

Classic Poetry Series

Vachel Lindsay
- poems -

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Vachel Lindsay(November 10, 1879 – December 5, 1931)

Nicholas Vachel Lindsay was born on November 10, 1879 in Springfield, Illinois. The second of six children and the only son of Dr. Vachel Thomas Lindsay and Esther Catharine Frazee Lindsay. Vachel did not attend school until he was eight. He was taught at home by his mother, who had been a teacher and artist before her marriage. Grimm's Fairy Tales is said to have been his primer. He graduated from Stuart School in 1893, having skipped the seventh grade and winning several prizes for his writing compositions.

During his youth, Vachel was encouraged to follow in his father's footsteps, therefore as a dutiful son, he enrolled at Hiram College, as a premedical student in 1897. Three years later, he wrote home and asked his parents to allow him to attend art school. In 1901 he was accepted as a student at the Art Institute of Chicago and began his pursuit of a career as an illustrator. He spent time reading the works of English mystic poet William Blake and writing poetry in earnest.

He moved in 1904 to continue his studies at the New York School of Art and, while there, began to combine poetry and art. After hearing Lindsay recite one of his illustrated poems, "The Tree of the Laughing Bells," Robert Henri, a painter and teacher at the New York School, suggested to Lindsay that he devote himself to poetry. It was a turning point in the poet's life.

The years 1906 through 1912 were Lindsay's troubadour years as he took his poetry to the people. He ventured out into the world on walking tours of the countryside, taking no money with him, instead trading his poetry for food and shelter. In 1920, Lindsay became the first American poet invited to recite at Oxford University and undertook his first national lecturing tour.

Nicholas Vachel Lindsay died in 1931, his funeral attended by hundreds. Cables expressing Lindsay's popularity and people's great sorrow at his death came from all over the nation.

A Colloquial Reply: To Any Newsboy

If you lay for Iago at the stage door with a brick
You have missed the moral of the play.
He will have a midnight supper with Othello and his wife.
They will chirp together and be gay.
But the things Iago stands for must go down into the dust:
Lying and suspicion and conspiracy and lust.
And I cannot hate the Kaiser (I hope you understand.)
Yet I chase the thing he stands for with a brickbat in my hand.

Vachel Lindsay

A Curse For Kings

A curse upon each king who leads his state,
No matter what his plea, to this foul game,
And may it end his wicked dynasty,
And may he die in exile and black shame.

If there is vengeance in the Heaven of Heavens,
What punishment could Heaven devise for these
Who fill the rivers of the world with dead,
And turn their murderers loose on all the seas!

Put back the clock of time a thousand years,
And make our Europe, once the world's proud Queen,
A shrieking strumpet, furious fratricide,
Eater of entrails, wallowing obscene

In pits where millions foam and rave and bark,
Mad dogs and idiots, thrice drunk with strife;
While Science towers above;--a witch, red-winged:
Science we looked to for the light of life,

Curse me the men who make and sell iron ships
Who walk the floor in thought, that they may find
Each powder prompt, each steel with fearful edge,
Each deadliest device against mankind.

Curse me the sleek lords with their plumes and spurs,
May Heaven give their land to peasant spades,
Give them the brand of Cain, for their pride's sake,
And felon's stripes for medals and for braids.

Curse me the fiddling, twiddling diplomats,
Haggling here, plotting and hatching there,
Who make the kind world but their game of cards,
Till millions die at turning of a hair.

What punishment will Heaven devise for these
Who win by others' sweat and hardihood,
Who make men into stinking vultures' meat,
Saying to evil still "Be thou my good"?

Ah, he who starts a million souls toward death
Should burn in utmost hell a million years!
--Mothers of men go on the destined wrack
To give them life, with anguish and with tears:--

Are all those childbed sorrows sneered away?
Yea, fools laugh at the humble christenings,
And cradle-joys are mocked of the fat lords:
These mothers' sons made dead men for the Kings!

All in the name of this or that grim flag,
No angel-flags in all the rag-array--
Banners the demons love, and all Hell sings
And plays wild harps. Those flags march forth to-day!

Vachel Lindsay

A Dirge For A Righteous Kitten

To be intoned, all but the two italicized lines, which are to be spoken in a snappy, matter-of-fact way.

Ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong.
Here lies a kitten good, who kept
A kitten's proper place.
He stole no pantry eatables,
Nor scratched the baby's face.
He let the alley-cats alone.
He had no yowling vice.
His shirt was always laundered well,
He freed the house of mice.
Until his death he had not caused
His little mistress tears,
He wore his ribbon prettily,
He washed behind his ears.
Ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong.

Vachel Lindsay

A Net To Snare The Moonlight

[What the Man of Faith said]

The dew, the rain and moonlight
All prove our Father's mind.
The dew, the rain and moonlight
Descend to bless mankind.

Come, let us see that all men
Have land to catch the rain,
Have grass to snare the spheres of dew,
And fields spread for the grain.

Yea, we would give to each poor man
Ripe wheat and poppies red, —
A peaceful place at evening
With the stars just overhead:

A net to snare the moonlight,
A sod spread to the sun,
A place of toil by daytime,
Of dreams when toil is done.

Vachel Lindsay

A Prayer To All The Dead Among Mine Own People

Are these your presences, my clan from Heaven?
Are these your hands upon my wounded soul?
Mine own, mine own, blood of my blood be with me,
Fly by my path till you have made me whole!

Vachel Lindsay

A Rhyme About An Electrical Advertising Sign

I look on the specious electrical light
Blatant, mechanical, crawling and white,
Wickedly red or malignantly green
Like the beads of a young Senegambian queen.
Showing, while millions of souls hurry on,
The virtues of collars, from sunset till dawn,
By dart or by tumble of whirl within whirl,
Starting new fads for the shame-weary girl,
By maggotry motions in sickening line
Proclaiming a hat or a soup or a wine,
While there far above the steep cliffs of the street

The stars sing a message elusive and sweet.
Now man cannot rest in his pleasure and toil
His clumsy contraptions of coil upon coil
Till the thing he invents, in its use and its range,
Leads on to the marvelous CHANGE BEYOND CHANGE
Some day this old Broadway shall climb to the skies,
As a ribbon of cloud on a soul-wind shall rise.
And we shall be lifted, rejoicing by night,
Till we join with the planets who choir their delight.
The signs in the street and the signs in the skies
Shall make me a Zodiac, guiding and wise,
And Broadway make one with that marvelous stair
That is climbed by the rainbow-clad spirits of prayer.

Vachel Lindsay

A Sense Of Humor

No man should stand before the moon
To make sweet song thereon,
With dandified importance,
His sense of humor gone.

Nay, let us don the motley cap,
The jester's chastened mien,
If we would woo that looking-glass
And see what should be seen.

O mirror on fair Heaven's wall,
We find there what we bring.
So, let us smile in honest part
And deck our souls and sing.

Yea, by the chastened jest alone
Will ghosts and terrors pass,
And fays, or suchlike friendly things,
Throw kisses through the glass.

Vachel Lindsay

Above The Battle's Front

St. Francis, Buddha, Tolstoi, and St. John —
Friends, if you four, as pilgrims, hand in hand,
Returned, the hate of earth once more to dare,
And walked upon the water and the land,

If you, with words celestial, stopped these kings
For sober conclave, ere their battle great,
Would they for one deep instant then discern
Their crime, their heart-rot, and their fiend's estate?

If you should float above the battle's front,
Pillars of cloud, of fire that does not slay,
Bearing a fifth within your regal train,
The Son of David in his strange array—

If, in his majesty, he towered toward Heaven,
Would they have hearts to see or understand?
. . . Nay, for he hovers there to-night we know,
Thorn-crowned above the water and the land.

Vachel Lindsay

Abraham Lincoln Walks At Midnight

It is portentous, and a thing of state
That here at midnight, in our little town
A mourning figure walks, and will not rest,
Near the old court-house pacing up and down.

Or by his homestead, or in shadowed yards
He lingers where his children used to play,
Or through the market, on the well-worn stones
He stalks until the dawn-stars burn away.

A bronzed, lank man! His suit of ancient black,
A famous high top-hat and plain worn shawl
Make him the quaint great figure that men love,
The prairie-lawyer, master of us all.

He cannot sleep upon his hillside now.
He is among us: -- as in times before!
And we who toss and lie awake for long
Breathe deep, and start, to see him pass the door.

His head is bowed. He thinks on men and kings.
Yea, when the sick world cries, how can he sleep?
Too many peasants fight, they know not why,
Too many homesteads in black terror weep.

The sins of all the war-lords burn his heart.
He sees the dreadnaughts scouring every main.
He carries on his shawl-wrapped shoulders now
The bitterness, the folly and the pain.

He cannot rest until a spirit-dawn
Shall come; -- the shining hope of Europe free;
The league of sober folk, the Workers' Earth,
Bringing long peace to Cornwall, Alp and Sea.

It breaks his heart that kings must murder still,
That all his hours of travail here for men
Seem yet in vain. And who will bring white peace
That he may sleep upon his hill again?

Vachel Lindsay

Aladdin And The Jinn

"Bring me soft song," said Aladdin.
"This tailor-shop sings not at all.
Chant me a word of the twilight,
Of roses that mourn in the fall.
Bring me a song like hashish
That will comfort the stale and the sad,
For I would be mending my spirit,
Forgetting these days that are bad,
Forgetting companions too shallow,
Their quarrels and arguments thin,
Forgetting the shouting Muezzin:"--
"I AM YOUR SLAVE," said the Jinn.

"Bring me old wines," said Aladdin.
"I have been a starved pauper too long.
Serve them in vessels of jade and of shell,
Serve them with fruit and with song:--
Wines of pre-Adamite Sultans
Digged from beneath the black seas:--
New-gathered dew from the heavens
Dripped down from Heaven's sweet trees,
Cups from the angels' pale tables
That will make me both handsome and wise,
For I have beheld her, the princess,
Firelight and starlight her eyes.
Pauper I am, I would woo her.
And--let me drink wine, to begin,
Though the Koran expressly forbids it."
"I AM YOUR SLAVE," said the Jinn.

"Plan me a dome," said Aladdin,
"That is drawn like the dawn of the MOON,
When the sphere seems to rest on the mountains,
Half-hidden, yet full-risen soon."
Build me a dome," said Aladdin,"
That shall cause all young lovers to sigh,
The fullness of life and of beauty,
Peace beyond peace to the eye--
A palace of foam and of opal,

Pure moonlight without and within,
Where I may enthrone my sweet lady."
"I AM YOUR SLAVE," said the Jinn.

Vachel Lindsay

Alone In The Wind, On The Prairie

I know a seraph who has golden eyes,
And hair of gold, and body like the snow.
Here in the wind I dream her unbound hair
Is blowing round me, that desire's sweet glow
Has touched her pale keen face, and willful mien.
And though she steps as one in manner born
To tread the forests of fair Paradise,
Dark memory's wood she chooses to adorn.
Here with bowed head, bashful with half-desire
She glides into my yesterday's deep dream,
All glowing by the misty ferny cliff
Beside the far forbidden thundering stream.
Within my dream I shake with the old flood.
I fear its going, ere the spring days go.
Yet pray the glory may have deathless years,
And kiss her hair, and sweet throat like the snow.

Vachel Lindsay

An Apology For The Bottle Volcanic

Sometimes I dip my pen and find the bottle full of fire,
The salamanders flying forth I cannot but admire.
It's Etna, or Vesuvius, if those big things were small,
And then 'tis but itself again, and does not smoke at all.
And so my blood grows cold. I say, "The bottle held but ink,
And, if you thought it otherwise, the worser for your think."
And then, just as I throw my scribbled paper on the floor,
The bottle says, "Fe, fi, fo, fum," and steams and shouts some more.
O sad deceiving ink, as bad as liquor in its way—
All demons of a bottle size have pranced from you to-day,
And seized my pen for hobby-horse as witches ride a broom,
And left a trail of brimstone words and blots and gobs of gloom.
And yet when I am extra good and say my prayers at night,
And mind my ma, and do the chores, and speak to folks polite,
My bottle spreads a rainbow-mist, and from the vapor fine
Ten thousand troops from fairyland come riding in a line.
I've seen them on their chargers race around my study chair,
They opened wide the window and rode forth upon the air.
The army widened as it went, and into myriads grew,
O how the lances shimmered, how the silvery trumpets blew!

Vachel Lindsay

An Argument

I. THE VOICE OF THE MAN IMPATIENT WITH VISIONS AND UTOPIAS

We find your soft Utopias as white
As new-cut bread, and dull as life in cells,
O, scribes who dare forget how wild we are
How human breasts adore alarum bells.
You house us in a hive of prigs and saints
Communal, frugal, clean and chaste by law.
I'd rather brood in bloody Elsinore
Or be Lear's fool, straw-crowned amid the straw.
Promise us all our share in Agincourt
Say that our clerks shall venture scorns and death,
That future ant-hills will not be too good
For Henry Fifth, or Hotspur, or Macbeth.
Promise that through to-morrow's spirit-war
Man's deathless soul will hack and hew its way,
Each flaunting Caesar climbing to his fate
Scorning the utmost steps of yesterday.
Never a shallow jester any more!
Let not Jack Falstaff spill the ale in vain.
Let Touchstone set the fashions for the wise
And Ariel wreak his fancies through the rain.

II. THE RHYMER'S REPLY. INCENSE AND SPLENDOR

Incense and Splendor haunt me as I go.
Though my good works have been, alas, too few,
Though I do naught, High Heaven comes down to me,
And future ages pass in tall review.
I see the years to come as armies vast,
Stalking tremendous through the fields of time.
MAN is unborn. To-morrow he is born,
Flame-like to hover o'er the moil and grime,
Striving, aspiring till the shame is gone,
Sowing a million flowers, where now we mourn—
Laying new, precious pavements with a song,
Founding new shrines, the good streets to adorn.
I have seen lovers by those new-built walls

Clothed like the dawn in orange, gold and red.
Eyes flashing forth the glory-light of love
Under the wreaths that crowned each royal head.
Life was made greater by their sweetheart prayers.
Passion was turned to civic strength that day—
Piling the marbles, making fairer domes
With zeal that else had burned bright youth away.
I have seen priestesses of life go by
Gliding in samite through the incense-sea—
Innocent children marching with them there,
Singing in flowered robes, "THE EARTH IS FREE":
While on the fair, deep-carved unfinished towers
Sentinels watched in armor, night and day—
Guarding the brazier-fires of hope and dream—
Wild was their peace, and dawn-bright their array!

Vachel Lindsay

An Indian Summer Day On The Prairie

(IN THE BEGINNING)

The sun is a huntress young,
The sun is a red, red joy,
The sun is an indian girl,
Of the tribe of the Illinois.

(MID-MORNING)

The sun is a smouldering fire,
That creeps through the high gray plain,
And leaves not a bush of cloud
To blossom with flowers of rain.

(NOON)

The sun is a wounded deer,
That treads pale grass in the skies,
Shaking his golden horns,
Flashing his baleful eyes.

(SUNSET)

The sun is an eagle old,
There in the windless west.
Atop of the spirit-cliffs
He builds him a crimson nest.

Vachel Lindsay

At Mass

No doubt to-morrow I will hide
My face from you, my King.
Let me rejoice this Sunday noon,
And kneel while gray priests sing.

It is not wisdom to forget.
But since it is my fate
Fill thou my soul with hidden wine
To make this white hour great.

My God, my God, this marvelous hour
I am your son I know.
Once in a thousand days your voice
Has laid temptation low.

Vachel Lindsay

Beyond The Moon

[Written to the Most Beautiful Woman in the World]

My Sweetheart is the TRUTH BEYOND THE MOON,
And never have I been in love with Woman,
Always aspiring to be set in tune
With one who is invisible, inhuman.

O laughing girl, cold TRUTH has stepped between,
Spoiling the fevers of your virgin face:
Making your shining eyes but lead and clay,
Mocking your brilliant brain and lady's grace.

TRUTH haunted me the day I wooed and lost,
The day I wooed and won, or wooed in play:
Tho' you were Juliet or Rosalind,
Thus shall it be, forever and a day.

I doubt my vows, tho' sworn on my own blood,
Tho' I draw toward you weeping, soul to soul,
I have a lonely goal beyond the moon;
Ay, beyond Heaven and Hell, I have a goal!

Vachel Lindsay

Blanche Sweet

MOVING-PICTURE ACTRESS

(After seeing the reel called "Oil and Water.")

Beauty has a throne-room
In our humorous town,
Spoiling its hob-goblins,
Laughing shadows down.
Rank musicians torture
Ragtime ballads vile,
But we walk serenely
Down the odorous aisle.
We forgive the squalor
And the boom and squeal
For the Great Queen flashes
From the moving reel.

Just a prim blonde stranger
In her early day,
Hiding brilliant weapons,
Too averse to play,
Then she burst upon us
Dancing through the night.
Oh, her maiden radiance,
Veils and roses white.
With new powers, yet cautious,
Not too smart or skilled,
That first flash of dancing
Wrought the thing she willed:—
Mobs of us made noble
By her strong desire,
By her white, uplifting,
Royal romance-fire.

Though the tin piano
Snarls its tango rude,
Though the chairs are shaky
And the dramas crude,

Solemn are her motions,
Stately are her wiles,
Filling oafs with wisdom,
Saving souls with smiles;
'Mid the restless actors
She is rich and slow.
She will stand like marble,
She will pause and glow,
Though the film is twitching,
Keep a peaceful reign,
Ruler of her passion,
Ruler of our pain!

Vachel Lindsay

Bryan, Bryan, Bryan, Bryan

I

In a nation of one hundred fine, mob-hearted, lynching, relenting, repenting
millions,
There are plenty of sweeping, swinging, stinging, gorgeous things to shout
about,
And knock your old blue devils out.

I brag and chant of Bryan, Bryan, Bryan, Bryan,
Candidate for president who sketched a silver Zion,
The one American Poet who could sing outdoors,
He brought in tides of wonder, of unprecedented splendor,
Wild roses from the plains, that made hearts tender,
All the funny circus silks
Of politics unfurled,
Bartlett pears of romance that were honey at the cores,
And torchlights down the street, to the end of the world.

There were truths eternal in the gap and tittle-tattle.
There were real heads broken in the fustian and the rattle.
There were real lines drawn:
Not the silver and the gold,
But Nebraska's cry went eastward against the dour and old,
The mean and cold.

It was eighteen ninety-six, and I was just sixteen
And Altgeld ruled in Springfield, Illinois,
When there came from the sunset Nebraska's shout of joy:
In a coat like a deacon, in a black Stetson hat
He scourged the elephant plutocrats
With barbed wire from the Platte.
The scales dropped from their mighty eyes.
They saw that summer's noon
A tribe of wonders coming
To a marching tune.

Oh the longhorns from Texas,
The jay hawks from Kansas,
The plop-eyed bungaroo and giant giassicus,

The varmint, chipmunk, bugaboo,
The horn-toad, prairie-dog and ballyhoo,
From all the newborn states arow,
Bidding the eagles of the west fly on,
Bidding the eagles of the west fly on.
The fawn, prodoctyl, and thing-a-ma-jig,
The rackaboor, the hellangone,
The whangdoodle, batfowl and pig,
The coyote, wild-cat and grizzly in a glow,
In a miracle of health and speed, the whole breed abreast,
The leaped the Mississippi, blue border of the West,
From the Gulf to Canada, two thousand miles long:-
Against the towns of Tubal Cain,
Ah,-- sharp was their song.
Against the ways of Tubal Cain, too cunning for the young,
The longhorn calf, the buffalo and wampus gave tongue.

These creatures were defending things Mark Hanna never dreamed:
The moods of airy childhood that in desert dew's gleamed,
The gossamers and whimsies,
The monkeyshines and didoes
Rank and strange
Of the canyons and the range,
The ultimate fantastics
Of the far western slope,
And of prairie schooner children
Born beneath the stars,
Beneath falling snows,
Of the babies born at midnight
In the sod huts of lost hope,
With no physician there,
Except a Kansas prayer,
With the Indian raid a howling through the air.

And all these in their helpless days
By the dour East oppressed,
Mean paternalism
Making their mistakes for them,
Crucifying half the West,
Till the whole Atlantic coast
Seemed a giant spiders' nest.

And these children and their sons
At last rode through the cactus,
A cliff of mighty cowboys
On the lope,
With gun and rope.
And all the way to frightened Maine the old East heard them call,
And saw our Bryan by a mile lead the wall
Of men and whirling flowers and beasts,
The bard and prophet of them all.
Prairie avenger, mountain lion,
Bryan, Bryan, Bryan, Bryan,
Gigantic troubadour, speaking like a siege gun,
Smashing Plymouth Rock with his boulders from the West,
And just a hundred miles behind, tornadoes piled across the sky,
Blotting out sun and moon,
A sign on high.

Headlong, dazed and blinking in the weird green light,
The scalawags made moan,
Afraid to fight.

II

When Bryan came to Springfield , and Altgeld gave him greeting,
Rochester was deserted, Divernon was deserted,
Mechanicsburg, Riverton, Chickenbristle, Cotton Hill,
Empty: for all Sangamon drove to the meeting-
In silver-decked racing cart,
Buggy, buckboard, carryall,
Carriage, phaeton, whatever would haul,
And silver-decked farm wagons gritted, banged and rolled,
With the new tale of Bryan by the iron tires told.
The State House loomed afar,
A speck, a hive, a football, a captive balloon!
And the town was all one spreading wing of bunting, plumes, and sunshine,
Every rag and flag and Bryan picture sold,
When the rigs in many a dusty line
Jammed our streets at noon,
And joined the wild parade against the power of gold.
We roamed, we boys from High School,
With mankind, while Springfield gleamed, silk-lined.
Oh, Tom Dines, and Art Fitzgerald,

And the gangs that they could get!
I can hear them yelling yet.
Helping the incantation,
Defying aristocracy,
With every bridle gone,
Ridding the world of the low down mean,
Bidding the eagles of the West fly on,
Bidding the eagles of the West fly on,
We were bully, wild and woolly,
Never yet curried below the knees.
We saw flowers in the air,
Fair as the Pleiades, bright as Orion,
-Hopes of all mankind,
Made rare, resistless, thrice refined.
Oh, we bucks from every Springfield ward!
Colts of democracy-
Yet time-winds out of Chaos from the star-fields of the Lord.

The long parade rolled on. I stood by my best girl.
She was a cool young citizen, with wise and laughing eyes.
With my necktie by my ear, I was stepping on my dear,
But she kept like a pattern without a shaken curl.
She wore in her hair a brave prairie rose.
Her gold chums cut her, for that was not the pose.
No Gibson Girl would wear it in that fresh way.
But we were fairy Democrats, and this was our day.

The earth rocked like the ocean, the sidewalk was a deck.
The houses for the moment were lost in the wide wreck.
And the bands played strange and stranger music as they trailed along.
Against the ways of Tubal Cain,
Ah, sharp was their song!
The demons in the bricks, the demons in the grass,
The demons in the bank-vaults peered out to see us pass,
And the angels in the trees, the angels in the grass,
The angels in the flags, peered out to see us pass.
And the sidewalk was our chariot, and the flowers bloomed higher,
And the street turned to silver and the grass turned to fire,
And then it was but grass, and the town was there again,
A place for women and men.

III

Then we stood where we could see
Every band,
And the speaker's stand.
And Bryan took the platform.
And he was introduced.
And he lifted his hand
And cast a new spell.
Progressive silence fell
In Springfield, in Illinois, around the world.
Then we heard these glacial boulders across the prairie rolled:
'The people have a right to make their own mistakes....
You shall not crucify mankind
Upon a cross of gold.'
And everybody heard him-
In the streets and State House yard.
And everybody heard him in Springfield, in Illinois,
Around and around and around the world,
That danced upon its axis
And like a darling broncho whirled.

IV

July, August, suspense,
Wall Street lost to sense.
August, September, October,
More suspense,
And the whole East down like a wind-smashed fence.
Then Hanna to the rescue, Hanna of Ohio,
Rallying the roller-tops,
Rallying the bucket-shops.
Threatening drouth and death,
Promising manna,
Rallying the trusts against the bawling flannelmouth;
Invading misers' cellars, tin-cans, socks,
Melting down the rocks,
Pouring out the long green to a million workers,
Spondulix by the mountain-load, to stop each new tornado,
And beat the cheapskate, blatherskite,
Populistic, anarchistic, deacon-desperado.

V

Election night at midnight:
Boy Brian's defeat.
Defeat of western silver.
Defeat of the wheat.
Victory of letterfiles
And plutocrats in miles
With dollar signs upon their coats,
Diamond watchchains on their vests and spats on their feet.
Victory of custodians, Plymouth Rock,
And all that inbred landlord stock.
Victory of the neat.
Defeat of the aspen groves of Colorado valleys,
The blue bells of the Rockies,
And blue bonnets of old Texas, by the Pittsburg alleys.
Defeat of alfalfa and the Mariposa lily.
Defeat of the Pacific and the long Mississippi.
Defeat of the young by the old and the silly.
Defeat of tornadoes by the poison vats supreme.
Defeat of my boyhood, defeat of my dream.

VI

Where is McKinley, that respectable McKinley,
The man without an angle or a tangle,
Who soothed down the city man and soothed down the farmer,
The German, the Irish, the Southerner, the Northerner,
Who climbed every greasy pole, and slipped through every crack;
Who soothed down the gambling hall, the bar-room, the church,
The devil-vote, the angel vote, the neutral vote,
The desperately wicked, and their victims on the rack,
The gold vote, the silver vote, the brass vote, the lead vote,
Every vote?...
Where is McKinley, Mark Hanna's McKinley,
His slave, his echo, his suit of clothes?
Gone to join the shadows, with the poms of that time,
And the flames of that summer's prairie rose.

Where is Cleveland whom the Democratic platform
Read from the party in a glorious hour?
Gone to join the shadows with pitchfork Tillman,
And sledge-hammer Altgeld who wrecked his power.

Where is Hanna, bulldog Hanna,
Low-browed Hanna, who said: Stand pat'?
Gone to his place with old Pierpont Morgan.
Gone somewhere...with lean rat Platt.

Where is Roosevelt, the young dude cowboy,
Who hated Bryan, then aped his way?
Gone to join the shadows with might Cromwell
And tall King Saul, till the Judgement day.

Where is Altgeld, brave as the truth,
Whose name the few still say with tears?
Gone to join the ironies with Old John Brown,
Whose fame rings loud for a thousand years.

Where is that boy, that Heaven-born Bryan,
That Homer Bryan, who sang from the West?
Gone to join the shadows with Altgeld the Eagle,
Where the kings and the slaves and the troubadours rest.

Vachel Lindsay

Buddha

Would that by Hindu magic we became
Dark monks of jeweled India long ago,
Sitting at Prince Siddartha's feet to know
The foolishness of gold and love and station,
The gospel of the Great Renunciation,
The ragged cloak, the staff, the rain and sun,
The beggar's life, with far Nirvana gleaming:
Lord, make us Buddhas, dreaming.

Vachel Lindsay

By The Spring, At Sunset

Sometimes we remember kisses,
Remember the dear heart-leap when they came:
Not always, but sometimes we remember
The kindness, the dumbness, the good flame
Of laughter and farewell.
Beside the road
Afar from those who said "Good-by" I write,
Far from my city task, my lawful load.

Sun in my face, wind beside my shoulder,
Streaming clouds, banners of new-born night
Enchant me now. The splendors growing bolder
Make bold my soul for some new wise delight.

I write the day's event, and quench my drouth,
Pausing beside the spring with happy mind.
And now I feel those kisses on my mouth,
Hers most of all, one little friend most kind.

Vachel Lindsay

Caught In A Net

Upon her breast her hands and hair
Were tangled all together.
The moon of June forbade me not —
The golden night time weather
In balmy sighs commanded me
To kiss them like a feather.

Her looming hair, her burning hands,
Were tangled black and white.
My face I buried there. I pray —
So far from her to-night —
For grace, to dream I kiss her soul
Amid the black and white.

Vachel Lindsay

Concerning Emperors

I. GOD SEND THE REGICIDE

Would that the lying rulers of the world
Were brought to block for tyrannies abhorred.
Would that the sword of Cromwell and the Lord,
The sword of Joshua and Gideon,
Hewed hip and thigh the hosts of Midian.
God send that ironside ere tomorrow's sun;
Let Gabriel and Michael with him ride.
God send the Regicide.

II. A COLLOQUIAL REPLY: TO ANY NEWSBOY

If you lay for Iago at the stage door with a brick
You have missed the moral of the play.
He will have a midnight supper with Othello and his wife.
They will chirp together and be gay.
But the things Iago stands for must go down into the dust:
Lying and suspicion and conspiracy and lust.
And I cannot hate the Kaiser (I hope you understand.)
Yet I chase the thing he stands for with a brickbat in my hand.

Vachel Lindsay

Crickets On A Strike

The foolish queen of fairyland
From her milk-white throne in a lily-bell,
Gave command to her cricket-band
To play for her when the dew-drops fell.

But the cold dew spoiled their instruments
And they play for the foolish queen no more.
Instead those sturdy malcontents
Play sharps and flats in my kitchen floor.

Vachel Lindsay

Darling Daughter Of Babylon

Too soon you wearied of our tears.
And then you danced with spangled feet,
Leading Belshazzar's chattering court
A-tinkling through the shadowy street.
With mead they came, with chants of shame.
DESIRE'S red flag before them flew.
And Istar's music moved your mouth
And Baal's deep shames rewoke in you.

Now you could drive the royal car;
Forget our Nation's breaking load:
Now you could sleep on silver beds.—
(Bitter and dark was our abode.)
And so, for many a night you laughed,
And knew not of my hopeless prayer,
Till God's own spirit whipped you forth
From Istar's shrine, from Istar's stair.

Darling daughter of Babylon—
Rose by the black Euphrates flood—
Again your beauty grew more dear
Than my slave's bread, than my heart's blood.
We sang of Zion, good to know,
Where righteousness and peace abide. . . .
What of your second sacrilege
Carousing at Belshazzar's side?

Once, by a stream, we clasped tired hands—
Your paint and henna washed away.
Your place, you said, was with the slaves
Who sewed the thick cloth, night and day.
You were a pale and holy maid
Toil-bound with us. One night you said:—
"Your God shall be my God until
I slumber with the patriarch dead."

Pardon, daughter of Babylon,
If, on this night remembering
Our lover walks under the walls

Of hanging gardens in the spring,
A venom comes from broken hope,
From memories of your comrade-song
Until I curse your painted eyes
And do your flower-mouth too much wrong.

Vachel Lindsay

Davy Jones' Door-Bell

A Chant for Boys with Manly Voices

(Every line sung one step deeper than the line preceding)

Any sky-bird sings,
Ring, ring!
Any church-chime rings,
Dong ding!
Any cannon says,
Boom bang!
Any whirlwind says,
Whing whang!
The bell-buoy hums and roars,
Ding dong!
And way down deep,
Where fishes throng,
By Davy Jones' big deep-sea door,
Shaking the ocean's flowery floor,
His door-bell booms
Dong dong,
Dong dong,
Deep, deep down,
Clang boom,
Boom dong.

Vachel Lindsay

Drying Their Wings

What the Carpenter Said

The moon's a cottage with a door.
Some folks can see it plain.
Look, you may catch a glint of light,
A sparkle through the pane,
Showing the place is brighter still
Within, though bright without.
There, at a cosy open fire
Strange babes are grouped about.
The children of the wind and tide--
The urchins of the sky,
Drying their wings from storms and things
So they again can fly.

Vachel Lindsay

Eden In Winter

[Supposed to be chanted to some rude instrument at a modern fireplace]

Chant we the story now
Tho' in a house we sleep;
Tho' by a hearth of coals
Vigil to-night we keep.
Chant we the story now,
Of the vague love we knew
When I from out the sea
Rose to the feet of you.

Bird from the cliffs you came,
Flew thro' the snow to me,
Facing the icy blast
There by the icy sea.
How did I reach your feet?
Why should I — at the end
Hold out half-frozen hands
Dumbly to you my friend?
Ne'er had I woman seen,
Ne'er had I seen a flame.
There you piled fagots on,
Heat rose — the blast to tame.
There by the cave-door dark,
Comforting me you cried —
Wailed o'er my wounded knee,
Wept for my rock-torn side.

Up from the South I trailed —
Left regions fierce and fair!
Left all the jungle-trees,
Left the red tiger's lair.
Dream led, I scarce knew why,
Into your North I trod —
Ne'er had I known the snow,
Or the frost-blasted sod.

O how the flakes came down!
O how the fire burned high!
Strange thing to see he was,
Thro' his dry twigs would fly,
Creep there awhile and sleep —
Then wake and bark for fight —
Biting if I too near
Came to his eye so bright.
Then with a will you fed
Wood to his hungry tongue.

Then he did leap and sing —
Dancing the clouds among,
Turning the night to noon,
Stinging my eyes with light,
Making the snow retreat,
Making the cave-house bright.

There were dry fagots piled,
Nuts and dry leaves and roots,
Stores there of furs and hides,
Sweet-barks and grains and fruits.
There wrapped in fur we lay,
Half-burned, half-frozen still —
Ne'er will my soul forget
All the night's bitter chill.
We had not learned to speak,
I was to you a strange
Wolfling or wounded fawn,
Lost from his forest-range.

Thirsting for bloody meat,
Out at the dawn we went.
Weighed with our prey at eve,
Home-came we all forespent.
Comrades and hunters tried
Ere we were maid and man —
Not till the spring awoke
Laughter and speech began.

Whining like forest dogs,
Rustling like budding trees,

Bubbling like thawing springs,
Humming like little bees,
Crooning like Maytime tides,
Chattering parrot words,
Crying the panther's cry,
Chirping like mating birds —
Thus, thus, we learned to speak,
Who mid the snows were dumb,
Nor did we learn to kiss
Until the Spring had come.

Vachel Lindsay

Edwin Booth

An old actor at the Player's Club told me that Edwin Booth first impersonated Hamlet when a barnstormer in California. There were few theatres, but the hotels were provided with crude assembly rooms for strolling players.

The youth played in the bleak hotel.
The rafters gleamed with glories strange.
And winds of mourning Elsinore
Howling at chance and fate and change;
Voices of old Europe's dead
Disturbed the new-built cattle-shed,
The street, the high and solemn range.

The while the coyote barked afar
All shadowy was the battlement.
The ranch-boys huddled and grew pale,
Youths who had come on riot bent.
Forgot were pranks well-planned to sting.
Behold there rose a ghostly king,
And veils of smoking Hell were rent.

When Edwin Booth played Hamlet, then
The camp-drab's tears could not but flow.
Then Romance lived and breathed and burned.
She felt the frail queen-mother's woe,
Thrilled for Ophelia, fond and blind,
And Hamlet, cruel, yet so kind,
And moaned, his proud words hurt her so.

A haunted place, though new and harsh!
The Indian and the Chinaman
And Mexican were fain to learn
What had subdued the Saxon clan.
Why did they mumble, brood, and stare
When the court-players curtsied fair
And the Gonzago scene began?

And ah, the duel scene at last!

They cheered their prince with stamping feet.
A death-fight in a palace! Yea,
With velvet hangings incomplete,
A pasteboard throne, a pasteboard crown,
And yet a monarch tumbled down,
A brave lad fought in splendor meet.

Was it a palace or a barn?
Immortal as the gods he flamed.
There in his last great hour of rage
His foil avenged a mother shamed.
In duty stern, in purpose deep
He drove that king to his black sleep
And died, all godlike and untamed.

.

I was not born in that far day.
I hear the tale from heads grown white.
And then I walk that earlier street,
The mining camp at candle-light.
I meet him wrapped in musings fine
Upon some whispering silvery line
He yet resolves to speak aright.

Vachel Lindsay

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Sat gossiping with Robert.

(She was really a raving beauty in her day.

With Mary Pickford curls in clouds and whirls.)

She was trying to think of something nice to say,

So she pointed to a page by her fellow star and sage,

And said: "I wish that *I* could write that way!"

Vachel Lindsay

Epilogue

UNDER THE BLESSING OF YOUR PSYCHE WINGS

Though I have found you like a snow-drop pale,
On sunny days have found you weak and still,
Though I have often held your girlish head
Drooped on my shoulder, faint from little ill:—

Under the blessing of your Psyche-wings
I hide to-night like one small broken bird,
So soothed. I half-forget the world gone mad:—
And all the winds of war are now unheard.

My heaven-doubting pennons feel your hands
With touch most delicate so circling round,
That for an hour I dream that God is good.
And in your shadow, Mercy's ways abound.

I thought myself the guard of your frail state,
And yet I come to-night a helpless guest,
Hiding beneath your giant Psyche-wings,
Against the pallor of your wondrous breast.

Vachel Lindsay

Epitaphs For Two Players

I. EDWIN BOOTH

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The while the coyote barked afar
All shadowy was the battlement.
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Youths who had come on riot bent.
Forgot were pranks well-planned to sting.
Behold there rose a ghostly king,
And veils of smoking Hell were rent.

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And Hamlet, cruel, yet so kind,
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What had subdued the Saxon clan.
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When the court-players curtsied fair
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And ah, the duel scene at last!
They cheered their prince with stamping feet.
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With velvet hangings incomplete,
A pasteboard throne, a pasteboard crown,
And yet a monarch tumbled down,
A brave lad fought in splendor meet.

Was it a palace or a barn?
Immortal as the gods he flamed.
There in his last great hour of rage
His foil avenged a mother shamed.
In duty stern, in purpose deep
He drove that king to his black sleep
And died, all godlike and untamed.

I was not born in that far day.
I hear the tale from heads grown white.
And then I walk that earlier street,
The mining camp at candle-light.
I meet him wrapped in musings fine
Upon some whispering silvery line
He yet resolves to speak aright.

II. EPITAPH FOR JOHN BUNNY, MOTION PICTURE COMEDIAN

In which he is remembered in similitude, by reference to Yorick, the king's jester, who died when Hamlet and Ophelia were children.

Yorick is dead. Boy Hamlet walks forlorn
Beneath the battlements of Elsinore.
Where are those oddities and capers now
That used to "set the table on a roar"?

And do his bauble-bells beyond the clouds
Ring out, and shake with mirth the planets bright?
No doubt he brings the blessed dead good cheer,
But silence broods on Elsinore tonight.

That little elf, Ophelia, eight years old,
Upon her battered doll's staunch bosom weeps.

("O best of men, that wove glad fairy-tales.")
With tear-burned face, at last the darling sleeps.

Hamlet himself could not give cheer or help,
Though firm and brave, with his boy-face controlled.
For every game they started out to play
Yorick invented, in the days of old.

The times are out of joint! O cursed spite!
The noble jester Yorick comes no more.
And Hamlet hides his tears in boyish pride
By some lone turret-stair of Elsinore.

Vachel Lindsay

Euclid

Old Euclid drew a circle
On a sand-beach long ago.
He bounded and enclosed it
With angles thus and so.
His set of solemn greybeards
Nodded and argued much
Of arc and circumference,
Diameter and such.
A silent child stood by them
From morning until noon
Because they drew such charming
Round pictures of the moon.

Vachel Lindsay

Factory Windows Are Always Broken

Factory windows are always broken.
Somebody's always throwing bricks,
Somebody's always heaving cinders,
Playing ugly Yahoo tricks.

Factory windows are always broken.
Other windows are let alone.
No one throws through the chapel-window
The bitter, snarling, derisive stone.

Factory windows are always broken.
Something or other is going wrong.
Something is rotten--I think, in Denmark.
<i>End of factory-window song.</i>

Vachel Lindsay

Foreign Missions In Battle Array

An endless line of splendor,
These troops with heaven for home,
With creeds they go from Scotland,
With incense go from Rome.
These, in the name of Jesus,
Against the dark gods stand,
They gird the earth with valor,
They heed their King's command.

Onward the line advances,
Shaking the hills with power,
Slaying the hidden demons,
The lions that devour.
No bloodshed in the wrestling, —
But souls new-born arise —
The nations growing kinder,
The child-hearts growing wise.

What is the final ending?
The issue, can we know?
Will Christ outlive Mohammed?
Will Kali's altar go?
This is our faith tremendous, —
Our wild hope, who shall scorn, —
That in the name of Jesus
The world shall be reborn!

Vachel Lindsay

Friends, I Will Not Cease

Friends, I will not cease hoping though you weep.
Such things I see, and some of them shall come,
Though now our streets are harsh and ashen-gray,
Though our strong youths are strident now, or dumb.
Friends, that sweet town, that wonder-town, shall rise.
Naught can delay it. Though it may not be
Just as I dream, it comes at last I know,
With streets like channels of an incense-sea.

Vachel Lindsay

Galahad, Knight Who Perished

A POEM DEDICATED TO ALL CRUSADERS AGAINST THE INTERNATIONAL AND INTERSTATE TRAFFIC IN YOUNG GIRLS

Galahad . . . soldier that perished . . . ages ago,
Our hearts are breaking with shame, our tears overflow.
Galahad . . . knight who perished . . . awaken again,
Teach us to fight for immaculate ways among men.
Soldiers fantastic, we pray to the star of the sea,
We pray to the mother of God that the bound may be free.
Rose-crowned lady from heaven, give us thy grace,
Help us the intricate, desperate battle to face
Till the leer of the trader is seen nevermore in the land,
Till we bring every maid of the age to one sheltering hand.
Ah, they are priceless, the pale and the ivory and red!
Breathless we gaze on the curls of each glorious head!
Arm them with strength mediaeval, thy marvellous dower,
Blast now their tempters, shelter their steps with thy power.
Leave not life's fairest to perish —strangers to thee,
Let not the weakest be shipwrecked, oh, star of the sea!

Vachel Lindsay

General William Booth Enters Into Heaven

[To be sung to the tune of The Blood of the Lamb with indicated instrument]
</i>

I

[Bass drum beaten loudly.]</i>

Booth led boldly with his big bass drum --
(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)
The Saints smiled gravely and they said: "He's come."
(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)
Walking lepers followed, rank on rank,
Lurching bravoos from the ditches dank,
Drabs from the alleyways and drug fiends pale --
Minds still passion-ridden, soul-powers frail: --
Vermin-eaten saints with mouldy breath,
Unwashed legions with the ways of Death --
(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)

[Banjos.]</i>

Every slum had sent its half-a-score
The round world over. (Booth had groaned for more.)
Every banner that the wide world flies
Bloomed with glory and transcendent dyes.
Big-voiced lasses made their banjos bang,
Tranced, fanatical they shrieked and sang: --
"Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?"
Hallelujah! It was queer to see
Bull-necked convicts with that land make free.
Loons with trumpets blowed a blare, blare, blare
On, on upward thro' the golden air!
(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)

II

[Bass drum slower and softer.]</i>

Booth died blind and still by Faith he trod,
Eyes still dazzled by the ways of God.
Booth led boldly, and he looked the chief
Eagle countenance in sharp relief,
Beard a-flying, air of high command
Unabated in that holy land.

[Sweet flute music.]

Jesus came from out the court-house door,
Stretched his hands above the passing poor.
Booth saw not, but led his queer ones there
Round and round the mighty court-house square.
Then in an instant all that blear review
Marched on spotless, clad in raiment new.
The lame were straightened, withered limbs uncurled
And blind eyes opened on a new, sweet world.

[Bass drum louder.]

Drabs and vixens in a flash made whole!
Gone was the weasel-head, the snout, the jowl!
Sages and sibyls now, and athletes clean,
Rulers of empires, and of forests green!

[Grand chorus of all instruments. Tambourines to the foreground.]

The hosts were sandalled, and their wings were fire!
(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)
But their noise played havoc with the angel-choir.
(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)
O shout Salvation! It was good to see
Kings and Princes by the Lamb set free.
The banjos rattled and the tambourines
Jing-jing-jingled in the hands of Queens.

[Reverently sung, no instruments.]

And when Booth halted by the curb for prayer
He saw his Master thro' the flag-filled air.
Christ came gently with a robe and crown

For Booth the soldier, while the throng knelt down.
He saw King Jesus. They were face to face,
And he knelt a-weeping in that holy place.
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Vachel Lindsay

Genesis

I was but a half-grown boy,
You were a girl-child slight.
Ah, how weary you were!
You had led in the bullock-fight...
We slew the bullock at length
With knives and maces of stone.
And so your feet were torn,
Your lean arms bruised to the bone.

Perhaps 'twas the slain beast's blood
We drank, or a root we ate,
Or our reveling evening bath
In the fall by the garden gate,
But you turned to a witching thing,
Side-glancing, and frightened me;
You purred like a panther's cub,
You sighed like a shell from the sea.

We knelt. I caressed your hair
By the light of the leaping fire:
Your fierce eyes blinked with smoke,
Pine-fumes, that enhanced desire.
I helped to unbraid your hair
In wonder and fear profound:
You were humming your hunting tune
As it swept to the grassy ground.

Our comrades, the shaggy bear,
The tiger with velvet feet,
The lion, crept to the light
Whining for bullock meat.
We fed them and stroked their necks...
They took their way to the fen
Where they hunted or hid all night;
No enemies, they, of men.

Evil had entered not
The cobra, since defiled.
He watched, when the beasts had gone

Our kissing and singing wild.
Beautiful friend he was,
Sage, not a tempter grim.
Many a year should pass
Ere Satan should enter him.

He danced while the evening dove
And the nightingale kept in tune.
I sang of the angel sun:
You sang of the angel-moon:
We sang of the angel-chief
Who blew thro' the trees strange breath,
Who helped in the hunt all day
And granted the bullock's death.

O Eve with the fire-lit breast
And child-face red and white!
I heaped the great logs high!
That was our bridal night.

Vachel Lindsay

Ghosts In Love

"Tell me, where do ghosts in love
Find their bridal veils?"

"If you and I were ghosts in love
We'd climb the cliffs of Mystery,
Above the sea of Wails.
I'd trim your gray and streaming hair
With veils of Fantasy
From the tree of Memory.
'Tis there the ghosts that fall in love
Find their bridal veils."

Vachel Lindsay

God Send The Regicide

Would that the lying rulers of the world
Were brought to block for tyrannies abhorred.
Would that the sword of Cromwell and the Lord,
The sword of Joshua and Gideon,
Hewed hip and thigh the hosts of Midian.
God send that ironside ere tomorrow's sun;
Let Gabriel and Michael with him ride.
God send the Regicide.

Vachel Lindsay

Heart Of God

O great heart of God,
Once vague and lost to me,
Why do I throb with your throb to-night,
In this land, eternity?

O little heart of God,
Sweet intruding stranger,
You are laughing in my human breast,
A Christ-child in a manger.

Heart, dear heart of God,
Beside you now I kneel,
Strong heart of faith. O heart not mine,
Where God has set His seal.

Wild thundering heart of God
Out of my doubt I come,
And my foolish feet with prophets' feet,
March with the prophets' drum.

Vachel Lindsay

Here's To The Mice!

(Written with the hope that the socialists might yet dethrone Kaiser and Czar.)

Here's to the mice that scare the lions,
Creeping into their cages.
Here's to the fairy mice that bite
The elephants fat and wise:
Hidden in the hay-pile while the elephant thunder rages.
Here's to the scurrying, timid mice
Through whom the proud cause dies.

Here's to the seeming accident
When all is planned and working,
All the flywheels turning,
Not a vassal shirking.
Here's to the hidden tunneling thing
That brings the mountain's groans.
Here's to the midnight scamps that gnaw,
Gnawing away the thrones.

Vachel Lindsay

Honor Among Scamps

We are the smirched. Queen Honor is the spotless.
We slept thro' wars where Honor could not sleep.
We were faint-hearted. Honor was full-valiant.
We kept a silence Honor could not keep.

Yet this late day we make a song to praise her.
We, codeless, will yet vindicate her code.
She who was mighty, walks with us, the beggars.
The merchants drive her out upon the road.

She makes a throne of sod beside our campfire.
We give the maiden-queen our rags and tears.
A battered, rascal guard have rallied round her,
To keep her safe until the better years.

Vachel Lindsay

How A Little Girl Danced

DEDICATED TO LUCY BATES

(Being a reminiscence of certain private theatricals.)

Oh, cabaret dancer, <i>I</i> know a dancer,
Whose eyes have not looked on the feasts that are vain.
<i>I</i> know a dancer, <i>I</i> know a dancer,
Whose soul has no bond with the beasts of the plain:
Judith the dancer, Judith the dancer,
With foot like the snow, and with step like the rain.

Oh, thrice-painted dancer, vaudeville dancer,
Sad in your spangles, with soul all astrain,
<i>I</i> know a dancer, <i>I</i> know a dancer,
Whose laughter and weeping are spiritual gain,
A pure-hearted, high-hearted maiden evangel,
With strength the dark cynical earth to disdain.

Flowers of bright Broadway, you of the chorus,
Who sing in the hope of forgetting your pain:
I turn to a sister of Sainted Cecilia,
A white bird escaping the earth's tangled skein:—
The music of God is her innermost brooding,
The whispering angels her footsteps sustain.

Oh, proud Russian dancer: praise for your dancing.
No clean human passion my rhyme would arraign.
You dance for Apollo with noble devotion,
A high cleansing revel to make the heart sane.
But Judith the dancer prays to a spirit
More white than Apollo and all of his train.

I know a dancer who finds the true Godhead,
Who bends o'er a brazier in Heaven's clear plain.
I know a dancer, I know a dancer,
Who lifts us toward peace, from this earth that is vain:
Judith the dancer, Judith the dancer,
With foot like the snow, and with step like the rain.

Vachel Lindsay

How A Little Girl Sang

Ah, she was music in herself,
A symphony of joyousness.
She sang, she sang from finger tips,
From every tremble of her dress.
I saw sweet haunting harmony,
An ecstasy, an ecstasy,
In that strange curling of her lips,
That happy curling of her lips.
And quivering with melody
Those eyes I saw, that tossing head.

And so I saw what music was,
Tho' still accursed with ears of lead.

Vachel Lindsay

How I Walked Alone In The Jungles Of Heaven

Oh, once I walked in Heaven, all alone
Upon the sacred cliffs above the sky.
God and the angels, and the gleaming saints
Had journeyed out into the stars to die.

They had gone forth to win far citizens,
Bought at great price, bring happiness for all:
By such a harvest make a holier town
And put new life within old Zion's wall.

Each chose a far-off planet for his home,
Speaking of love and mercy, truth and right,
Envied and cursed, thorn-crowned and scourged in time,
Each tasted death on his appointed night.

Then resurrection day from sphere to sphere
Sped on, with all the POWERS arisen again,
While with them came in clouds recruited hosts
Of sun-born strangers and of earth-born men.

And on that day gray prophet saints went down
And poured atoning blood upon the deep,
Till every warrior of old Hell flew free
And all the torture fires were laid asleep.

And Hell's lost company I saw return
Clear-eyed, with plumes of white, the demons bold
Climbed with the angels now on Jacob's stair,
And built a better Zion than the old.

And yet I walked alone on azure cliffs
A lifetime long, and loved each untrimmed vine:
The rotted harps, the swords of rusted gold,
The jungles of all Heaven then were mine.

Oh mesas and throne-mountains that I found!
Oh strange and shaking thoughts that touched me there,
Ere I beheld the bright returning wings
That came to spoil my secret, silent lair!

Vachel Lindsay

How Samson Bore Away The Gates Of Gaza

(A Negro Sermon.)

Once, in a night as black as ink,
She drove him out when he would not drink.
Round the house there were men in wait
Asleep in rows by the Gaza gate.
But the Holy Spirit was in this man.
Like a gentle wind he crept and ran.
("It is midnight," said the big town clock.)

He lifted the gates up, post and lock.
The hole in the wall was high and wide
When he bore away old Gaza's pride
Into the deep of the night: —
The bold Jack Johnson Israelite, —
Samson —
The Judge,
The Nazarite.

The air was black, like the smoke of a dragon.
Samson's heart was as big as a wagon.
He sang like a shining golden fountain.
He sweated up to the top of the mountain.
He threw down the gates with a noise like judgment.
And the quails all ran with the big arousement.

But he wept — "I must not love tough queens,
And spend on them my hard earned means.
I told that girl I would drink no more.
Therefore she drove me from her door.
Oh sorrow!
Sorrow!
I cannot hide.
Oh Lord look down from your chariot side.
You made me Judge, and I am not wise.
I am weak as a sheep for all my size."

Let Samson

Be coming
Into your mind.</i>

The moon shone out, the stars were gay.
He saw the foxes run and play.
He rent his garments, he rolled around
In deep repentance on the ground.

Then he felt a honey in his soul.
Grace abounding made him whole.
Then he saw the Lord in a chariot blue.
The gorgeous stallions whinnied and flew.
The iron wheels hummed an old hymn-tune
And crunched in thunder over the moon.
And Samson shouted to the sky:
"My Lord, my Lord is riding high."

Like a steed, he pawed the gates with his hoof.
He rattled the gates like rocks on the roof,
And danced in the night
On the mountain-top,
Danced in the deep of the night:
The Judge, the holy Nazarite,
Whom ropes and chains could never bind.

<i>Let Samson
Be coming
Into your mind.</i>

Whirling his arms, like a top he sped.
His long black hair flew round his head
Like an outstretched net of silky cord,
Like a wheel of the chariot of the Lord.

<i>Let Samson
Be coming
Into your mind.</i>

Samson saw the sun anew.
He left the gates in the grass and dew.
He went to a county-seat a-nigh.
Found a harlot proud and high:

Philistine that no man could tame —
Delilah was her lady-name.
Oh sorrow,
Sorrow,
She was too wise.
She cut off his hair,
She put out his eyes.

*Let Samson
Be coming
Into your mind.*

Vachel Lindsay

I Heard Immanuel Singing

(The poem shows the Master, with his work done, singing to free his heart in Heaven.)

I heard Immanuel singing
Within his own good lands,
I saw him bend above his harp.
I watched his wandering hands
Lost amid the harp-strings;
Sweet, sweet I heard him play.
His wounds were altogether healed.
Old things had passed away.

All things were new, but music.
The blood of David ran
Within the Son of David,
Our God, the Son of Man.
He was ruddy like a shepherd.
His bold young face, how fair.
Apollo of the silver bow
Had not such flowing hair.

I saw Immanuel singing
On a tree-girdled hill.
The glad remembering branches
Dimly echoed still
The grand new song proclaiming
The Lamb that had been slain.
New-built, the Holy City
Gleamed in the murmuring plain.

The crowning hours were over.
The pageants all were past.
Within the many mansions
The hosts, grown still at last,
In homes of holy mystery
Slept long by crooning springs
Or waked to peaceful glory,
A universe of Kings.

He left his people happy.
He wandered free to sigh
Alone in lowly friendship
With the green grass and the sky.
He murmured ancient music
His red heart burned to sing
Because his perfect conquest
Had grown a weary thing.

No chant of gilded triumph—
His lonely song was made
Of Art's deliberate freedom;
Of minor chords arrayed
In soft and shadowy colors
That once were radiant flowers:—
The Rose of Sharon, bleeding
In Olive-shadowed bowers:—

And all the other roses
In the songs of East and West
Of love and war and worshipping,
And every shield and crest
Of thistle or of lotus
Or sacred lily wrought
In creeds and psalms and palaces
And temples of white thought:—

All these he sang, half-smiling
And weeping as he smiled,
Laughing, talking to his harp
As to a new-born child:—
As though the arts forgotten
But bloomed to prophecy
These careless, fearless harp-strings,
New-crying in the sky.
"When this his hour of sorrow
For flowers and Arts of men
Has passed in ghostly music,"
I asked my wild heart then—
What will he sing to-morrow,
What wonder, all his own

Alone, set free, rejoicing,
With a green hill for his throne?
What will he sing to-morrow
What wonder all his own
Alone, set free, rejoicing,
With a green hill for his throne?

Vachel Lindsay

I Went Down Into The Desert

I went down into the desert
To meet Elijah—
Arise from the dead.
I thought to find him in an echoing cave;
For so my dream had said.

I went down into the desert
To meet John the Baptist.
I walked with feet that bled,
Seeking that prophet lean and brown and bold.
I spied foul fiends instead.

I went down into the desert
To meet my God.
By him be comforted.
I went down into the desert
To meet my God.
And I met the devil in red.

I went down into the desert
To meet my God.
O, Lord my God, awaken from the dead!
I see you there, your thorn-crown on the ground,
I see you there, half-buried in the sand.
I see you there, your white bones glistening, bare,
The carrion-birds a-wheeling round your head.

Vachel Lindsay

In Memory Of A Child

I

The angels guide him now,
And watch his curly head,
And lead him in their games,
The little boy we led.

II

He cannot come to harm,
He knows more than we know,
His light is brighter far
Than daytime here below.

III

His path leads on and on,
Through pleasant lawns and flowers,
His brown eyes open wide
At grass more green than ours.

IV

With playmates like himself,
The shining boy will sing,
Exploring wondrous woods,
Sweet with eternal spring.

V

Yet, he is lost to us,
Far is his path of gold,
Far does the city seem,
Lonely our hearts and old.

Vachel Lindsay

In Praise Of Songs That Die

*AFTER HAVING READ A GREAT DEAL OF GOOD CURRENT POETRY IN THE
MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS*

Ah, they are passing, passing by,
Wonderful songs, but born to die!
Cries from the infinite human seas,
Waves thrice-winged with harmonies.
Here I stand on a pier in the foam
Seeing the songs to the beach go home,
Dying in sand while the tide flows back,
As it flowed of old in its fated track.
Oh, hurrying tide that will not hear
Your own foam children dying near
Is there no refuge-house of song,
No home, no haven where songs belong?
Oh, precious hymns that come and go!
You perish, and I love you so!

Vachel Lindsay

Incense

Think not that incense-smoke has had its day.
My friends, the incense-time has but begun.
Creed upon creed, cult upon cult shall bloom,
Shrine after shrine grow gray beneath the sun.

And mountain-boulders in our aged West
Shall guard the graves of hermits truth-endowed:
And there the scholar from the Chinese hills
Shall do deep honor, with his wise head bowed.

And on our old, old plains some muddy stream,
Dark as the Ganges, shall, like that strange tide —
(Whispering mystery to half the earth) —
Gather the praying millions to its side,

And flow past halls with statues in white stone
To saints unborn to-day, whose lives of grace
Shall make one shining, universal church
Where all Faiths kneel, as brothers, in one place.

Vachel Lindsay

John Brown

(To be sung by a leader and chorus, the leader singing the body of the poem, while the chorus interrupts with the question.)

I've been to Palestine.
WHAT DID YOU SEE IN PALESTINE?
I saw the ark of Noah—
It was made of pitch and pine.
I saw old Father Noah
Asleep beneath his vine.
I saw Shem, Ham and Japhet
Standing in a line.
I saw the tower of Babel
In the gorgeous sunrise shine—
By a weeping willow tree
Beside the Dead Sea.

I've been to Palestine.
WHAT DID YOU SEE IN PALESTINE?
I saw abominations
And Gadarene swine.
I saw the sinful Canaanites
Upon the shewbread dine,
And spoil the temple vessels
And drink the temple wine.
I saw Lot's wife, a pillar of salt
Standing in the brine—
By a weeping willow tree
Beside the Dead Sea.

I've been to Palestine.
WHAT DID YOU SEE IN PALESTINE?
Cedars on Mount Lebanon,
Gold in Ophir's mine,
And a wicked generation
Seeking for a sign
And Baal's howling worshippers
Their god with leaves entwined.

And . . .

I saw the war-horse ramping
And shake his forelock fine—
By a weeping willow tree
Beside the Dead Sea.

I've been to Palestine.

WHAT DID YOU SEE IN PALESTINE?

Old John Brown.

Old John Brown.

I saw his gracious wife
Dressed in a homespun gown.

I saw his seven sons
Before his feet bow down.

And he marched with his seven sons,
His wagons and goods and guns,
To his campfire by the sea,
By the waves of Galilee.

I've been to Palestine.

WHAT DID YOU SEE IN PALESTINE?

I saw the harp and psalt'ry
Played for Old John Brown.

I heard the ram's horn blow,
Blow for Old John Brown.

I saw the Bulls of Bashan—
They cheered for Old John Brown.

I saw the big Behemoth—
He cheered for Old John Brown.

I saw the big Leviathan—
He cheered for Old John Brown.

I saw the Angel Gabriel
Great power to him assign.

I saw him fight the Canaanites
And set God's Israel free.

I saw him when the war was done
In his rustic chair recline—

By his campfire by the sea,
By the waves of Galilee.

I've been to Palestine.

WHAT DID YOU SEE IN PALESTINE?

Old John Brown.
Old John Brown.
And there he sits
To judge the world.
His hunting-dogs
At his feet are curled.
His eyes half-closed,
But John Brown sees
The ends of the earth,
The Day of Doom.
And his shot-gun lies
Across his knees—
Old John Brown,
Old John Brown.

Vachel Lindsay

John Bunny, Motion Picture Comedian

In which he is remembered in similitude, by reference to Yorick,
the king's jester, who died when Hamlet and Ophelia were children.

Yorick is dead. Boy Hamlet walks forlorn
Beneath the battlements of Elsinore.
Where are those oddities and capers now
That used to "set the table on a roar"?

And do his bauble-bells beyond the clouds
Ring out, and shake with mirth the planets bright?
No doubt he brings the blessed dead good cheer,
But silence broods on Elsinore tonight.

That little elf, Ophelia, eight years old,
Upon her battered doll's staunch bosom weeps.
("O best of men, that wove glad fairy-tales.")
With tear-burned face, at last the darling sleeps.

Hamlet himself could not give cheer or help,
Though firm and brave, with his boy-face controlled.
For every game they started out to play
Yorick invented, in the days of old.

The times are out of joint! O cursed spite!
The noble jester Yorick comes no more.
And Hamlet hides his tears in boyish pride
By some lone turret-stair of Elsinore.

Vachel Lindsay

Kalamazoo

Once, in the city of Kalamazoo,
The gods went walking, two and two,
With the friendly phoenix, the stars of Orion,
The speaking pony and singing lion.
For in Kalamazoo in a cottage apart
Lived the girl with the innocent heart.

Thenceforth the city of Kalamazoo
Was the envied, intimate chum of the sun.
He rose from a cave by the principal street.
The lions sang, the dawn?horns blew,
And the ponies danced on silver feet.
He hurled his clouds of love around;
Deathless colors of his old heart
Draped the houses and dyed the ground.
O shrine of the wide young Yankee land,
Incense city of Kalamazoo,
That held, in the midnight, the priceless sun
As a jeweller holds an opal in hand!

From the awkward city of Oshkosh came
Love the bully no whip shall tame,
Bringing his gang of sinners bold.
And I was the least of his Oshkosh men;
But none were reticent, none were old.
And we joined the singing phoenix then,
And shook the lilies of Kalamazoo
All for one hidden butterfly.
Bulls of glory, in cars of war
We charged the boulevards, proud to die
For her ribbon sailing there on high.
Our blood set gutters all aflame,
Where the sun slept without any heat—
Cold rock till he must rise again.
She made great poets of wolf-eyed men—
The dear queen-bee of Kalamazoo,
With her crystal wings, and her honey heart.
We fought for her favors a year and a day
(Oh, the bones of the dead, the Oshkosh dead,

That were scattered along her pathway red!)
And then, in her harum?scarum way,
She left with a passing traveller-man—
With a singing Irishman
Went to Japan.

Why do the lean hyenas glare
'Where the glory of Artemis had begun—
Of Atalanta, Joan of Arc,
Cinderella, Becky Thatcher,
And Orphant Annie, all in one?
Who burned this city of Kalamazoo
Till nothing was left but a ribbon or two—
One scorched phoenix that mourned in the dew,
Acres of ashes, a junk-man's cart,
A torn-up letter, a dancing shoe,
And the bones of the dead, the dead) ?
Who burned this city of Kalamazoo—
Love-town, Troy-town Kalamazoo?

A harum-scarum innocent heart.

Vachel Lindsay

King Arthur's Men Have Come Again

[Written while a field-worker in the Anti-Saloon League of Illinois.]

King Arthur's men have come again.
They challenge everywhere
The foes of Christ's Eternal Church.
Her incense crowns the air.
The heathen knighthood cower and curse
To hear the bugles ring,
But spears are set, the charge is on,
Wise Arthur shall be king!

And Cromwell's men have come again,
I meet them in the street.
Stern but in this — no way of thorns
Shall snare the children's feet.
The reveling foemen wreak but waste,
A sodden poisonous band.
Fierce Cromwell builds the flower-bright towns,
And a more sunlit land!

And Lincoln's men have come again.
Up from the South he flayed,
The grandsons of his foes arise
In his own cause arrayed.
They rise for freedom and clean laws
High laws, that shall endure.
Our God establishes his arm
And makes the battle sure!

Vachel Lindsay

King Solomon And The Queen Of Sheba

(A Poem Game.)

“And when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, . . .
she came to prove him with hard questions.”

[The men’s leader rises as he sees the Queen unveiling
and approaching a position that gives her half of the stage.]

Men’s Leader: The Queen of Sheba came to see King Solomon.

[He bows three times.]

I was King Solomon,

I was King Solomon,

I was King Solomon.

[She bows three times.]

Women’s Leader: I was the Queen,

I was the Queen,

I was the Queen.

Both Leaders: We will be king and queen,

[They stand together stretching their hands over the land.]

Reigning on mountains green,

Happy and free

For ten thousand years.

[They stagger forward as though carrying a yoke together.]

Both Leaders: King Solomon he had four hundred oxen.

Congregation: We were the oxen.

[Here King and Queen pause at the footlights.]

Both Leaders: You shall feel goads no more.

[They walk backward, throwing off the yoke and rejoicing.]

Walk dreadful roads no more,

Free from your loads

For ten thousand years.

[The men’s leader goes forward, the women’s leader dances round him.]

Both Leaders: King Solomon he had four hundred sweethearts.

[Here he pauses at the footlights.]

Congregation: We were the sweethearts.

[He walks backward. Both clap their hands to the measure.]

Both Leaders: You shall dance round again,

You shall dance round again,

Cymbals shall sound again,

Cymbals shall sound again,

[The Queen appears to gather wildflowers.]

Wildflowers be found

For ten thousand years,

Wildflowers be found

For ten thousand years.

[He continues to command the congregation, the woman to dance.

He goes forward to the footlights.]

Both Leaders: And every sweetheart had four hundred swans.

Congregation: We were the swans.

[The King walks backward.]

Both Leaders: You shall spread wings again,

You shall spread wings again,

[Here a special dance, by the Queen: swans flying in circles.]

Fly in soft rings again,

Fly in soft rings again,

Swim by cool springs

For ten thousand years,

Swim by cool springs,

For ten thousand years.

[The refrain "King Solomon" may be intoned by the men's leader whenever it is needed to enable the women's leader to get to her starting point. All the refrains may be likewise used.]

Men's Leader: King Solomon,

King Solomon.

Women's Leader: The Queen of Sheba asked him like a lady,

[They bow to each other—then give a pantomime indicating a great rose garden.]

Bowing most politely:
"What makes the roses bloom
Over the mossy tomb,
Driving away the gloom
Ten thousand years?"

Men's Leader: King Solomon made answer to the lady,
[They bow and confer. The Queen reserved, but taking cognizance.
The King wooing with ornate gestures of respect, and courtly animation.]

Bowing most politely:
"They bloom forever thinking of your beauty,
Your step so queenly and your eyes so lovely.
These keep the roses fair,
Young and without a care,
Making so sweet the air,
Ten thousand years."

[The two, with a manner almost a cake walk, go forward.]
Both Leaders: King Solomon he had four hundred sons.

[On this line, King and Queen pause before the footlights.]
Congregation: We were the sons.

[Pantomime of crowning the audience.]
Both Leaders: Crowned by the throngs again,
[On this line they walk backward, playing great imaginary harps.]
You shall make songs again,
Singing along
For ten thousand years.

[They go forward in a pony gallop, then stand pawing.]
Both Leaders: He gave each son four hundred prancing ponies.

Congregation: We were the ponies.

[They nod their heads, starting to walk backward.]
Both Leaders: You shall eat hay again,
[A pony dance by both, in circles.]
In forests play again,
Rampage and neigh
For ten thousand years.

Men's Leader: King Solomon he asked the Queen of Sheba,
[They bow to each other, standing so that
each one commands half of the stage.]

Bowing most politely:

"What makes the oak-tree grow
Hardy in sun and snow,
Never by wind brought low
Ten thousand years?"

Women's Leader: The Queen of Sheba answered like a lady,
[They bow to each other, again, with pantomime indicating a forest.]

Bowing most politely:

"It blooms forever thinking of your wisdom,
Your brave heart and the way you rule your kingdom.
These keep the oak secure,
Weaving its leafy lure,
Dreaming by fountains pure
Ten thousand years."

[They go to the footlights with a sailor's lurch and hitch.]

Both Leaders: The Queen of Sheba had four hundred sailors.

[The King and Queen pause.]

Congregation: We were the sailors.

Both Leaders: You shall bring spice and ore

[They walk backward with slow long-armed gestures
indicating the entire horizon line.]

Over the ocean's floor,
Shipmates once more,
For ten thousand years.

Women's Leader: The Queen of Sheba asked him like a lady,

[They bow to each other, the Queen indicating the depths of the sea.]

Bowing most politely:

"Why is the sea so deep,
What secret does it keep
While tides a-roaring leap
Ten thousand years?"

Men's Leader: King Solomon made answer to the lady,

[They bow to each other, then confer; the Queen reserved,

but taking cognizance, the King wooing with ornate gestures of respect and courtly admiration.]

Bowing most politely:

“My love for you is like the stormy ocean—

Too deep to understand,

Bending to your command,

Bringing your ships to land

Ten thousand years.”

King Solomon,

King Solomon.

[They go to the footlights with the greatest possible strut.]

Both Leaders: King Solomon he had four hundred chieftains.

Congregation: We were the chieftains.

[The leaders stand with arms proudly folded.]

Both Leaders: You shall be proud again,

[They walk backward haughtily, laughing on the last lines.]

Dazzle the crowd again,

Laughing aloud

For ten thousand years.

[From here on the whole production to be much more solemn, elevated, religious.]

[The leaders go forward to the footlights carrying imaginary torches.]

Both Leaders: King Solomon he had four hundred shepherds.

[The man and woman pause at the footlights.]

Congregation: We were the shepherds.

[They wander over the stage as though looking for lost lambs, with torches held high.]

Both Leaders: You shall have torches bright,

Watching the folds by night,

Guarding the lambs aright,

Ten thousand years.

Men’s Leader: King Solomon he asked the Queen of Sheba,

[The King kneels, and indicates the entire sky with one long slow gesture.]

Bowing most politely:

“Why are the stars so high,
There in the velvet sky,
Rolling in rivers by,
Ten thousand years?”

Women’s Leader: The Queen of Sheba answered like a lady,
[The Queen kneels opposite the King,
and gives the same gesture as she answers.]

Bowing most politely:

“They’re singing of your kingdom to the angels,
They guide your chariot with their lamps and candles,
Therefore they burn so far—
So you can drive your car
Up where the prophets are,
Ten thousand years.”

Men’s Leader: King Solomon,
King Solomon.

Both Leaders: King Solomon he kept the Sabbath holy.
[The two stand, commanding the audience.]
And spoke with tongues in prophet words so mighty
[The man and woman stamp and whirl with great noise and solemnity.]
We stamped and whirled and wept and shouted:—

Congregation Rises and Joins the Song:

. . . . “Glory.”

We were his people.

[On these two lines, man and woman stamp and whirl again,
gravely, magnificently.]

Both Leaders: You shall be wild and gay,
Green trees shall deck your way,

[On these two lines they kneel, commanding the audience.]

Sunday be every day,
Ten thousand years.

[Now they rise and bow to each other and the audience,
maintaining a certain intention of benediction.]

King Solomon,
King Solomon.

Vachel Lindsay

Lincoln

Would I might rouse the Lincoln in you all,
That which is gendered in the wilderness
From lonely prairies and God's tenderness.
Imperial soul, star of a weedy stream,
Born where the ghosts of buffaloes still dream,
Whose spirit hoof-beats storm above his grave,
Above that breast of earth and prairie-fire —
Fire that freed the slave.

Vachel Lindsay

Look You, I'll Go Pray

Look you, I'll go pray,
My shame is crying,
My soul is gray and faint,
My faith is dying.
Look you, I'll go pray —
"Sweet Mary, make me clean,
Thou rainstorm of the soul,
Thou wine from worlds unseen."

Vachel Lindsay

Love And Law

True Love is founded in rocks of Remembrance
In stones of Forbearance and mortar of pain.
The workman lays wearily granite on granite,
And bleeds for his castle, 'mid sunshine and rain.

Love is not velvet, not all of it velvet,
Not all of it banners, not gold-leaf alone.
'Tis stern as the ages and old as Religion.
With Patience its watchword and Law for its throne.

Vachel Lindsay

Mae Marsh, Motion Picture Actress

I

The arts are old, old as the stones
From which man carved the sphinx austere.
Deep are the days the old arts bring:
Ten thousand years of yesteryear.

II

She is madonna in an art
As wild and young as her sweet eyes:
A frail dew flower from this hot lamp
That is today's divine surprise.

Despite raw lights and gloating mobs
She is not seared: a picture still:
Rare silk the fine director's hand
May weave for magic if he will.

When ancient films have crumbled like
Papyrus rolls of Egypt's day,
Let the dust speak: "Her pride was high,
All but the artist hid away:

"Kin to the myriad artist clan
Since time began, whose work is dear."
The deep new ages come with her,
Tomorrow's years of yesteryear.

Vachel Lindsay

Mark Twain And Joan Of Arc

When Yankee soldiers reach the barricade
Then Joan of Arc gives each the accolade.

For she is there in armor clad, today,
All the young poets of the wide world say.

Which of our freemen did she greet the first,
Seeing him come against the fires accurst?

Mark Twain, our Chief, with neither smile nor jest,
Leading to war our youngest and our best.

The Yankee to King Arthur's court returns.
The sacred flag of Joan above him burns.

For she has called his soul from out the tomb.
And where she stands, there he will stand till doom.

But I, I can but mourn, and mourn again
At bloodshed caused by angels, saints, and men.

Vachel Lindsay

Michaelangelo

Would I might wake in you the whirl-wind soul
Of Michelangelo, who hewed the stone
And Night and Day revealed, whose arm alone
Could draw the face of God, the titan high
Whose genius smote like lightning from the sky —
And shall he mold like dead leaves in the grave?
Nay he is in us! Let us dare and dare.
God help us to be brave.

Vachel Lindsay

My Lady In Her White Silk Shawl

My lady in her white silk shawl
Is like a lily dim,
Within the twilight of the room
Enthroned and kind and prim.

My lady! Pale gold is her hair.
Until she smiles her face
Is pale with far Hellenic moods,
With thoughts that find no place

In our harsh village of the West
Wherein she lives of late,
She's distant as far-hidden stars,
And cold — (almost!) — as fate.

But when she smiles she's here again
Rosy with comrade-cheer,
Puritan Bacchante made
To laugh around the year.

The merry gentle moon herself,
Heart-stirring too, like her,
Wakening wild and innocent love
In every worshipper.

Vachel Lindsay

My Lady Is Compared To A Young Tree

When I see a young tree
In its white beginning,
With white leaves
And white buds
Barely tipped with green,
In the April weather,
In the weeping sunshine—
Then I see my lady,
My democratic queen,
Standing free and equal
With the youngest woodland sapling
Swaying, singing in the wind,
Delicate and white:
Soul so near to blossom,
Fragile, strong as death;
A kiss from far-off Eden,
A flash of Judgment's trumpet—
April's breath.

Vachel Lindsay

Niagara

I

Within the town of Buffalo
Are prosy men with leaden eyes.
Like ants they worry to and fro,
(Important men, in Buffalo.)
But only twenty miles away
A deathless glory is at play:
Niagara, Niagara.

The women buy their lace and cry: —
"O such a delicate design,"
And over ostrich feathers sigh,
By counters there, in Buffalo.
The children haunt the trinket shops,
They buy false-faces, bells, and tops,
Forgetting great Niagara.

Within the town of Buffalo
Are stores with garnets, sapphires, pearls,
Rubies, emeralds aglow, —
Opal chains in Buffalo,
Cherished symbols of success.
They value not your rainbow dress: —
Niagara, Niagara.

The shaggy meaning of her name
This Buffalo, this recreant town,
Sharps and lawyers prune and tame:
Few pioneers in Buffalo;
Except young lovers flushed and fleet
And winds hallooing down the street:
"Niagara, Niagara."

The journalists are sick of ink:
Boy prodigals are lost in wine,
By night where white and red lights blink,
The eyes of Death, in Buffalo.
And only twenty miles away

Are starlit rocks and healing spray: —
Niagara, Niagara.

Above the town a tiny bird,
A shining speck at sleepy dawn,
Forgets the ant-hill so absurd,
This self-important Buffalo.
Descending twenty miles away
He bathes his wings at break of day —
Niagara, Niagara.

II

*<i>What marching men of Buffalo
Flood the streets in rash crusade?
Fools-to-free-the-world, they go,
Primeval hearts from Buffalo.
Red cataracts of France today
Awake, three thousand miles away
An echo of Niagara,
The cataract Niagara.</i>*

Vachel Lindsay

On Reading Omar Khayyam

<i>[During an anti-saloon campaign, in central Illinois.]</i>

In the midst of the battle I turned,
(For the thunders could flourish without me)
And hid by a rose-hung wall,
Forgetting the murder about me;
And wrote, from my wound, on the stone,
In mirth, half prayer, half play: —
'Send me a picture book,
Send me a song, to-day.'

I saw him there by the wall
When I scarce had written the line,
In the enemy's colors dressed
And the serpent-standard of wine
Writhing its withered length
From his ghostly hands o'er the ground,
And there by his shadowy breast
The glorious poem I found.

This was his world-old cry:
Thus read the famous prayer:
'Wine, wine, wine and flowers
And cup-bearers always fair! '
'Twas a book of the snares of earth
Bordered in gold and blue,
And I read each line to the wind
And read to the roses too:
And they nodded their womanly heads
And told to the wall just why
For wine of the earth men bleed,
Kingdoms and empires die.
I envied the grape stained sage:
(The roses were praising him.)
The ways of the world seemed good
And the glory of heaven dim.
I envied the endless kings
Who found great pearls in the mire,

Who bought with the nation's life
The cup of delicious fire.

But the wine of God came down,
And I drank it out of the air.

(Fair is the serpent-cup,
But the cup of God more fair.)

The wine of God came down
That makes no drinker to weep.
And I went back to battle again
Leaving the singer asleep.

Vachel Lindsay

On Receiving One Of Gloriana's Letters

Your pen needs but a ruffle
To be Pavlova whirling.
It surely is a scalawag
A-scamping down the page.
A pretty little May-wind
The morning buds uncurling.
And then the white sweet Russian,
The dancer of the age.

Your pen's the Queen of Sheba,
Such serious questions bringing,
That merry rascal Solomon
Would show a sober face:—
And then again Pavlova
To set our spirits singing,
The snowy-swan bacchante
All glamour, glee and grace.

Vachel Lindsay

On Suddenly Receiving A Curl Long Refused

Oh, saucy gold circle of fairyland silk—
Impudent, intimate, delicate treasure:
A noose for my heart and a ring for my finger:—
Here in my study you sing me a measure.

Whimsy and song in my little gray study!
Words out of wonderland, praising her fineness,
Touched with her pulsating, delicate laughter,
Saying, "The girl is all daring and kindness!"

Saying, "Her soul is all feminine gameness,
Trusting her insights, ardent for living;
She would be weeping with me and be laughing,
A thoroughbred, joyous receiving and giving!"

Vachel Lindsay

On The Building Of Springfield

Let not our town be large, remembering
That little Athens was the Muses' home,
That Oxford rules the heart of London still,
That Florence gave the Renaissance to Rome.

Record it for the grandson of your son —
A city is not builded in a day:
Our little town cannot complete her soul
Till countless generations pass away.

Now let each child be joined as to a church
To her perpetual hopes, each man ordained:
Let every street be made a reverent aisle
Where Music grows and Beauty is unchained.

Let Science and Machinery and Trade
Be slaves of her, and make her all in all,
Building against our blatant, restless time
An unseen, skilful, medieval wall.

Let every citizen be rich toward God.
Let Christ the beggar, teach divinity.
Let no man rule who holds his money dear.
Let this, our city, be our luxury.

We should build parks that students from afar
Would choose to starve in, rather than go home,
Fair little squares, with Phidian ornament,
Food for the spirit, milk and honeycomb.

Songs shall be sung by us in that good day,
Songs we have written, blood within the rhyme
Beating, as when Old England still was glad, —
The purple, rich Elizabethan time.

Say, is my prophecy too fair and far?
I only know, unless her faith be high,
The soul of this, our Nineveh, is doomed,
Our little Babylon will surely die.

Some city on the breast of Illinois
No wiser and no better at the start
By faith shall rise redeemed, by faith shall rise
Bearing the western glory in her heart.

The genius of the Maple, Elm and Oak,
The secret hidden in each grain of corn,
The glory that the prairie angels sing
At night when sons of Life and Love are born,

Born but to struggle, squalid and alone,
Broken and wandering in their early years.
When will they make our dusty streets their goal,
Within our attics hide their sacred tears?

When will they start our vulgar blood athrill
With living language, words that set us free?
When will they make a path of beauty clear
Between our riches and our liberty?

We must have many Lincoln-hearted men.
A city is not builded in a day.
And they must do their work, and come and go
While countless generations pass away.

Vachel Lindsay

On The Garden Wall

Oh, once I walked a garden
In dreams. 'Twas yellow grass.
And many orange-trees grew there
In sand as white as glass.
The curving, wide wall-border
Was marble, like the snow.
I walked that wall a fairy-prince
And, pacing quaint and slow,
Beside me were my pages,
Two giant, friendly birds.
Half swan they were, half peacock.
They spake in courtier-words.
Their inner wings a charriot,
Their outer wings for flight,
They lifted me from dreamland.
We bade those trees good-night.
Swiftly above the stars we rode.
I looked below me soon.
The white-walled garden I had ruled
Was one lone flower--the moon.

Vachel Lindsay

On The Road To Nowhere

On the road to nowhere
What wild oats did you sow
When you left your father's house
With your cheeks aglow?
Eyes so strained and eager
To see what you might see?
Were you thief or were you fool
Or most nobly free?

Were the tramp-days knightly,
True sowing of wild seed?
Did you dare to make the songs
Vanquished workmen need?
Did you waste much money
To deck a leper's feast?
Love the truth, defy the crowd
Scandalize the priest?
On the road to nowhere
What wild oats did you sow?
Stupids find the nowhere-road
Dusty, grim and slow.

Ere their sowing's ended
They turn them on their track,
Look at the caitiff craven wights
Repentant, hurrying back!
Grown ashamed of nowhere,
Of rags endured for years,
Lust for velvet in their hearts,
Pierced with Mammon's spears,
All but a few fanatics
Give up their darling goal,
Seek to be as others are,
Stultify the soul.
Reapings now confront them,
Glut them, or destroy,
Curious seeds, grain or weeds
Sown with awful joy.
Hurried is their harvest,

They make soft peace with men.
Pilgrims pass. They care not,
Will not tramp again.

O nowhere, golden nowhere!
Sages and fools go on
To your chaotic ocean,
To your tremendous dawn.
Far in your fair dream-haven,
Is nothing or is all...
They press on, singing, sowing
Wild deeds without recall!

Vachel Lindsay

Once More—to Gloriana

Girl with the burning golden eyes,
And red-bird song, and snowy throat:
I bring you gold and silver moons
And diamond stars, and mists that float.
I bring you moons and snowy clouds,
I bring you prairie skies to-night
To feebly praise your golden eyes
And red-bird song, and throat so white.

Vachel Lindsay

Our Guardian Angels And Their Children

Where a river roars in rapids
And doves in maples fret,
Where peace has decked the pastures
Our guardian angels met.

Long they had sought each other
In God's mysterious name,
Had climbed the solemn chaos tides
Alone, with hope aflame:

Amid the demon deeps had wound
By many a fearful way.
As they beheld each other
Their shout made glad the day.

No need of purse delayed them,
No hand of friend or kin —
Nor menace of the bell and book,
Nor fear of mortal sin.

You did not speak, my girl,
At this, our parting hour.
Long we held each other
And watched their deeds of power.

They made a curious Eden.
We saw that it was good.
We thought with them in unison.
We proudly understood

Their amaranth eternal,
Their roses strange and fair,
The asphodels they scattered
Upon the living air.

They built a house of clouds
With skilled immortal hands.
They entered through the silver doors.
Their wings were wedded brands.

I labored up the valley
To granite mountains free.
You hurried down the river
To Zidon by the sea.

But at their place of meeting
They keep a home and shrine.
Your angel twists a purple flax,
Then weaves a mantle fine.

My angel, her defender
Upstanding, spreads the light
On painted clouds of fancy
And mists that touch the height.

Their sturdy babes speak kindly
And fly and run with joy,
Shepherding the helpless lambs —
A Grecian girl and boy.

These children visit Heaven
Each year and make of worth
All we planned and wrought in youth
And all our tears on earth.

From books our God has written
They sing of high desire.
They turn the leaves in gentleness.
Their wings are folded fire.

Vachel Lindsay

Our Mother Pocahontas

(Note: — Pocahontas is buried at Gravesend, England.)

"Pocahontas' body, lovely as a poplar, sweet as a red haw in November or a pawpaw in May — did she wonder? does she remember — in the dust — in the cool tombs?"

CARL SANDBURG.

I

Powhatan was conqueror,
Powhatan was emperor.
He was akin to wolf and bee,
Brother of the hickory tree.
Son of the red lightning stroke
And the lightning-shivered oak.
His panther-grace bloomed in the maid
Who laughed among the winds and played
In excellence of savage pride,
Wooing the forest, open-eyed,
In the springtime,
In Virginia,
Our Mother, Pocahontas.

Her skin was rosy copper-red.
And high she held her beauteous head.
Her step was like a rustling leaf:
Her heart a nest, untouched of grief.
She dreamed of sons like Powhatan,
And through her blood the lightning ran.
Love-cries with the birds she sung,
Birdlike
In the grape-vine swung.
The Forest, arching low and wide
Gloried in its Indian bride.
Rolfe, that dim adventurer
Had not come a courtier.
John Rolfe is not our ancestor.

We rise from out the soul of her
Held in native wonderland,
While the sun's rays kissed her hand,
In the springtime,
In Virginia,
Our Mother, Pocahontas.

II

She heard the forest talking,
Across the sea came walking,
And traced the paths of Daniel Boone,
Then westward chased the painted moon.
She passed with wild young feet
On to Kansas wheat,
On to the miners' west,
The echoing cañons' guest,
Then the Pacific sand,
Waking,
Thrilling,
The midnight land....

On Adams street and Jefferson —
Flames coming up from the ground!
On Jackson street and Washington —
Flames coming up from the ground!
And why, until the dawning sun
Are flames coming up from the ground?
Because, through drowsy Springfield sped
This red-skin queen, with feathered head,
With winds and stars, that pay her court
And leaping beasts, that make her sport;
Because, gray Europe's rags august
She tramples in the dust;
Because we are her fields of corn;
Because our fires are all reborn
From her bosom's deathless embers,
Flaming
As she remembers
The springtime
And Virginia,

Our Mother, Pocahontas.

III

We here renounce our Saxon blood.
Tomorrow's hopes, an April flood
Come roaring in. The newest race
Is born of her resilient grace.
We here renounce our Teuton pride:
Our Norse and Slavic boasts have died:
Italian dreams are swept away,
And Celtic feuds are lost today....

She sings of lilacs, maples, wheat,
Her own soil sings beneath her feet,
Of springtime
And Virginia,
Our Mother, Pocahontas.

Vachel Lindsay

Parvenu

Where does Cinderella sleep?
By far-off day-dream river.
A secret place her burning Prince
Decks, while his heart-strings quiver.

Homesick for our cinder world,
Her low-born shoulders shiver;
She longs for sleep in cinders curled—
We, for the day-dream river.

Vachel Lindsay

Popcorn, Glass Balls, And Cranberries

I. THE LION

The Lion is a kingly beast.
He likes a Hindu for a feast.
And if no Hindu he can get,
The lion-family is upset.

He cuffs his wife and bites her ears
Till she is nearly moved to tears.
Then some explorer finds the den
And all is family peace again.

II. AN EXPLANATION OF THE GRASSHOPPER

The Grasshopper, the grasshopper,
I will explain to you:—
He is the Brownies' racehorse,
The fairies' Kangaroo.

III. THE DANGEROUS LITTLE BOY FAIRIES

In fairyland the little boys
Would rather fight than eat their meals.
They like to chase a gauze-winged fly
And catch and beat him till he squeals.
Sometimes they come to sleeping men
Armed with the deadly red-rose thorn,
And those that feel its fearful wound
Repent the day that they were born.

IV. THE MOUSE THAT GNAWED THE OAK-TREE DOWN

The mouse that gnawed the oak-tree down
Began his task in early life.
He kept so busy with his teeth
He had no time to take a wife.

He gnawed and gnawed through sun and rain
When the ambitious fit was on,
Then rested in the sawdust till
A month of idleness had gone.

He did not move about to hunt
The coteries of mousie-men.
He was a snail-paced, stupid thing
Until he cared to gnaw again.

The mouse that gnawed the oak-tree down,
When that tough foe was at his feet —
Found in the stump no angel-cake
Nor buttered bread, nor cheese, nor meat —
The forest-roof let in the sky.
"This light is worth the work," said he.
"I'll make this ancient swamp more light,"
And started on another tree.

<i>V. PARVENU</i>

Where does Cinderella sleep?
By far-off day-dream river.
A secret place her burning Prince
Decks, while his heart-strings quiver.

Homesick for our cinder world,
Her low-born shoulders shiver;
She longs for sleep in cinders curled —
We, for the day-dream river.

<i>VI. THE SPIDER AND THE GHOST OF THE FLY</i>

Once I loved a spider
When I was born a fly,
A velvet-footed spider
With a gown of rainbow-dye.
She ate my wings and gloated.
She bound me with a hair.

She drove me to her parlor
Above her winding stair.
To educate young spiders
She took me all apart.
My ghost came back to haunt her.
I saw her eat my heart.

VII. CRICKETS ON A STRIKE

The foolish queen of fairyland
From her milk-white throne in a lily-bell,
Gave command to her cricket-band
To play for her when the dew-drops fell.

But the cold dew spoiled their instruments
And they play for the foolish queen no more.
Instead those sturdy malcontents
Play sharps and flats in my kitchen floor.

Vachel Lindsay

Prologue To Rhymes To Be Traded For Bread

Even the shrewd and bitter,
Gnarled by the old world's greed,
Cherished the stranger softly
Seeing his utter need.
Shelter and patient hearing,
These were their gifts to him,
To the minstrel chanting, begging,
As the sunset-fire grew dim.
The rich said "you are welcome."
Yea, even the rich were good.
How strange that in their feasting
His songs were understood!
The doors of the poor were open,
The poor who had wandered too,
Who slept with never a roof-tree
Under the wind and dew.
The minds of the poor were open,
There dark mistrust was dead:
They loved his wizard stories,
They bought his rhymes with bread.

Those were his days of glory,
Of faith in his fellow-men.
Therefore to-day the singer
Turns beggar once again.

Vachel Lindsay

Queen Mab In The Village

Once I loved a fairy,
Queen Mab it was. Her voice
Was like a little Fountain
That bids the birds rejoice.
Her face was wise and solemn,
Her hair was brown and fine.
Her dress was pansy velvet,
A butterfly design.

To see her hover round me
Or walk the hills of air,
Awakened love's deep pulses
And boyhood's first despair;
A passion like a sword-blade
That pierced me thro' and thro':
Her fingers healed the sorrow
Her whisper would renew.
We sighed and reigned and feasted
Within a hollow tree,
We vowed our love was boundless,
Eternal as the sea.

She banished from her kingdom
The mortal boy I grew —
So tall and crude and noisy,
I killed grasshoppers too.
I threw big rocks at pigeons,
I plucked and tore apart
The weeping, wailing daisies,
And broke my lady's heart.
At length I grew to manhood,
I scarcely could believe
I ever loved the lady,
Or caused her court to grieve,
Until a dream came to me,
One bleak first night of Spring,
Ere tides of apple blossoms
Rolled in o'er everything,
While rain and sleet and snowbanks

Were still a-vexing men,
Ere robin and his comrades
Were nesting once again.

I saw Mab's Book of Judgment —
Its clasps were iron and stone,
Its leaves were mammoth ivory,
Its boards were mammoth bone, —
Hid in her seaside mountains,
Forgotten or unkept,
Beneath its mighty covers
Her wrath against me slept.
And deeply I repented
Of brash and boyish crime,
Of murder of things lovely
Now and in olden time.
I cursed my vain ambition,
My would-be worldly days,
And craved the paths of wonder,
Of dewy dawns and fays.
I cried, "Our love was boundless,
Eternal as the sea,
O Queen, reverse the sentence,
Come back and master me!"

The book was by the cliff-side
Upon its edge upright.
I laid me by it softly,
And wept throughout the night.
And there at dawn I saw it,
No book now, but a door,
Upon its panels written,
"Judgment is no more."
The bolt flew back with thunder,
I saw within that place
A mermaid wrapped in seaweed
With Mab's immortal face,
Yet grown now to a woman,
A woman to the knee.
She cried, she clasped me fondly,
We soon were in the sea.

Ah, she was wise and subtle,
And gay and strong and sleek,
We chained the wicked sword-fish,
We played at hide and seek.
We floated on the water,
We heard the dawn-wind sing,
I made from ocean-wonders,
Her bridal wreath and ring.
All mortal girls were shadows,
All earth-life but a mist,
When deep beneath the maelstrom,
The mermaid's heart I kissed.

I woke beside the church-door
Of our small inland town,
Bowing to a maiden
In a pansy-velvet gown,
Who had not heard of fairies,
Yet seemed of love to dream.
We planned an earthly cottage
Beside an earthly stream.

Our wedding long is over,
With toil the years fill up,
Yet in the evening silence,
We drink a deep-sea cup.
Nothing the fay remembers,
Yet when she turns to me,
We meet beneath the whirlpool,
We swim the golden sea.

Vachel Lindsay

Rhymes For Gloriana

I. THE DOLL UPON THE TOPMOST BOUGH

This doll upon the topmost bough,
This playmate-gift, in Christmas dress,
Was taken down and brought to me
One sleety night most comfortless.

Her hair was gold, her dolly-sash
Was gray brocade, most good to see.
The dear toy laughed, and I forgot
The ill the new year promised me.

II. ON SUDDENLY RECEIVING A CURL LONG REFUSED

Oh, saucy gold circle of fairyland silk —
Impudent, intimate, delicate treasure:
A noose for my heart and a ring for my finger: —
Here in my study you sing me a measure.

Whimsy and song in my little gray study!
Words out of wonderland, praising her fineness,
Touched with her pulsating, delicate laughter,
Saying, "The girl is all daring and kindness!"

Saying, "Her soul is all feminine gameness,
Trusting her insights, ardent for living;
She would be weeping with me and be laughing,
A thoroughbred, joyous receiving and giving!"

III. ON RECEIVING ONE OF GLORIANA'S LETTERS

Your pen needs but a ruffle
To be Pavlova whirling.
It surely is a scalawag
A-scamping down the page.
A pretty little May-wind

The morning buds uncurling.
And then the white sweet Russian,
The dancer of the age.

Your pen's the Queen of Sheba,
Such serious questions bringing,
That merry rascal Solomon
Would show a sober face: —
And then again Pavlova
To set our spirits singing,
The snowy-swan bacchante
All glamour, glee and grace.

IV. IN PRAISE OF GLORIANA'S REMARKABLE GOLDEN HAIR

The gleaming head of one fine friend
Is bent above my little song,
So through the treasure-pits of Heaven
In fancy's shoes, I march along.

I wander, seek and peer and ponder
In Splendor's last ensnaring lair—
'Mid burnished harps and burnished crowns
Where noble chariots gleam and flare:

Amid the spirit-coins and gems,
The plates and cups and helms of fire—
The gorgeous-treasure-pits of Heaven—
Where angel-misers slake desire!

O endless treasure-pits of gold
Where silly angel-men make mirth—
I think that I am there this hour,
Though walking in the ways of earth!

Vachel Lindsay

Shakespeare

Would that in body and spirit Shakespeare came
Visible emperor of the deeds of Time,
With Justice still the genius of his rhyme,
Giving each man his due, each passion grace,
Impartial as the rain from Heaven's face
Or sunshine from the heaven-enthroned sun.
Sweet Swan of Avon, come to us again.
Teach us to write, and writing, to be men.

Vachel Lindsay

Simon Legree

A Negro Sermon.

(To be read in your own variety of negro dialect.)

Legree's big house was white and green.
His cotton-fields were the best to be seen.
He had strong horses and opulent cattle,
And bloodhounds bold, with chains that would rattle.
His garret was full of curious things:
Books of magic, bags of gold,
And rabbits' feet on long twine strings.
BUT HE WENT DOWN TO THE DEVIL.

Legree he sported a brass-buttoned coat,
A snake-skin necktie, a blood-red shirt.
Legree he had a beard like a goat,
And a thick hairy neck, and eyes like dirt.
His puffed-out cheeks were fish-belly white,
He had great long teeth, and an appetite.
He ate raw meat, 'most every meal,
And rolled his eyes till the cat would squeal.
His fist was an enormous size
To mash poor niggers that told him lies:
He was surely a witch-man in disguise.
BUT HE WENT DOWN TO THE DEVIL.

He wore hip-boots, and would wade all day
To capture his slaves that had fled away.
BUT HE WENT DOWN TO THE DEVIL.

He beat poor Uncle Tom to death
Who prayed for Legree with his last breath.
Then Uncle Tom to Eva flew,
To the high sanctoriums bright and new;
And Simon Legree stared up beneath,
And cracked his heels, and ground his teeth:
AND WENT DOWN TO THE DEVIL.

He crossed the yard in the storm and gloom;

He went into his grand front room.
He said, "I killed him, and I don't care."
He kicked a hound, he gave a swear;
He tightened his belt, he took a lamp,
Went down cellar to the webs and damp.
There in the middle of the mouldy floor
He heaved up a slab, he found a door—
AND WENT DOWN TO THE DEVIL.

His lamp blew out, but his eyes burned bright.
Simon Legree stepped down all night—
DOWN, DOWN TO THE DEVIL.
Simon Legree he reached the place,
He saw one half of the human race,
He saw the Devil on a wide green throne,
Gnawing the meat from a big ham-bone,
And he said to Mister Devil:

"I see that you have much to eat—
A red ham-bone is surely sweet.
I see that you have lion's feet;
I see your frame is fat and fine,
I see you drink your poison wine—
Blood and burning turpentine."

And the Devil said to Simon Legree:
"I like your style, so wicked and free.
Come sit and share my throne with me,
And let us bark and revel."
And there they sit and gnash their teeth,
And each one wears a hop-vine wreath.
They are matching pennies and shooting craps,
They are playing poker and taking naps.
And old Legree is fat and fine:
He eats the fire, he drinks the wine—
Blood and burning turpentine—
DOWN, DOWN WITH THE DEVIL;
DOWN, DOWN WITH THE DEVIL;
DOWN, DOWN WITH THE DEVIL.

Vachel Lindsay

Speak Now For Peace

Lady of Light, and our best woman, and queen,
Stand now for peace, (though anger breaks your heart),
Though naught but smoke and flame and drowning is seen.

Lady of Light, speak, though you speak alone,
Though your voice may seem as a dove's in this howling flood,
It is heard to-night by every senate and throne.

Though the widening battle of millions and millions of men
Threatens to-night to sweep the whole of the earth,
Back of the smoke is the promise of kindness again.

Vachel Lindsay

Springfield Magical

In this, the City of my Discontent,
Sometimes there comes a whisper from the grass,
"Romance, Romance — is here. No Hindu town
Is quite so strange. No Citadel of Brass
By Sinbad found, held half such love and hate;
No picture-palace in a picture-book
Such webs of Friendship, Beauty, Greed and Fate!"

In this, the City of my Discontent,
Down from the sky, up from the smoking deep
Wild legends new and old burn round my bed
While trees and grass and men are wrapped in sleep.
Angels come down, with Christmas in their hearts,
Gentle, whimsical, laughing, heaven-sent;
And, for a day, fair Peace have given me
In this, the City of my Discontent!

Vachel Lindsay

St. Francis Of Assisi

Would I might wake St. Francis in you all,
Brother of birds and trees, God's Troubadour,
Blinded with weeping for the sad and poor;
Our wealth undone, all strict Franciscan men,
Come, let us chant the canticle again
Of mother earth and the enduring sun.
God make each soul the lonely leper's slave;
God make us saints, and brave.

Vachel Lindsay

Star Of My Heart

Star of my heart, I follow from afar.
Sweet Love on high, lead on where shepherds are,
Where Time is not, and only dreamers are.
Star from of old, the Magi-Kings are dead
And a foolish Saxon seeks the manger-bed.
O lead me to Jehovah's child
Across this dreamland lone and wild,
Then will I speak this prayer unsaid,
And kiss his little haloed head —
"My star and I, we love thee, little child."

Except the Christ be born again to-night
In dreams of all men, saints and sons of shame,
The world will never see his kingdom bright.
Stars of all hearts, lead onward thro' the night
Past death-black deserts, doubts without a name,
Past hills of pain and mountains of new sin
To that far sky where mystic births begin,
Where dreaming ears the angel-song shall win.
Our Christmas shall be rare at dawning there,
And each shall find his brother fair,
Like a little child within:
All hearts of the earth shall find new birth
And wake, no more to sin.

Vachel Lindsay

Sunshine

*FOR A VERY LITTLE GIRL, NOT A YEAR OLD.
CATHARINE FRAZEE WAKEFIELD.*

The sun gives not directly
The coal, the diamond crown;
Not in a special basket
Are these from Heaven let down.

The sun gives not directly
The plough, man's iron friend;
Not by a path or stairway
Do tools from Heaven descend.

Yet sunshine fashions all things
That cut or burn or fly;
And corn that seems upon the earth
Is made in the hot sky.

The gravel of the roadbed,
The metal of the gun,
The engine of the airship
Trace somehow from the sun.

And so your soul, my lady—
(Mere sunshine, nothing more)—
Prepares me the contraptions
I work with or adore.

Within me cornfields rustle,
Niagaras roar their way,
Vast thunderstorms and rainbows
Are in my thought to-day.

Ten thousand anvils sound there
By forges flaming white,
And many books I read there,
And many books I write;

And freedom's bells are ringing,
And bird-choirs chant and fly—
The whole world works in me to-day
And all the shining sky,

Because of one small lady
Whose smile is my chief sun.
She gives not any gift to me
Yet all gifts, giving one. . . .

Amen.

Vachel Lindsay

Sweet Briars Of The Stairways

We are happy all the time
Even when we fight:
Sweet briars of the stairways,
Gay fairies of the grime;
We, who are playing to-night.

"Our feet are in the gutters,
Our eyes are sore with dust,
But still our eyes are bright.
The wide street roars and mutters —
We know it works because it must —
We, who are playing to-night!

"Dirt is everlasting. — We never, never fear it.
Toil is never ceasing. — We will play until we near it.
Tears are never ending. — When once real tears have come;

"When we see our people as they are —
Our fathers — broken, dumb —

Our mothers — broken, dumb —
The weariest of women and of men;
Ah — then our eyes will lose their light —
Then we will never play again —
We, who are playing to-night."

Vachel Lindsay

Sweethearts Of The Year

Sweetheart Spring

Our Sweetheart, Spring, came softly,
Her gliding hands were fire,
Her lilac breath upon our cheeks
Consumed us with desire.

By her our God began to build,
Began to sow and till.
He laid foundations in our loves
For every good and ill.
We asked Him not for blessing,
We asked Him not for pain —
Still, to the just and unjust
He sent His fire and rain.

Sweetheart Summer

We prayed not, yet she came to us,
The silken, shining one,
On Jacob's noble ladder
Descended from the sun.
She reached our town of Every Day,
Our dry and dusty sod —
We prayed not, yet she brought to us
The misty wine of God.

Sweetheart Autumn

The woods were black and crimson,
The frost-bit flowers were dead,
But Sweetheart Indian Summer came
With love-winds round her head.
While fruits God-given and splendid
Belonged to her domain:
Baskets of corn in perfect ear
And grapes with purple stain,

The treacherous winds persuaded her
Spring Love was in the wood
Altho' the end of love was hers —
Fruition, Motherhood.

Sweetheart Winter

We had done naught of service
To win our Maker's praise.
Yet Sweetheart Winter came to us
To gild our waning days.
Down Jacob's winding ladder
She came from Sunshine Town,
Bearing the sparkling mornings
And clouds of silver-brown;
Bearing the seeds of Springtime.
Upon her snowy seas
Bearing the fairy star-flowers
For baby Christmas trees.

Vachel Lindsay

The Alchemist's Petition

Thou wilt not sentence to eternal life
My soul that prays that it may sleep and sleep
Like a white statue dropped into the deep,
Covered with sand, covered with chests of gold,
And slave-bones, tossed from many a pirate hold.

But for this prayer thou wilt not bind in Hell
My soul, that shook with love for Fame and Truth—
In Such unquenched desires consumed his youth—
Let me turn dust, like dead leaves in the Fall,
Or wood that lights an hour your knightly hall—

Amen.

Vachel Lindsay

The Amaranth

Ah, in the night, all music haunts me here. . . .
Is it for naught high Heaven cracks and yawns
And the tremendous Amaranth descends
Sweet with the glory of ten thousand dawns?

Does it not mean my God would have me say: —
"Whether you will or no, O city young,
Heaven will bloom like one great flower for you,
Flash and loom greatly all your marts among?"

Friends, I will not cease hoping though you weep.
Such things I see, and some of them shall come
Though now our streets are harsh and ashen-gray,
Though our strong youths are strident now, or dumb.
Friends, that sweet town, that wonder-town, shall rise.
Naught can delay it. Though it may not be
Just as I dream, it comes at last I know
With streets like channels of an incense-sea.

Vachel Lindsay

The Angel And The Clown

I saw wild domes and bowers
And smoking incense towers
And mad exotic flowers
In Illinois.

Where ragged ditches ran
Now springs of Heaven began
Celestial drink for man
In Illinois.

There stood beside the town
Beneath its incense-crown
An angel and a clown
In Illinois.

He was as Clowns are:
She was snow and star
With eyes that looked afar
In Illinois.

I asked, "How came this place
Of antique Asian grace
Amid our callow race
In Illinois?"
Said Clown and Angel fair:
"By laughter and by prayer,
By casting off all care
In Illinois."

Vachel Lindsay

The Bankrupt Peace-Maker

I opened the ink-well and smoke filled the room.
The smoke formed the giant frog-cat of my doom.
His web feet left dreadful slime tracks on the floor.
He had hammer and nails that he laid by the door.
He sprawled on the table, claw-hands in my hair.
He looked through my heart to the mud that was there.
Like a black-mailer hating his victim he spoke:
"When I see all your squirming I laugh till I choke
Singing of peace. Railing at battle.
Soothing a handful with saccharine prattle.
All the millions of earth have voted for fight.
You are voting for talk, with hands lily white."
He leaped to the floor, then grew seven feet high,
Beautiful, terrible, scorn in his eye:
The Devil Eternal, Apollo grown old,
With beard of bright silver and garments of gold.
"What will you do to end war for good?
Will you stand by the book-case, be nailed to the wood?"
I stretched out my arms. He drove the nails deep,
Silently, coolly. The house was asleep,
I hung for three years, forbidden to die.
I seemed but a shadow the servants passed by.
At the end of the time with hot irons he returned.
"The Quitter Sublime" on my bosom he burned.
As he seared me he hissed: "You are wearing away.
The good angels tell me you leave them today.
You want to come down from the nails in the door.
The victor must hang there three hundred years more.
If any prig-saint would outvote all mankind
He must use an immortally resolute mind.
Think what the saints of Benares endure,
Through infinite birthpangs their courage is sure.
Self-tortured, self-ruled, they build their powers high,
Until they are gods, overmaster the sky."
Then he pulled out the nails. He shouted "Come in."
To heal me there stepped in a lady of sin.
Her hand was in mine. We walked in the sun.
She said: "Now forget them, the Saxon and Hun.
You are dreary and aged and silly and weak.

Let us smell the sweet groves. Let the summertime speak."
We walked to the river. We swam there in state.
I was a serpent. She was my mate.
I forgot in the marsh, as I tumbled about,
That trial in my room, where I did not hold out.
Since I was a serpent, my mate seemed to me
As a mermaid seems to a fisher at sea,
Or a whisky soaked girl to a whisky soaked king.
I woke. She had turned to a ravening thing
On the table — a buzzard with leperous head.
She tore up my rhymes and my drawings. She said:
"I am your own cheap bankrupt soul.
Will you die for the nations, making them whole?
We joy in the swamp and here we are gay.
<i>Will you bring your fine peace to the nations today?</i>"

Vachel Lindsay

The Beggar's Valentine

Kiss me and comfort my heart
Maiden honest and fine.
I am the pilgrim boy
Lame, but hunting the shrine;

Fleeing away from the sweets,
Seeking the dust and rain,
Sworn to the staff and road,
Scorning pleasure and pain;

Nevertheless my mouth
Would rest like a bird an hour
And find in your curls a nest
And find in your breast a bower:

Nevertheless my eyes
Would lose themselves in your own,
Rivers that seek the sea,
Angels before the throne:

Kiss me and comfort my heart,
For love can never be mine:
Passion, hunger and pain,
These are the only wine

Of the pilgrim bound to the road.
He would rob no man of his own.
Your heart is another's I know,
Your honor is his alone.

The feasts of a long drawn love,
The feasts of a wedded life,
The harvests of patient years,
And hearthstone and children and wife:

These are your lords I know.
These can never be mine —
This is the price I pay
For the foolish search for the shrine:

This is the price I pay
For the joy of my midnight prayers,
Kneeling beneath the moon
With hills for my altar stairs;

This is the price I pay
For the throb of the mystic wings,
When the dove of God comes down
And beats round my heart and sings;

This is the price I pay
For the light I shall some day see
At the ends of the infinite earth
When truth shall come to me.

And what if my body die
Before I meet the truth?
The road is dear, more dear
Than love or life or youth.

The road, it is the road,
Mystical, endless, kind,
Mother of visions vast,
Mother of soul and mind;

Mother of all of me
But the blood that cries for a mate —
That cries for a farewell kiss
From the child of God at the gate.

Vachel Lindsay

The Black Hawk War Of The Artists

*WRITTEN FOR LORADO TAFT'S STATUE OF BLACK HAWK AT OREGON,
ILLINOIS*

To be given in the manner of the Indian Oration and the Indian War-Cry.

Hawk of the Rocks,
Yours is our cause to-day.
Watching your foes
Here in our war array,
Young men we stand,
Wolves of the West at bay.
Power, power for war
Comes from these trees divine;
Power from the boughs,
Boughs where the dew-beads shine,
Power from the cones
Yea, from the breath of the pine!

Power to restore
All that the white hand mars.
See the dead east
Crushed with the iron cars—
Chimneys black
Blinding the sun and stars!

Hawk of the pines,
Hawk of the plain-winds fleet,
You shall be king
There in the iron street,
Factory and forge
Trodden beneath your feet.

There will proud trees
Grow as they grow by streams.
There will proud thoughts
Walk as in warrior dreams.
There will proud deeds
Bloom as when battle gleams!

Warriors of Art,
We will hold council there,
Hewing in stone
Things to the trapper fair,
Painting the gray
Veils that the spring moons wear,
This our revenge,
This one tremendous change:
Making new towns,
Lit with a star-fire strange,
Wild as the dawn
Gilding the bison-range.

All the young men
Chanting your cause that day,
Red-men, new-made
Out of the Saxon clay,
Strong and redeemed,
Bold in your war-array!

Vachel Lindsay

The Booker Washington Trilogy

I. A NEGRO SERMON:—SIMON LEGREE

(To be read in your own variety of negro dialect.)

Legree's big house was white and green.
His cotton-fields were the best to be seen.
He had strong horses and opulent cattle,
And bloodhounds bold, with chains that would rattle.
His garret was full of curious things:
Books of magic, bags of gold,
And rabbits' feet on long twine strings.
But he went down to the Devil.

Legree he sported a brass-buttoned coat,
A snake-skin necktie, a blood-red shirt.
Legree he had a beard like a goat,
And a thick hairy neck, and eyes like dirt.
His puffed-out cheeks were fish-belly white,
He had great long teeth, and an appetite.
He ate raw meat, 'most every meal,
And rolled his eyes till the cat would squeal.

His fist was an enormous size
To mash poor niggers that told him lies:
He was surely a witch-man in disguise.
But he went down to the Devil.

He wore hip-boots, and would wade all day
To capture his slaves that had fled away.
But he went down to the Devil.

He beat poor Uncle Tom to death
Who prayed for Legree with his last breath.
Then Uncle Tom to Eva flew,
To the high sanctoriums bright and new;
And Simon Legree stared up beneath,
And cracked his heels, and ground his teeth:
And went down to the Devil.

He crossed the yard in the storm and gloom;
He went into his grand front room.
He said, "I killed him, and I don't care."
He kicked a hound, he gave a swear;
He tightened his belt, he took a lamp,
Went down cellar to the webs and damp.
There in the middle of the mouldy floor
He heaved up a slab, he found a door —
<i>And went down to the Devil.</i>

His lamp blew out, but his eyes burned bright.
Simon Legree stepped down all night —
<i>Down, down to the Devil.</i>
Simon Legree he reached the place,
He saw one half of the human race,
He saw the Devil on a wide green throne,
Gnawing the meat from a big ham-bone,
And he said to Mister Devil:

"I see that you have much to eat —
A red ham-bone is surely sweet.
I see that you have lion's feet;
I see your frame is fat and fine,
I see you drink your poison wine —
Blood and burning turpentine."

And the Devil said to Simon Legree:
"I like your style, so wicked and free.
Come sit and share my throne with me,
And let us bark and revel."
And there they sit and gnash their teeth,
And each one wears a hop-vine wreath.
They are matching pennies and shooting craps,
They are playing poker and taking naps.
And old Legree is fat and fine:
He eats the fire, he drinks the wine —
Blood and burning turpentine —
<i>Down, down with the Devil;
Down, down with the Devil;
Down, down with the Devil.</i>

II. JOHN BROWN

(To be sung by a leader and chorus, the leader singing the body of the poem, while the chorus interrupts with the question.)

I've been to Palestine.

What did you see in Palestine?

I saw the ark of Noah —

It was made of pitch and pine.

I saw old Father Noah

Asleep beneath his vine.

I saw Shem, Ham and Japhet

Standing in a line.

I saw the tower of Babel

In the gorgeous sunrise shine —

By a weeping willow tree

Beside the Dead Sea.

I've been to Palestine.

What did you see in Palestine?

I saw abominations

And Gadarene swine.

I saw the sinful Canaanites

Upon the shewbread dine,

And spoil the temple vessels

And drink the temple wine.

I saw Lot's wife, a pillar of salt

Standing in the brine —

By a weeping willow tree

Beside the Dead Sea.

I've been to Palestine.

What did you see in Palestine?

Cedars on Mount Lebanon,

Gold in Ophir's mine,

And a wicked generation

Seeking for a sign

And Baal's howling worshippers

Their god with leaves entwined.

And...

I saw the war-horse ramping
And shake his forelock fine —
By a weeping willow tree
Beside the Dead Sea.

I've been to Palestine.

What did you see in Palestine?

Old John Brown.

Old John Brown.

I saw his gracious wife
Dressed in a homespun gown.

I saw his seven sons
Before his feet bow down.

And he marched with his seven sons,
His wagons and goods and guns,
To his campfire by the sea,
By the waves of Galilee.

I've been to Palestine.

What did you see in Palestine?

I saw the harp and psalt'ry
Played for Old John Brown.

I heard the ram's horn blow,
Blow for Old John Brown.

I saw the Bulls of Bashan —
They cheered for Old John Brown.

I saw the big Behemoth —
He cheered for Old John Brown.

I saw the big Leviathan —
He cheered for Old John Brown.

I saw the Angel Gabriel
Great power to him assign.

I saw him fight the Canaanites
And set God's Israel free.
I saw him when the war was done
In his rustic chair recline —
By his campfire by the sea,
By the waves of Galilee.

I've been to Palestine.

<i>What did you see in Palestine?</i>

Old John Brown.

Old John Brown.

And there he sits

To judge the world.

His hunting-dogs

At his feet are curled.

His eyes half-closed,

But John Brown sees

The ends of the earth,

The Day of Doom.

And his shot-gun lies

Across his knees —

Old John Brown,

Old John Brown.

III. KING SOLOMON AND THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

(A Poem Game.)

"And when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon,... she came to prove him with hard questions."

<i>[The men's leader rises as he sees the Queen unveiling and approaching a position that gives her half of the stage.]</i>

MEN'S LEADER: :

The Queen of Sheba came to see King Solomon.

I was King Solomon,

<i>[He bows three times.]</i>

I was King Solomon,

I was King Solomon.

WOMEN'S LEADER::

I was the Queen,

<i>[She bows three times.]</i>

I was the Queen,
I was the Queen.

BOTH LEADERS::

We will be king and queen,
Reigning on mountains green,

<i>[They stand together stretching their hands over the land.]</i>

Happy and free
For ten thousand years.

BOTH LEADERS:

King Solomon he had four hundred oxen.

<i>[They stagger forward as through carrying a yoke together.]</i>

CONGREGATION:

We were the oxen.

BOTH LEADERS:

You shall feel goads no more.

<i>[Here King and Queen pause at the footlights.]</i>

Walk dreadful roads no more,

<i>[They walk backward, throwing off the yoke and rejoicing.]</i>

Free from your loads
For ten thousand years.

BOTH LEADERS:

King Solomon he had four hundred sweethearts.

[The men's leader goes forward, the women's leader dances round him.]

CONGREGATION:

We were the sweethearts.

[Here he pauses at the footlights.]

BOTH LEADERS:

You shall dance round again,

[He walks backward. Both clap their hands to the measure.]

You shall dance round again,
Cymbals shall sound again,
Cymbals shall sound again,
Wildflowers be found

[The Queen appears to gather wildflowers.]

For ten thousand years,
Wildflowers be found
For ten thousand years.

BOTH LEADERS:

And every sweetheart had four hundred swans.

[He continues to command the congregation, the woman to dance. He goes forward to the footlights.]

CONGREGATION:

We were the swans.

BOTH LEADERS:

You shall spread wings again,

[The King walks backward.]

You shall spread wings again,

Fly in soft rings again,

[Here a special dance, by the Queen: swans flying in circles.]

Fly in soft rings again,

Swim by cool springs

For ten thousand years,

Swim by cool springs,

For ten thousand years.

MEN'S LEADER:

King Solomon,

[The refrain "King Solomon" may be intoned by the men's leader whenever it is needed to enable the women's leader to get to her starting point. All the refrains may be likewise used.]

King Solomon.

WOMEN'S LEADER:

The Queen of Sheba asked him like a lady,

Bowing most politely:

"What makes the roses bloom

Over the mossy tomb,

[They bow to each other — then give a pantomime indicating a great rose

garden.]</i>

Driving away the gloom
Ten thousand years?"

MEN'S LEADER:

King Solomon made answer to the lady,
Bowing most politely:

<i>[They bow and confer. The Queen reserved, but taking cognizance. The King wooing with ornate gestures of respect, and courtly animation.]</i>

"They bloom forever thinking of your beauty,
Your step so queenly and your eyes so lovely.
These keep the roses fair,
Young and without a care,
Making so sweet the air,
Ten thousand years."

BOTH LEADERS:

King Solomon he had four hundred sons.

<i>[The two, with a manner almost a cake walk, go forward.]</i>

CONGREGATION:

We were the sons.

<i>[On this line, King and Queen pause before the footlights.]</i>

BOTH LEADERS:

Crowned by the throngs again,

<i>[Pantomime of crowning the audience.]</i>

You shall make songs again,

[On this line they walk backward, playing great imaginary harps.]

Singing along

For ten thousand years.

BOTH LEADERS:

He gave each son four hundred prancing ponies.

[They go forward in a pony gallop, then stand pawing.]

CONGREGATION:

We were the ponies.

BOTH LEADERS:

You shall eat hay again,

[They nod their heads, starting to walk backward.]

In forests play again,

[A pony dance by both, in circles.]

Rampage and neigh

For ten thousand years.

MEN'S LEADER:

King Solomon he asked the Queen of Sheba,

Bowing most politely:

[They bow to each other, standing so that each one commands half of the stage.]

"What makes the oaktree grow
Hardy in sun and snow,
Never by wind brought low
Ten thousand years?"

WOMEN'S LEADER:

The Queen of Sheba answered like a lady,
Bowing most politely:

[They bow to each other, again, with pantomime indicating a forest.]

"It blooms forever thinking of your wisdom,
Your brave heart and the way you rule your kingdom.
These keep the oak secure,
Weaving its leafy lure,
Dreaming by fountains pure
Ten thousand years."

BOTH LEADERS:

The Queen of Sheba had four hundred sailors.

[They go to the footlights with a sailor's lurch and hitch.]

CONGREGATION:

We were the sailors.

[The King and Queen pause.]

BOTH LEADERS:

You shall bring spice and ore
Over the ocean's floor,

[They walk backward with slow long-armed gestures indicating the entire horizon line.]

Shipmates once more,
For ten thousand years.

WOMEN'S LEADER:

The Queen of Sheba asked him like a lady,
Bowling most politely:

[They bow to each other, the Queen indicating the depths of the sea.]

"Why is the sea so deep,
What secret does it keep
While tides a-roaring leap
Ten thousand years?"

MEN'S LEADER:

King Solomon made answer to the lady,
Bowling most politely:

[They bow to each other, then confer; the Queen reserved, but taking cognizance, the King wooing with ornate gestures of respect and courtly admiration.]

"My love for you is like the stormy ocean —
Too deep to understand,
Bending to your command,
Bringing your ships to land
Ten thousand years."
King Solomon,
King Solomon.

BOTH LEADERS:

King Solomon he had four hundred chieftains.

[They go to the footlights with the greatest possible strut.]

CONGREGATION:

We were the chieftains.

BOTH LEADERS:

You shall be proud again,

[The leaders stand with arms proudly folded.]

Dazzle the crowd again,

[They walk backward haughtily, laughing on the last lines.]

Laughing aloud
For ten thousand years.

[From here on the whole production to be much more solemn, elevated, religious.]

BOTH LEADERS:

King Solomon he had four hundred shepherds.

[The leaders go forward to the footlights carrying imaginary torches.]

CONGREGATION:

We were the shepherds.

[The man and woman pause at the footlights.]

BOTH LEADERS:

You shall have torches bright,

[They wander over the stage as though looking for lost lambs, with torches

held high.]</i>

Watching the folds by night,
Guarding the lambs aright,
Ten thousand years.

MEN'S LEADER:

King Solomon he asked the Queen of Sheba,
Bowing most politely:

<i>[The King kneels, and indicates the entire sky with one long slow
gesture.]</i>

"Why are the stars so high,
There in the velvet sky,
Rolling in rivers by,
Ten thousand years?"

WOMEN'S LEADER:

The Queen of Sheba answered like a lady,
Bowing most politely:

<i>[The Queen kneels opposite the King, and gives the same gesture as she
answers.]</i>

"They're singing of your kingdom to the angels,
They guide your chariot with their lamps and candles,
Therefore they burn so far—
So you can drive your car
Up where the prophets are,
Ten thousand years."

MEN'S LEADER:

King Solomon,
King Solomon.

BOTH LEADERS:

King Solomon he kept the Sabbath holy.
And spoke with tongues in prophet words so mighty

[The two stand, commanding the audience.]

We stamped and whirled and wept and shouted: —

[The man and woman stamp and whirl with great noise and solemnity.]

CONGREGATION RISES AND JOINS THE SONG:

.... "Glory."
We were his people.

BOTH LEADERS:

You shall be wild and gay,

[On these two lines, man and woman stamp and whirl again, gravely, magnificently.]

Green trees shall deck your way,
Sunday be every day,

[On these two lines they kneel, commanding the audience.]

Ten thousand years.

King Solomon,

[Now they rise and bow to each other and the audience, maintaining a certain intention of benediction.]

King Solomon.

Vachel Lindsay

The Broncho That Would Not Be Broken

A little colt — broncho, loaned to the farm
To be broken in time without fury or harm,
Yet black crows flew past you, shouting alarm,
Calling "Beware," with lugubrious singing...
The butterflies there in the bush were romancing,
The smell of the grass caught your soul in a trance,
So why be a-fearing the spurs and the traces,
O broncho that would not be broken of dancing?

You were born with the pride of the lords great and olden
Who danced, through the ages, in corridors golden.
In all the wide farm-place the person most human.
You spoke out so plainly with squealing and capering,
With whinnying, snorting, contorting and prancing,
As you dodged your pursuers, looking askance,
With Greek-footed figures, and Parthenon paces,
O broncho that would not be broken of dancing.

The grasshoppers cheered. "Keep whirling," they said.
The insolent sparrows called from the shed
"If men will not laugh, make them wish they were dead."
But arch were your thoughts, all malice displacing,
Though the horse-killers came, with snake-whips advancing.
You bantered and cantered away your last chance.
And they scourged you, with Hell in their speech and their faces,
O broncho that would not be broken of dancing.

"Nobody cares for you," rattled the crows,
As you dragged the whole reaper, next day, down the rows.
The three mules held back, yet you danced on your toes.
You pulled like a racer, and kept the mules chasing.
You tangled the harness with bright eyes side-glancing,
While the drunk driver bled you — a pole for a lance —
And the giant mules bit at you — keeping their places.
O broncho that would not be broken of dancing.

In that last afternoon your boyish heart broke.
The hot wind came down like a sledge-hammer stroke.
The blood-sucking flies to a rare feast awoke.

And they searched out your wounds, your death-warrant tracing.
And the merciful men, their religion enhancing,
Stopped the red reaper, to give you a chance.
Then you died on the prairie, and scorned all disgraces,
O broncho that would not be broken of dancing.

Vachel Lindsay

The Chinese Nightingale

<i>A Song in Chinese Tapestries</i>

"How, how," he said. "Friend Chang," I said,
"San Francisco sleeps as the dead—
Ended license, lust and play:
Why do you iron the night away?
Your big clock speaks with a deadly sound,
With a tick and a wail till dawn comes round.
While the monster shadows glower and creep,
What can be better for man than sleep?"

"I will tell you a secret," Chang replied;
"My breast with vision is satisfied,
And I see green trees and fluttering wings,
And my deathless bird from Shanghai sings."
Then he lit five fire-crackers in a pan.
"Pop, pop," said the fire-crackers, "cra-cra-crack."
He lit a joss stick long and black.
Then the proud gray joss in the corner stirred;
On his wrist appeared a gray small bird,
And this was the song of the gray small bird:
"Where is the princess, loved forever,
Who made Chang first of the kings of men?"

And the joss in the corner stirred again;
And the carved dog, curled in his arms, awoke,
Barked forth a smoke-cloud that whirled and broke.
It piled in a maze round the ironing-place,
And there on the snowy table wide
Stood a Chinese lady of high degree,
With a scornful, witching, tea-rose face....
Yet she put away all form and pride,
And laid her glimmering veil aside
With a childlike smile for Chang and for me.

The walls fell back, night was aflower,
The table gleamed in a moonlit bower,
While Chang, with a countenance carved of stone,

Ironed and ironed, all alone.
And thus she sang to the busy man Chang:
"Have you forgotten....
Deep in the ages, long, long ago,
I was your sweetheart, there on the sand—
Storm-worn beach of the Chinese land?
We sold our grain in the peacock town
Built on the edge of the sea-sands brown—
Built on the edge of the sea-sands brown....

"When all the world was drinking blood
From the skulls of men and bulls
And all the world had swords and clubs of stone,
We drank our tea in China beneath the sacred spice-trees,
And heard the curled waves of the harbor moan.
And this gray bird, in Love's first spring,
With a bright-bronze breast and a bronze-brown wing,
Captured the world with his carolling.
Do you remember, ages after,
At last the world we were born to own?
You were the heir of the yellow throne—
The world was the field of the Chinese man
And we were the pride of the Sons of Han?
We copied deep books and we carved in jade,
And wove blue silks in the mulberry shade...."

"I remember, I remember
That Spring came on forever,
That Spring came on forever,"
Said the Chinese nightingale.

My heart was filled with marvel and dream,
Though I saw the western street-lamps gleam,
Though dawn was bringing the western day,
Though Chang was a laundryman ironing away....
Mingled there with the streets and alleys,
The railroad-yard and the clock-tower bright,
Demon clouds crossed ancient valleys;
Across wide lotus-ponds of light
I marked a giant firefly's flight.

And the lady, rosy-red,

Flourished her fan, her shimmering fan,
Stretched her hand toward Chang, and said:
"Do you remember,
Ages after,
Our palace of heart-red stone?
Do you remember
The little doll-faced children
With their lanterns full of moon-fire,
That came from all the empire
Honoring the throne?—
The loveliest fête and carnival
Our world had ever known?
The sages sat about us
With their heads bowed in their beards,
With proper meditation on the sight.
Confucius was not born;
We lived in those great days
Confucius later said were lived aright....

And this gray bird, on that day of spring,
With a bright bronze breast, and a bronze-brown wing,
Captured the world with his carolling.
Late at night his tune was spent.
Peasants,
Sages,
Children,
Homeward went,
And then the bronze bird sang for you and me.
We walked alone. Our hearts were high and free.
I had a silvery name, I had a silvery name,
I had a silvery name — do you remember
The name you cried beside the tumbling sea?"

Chang turned not to the lady slim—
He bent to his work, ironing away;
But she was arch, and knowing and glowing,
And the bird on his shoulder spoke for him.

"Darling . . . darling . . . darling . . . darling . . ."
Said the Chinese nightingale.

The great gray joss on a rustic shelf,

Rakish and shrewd, with his collar awry,
Sang impolitely, as though by himself,
Drowning with his bellowing the nightingale's cry:
"Back through a hundred, hundred years
Hear the waves as they climb the piers,
Hear the howl of the silver seas,
Hear the thunder.
Hear the gongs of holy China
How the waves and tunes combine
In a rhythmic clashing wonder,
Incantation old and fine:
` Dragons, dragons, Chinese dragons,
Red fire-crackers, and green fire-crackers,
And dragons, dragons, Chinese dragons.'"

Then the lady, rosy-red,
Turned to her lover Chang and said:
"Dare you forget that turquoise dawn
When we stood in our mist-hung velvet lawn,
And worked a spell this great joss taught
Till a God of the Dragons was charmed and caught?
From the flag high over our palace home
He flew to our feet in rainbow-foam —
A king of beauty and tempest and thunder
Panting to tear our sorrows asunder.
A dragon of fair adventure and wonder.
We mounted the back of that royal slave
With thoughts of desire that were noble and grave.
We swam down the shore to the dragon-mountains,
We whirled to the peaks and the fiery fountains.
To our secret ivory house we were bourne.
We looked down the wonderful wing-filled regions
Where the dragons darted in glimmering legions.
Right by my breast the nightingale sang;
The old rhymes rang in the sunlit mist
That we this hour regain —
Song-fire for the brain.
When my hands and my hair and my feet you kissed,
When you cried for your heart's new pain,
What was my name in the dragon-mist,
In the rings of rainbowed rain?"

"Sorrow and love, glory and love,"
Said the Chinese nightingale.
"Sorrow and love, glory and love,"
Said the Chinese nightingale.

And now the joss broke in with his song:
"Dying ember, bird of Chang,
Soul of Chang, do you remember? —
Ere you returned to the shining harbor
There were pirates by ten thousand
Descended on the town
In vessels mountain-high and red and brown,
Moon-ships that climbed the storms and cut the skies.
On their prows were painted terrible bright eyes.
But I was then a wizard and a scholar and a priest;
I stood upon the sand;
With lifted hand I looked upon them
And sunk their vessels with my wizard eyes,
And the stately lacquer-gate made safe again.
Deep, deep below the bay, the sea-weed and the spray,
Embalmed in amber every pirate lies,
Embalmed in amber every pirate lies."

Then this did the noble lady say:
"Bird, do you dream of our home-coming day
When you flew like a courier on before
From the dragon-peak to our palace-door,
And we drove the steed in your singing path—
The ramping dragon of laughter and wrath:
And found our city all aglow,
And knighted this joss that decked it so?
There were golden fishes in the purple river
And silver fishes and rainbow fishes.
There were golden junks in the laughing river,
And silver junks and rainbow junks:
There were golden lilies by the bay and river,
And silver lilies and tiger-lilies,
And tinkling wind-bells in the gardens of the town
By the black-lacquer gate
Where walked in state
The kind king Chang
And his sweet-heart mate....

With his flag-born dragon
And his crown of pearl...and...jade,
And his nightingale reigning in the mulberry shade,
And sailors and soldiers on the sea-sands brown,
And priests who bowed them down to your song—
By the city called Han, the peacock town,
By the city called Han, the nightingale town,
The nightingale town."

Then sang the bird, so strangely gay,
Fluttering, fluttering, ghostly and gray,
A vague, unravelling, final tune,
Like a long unwinding silk cocoon;
Sang as though for the soul of him
Who ironed away in that bower dim: —
"I have forgotten
Your dragons great,
Merry and mad and friendly and bold.

Dim is your proud lost palace-gate.
I vaguely know
There were heroes of old,
Troubles more than the heart could hold,
There were wolves in the woods
Yet lambs in the fold,
Nests in the top of the almond tree....
The evergreen tree... and the mulberry tree...
Life and hurry and joy forgotten,
Years on years I but half-remember...
Man is a torch, then ashes soon,
May and June, then dead December,
Dead December, then again June.
Who shall end my dream's confusion?
Life is a loom, weaving illusion...
I remember, I remember
There were ghostly veils and laces...
In the shadowy bowery places...
With lovers' ardent faces
Bending to one another,
Speaking each his part.
They infinitely echo
In the red cave of my heart.

`Sweetheart, sweetheart, sweetheart.'
They said to one another.

They spoke, I think, of perils past.
They spoke, I think, of peace at last.
One thing I remember:
Spring came on forever,
Spring came on forever,"
Said the Chinese nightingale.

Vachel Lindsay

The City That Will Not Repent

Climbing the heights of Berkeley
Nightly I watch the West.
There lies new San Francisco,
Sea-maid in purple dressed,
Wearing a dancer's girdle
All to inflame desire:
Scorning her days of sackcloth,
Scorning her cleansing fire.

See, like a burning city
Sets now the red sun's dome.
See, mystic firebrands sparkle
There on each store and home.
See how the golden gateway
Burns with the day to be —
Torch-bearing fiends of portent
Loom o'er the earth and sea.

Not by the earthquake daunted
Nor by new fears made tame,
Painting her face and laughing
Plays she a new-found game.
Here on her half-cool cinders
'Frisco abides in mirth,
Planning the wildest splendor
Ever upon the earth.

Here on this crumbling rock-ledge
'Frisco her all will stake,
Blowing her bubble-towers,
Swearing they will not break,
Rearing her Fair transcendent,
Singing with piercing art,
Calling to Ancient Asia,
Wooing young Europe's heart.
Here where her God has scourged her
Wantoning, singing sweet:
Waiting her mad bad lovers
Here by the judgment-seat!

'Frisco, God's doughty foeman,
Scorns and blasphemes him strong.
Tho' he again should smite her
She would not slack her song.
Nay, she would shriek and rally —
'Frisco would ten times rise!
Not till her last tower crumbles,
Not till her last rose dies,
Not till the coast sinks seaward,
Not till the cold tides beat
Over the high white Shasta,
'Frisco will cry defeat.

God loves this rebel city,
Loves foemen brisk and game,
Tho', just to please the angels,
He may send down his flame.
God loves the golden leopard
Tho' he may spoil her lair.
God smites, yet loves the lion.
God makes the panther fair.

Dance then, wild guests of 'Frisco,
Yellow, bronze, white and red!
Dance by the golden gateway —
Dance, tho' he smite you dead!

Vachel Lindsay

The Congo: A Study Of The Negro Race

I. THEIR BASIC SAVAGERY

Fat black bucks in a wine-barrel room,
Barrel-house kings, with feet unstable,
Sagged and reeled and pounded on the table,
A deep rolling bass.
Pounded on the table,
Beat an empty barrel with the handle of a broom,
Hard as they were able,
Boom, boom, BOOM,
With a silk umbrella and the handle of a broom,
Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, BOOM.
THEN I had religion, THEN I had a vision.
I could not turn from their revel in derision.
THEN I SAW THE CONGO, CREEPING THROUGH THE BLACK,
More deliberate. Solemnly chanted.
CUTTING THROUGH THE FOREST WITH A GOLDEN TRACK.
Then along that riverbank
A thousand miles
Tattooed cannibals danced in files;
Then I heard the boom of the blood-lust song
And a thigh-bone beating on a tin-pan gong.
A rapidly piling climax of speed & racket.
And "BLOOD" screamed the whistles and the fifes of the warriors,
"BLOOD" screamed the skull-faced, lean witch-doctors,
"Whirl ye the deadly voo-doo rattle,
Harry the uplands,
Steal all the cattle,
Rattle-rattle, rattle-rattle,
Bing.
Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, BOOM,"
A roaring, epic, rag-time tune
With a philosophic pause.
From the mouth of the Congo
To the Mountains of the Moon.
Death is an Elephant,
Torch-eyed and horrible,
Shrilly and with a heavily accented metre.
Foam-flanked and terrible.

BOOM, steal the pygmies,
BOOM, kill the Arabs,
BOOM, kill the white men,
HOO, HOO, HOO.

Listen to the yell of Leopold's ghost

Like the wind in the chimney.

Burning in Hell for his hand-maimed host.

Hear how the demons chuckle and yell

Cutting his hands off, down in Hell.

Listen to the creepy proclamation,

Blown through the lairs of the forest-nation,

Blown past the white-ants' hill of clay,

Blown past the marsh where the butterflies play: --

"Be careful what you do,

Or Mumbo-Jumbo, God of the Congo,

All the "O" sounds very golden. Heavy accents very heavy. Light accents very light. Last line whispered.

And all of the other

Gods of the Congo,

Mumbo-Jumbo will hoo-doo you,

Mumbo-Jumbo will hoo-doo you,

Mumbo-Jumbo will hoo-doo you."

II. THEIR IRREPRESSIBLE HIGH SPIRITS

Wild crap-shooters with a whoop and a call

Rather shrill and high.

Danced the juba in their gambling-hall

And laughed fit to kill, and shook the town,

And guyed the policemen and laughed them down

With a boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, BOOM.

THEN I SAW THE CONGO, CREEPING THROUGH THE BLACK,

Read exactly as in first section.

CUTTING THROUGH THE FOREST WITH A GOLDEN TRACK.

A negro fairyland swung into view,

Lay emphasis on the delicate ideas. Keep as light-footed as possible.

A minstrel river

Where dreams come true.

The ebony palace soared on high

Through the blossoming trees to the evening sky.

The inlaid porches and casements shone

With gold and ivory and elephant-bone.
And the black crowd laughed till their sides were sore
At the baboon butler in the agate door,
And the well-known tunes of the parrot band
That trilled on the bushes of that magic land.

A troupe of skull-faced witch-men came
<i>With pomposity.</i>
Through the agate doorway in suits of flame,
Yea, long-tailed coats with a gold-leaf crust
And hats that were covered with diamond-dust.
And the crowd in the court gave a whoop and a call
And danced the juba from wall to wall.
But the witch-men suddenly stilled the throng
<i>With a great deliberation & ghostliness.</i>
With a stern cold glare, and a stern old song: --
"Mumbo-Jumbo will hoo-doo you." ...
Just then from the doorway, as fat as shotes,
<i>With overwhelming assurance, good cheer, and pomp.</i>
Came the cake-walk princes in their long red coats,
Canes with a brilliant lacquer shine,
And tall silk hats that were red as wine.
And they pranced with their butterfly partners there,
<i>With growing speed and sharply marked dance-rhythm</i>
Coal-black maidens with pearls in their hair,
Knee-skirts trimmed with the jessamine sweet,
And bells on their ankles and little black-feet.
And the couples railed at the chant and the frown
Of the witch-men lean, and laughed them down.
(O rare was the revel, and well worth while
That made those glowering witch-men smile.)

The cake-walk royalty then began
To walk for a cake that was tall as a man
To the tune of "Boomlay, boomlay, BOOM,"
While the witch-men laughed, with a sinister air,
<i>With a touch of negro dialect, and as rapidly as possible toward the end.</i>
And sang with the scalawags prancing there: --
"Walk with care, walk with care,
Or Mumbo-Jumbo, God of the Congo,
And all the other
Gods of the Congo,

Mumbo-Jumbo will hoo-doo you.
Beware, beware, walk with care,
Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, boom.
Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, boom.
Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, boom.
Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay,
BOOM."

Oh rare was the revel, and well worth while
<i>Slow philosophic calm.</i>
That made those glowering witch-men smile.

<i>III. THE HOPE OF THEIR RELIGION</i>

A good old negro in the slums of the town
<i>Heavy bass. With a literal imitation of camp-meeting racket, and trance.</i>
Preached at a sister for her velvet gown.
Howled at a brother for his low-down ways,
His prowling, guzzling, sneak-thief days.
Beat on the Bible till he wore it out
Starting the jubilee revival shout.
And some had visions, as they stood on chairs,
And sang of Jacob, and the golden stairs,
And they all repented, a thousand strong
From their stupor and savagery and sin and wrong
And slammed with their hymn books till they shook the room
With "glory, glory, glory,"
And "Boom, boom, BOOM."
THEN I SAW THE CONGO, CREEPING THROUGH THE BLACK,
<i>Exactly as in the first section. Begin with terror and power, end with joy.</i>
CUTTING THROUGH THE FOREST WITH A GOLDEN TRACK.
And the gray sky opened like a new-rent veil
And showed the Apostles with their coats of mail.
In bright white steel they were seated round
And their fire-eyes watched where the Congo wound.
And the twelve Apostles, from their thrones on high
Thrilled all the forest with their heavenly cry: --
"Mumbo-Jumbo will die in the jungle;
<i>Sung to the tune of "Hark, ten thousand harps and voices."</i>
Never again will he hoo-doo you,
Never again will he hoo-doo you."

Then along that river, a thousand miles
<i>With growing deliberation and joy.</i>
The vine-snared trees fell down in files.
Pioneer angels cleared the way
For a Congo paradise, for babes at play,
For sacred capitals, for temples clean.
Gone were the skull-faced witch-men lean.
There, where the wild ghost-gods had wailed
<i>In a rather high key -- as delicately as possible.</i>
A million boats of the angels sailed
With oars of silver, and prows of blue
And silken pennants that the sun shone through.
'Twas a land transfigured, 'twas a new creation.
Oh, a singing wind swept the negro nation
And on through the backwoods clearing flew: --
"Mumbo-Jumbo is dead in the jungle.
<i>To the tune of "Hark, ten thousand harps and voices."</i>
Never again will he hoo-doo you.
Never again will he hoo-doo you.

Redeemed were the forests, the beasts and the men,
And only the vulture dared again
By the far, lone mountains of the moon
To cry, in the silence, the Congo tune: --
"Mumbo-Jumbo will hoo-doo you,
<i>Dying down into a penetrating, terrified whisper.</i>
"Mumbo-Jumbo will hoo-doo you.
Mumbo ... Jumbo ... will ... hoo-doo ... you."

Vachel Lindsay

The Conscientious Deacon

(A song to be syncopated as you please)

Black cats, grey cats, green cats miau—
Chasing the deacon who stole the cow.

He runs and tumbles, he tumbles and runs.
He sees big white men with dogs and guns.

He falls down flat. He turns to stare—
No cats, no dogs, and no men there.

But black shadows, grey shadows, green shadows come.
The wind says, 'Miau!' and the rain says, 'Hum!'

He goes straight home. He dreams all night.
He howls. He puts his wife in a fright.

Black devils, grey devils, green devils shine—
Yes, by Sambo,
And the fire looks fine!
Cat devils, dog devils, cow devils grin—
Yes, by Sambo,
And the fire rolls in.

And so, next day, to avoid the worst—
He takes that cow
Where he found her first.

Vachel Lindsay

The Cornfields

The cornfields rise above mankind,
Lifting white torches to the blue,
Each season not ashamed to be
Magnificently decked for you.

What right have you to call them yours,
And in brute lust of riches burn
Without some radiant penance wrought,
Some beautiful, devout return?

Vachel Lindsay

The Dandelion

O dandelion, rich and haughty,
King of village flowers!
Each day is coronation time,
You have no humble hours.
I like to see you bring a troop
To beat the blue-grass spears,
To scorn the lawn-mower that would be
Like fate's triumphant shears,
Your yellow heads are cut away,
It seems your reign is o'er.
By noon you raise a sea of stars
More golden than before.

Vachel Lindsay

The Dangerous Little Boy Fairies

In fairyland the little boys
Would rather fight than eat their meals.
They like to chase a gauze-winged fly
And catch and beat him till he squeals.
Sometimes they come to sleeping men
Armed with the deadly red-rose thorn,
And those that feel its fearful wound
Repent the day that they were born.

Vachel Lindsay

The Doll Upon The Topmost Bough

This doll upon the topmost bough,
This playmate-gift, in Christmas dress,
Was taken down and brought to me
One sleety night most comfortless.

Her hair was gold, her dolly-sash
Was gray brocade, most good to see.
The dear toy laughed, and I forgot
The ill the new year promised me.

Vachel Lindsay

The Dreamer

“Why do you seek the sun,
In your Bubble-Crown ascending?
Your chariot will melt to mist,
Your crown will have an ending.”
“Nay, sun is but a Bubble,
Earth is a whiff of Foam—
To my caves on the coast of Thule
Each night I call them home.
Thence Faiths blow forth to angels
And Loves blow forth to men—
They break and turn to nothing
And I make them whole again:
On the crested waves of chaos
I ride them back reborn:
New stars I bring at evening
For those that burst at morn:
My soul is the wind of Thule
And evening is the sign,
The sun is but a Bubble,
A fragile child of mine.”

Vachel Lindsay

The Drunkard's Funeral

"Yes," said the sister with the little pinched face,
The busy little sister with the funny little tract: —
"This is the climax, the grand fifth act.
There rides the proud, at the finish of his race.
There goes the hearse, the mourners cry,
The respectable hearse goes slowly by.
The wife of the dead has money in her purse,
The children are in health, so it might have been worse.
That fellow in the coffin led a life most foul.
A fierce defender of the red bar-tender,
At the church he would rail,
At the preacher he would howl.
He planted every deviltry to see it grow.
He wasted half his income on the lewd and the low.
He would trade engender for the red bar-tender,
He would homage render to the red bar-tender,
And in ultimate surrender to the red bar-tender,
He died of the tremens, as crazy as a loon,
And his friends were glad, when the end came soon.
There goes the hearse, the mourners cry,
The respectable hearse goes slowly by.
And now, good friends, since you see how it ends,
Let each nation-mender flay the red bar-tender, —
Abhor
The transgression
Of the red bar-tender, —
Ruin
The profession
Of the red bar-tender:
Force him into business where his work does good.
Let him learn how to plough, let him learn to chop wood,
Let him learn how to plough, let him learn to chop wood.

"The moral,
The conclusion,
The verdict now you know:—
'The saloon must go,
The saloon must go,
The saloon,

The saloon,
The saloon,
Must go."

"You are right, little sister," I said to myself,
"You are right, good sister," I said.
"Though you wear a mussy bonnet
On your little gray head,
You are right, little sister," I said.

Vachel Lindsay

The Drunkards In The Street

The Drunkards in the street are calling one another,
Heeding not the night-wind, great of heart and gay, —
Publicans and wantons —
Calling, laughing, calling,
While the Spirit bloweth Space and Time away.

Why should I feel the sobbing, the secrecy, the glory,
This comforter, this fitful wind divine?
I the cautious Pharisee, the scribe, the whited sepulchre —
I have no right to God, he is not mine.

Within their gutters, drunkards dream of Hell.
I say my prayers by my white bed to-night,
With the arms of God about me, with the angels singing, singing
Until the grayness of my soul grows white.

Vachel Lindsay

The Eagle That Is Forgotten

Sleep softly ... eagle forgotten ... under the stone.
Time has its way with you there, and the clay has its own.

"We have buried him now," thought your foes, and in secret rejoiced.
They made a brave show of their mourning, their hatred unvoiced.
They had snarled at you, barked at you, foamed at you, day after day.
Now you were ended. They praised you ... and laid you away.

The others, that mourned you in silence and terror and truth,
The window bereft of her crust, and the boy without youth,
The mocked and the scorned and the sounded, the lame and the poor,
That should have remembered forever, ... Remember no more.

Where are those lovers of yours, on what name do they call,
The lost, that in armies wept over your funeral pall?
They call on the names of a hundred high-valiant ones,
A hundred white eagles have risen, the sons of your sons,
The zeal in their wings is a zeal that your dreaming began.
The valor that wore out your soul in the service of man.

Sleep softly ... eagle forgotten... under the stone.
Time has its way with you there, and the clay has its own.
Sleep on, O brave-hearted, O wise man that kindled the flame --
To live in mankind is far more than to live in a name,
To live in mankind, far, far more than ... to live in a name.

Vachel Lindsay

The Empty Boats

Why do I see these empty boats, sailing on airy seas?
One haunted me the whole night long, swaying with every breeze,
Returning always near the eaves, or by the skylight glass:
There it will wait me many weeks, and then, at last, will pass.
Each soul is haunted by a ship in which that soul might ride
And climb the glorious mysteries of Heaven's silent tide
In voyages that change the very metes and bounds of Fate —
O empty boats, we all refuse, that by our windows wait!

Vachel Lindsay

The Encyclopaedia

"If I could set the moon upon
This table," said my friend,
"Among the standard poets
And brochures without end,
And noble prints of old Japan,
How empty they would seem,
By that encyclopaedia
Of whim and glittering dream."

Vachel Lindsay

The Fairy Bridal-Hymn

[This is the hymn to Eleanor, daughter of Mab and a golden drone, sung by the Locust choir when the fairy child marries her God, the yellow rose]

This is a song to the white-armed one
Cold in the breast as the frost-wrapped Spring,
Whose feet are slow on the hills of life,
Whose round mouth rules by whispering.

This is a song to the white-armed one
Whose breast shall burn as a Summer field,
Whose wings shall rise to the doors of gold,
Whose poppy lips to the God shall yield.

This is a song to the white-armed one
When the closing rose shall bind her fast,
And a song of the song their blood shall sing,
When the Rose-God drinks her soul at last.

Vachel Lindsay

The Firemen's Ball

<i>SECTION ONE</i>

"Give the engines room,
Give the engines room."
Louder, faster
The little band-master
Whips up the fluting,
Hurries up the tooting.
He thinks that he stands,
[*] The reins in his hands,
In the fire-chief's place
In the night alarm chase.
The cymbals whang,
The kettledrums bang: —
"Clear the street,
Clear the street,
Clear the street — Boom, boom.
In the evening gloom,
In the evening gloom,
Give the engines room,
Give the engines room.
Lest souls be trapped
In a terrible tomb."
The sparks and the pine-brands
Whirl on high
From the black and reeking alleys
To the wide red sky.
Hear the hot glass crashing,
Hear the stone steps hissing.
Coal black streams
Down the gutters pour.
There are cries for help
From a far fifth floor.
For a longer ladder
Hear the fire-chief call.
Listen to the music
Of the firemen's ball.
Listen to the music
Of the firemen's ball.

"Tis the
NIGHT
Of doom,"
Say the ding-dong doom-bells.
"NIGHT
Of doom,"
Say the ding-dong doom-bells.

Faster, faster
The red flames come.
"Hum grum," say the engines,
"Hum grum grum."
"Buzz, buzz,"
Says the crowd.
"See, see,"
Calls the crowd.
And the high walls fall:—
Listen to the music
Of the firemen's ball
"Tis the
NIGHT
Of doom,"
Say the ding-dong doom-bells.
NIGHT
Of doom,
Say the ding-dong doom-bells.
Whangaranga, whangaranga,
Whang, whang, whang,
Clang, clang, clangaranga,
Clang, clang, clang.
Clang—a—ranga—
Clang—a—ranga—
Clang,
Clang,
Clang.
Listen—to—the—music—
Of the firemen's ball—

<i>SECTION TWO</i>

"Many's the heart that's breaking

If we could read them all
After the ball is over."

(An old song.)

Scornfully, gaily
The bandmaster sways,
Changing the strain
That the wild band plays.
With a red and royal intoxication,
A tangle of sounds
And a syncopation,
Sweeping and bending
From side to side,
Master of dreams,
With a peacock pride.
A lord of the delicate flowers of delight
He drives compunction
Back through the night.
Dreams he's a soldier
Plumed and spurred,
And valiant lads
Arise at his word,
Flaying the sober
Thoughts he hates,
Driving them back
From the dream-town gates.
How can the languorous
Dancers know
The red dreams come
When the good dreams go?
"'Tis the
NIGHT
Of love,"
Call the silver joy-bells,
"NIGHT
Of love,"
Call the silver joy-bells.
"Honey and wine,
Honey and wine.
Sing low, now, violins,
Sing, sing low,

Blow gently, wood-wind,
Mellow and slow.
Like midnight poppies
The sweethearts bloom.
Their eyes flash power,
Their lips are dumb.
Faster and faster
Their pulses come,
Though softer now
The drum-beats fall.
Honey and wine,
Honey and wine.
'Tis the firemen's ball,
'Tis the firemen's ball.

"I am slain,"
Cries true-love
There in the shadow.
"And I die,"
Cries true-love,
There laid low.
"When the fire-dreams come,
The wise dreams go."
BUT HIS CRY IS DROWNED
BY THE PROUD BAND-MASTER.

And now great gongs whang,
Sharper, faster,
And kettledrums rattle
And hide the shame
With a swish and a swirk
In dead love's name.
Red and crimson
And scarlet and rose
Magical poppies
The sweethearts bloom.
The scarlet stays
When the rose-flush goes,
And love lies low
In a marble tomb.
"Tis the
NIGHT

Of doom,"
Call the ding-dong doom-bells.
"NIGHT
Of Doom,"
Call the ding-dong doom-bells.
Hark how the piccolos still make cheer.
'Tis a moonlight night in the spring of the year."
CLANGARANGA, CLANGARANGA,
CLANG . . . CLANG . . . CLANG.
CLANG . . . A . . . RANGA . . .
CLANG . . . A . . . RANGA . . .
CLANG . . . CLANG . . . CLANG . . .
LISTEN . . . TO . . . THE . . . MUSIC . . .
OF . . . THE . . . FIREMEN'S BALL . . .
LISTEN . . . TO . . . THE . . . MUSIC . . .
OF . . . THE . . . FIREMEN'S . . . BALL . . .

<i>SECTION THREE</i>

<i>In Which, contrary to Artistic Custom, the moral of the piece is placed before the reader.</i>

<i>(From the first Khandaka of the Mahavagga: "There Buddha thus addressed his disciples: 'Everything, O mendicants, is burning. With what fire is it burning? I declare unto you it is burning with the fire of passion, with the fire of anger, with the fire of ignorance. It is burning with the anxieties of birth, decay and death, grief, lamentation, suffering and despair. . . . A disciple, . . . becoming weary of all that, divests himself of passion. By absence of passion, he is made free.'")</i>

I once knew a teacher,
Who turned from desire,
Who said to the young men
"Wine is a fire."
Who said to the merchants:—
"Gold is a flame
That sears and tortures
If you play at the game."
I once knew a teacher
Who turned from desire

Who said to the soldiers,
 "Hate is a fire."
 Who said to the statesmen:—
 "Power is a flame
 That flays and blisters
 If you play at the game."
 I once knew a teacher
 Who turned from desire,
 Who said to the lordly,
 "Pride is a fire."
 Who thus warned the revellers:—
 "Life is a flame.
 Be cold as the dew
 Would you win at the game
 With hearts like the stars,
 With hearts like the stars."
 SO BEWARE,
 SO BEWARE,
 SO BEWARE OF THE FIRE.
 Clear the streets,
 BOOM, BOOM,
 Clear the streets,
 BOOM, BOOM,
 GIVE THE ENGINES ROOM,
 GIVE THE ENGINES ROOM,
 LEST SOULS BE TRAPPED
 IN A TERRIBLE TOMB.
 SAYS THE SWIFT WHITE HORSE
 TO THE SWIFT BLACK HORSE:—
 "THERE GOES THE ALARM,
 THERE GOES THE ALARM.
 THEY ARE HITCHED, THEY ARE OFF,
 THEY ARE GONE IN A FLASH,
 AND THEY STRAIN AT THE DRIVER'S IRON ARM."
 CLANG . . . A . . . RANGA, . . . CLANG.. A . . . RANGA. . . .
 CLANG . . . CLANG . . . CLANG. . . .
 CLANG . . . A . . . RANGA. . . . CLANG . . . A . . . RANGA. . . .
 CLANG . . . CLANG . . . CLANG. . . .
 CLANG . . . A . . . RANGA. . . . CLANG . . . A . . . RANGA. . . .
 CLANG . . . CLANG . . . CLANG

Vachel Lindsay

The Flower Of Mending

(To Eudora, after I had had certain dire adventures.)

When Dragon-fly would fix his wings,
When Snail would patch his house,
When moths have marred the overcoat
Of tender Mister Mouse,

The pretty creatures go with haste
To the sunlit blue-grass hills
Where the Flower of Mending yields the wax
And webs to help their ills.

The hour the coats are waxed and webbed
They fall into a dream,
And when they wake the ragged robes
Are joined without a seam.

My heart is but a dragon-fly,
My heart is but a mouse,
My heart is but a haughty snail
In a little stony house.

Your hand was honey-comb to heal,
Your voice a web to bind.
You were a Mending Flower to me
To cure my heart and mind.

Vachel Lindsay

The Flower-Fed Buffaloes

The flower-fed buffaloes of the spring
In the days of long ago,
Ranged where the locomotives sing
And the prairie flowers lie low:—
The tossing, blooming, perfumed grass
Is swept away by the wheat,
Wheels and wheels and wheels spin by
In the spring that still is sweet.
But the flower-fed buffaloes of the spring
Left us, long ago.
They gore no more, they bellow no more,
They trundle around the hills no more:—
With the Blackfeet, lying low,
With the Pawnees, lying low,
Lying low.

Vachel Lindsay

The Gamblers

Life's a jail where men have common lot.
Gaunt the one who has, and who has not.
All our treasures neither less nor more,
Bread alone comes thro' the guarded door.
Cards are foolish in this jail, I think,
Yet they play for shoes, for drabs and drink.
She, my lawless, sharp-tongued gypsy maid
Will not scorn with me this jail-bird trade,
Pets some fox-eyed boy who turns the trick,
Tho' he win a button or a stick,
Pencil, garter, ribbon, corset-lace —
<i>His</i> the glory, <i>mine</i> is the disgrace.

Sweet, I'd rather lose than win despite
Love of hearty words and maids polite.
"Love's a gamble," say you. I deny.
Love's a gift. I love you till I die.
Gamblers fight like rats. I will not play.
All I ever had I gave away.
All I ever coveted was peace
Such as comes if we have jail release.
Cards are puzzles, tho' the prize be gold,
Cards help not the bread that tastes of mold,
Cards dye not your hair to black more deep,
Cards make not the children cease to weep.

Scorned, I sit with half shut eyes all day —
Watch the cataract of sunshine play
Down the wall, and dance upon the floor.
Sun, come down and break the dungeon door!
Of such gold dust could I make a key, —
Turn the bolt — how soon we would be free!
Over borders we would hurry on
Safe by sunrise farms, and springs of dawn,
Wash our wounds and jail stains there at last,
Azure rivers flowing, flowing past.
<i>God has great estates just past the line,
Green farms for all, and meat and corn and wine.</i>

Vachel Lindsay

The Ghosts Of The Buffaloes

Last night at black midnight I woke with a cry,
The windows were shaking, there was thunder on high,
The floor was a-tremble, the door was a-jar,
White fires, crimson fires, shone from afar.
I rushed to the door yard. The city was gone.
My home was a hut without orchard or lawn.
It was mud-smear and logs near a whispering stream,
Nothing else built by man could I see in my dream...
Then...
Ghost-kings came headlong, row upon row,
Gods of the Indians, torches aglow.

They mounted the bear and the elk and the deer,
And eagles gigantic, aged and sere,
They rode long-horn cattle, they cried "A-la-la."
They lifted the knife, the bow, and the spear,
They lifted ghost-torches from dead fires below,
The midnight made grand with the cry "A-la-la."
The midnight made grand with a red-god charge,
A red-god show,
A red-god show,
"A-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la."

With bodies like bronze, and terrible eyes
Came the rank and the file, with catamount cries,
Gibbering, yipping, with hollow-skull clacks,
Riding white bronchos with skeleton backs,
Scalp-hunters, beaded and spangled and bad,
Naked and lustful and foaming and mad,
Flashing primeval demoniac scorn,
Blood-thirst and pomp amid darkness reborn,
Power and glory that sleep in the grass
While the winds and the snows and the great rains pass.
They crossed the gray river, thousands abreast,
They rode in infinite lines to the west,
Tide upon tide of strange fury and foam,
Spirits and wraiths, the blue was their home,
The sky was their goal where the star-flags are furled,
And on past those far golden splendors they whirled.

They burned to dim meteors, lost in the deep.
And I turned in dazed wonder, thinking of sleep.

And the wind crept by
Alone, unkempt, unsatisfied,
The wind cried and cried —
Muttered of massacres long past,
Buffaloes in shambles vast...
An owl said: "Hark, what is a-wing?"
I heard a cricket carolling,
I heard a cricket carolling,
I heard a cricket carolling.

Then...
Snuffing the lightning that crashed from on high
Rose royal old buffaloes, row upon row.
The lords of the prairie came galloping by.
And I cried in my heart "A-la-la, a-la-la,
A red-god show,
A red-god show,
A-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la."

Buffaloes, buffaloes, thousands abreast,
A scourge and amazement, they swept to the west.
With black bobbing noses, with red rolling tongues,
Coughing forth steam from their leather-wrapped lungs,
Cows with their calves, bulls big and vain,
Goring the laggards, shaking the mane,
Stamping flint feet, flashing moon eyes,
Pompous and owlish, shaggy and wise.

Like sea-cliffs and caves resounded their ranks
With shoulders like waves, and undulant flanks.
Tide upon tide of strange fury and foam,
Spirits and wraiths, the blue was their home,
The sky was their goal where the star-flags are furled,
And on past those far golden splendors they whirled.
They burned to dim meteors, lost in the deep,
And I turned in dazed wonder, thinking of sleep.

I heard a cricket's cymbals play,
A scarecrow lightly flapped his rags,

And a pan that hung by his shoulder rang,
Rattled and thumped in a listless way,
And now the wind in the chimney sang,
The wind in the chimney,
The wind in the chimney,
The wind in the chimney,
Seemed to say: —
"Dream, boy, dream,
If you anywise can.
To dream is the work
Of beast or man.
Life is the west-going dream-storm's breath,
Life is a dream, the sigh of the skies,
The breath of the stars, that nod on their pillows
With their golden hair mussed over their eyes."
The locust played on his musical wing,
Sang to his mate of love's delight.
I heard the whippoorwill's soft fret.
I heard a cricket carolling,
I heard a cricket carolling,
I heard a cricket say: "Good-night, good-night,
Good-night, good-night,...good-night."

Vachel Lindsay

The Golden Whales Of California

Part I.A Short Walk Along the Coast

Yes, I have walked in California,
And the rivers there are blue and white.
Thunderclouds of grapes hang on the mountains.
Bears in the meadows pitch and fight.
(Limber, double- jointed lords of fate,
Proud native sons of the Golden Gate.)
And flowers burst like bombs in California,
Exploding on tomb and tower.
And the panther-cats chase the red rabbits,
Scatter their young blood every hour.
And the cattle on the hills of California
And the very swine in the holes
Have ears of silk and velvet
And tusks like long white poles.
And the very swine, big hearted,
Walk with pride to their doom
For they feed on the sacred raisins
Where the great black agates loom.

Goshawfuls are Burbanked with the grizzly bears.
At midnight their children come clanking up the stairs.
They wriggle up the canyons,
Nose into the caves,
And swallow the papooses and the Indian braves.
The trees climb so high the crows are dizzy
Flying to their nests at the top.
While the jazz-birds screech, and storm the brazen beach
And the sea-stars turn flip flop.
The solid Golden Gate soars up to Heaven.
Perfumed cataracts are hurled
From the zones of silver snow
To the ripening rye below,
To the land of the lemon and the nut
And the biggest ocean in the world.
While the Native Sons, like lords tremendous
Lift up their heads with chants sublime,
And the band-stands sound the trombone, the saxophone and xylophone

And the whales roar in perfect tune and time.
And the chanting of the whales of California
I have set my heart upon.
It is sometimes a play by Belasco,
Sometimes a tale of Prester John.

Part II. The Chanting of the Whales

North to the Pole, south to the Pole
The whales of California wallow and roll.
They dive and breed and snort and play
And the sun struck feed them every day
Boatloads of citrons, quinces, cherries,
Of bloody strawberries, plums and beets,
Hogsheads of pomegranates, vats of sweets,
And the he-whales chant like a cyclone blares,
Proclaiming the California noons
So gloriously hot some days
The snake is fried in the desert
And the flea no longer plays.
There are ten gold suns in California
When all other lands have one,
For the Golden Gate must have due light
And persimmons be well-done.
And the hot whales slosh and cool in the wash
And the fume of the hollow sea.
Rally and roam in the loblolly foam
And whoop that their souls are free.
(Limber, double-jointed lords of fate,
Proud native sons of the Golden Gate.)
And they chant of the forty-niners

Who sailed round the cape for their loot
With guns and picks and washpans
And a dagger in each boot.
How the richest became the King of England,
The poorest became the King of Spain,
The bravest a colonel in the army,
And a mean one went insane.
The ten gold suns are so blasting
The sunstruck scoot for the sea

And turn to mermen and mermaids
And whoop that their souls are free.
(Limber, double- jointed lords of fate,
Proud native sons of the Golden Gate.)
And they take young whales for their bronchos
And old whales for their steeds,
Harnessed with golden seaweeds,
And driven with golden reeds.
They dance on the shore throwing rose-leaves.
They kiss all night throwing hearts.
They fight like scalded wildcats
When the least bit of fighting starts.
They drink, these belly-busting devils
And their tremens shake the ground.
And then they repent like whirlwinds

And never were such saints found.
They will give you their plug tobacco.
They will give you the shirts off their backs.
They will cry for your every sorrow,
Put ham in your haversacks.
And they feed the cuttlefishes, whales and skates
With dates and figs in bales and crates :
Shiploads of sweet potatoes, peanuts, rutabagas,
Honey in hearts of gourds:
Grapefruits and oranges barrelled with apples,
And spices like sharp sweet swords.

Part III. St. Francis of San Francisco

But the surf is white, down the long strange coast
With breasts that shake with sighs,
And the ocean of all oceans
Holds salt from weary eyes.
St. Francis comes to his city at night
And stands in the brilliant electric light
And his swans that prophesy night and day
Would soothe his heart that wastes away :
The giant swans of California
That nest on the Golden Gate
And beat through the clouds serenely

And on St. Francis wait.
But St. Francis shades his face in his cowl
And stands in the street like a lost grey owl.
He thinks of gold . . . gold.
He sees on far redwoods
Dewfall and dawning:
Deep in Yosemite
Shadows and shrines:
He hears from far valleys
Prayers by young Christians,
He sees their due penance
So cruel, so cold ;
He sees them made holy,
White-souled like young aspens
With whimsies and fancies untold:
The opposite of gold.
And the mighty mountain swans of California
Whose eggs are like mosque domes of Ind,
Cry with curious notes
That their eggs are good for boats
To toss upon the foam and the wind.
He beholds on far rivers
The venturesome lovers
Sailing for the sea
All night

In swanshells white.
He sees them far on the ocean prevailing
In a year and a month and a day of sailing
Leaving the whales and their whoop unfailing
On through the lightning, ice and confusion
North of the North Pole,
South of the South Pole,
And west of the west of the west of the west,
To the shore of Heartache's Cure,
The opposite of gold,
On and on like Columbus
With faith and eggshell sure.

Part IV. The Voice of the Earthquake

But what is the earthquake s cry at last
Making St. Francis yet aghast:
' Oh the flashing cornucopia of haughty
From here on, the audience California joins in the

Is gold, gold, gold.
Their brittle speech and their clutching reach
Is gold, gold, gold.
What is the fire-engine s ding dong bell?
The burden of the burble of the bull-frog in the well?
Gold, gold, gold.

What is the color of the cup and plate
And knife and fork of the chief of state?
Gold, gold, gold.
What is the flavor of the Bartlett pear?
What is the savor of the salt sea air?
Gold, gold, gold.
What is the color of the sea-girl s hair?
Gold, gold, gold.
In the church of Jesus and the streets of Venus:
Gold, gold, gold.
What color are the cradle and the bridal bed?
What color are the coffins of the great grey dead?
Gold, gold, gold.
What is the hue of the big whales hide?
Gold, gold, gold.
What is the color, of their guts* inside?
Gold, gold, gold.
' What is the color of the pumpkins in the moonlight?
Gold, gold, gold.
The color of the moth and the worm in the starlight?
Gold, gold, gold.

Vachel Lindsay

The Haughty Snail-King

Twelve snails went walking after night.
They'd creep an inch or so,
Then stop and bug their eyes
And blow.
Some folks . . . are . . . deadly . . . slow.
Twelve snails went walking yestereve,
Led by their fat old king.
They were so dull their princeling had
No sceptre, robe or ring—
Only a paper cap to wear
When nightly journeying.

This king-snail said: "I feel a thought
Within. . . . It blossoms soon. . . .
O little courtiers of mine, . . .
I crave a pretty boo. . . .
Oh, yes . . . (High thoughts with effort come
And well-bred snails are ALMOST dumb.)
"I wish I had a yellow crown
As glistening . . . as . . . the moon."

Vachel Lindsay

The Hearth Eternal

There dwelt a widow learned and devout,
Behind our hamlet on the eastern hill.
Three sons she had, who went to find the world.
They promised to return, but wandered still.
The cities used them well, they won their way,
Rich gifts they sent, to still their mother's sighs.
Worn out with honors, and apart from her,
They died as many a self-made exile dies.
The mother had a hearth that would not quench,
The deathless embers fought the creeping gloom.
She said to us who came with wondering eyes—
"This is a magic fire, a magic room."
The pine burned out, but still the coals glowed on,
Her grave grew old beneath the pear-tree shade,
And yet her crumbling home enshrined the light.
The neighbors peering in were half afraid.
Then sturdy beggars, needing fagots, came,
One at a time, and stole the walls, and floor.
They left a naked stone, but how it blazed!
And in the thunderstorm it flared the more.
And now it was that men were heard to say,
"This light should be beloved by all the town."
At last they made the slope a place of prayer,
Where marvellous thoughts from God came sweeping down.
They left their churches crumbling in the sun,
They met on that soft hill, one brotherhood;
One strength and valor only, one delight,
One laughing, brooding genius, great and good.
Now many gray-haired prodigals come home,
The place out-flames the cities of the land,
And twice-born Brahmans reach us from afar,
With subtle eyes prepared to understand.
Higher and higher burns the eastern steep,
Showing the roads that march from every place,
A steady beacon o'er the weary leagues,
At dead of night it lights the traveller's face!
Thus has the widow conquered half the earth,
She who increased in faith, though all alone,
Who kept her empty house a magic place,

Has made the town a holy angel's throne.

Vachel Lindsay

The Hope Of The Resurrection

Though I have watched so many mourners weep
O'er the real dead, in dull earth laid asleep—
Those dead seemed but the shadows of my days
That passed and left me in the sun's bright rays.
Now though you go on smiling in the sun
Our love is slain, and love and you were one.
You are the first, you I have known so long,
Whose death was deadly, a tremendous wrong.
Therefore I seek the faith that sets it right
Amid the lilies and the candle-light.
I think on Heaven, for in that air so dear
We two may meet, confused and parted here.
Ah, when man's dearest dies, 'tis then he goes
To that old balm that heals the centuries' woes.
Then Christ's wild cry in all the streets is rife:—
"I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Vachel Lindsay

The Horrid Voice Of Science

'There's machinery in the butterfly;
There's a mainspring to the bee;
There's hydraulics to a daisy,
And contraptions to a tree.

'If we could see the birdie
That makes the chirping sound
With x-ray, scientific eyes,
We could see the wheels go round.'

And I hope all men
Who think like this
Will soon lie
Underground.

Vachel Lindsay

The Illinois Village

O you who lose the art of hope,
Whose temples seem to shrine a lie,
Whose sidewalks are but stones of fear,
Who weep that Liberty must die,
Turn to the little prairie towns,
Your higher hope shall yet begin.
On every side awaits you there
Some gate where glory enters in.

Yet when I see the flocks of girls,
Watching the Sunday train go thro'
(As tho' the whole wide world went by)
With eyes that long to travel too,
I sigh, despite my soul made glad
By cloudy dresses and brown hair,
Sigh for the sweet life wrenched and torn
By thundering commerce, fierce and bare.
Nymphs of the wheat these girls should be:
Kings of the grove, their lovers strong.
Why are they not inspired, aflame?
This beauty calls for valiant song —

For men to carve these fairy-forms
And faces in a fountain-frieze;
Dancers that own immortal hours;
Painters that work upon their knees;
Maids, lovers, friends, so deep in life,
So deep in love and poet's deeds,
The railroad is a thing disowned,
The city but a field of weeds.

Who can pass a village church
By night in these clean prairie lands
Without a touch of Spirit-power?
So white and fixed and cool it stands —
A thing from some strange fairy-town,
A pious amaranthine flower,
Unsullied by the winds, as pure
As jade or marble, wrought this hour: —

Rural in form, foursquare and plain,
And yet our sister, the new moon,
Makes it a praying wizard's dream.
The trees that watch at dusty noon
Breaking its sharpest lines, veil not
The whiteness it reflects from God,
Flashing like Spring on many an eye,
Making clean flesh, that once was clod.

Who can pass a district school
Without the hope that there may wait
Some baby-heart the books shall flame
With zeal to make his playmates great,
To make the whole wide village gleam
A strangely carved celestial gem,
Eternal in its beauty-light,
The Artist's town of Bethlehem!

Vachel Lindsay

The Jingo And The Minstrel

*AN ARGUMENT FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF PEACE AND GOODWILL WITH
THE JAPANESE PEOPLE*

Glossary for the uninstructed and the hasty: Jimmu Tenno, ancestor of all the Japanese Emperors; Nikko, Japan's loveliest shrine; Iyeyasu, her greatest statesman; Bushido, her code of knighthood; The Forty-seven Ronins, her classic heroes; Nogi, her latest hero; Fuji, her most beautiful mountain.

"Now do you know of Avalon
That sailors call Japan?
She holds as rare a chivalry
As ever bled for man.
King Arthur sleeps at Nikko hill
Where Iyeyasu lies,
And there the broad Pendragon flag
In deathless splendor flies."

"Nay, minstrel, but the great ships come
From out the sunset sea.
We cannot greet the souls they bring
With welcome high and free.
How can the Nippon nondescripts
That weird and dreadful band
Be aught but what we find them here:—
The blasters of the land?"

"First race, first men from anywhere
To face you, eye to eye.
For that do you curse Avalon
And raise a hue and cry?
These toilers cannot kiss your hand,
Or fawn with hearts bowed down:
Be glad for them, and Avalon,
And Arthur's ghostly crown.

"No doubt your guests, with sage debate
In grave things gentlemen
Will let your trade and farms alone

And turn them back again.
But why should brawling braggarts rise
With hasty words of shame
To drive them back like dogs and swine
Who in due honor came?"

"We cannot give them honor, sir.
We give them scorn for scorn.
And Rumor steals around the world
All white-skinned men to warn
Against this sleek silk-merchant here
And viler coolie-man
And wrath within the courts of war
Brews on against Japan!"

"Must Avalon, with hope forlorn,
Her back against the wall,
Have lived her brilliant life in vain
While ruder tribes take all?
Must Arthur stand with Asian Celts,
A ghost with spear and crown,
Behind the great Pendragon flag
And be again cut down?"

"Tho Europe's self shall move against
High Jimmu Tenno's throne
The Forty-seven Ronin Men
Will not be found alone.
For Percival and Bedivere
And Nogi side by side
Will stand,—with mourning Merlin there,
Tho all go down in pride.

"But has the world the envious dream—
Ah, such things cannot be,—
To tear their fairy-land like silk
And toss it in the sea?
Must venom rob the future day
The ultimate world-man
Of rare Bushido, code of codes,
The fair heart of Japan?"

"Go, be the guest of Avalon.
Believe me, it lies there
Behind the mighty gray sea-wall
Where heathen bend in prayer:
Where peasants lift adoring eyes
To Fuji's crown of snow.
King Arthur's knights will be your hosts,
So cleanse your heart, and go.

"And you will find but gardens sweet
Prepared beyond the seas,
And you will find but gentlefolk
Beneath the cherry-trees.
So walk you worthy of your Christ
Tho church bells do not sound,
And weave the bands of brotherhood
On Jimmu Tenno's ground."

Vachel Lindsay

The King Of Yellow Butterflies

<i>(A Poem Game.)</i>

The King of Yellow Butterflies,
The King of Yellow Butterflies,
The King of Yellow Butterflies,
Now orders forth his men.
He says "The time is almost here
When violets bloom again."
Adown the road the fickle rout
Goes flashing proud and bold,
A down the road the fickle rout
Goes flashing proud and bold,
Adown the road the fickle rout
Goes flashing proud and bold,
They shiver by the shallow pools,
They shiver by the shallow pools,
They shiver by the shallow pools,
And whimper of the cold.
They drink and drink. A frail pretense!
They love to pose and preen.

Each pool is but a looking glass,
Where their sweet wings are seen.
Each pool is but a looking glass,
Where their sweet wings are seen.
Each pool is but a looking glass,
Where their sweet wings are seen.
Gentlemen adventurers! Gypsies every whit!
They live on what they steal. Their wings
By briars are frayed a bit.
Their loves are light. They have no house.
And if it rains today,
They'll climb into your cattle-shed,
They'll climb into your cattle-shed,
They'll climb into your cattle-shed,
And hide them in the hay,
And hide them in the hay,
And hide them in the hay,

And hide them in the hay.

Vachel Lindsay

The Knight In Disguise

<i>[Concerning O. Henry (Sidney Porter)]</i>

"He could not forget that he was a Sidney."

Is this Sir Philip Sidney, this loud clown,
The darling of the glad and gaping town?

This is that dubious hero of the press
Whose slangy tongue and insolent address
Were spiced to rouse on Sunday afternoon
The man with yellow journals round him strewn.
We laughed and dozed, then roused and read again,
And vowed O. Henry funniest of men.
He always worked a triple-hinged surprise
To end the scene and make one rub his eyes.

He comes with vaudeville, with stare and leer.
He comes with megaphone and specious cheer.

His troupe, too fat or short or long or lean,
Step from the pages of the magazine
With slapstick or sombrero or with cane:
The rube, the cowboy or the masher vain.
They over-act each part. But at the height
Of banter and of canter and delight
The masks fall off for one queer instant there
And show real faces: faces full of care
And desperate longing: love that's hot or cold;
And subtle thoughts, and countenances bold.
The masks go back. 'Tis one more joke. Laugh on!
The goodly grown-up company is gone.

No doubt had he occasion to address
The brilliant court of purple-clad Queen Bess,
He would have wrought for them the best he knew
And led more loftily his actor-crew.
How coolly he misquoted. 'Twas his art —
Slave-scholar, who misquoted — from the heart.

So when we slapped his back with friendly roar
Æsop awaited him without the door, —
Æsop the Greek, who made dull masters laugh
With little tales of fox and dog and calf .

And be it said, mid these his pranks so odd
With something nigh to chivalry he trod
And oft the drear and driven would defend —
The little shopgirls' knight unto the end.
Yea, he had passed, ere we could understand
The blade of Sidney glimmered in his hand.
Yea, ere we knew, Sir Philip's sword was drawn
With valiant cut and thrust, and he was gone.

Vachel Lindsay

The Leaden-Eyed

Let not young souls be smothered out before
They do quaint deeds and fully flaunt their pride.
It is the world's one crime its babes grow dull,
Its poor are ox-like, limp and leaden-eyed.
Not that they starve; but starve so dreamlessly,
Not that they sow, but that they seldom reap,
Not that they serve, but have no gods to serve,
Not that they die, but that they die like sheep.

Vachel Lindsay

The Light O' The Moon

[How different people and different animals look upon the moon: showing that each creature finds in it his own mood and disposition]

The Old Horse in the City

The moon's a peck of corn. It lies
Heaped up for me to eat.
I wish that I might climb the path
And taste that supper sweet.

Men feed me straw and scanty grain
And beat me till I'm sore.
Some day I'll break the halter-rope
And smash the stable-door,

Run down the street and mount the hill
Just as the corn appears.
I've seen it rise at certain times
For years and years and years.

What the Hyena Said

The moon is but a golden skull,
She mounts the heavens now,
And Moon-Worms, mighty Moon-Worms
Are wreathed around her brow.

The Moon-Worms are a doughty race:
They eat her gray and golden face.
Her eye-sockets dead, and molding head:
These caverns are their dwelling-place.

The Moon-Worms, serpents of the skies,
From the great hollows of her eyes
Behold all souls, and they are wise:
With tiny, keen and icy eyes,
Behold how each man sins and dies.

When Earth in gold-corruption lies
Long dead, the moon-worm butterflies
On cyclone wings will reach this place —
Yea, rear their brood on earth's dead face.

What the Snow Man Said

The Moon's a snowball. See the drifts
Of white that cross the sphere.
The Moon's a snowball, melted down
A dozen times a year.

Yet rolled again in hot July
When all my days are done
And cool to greet the weary eye
After the scorching sun.

The moon's a piece of winter fair
Renewed the year around,
Behold it, deathless and unstained,
Above the grimy ground!

It rolls on high so brave and white
Where the clear air-rivers flow,
Proclaiming Christmas all the time
And the glory of the snow!

What the Scare-crow Said

The dim-winged spirits of the night
Do fear and serve me well.
They creep from out the hedges of
The garden where I dwell.

I wave my arms across the walk.
The troops obey the sign,
And bring me shimmering shadow-robos
And cups of cowslip-wine.

Then dig a treasure called the moon,
A very precious thing,
And keep it in the air for me
Because I am a King.

<i>What Grandpa Mouse Said</i>

The moon's a holy owl-queen.
She keeps them in a jar
Under her arm till evening,
Then sallies forth to war.

She pours the owls upon us.
They hoot with horrid noise
And eat the naughty mousie-girls
And wicked mousie-boys.

So climb the moonvine every night
And to the owl-queen pray:
Leave good green cheese by moonlit trees
For her to take away.

And never squeak, my children,
Nor gnaw the smoke-house door:
The owl-queen then will love us
And send her birds no more.

<i>The Beggar Speaks</i>

"What Mister Moon Said to Me."

Come, eat the bread of idleness,
Come, sit beside the spring:
Some of the flowers will keep awake,
Some of the birds will sing.

Come, eat the bread no man has sought
For half a hundred years:
Men hurry so they have no griefs,
Nor even idle tears:

They hurry so they have no loves:
They cannot curse nor laugh —
Their hearts die in their youth with neither
Grave nor epitaph.

My bread would make them careless,
And never quite on time —
Their eyelids would be heavy,
Their fancies full of rhyme:

Each soul a mystic rose-tree,
Or a curious incense tree:
Come, eat the bread of idleness,
Said Mister Moon to me.

What the Forester Said

The moon is but a candle-glow
That flickers thro' the gloom:
The starry space, a castle hall:
And Earth, the children's room,
Where all night long the old trees stand
To watch the streams asleep:
Grandmothers guarding trundle-beds:
Good shepherds guarding sheep.

Vachel Lindsay

The Lion

The Lion is a kingly beast.
He likes a Hindu for a feast.
And if no Hindu he can get,
The lion-family is upset.

He cuffs his wife and bites her ears
Till she is nearly moved to tears.
Then some explorer finds the den
And all is family peace again.

Vachel Lindsay

The Little Turtle

A Recitation for Martha Wakefield, Three Years Old

There was a little turtle.
He lived in a box.
He swam in a puddle.
He climbed on the rocks.

He snapped at a mosquito.
He snapped at a flea.
He snapped at a minnow.
And he snapped at me.

He caught the mosquito.
He caught the flea.
He caught the minnow.
But he didn't catch me.

Vachel Lindsay

The Master Of The Dance

A chant to which it is intended a group of children shall dance and improvise pantomime led by their dancing-teacher.

A master deep-eyed
Ere his manhood was ripe,
He sang like a thrush,
He could play any pipe.
So dull in the school
That he scarcely could spell,
He read but a bit,
And he figured not well.
A bare-footed fool,
Shod only with grace;
Long hair streaming down
Round a wind-hardened face;
He smiled like a girl,
Or like clear winter skies,
A virginal light
Making stars of his eyes.
In swiftness and poise,
A proud child of the deer,
A white fawn he was,
Yet a fawn without fear.
No youth thought him vain,
Or made mock of his hair,
Or laughed when his ways
Were most curiously fair.
A mastiff at fight,
He could strike to the earth
The envious one
Who would challenge his worth.
However we bowed
To the schoolmaster mild,
Our spirits went out
To the fawn-looted child.
His beckoning led
Our troop to the brush.

We found nothing there
But a wind and a hush.
He sat by a stone
And he looked on the ground,
As if in the weeds
There was something profound.
His pipe seemed to neigh,
Then to bleat like a sheep,
Then sound like a stream
Or a waterfall deep.
It whispered strange tales,
Human words it spoke not.
Told fair things to come,
And our marvellous lot
If now with fawn-steps
Unshod we advanced
To the midst of the grove
And in reverence danced.
We obeyed as he piped
Soft grass to young feet,
Was a medicine mighty,
A remedy meet.
Our thin blood awoke,
It grew dizzy and wild,
Though scarcely a word
Moved the lips of a child.
Our dance gave allegiance,
It set us apart,
We tripped a strange measure,
Uplifted of heart.

<i>II</i>

We thought to be proud
Of our fawn everywhere.
We could hardly see how
Simple books were a care.
No rule of the school
This strange student could tame.
He was banished one day,
While we quivered with shame.

He piped back our love
On a moon-silvered night,
Enticed us once more
To the place of delight.
A greeting he sang
And it made our blood beat,
It tramped upon custom
And mocked at defeat.
He builded a fire
And we tripped in a ring,
The embers our books
And the fawn our good king.
And now we approached
All the mysteries rare
That shadowed his eyelids
And blew through his hair.
That spell now was peace
The deep strength of the trees,
The children of nature
We clambered her knees.
Our breath and our moods
Were in tune with her own,
Tremendous her presence,
Eternal her throne.
The ostracized child
Our white foreheads kissed,
Our bodies and souls
Became lighter than mist.
Sweet dresses like snow
Our small lady-loves wore,
Like moonlight the thoughts
That our bosoms upbore.
Like a lily the touch
Of each cold little hand.
The loves of the stars
We could now understand.
O quivering air!
O the crystalline night!
O pauses of awe
And the faces swan-white!
O ferns in the dusk!
O forest-shrined hour!

O earth that sent upward
The thrill and the power,
To lift us like leaves,
A delirious whirl,
The masterful boy
And the delicate girl!
What child that strange night-time
Can ever forget?
His fealty due
And his infinite debt
To the folly divine,
To the exquisite rule
Of the perilous master,
The fawn-looted fool?

III

Now soldiers we seem,
And night brings a new thing,
A terrible ire,
As of thunder awing.
A warrior power,
That old chivalry stirred,
When knights took up arms,
As the maidens gave word.
THE END OF OUR WAR,
WILL BE GLORY UNTOLD.
WHEN THE TOWN LIKE A GREAT
BUDDING ROSE SHALL UNFOLD!
Near, nearer that war,
And that ecstasy comes,
We hear the trees beating
Invisible drums.
The fields of the night
Are starlit above,
Our girls are white torches
Of conquest and love.
No nerve without will,
And no breast without breath,
We whirl with the planets
That never know death!

Vachel Lindsay

The Merciful Hand

Written to Miss Alice L. F. Fitzgerald, Edith Cavell memorial nurse, going to the front.

Your fine white hand is Heaven's gift
To cure the wide world, stricken sore,
Bleeding at the breast and head,
Tearing at its wounds once more.

Your white hand is a prophecy,
A living hope that Christ shall come
And make the nations merciful,
Hating the bayonet and drum.

Each desperate burning brain you soothe,
Or ghastly broken frame you bind,
Brings one day nearer our bright goal,
The love-alliance of mankind.

Vachel Lindsay

The Modest Jazz-Bird

The Jazz-bird sings a barnyard song—
A cock-a-doodle bray,
A jingle-bells, a boiler works,
A he-man's roundelay.

The eagle said, 'My noisy son,
I send you out to fight!'
So the youngster spread his sunflower wings
And roared with all his might.

His headlight eyes went flashing
From Oregon to Maine;
And the land was dark with airships
In the darting Jazz-bird's train.

Crossing the howling ocean,
His bell-mouth shook the sky;
And the Yankees in the trenches
Gave back the hue and cry.

And Europe had not heard the like—
And Germany went down!
The fowl of steel with clashing claws
Tore off the Kaiser's crown.

Vachel Lindsay

The Moon Is A Painter

He coveted her portrait.
He toiled as she grew gay.
She loved to see him labor
In that devoted way.

And in the end it pleased her,
But bowed him more with care.
Her rose-smile showed so plainly,
Her soul-smile was not there.

That night he groped without a lamp
To find a cloak, a book,
And on the vexing portrait
By moonrise chanced to look.

The color-scheme was out of key,
The maiden rose-smile faint,
But through the blessed darkness
She gleamed, his friendly saint.

The comrade, white, immortal,
His bride, and more than bride—
The citizen, the sage of mind,
For whom he lived and died.

Vachel Lindsay

The Moon's The North Wind's Cooky

The Moon's the North Wind's cooky.
He bites it, day by day,
Until there's but a rim of scraps
That crumble all away.

The South Wind is a baker.
He kneads clouds in his den,
And bakes a crisp new moon that *. . . greedy*
North . . . Wind . . . eats . . . again!

Vachel Lindsay

The Mouse That Gnawed The Oak-Tree Down

The mouse that gnawed the oak-tree down
Began his task in early life.
He kept so busy with his teeth
He had no time to take a wife.

He gnawed and gnawed through sun and rain
When the ambitious fit was on,
Then rested in the sawdust till
A month of idleness had gone.

He did not move about to hunt
The coteries of mousie-men.
He was a snail-paced, stupid thing
Until he cared to gnaw again.

The mouse that gnawed the oak-tree down,
When that tough foe was at his feet—
Found in the stump no angel-cake
Nor buttered bread, nor cheese, nor meat—
The forest-roof let in the sky.
“This light is worth the work,” said he.
“I’ll make this ancient swamp more light,”
And started on another tree.

Vachel Lindsay

The Mysterious Cat

A chant for a children's pantomime dance, suggested by a picture painted by George Mather Richards.

I saw a proud, mysterious cat,
I saw a proud, mysterious cat
Too proud to catch a mouse or rat—
Mew, mew, mew.

But catnip she would eat, and purr,
But catnip she would eat, and purr.
And goldfish she did much prefer—
Mew, mew, mew.

I saw a cat—'twas but a dream,
I saw a cat—'twas but a dream
Who scorned the slave that brought her cream—
Mew, mew, mew.

Unless the slave were dressed in style,
Unless the slave were dressed in style
And knelt before her all the while—
Mew, mew, mew.

Did you ever hear of a thing like that?
Did you ever hear of a thing like that?
Did you ever hear of a thing like that?
Oh, what a proud mysterious cat.
Oh, what a proud mysterious cat.
Oh, what a proud mysterious cat.
Mew . . . mew . . . mew.

Vachel Lindsay

The North Star Whispers To The Blacksmith's Son

The North Star whispers: "You are one
Of those whose course no chance can change.
You blunder, but are not undone,
Your spirit-task is fixed and strange.

"When here you walk, a bloodless shade,
A singer all men else forget.
Your chants of hammer, forge and spade
Will move the prairie-village yet.

"That young, stiff-necked, reviling town
Beholds your fancies on her walls,
And paints them out or tears them down,
Or bars them from her feasting halls.

"Yet shall the fragments still remain;
Yet shall remain some watch-tower strong
That ivy-vines will not disdain,
Haunted and trembling with your song.

"Your flambeau in the dusk shall burn,
Flame high in storms, flame white and clear;
Your ghost in gleaming robes return
And burn a deathless incense here."

Vachel Lindsay

The Perfect Marriage

I

I hate this yoke; for the world's sake here put it on:
Knowing 'twill weigh as much on you till life is gone.
Knowing you love your freedom dear, as I love mine—
Knowing that love unchained has been our life's great wine:
Our one great wine (yet spent too soon, and serving none;
Of the two cups free love at last the deadly one).

II

We grant our meetings will be tame, not honey-sweet
No longer turning to the tryst with flying feet.
We know the toil that now must come will spoil the bloom
And tenderness of passion's touch, and in its room
Will come tame habit, deadly calm, sorrow and gloom.
Oh, how the battle sears the best who enter life!
Each soidier comes out blind or lame from the black strife.
Mad or diseased or damned of soul the best may come—
It matters not how merrily now rolls the drum,
The fife shrills high, the horn sings loud, till no steps lag—
And all adore that silken flame, Desire's great flag.

III

We will build strong our tiny fort, strong as we can—
Holding one inner room beyond the sword of man.
Love is too wide, it seems to-day, to hide it there.
It seems to flood the fields of corn, and gild the air—
It seems to breathe from every brook, from flowers to sigh—
It seems a cataract poured down from the great sky;
It seems a tenderness so vast no bush but shows
Its haunting and transfiguring light where wonder glows.
It wraps us in a silken snare by shadowy streams,
And wildering sweet and stung with joy your white soul seems
A flame, a flame, conquering day, conquering night,
Brought from our God, a holy thing, a mad delight.

But love, when all things beat it down, leaves the wide air,
The heavens are gray, and men turn wolves, lean with despair.
Ah, when we need love most, and weep, when all is dark,
Love is a pinch of ashes gray, with one live spark—
Yet on the hope to keep alive that treasure strange
Hangs all earth's struggle, strife and scorn, and desperate change.

IV

Love? . . . we will scarcely love our babes full many a time—
Knowing their souls and ours too well, and all our grime—
And there beside our holy hearth we'll hide our eyes—
Lest we should flash what seems disdain without disguise.
Yet there shall be no wavering there in that deep trial—
And no false fire or stranger hand or traitor vile—
We'll fight the gloom and fight the world with strong sword-play,
Entrenched within our block-house small, ever at bay—
As fellow-warriors, underpaid, wounded and wild,
True to their battered flag, their faith still undefiled!

Vachel Lindsay

The Potatoes' Dance

(A Poem Game.)

I

"Down cellar," said the cricket,
"Down cellar," said the cricket,
"Down cellar," said the cricket,
"I saw a ball last night,
In honor of a lady,
In honor of a lady,
In honor of a lady,
Whose wings were pearly-white.
The breath of bitter weather,
The breath of bitter weather,
The breath of bitter weather,
Had smashed the cellar pane.
We entertained a drift of leaves,
We entertained a drift of leaves,
We entertained a drift of leaves,
And then of snow and rain.
But we were dressed for winter,
But we were dressed for winter,
But we were dressed for winter,
And loved to hear it blow
In honor of the lady,
In honor of the lady,
In honor of the lady,
Who makes potatoes grow,
Our guest the Irish lady,
The tiny Irish lady,
The airy Irish lady,
Who makes potatoes grow.

II

"Potatoes were the waiters,
Potatoes were the waiters,

Potatoes were the waiters,
Potatoes were the band,
Potatoes were the dancers
Kicking up the sand,
Kicking up the sand,
Kicking up the sand,
Potatoes were the dancers
Kicking up the sand.
Their legs were old burnt matches,
Their legs were old burnt matches,
Their legs were old burnt matches,
Their arms were just the same.
They jigged and whirled and scrambled,
Jigged and whirled and scrambled,
Jigged and whirled and scrambled,
In honor of the dame,
The noble Irish lady
Who makes potatoes dance,
The witty Irish lady,
The saucy Irish lady,
The laughing Irish lady
Who makes potatoes prance.

III

"There was just one sweet potato.
He was golden brown and slim.
The lady loved his dancing,
The lady loved his dancing,
The lady loved his dancing,
She danced all night with him,
She danced all night with him.
Alas, he wasn't Irish.
So when she flew away,
They threw him in the coal-bin,
And there he is today,
Where they cannot hear his sighs
And his weeping for the lady,
The glorious Irish lady,
The beauteous Irish lady,
Who

Gives
Potatoes
Eyes."

Vachel Lindsay

The Prairie Battlements

(To Edgar Lee Masters, with great respect)

Here upon the prairie
Is our ancestral hall.
Agate is the dome,
Cornelian the wall.
Ghouls are in the cellar,
But fays upon the stairs.
And here lived old King Silver Dreams,
Always at his prayers.

Here lived gray Queen Silver Dreams,
Always signing psalms,
And haughty Grandma Silver Dreams,
Throned with folded palms.
Here played cousin Alice.
Her soul was best of all.
And every fairy loved her,
In our ancestral hall.

Alice has a prairie grave.
The King and Queen lie low,
And aged Grandma Silver Dreams,
Four toombstones in a row.
But still in snow and sunshine
Stands our ancestral hall.

Agate is the dome,
Cornelian the wall.
And legends walk about,
And proverbs, with proud airs.
Ghouls are in the cellar,
But fays upon the stairs.

Vachel Lindsay

The Proud Farmer

[In memory of E. S. Frazee, Rush County, Indiana]

Into the acres of the newborn state
He poured his strength, and plowed his ancient name,
And, when the traders followed him, he stood
Towering above their furtive souls and tame.

That brow without a stain, that fearless eye
Oft left the passing stranger wondering
To find such knighthood in the sprawling land,
To see a democrat well-nigh a king.

He lived with liberal hand, with guests from far,
With talk and joke and fellowship to spare, —
Watching the wide world's life from sun to sun,
Lining his walls with books from everywhere.
He read by night, he built his world by day.
The farm and house of God to him were one.
For forty years he preached and plowed and wrought —
A statesman in the fields, who bent to none.

His plowmen-neighbors were as lords to him.
His was an ironside, democratic pride.
He served a rigid Christ, but served him well —
And, for a lifetime, saved the countryside.

Here lie the dead, who gave the church their best
Under his fiery preaching of the word.
They sleep with him beneath the ragged grass...
The village withers, by his voice unstirred.

And tho' his tribe be scattered to the wind
From the Atlantic to the China sea,
Yet do they think of that bright lamp he burned
Of family worth and proud integrity.

And many a sturdy grandchild hears his name
In reverence spoken, till he feels akin

To all the lion-eyed who built the world —
And lion-dreams begin to burn within.

Vachel Lindsay

The Queen Of Bubbles

[Written for a picture]

The Youth speaks: —:

"Why do you seek the sun
In your bubble-crown ascending?
Your chariot will melt to mist.
Your crown will have an ending."

The Goddess replies: — :

"Nay, sun is but a bubble,
Earth is a whiff of foam —
To my caves on the coast of Thule
Each night I call them home.
Thence Faiths blow forth to angels
And loves blow forth to men —
They break and turn to nothing
And I make them whole again.
On the crested waves of chaos
I ride them back reborn:
New stars I bring at evening
For those that burst at morn:
My soul is the wind of Thule
And evening is the sign —
The sun is but a bubble,
A fragile child of mine."

Vachel Lindsay

The Raft

The whole world on a raft! A King is here,
The record of his grandeur but a smear.
Is it his deacon-beard, or old bald pate
That makes the band upon his whims to wait?
Loot and mud-honey have his soul defiled.
Quack, pig, and priest, he drives camp-meetings wild
Until they shower their pennies like spring rain
That he may preach upon the Spanish main.
What landlord, lawyer, voodoo-man has yet
A better native right to make men sweat?

The whole world on a raft! A Duke is here
At sight of whose lank jaw the muses leer.
Journeyman-printer, lamb with ferret eyes,
In life's skullduggery he takes the prize —
Yet stands at twilight wrapped in Hamlet dreams.
Into his eyes the Mississippi gleams.
The sandbar sings in moonlit veils of foam.
A candle shines from one lone cabin home.
The waves reflect it like a drunken star.

A banjo and a hymn are heard afar.
No solace on the lazy shore excels
The Duke's blue castle with its steamer-bells.
The floor is running water, and the roof
The stars' brocade with cloudy warp and woof.

And on past sorghum fields the current swings.
To Christian Jim the Mississippi sings.
This prankish wave-swept barque has won its place,
A ship of jesting for the human race.
But do you laugh when Jim bows down forlorn
His babe, his deaf Elizabeth to mourn?
And do you laugh, when Jim, from Huck apart
Gropes through the rain and night with breaking heart?

But now that imp is here and we can smile,
Jim's child and guardian this long-drawn while.
With knife and heavy gun, a hunter keen,

He stops for squirrel-meat in islands green.
The eternal gamin, sleeping half the day,
Then stripped and sleek, a river-fish at play.
And then well-dressed, ashore, he sees life spilt.
The river-bank is one bright crazy-quilt
Of patch-work dream, of wrath more red than lust,
Where long-haired feudist Hotspurs bite the dust...

This Huckleberry Finn is but the race,
America, still lovely in disgrace,
New childhood of the world, that blunders on
And wonders at the darkness and the dawn,
The poor damned human race, still unimpressed
With its damnation, all its gamin breast
Chorteling at dukes and kings with nigger Jim,
Then plotting for their fall, with jestings grim.

Behold a Republic
Where a river speaks to men
And cries to those that love its ways,
Answering again
When in the heart's extravagance
The rascals bend to say
"O singing Mississippi
Shine, sing for us today."

But who is this in sweeping Oxford gown
Who steers the raft, or ambles up and down,
Or throws his gown aside, and there in white
Stands gleaming like a pillar of the night?
The lion of high courts, with hoary mane,
Fierce jester that this boyish court will gain —
Mark Twain!
The bad world's idol:
Old Mark Twain!

He takes his turn as watchman with the rest,
With secret transports to the stars addressed,
With nightlong broodings upon cosmic law,
With daylong laughter at this world so raw.

All praise to Emerson and Whitman, yet

The best they have to say, their sons forget.
But who can dodge this genius of the stream,
The Mississippi Valley's laughing dream?
He is the artery that finds the sea
In this the land of slaves, and boys still free.
He is the river, and they one and all
Sail on his breast, and to each other call.

Come let us disgrace ourselves,
Knock the stuffed gods from their shelves,
And cinders at the schoolhouse fling.
Come let us disgrace ourselves,
And live on a raft with gray Mark Twain
And Huck and Jim
And the Duke and the King.

Vachel Lindsay

The Rhymer's Reply. Incense And Splendor

Incense and Splendor haunt me as I go.
Though my good works have been, alas, too few,
Though I do naught, High Heaven comes down to me,
And future ages pass in tall review.
I see the years to come as armies vast,
Stalking tremendous through the fields of time.
MAN is unborn. To-morrow he is born,
Flame-like to hover o'er the moil and grime,
Striving, aspiring till the shame is gone,
Sowing a million flowers, where now we mourn—
Laying new, precious pavements with a song,
Founding new shrines, the good streets to adorn.
I have seen lovers by those new-built walls
Clothed like the dawn in orange, gold and red.
Eyes flashing forth the glory-light of love
Under the wreaths that crowned each royal head.
Life was made greater by their sweetheart prayers.
Passion was turned to civic strength that day—
Piling the marbles, making fairer domes
With zeal that else had burned bright youth away.
I have seen priestesses of life go by
Gliding in samite through the incense-sea—
Innocent children marching with them there,
Singing in flowered robes, "THE EARTH IS FREE":
While on the fair, deep-carved unfinished towers
Sentinels watched in armor, night and day—
Guarding the brazier-fires of hope and dream—
Wild was their peace, and dawn-bright their array!

Vachel Lindsay

The Rose Of Midnight

The moon is now an opening flower,
The sky a cliff of blue.
The moon is now a silver rose;
Her pollen is the dew.

Her pollen is the mist that swings
Across her face of dreams:
Her pollen is the April rain,
Filling the April streams.

Her pollen is eternal life,
Endless ambrosial foam.
It feeds the swarming stars and fills
Their hearts with honeycomb.

The earth is but a passion-flower
With blood upon his crown.
And what shall fill his failing veins
And lift his head, bowed down?

This cup of peace, this silver rose
Bending with fairy breath
Shall lift that passion-flower, the earth
A million times from Death!

Vachel Lindsay

The Santa-Fe Trail (A Humoresque)

I asked the old Negro, "What is that bird that sings so well?" He answered: "That is the Rachel-Jane." "Hasn't it another name, lark, or thrush, or the like?" "No. Jus' Rachel-Jane."

I. IN WHICH A RACING AUTO COMES FROM THE EAST

This is the order of the music of the morning: —
First, from the far East comes but a crooning.
The crooning turns to a sunrise singing.
Hark to the calm -horn, balm -horn, psalm -horn.
Hark to the faint -horn, quaint -horn, saint -horn. . . .

Hark to the pace -horn, chase -horn, race -horn.
And the holy veil of the dawn has gone.
Swiftly the brazen ear comes on.
It burns in the East as the sunrise burns.
I see great flashes where the far trail turns.

Its eyes are lamps like the eyes of dragons.
It drinks gasoline from big red flagons.
Butting through the delicate mists of the morning,
It comes like lightning, goes past roaring.
It will hail all the wind-mills, taunting, ringing,
Dodge the cyclones,
Count the milestones,
On through the ranges the prairie-dog tills—
Scooting past the cattle on the thousand hills. . . .
Ho for the tear-horn, scare-horn, dare-horn,
Ho for the gay -horn, bark -horn, bay -horn.
Ho for Kansas, land that restores us
When houses choke us, and great books bore us!
Sunrise Kansas, harvester's Kansas,
A million men have found you before us.

II. IN WHICH MANY AUTOS PASS WESTWARD

I want live things in their pride to remain.

I will not kill one grasshopper vain
Though he eats a hole in my shirt like a door.
I let him out, give him one chance more.
Perhaps, while he gnaws my hat in his whim,
Grasshopper lyrics occur to him.

I am a tramp by the long trail's border,
Given to squalor, rags and disorder.
I nap and amble and yawn and look,
Write fool-thoughts in my grubby book,
Recite to the children, explore at my ease,
Work when I work, beg when I please,
Give crank-drawings, that make folks stare
To the half-grown boys in the sunset glare,
And get me a place to sleep in the hay
At the end of a live-and-let-live day.

I find in the stubble of the new-cut weeds
A whisper and a feasting, all one needs:
The whisper of the strawberries, white and red
Here where the new-cut weeds lie dead.

But I would not walk all alone till I die
Without some life-drunk horns going by.
Up round this apple-earth they come
Blasting the whispers of the morning dumb:—
Cars in a plain realistic row.
And fair dreams fade
When the raw horns blow.

On each snapping pennant
A big black name:—
The careering city
Whence each car came.
They tour from Memphis, Atlanta, Savannah,
Tallahassee and Texarkana.
They tour from St. Louis, Columbus, Manistee,
They tour from Peoria, Davenport, Kankakee.
Cars from Concord, Niagara, Boston,
Cars from Topeka, Emporia, and Austin.
Cars from Chicago, Hannibal, Cairo.
Cars from Alton, Oswego, Toledo.

Cars from Buffalo, Kokomo, Delphi,
Cars from Lodi, Carmi, Loami.
Ho for Kansas, land that restores us
When houses choke us, and great books bore us!
While I watch the highroad
And look at the sky,
While I watch the clouds in amazing grandeur
Roll their legions without rain
Over the blistering Kansas plain—
While I sit by the milestone
And watch the sky,
The United States
Goes by.

Listen to the iron-horns, ripping, racking.
Listen to the quack-horns, slack and clacking.
Way down the road, trilling like a toad,
Here comes the dice -horn, here comes the vice -horn,
Here comes the snarl -horn, brawl -horn, lewd -horn,
Followed by the prude -horn, bleak and squeaking: —
(Some of them from Kansas, some of them from Kansas.)
Here comes the hod -horn, plod -horn, sod -horn,
Nevermore-to-roam -horn, loam -horn, home -horn.

(Some of them from Kansas, some of them from Kansas.)

Far away the Rachel-Jane
Not defeated by the horns
Sings amid a hedge of thorns:—
"Love and life,
Eternal youth—
Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet,
Dew and glory,
Love and truth,
Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet."

WHILE SMOKE-BLACK FREIGHTS ON THE DOUBLE-TRACKED RAILROAD,
DRIVEN AS THOUGH BY THE FOUL-FIEND'S OX-GOAD,
SCREAMING TO THE WEST COAST, SCREAMING TO THE EAST,
CARRY OFF A HARVEST, BRING BACK A FEAST,
HARVESTING MACHINERY AND HARNESS FOR THE BEAST.
THE HAND-CARS WHIZ, AND RATTLE ON THE RAILS,
THE SUNLIGHT FLASHES ON THE TIN DINNER-PAILS.

And then, in an instant,
Ye modern men,
Behold the procession once again,
Listen to the iron-horns, ripping, racking,
Listen to the wise -horn, desperate-to-advise horn,
Listen to the fast -horn, kill -horn, blast -horn. . . .
Far away the Rachel-Jane
Not defeated by the horns
Sings amid a hedge of thorns:—
Love and life,
Eternal youth,
Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet,
Dew and glory,
Love and truth.
Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet.
The mufflers open on a score of cars
With wonderful thunder,
CRACK, CRACK, CRACK,
CRACK-CRACK, CRACK-CRACK,
CRACK-CRACK-CRACK, . . .
Listen to the gold-horn . . .
Old-horn . . .
Cold-horn . . .

And all of the tunes, till the night comes down
On hay-stack, and ant-hill, and wind-bitten town.
Then far in the west, as in the beginning,
Dim in the distance, sweet in retreating,
Hark to the faint-horn, quaint-horn, saint-horn,
Hark to the calm-horn, balm-horn, psalm-horn. . . .

They are hunting the goals that they understand:—
San-Francisco and the brown sea-sand.
My goal is the mystery the beggars win.
I am caught in the web the night-winds spin.
The edge of the wheat-ridge speaks to me.
I talk with the leaves of the mulberry tree.
And now I hear, as I sit all alone
In the dusk, by another big Santa-Fe stone,
The souls of the tall corn gathering round
And the gay little souls of the grass in the ground.
Listen to the tale the cotton-wood tells.

Listen to the wind-mills, singing o'er the wells.
Listen to the whistling flutes without price
Of myriad prophets out of paradise.
Harken to the wonder
That the night-air carries. . . .
Listen . . . to . . . the . . . whisper . . .
Of . . . the . . . prairie . . . fairies
Singing o'er the fairy plain:—
"Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet.
Love and glory,
Stars and rain,
Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet"

Vachel Lindsay

The Scissors-Grinder

The old man had his box and wheel
For grinding knives and shears.
No doubt his bell in village streets
Was joy to children's ears.
And I bethought me of my youth
When such men came around,
And times I asked them in, quite sure
The scissors should be ground.
The old man turned and spoke to me,
His face at last in view.
And then I thought those curious eyes
Were eyes that once I knew.

"The moon is but an emery-wheel
To whet the sword of God,"
He said. "And here beside my fire
I stretch upon the sod.
Each night, and dream, and watch the stars
And watch the ghost-clouds go.
And see that sword of God in Heaven
A-waving to and fro.

I see that sword each century, friend.
It means the world-war comes
With all its bloody, wicked chiefs
And hate-inflaming drums.
Men talk of peace, but I have seen
That emery-wheel turn round.
The voice of Abel cries again
To God from out the ground.
The ditches must flow red, the plague
Go stark and screaming by
Each time that sword of God takes edge
Within the midnight sky.
And those that scorned their brothers here
And sowed a wind of shame
Will reap the whirlwind as of old
And face relentless flame."

And thus the scissors-grinder spoke,
His face at last in view.
<i>And there beside the railroad bridge
I saw the wandering Jew.</i>

Vachel Lindsay

The Song Of The Garden-Toad

Down, down beneath the daisy beds,
O hear the cries of pain!
And moaning on the cinder-path
They're blind amid the rain.
Can murmurs of the worms arise
To higher hearts than mine?
I wonder if that gardener hears
Who made the mold all fine
And packed each gentle seedling down
So carefully in line?

I watched the red rose reaching up
To ask him if he heard
Those cries that stung the evening earth
Till all the rose-roots stirred.
She asked him if he felt the hate
That burned beneath them there.
She asked him if he heard the curse
Of worms in black despair.
He kissed the rose. What did it mean?
What of the rose's prayer?

Down, down where rain has never come
They fight in burning graves,
Bleeding and drinking blood
Within those venom-caves.
Blaspheming still the gardener's name,
They live and hate and go.
I wonder if the gardener heard
The rose that told him so?

Vachel Lindsay

The Sorceress!

I asked her, "Is Aladdin's lamp
Hidden anywhere?"
"Look into your heart," she said,
"Aladdin's lamp is there."

She took my heart with glowing hands.
It burned to dust and air
And smoke and rolling thistledown
Blowing everywhere.

"Follow the thistledown," she said,
"Till doomsday, if you dare,
Over the hills and far away.
Aladdin's lamp is there."

Vachel Lindsay

The Soul Of The City Receives The Gift Of The Holy Spirit

A BROADSIDE DISTRIBUTED IN SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

Censers are swinging,
Over the town;
Censers are swinging,
Look overhead!
Censers are swinging,
Heaven comes down.
City, dead city,
Awake from the dead!

Censers, tremendous,
Gleam overhead.
Wind-harps are ringing,
Wind-harps unseen—
Calling and calling:—
"Wake from the dead.
Rise, little city,
Shine like a queen."

Soldiers of Christ
For battle grow keen.
Heaven-sent winds
Haunt alley and lane.
Singing of life
In town-meadows green
After the toil
And battle and pain.

Incense is pouring
Like the spring rain
Down on the mob
That moil through the street.
Blessed are they
Who behold it and gain
Power made more mighty

Thro' every defeat.

Builders, toil on.
Make all complete.
Make Springfield wonderful.
Make her renown
Worthy this day,
Till, at God's feet,
Tranced, saved forever,
Waits the white town.

Censers are swinging
Over the town,
Censers gigantic!
Look overhead!
Hear the winds singing:—
"Heaven comes down.
City, dead city,
Awake from the dead."

Vachel Lindsay

The Spice-Tree

This is the song
The spice-tree sings:
"Hunger and fire,
Hunger and fire,
Sky-born Beauty—
Spice of desire,"
Under the spice-tree
Watch and wait,
Burning maidens
And lads that mate.

The spice-tree spreads
And its boughs come down
Shadowing village and farm and town.
And none can see
But the pure of heart
The great green leaves
And the boughs descending,
And hear the song that is never ending.

The deep roots whisper,
The branches say:—
"Love to-morrow,
And love to-day,
And till Heaven's day,
And till Heaven's day."

The moon is a bird's nest in its branches,
The moon is hung in its topmost spaces.
And there, to-night, two doves play house
While lovers watch with uplifted faces.
Two doves go home
To their nest, the moon.
It is woven of twigs of broken light,
With threads of scarlet and threads of gray
And a lining of down for silk delight.
To their Eden, the moon, fly home our doves,
Up through the boughs of the great spice-tree;—
And one is the kiss I took from you,

And one is the kiss you gave to me.

Vachel Lindsay

The Spider And The Ghost Of The Fly

Once I loved a spider
When I was born a fly,
A velvet-footed spider
With a gown of rainbow-dye.
She ate my wings and gloated.
She bound me with a hair.
She drove me to her parlor
Above her winding stair.
To educate young spiders
She took me all apart.
My ghost came back to haunt her.
I saw her eat my heart.

Vachel Lindsay

The Strength Of The Lonely

(What the Mendicant Said)

The moon's a monk, unmated,
Who walks his cell, the sky.
His strength is that of heaven-vowed men
Who all life's flames defy.

They turn to stars or shadows,
They go like snow or dew—
Leaving behind no sorrow—
Only the arching blue.

Vachel Lindsay

The Sun Says His Prayers

"The sun says his prayers," said the fairy,
Or else he would wither and die.

"The sun says his prayers," said the fairy,
"For strength to climb up through the sky.

He leans on invisible angels,
And Faith is his prop and his rod.
The sky is his crystal cathedral.
And dawn is his altar to God."

Vachel Lindsay

The Tale Of The Tiger-Tree

A Fantasy, dedicated to the little poet Alice Oliver Henderson, ten years old.

The Fantasy shows how tiger-hearts are the cause of war in all ages. It shows how the mammoth forces may be either friends or enemies of the struggle for peace. It shows how the dream of peace is unconquerable and eternal.

I

Peace-of-the-Heart, my own for long,
Whose shining hair the May-winds fan,
Making it tangled as they can,
A mystery still, star-shining yet,
Through ancient ages known to me
And now once more reborn with me: —

This is the tale of the Tiger Tree
A hundred times the height of a man,
Lord of the race since the world began.

This is my city Springfield,
My home on the breast of the plain.
The state house towers to heaven,
By an arsenal gray as the rain...
And suddenly all is mist,
And I walk in a world apart,
In the forest-age when I first knelt down
At your feet, O Peace-of-the-Heart.

This is the wonder of twilight:
Three times as high as the dome
Tiger-striped trees encircle the town,
Golden geysers of foam.
While giant white parrots sail past in their pride.
The roofs now are clouds and storms that they ride.
And there with the huntsmen of mound-builder days
Through jungle and meadow I stride.
And the Tiger Tree leaf is falling around
As it fell when the world began:

Like a monstrous tiger-skin, stretched on the ground,
Or the cloak of a medicine man.
A deep-crumpled gossamer web,
Fringed with the fangs of a snake.
The wind swirls it down from the leperous boughs.
It shimmers on clay-hill and lake,
With the gleam of great bubbles of blood,
Or coiled like a rainbow shell....
I feast on the stem of the Leaf as I march.
I am burning with Heaven and Hell.

II

The gray king died in his hour.
Then we crowned you, the prophetess wise:
Peace-of-the-Heart we deeply adored
For the witchcraft hid in your eyes.
Gift from the sky, overmastering all,
You sent forth your magical parrots to call
The plot-hatching prince of the tigers,
To your throne by the red-clay wall.

Thus came that genius insane:
Spitting and slinking,
Sneering and vain,
He sprawled to your grassy throne, drunk on The Leaf,
The drug that was cunning and splendor and grief.
He had fled from the mammoth by day,
He had blasted the mammoth by night,
War was his drunkenness,
War was his dreaming,
War was his love and his play.
And he hissed at your heavenly glory
While his councillors snarled in delight,
Asking in irony: "What shall we learn
From this whisperer, fragile and white?"

And had you not been an enchantress
They would not have loitered to mock
Nor spared your white parrots who walked by their paws
With bantering venturesome talk.

You made a white fire of The Leaf.
You sang while the tiger-chiefs hissed.
You chanted of "Peace to the wonderful world."
And they saw you in dazzling mist.
And their steps were no longer insane,
Kindness came down like the rain,
They dreamed that like fleet young ponies they feasted
On succulent grasses and grain.

Then came the black-mammoth chief:
Long-haired and shaggy and great,
Proud and sagacious he marshalled his court:
(You had sent him your parrots of state.)
His trunk in rebellion upcurled,
A curse at the tiger he hurled.
Huge elephants trumpeted there by his side,
And mastodon-chiefs of the world.
But higher magic began.
For the turbulent vassals of man.
You harnessed their fever, you conquered their ire,
Their hearts turned to flowers through holy desire,
For their darling and star you were crowned,
And their raging demons were bound.
You rode on the back of the yellow-streaked king,
His loose neck was wreathed with a mistletoe ring.
Primordial elephants loomed by your side,
And our clay-painted children danced by your path,
Chanting the death of the kingdoms of wrath.
You wrought until night with us all.
The fierce brutes fawned at your call,
Then slipped to their lairs, song-chained.
And thus you sang sweetly, and reigned:
"Immortal is the inner peace, free to beasts and men.
Beginning in the darkness, the mystery will conquer,
And now it comforts every heart that seeks for love again.
And now the mammoth bows the knee,
We hew down every Tiger Tree,
We send each tiger bound in love and glory to his den,
Bound in love...and wisdom...and glory,...to his den."

III

"Beware of the trumpeting swine,"
Came the howl from the northward that night.
Twice-rebel tigers warning was still
If we held not beside them it boded us ill.
From the parrots translating the cry,
And the apes in the trees came the whine:
"Beware of the trumpeting swine.
Beware of the faith of a mammoth."

"Beware of the faith of a tiger,"
Came the roar from the southward that night.
Trumpeting mammoths warning us still
If we held not beside them it boded us ill.
The frail apes wailed to us all,
The parrots reëchoed the call:
"Beware of the faith of a tiger."
From the heights of the forest the watchers could see
The tiger-cats crunching the Leaf of the Tree
Lashing themselves, and scattering foam,
Killing our huntsmen, hurrying home.
The chiefs of the mammoths our mastery spurned,
And eastward restlessly fumed and burned.
The peacocks squalled out the news of their drilling
And told how they trampled, maneuvered, and turned.
Ten thousand man-hating tigers
Whirling down from the north, like a flood!
Ten thousand mammoths oncoming
From the south as avengers of blood!
Our child-queen was mourning, her magic was dead,
The roots of the Tiger Tree reeking with red.

IV

This is the tale of the Tiger Tree
A hundred times the height of a man,
Lord of the race since the world began.

We marched to the mammoths,
We pledged them our steel,

And scorning you, sang: —
"We are men,
We are men."
We mounted their necks,
And they stamped a wide reel.
We sang:
"We are fighting the hell-cats again,
We are mound-builder men,
We are elephant men."
We left you there, lonely,
Beauty your power,
Wisdom your watchman,
To hold the clay tower.
While the black-mammoths boomed —
"You are elephant men,
Men,
Men,
Elephant men."
The dawn-winds prophesied battles untold.
While the Tiger Trees roared of the glories of old,
Of the masterful spirits and hard.

The drunken cats came in their joy
In the sunrise, a glittering wave.
"We are tigers, are tigers," they yowled.
"Down,
Down,
Go the swine to the grave."
But we tramp
Tramp
Trampled them there,
Then charged with our sabres and spears.
The swish of the sabre,
The swish of the sabre,
Was a marvellous tune in our ears.

We yelled "We are men,
We are men."
As we bled to death in the sun....
Then staunched our horrible wounds
With the cry that the battle was won....
And at last,

When the black-mammoth legion
Split the night with their song: —
"Right is braver than wrong,
Right is stronger than wrong,"
The buzzards came taunting:
"Down from the north
Tiger-nations are sweeping along."

Then we ate of the ravening Leaf
As our savage fathers of old.
No longer our wounds made us weak,
No longer our pulses were cold.
Though half of my troops were afoot,
(For the great who had borne them were slain)
We dreamed we were tigers, and leaped
And foamed with that vision insane.
We cried "We are soldiers of doom,
Doom,
Sabres of glory and doom."
We wreathed the king of the mammoths
In the tiger-leaves' terrible bloom.
We flattered the king of the mammoths,
Loud-rattling sabres and spears.
The swish of the sabre,
The swish of the sabre,
Was a marvellous tune in his ears.

V

This was the end of the battle.
The tigers poured by in a tide
Over us all with their caterwaul call,
"We are the tigers,"
They cried.
"We are the sabres,"
They cried.
But we laughed while our blades swept wide,
While the dawn-rays stabbed through the gloom.
"We are suns on fire" was our yell —
"Suns on fire."...
But man-child and mastodon fell,

Mammoth and elephant fell.
The fangs of the devil-cats closed on the world,
Plunged it to blackness and doom.

The desolate red-clay wall
Echoed the parrots' call: —
"Immortal is the inner peace, free to beasts and men.
Beginning in the darkness, the mystery will conquer,
And now it comforts every heart that seeks for love again.
And now the mammoth bows the knee,
We hew down every Tiger Tree,
We send each tiger bound in love and glory to his den,
Bound in love... and wisdom... and glory,... to his den."

A peacock screamed of his beauty
On that broken wall by the trees,
Chiding his little mate,
Spreading his fans in the breeze...
And you, with eyes of a bride,
Knelt on the wall at my side,
The deathless song in your mouth...
A million new tigers swept south...
As we laughed at the peacock, and died.

This is my vision in Springfield:
Three times as high as the dome,
Tiger-striped trees encircle the town,
Golden geysers of foam; —
Though giant white parrots sail past, giving voice,
Though I walk with Peace-of-the-Heart and rejoice.

Vachel Lindsay

The Trap

She was taught desire in the street,
Not at the angels' feet.
By the good no word was said
Of the worth of the bridal bed.
The secret was learned from the vile,
Not from her mother's smile.
Home spoke not. And the girl
Was caught in the public whirl.
Do you say "She gave consent:
Life drunk, she was content
With beasts that her fire could please?"
But she did not choose disease
Of mind and nerves and breath.
She was trapped to a slow, foul death.
The door was watched so well,
That the steep dark stair to hell
Was the only escaping way...
"She gave consent," you say?

Some think she was meek and good,
Only lost in the wood
Of youth, and deceived in man
When the hunger of sex began
That ties the husband and wife
To the end in a strong fond life.
Her captor, by chance was one
Of those whose passion was done,
A cold fierce worm of the sea
Enslaving for you and me.
The wages the poor must take
Have forced them to serve this snake.
Yea, half-paid girls must go
For bread to his pit below.
What hangman shall wait his host
Of butchers from coast to coast,
New York to the Golden Gate —
The merger of death and fate,
Lust-kings with a careful plan
Clean-cut, American?

In liberty's name we cry
For these women about to die.

O mothers who failed to tell
The mazes of heaven and hell,
Who failed to advise, implore
Your daughters at Love's strange door,
What will you do this day?
Your dear ones are hidden away,
As good as chained to the bed,
Hid like the mad, or the dead: —
The glories of endless years
Drowned in their harlot-tears:
The children they hoped to bear,
Grandchildren strong and fair,
The life for ages to be,
Cut off like a blasted tree,
Murdered in filth in a day,
Somehow, by the merchant gay!

In liberty's name we cry
For these women about to die.

What shall be said of a state
Where traps for the white brides wait?
Of sellers of drink who play
The game for the extra pay?
Of statesmen in league with all
Who hope for the girl-child's fall?
Of banks where hell's money is paid
And Pharisees all afraid
Of pandars that help them sin?
When will our wrath begin?

Vachel Lindsay

The Traveller-Heart

(To a Man who maintained that the Mausoleum is the Stateliest Possible Manner of Interment)

I would be one with the dark, dark earth:--
Follow the plough with a yokel tread.
I would be part of the Indian corn,
Walking the rows with the plumes o'erhead.

I would be one with the lavish earth,
Eating the bee-stung apples red:
Walking where lambs walk on the hills;
By oak-grove paths to the pools be led.

I would be one with the dark-bright night
When sparkling skies and the lightning wed--
Walking on with the vicious wind
By roads whence even the dogs have fled.

I would be one with the sacred earth
On to the end, till I sleep with the dead.
Terror shall put no spears through me.
Peace shall jewel my shroud instead.

I shall be one with all pit-black things
Finding their lowering threat unsaid:
Stars for my pillow there in the gloom,--
Oak-roots arching about my head!

Stars, like daisies, shall rise through the earth,
Acorns fall round my breast that bled.
Children shall weave there a flowery chain,
Squirrels on acorn-hearts be fed:--

Fruit of the traveller-heart of me,
Fruit of my harvest-songs long sped:
Sweet with the life of my sunburned days
When the sheaves were ripe, and the apples red.

Vachel Lindsay

The Tree Of Laughing Bells

[A Poem for Aviators]

How the Wings Were Made

From many morning-glories
That in an hour will fade,
From many pansy buds
Gathered in the shade,
From lily of the valley
And dandelion buds,
From fiery poppy-buds
Are the Wings of the Morning made.

<i>The Indian Girl Who Made Them</i>

These, the Wings of the Morning,
An Indian Maiden wove,
Intertwining subtilely
Wands from a willow grove
Beside the Sangamon —
Rude stream of Dreamland Town.
She bound them to my shoulders
With fingers golden-brown.
The wings were part of me;
The willow-wands were hot.
Pulses from my heart
Healed each bruise and spot
Of the morning-glory buds,
Beginning to unfold
Beneath her burning song of suns untold.

<i>The Indian Girl Tells the Hero Where to Go to Get the Laughing
Bell</i>

'To the farthest star of all,
Go, make a moment's raid.
To the west — escape the earth

Before your pennons fade!
West! west! o'ertake the night
That flees the morning sun.
There's a path between the stars —
A black and silent one.
O tremble when you near
The smallest star that sings:
Only the farthest star
Is cool for willow wings.

'There's a sky within the west —
There's a sky beyond the skies
Where only one star shines —
The Star of Laughing Bells —
In Chaos-land it lies;
Cold as morning-dew,
A gray and tiny boat
Moored on Chaos-shore,
Where nothing else can float
But the Wings of the Morning strong
And the lilt of laughing song
From many a ruddy throat:

'For the Tree of Laughing Bells
Grew from a bleeding seed
Planted mid enchantment
Played on a harp and reed:
Darkness was the harp —
Chaos-wind the reed;
The fruit of the tree is a bell, blood-red —
The seed was the heart of a fairy, dead.
Part of the bells of the Laughing Tree
Fell to-day at a blast from the reed.
Bring a fallen bell to me.
Go! ' the maiden said.
'For the bell will quench our memory,
Our hope,
Our borrowed sorrow;
We will have no thirst for yesterday,
No thought for to-morrow.'

<i>The Journey Starts Swiftly</i>

A thousand times ten thousand times
More swift than the sun's swift light
Were the Morning Wings in their flight
On — On —
West of the Universe,
Thro' the West
To Chaos-night.

<i>He Nears the Goal</i>

How the red bells rang
As I neared the Chaos-shore!
As I flew across to the end of the West
The young bells rang and rang
Above the Chaos roar,
And the Wings of the Morning
Beat in tune
And bore me like a bird along —
And the nearing star turned to a moon —
Gray moon, with a brow of red —
Gray moon with a golden song.

Like a diver after pearls
I plunged to that stifling floor.
It was wide as a giant's wheat-field
An icy, wind-washed shore.
O laughing, proud, but trembling star!
O wind that wounded sore!

<i>He Climbs the Hill Where the Tree Grows</i>

On —
Thro' the gleaming gray
I ran to the storm and clang —
To the red, red hill where the great tree swayed —
And scattered bells like autumn leaves.
How the red bells rang!
My breath within my breast

Was held like a diver's breath —
The leaves were tangled locks of gray —
The boughs of the tree were white and gray,
Shaped like scythes of Death.
The boughs of the tree would sweep and sway —
Sway like scythes of Death.
But it was beautiful!
I knew that all was well.

A thousand bells from a thousand boughs
Each moment bloomed and fell.
On the hill of the wind-swept tree
There were no bells asleep;
They sang beneath my trailing wings
Like rivers sweet and steep.
Deep rock-clefts before my feet
Mighty chimes did keep
And little choirs did keep.

<i>He Receives the Bells</i>

Honeyed, small and fair,
Like flowers, in flowery lands —
Like little maidens' hands —
Two bells fell in my hair,
Two bells caressed my hair.
I pressed them to my purple lips
In the strangling Chaos-air.

<i>He Starts on the Return Journey</i>

On desperate wings and strong,
Two bells within my breast,
I breathed again, I breathed again —
West of the Universe —
West of the skies of the West.
Into the black toward home,
And never a star in sight,
By Faith that is blind I took my way
With my two bosomed blossoms gay

Till a speck in the East was the Milky way:
Till starlit was the night.
And the bells had quenched all memory —
All hope —
All borrowed sorrow:
I had no thirst for yesterday,
No thought for to-morrow.
Like hearts within my breast
The bells would throb to me
And drown the siren stars
That sang enticingly;
My heart became a bell —
Three bells were in my breast,
Three hearts to comfort me.
We reached the daytime happily —
We reached the earth with glee.
In an hour, in an hour it was done!
The wings in their morning flight
Were a thousand times ten thousand times
More swift than beams of light.

<i>He Gives What He Won to the Indian Girl</i>

I panted in the grassy wood;
I kissed the Indian Maid
As she took my wings from me:
With all the grace I could
I gave two throbbing bells to her
From the foot of the Laughing Tree.
And one she pressed to her golden breast
And one, gave back to me.

From Lilies of the valley —
See them fade.
From poppy-blooms all frayed,
From dandelions gray with care,
From pansy-faces, worn and torn,
From morning-glories —
See them fade —
From all things fragile, faint and fair
Are the Wings of the Morning made!

Vachel Lindsay

The Unpardonable Sin

This is the sin against the Holy Ghost: —
To speak of bloody power as right divine,
And call on God to guard each vile chief's house,
And for such chiefs, turn men to wolves and swine:—

To go forth killing in White Mercy's name,
Making the trenches stink with spattered brains,
Tearing the nerves and arteries apart,
Sowing with flesh the unreaped golden plains.

In any Church's name, to sack fair towns,
And turn each home into a screaming sty,
To make the little children fugitive,
And have their mothers for a quick death cry,—

This is the sin against the Holy Ghost:
This is the sin no purging can atone:—
To send forth rapine in the name of Christ:—
To set the face, and make the heart a stone.

Vachel Lindsay

The Voice Of The Man Impatient With Visions And Utopias

We find your soft Utopias as white
As new-cut bread, and dull as life in cells,
O, scribes who dare forget how wild we are
How human breasts adore alarum bells.
You house us in a hive of prigs and saints
Communal, frugal, clean and chaste by law.
I'd rather brood in bloody Elsinore
Or be Lear's fool, straw-crowned amid the straw.
Promise us all our share in Agincourt
Say that our clerks shall venture scorns and death,
That future ant-hills will not be too good
For Henry Fifth, or Hotspur, or Macbeth.
Promise that through to-morrow's spirit-war
Man's deathless soul will hack and hew its way,
Each flaunting Caesar climbing to his fate
Scorning the utmost steps of yesterday.
Never a shallow jester any more!
Let not Jack Falstaff spill the ale in vain.
Let Touchstone set the fashions for the wise
And Ariel wreak his fancies through the rain.

Vachel Lindsay

The Voyage

What is my mast ? A pen.

What are my sails ? Ten crescent moons.

What is my sea? A bottle of ink.

Where do I go? To heaven again.

What do I eat ? The amaranth flower,

While the winds through the jungles think old tunes.

I eat that flower with ivory spoons

While the winds through the jungles play old tunes;

The songs the angels used to sing

When heaven was not old autumn, but spring

The bold, old songs of heaven and spring.

Vachel Lindsay

The Wedding Of The Rose And The Lotos

The wide Pacific waters
And the Atlantic meet.
With cries of joy they mingle,
In tides of love they greet.
Above the drowned ages
A wind of wooing blows: —
The red rose woos the lotos,
The lotos woos the rose . . .

The lotos conquered Egypt.
The rose was loved in Rome.
Great India crowned the lotos:
(Britain the rose's home).
Old China crowned the lotos,
They crowned it in Japan.
But Christendom adored the rose
Ere Christendom began . . .

The lotos speaks of slumber:
The rose is as a dart.
The lotos is Nirvana:
The rose is Mary's heart.
The rose is deathless, restless,
The splendor of our pain:
The flush and fire of labor
That builds, not all in vain. . . .

The genius of the lotos
Shall heal earth's too-much fret.
The rose, in blinding glory,
Shall waken Asia yet.
Hail to their loves, ye peoples!
Behold, a world-wind blows,
That aids the ivory lotos
To wed the red red rose!

Vachel Lindsay

The Wizard In The Street

<i>[Concerning Edgar Allan Poe]</i>

Who now will praise the Wizard in the street
With loyal songs, with humors grave and sweet —
This Jingle-man, of strolling players born,
Whom holy folk have hurried by in scorn,
This threadbare jester, neither wise nor good,
With melancholy bells upon his hood?

The hurrying great ones scorn his Raven's croak,
And well may mock his mystifying cloak
Inscribed with runes from tongues he has not read
To make the ignoramus turn his head.
The artificial glitter of his eyes
Has captured half-grown boys. They think him wise.
Some shallow player-folk esteem him deep,
Soothed by his steady wand's mesmeric sweep.

The little lacquered boxes in his hands
Somehow suggest old times and revered lands.
From them doll-monsters come, we know not how:
Puppets, with Cain's black rubric on the brow.
Some passing jugglers, smiling, now concede
That his best cabinet-work is made, indeed
By bleeding his right arm, day after day,
Triumphantly to seal and to inlay.
They praise his little act of shedding tears;
A trick, well learned, with patience, thro' the years.

I love him in this blatant, well-fed place.
Of all the faces, his the only face
Beautiful, tho' painted for the stage,
Lit up with song, then torn with cold, small rage,
Shames that are living, loves and hopes long dead,
Consuming pride, and hunger, real, for bread.

Here by the curb, ye Prophets thunder deep:
"What Nations sow, they must expect to reap,"

Or haste to clothe the race with truth and power,
With hymns and shouts increasing every hour.
Useful are you. There stands the useless one
Who builds the Haunted Palace in the sun.
Good tailors, can you dress a doll for me
With silks that whisper of the sounding sea?
One moment, citizens, — the weary tramp
Unveileth Psyche with the agate lamp.
Which one of you can spread a spotted cloak
And raise an unaccounted incense smoke
Until within the twilight of the day
Stands dark Ligeia in her disarray,
Witchcraft and desperate passion in her breath
And battling will, that conquers even death?

And now the evening goes. No man has thrown
The weary dog his well-earned crust or bone.
We grin and hie us home and go to sleep,
Or feast like kings till midnight, drinking deep.
He drank alone, for sorrow, and then slept,
And few there were that watched him, few that wept.
He found the gutter, lost to love and man.
Too slowly came the good Samaritan.

Vachel Lindsay

This Section Is A Christmas Tree

This section is a Christmas tree:
Loaded with pretty toys for you.
Behold the blocks, the Noah's arks,
The popguns painted red and blue.
No solemn pine-cone forest-fruit,
But silver horns and candy sacks
And many little tinsel hearts
And cherubs pink, and jumping-jacks.
For every child a gift, I hope.
The doll upon the topmost bough
Is mine. But all the rest are yours.
And I will light the candles now.

Vachel Lindsay

This, My Song, Is Made For Kerensky

(Being a Chant of the American Soap-Box and the Russian Revolution.)

O market square, O slattern place,
Is glory in your slack disgrace?
Plump quack doctors sell their pills,
Gentle grafters sell brass watches,
Silly anarchists yell their ills.
Shall we be as weird as these?
In the breezes nod and wheeze?

*Heaven's mass is sung,
Tomorrow's mass is sung
In a spirit tongue
By wind and dust and birds,
The high mass of liberty,
While wave the banners red:
Sung round the soap-box,
A mass for soldiers dead.*

When you leave your faction in the once-loved hall,
Like a true American tongue-lash them all,
Stand then on the corner under starry skies
And get you a gang of the worn and the wise.
The soldiers of the Lord may be squeaky when they rally,
The soldiers of the Lord are a queer little army,
But the soldiers of the Lord, before the year is through,
Will gather the whole nation, recruit all creation,
To smite the hosts abhorred, and all the heavens renew —
Enforcing with the bayonet the thing the ages teach —
Free speech!
Free speech!

Down with the Prussians, and all their works.
Down with the Turks.
Down with every army that fights against the soap-box,
The Pericles, Socrates, Diogenes soap-box,
The old Elijah, Jeremiah, John-the-Baptist soap-box,
The Rousseau, Mirabeau, Danton soap-box,

The Karl Marx, Henry George, Woodrow Wilson soap-box.
We will make the wide earth safe for the soap-box,
The everlasting foe of beastliness and tyranny,
Platform of liberty: — Magna Charta liberty,
Andrew Jackson liberty, bleeding Kansas liberty,
New-born Russian liberty: —
Battleship of thought,
The round world over,
Loved by the red-hearted,
Loved by the broken-hearted,
Fair young Amazon or proud tough rover,
Loved by the lion,
Loved by the lion,
Loved by the lion,
Feared by the fox.

The Russian Revolution is the world revolution.
Death at the bedstead of every Kaiser knocks.
The Hohenzollern army shall be felled like the ox.
The fatal hour is striking in all the doomsday clocks.
The while, by freedom's alchemy
Beauty is born.
Ring every sleigh-bell, ring every church bell,
Blow the clear trumpet, and listen for the answer: —
The blast from the sky of the Gabriel horn.

Hail the Russian picture around the little box: —
Exiles,
Troops in files,
Generals in uniform,
Mujiks in their smocks,
And holy maiden soldiers who have cut away their locks.

All the peoples and the nations in processions mad and great,
Are rolling through the Russian Soul as through a city gate: —
As though it were a street of stars that paves the shadowy deep.
And mighty Tolstoi leads the van along the stairway steep.

But now the people shout:
"Hail to Kerensky,
He hurled the tyrants out."
And this my song is made for Kerensky,

Prophet of the world-wide intolerable hope,
There on the soap-box, seasoned, dauntless,
There amid the Russian celestial kaleidoscope,
Flags of liberty, rags and battlesmoke.

Moscow and Chicago!
Come let us praise battling Kerensky,
Bravo! Bravo!
Comrade Kerensky the thunderstorm and rainbow!
Comrade Kerensky, Bravo, Bravo!

Vachel Lindsay

Titian

Would that such hills and cities round us sang,
Such vistas of the actual earth and man
As kindled Titian when his life began;
Would that this latter Greek could put his gold,
Wisdom and splendor in our brushes bold
Till Greece and Venice, children of the sun,
Become our every-day, and we aspire
To colors fairer far, and glories higher.

Vachel Lindsay

To Buddha

Awake again in Asia, Lord of Peace,
Awake and preach, for her far swordsmen rise.
And would they sheathe the sword before you, friend,
Or scorn your way, while looking in your eyes?

Good comrade and philosopher and prince,
Thoughtful and thoroughbred and strong and kind,
Dare they to move against your pride benign,
Lord of the Law, high chieftain of the mind?

But what can Europe say, when in your name
The throats are cut, the lotus-ponds turn red?
And what can Europe say, when with a laugh
Old Asia heaps her hecatombs of dead?

Vachel Lindsay

To Gloriana

Girl with the burning golden eyes,
And red-bird song, and snowy throat:
I bring you gold and silver moons,
And diamond stars, and mists that float.
I bring you moons and snowy clouds,
I bring you prairie skies to-night
To feebly praise your golden eyes
And red-bird song, and throat so white.

Vachel Lindsay

To Jane Addams At The Hague

I. SPEAK NOW FOR PEACE

Lady of Light, and our best woman, and queen,
Stand now for peace, (though anger breaks your heart),
Though naught but smoke and flame and drowning is seen.

Lady of Light, speak, though you speak alone,
Though your voice may seem as a dove's in this howling flood,
It is heard to-night by every senate and throne.

Though the widening battle of millions and millions of men
Threatens to-night to sweep the whole of the earth,
Back of the smoke is the promise of kindness again.

II. TOLSTOI IS PLOWING YET

Tolstoi is plowing yet. When the smoke-clouds break,
High in the sky shines a field as wide as the world.
There he toils for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake.

Ah, he is taller than clouds of the little earth.
Only the congress of planets is over him,
And the arching path where new sweet stars have birth.

Wearing his peasant dress, his head bent low,
Tolstoi, that angel of Peace, is plowing yet;
Forward, across the field, his horses go.

Vachel Lindsay

To Lady Jane

Romance was always young.
You come today
Just eight years old
With marvellous dark hair.
Younger than Dante found you
When you turned
His heart into the way
That found the heavenly stair.

Perhaps we must be strangers.
I confess
My soul this hour is Dante's,
And your care
Should be for dolls
Whose painted hands caress
Your marvellous dark hair.

Romance, with moonflower face
And morning eyes,
And lips whose thread of scarlet prophesies
The canticles of a coming king unknown,
Remember, when you join him
On his throne,
Even me, your far off troubadour,
And wear
For me some trifling rose
Beneath your veil,
Dying a royal death,
Happy and pale,
Choked by the passion,
The wonder and the snare,
The glory and despair
That still will haunt and own
Your marvellous dark hair.

Vachel Lindsay

To Mary Pickford

MOVING-PICTURE ACTRESS

(On hearing she was leaving the moving-pictures for the stage.)

Mary Pickford, doll divine,
Year by year, and every day
At the movmg-picture play,
You have been my valentine.

Once a free-limbed page in hose,
Baby-Rosalind in flower,
Cloakless, shrinking, in that hour
How our reverent passion rose,
How our fine desire you won.
Kitchen-wench another day,
Shapeless, wooden every way.
Next, a fairy from the sun.

Once you walked a grown-up strand
Fish-wife siren, full of lure,
Snaring with devices sure
Lads who murdered on the sand.
But on most days just a child
Dimpled as no grown-folk are,
Cold of kiss as some north star,
Violet from the valleys wild.
Snared as innocence must be,
Fleeing, prisoned, chained, half-dead—
At the end of tortures dread
Roaring Cowboys set you free.

Fly, O song, to her to-day,
Like a cowboy cross the land.
Snatch her from Belasco's hand
And that prison called Broadway.

All the village swains await
One dear lily-girl demure,

Saucy, dancing, cold and pure,
Elf who must return in state.

Vachel Lindsay

To Reformers In Despair

'Tis not too late to build our young land right,
Cleaner than Holland, courtlier than Japan,
Devout like early Rome, with hearths like hers,
Hearths that will recreate the breed called man.

Vachel Lindsay

To The United States Senate

And must the Senator from Illinois
Be this squat thing, with blinking, half-closed eyes?
This brazen gutter idol, reared to power
Upon a leering pyramid of lies?

And must the Senator from Illinois
Be the world's proverb of successful shame,
Dazzling all State house flies that steal and steal,
Who, when the sad State spares them, count it fame?

If once or twice within his new won hall
His vote had counted for the broken men;
If in his early days he wrought some good —
We might a great soul's sins forgive him then.

But must the Senator from Illinois
Be vindicated by fat kings of gold?
And must he be belauded by the smirched,
The sleek, uncanny chiefs in lies grown old?

Be warned, O wanton ones, who shielded him —
Black wrath awaits. You all shall eat the dust.
You dare not say: "To-morrow will bring peace;
Let us make merry, and go forth in lust."

What will you trading frogs do on a day
When Armageddon thunders thro' the land;
When each sad patriot rises, mad with shame,
His ballot or his musket in his hand?

In the distracted states from which you came
The day is big with war hopes fierce and strange;
Our iron Chicagos and our grimy mines
Rumble with hate and love and solemn change.

Too many weary men shed honest tears,
Ground by machines that give the Senate ease.
Too many little babes with bleeding hands
Have heaped the fruits of empire on your knees.

And swine within the Senate in this day,
When all the smothering by-streets weep and wail;
When wisdom breaks the hearts of her best sons;
When kingly men, voting for truth, may fail: —

These are a portent and a call to arms.
Our protest turns into a battle cry:
"Our shame must end, our States be free and clean;
And in this war we choose to live and die."

Vachel Lindsay

Tolstoi Is Plowing Yet

Tolstoi is plowing yet. When the smoke-clouds break,
High in the sky shines a field as wide as the world.
There he toils for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake.

Ah, he is taller than clouds of the little earth.
Only the congress of planets is over him,
And the arching path where new sweet stars have birth.

Wearing his peasant dress, his head bent low,
Tolstoi, that angel of Peace, is plowing yet;
Forward, across the field, his horses go.

Vachel Lindsay

Two Easter Stanzas

I

The Hope of the Resurrection

Though I have watched so many mourners weep
O'er the real dead, in dull earth laid asleep—
Those dead seemed but the shadows of my days
That passed and left me in the sun's bright rays.
Now though you go on smiling in the sun
Our love is slain, and love and you were one.
You are the first, you I have known so long,
Whose death was deadly, a tremendous wrong.
Therefore I seek the faith that sets it right
Amid the lilies and the candle-light.
I think on Heaven, for in that air so clear
We two may meet, confused and parted here.
Ah, when man's dearest dies, 'tis then he goes
To that old balm that heals the centuries' woes.
Then Christ's wild cry in all the streets is rife:—
"I am the Resurrection and the Life."

II

We meet at the Judgment and I fear it Not

Though better men may fear that trumpet's warning,
I meet you, lady, on the Judgment morning,
With golden hope my spirit still adorning.

Our God who made you all so fair and sweet
Is three times gentle, and before his feet
Rejoicing I shall say:— "The girl you gave
Was my first Heaven, an angel bent to save.
Oh, God, her maker, if my ingrate breath
Is worth this rescue from the Second Death,
Perhaps her dear proud eyes grow gentler too
That scorned my graceless years and trophies few.
Gone are those years, and gone ill-deeds that turned

Her sacred beauty from my songs that burned.
We now as comrades through the stars may take
The rich and arduous quests I did forsake.
Grant me a seraph-guide to thread the throng
And quickly find that woman-soul so strong.
I dream that in her deeply-hidden heart
Hurt love lived on, though we were far apart,
A brooding secret mercy like your own
That blooms to-day to vindicate your throne.

Vachel Lindsay

Two Old Crows

Two old crows sat on a fence rail.
Two old crows sat on a fence rail,
Thinking of effect and cause,
Of weeds and flowers,
And nature's laws.
One of them muttered, one of them stuttered,
One of them stuttered, one of them muttered.
Each of them thought far more than he uttered.
One crow asked the other crow a riddle.
One crow asked the other crow a riddle:
The muttering crow
Asked the stuttering crow,
"Why does a bee have a sword to his fiddle?
Why does a bee have a sword to his fiddle?"
"Bee-cause," said the other crow,
"Bee-cause,
B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B-cause."

Just then a bee flew close to their rail: --
"Bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz zzzzzzzzz zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz zzzzzzzzzzz." *ZZZZZZZZZ.*"
And those two black crows
Turned pale,
And away those crows did sail.
Why?
B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B-cause.
B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B B-cause.
"Bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz zzzzzzzzz zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz zzzzzzzzzzz." *ZZZZZZZZZ.*"

Vachel Lindsay

Upon Returning To The Country Road

Even the shrewd and bitter,
Gnarled by the old world's greed,
Cherished the stranger softly
Seeing his utter need.
Shelter and patient hearing,
These were their gifts to him,
To the minstrel, grimly begging
As the sunset-fire grew dim.
The rich said "You are welcome."
Yea, even the rich were good.
How strange that in their feasting
His songs were understood!
The doors of the poor were open,
The poor who had wandered too,
Who had slept with ne'er a roof-tree
Under the wind and dew.
The minds of the poor were open,
Their dark mistrust was dead.
They loved his wizard stories,
They bought his rhymes with bread.
Those were his days of glory,
Of faith in his fellow-men.
Therefore, to-day the singer
Turns beggar once again.

Vachel Lindsay

We Meet At The Judgment And I Fear It Not

Though better men may fear that trumpet's warning,
I meet you, lady, on the Judgment morning,
With golden hope my spirit still adorning.

Our God who made you all so fair and sweet
Is three times gentle, and before his feet
Rejoicing I shall say:—"The girl you gave
Was my first Heaven, an angel bent to save.
Oh, God, her maker, if my ingrate breath
Is worth this rescue from the Second Death,
Perhaps her dear proud eyes grow gentler too
That scorned my graceless years and trophies few.

Gone are those years, and gone ill-deeds that turned
Her sacred beauty from my songs that burned.
We now as comrades through the stars may take
The rich and arduous quests I did forsake.
Grant me a seraph-guide to thread the throng
And quickly find that woman-soul so strong.
I dream that in her deeply-hidden heart
Hurt love lived on, though we were apart,
A brooding secret mercy like your own
That blooms to-day to vindicate your throne.

Vachel Lindsay

What Grandpa Mouse Said

The moon's a holy owl-queen.
She keeps them in a jar
Under her arm till evening,
Then sallies forth to war.

She pours the owls upon us.
They hoot with horrid noise
And eat the naughty mousie-girls
And wicked mousie-boys.

So climb the moonvine every night
And to the owl-queen pray:
Leave good green cheese by moonlit trees
For her to take away.

And never squeak, my children,
Nor gnaw the smoke-house door:
The owl-queen then will love us
And send her birds no more.

Vachel Lindsay

What Semiramis Said

The moon's a steaming chalice,
Of honey and venom-wine.
A little of it sipped by night
Makes the long hours divine.
But oh, my reckless lovers,
They drain the cup and wail,
Die at my feet with shaking limbs
And tender lips all pale.
Above them in the sky it bends
Empty and gray and dead.
To-morrow night 'tis full again,
Golden, and foaming red.

Vachel Lindsay

What The Coal-Heaver Said

The moon's an open furnace door
Where all can see the blast,
We shovel in our blackest griefs,
Upon that grate are cast
Our aching burdens, loves and fears
And underneath them wait
Paper and tar and pitch and pine
Called strife and blood and hate.

Out of it all there comes a flame,
A splendid widening light.
Sorrow is turned to mystery
And Death into delight.

Vachel Lindsay

What The Forester Said

The moon is but a candle-glow
That flickers thro' the gloom:
The starry space, a castle hall:
And Earth, the children's room,
Where all night long the old trees stand
To watch the streams asleep:
Grandmothers guarding trundle-beds:
Good shepherds guarding sheep.

Vachel Lindsay

What The Ghost Of The Gambler Said

Where now the huts are empty,
Where never a camp-fire glows,
In an abandoned cañon,
A Gambler's Ghost arose.
He muttered there, "The moon's a sack
Of dust." His voice rose thin:
"I wish I knew the miner-man.
I'd play, and play to win.
In every game in Cripple-creek
Of old, when stakes were high,
I held my own. Now I would play
For that sack in the sky.
The sport would not be ended there.
'Twould rather be begun.
I'd bet my moon against his stars,
And gamble for the sun.

Vachel Lindsay

What The Gray-Winged Fairy Said

The moon's a gong, hung in the wild,
Whose song the fays hold dear.
Of course you do not hear it, child.
It takes a FAIRY ear.

The full moon is a splendid gong
That beats as night grows still.
It sounds above the evening song
Of dove or whippoorwill.

Vachel Lindsay

What The Hyena Said

The moon is but a golden skull,
She mounts the heavens now,
And Moon-Worms, mighty Moon-Worms
Are wreathed around her brow.

The Moon-Worms are a doughty race:
They eat her gray and golden face.
Her eye-sockets dead, and molding head:
These caverns are their dwelling-place.

The Moon-Worms, serpents of the skies,
From the great hollows of her eyes
Behold all souls, and they are wise:
With tiny, keen and icy eyes,
Behold how each man sins and dies.

When Earth in gold-corruption lies
Long dead, the moon-worm butterflies
On cyclone wings will reach this place—
Yea, rear their brood on earth's dead face.

Vachel Lindsay

What The Miner In The Desert Said

The moon's a brass-hooped water-keg,
A wondrous water-feast.
If I could climb the ridge and drink
And give drink to my beast;
If I could drain that keg, the flies
Would not be biting so,
My burning feet be spry again,
My mule no longer slow.
And I could rise and dig for ore,
And reach my fatherland,
And not be food for ants and hawks
And perish in the sand.

Vachel Lindsay

What The Moon Saw

Two statesmen met by moonlight.
Their ease was partly feigned.
They glanced about the prairie.
Their faces were constrained.
In various ways aforesaid
They had misled the state,
Yet did it so politely
Their henchmen thought them great.
They sat beneath a hedge and spake
No word, but had a smoke.
A satchel passed from hand to hand.
Next day, the deadlock broke.

Vachel Lindsay

What The Rattlesnake Said

The moon's a little prairie-dog.
He shivers through the night.
He sits upon his hill and cries
For fear that I will bite.

The sun's a broncho. He's afraid
Like every other thing,
And trembles, morning, noon and night,
Lest *I* should spring, and sting.

Vachel Lindsay

What The Scare-Crow Said

The dim-winged spirits of the night
Do fear and serve me well.
They creep from out the hedges of
The garden where I dwell.

I wave my arms across the walk.
The troops obey the sign,
And bring me shimmering shadow-robos
And cups of cowslip-wine.

Then dig a treasure called the moon,
A very precious thing,
And keep it in the air for me
Because I am a King.

Vachel Lindsay

What The Sexton Said

Your dust will be upon the wind
Within some certain years,
Though you be sealed in lead to-day
Amid the country's tears.

When this idyllic churchyard
Becomes the heart of town,
The place to build garage or inn,
They'll throw your tombstone down.

Your name so dim, so long outworn,
Your bones so near to earth,
Your sturdy kindred dead and gone,
How should men know your worth?

So read upon the runic moon
Man's epitaph, deep-writ.
It says the world is one great grave.
For names it cares no whit.

It tells the folk to live in peace,
And still, in peace, to die.
At least, so speaks the moon to me,
The tombstone of the sky.

Vachel Lindsay

What The Snow Man Said

The Moon's a snowball. See the drifts
Of white that cross the sphere.
The Moon's a snowball, melted down
A dozen times a year.

Yet rolled again in hot July
When all my days are done
And cool to greet the weary eye
After the scorching sun.

The moon's a piece of winter fair
Renewed the year around,
Behold it, deathless and unstained,
Above the grimy ground!

It rolls on high so brave and white
Where the clear air-rivers flow,
Proclaiming Christmas all the time
And the glory of the snow!

Vachel Lindsay

When Bryan Speaks

When Bryan speaks, the town's a hive.
From miles around, the autos drive.
The sparrow chirps. The rooster crows.
The place is kicking and alive.

When Bryan speaks, the bunting glows.
The raw procession onward flows.
The small dogs bark. The children laugh
A wind of springtime fancy blows.

When Bryan speaks, the wigwam shakes.
The corporation magnate quakes.
The pre-convention plot is smashed.
The valiant pleb full-armed awakes.

When Bryan speaks, the sky is ours,
The wheat, the forests, and the flowers.
And who is here to say us nay?
Fled are the ancient tyrant powers.

When Bryan speaks, then I rejoice.
His is the strange composite voice
Of many million singing souls
Who make world-brotherhood their choice.

Vachel Lindsay

When Gassy Thompson Struck It Rich

He paid a Swede twelve bits an hour
Just to invent a fancy style
To spread the celebration paint
So it would show at least a mile.

Some things they did I will not tell.
They're not quite proper for a rhyme.
But I will say Yim Yonson Swede
Did sure invent a sunflower time.

One thing they did that I can tell
And not offend the ladies here:—
They took a goat to Simp's Saloon
And made it take a bath in beer.

That ENTERprise took MANagement.
They broke a wash-tub in the fray.
But mister goat was bathed all right
And bar-keep Simp was, too, they say.

They wore girls' pink straw hats to church
And clucked like hens. They surely did.
They bought two HOfel frying pans
And in them down the mountain slid.

They went to Denver in good clothes,
And kept Burt's grill-room wide awake,
And cut about like jumping-jacks,
And ordered seven-dollar steak.

They had the waiters whirling round
Just sweeping up the smear and smash.
They tried to buy the State-house flag.
They showed the Janitor the cash.

And old Dan Tucker on a toot,
Or John Paul Jones before the breeze,
Or Indians eating fat fried dog,
Were not as happy babes as these.

One morn, in hills near Cripple-creek
With cheerful swears the two awoke.
The Swede had twenty cents, all right.
But Gassy Thompson was clean broke.

Vachel Lindsay

Where Is David, The Next King Of Israel?

Where is David? . . . O God's people,
Saul has passed, the good and great.
Mourn for Saul the first-anointed —
Head and shoulders o'er the state.

He was found among the Prophets:
Judge and monarch, merged in one.
But the wars of Saul are ended
And the works of Saul are done.

Where is David, ruddy shepherd,
God's boy-king for Israel?
Mystic, ardent, dowered with beauty,
Singing where still waters dwell?

Prophet, find that destined minstrel
Wandering on the range to-day,
Driving sheep and crooning softly
Psalms that cannot pass away.

"David waits," the prophet answers,
"In a black notorious den,
In a cave upon the border
With four hundred outlaw men.

"He is fair, and loved of women,
Mighty-hearted, born to sing:
Thieving, weeping, erring, praying,
Radiant royal rebel-king.

"He will come with harp and psaltry,
Quell his troop of convict swine,
Quell his mad-dog roaring rascals,
Witching them with words divine —

<i>"They will ram the walls of Zion!
They will win us Salem hill,
All for David, Shepherd David —
Singing like a mountain rill!"</i>

Vachel Lindsay

Where Is The Real Non-Resistant

(Matthew V, 38-48.)

Who can surrender to Christ, dividing his best with the stranger,
Giving to each what he asks, braving the uttermost danger
All for the enemy, MAN? Who can surrender till death
His words and his works, his house and his lands,
His eyes and his heart and his breath?

Who can surrender to Christ? Many have yearned toward it daily.
Yet they surrender to passion, wildly or grimly or gaily;
Yet they surrender to pride, counting her precious and queenly;
Yet they surrender to knowledge, preening their feathers serenely.

Who can surrender to Christ? Where is the man so transcendent,
So heated with love of his kind, so filled with the spirit resplendent
That all of the hours of his day his song is thrilling and tender,
And all of his thoughts to our white cause of peace
Surrender, surrender, surrender?

Vachel Lindsay

Who Knows?

They say one king is mad. Perhaps. Who knows?
They say one king is doddering and grey.
They say one king is slack and sick of mind,
A puppet for hid strings that twitch and play.

Is Europe then to be their sprawling-place?
Their mad-house, till it turns the wide world's bane?
Their place of maudlin, slaving conference
Till every far-off farmstead goes insane?

Vachel Lindsay

Why I Voted The Socialist Ticket

I am unjust, but I can strive for justice.
My life's unkind, but I can vote for kindness.
I, the unloving, say life should be lovely.
I, that am blind, cry out against my blindness.

Man is a curious brute — he pets his fancies —
Fighting mankind, to win sweet luxury.
So he will be, tho' law be clear as crystal,
Tho' all men plan to live in harmony.

Come, let us vote against our human nature,
Crying to God in all the polling places
To heal our everlasting sinfulness
And make us sages with transfigured faces.

Vachel Lindsay

With A Bouquet Of Twelve Roses

I saw Lord Buddha towering by my gate
Saying: "Once more, good youth, I stand and wait."
Saying: "I bring you my fair Law of Peace
And from your withering passion full release;
Release from that white hand that stabbed you so.
The road is calling. With the wind you go,
Forgetting her imperious disdain —
Quenching all memory in the sun and rain."

"Excellent Lord, I come. But first," I said,
"Grant that I bring her these twelve roses red.
Yea, twelve flower kisses for her rose-leaf mouth,
And then indeed I go in bitter drouth
To that far valley where your river flows
In Peace, that once I found in every rose."

Vachel Lindsay

Written For A Musician

Hungry for music with a desperate hunger
I prowled abroad, I threaded through the town;
The evening crowd was clamoring and drinking,
Vulgar and pitiful--my heart bowed down--
Till I remembered duller hours made noble
By strangers clad in some suprising grace.
Wait, wait my soul, your music comes ere midnight
Appearing in some unexpected place
With quivering lips, and gleaming, moonlit face.

Vachel Lindsay

Yankee Doodle

This poem is intended as a description of a sort of Blashfield mural painting on the sky. To be sung to the tune of Yankee Doodle, yet in a slower, more orotund fashion. It is presumably an exercise for an entertainment on the evening of Washington's Birthday.

Dawn this morning burned all red
Watching them in wonder.
There I saw our spangled flag
Divide the clouds asunder.
Then there followed Washington.
Ah, he rode from glory,
Cold and mighty as his name
And stern as Freedom's story.
Unsubdued by burning dawn
Led his continentals.
Vast they were, and strange to see
In gray old regimentals:—
Marching still with bleeding feet,
Bleeding feet and jesting—
Marching from the judgment throne
With energy unresting.
How their merry quickstep played—
Silver, sharp, sonorous,
Piercing through with prophecy
The demons' rumbling chorus—
Behold the ancient powers of sin
And slavery before them!—
Sworn to stop the glorious dawn,
The pit-black clouds hung o'er them.
Plagues that rose to blast the day
Fiend and tiger faces,
Monsters plotting bloodshed for
The patient toiling races.
Round the dawn their cannon raged,
Hurling bolts of thunder,
Yet before our spangled flag
Their host was cut asunder.
Like a mist they fled away. . . .

Ended wrath and roaring.
Still our restless soldier-host
From East to West went pouring.

High beside the sun of noon
They bore our banner splendid.
All its days of stain and shame
And heaviness were ended.
Men were swelling now the throng
From great and lowly station—
Valiant citizens to-day
Of every tribe and nation.
Not till night their rear-guard came,
Down the west went marching,
And left behind the sunset-rays
In beauty overarching.
War-god banners lead us still,
Rob, enslave and harry
Let us rather choose to-day
The flag the angels carry—
Flag we love, but brighter far—
Soul of it made splendid:
Let its days of stain and shame
And heaviness be ended.
Let its fifes fill all the sky,
Redeemed souls marching after,
Hills and mountains shake with song,
While seas roll on in laughter.

Vachel Lindsay

Yet Gentle Will The Griffin Be

(What Grandpa told the Children)

The moon? It is a griffin's egg,
Hatching to-morrow night.
And how the little boys will watch
With shouting and delight
To see him break the shell and stretch
And creep across the sky.
The boys will laugh. The little girls,
I fear, may hide and cry.
Yet gentle will the griffin be,
Most decorous and fat,
And walk up to the milky way
And lap it like a cat.

Vachel Lindsay