LITTLE JAMAICA MAN
A COOLIE TOWN LULLABY

De sun's hangin' ovah de aidge of de worl',
  Li'l man, li'l man;
An' de clouds in him breat' all frizzle an' curl,
  Li'l Jamaica man.

Hit's gwine be dahk fe come bimeby,
  Li'l man, li'l man;
So light up de tawch in you tail, firefly,
  Li'l Jamaica man.

De stahs got ta swing low down dis night,
  Li'l man, li'l man;
De fool-vahgin moon feegit hile fe light,
  Li'l Jamaica man.

But hit meks no diff'unce to dis sugah chile,
  Li'l man, li'l man;
Hi fin' light 'nuff in him mummah smile,
  Li'l Jamaica man.

De win' blow hahd, but him no git skeer,
  Li'l man, li'l man;
De tunnah crack, but him mummah here,
  Li'l Jamaica man.

De Lahd got him safe in Him 'evingly keep,
  Li'l man, li'l man;
So sleep along, honey, sleep—sleep—sleep,
  Li'l Jamaica man.

109
BENEATH THE ROSE

Beneath the rose, who knows?
Perchance a serpent lurketh there,
Safe-screened within that bosom fair;
And passion's lightest breath that blows
May all the turpitude disclose
Clandestine there, beneath the rose!—
Who knows?

Beneath the rose, who knows?
Perchance a wrong is burning there,
A brand upon that bosom fair,
That wider, deeper, hourly grows—
A brand that ever flames and glows,
Suspected not, beneath the rose!—
Who knows?

Beneath the rose, who knows?
Perchance a love is dying there,
Enfamished on that bosom fair—
A starveling, whose expiring throes
Are witnessed not by friends or foes
Who cannot see beneath the rose!—
Who knows?

Beneath the rose, who knows?
Perchance a joy is hiding there,
And madly thrills that bosom fair!
Whate'er there be, it never shows;
She still doth smile and calmly pose!
Can there be naught beneath the rose?—
Who knows?

110
AT SUNSET TIME

At sunset time so long ago—
Ah, long ago! Ah, hearts of woe!—
We numbered in the shoreless West
The cloud-born Islands of the Blest,
And sought the one we once would know.

O'er seas serene of opal glow,
With softened thoughts we urged the quest
Till Night's far whisper bade us rest
At sunset time.

And now, tho' left alone, and tho'
Through tears the Isles but dimly show,
We seek, still seek the purple crest
Where, waiting, She hath made her nest,
And Hope—for She would have it so—
At sunset time.
I THINK OF THEE

The sun has set—the stars are in the sky,
The clouds form valleys deep and mountains high,
And as I watch full many a form and face
Appear and vanish in the azure space,
       I think of thee.

The sun has set—the weary day is done,
Another night of retrospect begun;
Yet while fond memory tales of sadness tells,
One ray of comfort all the gloom dispels—
       I think of thee.

The sun has set—across the land and sea
That seem to separate my love from me,
Still soul communes with soul, heart throbs with heart;
Tho' distance darkens we are not apart—
       I think of thee.
SHE SENDS HER LOVE

She sends her love! My heart prepare
To cleave the last, thin band of air
Where slothful spirits hesitate
And sluggish souls deliberate,—
Then back to sordid earth repair.

We'll leave this atmosphere of care
And zones of ether penetrate—
For doth the word not clearly state,
"She sends her love"?

Yea! Jubilant our path shall fare
To that far Aiden none may dare
Save those—the passing fortunate,
To whom—O dear and charming fate—
O boon benign and rapture rare—
She sends her love!
TO VIOLET

When Nature scattered roses 'round
To please the eye of man,
She rested while she stood aloof
Her handiwork to scan.
She was by no means satisfied—
A flower was lacking yet;
And so she came to earth again
And brought the violet.

That's why, dear one, thy friends rejoice
And render thanks to-day;
Our souls are glad, our hearts are light—
We laugh, we sing, we play.
For Nature, bless her smiling face,
Our need did not forget,
But gave us what has pleased us most—
Our precious Violet!
THESE AWFUL DAYS

The sun climbs over the indigo hills  
And lazily mounts the sky;  
So slothful his gait that noon we await  
Ere his course is two hours high.  
The waveless sea inertly lies  
In the hush and quiet of death—  
All nature's asleep in slumber deep,  
And the breeze is an infant's breath.

O these are the days, the awful days,  
When the fiercest spirit quails!  
When the keenest zest is fain to rest,  
When the strongest effort fails.  
When the sluggish mind and the sluggish soul  
To the sluggish pulse respond;  
When desire is dead, ambition fled,  
And we sink in the Slough of Despond!
THE HAPPIEST TIME

In all the day the happiest time
Is when old blazing Red Eye sets,
And frogs in distant pools of slime
Begin their raucous pumps to prime;
When crickets practice their duets
And fireflies puff their cigarettes.

The deadly night-air not at all
Doth frighten me, for I'm immune;
And I've become so tropical,
So bilious and malarial,
Mosquitoes sing as sweet a tune
As ever did the birds of June.

So, on the balcony at ease,
I watch the stars wink merrily,
And palms play in the evening breeze
At see-saw with the almond trees—
And now it is that, verily,
I look at things quite cheerily.

This is the hour I'm glad to live,
And know I'd just as gladly die;
The hour that doth one courage give
To sift his sins in Candor's sieve,
And when in graded heaps they lie
To count them o'er without a sigh.
It is the hour that brings relief
   From daylight's all-exposing glare;
That deadens doubt and dims belief,
And even dulls one's dearest grief;
   When one's most hateful fault looks fair—
For 'tis the hour when one don't care!

And so to me the happiest time
   Is when old blazing Red Eye sets,
And frogs in distant pools of slime
Begin their raucous pumps to prime—
   When crickets practice their duets
And fireflies puff their cigarettes.
I know of an isle in the mighty Pacific,
   To which Nature retires when her day's work is done,
And thence doth she issue decrees soporific
   That govern the world to the rising of sun.

There she marshals the stars and parades constellations,
   Commanding their march o'er the fleece-adorned blue,
And orders the moon to pour silver libations
   To the Master of Night and his shadowy crew.

On the crest of the mountain a rude cross erected
   By rev'rently pious hands long years ago,
Spreads sheltering arms, in soft light reflected,
   O'er the bamboo-built hamlet that nestles below.

Down verdure-clad slopes and terracing reaches
   Where orange and mango and pine-apple grow,
One wanders thro' Eden to ocean-washed beaches—
   An Eden that only the sun-children know.

Here Idleness tarries and Care is a stranger;
   Here Love has his grotto and fashions the darts
That bear on their flight their ever-sweet danger
   To eagerly waiting and passionate hearts.
Alas that our happiness never lacks leaven—
    That an anchor is chained unto every delight!
That Taboga's a place which might be called Heaven,
    Were it not for the fact that it isn't,—not quite!
ONLY A WEED

I discovered a flower yesterday
    In a rubbish barrel growing;
It smilingly nodded its head at me,
    In the gentle zephyr blowing.

Its petals were beaten from elfin gold
    By a fairy as day was breaking;
She daintily fashioned them all alike,
    From a heart her pattern taking.

She joined them together in matchless grace,
    With a star each pendant gripping,
And enamelled them all with velvet gloss,
    Her brush in the sunshine dipping.

From her diadem then, a tiny pearl
    She loosed from its sheeny setting,
And fastened it down in a stellar zone
    With tethers of filmy netting.

It was only a weed, when all is said,
    In a rubbish barrel growing,
That smilingly nodded its head at me,
    In the gentle zephyr blowing:

But I plucked it, and bring it here to you
    With never a word of preaching:
Should it bear no lesson within itself,
    Why, you're past the power of teaching!
SIMPLE AVEU

Evening dons her starry robe,
    All the world's asleep;
Luna, pale and cold, looks down,
    Shadows sweep the deep.
Yet, dear heart, thy presence seems
    Brightness full for me;
Sleeping, thou art all my dreams,
    Awake, I think of thee!

List, oh, listen! Hear my vow
    As I longing plead:
Faith and truth I pledge thee now,
    Love in thought and deed!

Gently folds the wings of night,
    Darkness falls apace;
Yet my soul is full of light—
    Light from thy dear face.
Night can ne'er of life be part;
    Darkness never be!
Day is ever in my heart
    While I think of thee!

Gentle lady, of thy grace
    Tell me thou art mine;
Then shall neither time nor place
    All my love confine!
Banish every doubt and fear,
    Grant my earnest plea;
Bless the suppliant waiting here
    Thinking still of thee!
"THE OLD FAMILIAR FACES"

Come, let us sit together while
   Old friends are round us falling,
And memory doth our tears beguile—
   Departed days recalling.
Hold thou my hand, and I'll hold thine,
   Thou friend of many graces.
While we drink a cup of salty wine
   To the old familiar faces.

Long years have we together dwelt,
   Thro' dry and rainy season;
I've felt with thee, as thou hast felt
   With me, o'er Fortune's treason.
We've seen our comrades sail away
   To earth's far-distant places,
And 'tis salty wine we drink to-day
   To the old familiar faces.

Together we have fought the fight—
   Each other always aiding—
Together we have watched the light
   'Neath each other's eyelids fading.
So put thy brave old hand in mine
   While we count the empty spaces,
And drink a cup of salty wine
   To the old familiar faces.

123
Full many a one we've borne to rest,
   Our hearts with sorrow breaking;
Full many a friend on earth's cold breast
   His last repose is taking.
Then let us drain death's loving-cup,
   And dash away the traces:
'Tis salty, yet we'll drink it up
   To the old familiar faces.

There's still an arrow left for us
   In that exhaustless quiver;
Right soon, with Charon's pall o'er us,
   We'll cross the inky river;
But put thy brave old hand in mine,
   Thou friend of many graces,
And pledge with me in salty wine
   The old familiar faces.
"OLD COMRADE"

God bless you, dear old comrade,
    You're my kind of gentleman!
I've known you since the "eighties,"
    When our years of grief began.
I've known you and I've loved you—
    I couldn't help it, see?
And I've respected you, sir,
    As you've respected me!

You've never thought your duty
    Lay in making others feel
That on top was your position—
    Theirs the bottom of the wheel.
Yours are Nature's manners,
    Yours is the tender heart;
And the part that you have chosen
    Is, by God, the better part!

You've sorrowed with the weeping,
    You've been merry with the glad;
You've helped to bear the burden
    When it almost drove us mad!
You've wasted no time talking,
    You've simply said a word,
But in that word we've fancied
    A sermon we have heard!

125
Again I say, God bless you
   Wherever you may be!
Whatever be the distance
   You can't get far from me!
I've known you and I've loved you
   Since our years of grief began:
Here's a brimming bumper to you—
    You're my kind of gentleman!
THE PRAYER OF A TIMID MAN

Oh, answer me, Lord, from the whirlwind,
   As Thou didst Thy servant of old!
Oh, tell me in speech without figures
   The things I long to be told!

Cast into my heart's darkened chamber
   One ray of Thine infinite light!
Drive out from my soul but an instant
   The deepening shadow of night!

Give heed to my ceaseless petitions
   As prostrate I lie at Thy feet!
Reply to my unspoken questions—
   The questions I dare not repeat!
IF YE WEEP

If ye weep, ah, then weep least for him
   Who mourns some loved one lost,
For tender Time smoothes finally
   The brow with pain o'ercrost;
The wound will heal that seemeth now
   E'er open to the touch:
And forgiven much—'tis written so—
   Is he that loveth much.

If ye weep, ah, weep far more for him
   Who sheds no outward tear,
But whose very soul the unshed tears
   Of disappointment sear!
Who tries and fails and tries again,
   And faileth o'er and o'er—
For him whose life naught visiteth
   Save failure evermore!

If ye weep, ah, yes; weep most for him,
   The unsuccessful man,
Whose weakness of each dear design
   Leaves but the barren plan;
Who fails and, as a forest leaf,
   Unheeded, falls to rot:
All charm unknown, all grace unseen,
   For to him hope cometh not!

128
MEMORY

"There is no progress in the life which feeds on memory, only stagnation and death."—Elements of Theosophy.

On memory’s progressless sea
    Then let me, stagnant, lie
And rot with my remembrances
    Until I, stagnant, die!

No gospel preach to me, I pray,
    That robs me of the bliss—
Still sweetly tasted on my lips—
    Of a sainted mother’s kiss!

That teaches that the childish prayer
    I prattled at her knee
Was silly nonsense, and unfit
    To be recalled by me!

That teaches that a father’s care,
    The precepts that it taught,
Are wisdomless, devoid of truth,
    And hence, accounted naught!

That sees in youth and love’s first dream
    No lessons that the mind
On Karma set, on progress bent,
    Some benefit may find!

129
That would ignore the consciousness
   Of life's maturer sins;
That teaches that with every day
   Another life begins!

That dims the blush, that blunts the sting
   Of an unworthy deed;
That teaches that of memory's whip
   No mortal hath a need!

Ah, no, I'll suffer for my faults
   Each wretched night and day;
'And in kind acts small comfort find
   In the old, old-fashioned way.

So, then, on memory's changeless sea
   Pray, let me, stagnant, lie
'And rot with my remembrances
   Until I, stagnant, die!
Behold, far out upon the heaving sea
That dim, faint shadow-line that momentarily
Grows deeper, wider, longer, till at length,
It gathers form and ocean's awful strength,
And rushing onward o'er the hidden reef,
With one prolonged and thundrous sob of grief
Relinquishes its might; and on the shore
Becomes a pool—a giant wave no more!

And what of this? Why, this is human life.
Impelled, we know not how, we join a strife,
The purpose and design of which we are
As far from knowing as yon frozen star,
Whose wickless lamp a million years hath lit.
We rise, we fall, and that's the end of it!
JOB AND ANOTHER

A moan for the hapless dying,
A moan for the helpless dead,
A moan for the thousands lying
On yonder hillock dread.
A moan for the passed and passing
Let us, the living, give;
And then, our voices massing,
A groan for those that live.

JOB

If Thou to a grave would'st guide me,
   And over me darkness cast,
In secrecy would'st hide me
   Till Thy day of wrath be past,
An appointed time, oh, set me
   To wait Thy welcome call;
Nor, hidden, do Thou forget me,
   Lest I, like the mountain, fall!

For now while e'en I slumber
   Thou watchest o'er my sin;
My footsteps Thou dost number,
   And the shrinking fears therein.
Desire with desire Thou cloyest;
   The race ends ere 'tis ran:
Serenely Thou destroyest
   The dearest hope of man!

132
ANOTHER

A moan for the hapless dying,
   A moan for the helpless dead,
A moan for the thousands lying
   On yonder hillock dread.
A moan for the passed and passing
   Let us, the living, give;
And then, our voices massing.
   A groan for those that live.
LET ME ALONE

I care not who the cup celestial wins,
    Let me alone!
I've lost my grip, I'm wedded to my sins,
    Let me alone!
Within my hand I hold no stone to throw;
Let that suffice: it is enough to know.

Fare straight ahead, oh, ye the sanctified!
    Let me alone!
I pray ye, race upon the other side,
    Let me alone!
I stumbled early, fell, and here I lie
Contented, so ye do but pass me by!

For me no visions of the Promised Land,
    Let me alone!
For me? Not much! I would not with ye stand,
    Let me alone!
For me nor sun, nor moon, nor star shall bow;
'Tis Reuben, 'tis not Joseph, dreaming now!
AU REVOIR

I wandered last night to the mystical mountain
Where the Muses recline 'neath the evergreen trees;
And deeply I drank at the crystalline fountain,
While flowers of poesy perfumed the breeze.

And this was my object: To see if I could not
Imbibe or absorb of the gentlest of arts
Some aid to express—pray, tell me who would not?—
The thoughts that this evening lie deep in our hearts.

I deemed it my right and my privileged duty
To gather a garland of messages sweet;
A wreath of good wishes in blossoming beauty
As an earnest of friendship to place at thy feet.

Alas, for my dreams! With daybreak they vanished,
Leaving never a trace of their fragrance behind;
And I from Parnassus am evermore banished
With soul over-full, but with vacuous mind.

So, tremulously, haltingly, timidly, weakly,
Yet voicing the feeling that governs us all;
Unworthily, doubtless, but humbly and meekly,
I pray for all blessings upon thee to fall.
VICTORIA THE WOMAN

(c. c. m.)

Down thro' a glorious century she treads,
   Each step an added glory to the years;
Her fame the halo round a myriad heads,
   Her name a name a willing world reveres:
A queen whose power naught hath long withstood,
A queen whose chiefest grace is womanhood.

Let others sing her grandeur on the throne;
   In ode and epic let the pæan swell;
Her arms and state-craft chant in thrilling tone,
   In deathless words her brilliant triumphs tell:
'Tis ours in humble verse—crude, incomplete—
To lay our tribute at the woman's feet.

All pride and pomp and circumstance aside
   Flung with the trappings of the civic life,
We see her stand, a simple, modest bride—
   Lamented Albert's true and loyal wife:
His love her crown, all other crowns apart,
His love the sceptre of her woman's heart.

In all the beauty of maternity
   Example sweet and admonition mild,
Forgetting regal place that she may be
   The guide and playmate of a little child:
Still steadfast as the crowding cycles fly,
In woman's realm her greatest majesty.

137
Handmaiden of the virtues, all and each,
Swift to reward, swift to rebuke as well;
The love of home her happiness to teach,
'Mid social purity her joy to dwell:
A censor of society, whose aim
Hath ever been to honor woman's name.

We hail her, then; and as the earth resounds
With soaring song and martial blare and blast,
While Glory leads her on her dazzling rounds,
We in her path would our poor offering cast:
The flower of our reverence for one
Whose queenly soul hath woman's duty done.

1901

Hail—and farewell! Bereaved and unconsolled,
Beside her tomb the world she dignified
Still reverent, listens while the tale is told
Of how a Queenly Woman ruled—and died:
And 'round her name that world for ages yet
Shall wreathe the homage of profound regret.
A SPRIG OF SAGE-BRUSH

A sprig of sage-brush I've brought to you
From the prairies of the West;
I know 'tis the season for mistletoe,
    But I thought—well, you know best!
Perhaps, however, you'll listen awhile
    And ponder the matter well;
And render your judgment afterward
    On the tale I've got to tell.

I sing no song of knightly might,
    Or deed of warrior brave,
Or tell of exploit nobly dared
    A woman's fame to save;
All these, and more, 'tis my delight
    To reverence with you;
But that there're other kinds of pluck
    As great, I think is true.

'Twas early days in Medicine Lodge
    On the road to No Man's Land,
When men played high, and settled games
    With a gun in either hand.
When iron nerves and a steady eye
    Were trumps when a row began,
And the reputation greatly prized
    Of having killed one's man.
And the man whose reputation stood
   Head-high above the rest
Was Isaac Walton—Ike for short—
   The terror of the West.
No bully he, but quick and sure,
   And tenacious of his right;
And no man ever saw him run
   Or dodge the deadliest fight.

And very proud was Ike of this,
   And his reputation kept
Unsullied save by those who short
   Within the graveyard slept!
Until one night old Morris Smith,
   Before a crowd of men,
Gave him the lie, and dared him shoot—
   Not once, but thrice again!

A hush such as had not been known
   For many a year and long—
Since lonely winds moaned o’er the spot—
   Fell on that waiting throng!
And then—that hand of cruel aim,
   That hand that ne’er before
Was known to falter—dropped, and Ike
   Strode thro’ the open door!

Next day a horseman far from town
   Met Isaac—Ike for short—
And, trembling much, asked him if there
   Was truth in the report.

140
"Thar mebbe—yes—I run," said Ike,
"'My reputation?' Lost!
'Why did I do it?'—wall, yer see,
I kinder thought the cost

"Of old Smith's life ter them kids o' his
A ruther steep price ter pay
Fer a repertation I kin git
In a damned sight cheaper way!"
I've brought this sprig of sage-brush here,
Tho' it should be mistletoe;
But don't you think I have an excuse?
Just think—and let me know!

141
THE MINORITY

Whence do they come, they of the lofty bearing,
    Whose manners voice an elevated life,
Whose faces, smiles of triumph wearing,
    Tell us of strife,
And victory won o'er weaknesses of nature,
    And petty sinfulness? In what grave tone—
In what phraseology and nomenclature
    To us unknown—
Do they commune together o'er the tale
Of how we strive to reach them but to fail?

We may not say! Perchance they are descended
    In line unbroken from the Pharisee
Who once within the gates, his knee unbended,
    Thanked God that he
Was not as other men! We must not murmur,
    Oh, mourning brother of the frail estate!
Our steps will aye be weak, theirs aye the firmer!
    We may be late;
Yet, haply still, each much-repented fall
Shall aid us answer His last muster-call!

142
CHARITY

To brag or boast of one's own deeds
Is nature's mild insanity—
The pabulum on which one feeds
The craving, ever-pressing needs
Of this weakness of humanity.

And I would aid to place a ban
Upon all thoughts satirical;
For I believe that every man
Is, in his heart, a charlatan,
And more or less empirical.

Then why pose as exceptional,
Or claim superiorities,
When at thy soul's confessional
Thou hast, perforce, to mention all
Thine own inferiorities?

Come, let us strive to be so great
As to deny disparity
Between the faults with all innate,
And ours, that are commensurate—
Thus practising true charity!
THE PORTAL AND THE DOOR

I

Through a shining portal springs a youth to grasp his kingdom fair,
With a smile of fond assurance—careless, blithe and debonair;
'Tis a heritage of gladness that he rapturously claims,
And his joy-bejewelled sceptre just before him brightly flames.

II

One who early plucked life's fruitage—thro' its rosy surface tore;
To whose trembling lip still clings the dust left by the ashen core;
One who longed and lost—a sad, stern man—chokes down a bitter sob
As he slowly passes through a door that has no outer knob.
To John Payne

To dream with thee in fair Armida's garden,
Thou sweetest dreamer of the dream-song land,
    I entreat thy kind compliance;
    I crave with thee alliance:
Across the sea that thou would'st clasp my hand.

Deem not my hope but too audacious folly—
    'Tis most sincere, this humble prayer of mine;
    For tho' the world is ringing
    With the notes of poets singing,
There is no voice that thrills me as does thine!

So, then, oh, thou most gracious, tender master,
    I ask to follow on thine upward way:
    I would suffer all thy sadness,
    Would be glad with all thy gladness,
And with thee learn to dream and sing and pray!

145
A SHIP OF MIST

A ship of mist sails out of a cloud,
Out of a cloud at the sunrise time;
The glint of the dawn is on sail and shroud,
The glint of the dawn of the sunrise clime.
Into the blue from the harbor gray,
Into the blue of the living day,
Into the vast she sails away.

Ahoy, lone sailor, what of the voyage?
"I've neither chart nor bearing, friend!"

A ship of mist sails into a cloud,
Into a cloud at the sunset time;
The shade of the dusk is on sail and shroud,
The shade of the dusk of the sunset clime.
Into the gloom with the dying light,
Into the gloom of the endless night,
Into the vast she sails from sight.

Ahoy, lone sailor, what of the voyage?
"I'm past the care of caring, friend!"

146
WE LINGER STILL

We linger still, tho' many a one
Who thought his labor just begun
Has learned his task was but to fill
A narrow space on yonder hill;
And found it easy—quickly done!

O'er longer stints ere rest is won—
O'er work we may not slight or shun—
With ever-lessening speed and skill
We linger still.

His hopeless race the jaded sun
With tireless Time has nearly run;
The evening falls, the night winds chill
The fainting heart and failing will:
Expecting all things, fearing none,
We linger still.
WHEN I AM DEAD

When I am dead no graven stone
Thou need'st erect to make it known
That one lies there of whom 'twas said:
His faults were not of heart, but head,
And such as all men should condone.
My sins are mine and mine alone!
Let no man's thoughts be once misled,
Or tastes for eulogy be fed
   When I am dead!

Pray, tell the truth: that may atone
For a life of folly like my own,
By warning others not to tread
The path o'er which my feet have bled.
I'd have no "mantles" round me thrown
   When I am dead!
TO HIM WHO WAITS

To him who waits all things, they say,
Will come upon a certain day:
The love that Love's own sloth belates,
The satisfaction of the hates,
For which one yearns, tho' does not pray.

Success will bring the wreath of bay
She filched from Fame, as sleeping lay
The sullen and unwilling Fates,
To him who waits.

It may be true! Ah, yes, it may!
But hearts grow feeble, Faith grows gray;
Her greed for sadness Sorrow sates;
Hope trembles, doubts and hesitates,
While Fortune loiters on her way
To him who waits.
MY WICKER JUG

My wicker jug before me stands,
A quart within its woven bands—
A quart of undiluted themes,
A quart of concentrated dreams
At vagrant Fancy's soft commands.

I ramble now enchanted lands
Of forest glades and purling streams—
The while benignly on me beams
  My wicker jug.

Led by Caprice's listless hands,
I reach at last far Lethe's strands
Where Memory dies and darkness teems—
Save where beside me kindly gleams,
Still murmuring gently its demands,
  My wicker jug.
THE SWEET OLD STORY

Down the tunnel long that Time hath built—
Thro' the circles smaller growing—
Past the doubts and fears
Of the arching years—
Toward the entrance dimly glowing
Doth Memory speed on her way to-night
Back to childhood's dormitory,
Just to hear once more
With the faith of yore
The sweet old Christmas story.

All unbid, she'll slip in the trundle-bed
To the space 'twixt down and feather;
And will lay her head,
As in time long fled,
Where the pillows meet together.
She will close her eyes at the face she sees
All ablaze with loving glory,
As a mother sweet
Will again repeat
The dear old Christmas story.

The angels and shepherds again will play
Their parts in the drama holy;
The star will appear,
The wise men revere,
The Babe in the manger lowly.
Then Memory, like Mary, will ponder well
These things of the ages hoary;
And with tender art
Tell the softened heart
The old, old Christmas story.

Oh, the sweet old story!
The dear old story!
The old, old story to memory dear!
Hearts of the boldest,
The sternest, the coldest.
Grow warm o'er the story told once a year!
THE FALL OF OLD PANAMA

1671

His Catholic Majesty, Philip of Spain,
Ruled o'er the West Coast, the Indies and main;
His ships, heavy laden with pesos and plate,
Sailed o'er the South Sea with tribute of state.
From Lima and Quito his galleys pulled forth
For Panama pearls and gold of the North;
And cargoes of treasure were sent overland
While his soldiers kept guard from the gulf to the strand.
From Panama Bay to the port "Name of God"
Long freight trains of slaves thro' the dense forests trod:
Then, some through the straits and some from the main,
King Philip's good ships sought their owner again.

On England's grand throne great Elizabeth reigned,
And on sea and on land her power maintained:
O'er the hearts of her subjects, o'er the conquests they made,
O'er their lives and their fortunes her sceptre she swayed.
But her title of "Queen of the Seas" to dispute
King Philip essayed from the land of the lute;
And velvet-clad Dons cast their love-songs aside
To battle the English, and wind, wave and tide.

153
In many and mortal affray they engaged,
And bravely and fiercely the struggle they waged,
But the men of old Devon—those stout hearts of oak—
As often successfully parried each stroke.
The Drakes and the Gilberts, the Grenvils and Leighs,
The Oxenhams, Raleighs—the props and the stays
Of England's first greatness—were the heroes of old
Who helped Britain's queen with the Spanish king's gold.
They robbed the arch-robber of ill-gotten gain,
And brought England the glory they wrested from Spain.
His galleons they captured, his treasure trains seized—
Outfought him abroad and with zeal unappeased.
At home they defeated the Armada's great fleet,
And laid a world's spoil at Elizabeth's feet.

Alas, that such deeds should grow dim with the years!
Alas, that such men should have trained buccaneers!
That from such examples—so noble, so true—
A race of marauders and ruffians grew!
That fiends such as Morgan should follow the wake
Of men like John Oxman and Sir Francis Drake,
Who swore by the oak, by the ash and the thorn.
God helping them always, to sail round the Horn
To fair Panama and the placid South Sea,
Which they saw one day from the top of the tree!
For old England's glory their standard to raise,
To cruise the Pacific and its isle-dotted bays.
Four miles from where Ancon looks down on the

New

Stood old Panama, whence Pizarro once drew
The bravest of followers Peru to obtain
And her Incas subject to the power of Spain;
Where once stood cathedrals and palaces fair,
Whose altars and vessels and tapestries rare
Were the pride of a people whose opulence then
Was the envy of kings and the longing of men;
Where once stately streets to the plains stretched away,
And warehouses skirted the vessel-lined bay;
Where plantations and gardens and flowering trees
Once perfumed the tropical evening breeze—
Stands naught but a ruin half hidden from view,
A pirate's foul gift to his bloodthirsty crew!

From sacked Porto Bello redhanded they came,
All bloodstained from conquest unworthy the name,
To the mouth of the Chagres, where, high on the hill,
San Lorenzo kept guard, to plunder and kill
Its devoted defenders, who courageously fought
For homes, wives and children, accounting as naught
Their lives held so precious, so cherished before,
Could they drive the fierce pirates away from their shore.
Three days they repulsed them, but to find every night
The foe still upon them in ne’er-ending fight.
Their arms could not conquer the powers of hell!
San Lorenzo surrendered—ingloriously fell!
Burned, famished and bleeding from many a wound,
They lay while their stronghold was razed to the ground.

On, on up to Cruces the buccaneers sped,
But to find it in ashes, its inhabitants fled.
Yet on and still on, with Morgan ahead,
They pressed down the road that to Panama led.
Nine days through the forest unbroken they tramped,
And at last on a mount near the city encamped.
Before them the ocean for leagues away rolled;
Below them the islands lay bathed in the gold
Of the sun that, just setting, looked mournfully down
On the last day of life of the ill-fated town:
While around them the plains with groves of bright trees
Sheltered cattle and fountains their wants to appease.
The famed “golden cup” lay filled at their hand.
And to drain it at sunrise the buccaneers planned.
"Oh, ho, for the morrow!" quoth Morgan the bold.
"Oh, ho, for the day and the tale to be told!"

The dawn's faint purple had scarce 'gan to light
The peak of Ancon, erst hid in the night,
When the blare of the trumpet and beat of the drum
Made known that the day of the struggle had come.
In the camp of the pirates "To arms!" is the cry;
"Press forward, my hearties, our treasure is nigh!
Avoid the main road—there are ambuscades there—
Push on through the forest, your firearms prepare!"
Now out on the hill, still called the "Advance,"
The buccaneers over their enemy glance.
Before them they see in the full light of day
The Spaniards drawn up in battle array.
Two squadrons of horse, four thousand of line,
With bullocks and peons their forces combine.
And then, were it safer for them to retreat,
Would Morgan have ordered the signal to beat?
Too late it is now—it is triumph or die!
Though desperate to battle, 'twere folly to fly!
'Tis useless to falter! On, onward, my men!
We have won against odds, we shall win once again!"

And "On!" cry the Spaniards, shouting "Viva el Rey!
Our numbers are greater! Ours, ours is the day!
Our bullocks will rout them! Huzza for old Spain!
The gore of the thieves shall enrich the plain!"
Alas, for the hopes so sadly misplaced,
For never before such a foe had they faced!
No Indians now, but trained men of might,
Who had learned in stern schools to die and to fight.
Two hours they fought 'neath the tropical sun,
Then threw down their muskets, and—Morgan had won!
The verdant savanna like a great river runs
With the blood of six thousands of Panama's sons!
"On, on to the city!" cries Morgan the bold!
"Oh, ho, 'tis the day, and the tale is soon told!"

Then awful the combat, as over the walls
The bloodthirsty pirate in eagerness falls!
With Spartan-like valor did the sons of those who
Had assisted Pizarro to conquer Peru
Attempt to o'erpower the fierce buccaneer—
To save city and home and all they held dear!
But vainly they struggled—repulsed o'er and o'er,
The pirates return to the battle once more!
At last they are vanquished! "Now, comrades, we'll sup
On the riches we find in the West's golden cup!"

"Fire, pillage and slaughter!" the order goes round
Till palace and cottage are burned to the ground;
Till cathedral and warehouse no treasures contain,
And in the whole city no gold doth remain;
Till mother and daughter are captured and chained
With father and brother, or ransom obtained.
Monasteries and hospitals—down with them all!
Leave not a stone standing on yon city wall!
"Oh, ho, 'tis the day!" quoth Morgan the bold!
"Oh, ho, 'tis the day, and the tale is now told!"

O demon insensate! O offspring of hell!
What pen may thine awful enormities tell!
How picture the cruelties, useless and vain,
Upon the march back through the forest again!
Old men tottering feebly 'neath Time's hoary crown,
Frail women in chains and with burdens borne down,
Fresh youth and grown man and the child but just born,
Scourged pitilessly on with the lash and the thorn,
While sobs, lamentations and shrieks of despair
Unceasingly freighted the soft summer air!
The ink turns to tears and corrodes the sad pen
O'er the tortures at Cruces repeated again.
There, under the shade of the broad mango trees—
'Mid anguish that nothing may ever appease—
Are parents and children and husbands and wives,
Condemned without mercy to horrible lives!

Then back down the Chagres the buccaneers hie
To where ships near the castle awaiting them lie;
And embarked with his slaves, his treasure and gold,
Once again for Port Royal sails Morgan the bold!
THE LAND OF THE CACIQUE

Near the cliffs of Portobelo,
Where the fortress still is standing,
Near the moss-clad old cathedral
That the Dons built long ago;
Eight degrees from the equator,
From the southward counting northward,
Lies the land of the Cacique,
Lies the region of San Blas.
There the skies are soft and tender,
And the clouds form wondrous pictures
Round the crimson sun disrobing
For his sleep beneath the sea;
And the monarch of the forest,
The majestic palm-tree, waveth
Shining, multi-sceptred branches
O'er a kingdom all its own.
There the almond-tree doth flourish,
There the gorgeous mango groweth
Close beside the lustrous caucho,
And the tagua strews the ground.
There, upon the sylvan hillsides
And within the lovely valleys,
Nestles many an Indian village
Of the slender bamboo built.

'Tis a lyric of these people,
Of their customs quaint and curious,
160
Of the rites to them peculiar,
That the bard would strive to sing:
Sing in humble words and simple
To a harp uncouth and awkward,
As befits the modest minstrel
Of a lowly race of men.
Lowly? Yea, but lowly only
As retired from observation—
As without the pale of notice
Of the nations of the world.
For within his own dominion
The Cacique and his subjects
Are as dignified and haughty
As the proudest of mankind.
In their veins no mixed blood courseth,
In their land no stranger dwelleth,
For this simple child of nature
Guards his country with his life.
Guards his race from all admixture,
Guards his ancient superstitions,
His religion and his customs,
Zealously and jealously.
For a solemn oath doth bind him—
Sworn above his father's body—
To kill wife and son and daughter
Should an enemy approach
To obtain his fair possessions,
Or to other laws subdue him
Ere he marches to the battle
That can end but with his life.
Every hamlet hath its chieftain,
Subject still to the Cacique—
The Cacique of Sasardi—
Who is ruler over all.
Every village hath its Mila,
Arzoguete and Tulete
(Priest and teacher and physician,
Councillor and wisest men).
Primitive is their religion:
Little know they of the Godhead
That the Israelites discovered
And the Gentiles have improved.
No need here for costly churches:
Each rude hut is sanctuary,
From whence, dying, to the bosom
Of Eternal Rest they go.
And to show the Mighty Spirit
How on earth they toiled and labored,
The canoe and the machete
And the arrows near them lie.
Each home hath its cemetery,
Built within a palm enclosure,
Where the dead swing in their hammocks,
Hid forever from the view.
Seldom dream the San Blas Indians,
Seldom lose their mental balance,
For an ancient superstition
Holds all such condemned to death.
’Tis a sign that evil spirits
Seek to cast their lot among them,
From their old beliefs to win them
Unto those they know not of.

Let us leave these sad statistics—
Let us visit the Fiestas:
Three days since unto an Ohme
A Punagua child was born;
And with shouts of great rejoicing
And libations of the Chicha,
They will pierce the tiny nostril
For the hoop of yellow gold.
Haste we quickly to another—
To a festival more joyful:
For in turn the shy Punagua
Hath an Ohme now become.
Oh, the drinking! Oh, the dancing!
As they cut the maiden’s tresses;
In her father’s house immure her
Till her husband shall be found.
Now bring forth the long Cachimba,
Bring the Ina, bring the Guarra,
Bring the men and bring the women:
The Nutschuqua claims his bride!
Long the parents pondered o’er it,
That among the young men waiting
They might choose the one most fitting
For their daughter and themselves.
Whom could choose they but Machua?
Who, like him, to snare the tortoise?
Who, like him, to drive the Ulo
Through the breakers of the coast?
On the voyage to Portobelo,
Though with cocoanuts deep laden,
His canoe is always leading,
Always first to reach the port.

Six days will he bravely labor,
Six days' toil to build the Ulo
That the law from him demandeth
Ere he once may see his bride.
Sweet Punagua, none may see her;
For until the boat is builded
In the pit the maid is hidden
From the sight of every one.
From her father's house they brought her
In the early morning darkness;
Now about her all the village,
In a circle gathered round,
Sit and smoke the wedding Guarra,
Sit and drink the wedding Chicha,
Stories tell of other weddings,
And traditions old recite.
Six days will they all be merry,
Six days till, his labor finished,
With rejoicing comes Machua—
Comes and claims his promised wife.
To her father's house he bears her,
There to serve their daughter's parents
Till to him is born a daughter,
And his freedom thus is gained.

164
Then upon the sylvan hillside,
Or within the lovely valley,
Or upon the beach of coral
They will build their palm-thatched home;
And in turn will rear their children
In the ancient superstitions,
And to all the tribe be useful
In the common industries.

Let them live in their seclusion,
Let them keep their fair possessions,
Let them rule themselves unaided,
O ye nations of the earth!
Let them practise their religion,
And observe their rights and customs
O ye pushing missionaries
Of accepted creed and sect!
Trouble not this gentle people—
Leave them to their peace and quiet—
Nor disturb this tropic Eden
Of the red men of San Blas!
ON THE BROW OF THE HILL

(The cemetery of Monkey Hill, or Mount Hope—by which latter name it is more euphoniously though less widely known—is situated about two miles to the southward of Colon, and overlooks a wide expanse of diversified tropical country. At its base lies the extensive plant of the Panama Canal Company, and, beyond, the straggling little city and broad Caribbean Sea. The spot was first used as a burial-place about the year 1853, shortly after the beginning of the work on the Panama Railroad.

Although of such recent origin, there is probably no more populous Necropolis in the New World; and while many of the tales that are told of it are considerably exaggerated, they all, unfortunately, have a foundation in fact.

Should Macaulay’s Traveller in his lonely wanderings visit this tragic mount, visions, perhaps not so extensive, but certainly as melancholy as those which could appear to him on the ruins of London Bridge, would materially assist in his speculations upon the littleness of man and the barrenness of life.)

Beneath the sea the diving sun
Is searching for another day:
This weary one, its life work done,
Expires with yon swift-fading ray.

Low at my feet the drowsy town
Lies dully mute, awaiting sleep;
In gathering dusk the foothills frown,
And o’er the waves dark shadows creep.

Where once fierce toil the landscape blurred,
And greed’s o’erweening passion dwelt,
Now only laggard steps are heard—
The pulse of life can scarce be felt.

166
The lights that pant with feeble breath
   Anon will vanish in the gloom,
And in the very lair of Death
   I muse upon an unknown tomb.

Around in graves thrice multiplied
   The bones of countless thousands lie;
They found their wish here satisfied
   Who sought a nod as Wealth passed by.

Success and Failure side by side
   Enrich the dank and ochrous mold;
Conducted by the Pallid Guide,
   Alike come here the faint and bold.

The envious and the kind of heart
   On evil and on good intent
Out here perform one common part—
   Their separate ways together blent.

The cunning scheme, the noble plan
   That busy intellects evolved
Here find the worst and best of man—
   Life's mazeful problem here is solved.

Yon rotting cross that marks the place
   Of ended quest in stranger land
The cancelling months will soon efface,
   Nor leave a vestige of it stand.

167
Yet hear the tale those ruins tell
   Ere he who knows the story falls;
And tarrying on this hill of hell,
   Obeys the last, most dread of calls.

The man whose dust commingles there
   Belike with that of some low thief
Gave promise of a life as fair
   As e’er succumbed to blighting grief.

He came in Fortune’s crowded train
   To wrest from her a fleeting smile;
Erelong he seemed his end to gain,
   And reigned a favorite for a while.

Around him gather hosts of friends,
   Whose praise and gifts are wondrous sweet;
Who watch that no harsh word offends,
   And strew bright roses ’neath his feet.

Beloved by women, sought by men,
   His life is one continued joy;
He buys each pleasure o’er again,
   Nor in the gold detects alloy.

What wonder that the reckless crew
   His early teachings soon erase;
That their ideals his mind imbue—
   His once keen moral sense debase!

168
On, on he travels down the road—
  Laughs gaily in each sober face;
Just now he bears no heavy load—
  Of coming care he sees no trace.

What use the story to prolong?
  'Tis hackneyed—stale on every tongue:
The burden of each dismal song
  That poets have for ages sung.

The smiles of Fortune are withdrawn—
  Her fickle favors quickly end;
His satellites forget to fawn—
  He seeks in vain one faithful friend.

In broken health, enfeebled mind,
  To menials then for aid he flies;
And, lastly, failing that to find,
  He hugs his misery—and dies.

A conscience-stricken one remains,
  Who stealthily erects this cross,
Recording one of Hades' gains,
  And sadly marking Heaven's loss.

Bend low, thou gloomy, starless sky,
  And in thy tears each hillock lave!
Sob on, thou mournful wind, and sigh
  O'er stoneless tomb and nameless grave!
CURTAIN

The rhymster should apologize, perhaps,
For many a silly jest and foolish lapse;
But, then, no purposed mischief hath he done,
And truth, you know, oft masquerades as fun.
It may be that his utterances trite
Some good may do—some senseless wrong may right.
There may be, 'mongst them all, one word with pow'r
To call a smile—to cheer some lonely hour:
If so, then, he whose sentences involved
Contain more puzzles than may e'er be solved,
Fore'er deserts his feeble, unfledged Muse—
His tuneless lyre abandons to disuse!
If so—if happ'ly so!—then ring the bell,
And drop the curtain. 'Tis a glad Farewell!