

FICTION

Carolyn Wells

The Re-echo Club

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK



eBookTakeAway

FICTION

THE RE-ECHO CLUB

By
CAROLYN WELLS

NEW YORK
FRANKLIN BIGELOW CORPORATION
THE MORNINGSIDE PRESS
PUBLISHERS

Copyright, 1913, by
FRANKLIN BIGELOW CORPORATION

ONYX SERIES

THE RE-ECHO CLUB

THE RE-ECHO CLUB

1

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 clientele 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,

2

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! Tum! 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.

When I am good, I seem to be
As good as peaches on the tree;
But when I'm bad I've awful ways,
I'm horrid, everybody says.

And does it not seem hard to you,
I have to choose between the two?
When I'm not happy, good and glad,
I have to be so awful bad!

Mr. Kipling took a real interest in the work and produced the following:

"What is the gas-stove going for?"
Asked Files-On-Parade.
"To curl my hair, to curl my hair?"
His Little Sister said.

"What makes you curl so tight, so tight?"
Asked Files-On-Parade.
"I'm thinkin' 'twill be damp to-night,"
His Little Sister said.

"For you know that when I'm good, I'm just as good as I can be.
And when I'm bad, there's nobody can be as bad as me.
So I'm thinkin' I'll be very good to-night, because, you see,
I'm thinkin' I'll be horrid in the morning."

Mr. Hood was in a reminiscent mood, so he looked backward:

I remember, I remember,
That curl I used to wear;
It cost a dollar ninety-eight
(It was the best of hair).
It always stayed right in its place,
It never went astray;
But now, I sometimes wish the wind
Had blown that curl away.

I remember, I remember,
How good I used to be;
Why, St. Cecelia at her best
Was not as good as me.
I never tore my pinafore,

Or got my slippers wet;
I let my brother steal my cake--
That boy is living yet!

I remember, I remember,
How bad I've sometimes been;
How all my little childish tricks
Were counted fearful sin.
I'm glad I cut up, anyway,
But still 'tis little joy
To know I could have played worse pranks
If I had been a boy.

Mr. Wordsworth took it quietly:

I met a gentle Little Girl,
She was sixteen years, *she said*;
Her hair was thick; that same old curl
Was hanging from her head.

"You're very, very good, you say;
And you look good to me,
Yet you are bad. Tell me, I pray,
Sweet maid, how that may be?"

Then did the Little Girl reply
(The curl bobbed on her forehead),
"When I am good, I'm good as pie,
And when I'm bad, I'm horrid."

At the next meeting of the Re-Echo Club there was achieved a vindication of the limerick. "It has been said," remarked the President of the Re-Echo Club, "by ignorant and undiscerning would-be critics that the Limerick is not among the classic and best forms of poetry, and, indeed, some have gone so far as to say that it is not poetry at all.

"A brief consideration of its claims to preeminence among recognized forms of verse will soon convince any intelligent reader of its superlative worth and beauty.

"As a proof of this, let us consider the following Limerick, which in the opinion of connoisseurs is the best one ever written:

There was a young lady of Niger,
Who smiled as she rode on a tiger;
They came back from the ride
With the lady inside,
And the smile on the face of the tiger.

Now let us compare this exquisite bit of real poesy with what Chaucer has written on the same theme:

A mayde ther ben, in Niger born and bredde;
Hire merye smyle went neere aboute hire hedde.
Uponne a beeste shee rood, a tyger gaye,
And sikerly shee laughen on hire waye.

Anon, as it bifel, bak from the ryde
Ther came, his sadel hangen doone bisyde,

The tyger. On his countenance the while
Ther ben behelde a gladnesse and a smyle.

Again, Austin Dobson chose to throw off the thing in triolet form:

She went for a ride,
That young lady of Niger;
Her smile was quite wide
As she went for a ride;
But she came back inside,
With the smile on the tiger!
She *went* for a ride,
That young lady of Niger.

Rossetti, with his inability to refrain from refrains, turned out this:

In Niger dwelt a lady fair,
(Bacon and eggs and a bar o' soap!)
Who smiled 'neath tangles of her hair,
As her steed began his steady lope.
(You like this style, I hope!)

On and on they sped and on,
(Bacon and eggs and a bar o' soap!)
On and on and on and on;
(You see I've not much scope.)

Een ere they loped the second mile,
The tiger 'gan his mouth to ope;
Anon he halted for a while;
Then went on with a pleasant smile,
(Bacon and eggs and a bar o' soap!)

Omar looked at the situation philosophically, and summed up his views in such characteristic lines as these.

Why if the Soul can fling the Dust aside
And, smiling, on a Tiger blithely ride,
Were't not a Shame--were't not a Shame for him
In stupid Niger tamely to abide?

Strange, is it not? that, of the Myriads who
Before us rode the Sandy Desert through,
Not one returns to tell us of the Road
Which to discover we ride smiling, too.

We are no other than a moving Row
Of Magic Niger-shapes that come and go
Round with the Smile-illuminated Tiger held
In Midnight by the Master of the Show.

Tennyson saw a dramatic opportunity, and gloried in his chance, thus:

Half a league, half a league,
On the big tiger,
Rode with a smiling face
The lady of Niger.

Mad rushed the noble steed,
Smiled she and took no heed;
Smiled at the breakneck speed
Of the big tiger.

Boldly they plunged and swayed,
Fearlessly and unafraid,--
Tiger and lovely maid,
Fair and beguiling;
Flash'd she her sunny smiles,
Flash'd o'er the sunlit miles;
Then they rode back, but not--
Not the same smiling!

When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made,
Riding from Niger!
Honor the ride they made!
Honor the smiles displayed,
Lady and Tiger!

Kipling, of course, seized the theme for a fine and stirring Barrack-Room Ballad:

"What is the lady smiling for?"
Said Files-On-Parade.
"She's going for a tiger ride,"
The Color-Sergeant said;
"What makes her smile so gay, so gay?"
Said Files-On-Parade;
"She likes to go for tiger rides,"
The Color-Sergeant said.

"For she's riding on the tiger, you can see his stately stride;
When they're returning home again, she'll take a place inside;
And on the tiger's face will be the smile so bland and wide,
But she's riding on the tiger in the morning."

Browning was pleased with the subject and did the best he could with it, along these lines:

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER:

(The Tiger speaks.)
I said, "Then, Dearest, since 'tis so,
Since now at length your fate you know,
Since nothing all your smile avails,
Since all your life seems meant for fails,
Henceforth you ride inside."
Who knows what's best? Ah, who can tell?
I loved the lady. Therefore,--well,--
I shuddered. Yet it had to be.
And so together, I and she
Ride, ride, forever ride.

Swinburne spread himself thusly:

O marvellous, mystical maiden,
With the way of the wind on the wing;

Low laughter thy lithe lips hath laden,
Thy smile is a Song of the Spring.
O typical, tropical tiger,
With wicked and wheedlesome wiles;
O lovely lost lady of Niger,
Our Lady of Smiles.

Edgar Allan Poe put it this way:

See the lady with a smile,
Sunny smile!
Hear her gaysome, gleesome giggle as she rides around in style!
How the merry laughter trips
From her red and rosy lips,
As she smiles, smiles, smiles, smiles, smiles, smiles, smiles,
While she rides along the dusty, desert miles.

See the tiger with a smile,
Happy smile!
If such a smile means happiness, he's happy quite a pile;
How contentedly he chuckles as he trots along the miles.
Oh, he doesn't growl or groan
As he ambles on alone,
But he smiles, smiles, smiles, smiles, smiles, smiles, smiles,
As he homeward goes along the desert miles.

And Longfellow gave it his beautiful and clever "Hiawatha" setting:

Oh, the fair and lovely lady;
Oh, the sweet and winsome lady;
With a smile of gentle goodness
Like the lovely Laughing Water.
Oh, the day the lovely lady
Went to ride upon a tiger.
Came the tiger, back returning,
Homeward through the dusky twilight;
Ever slower, slower, slower,
Walked the tiger o'er the landscape;
Ever wider, wider, wider,
Spread the smile o'er all his features.

"And so," said the President, "after numerous examples and careful consideration of this matter, we are led to the conclusion that for certain propositions the Limerick is the best and indeed the only proper vehicle of expression."

It was at the very next meeting that the President of the club gave the members another Limerick for their consideration. The Limerick was anonymous, but the Re-Echoes were not. Here they are:

THE LIMERICK:

A scholarly person named Finck
Went mad in the effort to think
Which were graver misplaced,
To dip pen in his paste,
Or dip his paste-brush in the ink.

OMAR KHAYYAM'S VERSION:

Stay, fellow traveller, let us stop and think,
Pause and reflect on the abysmal brink;
Say would you rather thrust your pen in paste,
Or dip your paste-brush carelessly in ink?

RUDYARD KIPLING'S VERSION:

Here is a theme that is worthy of our cognizance,
A theme of great importance and a question for your ken;
Would you rather--stop and think well--
Dip your paste-brush in your ink-well,
Or in your pesky pasting-pot immerse your inky pen?

WALT WHITMAN'S VERSION:

Hail, Camerados!
I salute you,
Also I salute the sewing-machine, and the flour-barrel, and the feather
duster.
What is an aborigine, anyhow?
I see a paste-pot.
Ay, and a well of ink.
Well, well!
Which shall I do?
Ah, the immortal fog!
What am I myself
But a meteor
In a fog?

CHAUCER'S VERSION:

A mayde ther ben, a wordy one and wyse,
Who wore a paire of gogles on her eyes.
O'er theemes of depest thogt her braine she werked,
Nor ever any knoty problemme sherked.
Yette when they askt her if she'd rather sinke
Her penne in payste, or eke her brushe in inke,
"Ah," quo' the canny mayde, "now wit ye wel,
I'm wyse enow to know--too wyse to tel."

HENRY JAMES'S VERSION:

She luminously wavered, and I tentatively inferred that she would soon perfectly reconsider her not altogether unobvious course. Furiously, tho' with a tender, ebbing similitude, across her mental consciousness stole a reculmination of all the truths she had ever known concerning, or even remotely relating to, the not easily fathomed qualities of paste and ink. So she stood, focused in an intensity of soul-quivers, and I, all unrelenting, waited, though of a dim uncertainty whether, after all, it might not be only a dubitant problem.

SWINBURNE'S VERSION:

Shall I dip, shall I dip it, Dolores,
This luminous paste-brush of thine?
Shall I sully its white-breasted glories,
Its fair, foam-flecked figure divine?

O shall I--abstracted, unheeding--

Swish swirling this pen in my haste,
And, deaf to thy pitiful pleading,
Just jab it in paste?

STEPHEN CRANE'S VERSION:

I stood upon a church spire,
A slender, pointed spire,
And I saw
Ranged in solemn row before me,
A paste-pot and an ink-pot.
I held in my either hand
A pen and a brush.
Ay, a pen and a brush.
Now this is the strange part;
I stood upon a church spire,
A slender, pointed spire,
Glad, exultant,
Because
The choice was mine!
Ay, mine!
As I stood upon a church spire,
A slender, pointed spire.

Perhaps one of the most enjoyable occasions was the night when the members of the Re-Echo Club discussed the merits of the classic poem:

Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eater,
Had a wife and couldn't keep her;
Put her in a pumpkin shell,
And there he kept her very well.

In many ways this historic narrative called forth admiration. One must admit Peter's great strength of character, his power of quick decision, and immediate achievement. Some held that his inability to retain the lady's affection in the first place argued a defect in his nature; but remembering the lady's youth and beauty (implied by the spirit of the whole poem), they could only reiterate their appreciation of the way he conquered circumstances, and proved himself master of his fate, and captain of his soul! Truly, the Pumpkin-Eaters must have been a forceful race, able to defend their rights and rule their people.

The Poets at their symposium unanimously felt that the style of the poem, though hardly to be called crude, was a little bare, and they took up with pleasure the somewhat arduous task of rewriting it.

Mr. Ed Poe opined that there was lack of atmosphere, and that the facts of the narrative called for a more impressive setting. He therefore offered:

The skies, they were ashen and sober,
The lady was shivering with fear;
Her shoulders were shud'ring with fear,
On a dark night in dismal October,
Of his most Matrimonial Year.
It was hard by the cornfield of Auber,
In the musty Mud Meadows of Weir,
Down by the dank frog-pond of Auber,

In the ghoulish-haunted cornfield of Weir.

Now, his wife had a temper Satanic,
And when Peter roamed here with his Soul,
Through the corn with his conjugal Soul,
He spied a huge pumpkin Titanic,
And he popped her right in through a hole.
Then solemnly sealed up the hole.

And thus Peter Peter has kept her
Immured in Mausoleum gloom,
A moist, humid, damp sort of gloom.
And, though there's no doubt he bewept her,
She is still in her yellow-hued tomb,
Her unhallowed, Hallowe'en tomb
And ever since Peter side-stepped her,
He calls her his lost Lulalume,
His Pumpkin-entombed Lulalume.

This was received with acclaim, but many objected to the mortuary theory.

Mrs. Robert Browning was sure that Peter's love for his wife, though perhaps that of a primitive man, was of the true Portuguese stamp, and with this view composed the following pleasing Sonnet:

How do I keep thee? Let me count the ways.
I bar up every breadth and depth and height
My hands can reach, while feeling out of sight
For bolts that stick and hasps that will not raise.
I keep thee from the public's idle gaze,
I keep thee in, by sun or candle light.
I keep thee, rude, as women strive for Right.
I keep thee boldly, as they seek for praise,
I keep thee with more effort than I'd use
To keep a dry-goods shop or big hotel.
I keep thee with a power I seemed to lose
With that last cook. I'll keep thee down the well,
Or up the chimney-place! Or if I choose,
I shall but keep thee in a Pumpkin shell.

This was, of course, meritorious, though somewhat suggestive of the cave-men, who, we have never been told, were Pumpkin Eaters.

Austin Dobson's version was really more lady-like:

BALLADE OF A PUMPKIN:

Golden-skinned, delicate, bright,
Wondrous of texture and hue,
Bathed in a soft, sunny light,
Pearled with a silvery dew.
Fair as a flower to the view,
Ripened by summer's soft heat,
Basking beneath Heaven's blue,--

This is the Pumpkin of Pete.

Peter consumed day and night,
Pumpkin in pie or in stew;
Hinted to Cook that she might
Can it for winter use, too.
Pumpkin croquettes, not a few,
Peter would happily eat;
Knowing content would ensue,--
This is the Pumpkin of Pete.

Everything went along right,
Just as all things ought to do;
Till Peter,--unfortunate wight,--
Married a girl that he knew.
Each day he had to pursue
His runaway Bride down the street,--
So her into prison he threw,--
This is the Pumpkin of Pete.

L'ENVOI

Lady, a sad lot, 'tis true,
Staying your wandering feet;
But 'tis the best place for you,--
This is the Pumpkin of Pete.

Like the other women present Dinah Craik felt the pathos of the situation, and gave vent to her feelings in this tender burst of song:

Could I come back to you, Peter, Peter,
From this old pumpkin that I hate;
I would be so tender, so loving, Peter,--
Peter, Peter, gracious and great.

You were not half worthy of me, Peter,
Not half worthy the like of I;
Now all men beside are not in it, Peter,--
Peter, Peter, I feel like a pie.

Stretch out your hand to me, Peter, Peter,
Let me out of this Pumpkin, do;
Peter, my beautiful Pumpkin Eater,
Peter, Peter, tender and true.

Mr. Hogg took his own graceful view of the matter, thus:

Lady of wandering,
Blithesome, meandering,
Sweet was thy flitting o'er moorland and lea;
Emblem of restlessness,
Blest be thy dwelling place,
Oh, to abide in the Pumpkin with thee.

Peter, though bland and good,
Never thee understood,
Or he had known how thy nature was free;
Goddess of fickleness,

Blest be thy dwelling place,
Oh, to abide in the Pumpkin with thee.

Mr. Kipling grasped at the occasion for a ballad in his best vein. The plot of the story aroused his old-time enthusiasm, and he transplanted the pumpkin eater and his wife to the scenes of his earlier powers:

In a great big Mammoth pumpkin
Lookin' eastward to the sea,
There's a wife of mine a-settin'
And I know she's mad at me.
For I hear her calling, "Peter!"
With a wild hysteric shout:
"Come you back, you Punkin Eater,--
Come you back and let me out!"
For she's in a punkin shell,
I have locked her in her cell;
But it really is a comfy, well-constructed punkin shell;
And there she'll have to dwell,
For she didn't treat me well,
So I put her in the punkin and I've kept her very well.

Algernon Swinburne was also in one of his early moods, and as a result he wove the story into this exquisite fabric of words:

IN THE PUMPKIN

Leave go my hands. Let me catch breath and see,
What is this confine either side of me?
Green pumpkin vines about me coil and crawl,
Seen sidelong, like a 'possum in a tree,--
Ah me, ah me, that pumpkins are so small!

Oh, my fair love, I charge thee, let me out
From this gold lush encircling me about;
I turn and only meet a pumpkin wall.
The crescent moon shines slim,--but I am stout,--
Ah me, ah me, that pumpkins are so small!

Pumpkin seeds like cold sea blooms bring me dreams;
Ah, Pete,--too sweet to me,--My Pete, it seems
Love like a Pumpkin holds me in its thrall;
And overhead a writhen shadow gleams,--
Ah me, ah me, that pumpkins are so small!

This intense poesy thrilled the heavens, and it was with a sense of relief to their throbbing souls that they listened to Mr. Bret Harte's contribution:

Which I wish to remark,
That the lady was plain;
And for ways that are dark
And for tricks that are vain
She had predilections peculiar,
And drove Peter nearly insane.

Far off, anywhere,
She wandered each day;
And though Peter would swear,
The lady would stray;

And whenever he thought he had got her,
She was sure to be rambling away.

Said Peter, "My Wife,
Hereafter you dwell
For the rest of your life
In a big Pumpkin Shell."
He popped her in one that was handy,
And since then he's kept her quite well.

Which is why I remark,
Though the lady was plain,
For ways that are dark
And tricks that are vain
A husband is very peculiar,
And the same I am free to maintain.

Oscar Wilde, in a poetic fervor and a lily-like kimono, recited with tremulous intensity this masterpiece of his own:

Oh, Peter! Pumpkin-fed and proud,
Ah me; ah me!
(Sweet squashes, mother!)
Thy woe knells like a stricken cloud;
(Ah me; ah me!
Hurroo, Hurree!)

Lo! vanisht like an anguisht wraith;
Ah me; ah me!
(Sweet squashes, mother!)
Wan hope a dolorous musing saith;
(Ah me; ah me!
Dumdiddle dee!)

Hist! dare we soar? The Pumpkin Shell!
Ah me; ah me!
(Sweet squashes, mother!)
Fast and forever! Sooth, 'tis well.
(Ah me; ah me!
Faloodle dee!)

There was little to be said after this, so the meeting closed with a solo by Lady Arthur Hill, sung with a truly touching touch:

In the pumpkin, oh, my darling,
Think not bitterly of me;
Though I went away in silence,
Though I couldn't set you free.

For my heart was filled with longing,
For another piece of pie;
It was best to leave you there, dear,
Best for you and best for I.

At Christmas the members of the Re-Echo Club voiced these pleasant sentiments:

BY MR. TENNYSON:

Give me no more! Though worsted slippers be
The proper gift from woman unto man,
Component of the universal plan;
But, oh, too many hast thou given me,
Give me no more!

BY MR. SHAKESPEARE:

To give or not to give, that is the question;
Whether 'tis nobler on the whole to suffer
The old exchange of trinkets, gauds and kickshaws,
Or to take arms against this Christmas nuisance,
And, by opposing, end it? To buy--to give--
No more; and by that gift to say we end
The Christmas obligations to our friends
We all are heir to! To buy--to give;
To give--perchance to get; ay, there's the rub!
For in those bundles gay what frights may come
When we have shuffled off the ribbon bows
And tissue paper! Who would gifts receive
Of foolish books and little silver traps,
That make us rather keep the things we buy,
Than get these others that we know not of!
Thus Christmas doth make cowards of us all,
And, notwithstanding our good resolutions,
Each year we bandy gifts, and follow out
The same old Christmas programme!

BY MR. WORDSWORTH:

It was the very best of pies,
All plummy, thick and sweet;
A pie of most prodigious size--
And very few to eat.

'Twas passing rich, and few folks know
How rich mince pie can be;
But I have eaten it--and, oh,
The difference to me!

BY MR. DOBSON:

When she gave me cigars (!)
I smiled at the present.
Her eyes were like stars
When she gave me cigars.
(I can stand sudden jars.)
So I looked very pleasant
When she gave me cigars (!)
I smiled at the present.

BY MR. SWINBURNE:

If you eat turkey stuffing,
And I eat hot mince pie,
We'll vow that our digestion

Is quite beyond all question;
But soon we'll quit our bluffing
 And curl us up to die,
If you eat turkey stuffing,
 And I eat hot mince pie.

BY MR. LONGFELLOW:

The day is done, and the darkness
 Falls on our little flat,
As a feather is wafted downward
 From a lady's mushroom hat.

I've a feeling of fullness and sorrow
 That is not like being ill,
And resembles colic only
 As a pillow resembles a pill.

But the night shall be filled with nightmares,
 And the food that was left to-day
Shall be given to poor street Arabs,
 Or silently thrown away!

BY MR. MOORE:

'Twas ever thus, from childhood's bawl,
 I've seen my fondest hopes decay;
Whatever I want most of all,
 I do not get it Christmas Day!

BY MISS PROCTER:

Seated one day at the table,
 I was stuffy and ill at ease,
And my fingers wandered idly
 Over the nuts and cheese.

I know not what I had eaten,
 Or what I was eating then,
But I struck a delicious flavor
 That I'd like to taste again.

It linked all elusive savors
 Into one perfect taste,
Then faded away on my palate
 Without any undue haste.

I have sought, but I seek it vainly,
 That one lost taste so fine,
That came from the head of the kitchen,
 And entered into mine.

BY MR. RILEY:

There, little girl, don't cry!
You are awfully broke, I know;
 And of course you've spent
 Far more than you meant,

And lots of bills you owe.
But at Christmas time one has to buy--
There, little girl, don't cry, don't cry!

The Re-Echo Club met in their pleasant rooms at No. 4, Poetic Mews. Spring had passed, so their fancy was lightly turning to other matters than Love, and it chanced to turn lightly to the Cubist Movement in Art.

"Of course," mused the President, rolling his eyes in an especially fine frenzy, "this movement will strike the poets next."

"Ha," said Dan Rossetti, refraining for a moment from the refrain he was building, "we must be ready for it."

"We must advance to meet it," said Teddy Poe, who was ever of an adventurous nature. "What's it all about?"

"The principles are simple," observed Rob Browning, glancing from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven; "in fact, it's much like my own work always has been. I was born cubic. You see, you just symbolize the liquefaction of the essence of an idea into its emotional constituents, and there you are!"

"Dead easy!" declared Lally Tennyson, who went out poeting by the day, and knew how to do any kind. "What's the subject?"

"That's just the point," said the President; "preeminently and exclusively it's subjective, and you must keep it so. On no account allow an object of any kind to creep in. Now, here's one of the Cubist pictures. They call it 'A Nude Descending the Staircase.' They pick names at random out of a hat, I believe. Take this, you fellows, and throw it into poetry."

"Any rules or conditions?" asked Billy Wordsworth.

"Absolutely none. It's the Ruleless School."

Then the Poets opened the aspiration valves, ignited the divine spark plugs, and whiz! went their motor-meters in a whirring, buzzing melody.

Soon their Cubist emotions were splashed upon paper, and the Poets read with justifiable pride these symbolic results.

Ally Swinburne tossed off this poetic gem without a bit of trouble.

Square eyelids that hide like a jewel;
Ten heads,--though I sometimes count more;
Six mouths that are cubic and cruel;
Of mixed arms and legs, twenty-four;
Descending in Symbolic glories
Of lissome triangles and squares;
Oh, mystic and subtle Dolores,
Our Lady of Stairs.

You descend like an army with banners,
In a cyclone of wrecked parasols.
You look like a mob with mad manners
Or a roystering row of Dutch dolls.
Oh, Priestess of Cubical passion,
Oh, Deification of Whim,
You seem to walk down in the fashion
That lame lobsters swim.

Here we have Mr. P.B. Shelley's noble lines:

Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
Nude thou never wert.
Not from Heaven nor near it
Breathed thy cubic heart
In profuse stairs of unintelligible art.

What thou art, we know not;
What is thee most like?
Snakes tied in a bow-knot?
Stovepipes on a strike?
Or Bellevue inmates on a Suffrage hike!

We look before and after,
And pine thy face to see;
Our sincerest laughter
Is aroused by thee.
Art thou perchance the sad cube root of 23?

Mr. R. Kipling felt a flash of his old fire, and threw in a high speed:

On an old symbolic staircase,
Looking forty ways at once;
There's a Cubist Nude descending,
With the queerest sort of stunts.
For the staircase is a-falling,
And the Noodle seems to say:
"Though you hear my soul a-calling,
You can't see me, anyway!"

Oh, this symbol balderdash,
And this post-Impression trash;
Can't you see their paint a-chunkin in a hotchy-potchy splash?
Where the motives bold and brash
Of the Cubist painters clash,
And the Nude descends like thunder down a staircase gone to
smash!

Mr. D.G. Rossetti, ever a sweet singer, warbled thus tunefully:

The Blessed Nude at eve leaned out
From the gold staircase rail;
Her paint was deeper than the depth
Of waters in a pail.
She wore three bonnets on her heads,
And seven coats of mail.

And still she bowed herself and swayed
In circling cubic charms.
And the pigments of her painted soul
Were loud as war's alarms.
But the staircase lay as if asleep
Along her fourteen arms.

(I saw her move!) But soon her path
Was cubes instead of spheres;
And then she disappeared among
The staircase barriers;
And, after she was gone, I saw

She'd wept some large paint tears!

Mr. R. Browning found the subject greatly to his liking:

Who will may hear the Staircase story told;
All its blobs, splotches, facets,--what you will;
The vague Nude, compassed murkily about
With ravage of six long sad hundred stairs,
Dizzily plunging with tumultuous glee!
Whirling the staidust, hazarding oblique,
The moon safe in her pocket! See she treads
Cool citric crystals, fierce pyropus stone;
While crushing sunbeams in a triple line
Smirk at the insane roses in her hair,
And Strojavacca, frowning, looks asquint
To see that trick of toe,--that dized heel,--
As she, the somewhat, hangs 'twixt naught and naught.
A perfect Then,--a sub-potential Now--
A facile and slabsided centipede.

And here is Mr. B. Jonson's little jingle:

Still to be cubed, still to be square,
As you were going down a stair;
Still to see lurid pigments sluiced,--
Lady, it is to be deduced,
Though art's hid causes are not found,
All is not square, all is not round.

Give me a cube, give me a line
That makes a whirling maze design;
Robes made of sheet-iron, flowing free,--
Such sweet device more taketh me
Than masterpieces by old Rubes
Which charm not eyes attuned to cubes.

And Mr. J.W. Riley sang in his usual comforting strain:

There, Little Nude, don't cry!
You've descended the stairs, I know;
And the weird wild ways
Of the Cubist Jays
Have made you a holy show!
But Post Impressions will soon pass by.
There Little Nude, don't cry, don't cry!

Sir A. Tennyson caught the Cubical spirit neatly thus:

As the staircase is, the Nude is; thou art painted by a freak.
And I think that he has knocked thee to the middle of next week.
He will paint thee (till this fashion shall expend its foolish force),
Something like a rabid dog,--a little larger than a horse.
Semblance? Likeness? Scorned of Cubists! This th' evangel that he
sings;
Any picture's crown of glory is to look like other things!
So thou art not seen descending in the ordinary way,
But, like fifty motor-cycles, breaking speed laws in Cathay.

Mr. C. Kingsley was greatly interested:

My Cubist Nude, I have no song to give you;
I could not pipe you, howsoe'er I tried;
But ere I go, I wish that you would teach me
That Staircase Slide!

Be skittish, child, and let who will be graceful,
Do whizzy whirls whenever you've the chance;
And so make life, death and that grand old staircase
One song and dance.

Oscar Wilde was moody and this was his mood:

A down the stairs the Nudelet came;
(Pale pink cats up a purple tree!)
Hark! to the smitten cubes of flame!
Ah, me! Ah, jamboree!

Her soul seethed in emotions sweet;
(Pale pink cats up a purple tree!)
Symboling like a torn-up street;
Ah, jamboree! Ah, me!

And still the Nude's soul-cubes are there,--
(Pale pink cats up a purple tree!)
In writhen glory of despair,--
Ah, me! Ah, Hully Gee!

Mr. W. Wordsworth was frankly disdainful:

She trod among the untrodden maze
Of Cubists on a spree;
A Nude whom there were none to praise,
And very few could see.

A violet 'neath a mossy stone,
Quite hidden from the eye,
Is far more easy to discern
Than that same Nude to spy.

She lived unseen. Though some few fakes
Pretended her to see;
But if she's on the stairs, it makes
No difference to me.

Mr. Longfellow fairly let himself go:

The picture's done! And the staircase
Falls like the crash of night.
And the Nude is wafted downward
Like a catapult in flight.

There's a feeling of strange emotion
That is not akin to art;
And resembles a picture only
As a Tartar resembles a tart.

Such art has power to rouse
Our laughter at any time,
And comes like electrocution
That follows after crime.

And Mr. Bunner's poetic gem has a charm all its own:

It was an old, old, old, old lady,
On a staircase at half-past three;
And the way she was painted together
Was beautiful for to see.

She wasn't visible any,
And the staircase, no more was he;
For it was a Cubist picture
With a feeling of deep skewgee.

'Twas a symbol of soul expression,
Though you'd never have known it to be!
That emotional old, old lady
On a staircase at half-past three.

Mr. Wordsworth treated the subject boldly, thus:

She was a phantom of a fright
When first she burst upon my sight;
A Cubist apparition meant
To symbolize a Nude's descent.
Her eyes like soft-shell crabs aflame
Like loads of brick her dusky hair;
And all things else about her drawn
As by one coming home at dawn.
A fearsome shape, an image fierce,
To haunt, to startle, and to pierce.
I saw her upon nearer view,
Like a symbolic oyster stew;
A countenance in which did meet
The paving blocks from some old street;
The staircase, floating fancy-free,
With steps of Cubic liberty.
A perfect lady, nobly built,
Constructed like a crazy quilt.
Or a volcano on a spree,
Or herd of elephants at tea.
The staircase, by a bombshell wrecked,
With something of a burst effect.

What do you think of A. Dobson's triolet:

Oh, see the Nude
Descend the Stair!
Fear not, oh, prude,
To see the Nude;
For by the rood,
She isn't there!
Oh, see the Nude

Descend the Stair!

Of course, no one is a sweeter poetess than Miss A.A. Proctor:

Seated one day at my easel,
I was hungry and somewhat faint,
And my fingers wandered idly
Over the tubes of paint.

I know not what I was drawing,
Or what I was painting there,
But I splotched a Cubic Symbol!
Like a Nude Descending a Stair!

It flooded the crimson canvas
With the gush of a broken dam;
And it lay in sticky masses
Like upset gooseberry jam.

It rioted blazing color,
Like love ballyragging strife;
It seemed the loquacious echo
Of our discordant wife.

It linked all Futurist meanings
Into one perfect cube,
And broke itself up into facets
Like a wreck in a Hudson Tube.

I seek, but I seek it vainly,
That vast, symbolic line,
That came from the head of the staircase
And entered into mine.

It may be that Pab Picasso
Has painted the thing before,
And it may be that only in Bedlam
I shall paint that Nude some more.

And now the admirers of Mr. Poe will enjoy this:

It was many and many a year ago,
In a kingdom made of squares,
That a Lady lived whom you may know
As the Nude Descending the Stairs,
And the lady lived with no other home,
But those racketty-packetty stairs!

And the moon never beams
Without jarring the seams
Of those cubic triangular stairs;
And the earth never quakes
Without bringing the shakes
To those wigglety-wagglety stairs.

And neither the artists in circles above,
Or critics who view the debris,
Can ever dissever the Nude from the Stairs,

For both are so hobble-de-gee,
So hobble-de-wobble-de-gee!

Mr. A. Tennyson is quite frank in his opinions, and it would seem that he does not altogether admire the lady:

Lady Clara Stair de Stair,
Of me you shall not win renown.
You thought to charm the country's heart
As you the staircase tumbled down.

At me you splashed; but unabashed,
I saw you in your paint attired;
You daughter of a hundred cubes,
You are not one to be desired!

Lady Clara Stair de Stair,
I care not for these wild etudes;
A simple Titian in a frame
Is worth a hundred Staircase Nudes.

Howe'er it be, it seems to me
It isn't noble to be fools;
Fine arts are more than Futurists,
And simple lines than Cubist Schools.

At one meeting of The Re-Echo Club, it chanced that there was no one present but Omar Khayyam. He had mistaken the date, and came to the clubroom, only to find it empty. Absent-mindedly, he picked up paper and pen, and, on leaving, left behind these additional Rubaiyat:

RUBAIYAT OF WALL STREET

Now the New Hope reviving dying fires,
The Thoughtful Soul to speculate aspires;
And the lean Hand of Shylock and his Kin
Puts out some Money, which he gladly Hires.

Myself, when Young, did eagerly Frequent
Broker and Broke; and heard Great Argument
About it and about. Yet evermore
Came out far Shrewder than when in I went.

With them the Seed of Wisdom did I sow,
And then I thought I'd sure be in The Know;
And this is all the Wisdom that I gained:
If you buy High, Quotations will be Low!

Some for the Glories of the System; Some
Sigh for the big Fool's Paradise to come.
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Profits go,
Nor heed the Rumble of a Boston Drum!

The System that with logic absolute
Both Standard Oil and Copper can confute;
The Sovereign Alchemist that in a trice
National Lead can into Gold transmute.

Indeed, indeed, at Brokers oft Before
I swore. But was I Cautious when I swore?
And then Came Gay State Gas and Rise-in-Hand;
I plunged--and Lost some Fifty Thousand More.

And then that New Prospectus cast a Spell,
And robbed me of my Hard-Earned Savings. Well,
I often wonder what the Magnates buy
One-Half so precious as the Fools they Sell.

Ah, My Beloved, all Goes up in Smoke!
Last week is past Regret; To-day is a joke;
To-morrow--why, to-morrow I may be
Myself with Yesterday's Seven Thousand Broke!

You know, My Friends, with what a Brave Carouse
I put a Second Mortgage on my House,
So I could Buy a lot of Copper Shares--
I even used the Savings of my Spouse!

I sent my Soul down where the Magnates flock
To learn the Truth about some Worthless Stock;
And by and by my Soul returned to me,
And answered: "I, myself, have Bought a Block!"

Oh, threats of Curbs, and Hopes of Bucket-shops,
Whether Industrials, Railroads, Mines or Crops;
One thing is Certain, and the Rest is Lies--
The Stock that you have Bought Forever Drops!

And if, in Vain, down on the Stubborn Floor
Of the Exchange you Hazard all your Store,
You Rise to-day--while Crops are up--how then
To-morrow, when they Fall to Rise no more?

Waste not your Money on Expected Gain
Of this or that Provision, Crop or Grain.
Better be Jocund with Industrials,
Than sadden just Because it Doesn't Rain!

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend
Before we, too, into the Pit descend!
Dust unto Dust, and without Dust to Live,
Sans Stock, sans Bonds, sans Credit and sans Friend.

The Moving Ticker tells. And, having told,
Moves on. Nor all your Poverty nor Gold
Shall lure it back to Raise one-half a Point,
Nor let you Realize on what you Hold.

For I remember stopping in the Jam
To watch a Magnate shearing a Poor Lamb.
And with an Eager and Excited Tongue
It murmured: "Oh, how Fortunate I am!"

No book of verses! But a Ticker Tape,
Quotation Record and a Daily Pape;
A yellow-haired stenographer--Perhaps
That Wilderness might be a Good Escape!

When You and I are hid within the Tomb,
The System still shall Lure New Souls to Doom;
Which of our Coming and Departure heeds
As Wall Street's Self should heed a Lawson Boom.

Ah, Love! could you and I lay on the Shelf
This Sorry Scheme of Ill-begotten Pelf,
Would we not Shatter it to Bits, and Then
Remould a System just to suit Ourselves?