strive, though still
Rapped on the rotting head and bidden sleep
Till Resurrection's morn,--if I had thought
You would accept the challenge that I flung
I would have seen you damned ere I came forth
In the night air, shroud-clad and shivering,
To fight so mean a thing! But since you're here,
Draw and defend yourself. By gad, we'll _see_
Who'll be Postmaster-General!

DE YOUNG:

We will--

I'll fight (for I am lame) with any blue
And redolent remain that dares aspire
To wreck the Grand Old Grandson's cabinet.
Here's at you, nosegay!

(_They draw tongues and are about to fight, when from an
adjacent whited sepulcher, enter Swift._)

SWIFT:

Hold! put up your tongues!
Within the confines of this sacred spot
Broods such a holy calm as none may break

By clash of weapons, without sacrilege.
(_Beats down their tongues with a bone._)
Madmen! what profits it? For though you fought
With such heroic skill that both survived,
Yet neither should achieve the prize, for I
Would wrest it from him. Let us not contend,
But friendliwise by stipulation fix
A slate for mutual advantage. Why,
Having the pick and choice of seats, should we
Forego them all but one? Nay, we'll take three,
And part them so among us that to each
Shall fall the fittest to his powers. In brief,
Let us establish a Portfolio Trust.

ESTEE:

Agreed.

DE YOUNG:

Aye, truly, 'tis a greed--and one
The offices imperfectly will sate,
But I'll stand in.

SWIFT:

Well, so 'tis understood,
As you're the junior member of the Trust,
Politically younger and undead,
Speak, Michael: what portfolio do you choose?

DE YOUNG:

I've thought the Postal service best would serve
My interest; but since I have my pick,
I'll take the War Department. It is known
Throughout the world, from Market street to Pine,
(For a Chicago journal told the tale)
How in this hand I lately took my life
And marched against great Buckley, thundering
My mandate that he count the ballots fair!
Earth heard and shrank to half her size! Yon moon,
Which rivaled then a liver's whiteness, paused
That night at Butchertown and daubed her face
With sheep's blood! Then my serried rank I drew
Back to my stronghold without loss. To mark
My care in saving human life and limb,
The Peace Society bestowed on me
Its leather medal and the title, too,
Of Colonel. Yes, my genius is for war. Good land!
I naturally dote on a brass band!

(_Sings._)

O, give me a life on the tented field,
Where the cannon roar and ring,
Where the flag floats free and the foemen yield
And bleed as the bullets sing.
But be it not mine to wage the fray

Where matters are ordered the other way,
For that is a different thing.

O, give me a life in the fierce campaign--
Let it be the life of my foe:
I'd rather fall upon him than the plain;
That service I'd fain forego.
O, a warrior's life is fine and free,
But a warrior's death--ah me! ah me!
That's a different thing, you know.

ESTEE:

Some claim I might myself advance to that
Portfolio. When Rebellion raised its head,
And you, my friends, stayed meekly in your shirts,
I marched with banners to the party stump,
Spat on my hands, made faces fierce as death,
Shook my two fists at once and introduced
Brave resolutions terrible to read!
Nay, only recently, as you do know,
I conquered Treason by the word of mouth,
And slew, with Samson's weapon, the whole South!

SWIFT:

You once fought Stanford, too.

ESTEE:

Enough of that--
Give me the Interior and I'll devote
My mind to agriculture and improve
The breed of cabbages, especially
The Brassica Celeritatis, named
For you because in days of long ago
You sold it at your market stall,--and, faith,
'Tis said you were an honest huckster then.
I'll be Attorney-General if you
Prefer; for know I am a lawyer too!

SWIFT:

I never have heard that!--did you, De Young?

DE YOUNG:

Never, so help me! And I swear I've heard
A score of Judges say that he is not.

SWIFT (to Estee):

You take the Interior. I might aspire
To military station too, for once
I led my party into Pixley's camp,
And he paroled me. I defended, too,
The State of Oregon against the sharp
And bloody tooth of the Australian sheep.
But I've an aptitude exceeding neat

For bloodless battles of diplomacy.
My cobweb treaty of Exclusion once,
Through which a hundred thousand coolies sailed,
Was much admired, but most by Colonel Bee.
Though born a tinker I'm a diplomat
From old Missouri, and I--ha! what's that?

(_Exit Moon. Enter Blue Lights on all the tombs, and a
circle of Red Fire on the grass; in the center the Spirit of
Broken Hopes, and round about, a Troupe of Coffins, dancing
and singing._)

CHORUS OF COFFINS:

Two bodies dead and one alive--
Yo, ho, merrily all!
Now for boodle strain and strive--
Buzzards all a-warble, O!
Prophets three, agape for bread;
Raven with a stone instead--
Providential raven!
Judges two and Colonel one--
Run, run, rustics, run!
But it's O, the pig is shaven,
And oily, oily all!

(_Exeunt Coffins, dancing. The Spirit of Broken Hopes
advances, solemnly pointing at each of the Three Worthies in
turn._)

SPIRIT OF BROKEN HOPES:

Governor, Governor, editor man,
Rusty, musty, spick-and-span,
Harlequin, harridan, dicky-dout,
Demagogue, charlatan--o, u, t, OUT!
(_De Young falls and sleeps._)

Antimonopoler, diplomat,
Railroad lackey, political rat,
One, two, three--SCAT!
(_Swift falls and sleeps._)

Boycotting chin-worker, working to woo
Fortune, the fickle, to smile upon _you_,
Jo-coated acrobat, shuttle-cock--SHOO!
(_Estee falls and sleeps._)

Now they lie in slumber sweet,
Now the charm is all complete,
Hasten I with flying feet
Where beyond the further sea
A babe upon its mother's knee
Is gazing into skies afar
And crying for a golden star.
I'll drag a cloud across the blue
And break that infant's heart in two!

(_Exeunt the Spirit of Broken Hopes and the Red and Blue

Fires. Re-enter Moon._)

ESTEE (_waking_):

Why, this is strange! I dreamed I know not what,
It seemed that certain apparitions were,
Which sang uncanny words, significant
And yet ambiguous--half-understood--
Portending evil; and an awful spook,
Even as I stood with my accomplices,
Counted me out, as children do in play.
Is that you, Mike?

DE YOUNG _(waking):_

It was.

SWIFT _(waking):_

Am I all that?
Then I'll reform my ways.
(Reforms his ways.)
Ah! had I known
How sweet it is to be an honest man
I never would have stooped to turn my coat
For public favor, as chameleons take
The hue (as near as they can judge) of that
Supporting them. Henceforth I'll buy
With money all the offices I need,
And know the pleasure of an honest life,
Or stay forever in this dismal place.
Now that I'm good, it will no longer do
To make a third with such, a wicked two.
(Returns to his tomb.)

DE YOUNG:

Prophetic dream! by some good angel sent
To make me with a quiet life content.
The question shall no more my bosom irk,
To go to Washington or go to work.
From Fame's debasing struggle I'll withdraw,
And taking up the pen lay down the law.
I'll leave this rogue, lest my example make
An honest man of him--his heart would break.
(Exit De Young.)

ESTEE:

Out of my company these converts flee,
But that advantage is denied to me:
My curst identity's confining skin
Nor lets me out nor tolerates me in.
Well, since my hopes eternally have fled,
And, dead before, I'm more than ever dead,
To find a grander tomb be now my task,
And pack my pork into a stolen cask.
_(Exit, searching. Loud calls for the Author, who appears,
bowing and smiling.)_

AUTHOR _(singing):_

Jack Satan's the greatest of gods,
And Hell is the best of abodes.
'Tis reached, through the Valley of Clods,
By seventy different roads.
Hurrah for the Seventy Roads!
Hurrah for the clods that resound
With a hollow, thundering sound!
Hurrah for the Best of Abodes!

We'll serve him as long as we've breath--
Jack Satan the greatest of gods.
To all of his enemies, death!--
A home in the Valley of Clods.
Hurrah for the thunder of clods
That smother the soul of his foe!
Hurrah for the spirits that go
To dwell with the Greatest of Gods;

(Curtain falls to faint odor of mortality. Exit the Gas.)

THE BIRTH OF THE RAIL

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| LELAND, THE KID | _a Road Agent_ |
| COWBOY CHARLEY | _Same Line of Business_ |
| HAPPY HUNTY | _Ditto in All Respects_ |
| SOOTYMUG | _a Devil_ |

Scene--the Dutch Flat Stage Road, at 12 P.M., on a Night of 1864.

COWBOY CHARLEY:

My boss, I fear she is delayed to-night.
Already it is past the hour, and yet
My ears have reached no sound of wheels; no note
Melodious, of long, luxurious oaths
Betokens the traditional dispute
(Unsettled from the dawn of time) between
The driver and off wheeler; no clear chant
Nor carol of Wells Fargo's messenger
Unbosoming his soul upon the air--
his prowess to the tender-foot,
And how at divers times in sundry ways
He strewed the roadside with our carcasses.
Clearly, the stage will not come by to-night.

LELAND, THE KID:

I now remember that but yesterday
I saw three ugly looking fellows start

From Colfax with a gun apiece, and they
Did seem on business of importance bent.
Furtively casting all their eyes about
And covering their tracks with all the care
That business men do use. I think perhaps
They were Directors of that rival line,
The great Pacific Mail. If so, they have
Indubitably taken in that coach,
And we are overreached. Three times before
This thing has happened, and if once again
These outside operators dare to cut
Our rates of profit I shall quit the road
And take my money out of this concern.
When robbery no longer pays expense
It loses then its chiefest charm for me,
And I prefer to cheat--you hear me shout!

HAPPY HUNTY:

My chief, you do but echo back my thoughts:
This competition is the death of trade.
'Tis plain (unless we wish to go to work)
Some other business we must early find.
What shall it be? The field of usefulness
Is yearly narrowing with the advance
Of wealth and population on this coast.
There's little left that any man can do
Without some other fellow stepping in
And doing it as well. If one essay
To pick a pocket he is sure to feel
(With what disgust I need not say to you)
Another hand inserted in the same.
You crack a crib at dead of night, and lo!
As you explore the dining-room for plate
You find, in session there, a graceless band
Stuffing their coats with spoons, their skins with wine.
And so it goes. Why even undertake
To salt a mine and you will find it rich
With noble specimens placed there before!

LELAND, THE KID:

And yet this line of immigration has
Advantages superior to aught
That elsewhere offers: all these passengers,
If punched with care--

COWBOY CHARLEY:

Significant remark!
It opens up a prospect wide and fair,
Suggesting to the thoughtful mind--_my_ mind--
A scheme that is the boss lay-out. Instead
Of stopping passengers, let's carry them.
Instead of crying out: "Throw up your hands!"
Let's say: "Walk up and buy a ticket!" Why
Should we unwieldy goods and bullion take,
Watches and all such trifles, when we might
Far better charge their value three times o'er

For carrying them to market?

LELAND, THE KID:

Put it there,
Old son!

HAPPY HUNTY:

You take the cake, my dear. We'll build
A mighty railroad through this pass, and then
The stage folk will come up to us and squeal,
And say: "It is bad medicine for both:
What will you give or take?" And then we'll sell.

COWBOY CHARLEY:

Enlarge your notions, little one; this is
No petty, slouching, opposition scheme,
To be bought off like honest men and fools;
Mine eye prophetic pierces through the mists
That cloud the future, and I seem to see
A well-devised and executed scheme
Of wholesale robbery within the law
(Made by ourselves)--great, permanent, sublime,
And strong to grapple with the public throat--
Shaking the stuffing from the public purse,
The tears from bankrupt merchants' eyes, the blood
From widows' famished carcasses, the bread
From orphans' mouths!

HAPPY HUNTY:

Hooray!

LELAND, THE KID:

Hooray!

ALL:

Hooray!

_(They tear the masks from their faces, and discharging their
shotguns, throw them into the chapparal. Then they join hands,
dance and sing the following song:)_

Ah! blessed to measure
The glittering treasure!
Ah! blessed to heap up the gold
Untold
That flows in a wide
And deepening tide--
Rolled, rolled, rolled
From multifold sources,
Converging its courses
Upon our--

LELAND, THE KID:

Just wait a bit, my pards, I thought I heard
A sneaking grizzly cracking the dry twigs.
Such an intrusion might deprive the State
Of all the good that we intend it. Ha!

_(Enter Sootymug. He saunters carelessly in and gracefully
leans his back against a redwood.)_

SOOTYMUG:

My boys, I thought I heard
Some careless revelry,
As if your minds were stirred
By some new devilry.
I too am in that line. Indeed, the mission
On which I come--

HAPPY HUNTY:

Here's more damned competition!
(Curtain.)

A BAD NIGHT

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

| | |
|-----------|---------------------|
| VILLIAM | _a Sen_ |
| NEEDLESON | _a Sidniduc_ |
| SMILER | _a Scheister_ |
| KI-YI | _a Trader_ |
| GRIMGHAST | _a Spader_ |
| SARALTHIA | _a Love-lorn Nymph_ |
| NELLIBRAC | _a Sweetun_ |

A BODY; A GHOST; AN UNMENTIONABLE THING; SKULLS;
HOODOOS; ETC.

Scene--a Cemetery in San Francisco.

Saralthia, Nellibrac, Grimghast.

SARALTHIA:

The red half-moon is dipping to the west,
And the cold fog invades the sleeping land.
Lo! how the grinning skulls in the level light
Litter the place! Methinks that every skull
Is a most lifelike portrait of my Sen,
Drawn by the hand of Death; each fleshless pate,
Cursed with a ghastly grin to eyes unrubbed
With love's magnetic ointment, seems to mine
To smile an amiable smile like his
Whose amiable smile I--I alone
Am able to distinguish from his leer!

See how the gathering coyotes flit
Through the lit spaces, or with burning eyes
Star the black shadows with a steadfast gaze!
About my feet the poddy toads at play,
Bulbously comfortable, try to hop,
And tumble clumsily with all their warts;
While pranking lizards, sliding up and down
My limbs, as they were public roads, impart
A singularly interesting chill.

The circumstance and passion of the time,
The cast and manner of the place--the spirit
Of this confederate environment,
Command the rights we come to celebrate
Obedient to the Inspired Hag--
The seventh daughter of the seventh daughter,
Who rules all destinies from Minna street,
A dollar a destiny. Here at this grave,
Which for my purposes thou, Jack of Spades--

(To Grimghast)

Corrupter than the thing that reeks below--
Hast opened secretly, we'll work the charm.
Now what's the hour?

(Distant clock strikes thirteen.)
Enough--hale forth the stiff!

_(Grimghast by means of a boat-hook stands the coffin on end
in the excavation; the lid crumbles, exposing the remains of a
man.)_

Ha! Master Mouldybones, how fare you, sir?

THE BODY:

Poorly, I thank your ladyship; I miss
Some certain fingers and an ear or two.
There's something, too, gone wrong with my inside,
And my periphery's not what it was.
How can we serve each other, you and I?

NELLIBRAC:

O what a personable man!

_(Blushes bashfully, drops her eyes and twists the corner of
her apron_.)

SARALTHIA:

Yes, dear,
A very proper and alluring male,
And quite superior to Lubin Rroyd,
Who has, however, this distinct advantage--
He is alive.

GRIMGHAST:

Missus, these yer remains
Was the boss singer back in '72,
And used to allers git invites to go

Down to Swellmont and sing at every feed.
In t'other Villiam's time, that was, afore
The gent that you've hooked onto bought the place.

THE BODY _(singing):_

Down among the sainted dead
Many years I lay;
Beetles occupied my head,
Moles explored my clay.

There we feasted day and night--
I and bug and beast;
They provided appetite
And I supplied the feast.

The raven is a dicky-bird,

SARALTHIA _(singing):_

The jackal is a daisy,

NELLIBRAC _(singing):_

The wall-mouse is a worthy third,

A SPOOK _(singing):_

But mortals all are crazy.

CHORUS OF SKULLS:

O mortals all are crazy,
Their intellects are hazy;
In the growing moon they shake their shoon
And trip it in the mazy.

But when the moon is waning,
Their senses they're regaining:
They fall to prayer and from their hair
Remove the straws remaining.

SARALTHIA:

That's right, Rogues Gallery, pray keep it up:
Your song recalls my Villiam's "Auld Lang Syne,"
What time he came and (like an amorous bird
That struts before the female of its kind,
Warbling to cave her down the bank) piped high
His cracked falsetto out of reach. Enough--
Now let's to business. Nellibrac, sweet child,
St. Cloacina's future devotee,
The time is ripe and rotten--gut the grip!

_(Nellibrac brings forward a valise and takes from it five
articles of clothing, which, one by one, she lays upon the points
of a magic pentagram that has thoughtfully inscribed itself in
lines of light on the wet grass. The Body holds its late lamented
nose.)_

NELLIBRAC _(singing):_

Fragrant socks, by Villiam's toes
Consecrated to the nose;

Shirt that shows the well worn track
Of the knuckles of his back,

Handkerchief with mottled stains,
Into which he blew his brains;

Collar crying out for soap--
Prophet of the future rope;

An unmentionable thing
It would sicken me to sing.

UNMENTIONABLE THING _(aside):_

What! _I_ unmentionable? Just you wait!
In all the family journals of the State
You'll sometime see that I'm described at length,
With supereditorial grace and strength.

SARALTHIA _(singing):_

Throw them in the open tomb
They will cause his love to bloom
With an amatory boom!

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE HOODOOS:

Hoodoo, hoodoo, voodoo-vet
Villiam struggles in the net!
By the power and intent
Of the charm his strength is spent!
By the virtue in each rag
Blessed by the Inspired Hag
He will be a willing victim
Limp as if a donkey kicked him!
By this awful incantation
We decree his animation--

By the magic of our art
Warm the cockles of his heart,
Villiam, if alive or dead,
Thou Saralthia shalt wed!

(They cast the garments into the grave and push over the coffin. Grimghast fills up the hole. Hoodoos gradually become apparent in a phosphorescent light about the grave, holding one another's back-hair and dancing in a circle.)

HOODOO SONG AND DANCE:

O we're the larrikin hoodoos!
The chirruping, lirruring hoodoos!
We mix things up that the Fates ordain,

Bring back the past and the present detain,
Postpone the future and sometimes tether
The three and drive them abreast together--
We rollicking, frolicking hoodoos!

To us all things are the same as none
And nothing is that is under the sun.
Seven's a dozen and never is then,
Whether is what and what is when,
A man is a tree and a cuckoo a cow
For gold galore and silver enow
To magical, mystical hoodoos!

SARALTHIA:

What monstrous shadow darkens all the place,

(Enter Smyler.)

Flung like a doom athwart--ha!--thou?
Portentous presence, art thou not the same
That stalks with aspect horrible among
Small youths and maidens, baring snaggy teeth,
Champing their tender limbs till crimson spume,
Flung from, thy lips in cursing God and man,
Incarnadines the land?

SMYLER:

Thou dammid slut!

(Exit Smyler.)

NELLIBRAC:

O what a pretty man!

SARALTHIA

Now who is next?
Of tramps and casuals this graveyard seems
Prolific to a fault!

_(Enter Needleson, exhaling, prophetically, an odor of decayed
eggs and, actually, one of unlaundried linen. He darts an
intense regard at an adjacent marble angel and places his open
hand behind his ear.)_

NEEDLESON:

Hay?

(Exit Needleson.)

NELLIBRAC:

Sweet, sweet male!
I yearn to play at Copenhagen with him!

(Blushes diligently and energetically.)

CHORUS OF SKULLS:

Hoodoos, hoodoos, disappear--
Some dread deity draws near!

(Exeunt Hoodos.)

Smitten with a sense of doom,
The dead are cowering in the tomb,
Seas are calling, stars are falling
And appalling is the gloom!
Fragmentary flames are flung
Through the air the trees among!
Lo! each hill inclines its head--
Earth is bending 'neath his thread!

(On the contrary, enter Villiam on a chip, navigating an odor of mignonette. Saralthia springs forward to put him in her pocket, but he is instantly retracted by an invisible string. She falls headlong, breaking her heart. Reenter Villiam, Needle son, Smyler. All gather about Saralthia, who loudly laments her accident. The Spirit of Tar-and Feathers, rising like a black smoke in their midst, executes a monstrous wink of graphic and vivid significance, then contemplates them with an obviously baptismal intention. The cross on Lone Mountain takes fire, splendoring the Peninsula. Tableau. Curtain.)

ON STONE

_As in a dream, strange epitaphs I see,
Inscribed on yet unquarried stone,
Where wither flowers yet unstrown--
The Campo Santo of the time to be._

A WREATH OF IMMORTELLES

* * * * *

LORING PICKERING

(After Pope)

Here rests a writer, great but not immense,
Born destitute of feeling and of sense.
No power he but o'er his brain desired--
How not to suffer it to be inspired.
Ideas unto him were all unknown,
Proud of the words which, only, were his own.

So unreflecting, so confused his mind,
Torpid in error, indolently blind,
A fever Heaven, to quicken him, applied,
But, rather than revive, the sluggard died.

* * * * *

A WATER-PIRATE

Pause, stranger--whence you lightly tread
Bill Carr's immoral part has fled.
For him no heart of woman burned,
But all the rivers' heads he turned.
Alas! he now lifts up his eyes
In torment and for water cries,
Entreating that he may procure
One drop to cool his parched McClure!

* * * * *

C.P. BERRY

Here's crowbait!--ravens, too, and daws
Flock hither to advance their caws,
And, with a sudden courage armed,
Devour the foe who once alarmed--
In life and death a fair deceit:
Nor strong to harm nor good to eat.
King bogey of the scarecrow host,
When known the least affrighting most,
Though light his hand (his mind was dark)
He left on earth a straw Berry mark.

* * * * *

THE REV. JOSEPH

He preached that sickness he could floor
By prayer and by commanding;
When sick himself he sent for four
Physicians in good standing.
He was struck dead despite their care,
For, fearing their dissension,
He secretly put up a prayer,
Thus drawing God's attention.

* * * * *

Cynic perforce from studying mankind
In the false volume of his single mind,
He damned his fellows for his own unworth,
And, bad himself, thought nothing good on earth.
Yet, still so judging and so erring still,
Observing well, but understanding ill,
His learning all was got by dint of sight,
And what he learned by day he lost by night.

When hired to flatter he would never cease
Till those who'd paid for praises paid for peace.
Not wholly miser and but half a knave,
He yearned to squander but he lived to save,
And did not, for he could not, cheat the grave.
Hic jacet Pixley, scribe and muleteer:
Step lightly, stranger, anywhere but here.

* * * * *

McAllister, of talents rich and rare,
Lies at this spot at finish of his race.
Alike to him if it is here or there:
The one spot that he cared for was the ace.

* * * * *

Here lies Joseph Redding, who gave us the catfish.
He dined upon every fish except that fish.
'Twas touching to hear him expounding his fad
With a heart full of zeal and a mouth full of shad.
The catfish miaowed with unspeakable woe
When Death, the lone fisherman, landed their Jo.

* * * * *

Judge Sawyer, whom in vain the people tried
To push from power, here is laid aside.
Death only from the bench could ever start
The sluggish load of his immortal part.

* * * * *

John Irish went, one luckless day,
To loaf and fish at San Jose.
He got no loaf, he got no fish:
They brained him with an empty dish!
They laid him in this place asleep--
O come, ye crocodiles, and weep.

* * * * *

In Sacramento City here
This wooden monument we rear
In memory of Dr. May,
Whose smile even Death could not allay.
He's buried, Heaven alone knows where,
And only the hyenas care;
This May-pole merely marks the spot
Where, ere the wretch began to rot,
Fame's trumpet, with its brazen bray,
Bawled; "Who (and why) was Dr. May?"

* * * * *

Dennis Spencer's mortal coil
Here is laid away to spoil--
Great riparian, who said
Not a stream should leave its bed.

Now his soul would like a river
Turned upon its parching liver.

* * * * *

For those this mausoleum is erected
Who Stanford to the Upper House elected.
Their luck is less or their promotion slower,
For, dead, they were elected to the Lower.

* * * * *

Beneath this stone lies Reuben Lloyd,
Of breath deprived, of sense devoid.
The Templars' Captain-General, he
So formidable seemed to be,
That had he not been on his back
Death ne'er had ventured to attack.

* * * * *

Here lies Barnes in all his glory--
Master he of oratOry.
When he died the people weeping,
(For they thought him only sleeping)
Cried: "Although he now is quiet
And his tongue is not a riot,
Soon, the spell that binds him breaking,
He a motion will be making.
Then, alas, he'll rise and speak
In support of it a week."

* * * * *

Rash mortal! stay thy feet and look around--
This vacant tomb as yet is holy ground;
But soon, alas! Jim Fair will occupy
These premises--then, holiness, good-bye!

* * * * *

Here Salomon's body reposes;
Bring roses, ye rebels, bring roses.
Set all of your drumsticks a-rolling,
Discretion and Valor extolling:
Discretion--he always retreated--
And Valor--the dead he defeated.
Brings roses, ye loyal, bring roses:
As patriot here he re-poses.

* * * * *

When Waterman ended his bright career
He left his wet name to history here.
To carry it with him he did not care:
'Twould tantalize spirits of statesmen There.

* * * * *

Here lie the remains of Fred Emerson Brooks,
A poet, as every one knew by his looks
Who hadn't unluckily met with his books.

On civic occasions he sprang to the fore
With poems consisting of stanzas three score.
The men whom they deafened enjoyed them the more.

Of reason his fantasy knew not the check:
All forms of inharmony came at his beck.
The weight of his ignorance fractured his neck.

In this peaceful spot, so the grave-diggers say,
With pen, ink and paper they laid him away--
The Poet-elect of the Judgment Day.

* * * * *

George Perry here lies stiff and stark,
With stone at foot and stone at head.
His heart was dark, his mind was dark--
"Ignorant ass!" the people said.

Not ignorant but skilled, alas,
In all the secrets of his trade:
He knew more ways to be an ass
Than any ass that ever brayed.

* * * * *

Here lies the last of Deacon Fitch,
Whose business was to melt the pitch.
Convenient to this sacred spot
Lies Sammy, who applied it, hot.
'Tis hard--so much alike they smell--

One's grave from t'other's grave to tell,
But when his tomb the Deacon's burst
(Of two he'll always be the first)
He'll see by studying the stones
That he's obtained his proper bones,
Then, seeking Sammy's vault, unlock it,
And put that person in his pocket.

* * * * *

Beneath this stone O'Donnell's tongue's at rest--
Our noses by his spirit still addressed.
Living or dead, he's equally Satanic--
His noise a terror and his smell a panic.

* * * * *

When Gabriel blows a dreadful blast
And swears that Time's forever past,
Days, weeks, months, years all one at last,
Then Asa Fiske, laid here, distressed,
Will beat (and skin his hand) his breast:
There'll be no rate of interest!

* * * * *

Step lightly, stranger: here Jerome B. Cox
Is for the second time in a bad box.
He killed a man--the labor party rose
And showed him by its love how killing goes.

* * * * *

When Vrooman here lay down to sleep,
The other dead awoke to weep.
"Since he no longer lives," they said
"Small honor comes of being dead."

* * * * *

Here Porter Ashe is laid to rest
Green grows the grass upon his breast.
This patron of the turf, I vow,
Ne'er served it half so well as now.

* * * * *

Like a cold fish escaping from its tank,
Hence fled the soul of Joe Russel, crank.
He cried: "Cold water!" roaring like a beast.
'Twas thrown upon him and the music ceased.

* * * * *

Here Estee rests. He shook a basket,
When, like a jewel from its casket,
Fell Felton out. Said Estee, shouting
With mirth; "I've given you an outing."
Then told him to go back. He wouldn't.
Then tried to _put_ him back. He couldn't.
So Estee died (his blood congealing
In Felton's growing shadow) squealing.

* * * * *

Mourn here for one Bruner, called Elwood.
He doesn't--he never did--smell good
To noses of critics and scholars.
If now he'd an office to sell could
He sell it? O, no--where (in Hell) could
He find a cool four hundred dollars?

* * * * *

Here Stanford lies, who thought it odd
That he should go to meet his God.
He looked, until his eyes grew dim,
For God to hasten to meet him.

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