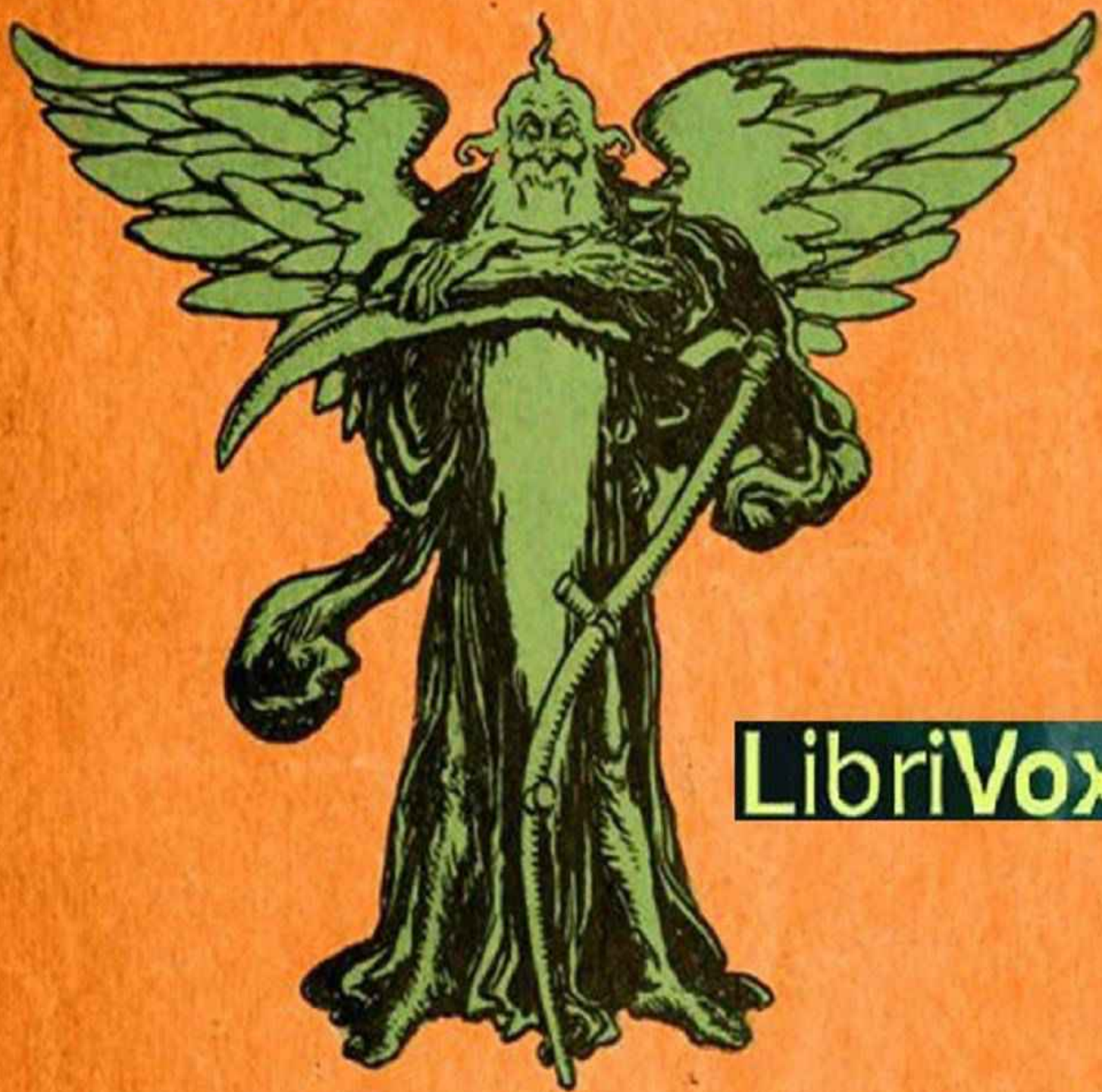




# AN ALPHABET *of* HISTORY



LibriVox

**An alphabet of historical characters presented in poetical form!  
In their original form, the contents of this book appeared in the  
Chicago unday Tribune, which newspaper is hereby thanked for the  
privilege of reproducing this Alphabet  
(Summary from the Acknowledgment and Ann Boulais)**

**Who frets about the mystery  
Enshrouding all of history  
On reading this will, maybe, see  
We've made it plain as A, B, C.**

**Read by Librivox volunteers . Total running time: 0:58:26**

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# An Alphabet of History



By Wilbur D. Nesbit

*The Pictures by Ellsworth Young*

Who frets about the mystery  
Enshrouding all of history  
On reading this will, maybe, see  
We've made it plain as A, B, C.

*Paul Elder and Company Publishers,  
San Francisco*

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

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[ALEXANDER THE GREAT](#)

Alexander the Great was a victim of fate,  
And he sighed there was naught to delight him  
When he brandished his sword and defiantly roared  
And could not get a country to fight him.

All the armies he'd chased, all the lands laid to waste,  
And he clamored for further diversions;  
And our history speaks of his grip on the Greeks  
And his hammerlock hold on the Persians.

Though the Gordian knot, cut in two, in a spot  
In his palace was labeled a relic,



Though Bucephalus, stuffed, gave him fame, he was huffed—  
He was grouchy and grumpy, was Aleck.

And the cause of his woe, he would have you to know,  
Was the fact that he never was able  
To conduct a big scrap that a versatile chap  
Of a war correspondent would cable.

'Stead of being quite glad, he would grow very sad  
When he told of the fellows who'd fought him,  
As he thought of the lack of the clicking kodak  
In the hands of a man to "snapshot" him.

We are told that he wept, and in dolefulness crept  
Through his palace—the reason is hinted:  
There were not at that time magazines for a dime,  
And his articles could not be printed.

Though it may seem unkind, ere his life we've outlined,  
We must say in some ways he was hateful;  
And in truth, we have heard he went back on his word,  
And was not Alexander the Grateful.

## BRUTUS

Back in the time of Rome sublime,  
There lived great Julius Cæsar  
Who wore the crown with haughty frown  
And was a frosty geezer.

Three times, they say, upon the way  
Called Lupercal, they fetched it  
For him to wear, but then and there  
He said they should have stretched it.

And we are told that Jule was cold  
And frigid as Alaska,  
Ambitious, too,—that would not do  
For Cassius and Casca.

They told their friends: "It all depends  
On having things to suit us.  
We think that Jule is much too cool;  
Let us conspire with Brutus."

They furthermore let out this roar:  
"Shall Cæsar further scoff us?  
Next week, they say, he'll have his way  
About the Rome postoffice."



With dirk and sword in togas stored—  
You know those times they wore 'em—  
They made a muss of Ju-li-us  
One morning in the Forum.

With "Et tu, Brute?" J. C. grew mute.  
(Some claim it's "Et tu, Bru-te";  
We mention it both whole and split  
As is our bounden duty.)

Mark Antony arose, and he  
Talked some,—we shall not quote it;  
We've understood 'twas not as good  
As when Bill Shakespeare wrote it.

Then Brutus skipped lest he be nipped—  
And since his dissolution  
He's been accused and much abused  
In schools of elocution.

### CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

When Christopher Columbus stood the egg upon its end,  
He solved a weighty problem that no one could comprehend—  
Perhaps it was the puzzle whose solution clearly showed  
The psychologic motives of the hen that crossed the road.  
Perhaps cold storage minstrels never might have heard of this  
If it hadn't been for Chris.

Columbus packed his little grip and got upon the train  
And went to see that noble man, King Ferdinand of Spain.  
Result: He found America—oh, do not idly nod,  
For if it hadn't been for this we couldn't go abroad!  
Just think of all the travel and the voyages we'd miss  
If it hadn't been for Chris.

Columbus found America and won a lot of fame—  
Nobody ever thought to ask him how he knew its name;  
Nobody ever booked him for some lectures to declare  
In eloquent assertions how he knew the land was there.  
Today we might be savages, unknowing modern bliss,  
If it hadn't been for Chris.

He landed near Havana, and he said: "It seems to me  
That sometime in the future little Cuby shall be free."  
His vision was prophetic—far adown the future's track  
He saw the dauntless Hobson and the sinking Merrimac.  
We might have still been tyros in the ethics of the kiss  
If it hadn't been for Chris.



Today there are big cities and big buildings named for him,  
And yet he was so poor that once he thought he'd have to swim  
To find this wondrous country, for he was so badly broke;  
But Isabella nobly put her watch and ring in soak.  
Who knows but Isabella never might have thought of this  
If it hadn't been for Chris?

## DIOGENES

Diogenes lived in a tub  
His fellows analyzing;  
These words were carved upon his club:  
"First Class Philosophizing."  
If any question came his way  
Involving people's morals,  
The things that he felt moved to say  
Were sure to start some quarrels.  
In fact, his tub became a booth  
In which he dealt in wholesale truth.

This world was but a fleeting show—  
He knew a lot about it;  
When he was told a thing was so  
He then began to doubt it.  
He seldom left his narrow home—  
Not even on a Sunday;  
The only time that he would roam  
Abroad was on a Monday.  
He had to roam then, anyway,  
For that, you know, is washing day.

Society, with all its sham,  
Gave him a paroxysm;  
He always spoke in epigram  
And thought in aphorism.  
One day he took his lantern down  
And polished it and lit it—  
But first he frowned a peevish frown  
And growled: "The wick don't fit it."  
And then, with pessimistic scan,  
He sought to find an honest man.

Diogenes has long been dead;  
His search was not well heeded,  
For no historian has said  
If ever he succeeded.  
But there's this thought for you and me:  
It would not be quite pleasant



If on that quest the sage should be  
With his fierce light, at present.  
For, if he were, one may but think  
How much that light would make him blink.

## EURIPIDES

Euripides, of ancient Greece,  
Excelled in things dramatic;  
He could sit down and write a piece  
Mild tempered or emphatic;  
The dramatists of modern days—  
No matter how much they write—  
Can never equal Rippy's ways,  
For he was quite a playwright.

When Rippy took his pen in hand  
The scenes would flow like magic;  
Though humor came at his command  
His penchant was the tragic;  
He often wrote a little speech  
That was extremely pleasant—  
His jests were lasting—all and each  
Are still used at the present.

Euripides was serious—  
He thought he had a mission.  
He said, "By writing thus and thus  
I'll elevate the Grecian."  
However, though he oft produced  
His works in manner spurty,  
He never wrote a thing to boost  
The vogue of ten, twent', thirty.

In fact, his works could have been played  
In goodly style with no girls—  
He never used the soubrette maid  
Or based his play on show girls;  
And, this for old Euripides:  
In none of all his dramas  
Did he observe the modern pleas  
For chorus in pajamas.

Euripides was Athens' Fitch  
Or her Augustus Thomas—  
It's really hard to say just which,  
But he was full of promise.  
It's time that Rippy had his due  
And got his share of glory,



For royalties he never knew  
And no press agent's story.

## FRANKLIN

Fame twined a wreath on Franklin's brow  
A-many years ago—  
And yet, how many people now  
The reason for it know?  
Was it because he wisely wrote  
Poor Richard's Almanac  
(One of the few, we pause to note,  
Which testimonials lack)?

Was Franklin's fame the sure result  
Of his philosophy?  
(No mental cure or psychic cult  
Or Great Uplift had he.)  
Was it because for years and years  
He was a diplomat?  
Why, no. What person ever hears  
About such things as that?

Then what did wise Ben Franklin do  
That he should merit fame?  
That each edition of "Who's Who"  
In bold type puts his name?  
He flew his kite; he had the key  
His front door to unlock—  
Like countless other men, then he  
Acquired a sudden shock.

The trolley cars and dynamos  
And incandescent light  
And buzzing fan which coolness blows  
All date from Franklin's kite.  
But, what an oversight of Fame!  
Ben Franklin's wife—'twas she,  
That thoughtful, gentle, kindly dame,  
Who let him have the key.

## GALILEI GALILEO

Galilei Galileo was an early man of science;  
He was happy when inventing, or discussing an appliance;  
Pendulums, he found by study, were precise in every wobble—  
Showing how old Father Time went in his never-ending hobble.



Galilei Galileo the thermometer invented  
And informed the gaping public what its figures represented.  
"O you foolish Galileo," cried the public, "you shall rue it!  
Why get up a thing to tell us we are hot? We always knew it."

Galilei Galileo took a tube and got some lenses  
And discovered things that made him rather disbelieve his senses;  
He would point his telescope up to the sky and then he'd scan it,  
Then go in to breakfast smiling, for he'd found another planet.

Galilei Galileo viewed the luminary solar  
(That's the sun) and found it spotted on the belt and regions polar;  
But he didn't figure out that when the sun was thickly freckled  
Then the world with lights and fusses was continually speckled.

Galilei Galileo wrote a thing and then denounced it—  
But we often read his name and wonder how the man pronounced  
it.

Maybe when he tried to he was all at sixes and at sevens,  
Which is why he turned his studies to the dim and distant  
heavens.

Galilei Galileo! What a musical cognomen!  
Possibly some bright librettist will find in this name an omen  
That presages fortune for him, and the stage will pay what we  
owe  
To that honest old star gazer, Galilei Galileo.

## HIPPOCRATES

Hippocrates was father to an awful lot of bother, for 'tis claimed  
that as to medicine he was the pioneer,  
That but for him the surgeon or the latter-day chururgeon might  
never have been tinkering the human running gear.

Hippocrates' diploma never threw him into coma in his efforts to  
decipher what its classic diction said,  
For when he was seeking practice—long ago—the simple fact is  
that the Latin tongue was common and was very far from dead.

He often growled, "Dad gum it!" when he felt the glossy summit of his head, which was as bald as any  
shiny billiard ball—  
But old Hip had to endure it, for he knew he couldn't cure it, and that once his hair was falling, why, he  
had to let it fall.



He was written up by Plato (who was quite a hot potato when it came to mental effort, for you know he reasoned well);

Plato praised his diagnosis, called him healing's patient Moses, and though facts were hard to gather, found a goodly lot to tell.

Hippocrates had knowledge, though he didn't go to college; he could speak of all diseases that he knew, in Latin terms

(Still, 'twas only second nature to affect that nomenclature), but he never even thought of, much less heard of, any germs.

Streptococcus or bacillus such as get in us and kill us to Hippocrates were always undiscovered and unknown, And the grim appendicitis which today is sure to fright us, was by Dr. Hip considered but a stomach-achic groan.

Were he living at this moment, would the world be in a foment? Would physicians of the present take him out to see the town? From New Jersey clear to Joppa not a one would call him "Papa," and his theories and treatments would be greeted with a frown.

We must say that he was clever, and that in one way, however, he resembled all the others who are treating human ills— He was constantly complaining that in spite of all his training he could never cure his patients of the trait of dodging bills.

## IAGO

Iago as a villain was a master of his craft,  
And yet he did not work at all as modern villains do;  
No one can rise and say that bold Iago hoarsely laughed  
When some one demonstrated that his stories were untrue.  
He did not swagger on the stage in evening clothes, and mutter,  
Nor bite his finger nails in baffled anger now and then;  
He never turned and left the stage with nothing else to utter  
Except: "Aha! Proud beauty! I shall not be foiled again!"

Iago did not hover near the old deserted mill  
To hurl the daring hero in the waters of the race;  
He never frowned and ground his teeth and burned the hidden will

Or kidnapped any children just to complicate the case.  
Iago was not like the villains that we have at present;  
He didn't even try to scowl or to look like the part.  
Iago as a villain was continually pleasant,  
And never gave the notion that he had a stony heart.

Othello was his victim—and Iago's work was good,  
But still Iago doesn't seem to get the proper praise;  
Othello, as the hero—as all proper heroes should—  
Stood calmly in the spotlight and corralled the wreathing bays.



Since then there is no villain of the art of good iago—  
At least we haven't seen an actor who approached him yet;  
The villains we have noticed from Galveston to Chicago  
Have hissed through black mustaches and have smoked the cigaret.

## JONSON

O rare Ben Jonson, you who wrote  
"To Celia,"  
Presager of that later note  
, "Bedelia,"  
To you, rare Ben, our hat we raise  
For all your poems and your plays.

You knew, forsooth, if Shakespeare's work  
Was taken,  
Like copies by a scrawling clerk,  
From Bacon;  
You would have known of that flimflam  
Without a hidden cryptogram.

O rare Ben Jonson, with your pen  
You labored,  
And with brave lords and gentlemen  
You neighbored—  
You never turned out feeble farce  
In sentences that would not parse.

To managers you ne'er were made  
To grovel,  
And, Ben, you never called a spade  
A shovel—  
Where you wrote sentences risqué  
We now have costumes very gay.

O rare Ben Jonson, when you asked  
That lady  
To drink, her name you never masked  
As "Sadie,"  
Nor did you call her "Creole Belle"  
Or half the song names we might tell.

"Drink to me only with thine eyes!"  
Your sighing  
Showed you no steins of any size  
Were buying.  
But from the way the stanzas run,  
You, rare Ben Jonson, were well done.



## KIDD

Oh, William Kidd was a pirate bold,  
Yo ho, my lads, yo ho!  
He sailed the seas in search of gold,  
Yo ho, my lads, yo ho!  
He sailed on both sides of the line,  
The skull and bones he made his sign;  
Where he found wealth, he said: "That's mine!"  
Three centuries ago.

Oh, William Kidd was a pirate bad,  
Three centuries ago,  
A very dark repute he had—  
Yo ho, my lads, yo ho!  
He'd board a ship and take its hoard,  
Then: "Walk the plank!" he fiercely roared,  
"The ship is all that I can board,"  
Yo ho, my lads, yo ho!

Oh, William Kidd was a pirate great,  
Yo ho, my lads, yo ho!  
He said: "I'll rob you while you wait"—  
Three centuries ago.  
He had a long, low, rakish craft  
With Long Toms both before and aft,  
And wickedly and loud he laughed,  
Yo ho, my lads, yo ho!

Oh, William Kidd was a pirate big,  
Yo ho, my lads, yo ho!  
He feared no frigate, bark or brig,  
Yo ho, my lads, yo ho!  
And while his grim flag flapped and tossed  
Above the ship that Bill Kidd bossed,  
His victims knew just how they lost,  
Three centuries ago.

Oh, William Kidd was a pirate then,  
Three centuries ago.  
If he should come to life again—  
Yo ho, my lads, yo ho!  
The chances are that he would just  
Go out and organize a trust—  
He knew the way to raise the dust  
Three centuries ago.



## LUCULLUS

Lucullus was a fighter for a portion of his life;  
He won the bay and laurel by his prowess in the strife.  
He came back home a hero (and no doubt, just as today,  
They named a cocktail for him ere they looked the other way).  
But when Lucullus noticed he was losing grips on fame,  
He struck a happy notion to perpetuate his name.

He took to giving dinners in a palace he had built—  
'Tis said that lots was eaten and a sea of wine was spilt;  
That guests might order anything in dishes old or or new  
And get the very rarest, and a second order, too!  
Quick lunches or course dinners—anything a man could wish  
In the line of drinks or dainties; yet he was no *nouveau riche*.

Lucullus won great battles, victories that he might boast,  
Yet today we recollect him merely as a lavish host.  
It is said that once he ordered quite the richest feast prepared  
But no guests came to enjoy it, and the busy chef was scared.  
"Is nobody here for dinner?" asked the flustered, pestered chef.  
"I am dining with Lucullus!" roared Lucullus. "Are you deaf?"

But we think that one great reason for his never-dying fame,  
For the pure, unfading luster of his dinner-eating name,  
Is that though Lucullus feasted at a very great expense  
And sat down to simple breakfasts where the health foods were  
immense,  
He was gracious to his fellows, was considerate of each,  
And he never put his chestnuts in an after-dinner speech.

## METHUSELAH

Methuselah lived long ago—  
He was the Old Inhabitant  
Those times, but never had a show;  
His opportunities were scant.  
Although he lived nine centuries  
And three-score years and nine beside,  
The times he saw were not like these,  
A chance to spread he was denied.

He could not seek the corner store  
And lunch on crackers, cheese and prunes,  
And there display his helpful lore  
Through mornings and through afternoons;  
He could not talk about the days  
When folks first saw the telegraph





Or telephone; how their amaze  
Made better posted people laugh.

He could not take the stranger out  
To some tall building, then say: "Here,  
An' for a good ways hereabout,  
I used to shoot the bear and deer."  
Skyscrapers were an unknown thing,  
Excepting Babel, in his land,  
And Babel only served to bring  
Speech that he could not understand.

(Perhaps this Babel item is  
Anachronistic; as to that  
We'll say one pleasant thing was his:  
He never had to rent a flat.)  
Another joy in his career  
Was this: nobody ever told  
Methuselah the stated year  
When he should be considered old.

At thirty-five he was not barred  
From working if he wanted to;  
He did not need a union card  
His daily labors to pursue;  
And when his hair was snowy white  
And age his manly form had bent,  
Nobody called him young and bright  
And ran him for vice-president.

### NEWTON

Now, Newton in the orchard felt an apple strike his head.  
"Tis gravity! 'Tis gravity!" excitedly he said.  
Had you or I been sitting there a-thinking of this earth,  
As Newton was, and wondering about its size and girth,

And just when we were figuring a long and heavy sum,  
The apple hit us on the mind and made our bald spot numb!

We say, had you or I been there, as Newton was that day,  
Would there have been much gravity in what we had to say?

This shows how great it is to have a scientific mind—  
An intellect that reaches out to see what it may find.  
Perchance an ordinary man in such a circumstance  
Would have got up and rubbed his head and done a little dance,  
And muttered things that gentle folks should scarcely ever state,  
And not concede the apple simply had to gravitate.

Again we say, if Newton's place was held by you or I,  
Instead of gravity we might have thought of apple pie.

You see (again we make the point that scientific minds  
Discover facts which any brain that's common never finds),  
You see, when Newton felt the jolt, his science did not stop—  
He simply meditated on "What made the apple drop?"  
And while in cogitation deep beneath the tree he lay,  
He mused: "It's odd that apples never drop the other way."

Once more: If you or I had been beneath the apple tree,  
We might have howled: "Who was it threw that apple and hit  
me?"

To finish this, however, with becoming gravity,  
We'll state that Newton lingered there beneath the apple tree;  
With logarithmic tables he discovered that the speed  
At which the apple fell was based on whence it fell—indeed,  
Had it dropped from the moon, we'll say, it would have grown so  
hot  
That it would have been melted up before to earth it got.

Again, and finally, had you or I held Newton's seat,  
We should, like he did, take the apple up and start to eat.

### OMAR

Old Omar, in a Tent he had to live,  
Yet gave to Verse such Time as he could give;  
Whereat the Critics rose and Hurl'd at Him:  
"The Stuff you write is only Tentative."

Yet Khayyam never worried over that—  
He kept his Troubles underneath his Hat  
Except such Times as when he worked them up  
Into an Apt and Pleasing Rubaiyat.

Fitzgerald, the Translator, took his Pen  
And made a flowing Version; yes, and then  
To show that he could keep it up a While,  
Translated all the Rubaiyat again.

Now, is there any Home that Don't reveal  
O. Khayyam's volume resting by "Lucille,"  
Bound in Limp Leather, with each Edge uncut,  
To show the Literary Sense we feel?

And is there any town from York to Butte  
Wherein some Maiden fair don't Elocute  
Through Khayyam's easy-speaking poetry,  
With Musical Accomp'niment to suit?



Aye, verily! And where the Parodist  
Who does not seek through all upon his List  
And come back at the last to Khayyam's work  
Each time to find New Chances he has missed?

A Good Cigar, a ready Fountain Pen  
Or a Typewriter one can use, and then  
A book of Omar whence to draw the Thought—  
Oh, Parodies one will turn out again!

Some black initial letters here and there,  
Perchance he also had E. Hubbard Hair—  
But anyhow old Khayyam set a Task  
To fill all his Successors with despair!

### PEPYS

Perchance when he was working on  
The diary that bears his name  
In those far days, now dead and gone,  
He never dreamed about his fame.  
Yet now, from time to time, it is  
Heard from 'most everybody's lips—  
That magic, mellow name of his,  
The soft and pleasing name of Pepys.

Again, when reading what he wrote,  
We live anew that ancient time  
(The book is one we often quote—  
The cheap editions are a dime);  
We mark his course through dingy streets  
And climb with him the palace steps;  
In fancy all of those one meets  
Remark: "Why, there goes Mr. Pepys!"

He always had a seeing eye  
And hearing ear, and what he saw  
And what he heard he fain would try  
To set down, but evade the law  
And that is why in cipher dark  
The tale originally creeps—  
'Twas thus, also, he made his mark,  
This man of truth and trouble, Pepys.

Throughout his life he had his griefs  
And also had a little fun—  
He kept his eye upon his chiefs  
And tells the things they might have done  
If they had not done what they did.



Ah, if each person now should keep his  
Own diary and raise the lid  
As did this honest Samuel Pepys!

And so, you see, he made a name  
Whereon the critics sometimes pounce;  
It hardly ever sounds the same,  
It is so easy to pronounce.  
But still, there is an hour or so  
Of pleasure for the man who dips  
Into his book and comes to know  
Good Samuel Pepys, Peps or Pips.

### QUINTILIAN

Quintilian, years and years ago,  
Was It on oratory;  
Demosthenes and Cicero  
He studied con amore;  
He ran an elocution school  
And taught the Roman lispers  
The reason and the rote and rule  
For requesting father, dear father, to come home with me now, in  
most pathetic whispers.

'Twas he who showed that thus and thus  
One should appear when stating  
The last remarks of Spartacus  
On ceasing gladiating.  
(Perchance the word we just have used  
Escaped your dictionary.  
We mean when Spartacus refused  
To be butchered to make a Roman holiday exceedingly exciting  
and otherwise gladsome and merry.)

Quintilian's book on How to Speak  
Is classic at this moment;  
It tells the speaker when to shriek  
And when his rage to foment.  
The boy who on commencement day  
Cites Patrick Henry's speeches  
Must do so in Quintilian's way  
When a single order of liberty, with a supplemental second choice  
of death, he beseeches.

The actor who would thrill the crowd  
(A blood and marrow freezer)  
By handing out in accents proud  
"Mark Antony on Cæsar,"



Must heed the rules set down by Quint.,  
And so must he who rises  
To heights of glowing fame by dint  
Of the justly famous to be or not to be, center of the stage, two spotlights sizzling, when he as Hamlet  
soliloquizes.

Quintilian, we are fain to say,  
Was It on oratory,  
And even in this later day  
Receives his share of glory,  
Except when elocutionists  
Our peace and comfort mangle,  
By showing how fair Bessie's wrists  
Were strained and bruised while swinging around in the belfry  
the time she said the curfew should not jangle.

### RALEIGH

Sir Walter Raleigh was a man  
Of excellent deportment;  
He could advise a King or Khan  
What going into court meant;  
When Spenser wrote his Faerie Queene  
Sir Walter Raleigh said it  
Betrayed a wit both sharp and clean  
(We wonder if he read it).

Good Queen Elizabeth one day  
Was out (perhaps for shopping),  
And Raleigh chanced along the way  
Where she in wrath was stopping.  
"How can I get across that mud?"  
She asked; and in the muddle  
Sir Walter showed his gentle blood—  
His cloak soon bridged the puddle.

A smile replaced the good queen's frown,  
She paused there for a minute  
To set more straight the royal crown  
(It had no hat pin in it).  
And then she murmured low to Walt.:  
"Sir, you shall see my tailor."  
He answered: "If I'm worth my salt,  
Good queen, make me a sailor!"

And so good Queen Elizabeth  
Gave him a high position—  
He drew his pay like drawing breath  
And led an expedition



That sailed across the raging seas  
For gold and slaves and cocoa,  
And battled with the biting breeze  
Along the Orinoco.

Alas! It may have been the cloak  
That was in mire imbedded,  
Or possibly some words he spoke  
That made him be beheaded.  
But let us learn this lesson here  
From poor Sir Walter Raleigh:  
The favor of the great, 'tis queer,  
Oft has a grim finale.

### SHAKSPEARE

Shakspeare, as all of us have read,  
Once asked: "What's in a name?"  
An alias for the rose, he said,  
Would make it smell the same.  
But Shakspeare was so frivolous—  
Excuse us if we say  
That it has always seemed to us  
His work was mostly play.

As "Shaxpere," "Shakspere," "Shaikspeare," too,  
His signature is found;  
His autographs are much too few  
To be passed all around.  
This shows the cumulative worth  
Of honest, solid fame;  
The bidders come from all the earth  
To buy his misspelled name.

He dramatized the thrilling scene  
Where Cæsar met his end,  
Where Casca, hungry, lank and lean,  
And Brutus, Cæsar's friend,  
Stabbed swiftly with their daggers bright  
When Julius came in reach—  
Then Antony, thrilled at the sight,  
Arose and made a speech.

No chorus girls were in his shows;  
In them no "social queens"  
Were given princely wage to pose  
And dignify the scenes.  
But there be those who say there are  
Odd facts that can't be passed:



For instance, oft we see a star  
With ciphers in the cast—

And this leads many to declare  
That Bacon wrote the shows;  
A cryptic secret hidden there  
They say they will disclose.  
It may be that each drama hoards  
A Bacon cryptogram,  
For often, proud upon the boards  
There struts and strides a ham.

## TELL

The tale of Tell is simply told;  
He would not heed the tyrant,  
But, big and brave and bluffly bold  
He spurned the cold aspirant—  
He simply came out plain and flat  
And his own rights defended;  
He would not bow to Gessler's hat  
Upon the pole suspended.

Then Gessler came upon the scene  
And ordered Tell to knuckle;  
Tell fixed him with his glances keen  
And gave a scornful chuckle.  
Then Gessler frowned and knit his brows  
(A most portentous omen);  
"Risk your boy's life or make those bows!"  
(We've lost the boy's cognomen.)

Tell smiled, and got his trusty bow,  
Likewise his trusty arrow  
(Now, William Tell, as you should know,  
Could wing the fleeting sparrow  
Or he could truly shoot the chutes)—  
So Gessler said: "Now grapple  
With this one fact—for you the boots  
Unless you cleave the apple."

Did Tell succeed? In your school books  
The tale is very well told,  
And Gessler looked some haughty looks  
When he heard what Bill Tell told.  
"What did you hide this arrow for?"  
Asked Gessler of the wizard.  
"I meant to split that apple, or  
I'd have to harm your gizzard!"



That's all, except it shall endure  
As acted by Salvini.  
(But was it?) And the overture  
Composed by one Rossini  
Shall prove that Tell is not a myth  
Concocted to deceive us.  
We've seen the bow he did it with;  
We hope you will believe us.

## ULYSSES

Unusually popular with mythologic misses,  
And rather wont to wander when he should have stayed at home,  
We find is why our hero, the redoubtable Ulysses,  
Went rambling into trouble when he thought that he would roam.  
Penelope, good lady, left behind in their apartment,  
Had trouble in her efforts to get cash to pay the rent —  
Telemachus, their scion, knew not then what being smart meant;  
He should have helped his mamma, but he never earned a cent.

Ulysses, in the meantime, found the land of the Cyclopes,  
And came within an ace of being made into a stew.  
He drugged old Polyphemus, then skedaddled with: "I hope 'e's  
Laid up with indigestion," and went onward with his crew.  
From there he ambled farther till he reached the realm of Circé;  
We translate rather freely from the Odyssean log:  
"She proved to be a lady with no tenderness or mercy,  
Each comrade of Ulysses, for her sport, was made a hog."

He got away, however, and he steered his trusty ship so  
That it would take him quickly where more trouble might be found—

He grounded on the island of the nymph they called Calypso,  
And dallied in her presence till eight years had rolled around.  
Homesickness must have struck him not so many years thereafter;  
He sighed: "I think the time has come for me to pull my freight."  
The listeners had trouble when they tried to hold their laughter  
At thinking of how long it was before he knew 'twas late.

Penelope, fond woman, had been wooed by many suitors;  
To each and every one of them she firmly whispered "No."  
Ulysses, on appearing, changed the suitors into scooters—  
He strode into the parlor and said: "Take your hats and go!"  
Old Homer tells us fully how Penelope received him,  
And how, to give her pleasure, all these stories he would weave:  
He also tells us solemnly Penelope believed him!  
(That portion of the Odyssey we never can believe.)



## VILLON

Villon—bard of the early times,  
Familiarly called Francois—  
'Twas he who juggled so with rhymes  
That we regard him now with awe;  
His Pegasus knew "Gee" from "Haw".  
He drove with all a jockey's art  
And ran each race without a flaw—  
Villon gave these ballades their start.

Must he flee to some safer climes?  
Did hunger at his vitals gnaw?  
Or was he jailed for varied crimes?  
In that he inspiration saw  
And, pen held in a grimy paw  
Would let his flashing fancy dart  
Ofttimes in measures rather raw—  
Villon gave these ballades their start.

His purse was ever bare of dimes;  
He often felt the grip of law;  
Yet he, the jolliest of mimes,  
Who slept most nights upon the straw  
And wakened to the raucous caw  
Of ravens, never shirked his part;  
He never stopped at fate to jaw—  
Villon gave these ballades their start.

### L'ENVOI

Princess, the moral's here to draw:  
When poets go into the mart  
The editors say coldly: "Pshaw!  
Villon gave these ballades their start."

## WATT

When Watt was but a little boy—  
His papa's pride, his mama's joy—  
He sat beside the kitchen fire  
The bubbling teapot to admire;  
And as he watched the hissing steam  
He straightway then began to dream  
Of what the vapor hot could do  
If how to use it he but knew.



Eventually he devised  
A neat invention which surprised  
The people of that early day—  
He made an engine, anyway.  
This poor contrivance he improved  
Until by it great loads were moved  
And horses were displaced by rails,  
While sidewheels took the place of sails.

Observe, my child, how one small thing  
A wondrous lot of change will bring:  
Because wise little Jimmy Watt  
Could turn to some account his thought,  
Today the trains go whizzing through  
The land, and o'er the ocean blue  
The mighty ships scoot night and day  
From here to countries far away.

Great thanks are due to this James Watt,  
Also to his mama's teapot,  
By porters who on every trip  
Hold up the tourist for a tip,  
And also by that mighty mass  
Of folks who travel on a pass,  
And by the ones who rake in rocks  
Through squeezes that they work in stocks.

But that it would like punning seem  
We'd say Watt has the world's esteem  
(But since we've said it that way now  
We'll let the pun go, anyhow).  
But, somehow, when we chanced to stop  
Beside some busy boiler shop,  
We cannot say that peace was brought  
To all of us by Jimmy Watt.

### XANTIPPE

Xantippe was the lady who was wed to Socrates—  
And their life was not a grand, sweet song;  
'Twas a study—just a study—done in all the minor keys  
With the gloomy measures turned on strong.  
When old Socrates was busy at the office, she would wait  
Till he ambled in at 3 a.m.  
And she met him in the moonlight 'twixt the doorway and the gate—  
Then the neighbors heard a lot from them.

But Socrates—he didn't mind when she pulled out his hair,  
When she would box his ears for him he didn't seem to care—



In a manner bland and wise  
He would then philosophize  
On the Whyness of the Whichness of the Neither Here nor There.

Xantippe did the cooking, and (we have to tell the truth)—  
Indigestion quickly seized on him,  
And in one of her biscuits on a time he broke a tooth,  
Yet he smiled across at wifey grim.  
When she tried her hand at pastry was the only time he spoke,  
And of course he had to make a break—  
'Twas perhaps the first appearance of the ever-lasting joke  
On the pies that mother used to make.

Poor Socrates! He never even ducked his head or dodged  
But merely rubbed the spot whereon the flying platter lodged,  
Then he murmured: "Xanty, dear,  
You have made a problem clear"—  
Then he went to get the swelling on his cranium massaged.

Xantippe wouldn't let him smoke at all about the place,  
And she wouldn't let him take a drink.  
He never learned the value of a two-spot or an ace—  
For 'most all that he could do was think.  
Thus you see that though Xantippe has been fiercely criticized,  
Yet she really made her husband's fame,  
For 'twas while she bossed him sorely that the great man  
analyzed  
All the subjects that have made his name.

Xantippe made him famous; but for her the man had been  
Forgotten like the others of the time that he lived in.  
"Oh, my darling, such a help!"  
He most gratefully would yelp  
When she gave him an impression with a busy rolling-pin.

### YVETOT

There was a king of Yvetot,  
And easy was his head,  
Serene his rest—naught would suggest  
The words so often said,  
That crowned heads are not peaceful;  
He never wore a frown—  
He laughed away the night and day.  
With gayly tilted crown.

The jester of his palace  
Was never forced to work,  
He never had to make things glad



With oily smile and smirk.  
This jolly king of Yvetot  
Had no need of his fool—  
He made his own jests from the throne  
And pleasure was his rule.

He never had a quarrel  
With any other king;  
"Why should we fight?" he asked. "Delight  
Is such an easy thing."  
He told no one his troubles—  
In truth, he reigned so well  
No one could know, in fair Yvetot,  
Of troubles fit to tell.

The little realm of Yvetot—  
A wee spot on the map—  
Has made a name secure in fame  
Because of this rare chap  
Who put his crown on sidwise  
And lolled upon his throne  
With scepter set so that it met  
His active funny bone.

He was to war a stranger;  
His kingdom had no debt;  
Each of his laws possessed a clause  
That barred out care and fret—  
'Tis told that when expiring  
He wasted his last breath  
In one long laugh in life's behalf,  
And thus went to his death.

There was a king of Yvetot—  
There are such kings today;  
They never sigh for things gone by  
But laugh along the way.  
So, crown yourself with laughter,  
Put pleasure on the throne,  
And you'll possess in happiness  
An Yvetot of your own.

## ZENOBIA

Zenobia was empress of the people of Palmyra;  
She tried to boss the army when she should have stayed at home.  
Aurelian, the soldier, led a sort of a hegira  
Of armies up to fight her—they came all the way from Rome.



Full soon he was pursuing them, with spears and daggers "shooing" them,  
At last he sent them to defeat and caught the doughty queen.  
He captured her regretfully, he said, but she said fretfully  
That she considered him a spiteful thing, and very, very "mean."

He led her back a captive with her hands in jeweled fetters,  
Though she cast on Aurelian a look of proud disdain;  
Her manacles were carved and chased and decked by jewel setters,  
And to securely hold her he had made a golden chain.

There is a lot of mystery connected with all history—  
Zenobia, they tell us, didn't want to go to jail,  
But, think of such a fate as that! Why, such a jeweled weight as that  
Was better than to pawn your clothes and be released on bail!

Zenobia was taken to the royal Roman palace  
And there the charming prisoner, we read, was quite the rage—  
Had she lived in this time of ours (we say this without malice),  
She might have made a lasting hit by going on the stage.

Aurelian was nice to her—he hinted more than twice to her  
That he was getting pretty tired of kinging it alone.  
You see, she might have captured him—already she enraptured him—  
And had that handcuff jewelry to wear upon the throne.

But, no! Zenobia was like 'most any other lady—  
They've been the same since mother Eve; they have the same way still:  
No matter if it's Princess May, or Susie, Sal or Sadie,  
No lady will consent to be convinced against her will.

At last they told her civilly, "You'll have to live in Tivoli"  
(Which may or may not be the way to speak that city's name).  
She answered very prettily: "I'll love to live in Italy"—  
And there she stayed until she was an old, forgotten dame.