

BALLAD OF THE SCHOLAR'S LAMENT

When I have struggled through three hundred years
 Of Roman history, and hastened o'er
 Some French play—(though I have my private fears
 Of flunking sorely when I take the floor
 In class),—when I have steeped my soul in gore
 And Greek, and figured over half a ream
 With Algebra, which I do (not) adore,
 How shall I manage to compose a theme?

It's well enough to talk of poor and peers,
 And munch the golden apples' shiny core,
 And lay a lot of heroes on their biers;—
 While the great Alec, knocking down a score,
 Takes out his handkerchief, boohoo-ing, "More!"—
 But harshly I awaken from my dream,
 To find a new,—er,—privilege,—in store:
 How shall I manage to compose a theme?

After I've swallowed prophecies of seers,
 And trailed Aeneas from the Trojan shore,
 Learned how Achilles, after many jeers,
 On piggy Agamemnon got to sore,
 And heard how Hercules, Esq., tore
 Around, and swept and dusted with a stream,
 There's one last duty,—let's not call it bore,—
 How shall I manage to compose a theme?

Envoi

Of what avail is all my mighty lore?
 I beat my breast, I tear my hair, I scream:
 "Behold, I have a Herculean chore.
 How shall I manage to compose a theme?"