

JOSEPH ASHBY-STERRY

THE LAZY MINSTREL

Joseph Ashby-Sterry

The Lazy Minstrel

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Joseph Ashby-Sterry

The Lazy Minstrel

*And while his merry Banjo rang,
'Twas thus the Lazy Minstrel sang!*

OVERTURE

Within this Volume you will find,
No project to "improve the mind"!
No "purpose" lurks within these lays —
These idle songs of idle days.
They're seldom learnēd, never long —
The best apology for song!
Should e'er they chance to have the pow'r,
To pass away some lazy hour —
They'll serve all "purpose," it is true,
The Minstrel ever had in view!

LAZY LAYS

HAMBLEDEN LOCK

A CAPITAL luncheon I've had at the "Lion,"
I've drifted down here with the light Summer breeze;
I land at the bank, where the turf's brown and dry on,
And lazily list to the music of trees!
O, sweet is the air, with a perfume of clover,
O, sleepy the cattle in Remenham meads!
The lull of the lasher is soothing, moreover,
The wind whistles low in the stream-stricken reeds!
With sail closely furled, and a weed incandescent —
Made fast to a post is the swift *Shuttlecock*—
I think you will own 'tis uncommonly pleasant
To dream and do nothing by Hambleden Lock!

See a barge blunder through, overbearing and shabby,
With its captain asleep, and his wife in command;
Then a boatful of beauties for Medmenham Abbey,
And a cargo of campers all tired and tanned.
Two duffers collide, they don't know what they're doing —
They're both in the ways of the water unskilled —
But here is the Infant, so great at canoeing,
Sweet, saucy, short-skirted, and snowily frilled.
I notice the tint of a ribbon or feather,
The ripple of ruffle, the fashion of frock;
I languidly laze in the sweet Summer weather,
And muse o'er the maidens by Hambleden Lock!

What value they give to the bright panorama —
O, had I the pencil of Millais or Sandys! —
The lasses with sunshades from far Yokohama,
The pretty girl-scullers with pretty brown hands!
Next the *Syren* steams in; see the kind-eyed old colley,
On the deck, in the sun, how he loves to recline!
Note the well-ordered craft and its Skipper so jolly,
With friends, down to Marlow, he's taking to dine.
In the snug-curtained cabin, I can't help espying
A dew-clouded tankard of seltzer-and-hock,
And a plateful of peaches big babies are trying,
I note, as they glide out of Hambleden Lock!

A punt passes in, with Waltonians laden,
And boatman rugose of mahogany hue;
And then comes a youth and a sunny-haired maiden

Who sit *vis-à-vis* in their bass-wood canoe.
Now look at the Admiral steering the *Fairy*,
O, where could he find a much better crew than
His dutiful daughters, Flo, Nina, and Mary,
Who row with such grace in his trim-built randan?
I muse while the water is ebbing and flowing,
I silently smoke and serenely take stock
Of countless Thames toilers, now coming, now going,
Who take a pink ticket at Hambleden Lock!

SPRING'S DELIGHTS

*'Tis good-bye to comfort, to ease and prosperity,
Now Spring has set in with its usual severity!*

SPRING'S Delights are now returning!
Let the Lazy Minstrel sing;
While the ruddy logs are burning,
Let his merry banjo ring!
Take no heed of pluvial patter,
Waste no time in vain regrets;
Though our teeth are all a-chatter,
Like the clinking castanets!
Though it's freezing, sleeting, snowing,
Though we're speechless from catarrh,
Though the East wind's wildly blowing,
Let us warble, *Tra la la!*

Spring's Delights are now returning!
Let us order new great-coats:
Never let us dream of spurning
Woollen wrap around our throats.
Let us see the couch nocturnal
Snugly swathed in eider-down:
Let not thoughts of weather vernal
Tempt us to go out of Town.
Though the biting blast is cruel,
Though our "tonic's" not *sol-fa*,
Though we sadly sup on gruel,
Let us warble, *Tra la la!*

Spring's Delights are now returning
Now the poet deftly weaves
Quaint conceits and rhymes concerning
Croton oil and mustard leaves!
Let us, though we are a fixture,
In our room compelled to stay —
Let us quaff the glad cough mixture,
Gaily gargle time away!
Though we're racked with pains rheumatic,
Though to sleep we've said ta-ta,
Let us, with a voice ecstatic,
Wildly warble, *Tra la la!*

Spring's Delights are now returning!

Doctors now are blithe and gay!
Heaps of money now they're earning,
Calls they're making ev'ry day.
Ev'ry shepherd swain grows colder,
As, in vain, he tries to sing;
Feels he now quite ten years older,
'Neath the blast of blighting Spring!
Though we're doubtful of the issue,
Let us bravely shout Hurrah!
And in one superb *A-tishoo!*
Sneeze and warble *Tra la la!*

A MODERN SYREN

THE laughing ripples sing their lay,
The sky is blue, and o'er the bay
The breeze is blowing free;
For, O, the morning's fresh and fair,
And bright and bracing is the air,
Down by the summer sea.

A pretty, winsome, merry girl,
With all her sunny hair a-curl,
Was dimpled bonny Bee;
Her laugh was light, her eyes were blue,
They always said her heart was true,
Down by the summer sea.

The sun is hot, the day is grand,
And up and down the yellow sand
Perambulateth he:
She promised they should meet at eight,
And from her lips should learn his fate,
Down by the summer sea.

He fancies it is getting late,
For by his watch 'tis now past eight,
Some minutes twenty-three;
The shore he scans with eyesight keen.
And notes the track of small *bottines*,
Down by the summer sea.

He hums a merry song and strolls,
And tracks this pretty pair o' soles —
His heart is full of glee!
For now that he has found the clue,
He follows footsteps two and two,
Down by the summer sea.

"But ah!" he says, and stops his song —
"This soler system is all wrong,
'Tis plain enough to me,
Those prints are proofs – I can't tell whose —
But 'quite another pair of shoes,'
Down by the summer sea."

The short and narrow, long and wide,
He finds march closely side by side
By some occult decree;

And as he cons the footprints o'er,
He finds that two and two make four,
Down by the summer sea!

He sighs, and says, "Ah, well, indeed!"
And from his pocket takes a weed,
And strikes the light fuzee:
He adds, "I think I'll now go home,
For maidens' vows are frail as foam
Down by the summer sea!"

REGRETS

O FOR the look of those pure grey eyes —
Seeming to plead and speak —
The parted lips, the deep-drawn sighs,
The blush on the kissen cheek!

O for the tangle of soft brown hair,
Fanned by the lazy breeze;
The fleeting hours unshadowed by care,
Shaded by tremulous trees!

O for the dream of those sunny days,
Their bright unbroken spell,
And thrilling sweet untutored praise —
From lips once loved too well!

O for the feeling of days ago,
The simple faith and truth,
The Spring of time, life's rosy dawn —
O for the love and the youth!

HAMMOCKUITY

*If you swing in a hammock the summer day through,
And you dream with profound assiduity,
A new phase of content it will give unto you
Which philosophers call "Hammockuity"!*

ALL through the lazy afternoon,
Beneath the sycamore,
I listen to the distant Lune,
Or slumber to its roar;
'Tis sweet to muse, to sleep or sing,
When talk is superfluity;
'Tis sweet beneath the trees to swing,
And practise hammockuity.

Forgotten here, I would forget
The destiny fate weaves,
The while I smoke a cigarette
To music of the leaves;
I wish my present lazy life
A lengthy continuity;
Away from trouble, care, and strife,
In happy hammockuity!

While others work, while others play,
Or love, or laugh, or weep;
I watch the smoke-rings curl away,
And almost fall asleep!
I'd give up thought of future fame —
Despite such incongruity —
I'd forfeit riches, power, name,
For blissful hammockuity!

I hate the booming busy bee
Who dares to wake me up —
I wonder if it's time for tea,
Or grateful cyder-cup?
I would I could, beneath the trees,
Repose in perpetuity,
And swing, and sing, and take mine ease
In lasting hammockuity!

MY COUNTRY COUSIN

TO Town, about the close of dull November,
Up comes the Country Cousin, pray remember, —
The Cattle Show to visit in December!

Her winsome, watchet eyes, they are the sweetest,
Her *chaussure* and her gloves they are the neatest,
Her toilette you'll consider the completest.

She's pretty, piquante, pouting, and capricious;
So dainty, dimpled, daring, and delicious:
She's joyful, and she's jaunty and judicious.

She loves to hear the latest tittle-tattle;
On manners, music, crinoline, and cattle,
And pictures, peers and poets will she prattle!

She often goes out shopping with her Mother,
The Park she sometimes visits with her Brother —
She'd much prefer to stroll there with Another!

The gay *Mikado* music sets her humming —
And how she likes the Temple kettle-drumming,
With those who love to go chrysanthemumming!

She has no views on "rights" or vivisection,
Finds politics a nuisance on reflection —
To bores she has a most supreme objection!

Delight she takes in anything that's merry,
She dearly loves a pleasant lunch *chez Verrey*,
And much prefers dry Pommery to sherry!

She rattles through a picture exhibition,
Then goes to see a circus or magician,
And does a morning concert in addition!

Of theatres, you'll find, she'll ne'er grow weary;
Each night she'll go – let plays be good or dreary —
And sit them through, still looking bright and cheery!

She can't e'en rest 'twixt Saturday and Monday,
But in a hansom – despite Mrs. Grundy —
She drives down to the Abbey on a Sunday!

She's bright each morn – as fresh as any daisy —

And when with seeing sights I'm nearly crazy,
She says I am "incorrigibly lazy!"

But when one morn from Euston she has started —
Those eyelids drooped a wee bit when we parted —
I certainly feel dismal and down-hearted.

That merry whirling time at last is ended! —
And as for hearts? Pooh! pooh! I'm feeling splendid.
"Least said," the proverb hints, "is soonest mended."

A COMMON-SENSE CAROL

*By the sea, on the shore, it is pleasant to be,
The sunshine's delicious I own;
This life would be ever delightful to me,
If folks would but leave me alone!*

O, HOLIDAY-MAKERS can rarely be still,
But take superhuman exertions
And make themselves hot and exhausted and ill
To organize horrid "excursions"!
Let those who enjoy it ride out in a "shay" —
Exploring each dell and each dingle —
But let me throw stones in the water all day
And roll on the sand and the shingle!

They think it delightful to walk on the pier,
And try to create a sensation;
When passengers land, looking pallid and queer,
A cause is for great jubilation:
Let lunatics listen to bands when they play,
And nod to their noise and their jingle —
But let me throw stones in the water all day
And roll on the sand and the shingle!

Anemone-hunters roam over the rocks,
All hoping to fish up a tank-full;
They hopelessly ruin their shoes and their socks —
O, why can't they rest and be thankful?
They rave o'er a wrinkle, a wrass, or a wray,
And sea-weeds that with them commingle —
But let me throw stones in the water all day
And roll on the sand and the shingle!

They fancy 'tis pleasant to go for a sail
With wind in a dubious quarter;
When waves "chop about," and they get very pale,
And up to their knees in the water.
Let maritime maniacs, wetted with spray,
Discourse on a cleat or a cringle —
But let me throw stones in the water all day
And roll on the sand and the shingle!

I'd much rather take a good pull at ozone
Without all this bustle and riot;
If well-meaning friends would but leave me alone,

To bask in the sunshine and quiet.
Such labour as theirs fills my heart with dismay —
The thought of it makes my blood tingle —
So I will throw stones in the water all day
And roll on the sand and the shingle!

SAINT MAY

*There's a bell that wakes the echo and renders
incomplete,
The sullen shuttered silence of the solemn City street!*

SAINT ALOYS the Great is both mouldy and grim,
The Decalogue's dusty, the windows are dim;
If I'm not mistaken, you'll long have to search
Before you discover this old City church:
But it's whereabouts I don't intend to betray,
Though a pilgrim each week to the shrine of Saint May!

The one bell is cracked in its crazy old tower,
The sermon oft lasts rather more than an hour;
The parson is prosy, the clerk eighty-three,
The organ drones out in a sad minor key:
Yet how quickly the moments, I find, fly away,
I pass every week 'neath the spell of Saint May.

She sits in a high, ancient black oaken pew,
Which almost conceals her fair face from my view;
The sweetest of pictures, it can't be denied,
With two tiny sisters who sit by her side:
And they lisp the responses and kneel down to pray,
With their little hands locked in the palm of Saint May.

Of saints I've seen many in churches before —
In Florence or Venice, they're there by the score;
Agnese, Maria – the rest I forget —
By Titian, Bassano, and brave Tintoret —
Though as pictures delightful, I fancy that they,
E'en as pictures, can't rival my gentle Saint May.

She's almost too young and too plump for a saint,
With sweet little dimples that Millais might paint;
She wears no ascetic or mortified mien,
No wimple of yellow or vestment of green —
But her soft golden hair throws a sunshiny ray,
Like a nimbus, around the fair face of Saint May!

What surquayne or partlet could look better than
My saint's curly jacket of black Astracan?
What coif than her bonnet – a triumph of skill —
Or alb than her petticoat, edged with a frill.

Would she love, would she honour, and would she *obey*?
I wonder while gazing across at Saint May!

The sermon is finished, the blessing is o'er,
The sparse congregation drift out at the door;
I pause as I pass down the gloomy old aisle,
To see my saint pass and perchance get a smile:
I would daily change faith like the Vicar of Bray,
Could I pass all my life in adoring Saint May!

Through the weary dull week, as it rolls on apace,
I'm haunted by thoughts of that tender young face;
And oft, O how oft, does the vision arise —
The pureness and truth of those eloquent eyes!
And I long for the hour, and I count on the day,
When I sit at a distance and worship Saint May!

No doubt you'll be vastly surprised when you're told
Her name, in the Calendar, ne'er was enrolled —
They prattled of "May," the sweet sisterly pair,
I added the "Saint," — she was canonized there!
Ah! if saints might wed sinners, I'd yield to her sway,
And I straightway would fall on my knees to Saint May!

A CANOE CANZONET

*The leaves scarce rustled in the trees,
And faintly blew the summer breeze;
A damsel drifted slowly down,
Aboard her ship to Henley town;
And as the white sail passed along,
A punted Poet sang this song!*

IN your canoe, love, when you are going,
With white sail flowing, and merry song;
In your canoe, love, with ripples gleaming
And sunshine beaming, you drift along!
While you are dreaming, or idly singing,
Your sweet voice ringing, when skies are blue:
In summer days, love, on water-ways, love,
You like to laze, love, – in your canoe!

In your canoe, love, I'd be a tripper,
If you were skipper and I were mate;
In your canoe, love, where sedges shiver
And willows quiver, we'd navigate!
Upon the River, you'd ne'er be lonely,
For, if you only had room for two,
I'd pass my leisure with greatest pleasure
With you, my treasure, – in your canoe!

In your canoe, love, when breezes sigh light,
In tender twilight, we'd drift away;
In your canoe, love, light as a feather,
Were we together – what *should* I say?
In sunny weather, were Fates propitious,
A tale delicious I'd tell to you!
In quiet spots, love, forget-me-nots, love,
We'd gather lots, love, – in your canoe!

Bolney Backwater, July.

A LOVER'S LULLABY

MIRROR your sweet eyes in mine, love,
See how they glitter and shine!
Quick fly such moments divine, love,
Link your lithe fingers in mine!

Lay your soft cheek against mine, love,
Pillow your head on my breast;
While your brown locks I entwine, love,
Pout your red lips when they're prest!

Mirror your fate, then, in mine, love;
Sorrow and sighing resign:
Life is too short to repine, love,
Link your fair future in mine!

THE TAM O' SHANTER CAP

Upon the Spa at Scarborough, the Minstrel was a panter
—

He asked a Wilful Maiden why she wore a Tam o' Shanter?

She gazed upon his furrowed face, half doubting if he chaffed her,

Then, noting well his solemn mien, she answered thus, with laughter —

LET others wear, upon the Spa,
The "Rubens" hat or bonnet;
The "Gainsborough," the Tuscan straw,
With *marguerites* upon it —
The "Pamela," of quaint design,
The "Zulu," or the "Planter" —
But as for me, I much incline
To wear my Tam o' Shanter!

Let others sport the fluffy hat,
The "Sailor Boy," or "Granny;"
The "Bargee," or some other that
Is anything but canny.
If petticoats be short or long,
Or fuller be or scanter,
Or if you think it right or wrong —
I'll wear my Tam o' Shanter!

I'll wear it if it's hot or cold,
Let weather what it may be!
Will this Child do "what she is told"?
Or is she *quite* a baby?
I do not care for my Mama,
Or Cousin Charlie's banter;
Despite the chaff of dear Papa,
I'll wear my Tam o' Shanter!

You ask me if I'll tell you why
I cannot do without it?
Because it keeps me cool and dry —
You seem inclined to doubt it?
The reason why? There, pray don't tease!
I'll tell you that instanter.
The reason is —*Because I please*
To wear my Tam o' Shanter!

A STREET SKETCH

UPON the Kerb, a maiden neat —
Her hazel eyes are passing sweet —
There stands and waits in dire distress:
The muddy road is pitiless,
And 'busses thunder down the street!

A snowy skirt, all frill and pleat;
Two tiny, well-shod, dainty feet
Peep out, beneath her kilted dress,
Upon the Kerb!

She'll first advance and then retreat,
Half frightened by a hansom fleet.
She looks around, I must confess,
With marvellous coquettishness! —
Then droops her eyes and looks discreet,
Upon the Kerb!

A TINY TRIP

THE BILL OF LADING

SHE was cargo and crew,
She was boatswain and skipper,
She was passenger too,
Of the *Nutshell* canoe;
And the eyes were so blue
Of this sweet tiny tripper!
She was cargo and crew,
She was boatswain and skipper!

THE PILOT

How I bawled, "Ship, ahoy!"
Hard by Medmenham Ferry!
And she answered with joy,
She would like a convoy,
And would love to employ
A bold pilot so merry:
How I bawled, "Ship, ahoy!"
Hard by Medmenham Ferry!

THE VOYAGE

'Neath the trees gold and red,
In that bright autumn weather,
When our white sails were spread,
O'er the waters we sped —
What was it she said?
When we drifted together!
'Neath the trees gold and red,
In that bright autumn weather!

THE HAVEN

Ah! the moments flew fast,
But our trip too soon ended!

When we reached land at last,
And our craft was made fast,
It was six or half-past —
And Mama looked offended!
Ah! the moments flew fast,
But our trip too soon ended!

A STUDY

MADE IN "BRADSHAW" AT CARNFORTH JUNCTION

MISS DIMPLECHEEK,
Your winsome face,
Your figure full of girlish grace,
Is quite unique!
Your pretty, poutful, childlike charm,
All criticism must disarm,
Miss Dimplecheek!

Miss Dimplecheek,
Ah! well-a-day,
I watch your pretty roses play
At hide and seek!
While York to Lancaster gives place,
And sweeter grows your pretty face —
Miss Dimplecheek!

Miss Dimplecheek,
I wonder if
You ever revel in a tiff,
Or pout in pique
Or droop those pretty eyelids down,
Or shake your shoulders, stamp, or frown,
Miss Dimplecheek?

Miss Dimplecheek,
I gaze, and then —
The most cantankerous of men
Grows mild and meek.
Your faults? Perchance you *may* have some —
But to your faults I'm blind and dumb —
Miss Dimplecheek.

Miss Dimplecheek,
If I but knew
Who was the proud papa of you
I'd quickly speak:
And get an introduction, so
Eventually I might know
Miss Dimplecheek.

Miss Dimplecheek,
I leave you here,

For I am off to Windermere,
To stay a week:
I p'r'aps may ne'er see you again —
But – there's the bell, and here's my train —
Miss Dimplecheek!

DOCTOR BRIGHTON

"One of the best physicians our city ever knew is kind, cheerful, merry, Doctor Brighton." – The Newcomes.

Scene. – King's Road, Brighton

The Colonel. Beryl (*His Niece*)

The Colonel

THOUGH long it is since Titmarsh wrote;
His good advice we still remember,
When bad catarrh and rugged throat
Are rife in town in grey November!
So, if your temper's short or bad,
Or of engagements you are full, man;
Or if you're feeling bored or sad,
Make haste and get aboard the Pullman
And throw all physic to the dogs —
If life's sad burden you would lighten —
Run quick away from London fogs
And call in cheerful Doctor Brighton!

Beryl

Good Doctor Brighton, a mighty magician is,
See him at once, howe'er bad you may be!
Take his advice – there no better physician is —
Naught is his physic but Sunshine and Sea!
Come down at once then! Leave London in hazy time,
Leave it enshrouded in yellow and brown!
Come here and revel in exquisite lazy time,
Flee from the turmoil and taint of the town!
Blue is the sky and the sunshine is glorious,
Charged is the air with delicious ozone:
Gay is the cliff and most gentle is Boreas,
Come down at once and recover your "tone!"

The Colonel

Though many years have passed away,
And countless cares to not a *few* come,
The place is bright as in the day
Of Ethel, Clive, and Colonel Newcome:
The East Street shops are just as gay,
The turtle still as good at Mutton's;
The buns at Streeter's – so they say —
As well-beloved by tiny gluttons!
You still can gallop o'er the Down,
Or swim at Brill's just like a Triton.
A smile will supersede your frown
When you consult kind Doctor Brighton!

Beryl

Here is Mama looking anxious and serious:
List to the patter of smartly shod feet!
Dainty young damsels, whose faces ne'er weary us,
Tailor-made dresses delightfully neat!
Angular ladies in gloomy æsthetic coats,
Maudle and dawdle the afternoon through;
Graceful girlettes in the shortest of petticoats,
Flutter their frills as they walk two-and-two.
Fur-coated beauties in carriages roll about,
Jaded M.P.'s try to trot away cares,
Dandies and poets and loungers here stroll about,
Dignified dowagers bask in Bath-chairs!

The Colonel

Though cynics swear all pleasures fade,
And cry, *O tempora mutantur!*
The bonny laughing Light Brigade,
Still on the King's Road gaily canter!
And yet upon the Lawns and Pier,
Do lots of pleasant folk commingle:
While still the old, old song we hear —
The lullaby of surf on shingle!
Then let's remain to laugh and laze,
Where light and air enjoyment heighten —

Too short the hours, too few the days,
We pass with merry Doctor Brighton!

LIZZIE

PAINTED BY LESLIE

O, WHO can paint the picture of my pet?
As 'mid the grey-green hay she childlike kneels,
Who shows a dainty slipper, then conceals
'Neath tangled grass its celadon rosette.
A soft white robe, a broidered chemisette
Scarce veils her rounded bosom, as it steals
A subtle charm it only half reveals —
As sweet and modest as the violet!

A gipsy hat casts shadows, pearly grey,
Across the golden sunshine of her smile.
Her glance e'en cynics dare not disobey,
Her dimples even iron hearts beguile —
A dainty despot on a throne of hay,
Who conquers all by magic girlish wile!

A MARLOW MADRIGAL

O, BISHAM BANKS are fresh and fair,
And Quarry Woods are green,
And pure and sparkling is the air,
Enchanting is the scene!
I love the music of the weir,
As swift the stream runs down,
For, O, the water's deep and clear
That flows by Marlow town!

When London's getting hot and dry,
And half the Season's done,
To Marlow you should quickly fly,
And bask there in the sun.
There pleasant quarters you may find —
The "Angler" or the "Crown"
Will suit you well, if you're inclined
To stay in Marlow town.

I paddle up to Harleyford,
And sometimes I incline
To cushions take with lunch aboard,
And play with rod and line.
For in a punt I love to laze,
And let my face get brown;
And dream away the sunny days
By dear old Marlow town!

I go to luncheon at the Lawn,
I muse, I sketch, I rhyme;
I headers take at early dawn,
I list to All Saints' chime.
And in the River, flashing bright,
Dull Care I strive to drown —
And get a famous appetite
At pleasant Marlow town!

So when, no longer, London life
You feel you can endure;
Just quit its noise, its whirl, its strife,
And try the "Marlow-cure"!
You'll smooth the wrinkles on your brow
And scare away each frown —
Feel young again once more, I vow,
At quaint old Marlow town!

Here Shelley dreamed and thought and wrote,
And wandered o'er the leas;
And sung and drifted in his boat
Beneath the Bisham trees.
So let *me* sing, although I'm no
Great poet of renown —
Of hours that much too quickly go,
At good old Marlow town!

IN ROTTEN ROW

A WAY with all sorrow, away with all gloom,
Now may is in blossom, and lilac in bloom;
The golden laburnum in gardens is gay,
The windows are bright with their floral display;
The air is delightful, and warm is the sun,
The chesnuts are snowy, the Derby is won.
Piccadilly is pleasant from daylight to dark,
And Bond Street is crowded, and gay is the Park —
So now is the time when you all ought to go,
And sit on a Chair 'neath the trees in the Row!

For only a penny I sit in the shade,
And gaze with delight on the gay cavalcade!
While countless romances I read if I please,
In the people I see from my Chair 'neath the trees.
'Tis better by far than an Opera-stall,
A crowded At-home or a smart fancy ball;
Or gazing at pictures, or playing at pool,
Or playing the banjo, or playing the fool —
When soft summer breezes from Kensington blow,
'Tis pleasant to sit on a Chair in the Row!

What studies of man and of woman and horse
Here pass up and down on the tan-trodden course!
The Earl and the Duke and the Doctor are there,
The author, the actor, the great millionaire;
The first-season beauties whose roses are red,
The third-season beauties whose roses have fled!
M.P.'s, upon cobs, chatting pleasantly there,
And pets, upon ponies, with long sunny hair —
I note them all down, as they pass to and fro,
And muse in my Chair 'neath the trees in the Row!

What countless fair pictures around may be seen,
How colours flash bright on their background of green!
A bouquet of figure, of fashion, of face,
And dainty devices in linen and lace!
The triumphs of Worth and of Madame Elise
You see as you wonder and moon 'neath the trees.
What sweet scraps of scandal afloat in the air,
And gossip you hear sitting silently there! —
But folks are going lunchwards; I'll join them, and so
I ponder no more in my Chair in the Row!

A PORTRAIT

IN sunny girlhood's vernal life
She caused no small sensation;
But now the modest English wife
To others leaves flirtation.
She's young still, lovely, debonair,
Although sometimes her features
Are clouded by a thought of care
For those two tiny creatures.

Each tiny, toddling, mottled mite
Asserts with voice emphatic,
In lisping accents, "Mite is right" —
Their rule is autocratic:
The song becomes, that charmed mankind,
Their musical narcotic,
And baby lips, than Love, she'll find,
Are even more despotic!

Soft lullaby, when singing there,
And castles ever building —
Their destiny she'll carve in air,
Bright with maternal gilding:
Young Guy, a clever advocate —
So eloquent and able!
A powdered wig upon his pate,
A coronet for Mabel!

SYMPHONIES IN FUR. COMPOSED DURING THE FROST

*In these rough rhymes I string together
Portraits of each pretty face —
Which, in this rough and rimy weather,
Surely can't be out of place.*

LADY SEALSKIN

A DAINTY young damsel is Pearl,
Beclad in the softest of sealskin:
I'm told her papa is an Earl; —
Just watch her most gracefully twirl,
A lovely and lissom young girl,
Whose jersey is tight as an eelskin;
A dainty young damsel is Pearl,
Beclad in the softest of sealskin.

MISS OTTER

You never, I'm certain, saw such
A lithe little learner in otter!
She's ready to fall at a touch;
Behold how she's anxious to clutch
Her ebony-stick with a crutch
By which she's enabled to totter.
You never, I'm certain, saw such
A lithe little learner in otter.

PRINCESS ERMINE

Pray, who is the pretty Princess,
Who is robed in the royalest ermine?
And exquisite velveteen dress,
With bangles that ring more or less;
I'm sure you're unable to guess,
And 'tis hardly for me to determine!
Pray, who is this pretty Princess,

Who is robed in the royalest ermine?

MISS SILVER-GREY RABBIT

Here comes that big baby called Bee,
Who is clad in the coat of a bunny!
A romping young rebel is she —
Her skirts only reach to her knee,
Her life's full of mischief and glee,
And a "spill" she thinks screamingly funny.
Here comes that big baby called Bee,
Who is clad in the coat of a bunny!

THE HON. MABEL SABLE

O, had I ten thousand a year
I'd marry Miss Mabel in sable!
A dainty, divine little dear,
She's out of my reach though she's near —
I'd woo her to-day without fear,
And wed her at once, were I able!
O, had I ten thousand a year
I'd marry Miss Mabel in sable!

MISS BEARSKIN

And this is our sweet little Flo,
A bonny young beauty in bearskin!
How glibly she'll glide to and fro,
And sweet sunny glances bestow,
While a lovely carnational glow
Just flushes her exquisite fair skin.
And this is our sweet little Flo,
A bonny young beauty in bearskin!

DRIFTING DOWN

DRIFTING down in the grey-green twilight,
O, the scent of the new-mown hay!
The oars drip in the mystic shy light,
O, the charm of the dying day!
While fading flecks of bright opalescence
But faintly dapple a saffron sky,
The stream flows on with superb quiescence,
The breeze is hushed to the softest sigh.
Drifting down in the sweet still weather,
O, the fragrance of fair July!
Love, my Love, when we drift together,
O, how fleetly the moments fly!

Drifting down on the dear old River,
O, the music that interweaves!
The ripples run and the sedges shiver,
O, the song of the lazy leaves!
And far-off sounds – for the night so clear is —
Awake the echoes of bygone times;
The muffled roar of the distant weir is
Cheered by the clang of the Marlow chimes.
Drifting down in the cloudless weather,
O, how short is the summer day!
Love, my Love, when we drift together,
O, how quickly we drift away!

Drifting down as the night advances,
O, the calm of the starlit skies!
Eyelids droop o'er the half-shy glances,
O, the light in those blue-grey eyes!
A winsome maiden is sweetly singing
A dreamy song in a minor key;
Her clear low voice and its tones are bringing
A mingled melody back to me.
Drifting down in the clear calm weather,
O, how sweet is the maiden's song!
Love, my Love, when we drift together,
O, how quickly we drift along!

TOUJOURS TENNIS

BY A WILFUL LAWNTENNISONIENNE

O BRING me, O bring me, my stout mackintosh,
I care not a feather for slime or for slosh!
The sky it is leaden, the lawn sopping wet,
And sodden the balls are, and slack is the net!
I've done it before and I'll do it again,
I'll play at Lawn-Tennis in spite of the rain!

I'll don my sou'-wester, then what do I care
If weather be foul or if weather be fair?
I'll put on my furs, and I'll shorten my clothes,
I'll wear my galoshes and thick woollen hose:
I care not a pin for the storm or the flood,
I'll play at Lawn-Tennis in spite of the mud!

I laugh as the hailstones come pattering down,
I'm spattered all over from sole unto crown!
In thunder and lightning I'll play all the same —
I *won't* be debarred from my favourite game!
Though weak-hearted lasses may quiver and quail,
I'll play at Lawn-Tennis in spite of the hail!

In summer 'tis pleasant, but you ought to know
'Tis capital fun in the winter also:
When nets are all frozen and balls can't rebound,
When chilly the air is and snow's on the ground!
Though lazy folks shiver, and say 'tis "no go,"
I'll play at Lawn-Tennis in spite of the snow!

What pleasure can equal, what exercise vies
This winter Lawn-Tennis, with snow in your eyes?
You trip and you tumble, you glance and you glide,
You totter and stumble, you slip and you slide!
With two ancient racquets strapped fast to my feet,
I'll play at Lawn-Tennis in spite of the sleet!

In autumn, as well as in summer or spring,
In praise of Lawn-Tennis I heartily sing!
Though good at each season, and better each time,
I'm certain in winter the game's in its prime!
You doubt it? No matter! Whate'er may befall,
I'll play at Lawn-Tennis in spite of you all!

TARPAULINE

A SKETCH AT RYDE

A PRETTY picture is it not,
Beneath the awning of the yacht?
A beauty of Sixteen,
She wears a trim tarpaulin hat,
So now you know the reason that
I call her Tarpauline.

A taut serge dress of Navy blue,
A boatswain's silver whistle, too,
She wears when she's afloat;
An open collar, and I wot,
A veritable sailor's knot
Around her pretty throat.

She has a glance that pleads and kills;
And 'mid her shy and snowy frills
A little foot appears;
She has the softest sunny locks,
The compass she knows how to box,
And, when it's needful – ears!

The smartest little sailor-girl,
Who'll steer or "bear a hand" or furl,
And I am told she oft
Quite longs to reef her petticoats,
And gleefully to "girl the boats,"
Or glibly go aloft!

But now how lazily she lies!
And droops those tender trustful eyes
Unutterably sweet!
While snugly 'neath the bulwark curled,
Forgetting all about the world,
The *World* is at her feet!

With tiny, dimpled, sunburnt hand,
She pats the solemn Newfoundland
Who crouches at her side.
She's thinking – not of me nor you,
When smiling as she listens to
The lapping of the tide.

O, were I pressed, aboard that ship,
How joyfully I'd take a trip,
For change of air and scene!
I'd soon pack up a carpet-bag,
And gladly sail beneath the flag,
Of bonny Tarpauline!

THE KITTEN

A SWEET, short-skirted, pouting pet,
A winsome, laughing, glad, girlette;
She's ten-and-thoughtless, and as yet,
By falsity unsmitten!
A merry young misogynist,
Few boyish games can she resist —
The Kitten!

She hates a doll and girlish toys,
She's fond of whips, and dogs, and boys,
For, truth to tell, she finds no joys
In crewel-work or tatting:
But see how smiling is her face,
Indeed, a pretty gleeful Grace —
When batting!

She bowls with marvellous success,
And keeps her wicket, I confess —
Despite her graceful girlish dress —
As well as any Briton!
She's saucy, silly, and self-willed,
The smartest longstop ever frilled —
The Kitten!

She's erudite in "wides" and "byes,"
And I will venture to surmise,
She'll vanquish any boy her size
At games of single-wicket!
And yet, no doubt, she's good as gold,
For I'll go bail she's only bold —
At cricket!

But like her namesake, clad in fur,
No mischief comes amiss to her;
To me it seems it should occur,
To leave her faults unwritten.
She'll make a score, I'm sure of that,
And loves to carry out her bat —
The Kitten!

Tunbridge Wells, August.

IN THE TEMPLE

*The danger that lurks in Chrysanthemum Shows,
You'll see in this letter from Milly to Rose!*

DEAR ROSE,
I never shall forget —
That is, I always shall remember —
The very brightest day, my pet,
We had throughout this dull November!
I went last Monday, you must know,
With Tina, Mrs. S., and Clarry,
To see the Temple flower-show,
And, best of all, to lunch with Harry!

We saw the gardens – 'twould be sport
To make the Benchers play lawn-tennis —
And chambers in a dingy court
Where Fanny Bolton nursed Pendennis:
The rooms where Goldsmith lived and died,
The sycamore where Johnson prated;
The house where Pip did once reside,
The Fountain where sweet Ruth Pinch waited.

We grasped a massive balustrade —
The date, they said, was Sixteen Thirty —
The way was dark, and I'm afraid
We found the staircase rather dirty.
Those grim old stairs to Harry's Den —
We clomb them gaily, nothing daunted —
They still by Warrington and Pen,
And other pleasant ghosts are haunted!

Ah, what a spot, my dearest Rose,
To muse upon this queer old Den is!
To catalogue its curios
I'm sure unable quite my pen is!
But from its panes we gaze upon
The misty midday sun a-quiver;
The red-sailed barges drifting on,
The sparkle of the dear old River!

Then mingling sweetly one perceives —
'Mid laughter light and girlish gabble —
The sighing of the autumn leaves,

And singing of the Fountain's babble!
How quick my thoughts drift back again
To those bright happy days at Hurley —
A pleasure strongly dashed with pain —
(O, Harry's locks are brown and curly!)

But, Rose, the luncheon! It was grand —
The oak you know, my love, was sported —
And all the speeches, understand,
Were much too good to be reported.
There's Clarry and big Charlie Clough —
It is a case! I think they'll marry —
I wonder who is good enough
For handsome, grey-eyed, laughing Harry?

It soon grew dark, but I could see
That clearly no one did desire light;
For Tina and young Freddy B.
Were spooning by the fitful firelight.
We stayed till late, for Mrs. S.
The most enduring chaperone is.
And Harry sang! I must confess
His voice the richest baritone is.

Ah, how the moments quickly flit
In song and talk and playful banter!
The motto on the sundial writ
Is *Pereunt et imputantur*.
I'm rather sad! Ah, what's the use?
I know you'll think I'm very silly;
Although I am a little goose,
I always am, your loving Milly.

AN UNFINISHED SKETCH

A SYMPHONY IN WHITE

*Too fair for prose, too sweet for rhyme,
A laughing lass beneath the lime!*

ONE sunny day in glorious July
I lazed upon the verdant tennis lawn!
And smoking there an idle cigarette
I watched a maid who gazed upon the game,
Clad in a simple snowy cambric frock,
And all the budding beauty of Sixteen!
And as she held her racquet banjo-wise,
While dreamily she trifled with its strings,
I sketched the merry maiden as she stood,

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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