

# **A Growler**

**By**

**Ambrose Bierce**

## FOUR CANDIDATES FOR SENATOR

To flatter your way to the goad of your hope,  
O plausible Mr. Perkins,  
You'll need ten tons of the softest soap  
And butter a thousand firkins.  
The soap you could put to a better use  
In washing your hands of ambition  
Ere the butter's used for cooking your goose  
To a beautiful brown condition.

"The Railroad can't run Stanford." That is so  
The tail can't curl the pig; but then, you know,  
Inside the vegetable-garden's pale  
The pig will eat more cabbage than the tail.

When Sargent struts by all the lawmakers say:  
"Right—left!" It is fair to infer  
The right will get left, nor polar the day  
When he makes that thing to occur.  
Not so, not so, 'tis a joke, that cry  
Foolish and dull and small:  
He so bores them for votes that they mean to imply  
He's a drill-Sargent, that is all.

Gods! what a sight! Astride McClure's broad back  
Estee jogs round the Senatorial track,  
The crowd all undecided, as they pass,  
Whether to cheer the man or cheer the ass.  
They stop: the man to lower his feet is seen  
And the tired beast, withdrawing from between,  
Mounts, as they start again, the biped's neck,  
And scarce the crowd can say which one's on deck.

## A GROWLER

Judge Shafter, you're an aged man, I know,  
And learned too, I doubt not, in the law;  
And a head white with many a winter's snow  
(I wish, however that your heart would thaw)  
Claims reverence and honor; but the jaw  
That's always wagging with a word malign,  
Nagging and scolding every one in sight  
As harshly as a jaybird in a pine,  
And with as little sense of wrong and right  
As animates that irritable creature,  
Is not a very venerable feature.  
You damn all witnesses, all jurors too  
(And swear at the attorneys, I suppose,  
But that's commendable) "till all is blue";  
And what it's all about, the good Lord knows,  
Not you; but all the hotter, fiercer glows  
Your wrath for that—as dogs the louder howl  
With only moonshine to incite their rage,  
And bears with more ferocious menace growl,  
Even when their food is flung into the cage.  
Reform, your Honor, and forbear to curse us.  
Lest all men, hearing you, cry: "Ecce ursus!"

## AD MOODIUM

Tut! Moody, do not try to show  
To gentlemen and ladies  
That if they have not "Faith," they'll go  
Headlong to Hades.

Faith is belief; and how can I  
Have that by being willing?  
This dime I cannot, though I try,  
Believe a shilling.

Perhaps you can. If so, pray do  
Believe you own it, also.

But what seems evidence to you  
I may not call so.

Heaven knows I'd like the Faith to think  
This little vessel's contents  
Are liquid gold. I see 'tis ink  
For writing nonsense.

Minds prone to Faith, however, may  
Come now and then to sorrow:  
They put their trust in truth to-day,  
In lies to-morrow.

No doubt the happiness is great  
To think as one would wish to;  
But not to swallow every bait,  
As certain fish do.

To think a snake a cord, I hope,  
Would bolden and delight me;  
But some day I might think a rope  
Would chase and bite me.

"Curst Reason! Faith forever blest!"  
You're crying all the season.

Well, who decides that Faith is best?  
Why, Mr. Reason.

He's right or wrong; he answers you  
According to your folly,  
And says what you have taught him to,  
Like any polly.

## AN EPITAPH

Hangman's hands laid in this tomb an  
Imp of Satan's getting, whom an  
Ancient legend says that woman  
Never bore—he owed his birth  
To Sin herself. From Hell to Earth  
She brought the brat in secret state  
And laid him at the Golden gate,  
And they named him Henry Vrooman.  
While with mortals here he stayed,  
His father frequently he played.  
Raised his birth-place and in other  
Playful ways begot his mother.

## A SPADE

Precursor of our woes, historic spade,  
What dismal records burn upon thy blade!  
On thee I see the maculating stains  
Of passengers' commingled blood and brains.  
In this red rust a widow's curse appears,  
And here an orphan tarnished thee with tears.  
Upon thy handle sanguinary bands  
Reveal the clutching of thine owner's hands  
When first he wielded thee with vigor brave  
To cut a sod and dig a people's grave  
(For they who are debauched are dead and ought,  
In God's name, to be hid from sight and thought.)  
Within thee, as within a magic glass,  
I seem to see a foul procession pass—  
Judges with ermine dragging in the mud  
And spotted here and there with guiltless blood;  
Gold-greedy legislators jingling bribes;  
Kept editors and sycophantic scribes;  
Liars in swarms and plunderers in tribes;  
They fade away before the night's advance,  
And fancy figures thee a devil's lance  
Gleaming portentous through the misty shade,  
While ghosts of murdered virtues shriek about my blade!

## THE VAN NESSIAD

From end to end, thine avenue, Van Ness,  
Rang with the cries of battle and distress!  
Brave lungs were thundering with dreadful sound  
And perspiration smoked along the ground!  
Sing, heavenly muse, to ears of mortal clay,  
The meaning, cause and finish of the fray.  
Great Porter Ashe (invoking first the gods,  
Who signed their favor with assenting nods  
That snapped off half their heads—their necks grown dry  
Since last the nectar cup went circling by)  
Resolved to build a stable on his lot,  
His neighbors fiercely swearing he should not.  
Said he: "I build that stable!" "No, you don't,"  
Said they. "I can!" "You can't!" "I will!" "You won't!"  
"By heaven!" he swore; "not only will I build,  
But purchase donkeys till the place is filled!"  
"Needless expense," they sneered in tones of ice  
"The owner's self, if lodged there, would suffice."  
For three long months the awful war they waged:  
With women, women, men with men engaged,  
While roaring babes and shrilling poodles raged!  
Jove, from Olympus, where he still maintains  
His ancient session (with rheumatic pains  
Touched by his long exposure) marked the strife,  
Interminable but by loss of life;  
For malediction soon exhausts the breath  
If not, old age itself is certain death.  
Lo! he holds high in heaven the fatal beam;  
A golden pan depends from each, extreme;  
This feels of Porter's fate the downward stress,  
That bears the destiny of all Van Ness.  
Alas! the rusted scales, their life all gone,  
Deliver judgment neither pro nor con:  
The dooms hang level and the war goes on.  
With a divine, contemptuous disesteem  
Jove dropped the pans and kicked, himself, the beam:  
Then, to decide the strife, with ready wit,  
The nickel that he did not care for it  
Twirled absently, remarking: "See it spin:

Head, Porter loses; tail, the others win."  
The conscious nickel, charged with doom, spun round,  
Portentously and made a ringing sound,  
Then, staggering beneath its load of fate,  
Sank rattling, died at last and lay in state.  
Jove scanned the disk and then, as is his wont,  
Raised his considering orbs, exclaiming: "Front!"  
With leisurely alacrity approached  
The herald god, to whom his mind he broached:  
"In San Francisco two belligerent Powers,  
Such as contended round great Ilion's towers,  
Fight for a stable, though in either class  
There's not a horse, and but a single ass.  
Achilles Ashe, with formidable jaw  
Assails a Trojan band with fierce hee-haw,  
Firing the night with brilliant curses. They  
With dark vituperation gloom the day.  
Fate, against which nor gods nor men compete,  
Decrees their victory and his defeat.  
With haste, good Mercury, betake thee hence  
And salivate him till he has no sense!"  
Sheer downward shot the messenger afar,  
Trailing a splendor like a falling star!  
With dimming lustre through the air he burned,  
Vanished, nor till another sun returned.  
The sovereign of the gods superior smiled,  
Beaming benignant, fatherly and mild:  
"Is Destiny's decree performed, my lad?  
And has he now no sense?" "Ah, sire, he never had."

## **A FISH COMMISSIONER**

Great Joseph D. Redding—illustrious name!  
Considered a fish-horn the trumpet of Fame.  
That goddess was angry, and what do you think?  
Her trumpet she filled with a gallon of ink,  
And all through the Press, with a devilish glee,  
She sputtered and spattered the name of J.D.

## TO A STRAY DOG

Well, Towser (I'm thinking your name must be Towser),  
You're a decentish puppy as puppy dogs go,  
For you never, I'm sure, could have dined upon trowser,  
And your tail's unimpeachably curled just so.  
But, dear me! your name—if 'tis yours—is a "poser":  
Its meaning I cannot get anywise at,  
When spoken correctly perhaps it is Toser,  
And means one who toses. Max Muller, how's that?  
I ne'er was ingenious at all at divining  
A word's prehistorical, primitive state,  
Or finding its root, like a mole, by consigning  
Its bloom to the turnep-top's sorrowful fate.  
And, now that I think of it well, I'm no nearer  
The riddle's solution than ever—for how's  
My pretty invented word, "tose," any clearer  
In point of its signification than "towse"?  
So, Towser (or Toser), I mean to rename you  
In honor of some good and eminent man,  
In the light and the heat of whose quickening fame you  
May grow to an eminent dog if you can.  
In sunshine like his you'll not long be a croucher:  
The Senate shall hear you—for that I will vouch.  
Come here, sir. Stand up. I rechristen you Goucher.  
But damn you! I'll shoot you if ever you gouch!

## IN HIS HAND

De Young (in Chicago the story is told)  
"Took his life in his hand," like a warrior bold,  
And stood before Buckley—who thought him behind,  
For Buckley, the man-eating monster is blind.  
"Count fairly the ballots!" so rang the demand  
Of the gallant De Young, with his life in his hand.  
'Tis done, and the struggle is ended. No more  
He havocs the battle-field, gilt with the gore  
Of slain reputations. No more he defies  
His "lying opponents" with deadlier lies.  
His trumpet is hushed and his belt is unbound  
His enemies' characters cumber the ground.



They bloat on the war-plain with ink all asoak,  
The fortunate candidates perching to croak.  
No more he will charge, with a daring divine,  
His foes with corruption, his friends by the line.  
The thunders are stilled of the horrid campaign,  
De Young is triumphant, and never again  
Will he need, with his life in his hand, to roar:  
"Count fair or, by G—, I will die on your floor!"  
His life has been spared, for his sins to atone,  
And the hand that he took it in washed with cologne.

## A DEMAGOGUE

"Yawp, yawp, yawp!  
Under the moon and sun.  
It's aye the rabble,  
And I to gabble,  
And hey! for the tale that is never done.  
"Chant, chant, chant!  
To woo the reluctant vote.  
I would I were dead  
And my say were said  
And my song were sung to its ultimate note.  
"Stab, stab, stab!  
Ah! the weapon between my teeth  
I'm sick of the flash of it;  
See how the slash of it  
Misses the foeman to mangle the sheath!  
"Boom, boom, boom!  
I'm beating the mammoth drum.  
My nethermost tripe  
I blow into the pipes  
It's oh! for the honors that never come!"  
'Twas the dolorous blab  
Of a tramping "scab"  
'Twas the eloquent Swift  
Of the marvelous gift  
The wild, weird, wonderful gift of gab!

## **IGNIS FATUUS**

Weep, weep, each loyal partisan,  
For Buckley, king of hearts;  
A most accomplished man; a man  
Of parts—of foreign parts.  
Long years he ruled with gentle sway,  
Nor grew his glory dim;  
And he would be with us to-day  
If we were but with him.  
Men wondered at his going off  
In such a sudden way;  
'Twas thought, as he had come to scoff  
He would remain to prey.  
Since he is gone we're all agreed  
That he is what men call  
A crook: his very steps, indeed,  
Are bent—to Montreal.  
So let our tears unhindered flow,  
Our sighs and groans have way:  
It matters not how much we Oh!  
The devil is to pay.

## **FROM TOP TO BOTTOM**

O Buddha, had you but foreknown  
The vices of your priesthood  
It would have made you twist and moan  
As any wounded beast would.  
You would have damned the entire lot  
And turned a Christian, would you not?  
There were no Christians, I'll allow,  
In your day; that would only  
Have brought distinction. Even now  
A Christian might feel lonely.  
All take the name, but facts are things  
As stubborn as the will of kings.  
The priests were ignorant and low  
When ridiculed by Lucian;

The records, could we read, might show  
The same of times Confucian.  
And yet the fact I can't disguise  
That Deacon Rankin's good and wise.  
'Tis true he is not quite a priest,  
Nor more than half a preacher;  
But he exhorts as loud at least  
As any living creature.  
And when the plate is passed about  
He never takes a penny out.  
From Buddha down to Rankin! There,  
I never did intend to.  
This pen's a buzzard's quill, I swear,  
Such subjects to descend to.  
When from the humming-bird I've wrung  
A plume I'll write of Mike de Young.

## AN IDLER

Who told Creed Haymond he was witty?—who  
Had nothing better in this world to do?  
Could no greased pig's appeal to his embrace  
Kindle his ardor for the friendly chase?  
Did no dead dog upon a vacant lot,  
Bloated and bald, or curdled in a clot,  
Stir his compassion and inspire his arms  
To hide from human eyes its faded charms?  
If not to works of piety inclined,  
Then recreation might have claimed his mind.  
The harmless game that shows the feline greed  
To cinch the shorts and make the market bleed  
Is better sport than victimizing Creed;  
And a far livelier satisfaction comes  
Of knowing Simon, autocrat of thumbs.  
If neither worthy work nor play command  
This gentleman of leisure's heart and hand,  
Then Mammon might his idle spirit lift  
By hope of profit to some deed of thrift.

Is there no cheese to pare, no flint to skin,  
No tin to mend, no glass to be put in,  
No housewife worthy of a morning visit,  
Her rags and sacks and bottles to solicit?  
Lo! the blind sow's precarious pursuit  
Of the aspiring oak's familiar fruit!  
'Twould more advantage any man to steal  
This easy victim's undefended meal  
Than tell Creed Haymond he has wit, and so  
Expose the state to his narcotic flow!

## **THE DEAD KING**

Hawaii's King resigned his breath  
Our Legislature guffawed.  
The awful dignity of death  
Not any single rough awed.  
But when our Legislators die  
All Kings, Queens, Jacks and Aces cry.

## **A PATTER SONG**

There was a cranky Governor  
His name it wasn't Waterman.  
For office he was hotter than  
The love of any lover, nor  
Was Boruck's threat of aiding him  
Effective in dissuading him—  
This pig-headed, big-headed, singularly self-conceited Governor Nonwaterman.  
To citrus fairs, et cætera,  
He went about philandering,  
To pride of parish pandering.  
He knew not any better—ah,  
His early education had  
Not taught the abnegation fad  
The wool-witted, bull-witted, fabulously feeble-minded king of gabble-gandering!  
He conjured up, ad libitum,  
With postures energetical,

One day (this is prophetic)  
His graces, to exhibit 'em.  
He straddled in each attitude,  
Four parallels of latitude—  
The slab-footed, crab-footed, galloping gregarian, of presence unæsthetic!  
An ancient cow, perceiving that  
His powers of agility  
Transcended her ability  
(A circumstance for grieving at)  
Upon her horns engrafted him  
And to the welkin wafted him  
The high-rolling, sky-rolling, hurtling hallelujah-lad of peerless volatility!

### A CALLER

"Why, Goldenson, you're looking very well."  
Said Death as, strolling through the County Jail,  
He entered that serene assassin's cell  
And hung his hat and coat upon a nail.  
"I think that life in this secluded spot  
Agrees with men of your trade, does it not?"  
"Well, yes," said Goldenson, "I can't complain:  
Life anywhere—provided it is mine  
Agrees with me; but I observe with pain  
That still the people murmur and repine.  
It hurts their sense of harmony, no doubt,  
To see a persecuted man grow stout."  
"O no, 'tis not your growing stout," said Death,  
"Which makes these malcontents complain and scold  
They like you to be, somehow, scant of breath.  
What they object to is your growing old.  
And—though indifferent to lean or fat  
I don't myself entirely favor that."  
With brows that met above the orbs beneath,  
And nose that like a soaring hawk appeared,  
And lifted lip, uncovering his teeth,  
The Mamikellikiller coldly sneered:  
"O, so you don't! Well, how will you assuage  
Your spongy passion for the blood of age?"  
Death with a clattering convulsion, drew  
His coat on, hatted his unmeated pow,

Unbarred the door and, stepping partly through,  
Turned and made answer: "I will show you how.  
I'm going to the Bench you call Supreme  
And tap the old women who sit there and dream."

## **THE SHAFTER SHAFTE**

Well, James McMillan Shafter, you're a Judge  
At least you were when last I knew of you;  
And if the people since have made you budge  
I did not notice it. I've much to do  
Without endeavoring to follow, through  
The miserable squabbles, dust and smudge,  
The fate of even the veteran contenders  
Who fight with flying colors and suspenders.  
Being a Judge, 'tis natural and wrong  
That you should villify the public press  
Save while you are a candidate. That song  
Is easy quite to sing, and I confess  
It wins applause from hearers who have less  
Of spiritual graces than belong  
To audiences of another kidney—  
Men, for example, like Sir Philip Sidney.  
Newspapers, so you say, don't always treat  
The Judges with respect. That may be so  
And still no harm done, for I swear I'll eat  
My legs and in the long hereafter go,  
Snake-like, upon my belly if you'll show  
All Judges are respectable and sweet.  
For some of them are rogues and the world's laughter's  
Directed at some others, for they're Shafter's.

# THE TWO CAVEES

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

FITCH a Pelter of Railroguers

PICKERING his Partner, an Enemy to Sin

OLD NICK a General Blackwasher

DEAD CAT a Missile

ANTIQUE EGG Another

RAILROGUERS, DUMP-CARTERS. NAVVIES and Unassorted SHOVELRY in the Lower Distance

## Scene—The Brink of a Railway Cut, a Mile Deep.

### FITCH:

Gods! what a steep declivity! Below  
I see the lazy dump-carts come and go,  
Creeping like beetles and about as big.  
The delving Paddies—  
PICKERING:

### FITCH:

Loring, light-minded and unmeaning quips  
Come with but scant propriety from lips  
Fringed with the blue-black evidence of age.  
'Twere well to cultivate a style more sage,  
For men will fancy, hearing how you pun,  
Our foulest missiles are but thrown in fun.  
(Enter Dead Cat.)

Here's one that thoughtfully has come to hand; Slant your fine eye below and see it land.  
(Seizes Dead Cat by the tail and swings it in act to throw.)

DEAD CAT (singing):

Merrily, merrily, round I go  
Over and under and at.  
Swing wide and free, swing high and low  
The anti-monopoly cat!  
O, who wouldn't be in the place of me,  
The anti-monopoly cat?  
Designed to admonish,  
Persuade and astonish  
The capitalist and—  
FITCH (letting go):

Scat! (Exit Dead Cat.)

## **PICKERING:**

Huzza! good Deacon, well and truly flung!  
Pat Stanford it has grassed, and Mike de Young.  
Mike drives a dump-cart for the villains, though  
'Twere fitter that he pull it. Well, we owe  
The traitor one for leaving us!—some day  
We'll get, if not his place, his cart away.  
Meantime fling missiles—any kind will do.  
(Enter Antique Egg.)  
Ha! we can give them an ovation, too!

## **ANTIQUAE EGG:**

In the valley of the Nile,  
Where the Holy Crocodile  
Of immeasurable smile  
Blossoms like the early rose,  
And the Sacred Onion grows—  
When the Pyramids were new  
And the Sphinx possessed a nose,  
By a storkess I was laid  
In the cool papyrus shade,  
Where the rushes later grew,



That concealed the little Jew,  
Baby Mose.  
Straining very hard to hatch,  
I disrupted there my yolk;  
And I felt my yellow streaming  
Through my white;  
And the dream that I was dreaming  
Of posterity was broke  
In a night.  
Then from the papyrus-patch  
By the rising waters rolled,  
Passing many a temple old,  
I proceeded to the sea.  
Memnon sang, one morn, to me,  
And I heard Cambyses sass  
The tomb of Ozymandias!

### **FITCH:**

O, venerablest orb of all the earth,  
God rest the lady fowl that gave thee birth!  
Fit missile for the vilest hand to throw  
I freely tender thee mine own. Although  
As a bad egg I am myself no slouch,  
Thy riper years thy ranker worth avouch.  
Now, Pickering, please expose your eye and say  
If—whoop!—  
I've got the range.

### **PICKERING:**

Hooray! hooray!  
A grand good shot, and Teddy Colton's down:  
It burst in thunderbolts upon his crown!  
Larry O'Crocker drops his pick and flies,  
And deafening odors scream along the skies!  
Pelt 'em some more.

**FITCH:**

There's nothing left but tar— wish I were a Yahoo.

**PICKERING:**

Well, you are.  
But keep the tar. How well I recollect,  
When Mike was in with us—proud, strong, erect  
Mens conscia recti—flinging mud, he stood,  
Austerely brave, incomparably good,  
Ere yet for filthy lucre he began  
To drive a cart as Stanford's hired man,  
That pitch-pot bearing in his hand, Old Nick  
Appeared and tarred us all with the same stick.  
(Enter Old Nick).  
I hope he won't return and use his arts  
To make us part with our immortal parts.

**OLD NICK:**

Make yourself easy on that score my lamb;  
For both your souls I wouldn't give a damn!  
I want my tar-pot—hello! where's the stick?

**FITCH:**

Don't look at me that fashion!—look at Pick.

**PICKERING:**

Forgive me, father—pity my remorse!  
Truth is—Mike took that stick to spank his horse.  
It fills my pericardium with grief  
That I kept company with such a thief.

(Endeavoring to get his handkerchief, he opens his coat and the tar-stick falls out. Nick picks it up, looks at the culprit reproachfully and withdraws in tears.)

**FITCH (excitedly):**

O Pickering, come hither to the brink  
There's something going on down there, I think!  
With many an upward smile and meaning wink  
The navvies all are running from the cut  
Like lunatics, to right and left

**PICKERING:**

Tut, tut  
'Tis only some poor sport or boisterous joke.  
Let us sit down and have a quiet smoke.  
(They sit and light cigars.)

**FITCH (singing):**

When first I met Miss Toughie  
I smoked a fine cigyar,  
An' I was on de dummy  
And she was in de cyar.

**BOTH (singing):**

An' I was on de dummy  
And she was in de cyar.

**FITCH (singing):**

I couldn't go to her,  
An' she wouldn't come to me;  
An' I was as oneasy  
As a gander on a tree.

## **BOTH (singing):**

An' I was as oneasy  
As a gander on a tree.

## **FITCH (singing):**

But purty soon I weakened  
An' lef' de dummy's bench,  
An' frew away a ten-cent weed  
To win a five-cent wench!

## **BOTH (singing)**

An' frew away a ten-cent weed  
To win a five-cent wench!

## **FITCH:**

Is there not now a certain substance sold  
Under the name of fulminate of gold,  
A high explosive, popular for blasting,  
Producing an effect immense and lasting?

## **PICKERING:**

Nay, that's mere superstition. Rocks are rent  
And excavations made by argument.  
Explosives all have had their day and season;  
The modern engineer relies on reason.  
He'll talk a tunnel through a mountain's flank  
And by fair speech cave down the tallest bank.  
(The earth trembles, a deep subterranean explosion is heard and a section of the bank as big as El Capitan starts away and plunges thunderously into the cut. A part of it strikes De Young's dumpcart abaft the axletree and flings him, hurtling, skyward, a thing of legs

and arms, to descend on the distant mountains, where it is cold. Fitch and Pickering pull themselves out of the débris and stand ungraveling their eyes and noses.)

**FITCH:**

Well, since I'm down here I will help to grade,  
And do dirt-throwing henceforth with a spade.

**PICKERING:**

God bless my soul! it gave me quit a start. Well, fate is fate—I guess I'll drive this cart.  
(Curtain.)

# METEMPSYCHOSIS

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ST. JOHN a Presidential Candidate  
MCDONALD a Defeated Aspirant  
MRS. HAYES an Ex-President  
PITTS-STEVENSON a Water Nymph  
Scene—A Small Lake in the Alleghany Mountains.

### ST. JOHN:

Hours I've immersed my muzzle in this tarn  
And, quaffing copious potations, tried  
To suck it dry; but ever as I pumped  
Its waters into my distended skin  
The labor of my zeal extruded them  
In perspiration from my pores; and so,  
Rilling the marginal declivity,  
They fell again into their source. Ah, me!  
Could I but find within these ancient hills  
Some long extinct volcano, by the rains  
Of countless ages in its crater brimmed  
Like a full goblet, I would lay me down  
Prone on the outer slope, and o'er its edge  
Arching my neck, I'd siphon out its store  
And flood the valleys with my sweat for aye.  
So should I be accounted as a god,  
Even as Father Nilus is. What's that?  
Methought I heard some sawyer draw his file  
With jarring, stridulous cacophany  
Across his notchy blade, to set its teeth  
And mine on edge. Ha! there it goes again!  
Song, within.  
Cold water's the milk of the mountains,  
And Nature's our wet-nurse. O then,  
Glue thou thy blue lips to her fountains  
Forever and ever, amen!

## **ST. JOHN:**

Why surely there's congenial company  
Aloof—the spirit, I suppose, that guards  
This sacred spot; perchance some water-nymph  
Who laving in the crystal flood her limbs  
Has taken cold, and so, with raucous voice  
Afflicts the sensitive membrane of mine ear  
The while she sings my sentiments.

(Enter Pitts-Stevens.)

Hello!

What fiend is this?

## **PITTS-STEVENSON:**

'Tis I, be not afraid.

## **ST. JOHN:**

And who, thou antiquated crone, art thou?  
I ne'er forget a face, but names I can't  
So well remember. I have seen thee oft.  
When in the middle season of the night,  
Curved with a cucumber, or knotted hard  
With an eclectic pie, I've striven to keep  
My head and heels asunder, thou has come,  
With sociable familiarity,  
Into my dream, but not, alas, to bless.

## **PITTS-STEVENSON:**

My name's Pitts-Stevens, age just seventeen years;  
Talking teetotaler, professional  
Beauty.

**ST. JOHN:**

What dost them here?

**PITTS-STEVENSON:**

I'm come, fair sir,  
With paint and brush to blazon on these rocks  
The merits of my master's nostrum—so:  
(Paints rapidly.)  
"McDonald's Vinegar Bitters!"

**ST. JOHN:**

What are they?

**PITTS-STEVENSON:**

A woman suffering from widowhood  
Took a full bottle and was cured. A man  
There was—a murderer; the doctors all  
Had given him up—he'd but an hour to live.  
He swallowed half a glassful. He is dead,  
But not of Vinegar Bitters. A wee babe  
Lay sick and cried for it. The mother gave  
That innocent a spoonful and it smoothed  
Its pathway to the tomb. 'Tis warranted  
To cause a boy to strike his father, make  
A pig squeal, start the hair upon a stone,  
Or play the fiddle for a country dance.  
(Enter McDonald, reading a Sunday-school book.)  
Good morrow, sir; I trust you're well.



## **MCDONALD:**

H'lo, Pitts!

Observe, good friends, I have a volume here  
Myself am author of—a noble book  
To train the infant mind (delightful task!)  
It tells how one Samantha Brown, age, six,  
A gutter-bunking slave to rum, was saved  
By Vinegar Bitters, went to church and now  
Has an account at the Pacific Bank.  
I'll read the whole work to you.

## **ST JOHN:**

Heaven forbid!  
I've elsewhere an engagement.

## **PITTS-STEVENSON:**

I am deaf.

## **MCDONALD (reading regardless):**

"Once on a time there lived"

(Enter Mrs. Hayes.) Behold our queen!

## **ALL:**

Her eyes upon the ground  
Before her feet she low'rs,  
Walking, in thought profound,  
As 'twere, upon all fours.  
Her visage is austere,  
Her gait a high parade;  
At every step you hear  
The sloshing lemonade!

## **MRS. HAYES (to herself):**

Once, sitting in the White House, hard at work  
Signing State papers (Rutherford was there,  
Knitting some hose) a sudden glory fell  
Upon my paper. I looked up and saw  
An angel, holding in his hand a rod  
Wherewith he struck me. Smarting with the blow  
I rose and (cuffing Rutherford) inquired:  
"Wherefore this chastisement?" The angel said:  
"Four years you have been President, and still  
There's rum!"—then flew to Heaven. Contrite, I swore  
Such oath as lady Methodist might take,  
My second term should medicine my first.  
The people would not have it that way; so  
I seek some candidate who'll take my soul  
My spirit of reform, fresh from my breast,  
And give me his instead; and thus equipped  
With my imperious and fiery essence,  
Drive the Drink-Demon from the land and fill  
The people up with water till their teeth  
Are all afloat.  
(St. John discovers himself.)  
What, you?

## **ST. JOHN:**

Aye, Madam, I'll  
Swap souls with you and lead the cold sea-green  
Amphibians of Prohibition on,  
Pallid of nose and webbed of foot, swim-bladdered,  
Gifted with gills, invincible!

## **MRS. HAYES:**

Enough,  
Stand forth and consummate the interchange.

(While McDonald and Pitts-Stevens modestly turn their backs, the latter blushing a delicate shrimp-pink, St. John and Mrs. Hayes effect an exchange of immortal parts. When the transfer is complete McDonald turns and advances, uncorking a bottle of Vinegar Bitters.)

### **MCDONALD (chanting):**

Nectar compounded of simples  
Cocted in Stygian shades—  
Acids of wrinkles and pimples  
From faces of ancient maids  
Acrid precipitates sunken  
From tempers of scolding wives  
Whose husbands, uncommonly drunken,  
Are commonly found in dives,  
With this I baptize and appoint thee  
(to St. John.)  
To marshal the vinophobe ranks.  
In the name of Dambosh I anoint thee  
(pours the liquid down St. John's back.)  
As King of aquatical cranks!  
(The liquid blisters the royal back, and His Majesty starts on a dead run, energetically exclaiming. Exit St. John.)

### **MRS. HAYES:**

My soul! My soul! I'll never get it back Unless I follow nimbly on his track. (Exit Mrs. Hayes.)

### **PITTS-STEVENSONS:**

O my! he's such a beautiful young man! I'll follow, too, and catch him if I can. (Exit Pitts-Stevens.)

### **MCDONALD:**

He scarce is visible, his dust so great!  
Methinks for so obscure a candidate

He runs quite well. But as for Prohibition

I mean myself to hold the first position.

(Produces a pocket flask, topos a cruel quantity of double-distilled thunder-and-lightning out of it, smiles so grimly as to darken all the stage and sings):

Though fortunes vary let all be merry,

And then if e'er a disaster befall,

At Styx's ferry is Charon's wherry

In easy call.

Upon a ripple of golden tipple

That tipsy ship'll convey you best.

To king and cripple, the bottle's the nipple

Of Nature's breast!

(Curtain.)

# SLICKENS

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

HAYSEED a Granger  
NOZZLE a Miner  
RINGDIVVY a Statesman  
FEEGOBBLE a Lawyer  
JUNKET a Committee  
Scene—Yuba Dam.

Feegobble, Ringdivvy, Nozzle.

### NOZZLE:

My friends, since '51 I have pursued  
The evil tenor of my watery way,  
Removing hills as by an act of faith—

### RINGDIVVY:

Just so; the steadfast faith of those who hold,  
In foreign lands beyond the Eastern sea,  
The shares in your concern—a simple, blind,  
Unreasoning belief in dividends,  
Still stimulated by assessments which,  
When the skies fall, ensnaring all the larks,  
Will bring, no doubt, a very great return.

### ALL (singing):

O the beautiful assessment,  
The exquisite assessment,  
The regular assessment,  
That makes the water flow.

### RINGDIVVY:

The rascally-assessment!

**FEEGOBBLE:**

The murderous assessment!

**NOZZLE:**

The glorious assessment  
That makes my mare to go!

**FEEGOBBLE:**

But, Nozzle, you, I think, were on the point  
Of making a remark about some rights  
Some certain vested rights you have acquired  
By long immunity; for still the law  
Holds that if one do evil undisturbed  
His right to do so ripens with the years;  
And one may be a villain long enough  
To make himself an honest gentleman.

**ALL (singing):**

Hail, holy law,  
The soul with awe  
Bows to thy dispensation.

**NOZZLE:**

It breaks my jaw!

**RINGDIVVY:**

It qualms my maw!

## **FEEGOBBLE:**

It feeds my jaw,  
It crams my maw,  
It is my soul's salvation!

## **NOZZLE:**

Why, yes, I've floated mountains to the sea  
For lo! these many years; though some, they say,  
Do strand themselves along the bottom lands  
And cover up a village here and there,  
And here and there a ranch. 'Tis said, indeed,  
The granger with his female and his young  
Do not infrequently go to the dickens  
By premature burial in slickens.

## **ALL (singing):**

Could slickens forever  
Choke up the river,  
And slime's endeavor  
Be tried on grain,  
How small the measure  
Of granger's treasure,  
How keen his pain!

## **RINGDIVVY:**

"A consummation devoutly to be wished!"  
These rascal grangers would long since have been  
Submerged in slimes, to the last man of them,  
But for the fact that all their wicked tribes  
Affect our legislation with their bribes.

## **ALL (singing):**

O bribery's great  
'Tis a pillar of State,

And the people they are free.

**FEEGOBBLE:**

It smashes my slate!

**NOZZLE:**

It is thievery straight!

**RINGDIVVY:**

But it's been the making of me!

**NOZZLE:**

I judge by certain shrewd sensations here  
In these callosities I call my thumbs  
thrilling sense as of ten thousand pins,  
Red-hot and penetrant, transpiercing all  
The cuticle and tickling through the nerves  
That some malign and awful thing draws near.  
(Enter Hayseed.)

Good Lord! here are the ghosts and spooks of all  
The grangers I have decently interred,  
Rolled into one!

**FEEGOBBLE:**

Plead, phantom.

**RINGDIVVY:**

You've the floor.



## **HAYSEED:**

From the margin of the river  
(Bitter Creek, they sometimes call it)  
Where I cherished once the pumpkin,  
And the summer squash promoted,  
Harvested the sweet potato,  
Dallied with the fatal melon  
And subdued the fierce cucumber,  
I've been driven by the slickens,  
Driven by the slimes and tailings!  
All my family—my Polly  
Ann and all my sons and daughters,  
Dog and baby both included—  
All were swamped in seas of slickens,  
Buried fifty fathoms under,  
Where they lie, prepared to play their  
Gentle prank on geologic  
Gents that shall exhume them later,  
In the dim and distant future,  
Taking them for melancholy  
Relics antedating Adam.  
I alone got up and dusted.

## **NOZZLE:**

Avaunt! you horrid and infernal cuss!  
What dire distress have you prepared for us?

## **RINGDIVVY:**

Were I a buzzard stooping from the sky  
My craw with filth to fill,  
Into your honorable body I  
Would introduce a bill.

## **FEEGOBBLE:**

Defendant, hence, or, by the gods, I'll brain thee!

Unless you saved some turneps to retain me.

### **HAYSEED:**

As I was saying, I got up and dusted,  
My ranch a graveyard and my business busted!  
But hearing that a fellow from the City,  
Who calls himself a Citizens' Committee,  
Was coming up to play the very dickens,  
With those who cover up our farms with slickens,  
And make himself—unless I am in error—  
To all such miscreants a holy terror,  
I thought if I would join the dialogue  
I maybe might get payment for my dog.

### **ALL (Singing):**

O the dog is the head of Creation,  
Prime work of the Master's hand;  
He hasn't a known occupation,  
Yet lives on the fat of the land.  
Adipose, indolent, sleek and orbicular,  
Sun-soaken, door matted, cross and particular,  
Men, women, children, all coddle and wait on him,  
Then, accidentally shutting the gate on him,  
Miss from their calves, ever after, the rifted out  
Mouthful of tendons that doggy has lifted out!

### **(Enter Junket.)**

### **JUNKET:**

Well met, my hearties! I must trouble you  
Jointly and severally to provide  
A comfortable carriage, with relays  
Of hardy horses. This Committee means  
To move in state about the country here.  
I shall expect at every place I stop

Good beds, of course, and everything that's nice,  
With bountiful repast of meat and wine.  
For this Committee comes to sea and mark  
And inwardly digest.

### **HAYSEED:**

Digest my dog!

### **NOZZLE:**

First square my claim for damages: the gold  
Escaping with the slickens keeps me poor!

### **RINGDIVVY:**

I merely would remark that if you'd grease  
My itching palm it would more glibly glide  
Into the public pocket.

### **FEEGOBBLE:**

Sir, the wheels  
Of justice move but slowly till they're oiled.  
I have some certain writs and warrants here,  
Prepared against your advent. You recall  
The tale of Zaccheus, who did climb a tree,  
And Jesus said: "Come down"?

### **JUNKET:**

Why, bless your souls!  
I've got no money; I but came to see  
What all this noisy babble is about,  
Make a report and file the same away.

## **NOZZLE, RINGDIVVY, FEEGOBBLE, HAYSEED:**

How'll that help us? Reports are not our style  
Of provender!

### **JUNKET:**

Well, you can gnaw the file.

"PEACEABLE EXPULSION"

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MOUNTWAVE a Politician  
HARDHAND a Workingman  
TOK BAK a Chinaman  
SATAN a Friend to Mountwave  
CHORUS OF FOREIGN VOTERS.

### **MOUNTWAVE:**

My friend, I beg that you will lend your ears  
(I know 'tis asking a good deal of you)  
While I for your instruction nominate  
Some certain wrongs you suffer. Men like you  
Imperfectly are sensible of all  
The miseries they actually feel.  
Hence, Providence has prudently raised up  
Clear-sighted men like me to diagnose  
Their cases and inform them where they're hurt.  
The wounds of honest workingmen I've made  
A specialty, and probing them's my trade.

### **HARDHAND:**

Well, Mister, s'pose you let yer bossiest eye  
Camp on my mortal part awhile; then you  
Jes' toot my sufferin's an' tell me what's

The fashionable caper now in writhes  
The very swellest wiggle.

**MOUNTWAVE:**

Well, my lad,  
'Tis plain as is the long, conspicuous nose  
Borne, ponderous and pendulous, between  
The elephant's remarkable eye-teeth  
(Enter Tok Bak.)  
That Chinese competition's what ails you.  
BOTH (Singing):

O pig-tail Celestial,  
O barbarous bestial,  
Abominable Chinee!  
Simian fellow man,  
Primitive yellow man,  
Joshian devotee!  
Shoe-and-cigar machine,  
Oleomargarine  
You are, and butter are we  
Fat of the land are we,  
Salt of the earth;  
In God's image planned to be  
Noble in birth!  
You, on the contrary,  
Modeled upon very  
Different lines indeed,  
Show in conspicuous,  
Base and ridiculous  
Ways your inferior breed.  
Wretched apology,  
Shame of ethnology,  
Monster unspeakably low!  
Fit to be buckshotted—  
Be you 'steboycotted.  
Vanish—vamoose—mosy—Go!

**TOK BAK:**

You listen me! You beatee the big dlum  
An' tell me go to Flowly Kingdom Come.  
You all too muchee fool. You chinnee heap.  
Such talkee like my washee—belly cheap!

You dlive me outee clunty towns all way;  
Why you no tackle me Safflisco, hay?

### **SATAN:**

Methought I heard a murmuring of tongues  
Sound through the ceiling of the hollow earth,  
As if the anti-coolie ques—ha! friends,  
Well met. You see I keep my ancient word:  
Where two or three are gathered in my name,  
There am I in their midst.

### **MOUNTWAVE:**

O monstrous thief!  
To quote the words of Shakespeare as your own.  
I know his work.

### **HARDHAND:**

Who's Shakespeare?—what's his trade?  
I've heard about the work o' that galoot  
Till I'm jest sick!

### **TOK BAK:**

Go Sunny school—you'll know  
Mo' Bible. Bime by pleach—hell-talkee. Tell  
'Bout Abel—mebby so he live too cheap.  
He mebby all time dig on lanch—no dlink,  
No splee—no go plocession fo' make vote  
No sendee money out of clunty fo'  
To helpee Ilishmen. Cain killum. Josh  
He catchee at it, an' he belly mad  
Say: "Allee Melicans boycottee Cain."  
Not muchee—you no pleachee that:  
You all same lie.

## **MOUNTWAVE:**

This cuss must be expelled. (Draws pistol.)

MOUNTWAVE, HARDHAND, SATAN (singing):

For Chinese expulsion, hurrah!  
To mobbing and murder, all hail!  
Away with your justice and law—  
We'll make every pagan turn tail.  
CHORUS OF FOREIGN VOTERS:

Bedad! oof dot tief o'ze vorld—  
Zat Ivan Tchanay vos got hurled  
In Hella, da debil he say:  
"Wor be yer return pairmit, hey?"  
Und gry as 'e shaka da boot:  
"Zis haythen haf nevaire been oot!"

## **HARDHAND:**

Too many cooks are working at this broth  
I think, by thunder, t'will be mostly froth!  
I'm cussed ef I can sarvy, up to date,  
What good this dern fandango does the State.

## **MOUNTWAVE:**

The State's advantage, sir, you may not see,  
But think how good it is for me.

## **SATAN:**

And me.

# ASPIRANTS THREE

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

QUICK:

DE YOUNG a Brother to Mushrooms

DEAD:

SWIFT an Heirloom

ESTEE a Relic

IMMORTALS: THE SPIRIT OF BROKEN HOPES. THE AUTHOR.

**Scene—The Political Graveyard at Bone Mountain.**

### DE YOUNG:

This is the spot agreed upon. Here rest  
The sainted statesman who upon the field  
Of honor have at various times laid down  
Their own, and ended, ignominious,  
Their lives political. About me, lo!  
Their silent headstones, gilded by the moon,  
Half-full and near her setting—midnight. Hark!  
Through the white mists of this portentous night  
(Which throng in moving shapes about my way,  
As they were ghosts of candidates I've slain,  
To fray their murderer) my open ear,  
Spacious to maw the noises of the world,  
Engulfs a footstep.  
(Enter Estee from his tomb.)  
Ah, 'tis he, my foe,  
True to appointment; and so here we fight  
Though truly 'twas my firm belief that he  
Would send regrets, or I had not been here.

### ESTEE:

O moon that hast so oft surprised the deeds  
Whereby I rose to greatness!—tricksy orb,  
The type and symbol of my politics,  
Now draw my ebbing fortunes to their flood,



As, by the magic of a poultice, boils  
That burn ambitions with defeated fires  
Are lifted into eminence.

(Sees De Young.)

What? you!

Faith, if I had suspected you would come  
From the fair world of politics wherein  
So lately you were whelped, and which, alas,  
I vainly to revisit strive, though still  
Rapped on the rotting head and bidden sleep  
Till Resurrection's morn,—if I had thought  
You would accept the challenge that I flung  
I would have seen you damned ere I came forth  
In the night air, shroud-clad and shivering,  
To fight so mean a thing! But since you're here,  
Draw and defend yourself. By gad, we'll see  
Who'll be Postmaster-General!

## **DE YOUNG:**

We will  
I'll fight (for I am lame) with any blue  
And redolent remain that dares aspire  
To wreck the Grand Old Grandson's cabinet.  
Here's at you, nosegay!

## **SWIFT:**

Hold! put up your tongues!  
Within the confines of this sacred spot  
Broods such a holy calm as none may break  
By clash of weapons, without sacrilege.  
(Beats down their tongues with a bone.)  
Madmen! what profits it? For though you fought  
With such heroic skill that both survived,  
Yet neither should achieve the prize, for I

Would wrest it from him. Let us not contend,  
But friendliwise by stipulation fix  
A slate for mutual advantage. Why,  
Having the pick and choice of seats, should we  
Forego them all but one? Nay, we'll take three,  
And part them so among us that to each  
Shall fall the fittest to his powers. In brief,  
Let us establish a Portfolio Trust

**ESTEE:**

Agreed.

**DE YOUNG:**

Aye, truly, 'tis a greed—and one  
The offices imperfectly will sate,  
But I'll stand in.

**SWIFT:**

Well, so 'tis understood,  
As you're the junior member of the Trust,  
Politically younger and undead,  
Speak, Michael: what portfolio do you choose?

**DE YOUNG:**

I've thought the Postal service best would serve  
My interest; but since I have my pick,  
I'll take the War Department. It is known  
Throughout the world, from Market street to Pine,  
(For a Chicago journal told the tale)  
How in this hand I lately took my life  
And marched against great Buckley, thundering  
My mandate that he count the ballots fair!  
Earth heard and shrank to half her size! Yon moon,  
Which rivaled then a liver's whiteness, paused  
That night at Butchertown and daubed her face  
With sheep's blood! Then my serried rank I drew  
Back to my stronghold without loss. To mark  
My care in saving human life and limb,

The Peace Society bestowed on me  
Its leather medal and the title, too,  
Of Colonel. Yes, my genius is for war. Good land!  
I naturally dote on a brass band!  
(Sings.)

O, give me a life on the tented field,  
Where the cannon roar and ring,  
Where the flag floats free and the foemen yield  
And bleed as the bullets sing.  
But be it not mine to wage the fray  
Where matters are ordered the other way,  
For that is a different thing.  
O, give me a life in the fierce campaign  
Let it be the life of my foe:  
I'd rather fall upon him than the plain;  
That service I'd fain forego.  
O, a warrior's life is fine and free,  
But a warrior's death—ah me! ah me!  
That's a different thing, you know.

## **ESTEE:**

Some claim I might myself advance to that  
Portfolio. When Rebellion raised its head,  
And you, my friends, stayed meekly in your shirts,  
I marched with banners to the party stump,  
Spat on my hands, made faces fierce as death,  
Shook my two fists at once and introduced  
Brave resolutions terrible to read!  
Nay, only recently, as you do know,  
I conquered Treason by the word of mouth,  
And slew, with Samson's weapon, the whole South!

## **SWIFT:**

You once fought Stanford, too.

## **ESTEE:**

Enough of that—  
Give me the Interior and I'll devote  
My mind to agriculture and improve  
The breed of cabbages, especially  
The Brassica Celeritatis, named  
For you because in days of long ago  
You sold it at your market stall,—and, faith,  
'Tis said you were an honest huckster then.  
I'll be Attorney-General if you  
Prefer; for know I am a lawyer too!

## **SWIFT:**

I never have heard that!—did you, De Young?

## **DE YOUNG:**

Never, so help me! And I swear I've heard  
A score of Judges say that he is not.

## **SWIFT (to Estee):**

You take the Interior. I might aspire  
To military station too, for once  
I led my party into Pixley's camp,  
And he paroled me. I defended, too,  
The State of Oregon against the sharp  
And bloody tooth of the Australian sheep.  
But I've an aptitude exceeding neat  
For bloodless battles of diplomacy.  
My cobweb treaty of Exclusion once,  
Through which a hundred thousand coolies sailed,  
Was much admired, but most by Colonel Bee.  
Though born a tinker I'm a diplomat  
From old Missouri, and I—ha! what's that?

## **CHORUS OF COFFINS:**

Two bodies dead and one alive  
Yo, ho, merrily all!  
Now for boodle strain and strive  
Buzzards all a-warble, O!  
Prophets three, agape for bread;  
Raven with a stone instead  
Providential raven!  
Judges two and Colonel one  
Run, run, rustics, run!  
But it's O, the pig is shaven,  
And oily, oily all!

## **SPIRIT OF BROKEN HOPES:**

Governor, Governor, editor man,  
Rusty, musty, spick-and-span,  
Harlequin, harridan, dicky-dout,  
Demagogue, charlatan—o, u, t, OUT!  
(De Young falls and sleeps.)  
Antimonopoler, diplomat,  
Railroad lackey, political rat,  
One, two, three—SCAT!  
(Swift falls and sleeps.)  
Boycotting chin-worker, working to woo  
Fortune, the fickle, to smile upon you,  
Jo-coated acrobat, shuttle-cock—SHOO!  
(Estee falls and sleeps.)  
Now they lie in slumber sweet,  
Now the charm is all complete,  
Hasten I with flying feet  
Where beyond the further sea  
A babe upon its mother's knee  
Is gazing into skies afar  
And crying for a golden star.  
I'll drag a cloud across the blue  
And break that infant's heart in two!

## **ESTEE (waking):**

Why, this is strange! I dreamed I know not what,  
It seemed that certain apparitions were,  
Which sang uncanny words, significant  
And yet ambiguous—half-understood  
Portending evil; and an awful spook,  
Even as I stood with my accomplices,  
Counted me out, as children do in play.  
Is that you, Mike?

## **DE YOUNG (waking):**

It was.

## **SWIFT (waking):**

Am I all that?  
Then I'll reform my ways.  
(Reforms his ways.)  
Ah! had I known  
How sweet it is to be an honest man  
I never would have stooped to turn my coat  
For public favor, as chameleons take  
The hue (as near as they can judge) of that  
Supporting them. Henceforth I'll buy  
With money all the offices I need,  
And know the pleasure of an honest life,  
Or stay forever in this dismal place.  
Now that I'm good, it will no longer do  
To make a third with such, a wicked two.  
(Returns to his tomb.)

## **DE YOUNG:**

Prophetic dream! by some good angel sent  
To make me with a quiet life content.  
The question shall no more my bosom irk,  
To go to Washington or go to work.  
From Fame's debasing struggle I'll withdraw,

And taking up the pen lay down the law.  
I'll leave this rogue, lest my example make  
An honest man of him—his heart would break.

## **ESTEE:**

Out of my company these converts flee,  
But that advantage is denied to me:  
My curst identity's confining skin  
Nor lets me out nor tolerates me in.  
Well, since my hopes eternally have fled,  
And, dead before, I'm more than ever dead,  
To find a grander tomb be now my task,  
And pack my pork into a stolen cask.  
(Exit, searching. Loud calls for the Author, who appears,  
bowing and smiling.)  
AUTHOR (singing):

Jack Satan's the greatest of gods,  
And Hell is the best of abodes.  
'Tis reached, through the Valley of Clods,  
By seventy different roads.  
Hurrah for the Seventy Roads!  
Hurrah for the clods that resound  
With a hollow, thundering sound!  
Hurrah for the Best of Abodes!  
We'll serve him as long as we've breath  
Jack Satan the greatest of gods.  
To all of his enemies, death!—  
A home in the Valley of Clods.  
Hurrah for the thunder of clods  
That smother the soul of his foe!  
Hurrah for the spirits that go  
To dwell with the Greatest of Gods;

## **COWBOY CHARLEY:**

My boss, I fear she is delayed to-night.  
Already it is past the hour, and yet  
My ears have reached no sound of wheels; no note

Melodious, of long, luxurious oaths  
Betokens the traditional dispute  
(Unsettled from the dawn of time) between  
The driver and off wheeler; no clear chant  
Nor carol of Wells Fargo's messenger  
Unbosoming his soul upon the air  
his prowess to the tender-foot,  
And how at divers times in sundry ways  
He strewed the roadside with our carcasses.  
Clearly, the stage will not come by to-night.

### **LELAND, THE KID:**

I now remember that but yesterday  
I saw three ugly looking fellows start  
From Colfax with a gun apiece, and they  
Did seem on business of importance bent.  
Furtively casting all their eyes about  
And covering their tracks with all the care  
That business men do use. I think perhaps  
They were Directors of that rival line,  
The great Pacific Mail. If so, they have  
Indubitably taken in that coach,  
And we are overreached. Three times before  
This thing has happened, and if once again  
These outside operators dare to cut  
Our rates of profit I shall quit the road  
And take my money out of this concern.  
When robbery no longer pays expense  
It loses then its chiefest charm for me,  
And I prefer to cheat—you hear me shout!

### **HAPPY HUNTY:**

My chief, you do but echo back my thoughts:  
This competition is the death of trade.  
'Tis plain (unless we wish to go to work)  
Some other business we must early find.  
What shall it be? The field of usefulness  
Is yearly narrowing with the advance



Of wealth and population on this coast.  
There's little left that any man can do  
Without some other fellow stepping in  
And doing it as well. If one essay  
To pick a pocket he is sure to feel  
(With what disgust I need not say to you)  
Another hand inserted in the same.  
You crack a crib at dead of night, and lo!  
As you explore the dining-room for plate  
You find, in session there, a graceless band  
Stuffing their coats with spoons, their skins with wine.  
And so it goes. Why even undertake  
To salt a mine and you will find it rich  
With noble specimens placed there before!

### **LELAND, THE KID:**

And yet this line of immigration has  
Advantages superior to aught  
That elsewhere offers: all these passengers,  
If punched with care

### **COWBOY CHARLEY:**

Significant remark!  
It opens up a prospect wide and fair,  
Suggesting to the thoughtful mind—my mind  
A scheme that is the boss lay-out. Instead  
Of stopping passengers, let's carry them.  
Instead of crying out: "Throw up your hands!"  
Let's say: "Walk up and buy a ticket!" Why  
Should we unwieldy goods and bullion take,  
Watches and all such trifles, when we might  
Far better charge their value three times o'er  
For carrying them to market?

### **LELAND, THE KID:**

Put it there,  
Old son!

HAPPY HUNTY:

You take the cake, my dear. We'll build  
A mighty railroad through this pass, and then  
The stage folk will come up to us and squeal,  
And say: "It is bad medicine for both:  
What will you give or take?" And then we'll sell.

## **COWBOY CHARLEY:**

Enlarge your notions, little one; this is  
No petty, slouching, opposition scheme,  
To be bought off like honest men and fools;  
Mine eye prophetic pierces through the mists  
That cloud the future, and I seem to see  
A well-devised and executed scheme  
Of wholesale robbery within the law  
(Made by ourselves)—great, permanent, sublime,  
And strong to grapple with the public throat—  
Shaking the stuffing from the public purse,  
The tears from bankrupt merchants' eyes, the blood  
From widows' famished carcasses, the bread  
From orphans' mouths!

HAPPY HUNTY:

Hooray!

LELAND, THE; KID:

Hooray!

ALL:

Hooray!

Ah! blessèd to measure  
The glittering treasure!  
Ah! blessèd to heap up the gold

Untold  
That flows in a wide  
And deepening tide  
Rolled, rolled, rolled  
From multifold sources,  
Converging its courses  
Upon our—

### **LELAND, THE KID:**

Just wait a bit, my pards, I thought I heard  
A sneaking grizzly cracking the dry twigs.  
Such an intrusion might deprive the State  
Of all the good that we intend it. Ha!

### **SOOTYMUG:**

My boys, I thought I heard  
Some careless revelry,  
As if your minds were stirred  
By some new devilry.  
I too am in that line. Indeed, the mission  
On which I come  
HAPPY HUNTY:

Here's more damned competition! (Curtain.)

### **SARALTHIA:**

The red half-moon is dipping to the west,  
And the cold fog invades the sleeping land.  
Lo! how the grinning skulls in the level light  
Litter the place! Methinks that every skull  
Is a most lifelike portrait of my Sen,  
Drawn by the hand of Death; each fleshless pate,  
Cursed with a ghastly grin to eyes unrubbed  
With love's magnetic ointment, seems to mine  
To smile an amiable smile like his  
Whose amiable smile I—I alone  
Am able to distinguish from his leer!  
See how the gathering coyotes flit

Through the lit spaces, or with burning eyes  
Star the black shadows with a steadfast gaze!  
About my feet the poddy toads at play,  
Bulbously comfortable, try to hop,  
And tumble clumsily with all their warts;  
While pranking lizards, sliding up and down  
My limbs, as they were public roads, impart  
A singularly interesting chill.

The circumstance and passion of the time,  
The cast and manner of the place—the spirit  
Of this confederate environment,  
Command the rights we come to celebrate  
Obedient to the Inspired Hag—  
The seventh daughter of the seventh daughter,  
Who rules all destinies from Minna street,  
A dollar a destiny. Here at this grave,  
Which for my purposes thou, Jack of Spades  
(To Grimghast)

Corrupter than the thing that reeks below  
Hast opened secretly, we'll work the charm.  
Now what's the hour?

(Distant clock strikes thirteen.)

Enough—hale forth the stiff!

(Grimghast by means of a boat-hook stands the coffin on end in the excavation; the lid crumbles, exposing the remains of a man.)

Ha! Master Mouldybones, how fare you, sir?

## **THE BODY:**

Poorly, I thank your ladyship; I miss  
Some certain fingers and an ear or two.  
There's something, too, gone wrong with my inside,  
And my periphery's not what it was.  
How can we serve each other, you and I?

## **NELLIBRAC:**

O what a personable man!

(Blushes bashfully, drops her eyes and twists the corner of her apron.)

## **SARALTHIA:**

Yes, dear,  
A very proper and alluring male,  
And quite superior to Lubin Rroyd,  
Who has, however, this distinct advantage  
He is alive.

## **GRIMGHAST:**

Missus, these yer remains  
Was the boss singer back in '72,  
And used to allers git invites to go  
Down to Swellmont and sing at every feed.  
In t'other Villiam's time, that was, afore  
The gent that you've hooked onto bought the place.  
THE BODY (singing):

Down among the sainted dead  
Many years I lay;  
Beetles occupied my head,  
Moles explored my clay.  
There we feasted day and night  
I and bug and beast;  
They provided appetite  
And I supplied the feast.  
The raven is a dicky-bird,

SARALTHIA (singing):

The jackal is a daisy,

NELLIBRAC (singing):

The wall-mouse is a worthy third,

A SPOOK (singing):

But mortals all are crazy.

## CHORUS OF SKULLS:

O mortals all are crazy,  
Their intellects are hazy;  
In the growing moon they shake their shoon  
And trip it in the mazy.  
But when the moon is waning,  
Their senses they're regaining:  
They fall to prayer and from their hair  
Remove the straws remaining.

## **SARALTHIA:**

That's right, Rogues Gallery, pray keep it up:  
Your song recalls my Villiam's "Auld Lang Syne,"  
What time he came and (like an amorous bird  
That struts before the female of its kind,  
Warbling to cave her down the bank) piped high  
His cracked falsetto out of reach. Enough  
Now let's to business. Nellibrac, sweet child,  
St. Cloacina's future devotee,  
The time is ripe and rotten—gut the grip!  
(Nellibrac brings forward a valise and takes from it five articles of clothing, which, one by one, she lays upon the points of a magic pentagram that has thoughtfully inscribed itself in lines of light on the wet grass. The Body holds its late lamented nose.)

## **NELLIBRAC (singing):**

Fragrant socks, by Villiam's toes  
Consecrated to the nose;  
Shirt that shows the well worn track  
Of the knuckles of his back,  
Handkerchief with mottled stains,  
Into which he blew his brains;  
Collar crying out for soap—  
Prophet of the future rope;  
An unmentionable thing  
It would sicken me to sing.

## **UNMENTIONABLE THING (aside):**

What! I unmentionable? Just you wait!  
In all the family journals of the State  
You'll sometime see that I'm described at length,  
With supereditorial grace and strength.

## **SARALTHIA (singing):**

Throw them in the open tomb  
They will cause his love to bloom  
With an amatory boom!

## **CHORUS OF INVISIBLE HOODOOS:**

Hoodoo, hoodoo, voodoo-vet  
Villiam struggles in the net!  
By the power and intent  
Of the charm his strength is spent!  
By the virtue in each rag  
Blessed by the Inspired Hag  
He will be a willing victim  
Limp as if a donkey kicked him!  
By this awful incantation  
We decree his animation—  
By the magic of our art  
Warm the cockles of his heart,  
Villiam, if alive or dead,  
Thou Saralthia shalt wed!

## **HOODOO SONG AND DANCE:**

O we're the larrikin hoodoos!  
The chirruping, lirruping hoodoos!  
We mix things up that the Fates ordain,  
Bring back the past and the present detain,  
Postpone the future and sometimes tether  
The three and drive them abreast together  
We rollicking, frolicking hoodoos!  
To us all things are the same as none

And nothing is that is under the sun.  
Seven's a dozen and never is then,  
Whether is what and what is when,  
A man is a tree and a cuckoo a cow  
For gold galore and silver enow  
To magical, mystical hoodoos!

**SARALTHIA:**

What monstrous shadow darkens all the place,

(Enter Smyler.)

Flung like a doom athwart—ha!—thou?  
Portentous presence, art thou not the same  
That stalks with aspect horrible among  
Small youths and maidens, baring snaggy teeth,  
Champing their tender limbs till crimson spume,  
Flung from, thy lips in cursing God and man,  
Incarnadines the land?

**SMYLER:**

Thou dammid slut!

(Exit Smyler.)

**NELLIBRAC:**

O what a pretty man!

**SARALTHIA**

Now who is next?  
Of tramps and casuals this graveyard seems  
Prolific to a fault!

(Enter Needleon, exhaling, prophetically, an odor of decayed eggs and, actually, one of unlaundried linen. He darts an intense regard at an adjacent marble angel and places his open hand behind his ear.)

**NEEDLESON:**



Hay? (Exit Needleson.)

## **NELLIBRAC:**

Sweet, sweet male!

I yearn to play at Copenhagen with him!

(Blushes diligently and energetically.)

## **CHORUS OF SKULLS:**

Hoodoos, hoodoos, disappear

Some dread deity draws near!

(Exeunt Hoodos.)

Smitten with a sense of doom,

The dead are cowering in the tomb,

Seas are calling, stars are falling

And appalling is the gloom!

Fragmentary flames are flung

Through the air the trees among!

Lo! each hill inclines its head

Earth is bending 'neath his thread!

(On the contrary, enter Villiam on a chip, navigating an odor of mignonette. Saralthia springs forward to put him in her pocket, but he is instantly retracted by an invisible string. She falls headlong, breaking her heart. Reënter Villiam, Needleson, Smyler. All gather about Saralthia, who loudly laments her accident. The Spirit of Tar-and Feathers, rising like a black smoke in their midst, executes a monstrous wink of graphic and vivid significance, then contemplates them with an obviously baptismal intention. The cross on Lone Mountain takes fire, splendoring the Peninsula. Tableau. Curtain.)

## **ON STONE**

As in a dream, strange epitaphs I see,  
Inscribed on yet unquarried stone,  
Where wither flowers yet unstrawn  
The Campo Santo of the time to be.

## **A WREATH OF IMMORTELLES**

### **LORING PICKERING**

(After Pope)

Here rests a writer, great but not immense,  
Born destitute of feeling and of sense.  
No power he but o'er his brain desired  
How not to suffer it to be inspired.  
Ideas unto him were all unknown,  
Proud of the words which, only, were his own.  
So unreflecting, so confused his mind,  
Torpid in error, indolently blind,  
A fever Heaven, to quicken him, applied,  
But, rather than revive, the sluggard died.

### **A WATER-PIRATE**

Pause, stranger—whence you lightly tread  
Bill Carr's immoral part has fled.  
For him no heart of woman burned,  
But all the rivers' heads he turned.  
Alas! he now lifts up his eyes  
In torment and for water cries,  
Entreating that he may procure  
One drop to cool his parched McClure!

## **C.P. BERRY**

Here's crowbait!—ravens, too, and daws  
Flock hither to advance their caws,  
And, with a sudden courage armed,  
Devour the foe who once alarmed—  
In life and death a fair deceit:  
Nor strong to harm nor good to eat.  
King bogey of the scarecrow host,  
When known the least affrighting most,  
Though light his hand (his mind was dark)  
He left on earth a straw Berry mark.

## **THE REV. JOSEPH**

He preached that sickness he could floor  
By prayer and by commanding;  
When sick himself he sent for four  
Physicians in good standing.  
He was struck dead despite their care,  
For, fearing their dissension,  
He secretly put up a prayer,  
Thus drawing God's attention.

Cynic perforce from studying mankind  
In the false volume of his single mind,  
He damned his fellows for his own unworth,  
And, bad himself, thought nothing good on earth.  
Yet, still so judging and so erring still,  
Observing well, but understanding ill,  
His learning all was got by dint of sight,  
And what he learned by day he lost by night.  
When hired to flatter he would never cease  
Till those who'd paid for praises paid for peace.  
Not wholly miser and but half a knave,  
He yearned to squander but he lived to save,  
And did not, for he could not, cheat the grave.  
Hic jacet Pixley, scribe and muleteer:  
Step lightly, stranger, anywhere but here.

McAllister, of talents rich and rare,  
Lies at this spot at finish of his race.  
Alike to him if it is here or there:  
The one spot that he cared for was the ace.

Here lies Joseph Redding, who gave us the catfish.  
He dined upon every fish except that fish.  
'Twas touching to hear him expounding his fad  
With a heart full of zeal and a mouth full of shad.  
The catfish miaowed with unspeakable woe  
When Death, the lone fisherman, landed their Jo.

Judge Sawyer, whom in vain the people tried  
To push from power, here is laid aside.  
Death only from the bench could ever start  
The sluggish load of his immortal part.

John Irish went, one luckless day,  
To loaf and fish at San Jose.  
He got no loaf, he got no fish:  
They brained him with an empty dish!  
They laid him in this place asleep  
O come, ye crocodiles, and weep.

In Sacramento City here  
This wooden monument we rear  
In memory of Dr. May,  
Whose smile even Death could not allay.  
He's buried, Heaven alone knows where,  
And only the hyenas care;  
This May-pole merely marks the spot  
Where, ere the wretch began to rot,  
Fame's trumpet, with its brazen bray,  
Bawled; "Who (and why) was Dr. May?"

Dennis Spencer's mortal coil  
Here is laid away to spoil—  
Great riparian, who said  
Not a stream should leave its bed.  
Now his soul would like a river  
Turned upon its parching liver.

For those this mausoleum is erected  
Who Stanford to the Upper House elected.  
Their luck is less or their promotion slower,  
For, dead, they were elected to the Lower.

Beneath this stone lies Reuben Lloyd,  
Of breath deprived, of sense devoid.  
The Templars' Captain-General, he  
So formidable seemed to be,  
That had he not been on his back  
Death ne'er had ventured to attack.

Here lies Barnes in all his glory  
Master he of oratOry.  
When he died the people weeping,  
(For they thought him only sleeping)  
Cried: "Although he now is quiet  
And his tongue is not a riot,  
Soon, the spell that binds him breaking,  
He a motion will be making.  
Then, alas, he'll rise and speak  
In support of it a week."

Rash mortal! stay thy feet and look around  
This vacant tomb as yet is holy ground;  
But soon, alas! Jim Fair will occupy  
These premises—then, holiness, good-bye!

Here Salomon's body reposes;  
Bring roses, ye rebels, bring roses.  
Set all of your drumsticks a-rolling,  
Discretion and Valor extolling:  
Discretion—he always retreated  
And Valor—the dead he defeated.  
Brings roses, ye loyal, bring roses:  
As patriot here he re-poses.

When Waterman ended his bright career  
He left his wet name to history here.  
To carry it with him he did not care:

'Twould tantalize spirits of statesmen There.

Here lie the remains of Fred Emerson Brooks,  
A poet, as every one knew by his looks  
Who hadn't unluckily met with his books.  
On civic occasions he sprang to the fore  
With poems consisting of stanzas three score.  
The men whom they deafened enjoyed them the more.  
Of reason his fantasy knew not the check:  
All forms of inharmony came at his beck.  
The weight of his ignorance fractured his neck.  
In this peaceful spot, so the grave-diggers say,  
With pen, ink and paper they laid him away  
The Poet-elect of the Judgment Day.

George Perry here lies stiff and stark,  
With stone at foot and stone at head.  
His heart was dark, his mind was dark  
Ignorant ass!" the people said.  
Not ignorant but skilled, alas,  
In all the secrets of his trade:  
He knew more ways to be an ass  
Than any ass that ever brayed.

Here lies the last of Deacon Fitch,  
Whose business was to melt the pitch.  
Convenient to this sacred spot  
Lies Sammy, who applied it, hot.  
'Tis hard—so much alike they smell  
One's grave from t'other's grave to tell,  
But when his tomb the Deacon's burst  
(Of two he'll always be the first)  
He'll see by studying the stones  
That he's obtained his proper bones,  
Then, seeking Sammy's vault, unlock it,  
And put that person in his pocket.

Beneath this stone O'Donnell's tongue's at rest  
Our noses by his spirit still addressed.  
Living or dead, he's equally Satanic—  
His noise a terror and his smell a panic.

When Gabriel blows a dreadful blast  
And swears that Time's forever past,  
Days, weeks, months, years all one at last,  
Then Asa Fiske, laid here, distressed,  
Will beat (and skin his hand) his breast:  
There'll be no rate of interest!

Step lightly, stranger: here Jerome B. Cox  
Is for the second time in a bad box.  
He killed a man—the labor party rose  
And showed him by its love how killing goes.

When Vrooman here lay down to sleep,  
The other dead awoke to weep.  
"Since he no longer lives," they said  
"Small honor comes of being dead."

Here Porter Ashe is laid to rest  
Green grows the grass upon his breast.  
This patron of the turf, I vow,  
Ne'er served it half so well as now.

Like a cold fish escaping from its tank,  
Hence fled the soul of Joe Russel, crank.  
He cried: "Cold water!" roaring like a beast.  
'Twas thrown upon him and the music ceased.

Here Estee rests. He shook a basket,  
When, like a jewel from its casket,  
Fell Felton out. Said Estee, shouting  
With mirth; "I've given you an outing."  
Then told him to go back. He wouldn't.  
Then tried to put him back. He couldn't.  
So Estee died (his blood congealing  
In Felton's growing shadow) squealing.

Mourn here for one Bruner, called Elwood.  
He doesn't—he never did—smell good  
To noses of critics and scholars.  
If now he'd an office to sell could

He sell it? O, no—where (in Hell) could  
He find a cool four hundred dollars?

Here Stanford lies, who thought it odd  
That he should go to meet his God.  
He looked, until his eyes grew dim,  
For God to hasten to meet him.