

Waterman Nixon

Sonnets of a Budding Bard



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“Casabianca”

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Sometimes I get to wishin' I might be
A little lamb like Mary's, fond and true,
With Susan Sanderson as Mary, see?
We'd play amidst the clover sweet with dew,
And everywhere that she wast there'd be me,
And if she wasn't, I'dst be elsewhere, too

Lines Wrote in School Whilst I Shouldst Have Been Studyin' My Lesson

I've just about madest up my mind to be
A poet such as Shakespeare and the rest
Of them big literary gents, and dressed
In velvet clothes, write up the things I see
In some grand style to show that Browning he

Hast been done up! And when plain folks request
My autograph, then, throwin' out my chest,
I'llst make them wish that they wast great like me!

I'm tired dwellin' midst surroundin's where
Cheap things art always waitin' to be done:
I'dst rather loaf and dream and have long hair
Like all great poets dost: and, oh! what fun,
To dash off lays and sell them, then and there,
Whenever I'llst be needin' any "mon."

Thoughts Thought Whilst Thinkin' about Mary and Her Pet Lamb

Full oft I've read how Mary's lamb didst go
Where'er his kind and lovin' mistress went,
As if the little creature wast content
If it couldst only be where she wast. Oh,
I realize what madest it hanker so
To be in school that day: it surely meant
It loved her! Yet, that mean old teacher bent
On bossin' things – he didst not seem to know.

Sometimes I get to wishin' I might be
A little lamb like Mary's, fond and true,
With Susan Sanderson as Mary, see?
We'd play amidst the clover sweet with dew,
And everywhere that she wast there'd be me,
And if she wasn't, I'dst be elsewhere, too.

Lines Wrote Whilst Thinkin' about How Pa Acts When Dressin' Up

Whilst pa and ma art dressin' up to go
To church or somewhere, so I've heard ma tell
The neighbor women, pa tears 'round pell-mell
And turns things upside down, and wants to know
Who hid his clothes! and makes ma stop and show
Him where to find them. Ma she know'st full well
They're where he's kept them since he earnest to dwell
In our house: that's been twenty years or so.

And when ma's donest her level best to try
To help pa so he wilt not fuss and fret,
And found his clothes, shoes, collar, cuffs and tie,
And there ain't nothin' more for her to get,
Pa looks at her and with an awful sigh
Says: "Thunderation! Ain't you ready yet?"

Lines Wrote Whilst Realizin' We Oughtst to Be Kind to Dumb Brutes

Wise William Goat, familiarly addressed
As "Billy!" Thou art an amusin' brute,
For thou hast some traits that are truly cute
And others, still, so it must be confessed,
That I hast learned in sorrow to detest.
'Tis fun to see thee, in thy manner mute,
When boys dost tease thee, give some one a "beaut,"
Yet, he who's "it" deems thee a sorry jest.

Yestreen I met some other boys, and we,
At thy expense, wert havin' much delight
Till thou got'st 'round to where I didst not see
That thou wast headed my way. Sorry plight!
That's why I write this standin' – woe is me! —
And slept'st upon my bosom all last night.

Sonnet Wrote Whilst Thinkin' of Our Parents in the Garden of Eden

O Adam and O Eve! How very nice
It must have been to live where you wast at.
No neighbors anywhere with whom to spat,
Nor any one to give you free advice.
Ma says she'd gladly pay 'most any price
For such a lay-out. And she's certain that
Because there wert no servants in your flat
Is how you camest to call it "Paradise."

And pa says that if Eve hadst dressed the way
Our women do we shouldst have missed the fate
Of goin' forth into the world to stray,
For she'd be somewhere, still, inside the gate
Delayin' things, as women dost to-day,
A-tryin' for to pin her hat on straight.

Lines Wrote Whilst Smartin' from Punishment Received for Lyin'

O Washington! (O Reader, hast thou not
In readin' high-toned poems wrote for show,
Observed how many of them start with "O?"
Well, anyhow, there is an awful lot.)
The noble deeds thou wrought'st are not forgot
But serve to make thy name, where'er we go,
A household word. If all they say is so
Thou didst some mighty clever stunts. That's what!

And yet, thy fame belongest to thy dad;
Thou shinest by reflected light, forsooth,
For thou 'rt the only boy that ever had
A pa who, when his son dared tell the truth
About some kiddish prank didst not get mad
And lamm him! O thou heaven-protected youth!

Thoughts Thought about Ma's Notions Regardin' Love and House-keepin'

When sister Maymie saidst she'd like to learn
To sweep the keys of a piano-forte,
Ma she spoke up and cut her right off short
And saidst she'd rather that a girl of her 'n
Shouldst know just how to sweep a room, nor spurn
A poor but honest man, for that's the sort
Pa wast. And ma insists no woman ort
To spend more money than a man canst earn.

A kid-gloved dandy with a stove-pipe hat
Wed ma's proud cousin. Say, but he wast sly!
"Our home shalt be next thing to Heaven!" That
Wast what he vowed. Ma says that that's no lie
For they art packed into a stingy flat
Four stairways up, and plumb against the sky!

Thoughts Thought Whilst Thinkin' of Peary on a Hot Summer Day

O Peary! With the scorchin' summer here
And everybody payin' double price
For little weeny, teeny bits of ice,
It dost no longer seem so very queer
That thou shouldst have the bravery to steer
Thy ship up North where it is cool and nice.
I'll bet you smile whilst thinkin' thou hast twice
The fun we're havin' at this time of year.

And, say! old boy, since thou dost understand
The pole is an imaginary spot,
Why not "imagine" thou hast found it and
Of time and trouble save an awful lot?
Couldst others track thee to that frozen land
And prove thou didst not find it? I guess not!

Thoughts Thought Whilst Thinkin' of a Thanksgivin' Day Turkey

O Eagle! emblem of my country, thou,
Who art the boss of every other bird,
My muse, to find the highfalutin word
With which to name thee, dost not know just how.
Yet 'tis not thee who hast, I must allow,
My patriotic breast the deepest stirred,
And they who planned our country's banner erred
In makin' thee the sign to which we bow.

For whilst, O Eagle, thou dost dare to climb
The highest mountain peak and greet the sun,
It is the turkey that dost nearest rhyme
With all the lofty thrills that through us run;
He beats thee to a standstill every time,
For, stuffed and roasted – say! he takes the bun!

Sonnet Wrote Whilst Thinkin' of My Sister Maymie's Homely Beau

O Love! 'Tis saidst that thou art blind. Alas!
I didst not think that it wast truly so
Until I saw my sister Maymie's beau
Who's awful stingy and as green as grass!
How love canst make such guys as he is pass
For something beautiful, I dost not know.
Hadst I my way, you bet! he'd stand no show
Of settin' in our parlor wastin' gas.

He steals things, too! Last night whilst in a nook
Of our dark hall I heardst him say: "Alack!
I must steal one!" This morn I went'st to look
And found'st all our umbrellas in the rack,
And so I guess whatever 'twast he took,
My sister Maymie madest him give it back.

Lines Wrote Whilst Recovering from an Accident Caused by a Hornet

O Hornet! When I think'st what thou canst do
To make strong men just hump themselves and run,
Men who wouldst boldly face a ten-inch gun
But lack the "sand" to halt whilst you pursue,
And deem'st thy stinger something they wouldst rue,
I've wondered if, when things that weigh a ton
Flee from thy wrath, thou dost not deem it fun
To chase folks that are so much bigger 'n you.

Didst I accordin' to my size possess
The means for gettin' even thou dost own,
'Twouldst be great sport to tackle – well, I guess! —
A boy 'most any size, and hear him moan
As I didst when thou gavest me that caress
From something hotter than the torrid zone!

Lines Wrote on a Summer Day Whilst Thinkin' of a Soda Fountain

When I'm a man I shalt not care to be
The President of these United States:
I'dst rather be the drug-store clerk who waits
On people at the soda-fountain. He
Hast lots more first-class fun, it seems to me,
For whilst the public dost not get rebates
On soda, he canst get it at cut rates,
And lots of times, I'll bet, he gets it free!

Of course, I know it must be pretty fine
To hear the brass bands and the big bass drums
Come marchin' by the White House all in line
And playin': "See, the Conquerin' Hero Comes!"
And, yet, no presidential job in mine:
The soda clerk's the one that gets the plums!

Lines Wrote After Bein' Scolded for Not Doin' as Children Used To

I yearn'st to live to be ten times as old
As wast Mathusalem, the patriarch:
Then when some older person durst remark:
“When I wast young the children weren't so bold
And always loved to do as they wert told,
And went to bed soon after it wast dark;”
I'llst say to him: My errin' friend, now hark
To one who wilt no longer hear thee scold:

I knew thy great-great-great-grand-parents when
They wert sly youngsters vexin' their poor nurse,
And children now art good as they wert then!
They always have been stubborn, mean, perverse,
And always wilt be, since, alas! like men,
They're just as heaven makes them – only worse!

Lines Wrote On Readin' How Cleopatra Made Men Act Very Foolish

To-day I readst in an old history book
How Cleopatra used to make men do
Just any fool thing that she wanted to
By givin' them a "lovey-dovey" look.
Time wast, long, long ago, when I'dst have shook
My head and saidst the story wast not true,
But that, alas! that wast before I knew
Miss Susan S. who hast my fancy took.

To-day I hadst an apple I'dst have not
Let any boy in school taste, but when she
Asked couldst she have a bite and took a lot,
I didst not mind at all, for, oh, to me,
Where she hadst bit hadst somehow made the spot
Taste awful sweet! Thus dost love rule us. See?

Sonnet Wrote Whilst Thinkin' What I Wouldst Do with Carnegie's Gold

O Great Carnegie! With thy wealth, oh, my!
I dost not know exactly what I'd do,
But seem'st to me I'd have more fun than you
Art havin' with it. Anyhow, if I
Hadst money, as they say, "to burn," I'd try
To burn it here, for, oh! 'twouldst make me blue
To think I'd have to smell it burnin' through
The endless eons of the by and by!

And you can bet if I hadst gold in bins
As thou hast got, in quantities so vast
Thou canst not spend it, I'd buy diamond pins
And soda water to the very last!
And I'd be sorry that I wast not twins
So I couldst spend my fortune twice as fast.

Some Thoughts Thought Whilst Havin' to Bathe in a Bath-tub

I don't like bathin' in a bath-tub. Say!
It's no more like a good old swimmin'-hole
Where you can dive right in and splash and roll
Or anything you please, than work's like play!
Some afternoon of a hot summer day
When thou from school and poky things hast stole,
Oh, ain't it good for heart and brain and soul
To plunge right in and swim your own sweet way?

I pity folks who bathe where they must wear
A bathin'-suit! I wouldst have none in mine.
Give me a good old shady corner where
Nobody's lookin'. That's what I call "fine!"
And when I bathe in this sawed-off affair,
The swimmin'-hole's the thing for which I pine.

Lines Wrote in School Whilst Throwin' Glances at Susan Sanderson

“Oh, what is love?” the poet asks. I guess
I'dst better tell him. When a girl's cheeks seem
As fascinatin' to you as ice-cream,
And though snub-nosed and freckled, more or less,
She's still the phantom of pure loveliness
That ever and anon athwart your dream
Comes stealin', whilst you scheme and scheme and scheme
To be where she is, thou 'rt in love! Oh, yes!

When you keep thinkin' how you'dst squeeze her hand
If sometime thou couldst be her little glove,
And if thou feelst that thou wouldst like to stand,
With only just the frosty stars above,
In some big snowdrift 'neath her window and
Stay there forever, then thou art in love!

Thoughts Thought Whilst Mowin' the Lawn on a Saturday Afternoon

O Circus Day! So very brief art thou,
From early morn when first doth rise the tent
Till midnight comes and all the show hath went;
Thou 'rt like a swiftly passin' dream. Oh, how
I wish the laggin' tasks that wet the brow
With per-spi-ra-tion (sweat is what I meant)
Would haste as thou dost haste. How different
This world wouldst be from what we find it now!

Or 'twouldst be better still if time wouldst pass,
Whilst laughin' at the antics of the clown,
As slow as run'st the sands within the glass
Whilst I, 'neath sun that almost melts me down,
Must mow the lawn. O Fate, why must, alas!
Thy smile be so much shorter than thy frown?

Sonnet Wrote on the Fly-leaf of My Grammar Durin' School Hours

O Education! Maybe thou art all
Our teachers tell us, but just let me say
That if my folks wouldst let me have my way,
From early Spring till frost comes in the Fall
I'dst be outdoors, you bet! a-playin' ball
Or otherwise enjoyin' each fine day.
It seem'st a shame for boys to have to stay
Like culprits shut in by a prison wall!

I guess if you get rich folks wilt not care
If you don'tst know your grammar to a T,
For baby boys, you'llst find 'most everywhere,
Art named for uncles who hast money, see?
Though they hain'tst got no learnin' they canst spare
Nor never spell their 'taters with a p.

Thoughts Thought on Hearin' Folks Find Fault with the Weather

I love cold winter weather with the snow
A-driftin' on the walks I hast to clear,
And frost a-bitin' nose and cheek and ear,
With the thermometer "away below."
I also love the summer when it's so
Red-hot that clothes next to you all "adhere"
And everybody's frantic, pretty near,
And sayin' things that hot folks dost, you know?

I love both seasons, but I wish I could
Enjoy them whilst they're with us, for, you see,
It's winter when the summer seem'st so good,
And summer when the winter pleases me.
But, somehow, I have never understood
Why either of them whilst it's here's "n. g."

Lines Wrote After Seein' Shakespeare's Hamlet from an Upper Gallery

O Shakespeare! Thou whom'st all the world dost think
Hast written some good things, I, too, wouldst pay
My best respects to thee; yet, wouldst I say
That whilst I like thee yet I dost not shrink
From tellin' thee that thou art on the "blink"
And very sadly out of date to-day.
Still, if thou'lt follow my advice thou may
Still count as one of us, and get more "chink."

Your plays ain't any good the way they stand:
Thou ought'st to tone them up with something nice:
Some coon-songs, fire-engines, blood-hounds and
A swingin' bridge and chunks of floatin' ice
Wouldst make your old plays draw to beat the band,
And folks wouldst crowd your show at any price!

Sonnet Wrote Whilst Retrospectively Contemplatin' My First Cigar

Oh, woe is me! and other things like that!
Yestreen I soughtst to smoke my first cigar:
It gav'st my system a tremendous jar!
I didst not have the gumption of a gnat.
All night I couldst not tell where I wast at.
I wish I knew just what those cheap smokes are;
It seem'st to me they're made of glue and tar.
Ah, me! I'm weaker than a half-starved cat.

Oh, let them smoke henceforth, say'st I, who will,
For who am I that I shouldst dare condemn
Their vile tobacco? I have hadst my fill:
Let others have it; I sha'n'tst envy them,
For I'llst not never smoke no more until
I'm ten times older than Mathusalem!

Sonnet Wrote Whilst Thinkin' About a Vacation Spent on a Farm

O Farmer, independentest of all
Mankind art thou! I know, because, last year
I spent my whole vacation, pretty near,
On Uncle Eben's farm, and though I'm small,
I hoed the corn and beans, and helped him haul
And stack his hay. I'dst work until I'dst fear
I'dst just drop down and end my sad career
Before they'dst give the welcome dinner call.

My uncle dost not weigh his words with care,
For once he told me that I wast a shirk;
But I wouldst rather breathe the country air
Than be a shut-in office-boy or clerk;
For I found out whilst visitin' out there
That I like farmin', but I hate farm work.

Lines Composed After Seein' a Book Full of Byron's Love Letters

One reason why I'm 'most afraid to get
So famous like we poets always do,
Is that they'll print my spoony letters, too,
As is the way with all of us who let
Our fancies caper. Hadst I thought whilst yet
Unknown, I'dst be a poet, quite a few
Endearin' words with which I soughtst to woo
More girls than one I'dst not have wrote, you bet!

If Susan Sanderson shouldst find I sent
The valentine I saidst I wrote for her
To Jane Jones, too, the thirty cents I've spent
For soda water's wasted, I'dst infer:
Why must we poets do things we'll repent?
And oh! why thus didst me and Byron err?

Sonnet Wrote After Hearin' a Youth Oratin' about "Casabianca"

O Boy, that stood'st upon the burnin' deck
And gotst thyself in our school readers and
The "Whoop-'er-up" school speakers of our land
Because thou wouldst not leave that sinkin' wreck,
Oh, don'tst thou think if thou hadst saved thy neck
And wisely cut and run to beat the band,
Thou couldst have later done things still more grand?
Alas! too soon didst death thy valor check!

Oh, didst thou stay because thou couldst not swim?
Or wast it fame for which thy heart didst yearn?
Of course thou gotst a name time canst not dim,
But seemst to me that all I canst discern
In thy foolhardy, stickin'-to-it whim
Is that thou deemed the world hadst boys to burn.