

Classic Poetry Series

Henry Cuyler Bunner
- poems -

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Henry Cuyler Bunner(1855-1896)

Henry Cuyler Bunner (3 August 1855 – 11 May 1896) was an American novelist and poet born in Oswego, New York.

He was educated in New York City. From being a clerk in an importing house, he turned to journalism, and after some work as a reporter, and on the staff of *The Arcadian* (1873), he became in 1877 assistant editor of the comic weekly *Puck*. He soon assumed the editorship, which he held until his death in Nutley, New Jersey. He developed *Puck* from a new struggling periodical into a powerful social and political organ. In 1886 he published a novel, *The Midge*, followed in 1887 by *The Story of a New York House*. But his best efforts in fiction were his short stories and sketches *Short Sixes* (1891), *More Short Sixes* (1894), *Made in France* (1893), *Zadoc Pine and Other Stories* (1891), *Love in Old Cloathes and Other Stories* (1896), and *Jersey Street and Jersey Lane* (1896). His verses *Airs from A ready and Elsewhere* (884), containing the well-known poem, *The Way to Arcady*; *Rowen* (1892); and *Poems* (1896), edited by his friend Brander Matthews, displaying a light play of imagination and a delicate workmanship. He also wrote clever *vers de société* and parodies. One of his several plays (usually written in collaboration), was *The Tower of Babel* (1883).

His short story "Zenobia's Infidelity" was made into a feature film called *Zenobia* starring Harry Langdon and Oliver Hardy by the Hal Roach Studio in 1939.

A Dead Woman

Not a kiss in life; but one kiss, at life's end,
I have set on the face of Death in trust for thee.
Through long years keep it fresh on thy lips, O friend!
At the gate of Silence give it back to me.

Henry Cuyler Bunner

A Pitcher Of Mignonette

A pitcher of mignonette
In a tenement's highest casement,—
Queer sort of flower-pot—yet
That pitcher of mignonette
Is a garden in heaven set,
To the little sick child in the basement—
The pitcher of mignonette,
In a tenement's highest casement.

Henry Cuyler Bunner

An Old-Fashioned Love Song

Tell me what within her eyes
Makes the forgotten Spring arise,
And all the day, if kind she looks,
Flow to a tune like tinkling brooks;
Tell me why, if but her voice
Falls on men's ears, their souls rejoice;
Tell me why, if only she
Doth come into the companie
All spirits straight enkindled are,
As if a moon lit up a star.

Tell me this that's writ above,
And I will tell you why I love.

Tell me why the foolish wind
Is to her tresses ever kind,
And only blows them in such wise
As lends her beauty some surprise;
Tell me why no changing year
Can change from Spring, if she appear;
Tell me why to see her face
Begets in all folk else a grace
That makes them fair, as love of her
Did to a gentler nature stir.

Tell me why, if she but go
Alone across the fields of snow,
All fancies of the Springs of old
Within a lover's breast grow bold;
Tell me why, when he he sees,
Within him stirs an April breeze;
And all that in his secret heart
Most sacredly was set apart,
And most was hidden, then awakes,
At the sweet joy her coming makes.

Tell me what is writ above,
And I will tell you why I love.

Henry Cuyler Bunner

Behold The Deeds!

I would that all men my hard case would know,
How grievously I suffer for no sin:
I, Adolphe Culpepper Ferguson, for lo!
I of my landlady am lockèd in
For being short on this sad Saturday,
Nor having shekels of silver wherewith to pay:
She turned and is departed with my key;
Wherefore, not even as other boarders free,
I sing, (as prisoners to their dungeon-stones
When for ten days they expiate a spree):
Behold the deeds that are done of Mrs. Jones!

One night and one day have I wept my woe;
Nor wot I, when the morrow doth begin,
If I shall have to write to Briggs & Co.,
To pray them to advance the requisite tin
For ransom of their salesman, that he may
Go forth as other boarders go away—
As those I hear now flocking from their tea,
Led by the daughter of my landlady
Piano-ward. This day, for all my moans,
Dry-bread and water have been servèd me.
Behold the deeds that are done of Mrs. Jones!

Miss Amabel Jones is musical, and so
The heart of the young he-boarder doth win,
Playing 'The Maiden's Prayer' adagio—
That fetcheth him, as fetcheth the 'bunko skin'
The innocent rustic. For my part, I pray
That Badarjewska maid may wait for aye
Ere sits she with a lover, as did we
Once sit together, Amabel! Can it be
That all that arduous wooing not atones
For Saturday's shortness of trade dollars three?
Behold the deeds that are done of Mrs. Jones!

Yea! She forgets the arm that was wont to go
Around her waist. She wears a buckle whose pin
Galleth the crook of her young man's elbow.

I forget not, for I that youth have been!
Smith was aforetime the Lothario gay.
Yet once, I mind me, Smith was forced to stay
Close in his room. Not calm as I was he;
But his noise brought no pleasance, verily.
Small ease he got of playing on the bones
Or hammering on the stove-pipe, that I see.
Behold the deeds that are done of Mrs. Jones!

Thou, for whose fear the figurative crow
I eat, accursed be thou and all thy kin!
Thee I will show up—yea, up I will show
Thy too-thick buckwheats and thy tea too thin.
Ay! here I dare thee, ready for the fray:
Thou dost not 'keep a first-class house' I say!
It does not with the advertisements agree.
Thou lodgest a Briton with a puggaree,
And thou hast harbored Jacobses and Cohns,
Also a Mulligan. Thus denounce I thee!
Behold the deeds that are done of Mrs. Jones!

Envoy

Boarders! the worst I have not told to ye:
She hath stolen my trousers, that I may not flee
Privily by the window. Hence these groans.
There is no fleeing in a robe de nuit.
Behold the deeds that are done of Mrs. Jones!

Henry Cuyler Bunner

Candor

October--A Wood

'I know what you are going to say,' she said,
And she stood up, looking uncommonly tall:
'You are going to the speak of the hectic fall,
And say you're sorry the summer's dead,
And no other summer was like it, you know,
And can I imagine what made it so.
Now aren't you, honestly?' 'Yes,' I said.

'I know what you're going to say,' she said:
'You are going to ask if I forget
That day in June when the woods were wet,
And you carried me'--here she drooped her head--
'Over the creek; you are going to say,
Do I remember that horrid day.
Now aren't you, honestly?' 'Yes,' I said.

'I know what you are going to say,' she said:
'You are going to say that since that time
You have rather tended to run to rhyme
And'--her clear glance fell, and her cheek grew red--
'And have I noticed your tone was queer.
Why, everybody has seen it here!
Now aren't you, honestly?' 'Yes,' I said.

'I now what you are going to say,' I said:
'You're going to say you've been much annoyed;
And I'm short of tact--you will say, devoid--
And I'm clumsy and awkward; and call me 'Ted';
And I bear abuse like a dear old lamb;
And you'll have me, anyway, just as I am.
Now aren't you, honestly?' 'Ye-es,' she said.

Henry Cuyler Bunner

Deaf

As to a bird's song she were listening,
Her beautiful head is ever sidewise bent;
Her questioning eyes lift up their depths intent—
She, who will never hear the wild-birds sing.
My words within her ears' cold chambers ring
Faint, with the city's murmurous sub-tones blent,
Though with such sounds as suppliants may have sent
To high-throned goddesses, my speech takes wing.

Not for the side-poised head's appealing grace
I gaze, nor hair where fire in shadow lies—
For her this world's unhallowed noises base
Melt into silence; not our groans, our cries,
Our curses reach that high-removed place
Where dwells her spirit, innocently wise.

Henry Cuyler Bunner

Farewell To Salvini

Although a curtain of the salt sea-mist
May fall between the actor and our eyes —
Although he change, for dear and softer skies,
These that the Spring has yet but coyly kist —
Although the voice to which we loved to list
Fail ere the thunder of our plaudits dies —
Although he part from us in gracious wise,
With grateful Memory left his eulogist—
His best is with us still.
His perfect art
Has held us `twixt a heart-throb and a tear—
Cheating our souls to passionate belief:
And in his greatness we have now some part—
We have been courtiers of the crownless Lear,
And partners in Othello's mighty grief.

Henry Cuyler Bunner

Feminine

She might have known it in the earlier Spring,-
That all my heart with vague desire was stirred;
And, ere the Summer winds had taken wing,
I told her; but she smiled and said no word.

The Autumn's eager hand his red gold grasped,
And she was silent; till from skies grown drear
Fell soft one fine, first snow-flake, and she clasped
My neck and cried, 'Love, we have lost a year!'

Henry Cuyler Bunner

For An Old Poet

When he is old and past all singing,
Grant, kindly Time, that he may hear
The rhythm through joyous Nature ringing,
Uncaught by any duller ear.

Grant that, in memory's deeps still cherished,
Once more may murmur low to him
The winds that sung in years long perished,
Lit by the suns of days grown dim.

Grant that the hours when first he listened
To bird-songs manhood may not know,
In fields whose dew for lovers glistened,
May come back to him ere he go.

Grant only this, O Time most kindly,
That he may hear the song you sung
When love was new—and, hearkening blindly,
Feign his o'er-wearied spirit young.

With sound of rivers singing round him,
On waves that long since flowed away,
Oh, leave him, Time, where first Love found him,
Dreaming Tomorrow in Today!

Henry Cuyler Bunner

Forfeits

They sent him round the circle fair,
To bow before the prettiest there.
I'm bound to say the choice he made
A creditable taste displayed;
Although—I can't say what it meant—
The little maid looked ill-content.

His task was then anew begun—
To kneel before the wittiest one.
Once more that little maid sought he,
And went him down upon his knee.
She bent her eyes upon the floor—
I think she thought the game a bore.

He circled then—his sweet behest
To kiss the one he loved the best.
For all she frowned, for all she chid,
He kissed that little maid, he did.
And then—though why I can't decide—
The little maid looked satisfied.

Henry Cuyler Bunner

Forty

IN the heyday of my years, when I thought the world was young,
And believed that I was old—at the very gates of Life—
It seemed in every song the birds of heaven sung
That I heard the sweet injunction: " Go and get to thee a wife!"

And within the breast of youth woke a secret sweet desire;
For Love spoke in that carol his first mysterious word,
That to-day through ashen years kindles memory into fire,
Though the birds are dead that sang it, and the heart is old that heard.

I have watched my youth's blue heavens flush to angry, brooding red,
And again the crimson palsied in a dull unpregnant gloom;
I am older than some sorrows; I have watched by Pleasure dead;
I have seen Hope grow immortal at the threshold of the tomb.

Through the years by turns that gave me now curses, now caresses,
I have fought a fight with Fortune wherein Love hath had no part;
To-day, when peace hard-conquered riper years and weary blesses,
Will my fortieth summer pardon twenty winters to my heart?

When the spring-tide's verdure darkens to the summer's deeper glories,
And in the thickening foliage doth the year its life renew,
Will to me the forests whisper once more their wind-learnt stories?
Will the birds their message bring, me from out the heaven of blue?

Will the wakened world for me sing the old enchanted song—
Touch the underflow of love that, through all the toil and strife,
Has only grown the stronger as the years passed lone and long?
Shall I learn the will of Heaven is to get for me a wife?

The boy's heart yearns for freedom, he walks hand-in-hand with pleasure;
Made bright with wine and kisses he sees the face of Life;
He would make the world a pleasance for a love that knows not measure;
But the man seeks Heaven, and finds it in the bosom of his wife.

Henry Cuyler Bunner

Grant

Smile on, thou new-come Spring—if on thy breeze
The breath of a great man go wavering up
And out of this world's knowledge, it is well.

Kindle with thy green flame the stricken trees,
And fire the rose's many-petaled cup,
Let bough and branch with quickening life-blood swell—
But Death shall touch his spirit with a life
That knows not years or seasons. Oh, how small
Thy little hour of bloom! Thy leaves shall fall,
And be the sport of winter winds at strife;
But he has taken on eternity.
Yea, of how much this Death doth set him free!—
Now are we one to love him, once again.
The tie that bound him to our bitterest pain
Draws him more close to Love and Memory.

O Spring, with all thy sweetheart frolics, say,
Hast thou remembrance of those earlier springs
When we wept answer to the laughing day,
And turned aside from green and gracious things?

There was a sound of weeping over all—
Mothers uncomforted, for their sons were not;
And there was crueler silence: tears grew hot
In the true eyes that would not let them fall.

Up from the South came a great wave of sorrow
That drowned our hearthstones, splashed with blood our sills;
To-day, that spared, made terrible To-morrow
With thick presentiment of coming ills.
Only we knew the Right—but oh, how strong,
How pitiless, how insatiable the Wrong!

And then the quivering sword-hilt found a hand
That knew not how to falter or grow weak;
And we looked on, from end to end the land,
And felt the heart spring up, and rise afresh
The blood of courage to the whitened cheek,

And fire of battle thrill the numbing flesh.
Ay, there was death, and pain, and dear ones missed,
And lips forever to grow pale unkissed;
But lo, the man was here, and this was he;
And at his hands Faith gave us victory.

Spring, thy poor life, that mocks his body's death,
Is but a candle's flame, a flower's breath.
He lives in days that suffering made dear
Beyond all garnered beauty of the year.
He lives in all of us that shall outlive

The sensuous things that paltry time can give.
This Spring the spirit of his broken age
Across the threshold of its anguish stole—
All of him that was noble, fearless, sage,
Lives in his loved nation's strengthened soul.

Henry Cuyler Bunner

In A Paris Restaurant

I gaze, while thrills my heart with patriot pride,
Upon the exquisite skin, rose-flushed and creamy;
The perfect little head; on either side
Blonde waves. The dark eyes, vaguely soft and dreamy,
Hold for a space my judgment in eclipse,
Until, with half a pout, supremely dainty,
"He's red mean"—slips from out the strawberry lips—
"Oh, aint he!"

This at her escort, youthful, black-moustached
And diamond-studded—this reproof; whereat he
Is not to any great extent abashed.
(That youth's from "Noo Orleans" or "Cincinnati,"
I'm sure.) But she—those dark eyes doubtful strike
Her sherbet-ice. . . Wont touch it. . . Is induced to.
Result: "I'd sooner eat Mince-Pie, Jim, like
We used to."

While then my too-soon-smitten soul recants,
I hear her friend discoursing with much feeling
Of tailors, and a garment he calls "pants."
I note into her eyes a softness stealing—
A shade of thought upon her low, sweet brow—
She hears him not—I swear, I could have cried here—
The escort nudges her—she starts, and—"How?
The idear!"

This was the finishing and final touch.
I rose, and took no further observation.
I love my country "just about" as much—
I have for it as high a veneration—
As a man whose fathers fought for liberty,
Whose veins conduct the blood of Commodore Perry, can.
But she was quite too very awfully
American.

Henry Cuyler Bunner

Janiveer In March

I would not have you so kindly,
Thus early in friendship's year—
A little too gently, blindly,
You let me near.

So long as my voice is duly
Calm as a friend's should be,
In my eyes the hunger unruly
You will not see.

The eyes that you lift so brightly,
Frankly to welcome mine —
You bend them again as lightly
And note no sign.

I had rather your pale cheek reddened
With the flush of an angry pride:
That a look with disliking deadened
My look defied;

If so in the spring's full season
Your glance should soften and fall,
When, reckless with Love's unreason,
I tell you all.

Henry Cuyler Bunner

Just A Love Letter

NEW YORK, July 20, 1883.

DEAR GIRL:

The town goes on as though
It thought you still were in it;
The gilded cage seems scarce to know
That it has lost its linnet.
The people come, the people pass;
The clock keeps on a-ticking;
And through the basement plots of grass
Persistent weeds are pricking.

I thought 'twould never come — the Spring —
Since you had left the city;
But on the snow-drifts lingering
At last the skies took pity.
Then Summer's yellow warmed the sun,
Daily decreasing distance —
I really don't know how 'twas done
Without your kind assistance.

Aunt Van, of course, still holds the fort:
I've paid the call of duty;
She gave me one small glass of port —
'Twas '34 and fruity.
The furniture was draped in gloom
Of linen brown and wrinkled;
I smelt in spots about the room
The pungent camphor sprinkled.

I sat upon the sofa where
You sat and dropped your thimble —
You know — you said you didn't care;
But I was nobly nimble.
On hands and knees I dropped, and tried
To — well, I tried to miss it:
You slipped your hand down by your side —
You knew I meant to kiss it!

Aunt Van, I fear we put to shame
Propriety and precision;
But, praised be Love, that kiss just came
Beyond your line of vision.
Dear maiden aunt! the kiss, more sweet
Because 'tis surreptitious,
You never stretched a hand to meet,
So dimpled, dear, delicious.

I sought the Park last Saturday;
I found the Drive deserted;
The winter-trough beside the way
Sad and superfluous spurted.
I stood where Humboldt guards the gate,
Bronze, bumptious, stained, and streaky —
There sat a sparrow on his pate,
A sparrow chirp and cheeky.

Ten months ago! Ten months ago
It seems a happy second,
Against a life-time lone and slow,
By Love's wild time-piece reckoned —
You smiled, by Aunt's protecting side,
Where thick the drags were massing,
On one young man who didn't ride,
But stood and watched you passing.

I haunt Purssell's — to his amaze —
Not that I care to eat there,
But for the dear clandestine days
When we two had to meet there.
Oh, blessed is that baker's bake,
Past cavil and past question:
I ate a bun for your sweet sake,
And memory helped digestion.

The Norths are at their Newport ranch;
Van Brunt has gone to Venice;
Loomis invites me to the Branch,
And lures me with lawn tennis.

O bustling barracks by the sea!
O spiles, canals, and islands!
Your varied charms are naught to me —
My heart is in the Highlands!

My paper trembles in the breeze
That all too faintly flutters
Among the dusty city trees,
And through my half-closed shutters:
A northern captive in the town,
Its native vigor deadened,
I hope that, as it wandered down,
Your dear pale cheek it reddened.

I'll write no more! A vis-a-vis
In halcyon vacation
Will sure afford a much more free
Mode of communication.
I'm tantalized and cribbed and checked
In making love by letter:
I know a style more brief, direct —
And generally better!

Henry Cuyler Bunner

May-Bloom

Oh, for You that I never knew ! —
Now that the Spring is swelling,
And over the way is a whitening may,
In the yard of my neighbor's dwelling.

Oh, may, oho! do your sisters blow
Out there in the country grasses —
A-mocking the white of the cloudlet light,
That up in the blue sky passes?

Here in town the grass it is brown,
Right under your beautiful clusters;
But your sisters thrive where the sward's alive
With emerald lights and lustres.

Dream of my dreams! vision that seems
Ever to scorn my praying,
Love that I wait, face of my fate,
Come with me now a-maying!

Soul of my song! all my life long
Looking for you I wander~
Long have I sought — shall I find naught,
Under the may-bushes yonder?

Oh, for You that I never knew,
Only in dreams that bind you! —
By Spring's own grace I shall know your face,
When under the may I find you!

Henry Cuyler Bunner

One, Two, Three!

It was an old, old, old, old lady,
And a boy that was half-past three;
And the way that they played together
Was beautiful to see.

She couldn't go running or jumping,
And the boy, no more could he;
For he was a thin litte fellow,
With a thin little twisted knee.

They sat in the yellow sunlight,
Out under the maple tree;
And the game that they played I'll tell you,
Just as it was told to me.

It was Hide-and-Go-Seek they were playing,
Though you've never have known it to be--
With an old, old, old, old lady,
And a boy with a twisted knee.

The boy would bend his face down
On his one little sound right knee,
And he'd guess where she was hiding,
In guesses One, Two, Three!

'You are in the china-closet!'
He would cry, and laugh with glee--
It wasn't the china closet,
But he still had Two and Three.

'You are up in papa's big bedroom,
In the chest with the queer old key!'
And she said: 'You are warm and warmer;
But you're not quite right,' said she.

'It can't be the little cupboard
Where mamma's things used to be--
So it must be the clothes-press, Gran'ma!'
And he found her with his Three.

Then she covered her face with her fingers,
That were wrinkled and white and wee,
And she guessed where the boy was hiding,
With a One and a Two and a Three.

And they never had stirred from their places,
Right under the maple tree--
This old, old, old, old lady
And the boy with the lame little knee--
This dear, dear, dear old lady,
And the boy who was half-past three.

Henry Cuyler Bunner

Only Love May Lead Love In

Love must kiss that mortal's eyes
Who hopes to see fair Arcady.
No gold can buy you entrance there;
But beggared Love may go all bare—
No wisdom won with weariness;
But Love goes in with Folly's dress—
No fame that wit could ever win;
But only Love may lead Love in.

Henry Cuyler Bunner

She Was A Beauty

She was a beauty in the days
When Madison was President;
And quite coquettish in her ways—
On cardiac conquests much intent.

Grandpapa, on his right knee bent,
Wooed her in stiff, old-fashioned phrase—.
She was a beauty in the days
When Madison was President.

And when your roses where hers went
Shall go, my Lili, who date from Hayes,
I hope you'll wear her sweet content
Of whom tradition lightly says:
She was a beauty in the days
When Madison was President.

Henry Cuyler Bunner

Shriven

A.D. 1425.

I have let the world go.
That's the door that closed
Behind the holy father. I am shrived.
All's done—all's said—all's shaped and rounded out—
And one hour yet to wait for death. Good Lord!
How easy 'twas to let this vain life go;
Why, I protest, I who have fought for life
These fifty years, more times than I would count,
I gave the poor thing up but now as though
I toss'd away a shilling—ask the priest!
I gave up life as lightly as I gave him
For an altar-cloth that scarf of cloth of gold
The King bound round my arfa at Agincourt.

One hour—one hour! and then a tug o' the heart
And I shall see the saints. How plain they make it,
These honest men of God! Was it at Lisle
I met that paunchy little yellow friar,
Like Cupid in a cassock with the jaundice,
And played at cards with him two days together?
Stay, 'twas at Calais, where I fought the count—
By 'r Lady, but they mock'd him !—'twas at Calais—
Now had I had some converse with that brother
It might have been the better for my soul
Though 'tis all one, I take it, now. . . . The Abbess!
He told a master story of an Abbess—
An Abbess and a Clerk—but godly talk,
If I remember me aright . . . we had not.

Ay, 'tis fair lying here, to watch the sun
Creep up yon wall I would that I had thought
To give that priest the ruby in my hilt
To buy him better store of sacred oil—
The anointed go to Paradise, methinks,
Something too rancid-flavored.

What's the clock?

This hour's too full of minutes—minutes—minutes.

Ah, well, I have done with time. 'Tis but an hour.

I have let the world go.

Would my dog were here!

Henry Cuyler Bunner

Strong As Death

Death, when thou shalt come to me
Out of thy dark, where she is now,
Let no faint perfume cling to thee
Of withered roses on thy brow.

Henry Cuyler Bunner

The Chaperon

I take my chaperon to the play--
She thinks she's taking me.
And the gilded youth who owns the box,
A proud young man is he;
But how would his young heart be hurt
If he could only know
That not for his sweet sake I go
Nor yet to see the triffling show;
But to see my chaperon flirt.

Her eyes beneath her snowy hair
They sparkle young as mine;
There's scarce a wrinkle in her hand
So delicate and fine.
And when my chaperon is seen,
They come from everywhere--
The dear old boys with silver hair,
With old-time grace and old-time air,
To greet their old-time queen.

They bow as my young Midas here
Will never learn to bow
(The dancing-masters do not teach
That gracious reverence now);
With voices quivering just a bit,
They play their old parts through,
They talk of folk who used to woo,
Of hearts that broke in 'fifty-two--
Now none the worse for it.

And as those aged crickets chirp,
I watch my chaperon's face,
And see the dear old features take
A new and tender grace;
And in her happy eyes I see
Her youth awakening bright,
With all its hope, desire, delight--
Ah, me! I wish that I were quite
As young--as young as she!

Henry Cuyler Bunner

The Future Of The Classics

No longer, O scholars, shall Plautus
Be taught us.
No more shall professors be partial
To Martial.
No ninny
Will stop playing "shinney"
For Pliny.
Not even the veriest Mexican Greaser
Will stop to read Caesar.
No true son of Erin will leave his potato
To list to the love-lore of Ovid or Plato.
Old Homer,
That hapless old roamer,
Will ne'er find a rest 'neath collegiate dome or
Anywhere else. As to Seneca,
Any cur
Safely may snub him, or urge ill
Effects from the reading of Virgil.
Cornelius Nepos
Won't keep us
Much longer from pleasure's light errands —
Nor Terence.
The irreverent now may all scoff in ease
At the shade of poor old Aristophanes.
And moderns it now doth behoove in all
Ways to despise poor old Juvenal;
And to chivvy
Livy.
The class-room hereafter will miss a row
Of eager young students of Cicero.
The longshoreman — yes, and the dock-rat, he's
Down upon Socrates.
And what'll
Induce us to read Aristotle?
We shall fail in
Our duty to Galen.
No tutor henceforward shall rack us
To construe old Horatius Flaccus.
We have but a wretched opinion

Of Mr. Justinian.
In our classical pabulum mix we no wee sop
Of Aesop.
Our balance of intellect asks for no ballast
From Sallust.
With feminine scorn no fair Vassar-bred lass at us
Shall smile if we own that we cannot read Tacitus.
No admirer shall ever now wreath with begonias
The bust of Suetonius.
And so, if you follow me,
We'll have to cut Ptolemy.
Besides, it would just be considered facetious
To look at Lucretius.
And you can
Not go in Society if you read Lucan.
And we cannot have any fun
Out of Xenophon.

Henry Cuyler Bunner

The Heart Of The Tree

WHAT does he plant who plants a tree?
He plants a friend of sun and sky;
He plants the flag of breezes free;
The shaft of beauty, towering high.
He plants a home to heaven anigh
For song and mother-croon of bird
In hushed and happy twilight heard -
The treble of heaven's harmony -
These things he plants who plants a tree.

What does he plant who plants a tree?
He plants cool shade and tender rain,
And seed and bud of days to be,
And years that fade and flush again;
He plants the glory of the plain;
He plants the forest's heritage;
The harvest of a coming age;
They joy that unborn eyes shall see -
These things he plants who plants a tree.

What does he plant who plants a tree?
He plants, in sap and leaf and wood,
In love of home and loyalty
And far-cast thought of civic good -
His blessing on the neighborhood
Who in the hollow of His hand
Holds all the growth of all our land -
A nation's growth from sea to sea
Stirs in his heart who plants a tree.

Henry Cuyler Bunner

The Light

There is no shadow where my love is laid;
For (ever thus I fancy in my dream
That wakes with me and wakes my sleep), some gleam
Of sunlight, thrusting through the poplar shade,
Falls there; and even when the wind has played
His requiem for the Day, one stray sunbeam,
Pale as the palest moonlight glimmers seem,
Keeps sentinel for her till starlights fade.

And I, remaining here and waiting long,
And all enfolded in my sorrow's night,
Who not on earth again her face may see,—
For even Memory does her likeness wrong,—
Am blind and hopeless, only for this light —
This light, this light, through all the years to be.

Henry Cuyler Bunner

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Henry Cuyler Bunner

The Lost Child

YE CRYER:

Here's a reward for who'll find Love!
Love is a-straying
Ever since Maying,
Hither and yon, below, above,
All are seeking Love!

YE HAND-BILL:

Gone astray—between the Maying
And the gathering of the hay,
Love, an urchin ever playing—
Folk are warned against his play.

How may you know him? By the quiver,
By the bow he's wont to bear.
First on your left there comes a shiver,
Then a twinge—the arrow's there.

By his eye of pansy color,
Deep as wounds he dealeth iree;
If its hue have faded duller,
'T is not that he weeps for me.

By the smile that curls his mouthlet;
By the mockery of his sigh;
By his breath, a spicy South, let
Slip his lips of roses by.

By the devil in his dimple;
By his lies that sound so true;
By his shaft-sting, that no simple
Ever culled will heal for you.

By his beckonings that embolden;
By his quick withdrawals then;

By his flying hair, a golden
Light to lure the feet of men.

By the breast where ne'er a hurt'll
Rankle 'neath his kerchief hid—
What? you cry; he wore a kirtle?
Faith! methinks the rascal did!

Here's a reward for who'll find Love!
Love is a-straying
Ever since Maying;
Hither and yon, below, above,
I am seeking Love.

Henry Cuyler Bunner

The Red Box At Vesey Street

Past the Red Box at Vesey street
Swing two strong tides of hurrying feet,
And up and down and all the day
Rises a sullen roar, to say
The Bowery has met Broadway.
And where the confluent current brawls,
Stands, fair and dear and old, St. Paul's,
Through her grand window looking down
Upon the fever of the town;
Rearing her shrine of patriot pride
Above that hungry human tide
Mad with the lust of sordid gain,
Wild for the things that God holds vain;
Blind, selfish, cruel — Stay there! out
A man is turning from the rout,
And stops to drop a folded sheet
In the Red Box at Vesey street.

On goes he to the money-mart,
A broker, shrewd and tricky-smart;
But in the space you saw him stand,
He reached and grasped a brother's hand:
And some poor bed-rid wretch will find
Bed-life a little less unkind
For that man's stopping. They who pass
Under St. Paul's broad roseate glass
Have but to reach their hands to gain
The pitiful world of prisoned pain.
The hospital's poor captive lies
Waiting the day with weary eyes,
Waiting the day, to hear again
News of the outer world of men,
Brought to him in a crumpled sheet
From the Red Box at Vesey street.

For the Red Box at Vesey street
Was made because men's hearts must beat;
Because the humblest kindly thought
May do what wealth has never bought.

That journal in your hand you hold
To you already has grown old,—
Stale, dull, a thing to throw away,—
Yet since the earliest gleam of day
Men in a score of hospitals
Have lain and watched the whitewashed walls;
Waiting the hour that brings more near
The Life so infinitely dear —
The Life of trouble, toil, and strife,
Hard, if you will—but Life, Life, Life!
Tell them, O friend! that life is sweet
Through the Red Box at Vesey street.

Henry Cuyler Bunner

The Way To Arcady

OH, what's the way to Arcady,
To Arcady, To Arcady;
Oh, what's the way to Arcady,
Where all the leaves are merry?

Oh, what's the way to Arcady?
The spring is rustling in the tree,-
The tree the wind is blowing through,-
It sets the blossoms flickering white.
I knew not skies could burn so blue
Nor any breezes blow so light.
They blow an old-time way for me,
Across the world to Arcady.

Oh, what's the way to Arcady?
Sir poet, with the rusty coat,
Quit mocking of the song-bird's note.
How have you heart for any tune,
You with the wayworn russet shoon?
Your scrip, a-swinging by your side,
Gapes with a gaunt mouth hungry-wide.
I'll brim it well with pieces red,
If you will tell the way to tread.

Oh, I am bound for Arcady,
And if you but keep pace with me
You tread the way to Arcady.

And where away lies Arcady,
And how long yet may the journey be?

Ah, that (quoth he) I do not know:
Across the clover and the snow-
Across the frost, across the flowers-
Through summer seconds and winter hours,
I've trod the way my whole life long,
And know not now where it may be,
My guide is but the stir to song,
That tells me I cannot go wrong,

Or clear or dark the pathway be
Upon the road to Arcady.

But how shall I who cannot sing?
I was wont to sing, once on a time,-
There is never an echo now to ring
Remembrance back to the trick of rhyme.

'Tis strange you cannot sing (quoth he),-
The folk all sing in Arcady.

But how may he find Arcady
Who hath nor youth nor melody?

What, know you not, old man (quoth he),-
Your hair is white, your face is wise,-
That Love must kiss that Mortal's eyes
Who hopes to see fair Arcady?
No gold can buy you entrance there;
But beggered Love may go all bare-
No wisdom won with weariness;
But Love goes in with Folly's dress-
No fame that wit could ever win;
But only Love may lead Love in
To Arcady, to Arcady.

Ah, woe is me, through all my days
Wisdom and wealth I both have got,
And fame and name, and great men's praise;
But Love, ah Love! I have it not.
There was a time, when life was new-
But far away, and half forgot-
I only know her eyes were blue;
But Love-I fear I knew it not.
We did not wed, for lack of gold,
And she is dead, and I am old.
All things have come since then to me,
Save Love, ah Love! and Arcady.

Ah, then I fear we part (quoth he),-
My way's for Love and Arcady.

But you, you fare alone, like me;
The gray is likewise in your hair.
What love have you to lead you there,
To Arcady, to Arcady?

Ah, no, not lonely do I fare;
My true companion's Memory.
With Love he fills the Spring-time air;
With Love he clothes the Winter tree.
Oh, past this poor horizon's bound
My song goes straight to one who stands,-
Her face all gladdening at the sound,-
To lead me to the Spring-green lands,
To wander with enlacing hands.
The songs within my breast that stir
Are all of her, are all of her.
My maid is dead long years (quoth he),-
She waits for me in Arcady.

Oh, yon's the way to Arcady,
To Arcady, to Arcady;
Oh, yon's the way to Arcady,
Where all the leaves are merry.

Henry Cuyler Bunner