

Classic Poetry Series

Ellis Parker Butler
- poems -

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Ellis Parker Butler(5 December 1869 - 13 September 1937)

Ellis Parker Butler was an American author.

Biography

Butler was born in Muscatine, Iowa. He was the author of more than 30 books and more than 2,000 stories and essays, and is most famous for his short story "Pigs is Pigs", in which a bureaucratic stationmaster insists on levying the livestock rate for a shipment of two pet guinea pigs, which soon start proliferating geometrically.

Working from his home in Flushing (Queens) New York, Butler was—by every measure and by many times—the most published author of the pulp fiction era. Amongst others he wrote twenty-five stories to *Woman's Home Companion* between 1906 and 1935. The stories in the *Companion* were illustrated by artists including May Wilson Preston, Frederic Dorr Steele, Herbert Paus and Rico Le Brun. Between 1931 and 1936, at least seventeen of Butler's stories published in newspapers were enhanced by noted illustrator Ethel Hays.

His career spanned more than forty years and his stories, poems and articles were published in more than 225 magazines. His work appeared alongside that of his contemporaries including Mark Twain, Sax Rohmer, James B. Hendryx, Berton Braley, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Don Marquis, Will Rogers and Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Despite the enormous volume of his work, Butler was, for most of his life, only a part-time author. He worked full-time as a banker and was very active in his local community. A founding member of both the Dutch Treat Club and the Author's League of America, Butler was an always-present force in the New York City literary scene.

He died in Williamsville, Massachusetts and was interred in Flushing Cemetery.

A Culinary Puzzle

In our dainty little kitchen,
Where my aproned wife is queen
Over all the tin-pan people,
In a realm exceeding clean,
Oft I like to loiter, watching
While she mixes things for tea;
And she tasks me, slyly smiling,
"Now just guess what this will be!"

Hidden in a big blue apron,
Her dimpled arms laid bare,
And the love-smiles coyly mingling
With a housewife's frown of care—
See her beat a golden batter,
Pausing but to ask of me,
As she adds a bit of butter,
"Now just guess what this will be!"

Then I bravely do my duty,
Guess it, "pudding," "cake" or "pie,"
"Dumplings," "waffles," "bread" or "muffins;"
But no matter what I try,
This provoking witch just answers:
"Never mind, just wait and see!
But I think you should be able,
Dear, to guess what this will be."

Little fraud! she never tells me
Until 'tis baked and browned—
And I think I know the reason
For her secrecy profound—
She herself with all her fine airs
And her books on cookery,
Could not answer, should I ask her,
"Dearest, what will that mess be?"

Ellis Parker Butler

A Lost Angel

When first we met she seemed so white
I feared her;
As one might near a spirit bright
I neared her;
An angel pure from heaven above
I dreamed her,
And far too good for human love
I deemed her.
A spirit free from mortal taint
I thought her,
And incense as unto a saint
I brought her.

Well, incense burning did not seem
To please her,
And insolence I feared she'd deem
To squeeze her;
Nor did I dare for that same why
To kiss her,
Lest, shocked, she'd cause my eager eye
To miss her.
I sickened thinking of some way
To win her,
When lo! she asked me, one fine day,
To dinner!

Tw'as thus that made of common flesh
I found her,
And in a mortal lover's mesh
I wound her.
Embraces, kisses, loving looks
I gave her,
And buying bon-bons, flowers and books,
I save her;
For her few honest, human taints
I love her,
Nor would I change for all the saints
Above her
Those eyes, that little face, that so

Endear her,
And all the human joy I know
When near her;
And I am glad, when to my breast
I press her,
She's just a woman, like the rest,
God bless her!

Ellis Parker Butler

A Minute

She plucked a blossom fair to see;
Upon my coat I let her pin it;
And thus we stood beneath the tree
A minute.

She turned her smiling face to me;
I saw a roguish sweetness in it;
I kissed her once;—it took, maybe,
A minute.

The time was paltry, you'll agree;
It took but little to begin it;
But since my heart has not been free
A minute.

Ellis Parker Butler

A Pastoral

Just as the sun was setting
Back of the Western hills
Grandfather stood by the window
Eating the last of his pills.

And Grandmother, by the cupboard,
Knitting, heard him say:
'I ought to have went to the village
To fetch some more pills today.'

Then Grandmother snuffled a teardrop
And said. 'It is jest like I suz
T' th' parson—Grandfather's liver
Ain't what it used to was:

'It's gittin' torpid and dormant,
It don't function like of old,
And even them pills he swallows
Don't seem no more t' catch hold;

'They used to grab it and shake it
And joggle it up and down
And turn dear Grandfather yaller
Except when they turned him brown;

'I remember when we was married
His liver was lively and gay,
A kickin' an' rippin' an' givin'
Dear Ezry new pains ev'ry day;

'It used to turn clear over backwards
An' palpitate wuss'n a pump
An' give him the janders and yallers
An' bounce around thumpty-thump;

'But now it is torpid and dormant
And painless and quiet and cold;
Ah, me! all's so peaceful an' quiet
Since Grandfather's liver 's grown old!

Then Grandmother wiped a new teardrop
And sighed: 'It is just like I suz
T' th' parson: Grandfather's liver
Ain't what it used to was.'

Ellis Parker Butler

A Question

Whene'er I feed the barnyard folk
My gentle soul is vexed;
My sensibilities are torn
And I am sore perplexed.

The rooster so politely stands
While waiting for his food,
But when I feed him, what a change!
He then is rough and rude.

He crowds his gentle wives aside
Or pecks them on the head;
Sometimes I think it would be best
If he were never fed.

And so I often stand for hours
Deciding which is right—
To impolitely have enough,
Or starve and be polite.

Ellis Parker Butler

A Satisfactory Reform

A merry burgomaster
In a burgh upon the Rhine
Said, 'Our burghers all are
Far too fond of drinking wine.'
So the merry burgomaster,
When the burgomasters met,
Bade them look into the matter
Ere the thing went farther yet.

And the merry burgomasters
Did decide the only way
To alleviate the evil
Without worry or delay
Would be just to call a meeting
Of the burghers, great and small,
And then open every wine cask
And proceed to drink it all.

'For,' they said, 'when we have swallowed
Every drop that's in the land,
There can be no more of drinking,
It is plain to understand.'
So they called a monster meeting,
And the burghers, small and great,
Drank and drank until they were too
Tipsy to perambulate.

But there still was wine in plenty,
So, in sooth, the only way
Was to call another meeting;
So they called it for next day.
Thus from day to day the burghers
Met and swallowed seas of wine,
And they vowed the reformation
Was a mission quite divine.

And today the worthy burghers
In that burgh upon the Rhine
Still continue their great mission,

And still swallow seas of wine.
And they vow they will not falter
In their great reforming task
Till the last drop has been emptied
From the very last wine cask.

Ellis Parker Butler

A Scotchman Whose Name Was Isbister

A Scotchman whose name was Isbister
Had a maiden giraffe he called 'sister'
When she said 'Oh, be mine,
Be my sweet Valentine!'
He just shinned up her long neck and kissed her.

Ellis Parker Butler

A St. Valentine's Day Tragedy

Oh! Montmorency Vere de Vere,
To think that one I held so dear
Should use a base deceiver's art
To trifle with my loving heart.

A brand new ten-cent valentine
With lace and hearts and verses fine,
I sent to show my love for thee
And in return you send to me
The one I sent to you last year,
Oh! Montmorency Vere de Vere.

Ellis Parker Butler

A Study In Feeling

To be a great musician you must be a man of moods,
You have to be, to understand sonatas and etudes.
To execute pianos and to fiddle with success,
With sympathy and feeling you must fairly effervesce;
It was so with Paganini, Remenzi and Cho-pang,
And so it was with Peterkin Von Gabriel O'Lang.

Monsieur O'Lang had sympathy to such a great degree.
No virtuoso ever lived was quite so great as he;
He was either very happy or very, very sad;
He was always feeling heavenly or oppositely bad;
In fact, so sympathetic that he either must enthuse
Or have the dumps; feel ecstasy or flounder in the blues.

So all agreed that Peterkin Von Gabriel O'Lang
Was the greatest violinist in the virtuoso gang.
The ladies bought his photographs and put them on the shelves
In the place of greatest honor, right beside those of themselves;
They gladly gave ten dollars for a stiff backed parquette chair.
And sat in mouth-wide happiness a-looking at his hair.

I say 'a looking at his hair,' I mean just what I say,
For no one ever had a chance to hear P. O'Lang play;
So subtle was his sympathy, so highly strung was he,
His moods were barometric to the very last degree;
The slightest change of weather would react upon his brain,
And fill his soul with joyousness or murder it with pain.

And when his soul was troubled he had not the heart to play.
But let his head droop sadly down in such a soulful way,
That every one that saw him declared it was worth twice
(And some there were said three times) the large admission price;
And all were quite unanimous and said it would be crude
For such a man to fiddle when he wasn't in the mood.

But when his soul was filled with joy he tossed his flowing hair
And waved his violin-bow in great circles in the air;
Ecstaticly he flourished it, for so his spirit thrilled,
Thus only could he show the joy with which his heart was filled;

And so he waved it up and down and 'round and out and in,—
But he never, never, NEVER touched it to his violin!

Ellis Parker Butler

An Exception

In all romances, old and new,
And in all lover's rhymes
I find one rule that has held true
Since prehistoric times.

The lover must, if he indeed
Be hit by Cupid's dart,
Grow pale, sigh much, neglect his food,
And wholly lose his heart.

Now fain would I abide this rule
But I, forsooth, grow red
And hot, and stammer like a fool,
And only lose my head.

Ellis Parker Butler

An Old-Fashioned Garden

Strange, is it not? She was making her garden,
Planting the old-fashioned flowers that day—
Bleeding-hearts tender and bachelors-buttons—
Spreading the seeds in the old-fashioned way.

Just in the old fashioned way, too, our quarrel
Grew until, angrily, she set me free—
Planting, indeed, bleeding hearts for the two of us,—
Ordaining bachelor's buttons for me.

Envoi

Strange, was it not? But seeds planted in anger
Sour in the earth and, ere long, a decay
Withered the bleeding hearts, blighted the buttons,
And—we were wed—in the old-fashioned way.

Ellis Parker Butler

Anticipation

I hold her letter as I stand,
Nor break the seal; no need to guess
What dainty little female hand
Penned this most delicate address.

The scented seal—I break it not,
But stand in stormy revery;
I tremble as I wonder what
She who penned this will say to me.

I wonder what my wife will say
If so it be she e'er shall know
I only mailed her note today—
It should have gone two weeks ago!

Ellis Parker Butler

At Variance

When with me the play she goes,
I much admire the buds and bows
And all that on Kate's headgear grows.
But when some other night I see
That hat between the stage and me,
My taste and Kate's do not agree.

Ellis Parker Butler

Bird Nesting

O wonderful! In sport we climbed the tree,
Eager and laughing, as in all our play,
To see the eggs where, in the nest, they lay,
But silent fell before the mystery.

For, one brief moment there, we understood
By sudden sympathy too fine for words
That we were sisters to the brooding birds
And part, with them, in God's great motherhood.

Ellis Parker Butler

Circumstantial Evidence

She does not mind a good cigar
(The kind, that is, I smoke);
She thinks all men quite stupid are,
(But laughs whene'er I joke).

She says she does not care for verse
(But praises all I write);
She says that punning is a curse,
(But then mine are so bright!)

She does not like a big moustache
(You see that mine is small);
She hates a man with too much 'dash,'
(I scarcely dash at all!)

She simply dotes on hazel eyes
(And mine, you note, are that);
She likes a man of portly size;
(Gad! I am getting fat!)

She says champagne is made to drink;
(In this we quite agree!)
And all these symptoms make me think
Sweet Kate's in love with me.

Ellis Parker Butler

Cupid Caught Napping

Cupid on a summer day,
Wearied by unceasing play,
In a rose heart sleeping lay,
While, to guard the tricky fellow,
Close above the fragrant bed
Back and forth a gruff bee sped,
And, to lull the sleepy head,
Played 'Zoom! Zoom!' upon his `cello.

Little did the god surmise
That sweet Anna's cerule eyes
Gazed on him with glad surprise,
Or that he was in such danger;
But the watchman bee, in haste,
Left his post that he might taste
of the honey nature placed
On the lips of that fair stranger.

Thus unwatched, from Cupid's side
Anna stole the boy god's pride,
All his love darts, and then hied
Far away from capture's chances
And today she wields the prize;
For Love's quiver still supplies
Darts that speed from Anna's eyes
In her love compelling glances!

Ellis Parker Butler

Deer

The deer's a mighty useful beast
From Petersburg to Tennyson
For while he lives he lopes around
And when he's dead he's venison.

Ellis Parker Butler

Djolan

Soft was the night, the eve how airy,
When through the big, fat dictionary
I wandered on in careless ease,
And read the a's, b's, c's and d's!

But stop! What is this form I see,
Beginning with a hump-backed d?
I pause! I gasp! I falter there!
It is the djolan, I declare!

It is the djolan, wond'rous word!
The Buceros plicatus bird!
Ne'er, ne'er before had I the bliss
To meet a djolly word like this!

'Twas djust before my dinner hour --
Well, let the djuicy djoint go sour!
Djoyful I read. I djust must see
What this strange djolan word may be!

Ah! ha! It is a noun! A noun!
(A "name word" as we say in town)
"E. Ind. The native name of the
Year bird." These are the words I see.

"A hornbill with a white tail and --"
The big book trembles in my hand --
"-- plicated membrane at the base --"
Ah, well-a-day! If that's the case!

"-- base of the beak, inhabiting --"
Oh! dictionary, wond'rous thing!
"-- the Sunda Islands ----" Where would we
Without our dictionary be?

"-- Malacca, e-t-c." That's all!
I let the dictionary fall.
I am replete. All is explained.
Knowledge (it's power) is what I've gained!

Soft was the night, the eve how airy,
I read no more the dictionary,
But Oh! and Oh! my heart was stirred
To learn the djolan was a bird!

Submitted by John Martin

Ellis Parker Butler

Dogs

Dogs is mighty useful beasts
They might seem bad at first
They might seem worser right along
But when they're dead
They're wurst.

Ellis Parker Butler

Golden Silence

I told her I loved her and begged but a word,
One dear little word, that would be
For me by all odds the most sweet ever heard,
But never a word said she!

I raged at her then, and I said she was cold;
I swore she was nothing to me;
I prayed her the cause of her silence unfold,
But never a word said she!

I covered with kisses her delicate hand,
But she only glanced down where the sea
Low murmured in ripples of love on the sand,
And never a word said she!

I cast her hand from me with rage unsuppressed,
And she turned her blue eyes up to me
And smiled as she laid her fair head on my breast;
'What need of a word?' asked she.

Ellis Parker Butler

Good - Better - Best

When young, in tones quite positive
I said, "The world shall see
That I can keep myself from sin;
A good man I will be."

But when I loved Miss Kate St. Clair
'Twas thus my musing ran:
"I cannot be compared with her;
I'll be a better man."

'Twas at the wedding of a friend
(He married Kate St. Clair)
That I became superlative,
For I was "best man" there.

Ellis Parker Butler

How'D You Like It?

Well, then! How'd you like to bear the name of Butler
As an honor badge eight centuries at least,
And then have the Prohibitionists inform you
That a butler is a sort of outlawed beast?

Ellis Parker Butler

Immortality

I bowed my head in anguish sore
When Life made Death his bride;
'Soul, we are lost forever more!'
Unto my soul I cried.

'Nay, waste in wailing not thy breath,'
My soul replied to me,
'Behold! The child of Life and Death
Is Immortality!'

Ellis Parker Butler

Jabed Meeker, Humorist

Twain? Oh, yes, I've heard Mark Twain
Heard him down to Pleasant Plain;
Funny? Yes, I guess so. Folks
Seemed to laugh loud at his jokes—
Laughed to beat the band; but I
Couldn't rightly make out why.
Guess his humor ain't refined.
Quite enough to suit my mind.
Mark's all right—right clever speaker—
But he can't touch Jabed Meeker;
And one thing that makes it queer
Is that Jabed lives right here.

You ain't met him? Son, you've missed
The most funniest humorist
I've met with in my born days—
Funniest talker, anyways,
When it comes to repartee—
That's the humor catches me!

Like a specimen? Huh! Well,
Take, for instance, his umbrell;
Wouldn't think, until he spoke,
He could turn that to a joke;
Mark Twain couldn't, bet you that!
That's where Meeker beats Mark flat!

Just imagine three or four
Fellers in Jim Beemer's store—
'Long comes Meeker, and some feller
Says, 'See Meeker's bum umbreller.'
Quick as lightning Meeker 'd yell:
'Don't you guy my bumberell!
Where's the feller dares to hoot
At this sping-spang bumbershoot?
Show me some one dares to call
Bad names at my bumberoll!
Right like that! Right off the reel!
Say, you'd ought to heard us squeal!

Then, before we'd got our breath,
Meeker, solemn sad as death,
Says: 'Stand up there `gainst that wall,
Para-bumber-shooter-soll!'

Twain? All right! But just give me
Some one slick at repartee!

Ellis Parker Butler

Judgment Day

Saint Peter stood, at Heaven's gate,
All souls claims to adjudicate
Saying to some souls, 'Enter in!'
'Go to Hell,' to others, 'you are steeped in sin.'
When up from earth, with a great hubbub,
Came all the members of the Tuscarora Club.
The angel Gabriel, peering out,
Said, 'What, the devil, is this noise about?'
'Gabe,' said Peter, 'There's always lots of noise,
At any get-together of the Tuscarora boys -
Those are anglers and they all tell lies
About the trout that got away, their fierceness and their size -
They want to enter Heaven, for our brooks are full of trout,
But I won't have any liars, and I'll keep the whole gang out;
No liars enter Heaven, and I'll most distinctly tell
The whole danged Tuscarora Club, it has to go to Hell.'
Then, at a little distance from the precious pearly gate,
The Tuscarora fellows paused to talk and cogitate;
One Barr said this, one Barr said that, McAlpin had his say,
But foxy Charley Roberts said, 'This is the only way -
'You'd best leave this to me,' he said. 'Just let me handle Pete
and in a trice we'll be inside upon the golden street;
I'll show him that he's one of us, because he used to be,
Himself, a brother fisher, in the Sea of Gallilee-
And I move you, Mr. President, we make the poor old dub
An honorary member of the Tuscarora Club.'
'Agreed! Agreed!' the members cried, but Manny Barr said, 'Wait!
Amend it thus 'PROVIDED - That he didn't fish with bait.'
Saint Peter saw them coming but his face was hard and stern,
He had formed his resolution from which he would not turn,
Not even Roberts' palaver would ever change him so
He'd send the Tuscarorans anywhere, but down below.
But now upon his countenance there came a look of pain,
He stepped from foot to foot, and then from foot to foot again:
He hailed a new-come resident, who near the portal stood,
A goodly Christian gentleman, whose name was Hubert Wood.
He said to him, 'Come here, my friend, and tend awhile this gate-
Just take my place for half an hour - I've got to urinate.'
With that Saint Peter hustled off. The gate-keeper pro tem

Observed the Tuscarorans and he waved his hand at them.
'Come in! come in!' he shouted, for he was an angler, too,
And he knew that anglers, as a whole, were earth's most harmless crew.
So all the Tuscarorans got to heaven, thanks to Wood,
And the Secretary's last report says, 'Fishing there is good.'

Ellis Parker Butler

Little Ballads Of Timely Warning; II:

Little Ballads Of Timely Warning; II: On Malicious Cruelty To Harmless Creatures

The cruelty of P. L. Brown—
(He had ten toes as good as mine)
Was known to every one in town,
And, if he never harmed a noun,
He loved to make verbs shriek and whine.

The 'To be' family's just complaints—
(Brown had ten toes as good as mine)
Made Brown cast off the last restraints:
He smashed the 'Is nots' into 'Ain'ts'
And kicked both mood and tense supine.

Infinitives were Brown's dislike—
(Brown, as I said, had ten good toes)
And he would pinch and shake and strike
Infinitives, or, with a pike,
Prod them and then laugh at their woes.

At length this Brown more cruel grew—
(Ten toes, all good ones, then had Brown)
And to his woodshed door he drew
A young infinitive and threw
The poor, meek creature roughly down,

And while the poor thing weakly flopped,
Brown (ten good toes he had, the brute!)
Got out his chopping block and dropped
The martyr on it and then propped
His victim firmly with his boot.

He raised his axe! He brandished it!
(Ye gods of grammar, interpose!)
He brought it down full force all fit
The poor infinitive to split—

*

(Brown after that had but six toes!

Warning

Infinitives, by this we see.

Should not he split too recklessly.

Ellis Parker Butler

Little Ballads Of Timely Warning; Iii:

Little Ballads Of Timely Warning; III: On Laziness And Its Resultant Ills

There was a man in New York City
(His name was George Adolphus Knight)
So soft of heart he wept with pity
To see our language and its plight.

He mourned to see it sorely goaded
With silent letters left and right;
These from his own name he unloaded
And wrote it Georg Adolfus Nit.

Six other men in that same city
Who longed to see a Spelling Heaven
Formed of themselves a strong committee
And asked Georg Nit to make it seven.

He joined the other six with pleasure,
Proud such important men to know,
Agreeing that their first great measure
Should be to shorten the word though.

But G. Adolfus Nit was lazy;
He dilly-dallied every day;
His life was dreamy, slow and hazy,
And indolent in every way.

On Monday morn at nine precisely
The six reformers (Nit not there)
Prepared to simplify though nicely,
And each was eager for his share.

Smith bit the h off short and ate it;
Griggs from the thoug chewed off the g;
Brown snapped off u to masticate it,
And tho alone was left for three.

Delancy's teeth broke o off quickly;
From th Billings took his t,
And then the h, albeit prickly,

Was shortly swallowed by McGee.

This done, the six lay back in plenty,
Well fed, they picked their teeth and smiled,
And lazy Nit, about 10:20,
Strolled in, as careless as a child.

'Well, boys,' he said, 'where's the collation?
I'm hungry, let us eat some though.'
'All gone!' they said, and then Starvation,
(Who is not lazy) laid Nit low.

Nit trembled, gasped, and, as the phrase is,
Cashed in his checks, gave up his breath,
And turned his toes up to the daisies—
His laziness had caused his death!

Warning

Spelling reformers should make haste.
If each reformer wants a taste.

Ellis Parker Butler

Mary Had A Little Frog

Mary had a little frog
And it was water-soaked,
But Mary did not keep it long
Because, of course, it croaked!

Ellis Parker Butler

Merry Christmas And Happy New Year!

Little cullud Rastus come a-skipin' down de street,
A-smilin' and a-grinnin' at every one he meet;
My, oh! He was happy! Boy, but was he gay!
Wishin' 'Merry Chris'mus' an' 'Happy New-Year's Day'!
Wishin' that his wishes might every one come true—
And—bless your dear heart, honey,—I wish the same to you!

Ellis Parker Butler

Millennium

The great millennium is at hand.
Redder apples grow on the tree.
A saxophone is in ev'ry band.
Brandy no longer taints our tea.
Dimples smile in the red-rouged knee.
The dowagers are no longer fat.
Radio now makes safe the sea—
And the Turk has bought him a derby hat.

Even our sauerkraut now is canned.
Verse is a dangsight more than free.
A 'highboy' now is the old dish stand.
Ev'ry flapper has her night key.
Chopin is jazzed into melody.
A child is a 'kiddie' and not a 'brat.'
Bosses and miners at last agree—
And the Turk has bought him a derby hat.

All firewaters are bravely banned.
There is a ballot for every she.
The hairpin now is a contraband.
A New York mayor gets some sympathy.
My dealer brings some coal to me.
The plumber is an aristocrat.
In Miami all millionaires may be—
And the Turk has bought him a derby hat.

Son, the millennium is at hand!
What though Armenians be mashed flat?
The world is getting just perfectly grand,
For the Turk has bought him a derby hat.

Ellis Parker Butler

Mouths Of Hippopotami And Some Recent Novels

(with apologies to Frederic Taber Cooper)

I well recall (and who does not)
The circus bill-board hippopotamus,
whose wide distended jaws
For fear and terror were good cause.

That month, that vasty carmine cave,
Could munch with ease a Nubian slave;
In fact, the bill-board hippopot-
amus could bolt a house and lot!

Wide opened, that tremendous mouth
Obscured three-quarters of the south
Side of Schmidt's barn, and promised me
Thrills, shocks, delights and ecstasy.

And then, alas! what sad non plus
The living hippopotamus!
'Twas but a stupid, sodden lump
As thrilling as an old elm stump.

Its mouth—unreasonably small—
The hippo opened not at all,
Or, if it did, it was about
As thrilling as a teapot spout.

The Crimson Junk, by Doris Watt,
I've read it. Who, I pray, has not?
Bill Wastel, by C. Marrow. The
Plaid Cowslip. And The Hocking Lee.

The Fallow Field, by Sally Loo;
The Rose in Chains. I've read that too;
I've read them all for promised treat
Of thrills, emotions, tremblings sweet.

The bill-board hippopotamus
It was a wild, uprageous cuss—
The real one? Well—Can you recall
That it had any mouth at all?

Ellis Parker Butler

New England Magazine

Upon Bottle Miche the autre day
While yet the nuit was early,
Je met a homme whose barbe was grey,
Whose cheveaux long and curly.

'Je am a poete, sir,' dit he,
'Je live where tres grande want teems—
I'm faim, sir. Sil vous plait give me
Un franc or cinquatite centimes.'

I donne him vingt big copper sous
But dit, 'You moderne rhymers
The sacre poet name abuse—
Les poets were old timers.'

'Je know! I know!' he wept, contrite;
'The bards no more suis mighty:
Ils rise no more in eleve flight,
Though some are beaucoup flighty.

'Vous wonder why Je weep this way,
Pour quoi these tears and blubbers?
It is mon fault les bards today
Helas! suis mere earth-grubbers.

'There was a time when tout might see
My grande flights dans the saddle;
Crowned rois, indeed, applauded me
Le Pegasus astraddle.

'Le winged horse avec acclaim
Was voted mon possession;
Je rode him tous les jours to fame;
Je led the whole procession.

'Then arrivee the Prussian war—
The siege—the sacre famine—
Then some had but a crust encore,
We mange the last least ham-an'

'Helas! Mon noble winged steed
Went oft avec no dinner;
On epics il refusee feed
And maigre grew, and thinner!

'Tout food was gone, and dans the street
Each homme sought crusts to sate him—
Joyeux were those with horse's meat,
And Pegasus! Je ate him!'

My anger then Je could not hide—
To parler scarcely able
'Oh! curses dans you, sir!' Je cried;
'Vous human livery stable!'

He fled! But vous who read this know
Why mon pauvre verse is beaten
By that of cinquante years ago
'Vant Pegasus fut eaten!

Ellis Parker Butler

Night In The City

The sluggish clouds hang low upon the town,
And from yon lamp in chilled and sodden rays
The feeble light gropes through the heavy mist
And dies, extinguished in the stagnant maze.

From moisty eaves the drops fall slowly down
To strike with leaden sound the walk below,
And in dark, murky pools upon the street
The water stands, as lacking life to flow.

With hopeless brain, oppressed and sad at heart,
Toil's careworn slave turns out his flickering light
And treads in dreams his dulling round again,
Where weary day succeeds to dismal night.

Ellis Parker Butler

No Beer, No Work

The shades of night was fallin' slow
As through New York a guy did go
And nail on ev'ry barroom door
A card that this here motter bore:
'No beer, no work.'

His brow was sad, his mouth was dry;
It was the first day of July,
And where, all parched and scorched it hung,
These words was stenciled on his tongue:
'No beer, no work.'

'Oh, stay,' the maiden said, 'and sup
This malted milk from this here cup.'
A shudder passed through that there guy,
But with a moan he made reply:
'No beer, no work.'

At break of day, as through the town
The milkman put milk bottles down,
Onto one stoop a sort of snore
Was heard, and then was heard no more—
'No beer, no work.'

The poor old guy plumb dead was found
And planted in the buryin' ground,
Still graspin' in his hand of ice
Them placards with this sad device:
'No beer, no work.'

Ellis Parker Butler

October

The forest holds high carnival to-day,
And every hill-side glows with gold and fire;
Ivy and sumac dress in colors gay,
And oak and maple mask in bright attire.

The hoarded wealth of sober autumn days
In lavish mood for motley garb is spent,
And nature for the while at folly plays,
Knowing the morrow brings a snowy Lent.

Ellis Parker Butler

Outbid

When Cupid held an auction sale,
I hastened to his mart,
For I had heard that he would sell
The blue-eyed Dora's heart.

I brought a wealth of truest love,
The most that I could proffer,
Because, forsooth, of stocks or bonds
I had not one to offer.

When Cupid offered Dora's heart,
I bid my whole heart's love,
A love that reached from sea to sea
And to the sky above;

And When Sir Cupid called for more,
I bid my hands and life,
That should be hers for servitude
If she became my wife.

Then 'Going! going!' Cupid cried;
The silence was intense
Until old Goldbags said, 'I bid
My stocks and four per cents!'

Then Cupid cried, 'Fair Dora's heart,
That ne'er was sold before!
Does anybody raise the bid?
Will any offer more?'

'If not—,' but Count Decrepit rose,
Infirm, decayed and slim;
'I hid my title!' and her heart
Was there knocked down to him.

Well! titles may be more than love!
I shall not rant nor rail;
For after all I much prefer
Some heart that's not for sale!

Ellis Parker Butler

Partners

Love took chambers on our street
Opposite to mine;
On his door he tacked a neat,
Clearly lettered sign.

Straightway grew his custom great,
For his sign read so:
'Hearts united while you wait.
Step in. Love and Co.'

Much I wondered who was 'Co.'
In Love's partnership;
Thought across the street I'd go—
Learn from Love's own lip.

So I went; and since that day
Life is hard for me.
I was buncoed! (By the way,
'Co.' is Jealousy.)

Ellis Parker Butler

Reasonable Interest

I want to know how Bernard Shaw
Likes beefsteak—fairly done, or raw?
I want to know what kinds of shoes
M. Maeterlinck and Howells use.

I have great curiosity
Regarding George Ade's new boot tree.
Has Carolyn Wells of late employed
Hairpins of wire or celluliod?

What kind of soap does London like?
Does Robert Chambers ever 'hike'?
Or did he ever? Or, if not,
Does he like cabbage, cheese, or what?

I want to know the size of gloves
Oppenheim wears, and if he loves
Olives, and how his clothes are made.
What does he eat? How is he paid?

All sorts of things I want to learn,
That are not of the least concern
To any one. For, Oh! and Oh!
I want to know! I WANT TO KNOW!

I want to know, and know I will—
The printing press is never still,
For me it prints such facts as these!
I am the Public, if you please!

Ellis Parker Butler

Ridden Down

When I taught Ida how to ride a
Bicycle that night,
I ran beside her, just to guide her
Erring wheel aright;
And many times there in the street
She rode upon my weary feet.

But now can Ida mount and ride a
Wheel with graceful ease,
And I, untiring in admiring,
Fall upon my knees
To worship her,—and, for her part,
She rides upon my proffered heart!

Ellis Parker Butler

Says Mister Doojabs

Well, eight months ago one clear cold day,
I took a ramble up Broadway,
And with my hands behind my back
I strolled along on the streetcar track—
(I walked on the track, for walking there
Gives one, I think, a distinguished air.)

'Well, all of a sudden I felt a jar
And I said, 'I'll bet that's a trolley car,'
And, sure enough, when I looked to see
I saw it had run right over me!
And my limbs and things were so scattered about
That for a moment I felt put out.

Well, the motorman was a nice young chap!
And he came right up and tipped his cap
And said, 'Beg pardon,' and was so kind
That his gentle manner soothed my mind:
Especially as he took such pains
To gather up my spilt remains.

Well, he found my arms and found my head,
And then, in a contrite voice, he said,
'Say, mister, I guess I'll have to beg Your pardon,
I can't find your left leg,'
And he would have wept, but I said,
'No! no! It doesn't matter, just let it go.'

Well, I went on home and on the way
I considered what my wife would say:
I knew she would have some sharp reply
If I let her know I was one leg shy,
So I thought, on the whole, 'twould be just as well
For my peace of mind if I didn't tell.

Well, that was the first thing in my life
That I kept a secret from my wife.
And for eight long months I was in distress
To think that I didn't dare confess,

And I'd probably still feel just that way
If it hadn't come 'round to Christmas Day.

Well, in good old customs I still believe,
So I hung up my stocking Christmas Eve;
(A brand-new left one I'd never worn.)
And when I looked in it Christmas morn
There was my leg, as large as life,
With a ticket on it, 'From your wife.'

Well, my wife had had it stored away
In cotton, since last Easter Day,
When she ran across it, quite by chance,
In the left hip-pocket of my pants;
And the only reproachful thing she said
Was, 'Look out or some day you'll lose your head.'

Ellis Parker Butler

Song For Heroes

Captain O'Hare was a mariner brave;
He refused to abandon his ship;
A hero, he sleeps in a watery grave—
And his widow is now Mrs. Bipp,
Haw! Haw!
His widow is now Mrs. Bipp!

Henri Dupont was a fearless young ace;
Five thousand feet up he was hit;
Each year on his grave pretty flowers we place—
And his widow is now Mrs. Schmitt,
Haw! Haw!
His widow is now Mrs. Schmitt!

Corporal Dunn was a volunteer bold;
He plunged in the deadliest fray;
A bayonet thrust laid him out stony cold—
And his widow is now Mrs. Gray,
Haw! Haw!
His widow is now Mrs. Gray!

But Peter McGuck was a cowardly sneak,
Like a hound he remained home in fear;
When fishing one day he fell into the creek—
And his widow is now Mrs. Greer,
Haw! Haw! Haw!
Mrs. William O'Houlihan Greer!

Ellis Parker Butler

Speaking Of Operations

I know something wonderful—wonderful;
So strange it will quite startle you;
So strange and absurd and unusual
It seems it can hardly be true!

I know something wonderful—wonderful;
You'll hardly believe it can be—
You know my appendix? Well, honest,
I've still got it inside of me!

Ellis Parker Butler

The Ballad Of A Bachelor

Listen, ladies, while I sing
The ballad of John Henry King.

John Henry was a bachelor,
His age was thirty-three or four.

Two maids for his affection vied,
And each desired to be his bride,

And bravely did they strive to bring
Unto their feet John Henry King.

John Henry liked them both so well,
To save his life he could not tell

Which he most wished to be his bride,
Nor was he able to decide.

Fair Kate was jolly, bright, and gay,
And sunny as a summer day;

Marie was kind, sedate, and sweet,
With gentle ways and manners neat.

Each was so dear that John confessed
He could not tell which he liked best.

He studied them for quite a year,
And still found no solution near,

And might have studied two years more
Had he not, walking on the shore,

Conceived a very simple way
Of ending his prolonged delay--

A way in which he might decide
Which of the maids should be his bride.

He said, "I'll toss into the air
A dollar, and I'll toss it fair;

If heads come up, I'll wed Marie;
If tails, fair Kate my bride shall be."

Then from his leather pocket-book
A dollar bright and new he took;

He kissed one side for fair Marie,
The other side for Kate kissed he.

Then in a manner free and fair
He tossed the dollar in the air.

"Ye fates," he cried, "pray let this be
A lucky throw indeed for me!"

The dollar rose, the dollar fell;
He watched its whirling transit well,

And off some twenty yards or more
The dollar fell upon the shore.

John Henry ran to where it struck
To see which maiden was in luck.

But, oh, the irony of fate!
Upon its edge the coin stood straight!

And there, embedded in the sand,
John Henry let the dollar stand!

And he will tempt his fate no more,
But live and die a bachelor.

Thus, ladies, you have heard me sing
The ballad of John Henry King.

Submitted by John Martin

Ellis Parker Butler

The Ballade Of The Automobile

When our yacht sails seaward on steady keel
And the wind is moist with breath of brine
And our laughter tells of our perfect weal,
We may carol the praises of ruby wine;
But if, automobiling, my woes combine
And fuel gives out in my road-machine
And it's sixteen miles to that home of mine--
Then ho! For a gallon of gasoline!

When our coach rides smoothly on iron-shod wheel
With a deft touch guiding each taut drawn line
And the inn ahead holds a royal meal,
We may carol the praises of ruby wine;
But when, on some long and steep incline,
In a manner entirely unforeseen
The motor stops with a last sad whine--
Then ho! For a gallon of gasoline!

When the air is crisp and the brooks congeal
And our sleigh glides on with a speed divine
While the gay bells echo with peal on peal,
We may carol the praises of ruby wine;
But when, with perverseness most condign,
In the same harsh snowstorm, cold and keen,
My auto stops at the six-mile sign--
Then ho! For a gallon of gasoline!

ENVOY

When yacht or Coach Club fellows dine
We may carol the praises of ruby wine;
But when Automobile Clubmen convene
Then ho! For a gallon of gasoline!

Submitted by John Martin

Ellis Parker Butler

The Ballade Of The Mistletoe Bough

I am standing under the mistletoe,
And I smile, but no answering smile replies
For her haughty glance bids me plainly know
That not for me is the thing I prize;
Instead, from her coldly scornful eyes,
Indifference looks on my barefaced guile;
She knows, of course, what my act implies—
But look at those lips! Do they hint a smile?

I stand here, eager, and beam and glow,
And she only looks a refined surprise
As clear and crisp and as cold as snow,
And as—Stop! I will never criticise!
I know what her cold glance signifies;
But I'll stand just here as I am awhile
Till a smile to my pleading look replies—
But look at those lips! Do they hint a smile?

Just look at those lips, now! I claim they show
A spirit unmeet under Christmas skies;
I claim that such lips on such maidens owe
A—something—the custom justifies;
I claim that the mistletoe rule applies
To her as well as the rank and file;
We should meet these things in a cheerful guise—
But look at those lips! Do they hint a smile?

ENVOY

These customs of Christmas may shock the wise,
And mistletoe boughs may be out of style,
And a kiss be a thing that all maids despise—
But look at those lips, do! They hint a smile!

Ellis Parker Butler

The Charge Of The Second Iowa Cavalry

Comrades, many a year and day
Have fled since that glorious 9th of May
When we made the charge at Farmington.
But until our days on earth are done
Our blood will burn and our hearts beat fast
As we tell of the glorious moments we passed,
When we rode on the guns with a mighty shout
And saved Paine's army from utter rout;
And our children in years to come will tell
How the 2nd rose through the shot and shell
Rode with a cheer on that 9th of May
And held the whole rebel army at bay.

Behind lay the swamp, a dank morass.
A marsh - no horse nor man could pass
Save by one road, one narrow way.
But beyond that road our safety lay,
In front rose the hills which the rebels held
With his howling cannon that raked and shelled
Our troops.
We lay in the centre.
Paine,
Our general saw he must cross again
The narrow road, or his men were lost
The road was narrow. It must be crossed,
And crossed in haste, and the deadly rain
of the rebel guns 'Must be stopped!' said Paine.

Twenty-four cannon thundered and roared!
Twenty-four cannon into us poured.
Twenty-four cannon! A devil's den
Backed by full fifteen thousand men.
Must be held at bay till our troops could pass
In order over the dank morass.
Up to where the cavalry stand,
Waiting in order the word of command,
Gallops Paine. And his mighty shout
Rings the daring order out -
'Take and hold that battery!

Take it! Whatever the hazards be!
'Draw sabres!' They flash in the startled air.
'Forward! Gallop! March!' Away
We ride. We must show our steel today!

'Gallop! Charge!' On the rebels ears
Ring the thundering Yankee cheers!
And on, like a wave of maddened sea,
On - Dash the Iowa cavalry!
Into the torrents of shot and shell
That shrieks and screams like the fiends of hell!
Into the torrent of shot that kills!
Into the torrent of shell that stills
The cheer on many a lip, we ride
Like the onward rush of a whirling tide
Up to the cannon's mouth,
Our cheers
Curdle the blood of the cannoneers
To right and left from his silenced guns
In wild retreat the rebel runs.
And the charge of the Iowa cavalry
Rushes on!

Can you stop the sea
When the storm waves break on the sandy shore
Driving the driftwood awrack? No more
Can the rebel resist the terrible charge
As we ride right up to their army's marge -
They waver - the fifteen thousand men,
Waver and rally, and waver, and then
Our work is done.
Paine's men had crossed
The swamp while our little band was lost
In the smoke and dust of the eager ride,
And are safe at last on the other side.
Then we ride back! We had saved the day
By holding the whole rebel army at bay,
While Paine made a hasty and safe retreat
Over the swamp.

We had conquered defeat!

Comrades, many a year and day
Have fled since that glorious 9th of May
When we made the charge at Farmington.
And our time on earth is almost run,
But when we are gone our children will tell
How we rode through rebel shots and shell.
How we rode on the guns with a mighty shout,
And saved Paine's army from utter route.
And carved in the temple of glory will be
The roll of the 2nd Iowa Cavalry.
The brave old 2nd, that never knew
A deed too hard or rash to do.
The dear old 2nd, that would have spurred
Into Hell itself, if Hatch said the word.

Ellis Parker Butler

The Cut Finger

THE GOSSOON [Weeping]

It's bleedin'! It's bleedin'!

THE OULD WOMAN [Soothingly]

An' shure, me lad, 't is bleedin';
But come, me hearty laddy buck, be brave an' do not cry;
A lad that's learnin' readin' sh'u'd be far beyant the heedin'
Av a tiny bit o' finger cut that hurrts a bit foreby.

'Ere ye come till wan an' twinty
Ye'll be havin' hurrts in plinty
An' ye'll learn a bit o' bleedin' doesn't mean ye're goin' t' die.

THE GOSSOON [Crying]

It's bleedin'! It's bleedin'!

THE OULD WOMAN [Comfortingly]

An' shure, me lad, 't is bleedin';
But he's me slashin' buckeen, an' he will not weep at all;
A rag is all 't is needin' fer t' sthop the whole proceedin',
An', shure, a bit o' rosy blood won't make me gossoon bawl;
Fer 't is but wan way av knowin'
Ye have good red blood a-flowin'
An' a-workin' all inside av ye t' make ye strong an' tall.

THE GOSSOON [Sobbing]

It's bleedin'! It's bleedin'!

THE OULD WOMAN [Lovingly]

Aye, aye, me lad, 't is bleedin',
An' some foine day yer heartt will bleed as bleeds the heartt av me.
The saints ye will be pleadin', but 't is little they'll be heedin',
Fer the worrld is full av bleedin' heartts on either side the sea.

An' I'd die t' aise the achin'
Whin ye feel yer hearrt a-brealdn',
But, ah! the poor ould woman won't be there t' comfort ye.

Ellis Parker Butler

The Daughter Of The Year

Nature, when she made thee, dear,
Begged the treasures of the year.
For thy cheeks, all pink and white,
Spring gave apple blossoms light;
Summer, for thy matchless eyes,
Gave the azure of her skies;
Autumn spun her gold and red
In a mass of silken thread—
Gold and red and sunlight rare
For the wonder of thy hair!
Surly Winter would impart
But his coldness, for thy heart.

Dearest, let the love I bring
Turn thy Winter into Spring.
What are Summer, Spring and Fall,
If thy Winter chills them all?

Ellis Parker Butler

The Final Tax

Said Statesman A to Statesman Z:

'What can we tax that is not paying?

We're taxing every blessed thing—

Here's what our people are defraying:

'Tariff tax, income tax,

Tax on retail sales,

Club tax, school tax,

Tax on beers and ales,

'City tax, county tax,

Tax on obligations,

War tax. wine tax,

Tax on corporations,

'Brewer tax, sewer tax,

Tax on motor cars,

Bond tax, stock tax,

Tax on liquor bars,

'Bridge tax, check tax,

Tax on drugs and pills,

Gas tax, ticket tax,

Tax on gifts in wills,

'Poll tax, dog tax,

Tax on money loaned,

State tax, road tax,

Tax on all things owned,

'Stamp tax, land tax,

Tax on wedding ring,

High tax, low tax,

Tax on everything!'

Said Statesman A to Statesman Z:

'That is the list, a pretty bevy;

No thing or act that is untaxed;

There's nothing more on which to levy.'

Said Statesman Z to Statesman A:
'The deficit each moment waxes;
This is no time for us to fail—
We will decree a tax on taxes.'

Ellis Parker Butler

The Golf Walk

Behold, my child, this touching scene,
The golfer on the golfing-green;
Pray mark his legs' uncanny swing,
The golf-walk is a gruesome thing!

See how his arms and shoulders ride
Above his legs in haughty pride,
While over bunker, hill and lawn
His feet, relentless, drag him on.

And does the man walk always so?
Nay! nay I my child, and eke, oh! no!
It is a gait he only knows
When he has on his golfing clothes.

Blame not the man for that strange stride
He could not help it if he tried;
It is his timid feet that try
From his obstreperous clothes to fly.

Ellis Parker Butler

The Hunter

A full-fledged gun cannot endure
The trifling of an amateur;
Poor marksmanship its temper spoils
And this is why the gun recoils.

A self-respecting gun I'm sure
Delights to jar the amateur
And thinks that it is no disgrace
To kick his shoulder out of place.

Moral

When you go out to hunt, my son
Prepare to circumvent your gun
And on your shoulder firmly bind
A pillow of the largest kind.

Ellis Parker Butler

The Poor Boy's Christmas

Observe, my child, this pretty scene,
And note the air of pleasure keen
With which the widow's orphan boy
Toots his tin horn, his only toy.
What need of costly gifts has he?
The widow has nowhere to flee.
And ample noise his horn emits
To drive the widow into fits.

MORAL:

The philosophic mind can see
The uses of adversity.

Ellis Parker Butler

The Rich Boy's Christmas

And now behold this sulking boy,
His costly presents bring no joy;
Harsh tears of anger fill his eye
Tho' he has all that wealth can buy.
What profits it that he employs
His many gifts to make a noise?
His playroom is so placed that he
Can cause his folks no agony.

MORAL:

Mere worldly wealth does not possess
The power of giving happiness.

Ellis Parker Butler

The Romance Of Patrolman Casey

There was a young patrolman who
Had large but tender feet;
They always hurt him badly when
He walked upon his beat.
(He always took them with him when
He walked upon his beat.)

His name was Patrick Casey and
A sweetheart fair had he;
Her face was full of freckles—but
Her name was Kate McGee.
(It was in spite of freckles that
Her name was Kate McGee.)

'Oh, Pat!' she said, 'I'll wed you when
Promotion comes to you!'
'I'm much-obliged,' he answered, and
'I'll see what I can do.'
(I may remark he said it thus—
'Oi'll say phwat Oi kin do.')

So then he bought some new shoes which
Allowed his feet more ease—
They may have been large twelves. Perhaps
Eighteens, or twenty-threes.
(That's rather large for shoes, I think—
Eighteens or twenty-threes!)

What last they were I don't know, but
Somehow it seems to me
I've heard somewhere they either were
A, B, C, D, or E.
(More likely they were five lasts wide—
A, B plus C, D, E.)

They were the stoutest cowhide that
Could be peeled off a cow.

But he was not promoted

So
Kate wed him anyhow.

(This world is crowded full of Kates
That wed them anyhow.)

Ellis Parker Butler

The Sheep

The Sheep adorns the landscape rural
And is both singular and plural—
It gives grammarians the creeps
To hear one say, 'A flock of sheeps.'

The Sheep is gentle, meek and mild,
And led in herds by man or child—
Being less savage than the rabbit,
Sheep are gregarious by habit.

The Sheep grows wool and thus promotes
The making of vests, pants and coats—
Vests, pants and coats and woolen cloths
Provide good food for hungry moths.

With vegetables added to
The Sheep, we get our mutton stew—
Experiments long since revealed
The Sheep should first be killed and peeled.

Thus, with our debt to them so deep,
All men should cry 'Praise be for Sheep!'—
And, if we happen to be shepherds,
'Praise be they're not as fierce as leopards!'

Ellis Parker Butler

The Tearful Tale Of Captain Dan

A sinner was old Captain Dan;
His wives giv him no rest:
He had one wife to East Skiddaw
And one to Skiddaw West.

Now Ann Eliza was the name
Of her at East Skiddaw;
She was the most cantankerous
Female you ever saw.

I don't know but one crosser-grained,
And of this Captain Dan
She was the wife at Skiddaw West—
She was Eliza Ann.

Well, this old skeesicks, Captain Dan,
He owned a ferryboat;
From East Skiddaw to Skiddaw West
That vessel used to float.

She was as trim a ferry-craft
As ever I did see,
And on each end a p'inted bow
And pilothouse had she.

She had two bows that way, so when
She went acrost the sound
She could, to oncet, run back ag'in
Without a-turnin' round.

Now Captain Dan he sailed that boat
For nigh on twenty year
Acrost that sound and back ag'in,
Like I have stated here.

And never oncet in all them years
Had Ann Eliza guessed
That Dan he had another wife
So nigh as Skiddaw West.

Likewise, Eliza Ann was blind,
Howas she never saw
As Dan he had another wife
Acrost to East Skiddaw.

The way he fooled them female wives
Was by a simple plan
That come into the artful brain
Of that there Captain Dan.

With paint upon that ferry-craft,
In letters plain to see,
Upon the bow— to wit, both ends—
Her name he painted she.

Upon the bow toward East Skiddaw
This sinful Captain Dan
He painted just one single word—
The same which it was 'Ann';

And on the bow toward Skiddaw West
He likewise put one name,
And not no more; and I will state
'Eliza' was that same.

Thus, when she berthed to Skiddaw West
Eliza Ann could see
How Dan for love and gratitood
Had named her after she;

And likewise when to East Skiddaw
That boat bow-foremost came,
His Ann Eliza plain could see
The vessel bore her name.

Thuswise for nigh on twenty year,
As I remarked before
Dan cumfuscated them two wives
And sailed from shore to shore.

I reckon he might, to this day,

Have kept his sinful ways
And fooled them trustin' female wives,
Except there come a haze:

It was a thick November haze
Accompanied by frost,
And Dan, in steerin' 'cross the sound,
He got his bearin's lost.

So Dan he cast his anchor out,
And anchored on the sound;
And when the haze riz some next day,
His boat had swung clean round.

So, not bethinkin' how it was,
Dan steered for Skiddaw West;
For he had sot up all that night,
And shorely needed rest.

Well, when into his ferry-slip
His ferry-craft he ran,
Upon the shore he seen his wife:
To wit, Eliza Ann.

Says he, 'I'll tie this vessel up
And rest about a week;
I need a rest,' and 't was just then
He heard an awful shriek.

'O Villyun!' shrieked Eliza Ann.
'Oh! What—what do I see?
You don't not love me any more!
You've done deserted me!'

She pointed to that ferry-craft
With one wild, vicious stare.
Dan looked and seen the telltale name
Of 'Ann' a-painted there!

What could he do? He done his best!
'Lost! Lost! Alas!' he cried;
And, kicking off his rubber boots,

Jumped overboard—and died!

Ellis Parker Butler

The Twenty Hoss-Power Shay

You have heard of the wonderful one-hoss shay
That was built in such a logical way
It ran a hundred years to a day.
And then, of a sudden, it up and bust,
And all that was left was a mound of dust?
Holmes -- O. W. -- told it well
In a rhyme of his -- what there was to tell --
But the one-hoss shay wasn't "one, two, three"
With a vehicle once belonged to me.

One hoss? No, sir! Not six nor nine --
Twenty there were in this rig of mine!
Twenty hosses as tough as rocks,
All caged up in a sort of box
That stood jist back of the forward wheels!
Right! She was one of those automobiles
With twenty hosses bottled inside -
Hosses that not only pull but ride!
Wonder what Holmes would have had to say
If the mare had rode in his one-hoss shay!
I reckon the shay would have logicked out
Before the century rolled about.

Well, this big touring car, I say,
Was built just like the one-hoss shay --
Some dependable, logical way --
Flipflaps, dujabs, wheels and things,
Levers, thing-gum-bobs and springs,
Hub, and felloe, and hoss-power chest --
One part just as strong as the rest;
So "logic is logic," as Holmes would say,
And no one part could first give way.

Wonderful vehicle, you'll admit,
With not one flaw in the whole of it;
As long as I had it, I declare
I hadn't one cent to pay for repair,
It couldn't break down because, you see,
It was such a logical symphony.

Now for my tale. We're not so slow
These days as a hundred years ago,
And it's like enough that the one-hoss shay,
Ambling along in its sleepy way,
Should creep a century 'thout a break,
But nowadays we aim to make
A pace that is something like a pace,
And if that old shay got in our race
It would stand the pressure twenty days
And go to the home of played-out shays.

"Logic is logic." Just figure this out --
For I know just what I'm talking about: --
If a one-hoss vehicle, genus shays,
Will stand our pressure twenty days,
Then, vice versa, a twenty-hoss shay
Should stand the pressure just one day; --
Well, mine is a logical automobile,
From rubber tire to steering wheel.
I bought it one morning at just 10.42,
And the very next morning what did it do,
Right on the second, but up and bust!
Talk of the old shay's pile of dust --
That's not logical; my mobile
Vanished completely! Brass and steel,
Iron and wood and rubber tire
Went right up in a gush of fire,
And in half a minute a gassy smell
Was all I had left by which to tell
I ever owned a touring car, --
And then that vanished, and there you are!

End of my twenty hoss-power shay.
Logic is logic. That's all I say.

Submitted by John Martin

Ellis Parker Butler

The Water Nymphs

They hide in the brook when I seek to draw nearer,
Laughing amain when I feign to depart;
Often I hear them, now faint and now clearer—
Innocent bold or so sweetly discreet.
Are they Nymphs of the Stream at their playing
Or but the brook I mistook for a voice?
Little care I; for, despite harsh Time's flaying,
Brook voice or Nymph voice still makes me rejoice.

Ellis Parker Butler

The Whale

The Whale is found in seas and oceans,
Indulging there in fishlike motions,
But Science shows that Whales are mammals,
Like Jersey cows, and goats, and camels.

When undisturbed, the Whale will browse
Like camels, goats, and Jersey cows,
On food that satisfies its tongue,
Thus making milk to feed its young.

Asking no costly hay and oats,
Like camels, Jersey cows, and goats,
The Whale, prolific milk producer,
Should be our cheapest lactic juicer.

Our milk should all come from the sea,
But who, I ask, would want to be—
And here the proposition fails—
The milkmaid to a herd of Whales?

Ellis Parker Butler

The Wood Nymph

A glint of her hair or a flash of her shoulder —
That is the most I can boast to have seen,
Then all is lost as the shadows enfold her,
Forest glades making a screen of their green,
Could I cast off all the cares of tomorrow—
Could I forget all the fret of today
Then, my heart free from the burdens I borrow,
Nature's chaste spirit her face would display.

Ellis Parker Butler

To G. M. W. And G. F. W.

Whenas—(I love that 'whenas' word—
It shows I am a poet, too,)
Q. Horace Flaccus gaily stirred
The welkin with his tra-la-loo,
He little thought one donkey's back
Would carry thus a double load—
Father and son upon one jack,
Galumphing down the Tibur Road.

II

Old is the tale—Aesop's, I think—
Of that famed miller and his son
Whose fortunes were so 'on the blink'
They had one donk, and only one;
You know the tale—the critic's squawk
(As pater that poor ass bestrode)—
'Selfish! To make thy fine son walk!
Perhaps that was on Tibur Road?

III

You will recall how dad got down
And made the son the ass bestride:—
The critics shouted with a frown:
'Shame, boy! pray let thy father ride!'
Up got the dad beside the son;
The donkey staggered with the load
'Poor donk! For shame!' cried every one
That walked the (was it?) Tibur Road.

IV

You know the end! Upon their backs
Daddy and son with much ado
Boosted that most surprised of jacks,—
He kicked, and off the bridge he flew;
'He! haw!' A splash! A gurgling sound—
A long, last watery abode—

In Anio's stream the donk was drowned—
(If this occurred on Tibur Road.)

V

Let Donkey represent the Odes;
The Miller represent G. M.;
The Son stand for G. F.; the loads
Of Critics—I will do for them.
Now, then, this proposition made,
(And my bum verses 'Ah'd' and 'Oh'd!').
What Q. E. D. can be displayed
Anent this 'On the Tibur Road'?

VI

First, Horry's dead and he don't care,
So cancel him, and let him snore;
His Donkey has been raised in air
So oft he's tough and calloused o'er;
Our Miller—dusty-headed man—
Follows the best donk-boosting code:
Our Son—dispute it no one can—
Sings gaily down the Tibur Road.

VII

This, then, must be this Critic's scream:—
The donk was boosted well and high,
And, ergo! falling in the stream,
Isn't and ain't and can't be dry;
Nor is your book. Which is to say
It is no gloomy episode—
You've made a dead donk sweetly bray,
And joyful is the Tibur Road.

Ellis Parker Butler

To Jessica, Gone Back To The City

Sence fair Jessica hez left us
Seems ez ef she hed bereft us,
When she went, o' half o' livin';
Fer we never knowed she'd driven
Into us so much content,
Till fair Jessica hed went.
(Knowed a feller once thet cried
When his yaller dog hed died.)

We hain't near ez bright an' chirky,
An' the sun shines blue an' murky,
Kind o' sadly an' dishearted,
Like ets sperret bed departed;
Just ez ef ets joy bed ceased
Sence fair Jessica 's gone East.
(Not but what ets always sober
Sort o' weather in October.)

Then the posies, too, seems human,
An' hez all quit o' their bloomin';
An' the trees they show a pallor
An' hey turned a heart-sick yaller,
Sayin', 'No use livin' on
Ef fair Jessica hez gone.'
(Folks thet knows sez this ez all
Very common in the fall.)

Truth ez, I'm a-feelin' sadly;
Things ez goin' kind o' badly
Round my heart an' other vitals
(Brings on poetry recitals
O' my woes 'most ev'ry day)
Sence fair Jessica's away.
(Kind o' think thet I will haf ter
Smoke a leetle less hereafter.)

But, with fun aside, you know,
We're blamed sorry she must go;
An' we hope she'll think, maybe,

'Z well o' us ez we o' she.

Ellis Parker Butler

To Kate. (In Lieu Of A Valentine)

Sweet Love and I had oft communed;
We were, indeed, great friends,
And oft I sought his office, near
Where Courtship Alley ends.

I used to sit with him, and smoke,
And talk of your blue eyes,
And argue how I best might act
To make your heart my prize.

He always seemed to have much time
To hear me tell my joy,
So that I came to deem him but
An idle, lazy boy.

But on St. Valentine his day,
I found him hard at work,
As if he had a mighty task
And did not dare to shirk;

And o'er his head there hung a card
That made me haste away;
It bore these words—
Please make it short.
This is my busy day!

And so, Sweet maiden; if I send
No valentine, you see
The reason here; Love could not waste
His precious time on me!

Ellis Parker Butler

To Lovers

Ho, ye lovers, list to me;
Warning words have I for thee:
Give ye heed, hefore ye wed,
To this thing Sir Chaucer said:

"Love wol not be constrained by maistrie,
When maistrie cometh, the god of love anon
Beteth his winges, and farewel, he is gon."

Other poets knew as well,
And the same sad story tell,
Hark ye, heed ye, while ye may,
What the worldly Pope doth say:

"Love, free as air, at sight of human ties
Spreads his light wings and in a moment flies."

This, Sir Hudibras, brave knight,
Faithful lover, constant wight,
From his lady's lips did hear;
Mark ye, eke, the warning clear:

"Love is too generous t'abide
To be against its nature ty'd,
For where 'tis of itself inclin'd,
It breaks loose when it is confin'd."

Ho, ye lovers, shall I tell
How through life with Love to dwell,
Spite of all the poets say?
Harken to the easy way:--

Strive to bind him not, but see
That the little god binds thee.

Ellis Parker Butler

To Marguerite

So great my debt to thee, I know my life
Is all too short to pay the least I owe,
And though I live it all in that sweet strife,
Still shall I be insolvent when I go.
Bid, then, thy Bailiff Cupid come to me
And bind and lead me wheresoe'er thou art,
And let me live in sweet captivity
Within the debtor's prison of thy heart.

Ellis Parker Butler

To May

I have no heart to write verses to May;
I have no heart—yet I'm cheerful today;
I have no heart—she has won mine away
So—I have no heart to write verses to May.

Ellis Parker Butler

To Phyllis And May

O! fair, sweet Phyllis and sweet, fair May,
Which of you carried my heart away?
Who has my heart? I would like to know
Which was the guilty one of the two,
But I only know it was filched one day
By fair, sweet Phyllis, or sweet, fair May.

Ellis Parker Butler

Trespassers

When Love and I drew softly nigh
And gazed in modest Chloe's eye
We saw reflected there in part
The lovely mansion of her heart,
A sight so fair that, quite bereft
Of sense and shame, we had but left
One wish, that we by foul or fair
Might enter in and tarry there.

But when, with vagabondish art,
We nearer crept to Chloe's heart
That we might steal therein, we found
Her heart with barbed wires enwound;
And crawling through those cruel rings
My garments caught, Love caught his wings.
And though we now would fain depart
We twain are snared, outside her heart.

Ellis Parker Butler

Valentine To The Girl In Black

In hand I take this pen of mine
To write you, sweet, a valentine;
I'd take your dainty hand instead,
But—you're a drawing—I am wed—
And that is why, you understand,
I only take my pen in hand.

Ellis Parker Butler

Western

The Cowboy had a sterling heart,
The Maiden was from Boston,
The Rancher saw his wealth depart—
The Steers were what he lost on.

The Villain was a banker's limb,
His spats and cane were nifty;
The Maiden needs must marry him—
Her father was not thrifty.

The Sheepmen were as foul as pitch,
The Cowboy was a hero,
The gold mine made the hero rich,
The Villain's score was zero.

The Sheepmen tried to steal the maid,
The Villain sought the attic,
The Hero fifteen bad men slayed
With his blue automatic.

The Hero kissed the willing lass,
The final scene was snappy;
The Villain went to Boston, Mass.,
And everyone was happy.

Ellis Parker Butler

When Ida Puts Her Armor On

When Ida puts her armor on
And draws her trusty blade
The turnips in the bin turn pale,
The apples are afraid.
The quiet kitchen city wakes
And consternation feels,
And quick the tocsin pealeth forth
In long potato peels.

When Ida puts her armor on
The pots and pans succumb,
A wooden spoon her drum-stick is,
A mixing pan her drum;
She charges on the kitchen folk
With silver, tin and steel
She beat the eggs, she whips the cream,
The victory is a meal.

When Ida puts her apron on
Her breast-plate is of blue.
(Checked gingham ruffled top and sides)
Her gauntlets gingham, too;
And thus protected from assault
Of batter, stain and flour
She wars with vegetable foes
And conquers in an hour.

When Ida puts her armor on
She is so fair to see
Her battle with the kitchen folk
Is reproduced in me;
So sweet she is, armed cap-a-pie,
So good her kitchen art
I hardly know which loves her best
My palate or my heart.

Ellis Parker Butler

Why I Went To The Foot

Was ever a maiden so worried?
I'll admit I am partial to Jim,
For Jimmie has promised to wed me
When I'm old enough to wed him.

But then I love teacher, too, dearly,
She's always so lovely to me,
And she's pretty and kind and sweet-tempered,
And gentle as gentle can be.

I wouldn't for worlds hurt Jim's feelings,
For he never would like me again—
But there was my dearest, sweet teacher,
And I'd die if my words gave her pain.

'Two plus two equals what?' was the problem.
And I knew teacher thought it made 'four';
But Jimmie said 'six,' and maintained it
As long as he stood on the floor.

And I saw I must soon choose between them,
For I was the next in the line.
Should I side with my teacher or Jimmie?
What a sad situation was mine!

And just as my heart with that problem
Of friendship was so sorely vexed
I was called on to answer the other,
For teacher had said, sharply, 'Next!'

It was then that the brilliant thought struck me,
That by compromise I could contrive
To hurt neither teacher nor Jimmie,
And that's how I came to say 'five.'

Ellis Parker Butler

Why Washington Retreated

1775

Said Congress to George Washington:

"To set this country free,
You'll have to whip the Britishers
And chase them o'er the sea."

"Oh, very well," said Washington,
"I'll do the best I can.

I'll slam and bang those Britishers
And whip them to a man."

1777

Said Congress to George Washington:

"The people all complain;
Why don't you fight? You but retreat
And then retreat again."

"That can't be helped," said Washington,

"As you will quite agree
When you see how the novelists
Have mixed up things for me."

Said Congress to George Washington:

"Pray make your meaning clear."

Said Washington: "Why, certainly --
But pray excuse this tear.

Of course we know," said Washington,

"The object of this war --

It is to furnish novelists
With patriotic lore."

Said Congress to George Washington:

"Yes! yes! but pray proceed."

Said Washington: "My part in it
Is difficult indeed,

For every hero in the books

Must sometime meet with me,

And every sweet-faced heroine

I must kiss gallantly."

Said Congress to George Washington:

"But why must you retreat?"

Said Washington: "One moment, please,
My story to complete.

These hero-folk are scattered through

The whole United States;

At every little country town

A man or maiden waits."

To Congress said George Washington:

"At Harlem I must be

On such a day to chat with one,

And then I'll have to flee

With haste to Jersey, there to meet

Another. Here's a list

Of sixty-seven heroes, and

There may be some I've missed."

To Congress said George Washington:

"Since I must meet them all

(And if I don't you know how flat

The novels all will fall),

I cannot take much time to fight,

I must be on the run,

Or some historic novelist

Will surely be undone."

Said Congress to George Washington:

"You are a noble man.

Your thoughtfulness is notable,

And we approve your plan;

A battle won pads very well

A novel that is thin,

But it is better to retreat

Than miss one man and win."

Said Congress to George Washington:

"Kiss every pretty maid,

But do it in a courtly way

And in a manner staid --

And some day when your sword is sheathed

And all our banners furled,
A crop of novels will spring up
That shall appal the world."

Submitted by John Martin

Ellis Parker Butler

Would You Believe It?

One year ago I wished that I
A banker great might be
With a hundred million dollars
And financial majesty;

A mighty Wall Street banker
With a whopping lot of power
And an income of somewhere around
A thousand plunks per hour;

A solid Wall Street banker
With securities in sacks
And with clever men to show me
How to pay no income tax;

A wealthy Wall Street banker
Who raked in cash like hay;
I wished that just a year ago—
And I wish the same today.

Ellis Parker Butler