

THE
OLD HANGING FORK
AND
OTHER POEMS.

BY
GEORGE W. DONEGHY.

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The
Old Hanging Fork
and
Other Poems.

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THE OLD HANGING FORK.

I.

O DON'T you remember those days so divine,
Around which the heart-strings all tenderly twine,
When with sapling pole and a painted cork
We fished up and down the old Hanging Fork—
From the railroad bridge, with its single span,
Clear down to the mill at Dawson's old dam—
From early morn till the shades of night,
And it made no difference if fish *didn't* bite?

II.

What pleasure it gives to think and to dream
Of those long, happy days, and the old winding stream,
When we waded the creek with our pants to the knee,
And got our lines tangled in a sycamore tree,
And were most scared to death when out from the root
The long, wriggling snake through the water did shoot,
And you lost your line, your hook and your cork,
And I slipped and fell in the old Hanging Fork!

III.

The years they have come, and the years they have fled,
And frosted with silver the hairs of the head,
But still in fond memory there lingers the joy
Of scenes such as these, when a bare-footed boy
I wandered away to the clear rippling stream—
No cankering care to trouble life's dream;—
And we spit on our bait and in whispers we'd talk,
As we threw out our lines in the old Hanging Fork!

IV.

We sat there and fished with the sun beaming down
On the tops of our heads through hats minus crown,
And when I got a bite or you caught a perch
We'd just give our lines a thundering lurch,
And land him high up on the bank in the weeds,
Then string him along with the pumpkin seeds!
O don't you remember the hot, dusky walk,
Along the white pike to the old Hanging Fork?

SWEET SEPTEMBER DAYS.

I.

THERE'S a something in the atmosphere, in sweet September days,
That mantles all the landscape with its languid, dreamy haze;
And you see the leaves a-dropping, in a lazy kind of way,
Where the maple trees are standing in their Summer-time array.

II.

There's a yellowish tinge a-creeping over Nature's emerald sheen,
And the cattle stand, half-sleeping, in the middle of the stream
Where the glassy pool is shaded by the overhanging limb,
And the pebbly bottom's glinting where the silvery minnows swim.

III.

The tasseled corn is nodding, and the crow on drowsy wing
Is sailing o'er the orchard where the ripening apples swing,
And the fleecy clouds are floating in the azure of the sky,
And the gentle breeze is sighing as it's idly wafted by.

IV.

The cantaloupes are ripening in their yellow golden
rinds;
And the melons, round and juicy, are a-clinging to the
vines;
And the merry, laughing children, in their happy hour of
play,
Are a-romping in the meadow and a-sliding down the hay.

V.

The busy bees are buzzing where the grapes with purple
blush,
And the hanging bunches tempting with their weight the
arbor crush,
And the blue jays are a-wrangling in the wood across
the road,
Where the hickory boughs are bending 'neath an extra
heavy load.

VI.

Let your poets keep a-singing about the Springtime gay,
And the blossoms and the flowers in the merry month of
May—
But the early Autumn splendor, with its sweet September
days,
Eclipses boasted Springtime in a thousand kind of ways!

YER OLD COB PIPE.

I.

WHEN the chilling winds of Winter come a-knocking at
the door,
And the fleecy flakes are flying and the earth is covered o'er,
And you've supped on sweet potatoes and a 'possum frosted
ripe,
Then glory hallelujah! Git yer
Old
Cob
Pipe!

II.

When the fire is blazing brightly and the room is snug and
warm,
And you've left your cares and troubles on the outside with
the storm,
And your natural leaf is colored with a golden yellow stripe,
Then glory hallelujah! Git yer
Old
Cob
Pipe!

III.

When the old split-bottom rocker is far better than a throne,
And the visions of the fancy are the fairest earth has known,
And you watch the mystic shapes that the dancing shadows
write,
Then glory hallelujah! Git yer
Old
Cob
Pipe!

IV.

When your dressing gown and slippers might be envied by
a king,

And the voices of the children sound as sweet as birds' that
sing,

And the feelings that possess you are all of heavenly type,

Then glory hallelujah! Git yer

Old

Cob

Pipe!

V.

When the ringlets aromatic have circled round your head,

And a drowsiness o'ertakes you, and you want to go to bed,

And the bowlful that you're smoking has burned to ashes
white,

Then glory hallelujah! Quit yer

Old

Cob

Pipe!

TIM BLUSTER'S DREAM.

'Twas a place of fifty acres, in a lonely neighborhood,
And near a grove of somber pines the shackly farm-house
stood;

And all the folks, for miles around, did solemnly declare
That ghosts and goblins horrible held nightly revel there.

They said the house was "hanted," and that not a man alive,
In all the country round about, could own the place and
thrive;

That the cattle died with fever, and the hogs the cholera
took—

And every one that tried it wore a mighty troubled look.

But they put it up at auction, and Tim Bluster bid the most,
Who always said "There want no hants nor any kind of
ghost

That ever walked a graveyard in the middle of the night
Could make *his* nerves unsteady, or could fill *him* with
affright!"

So Tim got full possession, and he moved out to his home,
And the first night, as he sat there, within his room alone,
The door was softly opened, and a cat came walking in,
With eyes like balls of fire and a coat as black as sin.

Then squatting on its haunches, it said, in tones polite,
"There seems to be but two of us to stay in here to-night!"
Tim muttered in a trembling voice, as for the door he run,
"Perhaps *you* think there will be two, but darn *me*, there's
but one!"

Tim staid away the blessed night, but when the daylight
came,
It brought him back his courage, and it filled him full of
shame;
And then he said, unto himself, "There wasn't any cat
Could make him leave that room again—he'd bet his life
on that!"

So when the shades of evening fell, Tim double-barred the
door,
And took precautions that, perhaps, he hadn't night before,
And felt quite sure that nothing now could gain admittance
there,
And peacefully he dozed and slept, a-sitting in his chair.

Then, all at once, he roused himself, and opening wide his
eyes,
Beheld a figure standing there that made his hair arise
Like quills upon a porcupine, and froze his heart with fear,
And headless though it was, it spoke, and said in accents
clear,

"There seems to be but two of us to stay in here to-night!"
Tim made a bound, and took with him the sash and every
light,
And then he jumped a nine-rail fence, and down the road he
spun,
And said, "Perhaps *he* thinks there's two, but darn *me*,
there's but one!"

'Twas seven miles before he stopped and sat down on a log
To catch his breath and rest awhile from his nocturnal jog
And then he turned his head around, and right before his face
The figure stood, and said to him, "I think we've had a
race!"

Tim tried to speak, and not a word he found to utter then,
But as he jumped from off his seat and broke away again,
He spluttered out, "*I know* we have, but think it's not quite
done,
For you can bet right now's the time we'll have another one!"

Away Tim flew—he left the road, and through the woods
and fields
The pace he set was wonderful, the ghost right at his heels!
And that old house is tenantless, and slowly rotting down,
Since that dread night Tim had his dream, and moved right
back to town!

APPLE BLOSSOMS.

I.

THERE'S the rose and the lily, the daisy and pink,
And many rare flowers which others may think
Are the fairest and best, the sweetest that blow,
With delicious perfume, and colors that glow—
But go to the orchard and sniff the delight
Of the incense that's shed by the pink and the white,
And let the soul float away in a swoon
On the ambient air where the apple trees bloom!

II.

There's the cowslip, narcissus, and sweet mignonette,
The asters, verbenas, the fuschias; and yet,
As much as I love them in Summer array,
It's the white and the pink I dream of to-day,
And I walk 'neath the branches that just interlace
And shower their blossoms right down in my face
When the breeze that is laden with rarest perfume
Is wafted along where the apple trees bloom!

III.

With glad voices the birds as they flit to and fro
Are singing their songs where the pink and the snow
Of the orchard, bedecked in its garments so rare,
Is diffusing and sending its breath on the air;
And the rays of the sun sift through on the grass,
And the dew-drops that sparkle no jewels surpass!
In Springtime at evening, at morning, at noon,
How sweet is the scent of the apple trees' bloom!

IV.

And when Summer is gone, and Autumn has shed
It's soft, dreamy haze through the trees overhead,
On each spreading branch where blossoms now cling
The red and the gold to the fruit it will bring,
And stripe with a skill and give it that blush
Only Nature can paint with her delicate brush!
O when life ebbs away, then make me a tomb
Right out in the orchard, where the apple trees bloom!

CHICKAMAUGA.

To CHATTANOOGA's vale, where flows the winding Tennessee,
And rugged Lookout sentinels heroic dust of sixty-three—
Where Chickamauga's gory field re-echoed to the cannon's
 roar,
And shot and shell through serried ranks a bloody pathway
 tore,
And mountain slope and wood and field were lumined with
 the blaze
Of musketry from Blue and Gray in those September days—
They come again, the gallant few, survivors of the fray,
Their breasts with hallowed memories filled, but passion
 passed away !

The fleeting years have silvered o'er the locks of those who
 live,
And turned to dust the sleeping ones who to their flag did
 give
The last drop of the crimson tide from ghastly wounds
 poured out
Amid the conflict's awful din and wild resounding shout ;
And yet it seems but yesterday, or like a passing dream,
When marshaled on the mountain's side they saw the bayo-
 nets gleam,
As for a moment from the vale the battle's smoke was lifted,
And circling o'er the Blue and Gray in lurid clouds it drifted !

And now upon the blood-soaked ground once more they stand,
Where the unyielding "Rock of Chickamauga" held com-
 mand,

And strewed the field with heaps of the assaulting Gray
Who dauntless rushed where lines of Blue refused to give
the way;
And bloody scenes crowd thick and fast upon the memory
here
To fill the heart with grief and dim the eye with misty tear;
And spanning Time's chasm with the imagination's bridge,
They hear the thunder of the guns from Missionary Ridge!

And there the pyramid of balls is reared to tell
And mark the hallowed spot where tuneful genius fell;
The vagrant winds around it now seem sighing
The requiem sad of "I am dying, Egypt, dying!"
Prophetic words by gallant LYTLE penned—
A laurel wreath with immortelles to blend!
A halo hovers round about this gifted son,
Whose deathless name with pen and sword was nobly won!

They come to mark with tokens of their love and pride
Each consecrated spot where bleeding heroes fell and died,
And gaze with reverence on some gently swelling mound
Which hides the dust of comrade in his sleep profound;
To picture to the mind—with melancholy pleasure trace
The unforgotten outlines of a dear, remembered face,
Which passed from loved ones and from life away,
A victim on the bloody field of fratricidal fray!

GENERAL JOHN B. GORDON.

Facile Princeps.

I.

O GIFTED one of the Sunny South, with lips so eloquent,
In whose great heart no malice e'er was found!
And now thou art a messenger of Peace, by heaven sent
On mission of fraternity, to heal the cankering wound!

II.

In that dread day when fratricidal strife
Convulsed with passion—crimsoned with its blood—
No nobler son than thou who staked his life
With veterans Gray withstood the overwhelming flood!

III.

No sweeter tribute could be paid by mortal tongue—
No nobler sentiment the human heart could fill—
In grander strains no poet's praises e'er were sung
Of private soldier—than thy words that burn and thrill!

IV.

No treasured wrong within thy noble soul
Has tainted with its slimy trail of hate—
No broader love of country could embrace the whole,
Or bow more gracefully to iron hand of fate!

V.

Speak on! And scatter broadcast healing seed
That shall a harvest of good feeling yield—
And Peace, no less than War, shall lend her meed
And crown anew this hero of the bloody field!

UP AND DOWN OLD CLARK'S RUN.

BRIGHT visions of childhood! How dear to the heart
Are the scenes which from memory can never depart!
Undimmed by the sorrows, the grief and the tears
Which have shadowed the pathway of life's later years,
They come like the rainbow which follows the storm—
On remembrance reflected with colors as warm—
And in dreams of delight they picture the fun
That we had long ago when we fished in Clark's Run!

With a can full of worms and a heart full of joy,
Up and down the old stream, a bare-footed boy,
A truant from school, my footsteps would stray
To the deep-shaded pool, or where ripples at play,
As they flowed over beds of smooth-polished stones,
Sang a lullaby sweet in soft undertones!
From the dawn of the day to the set of the sun
What pleasures we've had when we fished in Clark's Run!

Equipped with a pole, a hook and a line,
And stowed in some pocket a long piece of twine
On which you could string, if you seined for a week,
Every fish that was found up and down the old creek—
With one "gallus" to pants that were rolled to the knee,
And holes in our hats through which you could see
Where the sunbeams had turned the light hair to dun—
We hied us away to the banks of Clark's Run!

There we baited the hook and threw out the line,
And watched the cork disappear with a rapture divine!
And felt just as proud as a prince or a king
When we landed high up, with a jerk and a swing,
A fish that would measure two inches or more,
Then anchored him fast with the string to the shore!
But unnumbered now are the silver strands spun
With the hair of the head since we fished in Clark's Run!

O who can there be with a heart in his breast
Would forget the dear scenes which so lovingly rest
In the bosom when life has grown old and cold,
And feel no delight when such pictures unfold,
And would blot out forever from memory's page
The records of childhood which solace old age?
'Till time ends for me and with life I have done,
I'll dream of the days when we fished in Clark's Run!

ROBERT BURNS.

(A PARAPHRASE.)

I.

THOU lingering Star! No less'ning ray
Will e'er bedim thy natal morn,
Or usher in the unhallowed day
When we forget that thou wert born!
O Burns! Thou dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
See'st thou again a Highland maid,
Who heard the groans that rent thy breast?

II.

That sacred day can we forget,
Can we forget the hallowed spot
Where by the winding Ayr was set
The sparkling jewel in lowly cot?
Eternity will not efface
The record dear of time that's past;
Thy memory sweet we still embrace,
And will as long as life shall last!

III.

Ayr, congealèd to its pebbled shore,
O'erhung with wild woods, shorn of green;
The leafless birch and hawthorn hoar
Were planted round the wintry scene;
No flowers sprang wanton to be pressed—
No birds sang love on every spray—
But brightest yet o'er all the rest
Will ever shine thy natal day!

IV.

Still o'er thy songs our rapture wakes,
And memory broods with miser care!
Time but their music sweeter makes,
As streams their channels deeper wear.
O Burns! Thou dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
See'st thou again a Highland maid,
Who heard the groans that rent thy breast?

WISHING—FISHING.

I.

FULL well I know that wishing never yet has brought
The things that seem to us would satisfy the heart,
And that anticipated pleasure, when at last 'tis caught,
Has naught but transitory solace to impart;
And yet, somehow, I've ever felt and thought
A joy there is that never can depart—
(As long as we are capable of feeling—wishing)—
And that's to leave dull care behind, and—go a-fishing!

II.

Some dream of wealth—of place—of fame—
And fleeting shadows vainly they pursue;
And some have sighed to win a deathless name
Where fields of carnage corpses thickly strew,
And shrieks of agony are heard 'mid smoke and flame;
But these are dizzy heights attained by few;
So, when Dame Fortune is her favors dishing,
I hope that I'll get mine in ample time to—go a-fishing!

III.

Oh, was there ever any sweeter dream,
Or music with a tone that's more entrancing,
Than just to wander where some mountain stream
Is o'er the rocks and polished pebbles dancing?
And nothing short of heaven itself, I ween,
Is like the moment when, his scales all glancing,
You see the happy consummation of your wishing,
And catch the very fish for which you have been fishing!

POE.

I.

OH, melancholy child of want and woe!
A brilliant meteor in an ebon sky!
Thy soul's weird music all did flow
From heart-strings touched by destiny!

II.

The Raven, perched above thy chamber door,
Responsive croaked with a prophetic word—
For in the realm of song may "Nevermore"
Such strains as thine by mortal ear be heard!

III.

Where now doth that proud spirit dwell,
Whose earthly days were clouded o'er with gloom?
In regions with the sweet-voiced "Israfil,"
Where never-fading flowerets bloom?

IV.

Dost rest within some "distant Aidenn,
Beyond the Night's Plutonian shore?
And clasp again a sainted maiden
Whom the angels name Lenore?"

V.

Yes, "echo through the corridors of Time"
Will have a tone that ages yet will know,
And blend with all that's beautiful—sublime—
The deathless name of Edgar Allan Poe!

A BARREN "IDEALTY."

THIS song that I sing—
It is not of a spring,
Nor yet of a silvery stream—
But of a vision bright
Which came last night
In the garb of a blissful dream—
When I thought, as I lay,
It was Thanksgiving Day,
And I was invited to dine
Where a table stood
On which everything good
Spread a feast that was almost divine!

Where the savors arose,
Right under my nose,
From turkey—and pumpkin pies;
And from jolly roast pig
Were slices as big
As some of the campaign lies!
And celery so white
'Twas a thing of delight
To bite the crisp stalks in two,
And the cranberry sauce—
Oh, I tell you 'twas boss—
And flanked by an oyster stew!

Where the bread and the cake—
The best they can bake—
Were cut into slices heroic,

And the amber ice cream
Melted into my dream
Like love to the heart of a 'poet';
And they heaped up my plate,
And I sat there and ate
Till I awoke with a yell,
And a shiver and shake
And a pain and an ache
That rudely my dream did dispel!

But dreams, as you know,
By contraries go,
And thus I fear if it will be
With the one of delight
That came last night
When I feasted so heartily;
And Thanksgiving Day
In the usual way
Will come to me, don't you see,
And the dinner I had
And the ache that was bad
Prove a——barren "idealty"!

A CHERISHED RELIC.

IN the attic, unused, there they put it away;
The old oaken frame has begun to decay;
What iron's about it is eaten with rust,
And upon and around it are cobwebs and dust;
The dear, loving hands that on it have spun,
With labor and toil forever are done,
And long is the time since I saw them unreel
The threads, snowy white, from the old spinning-wheel!

It stood on a porch where the Summer sunshine
Sifted down to the floor through a clambering vine,
Whose tendrils about the lattice-work clung [sung;
Like my heart-strings round her, and the song that she
And the pictures of fancy I con o'er and o'er,
Till, raptured, I see the dear features once more,
And thrill with the touch when her lips set the seal
Of her love, as she spun on the old spinning-wheel!

Then through the shadows and mists of many long years
The old cottage home to the vision appears;
And though youth it has fled, and the hair it is gray,
I'm a bare-footed boy returned to his play—
Forgetting the present to dream once again
That life had no anguish, no sorrow, no pain;
And sweetly the bells of the memory peal
When communing up there with the old spinning-wheel!

And back from the past, with its grief and its joy,
Come the tones of a voice I heard when a boy,
And I see once again, as it moved to and fro,
A form that now rests where the wild roses blow,
And the sentinel stars their love vigils keep
Above the dear one in her long, dreamless sleep;
But memories sweet to a heart that can feel
Still cluster around the old spinning-wheel.

Some spokes from the rim are broken and gone,
And it stands there forsaken, neglected, alone;
It knows naught of language, but a story can tell
With a charm that for me time cannot dispel;
And often I climb the old attic stair
The love of my childhood with it to share,
And emotions possess me I cannot conceal
When fondly I gaze on the old spinning-wheel!

The distaff is worn and smooth with the touch
Of the now folded hands that used it so much;
And lingering there I clearly can trace
The sweet smile of love from a well-cherished face,
Which sheds round about it a halo divine
When thus I am kneeling at memory's shrine,
And hallows the thoughts which on the mind steal,
When up there alone with the old spinning-wheel!

'Tis then that I see her in saintly guise,
Through the fast-welling tears that come to my eyes—
A vision arrayed in raiment white
That beckons to me from the regions of light,
And illumines the way that my footsteps may tread
Unerringly where her love for me led—
Along the straight path that she tried to reveal
As she taught me, and spun on the old spinning-wheel!

Yes, the finger of Time has furrowed the brow,
And silvered the hair, yet I dream of her now
As when, long ago, I heard as a child
The words of her love that my sorrows beguiled;
And this relic she used but brings back anew
The morning of life, that was fresh with the dew
Distilled from the heart, as she taught me to kneel
Right down by her side, and the old spinning-wheel!

“RESTLAND.”

WRITTEN IN THE DANVILLE (KY.) CEMETERY.

I.

WITHIN thy hallowed precincts on this sweet autumnal day,
We're wandering 'neath the cedar and the pine,
Where rests the sacred dust of loved ones passed away,
And bleeding hearts a melancholy pleasure find.

II.

In memory's faithful mirror here once more we trace
Familiar forms of those in life we knew,
And see again the shadowy outlines of some face
That, living, beamed with kindness—ever true.

III.

Old age, and manhood's prime, and helpless infancy
Have dotted o'er with many an emerald mound,
And marked each stone with mournful tracery
Which stands within this consecrated ground.

IV.

And there the marble shaft its stately head
In polished whiteness pointing to the sky,
And here the modest tribute to the lowly dead—
The silent monitors that tell us all must die.

V.

Here lavish Nature her bright smile imparts
And decks with lovely flowers in early Spring,
And here the sympathetic tear unbidden starts,
And loving hands their sweetest tributes bring.

VI.

Loved spot! A solace to the living 'tis to know
That when at last—life's fitful fever o'er—
The cortege sad, with solemn step and slow,
Shall bear us here, to rest forever more,—

VII.

'Till that bright day when ransomed spirits rise,
And loved and lost shall reunited be,
To dwell in realms beyond the star-lit skies
Throughout one circling, vast eternity!

MY VALENTINE.

I.

I PASSED her on the crowded street—
This winsome maid, demure and sweet—
And envious saw the silken tresses
That seemed to give her cheeks caresses,
And rapture felt that thrilled me through
When on me glanced those eyes of blue
From underneath the drooping lashes
That could not hide their azure flashes!
And oh, I dreamt of bliss divine
If she would be—my Valentine!

II.

And visions of as fair a face
As painter's pencil e'er did trace
Would haunt the mind each waking hour,
And slumber owned its magic power—
Until I found by merest chance
That belladonna made the glance,
And borrowed hair had lent its aid
For silken tresses of this maid—
And padding—paint—did all combine
To make for me—my Valentine!

A SMOKE.

I.

O OTHERS may boast of their pleasures galore—
The miser with rapture may count o'er his store,
And some may imagine great happiness there
In the gay shining beam of Society's glare;
But best of all comforts a feller can know,
While wintry winds whistle and fast flies the snow,
Is a pipe after supper, by a bright blazing fire,
Encircled with ringlets that curl high and higher!

II.

O doctors may tell you and others declare
It'll shorten your days and your heart will impair—
That nicotine poison will flow through your veins
And nervous distraction will rack with its pains;
But what cares a feller in slippers and gown,
When wintry winds whistle and snow's pouring down,
With papers and books, and his feet near the fire,
Encircled with ringlets that curl high and higher?

III.

O rare are the fancies, contentment and bliss,
That drive away care in an hour such as this!
When the ills of this life and the things that provoke
Are lost for the while in the blue curling smoke
Of a pipe and tobacco that's yellow as gold,
And raptures supernal the senses unfold.
O give me a chair by a bright blazing fire,
And sweet-smelling ringlets that curl high and higher!

PERRYVILLE.

FOUGHT OCTOBER 8TH, 1862.

HERE on this spot, where Nature now, with chilling, icy
breath,
Has mantled in a robe of white the field of strife and death,
We view in memory once again the awful scenes where met
In serried ranks the Blue and Gray—and tears the lashes wet;
For those who fell that dreadful day are mingled with the
dust,
And often here the plow upturns a bayonet red with rust:
A sad memento of the time when passion held full sway—
Reminder to the rustic swain of fratricidal fray.

From yonder hill the shotted guns in dreadful chorus rang—
And on this plain was heard that day the glittering sabre's
clang,
And in that vale, where wound the brook, with waters
murmuring,
We stood and heard the Minie balls their deadly message
sing,
And saw the life blood, gushing red, from stricken comrade
near,
Whose gentle voice his loved ones then no more should ever
hear—
His blue eyes close—his bosom heave—his pulse forever still,
A sacrifice to cause held dear, on the field of Perryville!

And the swiftly circling years can ne'er erase
From Memory's tablets or from Nature's face

One spot of all the rest we're standing near—
By fiercely battling hosts the prize held dear;
The old spring's waters still are gurgling from the rock
Where famished soldiers knelt—grim Death himself to mock;
Here on that day in ghastly heaps they lay—
Commingling with the Blue the men that wore the Gray!

And now the virgin snow has covered o'er the sod
Where once in fierce array contending armies trod;
The wintry wind makes mournful music through the trees
Where then the clash of arms was floating on the breeze,
And deep-toned guns belched forth the screaming shell
Like fiendish messengers of Death let loose from hell;
Now Nature's peaceful emblem spread o'er glade and hill
Enwraps beneath its folds the bloody field of Perryville.

December 26, 1895.

LONGINGS.

I.

GIM me back my stone-bruised heel,
And them tow-linen pants,
An' that old pole an' line an' reel,
An' all them boyhood ha'nts,
An' that old hat I used to wear,
That didn't hav' no crown,
An' that same crop uv yellor hair—
Sun-burnt on top ter brown—
An' them playmates I used ter know,
An' loved like very brothers—
An' you kin let the old world go
An' giv' its wealth ter others!

II.

Gim me back one gallus, too,
That buttoned with a peg,
An' them blamed ticks that burrowed through
The skin uv either leg,
An' that old single-barrel gun,
As crooked as a rail,
An' that same dog that used ter run
The molly cotton-tail,
An' lem me hav' the tops I spun—
The kites that I hav' sailed—
An' then at last, when life is done,
Who'd keer if it had failed?

DOWN ABOUT OLD SHAKERTOWN.

You may boast about the landscapes fair so far across the sea—
Of castled Rhine, and southern France, and favored Italy—
But have you seen, when Springtime flings the scented
 blossoms down,
The forests and the meadows green around old Shakertown?

You may boast of some that bask beneath perpetual
 Summer's smiles—
Those "Eden's of the eastern wave"—the sunny Grecian
 isles—
And others that perhaps you've seen, of beauty and renown,
But come and view the country spread around old
 Shakertown!

O come and boast that you have been where Nature's
 lavish hand
Bestowed the gifts of wood and field that vie with any land—
Where valleys wear a velvet robe—the hills an emerald
 crown
Of bluegrass shimmering in the sun, around old
 Shakertown!

O come to old Kentucky then, and to her garden spot,
Then wander wheresoe'er you will, it ne'er will be forgot—
For Nature's face is wreathed in smiles nor wears a single
 frown
To mar the beauty she has spread around old Shakertown!

MEMORIA IN ÆTERNA.

SWEET MEMORY! thou faculty divine—
Triumphant o'er the cruel hand of Time!
On thy tablets we may trace
The lines his fingers ne'er efface,
And take with us till latest day
The images that light our way,
And picture thus in a shadowy form
The loved and lost he's from us torn—
Their lids by Death so early sealed—
Life's crimson tide by him congealed—
The tyrant has not all concealed—
They in thy mirror still revealed!

Before the morning sunbeams kissed
The face of Nature—veiled in mist—
And heralded with golden ray
The opening of the perfect day—
Ere yet the sable shades of night
At dawn's approach had winged their flight —
We've listened to the whispering breeze
That's wafted o'er the trembling trees,
And seemed to hear the voices sweet
Of loved ones now we ne'er can meet
Till earthly night shall pass away—
Supplanted by immortal day!

And thus in retrospective mood,
Alone with Nature's solitude
In some secluded sylvan dell,
Her myriad voices float and swell

And flitting shadows softly tell
Of dear ones lost—yet loved so well!
Then to the sunny home where dwelt—
(Ere yet the envious tyrant dealt
The blow that blighted hopes have felt)—
Fond fancy wanders, and can see
Once happy scenes that ne'er can be
Lost in thy shades, O Memory!

But those to us so cruelly denied
Are drifting now upon some fairer tide—
Their scattered ashes on Hope's pinions rise
And people realms beyond the azure skies!
Then may our faltering footsteps lead
To where fond hearts may never bleed—
Where vanished faces, cherished forms,
Are anchored safe from life's rude storms;
Where strains seraphic, soft and low,
The rapt ear greet, and we shall know
The loved and lost we only see
In visions of sweet Memory!

A MOTHER'S GRAVE.

I.

THE years have passed in ceaseless round
Since first they laid her here to rest
In dreamless sleep beneath the silent mound,
With folded hands upon her gentle breast.

II.

The ivy twines about the crumbling stone,
And Springtime's scented blossoms fling
Their incense o'er the peaceful home
That knows no more of suffering.

III.

Full many a Summer's sun has shed
Its brightest smile upon the hallowed spot,
And sobered Autumn and wild Winter spread
Their garments here—she heeds them not!

IV.

The feathered wildlings of the wood and field
Their untaught melody around it make,
But she who sleeps with eyes so softly sealed
Their gladsome songs can never more awake.

V.

O restful sleep beneath the crumbling mold
To dream no more of hopes unrealized!
O Grave! What treasures do thy confines hold
By us so dearly loved and fondly prized!

A FRECKLE-FACED BOY.

I.

I'M just in my glory when the cat I can tease,
Or I'm hunting for bird nests up in the trees,
And I wear out my pants in the seat and the knees;
I'm the pride of my daddy, my mammy's own joy—
A frolicsome, rollicksome, freckle-faced boy!

II.

I can make a top hum, and at marbles, you bet,
I'm the cock of the walk and the king of the "set;"
I'm hearty and healthy—and don't you forget
The dead loads of "goodies" that I can destroy—
I'm a frolicsome, rollicksome, freckle-faced boy!

III.

They send me to school with my satchel and books,
And my pockets bulged out with nails and fish-hooks;
And sometimes while there my teacher she looks
And captures the things that provoke and annoy
From a frolicsome, rollicksome, freckle-faced boy!

IV.

My mammy she says that it's quite evident
Of the country some day I'll be President;
But auntie, she says from the way I am bent
The gold of her dream will be full of alloy
From a frolicsome, rollicksome, freckle-faced boy!

V.

I'm huntin' for fun, and I don't have a care,
And there's dirt on my hands, and I don't comb my hair,
And off-colored patches quite often I wear;
But there's no kind of sport the young heart can cloy
Of a frolicsome, rollicksome, freckle-faced boy!

THE DAM BELOW THE MILL.

THE Springtime am a-comin', and the dogwood soon will
bloom,
With the blossoms ten times thicker than the green leaves
are in June,
And if yer want some pleasure that I nominate divine,
Just git yer minnow bucket, and yer hook and pole and line,
And slip away some mornin', when the weather's bright and
still,
And hang a four-pound jumper at the dam below the mill!

There are lots of other pleasures in the old world here below,
And a mighty heap of happiness a feller 'll never know—
But never mind about 'em—just yer slip away and feel
That something so delectable that over yer will steal;
For it sets the pulses beatin' with a magic kind of thrill
When yer hang a four-pound jumper at the dam below the
mill!

When yer 'gin to take the fever, and yer feel it comin' on,
Why yer boun' ter go a-fishin', just as shore as yer born;
Then ye'd better git yer trapping's in the proper kind o' fix,
And go and hear the music when yer reel a-spinnin' clicks;
For he rushes through the water at a pace that's fit ter kill
When yer hang a four-pound jumper at the dam below the
mill!

THE SERENADE.

I.

THE winds were hushed, and thin and high
The fleecy clouds were drifting,
And through them as she sailed the sky
The moon's soft light was sifting.

II.

Beneath her pale and tender ray,
Its silvery kiss imprinting,
All dew-bedecked each flower and spray
Like myriad jewels glinting.

III.

Across the lawn there floats the sound
Of music sweet—entrancing—
'Neath a latticed casement, ivy-bound,
Where love-lit eyes were glancing.

IV.

The flute and harp and mandolin
There dulcet notes were blending,
And strains divine from a violin
In harmony ascending.

V.

Enraptured by the magic spell,
I lingering stood, and listening,
It seemed to me that I could tell
What love to her was whispering.

* * * * *

VI.

I looked above and chanced to see
The man in the moon was scowling,
For they had struck up "Sweet Marie,"
And the old watch-dog was howling!

"IS IT HOT ENOUGH FER YOU?"

I.

I WOULDN'T mind the weather much—I'd sizzle and I'd
stew,
Aud do the very best I could the heat to struggle through,
If I could find some way, you know, the feller to eschew,
Who greets you with the chestnut phrase—

"IS IT HOT ENOUGH FER YOU?"

II.

The mercury might climb the tube and spill right out the
top—
The sweat might ooze from every pore and off my carcass
drop—
I wouldn't mind the heat at all, and keep my temper too,
If it wasn't for the cuss who says—

"IS IT HOT ENOUGH FER YOU?"

III.

The sun might shine his level best—the sky seem molten
brass—
The heat might dry up every stream, and burn up all the
grass—
The evening come without a breeze—the morning have no
dew—
If it wasn't for the 'moke' who asks

"IS IT HOT ENOUGH FER YOU?"

THE TOKEN.

I.

ONLY a ringlet of flaxen hair,
Tied with a ribbon blue,
Laid by the hand of a mother there—
Cherished with love so true !

II.

Only a soft and silken curl,
Bound with a knotted bow ;
Worn on the head of a little girl
Lost in the long-ago.

III.

Only a hallowed treasure kept
From the grave's decay and mold,
Over which her eyes have wept
With anguish all untold !

IV.

Only a link in the golden chain,
By Death's cold hand unbroken,
Which leads to where she'll meet again
The wearer of this token.

V.

Only a relic undefiled,
Enshrined in a broken heart—
Rent in twain when a darling child
And a loving mother part !

VI.

Only a ringlet of flaxen hair,
Tied with a ribbon blue,
Clipped from the head of an angel fair,
Whose hands are beckoning you!

TO SCENES I USED TO KNOW.

I CAN see the back-log blazing and the sparkles take their
flight

Up the cavernous old chimney on a merry Christmas night;
I can see the old folks smiling and the children's cheeks
aglow,

And a saucy maiden standing there beneath the mistletoe;
I can hear the laughter mingle with the strains of music
sweet

As we tripped the light fantastic with the "many-twinkling
feet;"

I can see the moonlight gleaming through the trees upon
the snow,

When memory takes me back again to scenes I used to
know.

I can see the candles burning bright upon the Christmas
tree;

I can see the presents handed round, and hear the shouts of
glee,

And from the buried years there comes a-stealing on the
heart

A something indefinable which bids the tear-drop start;
I can see the blue smoke curling, through the little strip of
wood

Between the winding turnpike road and where the farmhouse
stood;

I can see the colts a-playing, I can hear the cattle low—

When memory takes me back again to scenes I used to
know.

I can see it all when fancy weaves its magic with a dream,
And I hear the tones from voices like the murmur of a
stream;
And oh, the heart seems young again and from its anguish
free
When I gaze upon these pictures that are ever dear to me;
Then I see the darkies dancing, I can hear the fiddle ring
As they gathered in the cabin and they cut the pigeon-wing;
I can smell the 'possum roasting, I can see the cider flow,
When memory takes me back again to scenes I used to
know.

BEREFT.

I.

NO MORE to feel the pressure warm
Of dimpled arms around your neck—
No more to clasp the little form
That Nature did with beauty deck.

II.

NO MORE to hear the music sweet
Of merry laugh and prattling talk—
No more to see the busy feet
Come toddling down the shaded walk.

III.

NO MORE the glint of flaxen hair
That nestled 'round the liliated brow—
No more the rose's bloom will wear
The cheek so cold and pallid now.

IV.

NO MORE the light from loving eyes,
Whose hue was like the violet blown
Where Summer's softest, bluest skies,
Had lent it coloring from their own.

V.

NO MORE to fondly bend above
The little one when slumber wrought,
With sweetest dreams, the smile of love
The placid features then had caught.

VI.

No more on earth—oh, nevermore !
The shattered idols of the heart
Can yearning love nor time restore—
But—you may meet to never part !

THE "BULL SPRING."

WHEN the burning sun of Summer shines from out a brassy
sky,
And has parched and browned the meadows, and the creek's
run dry,
O sweet it is to wander there and hear the water sing
It's rippling song of gladness from the

Old
" Bull
Spring! "

Since Logan and the pioneers first stood upon its bank,
And heard it gurgle from the rock, and of its waters drank,
With ceaseless music in its flow, like silvery chimes that
ring,
Has been the song of gladness from the

Old
" Bull
Spring! "

Around about the fields and woods of old " Magnolia "
spread—
Indigenous to " tansy " — " mint " — and the lithe-limbed
thoroughbred ;
And far above, on drowsy wing, the crow seems listening
To the rippling song of gladness from the

Old
" Bull
" Spring? "

No music that I've ever heard seems half so soft and sweet
As that in silvery tones it makes while flowing at your feet;
And sometimes when I'm far away I'd give most anything
To hear the song of gladness from the

Old
" Bull
Spring! "

'Tis then that fancy wanders, and I sit and fondly dream
That I'm gazing in its liquid depths and see the pebbles
gleam,
As when in happy childhood, and free from sorrow's sting,
I heard the song of gladness from the

Old
" Bull
Spring! "

And I sniff again the flavor of the aromatic breeze
From the mint-bed and the tansy, as it floated through the
trees,

And hear music mingle of the birds upon the wing
With the laughing song of gladness from the

Old
" Bull
Spring! "

FAMILIAR HAUNTS.

I.

GIVE me the patches on my pants, the freckles on my face—
The happy heart where cankering care had never found a
place—
And let my bare feet walk again that dirt road down the hill
That led me to the river's brink, beyond the old Mock Mill!

II.

Give me the youthful friends I knew, now scattered far and
wide—
The loved ones who have passed beyond the bounds of time
and tide—
And let me see the rose's hue that mantled every cheek
When we were run-aways from school, a-fishing in the creek.

III.

Give me the stone-bruise on my heel, the hat without a
crown—
The unkempt suit of yellow hair the sun had burnt to brown—
And let me go and soak myself, just where we used to walk,
In that old swimmin' pool we had, up on the Hanging Fork!

IV.

Give me the wealth I used to have—a wealth of vast content—
The pockets that were always full—but in them not a cent—
And let me hear the music sweet the wild birds used to sing
In woods and fields I wandered o'er, beyond the Old Cove
Spring!

v.

Give me—but what's the use of wishing for the days that
won't return—

The vanished faces of the friends for whom we fondly yearn?
And what's the use of trying to look beyond the misty
screen

Time's hand has hung between the eye and each familiar
scene?

A FADED LETTER.

I.

O WHAT memories sweet entwine
Around each word and faded line!
Yellow and dim with the touch of years,
And soiled with the marks of tears--
A sacred treasure of the heart
Which death alone can from him part--
A letter—cherished as no other—
And ending with the name of—Mother!

II.

Writ it was to a wayward boy,
When life to him seemed full of joy—
Pleading with him so to live
That he her heart no grief would give—
That after years might ne'er be fraught
With sorrow that himself had wrought:—
“ May guardian angels 'round you hover,”
She wrote—and signed the name of—Mother!

III.

The paper has the taint of must—
The hand that traced the lines is dust,
And silvery hair is on the head
Of that same boy since first he read
This missive from the sainted one
That bore her love to an erring son—
More fondly prized than any other—
'Twas written by the hand of—Mother!

THE HERMIT.

By the waters of a river, where the rocks like giants
stand,

There a stranger, young and favored, built a home with
his own hand.

Hewed the logs and reared the roof-tree, where for years
alone he dwelt,

Wanderer from the sunny Southland, and from pangs his
heart had felt.

Legend says high-born and wealthy, seeking there in
Nature's wilds

To forget a maiden fickle, basking in a rival's smiles.

Where the music of the wild birds, echoed from the cliffs
around,

Blended with the voice of waters, flowing past with silvery
sound ;

Where in Springtime wild flowers blooming shed their
incense day and night,

And the rugged cliff-sides wearing robes of dogwood,
snowy white ;

Where in Summer old trees spreading overhead a leafy
roof

Flung their shadows, deep and cooling, 'gainst the burning
sunbeams proof ;

Where in Winter wild winds raving whistled 'round his
lonely home,

And the swollen torrent rushing struck the rocks with
sullen tone—

He a sunnier clime forsaking for the "dark and bloody
ground,"

Where the forest stretched unbroken—there the wanderer
rest had found.

All of human-kind deserting, where no din of toil and
strife

Ever came to break the stillness—there he spent a hermit's
life.

All his frugal wants supplying from the storehouse Nature
gave,

Nevermore his footsteps bending toward where Hope had
found its grave.

Striving to forget the false one, dwelling 'neath her sunny
skies,

Who had left the arrow rankling in his heart with honied
lies.

Long ago she was forgotten, and at last surcease had
come—

For his heart was stilled forever, and his lips were sealed
and dumb.

Long he lay beside the river, flowing sweetly there
to-day,

Where was found a bleaching skeleton, and a rude hut
in decay.

Their where briars in tangled network sway above a little
mound,

Rest the bones of Southern stranger, in the "dark and
bloody ground!"

THE "MEDICAL SPRING."

I.

LET tipplers all boast of the pleasure divine
That is found in old whisky, in beer and in wine—
But what are all those to a feller who knows
Where the "Medical Spring" in its purity flows,
And has knelt at its brink and just drank his fill
Of the clear, sparkling fluid, from Nature's own still?

II.

How often I've strayed on a hot Summer's day
Where it gurgles and gushes, then flows on its way
With a ripple as sweet as the music that died
When the tones of loved voices are to us denied,
And mirrored my face in the "Medical Spring,"
Where the beetling old cliffs their cool shadows fling!

III.

Not riches, nor honors, nor place do I crave,
Ere they lay me at last to rest in the grave,
But oh, let me hear its music once more,
And drink from its depths while I kneel on its shore—
Then bear me away on the Death Angel's wing
While my lips are yet moist from the "Medical Spring!"

AN "IDYL" OF THE BALL.

I.

IN reel, in waltz, in lancer's maze,
She moved with pretty air of grace,
And all the ball-room's brilliant blaze
Seemed borrowed brightness from her face!
O, winsome maid, demure and sweet!
I'll ne'er forget when first I met her,
And saw the dainty slippered feet
Glide o'er the floor at Linnietta!

II.

O, dreams of youth and beauty rare,
What rose-hued visions thou canst paint!
But none in loveliness compare
With her who seemed Love's patron saint!
Her pictured image haunts the mind,
And, oh, I never can forget her,
Nor rarer pleasure hope to find
Than dance with her at Linnietta!

III.

Arrayed in softly flowing gown,
The love-light flashing from her eyes—
With cheeks aglow like roses blown
Beneath the ardent summer skies—
No artist hand could fitly trace
The wondrous charm that did beset her,
When tripping with a fairy's grace
O'er the waxen floor at Linnietta!

DREAMS.

I.

THE sweetest dreams, it seems to me, that we can ever
know,
Are those the fancy brings to us of days of long-ago,
When rainbow-tinted pictures all are like a mirage flung
Upon the canvas memory weaves—of days when we were
young.

II.

The step may falter, eye be dim—the brow may wrinkles
wear,
And underneath the crumbling mould our friends be
sleeping there—
But oh, these visions come to us as to the rose the dew,
And while with raptured gaze we look the heart seems ever
new.

III.

Oh, when perhaps at last we're left a laggard on life's stage,
This is the mellowed draught we quaff our longings to
assuage—
As sweet as that from Paradise the smiling Houris hand
The Prophet's faithful followers when at its gates they
stand!

IV.

If one last prayer were left to me for my declining days,
Its form should be that I might hear the chimes that
memory plays,
And when at last upon my grave the wavy grass had sprung,
Some passer-by could truly say "His heart was ever young!"

A TWIST OF "NATURAL LEAF."

SOME sing of the lily, some sing of the rose,
Some sing of each flower in beauty that blows;
But sing me a song that shall render its meed
To the fragrance and aroma found in a weed,
Which banishes care and mitigates grief—
I mean a big twist of old "natural leaf!"

When sorrow's dark mantle the spirit doth wear,
And the heart is oppressed with the demon of care,
Then get out your pipe and its magic invoke
And all of your troubles will vanish in smoke!
O, you who have tried it will know what I mean
When the praises I sing of a hank of long green!

Since the days of King James and his old counterblast
Its sway of all classes has ever held fast,
And its patron saint Raleigh forever will live
In remembrance as sweet as affection can give,
And the incense we burn is an offering seen
In wreaths of blue smoke from a twist of long green!

Now some may advise you and others may swear
That nicotine poison your nerves will impair,
And if from the weed you'd just kept aloof
From heartburn and palsy you'd surely been proof—
For a man who had died at a hundred fifteen
Was hastened away by smoking long green!

But a cigar, a pipe, or a good juicy chew
Will yield you more comfort than harm they will do,
And murder the microbes that float in the air,
And make magical dreams in the old arm-chair,
If you will remember, and never forget,
To just draw the line at a vile cigarette !

GEORGE W. CHILDS.

FEBRUARY 4TH, 1894.

"GONE to his exceeding great reward,"
The friend of rich and poor alike;
And there'll rest not beneath the sward
More shining mark that death could strike.

The benefactor of his race—
His noble soul from avarice free;
By heaven lent the sordid earth to grace—
A nation's tears sincerely shed for thee!

Thrice blest the one, in lowly lot,
Contented with an humble place,
Who by thy noble heart was ne'er forgot
And knew thy smiling, loving face!

Oh, thus too early snatched away
From generous act and loving deed;
Thousands will now deplore the day—
Thousands now whose hearts will bleed!

The heaven-pointing shaft for thee
Its stately head might never raise;
But thy sweet memory would ever be
Hymned by thy fellow-mortals' praise!

Oh, thanks to Him who in His image made
And to the world this beacon gave;
With tears we'll water flowers that never fade
And gently drop upon his new-made grave!

THE OLD SPRING-HOUSE.

WITH its rude walls of stone and its moss-covered roof—
(’Tis a picture inwoven with memory’s woof)—
It stands there to-day, as it stood in the years
When we knew naught of sorrow—nor anguish—nor tears;
And though far from it now, I can see it at will—
The old spring-house at the foot of the hill!

O flights of fond fancy that deeply inurn
Sweet scenes of our childhood, no more to return!
Which carry us back in visions and dreams
And illumine life’s pathway with memory’s gleams—
Till we see once again, though with tears the eyes fill,
The old spring-house at the foot of the hill!

There we children, bare-footed, would wander to play,
And wade in the branch that flowed on its way
Through the meadows and fields with current so fleet,
And a gurgle and ripple that sounded so sweet!
And the water that helped turn the wheel at the mill
Was from the spring-house at the foot of the hill!

And, oh! I remember a pair of blue eyes,
With glances as tender and soft as the skies,
And a little brown head that was covered with curls,
And the laughter that rippled between rows of pearls,
Which was changed to a cry of despair and of woe
When the craw-fish was clinging to a little pink toe!

Distilled by the heart into memory's wine,
'Tis thus that we drink a draught that's divine,
And lighten the burdens which after years bear,
And banish with dreaming the demon of Care!
O in fond recollection I linger there still,
By the old spring-house at the foot of the hill!

Though vanished forever the faces that smiled,
And hushed is the laughter I heard when a child—
Yet often when musing they float back to me,
And I see them and hear it as clear as can be!
And I'm playing again, while the heart strings all thrill,
By the old spring house at the foot of the hill!

CAMPING ON THE CUMBERLAND.

WHERE the Cumberland flows on its way to the South,
From its source in the hills half-way to its mouth—
When Autumn has come and tempered the rays
Of the hot blazing sun with its soft mellow haze,
Is an Eden of bliss and a place of delight,
When the minnows are good and the “jumpers” will bite,
And a fellow’s well fixed with a reel and a pole,
And other “equipments”—(of which I’ve been told) !

To camp there and fish for a week at a time,
And have the four-pouanders just tug at your line,
Is a feeling akin to sweet visions we see
When we dream of that home where we all hope to be ;
And no king in the world who sits on a throne
E’er felt the rare joy that thrills to the bone
When you throw out your line and it whizzes away,
Just cutting the water to foamy white spray !

He darts here and there, dead game to the last,
When he feels the barbed hook and finds that he’s fast,
And plunges and struggles, disdaining to yield,
Till exhausted at last to the bank he is reeled,
And carefully lifted from out the old stream,
While he flounders and gasps and his scaly sides gleam,
And you measure his length and guess at his weight—
(Five inches too long and a pound too great) !

And when shadows of evening are gathering around,
And the sun with pure gold each hill-top has crowned,
Then pick up your trappings and leisurely wend
Your way back to camp, above the long bend,
Where the cook has prepared a supper, I trow,
Ne'er dreamt of in thoughts of Delmonico!
And you'll sit there and eat for an hour or more
With an appetite keen—and unheard of before!

Now bring out your pipe and fill up the bowl,
And loll there and smoke till it seems that the soul
Is wafted away like the ringlets that rise
As blue as the dome of the star-jeweled skies!
Then roll in a blanket with your feet to the blaze,
And the croak of the frogs and the ripple that plays
Will lull you to sleep with music as sweet
As that of the song when the angels you greet!

AN EASTER FLOWER.

I.

THE flower that she gave to me
Has withered now and died—
But yet with fond fidelity
Its faded leaves abide.

II.

The petals that so fragrant then
She wore upon her breast—
Still clinging to the lifeless stem,
With miser care possessed.

III.

As when in sweetest purity
It shed its perfume rare,
A symbol dear 'twill ever be
Of one divinely fair!

IV.

Plucked by the cruel hand of Death
In beauty's youthful bloom—
She perished with his chilling breath,
And withered in the tomb.

V.

But I will cherish ever thus
The token that she gave
When sun-lit skies were over us,
Unclouded by the grave!

THE STAGE COACH.

No matter what the weather was, in good old stage coach
days,
The driver with his ruddy face and spanking team of bays
Would spin along the turnpike road, o'er level stretch
and hill,
That wound away from "Idleburg" to classic Nicholasville.

The depths beneath his seat were filled with leathern sacks
of mail,
And all the coach's top at times was crowded to the rail
With trunks, valises, packages, and bundles by the
score,
That must have weighed, it seemed to me, five thousand
pounds or more.

And strapped within the bulging boot, that hung far out
behind,
Was added weight enough to make a team of oxen blind;
And counting all the passengers that filled the coach
within,
The load those horses had to drag—I thought it was a sin!

How proud of them the driver was! And often he would
brag
That they could pull a heavier load and never balk or flag;
If all the road was ankle-deep in miry, sticky mud,
That was the time his team would show its metal and its
blood.

The "ribbons" then he'd gather up, and give his whip a
crack,
And any team in front of him had better clear the track;
He seemed to own the turnpike road, and kept the right
of way
Unto himself as jealously as bloomers do to-day.

By wood and field he wound along, and by the river's bank,
And when he reached the covered bridge the hoof-beats
on the plank
Were echoed from the cliffs around and from the vale
below;
And going up the hill beyond he'd let 'em walk and blow.

Then urged into a trot again around the curves they spun
Till hove in sight the manor-house of Camp Dick
Robinson;
And on beyond where Nelson lay, the bravest of the brave,
Till Nicholasville at last was reached, to them the reins
he gave.

And when the sun was hanging low and slanting shadows
fell,
Along the streets of "Idleburg" that old familiar yell
Would greet the ears of villagers from small boys as they
ran
With open mouths and lusty lungs a-shouting "Here
comes Sam!"

Ah me! The old stage coach, abandoned now, stands in
the stable lot,
A victim to the tooth of rust, and slow decay and rot;
Its whole-souled driver years ago forever passed away,
And crumbled now to dust the hand that drove each
gallant bay!

DICK'S RIVER.

I.

ROCK-SENTINELED, romantic stream!
Thy waters flow with silvery gleam
Where glassy pools and visions greet
Embosomed in some cool retreat;
Then rippling o'er a pebbly bed,
With current fleet thy course is led
To where, walled in by beetling cliffs,
It plunges o'er the hidden rifts.

II.

Past where the meadows gently sweep
The limpid waters silent creep,
Until, o'erhung with cooling shade,
They lave the shores of sylvan glade,
And many a wild-flower blooming there
Its incense flings upon the air;
And spreading o'er each sloping side
An emerald carpet stretches wide.

III.

Now gliding out, the waters gleam
And sparkle with the sun's warm beam,
Reflecting then some mirrored cloud
Like specter wrapt in filmy shroud—
Till pouring down with fretful whirl
They o'er the mill-dam rush and curl,
And foaming round in eddies deep,
The circles wide and wider creep!

IV.

Oh, by thy wave I've loved to stray
On many a balmy summer's day—
When youth, and hope, and life were sweet—
Thy wooded banks and cliffs to greet!
And often back to days of yore
My fancy strays along thy shore,
And musing thus I fondly dream
I see again thy waters gleam!

TO A LITTLE BOY.

I.

DEAR little one with eyes so blue,
And silken ringlets of flaxen hair!
Oh, may life have in store for you
Something better than anguish and care!
Oh, may thy footsteps guided be
In paths of peace and pleasantness!
Oh, may those bright eyes never see
Much of the cold world's bitterness!

II.

Dear little one with innocent lips,
Tasting life's cup at the sparkling brim!
Oh, may the dregs that sorrow sips
Ever be kept aloof from him!
Oh, may the smile on his dimpled face
Through the years to come still linger there!
Oh, may Time's fingers gently place
The silver strands in his flaxen hair!

WHEN THE COAL HOUSE 'S FULL.

When the nights are gittin' chilly and the leaves begin to
fade,
An' the mercury's down to thirty, 'stead o' ninety in the
shade,
There's a happy kind o' feelin' takes possession o' the
soul—
With the smoke house full o' middlin', and the coal house
full o' coal!

When the wintry winds are whistlin' through the branches
o' the trees,
An' the dead leaves are a-flyin' and a-rustlin' in the
breeze,
You kin feel the vast contentment that over you will
roll—
If the barn is full o' fodder, and the coal house full o'
coal!

When the 'skeeter's ceased from troublin' and the fly is
chilled to death,
An' the window-pane is written with the Frost King's
icy breath,
You kin dream about the Summer-time, an' that old
fishin' pole—
If the pantry's full o' victuals, an' the coal house full o'
coal!

When your supper's been digested an' you're dozin' in
your chair,
Or you're tucked between the blankets from the frosty,
nippin' air,
Why, your dreams will be the sweeter if you've helped
some sufferin' soul
Whose larder's scant o' victuals, and his coal house minus
coal!

DECEMBER.

I.

WHITE-SHROUDED, latest-born of all the year,
In thy cold hands no bud or floweret bearing,
Thou comest now to wail above the bier
Of thy dead sisters—on thy bosom wearing
The icy jewel and the frosted gem—
But on thy marble brow the Star of Bethlehem!

II.

Beneath thy foot-prints lie the Autumn leaves,
Mould'ring and hast'ning to decay;
And where the drifting snow its mantle weaves
The Summer songsters sang the happy hours away.
What tho' the birds have flown the blighted stem?
There's in thy jeweled crown the Star of Bethlehem!

SOLACE.

ONE Autumn evening, wandering, when the sun was
 hanging low,
Through a woodland where the music of a streamlet's
 gentle flow
Commingled with the rustling of the yellow golden
 leaves,
And the idling breeze's sighing as it floated through the
 trees,
I heard sweet voices whispering in accents soft and low,
That lulled to rest the troubled soul, like those of long ago.

Enchanted thus I lingered, by unseen hands fast bound,
My willing fancy captive to the magic of sweet sound,
And eagerly I listened to the whispering voices tell
Of happy days of childhood, and the tear unbidden fell,
As were pictured to the mind again the halcyon scenes of
 yore,
And loved ones that no more I'll meet till on the silent
 shore!

And as the slanting shadows fell athwart the scattered leaves
The language that the voices spoke was formed of words
 like these:

"You may mingle with the sordid world, in eager, restless
 haste,
To struggle for the golden fruit that Mammon loves to taste,
But find at last, the end attained, that there are better things
To satisfy the longing heart—that sweeter solace brings.

“Thy Springtime, thy Summer, and thy Autumn’s
mellowed haze,
If rightly lived and rightly spent, will bring rare, happy
days,
That temper with their sunshine the frigid Winter’s
wrath,
When gathering storms are darkling o’er life’s declining
path,
And lend a ray celestial that hoarded gold ne’er gave
To lighten all thy journey, from the cradle to the grave.”

FRANK L. STANTON.

I.

THE sweetest music put in song since Robby Burns's time
Is that which breathes its harmony from Georgia's sunny
clime,
Where the fragrant-scented odor that the climbing
jasmine flings
Commingles with the melody that gifted Stanton sings!

II.

It may not suit a bookish clan that cannot understand
The rhythm and the cadences they never can command—
But what is that to him that knows and touches all the
strings
Of hearts responsive to his strain when gifted Stanton sings?

III.

We read his songs and hear the notes repeated once again
His ear has caught when listening to the mocking-bird's
refrain,
And interwoven with the sense a mystic something rings
That fills the soul with ecstasy when gifted Stanton sings!

IV.

O Sunny South! where blooming flowers and where the
whispering pine
Attunes his harp till every string gives forth a sound
divine!
We love you for the many gifts that generous Nature
brings,
But best of all—we love you for the song that Stanton sings!

THE OLD CHURCH BELL.

It hangs today where it has hung for fifty years or more,
But some who loved its silver tones the church-yard
covers o'er,

And many are the times since then, with deep and
solemn knell,

Has tolled for dear departed ones the

Old
Church
Bell !

Within a latticed tower it swings, high up above the
street,

And every Sabbath morn is heard the music clear and sweet
Which floats above the village roofs, and over hill and dell,
Upborne upon the vagrant wind, from the

Old
Church
Bell !

Full many a change the hand of Time has in the village
wrought,

And passing years have often been with grief and anguish
fraught,

Yet age has never changed its tones, and years cannot
dispel

The magic of the music from the

Old
Church
Bell !

Since it was placed within the tower, in days of long ago,
The tempests wild have round it raved, and many a
 driven snow
Has sifted through the slats up there, and mantled as it fell
In robes of white its dwelling place, and the
 Old
 Church
 Bell!

Though gone from earth and earthly things—forever
 passed away—
The faithful ones who loved while here its summons to
 obey
Now rest beyond the tide of Time, with rapture long to
 dwell,
For there their footsteps guided were by the
 Old
 Church
 Bell!

A SUMMER EVENING.

I.

THE sun has sunk in the crimson west,
And "around the languid eyes of day"
The Twilight's dreamy shadows rest
And light and shade alternate play;
The winds are hushed, nor leaf nor flower
Is swayed with motion by their power.

II.

The fireflies with meteor lamps
Arise from out the dewy lawn,
And there the elfin cricket chants
His vespers when the day is gone,
And far above, the sky's coquette
With all her starry train is met.

FATHER RYAN.

I.

IN Southern sunny clime there is a hallowed tomb,
Where rest the ashes of a minstrel priest;
And soft winds that are laden with a sweet perfume
Their requiems for him have never ceased.

II.

We read his songs, and hear again the tread
Of armed battalions, marching to the fray,
Or see once more the features of beloved dead
Whose life blood crimsoned uniforms of gray!

III.

We see the tattered banner that he loved so well
Again unfurled and fluttering in the breeze,
And once again we hear the "rebel yell"
Triumphant wafted o'er the riven trees!

IV.

O, may thy minstrel spirit find eternal rest
In some fair clime where nothing can be lost!
Where anguish never more can rend thy breast,
And fondest hope can ne'er be tempest tost!

THE MEADOW PATH.

I.

It led adown the sloping hill, and through the valley
wound,
And where the blooming clover shed its fragrance all
around,
And then between the maple trees, across the little
brook,
To where the old fence bars let down, a tortuous course
it took;
And often are the times I've heard the merry, ringing
laugh,
From rosy-ankled children there, along the meadow
path.

II.

Three boys—and a little girl whose hair was chestnut
gold—
(She's resting now in dreamless sleep beneath the
crumbling mold;)—
But I remember her as when, with innocence and glee,
Her laughing eyes looked into mine—for she was dear
to me;
And thus it is I love to let the fancy photograph
The merry group that idled there, along the meadow
path.

III.

Adown it oft we used to go at twilight for the cows,
Or wander from the beaten track a rabbit to arouse,
And watch him as he scampered off, with frightened
 leap and bound,
The while we made the welkin ring and with our shouts
 resound.
The sweetest flowers that bloom for me—a fragrant
 aftermath—
Are those that in the memory blow, along the meadow
 path!

THE FOX HUNTERS.

I.

WITH fleet-limbed steeds and baying pack
They follow close on Reynard's track,
And wake the slumbering echoes round
With music of the horn and hound;
Through wood and field, o'er hill and dale,
They course him in the moonlight pale,
And sport they find which brings delight—
These reckless riders of the night!

II.

The game is up! away, away!
Nor hedge nor fence their course can stay;
They clear them at a single leap,
And like the wind they onward sweep!
O'er fallen trunk and hidden ditch
The fearless horsemen plunge and pitch,
And heedless all they follow on
With ringing shout and winding horn!

III.

Thy wondrous ride, oh Tam O'Shanter,
To speed like theirs was but a canter;
Had you bestrode that night instead
Of gray mare Meg a thoroughbred
(Such as Kentuckians only breed—
To Scotia then an unknown steed),
No carline could have caught his rump
And left your brute with scarce a stump!

IV.

His foaming horse with throbbing sides
Unslackened yet his pace he rides,
Till in among the yelping hounds
The foremost huntsman proudly bounds,
And sees the leaders of the chase
(Two matchless dogs that set the pace)
O'ertake the game and win the race!
And then dismounts and feels the flush
Of victory as he takes the brush!

V.

O royal sport, befitting kings!
It bids the demon Care take wings,
And the rose's hue to the cheek it brings!
And sweeter music none can hear
Than that which greets the list'ning ear—
By distance mellowed to a key
That breathes divinest harmony—
And wakes the slumbering echoes round—
The winding horn and baying hound!

THE CHARMING GIRL OF SOMERSET.

By magic spell was I entranced
When on me first thy brown eyes glanced,
And sunbeams played at hide and seek
Thro' silken ringlets on thy dimpling cheek,
And like some glorious halo shed
Their radiance o'er thy shapely head—
And seemed as if they loved to dwell
Where'er thy airy footsteps fell!
And in my dreams I see thee now—
The pearly teeth—the arching brow—
The form that mocks the sculptor's art
To add one curve that could impart
More beauty and more witching grace,
Or chisel out a sweeter face!
Blest be the hour when first I met
This charming girl of Somerset!

IN JULY.

I.

OH, for a deep-shaded spot where the shadows cool
Are hid from the rays of the glaring sun,
And the sparkling waters from a limped pool
O'er the gleaming pebbles in ripples run!

II.

Where the sloping banks are with verdure clad,
And the hoary cliffs with moss o'ergrown,
And the tangled vine and the wildflowers pad
The fallen trunk and the hidden stone!

III.

Where the song that wells from a feathered throat
The echoes repeat again and again,
And the drifted sedge and the bubbles float
O'er the glassy depths of a miniature main!

IV.

Where the willows dip in the edge of the stream,
And sway and nod in the passing breeze,
And a feller could tranquilly rest and dream
Of a howling blizzard and a good hard freeze!

TO J. R. M.

I WALKED within the silent city of the dead,
Which then with Autumn leaves was carpeted,
And where the faded flower and withered wreath
Bespoke the love for those who slept beneath,
And, weeping, stood beside a new-made grave
Which held the sacred dust that friendship gave.
That heart with milk of human kindness overflowed—
That sympathetic hand its generous aid bestowed
To lighten others' burdens on life's weary road!
And there no polished shaft need lift its head
In lettered eulogy above the sainted dead—
His deeds are monuments above the dust whereon we
tread!

When from its fragile tenement of clay
To fairer realms his spirit winged its way,
With poignant grief we stood around the bier
Which held the lifeless form of one held dear,
And broken hearts that knew no comfort then
Still mourn the loss of one of Nature's noblemen!

TWILIGHT.

THE sun is sinking where the western hills
The vision bounds with rugged summits old,
And with his latest beam he brightly gilds
And crowns with amethyst and gold.

The distant music of a tinkling bell
Is floating o'er the meadow's gentle sweep—
No discords mar the magic of the spell,
And stealthily the twilight shadows creep.

And gently falls upon the listening ear—
Like tones from voices of the long-ago—
The cadence of the murmuring waters near—
With rhythmic ripples soft and low.

Now grow apace the shadows' slanting shapes
And fade the rugged hills to misty gray,
As dying day its calm departure takes
And yields to coming night her sable sway.

The vaulted dome above now glows afar
With many a soft and tender light,
Each sparkling gem it wears a jeweled star,
With sweet effulgence purely bright.

Sweet scene! Sweet hour! If to the heart
No quick'ning pulses they can lend,
And to the soul no rapture thus impart—
Vain were our lives—and vainer still the end!

O, such the time when he who will may feel
Release from care, vexation, toil, and strife—
And musing then will gently o'er him steal
The sweetest moments of the turmoil—life!

OUT UV "POLITICKS."

I.

"I'LL tell yer what," said Uncle Zeke, down at the
country store,

"I'd been a farmer all my life—fur twenty year or more—
Until one day my noddle here, it got plumb out o' fix,
Er-swellin' with the idy that I's made fur politicks.

II.

"I'd been ter hear them fellers speak, an' rip an' rant an'
rave,

When 'lection time's er-comin' on, who tell yer how
ter save

Ther kentry frum tarnation ruin, by sendin' only men
That's fit ter draw ther salaries, an' honest—jest like
them.

III.

"So listen, boys—yer'll profit by ther story that I tell—
I left ther farm ter 'lectioneer an' run fur constable;
I wouldn't hearken ter my wife—she said I'd lost my wit,
An' as fur holdin' offices—*she* knowed *I* wusn't fit.

IV.

"But ennyhow, I sold er steer, an' then er heifer calf,
An' bought er bran' new suit o' clothes fur twenty an'
er half,
An' 'fore ther 'lection day cum roun' I'd sold my wheat
an' oats,
An' spent ther proceeds that I got in purchasin' uv votes.

v.

“ I knowed ’twus wrong—agin ther law—ter do er thing
like that—
But then ther boys all said, yer know, ’twould take er
little ‘fat,’
Fur ther feller that I run agin could have no earthly
hope
Uv beatin’ me if I’d use ther right amount uv ‘soap.’

VI.

“ I jocks I did—I won ther fight—I sarved er single term—
(But fur ther salary that I got I wouldn’t give er durn);
An’ right up here I wear ther scar that shows whar I
wus hit
Ther day I rid fur forty miles ter sarve that cussed
‘writ!’”

JONES' MARE.

I.

Now Farmer Jones was noted for fast horses on his place,
And also as the father of a son with freckled face,
And hair so red it looked as if it had been dyed in blood,
And Ephraim was the "masher" of the country
neighborhood.

II.

This Ephraim Jones' yellow mare, she was no nice and
fleet
That all the girls for miles around on Eph. were very
"sweet,"
In hopes to get a ride or two behind her on the road,
With sleigh-bells jingling 'round her neck, some day
when it had snowed.

III.

Or else to spin along the pike, with buggy top let down,
And ribbons sailing out behind, when Eph. would drive
to town,
The envy of the country boys, and many maidens fair
A-casting wistful glances at the youth with reddish hair.

IV.

This thing went on till finally our Ephraim fell in love
With Tildy Ann Serepty Brown—as gentle as a dove—
Of all the girls around about the reigning country bell,
Whose father was as rich as cream—he'd struck an oil
well!

V.

About three nights in every week could Ephraim's
 yellow mare
 Be found a-standing hitched outside, while he was
 courting there,
 And so the boys, with envy mad and jealousy aroused,
 To humble Eph. hit on a plan they heartily espoused.

VI.

If anything in all the world, beside sweet Tildy Ann,
 Was dear to Ephram's eye and heart, it was his claybank,
 Fan;
 He boasted of her speed and looks, and of her pedigree—
 Said more intelligence in a brute no man would ever see.

VII.

He kept her curried till her coat it shone like burnished
 gold—
 With silver-mounted harness on, a beauty to behold.
 A brand new buggy hitched to her, a-glinting in the sun,
 She "took the cake" for speed and style from every other
 one.

VIII.

They heard that Eph. one night would call upon his
 Tildy Ann
 To make arrangements all complete to carry out a plan:
 It would be Sunday following, when all in style he'd go
 With Tildy and the yellow mare to the country "bonnet-
 show."

IX.

Supplied with brushes, cans of paint of every shade and
 hue,
 And to furnish light by which to work, a bull's-eye
 lantern, too,

At ten o'clock that night so dark you couldn't see a
wink,
They striped his Fan with red and brown, and black and
blue and pink.

x.

Next morning when he went to feed, and opened wide
the door,
No zebra that was ever foaled could boast the stripes she
wore;
Her ears were white, her legs were green, her tail was
fiery red,
And as he gazed upon her then I can't tell what he said!

THAT OLD STRAW HAT OF MINE.

(WITH APOLOGIES TO RILEY.)

I.

AS ONE who dreams at evening o'er the new hats that
 he's worn,
And muses on the better times that once to him were
 known,
So I turn the leaves of fancy till, in shadowy design,
I see the faded ribbon on that old straw hat of mine.

II.

The firelight seems to mock me as the ruddy flames arise,
And I turn about to rest me of the dazzle in my eyes;
And I ponder then in silence, save a sigh that seems to
 yoke
Its fate with my condition, and to vanish like the smoke.

III.

With fondest recollection the loving thoughts that start
Into being are but feelings from the bottom of my heart;
And to wear the new hats over is a luxury divine—
Till my truant fancy wanders with that old straw hat of
 mine.

IV.

Now I hear without my chamber, like a fluttering of
 wings,
The rustling of the autumn wind as through the trees it
 sings,

And I feel no twinge of conscience to deny me any
scheme
That will bring to me a hat of which I now can only
dream.

V.

In fact, to speak in earnest, if I could work a charm,
I'd try it on old Isaacs—'twouldn't do him much of harm—
And I'd find an extra flavor in memory's mellow wine
When I thought of how I swapped him that old straw hat
of mine.

VI.

A thing of real beauty, with a shape of airy grace,
Floats out of Isaacs' storehouse, as the genii from the
vase,
And, oh! I gaze upon it with a pair of loving eyes,
As glowing as the summer and as tender as the skies!

* * * * *

VII.

But, ah! my dream is broken when I gaze upon that chair,
For my eyes are now wide open and—the same old hat is
there;
And reluctantly and sadly all my visions I resign
To know that I must wear again that old straw hat of
mine!

TOM BARBEE'S POND.

I.

O SWEET are the memories when backward we gaze
Through the vista of years to our schoolboy days,
When faces now vanished to the vision appear
And the music of voices long hushed we can hear,
As together we romped where the school-house stood,
Or joyfully wended our way through the wood
Where placidly lay, in the valley beyond,
The moss-covered waters of Tom Barbee's pond!

II.

Though scattered by Time o'er the face of the earth,
And sorrow and anguish have succeeded to mirth,
Still many there be whose mist-bedewed eye
Looks longingly back, while the breast heaves a sigh,
To that far-away time, when together we played
In the school-house yard, or on Saturdays strayed
Where the knots in our sleeves were tied tight as a
 bond,
As we splashed and we dived in Tom Barbee's pond!

III.

The "pleasures of memory" by Rogers were lined,
With rhythm as sweet as in verse you will find,
But could he e'er picture one-half of the joys
We had when we wandered as barefooted boys

Through the woods and the fields and the meadows out
there,
With our sun-blistered backs and the burrs in our
hair,
Or recall to the mind a remembrance more fond
Than bathing and swimming in Tom Barbee's pond?

WHERE?

I.

O, WHERE are the friends that in youth we once knew,
Whose smiles were like sunshine, whose hearts were so
true?

Alas! they are lost in the darkness and gloom
That veils them from sight in the cold, silent tomb!

II.

O, where are the years that forever have fled,
And over Life's morning their radiance shed?
With the Past written down on the unending scroll
Where Time—grim destroyer—his victims enroll!

III.

O, where are the fancies, the visions, the dreams,
That filled the young breast—with which memory
teems?

They have faded away—from life they have passed—
Like stars blotted out when the sky's overcast!

IV.

O, where are the hopes that have beckoned us on
With their beacons of light, through sunshine and
storm?

Like spectres—like phantoms—like vapor and mist,
They have vanished forever—a will-o'-the-wisp!

v.

O, where are the harbors, the havens of rest,
That solace can give to a heart that's opprest?
They are hid from the vision beyond the blue sky,
Yet the eye of sweet Faith their portals descry!

THE HILLS OF LINCOLN.

I.

O THE hills of old Lincoln!—I can see them to-day
As they stretch in dim distance far, far away,
And on Fancy's swift pinions my spirit hath flown
To rest 'mid the scenes which my childhood has
 known—
Where the old Hanging Fork, with its silvery gleam,
Glides away 'tween the meadows like thoughts in a
 dream,
And far to the south, with their outlines so blue,
The rugged knobs blend into heaven's own hue!

II.

O the hills of old Lincoln!—how fondly I gaze
On their wildwoods and thickets and deep-tangled
 ways
When memory's mirror presents them to view,
And I dream once again that I tread them anew,
While raptured I listen to the music of love
That the song-birds are singing in the tree-tops above,
And the soul drifts away in a swoon of delight,
Unanchored from care and from sorrow's cold blight!

III.

O the hills of old Lincoln!—my footsteps have trod
Up and down their green valleys, with shotgun and rod,

And it seems to me now that the years that have fled
Around their old summits a halo have shed
That guides the fond fancy unerringly there
When backward it wanders with childhood to share
Sweet scenes such as these, inurned in the heart,
And which from fond memory can never depart!

LOVED AND LOST.

I.

SWEETLY to sleep beneath the fresh green turf
They laid the loved and lost away;
A chair is vacant by the household hearth,
And shadow-vested Sorrow's there to-day.

II.

The tender hands that guided us in youth
Are folded now upon the gentle breast,
And those dear eyes whose depths were love and truth
Are closed to open in eternal rest.

III.

Through simple faith and duty well performed,
A crown of light forever shall be hers;
And though with bitter grief and anguish mourned,
A consolation gleams through blinding tears!

A TRUE STORY.

(READ BEFORE A MEETING OF THE DANVILLE
SCRIBBLER CLUB.)

DEAR FRIENDS, to-night the inspiration of my theme
Is not the baseless fabric of a weird, fantastic dream—
For truth, combined with justice, doth impel,
And therefore it is fact—not fiction—that I tell.

“ Truth, crushed to earth, will rise again ”—
A maxim true as holy writ ; —then it is plain,
If rudely woven by an untaught hand it be,
Sustains but transitory wrong and injury.

And thus it is, in homely rhyme, I venture forth,
Relating nothing here but under oath ;
And if, perchance, at times it sounds a little strange,
You know that truth o’er fiction hath a wider range.

These stanzas three I hope you’ll deem explanatory—
As introductory and preliminary to the story—
A preface simply used before I introduce
The proper characters essential for our use.

And just one moment more attention I will claim,
And crave indulgence while I here explain,
That “ character ” is used in a Pickwickian sense—
So truth and justice need not take offense.

'Twas when the Autumn leaves, with russet hue,
Scarce quivered in the gentle wind, and when the dew
Lay sparkling on the grass, beneath the argent moon,
A tragedy took place—of which I'll tell you soon.

And ever and anon a fleecy, drifting cloud,
Meek Dian's face would veil with filmy shroud,
And lend to wood and field that softened ray
Unmatched in beauty from the glaring god of day!

But I will tell the story as 'twas told to me,
And vouched for by some others—two or three—
Whose word to doubt would be a heinous sin—
So, armed with truth, in confidence I will begin.

Ah, memory! Thou art a fickle jade,
And oft responsible when grave mistakes are made,
And therefore 'tis with caution that I hesitate
When truthful things I undertake to state.

This much is due to accuracy and circumspection,
As well as to a rather faulty recollection;
And so I'll trespass on your patience now no more,
But straightway tell the story—as I said before.

All good beginnings have that natural trend
Which safely leads to a successful end,
And stories all should have their plots well laid—
Which neither prose nor verse can do, when haste is
made.

'Tis said "procrastination is the thief of time,"
And this might seem to be the object of my rhyme.
Had I not told you, as I should have done,
The reason why the story's not begun.

'Tis my sole object, then, to give without delay,
The narrative in a direct and proper way,
For as you know some critics may be here
Whom scribbling rhymesters may, with justice, fear.

“What shameless bards we have! And yet, 'tis true,
There are as mad, abandoned critics, too!”
This couplet, penned by Pope, is ever new—
But then, dear friends, the second line was *not* for you!

I only quote that you may comprehend
How modesty in *me* has missed its end,
And why it is I ever undertook to write
The story that I'm going to tell—sometime to-night.

An introduction that will keep the listener in suspense
I deem derogatory to good taste and sense;
And this is also why I'll nothing put as prefatory
Before I launch right out into the story.

I'm going to make it thrilling, crisp and short,
In purest diction drest, with gems of thought
So intermingled with the story's warp and woof,
That from beginning I can scarcely keep aloof.

I'll put quotation marks to shrive me of the sin
Of plagiarism when such language I begin—
That every one of you may plainly see
I tell the story as 'twas told to me.

So calmly, coolly then, I think I will proceed
To give you now the story—taking heed
To curtail all that truth and justice will permit—
Remembering that “brevity's the soul of wit.”

But undue haste would cause me to forget
And mar the memory of its telling with regret
If I had overlooked some startling fact,
Which on both truth and justice would re-act!

And now, dear friends, don't think that you are "sold"
If still as yet the story's left untold—
But paper, ink, your patience, and my time
Are all exhausted in this race with rhyme!