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VNiVERSITAS
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SALAMANIINI

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ESSEX BALLADS

AND

OTHER POEMS

BY

CHARLES E. BENHAM.

*WITH A PREFATORY NOTE BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE COUNTESS OF WARWICK.*

(Fourth Edition.)

Colchester:

BENHAM & Co., "ESSEX COUNTY STANDARD" OFFICE,
24, HIGH STREET.

1907.

[NP]

PRINTED AT
THE "ESSEX COUNTY STANDARD" OFFICE,
COLCHESTER.

[NP]

PREFATORY NOTE
TO THE SECOND EDITION
BY THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE THE COUNTESS OF WARWICK.

WARWICK CASTLE.

DEAR MR. BENHAM,

I gladly accede to your wish that I should write a prefatory note to the new edition of your "ESSEX BALLADS." Besides a very considerable skill in versification, you have handled local dialect in such a way as will tend helpfully to perpetuate many archaic and interesting forms of folk speech. But, beyond this, the poems "My Booy Jim," "These New-Fangled Ways," and the excellent parody, "Another Psalm of Life," are full of real humour and good fun. In "The Death of Mike," "The Big Book," "The Dragon," and "The Sphinx's Smile," another and a more serious chord is successfully touched.

Throughout your book I have found what should, I think, be in every local volume, a very welcome note of homeliness, the love of home and the love of one's own county.

After reading "ESSEX BALLADS" I am sure the book will be of much use and great popularity in the county villages.

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Believe me,

Yours very faithfully,

FRANCES EVELYN WARWICK.

[NP]

NOTE ON THE SYSTEM OF SPELLING ADOPTED
IN THE ESSEX BALLADS.

The method chosen for expressing the local pronunciation is purposely simplified as far as possible, the correct spelling not being altered more than was absolutely necessary. As a general rule the introduction of the letter “a” (as in “sao,” “knaow”) signifies the sound of “ā” as in fāther, — sāh-ō, knāh-ō. Similarly the rendering of such a word as “made,” viz., “maide,” means that it is pronounced māh-īd. But if the word when properly spelt has the “ai,” as “laid,” the diæresis is used — “lāid,” signifying lāh-īd, “prāy,” prāh-ī.

CHARLES E. BENHAM.

[NP]

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[NP]

“MASTER GO’ N TO BE SOWD.”

[A BALLAD OF ASTONISHMENT.]

MASTER ha’ gone to the Court! An’ the farm an’ the stock to be sowd!
Well, I am wholly amaized. I was here at eleven year owd —
That’ll be forty-two year, come Michaelmas next—an’ you säy
Master ha’ gone to the Court! What, an’ broke because he carn päy?

[2]

Things must be wunnerful bad, do master ‘ad never ha’ broke,
Him as had olluz a sight o’ good luck, why that seem like a joke.
Master gone to the Court? What an’ filed his petition an’ that?
Ten year agao I’d as soon ha’ believed it as eaten my hat.

An’ wha’s go’ n to come o’ the land — three hund’d o’ acres an’ more?
Wha’s go’ n to come o’ the land? Tha’s a go’ n to be sow’d? But good lor,
Who is the fule of a chap tha’s a goin’ to buy it, I say?
Land that ‘ont päy, to be sowd! Yes, but who is a goin’ to buy?

An’ wha’s go’ n to come o’ we chaps? Are we all goin’ sträight to the House?
What, me an’ Tom Hodge, an’ Jack Wilson, Mike, Harry, an’ Sandy, an’ Rous,
Along o’ the master an’ missus? Good lor, man alive, if we must
I knaow, when we git there, together, I knaow I shall larf till I bust.

[3]

“The lan’ for the people!” Old Warty, he talk to ’em wunnerful grand,
But wha’s go’ n to come o’ the people, and wha’s go’ n to come of the land?

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Well, that is the master bit I do think I ever was towld.

What *is* go'n to come o' this country if Master's a go'n to be sowd?

[4]

II.

“MISS JULIA:
THE PARSON'S DAUGHTER.”

[A BALLAD OF LOVE.]

I LOIKE to watch har in the Parson's pew
A Sundays, me a settin' in the choir;
She look jest wholly be'utiful, she do.
That fairly sim to set my heart a-fire.

Her gowden hair, a-glist'rin in the sun,
Them bright blew eyes — good lor', I see 'em now!
I carn abear it when the sarmon's done,
That fare to make me feel I dunner how.

Las Saddy, I was 'long o' Tom and Bill,
Down on th' allotment, back o' Thompson's Farm,
When she come past us, walkin' tard the hill,
A basket of them päigles on her arm.

[5]

“Nice evenin', John,” she säy as she goo by,
An' smiled — goodstruth, you mighter knock' me down
“That is indeed Miss,” I was go'n to säy

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But, there, I couldn't, give me 'arf-a-crown.

Säys Bill, a-larfin', as she tarned the lane,
"She's wäitin' for yer, roun' the corner, bor,"
I give 'ee sich a look, he larft again.
An' made me feel that mad I could a swore.

I carnt abide it when these bits of chaps
Talk of Miss Julia, saime as if they might
If she was some bloke's gal, but lor, prehaps
I think too much o' har, a jolly sight.

That sim ridic'lous nons'nse this, I doubt,
A tellin' on yer how she make me feel,
But who's to help it when she walk about
More like a angel than a gal a deal?

That made me wild to see that Lunnon chap,
What come down to the Hall las' Mon'ay week,
A-coaxin' o' the dog there in har lap,
She settin' in the garden — dang his cheek.

[6]

But there, Miss Julia! Lawk a mussy me,
I didn't oughter think of har n' more.
That aint as if she knaow I care for she,
And do I reckon she'd give me what for.

[7]

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“THERE’S OLLUZ SUMMAT.”

[A BALLAD OF WRATH.]

THERE’S olluz summat. When tha’s wet
The corn git läid, the häy git sp’iled,
And when tha’s dry the lan’ git set.
That fare to make me wholly riled.

Look there, together, goodalive,
Them chick’ns send me fairly wild.
See them a-scrappin’ in the drive?
That fare to make me wholly riled.

Why carn Tom shet gaites like he should?
He aint got no more sense ‘n a child.
A-talkin’ aint a mite o’ good —
That fare to make me wholly riled.

[8]

Now wha’s that kid a-cryin’ for?
Look, Emma, carnt you hold that child?
Here, drat this pipe, why ‘ont it dror?
That fare to make me wholly riled.

That räin agin. How that do räin!
Here, Mary, aint them taters biled?
You’re olluz half an hour behin’,
That fare to make me wholly riled.

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Hark how that blaow, jes what I thought,

That barley field'll all be sp'iled.

A Saddy's moon is good for nought —

That fare to make me wholly riled.

You want it wet, tha's olluz fine,

You want it cowl, tha's olluz mild,

You want it dry, there's nought but räin.

That fare to make me wholly riled.

There's olluz summat; if 'taint that

Its tother— fare to drive yer wild.

Don' matter tuppence what yer at.

Things olluz make yer wholly riled.

[9]

IV.

“I DIN KNAOW.”

[A BALLAD OF POLITICS.]

WARTY, he talk to 'em to-rights las' night —

I never h'ard a chap a talkin' sao.

He säy the lan' an' that is ourn by right,

But bless yer, *I din knaow.*

He säy we're all a poor deown-trodden lot,

A set o' slaives, tha's fact he towd us sao.

He säy we oughter hev I dunner wot,

But bless yer, *I din knaow.*

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Good night! He give it to our Parson str'ight —
I reck'n if tha's right he'll hev to gao.
The Charch an' taithe are ourn, he säy, by right,
But bless yer, *I din knaow.*

[10]

I olluz sorter liked our Parson; thought
He wornt at all a bad un as the' gao,
Yet Mister Warty säy I didn't ought,
But bless yer, *I din knaow.*

Las' winter, when my poor owd missus died,
Parson he come to see us through the snaow.
Old Warty säy tha's on'y cos he's päid,
But bless yer, *I din knaow.*

He simd right kind to me and my booy Bob;
He sent us meat and things— a reg'lar shaow.
Goodstruth, our Parson! Who'd a thought he'd rob?
Well bless yer, *I din knaow.*

And Master Warty, 'cordin' as it seems,
He bin our fri'nd these years and years agao,
A warkin' out for everlastin' schemes,
But dang it, *I din knaow.*

The las' elecsh'n, when them yallers found
I wear'd a bit o' blew, they säy," Hulloa,
You aint a go'n to wote for Mr. Round?"
But I says, *I din knaow.*

[11]

Tha's what I olluz tell 'em when they praitie.
I carn abear these chaps wot cackle sao.
That fairly stop their jawin', dont 't maite?
Jes tell em — You din knaow.

[12]

V.

“THEM HARNTED HOUSEN.”

[A BALLAD OF WARNING.]

Goo' mornin', sir, you minter säy you bought them housen there,
An' you're a-go'n ter live in one? Well, that'll make 'em stare.
Them housen, sir, is harnted, an' was when I's a lad,
An' anyone as sleep there, sir, is sartin to be had.

I wouldn't tell yer, but sure*lie*, I knaow as you'll repent.
Tek my advice, sir, don't you gao, y'll on'y wish yer hent,
Tha's no good you a-larfin, don't you sleep 'ithin that plaice
Do to-night you'll be a-larfin' on the wrong side o' yer faice.

[13]

There's jes one thing about it, you 'ont want to be there long
Afore you säy my wahrd is right, though now you think tha's wrong.
The rets? Nao, sir, that ent the rets, n'r yet the moice, I guess,
But tha's the Owd un, I believe, an' nothin' more n'r less.

Las' night I passed them housen by, along o' Tom an' Jack.
"There'll be a tempest, booy," I säy," the moon läy on her back."
The wind were flanny, an' the clouds come up as black as slaites,
An' soon that lightened crost the sky, an' thundered jes to rights.

You oughter sin them winders, sir, all lit o' fire — good luck!
And rattled — I sh'd think th' did — my stars, them winders shuk!
We didn't stop, I tell yer why, we felt that drefful bad,
Afeare the Owd un sh'd come out, an' we sh'd a bin had.

[14]

Ah, you can larf, but don't you läy your head 'ithin that plaice,
Do to-morrer you'll be larfin on the wrong side o' yer faice.
Them housen, sir, is harnted, an' was since I's a lad —
Tek may adwice, sir, don't you gao — yer sartin to be had.

[15]

VI.

"LITTLE JIMMY KING'OM - COME."

[A BALLAD OF PERSECUTION.]

WHAT, remember little Jimmy? I should rather thinker do.
How we use ter plaigue his life out! Why, I never rightly knew.
But there, the booy was darft, yer knaow, an' olbut deaf an' dumb,
An' we olluz use ter call him little Jimmy King'om-come.

He rowled off of a häy stack onst, acrost a iron bin,

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

An' that onsensed him for a week; he ne'er was right agin.
He simd a loikely child afore— a smart, quick-witted brat,
But arter that ere fall he got as pudden-brined as that.

[16]

He'd set a gahpin' on a gaiter all by hisself for hours,
Or a-wandrin' 'long the hedge-raows, gath'rin' lots o' cultch an' flowers.
He was olluz up to sumfin, an' 'twas olluz sumfin rum.
Why, everybody knaowed him, little Jimmy King'om- come.

Little Jim was that soft-hearted that he wouldn't hart a flea.
I've h'ard 'em säy the sparrers wornt a mite afräid o' he;
An' anyhow I sin the bards a feedin' from his hand —
Tha's fact, though why they wornt afeared I ne'er could unnerstand.

I recollect' how me an' Bill, one Sunday, dinner time,
Found little Jimmy fas' asleep, his little basket by'm —
The little cob his mother olluz use ter let him taik,
With some bread and cheese inside it, or a bit of harvust caike.

Well, me an' Bill, we et it all, without a-waikin he,
An' then Bill give the booy a shaik. That was a master spree
To see him lookin' for the caike. I p'inted to a shrub,
A maikin' signs to let him think a bard had et the grub.

[17]

At farst you should a sin him look, and harf begin to cry,
But when he saw the black-b'd there his faice was lit o' j'y.
He din care then. He thought that bard had taiken every crumb —
He was a caution, that ere booy, that Jimmy King'om- come.

I recollect, one evenin' time, we tied him to a tree,
An' maide belief the ghaost ud come at dark an' gobble he;
An' Jack come roun' at midnight with a sheet acrost his back,
An' olbut skeered him in a fit- a reglar tease was Jack.

We let him gao, all shaikin', hom', an' olbut dead o' fright,
A scamprin' long the laine there, in the middle o' the night
Goodstruth, to see young Jimmy runnin'! Lor, you woulder larft.
"Onkoind?" You talk like Parson, sir; why lor, the booy was darft!

[18]

You talk jest how our Parson talked; yer maike me call to mind
The times an' times he use to tell us "teasin" wasn't kind."
"Präy let em be," he use to säy, but lor, we on'y larft —
A funny thing he didn't sim to see the booy was darft.

An' Jimmy's mother, too, my stars, we use ter maike har riled.
She'd nilly cry her eyes out over that ere bloomin' child.
Them women! Wha's the good o' talkin' to em? Not a mite.
But there, she shoolly mighter sin as how the booy warnt right.

But what was I a tellin' on yer? — Ah, about the ghaost.
He died about a fortn't arter that— a month at maost.
We use ter give he beans, we did. Good night, you woulder larft.
That do sim, as you säy, a shaime, but there, the booy was darft.

[19]

The Salamanca Corpus: *Essex Ballads* (1907)
“JIM’S NEW GAL.”

[A BALLAD OF JEALOUSY.]

WHO’ s he got there? Good lawk, if that ain’t Sal—
Har tha’s at wark at Rob’t Wilson’s farm.
There’s nao mistaike, this time’s he’s got a gal;
Jes see ‘em, Mary, walkin’ arm in arm.

Here, good alive, jes let me hev a come.
Git down my bonnet off o’ that ere shelf.
Well, on my life, I never did; by gum,
I reckon she’s a fancyin’ of harsel.

Mary, here Mary, jes you come an’ look.
There come owd Sally —see her dress, the skart
A-hanging down— that fare to want a hook—
See how tha’s draggin’ in the dust and dart.

[20]

Good graicious, Mary jes to look at that!
Fancy young Jim a-walkin’ out with har!
D’yer see them feathers stickin’ in her ’at?
They’re limsy? I should rather think the’ are.

Jealous? What me? O’ sech as har indeed!
Nao, that I know I ent, so there. Good lor’,
Upon my life I think I never seed
A gal look sech a bag o’ rags afore.

Me jealous? Nao, I don’t care that for Jim;

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I towd him I was thankful to be rid.

You never h'ard me säy I cared him,
Nao, Mary, that I knaoow you never did.

I shouldn't like, not me. Hulloo, my eye,
I dew believe they're comin' threw the gaité.
Look, Mary, ent thäy tarnin' down this wäy,
Do, I'll stand here, an' give it to 'em sträight.

Mary, look sharp an' git yer bonnet on,
An' stand' longside o' me here while they pass.
Come, look alive now, don't they'll soon be gone;
Ah, now they've tarned the t'other side the grass.

[21]

Tha's where they're gooin', are they? Pas' the mill,
Along the fiel' path leadin' tard the woods;
I'll give he what for some däy, that I will,
For walkin' out 'ith that ere bit of goods.

J'yer hear him call "Good arternune" to me?
He think he's doin' of it there some tune.
Next time I ketch him out along o' she,
Blest if I don' give he "good arternune."

[22]

VIII.

"MY BOOY JIM."

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)
[A BALLAD OF PATERNAL PRIDE.]

I FEEL that wholly daized, I do 'n deed,
That I can scarce believe it, tha's a fac';
Well, there, I know I never thought t'a seed
My Jim a swell like that when he come back.

He bin out forrin nigh on twenty year.
You bin out forrin, sir, when you's a lad?
You may a comed acrost my booy out theer,
But lor, you wou'nt a known him if yer had.

He come right up to our owd cott'ge door
Las' evenin' time. Good night! he maide us stare.
"An how's the dad?" he säy, "an' Missus?" Lor,
You might knock me down, I do declare.

[23]

He got on one o' them there chimbley hats,
A pair o' yaller gloves, a walkin' stick,
One o' them wotcherallums — them crawats —
I tell yer, he looked reg'lar up to Dick.

"Well, there," I säys, "You minter säy you're Jim?"
"I do," he säy. Säys I, "Well, tha's a bit!"
I couldn't scarce believe as that were him,
For when he left he worn't much more'n a chit.

You oughter sin th'owd woman! She was struck
All of a heap, an' cou'n't tell what to säy.
He come in an' set down, she olbut shruck

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Till he jes died o' larfin, pretty nigh.

My, dint he larf! He fairly shuk the stool
As we kep 'gaphin at him there s'grand.
"Father," he säy, "you said I were a fool
When twenty year agao I lef the land."

Well, he kep' on a torkin' there, an' arst
All what had happened since he went awäy;
But there, he torkt s' precious queer, at farst
You couldn't unnerstand a wahrd he säy.

[24]

But he set there as happy as yer please,
An' Missus läid the supper while he tork;
A prahper set out, too, fat pork an' peas —
"Jim olluz was a mark," she säy, "on pork."

He larft, but there, the wäy he took that pork!
"Tha's right enough," I says, "tha's Jim, I knaow;"
But lor, he heft them peas up on his fork!
Two at a time, my stars, sir, somethin' slaow!

Well, I carn tell yer all he säy las' night,
Y'll hev to hear him, sir, yerself, I doubt,
Y'll find him jest a master one to prait —
Nothin' alive that booy don' knaow about.

He bin to plaices where the sun don' set —
The tother side the warld I think it were.
Tha's very like, sir, you an' him ha' met

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He sim to knaow 'most everyone out there

He gon up to the Rect'ry sir, to-däy
To see the Parson —'ont he maike him look?
I reckon, sir, as my owd gal ud säy
Them two 'll tork together like a book.

[25]

Wh', there he come, a walkin' 'ith them chaps,
There in the four-want-wäy, atween them carts.
Tha's my booy Jim, an' now y'll knaow, prehaps,
If you ha' sin him, sir, in forrin parts.

[26]

IX.

“OWD BILL.”

[A BALLAD OF ARTFULNESS.]

OWD Bill! Why everybody knaow owd Bill;
He's olluz schemin', olluz at some gaime,
Olluz a actin', tha's what he is; still
You carn't help likin' of him all the saime.

A rum un? I sh'd rather think he were!
T'd taik e'er all e'er time to tackle he.
An' langwidge! Lor, j'yer ever hear him swear?
A mark on swearin? Ah, sir, that he be.

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You might as lief be talkin' to a paost
As try to maike owd Bill amen' his wäys,
He knaow his wäy about as well as maost —
I ne'er see sich a chap in my born däys.

[27]

You on'y got to säy "I bet yer don't,"
An' Bill 'll do it, don' care what it be.
He'll best yer, too, I'm bothered if he 'ont;
There's no man livin' dussent tackle he.
Las' Michaelmas us fellers got him on
Down at the Anchor, Sunday dinner time.
There was a good few on us— me an' John,
An' Steve, an' Tom, an' Sandy Wha's-his-naime.

I don't ezackly knaow how that began.
Several come in — along the rest was Mike.
"Owd Bill," he säy, "I'll läy a tanner, man,
As you carn't eat a pound o' raw bif staike."

Owd Bill, o' course he took him, like a shot,
Blest if he didn't do it, too, an' so!
Three pound o' raw bif staike! He et the lot,
An' taters, an' a dish of broccolo.

He never goo to Charch, a Sunday, Bill,
Excep' he keep a larkin' all the time.
A reglar bad 'un, tha's what he is; still
You carn't help likin' of him all the saime.

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[28]

Why, up at Mis'ley— that there poachin' fräy,
I'll läy yer tuppence Bill was in the spree,
But he can olluz faike the thing some wäy
Afore the Magistrates so he git free.

He done it, right enough. You woon believe
The times an' times I sin him arter hares.
I could a tow'd 'em thäy was up his sleeve—
Nao, not the rabb'ts, sir, nao, nao, the snares.

Oo, he's the artfullest you ever knaowed;
He never taike no hart, not anywhere.
There's nao mistaike, Bill, he's as owd as owd,
He'd best the very Owd-un, I declare.

Nowhere there ent a bad un t'ekal he —
I knaow there ent a bigger liar livin',
Yet when the däy of Judgmen' come you'll see,
He'll faike it somehow so he git to Hiven.

[29]

X.

“THESE NEW-FANGLED WAYS.”

[A BALLAD OF PROTEST.]

ME, nao, sir, I don't howd 'ith these Board Schools.
They larn the booy's too much, my thinkin', now,

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

An' what I see, there's jest as many fools
As when thäy put the young uns to the plough.

I ent owd-fash'd, nao, I loike to see
The young uns comin' on. Bat now-a-däys
Thäy säy an' do sich things git over me,
An' I carnt howd 'ith these new-fangled wäys.

I howd 'ith larnin, mind, but let 'em larn
Saime way as I did, not that stuff o' theirs,
Larn 'em the proper wäy to thetch a barn,
Larn 'em the wäy to sao a field o' tares.

[30]

Geoggerfy! Now what on arth's the sense
A larnin' of em' how the Moon go roun'?

An' all about Ameriky an' Frence,
An' plaices tother side o' Lunnon town?

My booy he come to me the tother night,
"D'yer knaow," he säy," the Warld an' you an' me,
Are tarnin' on our axles — sich a raite
You woon believe? But there, tha's right," säys he.

I tarned he on his axles, you be boun',
I cop he one. That maide me reg'lar riled,
That fairly did. The Warld a tarnin' roun'!
To hear sich stuff an' nons'nse from a child!

N'more I don't howd with them thingmibobs,
Them Parish Councils wot they started now.

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

There's Tom an' Harry think they're reg'lar nobs,
Cos thäy goo there a kickin' up a row.

Look at that Council meetin' here las' week —
Why bless my saoul if Torn din taik the chair.
An' Parson settin' 'gin the door as meek
As some owd sheep, I tell yer; that he were.

[31]

An' what d'yer think they done? wh' nought, o' course,
Cos there aint nothin' here want doin' to.
N'woner Parson he look drefful cross,
Comin' awäy; I see him, did'nt you?

An' I don't howd 'ith these ere wäys at Charch —
A singin' o' the Scripters an' that ere,
Dressin' theirselves in nightgownds stiff wi' starch,
The Boible never tell 'em that, I swear.

They säy *Ahmen* instead o' *Aimen* now;
Tha's on'y jes to be contrairy like,
An' when that come the" Glory be" thäy bow
An' cartsey. Lor, I'd like to gim a shaik.

D'yer think the Aingels sing *Ahmen*? Not thäy,
An' when these ere are dead an' gone th'll see,
Th'll give it to 'em sträight up there, th'll säy,
You ent a go'n to sing along o' we."

I ent owd-fashioned, nao, I loike to see
The young uns comin' on. But now-a-däys

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

Thäy säy an' do sich things git over me,
An' I carnt howd 'ith these new-fangled wäys.

[32]

XI.

“TELL YOU FOR WHY.”

[A BALLAD OF LOGIC]

Cummisherners thäy call theirsels, I'm blaowed!

A comin' roun' to see why farms don' päy!

I could a towd 'em what thäy never knaowed,

Tellyerferwy — acos I could, tha's why.

One of 'em come to Master at the Hall,

An' arst all manner stuff, and writ it down.

A great owd book he'd got, to howd it all,

An' take it up to thäy in Lunnon town.

Cummish'ner, I'd cummish'ner him, I would.

I could a made he look, I could to-day.

What do he knaow? He carnt do we nao good,

Tellyerferwy — acos he carnt, tha's why.

[33]

Nex' day there's Master stood we chaps a drink.

“Dessay you think that bloke a fool?” he säy.

“Think?” I says, “Nao, sir, we don' want to think,

Tellyerferwy — acos we knaow, tha's why,”

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

“Protecshun,” Master säy, “tha’s what we want,
A forty-shillun duty, chaps, ’ud päy.”
But he ont get it — lay yer sixpence on’t.
Tellyerferwy — acos he ont, tha’s why.

But what a thing that is for me an’ you,
Free Traide — tha’s ruination, Master säy,
Tha’s no good säying what they oughter do.
Tellyerferwy — ‘cos do they don’t, tha’s why.

I wish as Master were our Member; lor,
He’d l’arn ’em suffen, wouldn’t he, my eye?
Free traiders! I guess he’d give thäy what for,
Tellyerferwy — he’d Free traide *them*, tha’s why.

He could a maide owd Harc’t set up sträight.
He could a twisted he about some tune,
Saime as he did them chaps what come an’ praithe
Up on the Green one evenin’-time las’ June.

[34]

He says, says he, “You move that ere red wan
Off o’ my fild, don’t I’ll larn you who’s who.
Look slippy now, and take that oft my lan’,
Tellyerferwy,” he say, “ ’cos don’t I do.”

Look at that clock! Another glass o’ stout?
I thank y’ sir, I doubt we dussen stäy.
Do, I shoon’ mind, but there, we’d best clear out,
Tellyerferwy — acos o’ Bruce, tha’s why.

[35]

XII.

“NEVER BEEN TO COLCHESTER!”

[A BALLAD OF THE TENDRING HUNDRED.]

I see young Nat come outer his,

As I come outer mine,

“An’ where you off to, booy?” I sez,

“You’re dressed up somethin’ fine!”

“I’m gooin’ by the trine,” he say,

“In harf an hour or sao,

I’m goon to Caochester to-däy.”

He say, “if you must knaow.”

He’d never bin to Caochester!

He hadn’t, I’ll be boun’.

Well, tha’s a caution, ent it, sir,

He’d never sin the town !

[36]

He oughter went next Saddy, sir,

When I shall be a goon,

For tha’s the däy for Caochester —

A Saddy arternoon.

I towd em so, “You want to gao

The Salamanca Corpus: *Essex Ballads* (1907)

A market dāy,” sez I,
“To see the people; you don’ knaow
The crowds an’ crowds,” I säy.

“An all them little stalls an that,
Along the High Street, lor,
I see” I sez, sez I, “young Nat,
You never bin afore.

“There’s rabbuts, birds, an’ guinea pigs,
An’ sweets o’ every kind,
An’ knives and tools an’ thingmijigs —
All mann’r o’ sorts you’ll find.

An’ fish an’ ’ysters — don’t they scent?
An’ how them chaps can shout!
An’ wilks all ready, so they ent
No trouble gitten out.

[37]

“An’ where S’n Runnel’s was, a lot
O’ cheap jacks in a ring
Keep sellin’ I carnt tell yer wot —
Why every mortal thing.

“Yes, tha’s the dāy to see the town
Along o’ all yer pals.
An’ keep a walkin’ up an’ down
An’ talkin’ to the gals.”

“Well, I carn stop,” he säy, “good luck!”

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

An' off goo Marster Nat.

He got a peacock's feather stuck

Jes so like in his hat.

“Well, hurry up,” I sez, sez I.

An' take care o' yersel.

You got no time to lose, good-bye,

Goo'-bye, an' fare ye well.

“There come the trine, you're all behin',

You'd best be starten forth,

An' you git out at Buttles, min',

Don't you'll goo roun' the North!”

[38]

XIII.

THE DEATH OF MIKE.

[A BALLAD OF MOURNFULNESS.]

HOWD me up a little, Martha, so as I can look around;

Lor, I feel that cowl an' weak, jes' wrap my showders in your gown.

I'm a dyin', ent I, Martha? I don' scarcely recollect

Who I be or where I bin to — I'm a dyin' I expect'.

Guess I bin a dreamin', Martha, what I min I thought jes now

I were in the Warkus, wond' rin when I got in there an' how.

Oo, that wor a laonesome feelin', wonnerful good news that seem

When I know tha's all onreal — that were nahthin but a dream.

[39]

Howd me up a minute, Martha, open that ere winder there,
Op' it wider, ah, tha's better, so I git a breath o' air.
So I see the fiel's an' that an' knaow I ent a dreamin' still,
So I knaow that ent the Warkus, where I be a lyin' ill.

I'm a dyin', ent I, Martha? Howd my han' and don't you gao.
Don' keep on a cryin', missus, you've no call for frettin' sao.
Carn' think what'll come o' you, though, poor owd gal, when I be gone.
Don' keep on a cryin', Martha; I carn bear you taikin' on.

Martha, if I goo to-night, remember me upon yer knees.
Präy for me, an' I säy, Martha, min' you think an' tell the bees.
Don't tha's sartin sure to bring some trouble to yer, I'm afräid.
Whisper to 'em softly, Martha, saime as when poor Emmie died.

[40]

Lor, I do feel drefful queer, I reckon I shall goo to-night,
I can feel m'self a sinkin', I sharn see the mornin' light.
Howd me up a little, Martha, so I git a breath o' air.
Tha's more easy-like; now Martha, let me try an' säy a prayer.

MIKE'S PRAYER

"God A'mighty, I'm a dyin'; tek I präy my saoul to Hiven.
Mebbe I ha' bin a bad un, do I hop' to be forgiven.
Lord, I *knaow* I bin a bad un, an' I knaow I dussent baost.
But I ent bin in the public for a twelve-m'nth as Thou knaowst.

"God A'mighty, tell my darter Emmie up in heaven with Thee,

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

I'm a comin' up 'longside her, evermore to live with she,
Tell her, Lord, I bin as saober these twelve months as any livin';
Don't she on' believe her father ever could a bin forgiven.

[41]

"Lord, I präy look arter Martha, till from this ere warld she gao.
Don't I carn see who's to help her, poor owd gal, when I'm läid laow,
'Less it be the rev'rent Johnson; Lord, Thou knaowest him I guess —
Him what maide me leave the drinkin', an' give Martha that owd dress.

"Lord I dew believe in Him who died upon the cross for we.
Which I thank 'm, God A'mighty; tell him sao, I präy, from me.
I carn säy n' more, I fare to feel as pow'rless as a mouse.
But look arter poor owd Martha, don't she'll goo 'ithin the House."

[42]

[43]

POEMS.

THE LEGEND OF ST. JOHN'S ABBEY,
COLCHESTER.

WHEN William the Second was King of this land
The people of Colchester cleverly planned
A request that a man who was William's right hand,
Named Eudo, a Norman, as I understand,
Should at once be sent down to govern the town,
Because they knew well that that man of renown,
Who was truer than steel, could do a good deal

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

To deliver the town from stern tyranny's heel.

For in Colchester, certainly, things had been rather

Too hot in the days of King Rufus's father.

Their humble petition they made with submission,

And the King granted all without any condition.

[44]

So Eudo came down, and was hailed in the town

With hip, hip, hurrahs from papas and mammas,

And the little one's shoutings the police could not drown.

Things went very well, so the chroniclers tell,

And the town was quite happy, for

Eudo the Dapifer —

Such was his title — relieved the distressed

And eased all the oppressed,

And removed from folk's backs full many a tax.

He built, too, the Castle, and Moot Hall, and opposite,

Found for his own house, as he thought, a proper site,

And then he revolved how he best could provide

For the wealth of the soul which he carried inside.

To the south of the town lived a man in a gown

Named Siric, a priest of unwonted renown

For near his house stood a Church built of wood,

A wonderful place for miraculous grace.

And there in dark nights were seen heavenly lights,

And though some said "Absurd," others vowed they had heard

Strange voices when no one there uttered a word.

And here in this Church of St. John, on a day

[45]

It happened a certain poor man went to pray,
A man who was forced, by the King's own command,
To wear iron shackles on foot and on hand,
And there, on the feast of St. John, with a clang
His fetters went flying and made such a bang
That it quite put a stop to the hymn the choir sang,
And the whole of the town with the miracle rang.

Be all this as it might, Eudo thought that no site
In the whole of the town was so suitable quite
For a monastery's walls, and no saint could be bettered
As patron, than he who this man had unfettered.
So he worked with a will, and by next year the whole
Of the work was achieved for the good of his soul.

Two monks he placed there, the stipend to share,
And masses to say by night and by day,
And to watch and to pray in the regular way.
And a smile of beatified radiance stole
O'er his face, and his eyes gave a heavenward roll
As he piously sighed, "Well, at least I have tried
My best to provide
From my bodily wealth for the wealth of my soul"

[46]

But, alas, those two monks turned out terrible skunks.
And grumbled and swore they were scantily fed;
They complained that the cheese was too hard, and the bread

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

Was too stale, and the butter was rancid, they said,
And one of them wanted a nice feather bed.
But Eudo gave both monks a sacking instead,
And appointed two more, who were worse than before,
For they worried poor Eudo by night and by day,
And struck, as we say, for an increase of pay,
Till he wished that he never had made the endeavour
To work for the good of his soul in this way.

At last he gave over the whole of his care
To Stephen, the Abbat of York, with a prayer
That he kindly would manage the wretched affair,
And quickly the Abbat made everything square.
Twelve monks he installed and another one called,
“By permission,” a prior, a title much higher,
In fact, it’s a sort of monastic esquire.
In time they elected one monk as their abbat,
Choosing one who was quite the least likely to grab at
The wealth of the place— not a man of capacity,

[47]

But — to quote from Morant — “of no worldly sagacity.”
Yet, alas for poor Eudo, the good of his soul
Still appeared to be just as far off as the Pole,
For all sorts of disputes with the Abbat arose,
And at last he resigned, and then nobody knows
What fresh troubles arose, which certainly shows
That the soul of poor Eudo could find no repose.

The good man at last to the spirit-world passed,
And there let us hope he attained to a goal

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

Where at length he discovered true wealth for his soul.
And his dying request was that all he loved best
Should be by the monks of the Abbey possessed.
He bequeathed them his ring with a topaz enshrined.
And a gold covered-cup to be used when they dined,
And presents of money and presents of kind,
And his mule and his horse to their care he consigned,
Then calmly to Heaven his spirit resigned.
And he begged they would pray both by night and by day,
And masses would say, in the regular way.
For what he in vain had been seeking the whole
Of his life — the repose and the good of his soul.

[48]

MORAL.

Let all who aspire to a noble desire
For the good of their souls, recollect they require
 No mortar and bricks for their sin,
Nor by building outside can they ever provide
 For the soul that is builded within.

[49]

THE LEGEND OF THE ESSEX
SERPENT.

*In the year 1669 there was published in London, by Peter Lillicrap, a strange pamphlet entitled "The Flying Serpent, or Strange News out of Essex, being a true relation of a monstrous serpent, which hath divers times been seen at a parish called Henham-on-the-Mount within four miles of Saffron Walden; showing the length,

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

proportion, and bigness of the Serpent, the place where it commonly lurks, and what means hath been used to kill it.”

It is Christmas night, and the yule log bright
Sinks on the hearth in its own red light,
The candles burn in their sockets low;
The children must now to their slumbers go,
To dream of holly and mistletoe.

“But stay, oh stay,” the children say,
We cannot yet be sent away.

Till grandpapa there in his old arm chair
Tells us a story, we all declare
We’ll none of us set a foot on the stair.”

“Ah well, ah well, a tale I’ll tell,
So sit down and listen, Tom, Harry, and Nell,

[50]

And Sarah, and Bobby, and Johnny as well;
You must all come near and you all shall hear
The tale that I tell to you every year.”
Then the children gathered and shrieked with glee,
And the youngest sat on her grandpa’s knee.

“Yes, tell us that story, please, grandpa, dear,
The story you tell to us every year.”

“Well, well, my children, ‘twas long ago,
When I was no bigger than Tom, you know,
That my grandfather sat in his old arm chair.
With me at his feet, as it might be there.

And the tale that he told me, I tell to you
A tale that is wonderful, strange, and true”

“Hurrah, hurrah, for Grandpapa!”

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

And then in a trice as still as mice
To hear the old story for ever new —
“The tale which *your* grandpapa told to you,
The tale that is wonderful, strange, and true.”
“Oh, well my dears, it’s a hundred years
Since my grandfather came from the Northern shires
To settle in Essex by Henham Hill,
In the house where your cousins are living still.
Though the village is not what it used to be
When I went to stay there in ‘43.
The old ones are dead and the young ones have fled

[51]

To the towns and cities for want of bread.
Now at Henham Hill you must know, my dears.
When my grandfather came from the Northern shires,
The village was all in a state of fright
Because of a terrible dragon’s might.
A horrible creature that none could kill,
That lurked in Birch Wood by Henham Hill.
It was nine feet long and uncommonly strong.
It had scales like a snake and teeth like a rake,
And great rolling eyes very much wide awake;
It had wings like a bird, and the noise it would make
Was enough to cause even the boldest to shake.
It lived in Birch Wood (where the Lodge Farm then stood),
And forth from its lair it would creep through the trees
With a rustling and roaring that made your blood freeze.
‘Twas a horrible creature that none could kill,
That dragon that terrified Henham-on-Hill.
The women and children ne’er ventured to roam

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

By themselves after dark; ay, and even at home
The youngsters would lie half the night wide awake
And scream that they saw the great dragon-shaped snake
Fly up on its wings to the window, and glare

[52]

With its hideous eyes, the poor children to scare.
One morning my grandfather out at his work,
Caught sight of the serpent which sprung with a jerk
From over the hedge but a few feet away.
On the grass just before him the strange monster lay,
And rolled itself o'er in the sun, with a snore
Which, sounded, he said, like an elephant's roar.
Then all of a sudden the beast as it lay
Caught sight of my grandfather coming that way,
It lifted its head and it goggled its eyes,
And it opened a mouth of a terrible size;
And its gums, like a sheath, covered sharp rows of teeth.
It stood like a cobra erect on the heath,
With a body all speckled with spots underneath.
To the Lodge ran my grandfather straight for a gun
As quickly as ever his two legs could run;
But when he came back and returned to the spot,
With his musket all loaded with powder and shot,
The dragon had fled, and was rustling away
To the depth of the wood where in ambush it lay,
And again and again on many a day
That monster green, with its scaly sheen,
In the woods was seen
With its wings and paws tipped with terrible claws.

[53]

But in vain the villagers tried to take
The life of that villainous dragon-snake.
They went with their guns in their two's and their three's;
They beat the bushes, they climbed the trees,
They searched the copses, they clubbed the cover,
And looked for its tracks in the grass and the clover,
The wheat and the barley, the oats and the stover,
But nothing, when armed, could they ever discover;
And from time to time the report went round
That the snake had been seen and its hole been found,
But whether it died or was killed at length,
Or whether it still lives there in strength,
Hiding away from the sight of man,
I cannot tell you, and nobody can.
So now away, my children gay,
For the fire is cut, and the night grows chill,
You must off to bed, to dream, if you will,
Of the wonderful dragon of Henham Hill,
Which nobody ever was able to kill,
And for ought I know may be living still."

[54]

THE FUNNY MAN.

[REPRINTED FROM *Harper's Magazine* BY KIND PERMISSION
OF MESSRS. HARPER & BROTHERS.]

Who is that man who sits and bites
His pen with aspect solemn?

The Salamanca Corpus: *Essex Ballads* (1907)

He is the Funny Man, who writes
The weekly Comic Column.

By day he scarce can keep awake,
At night he cannot rest.
His meals he hardly dares to take —
He jests, he can' t digest.

His hair, though not with years, is white;
His cheek is wan and pale,
And all with seeking day and night
For jokes that are not stale.

[55]

His joys are few; the chiefest one
Is when by luck a word
Suggests to him a novel pun
His readers haven't heard.

And when a Yankee joke he sees
In some old book — well, then
Perhaps he gains a moment's ease,
And makes it do again.

The thought that chiefly makes him sigh
Is that a time must come
When jokes extinct like mammoths lie
And jokers must be dumb.

When every quip to death is done,
And every crank is told,

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

When men have printed every pun,
And every joke is old.

When nought in heaven or earth or sea
Has not been turned to chaff,
And not a single oddity
Is left to make us laugh.

[56]

THE PROFESSIONAL SINGER.

[A SONG OF INCONGRUITY.]

“I MUSE of my loved one, sighing”

(That wretched piano’s flat!)

“For love of her soul I am dying”

(In an evening’ dress cravat).

“My heart it is wildly beating”

(But I mustn’t crush this bud)

“As I think of our last fond meeting”

(And I flash my diamond stud).

“I feed on my love’s sweet glances”

(And between the songs on stout)

“Her voice all my thoughts entrances”

(That piano’s awfully out).

[57]

“With a passion that’s wild and ceaseless

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

I tread the weary world”

(With a shirt-front smooth and creaseless

And moustaches soaped and curled).

“I know not, alas, I know not

If we two shall meet once more;

I weep” — *(though my tears they flow not,*

For I hear the cry “Encore”).

[58]

CARLYLE’S “GREATEST FOOL IN
LONDON.”

A PROBLEM OF THE UNKNOWNABLE.

[REPRINTED FROM *Golden Gates.*]

“For, observe, though there is a greatest Fool, as a superlative of every kind; and the most Foolish man in the Earth is now undubitably living and breathing, and did this morning or lately eat breakfast, and is even now digesting the same; and looks out on the world with his dim horn- eyes and inwardly forms some unspeakable theory thereof; yet where shall the authentically Existing be personally met with?”

CARLYLE’S Miscellanies Vol. IV. “Biography.”

BENEATH the fog that hangs o’er London town

Are many Fools of varying degrees,

And one must be the most consummate Clown,

The biggest Blockhead out of all of these.

Whatever depth of folly may invest

The others’ brains, his are more addled still.

Whatever nonsense occupies the rest,

The Salamanca Corpus: *Essex Ballads* (1907)
More vapid fancies yet his cranium fill.

[59]

His vacant face is more a perfect blank
Than any dunce's sent to town to school;
No idiot or statesman but may thank
His stars he is not such an utter Fool.

We know not his address nor e'en his name,
Though in directories both, mayhap, appear,
And many a ledger, p'raps may show a claim
Against this Dunderhead for meat and beer.

Perchance each day some postman more than once
Brings him prospectuses to feed his brain.
Oh! those who send to such a blithering Dunce,
Can it be true that they are less inane?

This veriest Jackass, who must somewhere be.
Though who and where he is we cannot tell;
Is it this Ass that in philosophy
The learned call the Great Unknowable?

[60]

ANOTHER PSALM OF LIFE.

[WHAT THE *Editor* SAID TO THE PSALMIST/]

ASK me not, in mournful queries,
Why the verses that you send

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

Month by month, in constant series,
Are declined with thanks, my friend

“Want of space —” you don’t believe it?

Well, we own that *was* a lie
Please in confidence receive it.
And we’ll tell you really why.

Faultless are your lines in rhythm.
All your rhymes are quite complete.

Nothing is the matter with them,
Every verse is honey-sweet.

[61]

In the poet’s proud profession
What you lack is — can’t you guess?
You’re a genius at expression,
But— you’ve nothing to express.

[62]

MUSIC EVERYWHERE.

[REPRINTED FROM THE *Professional World*.]

THERE’S music everywhere!
Thou canst not tread upon a pointed pin
But Nature’s music doth at once begin
With plaintive notes to tremble through the air.
There’s music everywhere!
Thou canst not drop a boot-jack on thy toe

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

But one deep note unconsciously will flow
Forth from thy lips, and echo up the stair —
There's music everywhere!

Thou canst not knock a nail into the wall,
But lo, the hammer on thy thumb will fall,
And Nature's treble rends the quivering air —
There's music everywhere!

[63]

Thou canst not rest at night upon thy bed,
But lo, among the chimneys overhead
Two cats, or three, sing out in chorus there —
There's mew-sic everywhere!

Thou canst not to the cobbler's go, to choose
A good substantial pair of leather shoes,
But lo, on tip-toe walking up the stair.
There's music everywhere!

Thou canst not take thy babe into thine arms,
And try to still its infantile alarms,
But music greets thee from thy son and heir.
There's music everywhere!

Thou canst not step upon a puppy's tail,
Or drop hot wax upon thy finger nail,
Or lift the boiling kettle from its stand,
Or take a roasting chestnut in thy hand
Or let the mouse run scampering from the trap,
Or kill a pig, or burst a shoulder strap,

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

Or rouse a cockroach when a lady's nigh,
Or get the soap into a youngster's eye,
Or stick a needle upright in a chair,
But music — Nature's music — rends the air.
There's music everywhere!

[64]

DISAPPOINTMENT.

IN a honey flower all night in bliss
There slept a bumble-bee.
“I can very well do with a drink from this
When the morning breaks,” said she.
But a spider was up before she woke
And caught the bumble-bee.
And the spider hung her in his net
On one of the corner pegs,
“She's mine for supper,” said he, “you bet,
As certain as eggs are eggs.”
But a frog walked round in the afternoon
And grabbed the spider's legs.

[65]

The frog walked off to a neighbouring pond
And croaked in joyous glee,
As he said to his wife and his children fond,
“A spider, my dears, for tea!”
But a duck dived down and gripped his neck.
“A nice fat frog,” said she.

The Salamanca Corpus: *Essex Ballads* (1907)

“Quack-a-quack, you are caught, Mr. Frog,” said the duck,
“You will do for my duckling son,
I reckon I’m in for a stroke of luck
To have caught such a big fat one,”
When up came I in a velvet coat,
And pop went my long gun.

So the duck fell dead. I picked her up,
To find her plump and fat,
“On Sunday my wife and I shall sup,”
Said I to myself, “on that.”
But we didn’t, after all, for the duck got away
Inside my neighbour’s cat.

[66]

A FLIGHT OF FANCY.

[REPRINTED FROM THE *Family circle*.]

WITH the roar of a giant it bounded along,
The monster of iron and steam,
Fining the air with its thundering song.
Till the rocks re-echoed its scream,
And a drowsy dust-cloud rose and sank.
As startled in a dream.

With a sound which only the insect ear
Could catch as it floated by,
A careless young butterfly hovered near
The great embankment high,

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

Quietly singing of honey and flowers,
And of the summer sky.

[67]

But all on a sudden the lazy wings.
Are gript by the whirling air.
And the poor little creature no longer sings.
And is swept to he knows not where;
And snap go his poor little tympanum-strings
In the whistle's hideous flare.

With a sad little song he resumes his flight,
As the monster hurries away.
He sings no more of the flowers and light,
Of honey and joys of day;
But he murmurs a ditty of dragons grim,
And smoky horrors grey.

Little he knows of the power of steam.
Of the action of crank and wheel.
Never of boilers did he dream,
Or the wonderful uses of steel;
For never to science did Nature yet.
His compound eyes unseal.

Butterflies we in the fields of Time,
Little or nothing we know
Of the mighty engines whose power sublime,
Although it may work our woe,
Serves uses vast in a world unseen
By mortals here below.

[68]

THE RIVER AND THE SEA.

LIFE is a voyage ever,
Oarsmen and sailors we.
Youth is a flowing river,
Manhood an open sea.

Happy the days when guided
On by the flowing stream,
Sure of our course we glided.
As in a golden dream.

Sails were unneeded o'er us,
Nor the firm hand to steer.
Safely the current bore us.
Peacefully free from fear.

[69]

Now on the ocean heaving,
Toil we with sail and oars.
Now must we labour, leaving
Rest with the river shores.

Tempests and waves beat o'er us,
Rocks are around us now.
All the wide sea before us,
Where shall we bend the prow \

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

Oh, for the days when we glided
On with the flowing stream.
Lost is the Power that guided,
Fled is the golden dream!

[70]

THE BIG BOOK.

ON the World I look as a sort of Book
Of which the pages are the ages.
On the first of all, alas, did fall
A blot from the pen of the first of men.

And many a page in an after age
Is black with smears and stained with tears.

And some contain a mournful strain,
A song of care and dark despair.

But here and there a page is fair,
And glorious shines with golden lines.

Are there pages still in the Book to fill?
Alas, not any can tell how many.

[71]

We know no more, as the leaves turn o'er,
Than this — that one is not yet done.

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

The years go by, and the pages dry.

But the ink is wet on one page yet.

We may have passed all but the last.

That turned who knows? The Book may close.

But the page that's wet is waiting yet

A word or line of yours and mine.

Our part is slight, yet we may write

Some little deed worth while to read.

'Tis good to think that when the ink

Has long been dry, as time goes by,

Some still might look back through the Book

To find the bit which we had writ,

And reading thus might speak of us,

And bid men note how well we wrote.

But those that read pay little heed

To writing fair penned out with care.

[72]

The flourished roll and figured scroll

Of days gone by attract the eye,

And blots I ween are clearly seen —

The whole world sees such things as these;

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

But all in vain by writing plain

We seek the praise of future days.

Yet I would choose all fame to lose,

All praises rung, all paeans sung.

If I could write some trifle slight

Which just a few would say was true.

They ever live whose life can give

New life to some in years to come.

[73]

THE DRAGON.

I HEARD, as a child, of a Dragon dread
That dogged man' s steps through life,
And at last would spring on its prey, they said,
To tear him in hopeless strife.

Timid, I peered the thickets between.

Till beneath the wayside boughs

I saw it! — A creature of fearful mien,

With "DEATH" writ o'er his brows.

With a quiver I turned away my sight.

As he couched in the shadows dim.

Determined that nevermore, come what might,

Would I look at that Dragon grim.

[74]

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

But the years went by, and there came a thought,
“From the Dragon you cannot fly;
Some day the battle will have to be fought.
Then face him before you die.”

So I looked again with a firmer gaze;
Boldly I looked, and long.
What mattered his glare in the early days
When life was young and strong?

I looked at the Dragon with cool disdain,
No longer a timid child,
And, could it be true? As I looked again
I thought the Dragon smiled.

My soul was filled with a deep surprise,
For the sight was wondrous strange,
As there before my very eyes
I saw the Dragon change!

Change! From a monster of fearful mien
With “DEATH” upon his brow,
To a creature of beauty and dazzling sheen,
That stood before me now.

[75]

No dragon! An Angel of light and love,
The perfume of flowers his breath,
And “LIFE ETERNAL” his brows above,
Instead of the legend “DEATH.”

[76]

THE SPHINX'S SMILE.

“My riddle rede,” the Sphinx who cries,
With cold grey eyes that all must heed,
O'er-views the crowd of passers-by,
And bids each answer her or die.

Once in a life, but scarcely more,
In searching sore, in eager strife,
Man peers the curtain's corner through,
And gains one glimpse of what is true.

Then, only then, the Sphinx's smile
A little while is seen of men.
But such a smile! It throws disdain
On all the other years of pain.

[77]

Once, as it seemed, that smiling face,
With all its grace, upon me beamed.
It came to me upon a day
As a strange vision passed away.

I saw the souls that left the earth
For higher birth, for greater goals.
I marked them each in wonder stand
Upon the far enchanted strand.

The Salamanca Corpus: *Essex Ballads* (1907)

A wandering crowd of spirits streamed,
And, so it seemed, they cried aloud—
Where is the God we knew so well,
And where is Heaven, and where is Hell?”

Then saw I one whose creed below
I seemed to know — “God there is none.”
And still of God he saw no trace—
Stood blind before his Father’s face.

I watched one next, whose creed had been—
“When God is seen my doubts perplexed
Shall fade away;” and in that land
The angels took him by the hand.

[78]

They led him on, through fields of light
Till on his sight a splendour shone,
Exceeding far the light of day.
“Behold the Lord,” I heard them say.

“Father, forgive,” was all he said,
“The past is dead, and now I live,
I knew Thee not, but now I see.”
And God forgave him instantly.

I marked a third; when earth he trod
He saw no God, no God he heard;
Yet held, in spite of clouds above,
Through life that God is Light and Love.

The Salamanca Corpus: *Essex Ballads* (1907)

I saw him meet his God, and all
He did was fall before His feet.
And he alone without surprise
Saw God with clear untutored eyes.

And he alone, of all that throng,
Could join the song around the Throne.
He only, in the realms above,
Untaught found Perfect Light and Love.

Then shone, ah yes, just for a while,
The Sphinx's smile of happiness.
And such a smile! It touched with light
The everlasting Hills of Night.

[79]

JOTTINGS.

WHO builds a house is free to choose
The kinds of stone that he will use;
So here what subjects you may find
Depends entirely on my mind.

Some writers make their readers feel
Provided with a good square meal,
While others — such a task is mine —
Supply the walnuts and the wine.
A sip of truth— the merest smack,
A pinch of salt, a nut to crack.

[80]

Some writers take you by the hand,
And lead you far through Fancy's land,
Through cultured gardens, where the soil
Is redolent of care and toil.
My path less cultured you will find;
My labour is of humbler kind.
A few wild flowers— by some called weeds—
I pluck from Nature's tangled meads.

'Tis pleasant at times in the journey of life
To turn for an hour from the highway,
For the flowers that are fairest, and sweetest, and rarest
Can only be found in the by-way.

We wonder that the swallows roam
Unguided to their distant home,
But is it not a stranger thing
That thought can fly on swifter wing,
And in an instant view a scene
Where neither birds nor men have been?

[81]

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

The ruined castle, crumbling to decay,
We count a relic of the distant past;
Yet every stone that lies upon the way
Is just as old, and just as long will last.

The tiny flower, born but to live a day,
That seems the freshest, newest thing on earth,
Is made of atom elements which lay
In the old Chaos, ere the race had birth.

“Beneath the sun there’s really nothing new.”
This saying certainly is very true;
And yet this paradox is even truer:
“Than oldest things there’s often nothing newer.”

GREAT AND SMALL.

The stars, although they seem so very small,
Are each a solar system after all.

[82]

The world is so large that its infinite store
Seems greater in number than sand on the shore;
But the world is so small that when all’s said and done
Its endless varieties all appear one.

With all that we read, and with all that we write,
And with all that our teachers can show,
There isn’t an emmet that sports in the light
But could tell us some things we don’t know.

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

According to the children's rhyme,

The world is made of drops and grains.

But grown up children learn in time

Each grain, each drop, a world contains.

If space is limitless, then great and small
Are without meaning as compared with all;
So he who sets no limits to his theme,
Nothing too small nor yet too great will deem.
Impartially his stream of fancy runs
From mites to empires, atomies to suns.

[83]

WORTH AND UNWORTH.

Often the gem but differs from the flint
In being rarer. Often gems of thought
But differ from the things we see in print
In being rarely written, seldom sought.

—

Who can exhaust from out the barren flint
The sparks that round the steel untiring play?
There is no theme but still Ins something in 't.
Till you have struck for ever and a day.

—

The wealth of all the Empires' thrones,
That glitter in the light of day.
The gold, the pearls, the precious stones
That millionaires have stowed away,
Are only samples. Thousands more
Are underneath Earth's mantle green.

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

The greatest treasures of its store
Are those the world has never seen.

[84]

There is a land where he who flings
Most wealth abroad, most riches saves,
A land where those who work are kings;
And all the kings are also slaves.

It is the land of black and white,
Whose store increases when unrolled,
And those who serve by every right
The ruling sceptre also hold.

POINTS OF VIEW.

“Just look at that goose,” said a duck on the sluice,
“Why the length of her neck is absurd”
“Just look at that duck — what a neck!” said the goose,
“She must be a queer sort of bird”

—
In the silent night when the white moth drinks
The honey from flower by flower,
How quaint are the thoughts the night moth thinks
In the still dark midnight hour.

[85]

The chill damp pall of the dewy air,
To her it is health and breath.
And all that we reckon as bright and fair

The Salamanca Corpus: Essex Ballads (1907)

To her is darkness and death.

—

If from the mountains of the moon
We looked upon the rolling earth.
We should not find the New Year's birth
Was touched with winter more than June.

Our eyes would see this mighty globe
Caparisoned by dual powers —
Half garlanded with summer flowers,
Halt shrouded in a snowy robe.

Summer and winter, spring and fall.
These variegate the whole world o'er,
And creeping shift from shore to shore,
But none of them *prevails* at all.

Some say the age of miracles is past,
Or but the fable of untutored men;
I hold that long as heaven and earth may last
All things are miracles beyond our ken.

[86]

When Adam delved the untrodden green,
And probed the wealth of Nature's store,
How often must his words have been—
“I never noticed that before.”

How oft her distaff laid aside,
As fancies flashed across her brow,
Fell from the lips of Adam's bride —
“I never thought of that till now.”

DIVIDED TOIL.

I gathered fruit from every tree
And gave it to the company.
Said one, "I, too. will follow suit
And go with you to gather fruit."
But soon he found the toil and heat
As bitter as the fruit was sweet
He sat him down beneath a tree,
"Divided toil is light," said he.
"The gathering shall be your pursuit,
While I will eat the gathered fruit"

[87]

THE UNKNOWABLE.

There are things out of sight which the mind still craves
To reach, and feel and know,
As the moon's keen glance cannot pierce the waves,
Or see what lies below,
Yet shells and shingle in deep-down caves
She tosses to and fro,
As her soul's invisible hands she laves
At tidal ebb and flow.