

# The Stray Thoughts of a Lifetime

By J.C. Atkinson

Privately published: 1906

Dear Family and Friends,

Where I am, it is Dec. 5, 2023. Tonight I scanned J.C. Atkinson's entire book of Poetry into my computer. JC was my great great grandfather. Tomorrow it will go on to the family history website which is probably where you have found it.

I am so excited!!! I feel like I am sitting at a crossroads. On one side is 1906, the year J.C. Atkinson printed this book of his poetry -- I'm in 2023 --- And where are you dear reader? At what point in the future are you reading this?

J.C. was not a poet of earthshattering genius but there are some gems in here that I love. Don't miss:

Snore Me to Sleep, hubby

The Man Who Killed my Deer

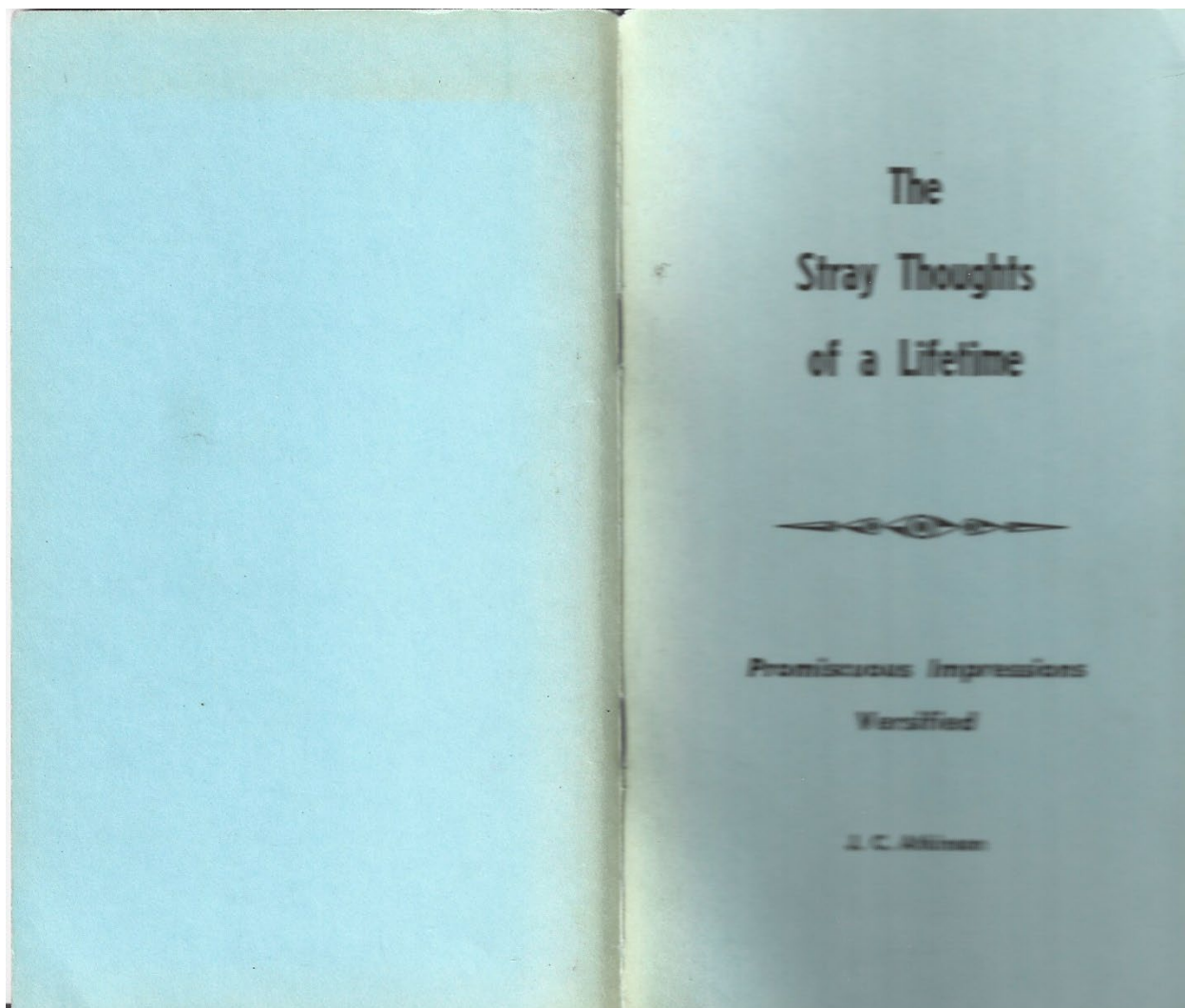
*(And the very sweet....*

To Mama on our 40th Anniversary

*Which is an autobiography of their life together)*

Hoping you will remember us!

Dhyan (Kathleen) Atkinson



The  
Stray Thoughts  
of a Lifetime



*Promiscuous Impressions  
Verified*

J. C. Allison

### To the Recipient

---

That this looks cheap can't be denied,  
And wife's ashamed to send it.  
For like it's author, the outside  
Has naught to recommend it.  
A gilded, glitt'ring souvenir  
'Twas never meant to be.  
But I confess this does appear  
Too plain and cheap for me.  
And yet you cannot call it cheap,  
If once you knew the price—  
The way it dipped my pockets deep,  
It should be extra nice.  
But it's no use to fume and fret—  
With kind regards we send it.  
However much we may regret,  
It's now too late to mend it.  
If in its dress you take most pride,  
And only want display,  
And little care for what's inside,  
Then throw the thing away.



When'er you look upon this face,  
You look upon a friend,  
Who in your mem'ry wants a place,  
And wants it to the end.

*J. B. Atkinson*

*Born in Yorkshire, England. July 27, 1834*

## The Stray Thoughts of a Lifetime

---

*This book is not intended for the public;  
it is printed by earnest request  
as a family relic*

---

THE PAWNEE REPUBLICAN  
PAWNEE CITY, NEBRASKA  
1906



## DEDICATION.

In memoriam sweet, I dedicate  
 These verses written here.  
 The last bequest, of my estate,  
 To wife, and children, dear.

It's not for merit that I give,  
 To mem'ry I devote them.  
 You'll keep and cherish, while you live,  
 Because of him who wrote them.

You'll view his life, both good and bad,  
 'Twill pain or pleasure give you.  
 Whatever faults he may have had,  
 His heart was always with you.

That heart is now too full to speak,  
 No words my thoughtscan tell.  
 While scalding tears roll down my cheek,  
 I write this last farewell.

## TO FRIENDS OUTSIDE THE FAMILY.

Accept this token from a friend,  
 Though but of trifling worth.  
 It tells of thoughts its author penned,  
 While here upon the earth.

Of little value in itself,  
 To mem'ry you'll devote it.  
 And give it space upon your shelf,  
 Because of him who wrote it.

But if you find it weak and tame,  
 Devoid of sense and tact,  
 Why just commit it to the flames,  
 You've got your money back.

## CONTENTS.

Dedication.....	2
Housecleaning Time.....	5
A Surprise.....	7
It Rains—It Rains—It's Raining.....	10
Glimpses of Life.....	11
To Mamma—On Our Fortieth Anniversary.....	13
Requesting Ma to Come Home.....	17
Mamma's Birthday.....	18
On Back of Picture to My Sister.....	18
Written for the Woods-Moore Infair.....	19
To Ella and May Van Horn.....	21
To Anna Peckham.....	21
The Hope of Reform Lies with the Young.....	22
The News.....	23
The Ways of Life.....	24
Meditation.....	24
To the Angel Gate-keeper.....	25
On Writing Verses on Back of Picture to a Friend.....	25-26
On Finding a Keepsake Which Had Been Lost.....	26
Keepsake's Reply.....	26
Stray Verses.....	26
A Poem.....	27
Fifty Years Ago.....	29
For Mrs. Gifford.....	29
Snore Me to Sleep, Hubby.....	30
To C. L. Armsbury on Hearing that He is Wed.....	31
Bitter-Sweet.....	32
Some Evils are Incurable.....	34
Lines to Tom Richmond.....	34
The Man Who Killed My Deer.....	35
As I Feel Sometimes.....	37
Praise People While They Live.....	39

Written and Read on Forty-fifth Anniversary .....	40
A Brief Review .....	41
On Presenting a Cane to My Son .....	43
The Old Spoons' Plea .....	44
To Paulina .....	44
To Mrs. Martha Snyder .....	46
The Blaker-Williams Wedding .....	47
Lines to Sarah .....	48
To Tom Northey .....	49
McKinley, The Able, Tried, and True .....	50
Answer to Plea for Starving Kansas .....	51
Reply to Bessie Casey, Touring in the Mountains .....	52
To Maud, on Hearing They Were Going to Leave Mercur, Utah .....	53
Reply to Mrs. Ed. Atkins, Asking My Views on Her Poem Sent Us .....	54
To Mrs. W. S. Peckham, Asking if it Would be Con- venient to visit at a Certain Time .....	56
On Presenting a Cane to My Son .....	56
To C. L. Armsbury .....	57
Valentine Day, 1902 .....	59
Soliloquy of Maud's Lover .....	60
Read at the Lyceum .....	60
Written for Uncle Josh's and Aunt Ann's Fiftieth Anniversary .....	65

## The Stray Thoughts of a Lifetime

### HOUSECLEANING TIME

If there is a time when a man feels bad  
It's when wife is struck with the housecleaning fad.  
Of confusion domestic that housekeepers make,  
For solid discomfort this sure wins the cake.  
You take up the carpets, put 'em out on the line.  
It's got to be done, so it's no use to whine.  
Then it's whip them and pound them, all up and down.  
Just listen! they're thumping them all over town.  
You turn them and welt them on this side and that,  
Till weary—dumfounded—don't know where you're at.  
Just then Paper Cap sings out from the door—  
Don't give it up yet, John; you must whip them more!  
Once more, though reluctant, at it he goes,  
Mixing adjectives bad along with his blows,  
Till exhausted complete, he stops in despair.  
There's confusion inside; he's glad he's not there.  
It relieves part his temper to know he's not in it.  
O, John! please come here just a minute.  
Please take out this bedstead: I can't; it's too hard—  
These tables and sofa put out in the yard.  
This tub of water, please take it up stairs.  
Then bring down the bedsteads, bed clothes and chairs.  
Take all the pictures down from the wall,  
And be careful the mirror—don't let it fall.  
And thus you keep at it from morning till night.  
You think yourself lucky to get a cold bite.  
The floor where microbes sport in the cracks  
Is littered with papers, and hammers, and tacks,

And brooms, and brushes, and water, and soap,  
 Borax, and mothballs, and wall paper dope,  
 And glasses, and dishes, and kettles, and pans,  
 Brackets, and screwhooks, and fruit-empty cans.  
 In short, it's confusion—you can't eat or sleep.  
 It would stagger a saint—make a brass monkey weep.  
 The kids are whining and sleepy—it's now after nine.  
 The bed clothes are still hanging out on the line.  
 O, hubby! run quick, before they get damp.  
 It's dark as black cats—I'll hold you the lamp.  
 He finds them all tangled and twisted about;  
 He fumbles and wrenches—the lamp it goes out.  
 In sheer desperation, and mutterings a sin,  
 At last he succeeds and carries them in.  
 The bedsteads are out—O, so they are, sure!  
 Well, never mind; we'll bunk on the floor.  
 After the children are all tucked away  
 We dump down to rest us as best we may;  
 We're too tired to sleep; our nerves are unstrung,  
 We think of the changes since we were young;  
 We think of our foremothers, dear, precious dames!  
 They had no time for carom, or any such games.  
 A man and twelve kids to feed, clothe and tend—  
 However she lived I can't comprehend.  
 She made all the clothing from fibre and fleece.  
 The bed clothing, too, with the beds from the geese.  
 She made all the soap, all the butter and cheese;  
 Planted potatoes, and cabbage, and peas,  
 Dressed children for school, and kept them in trim,  
 And patched, darned and mended for Jennie and Jim.  
 While hubby, incredible as it may seem,  
 Loafed in the tavern or fished in the stream.  
 She did all the washing without board or machine.  
 She rubbed things by hand until they were clean;  
 She did all the cooking, got the water and wood,  
 And many more things that a wife never should—  
 Such as swilling the pigs and cleaning their pen  
 And other worse jobs, so distasteful to men.  
 She milked and fed calves for day after day,  
 In the season went out and helped with the hay.

She made all the candles, and by their flickering light,  
 She spun, knit, or carded 'til late in the night.  
 While "Maister," well padded with onions and tripe,  
 In comfort sat smoking his filthy old pipe.  
 She had no rest or pleasure, but sorrow and grief,  
 And hard anxious labor till death gave relief.  
 That life is all sunshine few will contend.  
 But something's terribly wrong when death's your best  
 friend.  
 Talk of deeds of great men, love or ambition fired!  
 But what of grand women? It makes me tired!  
 Sum all the great things that great men have done,  
 It's but a tallow dip to the blaze of the sun,  
 Compared with what women have suffered and borne,  
 With hands and hearts oft bleeding and torn.  
 If they look on us now, as some fain believe—  
 Though a thing so unlikely is hard to conceive—  
 I say, if they do, no doubt they're glad  
 They died and escaped this house-cleaning fad.

Pawnee City, Nebraska, April 2, 1905.

#### A SURPRISE.

I'd worked all morn, so bright and fair,  
 With inside house affairs.  
 Helping a little here and there,  
 And making slight repairs.

Such work to me is nothing new—  
 We'd planned to take a drive.  
 I'd labored with this end in view  
 Since shortly after five.

I felt elate, as blooming youth,  
 To think we'd almost done;  
 For women's work, "to tell the truth,"  
 Is mighty little fun.

The bell it rang—wife ope'd the door,  
 I instantly stopped humming.  
 There stood fine ladies half a score  
 And several more were coming.

With true surprise and wonder wide,  
 (I didn't have to feign it);  
 If there had been a place to hide  
 No doubt I'd tried to gain it.

Half dazed I eyed the gathering crew,  
 While head of the procession,  
 Before I thought just what to do,  
 Were in and had possession.

My wife now had the bulge on me,  
 She knew what it all meant.  
 It was the W. R. C.,  
 And she was President.

They each had baskets on their arms,  
 Which were straightway delivered.  
 While with forebodings and alarms  
 I simply stood and shivered.

All trembling thus I furtive glanced,  
 In spite of my old breeches,  
 As Tam O'Shanter looked entranced  
 Upon the dancing witches.

Like exile in a foreign land  
 I felt. The W. R. C.  
 No doubt will let me understand  
 They have no use for me.

As one by one my hand they took  
 With greetings warm and hearty.  
 I somehow gathered from their look  
 I need not leave their party.

Encouraged thus, "it broke the spell,"  
 Pleased by their friendly glances,  
 I very soon resigned myself  
 To fate and circumstances.

The salutations mostly out,  
 They dropped their wraps and sables,  
 And donning aprons, went about  
 To set the two big tables.

They laughed and talked, and talked and laughed,  
 In true fraternal spirit;  
 I've seen the time 'twould drive me daft,  
 But now was glad to hear it.

They piled the tables heap on heap,  
 With plenty to repeat it.  
 Enough to make dyspeptic weep,  
 Because he dare not eat it.

With chicken fried, and chicken pressed,  
 And chicken rich with gravy,  
 And deviled ham, and salads dressed.—  
 Enough to fill the navy.

And pies, and cakes, and sauce galore,  
 And nice bread lined with butter—  
 Enough to feed Chicago's poor,  
 And make their glad hearts flutter.

When all were fully satisfied—  
 Had all they wished to eat—  
 To washing dishes some applied,  
 And some to easy seat.

The time passed pleasantly away  
 With poetry and games.  
 I never spent a happier day  
 Than with those worthy dames.

They talked and joked on this and that,  
 With peals of rippling laughter;  
 And ere they knew where they were at  
 'Twas three o'clock and after.

While laughter-ripples filled the air  
 And mirth seemed unabating,  
 Before the door, in carriage there,  
 A husband sat, awaiting.



This broke the meeting; stopped the fun;  
 For some now had to go.  
 Enjoyment prematurely done—  
 It often happens so.

With friendly grips, sincere good-byes,  
 They left in twos and threes.  
 May they be always pure and wise—  
 Have leisure, wealth, and ease.

May they live long to bless the lives  
 Of cheerless wights, like me,  
 No wonder men who have such wives  
 Sometimes want two or three

Pawnee City, Nebraska, Dec. 13, 1905.

---

IT RAINS—IT RAINS—IT'S RAINING.

Mute under the hedge sits the lark and the quail,  
 While the north wind blows a shivering gale,  
 One wonders why it don't turn to hail,  
 While it rains, it rains—it's raining.

This stops farm work so carefully planned,  
 With streams all out washing off the good land,  
 Leaving us nothing but gravel and sand,  
 While it rains, it rains—it's raining.

The farmer! No wonder he feels blue and cross,  
 As he looks over the waste, destruction and loss,  
 Things would be different if he were the boss  
 Of the rains, the rains—the raining.

And yet it's all for the best, no doubt,  
 But as we go dripping and slushing about,  
 We feel like the fellow whom Noah left out  
 While it rains, it rains—it's raining.

As I see the boughs bend before the stiff breeze,  
 I think of the crops, and the fruit budding trees,  
 We are likely to get an all-killing freeze,  
 Whenever it lets up raining.

If I could be anything but what I am,  
 I guess I would rather be oyster or clam,  
 I could laugh in my shell and not care a—bit  
 If it rains, it rains—it's raining.

April 25, 1904.

---

GLIMPSES OF LIFE.

Our childhood days go dancing by,  
 With mirth, and fun, and frolic.  
 Although at times we think we'll die  
 With measles, croup, or colic.

We coast, and skate, and fish and swim,  
 And hunt shells on the shore.  
 Enjoyment's cup filled to the brim.  
 And still we cry for more.

Here let me weave that truth in rhyme  
 Long taught by sage and poet  
 That they who have the happiest time,  
 Don't realize—don't know it.

There's much for childhood to enjoy,  
 As only childhood can;  
 Yet all the time, when he's a boy  
 He longs to be a man.

And when in his declining years  
 Sharp pains and care annoy,  
 Through misspent time he looks with tears  
 To when a happy boy.

The happiest days we ever see  
 In youthful, budding prime,  
 We sigh for joys we think will be  
 Enjoyed in future time,

## THE STRAY THOUGHTS

And when he comes to man's estate  
 With nerves all tense, a-quiver  
 With enjoyment keen, unless by fate  
 We're cursed with a torpid liver.

With impulsive life we keep in touch,  
 And go at pleasure's bid:  
 We feel so swell, know twice as much  
 As father ever did.

We sport and dance with maidens fair,  
 Like happy sheep in clover,  
 Till Cupid gets us in his snare,  
 And then the dance is over.

Our Idol's faults to us seem right,  
 In our blind admiration.  
 To think of her, our soul's delight,  
 Our constant contemplation.

Our heart thumps like a Texas steer  
 That's lassoed for the killing;  
 Until we whisper in her ear,  
 And learn that she is willing,

Matches are made in heaven, they say,  
 It may be true; I doubt it.  
 Rather, Will, impetuous, has its way—  
 Won't stop to think about it.

Look on the long divorce parade,  
 The unions that it sunders.  
 You must admit, in heaven, they made  
 Some most egregious blunders.

If each lives for the other's sake,  
 Their love is all possessing.  
 They have domestic peace that make  
 The greatest earthly blessing.

E'en then they'll find enough of strife,  
 Especially if they're poor;  
 'Twill tax the toil of man and wife  
 To keep wolf from the door.

## OF A LIFETIME

They slave their bones till nigh three score  
 And now they think to rest 'em,  
 And eat the fruit laid up in store,  
 When, lo! they can't digest them.

This thing to me seems plain and clear;  
 I've weighed it, bro and con.  
 There's little of enjoyment here,  
 When health and hope are gone.

At this conclusion I arrive,  
 And take it for my text,  
 To do your best while yet alive,  
 You don't know what comes next.

February 26, 1906.

---

 TO MAMMA—ON OUR FORTIETH ANNI-  
 VERSARY.

Do you mind the day that we were wed  
 Just forty years ago?  
 You blushed at what the preacher said  
 But could not answer no.

To sail the matrimonial sea,  
 And either steer or row;  
 You stepped into the boat with me  
 Just forty years ago.

It must have caused sad tears to fall—  
 Took pluck of high degree—  
 To leave home, parents, friends, and all,  
 And cast your lot with me.

What we've been through in all these years,  
 Our bark tossed to and fro;  
 How much impelled by hopes or fears—  
 How much of joy, or grief, or tears,  
 You and I, alone can know.



Sometimes we've had it bright and clear,  
 And sometimes cloudy weather;  
 But which your lot to row or steer,  
 We've tried to pull together.

You've been a good and faithful wife,  
 Ever standing near me;  
 To share the joys or ills of life,  
 To soothe, advise, and cheer me.

I think of how you clung to me,  
 And never hesitated;  
 When, per advice of Horace G.,  
 We westward emigrated.

When fever-stricken, low I lay,  
 And must die, the doctors said;  
 You watched and nursed me night and day,  
 And never left my bed.

When slowly I began to mend,  
 All grateful for new lease of life,  
 The doctor said "No thanks, my friend,  
 But thank your noble wife."

And this I know, if I were dead,  
 Had heard the last dread call;  
 You, of all the bitter tears, would shed  
 The bitterest tears of all.

Whoever first is called to go,  
 Will leave a heart bereft,  
 To drain the bitter dregs of woe—  
 God help the one that's left.

We emigrated all alone,  
 We had no kindred here;  
 We hoped to get a home our own,  
 Before land got too dear.

As day by day I tilled the land,  
 And strove to get a start,  
 You freely gave a helping hand  
 As you had done your heart.

You struggled hard, both soon and late,  
 Our daily bread to win;  
 Had I the key of heaven's gate  
 You should be welcomed in.

We've had a fairly prosperous life—  
 Have little cause to grumble;  
 We've shied the rock—domestic strife—  
 On which so many stumble.

We've reared a lot of girls and boys—  
 To us they're no discredit;  
 The book that tells of richer joys—  
 That book I've never read it.

We see them almost every day,  
 We're always glad to own 'em;  
 And if we have a word to say  
 To absent ones, we 'phone 'em.

And then, sometimes, they all are here,  
 A reg'lar family union,  
 All mingling glad, with home's good cheer,  
 Sweet friendship and communion.

They are deserving, one and all,  
 Our best and kindest wishes;  
 If ever soup from heaven fall,  
 May they have spoons and dishes.

That they may battle for the right,  
 With zeal both true and fervant,  
 Live lives of constant, pure delight,  
 So prays their humble servant.

When we came here the place was new,  
 'Twas then a territory;  
 But our experience to review  
 Would be too long a story.

Nebraska held inducements great,  
 For winning immigration;  
 She's now a grand and prosp'rous state,  
 In this our glorious nation.

We've seen her prairies dotted o'er,  
 With many a thrifty dwelling;  
 What lies for her in future store,  
 There's scarcely any telling.

We've had our ups and downs, 'tis true,—  
 Have had things to annoy us;  
 We have, at times, felt mighty blue;  
 At OTHER TIMES, been joyous.

We've felt the winds blow hot and dry,  
 From Mexico and Texas;  
 And when our crops began to die,  
 It seemed enough to vex us.

We've seen the 'hoppers swipe our corn,  
 Our summer's hope and labor;  
 And if our visage looked forlorn,  
 We looked just like our neighbor.

And when they'd sapped the very dregs  
 On which our bread depended,  
 They layed the ground chock full of eggs,  
 And thus the curse extended.

We've seen the chintz bugs kill our wheat  
 So dead that you could burn it;  
 Before we could have bread to eat,  
 We must go out and earn it.

Somehow, we've always got along,  
 Been fairly well contented;  
 Of all who came, we're not among  
 The few who have repented.

We backward view that distant day,  
 In retrospect discerning;  
 Alas! how many have gone the way  
 From which there's no returning.

'Tis sad to think since we were wed  
 Of all whom we have known;  
 Friends and schoolmates, mostly dead—  
 We're almost left alone.

While thinking of those friends so dear,  
 By cruel death bereft us;  
 Let's not forget to help and cheer  
 The very few that's left us.

While swift we near the Stygian beach  
 With feeble pulse and slow;  
 We'll be as kind and true to each,  
 As forty years ago.

April 14, 1901.

REQUESTING MA TO COME HOME WHILE  
 VISITING IN WISCONSIN DURING  
 THE PEARL FISHING EXCITE-  
 MENT.

Oh, hear the sweet voice of the birds as they sing,  
 "Get ready to sow," is the tune;  
 And if you're intending to help us this spring,  
 Dear mamma, you'd better come soon.  
 We get along nicely as ever was seen,  
 For the girls are as good as can be;  
 But the cows are to milk, and the houseyard to clean,  
 With no one to do it but me.

CHORUS:

So hear the sad voice of papa and girls,  
 "The night winds repeat as they roam,"  
 And don't fool your time away looking for pearls—  
 You've got them more precious at home.

Oh, mamma, dear mamma, come home once again,  
 We miss you a "heap" when you're gone;  
 You said you were coming on the first train,  
 As soon as your visit was done.  
 The house is so lonely, the bed is so cold,  
 My breeches need patching once more;  
 And it seems so odd, with no one to scold,  
 Because the said breeches are tore.

[CHORUS.]

## MAMMA'S BIRTHDAY.

May our girls now around us here,  
Who laugh, and joke, and chum,  
Help swell your birthday's mirth and cheer,  
For many years to come.

Their constant care and ready aid,  
In every time of need,  
Without which life's downward grade  
Would wretched be, indeed.

For lo! the time approaches fast  
When we won't be alive,  
For I am three score ten and past,  
And you are sixty-five.

But while we live, let's be alive  
To needs of fellow-man,  
And in each instance work and strive  
To do the best we can.

And when we're done with things of earth,  
And all its joys and care,  
Count us with those of modest worth,  
Our heartfelt, earnest prayer.

November 18, 1904.

## ON BACK OF PICTURE TO MY SISTER.

When angels hover round my bed,  
And foolish fancies keep me wake,  
Or wheels are buzzing in my head,  
Or I have got the stomach ache,  
I turn in anguish to the wall,  
And sigh for days of yore,  
While dearest angel of them all  
Keeps up a constant snore.

## WRITTEN FOR THE WOODS-MOORE INFAIR.

I'm glad to meet the neighbors here,  
To swell the stream of mirth and cheer,  
And congratulate, with heart sincere,  
This happy pair.  
And may their joys be never less.  
But daily grow in happiness;  
Our earnest prayer.

May wedded life be pure and sweet,  
With peace and plenty be replete,  
May truth and justice guide their feet,  
Adown life's lane.  
May they look back, with calm content,  
Upon this night and this event,  
Without a pain.

It seems to be kind nature's plan  
To make us happy, if she can,  
And so she made us, various man,  
With wants in common.  
It's clear to me she never meant  
A single heart should live content  
In man or woman.

"Lives there a man with heart so dead,  
Who never to himself hath said,"  
Some day I mean to woo and wed  
The loveliest of maids;  
If so, I fear 'twill be his fate  
To lose his way to heaven's gate.  
And find it down to hades.

I long have said this happy bride,  
Would like to wed—perhaps I lied—  
But she wants all wool, a yard wide,  
And she's a judge of goods.  
So she sighed, and sought, as women will,  
Until she found what filled the bill,  
In Honorable Lewis Woods.

## THE STRAY THOUGHTS

And he, though it may much surprise,  
Evinced rare judgment, deep and wise,  
In thus corralling such a prize,  
A bright and shining Ruby;  
He'd never find a fitter mate,  
Though he had sought, in every state,  
With Mexico and Cuba.

In fact, they seem to match so well,  
Which did the best it's hard to tell,  
Or which will wear the wether's bell  
In life's affair.

But this I know, if they agree,  
What matters it to you or me?  
Why need we care?

If things go wrong in life's affairs,  
And each one thinks the fault not theirs,  
And you feel cross as two old bears,  
But don't you bite.

With love and patience fortified,  
The failings on the other side  
Will seem more light.

If ever dire afflictions come,  
(They're mighty scarce who don't have some),  
Bad bargains, toothache, cards, or rum,  
Or fire or floods;

The wife has left one comfort still,  
To avail herself no doubt she will—  
Take to the Woods.

And now, perhaps, I've said enough.  
And tired you with this rhyming stuff;  
As muse is drowsy—somewhat gruff,  
I'll bid adieu.

And when we meet at heaven's bar,  
May angels hold the gates ajar  
For me and you.

## OF A LIFETIME

## TO ELLA AND MAY VAN HORN

Well, girls, we're truly glad you came,  
A thing you seldom do;  
Now that my muse is old and lame,  
If anything will fan her flame  
It's pretty girls like you

So, may your lives be bright and fair,  
With peace and plenty too,  
With guardian angels special care  
To keep you pure and true.

And now good bye; do come again,  
And make a longer stay.  
In tottering down life's careworn lane,  
'Twill cheer our lonely way.

## TO ANNA PECKHAM.

Don't think we drudge about half froze,  
As day by day it colder grows,  
In vain we pile on fire and clothes,  
An idle dream.  
While frosty tears run down our nose  
A constant stream.

The days are mostly clear and bright,  
With more or less of frost at night,  
In sports and drives some take delight,  
Unfeigned and true.  
If I had not this stomach blight  
Think I would, too.

The roads are fine you wish to go—  
Had little rain, as yet no snow,  
And neighbors visit to and fro  
With friendly mien.  
A better place than this, I know  
Is seldom seen.

With prosperous times as ne'er before,  
 And provisions plenty laid in store,  
 Enough for all to eat, and more,  
 of earthly treasure.

Why need we seek a foreign shore  
 For wealth or pleasure?

Of course it's vain to fume and fret  
 At nature's laws so fixed and set,  
 But seasons two is all you get  
 While all the years roll by;  
 The one is dismal, rainy, wet,  
 The other dusty, dry.

While you may never freeze nor roast,  
 In your fair land out on the coast,  
 Yet when it rains each day almost,  
 Oft two or three together,  
 I hardly see much room to boast.  
 About delightful weather.

Some think we're born beneath a star  
 That rules our lives to make or mar,  
 While others think we owe more far  
 To environment.

Then what's the difference where we are,  
 So we're content?

This was in reply to a letter from Seattle pitying our  
 cold and frosty condition.

---

THE HOPE OF REFORM LIES WITH THE  
 YOUNG.

Alas! I fear 'tis now too late,  
 Though much 'twould give us joy;  
 To save the drunkard from his fate—  
 Let's try to save his boy.

And while we may not hope to save  
 The toppers, steeped in rum,  
 We'll work to cheat the drunkard's grave,  
 Of men who are to come.

A duty that we cannot shirk;  
 We must do all we can,  
 To help build up this noble work.  
 To save our fellow man.

Then let us strive with zeal devout,  
 Both with our brain and purse;  
 And do our utmost to stamp out  
 This awful liquor curse.

Pawnee City, Nebraska, June 4, 1906.

---

THE NEWS.

It's all about the valiant Jap  
 Who caught the great Bear in his trap,  
 And dealt him such a fearful rap  
 That nations wonder.

MORAL. Don't insult a little chap—  
 Might give you thunder.

Pawnee City, Neb., June 1, 1905.

---

In sailing life's tempestuous sea,  
 Our sins will never sink us,  
 If we will live, and try to be  
 What we WANT folks to think us.

---

If all could fully be aware  
 What crops their actions grow,  
 No doubt they'd exercise more care  
 In kind of seed they sow.



## THE STRAY THOUGHTS

Shame ne'er will cloud their noble brow  
Who do their duty, and do it now.

---

True happiness consists  
In making others happy.

## THE WAYS OF LIFE.

We're bounding o'er the billowy deep,  
With spirits light and free;  
What matters it, though millions sleep  
Beneath the briny sea.

To float along in pleasure's gale,  
Ambition constant strives,  
Regardless of the orphan's wail;  
Or tears, of drunkard's wives.

---

For wealth and ease we tax our brain;  
We scheme, contrive, and plan;  
And in our strife for worldly gain,  
Forget our fellow man.

## MEDITATIONS.

Oh, the mystery of death!  
What mind can comprehend it?  
Does all existence end with breath?  
Or does some POWER extend it?

The myst'ry of life is still more vast,  
In all its varied phases.  
The thoughts of future, present, past,  
Astonishes—amazes!

In vain we try to grasp these things;  
We cannot comprehend them.  
We theories build on fancy's wings—  
But reason won't defend them.

We each must taste the bitter gall  
That rives soul and clay asunder;  
The fact we ever lived at all  
A most gigantic wonder.

## TO THE ANGEL GATE KEEPER.

We're coming swift from near and far,  
By fell disease or cruel war;  
Good Angel, keep the "Gates Ajar,"  
That when we shall come  
You'll recognize who we are,  
And bid us welcome.

## ON WRITING VERSES.

To tune and time it, to accent and rhyme it,  
Requires both practice and skill;  
If your'e not inclined to verses you'll find  
Small 'taters, and few in a hill.  
Some muses seem just waked from a dream,  
While many are sleeping still;  
Unless an earthquake should cause them to awake  
No doubt they always will.

## ON BACK OF PICTURE TO A FRIEND.

In groping through this world of care  
The pathway seems more bright,  
If shining clearly here and there,  
We see a friendly light.



## ON BACK OF PICTURE TO A FRIEND.

Until our forms are laid to rest  
 Beneath the chiseled stone.  
 We'll count you friends among the best  
 That we have ever known.

ON FINDING A KEEPSAKE WHICH HAD  
BEEN LOST.

I'm choked with emotion to greet you,  
 My dearest and fondest keepsake;  
 The thought that I ne'er more should meet you  
 Has caused my heart often to ache.

## KEEPSAKE'S REPLY.

By your kisses so rich and so creamy,  
 I know your affections are true.  
 And however happy to see me,  
 I'm none the less glad to see you.

June 10, 1868.

## STRAY VERSES.

If all your time you think and plan  
 Of wealth in foreign clime;  
 You don't get all the good you can  
 In present place and time.

You know I do not think like some—  
 Such thoughts to me's amiss;  
 Of pleasures in the world to come  
 At cost of joys in this.

Men may be earnest, fast, or slow,  
 They may be dull or clever;  
 They very soon tell all they know—  
 But women talk forever.

## A POEM.

The following poem was composed and read by John C. Atkinson, on the occasion of the golden wedding anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Clark, recently celebrated in this city.

All honor to this worthy pair,  
 Who have for fifty years,  
 Divided up their joy or care,  
 Likewise their hopes and fears.

They long have journeyed side by side,  
 Still hand in hand they go;  
 And in each other's love confide,  
 Like fifty years ago.

While we're confronted everywhere  
 With broken marriage bonds,  
 It's good to see this honest pair  
 Still hold each other's hands.

When we view the stream of wedded woe,  
 The thousand hearts now breaking,  
 It don't console one much to know  
 It's largely their own making.

From reading too much worthless trash  
 Youth gets a wrong impression,  
 Think lovers heroes, made of cash,  
 Love, wisdom, and discretion.

Think girls are angels wrapped in clay,  
 With marvelous grace and beauty.  
 That life is made for sport and play,  
 Instead of work and duty.

They're not long wed, their love has cooled,  
 Their ardor much abated;  
 They think how badly they were fooled,  
 How wretchedly mismated.

All comfort now forsakes their lives,  
 Their days, and months, and years,  
 Are filled with vain regrets and strife.  
 And bitter words and tears.

As day by day they drift apart,  
 The strain becomes intense,  
 And thus there's many a broken heart  
 Through want of common sense.

Of all the numerous ills of life,  
 Bad health or empty purses;  
 You must concede domestic strife  
 The worst of human curses.

It's true our troubles often seem  
 To come from various sources;  
 But largely from that turbid stream,  
 Domestic broils, divorces.

In view of this we're glad to see  
 Through bright or cloudy weather,  
 A pair like this who still agree  
 To plan and pull together.

They've lived to realize the truth,  
 Like embers in the fire.  
 They've seen the gush and thrill of youth  
 Flame, languish, and expire.

They've seen their darling schemes explode  
 And burst like empty bubbles;  
 Yet willing still to share the load,  
 And soothe each other's troubles.

Then hail to these long tried and true,  
 A worthy, bright example;  
 And may their griefs be faint and few.  
 Their blessings large and ample.

And when at last we're hence removed,  
 With all of modest worth;  
 May heaven welcome those who loved  
 Domestic peace on earth.

## FIFTY YEARS AGO.

Do men live happier today  
 Than fifty years ago?  
 With all our glitter and display,  
 Our numerous clubs and banquets gay?  
 Indeed, I hardly know.

The modes of life have changed a deal;  
 Now horses reap and mow.  
 We've laid aside the flint and steel—  
 The candle mould and spinning wheel  
 Of fifty years ago.

'Tis true, the changes have been great—  
 Old notions stand no show.  
 Still men are ruled by love or hate,  
 And grave mistakes are charged to fate  
 Like fifty years ago.

The world's the best it's ever been,  
 They say. Perhaps it's so.  
 But men will treat you just as mean,  
 And crooks will shave you just as clean  
 As fifty years ago.

## FOR MRS. GIFFORD.

How sad and gloomy life appears,  
 When our loved in death are sleeping.  
 But why should that draw forth our tears?  
 We help THEM none by weeping.

Let's help each other while alive,  
 Nor mourn that life's denied them;  
 For lo! the time will soon arrive  
 When we must lie beside them.

## SNORE ME TO SLEEP, HUBBY.

Snore me to sleep, hubby, just for tonight,  
 'Twill fill my soul with soothing delight,  
 While I cuddle down, in a snug little heap;  
 Just put your arms round me, and snore me to sleep;  
 Snore me to sleep, hubby, snore me to sleep.

Snore me to sleep, for the cares of the day  
 Have worried and fretted my head till it's gray;  
 O, must I forever these night vigils keep?  
 Eternally wishing you'd snore me to sleep.  
 O, snore me to sleep, hubby, snore me to sleep.

Snore me to sleep, for my throbbing brow aches  
 As I think on the world and its numerous fakes;  
 On men's amorous pledges, which they seldom keep,  
 And the thousand heartbreakings, O snore me to sleep.  
 O, snore me to sleep, hubby snore me to sleep.

Snore me to sleep, while your arms round me fold,  
 And we feel that blest feeling we used to of old;  
 O'er my wretched condition a cayote would weep,  
 And it's all because you won't snore me to sleep.  
 O, snore me to sleep, hubby, snore me to sleep.

O, snore me to sleep, I beseech you once more,  
 With that ever persistent, oblivious snore;  
 I'm sighing for pleasures I never may reap,  
 But the one I want most is, snore me to sleep.  
 O, snore me to sleep, hubby, snore me to sleep.

O, snore me to sleep before I go mad;  
 Once in the asylum, say won't you be glad?  
 'Twould give you a chance, O, it makes my flesh creep  
 To take some fool virgin and snore her to sleep.  
 O, snore me to sleep, hubby, snore me to sleep.

February 9, 1902.

TO C. L. ARMSBURY, ON HEARING THAT  
HE IS WED.

With feelings blue and mood ascetic,  
 And lowering skies with storm prophetic,  
 I'd rather take a huge emetic

Of good hot sling,  
 Than undertake to be poetic  
 On anything.

This world I find, is full of trouble,  
 Whether you go alone or double,  
 We're blown about like chaff or stubble.  
 By many a notion;  
 And life is but a transient bubble  
 On times vast ocean.

A week or more your letter's read,  
 Informing us that you were wed,  
 Since which your aunt's been sick in bed,  
 And looks most awful.

I dare not tell you all she's said—  
 'Twould be unlawful.

And your uncle is'nt much consoled  
 To learn you're petticoat controlled;  
 It seems to me you're not so old  
 You might have waited.

Maturer years may yet unfold  
 That you're mismated.

Perhaps you thought you could not wait  
 Till twenty-five—'twould be too late;  
 Nonsense—twenty-seven or eight  
 Would not have hurt you.

Your purse and brain might gain in weight,  
 If not your virtue.

I sincerely hope you are not sold—  
 Yet all that glitters is not gold.  
 What seems noble and high-souled,  
 As now you view it,  
 May prove to be a wretched scold,  
 And then you'll rue it.

## 32 THE STRAY THOUGHTS

But after all, you may be right,  
 To view it in its proper light,  
 You can't have lost an awful sight;  
 For what has she made?  
 If not your match, by day or night,  
 She's a sorry jade.

I hope she'll prove a real treasure,  
 Both for business and for pleasure;  
 A constant, full, o'erflowing measure  
 Of solid bliss.  
 You can forego wealth and leisure  
 For joy like this.

And may your love be never colder,  
 But flame up more as it grows older;  
 And may you never fret and scold her  
 With angry brow.  
 But in your lap caress and hold her,  
 As you do now.

Rejoice, O, earth, both man and beast,  
 Let kindred meet and make a feast,  
 For since you've been and got the priest,  
 To 'sauge your grief,  
 Two Kansas sufferers, at least,  
 Have found relief.

April 26, 1875.

## BITTER-SWEET.

It's nice to be a millionaire—  
 Do as you please, and never care  
 About your brother, how, or where  
 He gets his bread?  
 But what of those who fain would share—  
 Who wish you dead?

## OF A LIFETIME

33

How much we loved the pie and cake  
 That our good mothers used to make—  
 O, the sweet dainties she would bake,  
 With love intense.  
 But what about the stomach ache  
 In consequence?

It's now the "good old summer time,"  
 And things look glorious, grand, sublime,  
 And love in youthful, budding prime  
 Sports and capers.  
 But what about the blood and crime  
 That fill the papers?

Nature, they say, makes no mistakes,  
 That what she wills, designs, or makes,  
 Whether crystal drops or snowy flakes  
 Is for the best.  
 But what of VAMPIRES, poisonous snakes  
 We all detest?

True, nature seems designed to please,  
 And I most forget my fell disease,  
 As I musing sit beneath the tree's  
 Deep leafy shade.  
 But what of 'skeeters, bed bugs, fleas—  
 Why were THEY made?

It must be grand to be a king,  
 Or queen, or tzar, or some such thing,  
 While people loud your praises sing  
 With loyal breath.  
 But what about the BOMBS they sling—  
 Don't they mean death?

If there's a thing your life blood stirs,  
 It's your best girl, though it oft occurs,  
 While you worship her and all that's hers  
 With heart so mellow,  
 You're apt to find she much prefers  
 The other fellow.

June 2, 1905.

## SOME EVILS ARE INCURABLE.

It's true some evils fall to man  
 That scarcely can be cured.  
 After trying many a plan,  
 And fixing things as best we can,  
 There's much must be endured.

You tell the pigs the swill's too hot,  
 Each one will find it out;  
 And, whether you object or not,  
 He'll run his nose into the pot—  
 Then squeal with scalded snout.

Though thousands have done so before,  
 Yet man, like pigs, won't learn it.  
 In spite of all, you beg, implore,  
 Or others, whining, sad and sore—  
 His nose, he's sure to burn it.

There's some will always have their way,  
 Ignoring your advice.  
 To such I simply wish to say,  
 Just heal your nose as best you may—  
 But don't you burn it twice.

## LINES TO TOM RICHMOND.

Our childhood days are ne'er forgot;  
 My mem'ry takes me back  
 To days when you were little Tot,  
 And I was little Jack.

It's wonderful the change since then,  
 That time and place unfold;  
 From happy boys we grew to men.  
 And now we both are old.

Through all the changes that have passed,  
 We've called each other friend;  
 So may this fellow-feeling last  
 Until our lives shall end.

No matter which is first bereft  
 Of life upon this earth;  
 He'll be assured that he has left  
 ONE FRIEND of real worth.

February 27, 1906.

## THE MAN WHO KILLED MY DEER.

The morn was fair, with chilling air,  
 When one who should be watched,  
 Went sly about his trapping route  
 To see what he had caughted.

If on his beat you chance to meet—  
 Gray are his clothes and hair;  
 Did once reside on sunset side  
 Of Pawnee's public square.

A spare old man, with features wan,  
 Of long and slender breed;  
 Unless that he had stretched a wee,  
 To own some foul misdeed.

Be this as't may, upon this day,  
 In an adjoining wood,  
 A deer he met—it was a pet,  
 Owned in the neighborhood.

"What a fine buck; I'm just in luck;"  
 He said. "And who will know;  
 I'll take him in and trim his skin,  
 Then say I trapped adoe."

And thus no doubt, with arm stretched out,  
 He coaxed him up at last;  
 And ere poor Dick had smelled the trick,  
 By collar held him fast.



Dark is the age whose record page  
Can show a deed to match it;  
Where knave beset a harmless pet,  
And killed it with a hatchet.

A man, you know, might shoot a crow,  
Set on a pigpen fence,  
And not know it tame, refute all blame,  
Upon a just pretense.

But what can plead for this d—d deed—  
To palliate the sin?  
To trap a doe, and not prove it so,  
Is just a trifle thin.

Old man, 't isn't clear you caught that deer  
And held him in a trap;  
That trap, I guess, begins with "s"—  
You held him by the STRAP.

Though man oftime conceals his crime  
So nothing will detect him  
He cannot thwart suspicion's dart,  
When neighbors all suspect him.

If you are clear, let it appear,  
So that all men may know it;  
Why this dread to show the head,  
Unless you DARE not show it?

But if it's true that deer you slew,  
Then know this thing for sure,  
Since Adam fell they're filling h—l  
With better men than you are.

If you do that you would do worse—  
People need to watch you.  
You'd steal a horse, or steal a purse,  
But for the fear they'd catch you.

January, 1875.

## AS I FEEL SOMETIMES.

It's well enough, let youth and health  
Be blithe, and gay, and merry,  
And spurn all paths to sordid wealth—  
Avoid all care and worry.

There's little in old age that cheers,  
Not much that's brigh and sunny.  
With stomach sour for forty years,  
One don't feel very funny.

I'm old and feeble, sick and sad;  
And cheerless to extreme.  
The things that once, would make me glad,  
Are now an idle dream.

Truth is I'm very sad today,  
A canker gnaws my liver;  
As one by one hopes fade away,  
There is small hope for me, they say,  
This side the dark, cold river.

And what's beyond? It gives me pain;  
There's naught on earth can show me  
If I shall meet my friends again,  
Or meeting them, they'll know me.

E'en man-made sacred history  
With all its glorious pages,  
Don't lift the awful mystery  
Come down from countless ages.

A deep impenetrable bar  
Through which we cannot see—  
We little know what we NOW ARE,  
And naught what we SHALL BE.

I somehow think that All-Wise Force—  
Whate'er that Force may be,  
That made the spheres and mapped their course,  
Will care for you and me.



And since it's vain to speculate  
On Destiny of Man,  
We may as well accept our fate,  
And live the best we can.

This brings me back to self again—  
Dyspeptic's darling cheme—  
Because of constant ache and pain,  
And misery extreme.

I've tried a hundred things and more,  
To mitigate my sorrow  
Each worthless as the one before—  
Try something else tomorrow.

For much expense and anxious care,  
No good have I got from it.  
I still mope 'round in blank despair,  
And sigh, and groan, and vomit.

To view it in a worldly light,  
I guess I've filled my mission;  
But why entail this withering blight—  
This damnable condition?

Why breathe disease in every breath,  
While pleasures mock, confound me;  
Why am I doomed to starve to death  
With plenty all around me?

This world to me is bright and fair,  
How much I could enjoy it;  
There's love and beauty everywhere,  
But grief and pain destroy it.

Thus o'er my ills I muse and muse  
In meditation deep,  
Until my eyes with tears diffuse:  
No wonder that I weep.

## PRAISE PEOPLE WHILE THEY LIVE.

We're fallen in an evil way—  
We see it to our sorrow  
The things that we should do today  
We put off till tomorrow.

A common fault, it may be said;  
'Tis certain a misgiving.  
We wait to give, when friends are dead,  
What they should have while living.

Lives there a man deserves your praise,  
No matter why, or how;  
Don't wait until he ends his days,  
But let him hear it now.

"It gars me greet," as Burns would say,  
That worth in every station  
Gives talents, time, and life away,  
Without appreciation.

Men and women of noble mind,  
Who seem to think their mission  
Is here to benefit mankind,  
And better his condition.

But see the base ingratitude,  
For all the've worked and worried,  
Their purest motives misconstrued,  
Until they're dead and buried.

But when once we've laid them low,  
To sleep beneath the daisies,  
The world in general isn't slow  
To sing and shout their praises.

Let's grasp the hands of honest worth,  
And cheer them while they're GOING  
Along the various paths of earth,  
To where?—Alas! no knowing.

When summoned by the King of Fate  
To leave this world of beauty,  
It may be consolation great,  
To think we've done our duty.

WRITTEN AND READ ON FORTY-FIFTH  
ANNIVERSARY.

We're deeply grieved for faces missed,  
 Who should be here today;  
 But on the invitation list  
 We really had no say.

Did ever live such girls as ours?  
 They think that any time  
 My muse can pluck life's choicest flowers,  
 And weave them all in rhyme.

When scant of time and thought, it's true,  
 There's apt to be hard sledding;  
 Yet none the less we welcome you  
 To our memorial wedding.

We welcome you with hearts sincere,  
 And while on earth we stay,  
 We'll think you kindly came to cheer  
 On this our wedding day.

Until we say our last farewell,  
 And press the last sad kiss,  
 Our hearts will with emotion swell  
 When we remember this.

Years forty-five, through shine and rain,  
 We've owned the marriage fetter;  
 We'd like to live those years again,  
 Some things we might do better.

Now understand, we don't complain  
 That married life's a curse;  
 Could we be young we'd wed again—  
 Think single life is worse.

But on the whole let's be content,  
 And thank the Great All-Wise,  
 That here once more we can present  
 Unbroken family ties.

When we shall meet the King of Fate  
 And Jordan must pass through,  
 May angels open heaven's gate  
 To welcome us and you. April 14, 1906.

A BRIEF REVIEW, THOUGH SOMEWHAT  
CURSORY,  
ANENT THE PRESENT ANNIVERSARY.

The following lines are by our son, Ed., for our forty-  
 fifth wedding anniversary, April 14, 1906. We're proud  
 of them.

Perhaps you thought in '61  
 Your lives had reached their full fruition;  
 Life's school for you was just begun,  
 You'd only paid your first tuition.

You shared the fears and griefs of war,  
 Till in the spring of sixty-three  
 They were a while forgotten, for  
 A baby came—a beauty—me.

The strenuous life had now begun,  
 Your cup was full and running o'er;  
 You'd scarcely learned to care for ONE  
 When Jen. arrived, in sixty-four.

And now it seemed it would be wise  
 To build a new and larger nest;  
 With hopeful hearts and tear-dimmed eyes,  
 You started for the mighty West.

The way was long, and lone, and drear;  
 But blest with youth, and hope, and health,  
 Your courage mastered every fear—  
 Although one team drew all your wealth.

About the time you landed here  
 And picked a farm and reared a cot,  
 Another babe arrived to cheer  
 The dreary hardships of your lot.

Life now became more hard and stern;  
 The times were bad, the country new;  
 A dime was mighty hard to earn,  
 And had to do the work of two.

It seemed as if your cake was dough—  
 Corn meal at that—but with some leaven;  
 (I mention now, of course, you know,  
 Our Annie, born in sixty-seven.)

Ensuing years brought bad and good,  
 For which 'twas hard to be prepared.  
 You struggled on the best you could,  
 When drouth took what the 'hoppers spared.

We always had enough to eat,  
 Though luxuries were very few;  
 And now that you're on "Easy street,"  
 We're proud of how you pulled us through.

I'd like to note the main events  
 That happened in my recollection,  
 But lack of time and space prevents  
 More than the briefest retrospection.

In seventy, young Charles befell;  
 Next spring our brother, Ernest, died;  
 In seventy-two I knew Estelle,  
 And next year I met Maude, beside.

'Twas this same year we moved our all  
 To the "home place" northwest of town.  
 Next year on Easter, I recall,  
 The house and contents were burned down.

Then came more drouth and hoppers, too;  
 It seemed as if the land was curst;  
 But when this time was weathered through,  
 We felt that we had known the worst.

'Tis always darkest ere the day,  
 And brighter days were dawning fast.  
 (In seventy-seven, by the way,  
 "J. D." was born, and she's the last.)

And yet she's not the last to share  
 The care and love we'd shared before;  
 For every child is now a pair—  
 Grand-children number twenty-four.

And while we may have caused you grief,  
 And sleepless nights, as like as not—  
 You should be proud—It's my belief  
 There's no black sheep among the lot.

Now as we meet to wish you joys,  
 The greatest earth and heaven can give,  
 We know we have—both girls and boys—  
 The kindest parents ever lived.

J. E. ATKINSON

ON PRESENTING A CANE TO MY SON.

I need not explain why I give you this cane  
 'Twill remind you of me when you view it;  
 Of me and my ways, my bright or dark days,  
 In short, my whole life, as you knew it

Of sympathy true between me and you,  
 As well as for all human kind;  
 Of hatred to none, and love to my own,  
 Whose welfare was ever in mind.

How I hated deceit, though smiling so sweet;  
 The most detestable people on earth  
 Are they who strive, plan and contrive  
 To pass for more than they're worth.

These things will pass through your mind as you view  
 This token with silent regard.  
 If thinking of me any pleasure will be,  
 Then know, I have had my reward.

In years to come, Ed. though I may be dead,  
 And quietly in the grave sleeping,  
 Don't spurn it with pride, and kick it aside,  
 As a thing no longer worth keeping.

But cherish it still, as I now think you will,  
 For the memories of "auld lang syne."  
 You'll think of the days when I wrote simple lays,  
 And keep it—because it was mine.

Christmas, 1902.

## THE STRAY THOUGHTS

## THE OLD SPOON'S PLEA

TO BE CHERISHED WITH THE NEW-FANGLED  
SOUVENIRS.

For your affections I'm a suitor,  
Though old, and plain, and lacking grace;  
Not made of silver, gold, nor pewter,  
Nor stamped with name of noted place.

I've done my duty, faithful ever,  
In trials hard, and uses base;  
Fed babes and brutes, cut pie, but never  
Did harm—unless 'twas to your face.

So put me with your later treasures,  
In peace and quiet for a space;  
I've shared your griefs, increased your pleasures,  
And earned a rest—in any case.

J. E. ATKINSON

## TO PAULINA.

I read the lines your daughter sent,  
With keen appreciation.  
Such generous words, so kindly meant,  
Draw forth my admiration.

I should be vain if I believe  
My muse such praises merit;  
And hopeless blind, not to perceive  
A friendly, kindred spirit.

It's true, she takes a final shot  
Somewhat at my expense—  
She quite forgets, the poet's not  
Famed for his common sense.

As to California's charming land,  
My non-appreciation,  
I think you hardly understand  
The real situation.

## OF A LIFETIME

I like her happy, genial clime,  
Her sunshine and her flowers;  
In spite of dust in summer time,  
And winter's drizzling showers.

But you pay high for real estate,  
For all the good you get,  
For land that's raw, to irrigate,  
To ditch, and check, and wet.

And after all the cash, expense,  
And work, and care, about it,  
Your alfalfa isn't more immense,  
Than ours is without it.

While I don't want to irrigate,  
This truth is plain as day—  
It's the BEST way to fix a thing  
WILL FIX NO OTHER WAY.

Enough of this—life's chief delight  
Depends on no location;  
'Twill flourish, if the heart is right,  
In any situation.

It knows no east, it knows no west,  
No clime nor place control;  
It has its source within the breast,  
And wells up from the soul.

If each would constant work and strive,  
To make a happy home,  
Iniquity would cease to thrive—  
The devil cease to roam.



## TO MRS. MARTHA SNYDER.

I heard your letter to my wife,  
While sitting snug beside her;  
She could not tell me for her life,  
Who was this Martha Snyder.

No chum of mine, I said in truth,  
For it's quite plain to see,  
If we'd been intimate in youth,  
She'd still remember me.

Back fifty years our mem'ry flew,  
To days before we wed,  
But of the Marthas whom we knew,  
We thought they all were dead.

As thus we pondered o'er and o'er,  
My wife was first to speak;  
Why didn't I think of it before—  
Of course 'twas Martha Flak.

I thank you for remembrance kind,  
Of one so dear to me;  
Search o'er the world, you cannot find  
A better friend than she.

I thank you, too, with heart devout,  
Though this may feebly show it,  
For your very kind request about  
This frail and simple poet.

Then here this feeble hand of mine  
I offer if you'll take it,  
And on that human, wireless line,  
And for the sake of "auld lang syne,"  
I'll grasp your hand and shake it.

Alas! how few in fifty years,  
Are left on earth to greet us;  
In that bright land so free from tears,  
Let's hope that they will meet us.

March 14, 1906.

## THE BLAKER-WILLIAMS WEDDING.

Congratulations, Mr. Blaker,  
You've drawn a prize, or I mistake her;  
You have reason great to thank your Maker,  
With heart devout,  
That the other fellow didn't take her,  
And leave you out.

May she prove a glorious treasure,  
Both for business and for pleasure;  
A constant, full o'er flowing measure  
Of solid bliss.  
There's naught in fame, nor wealth, nor leisure,  
That equals this.

And may you, sweet bride, be ever blessed,  
In choosing Joe from all the rest,  
But you ran great risk (I mean no jest),  
Men are, I say,  
Scarce worth taking, at the best,  
But this one may.

Be true to him, through weal or woe,  
So may your happy hearts o'erflow;  
But if dire misfortunes in a row  
Should mar life's plan,  
Divide your trouble up with Joe.  
As best you can.

Shun jealousy, that grizzly phantom—  
Their hell's complete who let her haunt 'em.  
Earth's richest joys, may heaven grant 'em,  
Your home to bless.  
Darling cherubs as you want 'em,  
No more, no-less.

You'll both need strive with all your might,  
To win success, in life's great fight;  
May you ever battle for the right,  
With zeal most fervent.  
Live long with constant pure delight,  
So prays your servant.

## THE STRAY THOUGHTS

TO SARAH—SIX MONTHS LATER.

I'm sad and vexed as a drunkard's wife,  
For things are not what they appear;  
Joys that I hoped would last through life,  
Are gone in less than half a year.

Cheerless and sad is now my lot,  
I see my hopes die one by one;  
And then to think that you've forgot  
Your Aunt Polly and Uncle John.

—————  
LINES TO SARAH, A LITTLE NIECE WHO  
HAD BEEN VISITING US.

So, little girl, you're going to leave us,  
It's always just been that way;  
It's only things that fret and grieve us  
That are sure to always stay.

If there's a thing that gives us pleasure—  
A thing we set our hearts upon;  
We hardly realize the treasure  
Ere it flits, forever gone.

And since we know 'twas ever thus,  
All earthly things declare it;  
No use to whine or make a fuss,  
We'd better grin and bear it.

Good bye, dear child, you're going now,  
To home and kindred dear.  
May truth and virtue crown your brow  
For many a happy year.

I hope you'll do the best you can,  
To make other lives more sunny;  
And have the luck to TRAP a man  
With MORALS, BRAINS, AND MONEY.

And keep the golden rule in view  
Through all the scenes of life;  
And reach that bliss enjoyed by few—  
A perfect happy, wife.

May peace and plenty be your lot,  
With friendships true and tried;  
May love and virtue seek your cot,  
And ever there abide.

May troubles weigh as feathers light,  
Your joys weigh tons and more;  
And live a life of pure delight;  
With cherubs half a score.

As sun will daily rise and set,  
While days and years roll on;  
So while you live you'll not for get  
Aunt Polly and Uncle John.

—————  
TO TOM NORTHEY—THINK OF ME.

Yes, think of me when you're alone,  
And if your heart is not of stone,  
'Twill make you weep—nay even groan,  
That I, a speck of human dust—  
Compelled to gnaw an old dry crust.

With youth, and health, and teeth all sound,  
One might eat corn, although unground.  
Think how my toothless jaws must ache,  
While masticating johnnycake  
It's of no use to stop and rest 'em,  
And sigh for biscuits—can't digest 'em;  
And then what makes the matter wus,  
Nobody seems to care acuss.  
The world wags on in thoughtless glee,  
And never stop to think of me.

When your domestic skies are clear,  
Then think of me, Tom; do you hear?  
When plans all work as you designed,  
And you're at peace with all mankind,  
When you are lost in meditation,  
Of this glorious, grand creation,



Teeming with joys, of which the best,  
Leans snug and close to your white vest,  
You melt beneath the warm caress,  
Of that little poetess,  
And love sports wanton, wild and free;  
Then Tom, O, Tom! just think of me.

If murky clouds o'erspread your sky,  
As they will, doubtless, bye and bye;  
Then think of me, and heave a sigh.  
When cherished plans work wrong end to,  
And you feel sad, and mighty blue,  
I can't describe it, nor begin,  
As tired and ailing, you step in,  
The children's cross, wife in a fret,  
Water, and wood, and dinner to get;  
With three weeks' washings in the suds,  
The sweet perfume of baby duds;  
Your tooth it aches enough to kill;  
Do try and keep that young 'un still;  
Won't you give these clothes a stir up,  
While I give that brat some syrup;

In vain she plies the soothing bottle,  
It yells as if 'twould split its throttle;  
Till crazed with pain, and vexed with care,  
Your great heart bursting in despair,  
You trot the infant on your knee,  
And curse your fate—Tom, think of me.

August 10, 1876.

McKINLEY: THE ABLE, TRIED, AND TRUE.

The man whose energy and ability have proved equal to every emergency. The man whose record is practically above the adverse criticism of jealous foreign nations. With McKinley at the helm, the ship of state floats majestically and grand. And while the American people are justly proud of their standard bearer, the world looks on with wonder and surprise, admiration and respect, at the genius and ability evinced by our nation when led by such a man as Wm. McKinley.

ANSWER TO PLEA FOR STARVING KANSAS.

It's true enough, I'm somewhat poor,  
Yet I'm no selfish stingy boor;  
I'd share a crust with such as you are,  
If in distress.  
And devil take the one, I'm sure,  
Who would do less.

Whene'er I think of western woes,  
It nearly turns my verse to prose,  
How urchins lean and scant of clothes,  
Gaunt and grimmy,  
Huddle together, half chilled and froze,  
Without shirt or chemise.

O, how the mother's heart must ache,  
She dreads the time when they will wake,  
And cry for bread that's yet to bake,  
No meal about.

Cursed be the wretch who for their sake  
Would not "shell out."

We daily hear such tales as these is,  
Until our blood it almost freezes,  
To think how drouth and adverse breezes,  
Bring want and woe.  
And wonder why the Almighty pleases  
To will it so.

They say the reward of toil is sweet,  
But when 'hoppers, drouth, and bugs compete,  
To kill our wee bit corn and wheat,  
The cholera our chickens.

Just what we're going to have to eat  
It frets me like the dickens.

Though to repine may be a sin,  
The outlook's gloomy, cheerless, thin,  
And chaps like me, that's scant of "tin,"  
Are feeling blue.

They can't see where the sweet comes in—  
Say, Clark, can you?

But why complain it's all amiss,  
 It cheats one out of present bliss,  
 With wife to love and babes to kiss,  
 Why need it fret one?  
 The chap who lacks a joy like this,  
 Had better get one.

What though there's want among the masses,  
 And poverty stares the working classes?  
 Enjoy each season as it passes;  
 Thus reason teaches;  
 In spite of drouth or hoppergrasses,  
 Or ragged breeches.

REPLY TO BESSIE CASEY, TOURING IN  
 THE MOUNTAINS.

If you'll forgive the awful crime,  
 And muse will smile, I'll make it rhyme.  
 If she should balk before I close it,  
 Then of course, I'll have to prose it.

It makes me feel so proud—O, my!  
 As I adjust my glasses—  
 To know I'm still remembered by  
 The charming pretty lasses.  
 At my age it's so uncommon  
 To win a thought from girl or woman.

And this thing seems so very queer,  
 With wonders vast to gaze on;  
 A thousand things to see and hear,  
 And spend your nights and days on;  
 That I should get the least attention,  
 Quite surpasses comprehension.

It makes me feel so young, you bet,  
 In spite of my distresses,  
 To think the lines I used to get  
 From Hannahs, Belles, and Bessies;  
 They warm my blood, like ginger tea.  
 Those letters sweet they sent to me.

Long years have passed, and now I'm old  
 But it's no use repining;  
 Though life sometimes seems drear and cold,  
 Let's make it bright and shining.  
 May yours be always bright and sunny,  
 With a handsome man, and lots of money.

When I am sad, and feel unwell  
 And cannot sleep of nights,  
 Because of things I may not tell,  
 Or bugs, and 'skeeter bites,  
 I groan and turn, the clock strikes two—  
 I'd like to sleep and dream of you.

What though your path may lie above  
 My meek and lowly station;  
 May I ne'er be less worthy of  
 Your kind consideration.

Now, as my muse seems less inspired,  
 And you, like me, perhaps, are tired,  
 I'll say good night; may wisdom great  
 Keep you pure and hearty;  
 And choicest blessings ever wait  
 On you and all your party.  
 Believe me, most sincere and fervent,  
 Your obedient, humble servant.

TO MAUDE, ON HEARING THEY WERE GO-  
 ING TO LEAVE MERCUR, UTAH.

You doubtless well remember, Maude,  
 The fable about the dog,  
 That, with a lusty lump of meat,  
 Was crossing the stream on a log;  
 When he saw a dog in the stream,  
 Half a rod away, or less,  
 Also carrying a piece of meat,  
 Which he resolved to possess.  
 This exorbitant greed or habit,  
 Both dogs and men have it bad;  
 So he opened his jaws to grab it,  
 And dropped the piece that he had.

REPLY TO MRS. ED. ATKINSON, ASKING MY  
VIEWS ON HER POEM SENT US.

Your letter, with the paper, came;  
The lines—we're glad to read 'em.  
You want my views upon the same,  
In honest truth and freedom.

In asking this, most folks, you know,  
Want me to praise and flatter;  
But if defects I deign to show,  
Why that's a serious matter.

It's a ticklish job, I realize,  
Both delicate and tender;  
A friendly muse to criticise—  
What if I offend her.

On good and bad, as falls the rain,  
Both its defects and merits,  
As I see, I'll tell you plain  
In kind and friendly spirit.

It's mostly good, some couplets fine,  
Chock full of pith and sense;  
And some with wit and humor shine  
Somewhat at rhyme's expense.

And others are not quite complete,  
I find on scanning close;  
Some lines are slightly short in feet,  
And some are too verbose.

These faults are common, and appear  
In many a worthy poet,  
Whose muse has sung for many a year,  
And yet their verses show it.

To weave good sense in perfect rhyme  
With wit and humor too,  
In verse euphonious and sublime.  
Is what but few can do.

On the whole you did quite well;  
Your muse—pray don't forsake her—  
While lots in Kam-e-i will sell  
For fifty cents an acre.

Of any good we may possess,  
I think you'll find the fact is,  
We owe its chief and main success  
To constant pains and practice.

There's one exception to this rule—  
Please pardon this digression—  
It's what we never learned in school—  
Is taught by no profession.

I mean young love's first virgin kiss—  
No practice e'er improves on this,  
Though oft you may repeat it;  
The climax of all earthly bliss,  
But heaven, they say, will beat it.

But glories of the world to come  
I can but darkly see;  
What seems so plain and clear to some,  
Is quite obscure to me.

Those lofty themes I cannot sing,  
My muse I cannot boost;  
She puts her head beneath her wing  
And cowers down to roost.

As she will neither drive no coax,  
And enough's already said,  
I bid good night to you, dear folks,  
And hike me off to bed.

P. S. I've puzzled much, my misty brain:  
In futile effort to explain;  
How you sing booming Kam-e-i  
To tune of white man's lullaby.  
I don't see how, it came to pass;  
It's up to you, turn on the gas.

## 56 THE STRAY THOUGHTS

TO MRS. W. S. PECKHAM, ASKING IF IT WOULD  
BE CONVENIENT TO VISIT AT A CER-  
TAIN TIME.

By all means come and understand,  
We're not too pompous, great or grand,  
Nor yet too small,  
To modify what we have planned,  
For good of all.

Had we arranged to meet the Pope,  
To blot our sins, build up our hope,  
With heaven in view;  
We'd treat it as a light affair,  
And put it off, right glad to share  
A talk with you.

ON PRESENTING A CANE TO MY SON.

Well, Carley, my boy, I wish you much joy,  
As Christmas comes once again;  
With kindest regard for you and your pard,  
I now present you with this cane.

True it's not great, but honest and straight,  
Emblematic of me and you.

Let's hope and pray our lives ever may  
Be as honest, and straight, and true.

If in a back street a footpad you meet,  
Designing your pockets to pick,  
Don't think for a minute your luck is not in it;  
Just open his skull with this stick.

May joys that peace give in your home ever live  
To quarrel is wicked and wrong;  
But both of one mind, be gentle and kind,  
And so help each other along.

Let this be your creed, do as you've agreed,  
Though selfishness stand in the way;  
Put self aside, let conscience guide,  
Regardless of what people say.

## OF A LIFETIME 57

TO MRS. OWEN.

We are feeling bad, in fact so sad,  
It almost makes us cry;  
To think you wouldn't, or may be couldn't  
Call and bid us good bye.

Dear Mrs. Owen, we're sorry you're goin';  
Perhaps we may never meet more.  
If we never do, may heaven keep you  
Till we reach the Celestial shore.

Ere it be long we shall join the great throng  
Of the millions gone before  
Through tempest and tide may Providence guide  
Till we reach the Celestial shore.

September 2, 1902.

TO C. L. ARMSBURY.

Two weeks and more this answer's due,  
For which I ask your pardon;  
But then we have so much to do,  
I've scarcely time to tie my shoe,  
And none to make a garden.

With eyes half open up we get,  
And milk the cows all mornin';  
Then to the fields all in a fret,  
For here it's been so late and wet,  
That some ain't got their corn in.

And then it's milk till nine at night  
And subsequent the churning;  
O, labor! how is thy delight!  
To me obscured, or out of sight,  
When life and lamp-oil's burning.

'Tis said the reward of toil is sweet;  
So were our boyhood's lickings;  
They never used us up complete,  
As chintz bugs promised to our wheat,  
And cholera our chickens.



That you're as well as we's my prayer,  
 And hope you're twice as jolly;  
 For what with constant toil and care  
 We look and feel the worse for wear—  
 That's I and your Aunt Polly.

As to horses, I would say  
 I've two I might dispose of,  
 On either time or ready pay;  
 Who gets them any other way  
 May lightning strike his nose off.

But those I'd sell you should not buy,  
 Unless indeed, you're crazy;  
 I'll tell you plain the reason why—  
 One's hard to keep, his mettle's high;  
 The other's plagued lazy.

And then they both are geldings, too;  
 I much prefer a filley,  
 For poor men like me and you  
 To entertain a different view,  
 I think is very silly.

There's still another reason, too,  
 (I scarce know how to word it;)  
 When I was young and fixed like you,  
 (Though happy then as now, 'tis true),  
 I thought I couldn't afford it.

Their price would buy a yoke of steers,  
 And five or six good kine,  
 Which with good care, there is no fear,  
 Would buy in less than thirteen years,  
 A dozen teams like mine.

Let butter, wool, pork, beef, and cheese  
 Employ your constant care;  
 So may you live in plenteous ease,  
 And have good GREENBACKS when you please  
 To spend, and some to spare.

Whilst he who only wheat would raise,  
 Although he seems to LORD IT;  
 Will live in slavery all his days,  
 To soulless, cursed monopolies,  
 And DIE with a big STORE DEBT.  
 May 29, 1876.

## VALENTINE DAY, 1902.

Dear Mrs. Riddle, we wish you were here—  
 Now, don't be offended because I said dear;  
 Let me assure you, it's true when I say  
 We've always regretted that you went away.

Some men have fool notions. Say, don't you think?  
 Many go crazy; some take to strong drink;  
 Some to cease thinking of misery and crimes  
 Stifle reflections by stirring up rhymes.

Well, turn up your nose, and call me a CRANK,  
 I never MINCE matters, I'd rather be FRANK;  
 Sincerely I say, our grief is intense,  
 We're sorry you left us—have mourned ever since.

It's not that the neighbors treat us unkind,  
 To us most people seem friendly inclined.  
 Yet, while admitting that this is the case,  
 There's none, Mrs. Riddle, who quite fill your place.

So cheerful and bright, loquacious and gay,  
 Yet serious and mindful of duties today;  
 Ready to help in the struggles and strifes  
 Of people who lead more unfortunate lives.

We miss you indeed, there's something we lack,  
 Say, Mrs. Riddle, why don't you come back?  
 But if paths diverge, as fate may intend,  
 Consider me now and forever, your friend.



## SOLILOQUY OF MAUDE'S LOVER.

Although it may seem strange to some,  
I know the time will surely come,  
When Maude will be my sugar plum,  
So sweet and mellow.  
Then on my nose I'll wag my thumb  
At t'other fellow.

Yes, she will learn to love me yet;  
Before my star of fate be set,  
She'll be my darling, vretty pet,  
Angelic teaser.  
Won't I feel bigger then, you bet,  
Than Julius Caesar.

## READ AT THE LYCEUM.

If, in appointing me to lecture,  
Your community in truth believe,  
A web of argumentive texture,  
And philosophic, I can weave  
The sequel then, will soon be told,  
Both committee and you are badly sold.

I'm quite unfit for such a thing;  
Education I sadly lack this;  
To spin one's thoughts in even string  
Requires learning, pains, and practice.

To both instruct and to amuse,  
I'll try to make my constantaim;  
And though we differ in our views,  
Yet none of us may be to blame.  
If each does duty their own way,  
No matter what folk thinks or say.

Yet, if I put a wretched theme  
In still more wretched verses,  
The public judgment is supreme—  
I'm at its tender mercies.  
From which I know there's no appeal;  
So, come what may, I'll never squeal.

We sigh for knowledge when we're young,  
We long to roam in every land;  
We want to speak in every tongue,  
All art and science understand.  
But poverty, that worst of woes,  
Still holds the grindstone to our nose.

When farther over life's bubbling tide,  
And youthful aspiration cool?  
We see that learning misapplied,  
But makes men educated fools.  
Who wrangle over faith and creeds,  
Simply because some big fool leads.

I think, perhaps, that he's correct,  
That Darwin struck the true bonanza;  
That man, with noble intellect,  
Has sprung from the chimpanza;  
Though much improved in size and shape,  
In actions, still he's much an ape.

And what is learning, after all?  
The pomp and show that it displayed,  
What knows it of this earthly ball—  
Or when, or how, or why, 'twas made?  
Of what knows man, with giant mind,  
His origin—for what designed.

None know for what we were designed,  
I'm sorry, thus to state it  
Some say, to propagate our kind:  
But why should we propagate it,  
It seems scarcely worth the while;  
For this short life of care and toil.

But that's the thing we can't find out,  
Though we be great and learned and wise;  
Man grovels on 'twixt hope and doubt,  
Till in despair, at last he dies,  
Thus generations endless round,  
Die—are buried in the ground.

And that's the way it's ever been,  
 Through all the myriad ages spent;  
 Ten hundred thousand million men,  
 Have each asked what this earth life meant;  
 No answer yet, earth's records show,  
 We live and die 'tis all we know.

With all his research, all his skill,  
 What knows he of that first great cause?  
 The fiat of whose mighty will,  
 Creation made, and gave it laws.  
 Does man live on from sphere to sphere,  
 Or is existence ended here?

Does sage know more than you or I,  
 With his boasted education?  
 He knows all flesh is born to die,  
 Beyond this all is speculation.  
 In which the learned grope just as blind  
 As most unlettered of mankind.

A vast unfathomable sea,  
 Impenetrable, deep abyss,  
 In which the life that is to be,  
 They say, somehow depends on this.  
 But of that life there's none can know—  
 There's naught on earth that goes to show.

Since finite mind has not the key  
 By which infinite is revealed;  
 It's vain to yearn and strive to see  
 What its Great Author has concealed.  
 And strive for bliss beyond this sphere,  
 And lose the joy we might have here.

Education, rightly understood,  
 Has common sense for its mainspring.  
 Should only teach what's for our good,  
 Our just relation to everything.  
 To shun evil, as best we can,  
 Be true to ourselves and fellow man.

We read in nature's wondrous book,  
 Where things are so decreed and fixed,  
 That on whatever page we look,  
 We see there's good and evil mixed.  
 Or if not mixed, so near allied  
 We scarce know which is which, untried.

Some say all things are for our good,  
 But we're both ignorant and perverse.  
 And do not use them as we should;  
 So turn our joys to bitter curse.  
 The good lies in their temperate use,  
 The curse results from their abuse.

No doubt there's much of truth in this,  
 For all experience goes to show,  
 Whatever gives us greatest bliss,  
 Contains the germs of deepest woe.  
 Thus appetite, designed to please,  
 By much abuse, brings on disease.

It's natural as a cat laps cream,  
 To sigh for things we should not have.  
 Through all our lives we plan and scheme,  
 Through wet and dry we toil and slave;  
 And grievous ills, it's my impression,  
 Are faults of judgment or discretion.

When borne along by keen desire,  
 Rein up your nag a moment, stop her;  
 While of your conscience you inquire  
 If it be right, and just, and proper;  
 If best for you and all concerned  
 To have this thing for which you've yearned.

The social evils of our race,  
 That rob the world of half its joy;  
 Their origin we plain can trace  
 To indiscretions of the boy  
 The seed we sow in youth ul stage  
 We're sure to reap in later age.

So boys, I hope you'll stop and think,  
 Before bad habits go too far;  
 You're not a man because you drink,  
 And loaf, and smoke a nice cigar.  
 While liar, libertine, and thief,  
 Are very sure to come to grief.

Another evil I have seen,  
 As Solomon says, under the sun,  
 Old men want wives about sixteen,  
 Though they be three times twenty-one.  
 Thus old King David, I'm afraid,  
 Set bad example with the maid.

If husband dies, as a general rule,  
 He leaves a wife careworn and sad;  
 The wife dying oft leaves a fool,  
 However good the man she had.  
 For soon as free he seeks the hand  
 Of fairest girls in all the land

He may be robbed by time and fate  
 Of all attractions save his lucre;  
 He'll pledge his purse and real estate  
 As quick as gambler would on euchre.  
 Yes, though he's old, and bald, and gray,  
 Of youthful years and charms bereft,  
 He constant strives to make more gay  
 The few remaining days that's left.

And now, old bach, I can't contrive,  
 Why you live single, if this be true.  
 He wants a wife at sixty-five,  
 Then why in common sense don't you?  
 If men with wives are always cursed,  
 Why want the third more than the first.

The poor old maid, what can I say,  
 That would do justice to her case?  
 That angel wrapped in human clay;  
 Why do you shrink from her embrace?  
 You are to blame for all her woes,  
 Her sleepless nights and icy toes.

But I must stop; I've said enough;  
 There's other things I'd like to mention;  
 But I've run out of rhyming stuff.  
 So thank you for your kind attention.  
 And while the earth turns on its axis,  
 Put love, and faith, in truth and practice.

February 20, 1878.

OCTOBER 15, 1906.

Written for Uncle Josh's and Aunt Ann's Fiftieth Anniversary.

To me you're mostly strangers here,  
 Yet by your smiles I know  
 You've come to wish them joy and cheer—  
 This pair wed long ago.

We wish them joy in all they do,  
 The choicest that we know;  
 May they to each be kind and true  
 As fifty years ago.

Of all the good things from above  
 There's one I'd like to name;  
 It's where young lives are pledged in love,  
 And always stay the same.

In this fast age of pomp and show,  
 Domestic broils, divorce,  
 It really does one good to know  
 This pair have kept their course.

So may they down to death's grim tide,  
 As hand in hand they go,  
 In each other's love confide,  
 As fifty years ago.

The occasion comes but once in life,  
 And to but few at that;  
 Where they can sit down man and wife,  
 As years ago they sat.

And talk o'er lives back fifty years,  
 To days before they wed.  
 Of all their struggles, hopes, and fears,  
 The living and the dead.

Of schoolmates who now o'er the earth,  
 Are scattered far and wide;  
 Of parents dear who gave them birth,  
 And a thousand things beside.

They talk of days when they were poor  
 And struggled hand in hand  
 To keep the wolf out from the door,  
 Till now it's simply grand

To see the good things they possess,  
 Of all this world can give;  
 And may their joys be never less  
 While here on earth they live.

They have for years contrived and planned,  
 And labored side by side,  
 Till now they own of this good land  
 Broad acres, far and wide.

They own the cows on many a hill,  
 And swine and horses, too;  
 And yet they keep on working still;  
 I wouldn't; say, would you?

We all for pleasures of this sort  
 Our time and thoughts employ.  
 Alas! That life should be too short  
 Its blessings to enjoy.

We strive to lay up for old age,  
 And this is right, no doubt;  
 And when we drop from off the stage  
 Our children quarrel about.

We have for wealth no labor spared,  
 We've rustled all we could,  
 Till health and vigor's so impaired  
 It does us little good.

We stretch a greedy hand for gold,  
 With eager joy receive it,  
 Regardless that we're growing old—  
 Must shortly die and leave it.

From this we see, and no mistake,  
 We see it to our sorrow:  
 The man's a fool who wants his cake,  
 But saves it till tomorrow.

For what tomorrow may bring forth,  
 There's none of us can know;  
 If adverse winds will blow us north,  
 Or genial south winds blow.

But if to north or southern clime,  
 Let's do the best we may  
 To make the most of present time,  
 And let's begin today.

No matter what may come next year,  
 Or where we live or how;  
 Let us enjoy this bounteous cheer,  
 And have a good time now.

Since life has much we can't control,  
 It seems the fate of man—  
 We may as well fill up the bowl  
 And live the best we can.

Then blessings on this worthy pair  
 Who have for fifty years  
 Divided up life's joy and care,  
 Likewise its griefs and tears.

They've climbed life's hill together bound,  
 Have youth and vigor spent,  
 Till now on top they can look around  
 In plenteous content.

Yet they, like me, have never found  
 Just what this earth-life meant.

## THE STRAY THOUGHTS

"Now they must totter down again,  
But hand in hand they'll go,  
And sleep together at the foot,"  
And that is all we know.

We cannot a true answer give,  
However much we try,  
"If this be all of life to live,  
Or all of death to die."

But let us trust that all-wise Force—  
Whate'er that Force may be,  
That made the spheres and mapped their course,  
Will care for you and me.

And now I say to one and all,  
May we live free from sin,  
Until we hear good angels call  
To bid us welcome in.

Into that sweet, eternal rest,  
Where tears shall never flow,  
That place prepared for all the blessed—  
God grant it may be so.



