

Graham Harry

Verse and Worse



Harry Graham
Verse and Worse

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Graham H.

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Graham Harry Verse and Worse

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

With guilty, conscience-stricken tears,
I offer up these rhymes of mine
To children of maturer years
(From Seventeen to Ninety-nine).
A special solace may they be
In days of second infancy.

The frenzied mother who observes
This volume in her offspring's hand,
And trembles for the darling's nerves,
Must please to clearly understand,
If baby suffers by and by
The Publisher's at fault, not *I!*

But should the little brat survive,
And fatten on this style of Rhyme,
To raise a Heartless Home and thrive
Through a successful life of crime,
The Publisher would have you see
That *I* am to be thanked, not *he!*

Fond parent, you whose children are
Of tender age (from two to eight),
Pray keep this little volume far
From reach of such, and relegate
My verses to an upper shelf;
Where you may study them yourself.

FOREWORD

The Press may pass my Verses by
With sentiments of indignation,
And say, like Greeks of old, that I
Corrupt the Youthful Generation;
I am unmoved by taunts like these —
(And so, I think, was Socrates).

Howe'er the Critics may revile,
I pick no journalistic quarrels,
Quite realising that my Style
Makes up for any lack of Morals;
For which I feel no shred of shame —
(And Byron would have felt the same).

I don't intend a Child to read
These lines, which are not for the Young;
For, if I did, I should indeed
Feel fully worthy to be hung.
(Is 'hanged' the perfect tense of 'hang'?
Correct me, Mr. Andrew Lang!)

O Young of Heart, tho' in your prime,
By you these verses may be seen!
Accept the Moral with the Rhyme,
And try to gather what I mean.
But, if you can't, it won't hurt me!
(And Browning would, I know, agree.)

Be reassured, I have not got
The style of Stephen Phillips' heroes,
Nor Henry Jones's pow'r of Plot,
Nor wit like Arthur Wing Pinero's!
(If so, I should not waste my time
In writing you this sort of rhyme.)

I strive to paint things as they Are,
Of Realism the true Apostle;
All flow'ry metaphors I bar,
Nor call the homely thrush a 'throstle.'
Such synonyms would make me smile.
(And so they would have made Carlyle.)

My Style may be, at times, I own,
A trifle cryptic or abstruse;
In this I do not stand alone,

And need but mention, in excuse,
A thousand world-familiar names,
From Meredith to Henry James.

From these my fruitless fancy roams
To Aesop's or La Fontaine's Fable,
From Doyle's or Hemans' 'Stately Ho(l)mes,'
To t'other of The Breakfast Table;
Like Galahad, I wish (in vain)
'My wit were as the wit of Twain!

Had I but Whitman's rugged skill,
(And managed to escape the Censor),
The Accuracy of a Mill,
The Reason of a Herbert Spencer,
The literary talents even
Of Sidney Lee or Leslie Stephen,

The pow'r of Patmore's placid pen,
Or Watson's gift of execration,
The sugar of Le Gallienne,
Or Algernon's alliteration,
One post there is I'd not be lost in,
– Tho' I might find it most ex-Austin'!

Some day, if I but study hard,
The public, vanquished by my pen, 'll
Acclaim me as a Minor Bard,
Like Norman Gale or Mrs. Meynell;
And listen to my lyre a-rippling
Imperial banjo-spasms like Kipling.

Were I, like him, a syndicate,
Which publishers would put their trust in;
A Walter Pater up-to-date,
Or flippant scholar like Augustine;
With pen as light as lark or squirrel,
I'd love to kipple, pate and birrell.

So don't ignore me. If you should,
'Twill touch me to the very heart oh!
To be as much misunderstood
As once was Andrea del Sarto;
Unrecognised, to toil away,
Like Millet, – (not, of course, *Millais*).

And, pray, for Morals do not look
In this unique agglomeration,
– This unpretentious little book

Of Infelicitous Quotation.
I deem you foolish if you do,
(And Mr. Arnold thinks so, too).

PART I
THE BABY'S BAEDEKER

An International Guide-Book for the young of all ages;

peculiarly adapted to the wants of first and second Childhood

I ABROAD

Abroad is where we tourists spend,
In divers unalluring ways,
The brief occasional week-end,
Or annual Easter holidays;
And earn the (not ill-founded) charge
Of being lunatics at large.

Abroad, we lose our self-respect;
Wear whiskers; let our teeth protrude;
Consider any garb correct,
And no display of temper rude;
Descending, when we cross the foam,
To depths we dare not plumb at home.

(Small wonder that the natives gaze,
With hostile eyes, at foreign freaks,
Who patronise their Passion-plays,
In lemon-coloured chessboard breeks;
An op'ra-glass about each neck,
And on each head a cap of check.)

Abroad, where needy younger sons,
When void the parent's treasure-chest,
Take refuge from insistent duns,
At urgent relatives' request;
To live upon their slender wits,
Or sums some maiden-aunt remits.

Abroad, whence (with a wisdom rare)
Regardless of nostalgic pains,
The weary New York millionaire
Retires with his oil-gotten gains,
And learns how deep a pleasure 'tis
To found our Public Libraries.

For ours is the primeval clan,
From which all lesser lights descend;
Is Crockett not our countryman?
And call we not Corelli friend?
Our brotherhood has bred the brain
Whose offspring bear the brand of Caine.

Tho' nowadays we seldom hear
Miss Proctor, who mislaid a chord,

Or Tennyson, the poet peer,
Who came into the garden, Mord;
Tho' Burns be dead, and Keats unread,
We have a prophet still in Stead.

And so we stare, with nose in air;
And speak in condescending tone,
Of foreigners whose climes compare
So favourably with our own;
And aliens we cannot applaud
Who call themselves At Home Abroad!

II UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

This is the Country of the Free,
The Cocktail and the Ten Cent Chew;
Where you're as good a man as me,
And I'm a better man than you!
(O Liberty, how free we make!
Freedom, what liberties we take!)

'Tis here the startled tourist meets,
'Mid clanging of a thousand bells,
The railways running through the streets,
Skyscraping flats and vast hotels,
Where rest, on the resplendent floors,
The necessary cuspidors.

And here you may encounter too
The pauper immigrants in shoals,
The Swede, the German, and the Jew,
The Irishman, who rules the polls
And is employed to keep the peace,
A venal and corrupt police.

They are so busy here, you know,
They have no time at all for play;
Each morning to their work they go
And stay there all the livelong day;
Their dreams of happiness depend
On making more than they can spend.

The ladies of this land are all
Developed to a pitch sublime,
Some inches over six foot tall,
With perfect figures all the time.
(For further notice of their looks
See Mr. Dana Gibson's books.)

And, if they happen to possess
Sufficient balance at the bank,
They have the chance of saying 'Yes!'
To needy foreigners of rank;
The future dukes of all the earth
Are half American by birth.

MORAL

A 'dot' combining cash with charms
Is worth a thousand coats-of-arms.

III GREAT BRITAIN

The British are a chilly race.
The Englishman is thin and tall;
He screws an eyeglass in his face,
And talks with a reluctant drawl.
'Good Gwacious! This is doosid slow!
By Jove! Haw demmy! Don't-cher-know!'

The English*woman* ev'rywhere
A meed of admiration wins;
She has a crown of silken hair,
And quite the loveliest of skins.
(Go forth and seek an English maid,
Your trouble will be well repaid.)

Where Britain's banner is unfurled
There's room for nothing else beside,
She owns one-quarter of the world,
And still she is not satisfied.
The Briton thinks himself, by birth,
To be the lord of all the earth.

Some call his manners wanting, or
His sense of humour poor, and yet
Whatever he is striving for
He as a rule contrives to get;
His methods may be much to blame,
But he arrives there just the same.

MORAL

If you can get your wish, you bet it
Doesn't much matter *how* you get it!

IV SCOTLAND

In Scotland all the people wear
Red hair and freckles, and one sees
The men in women's dresses there,
With stout, décolleté, low-necked knees.
(*'Eblins ye dinna ken, I doot,
We're unco guid, so hoot, mon, hoot!'*)

They love 'ta whuskey' and 'ta Kirk';
I don't know which they like the most.
They aren't the least afraid of work;
No sense of humour can they boast;
And you require an axe to coax
The canny Scot to see your jokes.

They play an instrument they call
The bagpipes; and the sound of these
Is reminiscent of the squall
Of infant pigs attacked by bees;
Music that might drive cats away
Or make reluctant chickens lay.

MORAL

Wear kilts, and, tho' men look askance,
Go out and give your knees a chance.

V IRELAND

The Irishman is never quite
Contented with his little lot;
He's ever thirsting for a fight,
A grievance he has always got;
And all his energy is bent
On trying not to pay his rent.

He lives upon a frugal fare
(The few potatoes that he digs),
And hospitably loves to share
His bedroom with his wife and pigs;
But cannot settle even here,
And gets evicted once a year.

In order to amuse himself,
At any time when things are slack,
He takes his gun down from the shelf
And shoots a landlord in the back;
If he is lucky in the chase,
He may contrive to bag a brace.

MORAL

Procure a grievance and a gun
And you can have no end of fun.

VI WALES

The natives of the land of Wales
Are not a very truthful lot,
And the imagination fails
To paint the language they have got;
Bettws-y-coed-llan-dud-nod-
Dolgelly-rhiwlas-cwn-wm-dod!

MORAL

If you *must* talk, then do it, pray,
In an intelligible way.

VII CHINA

The Chinaman from early youth
Is by his wise preceptors taught
To have no dealings with the Truth,
In fact, romancing is his 'forte.'
In juggling words he takes the prize,
By the sheer beauty of his lies.

For laundrywork he has a knack;
He takes in shirts and makes them blue;
When he omits to send them back
He takes his customers in too.
He must be ranked in the 'élite'
Of those whose hobby is deceit.

For ladies 'tis the fashion here
To pinch their feet and make them small,
Which, to the civilised idea,
Is not a proper thing at all.
Our modern Western woman's taste
In pinching leans towards the waist.

The Chinese Empire is the field
Where foreign missionaries go;
A poor result their labours yield,
And they have little fruit to show;
For, if you would convert Wun Lung,
You have to catch him very young.

The Chinaman has got a creed
And a religion of his own,
And would be much obliged indeed
If you could leave his soul alone;
And he prefers, which may seem odd,
His own to other people's god.

Yet still the missionary tries
To point him out his wickedness,
Until the badgered natives rise, —
And there's one missionary less!
Then foreign Pow'rs step in, you see,
And ask for an indemnity.

MORAL

Adhere to facts, avoid romance,
And you a clergyman may be;
To lie is wrong, except perchance
In matters of Diplomacy.
And, when you start out to convert,
Make certain that you don't get hurt!

VIII FRANCE

The natives here remark 'Mon Dieu!
'Que voulez-vous?' 'Comment ça va?'
'Sapristi! Par exemple! Un peu!'
'Tiens donc! Mais qu'est-ce que c'est que ça?'
They shave one portion of their dogs,
And live exclusively on frogs.

They get excited very quick,
And crowds will gather before long
If you should stand and wave your stick
And shout, 'À bas le Presidong!'
Still more amusing would it be
To say, 'Conspuez la Patrie!'

The French are so polite, you know,
They take their hats off very well,
And, should they tread upon your toe,
Remark, 'Pardon, Mademoiselle!'
And you would gladly bear the pain
To see them make that bow again.

Their ladies too have got a way
Which even curates can't resist;
'Twould make an Alderman feel gay
Or soothe a yellow journalist;
And then the things they say are so
Extremely – well, in fact, – you know!

MORAL

The closest scrutiny can find
No morals here of any kind.

IX GERMANY

The German is a stolid soul,
And finds best suited to his taste
A pipe with an enormous bowl,
A fraulein with an ample waist;
He loves his beer, his Kaiser, and
(Donner und blitz!) his Fatherland!

He's perfectly contented if
He listens in the Op'ra-house
To Wagner's well-concealed 'motif,'
Or waltzes of the nimble Strauss;
And all discordant bands he sends
Abroad, to soothe his foreign friends.

When he is glad at anything
He cheers like a dyspeptic goat,
'Hoch! hoch!' You'd think him suffering
From some affection of the throat.
A disagreeable noise, 'tis true,
But pleases him and don't hurt you!

MORAL

A glass of lager underneath the bough,
A long 'churchwarden' and an ample 'frau'
Beside me sitting in a Biergarten,
Ach! Biergarten were paradise enow!

X HOLLAND

This country is extremely flat,
Just like your father's head, and were
It not for dykes and things like that
There would not be much country there,
For, if these banks should broken be,
What now is land would soon be sea.

So, any child who glory seeks,
And in a dyke observes a hole,
Must hold his finger there for weeks,
And keep the water from its goal,
Until the local plumbers come,
Or other persons who can plumb.

The Hollanders have somehow got
The name of Dutch (why, goodness knows!),
But Mrs. Hollander is not
A 'duchess' as you might suppose;
Mynheer Von Vanderpump is much
More used to style her his 'Old Dutch.'

Their cities' names are somewhat odd,
But much in vogue with golfing men
Who miss a 'put' or slice a sod,
(Whose thoughts I would not dare to pen),
'Oh, Rotterdam!' they can exclaim,
And blamelessly resume the game.

The Dutchman's dress is very neat;
He minds his little flock of goats
In cotton blouse, and on his feet
He dons a pair of wooden boats.
(He evidently does not trust
Those dykes I mentioned not to bust).

He has the reputation too
Of being what is known as 'slim,'
Which merely means he does to you
What you had hoped to do to him;
He has a business head, that's all,
And takes some beating, does Oom Paul.

MORAL

Avoid a country where the sea
May any day drop in to tea,
Rememb'ring that, at golf, one touch
Of bunker makes the whole world Dutch!

XI ICELAND

The climate is intensely cold;
Wild curates would not drag me there;
Not tho' they brought great bags of gold,
And piled them underneath my chair.
If twenty bishops bade me go,
I should decidedly say, 'No!'

MORAL

If ev'ry man has got his price,
As generally is agreed,
You will, by taking my advice,
Let yours be very large indeed.
Corruption is not nice at all,
Unless the bribe be far from small.

XII ITALY

In Italy the sky is blue;
The native loaf and loll about,
He's nothing in the world to do,
And does it fairly well, no doubt;
(Ital-i-ans are disinclined
To honest work of any kind).

A light Chianti wine he drinks,
And fancies it extremely good;
(It tastes like Stephens' Blue-black Inks); —
While macaroni is his food.
(I think it must be rather hard
To eat one's breakfast by the yard).

And, when he leaves his country for
Some northern climate, 'tis his dream
To be an organ grinder, or
Retail bacilli in ice-cream.
(The French or German student terms
These creatures '*Parisites*' or '*Germ*s.')

Sometimes an anarchist is he,
And wants to slay a king or queen;
So with some dynamite, may be,
Concocts a murderous machine;
'Here goes!' he shouts, 'For Freedom's sake!'
Then blows himself up by mistake.

Naples and Florence both repay
A visit, and, if fortune takes
Your toddling little feet that way,
Do stop a moment at The Lakes.
While, should you go to Rome, I hope
You'll leave your card upon the Pope.

MORAL

Don't work too hard, but use a wise discretion;
Adopt the least laborious profession.
Don't be an anarchist, but, if you must,
Don't let your bombshell prematurely bust.

XIII

JAPAN

Inhabitants of far Japan
Are happy as the day is long
To sit behind a paper fan
And sing a kind of tuneless song,
Desisting, ev'ry little while,
To have a public bath, or smile.

The members of the fairer sex
Are clad in a becoming dress,
One garment reaching from their necks
Down to the ankles more or less;
Behind each dainty ear they wear
A cherry-blossom in their hair.

If 'Imitation's flattery'
(We learn it at our mother's lap),
A flatterer by birth must be
Our clever little friend the Jap,
Who does whatever we can do,
And does it rather better too.

MORAL

Be happy all the time, and plan
To wash as often as you can.

XIV PORTUGAL

You are requested, if you please,
To note that here a people lives
Referred to as the Portuguese;
A fact which naturally gives
The funny man a good excuse
To call his friend a Portugoose.

MORAL

Avoid the obvious, if you can,
And *never* be a funny man.

XV RUSSIA

The Russian Empire, as you see,
Is governed by an Autocrat,
A sort of human target he
For anarchists to practise at;
And much relieved most people are
Not to be lodging with the Czar.

The Russian lets his whiskers grow,
Smokes cigarettes at meal-times, and
Imbibes more 'vodki' than 'il faut';
A habit which (I understand)
Enables him with ease to tell
His name, which nobody could spell.

The climate here is cold, with snow,
And you go driving in a sleigh,
With bells and all the rest, you know,
Just like a Henry Irving play;
While, all around you, glare the eyes
Of secret officers and spies!

The Russian prisons have no drains,
No windows or such things as that;
You have no playthings there but chains,
And no companion but a rat;
When once behind the dungeon door,
Your friends don't see you any more.

I further could enlarge, 'tis true,
But fear my trembling pen confines;
I have no wish to travel to
Siberia and work the mines.
(In Russia you must write with care,
Or the police will take you there.)

MORAL

If you hold morbid views about
A monarch's premature decease,
You only need a – Hi! Look out!
Here comes an agent of police!

...

(In future my address will be
'Siberia, Cell 63.')

XVI SPAIN

'Tis here the Spanish onion grows,
And they eat garlic all the day,
So, if you have a tender nose,
'Tis best to go the other way,
Or else you may discern, at length,
The fact that 'Onion is strength.'

The chestnuts flourish in this land,
Quite good to eat, as you will find,
For they are not, you understand,
The ancient after-dinner kind
That Yankees are accustomed to
From Mr. Chauncey M. Depew.

The Spanish lady, by the bye,
Is an alluring person who
Has got a bright and flashing eye,
And knows just how to use it too;
It's quite a treat to see her meet
The proud hidalgo on the street.

He wears a sort of soft felt hat,
A dagger, and a cloak, you know,
Just like the wicked villains that
We met in plays of long ago,
Who sneaked about with aspect glum,
Remarking, 'Ha! A time will come!'

His blood, of blue cerulean hue,
Runs in his veins like liquid fire,
And he can be most rude if you
Should rob him of his heart's desire;
'Caramba!' he exclaims, and whack!
His dagger perforates your back!

If you should care to patronise
A bull-fight, as you will no doubt,
You'll see a horse with blinded eyes
Be very badly mauled about;
By such a scene a weak inside
Is sometimes rather sorely tried.

And, if the bull is full of fun,
The horse is generally gored,

So then they fetch another one,
Or else the first one is encored;
The humour of the sport, of course,
Is not so patent to the horse.

MORAL

Be kind to ev'ry bull you meet,
Remember how the creature feels;
Don't wink at ladies in the street;
And don't make speeches after meals;
And lastly, I need not explain,
If you're a horse, don't go to Spain.

XVII SWITZERLAND

This atmosphere is pure ozone!
To climb the hills you promptly start;
Unless you happen to be prone
To palpitations of the heart;
In which case swarming up the Alps
Brings on a bad attack of palps.

The nicest method is to stay
Quite comfortably down below,
And, from the steps of your chalet,
Watch other people upwards go.
Then you can buy an alpenstock,
And scratch your name upon a rock.

MORAL

Don't do fatiguing things which you
Can pay another man to do.
Let friends assume (they may be wrong),
That you each year ascend Mong Blong.
Some things you can *pretend* you've done,
And climbing up the Alps is one.

XVIII TURKEY

The Sultan of the Purple East
Is quite a cynic, in his way,
And really doesn't mind the least
His nickname of 'Abdul the – ' (Nay!
I might perhaps come in for blame
If I divulged this monarch's name.)

The Turk is such a kindly man,
But his ideas of sport are crude;
He to the poor Armenian
Is not intentionally rude,
But still it is his heartless habit

To treat him as *we* treat the rabbit.
If he wants bracing up a bit,
His pleasing little custom is
To take a hatchet and commit
A series of atrocities.
I should not fancy, after dark,
To meet him, say, in Regent's Park.

A deeply married man is he,
'Early and often' is his rule;
He practises polygamy
Directly after leaving school,
And so arranges that his wives
Live happy but secluded lives.

If they attend a public place,
They have to do so in disguise,
And so conceal one-half their face
That nothing but a pair of eyes
Suggests the hidden charm that lurks
Beneath the veils of lady Turks.

Then too in Turkey all the men
Smoke water-pipes and cross their legs;
They watch their harem as a hen
That guards her first attempt at eggs.
(If you don't know what harems are,
Just run and ask your dear papa.)

MORAL

Wives of great men oft remind us
We should make our wives sublime,
But the years advancing find us
Vainly working over-time.
We could minimise our work
By the methods of the Turk.

XIX DREAMLAND

Here you will see strange happenings
With absolutely placid eyes;
If all your uncles sprouted wings
You would not feel the least surprise;
The oddest things that you can do
Don't seem a bit absurd to you.

You go (in Dreamland) to a ball,
And suddenly are shocked to find
That you have nothing on at all, —
But somehow no one seems to mind;
And, naturally, *you* don't care,
If they can bear what you can bare!

Then, in a moment, you're pursued
By engines on a railway track!
Your legs are tied, your feet are glued,
The train comes snorting down your back!
One last attempt at flight you make
And so (in bed) perspiring wake.

You feel so free from weight of cares
That, if the staircase you should climb,
You gaily mount, not single stairs,
But whole battalions at a time;
(My metaphor is mixed, may be,
I quote from Shakespeare, as you see).

If you should eat too much, you pay
(In dreams) the penalty for this;
A nightmare carries you away
And drops you down a precipice!
Down! down! until, with sudden smack,
You strike the mattress with your back.

MORAL

At meals decline to be a beast;
'Too much is better than a feast.'

XX STAGELAND

The customs of this land have all
Been published in a bulky tome.
The author is a man they call
Jerome K. Jerome K. Jerome.
So, lest on his preserves I poach,
This subject I refuse to broach.

MORAL

The moral here is plain to see.
If true the hackneyed witticism
Which stamps Originality
As 'undetected plagiarism,'
What a vocation I have miss'd
As undetected plagiarist!

XXI LOVERLAND

This is the land where minor bards
And other lunatics repair,
To live in houses made of cards,
Or build their castles in the air;
To feed on hope, and idly dream
That things are really what they seem.

The natives are a motley lot,
Of ev'ry age and creed and race,
But each inhabitant has got
The same expression on his face;
They look, when this their features fills,
Like angels with internal chills.

The lover sits, the livelong day,
Quite inarticulate of speech;
He simply brims with things to say;
Alas! the words he cannot reach,
And, silent, lets occasion pass,
Feeling a fulminating ass.

It is the lady lover's wont
To blush, and look demure or coy,

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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