

RUDYARD KIPLING

VERSES

1889-1896

Редьярд Киплинг

Verses 1889-1896

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Rudyard Kipling

Verses 1889-1896

BARRACK-ROOM BALLADS AND OTHER VERSES

1889-1891

TO WOLCOTT BALESTIER

Beyond the path of the outmost sun through utter darkness hurled —
Further than ever comet flared or vagrant star-dust swirled —
Live such as fought and sailed and ruled and loved and made our world.

They are purged of pride because they died, they know the worth of
their bays,

They sit at wine with the Maidens Nine and the Gods of the Elder
Days,

It is their will to serve or be still as fitteth our Father's praise.

'Tis theirs to sweep through the ringing deep where Azrael's outposts
are,

Or buffet a path through the Pit's red wrath when God goes out to war,
Or hang with the reckless Seraphim on the rein of a red-maned star.

They take their mirth in the joy of the Earth —
they dare not grieve for her pain —

They know of toil and the end of toil, they know God's law is plain,
So they whistle the Devil to make them sport who know that Sin is
vain.

And ofttimes cometh our wise Lord God, master of every trade,
And tells them tales of His daily toil, of Edens newly made;
And they rise to their feet as He passes by, gentlemen unafraid.

To these who are cleansed of base Desire, Sorrow and Lust and Shame
—

Gods for they knew the hearts of men, men for they stooped to Fame,
Borne on the breath that men call Death, my brother's spirit came.

He scarce had need to doff his pride or slough the dross of Earth —
E'en as he trod that day to God so walked he from his birth,
In simpleness and gentleness and honour and clean mirth.

So cup to lip in fellowship they gave him welcome high
And made him place at the banquet board – the Strong Men ranged
thereby,
Who had done his work and held his peace and had no fear to die.

Beyond the loom of the last lone star, through open darkness hurled,
Further than rebel comet dared or hiving star-swarm swirled,
Sits he with those that praise our God for that they served His world.

BARRACK-ROOM BALLADS

To T. A.

I have made for you a song,
And it may be right or wrong,
But only you can tell me if it's true;
I have tried for to explain
Both your pleasure and your pain,
And, Thomas, here's my best respects to you!

O there'll surely come a day
When they'll give you all your pay,
And treat you as a Christian ought to do;
So, until that day comes round,
Heaven keep you safe and sound,
And, Thomas, here's my best respects to you!

R. K.

DANNY DEEVER

“What are the bugles blowin' for?” said Files-on-Parade.
“To turn you out, to turn you out”, the Colour-Sergeant said.
“What makes you look so white, so white?” said Files-on-Parade.
“I'm dreadin' what I've got to watch”, the Colour-Sergeant said.
For they're hangin' Danny Deever, you can hear the Dead March
play,
The regiment's in 'ollow square – they're hangin' him to-day;
They've taken of his buttons off an' cut his stripes away,
An' they're hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'.

“What makes the rear-rank breathe so 'ard?” said Files-on-Parade.
“It's bitter cold, it's bitter cold”, the Colour-Sergeant said.
“What makes that front-rank man fall down?” said Files-on-Parade.
“A touch o' sun, a touch o' sun”, the Colour-Sergeant said.
They are hangin' Danny Deever, they are marchin' of 'im round,
They 'ave 'altered Danny Deever by 'is coffin on the ground;
An' 'e'll swing in 'arf a minute for a sneakin' shootin' hound —
O they're hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'!

“Is cot was right-'and cot to mine”, said Files-on-Parade.
“E's sleepin' out an' far to-night”, the Colour-Sergeant said.
“I've drunk 'is beer a score o' times”, said Files-on-Parade.
“E's drinkin' bitter beer alone”, the Colour-Sergeant said.
They are hangin' Danny Deever, you must mark 'im to 'is place,
For 'e shot a comrade sleepin' – you must look 'im in the face;
Nine 'undred of 'is county an' the regiment's disgrace,
While they're hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'.

“What’s that so black agin’ the sun?” said Files-on-Parade.

“It’s Danny fightin’ ‘ard for life”, the Colour-Sergeant said.

“What’s that that whimpers over’ead?” said Files-on-Parade.

“It’s Danny’s soul that’s passin’ now”, the Colour-Sergeant said.

For they’re done with Danny Deever, you can ‘ear the quickstep play,

The regiment’s in column, an’ they’re marchin’ us away;

Ho! the young recruits are shakin’, an’ they’ll want their beer to-day,

After hangin’ Danny Deever in the mornin’.

TOMMY

I went into a public-'ouse to get a pint o' beer,
The publican 'e up an' sez, "We serve no red-coats here."
The girls be'ind the bar they laughed an' giggled fit to die,
I outs into the street again an' to myself sez I:
 O it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Tommy, go away";
 But it's "Thank you, Mister Atkins", when the band begins to play,
 The band begins to play, my boys, the band begins to play,
 O it's "Thank you, Mister Atkins", when the band begins to play.

I went into a theatre as sober as could be,
They gave a drunk civilian room, but 'adn't none for me;
They sent me to the gallery or round the music-'alls,
But when it comes to fightin', Lord! they'll shove me in the stalls!
 For it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Tommy, wait outside";
 But it's "Special train for Atkins" when the trooper's on the tide,
 The troopship's on the tide, my boys, the troopship's on the tide,
 O it's "Special train for Atkins" when the trooper's on the tide.

Yes, makin' mock o' uniforms that guard you while you sleep
Is cheaper than them uniforms, an' they're starvation cheap;
An' hustlin' drunken soldiers when they're goin' large a bit
Is five times better business than paradin' in full kit.
 Then it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Tommy, 'ow's yer soul?"
 But it's "Thin red line of 'eroes" when the drums begin to roll,
 The drums begin to roll, my boys, the drums begin to roll,
 O it's "Thin red line of 'eroes" when the drums begin to roll.

We aren't no thin red 'eroes, nor we aren't no blackguards too,
But single men in barricks, most remarkable like you;
An' if sometimes our conduct isn't all your fancy paints,
Why, single men in barricks don't grow into plaster saints;
 While it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Tommy, fall be'ind",
 But it's "Please to walk in front, sir", when there's trouble in the
wind,
 There's trouble in the wind, my boys, there's trouble in the wind,
 O it's "Please to walk in front, sir", when there's trouble in the wind.

You talk o' better food for us, an' schools, an' fires, an' all:
We'll wait for extry rations if you treat us rational.
Don't mess about the cook-room slops, but prove it to our face
The Widow's Uniform is not the soldier-man's disgrace.
 For it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Chuck him out, the
brute!"
 But it's "Saviour of 'is country" when the guns begin to shoot;
 An' it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' anything you please;

An' Tommy ain't a bloomin' fool – you bet that Tommy sees!

“FUZZY-WUZZY”

(Soudan Expeditionary Force)

We've fought with many men acrost the seas,
An' some of 'em was brave an' some was not:
The Paythan an' the Zulu an' Burmese;
But the Fuzzy was the finest o' the lot.
We never got a ha'porth's change of 'im:
'E squatted in the scrub an' 'ocked our 'orses,
'E cut our sentries up at *Suakim*,
An' 'e played the cat an' banjo with our forces.
So 'ere's *to* you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, at your 'ome in the Soudan;
You're a pore benighted 'eathen but a first-class fightin' man;
We gives you your certificate, an' if you want it signed
We'll come an' 'ave a romp with you whenever you're inclined.

We took our chanst among the Khyber 'ills,
The Boers knocked us silly at a mile,
The Burman give us Irriwaddy chills,
An' a Zulu *impi* dished us up in style:
But all we ever got from such as they
Was pop to what the Fuzzy made us swaller;
We 'eld our bloomin' own, the papers say,
But man for man the Fuzzy knocked us 'oller.
Then 'ere's *to* you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, an' the missis and the kid;
Our orders was to break you, an' of course we went an' did.
We sloshed you with Martinis, an' it wasn't 'ardly fair;
But for all the odds agin' you, Fuzzy-Wuz, you broke the square.

'E 'asn't got no papers of 'is own,
'E 'asn't got no medals nor rewards,
So we must certify the skill 'e's shown
In usin' of 'is long two-'anded swords:
When 'e's 'oppin' in an' out among the bush
With 'is coffin-'eaded shield an' shovel-spear,
An' 'appy day with Fuzzy on the rush
Will last an' 'ealthy Tommy for a year.
So 'ere's *to* you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, an' your friends which are no more,
If we 'adn't lost some messmates we would 'elp you to deplore;
But give an' take's the gospel, an' we'll call the bargain fair,
For if you 'ave lost more than us, you crumpled up the square!

'E rushes at the smoke when we let drive,
An', before we know, 'e's 'ackin' at our 'ead;
'E's all 'ot sand an' ginger when alive,
An' 'e's generally shammin' when 'e's dead.
'E's a daisy, 'e's a ducky, 'e's a lamb!

'E's a injia-rubber idiot on the spree,
'E's the on'y thing that doesn't give a damn
For a Regiment o' British Infantee!
So 'ere's *to* you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, at your 'ome in the Soudan;
You're a pore benighted 'eathen but a first-class fightin' man;
An' 'ere's *to* you, Fuzzy-Wuzzy, with your 'ayrick 'ead of 'air —
You big black boundin' beggar – for you broke a British square!

SOLDIER, SOLDIER

“Soldier, soldier come from the wars,
Why don’t you march with my true love?”
“We’re fresh from off the ship an’ ‘e’s maybe give the slip,
An’ you’d best go look for a new love.”
New love! True love!
Best go look for a new love,
The dead they cannot rise, an’ you’d better dry your eyes,
An’ you’d best go look for a new love.

“Soldier, soldier come from the wars,
What did you see o’ my true love?”
“I seed ‘im serve the Queen in a suit o’ rifle-green,
An’ you’d best go look for a new love.”

“Soldier, soldier come from the wars,
Did ye see no more o’ my true love?”
“I seed ‘im runnin’ by when the shots begun to fly —
But you’d best go look for a new love.”

“Soldier, soldier come from the wars,
Did aught take ‘arm to my true love?”
“I couldn’t see the fight, for the smoke it lay so white —
An’ you’d best go look for a new love.”

“Soldier, soldier come from the wars,
I’ll up an’ tend to my true love!”
“‘E’s lying on the dead with a bullet through ‘is ‘ead,
An’ you’d best go look for a new love.”

“Soldier, soldier come from the wars,
I’ll down an’ die with my true love!”
“The pit we dug’ll ‘ide ‘im an’ the twenty men beside ‘im —
An’ you’d best go look for a new love.”

“Soldier, soldier come from the wars,
Do you bring no sign from my true love?”
“I bring a lock of ‘air that ‘e allus used to wear,
An’ you’d best go look for a new love.”

“Soldier, soldier come from the wars,
O then I know it’s true I’ve lost my true love!”
“An’ I tell you truth again – when you’ve lost the feel o’ pain
You’d best take me for your true love.”
True love! New love!
Best take ‘im for a new love,

The dead they cannot rise, an' you'd better dry your eyes,
An' you'd best take 'im for your true love.

SCREW-GUNS

Smokin' my pipe on the mountings, sniffin' the mornin' cool,
I walks in my old brown gaiters along o' my old brown mule,
With seventy gunners be'ind me, an' never a beggar forgets
It's only the pick of the Army
 that handles the dear little pets – 'Tss! 'Tss!
For you all love the screw-guns – the screw-guns they all love you!
So when we call round with a few guns,
 o' course you will know what to do – hoo! hoo!
Jest send in your Chief an' surrender —
 it's worse if you fights or you runs:
You can go where you please, you can skid up the trees,
 but you don't get away from the guns!

They sends us along where the roads are, but mostly we goes where
they ain't:

We'd climb up the side of a sign-board an' trust to the stick o' the paint:
We've chivied the Naga an' Looshai, we've give the Afreedee-man fits,
For we fancies ourselves at two thousand,
 we guns that are built in two bits – 'Tss! 'Tss!
For you all love the screw-guns.

If a man doesn't work, why, we drills 'im an' teaches 'im 'ow to behave;
If a beggar can't march, why, we kills 'im an' rattles 'im into 'is grave.
You've got to stand up to our business an' spring without snatchin'
or fuss.

D'you say that you sweat with the field-guns?
 By God, you must lather with us – 'Tss! 'Tss!
For you all love the screw-guns.

The eagles is screamin' around us, the river's a-moanin' below,
We're clear o' the pine an' the oak-scrub,
 we're out on the rocks an' the snow,
An' the wind is as thin as a whip-lash what carries away to the plains
The rattle an' stamp o' the lead-mules —
 the jinglety-jink o' the chains – 'Tss! 'Tss!
For you all love the screw-guns.

There's a wheel on the Horns o' the Mornin',
 an' a wheel on the edge o' the Pit,
An' a drop into nothin' beneath you as straight as a beggar can spit:
With the sweat runnin' out o' your shirt-sleeves,
 an' the sun off the snow in your face,
An' 'arf o' the men on the drag-ropes
 to hold the old gun in 'er place – 'Tss! 'Tss!
For you all love the screw-guns.

Smokin' my pipe on the mountings, sniffin' the mornin' cool,
I climbs in my old brown gaiters along o' my old brown mule.
The monkey can say what our road was —
 the wild-goat 'e knows where we passed.
Stand easy, you long-eared old darlin's!
 Out drag-ropes! With shrapnel! Hold fast – 'Tss! 'Tss!
For you all love the screw-guns – the screw-guns they all love you!
So when we take tea with a few guns,
 o' course you will know what to do – hoo! hoo!
Jest send in your Chief an' surrender —
 it's worse if you fights or you runs:
You may hide in the caves, they'll be only your graves,
 but you can't get away from the guns!

CELLS

I've a head like a concertina: I've a tongue like a button-stick:
I've a mouth like an old potato, and I'm more than a little sick,
But I've had my fun o' the Corp'ral's Guard: I've made the cinders fly,
And I'm here in the Clink for a thundering drink
and blacking the Corporal's eye.

With a second-hand overcoat under my head,
And a beautiful view of the yard,
O it's pack-drill for me and a fortnight's C.B.
For "drunk and resisting the Guard!"
Mad drunk and resisting the Guard —
'Strewth, but I socked it them hard!
So it's pack-drill for me and a fortnight's C.B.
For "drunk and resisting the Guard."

I started o' canteen porter, I finished o' canteen beer,
But a dose o' gin that a mate slipped in, it was that that brought me
here.

'Twas that and an extry double Guard that rubbed my nose in the dirt;
But I fell away with the Corp'ral's stock
and the best of the Corp'ral's shirt.

I left my cap in a public-house, my boots in the public road,
And Lord knows where, and I don't care, my belt and my tunic goed;
They'll stop my pay, they'll cut away the stripes I used to wear,
But I left my mark on the Corp'ral's face, and I think he'll keep it there!

My wife she cries on the barrack-gate, my kid in the barrack-yard,
It ain't that I mind the Ord'ly room – it's *that* that cuts so hard.
I'll take my oath before them both that I will sure abstain,
But as soon as I'm in with a mate and gin, I know I'll do it again!

With a second-hand overcoat under my head,
And a beautiful view of the yard,
Yes, it's pack-drill for me and a fortnight's C.B.
For "drunk and resisting the Guard!"
Mad drunk and resisting the Guard —
'Strewth, but I socked it them hard!
So it's pack-drill for me and a fortnight's C.B.
For "drunk and resisting the Guard."

GUNGA DIN

You may talk o' gin and beer
When you're quartered safe out 'ere,
An' you're sent to penny-fights an' Aldershot it;
But when it comes to slaughter
You will do your work on water,
An' you'll lick the bloomin' boots of 'im that's got it.
Now in Injia's sunny clime,
Where I used to spend my time
A-servin' of 'Er Majesty the Queen,
Of all them blackfaced crew
The finest man I knew
Was our regimental bhisti, Gunga Din.
 He was "Din! Din! Din!
 You limp in' lump o' brick-dust, Gunga Din!
 Hi! slippery *hitherao!*
 Water, get it! *Panee lao!* [Bring water swiftly.]
 You squidgy-nosed old idol, Gunga Din."

The uniform 'e wore
Was nothin' much before,
An' rather less than 'arf o' that be'ind,
For a piece o' twisty rag
An' a goatskin water-bag
Was all the field-equipment 'e could find.
When the sweatin' troop-train lay
In a sidin' through the day,
Where the 'eat would make your bloomin' eyebrows crawl,
We shouted "Harry By!" [Mr. Atkins's equivalent for "O
brother."]
Till our throats were bricky-dry,
Then we wopped 'im 'cause 'e couldn't serve us all.
 It was "Din! Din! Din!
 You 'eathen, where the mischief 'ave you been?
 You put some *juldee* in it [Be quick.]
 Or I'll *marrow* you this minute [Hit you.]
 If you don't fill up my helmet, Gunga Din!"

'E would dot an' carry one
Till the longest day was done;
An' 'e didn't seem to know the use o' fear.
If we charged or broke or cut,
You could bet your bloomin' nut,
'E'd be waitin' fifty paces right flank rear.
With 'is *mussick* on 'is back, [Water-skin.]
'E would skip with our attack,

An' watch us till the bugles made "Retire",
An' for all 'is dirty 'ide
'E was white, clear white, inside
When 'e went to tend the wounded under fire!
 It was "Din! Din! Din!"
 With the bullets kickin' dust-spots on the green.
 When the cartridges ran out,
 You could hear the front-files shout,
 "Hi! ammunition-mules an' Gunga Din!"

I shan't forgit the night
When I dropped be'ind the fight
With a bullet where my belt-plate should 'a' been.
I was chokin' mad with thirst,
An' the man that spied me first
Was our good old grinnin', gruntin' Gunga Din.
'E lifted up my 'ead,
An' he plugged me where I bled,
An' 'e guv me 'arf-a-pint o' water-green:
It was crawlin' and it stunk,
But of all the drinks I've drunk,
I'm gratefulest to one from Gunga Din.
 It was "Din! Din! Din!"
 'Ere's a beggar with a bullet through 'is spleen;
 'E's chawin' up the ground,
 An' 'e's kickin' all around:
 For Gawd's sake git the water, Gunga Din!"

'E carried me away
To where a dooli lay,
An' a bullet come an' drilled the beggar clean.
'E put me safe inside,
An' just before 'e died,
"I 'ope you liked your drink", sez Gunga Din.
So I'll meet 'im later on
At the place where 'e is gone —
Where it's always double drill and no canteen;
'E'll be squattin' on the coals
Givin' drink to poor damned souls,
An' I'll get a swig in hell from Gunga Din!
 Yes, Din! Din! Din!
 You Lazarushian-leather Gunga Din!
 Though I've belted you and flayed you,
 By the livin' Gawd that made you,
 You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din!

OONTS

(Northern India Transport Train)

Wot makes the soldier's 'eart to penk, wot makes 'im to perspire?
It isn't standin' up to charge nor lyin' down to fire;
But it's everlastin' waitin' on a everlastin' road
For the commissariat camel an' 'is commissariat load.

O the oont¹, O the oont, O the commissariat oont!
With 'is silly neck a-bobbin' like a basket full o' snakes;
We packs 'im like an idol, an' you ought to 'ear 'im grunt,
An' when we gets 'im loaded up 'is blessed girth-rope breaks.

Wot makes the rear-guard swear so 'ard when night is drorin' in,
An' every native follower is shiverin' for 'is skin?
It ain't the chanst o' being rushed by Paythans from the 'ills,
It's the commissariat camel puttin' on 'is bloomin' frills!
O the oont, O the oont, O the hairy scary oont!
A-trippin' over tent-ropes when we've got the night alarm!
We socks 'im with a stretcher-pole an' 'eads 'im off in front,
An' when we've saved 'is bloomin' life 'e chaws our bloomin' arm.

The 'orse 'e knows above a bit, the bullock's but a fool,
The elephant's a gentleman, the battery-mule's a mule;
But the commissariat cam-u-el, when all is said an' done,
'E's a devil an' a ostrich an' a orphan-child in one.
O the oont, O the oont, O the Gawd-forsaken oont!
The lumpy-'umpy 'ummin'-bird a-singin' where 'e lies,
'E's blocked the whole division from the rear-guard to the front,
An' when we get him up again – the beggar goes an' dies!

'E'll gall an' chafe an' lame an' fight – 'e smells most awful vile;
'E'll lose 'isself for ever if you let 'im stray a mile;
'E's game to graze the 'ole day long an' 'owl the 'ole night through,
An' when 'e comes to greasy ground 'e splits 'isself in two.
O the oont, O the oont, O the floppin', droppin' oont!
When 'is long legs give from under an' 'is meltin' eye is dim,
The tribes is up be'ind us, and the tribes is out in front —
It ain't no jam for Tommy, but it's kites an' crows for 'im.

So when the cruel march is done, an' when the roads is blind,
An' when we sees the camp in front an' 'ears the shots be'ind,
Ho! then we strips 'is saddle off, and all 'is woes is past:
'E thinks on us that used 'im so, and gets revenge at last.
O the oont, O the oont, O the floatin', bloatin' oont!
The late lamented camel in the water-cut 'e lies;

¹ Camel: – *oo* is pronounced like *u* in "bull", but by Mr. Atkins to rhyme with "front".

We keeps a mile be'ind 'im an' we keeps a mile in front,
But 'e gets into the drinkin'-casks, and then o' course we dies.

LOOT

If you've ever stole a pheasant-egg be'ind the keeper's back,
If you've ever snigged the washin' from the line,
If you've ever crammed a gander in your bloomin' 'aversack,
You will understand this little song o' mine.
But the service rules are 'ard, an' from such we are debarred,
For the same with English morals does not suit.

(*Cornet*: Toot! toot!)

W'y, they call a man a robber if 'e stuffs 'is marchin' clobber
With the —

(*Chorus*) Loo! loo! Lulu! lulu! Loo! loo! Loot! loot! loot!

Ow the loot!

Bloomin' loot!

That's the thing to make the boys git up an' shoot!

It's the same with dogs an' men,

If you'd make 'em come again

Clap 'em forward with a Loo! loo! Lulu! Loot!

(*ff*) Whoopee! Tear 'im, puppy! Loo! loo! Lulu! Loot! loot! loot!

If you've knocked a nigger edgeways when 'e's thrustin' for your life,
You must leave 'im very careful where 'e fell;
An' may thank your stars an' gaiters if you didn't feel 'is knife
That you ain't told off to bury 'im as well.
Then the sweatin' Tommies wonder as they spade the beggars under
Why lootin' should be entered as a crime;
So if my song you'll 'ear, I will learn you plain an' clear
'Ow to pay yourself for fightin' overtime.

(*Chorus*) With the loot,.

Now remember when you're 'acking round a gilded Burma god
That 'is eyes is very often precious stones;
An' if you treat a nigger to a dose o' cleanin'-rod
'E's like to show you everything 'e owns.

When 'e won't prodooce no more, pour some water on the floor
Where you 'ear it answer 'olloo to the boot

(*Cornet*: Toot! toot!) —

When the ground begins to sink, shove your baynick down the chink,
An' you're sure to touch the —

(*Chorus*) Loo! loo! Lulu! Loot! loot! loot!

Ow the loot!.

When from 'ouse to 'ouse you're 'unting, you must always work in
pairs —

It 'alves the gain, but safer you will find —

For a single man gets bottled on them twisty-wisty stairs,

An' a woman comes and clobs 'im from be'ind.

When you've turned 'em inside out, an' it seems beyond a doubt
As if there weren't enough to dust a flute

(*Cornet*: Toot! toot!) —

Before you sling your 'ook, at the 'ousetops take a look,
For it's underneath the tiles they 'ide the loot.

(*Chorus*) Ow the loot!.

You can mostly square a Sergint an' a Quartermaster too,

If you only take the proper way to go;

I could never keep my pickin's, but I've learned you all I knew —

An' don't you never say I told you so.

An' now I'll bid good-bye, for I'm gettin' rather dry,

An' I see another tunin' up to toot

(*Cornet*: Toot! toot!) —

So 'ere's good-luck to those that wears the Widow's clo'es,

An' the Devil send 'em all they want o' loot!

(*Chorus*) Yes, the loot,

Bloomin' loot!

In the tunic an' the mess-tin an' the boot!

It's the same with dogs an' men,

If you'd make 'em come again

(*fff*) Whoop 'em forward with a Loo! loo! Lulu! Loot! loot! loot!

Heeya! Sick 'im, puppy! Loo! loo! Lulu! Loot! loot! loot!

“SNARLEYOW”

This ‘appened in a battle to a batt’ry of the corps
Which is first among the women an’ amazin’ first in war;
An’ what the bloomin’ battle was I don’t remember now,
But Two’s off-lead ‘e answered to the name o’ *Snarleyow*.
Down in the Infantry, nobody cares;
Down in the Cavalry, Colonel ‘e swears;
But down in the lead with the wheel at the flog
Turns the bold Bombardier to a little whipped dog!

They was movin’ into action, they was needed very sore,
To learn a little schoolin’ to a native army corps,
They ‘ad nipped against an uphill, they was tuckin’ down the brow,
When a tricky, trundlin’ roundshot give the knock to *Snarleyow*.

They cut ‘im loose an’ left ‘im – ‘e was almost tore in two —
But he tried to follow after as a well-trained ‘orse should do;
‘E went an’ fouled the limber, an’ the Driver’s Brother squeals:
“Pull up, pull up for *Snarleyow* – ‘is head’s between ‘is ‘eels!”

The Driver ‘umped ‘is shoulder, for the wheels was goin’ round,
An’ there ain’t no “Stop, conductor!” when a batt’ry’s changin’ ground;
Sez ‘e: “I broke the beggar in, an’ very sad I feels,
But I couldn’t pull up, not for *you* – your ‘ead between your ‘eels!”

‘E ‘adn’t ‘ardly spoke the word, before a droppin’ shell
A little right the batt’ry an’ between the sections fell;
An’ when the smoke ‘ad cleared away, before the limber wheels,
There lay the Driver’s Brother with ‘is ‘ead between ‘is ‘eels.

Then sez the Driver’s Brother, an’ ‘is words was very plain,
“For Gawd’s own sake get over me, an’ put me out o’ pain.”
They saw ‘is wounds was mortal, an’ they judged that it was best,
So they took an’ drove the limber straight across ‘is back an’ chest.

The Driver ‘e give nothin’ ‘cept a little coughin’ grunt,
But ‘e swung ‘is ‘orses ‘andsome when it came to “Action Front!”
An’ if one wheel was juicy, you may lay your Monday head
‘Twas juicier for the niggers when the case begun to spread.

The moril of this story, it is plainly to be seen:
You ‘avn’t got no families when servin’ of the Queen —
You ‘avn’t got no brothers, fathers, sisters, wives, or sons —
If you want to win your battles take an’ work your bloomin’ guns!
Down in the Infantry, nobody cares;
Down in the Cavalry, Colonel ‘e swears;

But down in the lead with the wheel at the flog
Turns the bold Bombardier to a little whipped dog!

THE WIDOW AT WINDSOR

'Ave you 'eard o' the Widow at Windsor
With a hairy gold crown on 'er 'ead?
She 'as ships on the foam – she 'as millions at 'ome,
An' she pays us poor beggars in red.
(Ow, poor beggars in red!)
There's 'er nick on the cavalry 'orses,
There's 'er mark on the medical stores —
An' 'er troopers you'll find with a fair wind be'ind
That takes us to various wars.
(Poor beggars! – barbarious wars!)
Then 'ere's to the Widow at Windsor,
An' 'ere's to the stores an' the guns,
The men an' the 'orses what makes up the forces
O' Missis Victorier's sons.
(Poor beggars! Victorier's sons!)

Walk wide o' the Widow at Windsor,
For 'alf o' Creation she owns:
We 'ave bought 'er the same with the sword an' the flame,
An' we've salted it down with our bones.
(Poor beggars! – it's blue with our bones!)
Hands off o' the sons o' the Widow,
Hands off o' the goods in 'er shop,
For the Kings must come down an' the Emperors frown
When the Widow at Windsor says “Stop”!
(Poor beggars! – we're sent to say “Stop”!)
Then 'ere's to the Lodge o' the Widow,
From the Pole to the Tropics it runs —
To the Lodge that we tile with the rank an' the file,
An' open in form with the guns.
(Poor beggars! – it's always they guns!)

We 'ave 'eard o' the Widow at Windsor,
It's safest to let 'er alone:
For 'er sentries we stand by the sea an' the land
Wherever the bugles are blown.
(Poor beggars! – an' don't we get blown!)
Take 'old o' the Wings o' the Mornin',
An' flop round the earth till you're dead;
But you won't get away from the tune that they play
To the bloomin' old rag over'ead.
(Poor beggars! – it's 'ot over'ead!)
Then 'ere's to the sons o' the Widow,
Wherever, 'owever they roam.
'Ere's all they desire, an' if they require

A speedy return to their 'ome.
(Poor beggars! – they'll never see 'ome!)

BELTS

There was a row in Silver Street that's near to Dublin Quay,
Between an Irish regiment an' English cavalree;
It started at Revelly an' it lasted on till dark:
The first man dropped at Harrison's, the last forninst the Park.
For it was: – "Belts, belts, belts, an' that's one for you!"
An' it was "Belts, belts, belts, an' that's done for you!"
O buckle an' tongue
Was the song that we sung
From Harrison's down to the Park!

There was a row in Silver Street – the regiments was out,
They called us "Delhi Rebels", an' we answered "Threes about!"
That drew them like a hornet's nest – we met them good an' large,
The English at the double an' the Irish at the charge.
Then it was: – "Belts.

There was a row in Silver Street – an' I was in it too;
We passed the time o' day, an' then the belts went whirraru!
I misremember what occurred, but subsequent the storm
A *Freeman's Journal Supplemint* was all my uniform.
O it was: – "Belts.

There was a row in Silver Street – they sent the Polis there,
The English were too drunk to know, the Irish didn't care;
But when they grew impertinint we simultaneous rose,
Till half o' them was Liffey mud an' half was tattered clo'es.
For it was: – "Belts.

There was a row in Silver Street – it might ha' raged till now,
But some one drew his side-arm clear, an' nobody knew how;
'Twas Hogan took the point an' dropped; we saw the red blood run:
An' so we all was murderers that started out in fun.
While it was: – "Belts.

There was a row in Silver Street – but that put down the shine,
Wid each man whisperin' to his next: "Twas never work o' mine!"
We went away like beaten dogs, an' down the street we bore him,
The poor dumb corpse that couldn't tell the bhoys were sorry for him.
When it was: – "Belts.

There was a row in Silver Street – it isn't over yet,
For half of us are under guard wid punishments to get;
'Tis all a merricle to me as in the Clink I lie:
There was a row in Silver Street – begod, I wonder why!
But it was: – "Belts, belts, belts, an' that's one for you!"

An' it was "Belts, belts, belts, an' that's done for you!"
O buckle an' tongue
Was the song that we sung
From Harrison's down to the Park!

THE YOUNG BRITISH SOLDIER

When the 'arf-made recruity goes out to the East
'E acts like a babe an' 'e drinks like a beast,
An' 'e wonders because 'e is frequent deceased
Ere 'e's fit for to serve as a soldier.
Serve, serve, serve as a soldier,
Serve, serve, serve as a soldier,
Serve, serve, serve as a soldier,
So-oldier *OF* the Queen!

Now all you recruities what's drafted to-day,
You shut up your rag-box an' 'ark to my lay,
An' I'll sing you a soldier as far as I may:
A soldier what's fit for a soldier.
Fit, fit, fit for a soldier.

First mind you steer clear o' the grog-sellers' huts,
For they sell you Fixed Bay'nets that rots out your guts —
Ay, drink that 'ud eat the live steel from your butts —
An' it's bad for the young British soldier.
Bad, bad, bad for the soldier.

When the cholera comes – as it will past a doubt —
Keep out of the wet and don't go on the shout,
For the sickness gets in as the liquor dies out,
An' it crumples the young British soldier.
Crum-, crum-, crumples the soldier.

But the worst o' your foes is the sun over'ead:
You *must* wear your 'elmet for all that is said:
If 'e finds you uncovered 'e'll knock you down dead,
An' you'll die like a fool of a soldier.
Fool, fool, fool of a soldier.

If you're cast for fatigue by a sergeant unkind,
Don't grouse like a woman nor crack on nor blind;
Be handy and civil, and then you will find
That it's beer for the young British soldier.
Beer, beer, beer for the soldier.

Now, if you must marry, take care she is old —
A troop-sergeant's widow's the nicest I'm told,
For beauty won't help if your rations is cold,
Nor love ain't enough for a soldier.
'Nough, 'nough, 'nough for a soldier.

If the wife should go wrong with a comrade, be loath
To shoot when you catch 'em – you'll swing, on my oath! —
Make 'im take 'er and keep 'er: that's Hell for them both,
An' you're shut o' the curse of a soldier.
Curse, curse, curse of a soldier.

When first under fire an' you're wishful to duck,
Don't look nor take 'eed at the man that is struck,
Be thankful you're livin', and trust to your luck
And march to your front like a soldier.
Front, front, front like a soldier.

When 'arf of your bullets fly wide in the ditch,
Don't call your Martini a cross-eyed old bitch;
She's human as you are – you treat her as sich,
An' she'll fight for the young British soldier.
Fight, fight, fight for the soldier.

When shakin' their bustles like ladies so fine,
The guns o' the enemy wheel into line,
Shoot low at the limbers an' don't mind the shine,
For noise never startles the soldier.
Start-, start-, startles the soldier.

If your officer's dead and the sergeants look white,
Remember it's ruin to run from a fight:
So take open order, lie down, and sit tight,
And wait for supports like a soldier.
Wait, wait, wait like a soldier.

When you're wounded and left on Afghanistan's plains,
And the women come out to cut up what remains,
Jest roll to your rifle and blow out your brains
An' go to your Gawd like a soldier.
Go, go, go like a soldier,
Go, go, go like a soldier,
Go, go, go like a soldier,
So-oldier *of* the Queen!

MANDALAY

By the old Moulmein Pagoda, lookin' eastward to the sea,
There's a Burma girl a-settin', and I know she thinks o' me;
For the wind is in the palm-trees, and the temple-bells they say:
"Come you back, you British soldier; come you back to Mandalay!"
 Come you back to Mandalay,
 Where the old Flotilla lay:
 Can't you 'ear their paddles chunkin' from Rangoon to Mandalay?
 On the road to Mandalay,
 Where the flyin'-fishes play,
 An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer China 'crost the Bay!

'Er petticoat was yaller an' 'er little cap was green,
An' 'er name was Supi-yaw-lat – jes' the same as Theebaw's Queen,
An' I seed her first a-smokin' of a whackin' white cheroot,
An' a-wastin' Christian kisses on an 'eathen idol's foot:
 Bloomin' idol made o'mud —
 Wot they called the Great Gawd Budd —
 Plucky lot she cared for idols when I kissed 'er where she stud!
 On the road to Mandalay.

When the mist was on the rice-fields an' the sun was droppin' slow,
She'd git 'er little banjo an' she'd sing "*Kulla-lo-lo!*"
With 'er arm upon my shoulder an' 'er cheek agin' my cheek
We useter watch the steamers an' the *hathis* pilin' teak.
 Elephints a-pilin' teak
 In the sludgy, sjudgy creek,
 Where the silence 'ung that 'eavy you was 'arf afraid to speak!
 On the road to Mandalay.

But that's all shove be'ind me – long ago an' fur away,
An' there ain't no 'busses runnin' from the Bank to Mandalay;
An' I'm learnin' 'ere in London what the ten-year soldier tells:
"If you've 'eard the East a-callin', you won't never 'eed naught else."
 No! you won't 'eed nothin' else
 But them spicy garlic smells,
 An' the sunshine an' the palm-trees an' the tinkly temple-bells;
 On the road to Mandalay.

I am sick o' wastin' leather on these gritty pavin'-stones,
An' the blasted Henglish drizzle wakes the fever in my bones;
Tho' I walks with fifty 'ousemaids outer Chelsea to the Strand,
An' they talks a lot o' lovin', but wot do they understand?
 Beefy face an' grubby 'and —
 Law! wot do they understand?
 I've a neater, sweeter maiden in a cleaner, greener land!

On the road to Mandalay.

Ship me somewheres east of Suez, where the best is like the worst,
Where there aren't no Ten Commandments an' a man can raise a thirst;
For the temple-bells are callin', an' it's there that I would be —
By the old Moulmein Pagoda, looking lazy at the sea;
On the road to Mandalay,
Where the old Flotilla lay,
With our sick beneath the awnings when we went to Mandalay!
On the road to Mandalay,
Where the flyin'-fishes play,
An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer China 'crost the Bay!

TROOPIN'

(Our Army in the East)

Troopin', troopin', troopin' to the sea:
'Ere's September come again – the six-year men are free.
O leave the dead be'ind us, for they cannot come away
To where the ship's a-coalin' up that takes us 'ome to-day.
We're goin' 'ome, we're goin' 'ome,
Our ship is at the shore,
An' you must pack your 'aversack,
For we won't come back no more.
Ho, don't you grieve for me,
My lovely Mary-Ann,
For I'll marry you yit on a fourp'ny bit
As a time-expired man.

The *Malabar's* in 'arbour with the *Jumner* at 'er tail,
An' the time-expired's waitin' of 'is orders for to sail.
Ho! the weary waitin' when on Khyber 'ills we lay,
But the time-expired's waitin' of 'is orders 'ome to-day.

They'll turn us out at Portsmouth wharf in cold an' wet an' rain,
All wearin' Injian cotton kit, but we will not complain;
They'll kill us of pneumonia – for that's their little way —
But damn the chills and fever, men, we're goin' 'ome to-day!

Troopin', troopin', winter's round again!
See the new draf's pourin' in for the old campaign;
Ho, you poor recruities, but you've got to earn your pay —
What's the last from Lunnon, lads? We're goin' there to-day.

Troopin', troopin', give another cheer —
'Ere's to English women an' a quart of English beer.
The Colonel an' the regiment an' all who've got to stay,
Gawd's mercy strike 'em gentle – Whoop! we're goin' 'ome to-day.
We're goin' 'ome, we're goin' 'ome,
Our ship is at the shore,
An' you must pack your 'aversack,
For we won't come back no more.
Ho, don't you grieve for me,
My lovely Mary-Ann,
For I'll marry you yit on a fourp'ny bit
As a time-expired man.

THE WIDOW'S PARTY

“Where have you been this while away,
 Johnnie, Johnnie?”
‘Long with the rest on a picnic lay,
 Johnnie, my Johnnie, aha!
They called us out of the barrack-yard
To Gawd knows where from Gosport Hard,
And you can’t refuse when you get the card,
 And the Widow gives the party.
 (*Bugle: Ta – rara – ra-ra-rara!*)

“What did you get to eat and drink,
 Johnnie, Johnnie?”
Standing water as thick as ink,
 Johnnie, my Johnnie, aha!
A bit o’ beef that were three year stored,
A bit o’ mutton as tough as a board,
And a fowl we killed with a sergeant’s sword,
 When the Widow give the party.

“What did you do for knives and forks,
 Johnnie, Johnnie?”
We carries ‘em with us wherever we walks,
 Johnnie, my Johnnie, aha!
And some was sliced and some was halved,
And some was crimped and some was carved,
And some was gutted and some was starved,
 When the Widow give the party.

“What ha’ you done with half your mess,
 Johnnie, Johnnie?”
They couldn’t do more and they wouldn’t do less,
 Johnnie, my Johnnie, aha!
They ate their whack and they drank their fill,
And I think the rations has made them ill,
For half my comp’ny’s lying still
 Where the Widow give the party.

“How did you get away – away,
 Johnnie, Johnnie?”
On the broad o’ my back at the end o’ the day,
 Johnnie, my Johnnie, aha!
I comed away like a bleedin’ toff,
For I got four niggers to carry me off,
As I lay in the bight of a canvas trough,
 When the Widow give the party.

“What was the end of all the show,
 Johnnie, Johnnie?”
Ask my Colonel, for *I* don’t know,
 Johnnie, my Johnnie, aha!
We broke a King and we built a road —
A court-house stands where the reg’ment goed.
And the river’s clean where the raw blood flowed
 When the Widow give the party.
 (*Bugle: Ta – rara – ra-ra-rara!*)

FORD O' KABUL RIVER

Kabul town's by Kabul river —
Blow the bugle, draw the sword —
There I lef' my mate for ever,
Wet an' drippin' by the ford.
Ford, ford, ford o' Kabul river,
Ford o' Kabul river in the dark!
There's the river up and brimmin', an' there's 'arf a squadron
swimmin'
'Cross the ford o' Kabul river in the dark.

Kabul town's a blasted place —
Blow the bugle, draw the sword —
'Strewth I sha'n't forget 'is face
Wet an' drippin' by the ford!
Ford, ford, ford o' Kabul river,
Ford o' Kabul river in the dark!
Keep the crossing-stakes beside you, an' they will surely guide you
'Cross the ford o' Kabul river in the dark.

Kabul town is sun and dust —
Blow the bugle, draw the sword —
I'd ha' sooner drowned fust
'Stead of 'im beside the ford.
Ford, ford, ford o' Kabul river,
Ford o' Kabul river in the dark!
You can 'ear the 'orses threshin', you can 'ear the men a-splashin',
'Cross the ford o' Kabul river in the dark.

Kabul town was ours to take —
Blow the bugle, draw the sword —
I'd ha' left it for 'is sake —
'Im that left me by the ford.
Ford, ford, ford o' Kabul river,
Ford o' Kabul river in the dark!
It's none so bloomin' dry there; ain't you never comin' nigh there,
'Cross the ford o' Kabul river in the dark?

Kabul town'll go to hell —
Blow the bugle, draw the sword —
'Fore I see him 'live an' well —
'Im the best beside the ford.
Ford, ford, ford o' Kabul river,
Ford o' Kabul river in the dark!
Gawd 'elp 'em if they blunder, for their boots'll pull 'em under,
By the ford o' Kabul river in the dark.

Turn your 'orse from Kabul town —
Blow the bugle, draw the sword —
'Im an' 'arf my troop is down,
Down an' drowned by the ford.
Ford, ford, ford o' Kabul river,
Ford o' Kabul river in the dark!
There's the river low an' fallin', but it ain't no use o' callin'
'Cross the ford o' Kabul river in the dark.

GENTLEMEN-RANKERS

To the legion of the lost ones, to the cohort of the damned,
To my brethren in their sorrow overseas,
Sings a gentleman of England cleanly bred, machinely crammed,
And a trooper of the Empress, if you please.
Yea, a trooper of the forces who has run his own six horses,
And faith he went the pace and went it blind,
And the world was more than kin while he held the ready tin,
But to-day the Sergeant's something less than kind.
 We're poor little lambs who've lost our way,
 Baa! Baa! Baa!
 We're little black sheep who've gone astray,
 Baa – aa – aa!
Gentlemen-rankers out on the spree,
Damned from here to Eternity,
God ha' mercy on such as we,
 Baa! Yah! Bah!

Oh, it's sweet to sweat through stables, sweet to empty kitchen slops,
And it's sweet to hear the tales the troopers tell,
To dance with blowzy housemaids at the regimental hops
And thrash the cad who says you waltz too well.
Yes, it makes you cock-a-hoop to be "Rider" to your troop,
And branded with a blasted worsted spur,
When you envy, O how keenly, one poor Tommy being cleanly
Who blacks your boots and sometimes calls you "Sir".

If the home we never write to, and the oaths we never keep,
And all we know most distant and most dear,
Across the snoring barrack-room return to break our sleep,
Can you blame us if we soak ourselves in beer?
When the drunken comrade mutters and the great guard-lantern
gutters
And the horror of our fall is written plain,
Every secret, self-revealing on the aching white-washed ceiling,
Do you wonder that we drug ourselves from pain?

We have done with Hope and Honour, we are lost to Love and Truth,
We are dropping down the ladder rung by rung,
And the measure of our torment is the measure of our youth.
God help us, for we knew the worst too young!
Our shame is clean repentance for the crime that brought the sentence,
Our pride it is to know no spur of pride,
And the Curse of Reuben holds us till an alien turf enfolds us
And we die, and none can tell Them where we died.
 We're poor little lambs who've lost our way,

Baa! Baa! Baa!
We're little black sheep who've gone astray,
Baa – aa – aa!
Gentlemen-rankers out on the spree,
Damned from here to Eternity,
God ha' mercy on such as we,
Baa! Yah! Bah!

ROUTE MARCHIN'

We're marchin' on relief over Injia's sunny plains,
A little front o' Christmas-time an' just be'ind the Rains;
Ho! get away you bullock-man, you've 'eard the bugle blowed,
There's a regiment a-comin' down the Grand Trunk Road;
 With its best foot first
 And the road a-sliding past,
 An' every bloomin' campin'-ground exactly like the last;
 While the Big Drum says,
 With 'is "*rowdy-dowdy-dow!*" —
 "*Kiko kissywarsti* don't you *hamsher argy jow?*"²

Oh, there's them Injian temples to admire when you see,
There's the peacock round the corner an' the monkey up the tree,
An' there's that rummy silver grass a-wavin' in the wind,
An' the old Grand Trunk a-trailin' like a rifle-sling be'ind.
 While it's best foot first,.

At half-past five's Revelly, an' our tents they down must come,
Like a lot of button mushrooms when you pick 'em up at 'ome.
But it's over in a minute, an' at six the column starts,
While the women and the kiddies sit an' shiver in the carts.
 An' it's best foot first,.

Oh, then it's open order, an' we lights our pipes an' sings,
An' we talks about our rations an' a lot of other things,
An' we thinks o' friends in England, an' we wonders what they're at,
An' 'ow they would admire for to hear us sling the *bat*.³
 An' it's best foot first,.

It's none so bad o' Sunday, when you're lyin' at your ease,
To watch the kites a-wheelin' round them feather-'eaded trees,
For although there ain't no women, yet there ain't no barrick-yards,
So the orficers goes shootin' an' the men they plays at cards.
 Till it's best foot first,.

So 'ark an' 'eed, you rookies, which is always grumblin' sore,
There's worser things than marchin' from Umballa to Cawnpore;
An' if your 'eels are blistered an' they feels to 'urt like 'ell,
You drop some tallow in your socks an' that will make 'em well.
 For it's best foot first,.

² Why don't you get on?

³ Language. Thomas's first and firmest conviction is that he is a profound Orientalist and a fluent speaker of Hindustani. As a matter of fact, he depends largely on the sign-language.

We're marchin' on relief over Injia's coral strand,
Eight 'undred fightin' Englishmen, the Colonel, and the Band;
Ho! get away you bullock-man, you've 'eard the bugle blowed,
There's a regiment a-comin' down the Grand Trunk Road;
 With its best foot first
 And the road a-sliding past,
 An' every bloomin' campin'-ground exactly like the last;
 While the Big Drum says,
 With 'is "rowdy-dowdy-dow!" —
 "*Kiko kissywarsti* don't you *hamsher argy jow?*"

SHILLIN' A DAY

My name is O'Kelly, I've heard the Revelly
From Birr to Bareilly, from Leeds to Lahore,
Hong-Kong and Peshawur,
Lucknow and Etawah,
And fifty-five more all endin' in "pore".
Black Death and his quickness, the depth and the thickness,
Of sorrow and sickness I've known on my way,
But I'm old and I'm nervis,
I'm cast from the Service,
And all I deserve is a shillin' a day.

(Chorus) Shillin' a day,
 Bloomin' good pay —
 Lucky to touch it, a shillin' a day!

Oh, it drives me half crazy to think of the days I
Went slap for the Ghazi, my sword at my side,
When we rode Hell-for-leather
Both squadrons together,
That didn't care whether we lived or we died.
But it's no use despairin', my wife must go charin'
An' me commissairin' the pay-bills to better,
So if me you be'old
In the wet and the cold,
By the Grand Metropold, won't you give me a letter?

(Full chorus) Give 'im a letter —
 'Can't do no better,
 Late Troop-Sergeant-Major an' — runs with a letter!
 Think what 'e's been,
 Think what 'e's seen,
 Think of his pension an' —
 GAWD SAVE THE QUEEN.

OTHER VERSES

THE BALLAD OF EAST AND WEST

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face,
tho' they come from the ends of the earth!

Kamal is out with twenty men to raise the Border-side,
And he has lifted the Colonel's mare that is the Colonel's pride:
He has lifted her out of the stable-door between the dawn and the day,
And turned the calkins upon her feet, and ridden her far away.
Then up and spoke the Colonel's son that led a troop of the Guides:
"Is there never a man of all my men can say where Kamal hides?"
Then up and spoke Mahommed Khan, the son of the Ressaldar:
"If ye know the track of the morning-mist, ye know where his pickets
are.

At dusk he harries the Abazai – at dawn he is into Bonair,
But he must go by Fort Bukloh to his own place to fare,
So if ye gallop to Fort Bukloh as fast as a bird can fly,
By the favour of God ye may cut him off ere he win to the Tongue
of Jagai.

But if he be past the Tongue of Jagai, right swiftly turn ye then,
For the length and the breadth of that grisly plain is sown with Kamal's
men.

There is rock to the left, and rock to the right, and low lean thorn
between,

And ye may hear a breech-bolt snick where never a man is seen."

The Colonel's son has taken a horse, and a raw rough dun was he,
With the mouth of a bell and the heart of Hell
and the head of the gallows-tree.

The Colonel's son to the Fort has won, they bid him stay to eat —
Who rides at the tail of a Border thief, he sits not long at his meat.

He's up and away from Fort Bukloh as fast as he can fly,
Till he was aware of his father's mare in the gut of the Tongue of Jagai,
Till he was aware of his father's mare with Kamal upon her back,
And when he could spy the white of her eye, he made the pistol crack.
He has fired once, he has fired twice, but the whistling ball went wide.
"Ye shoot like a soldier," Kamal said. "Show now if ye can ride."

It's up and over the Tongue of Jagai, as blown dustdevils go,
The dun he fled like a stag of ten, but the mare like a barren doe.
The dun he leaned against the bit and slugged his head above,
But the red mare played with the snaffle-bars, as a maiden plays with
a glove.

There was rock to the left and rock to the right, and low lean thorn
between,

And thrice he heard a breech-bolt snick tho' never a man was seen.

They have ridden the low moon out of the sky, their hoofs drum up
the dawn,

The dun he went like a wounded bull, but the mare like a new-roused
fawn.

The dun he fell at a water-course – in a woful heap fell he,

And Kamal has turned the red mare back, and pulled the rider free.

He has knocked the pistol out of his hand – small room was there
to strive,

“‘Twas only by favour of mine,” quoth he, “ye rode so long alive:

There was not a rock for twenty mile, there was not a clump of tree,

But covered a man of my own men with his rifle cocked on his knee.

If I had raised my bridle-hand, as I have held it low,

The little jackals that flee so fast were feasting all in a row:

If I had bowed my head on my breast, as I have held it high,

The kite that whistles above us now were gorged till she could not fly.”

Lightly answered the Colonel's son: “Do good to bird and beast,

But count who come for the broken meats before thou makest a feast.

If there should follow a thousand swords to carry my bones away,

Belike the price of a jackal's meal were more than a thief could pay.

They will feed their horse on the standing crop,

their men on the garnered grain,

The thatch of the byres will serve their fires when all the cattle are
slain.

But if thou thinkest the price be fair, – thy brethren wait to sup,

The hound is kin to the jackal-spawn, – howl, dog, and call them up!

And if thou thinkest the price be high, in steer and gear and stack,

Give me my father's mare again, and I'll fight my own way back!”

Kamal has gripped him by the hand and set him upon his feet.

“No talk shall be of dogs,” said he, “when wolf and gray wolf meet.

May I eat dirt if thou hast hurt of me in deed or breath;

What dam of lances brought thee forth to jest at the dawn with
Death?”

Lightly answered the Colonel's son: “I hold by the blood of my clan:

Take up the mare for my father's gift – by God, she has carried a man!”

The red mare ran to the Colonel's son, and nuzzled against his breast;

“We be two strong men,” said Kamal then, “but she loveth the younger
best.

So she shall go with a lifter's dower, my turquoise-studded rein,

My broidered saddle and saddle-cloth, and silver stirrups twain.”

The Colonel's son a pistol drew and held it muzzle-end,

“Ye have taken the one from a foe,” said he;

“will ye take the mate from a friend?”

“A gift for a gift,” said Kamal straight; “a limb for the risk of a limb.

Thy father has sent his son to me, I'll send my son to him!”

With that he whistled his only son, that dropped from a mountain-
crest —

He trod the ling like a buck in spring, and he looked like a lance in rest.
“Now here is thy master,” Kamal said, “who leads a troop of the Guides,
And thou must ride at his left side as shield on shoulder rides.
Till Death or I cut loose the tie, at camp and board and bed,
Thy life is his – thy fate it is to guard him with thy head.
So, thou must eat the White Queen’s meat, and all her foes are thine,
And thou must harry thy father’s hold for the peace of the Border-line,
And thou must make a trooper tough and hack thy way to power —
Belike they will raise thee to Ressaldar when I am hanged in Peshawur.”

They have looked each other between the eyes, and there they found no fault,
They have taken the Oath of the Brother-in-Blood on leavened bread and salt:
They have taken the Oath of the Brother-in-Blood on fire and fresh-cut sod,
On the hilt and the haft of the Khyber knife, and the Wondrous Names of God.
The Colonel’s son he rides the mare and Kamal’s boy the dun,
And two have come back to Fort Bukloh where there went forth but one.
And when they drew to the Quarter-Guard, full twenty swords flew clear —
There was not a man but carried his feud with the blood of the mountaineer.
“Ha’ done! ha’ done!” said the Colonel’s son.
“Put up the steel at your sides!
Last night ye had struck at a Border thief —
to-night ‘tis a man of the Guides!”

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God’s great Judgment Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face,
tho’ they come from the ends of the earth!

THE LAST SUTTEE

Not many years ago a King died in one of the Rajpoot States.
His wives, disregarding the orders of the English against Suttee,
would have broken out of the palace had not the gates been barred.
But one of them, disguised as the King's favourite dancing-girl,
passed through the line of guards and reached the pyre. There,
her courage failing, she prayed her cousin, a baron of the court,
to kill her. This he did, not knowing who she was.

Udai Chand lay sick to death
In his hold by Gungra hill.
All night we heard the death-gongs ring
For the soul of the dying Rajpoot King,
All night beat up from the women's wing
A cry that we could not still.

All night the barons came and went,
The lords of the outer guard:
All night the cressets glimmered pale
On Ulwar sabre and Tonk jezail,
Mewar headstall and Marwar mail,
That clinked in the palace yard.

In the Golden room on the palace roof
All night he fought for air:
And there was sobbing behind the screen,
Rustle and whisper of women unseen,
And the hungry eyes of the Boondi Queen
On the death she might not share.

He passed at dawn – the death-fire leaped
From ridge to river-head,
From the Malwa plains to the Abu scars:
And wail upon wail went up to the stars
Behind the grim zenana-bars,
When they knew that the King was dead.

The dumb priest knelt to tie his mouth
And robe him for the pyre.
The Boondi Queen beneath us cried:
“See, now, that we die as our mothers died
In the bridal-bed by our master's side!
Out, women! – to the fire!”

We drove the great gates home apace:
White hands were on the sill:
But ere the rush of the unseen feet

Had reached the turn to the open street,
The bars shot down, the guard-drum beat —
We held the dovecot still.

A face looked down in the gathering day,
And laughing spoke from the wall:
“Oh]/e, they mourn here: let me by —
Azizun, the Lucknow nautch-girl, I!
When the house is rotten, the rats must fly,
And I seek another thrall.

“For I ruled the King as ne’er did Queen, —
To-night the Queens rule me!
Guard them safely, but let me go,
Or ever they pay the debt they owe
In scourge and torture!” She leaped below,
And the grim guard watched her flee.

They knew that the King had spent his soul
On a North-bred dancing-girl:
That he prayed to a flat-nosed Lucknow god,
And kissed the ground where her feet had trod,
And doomed to death at her drunken nod,
And swore by her lightest curl.

We bore the King to his fathers’ place,
Where the tombs of the Sun-born stand:
Where the gray apes swing, and the peacocks preen
On fretted pillar and jewelled screen,
And the wild boar couch in the house of the Queen
On the drift of the desert sand.

The herald read his titles forth,
We set the logs aglow:
“Friend of the English, free from fear,
Baron of Luni to Jeysulmeer,
Lord of the Desert of Bikaner,
King of the Jungle, – go!”

All night the red flame stabbed the sky
With wavering wind-tossed spears:
And out of a shattered temple crept
A woman who veiled her head and wept,
And called on the King – but the great King slept,
And turned not for her tears.

Small thought had he to mark the strife —
Cold fear with hot desire —
When thrice she leaped from the leaping flame,

And thrice she beat her breast for shame,
And thrice like a wounded dove she came
And moaned about the fire.

One watched, a bow-shot from the blaze,
The silent streets between,
Who had stood by the King in sport and fray,
To blade in ambush or boar at bay,
And he was a baron old and gray,
And kin to the Boondi Queen.

He said: "O shameless, put aside
The veil upon thy brow!
Who held the King and all his land
To the wanton will of a harlot's hand!
Will the white ash rise from the blistered brand?
Stoop down, and call him now!"

Then she: "By the faith of my tarnished soul,
All things I did not well,
I had hoped to clear ere the fire died,
And lay me down by my master's side
To rule in Heaven his only bride,
While the others howl in Hell.

"But I have felt the fire's breath,
And hard it is to die!
Yet if I may pray a Rajpoot lord
To sully the steel of a Thakur's sword
With base-born blood of a trade abhorred," —
And the Thakur answered, "Ay."

He drew and struck: the straight blade drank
The life beneath the breast.
"I had looked for the Queen to face the flame,
But the harlot dies for the Rajpoot dame —
Sister of mine, pass, free from shame,
Pass with thy King to rest!"

The black log crashed above the white:
The little flames and lean,
Red as slaughter and blue as steel,
That whistled and fluttered from head to heel,
Leaped up anew, for they found their meal
On the heart of – the Boondi Queen!

THE BALLAD OF THE KING'S MERCY

*Abdhur Rahman, the Durani Chief, of him is the story told.
His mercy fills the Khyber hills – his grace is manifold;
He has taken toll of the North and the South –
his glory reacheth far,
And they tell the tale of his charity from Balkh to Kandahar.*

Before the old Peshawur Gate, where Kurd and Kaffir meet,
The Governor of Kabul dealt the Justice of the Street,
And that was strait as running noose and swift as plunging knife,
Tho' he who held the longer purse might hold the longer life.

There was a hound of Hindustan had struck a Euzufzai,
Wherefore they spat upon his face and led him out to die.
It chanced the King went forth that hour when throat was bared to
knife;
The Kaffir grovelled under-hoof and clamoured for his life.

Then said the King: "Have hope, O friend! Yea, Death disgraced
is hard;
Much honour shall be thine"; and called the Captain of the Guard,
Yar Khan, a bastard of the Blood, so city-babble saith,
And he was honoured of the King – the which is salt to Death;
And he was son of Daoud Shah, the Reiver of the Plains,
And blood of old Durani Lords ran fire in his veins;
And 'twas to tame an Afghan pride nor Hell nor Heaven could bind,
The King would make him butcher to a yelping cur of Hind.

"Strike!" said the King. "King's blood art thou —
his death shall be his pride!"

Then louder, that the crowd might catch: "Fear not – his arms are
tied!"

Yar Khan drew clear the Khyber knife, and struck, and sheathed
again.

"O man, thy will is done," quoth he; "a King this dog hath slain."

*Abdhur Rahman, the Durani Chief, to the North and the South
is sold.*

*The North and the South shall open their mouth
to a Ghilzai flag unrolled,*

*When the big guns speak to the Khyber peak, and his dog-
Heratis fly:*

*Ye have heard the song – How long? How long?
Wolves of the Abazai!*

That night before the watch was set, when all the streets were clear,
The Governor of Kabul spoke: "My King, hast thou no fear?"

Thou knowest – thou hast heard,” – his speech died at his master’s face.

And grimly said the Afghan King: “I rule the Afghan race.
My path is mine – see thou to thine – to-night upon thy bed
Think who there be in Kabul now that clamour for thy head.”

That night when all the gates were shut to City and to throne,
Within a little garden-house the King lay down alone.
Before the sinking of the moon, which is the Night of Night,
Yar Khan came softly to the King to make his honour white.
The children of the town had mocked beneath his horse’s hoofs,
The harlots of the town had hailed him “butcher!” from their roofs.
But as he groped against the wall, two hands upon him fell,
The King behind his shoulder spake: “Dead man, thou dost not well!
‘Tis ill to jest with Kings by day and seek a boon by night;
And that thou bearest in thy hand is all too sharp to write.
But three days hence, if God be good, and if thy strength remain,
Thou shalt demand one boon of me and bless me in thy pain.
For I am merciful to all, and most of all to thee.
My butcher of the shambles, rest – no knife hast thou for me!”

*Abdhur Rahman, the Durani Chief,
holds hard by the South and the North;
But the Ghilzai knows, ere the melting snows,
when the swollen banks break forth,
When the red-coats crawl to the sungar wall,
and his Usbeg lances fail:
Ye have heard the song – How long? How long?
Wolves of the Zuka Kheyl!*

They stoned him in the rubbish-field when dawn was in the sky,
According to the written word, “See that he do not die.”

They stoned him till the stones were piled above him on the plain,
And those the labouring limbs displaced they tumbled back again.

One watched beside the dreary mound that veiled the battered thing,
And him the King with laughter called the Herald of the King.

It was upon the second night, the night of Ramazan,
The watcher leaning earthward heard the message of Yar Khan.
From shattered breast through shrivelled lips broke forth the rattling
breath,
“Creature of God, deliver me from agony of Death.”

They sought the King among his girls, and risked their lives thereby:
“Protector of the Pitiful, give orders that he die!”

“Bid him endure until the day,” a lagging answer came;
“The night is short, and he can pray and learn to bless my name.”

Before the dawn three times he spoke, and on the day once more:
“Creature of God, deliver me, and bless the King therefor!”

They shot him at the morning prayer, to ease him of his pain,
And when he heard the matchlocks clink, he blessed the King again.

Which thing the singers made a song for all the world to sing,
So that the Outer Seas may know the mercy of the King.

*Abdhur Rahman, the Durani Chief, of him is the story told,
He has opened his mouth to the North and the South,
they have stuffed his mouth with gold.
Ye know the truth of his tender ruth – and sweet his favours are:
Ye have heard the song – How long? How long?
from Balkh to Kandahar.*

THE BALLAD OF THE KING'S JEST

When spring-time flushes the desert grass,
Our kafilas wind through the Khyber Pass.
Lean are the camels but fat the frails,
Light are the purses but heavy the bales,
As the snowbound trade of the North comes down
To the market-square of Peshawur town.

In a turquoise twilight, crisp and chill,
A kafila camped at the foot of the hill.
Then blue smoke-haze of the cooking rose,
And tent-peg answered to hammer-nose;
And the picketed ponies, shag and wild,
Strained at their ropes as the feed was piled;
And the bubbling camels beside the load
Sprawled for a furlong adown the road;
And the Persian pussy-cats, brought for sale,
Spat at the dogs from the camel-bale;
And the tribesmen bellowed to hasten the food;
And the camp-fires twinkled by Fort Jumrood;
And there fled on the wings of the gathering dusk
A savour of camels and carpets and musk,
A murmur of voices, a reek of smoke,
To tell us the trade of the Khyber woke.

The lid of the flesh-pot chattered high,
The knives were whetted and – then came I
To Mahbub Ali the muleteer,
Patching his bridles and counting his gear,
Crammed with the gossip of half a year.
But Mahbub Ali the kindly said,
“Better is speech when the belly is fed.”
So we plunged the hand to the mid-wrist deep
In a cinnamon stew of the fat-tailed sheep,
And he who never hath tasted the food,
By Allah! he knoweth not bad from good.

We cleansed our beards of the mutton-grease,
We lay on the mats and were filled with peace,
And the talk slid north, and the talk slid south,
With the sliding puffs from the hookah-mouth.
Four things greater than all things are, —
Women and Horses and Power and War.
We spake of them all, but the last the most,
For I sought a word of a Russian post,
Of a shifty promise, an unsheathed sword

And a gray-coat guard on the Helmund ford.
Then Mahbub Ali lowered his eyes
In the fashion of one who is weaving lies.
Quoth he: "Of the Russians who can say?
When the night is gathering all is gray.
But we look that the gloom of the night shall die
In the morning flush of a blood-red sky.
Friend of my heart, is it meet or wise
To warn a King of his enemies?
We know what Heaven or Hell may bring,
But no man knoweth the mind of the King.
That unsought counsel is cursed of God
Attesteth the story of Wali Dad.

"His sire was leaky of tongue and pen,
His dam was a clucking Khuttuck hen;
And the colt bred close to the vice of each,
For he carried the curse of an unstanched speech.
Therewith madness – so that he sought
The favour of kings at the Kabul court;
And travelled, in hope of honour, far
To the line where the gray-coat squadrons are.
There have I journeyed too – but I
Saw naught, said naught, and – did not die!
He harked to rumour, and snatched at a breath
Of 'this one knoweth' and 'that one saith', —
Legends that ran from mouth to mouth
Of a gray-coat coming, and sack of the South.
These have I also heard – they pass
With each new spring and the winter grass.

"Hot-foot southward, forgotten of God,
Back to the city ran Wali Dad,
Even to Kabul – in full durbar
The King held talk with his Chief in War.
Into the press of the crowd he broke,
And what he had heard of the coming spoke.

"Then Gholam Hyder, the Red Chief, smiled,
As a mother might on a babbling child;
But those who would laugh restrained their breath,
When the face of the King showed dark as death.
Evil it is in full durbar
To cry to a ruler of gathering war!
Slowly he led to a peach-tree small,
That grew by a cleft of the city wall.
And he said to the boy: 'They shall praise thy zeal
So long as the red spurt follows the steel.
And the Russ is upon us even now?'

Great is thy prudence – await them, thou.
Watch from the tree. Thou art young and strong,
Surely thy vigil is not for long.
The Russ is upon us, thy clamour ran?
Surely an hour shall bring their van.
Wait and watch. When the host is near,
Shout aloud that my men may hear.’

“Friend of my heart, is it meet or wise
To warn a King of his enemies?
A guard was set that he might not flee —
A score of bayonets ringed the tree.
The peach-bloom fell in showers of snow,
When he shook at his death as he looked below.
By the power of God, who alone is great,
Till the seventh day he fought with his fate.
Then madness took him, and men declare
He mowed in the branches as ape and bear,
And last as a sloth, ere his body failed,
And he hung as a bat in the forks, and wailed,
And sleep the cord of his hands untied,
And he fell, and was caught on the points and died.

“Heart of my heart, is it meet or wise
To warn a King of his enemies?
We know what Heaven or Hell may bring,
But no man knoweth the mind of the King.
Of the gray-coat coming who can say?
When the night is gathering all is gray.
Two things greater than all things are,
The first is Love, and the second War.
And since we know not how War may prove,
Heart of my heart, let us talk of Love!”

WITH SCINDIA TO DELHI

More than a hundred years ago, in a great battle fought near Delhi,
an Indian Prince rode fifty miles after the day was lost
with a beggar-girl, who had loved him and followed him in all his camps,
on his saddle-bow. He lost the girl when almost within sight of safety.
A Maratta trooper tells the story: —

The wreath of banquet overnight lay withered on the neck,
Our hands and scarfs were saffron-dyed for signal of despair,
When we went forth to Paniput to battle with the *Mlech*, —
Ere we came back from Paniput and left a kingdom there.

Thrice thirty thousand men were we to force the Jumna fords —
The hawk-winged horse of Damajee, mailed squadrons of the Bhao,
Stark levies of the southern hills, the Deccan's sharpest swords,
And he the harlot's traitor son the goatherd Mulhar Rao!

Thrice thirty thousand men were we before the mists had cleared,
The low white mists of morning heard the war-conch scream and
bray;
We called upon Bhowani and we gripped them by the beard,
We rolled upon them like a flood and washed their ranks away.

The children of the hills of Khost before our lances ran,
We drove the black Rohillas back as cattle to the pen;
'Twas then we needed Mulhar Rao to end what we began,
A thousand men had saved the charge; he fled the field with ten!

There was no room to clear a sword – no power to strike a blow,
For foot to foot, ay, breast to breast, the battle held us fast —
Save where the naked hill-men ran, and stabbing from below
Brought down the horse and rider and we trampled them and passed.

To left the roar of musketry rang like a falling flood —
To right the sunshine rippled red from redder lance and blade —
Above the dark *Upsaras*⁴ flew, beneath us plashed the blood,
And, bellying black against the dust, the Bhagwa Jhanda swayed.

I saw it fall in smoke and fire, the banner of the Bhao;
I heard a voice across the press of one who called in vain: —
“Ho! Anand Rao Nimbalkhur, ride! Get aid of Mulhar Rao!
Go shame his squadrons into fight – the Bhao – the Bhao is slain!”

Thereat, as when a sand-bar breaks in clotted spume and spray —

⁴ The Choosers of the Slain.

When rain of later autumn sweeps the Jumna water-head,
Before their charge from flank to flank our riven ranks gave way;
But of the waters of that flood the Jumna fords ran red.

I held by Scindia, my lord, as close as man might hold;
A Soobah of the Deccan asks no aid to guard his life;
But Holkar's Horse were flying, and our chiefest chiefs were cold,
And like a flame among us leapt the long lean Northern knife.

I held by Scindia – my lance from butt to tuft was dyed,
The froth of battle bossed the shield and roped the bridle-chain —
What time beneath our horses' feet a maiden rose and cried,
And clung to Scindia, and I turned a sword-cut from the twain.

(He set a spell upon the maid in woodlands long ago,
A hunter by the Tapti banks she gave him water there:
He turned her heart to water, and she followed to her woe.
What need had he of Lalun who had twenty maids as fair?)

Now in that hour strength left my lord; he wrenched his mare aside;
He bound the girl behind him and we slashed and struggled free.
Across the reeling wreck of strife we rode as shadows ride
From Paniput to Delhi town, but not alone were we.

'Twas Lutuf-Ullah Populzai laid horse upon our track,
A swine-fed reiver of the North that lusted for the maid;
I might have barred his path awhile, but Scindia called me back,
And I – O woe for Scindia! – I listened and obeyed.

League after league the formless scrub took shape and glided by —
League after league the white road swirled behind the white mare's
feet —
League after league, when leagues were done, we heard the Populzai,
Where sure as Time and swift as Death the tireless footfall beat.

Noon's eye beheld that shame of flight, the shadows fell, we fled
Where steadfast as the wheeling kite he followed in our train;
The black wolf warred where we had warred, the jackal mocked our
dead,
And terror born of twilight-tide made mad the labouring brain.

I gasped: – “A kingdom waits my lord; her love is but her own.
A day shall mar, a day shall cure for her, but what for thee?
Cut loose the girl: he follows fast. Cut loose and ride alone!”
Then Scindia 'twixt his blistered lips: – “My Queens' Queen shall
she be!

“Of all who ate my bread last night 'twas she alone that came
To seek her love between the spears and find her crown therein!

One shame is mine to-day, what need the weight of double shame?
If once we reach the Delhi gate, though all be lost, I win!”

We rode – the white mare failed – her trot a staggering stumble grew,

—
The cooking-smoke of even rose and weltered and hung low;
And still we heard the Populzai and still we strained anew,
And Delhi town was very near, but nearer was the foe.

Yea, Delhi town was very near when Lalun whispered: – “Slay!
Lord of my life, the mare sinks fast – stab deep and let me die!”
But Scindia would not, and the maid tore free and flung away,
And turning as she fell we heard the clattering Populzai.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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