

Peters Claims a Poem Which an Friend Has Credited to the Gallant Colonel.

[National Republican.]

I have just read the remarkable fiction which appeared in your issue of September 6 concerning the authorship of my poem, "Solitude."

The paragraph credits the poem to Col. John A. Joyce, who is said to have dashed it off on an old envelope in the wine-room of the Galt House in December, 1862.

I can readily believe that the author of this astonishing fabrication had passed the entire night in the aforementioned wine-room, when his stimulated imagination gave birth to such an atrocious statement.

The poem "Solitude" never saw the light until February, 1883. I wrote it February 10 of that year in the library at the residence of Judge A. B. Brady, Madison, Wis.

The first four lines of the poem came to me at a reception given by Gov. Rush, of Wisconsin.

I had that day met a friend who was in great sorrow. I had felt sincere sympathy for her during the interview, but in the gaieties of the evening she and her grief passed wholly from my mind, and I gave myself up to the pleasures of the hour.

As a thought of her suddenly recurred to me, rebuking me for my mirth, these four lines came to my mind from that mysterious and unknown source whence poems do come:

Laugh and the world laughs with you,

Weep and you weep alone;

For the sad of earth must borrow its mirth,

But has trouble enough of its own.

On my return to the home of my friends I repeated the lines, and both Judge Brady and his wife urged me to complete them, saying:

"If you finish the poem as it began, it will be one of your finest efforts."

I did complete it, and sent it to the New York Sun, where it appeared the following Sunday, I think. The old files of the Sun will prove my statement, and my Madison friends will recall the incidents I mention, as they have frequently referred to them since the poem became so famous.

I challenge any one to produce a well authenticated copy of the poem, written or printed, dated earlier than Feb. 10, 1883.

It is embraced in my collection, "Poems of Passion," published by Belford & Clarke, Chicago, May, 1883.

I consider it one of my strongest efforts, and I agree with the author of the paragraph in Saturday's Republican, "the authorship should be known."

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

MERIDEN, CONN., Sept. 10, 1884.

The poem and "remarkable fiction" to which the fair poetess of passion alludes, bearing and all, was the following:

"LAUGH, AND THE WORLD LAUGHS."

The following poem has gone the rounds of the press for many years, under credit of "Anonymous." In December, 1862, it was written by Col. John A. Joyce, at the Galt House wine-room, at 1 o'clock in the morning, at the request of the celebrated George D. Prentice, Mr. Prentice and Maj. Miller, proprietor of the hotel, who had spent a social evening with Col. Joyce (at that time Adjutant of the Twenty-fourth Kentucky), bantered him to write an off-hand poem on "Love and Laughter." Accepting the banter, the Colonel wrote these words on the back of an envelope given him by Prentice. It is a gem of its kind, and its authorship should be known:

Laugh, and the world laughs with you;

Weep, and you weep alone;

For this brave old earth must borrow its mirth,

It has troubles enough of its own.

Sing, and the hills will answer;

Sigh! it is lost on the air;

The echoes bound to a joyful sound

But shrink from a voicing care.

Re-joice, and men will seek you;

Grieve, and they turn and go;

They want full measure of all your pleasure,

But they do not want your woe.

Be glad, and your friends are many,

Be sad, and you lose them all;

There are none to decline your nectar'd wine,

But alone you must drink life's gall.

Feast, and your halls are crowded;

Fast, and the world goes by;

Succeed and give, and it helps you live,

But no man can help you die.

There is room in the halls of pleasure

For a long and lordly train;

But one by one we must all file on

Through the narrow aisles of pain.

THE FAULT OF THE AGE.

[Ella Wheeler.]

The fault of the age is a mad endeavor To leap to heights that were made to climb; E'er a burst of strength or a thought that is clever We plan to outwit and forestall Time.

We scorn to wait for the thing worth having; We want high noon at the day's dim dawn; We find no pleasure in toiling and saving As our forefathers did in the good times gone.

We force our roses before their season To bloom and blossom that we may wear; And hush we wonder and ask the reason Why per se buds are so few and rare.

We crave the gain, but despise the getting; We want wealth, not as reward, but dower; And the strength that is wasted in useless fretting Would fell a forest or build a tower.

To covet the prize, yet to shrink from the winning; To thirst for glory, yet fear the fame; To hope that can lead to at last but sinning, No mental languor and moral blight.

Better the old slow way of striving And counting small, thus when the year is done, Than to use our forces in a contriving To dash for pleasure, we have not won.

A WALTZ QUADRILLE.

[Ella Wheeler.]

The band was playing a waltz quadrille— I felt as light as a wind-blown feather, As we floated away at the caller's will Through the intricate, mazy dance together Like a mimic army our lines were meeting, Slowly advancing, and then retreating, All decked in their bright array; And back and forth to the music's rhyme We moved together, and all the time I knew you were going away.

The fold of your strong arm sent a thrill From heart to brain, as we gently glided Like leaves on the waves of that waltz quadrille,

Parted, met, and again divided, You drifting one way and I another, Then suddenly turning and facing each other; Then off in the blithe chace, Then airily back to our places swaying, While every beat of the music seemed saying That you were going away.

I said to my heart, "Let us take our fill Of mirth and pleasure, and love and laughter,

For it all must end with this waltz quadrille, And life will never be the same life after. O! that the caller might go on calling— O! that the music might go on falling— Like a shower of silver spray— While we whirled on the vast forever, Where no hearts break and no ties sever, And no one goes away."

A clamor, a crash, and the band was still, 'Twas the end of the dream and the end of the measure.

The last low notes of that waltz quadrille Seemed like a dirge over the death of pleasure.

You said good night and the spell was over— Too warm for a friend and too cold for a lover—

There was nothing more to say; But the lights looked dim and the dancers weary, And the music was sad, and the hall was dreary After you went away.

THE DUET.

[By Ella Wheeler.]

I was smoking a cigarette; Maud, my wife, and the tenor McKee Were singing together a blithe duet; And days it were better I should forget Came suddenly back to me— Days when life seemed a gay masque-ball, And to love and be loved was the sum of it all.

As they sang together, the whole scene fled— The room's rich hangings, the sweet home air, Stately Maud with her proud blonde head; And I seemed to see in her place instead A wealth of blue-black hair, And a face—ah! your face! yours, Lisette! A face it were wiser I should forget.

We were back—well, no matter when or where; But you remember, I know; Lisette, I saw you, dainty and debonnaire, With the very same look that you used to wear In the days I should forget; And your lips, as red as the vintage we quaffed, Were pearl-edged bumpers of wine when you laughed.

Two small slippers, with big rosettes, Peeped out under your kilt skirt there, While we were smoking our cigarettes (Oh! I shall be dust when my heart forgets), And singing that self-same air; And between the verses, for interlude, I kissed your throat and your shoulders nude.

You were so full of a subtle fire, You were so warm and so sweet, Lisette, You were everything men admire, And there were no fetters to make us tire, For you were—a pretty grisette; But you loved as only such creatures can, With a love that makes heaven or hell for a man.

They have ceased singing that old duet, Stately Maud and the tenor McKee, "You are burning your coat with your cigarette, And you gaze at me, dear, with your eyes as wet." Maud says as she leans over me; And I smile, and lie to her, husband-wise, "Oh, it is nothing but smoke in my eyes."

Is it Anybody's Business?

[Dedicated to the Old Maid Who Lives Opposite.] Is it anybody's business, when a young man goes to call, If he enters at the kitchen, or the parlor, or the hall?

Is it anybody's business, but the girl's he goes to see, What that young man's name and station may happen for to be?

Is it anybody's business if he stays till it is late? Or anybody's business if she follows to the gate? If he kisses her at parting and she does not seem to grieve,

Is it anybody's business save the man's who takes his leave? If he comes to take her walking on a pleasant afternoon,

Is it anybody's business that they do not come back soon? If by chance they come together upon the public street,

Is it anybody's business if she blushes when they meet? If he goes to see her Sundays, and often stays to tea,

Is it anybody's business what his business there may be? Is it anybody's business what sort of beau she's got,

Or anybody's business if she loves him or does not? Is it anybody's business? I would really like to know,

If it's not, I am sure they're many who try to make it so.

AT THE STILE.

We had met, and we had parted In the stillness, heavy hearted I was lingering where she left me, at the olden rustic stile: Torn by warring pride and sorrow, All my soul shrank from the morrow, With its haunting recollections, that no hope could now beguile.

And the silence, like a token Of that fact, so rudely broken, Seemed to fill and thrill the meadows—as her presence did of yore; Seemed to trail along the grasses, Like a mist, that looms and masses Shade on shape, till form and shadow blend in gloom for evermore!

Gone for ever! All was ended, How—we neither comprehended; For, nor youth nor maiden ever yet was known in tale or song Who would own, self-willed, reliant, He had proven harsh, defiant— Nor would she confess impeachment when he decried her wholly wrong!

So that hour, born of gladness, Crept away in sombre sadness, While my heart grew sick to anguish with remorseful yearnings vain; Desolate and lost, and lonely, Still I lingered, dreaming only, Till the passion of my longing brought us face to face again!

* * * * * Face to face! But not in dreaming Did I feel the tender beaming Of the eyes whose limpid azure smiled on me tho' pleading tears! And I leaned to greet my maiden, With a word all passion laden, As she murmured: "Let forbearance light the pathway thro' the years!"

And that whisper, meek and lowly, Sweet as music in the holy Hush of eve's, fell divinely on the tumult of my soul, Till, like balmy incense stealing O'er the troubled tide of feeling, Crept the rapture of an impulse that no rancor could control!

And I turned, in shame and sorrow, Kissed the face that else to-morrow And forever had reproached me with its sad, upbraiding smile; And the little hands outreaching In the pathos of beseeching, Close within my own I clasped them—and we lingered at the stile! —Winwood Waitt, in The Continent.

THE TURKEY-COCK.

Among the flock the turkey-cock Was roosting on the lower limb; The females fat above him sat, And trembling listened unto him. Dear girls, don't squawk, I hear a hawk Above your heads; ere he arrives You come below and I will go Above to guard your precious lives. The silly things, with flapping wings, Flew down upon the lower perch, While he above, with words of love, Vouchsafed defense from night-hawk's search. With good-night peep, they fell asleep, But soon awoke with frightful screech, As one-by-one the farmer's son Wrung ev'ry neck within his reach. The cock aloft, with chuckle soft, Remark'd upon his rise so soft: Don't you forget, said he, you bet The weather's cold when I get left.

LAST JULY.

[Sophie St. Lawrence, in Century.] She's barely twenty, and her eyes Are very soft and very blue; Her lips seem made for sweet replies— Perhaps they're made for kisses, too; Her little teeth are white as pearl, Her nose aspires to the sky. She really is a charming girl, And I adored her—last July. We danced and swam and bowled and walked; She let me squeeze her finger-tips; Entranced I listened when she talked, And trash seemed wisdom from her lips, I sent her roses till my purse Was drained, I found, completely dry; I longed to sing her charms in verse— But all of this was last July. Of course at last we had to part; I saw a tear-drop on her cheek; I left her with an aching heart, And dreamt about her for a week, But out of sight is out of mind, And somehow, as the time went by, Much fainter I began to find The memory of last July. July has come again at last; With summer gowns the rocks are gay; It seems an echo of the past To meet her on the beach to-day. She's even fairer than of yore, And yet, I could not tell you why, I find the girl an awful bore— So long it is since last July.

SHE PLAYED CROQUET.

I thought she was a lovely sight, As daintily arrayed in white, With rosy cheeks and glances bright, That summer day She played croquet; Until beneath a shady tree I stopped to rest, which chanced to be Where in the kitchen I could see, That summer day She played croquet; And there alone in that hot place Her mother stood with care-worn face, And ironed a gown all frills and lace, That summer day She played croquet— A gown, the very counterpart Of that she wore with witching art; And so she did not win my heart, That summer day She played croquet.