

RUDYARD KIPLING

DEPARTMENTAL DITTIES
AND BARRACK ROOM
BALLADS

Rudyard Kipling
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Barrack Room Ballads

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Departmental Ditties and Barrack Room Ballads:*

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DEPARTMENTAL DITTIES

I have eaten your bread and salt,
I have drunk your water and wine,
The deaths ye died I have watched beside,
And the lives that ye led were mine.

Was there aught that I did not share
In vigil or toil or ease,
One joy or woe that I did not know,
Dear hearts across the seas?

I have written the tale of our life
For a sheltered people's mirth,
In jesting guise – but ye are wise,
And ye know what the jest is worth.

GENERAL SUMMARY

We are very slightly changed
From the semi-apes who ranged
India's prehistoric clay;
Whoso drew the longest bow,
Ran his brother down, you know,
As we run men down today.

“Dowb,” the first of all his race,
Met the Mammoth face to face
On the lake or in the cave,
Stole the steadiest canoe,
Ate the quarry others slew,
Died – and took the finest grave.

When they scratched the reindeer-bone
Someone made the sketch his own,
Filched it from the artist – then,
Even in those early days,
Won a simple Viceroy's praise
Through the toil of other men.

Ere they hewed the Sphinx's visage
Favoritism governed kissage,
Even as it does in this age.

Who shall doubt the secret hid
Under Cheops' pyramid
Was that the contractor did
 Cheops out of several millions?
Or that Joseph's sudden rise
To Comptroller of Supplies
Was a fraud of monstrous size
 On King Pharoah's swart Civilians?

Thus, the artless songs I sing
Do not deal with anything
 New or never said before.

As it was in the beginning,
Is today official sinning,
 And shall be forevermore.

ARMY HEADQUARTERS

Old is the song that I sing —

Old as my unpaid bills —

Old as the chicken that kitmutgars bring

Men at dak-bungalows – old as the Hills.

Ahasuerus Jenkins of the “Operatic Own”

Was dowered with a tenor voice of super-Santley tone.

His views on equitation were, perhaps, a trifle queer;

He had no seat worth mentioning, but oh! he had an ear.

He clubbed his wretched company a dozen times a day,

He used to quit his charger in a parabolic way,

His method of saluting was the joy of all beholders,

But Ahasuerus Jenkins had a head upon his shoulders.

He took two months to Simla when the year was at the
spring,

And underneath the deodars eternally did sing.

He warbled like a bulbul, but particularly at

Cornelia Agrippina who was musical and fat.

She controlled a humble husband, who, in turn, controlled
a Dept.,

Where Cornelia Agrippina's human singing-birds were kept
From April to October on a plump retaining fee,
Supplied, of course, per mensem, by the Indian Treasury.

Cornelia used to sing with him, and Jenkins used to play;
He praised unblushingly her notes, for he was false as they:
So when the winds of April turned the budding roses brown,
Cornelia told her husband: "Tom, you mustn't send him
down."

They haled him from his regiment which didn't much regret
him;

They found for him an office-stool, and on that stool they
set him,

To play with maps and catalogues three idle hours a day,
And draw his plump retaining fee – which means his double
pay.

Now, ever after dinner, when the coffeecups are brought,
Ahasuerus wailleth o'er the grand pianoforte;
And, thanks to fair Cornelia, his fame hath waxen great,
And Ahasuerus Jenkins is a power in the State.

STUDY OF AN ELEVATION, IN INDIAN INK

This ditty is a string of lies.
But – how the deuce did Gubbins rise?

POTIPHAR GUBBINS, C. E.,
Stands at the top of the tree;
And I muse in my bed on the reasons that led
To the hoisting of Potiphar G.

Potiphar Gubbins, C. E.,
Is seven years junior to Me;
Each bridge that he makes he either buckles or breaks,
And his work is as rough as he.

Potiphar Gubbins, C. E.,
Is coarse as a chimpanzee;
And I can't understand why you gave him your hand,
Lovely Mehitabel Lee.

Potiphar Gubbins, C. E.,
Is dear to the Powers that Be;
For They bow and They smile in an affable style
Which is seldom accorded to Me.

Potiphar Gubbins, C. E.,
Is certain as certain can be
Of a highly-paid post which is claimed by a host
Of seniors – including Me.

Careless and lazy is he,
Greatly inferior to Me.

What is the spell that you manage so well,
Commonplace Potiphar G.?

Lovely Mehitabel Lee,
Let me inquire of thee,
Should I have riz to what Potiphar is,
Hadst thou been mated to me?

A LEGEND

This is the reason why Rustum Beg,
Rajah of Kolazai,
Drinketh the “simpkin” and brandy peg,
Maketh the money to fly,
Vexeth a Government, tender and kind,
Also – but this is a detail – blind.

RUSTUM BEG of Kolazai – slightly backward native state
Lusted for a C. S. I., – so began to sanitate.
Built a Jail and Hospital – nearly built a City drain —
Till his faithful subjects all thought their Ruler was insane.

Strange departures made he then – yea, Departments
stranger still,

Half a dozen Englishmen helped the Rajah with a will,
Talked of noble aims and high, hinted of a future fine
For the state of Kolazai, on a strictly Western line.

Rajah Rustum held his peace; lowered octroi dues a half;
Organized a State Police; purified the Civil Staff;
Settled cess and tax afresh in a very liberal way;
Cut temptations of the flesh – also cut the Bukhshi's pay;

Roused his Secretariat to a fine Mahratta fury,
By a Hookum hinting at supervision of dasturi;
Turned the State of Kolazai very nearly upside-down;
When the end of May was nigh, waited his achievement
crown.

When the Birthday Honors came,
Sad to state and sad to see,
Stood against the Rajah's name nothing more than C. I. E.!

Things were lively for a week in the State of Kolazai.
Even now the people speak of that time regretfully.

How he disendowed the Jail – stopped at once the City drain;
Turned to beauty fair and frail – got his senses back again;
Doubled taxes, cesses, all; cleared away each new-built
thana;
Turned the two-lakh Hospital into a superb Zenana;

Heaped upon the Bukhshi Sahib wealth and honors manifold;

Clad himself in Eastern garb – squeezed his people as of old.

Happy, happy Kolazai! Never more will Rustum Beg
Play to catch the Viceroy's eye. He prefers the "simpkin"
peg.

THE STORY OF URIAH

“Now there were two men in one city;
the one rich and the other poor.”

Jack Barrett went to Quetta
Because they told him to.
He left his wife at Simla
On three-fourths his monthly screw:
Jack Barrett died at Quetta
Ere the next month's pay he drew.

Jack Barrett went to Quetta.
He didn't understand
The reason of his transfer
From the pleasant mountain-land:
The season was September,
And it killed him out of hand.

Jack Barrett went to Quetta,
And there gave up the ghost,
Attempting two men's duty
In that very healthy post;
And Mrs. Barrett mourned for him
Five lively months at most.

Jack Barrett's bones at Quetta

Enjoy profound repose;
But I shouldn't be astonished
If now his spirit knows
The reason of his transfer
From the Himalayan snows.

And, when the Last Great Bugle Call
Adown the Hurnal throbs,
When the last grim joke is entered
In the big black Book of Jobs,
And Quetta graveyards give again
Their victims to the air,
I shouldn't like to be the man
Who sent Jack Barrett there.

THE POST THAT FITTED

*Though tangled and twisted the course of true love
This ditty explains,
No tangle's so tangled it cannot improve
If the Lover has brains.*

Ere the steamer bore him Eastward, Sleary was engaged to marry

An attractive girl at Tunbridge, whom he called “my little Carrie.”

Sleary's pay was very modest; Sleary was the other way.

Who can cook a two-plate dinner on eight poor rupees a day?

Long he pondered o'er the question in his scanty furnished quarters —

Then proposed to Minnie Boffkin, eldest of Judge Boffkin's daughters.

Certainly an impecunious Subaltern was not a catch,
But the Boffkins knew that Minnie mightn't make another match.

So they recognised the business and, to feed and clothe the

bride,

Got him made a Something Something somewhere on the
Bombay side.

Anyhow, the billet carried pay enough for him to marry —
As the artless Sleary put it: – “Just the thing for me and
Carrie.”

Did he, therefore, jilt Miss Boffkin – impulse of a baser
mind?

No! He started epileptic fits of an appalling kind.

[Of his modus operandi only this much I could gather: —
“Pears’s shaving sticks will give you little taste and lots of
lather.”]

Frequently in public places his affliction used to smite
Sleary with distressing vigour – always in the Boffkins’ sight.

Ere a week was over Minnie weepingly returned his ring,
Told him his “unhappy weakness” stopped all thought of
marrying.

Sleary bore the information with a chastened holy joy, —
Epileptic fits don’t matter in Political employ, —
Wired three short words to Carrie – took his ticket, packed
his kit —

Bade farewell to Minnie Boffkin in one last, long, lingering
fit.

Four weeks later, Carrie Sleary read – and laughed until she wept —

Mrs. Boffkin's warning letter on the "wretched epilept."...

Year by year, in pious patience, vengeful Mrs. Boffkin sits
Waiting for the Sleary babies to develop Sleary's fits.

PUBLIC WASTE

*Walpole talks of "a man and his price."
List to a ditty queer —
The sale of a Deputy-Acting-Vice-
Resident-Engineer,
Bought like a bullock, hoof and hide,
By the Little Tin Gods on the Mountain Side.
By the Laws of the Family Circle 'tis written in letters
of brass*

That only a Colonel from Chatham can manage the Railways
of State,

Because of the gold on his breeks, and the subjects wherein
he must pass;

Because in all matters that deal not with Railways his
knowledge is great.

Now Exeter Battleby Tring had laboured from boyhood to
eld

On the Lines of the East and the West, and eke of the North
and South;

Many Lines had he built and surveyed – important the posts
which he held;

And the Lords of the Iron Horse were dumb when he opened
his mouth.

Black as the raven his garb, and his heresies jettier still —
Hinting that Railways required lifetimes of study and
knowledge —

Never clanked sword by his side – Vauban he knew not nor
drill —

Nor was his name on the list of the men who had passed
through the “College.”

Wherefore the Little Tin Gods harried their little tin souls,
Seeing he came not from Chatham, jingled no spurs at his
heels,

Knowing that, nevertheless, was he first on the Government
rolls

For the billet of “Railway Instructor to Little Tin Gods on
Wheels.”

Letters not seldom they wrote him, “having the honour to
state,”

It would be better for all men if he were laid on the shelf.
Much would accrue to his bank-book, an he consented to
wait

Until the Little Tin Gods built him a berth for himself,

“Special, well paid, and exempt from the Law of the Fifty
and Five,

Even to Ninety and Nine” – these were the terms of the pact:
Thus did the Little Tin Gods (long may Their Highnesses
thrive!)

Silence his mouth with rupees, keeping their Circle intact;

Appointing a Colonel from Chatham who managed the
Bhamo State Line

(The which was one mile and one furlong – a guaranteed
twenty-inch gauge),

So Exeter Battleby Tring consented his claims to resign,

And died, on four thousand a month, in the ninetieth year
of his age!

DELILAH

We have another viceroy now, – those days are dead and done

Of Delilah Aberyswith and depraved Ulysses Gunne.

Delilah Aberyswith was a lady – not too young —
With a perfect taste in dresses and a badly-bitted tongue,
With a thirst for information, and a greater thirst for praise,
And a little house in Simla in the Prehistoric Days.

By reason of her marriage to a gentleman in power,
Delilah was acquainted with the gossip of the hour;
And many little secrets, of the half-official kind,
Were whispered to Delilah, and she bore them all in mind.

She patronized extensively a man, Ulysses Gunne,
Whose mode of earning money was a low and shameful one.
He wrote for certain papers, which, as everybody knows,
Is worse than serving in a shop or scaring off the crows.

He praised her “queenly beauty” first; and, later on, he hinted

At the “vastness of her intellect” with compliment unstinted.
He went with her a-riding, and his love for her was such
That he lent her all his horses and – she galled them very much.

One day, THEY brewed a secret of a fine financial sort;
It related to Appointments, to a Man and a Report.
‘Twas almost worth the keeping, – only seven people knew
it —

And Gunne rose up to seek the truth and patiently pursue it.

It was a Viceroy’s Secret, but – perhaps the wine was red —
Perhaps an Aged Councillor had lost his aged head —
Perhaps Delilah’s eyes were bright – Delilah’s whispers
sweet —

The Aged Member told her what ‘twere treason to repeat.

Ulysses went a-riding, and they talked of love and flowers;
Ulysses went a-calling, and he called for several hours;
Ulysses went a-waltzing, and Delilah helped him dance —
Ulysses let the waltzes go, and waited for his chance.

The summer sun was setting, and the summer air was still,
The couple went a-walking in the shade of Summer Hill.
The wasteful sunset faded out in Turkish-green and gold,
Ulysses pleaded softly, and – that bad Delilah told!

Next morn, a startled Empire learnt the all-important news;
Next week, the Aged Councillor was shaking in his shoes.
Next month, I met Delilah and she did not show the least
Hesitation in affirming that Ulysses was a “beast.”

We have another Viceroy now, those days are dead and done

Of Delilah Aberyswith and most mean Ulysses Gunne!

WHAT HAPPENED

Hurree Chunder Mookerjee, pride of Bow Bazaar,
Owner of a native press, “Barrishter-at-Lar,”

Waited on the Government with a claim to wear
Sabres by the bucketful, rifles by the pair.

Then the Indian Government winked a wicked wink,
Said to Chunder Mookerjee: “Stick to pen and ink.
They are safer implements, but, if you insist,
We will let you carry arms wheresoe’er you list.”

Hurree Chunder Mookerjee sought the gunsmith and
Bought the tubes of Lancaster, Ballard, Dean, and Bland,
Bought a shiny bowie-knife, bought a town-made sword,
Jingled like a carriage-horse when he went abroad.

But the Indian Government, always keen to please,
Also gave permission to horrid men like these —
Yar Mahommed Yusufzai, down to kill or steal,
Chimbu Singh from Bikaner, Tantia the Bhil;

Killar Khan the Marri chief, Jowar Singh the Sikh,
Nubbee Baksh Punjabi Jat, Abdul Huq Rafiq —
He was a Wahabi; last, little Boh Hla-oo
Took advantage of the Act – took a Snider too.

They were unenlightened men, Ballard knew them not.
They procured their swords and guns chiefly on the spot;
And the lore of centuries, plus a hundred fights,
Made them slow to disregard one another's rights.

With a unanimity dear to patriot hearts
All those hairy gentlemen out of foreign parts
Said: "The good old days are back – let us go to war!"
Swaggered down the Grand Trunk Road into Bow Bazaar,

Nubbee Baksh Punjabi Jat found a hide-bound flail;
Chimbu Singh from Bikaner oiled his Tonk jezail;
Yar Mahommed Yusufzai spat and grinned with glee
As he ground the butcher-knife of the Khyberree.

Jowar Singh the Sikh procured sabre, quoit, and mace,
Abdul Huq, Wahabi, jerked his dagger from its place,
While amid the jungle-grass danced and grinned and
jabbered
Little Boh Hla-oo and cleared his dah-blade from the
scabbard.

What became of Mookerjee? Soothly, who can say?
Yar Mahommed only grins in a nasty way,
Jowar Singh is reticent, Chimbu Singh is mute.
But the belts of all of them simply bulge with loot.

What became of Ballard's guns? Afghans black and grubby
Sell them for their silver weight to the men of Pubbi;

And the shiny bowie-knife and the town-made sword are
Hanging in a Marri camp just across the Border.

What became of Mookerjee? Ask Mahommed Yar
Prodding Siva's sacred bull down the Bow Bazaar.
Speak to placid Nubbee Baksh – question land and sea —
Ask the Indian Congressmen – only don't ask me!

PINK DOMINOES

“They are fools who kiss and tell” —
Wisely has the poet sung.
Man may hold all sorts of posts
If he'll only hold his tongue.

Jenny and Me were engaged, you see,
On the eve of the Fancy Ball;
So a kiss or two was nothing to you
Or any one else at all.

Jenny would go in a domino —
Pretty and pink but warm;
While I attended, clad in a splendid
Austrian uniform.

Now we had arranged, through notes exchanged
Early that afternoon,
At Number Four to waltz no more,
But to sit in the dusk and spoon.

I wish you to see that Jenny and Me
Had barely exchanged our troth;
So a kiss or two was strictly due
By, from, and between us both.

When Three was over, an eager lover,
I fled to the gloom outside;
And a Domino came out also
Whom I took for my future bride.

That is to say, in a casual way,
I slipped my arm around her;
With a kiss or two (which is nothing to you),
And ready to kiss I found her.

She turned her head and the name she said
Was certainly not my own;
But ere I could speak, with a smothered shriek
She fled and left me alone.

Then Jenny came, and I saw with shame
She'd doffed her domino;
And I had embraced an alien waist —
But I did not tell her so.

Next morn I knew that there were two
Dominoes pink, and one
Had cloaked the spouse of Sir Julian House,
Our big Political gun.

Sir J. was old, and her hair was gold,
And her eye was a blue cerulean;
And the name she said when she turned her head
Was not in the least like "Julian."

THE MAN WHO COULD WRITE

Shun – shun the Bowl! That fatal, facile drink
Has ruined many geese who dipped their quills in ‘t;
Bribe, murder, marry, but steer clear of Ink
Save when you write receipts for paid-up bills in ‘t.

There may be silver in the “blue-black” – all
I know of is the iron and the gall.

Boanerges Blitzen, servant of the Queen,
Is a dismal failure – is a Might-have-been.
In a luckless moment he discovered men
Rise to high position through a ready pen.
Boanerges Blitzen argued therefore – “I,
With the selfsame weapon, can attain as high.”
Only he did not possess when he made the trial,
Wicked wit of C-iv-n, irony of L – l.

[Men who spar with Government need, to back their blows,
Something more than ordinary journalistic prose.]

Never young Civilian’s prospects were so bright,
Till an Indian paper found that he could write:
Never young Civilian’s prospects were so dark,
When the wretched Blitzen wrote to make his mark.
Certainly he scored it, bold, and black, and firm,

In that Indian paper – made his seniors squirm,
Quoted office scandals, wrote the tactless truth —
Was there ever known a more misguided youth?
When the Rag he wrote for praised his plucky game,
Boanerges Blitzen felt that this was Fame;
When the men he wrote of shook their heads and swore,
Boanerges Blitzen only wrote the more:

Posed as Young Ithuriel, resolute and grim,
Till he found promotion didn't come to him;
Till he found that reprimands weekly were his lot,
And his many Districts curiously hot.

Till he found his furlough strangely hard to win,
Boanerges Blitzen didn't care to pin:
Then it seemed to dawn on him something wasn't right —
Boanerges Blitzen put it down to "spite";

Languished in a District desolate and dry;
Watched the Local Government yearly pass him by;
Wondered where the hitch was; called it most unfair.

* * * * *

That was seven years ago – and he still is there!

MUNICIPAL

"Why is my District death-rate low?"

Said Binks of Hezabad.

"Well, drains, and sewage-outfalls are

My own peculiar fad.

"I learnt a lesson once, It ran

"Thus," quoth that most veracious man: —

It was an August evening and, in snowy garments clad,
I paid a round of visits in the lines of Hezabad;
When, presently, my Waler saw, and did not like at all,
A Commissariat elephant careering down the Mall.

I couldn't see the driver, and across my mind it rushed
That that Commissariat elephant had suddenly gone musth.

I didn't care to meet him, and I couldn't well get down,
So I let the Waler have it, and we headed for the town.

The buggy was a new one and, praise Dykes, it stood the
strain,

Till the Waler jumped a bullock just above the City Drain;
And the next that I remember was a hurricane of squeals,
And the creature making toothpicks of my five-foot patent

wheels.

He seemed to want the owner, so I fled, distraught with fear,
To the Main Drain sewage-outfall while he snorted in my
ear —

Reached the four-foot drain-head safely and, in darkness
and despair,

Felt the brute's proboscis fingering my terror-stiffened hair.

Heard it trumpet on my shoulder – tried to crawl a little
higher —

Found the Main Drain sewage outfall blocked, some eight
feet up, with mire;

And, for twenty reeking minutes, Sir, my very marrow froze,
While the trunk was feeling blindly for a purchase on my
toes!

It missed me by a fraction, but my hair was turning grey
Before they called the drivers up and dragged the brute away.

Then I sought the City Elders, and my words were very plain.
They flushed that four-foot drain-head and – it never choked
again!

You may hold with surface-drainage, and the sun-for-
garbage cure,

Till you've been a periwinkle shrinking coyly up a sewer.

I believe in well-flushed culverts...

This is why the death-rate's small;
And, if you don't believe me, get shikarred yourself. That's
all.

A CODE OF MORALS

*Lest you should think this story true
I merely mention I
Evolved it lately. 'Tis a most
Unmitigated misstatement.*

Now Jones had left his new-wed bride to keep his house in order,

And hied away to the Hurrum Hills above the Afghan border,

To sit on a rock with a heliograph; but ere he left he taught
His wife the working of the Code that sets the miles at naught.

And Love had made him very sage, as Nature made her fair;
So Cupid and Apollo linked, per heliograph, the pair.

At dawn, across the Hurrum Hills, he flashed her counsel wise —

At e'en, the dying sunset bore her husband's homilies.

He warned her 'gainst seductive youths in scarlet clad and gold,

As much as 'gainst the blandishments paternal of the old;
But kept his gravest warnings for (hereby the ditty hangs)
That snowy-haired Lothario, Lieutenant-General Bangs.

‘Twas General Bangs, with Aide and Staff, who tittupped
on the way,

When they beheld a heliograph tempestuously at play.

They thought of Border risings, and of stations sacked and
burnt —

So stopped to take the message down – and this is what they
learnt —

“Dash dot dot, dot, dot dash, dot dash dot” twice. The
General swore.

“Was ever General Officer addressed as ‘dear’ before?”

“‘My Love,’ i’ faith! ‘My Duck,’ Gadzooks! ‘My darling
poppy-wop!’

“Spirit of great Lord Wolseley, who is on that mountaintop?”

The artless Aide-de-camp was mute; the gilded Staff were
still,

As, dumb with pent-up mirth, they booked that message
from the hill;

For clear as summer lightning-flare, the husband’s warning
ran: —

“Don’t dance or ride with General Bangs – a most immoral
man.”

[At dawn, across the Hurrum Hills, he flashed her counsel
wise —

But, howsoever Love be blind, the world at large hath eyes.]

With damnatory dot and dash he heliographed his wife
Some interesting details of the General's private life.

The artless Aide-de-camp was mute, the shining Staff were
still,

And red and ever redder grew the General's shaven gill.

And this is what he said at last (his feelings matter not): —
“I think we've tapped a private line. Hi! Threes about there!
Trot!”

All honour unto Bangs, for ne'er did Jones thereafter know
By word or act official who read off that helio.

But the tale is on the Frontier, and from Michni to Mooltan
They know the worthy General as “that most immoral man.”

THE LAST DEPARTMENT

Twelve hundred million men are spread
About this Earth, and I and You
Wonder, when You and I are dead,
“What will those luckless millions do?”

None whole or clean,” we cry, “or free from stain
Of favour.” Wait awhile, till we attain
The Last Department where nor fraud nor fools,
Nor grade nor greed, shall trouble us again.

Fear, Favour, or Affection – what are these
To the grim Head who claims our services?
I never knew a wife or interest yet
Delay that pukka step, miscalled “decease”;

When leave, long overdue, none can deny;
When idleness of all Eternity
Becomes our furlough, and the marigold
Our thriftless, bullion-minting Treasury

Transferred to the Eternal Settlement,
Each in his strait, wood-scantled office pent,
No longer Brown reverses Smith’s appeals,
Or Jones records his Minute of Dissent.

And One, long since a pillar of the Court,
As mud between the beams thereof is wrought;
And One who wrote on phosphates for the crops
Is subject-matter of his own Report.

These be the glorious ends whereto we pass —
Let Him who Is, go call on Him who Was;
And He shall see the mallee steals the slab
For currie-grinder, and for goats the grass.

A breath of wind, a Border bullet's flight,
A draught of water, or a horse's fright —
The droning of the fat Sheristadar
Ceases, the punkah stops, and falls the night

For you or Me. Do those who live decline
The step that offers, or their work resign?
Trust me, Today's Most Indispensables,
Five hundred men can take your place or mine.

BALLADS AND BARRACK- ROOM BALLADS

THE BALLAD OF FISHER'S BOARDING-HOUSE

*That night, when through the mooring-chains
The wide-eyed corpse rolled free,
To blunder down by Garden Reach
And rot at Kedgerree,
The tale the Hughli told the shoal
The lean shoal told to me.*

'T was Fultah Fisher's boarding-house,
Where sailor-men reside,
And there were men of all the ports
From Mississip to Clyde,
And regally they spat and smoked,
And fearsomely they lied.

They lied about the purple Sea
That gave them scanty bread,
They lied about the Earth beneath,

The Heavens overhead,
For they had looked too often on
Black rum when that was red.

They told their tales of wreck and wrong,
Of shame and lust and fraud,
They backed their toughest statements with
The Brimstone of the Lord,
And crackling oaths went to and fro
Across the fist-banged board.

And there was Hans the blue-eyed Dane,
Bull-throated, bare of arm,
Who carried on his hairy chest
The maid Ultruda's charm —
The little silver crucifix
That keeps a man from harm.

And there was Jake Without-the-Ears,
And Pamba the Malay,
And Carboy Gin the Guinea cook,
And Luz from Vigo Bay,
And Honest Jack who sold them slops
And harvested their pay.

And there was Salem Hardieker,
A lean Bostonian he —
Russ, German, English, Halfbreed, Finn,
Yank, Dane, and Portuguese,

At Fultah Fisher's boarding-house
They rested from the sea.

Now Anne of Austria shared their drinks,
Collinga knew her fame,
From Tarnau in Galicia
To Juan Bazaar she came,
To eat the bread of infamy
And take the wage of shame.

She held a dozen men to heel —
Rich spoil of war was hers,
In hose and gown and ring and chain,
From twenty mariners,
And, by Port Law, that week, men called
her Salem Hardieker's.

But seamen learnt – what landmen know —
That neither gifts nor gain
Can hold a winking Light o' Love
Or Fancy's flight restrain,
When Anne of Austria rolled her eyes
On Hans the blue-eyed Dane.

Since Life is strife, and strife means knife,
From Howrah to the Bay,
And he may die before the dawn
Who liquored out the day,
In Fultah Fisher's boarding-house

We woo while yet we may.

But cold was Hans the blue-eyed Dane,
Bull-throated, bare of arm,
And laughter shook the chest beneath
The maid Ultruda's charm —
The little silver crucifix
That keeps a man from harm.

“You speak to Salem Hardieker;
“You was his girl, I know.

“I ship mineselfs tomorrow, see,
“Und round the Skaw we go,
“South, down the Cattedgat, by Hjelm,
“To Besser in Saro.”

When love rejected turns to hate,
All ill betide the man.

“You speak to Salem Hardieker” —
She spoke as woman can.
A scream – a sob – “He called me – names!”
And then the fray began.

An oath from Salem Hardieker,
A shriek upon the stairs,
A dance of shadows on the wall,
A knife-thrust unawares —

And Hans came down, as cattle drop,
Across the broken chairs.

* * * * *

In Anne of Austria's trembling hands
The weary head fell low: —

“I ship mineselfs tomorrow, straight

“For Besser in Saro;

“Und there Ultruda comes to me

“At Easter, und I go —

“South, down the Cattedgat – What's here?

“There – are – no – lights – to guide!”

The mutter ceased, the spirit passed,

And Anne of Austria cried

In Fultah Fisher's boarding-house

When Hans the mighty died.

Thus slew they Hans the blue-eyed Dane,

Bull-throated, bare of arm,

But Anne of Austria looted first

The maid Ultruda's charm —

The little silver crucifix

That keeps a man from harm.

AS THE BELL CLINKS

As I left the Halls at Lumley, rose the vision of a comely
Maid last season worshipped dumbly, watched with fervor
from afar;

And I wondered idly, blindly, if the maid would greet me
kindly.

That was all – the rest was settled by the clinking tonga-bar.
Yea, my life and hers were coupled by the tonga coupling-
bar.

For my misty meditation, at the second changin'-station,
Suffered sudden dislocation, fled before the tuneless jar
Of a Wagner obbligato, scherzo, doublehand staccato,
Played on either pony's saddle by the clacking tonga-bar —

Played with human speech, I fancied, by the jiggling, jolting
bar.

“She was sweet,” thought I, “last season, but ‘twere surely
wild unreason

Such tiny hope to freeze on as was offered by my Star,
When she whispered, something sadly: ‘I – we feel your
going badly!’”

“And you let the chance escape you?” rapped the rattling
tonga-bar.

“What a chance and what an idiot!” clicked the vicious tonga-bar.

Heart of man – oh, heart of putty! Had I gone by Kakahutti,
On the old Hill-road and ruddy, I had ‘scaped that fatal car.

But his fortune each must bide by, so I watched the
milestones slide by,

To “You call on Her tomorrow!” – fugue with cymbals by
the bar —

“You must call on Her tomorrow!” – post-horn gallop by
the bar.

Yet a further stage my goal on – we were whirling down
to Solon,

With a double lurch and roll on, best foot foremost, ganz
und gar —

“She was very sweet,” I hinted. “If a kiss had been
imprinted?” —

“Would ha’ saved a world of trouble!” clashed the busy
tonga-bar.

““Been accepted or rejected!” banged and clanged the tonga-
bar.

Then a notion wild and daring, ‘spite the income tax’s paring,
And a hasty thought of sharing – less than many incomes are,
Made me put a question private, you can guess what I would

drive at.

“You must work the sum to prove it,” clanked the careless tonga-bar.

“Simple Rule of Two will prove it,” lilted back the tonga-bar.

It was under Khyraghaut I mused. “Suppose the maid be haughty —

(There are lovers rich – and rotty) – wait some wealthy Avatar?

Answer monitor untiring, ‘twixt the ponies twain perspiring!”

“Faint heart never won fair lady,” creaked the straining tonga-bar.

“Can I tell you ere you ask Her?” pounded slow the tonga-bar.

Last, the Tara Devi turning showed the lights of Simla burning,

Lit my little lazy yearning to a fiercer flame by far.

As below the Mall we jingled, through my very heart it tingled —

Did the iterated order of the threshing tonga-bar —

“Try your luck – you can’t do better!” twanged the loosened tonga-bar.

AN OLD SONG

So long as 'neath the Kalka hills
The tonga-horn shall ring,
So long as down the Solon dip
The hard-held ponies swing,
So long as Tara Devi sees
The lights of Simla town,
So long as Pleasure calls us up,
Or Duty drives us down,
If you love me as I love you
What pair so happy as we two?

So long as Aces take the King,
Or backers take the bet,
So long as debt leads men to wed,
Or marriage leads to debt,
So long as little luncheons, Love,
And scandal hold their vogue,
While there is sport at Annandale
Or whisky at Jutogh,
If you love me as I love you
What knife can cut our love in two?

So long as down the rocking floor
The raving polka spins,
So long as Kitchen Lancers spur

The maddened violins,
So long as through the whirling smoke
We hear the oft-told tale —
“Twelve hundred in the Lotteries,”
And Whatsername for sale?
If you love me as I love you
We'll play the game and win it too.

So long as Lust or Lucre tempt
Straight riders from the course,
So long as with each drink we pour
Black brewage of Remorse,
So long as those unloaded guns
We keep beside the bed,
Blow off, by obvious accident,
The lucky owner's head,
If you love me as I love you
What can Life kill or Death undo?

So long as Death 'twixt dance and dance
Chills best and bravest blood,
And drops the reckless rider down
The rotten, rain-soaked khud,
So long as rumours from the North
Make loving wives afraid,
So long as Burma takes the boy
Or typhoid kills the maid,
If you love me as I love you
What knife can cut our love in two?

By all that lights our daily life
Or works our lifelong woe,
From Boileaugunge to Simla Downs
And those grim glades below,
Where, heedless of the flying hoof
And clamour overhead,
Sleep, with the grey langur for guard
Our very scornful Dead,
If you love me as I love you
All Earth is servant to us two!

By Docket, Billetdoux, and File,
By Mountain, Cliff, and Fir,
By Fan and Sword and Office-box,
By Corset, Plume, and Spur
By Riot, Revel, Waltz, and War,
By Women, Work, and Bills,
By all the life that fizzes in
The everlasting Hills,
If you love me as I love you
What pair so happy as we two?

CERTAIN MAXIMS OF HAFIZ

I

If It be pleasant to look on, stalled in the packed serai,
Does not the Young Man try Its temper and pace ere he buy?
If She be pleasant to look on, what does the Young Man say?
“Lo! She is pleasant to look on, give Her to me today!”

II

Yea, though a Kafir die, to him is remitted Jehannum
If he borrowed in life from a native at sixty per cent. per
annum.

III

Blister we not for bursati? So when the heart is vexed,
The pain of one maiden's refusal is drowned in the pain of
the next.

IV

The temper of chums, the love of your wife, and a new piano's tune —

Which of the three will you trust at the end of an Indian June?

V

Who are the rulers of Ind – to whom shall we bow the knee?
Make your peace with the women, and men will make you
L. G.

VI

Does the woodpecker flit round the young ferash?
Does grass clothe a new-built wall?
Is she under thirty, the woman who holds a boy in her thrall?

VII

If She grow suddenly gracious – reflect. Is it all for thee?
The black-buck is stalked through the bullock, and Man
through jealousy.

VIII

Seek not for favor of women. So shall you find it indeed.
Does not the boar break cover just when you're lighting a
weed?

IX

If He play, being young and unskilful, for shekels of silver
and gold,
Take his money, my son, praising Allah. The kid was
ordained to be sold.

X

With a “weed” among men or horses verily this is the best,
That you work him in office or dog-cart lightly – but give
him no rest.

XI

Pleasant the snaffle of Courtship, improving the manners
and carriage;
But the colt who is wise will abstain from the terrible thorn-
bit of Marriage.

XII

As the thriftless gold of the babul, so is the gold that we
spend
On a derby Sweep, or our neighbor’s wife, or the horse that
we buy from a
friend.

XIII

The ways of man with a maid be strange, yet simple and tame

To the ways of a man with a horse, when selling or racing that same.

XIV

In public Her face turneth to thee, and pleasant Her smile when ye meet.

It is ill. The cold rocks of El-Gidar smile thus on the waves at their feet.

In public Her face is averted, with anger. She nameth thy name.

It is well. Was there ever a loser content with the loss of the game?

XV

If She have spoken a word, remember thy lips are sealed,

And the Brand of the Dog is upon him by whom is the secret revealed.

If She have written a letter, delay not an instant, but burn it.

Tear it to pieces, O Fool, and the wind to her mate shall return it!

If there be trouble to Herward, and a lie of the blackest can clear,

Lie, while thy lips can move or a man is alive to hear.

XVI

My Son, if a maiden deny thee and scufflingly bid thee give o'er,

Yet lip meets with lip at the last word – get out!

She has been there before.

They are pecked on the ear and the chin and the nose who are lacking in lore.

XVII

If we fall in the race, though we win, the hoof-slide is scarred on the course.

Though Allah and Earth pardon Sin, remaineth forever

Remorse.

XVIII

“By all I am misunderstood!” if the Matron shall say, or the Maid:

“Alas! I do not understand,” my son, be thou nowise afraid.

In vain in the sight of the Bird is the net of the Fowler displayed.

XIX

My son, if I, Hafiz, the father, take hold of thy knees in my pain,

Demanding thy name on stamped paper, one day or one hour – refrain.

Are the links of thy fetters so light that thou cravest another man’s chain?

THE GRAVE OF THE HUNDRED HEAD

There's a widow in sleepy Chester
Who weeps for her only son;
There's a grave on the Pabeng River,
A grave that the Burmans shun,
And there's Subadar Prag Tewarri
Who tells how the work was done.

A Snider squibbed in the jungle,
Somebody laughed and fled,
And the men of the First Shikaris
Picked up their Subaltern dead,
With a big blue mark in his forehead
And the back blown out of his head.

Subadar Prag Tewarri,
Jemadar Hira Lal,
Took command of the party,
Twenty rifles in all,
Marched them down to the river
As the day was beginning to fall.

They buried the boy by the river,
A blanket over his face —

They wept for their dead Lieutenant,
The men of an alien race —
They made a samadh in his honor,
A mark for his resting-place.

For they swore by the Holy Water,
They swore by the salt they ate,
That the soul of Lieutenant Eshmitt Sahib
Should go to his God in state;
With fifty file of Burman
To open him Heaven's gate.

The men of the First Shikaris
Marched till the break of day,
Till they came to the rebel village,
The village of Pabengmay —
A jingal covered the clearing,
Calthrops hampered the way.

Subadar Prag Tewarri,
Bidding them load with ball,
Halted a dozen rifles
Under the village wall;
Sent out a flanking-party
With Jemadar Hira Lal.

The men of the First Shikaris
Shouted and smote and slew,
Turning the grinning jingal

On to the howling crew.
The Jemadar's flanking-party
Butchered the folk who flew.

Long was the morn of slaughter,
Long was the list of slain,
Five score heads were taken,
Five score heads and twain;
And the men of the First Shikaris
Went back to their grave again,

Each man bearing a basket
Red as his palms that day,
Red as the blazing village —
The village of Pabengmay,
And the “drip-drip-drip” from the baskets
Reddened the grass by the way.

They made a pile of their trophies
High as a tall man's chin,
Head upon head distorted,
Set in a sightless grin,
Anger and pain and terror
Stamped on the smoke-scorched skin.

Subadar Prag Tewarri
Put the head of the Boh
On the top of the mound of triumph,
The head of his son below,

With the sword and the peacock-banner
That the world might behold and know.

Thus the samadh was perfect,
Thus was the lesson plain
Of the wrath of the First Shikaris —
The price of a white man slain;
And the men of the First Shikaris
Went back into camp again.

Then a silence came to the river,
A hush fell over the shore,
And Bohs that were brave departed,
And Sniders squibbed no more;
For the Burmans said
That a kullah's head
Must be paid for with heads five score.

There's a widow in sleepy Chester
Who weeps for her only son;
There's a grave on the Pabeng River,
A grave that the Burmans shun,
And there's Subadar Prag Tewarri
Who tells how the work was done.

THE MOON OF OTHER DAYS

Beneath the deep veranda's shade,
When bats begin to fly,
I sit me down and watch – alas! —
Another evening die.

Blood-red behind the sere ferash
She rises through the haze.
Sainted Diana! can that be
The Moon of Other Days?

Ah! shade of little Kitty Smith,
Sweet Saint of Kensington!
Say, was it ever thus at Home
The Moon of August shone,
When arm in arm we wandered long
Through Putney's evening haze,
And Hammersmith was Heaven beneath
The Moon of Other Days?

But Wandle's stream is Suttlej now,
And Putney's evening haze
The dust that half a hundred kine
Before my window raise.
Unkempt, unclean, athwart the mist
The seething city looms,

In place of Putney's golden gorse
The sickly babul blooms.

Glare down, old Hecate, through the dust,
And bid the pie-dog yell,
Draw from the drain its typhoid-germ,
From each bazaar its smell;
Yea, suck the fever from the tank
And sap my strength therewith:
Thank Heaven, you show a smiling face
To little Kitty Smith!

THE OVERLAND MAIL
(Foot-Service to the Hills)

In the name of the Empress of India, make way,
O Lords of the Jungle, wherever you roam.
The woods are astir at the close of the day —
We exiles are waiting for letters from Home.
Let the robber retreat — let the tiger turn tail —

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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