"There is a palm beside my open door,
Whose fronds the Southern Cross shines nightly through."

—Robinson.
PANAMA PATCHWORK

POEMS

BY

JAMES STANLEY GILBERT

SIXTH EDITION

J. V. BEVERHOUĐT
CRISTOBAL AND COLON
ISTHMUS OF PANAMA
1920
PANAMA PATCHWORK
HAIL, PANAMA!

(Air, "America."

Daughter of Oceans Twain,  Queen of the Summer Land
Pearl Isles and Golden Main,  By Nature's high command,
Hail, Panama!  Hail, Panama!
Glorious thy history  Peaceful as was thy birth,
Shall thro' the ages be,  Thy sons shall make thy worth:
Offspring of Liberty,  Known over all the earth,
Hail, Panama!  Hail, Panama!

Freedom is thine by Right,
In Honor lies thy Might,
Hail, Panama!
Justice and Verity,
Wisdom, Sincerity,
Bring thee prosperity,
Hail, Panama!
INTRODUCTION

To the Second Edition.

In a foreword, written for an edition of Mr. Gilbert’s poems, published in 1894, I said:

"Life on the Isthmus of Panama has some interesting and peculiar features. The geographical isolation being practically complete, except by sea, it follows that a narrow strip of country along the Panama Railroad is all that modern civilization can boast of having captured. Nor is there evidence that any astonishing advances have yet been made within even this limited zone. The jungle still holds sway and defies the schoolmaster.

"Among those who have from time to time held official positions in the different companies, or who have engaged in other business pursuits, there has now and then been one who has caught the spirit of the place and has had the surprising energy to write interestingly of his surroundings. That this has been the case with my friend, the writer of the following pages, is my own firm conviction, and it gives me pleasure to believe that the public will agree with me.

"These poems have been evolved from an inner consciousness, the visible and outward environment of which has been an active business life."
"They have been penned while others slept or were engaged in some other engrossing tropical employment quite as intellectual. The somewhat limited local audience to which they were addressed has been greatly pleased, and it will give the numerous friends of their author much gratification to know that a wider public has endorsed their verdict."

Little more need be said at the present time. There will be a larger audience, owing to a greatly increased Isthmian population, and a wider acquaintance with the poems which the former editions, now out of print, has given. The maturing gift of the author will be recognized in the additional poems, nearly twenty in number, in the present volume; and it is my steadfast faith that, for "local color" as well as poetic form and completeness, nothing better has been written.

Tracy Robinson.

Colon, October, 1905.
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FOREWORD

To the Third Edition.

The gratifying success of the second edition of “Patchwork,” that was issued at the end of December and was out of print in February, has induced the author to consent to this third edition. And since, in a way, it has been my happy fortune to stand these many years with ever-increasing interest as a sort of godfather to Mr. Gilbert’s Muse, the fact that bringing out this new and improved issue has also been entrusted to my care gives me pleasure. It affords an opportunity of adding to the brief “Introductory” of the second edition a few explanatory words which may be of use to other than Isthmian readers.

Although the poems are largely confined to local themes, it will be found, I think, that their general scope is far wider. The very first line of the first poem, “Away down south in the Torrid Zone,”

brings before the mind a vision of the tropics that appeals at once to the Northern mind and suggests the “Land of the Cocoanut Tree.” And the free,
off-hand, spontaneous manner in which the fascinating vista of tropical life afforded by the book is opened in this initial poem will be found to hold good all through. It sets the pace. It lends its "potent charm" from first to last. For if Mr. Gilbert is anything he is natural. Take the next poem, "In the Roar of the Ocean," and as you read it and place yourself on the coral reef beside

"Him whose daily lot from year to year
Has been its never-ceasing voice to hear,"

you will be thrilled through with its significance. And thus, with varying mood, influenced by the hour and theme, will be found the touch that Nature alone bestows upon her fondlings. Art is not absent, but spontaneity of Feeling is the poetic element always the more conspicuous. This is the gift of which we are constantly the most conscious in these poems. It is disguised if you please by a frequent cynicism, but it is there all the same. The bitterness of the instant is only a sudden impulse, a hot resentment and hatred of wrong, an outcry against meanness and sham. "The Isthmian Way," "The Busiest Man," "The Never-Failing Friend," and others are in the nature of protest and disclaimer.

The poems are nearly all objective. Of the considerable number in which "local color" is a prominent feature, perhaps "John Aspinwall," page 13, is as good as any. The brief note to this poem in the second edition does scant justice to its hero.

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He certainly wandered about Colon, when it was Aspinwall, for many years, silent, inscrutable, demented rather than crazy. He took his name from the town, and like any great man might have been called John of Aspinwall. A speechless, harmless, picturesque old black man, clad in rags tied with strings to keep them from falling off, he walked the town as though on patrol, and slept, as the poem says, in a hut or den

"By the Dead-House gate."

He was there (indeed he was)

"When Totten came,
   And Baldwin and all the rest,
   To build thro' the swamps their pathway of fame,"

and by the irony of fate he remained after they had all passed away. (It may be said here for the information of new readers that Col. G. M. Totten was chief engineer, with W. H. Baldwin as his very able principal assistant in the construction of the Panama Railroad, 1850–1855.) Old John died as he had lived,

"A quaint old moke":

and no one knew

—"if thoughts at all
   Ever lurked in his woolly pate."

Another local poem, page 18, celebrates the famous old Sea-grape Tree, that stood on the sea-beach-front of the town, and was regarded with affection by all, until it was wantonly laid low. The
“Epitaph” conveys the feeling of indignation that followed.

“Woodbine Sally” is another local reminiscence, also “Cinco Centavos,” “Yellow Eyes,” “He Has Gone,” “La Cantinera,” “Our Gurl Mary,” and many more. “To Blame” was written as a protest against the censure directed towards the Captain of the steamship Moselle that was lost a few miles from Colon. “In Memoriam” was a tribute paid to a wonderful monkey that must have had human intelligence, while “Fides Achates” celebrates a pet dog.

Of the poems of what may be called a higher order, the reader will find many evidences of touching tenderness and appreciation. Read “To the Southern Cross,” “The Trade-Wind,” “A Tropic Nocturne,” “When the Trade-Wind Blows Again,” “The Visit,” “New Year’s Rainbow,” “To Mnemosyne,” “At Sunset Time,” “I Think of Thee,” “She Sends Her Love,” “The Happiest Time,” “Simple Aveu,” “If Ye Weep,” “The Wave,” “Au Revoir,” “A Ship of Mist,” “The Sweet Old Story,” and numerous others.

“In the Land of the Cacique” the strange San Blas Indians are described, a tribe that has never been subdued.

“Let them live in their seclusion,”

writes Mr. Gilbert; and all who know aught of this gentle, yet heroic, people will endorse his wish.

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If a poet is to be judged by his best work, I think perhaps the poem called "B. C. 2000," at page 81, may be placed at high-water mark in the list. The theme is the fascinating one of reincarnation and is treated with great delicacy and haunting beauty. It shows the finer thread of fancy, a bit obscured at times in other pieces.

"In Victoria the Woman," noble tribute is paid, while "Our Uncle Sam," in a patriotic Fourth-of-July poem, receives the homage of a loyal heart.

At the end will be found the sad recital called "On the Brow of the Hill," in which sorrowful cemetery musings are gathered.

Now turn we to "Only a Weed," page 121. Colon is perhaps the most unpromising field on earth for a poet. Unless he shall have the genius to find beauty in most unexpected places, in a simple weed for example,

"In a rubbish barrel growing,"

and to modestly offer it in rhyme

"With never a word of preaching,"

he can hardly hope for inspiration from such environment. It is all the more wonderful, therefore, that in surroundings so hopeless, in a retirement so severe from all influences that may be described as intellectual and elevating, the contents of the present volume should ever have been written at all. The
weed in the rubbish barrel is typical of the entire situation. Read it, friends, and you will I think at once discover that this poet, hidden away within his shy soul, not for common use and display, has the gift of gifts. The wondrous Gift of Song, that lifts and lightens the burdens of life, and helps to satisfy the "Great Want" after which the brooding, wistful heart of the world hungers everlastingly.

T. R.

New York, June, 1906.
Obituary Note

JAMES STANLEY GILBERT
Born at Middletown, Connecticut, U. S. A.,
July 20, 1855.
Died at Colon, Isthmus of Panama,
August 15, 1906.

The following is from a short address, read at his grave, by one who knew him well:

"Let his faults and mistakes die with the mortal life he has forsaken, and let his many virtues be for us who remain as guiding stars of excellence and fidelity on our brief journey towards the unknown world whither his bright, brave spirit has departed.

"Good-bye, dear Gilbert, good-bye! Under the palms I watched the clustered Pleiades, fading with the dawn-star and waning moon in the east this morning, and wondered where you were! Silent and sorrowful I asked the merciful gods of pity and forgiveness to guard you well! We shall not forget, dear friend, that

"'Our dead are ours and hold in faithful keeping,
Safe forever all they took away.'"
PANAMA PATCHWORK

THE LAND OF THE COCOANUT-TREE

Away down south in the Torrid Zone,
    North latitude nearly nine,
Where the eight months' pour once past and o'er,
    The sun four months doth shine;
Where 'tis eighty-six the year around,
    And people rarely agree;
Where the plaintain grows and the hot wind blows,
    Lies the Land of the Cocoanut-Tree.

'Tis the land where all the insects breed
    That live by bite and sting;
Where the birds are quite winged rainbows bright,
    Tho' seldom one doth sing!
Here radiant flowers and orchids thrive
    And bloom perennially—
All beauteous, yes—but odorless!
    In the Land of the Cocoanut-Tree.
'Tis a land profusely rich, 'tis said,
   In mines of yellow gold,
That, of claims bereft, the Spaniards left
   In the cruel days of old!
And many a man hath lost his life
   That treasure-trove to see,
Or doth agonize with streaming eyes
   In the Land of the Cocoanut-Tree!

'Tis a land that still with potent charm
   And wondrous, lasting spell
With mighty thrall enchaineth all
   Who long within it dwell;
'Tis a land where the Pale Destroyer waits
   And watches eagerly;
'Tis, in truth, but a breath from life to death,
   In the Land of the Cocoanut-Tree.

Then, go away if you have to go,
   Then, go away if you will!
To again return you will always yearn
   While the lamp is burning still!
You've drank the Chagres water,
   And the mango eaten free,
And, strange tho' it seems, 'twill haunt your dreams—
   This Land of the Cocoanut-Tree!
IN THE ROAR OF THE OCEAN

Come closer, stranger, closer to the shore,
And listen, listen, listen to that roar!
Do you know what that means to us, my man?
Ah, no! not you—not anybody can,
Unless he’s lived for years upon this beach,
And learned the lessons that old sea doth teach.

To him whose daily lot from year to year
Has been its never-ceasing voice to hear;
To him whose keen-trained ear at once detects
Each modulation that its pitch affects;
To him who hears when others cannot hear
The far, faint plash so like a falling tear,
That tells of hours of torrid heat and calm,
When fever lingers underneath the palm—
It means that Mistress Reef, the Malapert,
For three grand months shall hide her draggled skirt
Beneath a gown of foam-laced, gleaming green,
Beside which pales the wardrobe of a queen!
It means that yonder sibilant lagoon
Its pools of stagnant slime shall banish soon!
That suns, the brightest that were ever known,
That stars, the clearest that have ever shone,
Shall guide the day, direct the smiling night
Thro’ tropic paths of unalloyed delight!
It means that for these months a breeze shall blow
That hath its source in caves of Arctic snow!
That beareth on its ozone-laden breath
The Balm of Life: the Antidote of Death!

It means all this! Aye, infinitely more!
So closer, stranger, closer to the shore,
And listen, listen, *listen* to that roar!
SUNSET

I sit on my lofty piazza,
O'erlooking the restless sea;
(A spider glides over my forehead,
A cockroach runs over my knee!)

The god of the day is preparing
His bed for another night;
(A swarm of pestiferous sand-flies
Is obscuring the glorious sight!)

He's piling his cloud-blankets round him,
Of crimson embroidered with gold;
(That ant crawling under my collar,
Down my spine sends a shiver of cold!)

He's nodding—but with eye still half open
Tips a distant sail with his fire;
(Dios mio! another mosquito
Is twanging his dissonant lyre!)

He's sleeping—the night-lamps are twinkling
All around his limitless bed;
(A bat, darting hither and thither,
Has just missed hitting my head!)

Farewell till to-morrow, old fellow!
Thou warmest, most tropical friend!
(A centipede's slowly approaching—
'Tis time for my reverie to end!)
Beyond the Chagres River
Are paths that lead to death—
To the fever's deadly breezes,
To malaria's poisonous breath!

Beyond the tropic foliage,
Where the alligator waits,
Are the mansions of the Devil—
His original estates!

Beyond the Chagres River
Are paths fore'er unknown,
With a spider 'neath each pebble,
A scorpion 'neath each stone.
'Tis here the boa-constrictor
His fatal banquet holds,
And to his slimy bosom
His hapless guest enfolds!

Beyond the Chagres River
Lurks the cougar in his lair,
And ten hundred thousand dangers
Hide in the noxious air.
Behind the trembling leaflets,
Beneath the fallen reeds,
Are ever-present perils
Of a million different breeds!
Beyond the Chagres River
'Tis said—the story's old—
Are paths that lead to mountains
Of purest virgin gold;
But 'tis my firm conviction,
Whatever tales they tell,
That beyond the Chagres River
All paths lead straight to hell!
THE ISTMHIAN WAY

To bow and scrape and shake your hand,
To greet you with a smile so bland
That you will think no other friend
Can toward you half the good intend;
But still to cherish in one’s heart
Enough rank hate to fill a cart—
This is the Isthmian way.

To buy for gold and silver pay;
To answer yea while thinking nay,
To borrow some one’s little wealth,
And leave the country for one’s health;
To plot and scheme and slyly seek
To make some decent man a sneak—
This is the Isthmian way.

To kiss the man who wins success,
And kick the man whose luck is less;
To make of vice beatitude,
And virtue of ingratitude!
Accept all favors, but omit
To e’er return the benefit—
This is the Isthmian way.

To curry favor with the great,
And pander to one’s meanest trait;
To smash the Decalogue to bits,
But give your neighbor’s weakness fits!
Oppress the weak, uphold the strong—
In short, do everything that's wrong—
This is the Isthmian way.

To wage a miasmatic strife,
And suffer all the ills of life;
To eat and drink one's self to death,
And curse God with one's latest breath;
And then a "heavenly mansion" fill
Prepared for one on Monkey Hill *—
This is the Isthmian way.

God grant that haply some of us
Escape the general animus,
And travel, though but falteringly,
The nobler path of charity:
Tho' stumbling often, still to find
More cleanly records left behind
Than by the Isthmian way.

* The cemetery.
THE FUNERAL TRAIN

THRUST her in the dead-car box!
Jump aboard—let’s have a ride!
Ring the merry engine bell:
Death has claimed another bride!
Pass the gin to every one,
Pull the throttle open wide—
Pobre de solemnidad!

Now we start—we round the curve—
Down the busy street we go!
There is Gardner’s circus-tent,
And to-night we’ll see the show!
Through the window stick your head—
Wave your hat to all you know—
Pobre de solemnidad!

Here Fox River is at last—
See those men and women fight!
Sal, old gal, give me a smoke—
Bless my skin, that sun is bright!
Here we are at Monkey Hill;
Lend a hand—the corpse is light:
Pobre de solemnidad!

Up the weedy slope we climb:
Billy Black, you’re drunk, I swear!
And so are you! and you! and you!
And so am I, I do declare!
Now you’ve dropped her! Pick her up!
Leave the lid—we’re almost there!

_Pobre de solemnidad!

Dump her in the common grave!
Aren’t those lilies mighty sweet?
In she goes! Now heap the earth—
Never mind to be so neat!
There’s no need to make it deep—
No frost here to nip her feet:

_Pobre de solemnidad!
A DREAM in living bronze is she, 
A dusky goddess full revealed; 
Clad but in Nature's modesty— 
Her wondrous beauty unconcealed.

Half to her knee, the rushing stream 
An instant pauses on its way; 
The ripples in the sunshine gleam, 
And tiny rainbows round her play.

Lithe as the bamboo growing near 
Within the tangled, tropic glade; 
As graceful as the startled deer 
Half hidden in the distant shade.

The limbs, the hips, the swelling bust 
Of famed Olympus' fairest queen, 
Ne'er modelled yet on lines more just 
Was ever sculptured marble seen!

Her curl-fringed eyes, now black, now brown, 
Are depths of passion unexplored; 
Her teeth, a glistening, pearly crown 
A Rajah would delight to hoard.

A dream, a dream in bronze is she, 
A dusky goddess full revealed! 
Clad but in Nature's modesty— 
Her wondrous beauty unconcealed!
JOHN ASPINWALL

A Quaint old moke is John Aspinwall,
   Who lives by the Dead-House gate,
'And quaint are his thoughts, if thoughts at all
   Ever lurk in his woolly pate.
For he's old as the hills, is this old black man—
   Thrice doubled with age is he;
'And the days when his wanderings first began
   Are shrouded in mystery.

Perhaps he was living when Morgan's crew
   Came lusting for Spanish gold,
'And drenched the Isthmus with bloody dew
   In the brave, bold days of old.
Perhaps he was here when the pioneers
   Of the days almost forgot
Made a trail o'er the land with their bitter tears
   And the bones they left to rot.

Perhaps he was here when Totten came
   And Baldwin and all the rest,
To build thro' the swamps their pathway to fame
   From Chagres to Ancon's crest.
And many a night he has lain, no doubt,
   By the side of some comrade ill,
Whose corpse, in the morn, he has carried out
   To its rest on Monkey Hill.
For years upon years he has seen the tide
   Of adventurers ebb and flow—
Success and improvidence, side by side,
   Seen ceaselessly come and go.
He has seen the gamut of passion run,
   Oh, thousands and thousands of times!
And witnessed the brightest, purest sun
   Uncover the darkest of crimes.

Yet never a word will he answer me
   Whenever he passes by,
Though often a curious light I see
   In his fathomless, coal-black eye.
Oh, a quaint old moke is John Aspinwall,
   Who lives by the Dead-House gate;
And quaint are his thoughts, if thoughts at all
   Ever lurk in his woolly pate!
"CINCO CENTAVOS?"

I wonder 'neath what ban
His worthless life began,
And where he learned to say,
As I hear him every day:
    "Cinco centavos?"

No one has ever heard
Him say another word;
He may know more, 'tis true,
But he'll only answer you:
    "Cinco centavos?"

He's such a queer old boy,
With his pants of corduroy
And his faded velvet coat,
While he says, as if by rote:
    "Cinco centavos?"

His shirt is ancient, too.
He wears one boot, one shoe,
And he twirls a shabby cane
As he chants the old refrain:
    "Cinco centavos?"

His hair has not been cut
Since he washed his face of smut
Years ago, when he was neat
And knew not to repeat:
    "Cinco centavos?"
Each day he tramps the town,
Tho' the rain is pouring down,
With the mud up to his knees,
Greeting every one he sees:

"Cinco centavos?"

He sleeps beneath the pier—
If you listen, you can hear
The echoes grumbling deep
As he murmurs in his sleep:

"Cinco centavos?"

The fate in store for him
Must be a synonym
Of the woful wretchedness
His only words express:

"Cinco centavos?"
TO THE SOUTHERN CROSS

When evening drapes her filmy robe
O'er distant hill and drooping palm,
And, save soft echoes, naught disturbs
The purple twilight's drowsy calm—

Soft echoes from the coral reef;
The waves' low greeting to the stars,
That, answering across the sea,
Send fellowship on shining bars—

'Tis then, while earth is slumbering,
Its woes forgot in restful dreams,
That thou, Christ's love-test symbolling,
Shed'st o'er the blue thy sacred beams.

'Tis then by him who, listening, waits,
The still, small voice is heard again
In song—the sweetest ever sung—
"Upon earth peace: good-will to men!"
Long, long ago, in the faded past,
A breeze from the Indigo Hills—
Where every morn the sun is born
'Mid fair Santa Rita's rills—

On its fragrant breath a seedling bore
Across the arm of the sea,
And on the shore where the breakers roar
It planted the sea-grape tree.

And old Mother Carib nursed it long;
And chanted it lullabies;
And over each leaf from out on the reef
She watched with vigilant eyes.

And the rain and the mist and the gentle dew
Brought strength to its lengthening roots;
And the sun with his light and the moon with her light,
Both nourished its tender shoots.

And so the tree grew to a wondrous size,
And in wondrous shape as well;
Yet weird tho' its look, there never was book
That could weirder stories tell!

For within the memory of man 'tis known
That, under its spreading shade,
Full many a one, his travail done,
His bed of death hath made.
And below its branches men have sat
   And plotted a nation's wrong;
While lovers have met, as they sit there yet,
   To murmur the world-sweet song.

And many a fateful duel there
   Have lifelong comrades fought;
And near to its seat have children's feet
   For the branching coral sought.

Around its trunk the mummers have danced
   To the clicking castinet,
And beneath its boughs the gay carouse
   And funeral train have met!

Yet all undisturbed by Nature's hand,
   On the shores of the changeful sea,
Oblivious still to the good or the ill,
   Standeth the sea-grape tree!

EPITAPH

Thou can'st not censure more than we,
   The vandal hand that laid thee low:—
But any fool can fell a tree—
   Tho' it takes a God to make one grow!
WOODBINE SALLY

(A MEMORY OF EIGHTY-SIX)

In a low and rambling shanty
    Outside the stable gate,
Where woolly-headed "aunty"
    With wash-bills used to wait,
All the boys were wont to rally
    For cocktails every night;
And 'twas there I first saw Sally,
    Poor Sally—almost white!

By day or night she took delight
    In greeting every guest
That came her way, and made him pay
    For the glass she'd quaff with zest!
But she left us one dry season
    To glut her appetite
With a mixture called Ambrosia—
    Poor Sally—almost white!

Her hair was like dried seaweed,
    Her eyes were faded blue;
Her limbs, they say, were knock-kneed,
    Her skin was saffron hue!
Her features were not classic,
    But her teeth were snowy bright,
And her speech was somewhat drastic—
    Poor Sally—almost white!
Much drink she'd try to sell you
   With manner frank and free,
And any one will tell you
   She was quick at repartee!
For her own or for the bar's sake
   She never shirked a fight!
She was handy with a car-stake—
   Poor Sally—almost white!

But, oh, one hot December,
   Things snapped inside her head!
Some old folks may remember
   How she looked when she was dead!
And they've torn the "woodbine" roots up
   Till there's not a sprig in sight,
Yet sometimes a memory shoots up
   Of Sally—almost white!
ISTHMIAN HYMN

Come, all ye children of the soil,
   Ye offspring of the sun!
Aid me to praise these later days
   Of glory just begun!
Aid me to praise in fitting phrase
   Your land of liberty—
By Heaven’s grace the sacred place
   Of your nativity!

O land of palm and mountain peak,
   Of never-fading green!
Of oceans twain and storied main,
   The undisputed queen!
O land whose fond enchantments bind
   The stranger’s heart to thee;
Here be it known, we frankly own
   Thy gracious sovereignty!

Thy broad savanna vies in wealth
   With golden-pebbled stream!
Thy tableland and pearly strand
   With untold riches teem!
Thy precious forests spread their arms
   O’er fruitage lush and wild:
In all and part, thou surely art
   Fair Nature’s darling child!
Forever shall thy pathway trend
Toward glory's gleaming goal!
Eternally shall loyalty
Inspire each Isthmian soul!
Forever shall thy sons maintain
Their noble sires' renown;
For aye, through them, thy fame shall gem
Colombia's priceless crown!
THE TRADE-WIND

Blow, thou brave old trade-wind, blow!
Send the mighty billows flashing
In the radiant sunlight dashing,
O'er the reef like thunder crashing!
Blow, thou brave old trade-wind, blow!

Blow, thou grand old trade-wind, blow!
Oh, for caves in which to store thee!
See the palm-trees bow before thee—
Yea, like them, we do adore thee.
Blow, thou grand old trade-wind, blow!

Blow, thou kind old trade-wind, blow!
Blow, oh, blow with fierce endeavor!
Blow the fever far, forever!
Let the mists return, oh, never!
Blow, thou kind old trade-wind, blow!

Blow, thou good old trade-wind, blow!
Blow away our tropic madness!
Blow away our untold sadness!
Blow us lasting peace and gladness!
Blow, thou good old trade-wind, blow!
A SONG OF DRY WEATHER

When the rains at last cease falling,
   And the bracing trade-wind blows;
When the reef no stagnant waters
   Or festering seaweed knows;
'Tis a crime to mope within doors
   In an atmosphere impure—
Come out, and drink deep, eager draughts
   Of God's sure fever cure!

   Every breath is full of gladness,
      Each inspiration joy!
   Every sparkle of the sunshine
      A gem without alloy!
   Every tumble of the billows
      Maketh music far more sweet
Than ever great composer wrought
   A world's applause to greet!

Not a cloud bedims the heavens,
   That are smiling with delight;
Not a memory of sorrow
   Approachingblursthe sight!
Of all pleasures that life giveth,
   None ever can compare
With the bliss dry weather bringeth
   In its pure, health-giving air!
YELLOW EYES

You are going to have the fever,
    Yellow eyes!
In about ten days from now
Iron bands will clamp your brow;
Your tongue resemble curdled cream,
A rusty streak the centre seam;
Your mouth will taste of untold things,
With claws and horns and fins and wings;
Your head will weigh a ton or more,
And forty gales within it roar!

In about ten days from now
You will feebly wonder how
All your bones can break in twain
And so quickly knit again!
You will feel a score of Jaels
In your temples driving nails!
You will wonder if you're shot
Through the liver-case, or what!
You will wonder if such heat
Isn't Hades—and repeat!
Then you'll sweat until, at length,
You—won't—have—a—kitten's—strength!

In about ten days from now
Make to health a parting bow;
For you're going to have the fever,
    Yellow eyes!
HE HAS GONE

Close the door—across the river
    He has gone!
With an abscess on his liver
    He has gone!
Many years of rainy seasons,
And malaria’s countless treasons,
Are among the many reasons
    Why he’s gone!

Bind the wasted jaw up lightly—
    He has gone!
Close the sunken eyelids tightly—
    He has gone!
Chinese gin from Bottle Alley
Could not give him strength to rally—
Lone to wander in Death Valley
    He has gone!

In his best clothes we’ve arrayed him—
    He has gone!
In a wooden box we’ve laid him—
    He has gone!
Bogus Hennessey and sherry
With his system both made merry—
Very hard he fought them—very!
    Yet he’s gone!

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Down the hill we tramp once more, friends,
    He has gone!
Once again we've seen all o'er, friends,
    He has gone!
Let us hope we may endure, or,
At least, our taste be surer—
Let us pray the liquor's purer
    Where he's gone!
THE PARADISE OF FOOLS

NINETEEN hundred miles from home
We have crossed the ocean's foam;
Left our kin and comrades dear,
Shed the customary tear;
Left whatever life is worth
For the rummiest place on earth—
     For the Paradise of Fools.

All good things to eat and drink,
Left for what? You'd never think!
Tough old bull-beef, mud-fed swine,
Store-made liquors, logwood wine!
Every blessed day the same:
Change is nothing but a name
     In the Paradise of Fools.

Recreation? There is none;
If there were, 'twould weary one!
Innocence and sportiveness?
Bitter foes and nothing less!
Cards and cocktails, yes; galore!
Only these, and nothing more
     In the Paradise of Fools.

Hold! There's one thing I forget:
Scandal peddling's left us yet!
God knows, there's enough of that
To make a shrunken mummy fat!
Be the subject low or high,  
We must gossip—or we *die*  
    In the Paradise of Fools.

Yet we're happy, blithe, and gay;  
Else we'd go away and *stay!*  
How we kick and squirm and shout  
O'er attempts to drive us out!  
We are all content to dwell  
In this suburb of—ah, well!  
    In the Paradise of Fools.
THE BUSIEST MAN

Oh, don't disturb the gentleman,
He's as busy as can be!
You might attract his notice from
Something that he should see.
Just touch your hat, and quickly say,
Good-morning or, Ta-ta,
For he's got to run the universe—
Colon and Panama!

Pray, think of what he's got to do,
This very busy man!
He's got the biggest kind of job,
Just match it if you can.
He's got to note the time when we
Arise to start the day,
And he's got to listen carefully
To every word we say.

He's got to watch us labor, and
He's got to watch us play;
He's got to know what debts we owe,
And why we cannot pay;
He's got to know what cost the clothes
In which we look so neat—
The necktie and the hat we wear,
And the shoes upon our feet.
He's got to see us at our meals,
   Know what we eat and drink;
He's got to know what books we read,
   As well as what we think.
If we sit down awhile to chat
   With friends of many years,
He's got to join the party with
   His all-absorbing ears.

If we to town go for a walk
   When sunset ends our work,
He's got to sneak round corners bleak,
   Or in dark alleys lurk,
To see what we are doing here,
   Or what we're doing there,
And run the risk of fever in
   The evening's heavy air.

He's got to know the "female" that
   "Does up" our weekly shirt;
(She may wear diamonds in her ears,
   Or lace upon her skirt!)
Or, if one has that wondrous thing
   (That doubtful joy of life),
He's got to know each time that one
   Has a squabble with his wife.

He's got to listen to the tale
   Of every injured soul;
Of every row between two friends,
   He's got to know the whole.
Of what most folks talk sparingly,
   He’s got to glibly shout,
And run like lightning up and down
   To spread it all about.

He’s got to watch the Government,
   Each corporation, too;
And every private enterprise
   He’s got to carry through.
He’s got to keep a-moving, and
   Must never blink his eye,
For he’s got to have his finger in
   Each individual pie!

So don’t disturb the gentleman—
   I’m sure, you plainly see
That, as Mister Gossip is his name,
   He’s as busy as can be.
Just nod your head, and quickly say,
   Good-morning or, Ta-ta,
For he’s got to run the universe—
   Colon and Panama!
WHILE WE’RE STILL LIVING ON

There’s a gospel that I fain would preach as to the manner born,
To all ye sons of wretchedness from temperate regions torn;
As upon the torrid isthmus, heat-oppressed and fever-worn,
We still are living on!

’Tis an oft-repeated message, will ye never give it heed?
Ninety times and nine tho’ it hath failed, the hundredth may succeed;
So let’s print and post and blazon it, that he who runs may read,
While we’re still living on!

Speak lightly not of any man, and guard your neighbor’s fame;
For others prize as you may prize a fair, unsullied name;
And while criticising others’ gaits, you may yourself be lame!
While we’re still living on!

An honest man’s an honest man until he’s proved a thief;
Never yet was lasting happiness built on another’s grief;
Let us bear in mind of Graces three that Charity is chief,

While we're still living on!

Thus, in our brief existence in this land of sudden death,

We may breathe, perchance, when day is done, a self-contented breath;

And more calmly view the angel when toward us he wandereth!

While we're still living on!
THE NAKED BROWN BABIES OF BOLIVAR STREET

Tho' Destiny holds in her shadowy hands
   Adventure and incident for us to meet,
We'll never forget, tho' we may not regret,
   The naked brown babies of Bolivar Street.

The crash of the breakers, the lash of the gale,
   The thrash of the rain and the sun's awful heat,
May pass from us all, but we'll ever recall
   The naked brown babies of Bolivar Street.

The idiom local—that shuffle of speech
   We learn ere our isthmus instruction's complete—
We'll lose it—we ought—yet we'll cling to the thought
   Of the naked brown babies of Bolivar Street.

The pleasures and pains of the present and past
   Our sojourn here making so sad or so sweet;
Tho' all fade away, thro' the memory will stray
   The naked brown babies of Bolivar Street.

They wade in the puddles, they roll in the dust,
   No weather can ever their pleasure defeat;
All days are the same! Life is only a game
   To the naked brown babies of Bolivar Street.
DE PROFUNDIS

ALMIGHTY Dispenser of good things and ill,  
Purveyor of foods that delight or annoy;  
Thou that doth every man’s little cup fill  
With draughts to be drained of sorrow or joy:  
Disgusted we come to the Presence to-day,  
Sans flattering speeches of moment and pith,  
But simply and briefly and bluntly to say  
That we firmly believe that Job was a myth.

We are weary of patience and all of that cant  
About love that can chasten love gasping for breath.  
We are minus the faith that can cheerfully rant  
Of the blessings of life in the presence of death.  
We do not believe in the silver that lines  
The horse-blanket clouds spread above us for weeks,  
For we know all the silver is safe in the mines  
That is not in the pockets of somebody’s breeks.

We are weary of funerals, weary of tears,  
We are weary of pushing unpushable walls;  
We are weary of leveling mountains of fears—  
Of building a Hope that instantly falls.  
We have given to Misery more than her half,  
We have rendered to Gloom more years than are his,  
We have moped long enough! Great God let us laugh  
Before we forget what a laugh really is!

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THE WAIL OF THE FORGOTTEN

(1901)

O we are the people whom God forgot
In eighteen eighty-nine,
When Disaster dropped a mighty blot
On the Frenchman's grand design.

Then Fire and Fever and Famine came,
A triple Incubus,
And dealing the cards of a cut-throat game,
Sat down and played with us.

They've won in the past, they're winning still,
And we put up the stakes!
Yet play we must and play we will
Until the last heart breaks.

And the leaden bowl we call the sky,
Doth back the echoes throw
Of our exceeding bitter cry:
"God give us another show!"
As she scrambled down from the transport's deck,
Her figure parodied grace;
Eighteen at the most and a physical wreck,
Yet she had an angel's face!
From head to foot
Clung dirt like soot—
There was dirt on her angel's face.
—Yes, dirt on her angel's face!

Her hair in inky loops hung low,
O' er a soldier's canvas coat,
And a tattered shift yawned wide to show
A short and sunburned throat!
No lingerie—
We all could see
Her short and sunburned throat!
—Yes, more than her sunburned throat!

Her dress—her what? She had no dress;
Call it skirt for lack of a name—
('Tis a guess, the wildest kind of a guess)
Put shamelessness to shame!
So scanty and torn,
And carelessly worn,
It put shamelessness to shame!
—Yes, shamelessness to shame!
She gathered her kit and passed us by,
    Foul bedding and pots and bags;
A babe on her hip—another one nigh—
    Nakedness, filth and rags!
    On the endless tramp
    From camp to camp,
In nakedness, filth and rags!
—Yes, nakedness, filth and rags!

A drab and a drudge—a regiment's Thing
    To abuse, debauch, debase;
And yet—as tho' guarded by Beauty's wing—
    Her face was an angel's face!
    Tho' sadly bedimmed,
    'Twas Beauty who limned
The lines of her angel's face!
—Yes, modelled her angel's face!

What of it, you ask? Oh, nothing but this;—
    I think it not often the case
That one clearly beholds in ignorance, bliss,
    And 'tis proved by an angel's face!
    For ignorance
    Of innocence,
Shone from her angel's face!
—Yes, gave her an angel's face!
Cough and splutter, clang and shriek,
Day and night, week after week!
Choke with smoke the passers by,
Fill with slack the public eye!
Turn your squatty drivers round
Fifty times each foot of ground!
Siss and sizzle, gasp and jerk—
Fools will think you’re hard at work!

“Pull them box-cars up the track!
Wot yer doin’! Push ’em back!”

Don’t go easy! Let ’em slam!
Now then! You don’t care a—clam!
Do this ten score times a day,
Then all night—the other way!
Over frogs and switches leap,
Don’t let anybody sleep!
When there’s nothing else in sight
Down to Christophe take a flight!
Throw her over! Let her fly!
You’ll catch victims by and by!
What is horse or coach to you!
Hit a man—now hit one! Do!

That’s it! Smash him! Grind him fine!
Spread his blood along the line!
Spread it even, spread it thick!
Sand may slip but blood will stick!

* Local name for switch engine.
OUR GURL MARY

She's the "chupidest" gurl we ever knew,
   Is our gurl Mary;
She always does what she oughtn't to,
   Does our gurl Mary;
She's lazier far than Lethe's stream—
She meanders 'round in one long dream—
'Twould take a Titan's death-bed scream
   To wake up Mary!

In the morning at our coffee time—
   "Mary, OH, Mary!"
Our hearts sink deep in damning crime—
   "Mary! Oh, M-A-R-Y!"
What is the matter, Mary . . . Dear!
Been looking for you far and near!
'Most eight o'clock—no coffee here!
   John Rogers, Mary!

Just look at the lid of that coffee pot
   Now will you, Mary?
Why on earth can't you get it hot!
   Why can't you, Mary!
This stuff's cold as a puppy's nose,
Or a lonely, shivering, early rose
That blooms in the snow as the March wind blows!
   Understand, Mary?
Now then, Mary! It is twelve o'clock!
   The breakfast, Mary!
Where did you get that smudgy frock—
   Good Gracious, Mary!
Oh, NO!! The steak comes after fish!
And, Say! We've one more darling wish:—
Don't serve the cheese in the butter-dish!
   Now don't! Don't, Mary!

Tea-time, Mary! You've been told before,
   Haven't you, Mary?
The hour is Four—not half-past Four!
   Fiddlesticks! Mary!
"No biscuit?" Of course! Same old way!
Do you think we're here to hear you say:—
"De biskit finish yisterday?"
   Great Heavens! MARY!

[Dinner-time, every day:—]
No salt! No spoons! Ice if you please!
   Mustard, Mary!
You've spilled the gravy on my knees!
   N-E-V-E-R  M-I-N-D, Mary!
Oh, let's shut down the blooming mess!
We'll starve, perhaps, but nevertheless
Be quit of the fathomless cussedness
   Of our gurl Mary!
THAT EXCELLENT HEART

How often we hear some kind critic inveigh  
Against some one—not present, you know!  
How he’d have done this thing a far different way,  
And that thing have done so and so.  
He will analyze closely each venial sin,  
Each motive or speech tear apart;  
Then, suddenly conscious, will deftly slip in  
The cant of the excellent heart!

The absent one’s clothes he will oft criticise—  
They are either too coarse or too fine;  
Profoundly he’ll gabble and look very wise  
O’er some fellow’s fondness for wine.  
Like a Guayaquil parrot, he’ll chatter all day,  
Down Ruin’s road every one start;  
Then, rememb’ring himself, have something to say  
Of the undoubtedly excellent heart!

The absent one thinks that the critic’s his friend,  
For he’s eaten his bread and his salt,  
And will lend him his money if he has it to lend—  
For he’s generous, is he, to a fault.  
But the critic is blind to all virtues, be sure,  
Save when they add gall to his dart;  
But one balm does he offer his back-wounds to cure;  
Oh, I am sick of that excellent heart!
THE MAN WHO IS ALWAYS RIGHT

'Tis oh, for the might of a master mind
   And the grace of a gifted pen!
That Apollo's lyre and Sappho's fire
   Might be awaked again,
To suggest the choicest thoughts and words,
   To assist, direct, indite,
And to make the song remembered long
   Of the man who is always right!

Oh, beloved of all the gods is he,
   The most fortunate of men!
And many of us are envious,
   In spite of Commandment Ten,
As we see him glance serenely down
   From his moral, mental height,
And note the smile, so free from guile,
   Of the man who is always right!

His virtue, like Saint Anthony's,
   Is ninety above proof!
From cards and drinks he wisely shrinks,
   And holds himself aloof!
He has no venial weaknesses,
   His soul is spotless, white;
Vice leaves no trace on the tranquil face
   Of the man who is always right!
There is nothing that he does not know
   All, everything about!
O'er questions vexed he is ne'er perplexed,
   Nor troubled with a doubt!
His *ipse dicta* clouds dispel
   As the day o'ercomes the night;
Oh, the happiest man since the world began
   Is the man who is always right!

There is hope of a tree if it be cut down,
   There is hope for the withered grass!
There is hope on the deck of a storm-toss'd wreck,
   But no hope for us, alas!
We are doomed to be always in the wrong,
   And to linger 'neath the blight
Of the chilly air and frosty glare
   Of the man who is always right!
A PANAMA LULLABY

LULLABY, lullaby, child of the morning,
List to the matin bells hailing the day;
See the sun blithely the cloudlets adorning,
Ere beginning his journey from far down the bay.
Lovingly, tenderly, each cloud caressing
With glances of love-light and fingers of gold,
For each one doth hold for my darling a blessing,
That each hour of the day shall gently unfold.

Lullaby, lullaby, child of the even,
List to the vesper bells closing the day;
See the moon marshal the star-hosts of heaven
Ere beginning her journey from far down the bay.
Lovingly, tenderly, each star caressing
With glances of love-light and fingers of gold;
For each one doth hold for my darling a blessing,
That each hour of the night shall gently unfold.

Oh, child of the dawning, child of the gloaming,
Light of my spirit and pride of my heart!
Down into dreamland go fearlessly roaming:
Thy heart from my bosom shall ne’er be apart.
By day and by night I will guard thee securely—
Thy life is my life, my glorious boy—
In my arms slumbering—guilelessly, purely,
Thou’rt God’s choicest gift and man’s greatest joy!
A TROPIC NOCTURNE

Now the waves are softly murmuring their evening hymn of praise,
And the fleecy clouds are listening in the stars' prismatic rays;
All the palms are gently nodding in the moon's argental light,
And the tireless loom of Time fast weaves the royal robe of Night.

Out upon the sheeny waters rides a snowy-sailed canoe,
And the boatman chants an Ave, bidding vanished day adieu;
Crooning cradle-songs of Ocean weary souls to rest invite,
And the drowsy Evening falls asleep upon the breast of Night.

Deep and deeper grows the purple of the distant mountain range;
Stars and waters, palms and moonbeams loving benisons exchange;
In the hush of drooping silence, with resistless, tender might,
Reigns, serene in her omnipotence, the goddess-empress Night.
SAN LORENZO

Cloud-crested San Lorenzo guards
The Chagres' entrance still,
Tho' o'er each stone dense moss hath grown,
And earth his moat doth fill.
His bastions, feeble with decay,
Steadfastly view the sea,
And sternly wait the certain fate
The ages shall decree.

His reservoir is filled with slime,
Where noxious insects breed;
Corroding rust its greedy lust
On shot and gun doth feed;
The moaning wind sobs dismally
Thro' crumbling port and hold;
The staring owl and reptile foul
Thrive on his donjon's mold.

Left there, a sentry lone to strive
Against some Morgan's crew—
To guard our wives' and children's lives
Should the past itself renew;
To breast and buffet every storm,
To falter not nor fail;
His charge to keep; nor toil nor sleep
Against him to prevail.

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Still standeth San Lorenzo there,
   Aye faithful at his post,
Tho' scoffing trees in every breeze
   Their prime and vigor boast.
His garrison is but the shades
   Of soldiers of the past,
But it pleaseth him, alone and grim,
   To watch until the last!
OUR LITTLE LANDSCAPE

Across the little landscape of our lives
The shadows of the whole world seem to flit;
Ere one departs another one arrives,
So limited, so very small is it.

The passions of the universe crowd here—
Here gather Love and Joy and Hate and Pain:
The first fall ill, soon leave us with a tear;
The last, at once acclimatized, remain.

From East to West 'tis scarce a tenth degree,
This parallelogram whereon we dwell;
'Tis only fifty miles from sea to sea,
But far from heaven, far too close to hell!
THE WANING MOON

Here's a health to the waning moon, my boys,
To the waning tropical moon!
She smiles us her blessing, tho' faint, 'tis sincere,
'Twill be nearer and clearer soon!
So gather around me, your glasses fill high!
Anger and worry! Come, let them go by!
Here's hoping you never, no, never may die!
And a health to the waning moon!

She leaves us a time, but returns soon again
In fresh and more gorgeous array!
And so will our sorrows, in far different guise,
As joys gladden some coming day!
Then stand to me steady, and smile thro' your tears!
Pluck up your courage, and banish your fears!
Here's hoping all happiness thousands of years,
And a health to the waning moon!
THE NEVER-FAILING FRIEND

You have days, yes, weeks of loneliness that never seem to end,
When you’re sure the world’s against you, and you haven’t got a friend;
You are weary and discouraged, and you wish the fight was o’er,
For your heart is almost bursting, and your soul is sick and sore.

There’s no music in the billows, there’s no balm upon the breeze;
There’s no gladness in the sunlight—only sadness in the trees!
Life has grown to be a burden that you can no longer bear,
Or an ever-changing puzzle that you give up in despair.

Then it is some fellow tells you that he’s always been your friend;
Swears you know it—that he’s proved it on occasions without end!
That once more he’s going to do so—if you’ll never breathe a word—
Then repeats some nasty gossip that about you he has heard!
Lord preserve us, or we perish! We can’t stand it very long!
We are growing weak and weaker, and the pressure’s growing strong!
Order up thy mightiest cannons, and the trembling walls defend,
For they’re tottering ’neath the onslaughts of the never-failing friend.
KIN G F E V E R

He's ruler of rulers o'er all the earth,
      King Fever is his name!
From the monarch grown gray to the prince at his birth,
      King Fever is his name!
Before him, emperor, sultan, and czar,
President, pontiff, mikado, and shah,
Caliph and mandarin powerless are,
      King Fever is his name!

All, all must approach him with sceptreless hands,
      King Fever is his name!
For his are their subjects, their crowns and their lands,
      King Fever is his name!
His are their diadems, jewels and wealth;
Naught can they hide from him, sly tho' their stealth;
Heirs or inheritance, beauty or health,
      King Fever is his name!

Then hail! All hail, to the Great Socialist!
      King Fever is his name!
Whose levelling power none can resist,
      King Fever is his name!
Whose might can demolish the whole Chinese Wall,
And round our poor craniums rebuild it all—
Whose flames burn alike the great and the small—
      King Fever is his name!

55
THE SONG OF THE MOSQUITO IN HADES

Blackest corner

A murky river flows;

No imp knows whence it cometh,
No devil where it goes.

Twas in its noisome vapor
That Satan watched my birth,
And just through simple kindness
I winged my way to earth.

I'm a very small mosquito,
In Aspinwall I dwell;
By days I'm inoffensive,
But nights I'm merry well,
I tune my tiny fiddle,
I sound my tiny gong,
And make folks lives a burden
With the burden of my song!

My touch is light and downy
They know not I am there
Till zim! what howls and curses!

Tis laughable, I swear!

I draw my little dagger,
I cock my little eye,
And make the meekest Christian
Hate God, and wish to die!
“NO ICE”

(A LITANY OF THIRST)

FROM a lowly latitude,
Seeking Thy beatitude;
From a long-forgotten spot,
From creation’s darkest blot,
Comes a sound of rushing tears.
Doth no other reach Thine ears?

Listen, Lord!

Turn Thy head! Look West—look South!
Canst Thou see the Chagres’ mouth?
Yes! Look there—below it—there!
Thro’ the mist that fouls the air,
Thro’ malaria’s noisome veil,
Hear’st Thou not the frenzied wail?

Listen, Lord!

There, beneath the starry cross—
Emblem of Thy self-planned loss!
There, where in his burning hand,
Satan clutches sea and land,
Pilgrims, fainting with despair,
Hoarsely iterate one prayer:

Listen, Lord!

Cringing, shrinking, kneeling there,
Thro’ scorching night and midday glare;
Craving only that Thy grace
May assign their plea a place;
Of Thy largess asking naught
Save the boon that Dives sought:

*Listen, Lord!*
THE SAND-FLY

Oh, Lord! Oh, Nature! Oh, whatever be
The power properly addressed,
I pray thee humbly—pray on bended knee—
Grant this one plea, deny the rest!

'Tis little that I ask from out the store
Of blessings in thy right to give;
And surely thou dost daily waste much more
On folks less fit than I to live!

I crave but this: That from the different kinds
Of insects cursing night and day—
(The entomologist claims that he finds
Five hundred thousand, so they say)—

Thou wilt at once destroy, annihilate,
Permit no longer to exist—
Efface, cut off, rub out, obliterate
The pesky sand-fly from the list!
THE SONG OF THE PRICKLY HEAT

With face drawn into a scowl,
  With teeth well into his tongue,
Perspiring, like any old leaky pump,
  Squirmed a man no longer young.
  Scratch, scratch, scratch,
  From forehead down to feet!
And still tho' his voice with anger rang,
'Mid grunts and curses he hoarsely sang
  This song of the prickly heat!

  Itch, itch, itch,
  Till night drives the day away!
  Itch, itch, itch,
  Till day drives the night away!
  Arms and stomach and legs,
  Neck and ankles and back,
  Digging them all till they scorch and bleed,
  From one to the other with lightning speed,
  Like a demented jumping-jack!

Oh, 'tis off with your coat and vest!
  'Tis off with your shoes and pants!
Till, naked and bare, your skin you tear
  In a wild Saint Vitus dance!
  Scratch, scratch, scratch,
  With ever-waxing ire!
While into each pore a needle darts,
And the cuticle burns and shrivels and smarts,
  Like blisters of hell's own fire!
60
Itch, itch, itch,
While the months a-whirling go!

Itch, itch, itch,
As the years to decades grow!

Oh, God, for a moment’s rest!

Or, if I can’t be granted that,

In one spot quench the teasing flame,
Or blot that spot from my tortured frame—

_The spot that I can’t get at._

With face drawn into a scowl,

With teeth well into his tongue,

Perspiring, like any old leaky pump,

Squirmed a man no longer young.

Scratch, scratch, scratch,

From forehead down to feet!

And still tho’ his voice with anger rang

(I wonder himself he doesn’t hang!)

’Mid grunts and curses he hoarsely sang

This song of the prickly heat!
SONG OF THE MISANTHROPE

Oh, I'm a sullen misanthrope,
A hater of my kind;
Man's faults, as thro' a microscope,
Wax large within my mind.
Each sin that others trifling think
To me is great, indeed;
And crimes from which most people shrink
My taste for misery feed.

In every eye I plainly see
The evil lurking there;
Beneath each gentle voice to me
Appears a guileful snare.
In hand-clasps smooth hypocrisy
I always can detect,
And e'en a hat doffed courteously
But envy doth reflect.

All tenderness is selfishness,
That veils some low desire;
And purity to me is less
Than vileness in the mire.
And lofty thoughts, he, he, ho, ho,
What sport they give to me!
Their sire is Vanity, I know!
Still lives the Pharisee!

62
Each weakness human nature shows
   Is meat and drink for me,
And o'er man's many wrongs and woes
   I laugh in hearty glee!
'Twas Malice who wrote Friendship's laws,
   With Spite, her sister elf!
I hate my fellow-man because
   I'm hateful to myself!
A M A R V E L

"The body of a man weighing one hundred and fifty-four pounds contains forty-six quarts of water." — Curious Facts.

WHAT? Forty-six quarts of water
   To eleven stone of man?
You’re wrong in your figures, Mister,
   If you talk of an Isthmian!
Come down and live in the tropics,
   And perspire a year or two;
Then alter your calculations
   Till they’re somewhat nearer true!

Instead of quarts say gallons—
   And even then you’ll be
Full many a cask found lacking
   Of the proper quantity!
Why, bless your soul and body,
   When the sun shines after a show’r,
Most men will sweat a hogshead
   Of water in an hour!

And therein lies the marvel,
   If one stops to think awhile;
’Tis a puzzle where it comes from
   In such a liquid pile!
Is’t the dampness of the climate,
   Or something far more queer?
One thing is mighty certain:
   Folks don’t drink water here!
64
GEOGRAPHICAL

Where the longitude's mean and the latitude's low,
Where the hot winds of summer perennially blow,
Where the mercury chokes the thermometer's throat,
And the dust is as thick as the hair on a goat,
Where one's mouth is as dry as a mummy accurst—
There lieth the Land of Perpetual Thirst.
EPIGRAM

To be clever 's a very fine thing no doubt
   And goodness is something to sigh for;
To be clever and good—that lets us out,
   So decency 's all we can try for!
HE'LL NEVER DIE

On gloomy Styx's banks I stand,
Great crowds are passing over;
And patiently I watch and wait
One party to discover.

The ferry daily busier grows—
Old Charon shakes with laughter—
Yet vainly do I seek the face
Of the man whose luck I'm after!
WHEN THE TRADE-WIND BLOWS AGAIN

Many suns will lag and loiter from the Blue Hills to the sea,
Dragging lengthening days behind them to the vague eternity;
Many moons will arch their crescents over forest, field, and fen
Ere the storm-clouds cease to lower and the trade-wind blows again.

But he's coming, oh, he's coming, tho' he's long upon the way!
We'll forget the weary waiting when he bounds across the bay!
He's been trafficking with Boreas within his chilly den,
And we'll profit by his bargains when the trade-wind blows again.

He is roaming thro' the piney woods, and storing up the scent!
He is bottling for us perfumes that no chemist can invent!
He's exploring vale and mountain, lilied lake and mossy glen
For the presents he will bring us when the trade-wind blows again.
He is scouring round for ozone—simply cramming all his trunks With the precious stuff to heave at us in large and luscious chunks!
Talk about the gifts of Sheba to the luckiest of men, Why, they won’t be in it, brother, when the trade-wind blows again!
"TO BLAME?"

He was to blame, you say, sir?
Now, just look here, my friend,
Don’t you think your criticisms
The ears of Christ offend?
'Twas He who once said, Judge not!
And He alone can tell
Whose "negligence" occasioned
The loss of the Moselle.

"Neglect?" Oh, yes, 'tis easy
For lubbers just like you
To spin out yarns in fathoms,
And for fools to think 'em true!
Who taught you navigation?
How long have you been to sea?
You don’t know port from starboard,
Or weather side from lee!

The facts are these: Our captain
Was new upon this coast,
But a better man nor braver
The whole line couldn’t boast!
He knew his business, too, sir,
As well as it could be known,
But he couldn’t run the currents
Or storms of the Torrid Zone!
The course he set's been sailed on
For more than a hundred trips
By a hundred different captains,
Who haven't lost their ships!
Who sent the gale that swept us
With lightning speed ahead?
Who sent the sea like mountains
And the darkness of the dead?

I'll bet my next month's wages
You've lost your way on shore!
At sea, and in a tempest,
Is a damned sight different score!
How's man to sight his headlands
When God obscures the view?
I'd like to have an answer—
Who'll tell me, sir—can you?

He's dead!—a hero, too, sir,
If ever there was one!
He died to do his duty—
What more could he have done?
"To blame?" He paid the forfeit!
And Jesus always lets
The punishment fall lightly
On a man who pays his debts!
ON RONCADOR

No more the boatswain's pipe shall call
To quarters on her deck!
On Roncador, on Roncador
She lies—a lonely wreck!
No more shall bugler colors sound,
Nor tuneful taps shall play!
On Roncador, on Roncador,
In silence ends the day!

No more shall curious visitor
Be shown her famous gun!
On Roncador, on Roncador,
Her guerdon she hath won!
Haul down the flag left flying there—
No record let there be
Of how we lost on Roncador
Our veteran of the sea!

'Tis better thus to lay away
A memory of the past,
Whose strife hath ended in a peace
Forevermore to last!
Rest on, thou brave old Kearsarge, rest!
The waves that round thee surge
Shall on the shore of Roncador
For ages chant thy dirge!
THE VISIT

While the planets sang together
   At this old world's birth,
Beauty loosed her golden fetters—
   Winged her way to earth.
Hither, thither, free she rambled
   Over sea and land;
Aimlessly she gaily wandered
   To far Carib's strand.

On the laughing trade-wind's bosom
   Came she to entrance
Into brightness all things gloomy
   Simply by her glance.
She draped the palm, festooned the lily,
   Gave the sky its hue—
Santa Rita looming distant,
   Robed in wondrous blue.

Kissed the pear, smiled on the mango,
   Decked the pine with fringe,
Dyed the orange and banana
   With the sunlight's tinge.
Flitted thro' the tangled forest,
   Strewing fragrance rare,
And where'er she paused a moment,
   Placed an orchid there.
Graced the slender, swaying bamboo,
   Crowned the cottonwood;
Ferns and crotons sprang around her
   As she smiling stood.
Birds and blossoms dressed in prisms
   Her handiwork caressed—
Then sped on her journey, leaving
   Man alone unblessed!
A NEW YEAR'S RAINBOW

It rose this morning out of the sea,
    Just as the sun was peeping,
With glances bright at the distant night
    That still in the West was sleeping.
The rain that in the sombre dawn
    Like tears from the clouds was falling
Had passed away while the god of day
    The darkness was enthralling.

And it said, "Faint heart, take cheer! Take cheer,
    And behold the sign and token
I bring to thee from over the sea,
    Of the promise never broken!
The grief I follow shall ne'er return:
    Oh, list to my joyous message!
Dost thou not know that my gleaming bow
    Of a glad New Year is presage?"
THE COMRADES OF THE PLEASANT PAST

The comrades of the pleasant past,
The cronies of our halecyon days,
Aside frail friendship’s ties have cast,
And journeyed their appointed ways.

Some in the land that gave them birth
Our very names have long forgot;
Some, wanderers upon the earth,
’Mid other scenes recall us not.

Out yonder on the fateful hill,
Where erst we laid them down to rest,
Some, unremembered, slumber still,
In earth’s embrace more surely blest.

And some, although they linger here,
Have sought and found environment,
Where, to our hearts tho’ ever near,
Far from our homes they woo content.

The welcome bond, the willing chain,
We fondly forged in passion’s glow,
Their fancied strength could not maintain;
We thought them steel: we find them tow!
Thus ever ends the pretty play
  We act on life's capricious stage;
Once learned, we fling old parts away,
  And con new rôles from fresher page.

All love, like filmiest gossamer,
  Is transient as the clouds above:
Soon lost among the things that were,
  Save love of self and mother-love!
TO MNEMOSYNE

On the other side of Jordan,
In the green fields of Eden,
Where the Tree of Life is blooming,
There is rest for me.

Draw aside thy magic curtain,
Memory!
Once again my native country
I would see—
Once again behold the village
Down beside the sweeping river
That was once the River Jordan
Unto me.

Draw thy veil till days of childhood
Are in sight!
Hold it . . . till mine eyes are 'customed
To the light—
To the light that once did show them
The meadow fields of clover
That were Green Fields of Eden,
Wonder-bright.

Let me walk again the forest,
Goddess kind!
And the mighty silver-maple
I shall find,

78
That, with branches spreading splendor,
As I gazed in awe and rapture,
Seemed the Tree of Life in blossom,
    To my mind.

I would go again to meeting,
    Memory!
Would my heart not burn within me,
    Could it be!
From the high pew in the corner,
Hear the congregation singing,
"There is rest for the weary—
    Rest for me!"

There is rest for the weary,
There is rest for the weary,
There is rest for the weary,
    There is rest for me!
I knew thee then. Semiramis was Queen
Who stripped the foliage from the lettuce leaf
And asked Cambyses if he thought the green
More handsome, or the stalk—the barren sheaf.
Ah, those were cruel days! Men loved and killed
Their loves; and women hired assassins fell
To clear the path that, strong and stubborn-willed,
They wished to follow, were it ill or well.
Yet those were days of sweetness, too; I think
As sweet as any I have known thro' all
My many lives, since first upon the brink
Of Chaos standing, Eros heard my call
And led me trembling from the dread abyss,
Through forests scarce attained to leafy growth,
Nine days afar, to where the waters kiss
The setting sun and plight their nightly troth.

Thy hair was then the raven tint that now
Absorbs the light and gladdens with its glow
The eyes that 'neath a smooth uplifting brow
A deathless spirit, dauntless purpose show.
—Blue eyes were then unknown: they of the cold
And heartless North were bred, as toward the Pole
The earth grew warmer and the years grew old.
We were too soon for azure self-control!

80
Thy form the same: so slight, and yet not slight, 
Save as the willow-branch the tempest bends 
But cannot break, is slight. And, as her right, 
The dwelling-place whence Grace her influence sends—
Her chosen palace, undivided throne! 
And all the charm of manner and of mind—
The nameless atmosphere, distinctive, lone, 
That those long years agone I found, I find.

I would that I might call again on Thought 
To map before mine inward eye the scene 
Of those fair years when we for Knowledge sought—
When I was still thy subject, thou the Queen! 
Much would I thank the gods that know—
They of the Power—Ancient of the Days—
If once again the inky pool would show 
The well-loved picture to my raptured gaze.

Yet still I am content—almost content—
To know, or even think I know, to thee 
There strays a thought of those days fondly spent. 
To know I knew Thee then—thou knewest Me!