

WELLS

CAROLYN

THE RE-ECHO

CLUB

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Carolyn Wells

The Re-echo Club

DIVERSIONS OF THE RE-ECHO CLUB

A recent discovery has brought to light the long-hidden papers of the Re-Echo Club. This is a great find, and all lovers of masterpieces of the world's best literature will rejoice with us that we are enabled to publish herewith a few of these gems of great minds. Little is known of the locale or clientèle of this club, but it was doubtless a successor of the famous Echo Club of Boston memory, for, like that erudite body, it takes pleasure in trying to better what is done. On the occasion of the meeting of which the following gems of poesy are the result, the several members of the club engaged to write up the well-known tradition of the Purple Cow in more elaborate form than the quatrain made famous by Mr. Gelett Burgess:

"I never saw a Purple Cow,
I never hope to see one;
But I can tell you, anyhow,
I'd rather see than be one."

The first attempt here cited is the production of Mr. John Milton:

Hence, vain, deluding cows.
The herd of folly, without color bright,
How little you delight,
Or fill the Poet's mind, or songs arouse!
But, hail! thou goddess gay of feature!
Hail! divinest purple creature!
Oh, Cow, thy visage is too bright
To hit the sense of human sight.
And though I'd like, just once, to see thee,
I never, never, never'd be thee!

MR. P. BYSSHE SHELLEY:

Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
Cow thou never wert;
But in life to cheer it
Playest thy full part
In purple lines of unpremeditated art.

The pale purple color
Melts around thy sight
Like a star, but duller,
In the broad daylight.
I'd see thee, but I would not be thee if I might.

We look before and after
At cattle as they browse;
Our most hearty laughter
Something sad must rouse.
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of Purple Cows.

MR. W. WORDSWORTH:

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dee;
A Cow whom there were few to praise
And very few to see.
A violet by a mossy stone
Greeting the smiling East
Is not so purple, I must own,
As that erratic beast.
She lived unknown, that Cow, and so
I never chanced to see;
But if I had to be one, oh,
The difference to me!

MR. T. GRAY:

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea;
I watched them slowly wend their weary way,
But, ah, a Purple Cow I did not see.

Full many a cow of purplest ray serene
Is haply grazing where I may not see;
Full many a donkey writes of her, I ween,
But neither of these creatures would I be.

MR. J. W. RILEY:

There, little Cow, don't cry!
You are brindle and brown, I know.
And with wild, glad hues
Of reds and blues,
You never will gleam and glow.
But though not pleasing to the eye,
There, little Cow, don't cry, don't cry.

LORD A. TENNYSON:

Ask me no more. A cow I fain would see

Of purple tint, like to a sun-soaked grape—
Of purple tint, like royal velvet cape—
But such a creature I would never be—
Ask me no more.

MR. R. BROWNING:

All that I know
Of a certain Cow
Is it can throw,
Somewhere, somehow,
Now a dart of red,
Now a dart of blue
(That makes purple, 'tis said).
I would fain see, too,
This Cow that darkles the red and the blue!

MR. J. KEATS:

A cow of purple is a joy forever.
Its loveliness increases. I have never
Seen this phenomenon. Yet ever keep
A brave lookout; lest I should be asleep
When she comes by. For, though I would not be one,
I've oft imagined 'twould be joy to see one.

MR. D.G. ROSSETTI:

The Purple Cow strayed in the glade;
(Oh, my soul! but the milk is blue!)
She strayed and strayed and strayed and strayed
(And I wail and I cry Wa-hoo!)

I've never seen her—nay, not I;
(Oh, my soul! but the milk is blue!)
Yet were I that Cow I should want to die.
(And I wail and I cry Wa-hoo!)
But in vain my tears I strew.

MR. T.B. ALDRICH:

Somewhere in some faked nature place,
In Wonderland, in Nonsense Land,
Two darkling shapes met face to face,
And bade each other stand.

"And who are you?" said each to each;
"Tell me your title, anyhow."
One said, "I am the Papal Bull,"
"And I the Purple Cow."

MR. E. ALLAN POE:

Open then I flung a shutter,
And, with many a flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a Purple Cow which gayly tripped around my floor.
Not the least obeisance made she,
Not a moment stopped or stayed she,
But with mien of chorus lady perched herself above my door.
On a dusty bust of Dante perched and sat above my door.

And that Purple Cow unflitting
Still is sitting—still is sitting
On that dusty bust of Dante just above my chamber door,
And her horns have all the seeming
Of a demon's that is screaming,
And the arc-light o'er her streaming
Casts her shadow on the floor.
And my soul from out that pool of Purple Shadow on the floor
Shall be lifted Nevermore!

MR. H. LONGFELLOW:

The day is done, and the darkness
Falls from the wing of night
As ballast is wafted downward
From an air-ship in its flight.

I dream of a purple creature
Which is not as kine are now;
And resembles cattle only
As Cowper resembles a cow.

Such cows have power to quiet
Our restless thoughts and rude;
They come like the Benedictine
That follows after food.

MR. A. SWINBURNE:

Oh, Cow of rare rapturous vision,
Oh, purple, impalpable Cow,
Do you browse in a Dream Field Elysian,

Are you purpling pleasantly now?
By the side of wan waves do you languish?
Or in the lithe lush of the grove?
While vainly I search in my anguish,
O Bovine of mauve!

Despair in my bosom is sighing,
Hope's star has sunk sadly to rest;
Though cows of rare sorts I am buying,
Not one breathes a balm to my breast.
Oh, rapturous rose-crowned occasion,
When I such a glory might see!
But a cow of a purple persuasion
I never would be.

MR. F.D. SHERMAN:

I'd love to see
A Purple Cow,
Oh, Goodness me!
I'd love to see
But not to be
One. Anyhow,
I'd love to see
A Purple Cow.

MR. B. CARMAN:

Now the joys of the road are chiefly these,
A Purple Cow that no one sees,
A grove of green and a sky of blue,
And never a hope that cow to view.
But a firm conviction deep in me
That cow I would rather be than see.
Though, alack-a-day, there be times enow,
When I see pink snakes and a Purple Cow.

MR. H.C. BUNNER:

Oh, what's the way to Arcady,
Where all the cows are purple?
Ah, woe is me! I never hope
On such a sight my eyes to ope;
But, as I sing in merry glee
Along the road to Arcady,
Perchance full soon I may espy
A Purple Cow come dancing by.

Heigho! I then shall see one.
Her horns bedecked with ribbons gay,
And garlanded with rosy may,—
A tricky sight. Still I must say
I'd rather see than be one.

MR. R.L. STEVENSON:

In winter I get up at night
And hunt that cow by lantern light;
In summer quite the other way,
I seek a Purple Cow by day.
And does it not seem strange to you,
I can't find cows of purple hue?
But I can tell you, anyhow,
I'm glad I'm not a Purple Cow.

MR. R. KIPLING:

In the old ten-acre pasture,
Lookin' eastward toward a tree,
There's a Purple Cow a-settin'
And I know she thinks of me.
For the wind is in the gum-tree,
And the hay is in the mow,
And the cow-bells are a-calling
"Come and see a Purple Cow!"

But I am not going now,
Not at present, anyhow,
For I am not fond of purple, and
I can't abide a cow;
No, I shall not go to-day,
Where the Purple Cattle play,
Though I think I'd rather see one
Than to be one, anyhow.

MR. O. HERFORD:

Children, observe the Purple Cow,
You cannot see her, anyhow;
And, little ones, you need not hope
Your eyes will e'er attain such scope.
But if you ever have a choice
To be, or see, lift up your voice
And choose to see. For surely you
Don't want to browse around and moo.

MR. S. CRANE:

Once a man said,
I never saw a Purple Cow;
Again he spoke,
I never hope to see one.
Then all the people said,
How noble his humble-mindedness!
How glorious his meek resignation!
Now this is the strange part—
The man has seen hundreds of purple cows,
Ay, thousands,
But the man was color blind,
And the cows seemed to him to be a reddish brown.

MR. D.G. ROSSETTI:

(Second Attempt.)

The blessed Purple Cow leaned out
From a pasture lot at even
One horn was sixteen inches long,
The other just eleven.
She had a ruminative face,
And the teeth in her head were seven.
She gazed and listened, then she said
(Less sad of speech than queer),
"Nobody seems to notice me,
None knows that I am here.
And no one wishes to be me!"
She wept. (I heard a tear.)

MR. A.C. SWINBURNE:

(Second Attempt.)

Only in dim, drowsy depths of a
dream do I dare to delight
in deliciously dreaming
Cows there may be of a passionate
purple,—cows of a violent
violet-hue;
Ne'er have I seen such a sight, I am
certain it is but a demi-

delirious dreaming—
Ne'er may I happily harbor
a hesitant hope in my
heart that my dream
may come true.
Sad is my soul, and my senses
are sobbing, so strong
is my strenuous spirit
to see one.
Dolefully, drearily doomed
to despair as warily,
wearily watching I wait;
Thoughts thickly thronging are thrilling
and throbbing; to see is a
glorious gain—but to be one!
That were a darker and
direfuller destiny, that
were a fearfuller,
frightfuller fate.

At the second meeting of the Re-Echo Club, some of whose proceedings have already been chronicled in these pages, the question arose whether the poet was at his best who gave to the world the classic poem about The Little Girl:

"There was a little girl
And she had a little curl
Right in the middle of her forehead.
And when she was good,
She was very, very good,
And when she was bad she was horrid!"

Some members held that poets had at times risen to sublimer poetic flights than this, while others contended that the clear-cut decision of thought it expressed placed the poem above more elaborate works.

When those who criticised it were invited themselves to treat the same theme in more worthy fashion, they willingly enough agreed, and the results here subjoined were spread upon the minutes of the club.

With a lady-like air of reserve tempered by self-respect, Mrs. Felicia Hemans presented her version:

The Marcel waves dash'd high
Where the puffs and frizzes crossed;
And just above a roguish eye
A little curl was tossed.

And that little curl hung down
O'er a brow like a holy saint;
Her goodness was beyond renown,
And yet—there was a taint.

Ay, call it deadly sin,
The temper that she had;
But that Little Girl just gloried in
Freedom to be real bad!

Robert Browning gave the subject much thought and responded at length:

Who will may hear the poet's story told.
His story? Who believes me shall behold
The Little Girl, tricked out with ringolet,
Or fringe, or pompadour, or what you will,
Switch, bang, rat, puff—odzooks, man! I know not
What women call the hanks o' hair they wear!
But that same curl, beau-catcher, love-lock, frizz.
(Perchance hot-ironed—perchance 'twas bandolined;
Mayhap those rubber squirmers gave it shape—
I wot not.) But that corkscrew of a curl
Hung plumb, true, straight, accurate, at mid-brow,
Nor swerved a hair's breadth to the right or left.
Aught of her other tresses none may know.
Now go we straitly on. And undertake
To sound the humor of the Little Girl.
Ha! what's the note? Hark here. When she was good,
She was seraphic; hypersuperfine.
So good she made the saints seem scalawags;
An angel child; a paramaragon.
Halt! Turn! When she elected to be bad,
Black fails to paint the depths of ignomin,
The fearsome sins, the crimes unspeakable,
The deep abysses of her evilment.
Hist! Tell 't wi' bated breath! One day she let
A rosy tongue-tip from red lips peep forth!
Can viciousness cap that? Horrid's the word.
Yet there she is. There is that Little Girl,
Her goodness and her badness, side by side,
Like bacon, streak o' fat and streak o' lean.
Ah, Fatalist, she must be ever so.

Mr. E.A. Poe declared that he wrote his lines without any trouble at all, as he used to know the Little Girl personally:

'Twas not very many years ago,
At Seahurst-By-The-Sea,
A little girl had a little curl—
Her name was Annabel Lee.
And right in the middle of Annabel's brow
That curl would always be.

She was so good, oh, she was so good
At Seahurst-By-The-Sea!
She was good with a goodness more than good,
Was beautiful Annabel Lee,
With such goodness the winged seraphs of heaven
Coveted her of me.
But her badness was stronger by far than the good,
Like many far older than she,
Like many far wiser than she;
And neither the angels in heaven above
Nor the demons down under the sea
Can ever dissever the good from the bad
In the soul of Annabel Lee,
The beautiful Annabel Lee.

Then Mr. Stevenson went out into his own garden and plucked this:

In winter, I go up at night
And curl that curl by candle-light;
In summer, quite the other way,
I have to curl it twice a day.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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