

Ode to an ugly girl; and other poems.

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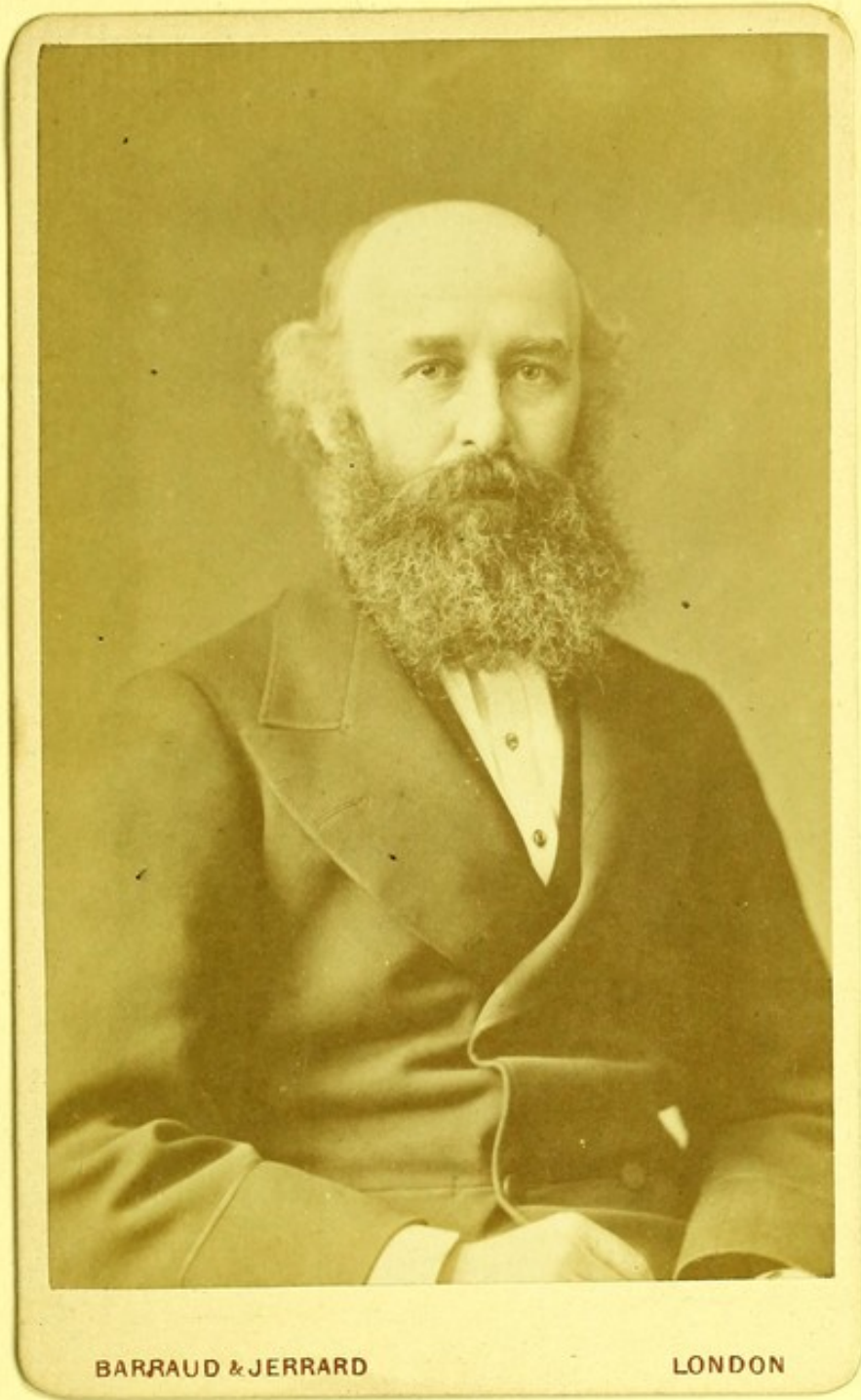
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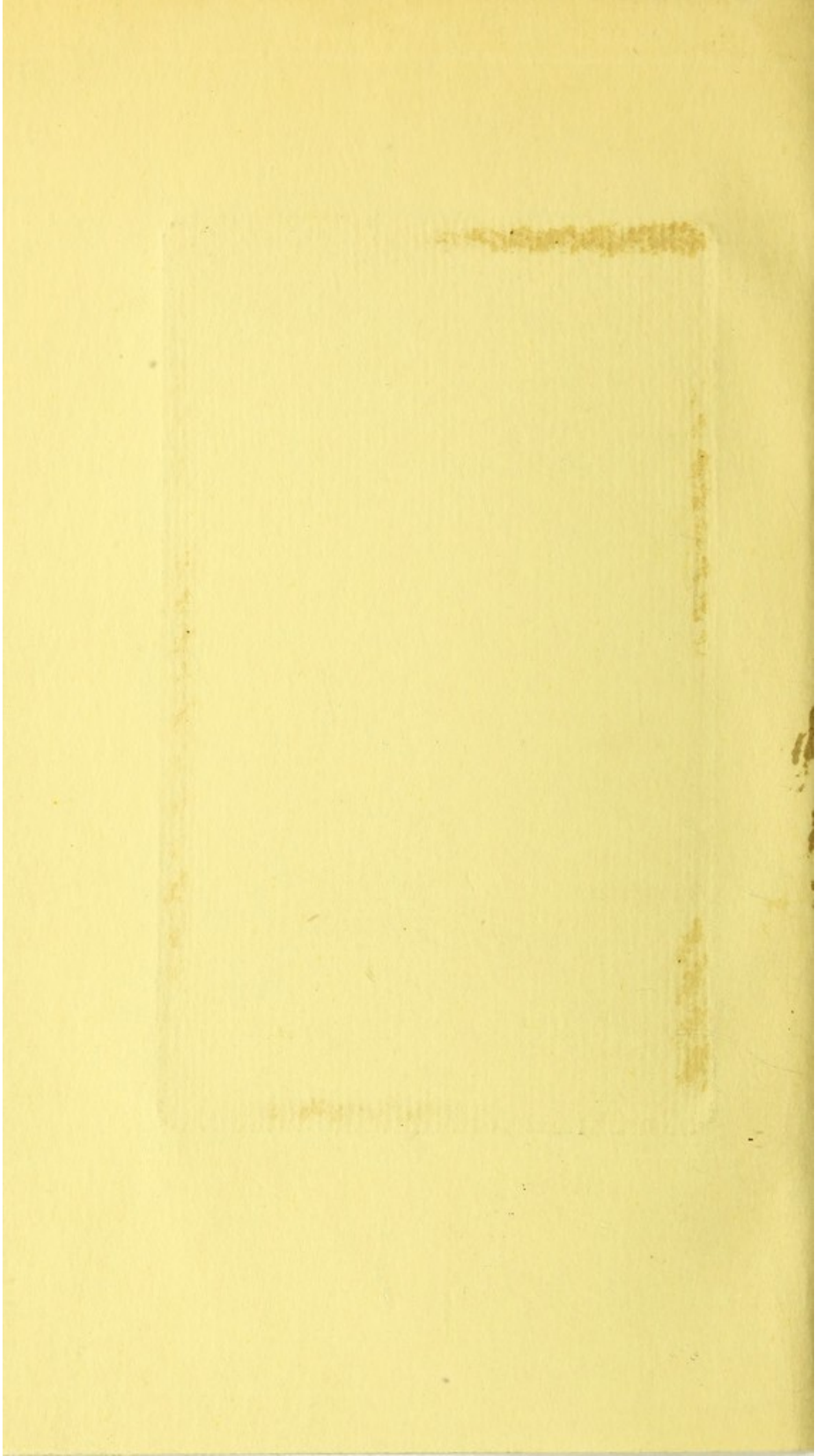
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ODE TO AN UGLY GIRL

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

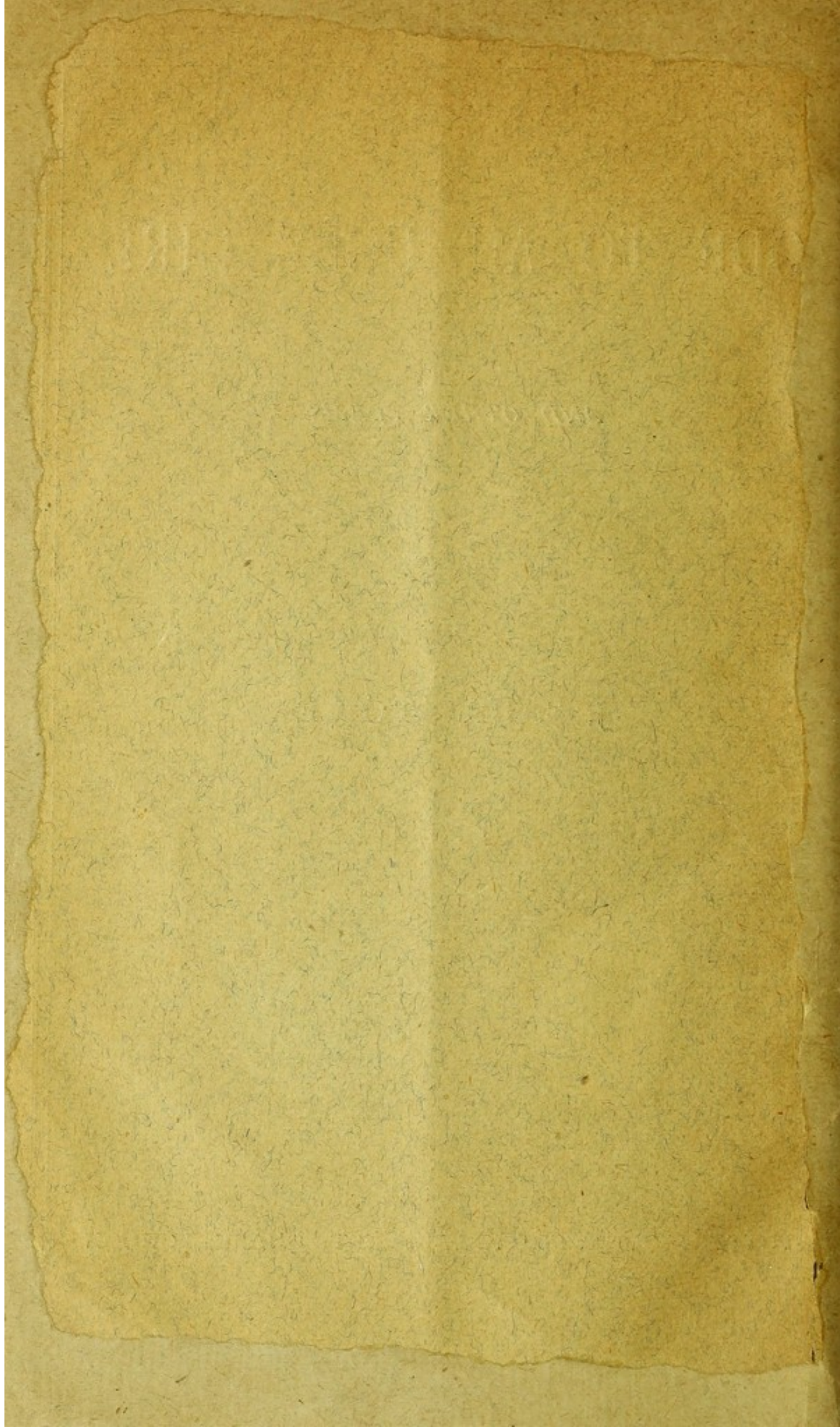
J. S. BRISTOWE




Printed by

SPOTTISWOODE & CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE, LONDON

1890



POEMS



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ODE TO AN UGLY GIRL

AND OTHER POEMS

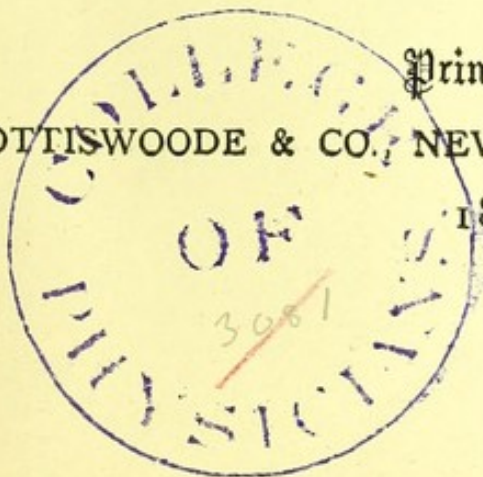
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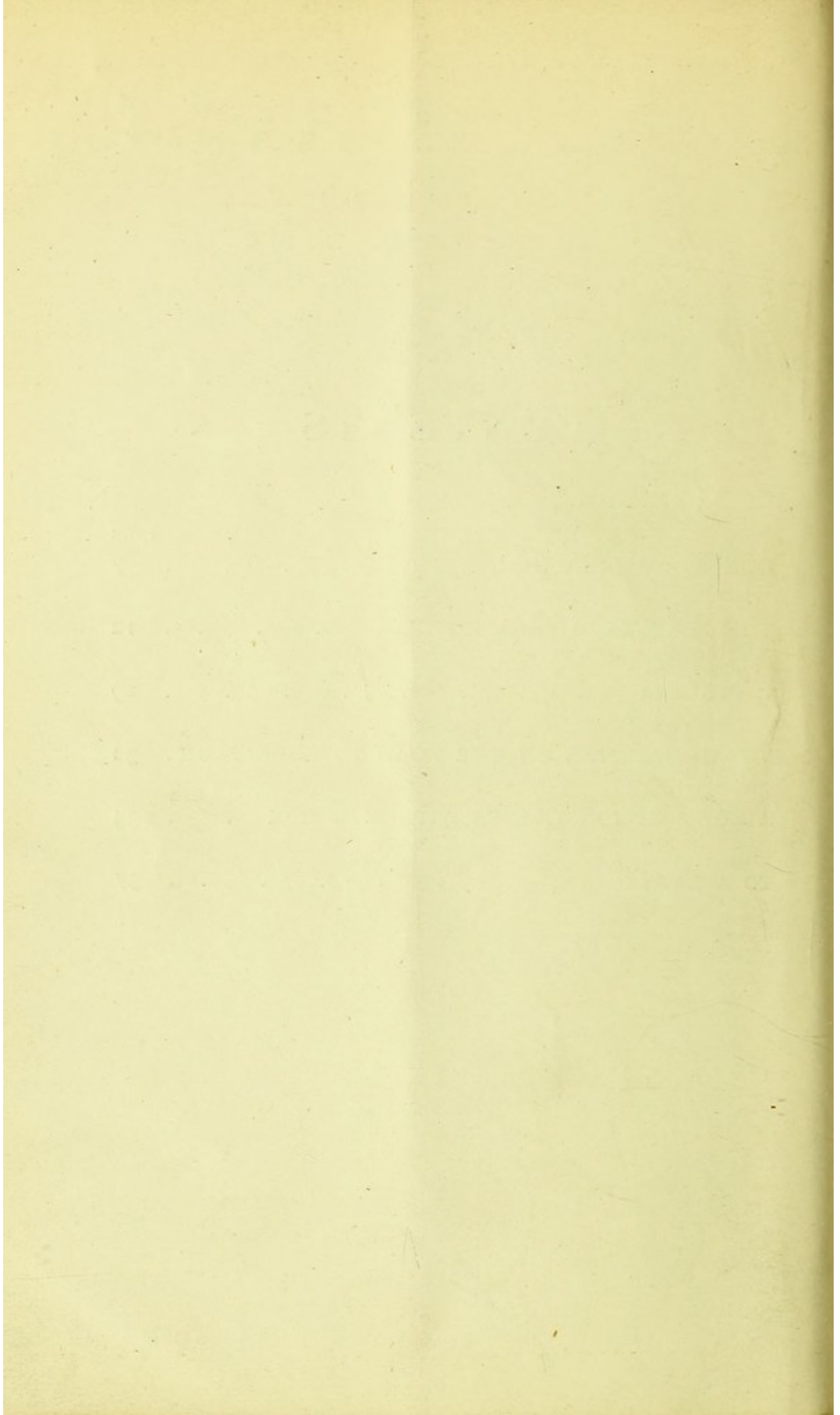


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ODE TO AN UGLY GIRL

POOR little ugly pock-marked girl,
With features seamed and scarred,
Ungainly, and deformed of limb,
So loathsome to regard!

Why did thy parents give thee life,
Their own in thee to vex?
Or why didst thou survive thy birth?
Thou libel on thy sex!

How in the ages that are past
Could things converge, to blend,
So blindly, that a blot like thee
Should be their common end?

Heaven knows! But thou, alas, poor child,
Must live, in life to be
The cruel joke, the monstrous hoax,
Nature hath made of thee;

Must live throughout thy mortal race
To be the scoff and scorn
Of all thy fellows—even of those
Thou lov'st! Why wast thou born?

And yet that sole lack-lustre eye
Doth lovingly behold
The bright things of the world, as well
As eyes of better mould;

Those ears uncomely catch the notes
Of music in the air,
And drink the words of human lips,
Even as they had been fair;

Within that strange mis-shapen skull
Bright fancies love to dwell,
And blessed thoughts and fervent hopes
From depths within it well:

Fancies, and thoughts, and hopes as rare
As ever poet weaved,
And love unselfish and as pure
As angel hath conceived!

Of what avail these heaven-born charms
To thee, unshapely dust !
Whose simple presence breeds offence,
Whose very sight, disgust :

Charms by coarse lips and halting voice
Within their prison barred—
Sweet thoughts untold, or ill-expressed
And in the utt'rance marred !

Poor little ugly pock-marked child,
Thy lot is hard indeed ;
And yet, methinks, my heart, not thine,
Doth for thy hard lot bleed.

Starved of caresses and of love
On which the young heart grows ;
Yet thine on all that God hath made
A wealth of love bestows.

Robbed of those pure maternal hopes
Which women fondly bear,
No shade of murmur flecks thy mind,
No bitterness dwells there.

Poor little waif, sweet little soul,
As thou hast lived, still live,
Mete not the harsh world scorn for scorn,
But love for scorning give.

Cherish the fancies and desires
That in thy spirit bloom ;
Let wisdom grow, and grace wax bright,
Beneath thy outward gloom.

Pour out thy soul in words of fire,
Or sweet harmonious strains,
Or forms of beauty, such as grace
Or palaces or fanes ;

To purify men's thoughts and deeds,
To stem the flood of vice,
To teach truth, charity and love—
Love and self-sacrifice !

Herein, dear maid, requital find
For man's and nature's scorn :
That thou become a household word
To nations yet unborn ;

That when the tongues which flout thee now
Are silent in the dust,
Thine own shall speak in living tones
Of peace and hope and trust ;

That when the unlovely frame thou wear'st
Is lost in earth, its giver,
The gem it held shall live enshrined
In hearts of men for ever !

Poor little ugly pock-marked girl,
With features seamed and scarred,
Ungainly—this be thy revenge,
And this thy high reward !

THE PERPLEXED PHILOSOPHER:

*An Episode in an excursion to Craig Aderyn, or the Bird-Rock,
made by a distinguished Physician and his family*

BY AN EYE-WITNESS

AS Craig-Aderyn-wards they went
 (Their eyes upon the crags intent
 That fret the azure firmament)
 A five-barred gate securely closed
 Their progress threateningly opposed.

‘How shall we reach the other side?’
 The father gasped. The mother sighed.
 The children sat them down and cried.
 But soon they calmed, and then revolved
 How best the puzzle might be solved.
 Young Francis, fresh from Mister Blair’s,
 Bethinking him of Jericho,
 His penny trumpet straight declares
 Shall do the trick, and gives a blow.

But, strange to say, the gate stood fast,
Though seven times sounded was the blast !
That wouldn't do. So then besought
 Louise, with burning zeal inspired,
That sticks and stubble might be brought
 And 'neath the gate piled up and fired.
The father, as wise men should be,
Was prudent in a high degree,
And said : ' My child, we'd better not
A bonfire make, 'twould be so hot !
Besides, who burns " what isn't his'n,"
Like him who prigs, may go to prison.
Again, suppose the flames should seize
Upon the hay, the corn, the trees,
And, carried onwards by the breeze,
Should reach to Towyn, and burn down
That highly venerable town—
Good Heavens ! '— but here he ended, choked
By the emotions he'd evoked.
Ere long resuming : ' It were best,
 Methinks, between the bars to squeeze
The smallest first, and then the rest
 In sequence, as their bulk decrees.
So, Francis, after you have passed
The rest shall follow ; I, the last.'

Poor Francis thought the spaces small,
And didn't like the plan at all.
But, once resolved, without ado
His dad essayed to squeeze him through.
His head and shoulders safely passed,
But, when midway 'twixt crown and feet,
He, where he plumpest was, stuck fast ;
Advance he could not, nor retreat.
They pushed and tugged ; the boy in pain
Wriggled and roared, and roared again ;
But all their efforts were in vain.

After a pause, the father said,
'I have a notion in my head !
I'm sure, if counter-irritants
Could be applied inside his pants,
We might, through vaso-motor action,
Relieve congestion of his trunk.

And when his inner parts have shrunk—
Why, there's an end to his impaction.'

'Your ingenuity, my dear,
Is great,' his wife said, 'but I fear
Blister nor mustard have we here.'

'You're right,' the husband then, 'my pet ;
But I've another notion yet.
How great the powers that science gives
To him who in her service lives !

See, dearest, how fox-gloves abound
 In all the banks and hedge-rows round.
 Enshrined in them there is a spell
 Which, rightly used, shall make all well.
 It bids the arteries contract
 (The blood within being elsewhere packed) ;
 And this, with some effects in aid,
 (Of which no more need now be said)
 Doth so reduce all gaps and chinks,
 That then, of course, the body shrinks !
 The application's clear, methinks.'

'Stuff,' said his wife ; 'you men of science,
 With fools have, surely, close alliance !
 Why, long before your med'cine works,
 In death would end his screams and jerks.
 No. I know better far than you
 In difficulties what to do—
 I've little knowledge, but it tends,
 Thank God, towards my finger-ends.
 Give me your hat. And you, my daughter,
 Go, fill it at yon stream with water ;
 Then straight return.'

As swift as wind,
 The girl fulfilled the task assigned.
 The mother snatched her burden, smiled,
 And dashed the contents o'er her child.

Then thoughtful, even in her haste,
The wet hat on her spouse replaced.
The effect was wondrous to behold.
But always still, as 'twas of old,
Success rewards the promptly bold.
For, at the shock, he gasped for breath,
His surface pallid grew, as death,
His chest collapsed, his belly shrunk ;
And, thus reduced as to his trunk,
Nor longer by the cross-bars gripped,
He, backward from his prison, slipped,
And stood once more on mother earth
Half-dazed, yet safe—a second birth !
His mother caught him to her breast,
Wept o'er him, hugged him, and caressed ;
And on her darling, sore and soaked,
Heaven's blessings volubly invoked.
At length, unto her spouse, who mute
Was standing, and irresolute,
She said, with absence of pretence,
And firmness, born of common sense,
' Unless you'd stop here all the day,
We must proceed upon our way,
Or else return. All the delay
And danger, that have hitherto
Been suffered by us, have been due

To that infirmity surprising
That comes of your philosophising.
Instead of facing perils plainly,
You try to circumvent them, vainly.
Don't answer me. We've had enough
Of all your scientific stuff.
Come, children, no more hesitate,
But follow me, and scale the gate.'
So saying, nimble as a cat,

 She clomb the bars and reached the top ;
Thereon an instant proudly sat ;

 Then on the other side did drop.
'Twas bravely done, and, as was meet,
She lighted deftly on her feet.

 Her offspring traced her course with eyes
Dilated with profound surprise ;
And when they saw it safe completed
Her feat with shouts of pleasure greeted.
Then, following in her footsteps, straight
In safety also crossed the gate.

 His wife's decisive words and action,
His own sophistical abstraction,
Combined to make the doctor more
Confused of purpose than before.
While she her pluck did thus display,
He simply stared, in blank dismay.

Of what he felt, and what he thought,
I know but little—he knows naught.
But when he saw the gate oppose
A barrier 'twixt himself and those
He loved so dearly, he began
To rouse himself to act the man.
'For what my wife has done, I ought
To have the skill to do,' he thought.

With inward fears, but bold in look,
His way unto the gate he took.
He scanned it o'er from top to base,
From end to end, on either face,
And when with his survey content
Slowly to work, but surely, went.
On the top bar his hands he put,
And on the lowest bar a foot,
Then step by step sedately rose
Till half way up; then took repose;
Thence looked around; next blew his nose;
And, thus with courage re-supplied,
Transferred one leg to t'other side.

Then, lo! the topmost rail he sat,
One half on this side, one on that,
Poised in mid-air 'twixt sky and mead,
Like him who rode the wingèd steed—
His name escapes me at my need.

His pose, no doubt, was dignified,
But still it had another side ;
And as he sat, uncertain next
What step to take, he much was vexed
To feel his sense of risk increasing,
While courage oozed away, unceasing.

Surprised that he so long delayed
(Yet dreaming not he was afraid)
His wife encouragement essayed :

‘ My dear, from your exalted seat
To view the landscape is a treat.
But, since enough a feast is reckoned,
You’ve feasted ; so come down.’ She beckoned.
But he was now afraid to stir,

And also fearful to confess it ;
And hence did looks and words concur
(Though meant to hide) to make one guess it.

For, as he swayed upon his seat,
He smiled a smile distressed yet sweet,
And said : ‘ I must, if I descend,
Alight on one or other end.

They both are big, and one is fat,
The other’s covered by my hat ;
I should not like to fall on that.’

‘ Lord ! what a funny man you are,’
His wife said ; but her words did jar

Upon his feelings, and his eye
Towards her turned reproachfully.
'Thank God, my dear, I'm well so far ;
And if just now my bosom quakes,
'Tis not for mine but your dear sakes.
I'm not afraid, wife, daughter, son ;
If I must die, God's will be done.
Even so, I have not lived in vain.
I've thought a lot. I've written more.
And I'm a famous man, be sure.
I would not live my life again !
Write on my tombstone——'

Here the gate
Collapsed beneath the doctor's weight,
And down he tumbled with a rush
Tail foremost in a pool of slush.
Within its depths he sat embowered,
While arms, legs, shoulders o'er it towered,
Just like a hermit-crab protruding
Forth from the shell where it lay brooding.
His wife into hysterics went
When she beheld this accident,
Believing she had lost in truth
By death the husband of her youth.
But, as for him, the blow behind
Restored the balance of his mind.

And there he sat (you soon may 'larn' it)
Moral philosophy incarnate.

He gazed around a little space,
Self-satisfaction in his face,

Then said: 'Dear wife, behold me stuck
Up, almost, to my waist in muck.

Kind providence, that governs all,
So, doubtless, pre-arranged my fall
That I should suffer no great hurt,
But only, so to speak, eat dirt.

Thus from the jaws of death I'm snatched,
So far as I can judge, unscratched.

I do confess my sinful blindness,
And thank the Lord for all his kindness.'

His wife replied, 'Dear husband, truly
I'm thankful for your safety, duly ;
But since unhurt, let me advise
That you at once attempt to rise ;
I'll lend a hand.'

He said, 'My dear,
The thing's more difficult, I fear,
Than you suppose ; at any rate
The subject's one that needs debate.
You know, before one can apply
Forces with due economy,
To calculate 'tis always meet

Of central gravity the seat.
 Now, where this centre lies in me
 I'm not quite certain. Let me see—
 Of course one knows that in a glutton
 'Tis near the lowest waistcoat button.
 But brains weigh heavy——'

' Drat your brain !

I wish you'd none ; for 'tis your bane.
 And, after all, as to this centre,
 No doubt its somewhere near your venter.
 Come, there's a dear, now let's see whether
 We cannot raise you, all together.'

'Thanks, darling ! but another question
 Claims intellectual digestion.
 I'm here, so much of mud displacing
 (As ships do water when they're tracing
 Their ocean path) that both location
 Of metacentre, and relation
 To 'tother, need determination.
 For, as we know, it much depends
 On which way one or other tends,
 Whether a ship, when she heels over
 Her upright posture doth recover,
 Or heeling still (the unstable minx)
 Turns bottom uppermost, and sinks.
 Well now, you see if I should heel

I know not whether head or keel——’

‘Dear, dear,’ she said, ‘this is too bad ;
His endless clack will drive me mad !
I must once more, though he protest,
Pursue the course I think the best.’

He still went rattling on indeed,
Though to his words she gave no heed.
From hydrostatics soon he wandered ;
Then on pathology he maundered :
Of myelitis first he spoke ;
How getting wet might this evoke ;
How on mishaps like his he’d seen
Paralysis oft supervene ;
And, soon or late (oh ! thought to harrow)
Sclerosis of the spinal marrow.
Much more of this confounded stuff
He uttered ; but I’ve given enough,
The more so, since, who cares to look,
Will see ’t verbatim in his book.

While thus his science he was airing,
His wife for action was preparing.
She said, half to herself, ‘In town,
When in the street a horse falls down,
Much like my spouse it helpless lies,
Without the least attempt to rise,
Till some one, by experience taught,

To anchor on its head is brought.

I am not wise or deeply read,

And know not why, by such an act,

A horse can be compelled or led

To get up ; but it is a fact !

And (here's the point) I'll now apply

To my dear spouse this remedy.'

So, sudden, ere he was aware,

She caught him by his scanty hair,

Down threw him on the roadway flat,

And straight upon his visage sat.

So unexpected was the attack,

Thereby he was so flabbergastered,

That motionless upon his back

He lay, completely overmastered,

Just like a corpse, save that a word

Or two could now and then be heard,

In smothered tones with sundry oaths,

To come from 'neath the lady's clothes.

Among the sounds that broke upon us

Were 'tendon reflex,' 'ankle clonus'—

Sounds that, at any rate, expressed

How science still his mind possessed.

What's short to do oft takes long time

To tell in prose or eke in rhyme.

For, ere her settlement was made,

She'd called her children to her aid,
And fully had explained to them
Her mode of action and her aim :—
' While I sit on your father's head,
And keep it firmly down,' she said,
' 'Twill be your duty, dears, to pinch
The darling hard, to make him flinch.
But,' showing here that tender care
And forethought, that her virtues are,
She added in kind tones ' forbear
To do him grievous hurt, so stick
To regions where the fat lies thick.'

The mother sat, like Patience, still ;
Her babes their fingers plied with skill ;
Then slow the father's legs were flexed
And then extended wide ; and next
His arms moved aimless, as perplexed ;
He drew a deep breath then, and shortly
Swayed up and down his body portly.
A moment's pause, and lo ! again
Convulsions did his limbs constrain ;
When turning round, by slow degrees,
He struggled on to hands and knees.

The final effort then achieving
(His wife rewarding yet aggrieving),
He jerked his head, of vigour full,

And tossed her, like an angry bull,
Across the road into a pool ;
His children (ended all their pranks)
Shook like full leeches from his flanks ;
And, rising resolutely, then
Stood his full stature, five foot ten,
Or possibly a little less
(For at his height I only guess) :
His nether parts with mud encased,
While every inch above his waist
Proclaimed the noted London doctor,
Prescription-monger and concoctor,
Writer of books and new editions
Much read by students and physicians,
Curer of spasms, and epilepsy—
Himself a martyr to dyspepsy.

.
Thus was the wife again successful
In circumstances most distressful.
Her cup of pleasure was, I guess, full !

.
'Tis needless any more to talk
Of what occurred upon the walk,
Suffice it, no more vexed or troubled,
Their happiness thenceforth was doubled ;
They saw the Bird-Rock, thought it fine,

And then reached home, by seven, to dine.

But, on the road, the doctor's tongue
Was rarely heard, and ne'er for long ;
A wiser and a humbler man
(I fear for only a short span)
He mused—and thus his musings ran :—

‘ How big a fool, upon my life,
I should be were't not for my wife.
I'm great in science and in thought—
In these I beat her, as I ought.
But in adapting means to ends
Her woman's genius mine transcends.

What man by reasoning attains
After long labour and much pains,
Woman, unerring (when the fit's on)
By simple intuition hits on.
In ready wit, and in resource,
She beats him into fits, of course !
Oh, woman, what we should have lacked
Without your constant care and tact !
Even from the time far-reaching Eve
Did Adam, by Nick's aid, deceive,
Thenceforth a life of toil compelling
For him who'd keep wife, children, dwelling ;
Thus best preventing the distress
And crime that come of idleness ;

Thus best restraining weeds of thought,
Which pass for genius, but are naught
But false philosophy and drivel—
Stop! to myself I'm scarcely civil!

ISANDLANA

THE dawning light is flowing
Along the sable land,
Upon the hill-side showing
A small red-coated band,
(With British valour glowing,
By Afric's hot suns tanned)
Who eager, and unknowing
Of fate impending, stand.

The noon-day sun is streaming
O'er river, rock and weald—
When, lo! earth's bowels teeming
Unnumbered foemen yield;
Who sudden, as is dreaming,
Stand everywhere revealed,
Black as the night, but gleaming
With assegai and shield.

The ruthless sun is blazing
O'er mountain and o'er plain ;
While these, in swarms amazing,
Surge onwards, like the main,
O'erwhelming and erasing
That little warrior train,
That, ever foeward gazing,
Fights—fights for life—in vain !

The shades of eve are falling
Upon that field of doom.
Where erst were rage and brawling,
Fierce cries, the cannon's boom,
Silence and rest appalling
Now mingle with the gloom—
The peace of night forestalling
The deep peace of the tomb !

The cold wan moon is steeping
The world in sombre light,
When wakes a voice of weeping
The echoes of the night,
And fond hearts ache, unsleeping,
For those who fell in fight—
But they are in God's keeping,
Who shall their woes requite !

The mists of grief are fleeting,
But glory's rays abide !
And age to age repeating,
Shall tell with growing pride
Of Isandlana's meeting,
Where grandly, side by side,
Nor conquering, nor retreating,
Our heroes fought and died—
Historic life completing
The human life denied !

VERSES

*Written on the road to Edinburgh to attend the tercentenary
of the University*

THE Scots are shrewd, and shrewdly win their way
By patient toil, and forethought reaching far ;
And hence, though oft repulsed, oft foiled, to-day
Behold them foremost 'mongst the men that are.

They gave their feeble king the South to sway—
The fatal gift brought sorrow and unrest.
Yet now his seed Great Britain's sons obey ;
And in her Scotland rules—in her is blest.

They gave their country to their ancient foe ;
But soon their own they made their rival's land.
And now in statesmanship and warfare, lo !
They rule their rulers, and the world command.

Their queen of cities, ruthless, they discrowned ;
Robbed her of royalty, of pomp, of place ;
But left her all her beauty, long renowned—
Athenæ-like in learning and in grace.

Unchanged in beauty, peerless as before,
But growing e'er in science and in arts,
She reigns to-day more potent than of yore,
The gracious queen of intellect and hearts.

Flourish Edina ! Still thy well-won fame
The youth of nations gather to thy breast ;
Still, still thy children, proud in thy proud name,
Teach by great deeds thy teaching ever blest !

A COW'S REMONSTRANCE WITH
MRS. COX

*For complaining that the beef provided at Neptune Hall, Towyn,
was only cow-beef*

I AM a cow
And feed on grass
Upon the slough
By Edward's Plas.
I'm milked, I trow,
By lad and lass.
That's mainly how
My life I pass !

At times I itch,
And then I scratch,
Or tail I switch
The flies to catch—
(Means by the which
Some ease I snatch)
Then sleep in ditch,
Or under thatch.

If death befall,
 (As soon it must)
They'll eat me all,
 I hope and trust,
At Neptune Hall,
 Even if they 'bust ;'
Despite the gall,
 And eke disgust,

Of Mrs. Cox,
 Who little recks
How much she shocks
 Sophia Jex,
And cruel mocks
 Our common sex,
Preferring ox-
 To cow-beef steaks.

Oh ! Mrs. C——
 Our common cause
Demands of thee
 Less partial jaws !
Self-true let's be
 (We cows and squaws),
Nor grant that we
 Are less, because

Male tyranny

Weak woman awes,

Or, selfish, He

Claims all applause.

TO A LADY

*Who lost the power of speech three years previously, as she says,
from much crying; and who now spends her whole time in
writing nonsense verses*

THROUGH grief the lady lost her voice;
 And still she grieves—her friends rejoice!
 So now her thoughts in vapid verses
 Her pen incessantly disperses.
 Ran her tongue on, as runs her ink,
 Her friends are justified, I think.
 Let's pray ere long her hand may halt,
 Partaker in her tongue's default.

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