

The Stories that Waas

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Goat
The Olt Plue Hen-shicken
The One Wheel Feller
The Calf
The Cow
My Neighbor
When the Frost is on the Pumpkin
As I grow Old
Somehow, Someway
The Truly Blind
The Poor
Sunrise
October Noon
Burning Bushes
Life's Purpose
Quotes from Uncle Bennie
Not the Duck it Might Have Been
Uncle Josh Stories:
The Bicycle
and
Movin' Day
The Old Man's Story
The Little Dog Under the Wagon
Faithful Fido
Pig-Hog

THE GOAT
(Pointer's Indyspepsible Goat)

Pointer rushes into my house the other day and he say,
"Vender, did you know dat a goat vas indyspepsible? I means,
did you ever heard of a goat mit dyspepsi?" And den I say,
"Pointer, I got no time to listen to your vild gooseberry
stories bout dyspensible goats nor no other nonsense. I
don't believe it." "But there's no nonsense about it," says
Pointer. "Now, Vender, you pretends to be a skyintific man
vot likes to learn something always. Now I tells you a goat
can have dyspepsi. I know it by my own experience. I had it
myself. The goat, I mean. His name vas Nanny." ---

Nanny Goat, dat's a perty name, and it vas a perty goat, too.
Goats, you know, vas very economical. I use dat goat for a
vastepaper basket. Ven I shpoils a piece of paper, I
vistles, she comes the vindow up, I flings the paper in her
mouth, she valks herself off, chews the paper and makes nice
goats milk of it. Then I gets 10 cents a quart for
vastepaper.

Nanny, she always had a shplendent happytite. She vould eat
anything from a fine gamebreeck 'ankerchief off the
clothline mit your name engraved in the corner to a basket
of oyster shells on the halfshell -- and she was never
boddered mit indigestion. But she died in a shtrange vay.

Von day a new drugstore moved into Harlem, and he vasn't
acquainted with my goat, so he leaves a basket of dried
sponges set mit the door out and he leaves the cover off.
Nanny, she comes along and she vas perty hungry. She ate up
the sponges, she ate up the basket, she licked up the
sidevalk, and she valked herself off. By and by she comes to
a duck pond, and she vas awful dry. She drank up the pond
and left the ducks in the mud. Then she starts home. By the
time she got there she vas as big as a cow and as light as a
feather. Ven the vind blows she vould roll over and over.
We had to tie her mit a string like a kite to keep her down.

We sent for the cow doctor. Ven he comes he says, "I
understands oxactly the case. It wasn't eating the sponges,
it vas drinking the vater. Hard drinking, that's vere she
made the mistake."

Vel, the only ting ve could do vas to put her in the
clothswringer and wring her dry, but it vas too late. Vile
we vent mit with the house in to got the clothswringer, we
heard a loud noise like a cannon oxploded. The glasses broke
mit the vindows out, and ven ve comes mit the yard out again,
the goat vasn't there. But the next day you could find
little pieces of sponges laying all over the streets of
Harlem.

The Olt Plue Hen-shicken
(How Zachary Set a Hen)

Vel, I tells you all about vot took place mit me last summer. You know, (or if you don't know, den I tells you) dat Katrina, dats my wife, and me, ve keeps some shickens vot long time ago. Von day she says to me, "Zachary (dat's my name), vy don't you put some eggs under dat olt plue hen-shicken? I tink she vants to set." "Vel" says I, "maybe I guess I vill." So I picks out some of the best eggs and takes them down to the barn ver de hen makes her nest in the hay mow bout 5-6 feet up.

You see, I never vas very pig up and down, but I vas always pig all the vay around in the middle; so I couldn't reach up til I get a barrel to schtand on. Vel, I climbs me on the barrel and ven my head raise up mit da nest by, dat olt hen, she gif me such a peck dat my nose runs all over my face mit blood. And ven I dodge back, dat blasted olt barrel, it break and down I came ker-schlam.

By jocky, I never did tink I could go inside a barrel before. But there I vas, and I fit so tight I couldn't get me out every way. My vest was pushed vay up under my arm holes. Vel, ven I found I vas tight stuck, I calls Katrina. Ven she come and see me stuck in the barrel up to my arm holes and my face all over mit blood and eggs, by shocky she shust lay down in the hay and laugh and laugh - til I get so mad and I says, "Vot you lay dere and laugh like an old fool, eh? Vy don't you come pull me out?" Then she sat up and say, "Oh, vipe off your chin and pull your vest down." Then she lay back on the hay and laugh like she vould split more as ever.

Vel, mad as I vas, I tinks to myself. Katrina, she speak English pretty good, but I only say in my greatest dignitude, "Katrina, vil you come and pull me dis barrel out?" Den she see I look pretty red, and she said, "Course I vil, Zachery." So she comes and lays me and de barrel down on our side, I take holt of the doorsill and she pull on the barrel. But the first pull she made, I hollers, "Donner and blishen, stop that!! Ders nails in dat barrel!" Ven I vent in the nails bent down, but ven I come out the nails shtick in me all the vay around.

Vel, to make a short story long, I tells Katrina, "Go to neighbor Hanson, tell him bring his saw and saw me dis barrel off." Ven he come, he liked to shplit himself mit laugh too, but he rolled me over and sawed the barrel all the vay round off; and finally ven I get up, I had a half barrel round my vaist. Den Katrina, she says, "Zackery, vait a little. I vant to get a pattern of dat new oferskirt you has on." But I don't say a verd. I shust get a knife and vittled the hoops off and frows the olt barrel in the vood pile.

Finally, ven I comes to the house, Katrina - she say to me so soft-like, "Zachery, don't you gon to put some eggs under dat olt plue hen-shicken?" And den I say in my deepest voice, "Katrina, if ever you says dat to me again I get a pill off you vot vill help me by shimminy grascious." And I tells you, she never says dat to me anymore! But now ven I shtep on a barrel, I don't shtep on it; I get a box.

(1.2.2019)

THE ONE WHEEL FELLER

I was workin in my corn field on a spring day just at noon
An a harkin' in my stomach for the dinner trumpet's tune,
An reflectin' that when my daughter should be married, t'would be best
She should take Josiah Baker's son who jined me on the west,
Then consolidate our acres into one immense abode --
When my hired man said, "By ginger, look'y yonder down the road."

"Well," said I, "my goodness gracious, things are rather overgrown
When a buggy wheel gets loosened and goes runnin' round alone!"
"But, my man," he said, "by mustards," -- as the critter nearer came,
"Don't you see that there's a feller on a-stradle of the same?"
And he was nice a shaver as you'd see most any day,
A trav'lin' through the country in that unexpected way.

He was rather young and handsome and a smilin' as you please,
And his pants they signed a contract with his stockings at the knees.
He had a pair o' treddles somewhat underneath his seat
So's to run the queer contraption by a workin' of his feet.
And with the sun descendin' on it in a manner warm and bright,
It was singular as a circus and an interistin' sight.

As fate was bound to have it on this quite particular morn'
There was something was the matter with our folks's dinner horn,
And when the hired girl tried to, she couldn't blow it very well
Fer to call us up to dinner, so she sent my daughter, Bell,
Who got there just at that minute, nice a gal as could be found,
And this feller looked her over an came smashin' to the ground.

Smash-to-bang he came a floppin'; wheel and stockings, pants and all.
I ran to him remarkin', "You have caught a dreadful fall."
An' my daughter hovered round him, tremblin' as if alarmed,
Actin' just as if she'd like to take him up into her arms.
Then he glanced up, faintly smilin', and gaspin'ly replied,
"I am only hurt internally." -- which I s'pose he meant inside.

Then we placed him on the stone-boat an drove him to the house,
An' he lay there on the sofa -- still and quiet as a mouse.
He wouldn't have a doctor, but he called my daughter, Bell,
An' he laughed and chatted with her like a person gettin' well.
Along late that evenin' I s'pose he went away
For he wasn't there next mornin', and Bell hadn't a word to say.

He had left two silver dollars in an easy noticed spot --
For to pay us for his passage on the stone-boat, like as not.
And t'was quite enough equivalent for his temporary stay --
But what'er he might have left us, still he carried more away,
For my daughter, Bell, grew silent, glanced at every sound she heard,
And Josiah Baker Junior couldn't get a civil word.

I was workin' in my meadow on a blazin' summer day
When my son-in-law by contract came a runnin' cross the way
Sayin', "It's been the bargain for how long I needn't tell
That these two forms should be married, an' also me and Bell,
But how much the indications indicate that that will be,
If you'll come over here a minute, you'll have a chance to see."

He led me cross the valley underneath some picnic trees
Where my gal an that wheel feller sat as cosy as you please.
She had fixed some flowers an ribbons on his wheel ter make a show,
An' they'd been shaken' hands there an forgotten to let go.
Then she sorta made a chair back of the feller's other arm
With no apparent recollection of Josiah Baker's farm.

I walked out in front of them, an' I says, "Yer mighty fine,
But this here gal that you are courtin' is Josiah's gal and mine.
Yer a mighty breachy fellow, a trespassin' all around --
Why, the very grove you sit in is Josiah's father's ground."
Then he rose up stiff and civil and helped Bell across the stile;
Also, put his wheel over with a queer but quiet smile.

Then he stood there like a colonel, she tremblin' with alarm,
And he said, "I beg your pardon if I've done you any harm,
But so far as trespassing matters, I've relieved you of your load,
For the place I now am standing is, I think, the public road.
And this very sweet young lady, you in one sense yours may call,
But she's mine, Sir, in another, and Josiah's not at all.

I'll escort this lady home, Sir, leave my wheel here in your care,
And be back in fifteen minutes to arrange the whole affair.
Please, do not touch the cycle, as tis yet without a flaw,
And I should not like to have a quarrel with my future father-in-law."
He left us both suspectin' that he'd rather got the start,
And the acres of their daddies seemed increasingly apart.

We didn't wait to see him, but with one impatient jerk
We shook our heads in concert and then went back to our work.
But I couldn't help reflectin', he is steady like and cool.
Though that wheel may be a folly, yet it didn't bring a fool.

I was on my step a restin' on a hazy autumn day,
Rather drowsy with a dinner that had just been stored away
And regrettin' that when old Baker's and my homesteads jined in one
That he wasn't to furnish daughter and I wasn't to furnish son
So's to have my name continued stead of lettin' it go down,
When Josiah Baker Junior came a drivin' home from town.

A little way behind him came that wheel scamp, ridin' hard,
An' they both at once alighted an' came walkin' through the yard.
And as fate would have it, also came my daughter, Bell,
From a visit to some neighbors - lookin' very sweet and well.
There they stood together, that there strange dissimilar three,
And remained in one position, lookin' steady down at me.
Then Josiah spoke up loudly with a kind o' sudden pet,

"If this here gal an I's to marry, it is time the day was set,
For this here one-wheel feller's always courtin' round here on the fly,
And they say she rides out with him in the night time on the sly.
Father'll give us board and vitals, you can give her land and dower;
Wherefore, is she wants to have me, please just set the day and hour."

Then the wheel scamp spoke up quiet, though as if the words he meant,
"I would like to wed your daughter and have come for your consent.
She is very dear to me, Sir, when we walk and when we ride,
And I think her not unwilling to become my cherished bride.
I can give her love and honor, and I ask of you no dower;
Wherefore, please bestow your blessing, we have set the day and hour."

Then I might have told my daughter that she now could have the floor
And remarked that on this question there should be just one speech more,
But I rendered my decision in a flame of righteous rage,
And I shouted, "You'd no business for to court or to engage!
This here gal has long been spoke for, and if you please, just clamber on
Your old hind wheel of a buggy and for evermore be gone!"

Then he picked Bell up quite sudden and made swiftly for the gate.
I formed a move to stop 'em, but was most perplexin' late.
He had fixed a small side-saddle on his everlastin' wheel
So that she could ride behind him, clingin' round him a good deal.
Down the B.B. Turnpike like a pair of birds they flew,
Right toward the preacher's, who had married almost everyone we knew.

"Stop 'em! Head 'em! Chase 'em! Catch 'em!", I commanded, very vexed,
"They'll be hustlin off our daughter on a streak of lightning next!"
Then we took Josiah's wagon and his old, gray, spavined mare,
And proceeded for to chase 'em with no extra time to spare.
Josiah whipped and shouted, it was a dismal pinch;
We stayed just so far behind them, but we couldn't gain an inch.

Down the turnpike road we rattled, and some fellers loudly cried,
"Go it, Baker, or you'll lose her; ten-to-one upon the bride!"
And I fumed and yelled and whistled and commanded them to halt;
And the fact we couldn't catch them wasn't Josiah Baker's fault!
But he murmured, "I'm a-makin' father's mare into a wreck
Just to see my gal a-huggin' round another feller's neck!"

They rushed into the preacher's maybe twenty yards ahead,
And before I reached the alter, all the wedding vows were said.
I smashed in wildly just as they were lettin' go of hands,
And remarked in tones of sternness, "I hereby forbid the bands!"
And a little way behind me, Josiah Baker meekly came
A-sayin', "Were my father present, he would doubtless done the same."

Then they turned to me a-smilin', she hangin' on his arm,
And he said, "I beg your pardon, let Josiah have the farm.
We've accomplished the sweet object which we so long have striven,
And as usual in such cases are prepared to be forgiven."
The whole thing seemed so funny, when I'd thought of it awhile,
That I looked them both all over, and then blessed them with a smile.

Then Josiah Baker Junior took his spavined mare for home.
It was difficult decidin' which indulged the most in foam.
And he said, "I'll ride alone, Sir, if the same you do not mind,
And your son and daughter Wheeler maybe'll take you up behind."
Then he yelled while disappearin' with a large smile on his mouth,
"I kin git a gal whose father jines my father on the south!"

I was workin' in my woodshed on a snowy winter day
And reflectin' on a letter that had lately come our way;
How Bell had every blessing that a married gal could need
And had bought her two twin daughters a small-sized velocipede.

Now the thought comes stealin' through me, well so far as I can see
In the line of love and lovin', what's to be is apt to be.

On the cassette tape that Bennie recorded, he made the following statement:

These are "Songs of the Lazy Farmer", published in the "IOWA FARMER" back in 1916 when I was working on a farm up in Iowa.

THE CALF

Of all the farmer's jobs, I think
The worst is learning calves to drink.
They seem to think it's pretty tough
When after they have sucked enough
You turn 'em off on half and half.
You got a disappointed calf.
You push his nose down in the pail,
And then he sneezes without fail
And covers you from head to foot
With milk he blows from out his snoot.
If you get straddled of his neck,
He kicks his heels and bucks, by heck.
If you get mad and twist his tail,
You may land head-first in the pail.
He bucks and bellows, sucks and blows,
And sprays you with his mouth and nose
Until your patience doth depart
And you have murder in your heart.
You'd think a hungry calf would know
Enough to suck instead of blow
When you take hold and push his nose
Down in the milk pail where it goes.
If that there milk was poison, he
Could not object no worse, by gee.
He's made his mind up he won't drink.
That stubborn critter seems to think
That he's completely out of luck
If he must drink instead of suck.
There ain't no job as hard by half
As beatin' sense into a calf.
I wish that them there calves, by gum,
Was born with wisdom when they come.

THE COW

The hired man, he says, "By hen,
That brindel cow is out again.
She busted right out through the fence.
She's run away and gone from hence.
She's good for neither milk nor meat
With tail aloft and flying feet.
She just goes chasing 'round the place.
She's got a mean look on her face.
I don't wish that there cow no harm,
But if I owned her, this here farm
Would be too small for her to stay.
I'd shoot that beast and save my hay.
At milking time she sets her foot
Down hard upon my rubber boot
And puts the other in the pail
And knocks my eye out with her tail.
That critter isn't any good.
If she had her deserts, she would
Be shot at sunrise with a gun.
A milkin' that cow ain't no fun."

Said I, "The trouble with you is,
You didn't fix the fence, gee whiz!
You let it go, and then to boot
You lay it onto that dumb brute.
What you should do is go out hence
And nail some new boards on that fence.
Then, if you'd curry that old cow
And show a little kindness now
Instead of calling her, 'old fool,'
And beating her up with a stool,
You'd find her disposition would
Soon change, and she'd start being good.
You find as you go through this life
That whether it's a cow or wife
It pays to treat 'em nice, by heck.
These females sure can cause a peck
Of trouble if they ain't used right.
It surely pays to treat 'em white."

MY NEIGHBOR

The trouble with my neighbor is
He lets his temper boil and fizz.
No matter what you talk about
He'll start to wave his arms and shout.
If you do no more than say,
"Ain't this a bang-up winter day?",
He'll argue that the sun's too bright
And prophesy a storm 'fore night.
He also knows just what to do
'Bout China, Greece, or Timbucktoo.
There's not a thing he reads or hears
But creates in him some brand new fears.
What worries me about the guy
Is that his pressure gets too high.
I'm scared to death that he might burst
And I won't get away safe first.
The way the blood goes to his head
And turns his face a scarlet red,
I'm sure a pressure gauge would show
That his poor top's about to blow.
His nerves are shot, his breath comes short,
And he drinks tonic by the quart.
He even gets wound up so tight
He rolls and tosses every night.
Can you imagine anything
Worth losing sleep about, by jing?

A FEW POEMS from GRANDPA'S "FILE"

WHEN THE FROST IS ON THE PUMPKIN

When the frost is on the pumpkin and the fodder's in the shock,
And you hear the kyuck and gobble of the struttin' turkey-cock,
And the cacklin' of the guineys and the cluckin' of the hens,
And the roosters' hallylooyer as he tiptoes on the fence;
Oh, it's then's the times a feller is a-feelin' at his best,
With the risen' sun to greet him from a night of peaceful rest
As he leaves the house bareheaded and goes out to feed the stock,
When the frost is on the pumpkin and the fodder's in the shock.

They's somethin kindo harty-like about the atmusfere
When the heat of summer's over and the coolin fall is here.
Of course, we miss the flowers and the blossoms on the trees
And the mumble of the hummingbirds and buzzin' of the bees,
But the air's so appetizin', and the landscape through the haze
Of a crisp and sunny morning of the airly autumn days
Is a picture that no painter has the colorin' to mock,
When the frost is on the pumpkin and the fodder's in the shock.

A FEW POEMS from GRANDPA'S "FILE"

The husky rusty russel of the tossels of the corn,
And the raspin' of the tangled leaves, as golden as the morn,
The stubble in the furries, kindo lonesome-like, but still
A-preachin sermons to us of the barns they growed to fill,
The strawstack in the medder, and the reaper in the shed,
The horses in their stalls below, the clover overhead.
Oh, it sets my heart a clickin' like the tickin' of the clock
When the frost is on the pumpkin and the fodder's in the shock.

When your apples all are gathered and the ones a feller keeps
Is poured around the celler floor in red and yeller heaps,
And your cider-makin's over, and your wimmen folks is through
With their mince and apple-butter and their souse and sausage too;
I don't know how to tell it, but if such a thing could be
As the angels wantin' boardin' and they called around on me,
I'd want to 'commodate 'em all, the whole induring flock,
When the frost is on the pumpkin and the fodder's in the shock.

AS I GROW OLD
Douglas Malloch

As I grow old it seem that I
Grow old as does the western sky
When day is drawing to its close,
For life takes on a tint of rose
I had not known in life's hot noon.
Now, in the night that comes so soon
I see new stars I had not seen,
A surer faith, a peace serene
As I grow old.

As I grow old the winds of life
Die down. The hate, the strife,
The water's calm, the waves are still;
I want no triumphs, wish no ill
To any man. Now from my heart
The ancient angers all depart."
New friends I know, new songs are sung,
New joys are mine. - Yes, I grow young
As I grow old.

SOMEHOW, SOMEWAY
Don Blanding

I've tried for many an hour and minute
To imagine the world without me in it;
But I could not imagine a newborn day
Without me here somehow, someday.

I cannot imagine the Autumn's flare
Without me here, alive, aware.
I cannot imagine a dawn in Spring
Without my heart awakening.

These treasured years will come and go
At a swifter pace, but this I know:
I will not fear, I do not care
That some future day - sometime, somewhere
This body will turn to ash and clay,
For I'll still be here somehow, someday.

A FEW POEMS from GRANDPA'S "FILE"

THE TRULY BLIND

My neighbors never find melody in the rain
Sounding on the keyboard of dusty leaves again.
A shining field of mustard, the plumes of goldenrod
Are just a useless waste of space and waste of good black sod.
To them, a wide cool pasture is a place for grazing cows,
The blueness of the morning means a good day for the plows.
Apple blossoms, fairy pink, mean apples by and by,
And only weather forecasts are revealed from out the sky.

THE POOR

Who walks beside a rosebud and does not sense its bloom,
It's lovely form and color, it's delicate perfume,
Who walks beneath the heavens, but does not see the sky
With the sunrise and the sunset, in tints that glow and die,
Who treads the rural pathway and never hears a bird,
Nor notes the trembling grasses a passing breeze has stirred,
Who dwells among his fellows and sees them pass his door
But never hears their heartbeats, is pitifully poor.

SUNRISE

Today, I saw the sun come up like Neptune from the sea.
I saw him light a cliff with gold and wake a distant tree.
I saw him shake his shaggy head and laugh the night away,
And toss into the sleeping world another golden day.
The waves which had been black and cold came in with silver crest.
I saw the sunbeams gently wake the songbirds from their nests.
The slow retreating night slipped back, and strewn on field and lawn,
On every blade of grass, I saw the jewels of the dawn.
Never was a monarch hailed with such a cavalcade,
No hero bringing victory home has seen such wealth displayed.
In honor of the coming day, the humblest plant and tree
Stood on the curbstone of the world in radiant livery.
Pageants of splendor man may plan with robes of burnished gold,
On horses from Arabia may prance the knights of old,
Harolds on silver horns may blow, and Kings come riding in --
But I have seen God's pagentry, I've seen the day begin.

A FEW POEMS from GRANDPA'S "FILE"

OCTOBER NOON

Last night the hills were draped in gray,
But in the sun of noon this day
A million flaming angels stood
Where yesterday had been a wood.

In robes of scarlet, crimson, gold,
With blowing banners manifold,
With lifted trumpet, flaming sword,
They hailed the glory of the Lord.

I hid my two eyes suddenly,
Lest too much beauty madden me.

BURNING BUSHES

Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush aflame
with God:

But only he who sees takes
off his shoes.
The rest sit 'round and eat
blackberries.

--- Eliz. B. Browning

Life's Purpose

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Tell me not in mournful numbers
Life is but an empty dream!
For the soul is dead that slumbers
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou are, to dust thou returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment and not sorrow
Is our destined end or way;
But to act that each tomorrow
Find us farther than today.

Lives of great men all remind us
We can live our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footsteps in the sands of time.

Let us then be up and doing
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor - and to wait.

QUOTES from Grandpa Bennie, including some memorized poems.

"A young man Gladys and I knew at McPherson College, we knew him quite well then, and it was a number of years later when a poem he wrote appeared in the church paper. I understood it quite well because I knew the young man and his background. He grew up where his dad was the minister in the church, and of course he was expected to go to church and always did; I'm sure he was a good boy all right. But this poem shows something of his growth in experience of real worship. The poem he calls "My Own Way."

Will Thou be pleased, dear Lord, that on this day
I worship in this sacred shrine in my own way?
My temple, Lord is carpeted with rugs of moss,
and overhead the bows have formed an azure cross.
Quietly the birches bow their heads in prayer.
The benediction of the sun is everywhere.
As if to make the prayer's amen, the wind comes strong.
The congregation of the trees unite in song.
Wilt Thou be pleased, dear Lord, that on this day
I worship in this sacred shrine in my own way?

"Each one in life must work out his own philosophy of life, religion, experience, appreciation, depth of understanding. Hallem and Tennyson were very close friends, were searching for truth and were denounced, ridiculed, called heretics, and I suppose were put out of the church. But after Hallem's death, Tennyson wrote this of him:

Perplexed in faith but pure in deed,
At last he beat his music out,
There is more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half our creeds.

"Another poet had something to say about this question that some people call doubt; I think it is merely an honest questioning and searching for truth - each person trying to find something that gives complete and solid satisfaction and a sound, basic philosophy. This poet says:

Craven are they who do not dare to doubt,
Who fear to tread the darkness and the gloom
Of queries and perplexities that loom
In ever deepening shadows round about.

But they who brave the tumult and the shout,
Bleeding and dying neath a martyr's doom,
Have blazed the trails where life and plenty bloom
Because they dared to question - and find out.

"The pendulum swings one way and then another, of course. George Santiana has one entitled, "Faith," which swings the pendulum back a little the other way:

Oh world, thou chooseth not the better part.
It is not wisdom to be only wise
And on the inward vision close the eyes.
But it is wisdom to believe the heart.
Columbus found a world and had no chart
Save one that faith deciphered in the skies.
To trust the soul's invincible surmise
Was all his science and his only art.
Our knowledge too is a torch of smoky pine
That lights the pathway but one step ahead
Across the void of mystery and dread.
Bid then the tender light of faith to shine
By which alone the mortal heart is led
Unto the thinking of the thought divine.

-- Not the Duck He Might Have Been -- *(attached)*

My padre says I'm all sinner
John Bull says I'm all saint
But both are bound to be wrong
For I'm neither of them, I ain't.
I'm a man, and a man is a mixture
Right down from the day of his birth
For part of him comes from heaven
And part of him comes from earth.

"And each one of us has to think our own way through.
Tennyson, thinking of Hallem, again, and thinking of his own
responsibility, said:

Nor will I let the teaching of another
absolve me of my task of finding out.
Just as I will not force upon my brother
the answer I have made to my own doubt.

Now to swing the pendulum back a little the other way again:

I would not always reason. The straight path wearies us
with never varying lines and we grow melancholy.

I would make reason my guide, but she must sometimes sit
patiently by the wayside while I tread the mazes of the
pleasant wilderness around me.

She should be my counselor, but not my tyrant, for the
spirit needs impulses from a deeper source than hers,
and there are notions in the mind of man that she must
look upon with awe.

"The combination of faith and reason. They are both
necessary, both vital to a good, abundant, full life. I like
to think of it this way: Reason should be used to its full
capacity to build a solid foundation upon which a consistent

faith can go far beyond. Putting it all in a little slogan, faith and reason travel the same road, but faith out travels reason. As far as reason can go, faith must be consistent with it, but when reason has gone to its' ultimate distance, then faith should build beyond that.

"Tennyson did that in his poem, "In Memoriam", written quite some years after Halleem's death. He gives this picture of that struggle of thinking things through:

Spring and summer,
 autumn and winter,
All of the old
 revolutions of earth
All of the old
 revolutions of empires
Change of the tide,
 what is all of it worth?

All the philosophies,
 all of the sciences,
All the various
 voices of prayer,
All that is noblest
 with all that is basest,
All that is filthy
 with all that is fair.

What is it all worth
 if each of us end
In being our own
 corpse coffin at last -
Swallowed in vastness,
 lost in the silence,
Drowned in the depths
 of the infinite past?

What, but the murmur
 of gnats in the gloom,
But a moment's anger
 of bees in the hive
But peace, let it be,
 I love him forever.
The dead are not dead,
 but alive!

"The thing that really makes life worthwhile is to add to the meaning of life and direct life in the right channels, down the right road. Here's a little poem called, "The Crossroads":

NOT THE DUCK IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

There are three tame ducks in our back yard,
Dabbling in mud and trying hard
To get their share, and maybe more,
Of the overflowing barnyard store.
Satisfied with the task they're at
Of eating and sleeping and getting fat.
But whenever the free wild ducks go by
In a long line streaming down the sky,
They cock a quizzical puzzled eye
And flap their wings and try to fly.

I think my soul is a tame old duck
Dabbling around the barnyard muck,
Fat and lazy, with useless wings,
But sometimes when the north wind sings
And the wild ones hurtle overhead,
It remembers something lost and dead
And cocks a wary bewildered eye
And makes a feeble attempt to fly.
It's fairly content with the state it's in,
But it isn't the duck it might have been.

Who never has suffered has lived but half,
Who never failed has never strove or sought,
Who never wept is stranger to a laugh,
And who never doubted, never thought.

UNCLE JOSH STORIES from old EDISON cylinder machine records (shaped like paper towel rolls):

THE BICYCLE:

Along last spring, Rubin Hoshkin - that is, Ezra Hoshkin's boy - he come home from college and he brought one of them new fangled bicycles with him. Well, I think ever since that time the whole town of Punkin Center's got bicycle fever. All our boys and girls are riding bicycles now and nothin would do 'em but I must learn to ride one of them. Well, I never did think very favorably on it, but in order to keep peace in the family, I told 'em I would learn. Well, I wish you'd a been there when I commenced. I took that machine by the horns, and I led it out in the middle of the road, and I got on it sorta unconcerned like, and then I got off sorta unconcerned like. I went up in the air and I come down all over that bicycle. I fell on top o fit, I fell under it, I fell between the wheels, I fell in front of the front wheel and behind the hind wheel at the same time. I run by foot thru the spokes, put about a hundred and fifty punctures in a hedge fence, and skeered a horse and buggy clear off the highway, and I made more revolutions in a fifteen foot circle than any buzz saw that ever was invented. I lost a lamp, I lost a clamp, I lost my patience, I lost my temper, I broke the handles bars, I broke the sprocket, I broke the ten commandments and the ordinance agin loud and abusive language. Well, I'm thru with it. Once is enough for me. You can all ride your bicycles that want to, but for my part I'd just as soon stand up and walk as to sot down and walk. There's no more bicycle for yer Uncle Josh, not if he knows it, and yer Uncle Josh calculates as how he do.

MOVIN DAY AT PUNKIN CENTER: Well, I don't believe there ever was as many people moved away from our town as there was last spring. Punkin Center went prohibition. Yep, we had four saloons and one drug store, and now we got five drug stores. Well, Hiram Wood made up his mind he would move over to Hickory Corners and he sent over to get Jim Larson and me to help him move. Well, I'd knowed Hi since he was a little feller, and his wife, Mandy, too. You see, there were two Wood families in our town, Hi's folks and Mandy's folks, and Hi was sparkin Mandy, and he asked Mandy if she would marry him and she said she would. So Wood Married Wood, and it weren't no time at all till they had a whole house full of kindling. Well, Hi didn't know very much. One spring he put so much fertilizer on his punkin patch he didn't have any punkins. They started growin and them vines grew so fast they wore the punkins out a draggin them over the ground. Well, Jim and me went over to help him move. We got a lot of things out on the wagon, 'n Jim was a crawlin around over some things in the garrett 'n he got his wooden leg poked thru a barrel 'n fell down stairs with it. Well, I had a quilting frame on one shoulder, a feather bed on the other, a dishpan full of dishes and a jar of preserves in my hand. Well, I fell down, busted the preserves, ripped open the feather bed an' got preserves and feathers all over me, and the horses got skeered and ran away, 'n Hi started after them. I started after Hi, the dogs started after me, and the whole town of Punkin Center turned out to see who got tarred and feathered. Gosh, I never will forget movin' day in Punkin Center.

THE OLD MAN'S STORY

Feeble and old, a stranger stood in a careless, boisterous crowd.
His face wore the look of solitude, his form with years was bowed.
"Old man," said one of the merry throng, "drink with us this Christmas Day!"
"Tell us a story, or sing us a song to pass the time away!"

From the stranger's lips this answer fell, "I can neither drink with you
Nor sing you a song, but I can tell a story alas too true:
You who have firesides of your own where little children play,
Look at me, old, friendless, alone, and heed these words, I say.

I once had a wife, a child, a little boy whose face
Was as bright as a flower, pure and mild, a marvel of youthful grace.
Bright curls hung over a forehead white, 'neath which his eyes of blue
Looked out with a steadfast light, rejoicing in all things new.

We lived in a lone, secluded spot beside a forest dim
No mates had he, but his mother thought that the angels played with him.
For gentle and good was he always, and he filled our home with joy.
Our lives grew brighter day by day from the love of our little boy

I often recall those happy years, but now it is strange to think
That in spite of pleadings and bitter tears, I fell a victim of drink.
And though she failed like a blighted flower, the wife who had loved me true,
I was held secure by that evil power which each day stronger grew.

The happiness of our home was o'er, and soon there came a day
When death stood at our open door, its entrance none could stay.
Not a word of reproach she had for me, but with a look instead
So tired, so worn, and so sad, my wife was with the dead.

Well after this I tried to reform my ways because of the little lad
Who had left his pranks and merry plays and had grown so quiet and sad.
He missed his mother, and grieved for her though her name he would seldom speak.
But I could tell it by the undried tears which, at night, lay on his cheek.

I tried to reform, but failed utterly and I ne'er can forget his eyes
They were his mother's own. How they followed me full of sorrow and sad surprise.
He started whenever I spoke his name, he shrank from my lightest touch,
He feared me, oh cruel, bitter shame - the child I loved so much.

Now when Christmas came I could plainly see there was something he wanted to say
As with trembling hands he clung to me that night when I started away.
"Papa," he faltered, "please stay at home. Don't let them make you drink,
Because that's why Santa Claus didn't come last Christmas Eve, I think.

Mama said when I asked her why.
And papa, dear, I've just prayed and prayed that this time he won't pass by.
I don't want books, or a single toy. I've asked him, don't you know
to bring Mama back to her little boy, for oh I want her so."

Somehow those words almost drove me wild, and flinging aside his arm,
Without a word to the trembling child, I plunged into the storm.
It was snowing fast, and a bleak wind blew, but I hurried on and on -
On to the place which of old I knew, where I drank till regret was gone.

It was late when at last I staggered home, late, late, and the night was old.
Was it strange that a feeling of ill should come, that the room was silent and cold?
Sobered, I stood in the grip of fear, and yet I doubted my sight
But the room was empty, no child was there, he was out alone at night.

My God, how I searched and called his name, how the bleak wind hurled the snow.
And I thought sometimes that an answer came. And the night passed dark and slow.
How I wildly cursed that evil bowl with sorrow and bitter pain,
And vowed to the depth of my wretched soul never to touch it again.

God pity me, for my little boy had wandered away from home
In a storm that was raging fierce and wild, because Santy Claus did not come.
He had gone to wait beside the road thinking surely he would appear.
And when morning broke like a ghostly ward I found him lying there,

White as the drifted snow beneath, his hair was like frosted gold,
His lips were sealed with the kiss of death, his cheeks were pale and cold.
He was smiling gently as there he lay on his snow bed soft and deep,
His hands were folded as if to say, "Now I lay me down to sleep"

And asleep was he, for that holy night the angels had made his bed,
His face was reflecting the wondrous light that their presence around him shed.
And my heart broke, though I was glad that God had heard his cries,
And sent his mama, so Santy Claus did not this time pass by.

THE LITTLE DOG UNDER THE WAGON

"Come, Wife," said good old farmer Gray, "Put on your things this market day,
And let's be off to the market town -there and back. We'll leave old Sport behind."
But Sport, he barked and Sport, he whined,
And soon made up his doggish mind to follow under the wagon.

Well away they went at a good round pace, and joy came into the farmer's face;
"Poor Sport," he said, "did want to come, but I 'm very glad he's left a home.
He'll guard the barn he'll guard the cot , and he'll keep the cattle out of the lot."
"I'm not so sure about that," thought Sport, the little dog under the wagon.

The farmer, all his produce sold, and got his pay in yellow gold,
And started homeward after dark, home through the lonely woods. Hark!
A robber springs from behind a tree, "Your money or your life!" says he.
The moon was up, but he didn't see the little dog under the wagon.

Now Sport never barked, Sport never whined, but he quickly caught the thief behind,
And dragged him down in the mire and dirt, and tore his coat and tore his shirt.
He held him fast on the mire ground, and the robber uttered not a sound.
While his hands and feet the farmer bound and tumbled him into the wagon.

So Sport, he saved the farmer's life, the farmer's money and the farmer's wife.
And now a hero, grand and gay, a silver collar he wears today.
Among his friends, among his foes, where'er his master chance to goes,
He follows on his little toes, the little dog under the wagon.

FAITHFUL FIDO

Faithful Fido was a dog that was trained to go with carriers of money from one town to another. He would guard this money at all costs. So when one little town wanted to deposit money, or change with a bank in the distance, or needed money, the carrier would use saddlebags behind the saddle. The money was put in there, the carrier would get on his horse and he would travel to this other town. Faithful Fido, his dog, followed along.

But it was a hot day, and they came to a stream of water where with trees on both sides for quite some distance. So this guy, he took the saddlebags off of his saddle, laid them down by a tree, and laid down to rest. He put his head on the saddlebags to rest. He slept longer than he had intended to. The dog woke him up, licking his face, because the dog knew that he was late. So he looked at his watch, and he jumped up quick, jumped on the horse and away he went.

Pretty soon he came to the stream, and the dog ran after him and barked, and would run back. He thought to himself, a dog who goes mad - when they get to water they act crazy. This dog had been running back and forth barking at him. So when he got to the stream, where the horse stopped to drink water, the dog came running, and barking, and jumped up on him and bit him on the foot - on the toe of his boot.

Well the guy made up his mind that the dog had gone mad. It was the August - the days they call Dog Daze. It was his decision that the dog should be shot. So he shot the dog. Fido yelped and hollered and started running back.

After he left the stream, going on by horseback, all the sudden he thought, "My goodness!" and he felt back of his saddle, his saddlebags were not there! He knew he had left them.

He turned around, going as fast as he could go. When he got to the stream he began to feel sorry for himself or ashamed, because he had shot the dog, and he knew then that the dog was only trying to tell him what he had done. So when he got across the road, why, as he rode along, he was watching to see where the dog had gone - if the dog had gone to one side of the road or the other. But he saw drops of blood on the road, so he knew he was still on the track. And when he got back to where he had taken the saddlebags off, why, Faithful Fido was there with his head on the saddlebags - dead.

PIG-HOG

Vas der any of you boys and girls vat vas here dat vas ever tried to drive a pig-hog? I did vonce't, and I told you right now I would sooner drive nails any day than hogs. Ven I vas a small boy, my fadder vonce said to me von day, "Ben, you go drive that vite and black schpeckled pig down to Mr Sphiggles." Mr Sphiggle lived about a mile down the road. And he said, "Now, hurry back mit yourself in time for school." So off I started for da pigpen, and dat vas the last he seen of me for twenty-five or nine hours.

Vell, I climbs me in the pigpen, and I begins to scratch dat vite and black schpeckled pig on the back. Vell, as long as I schcratched the pig on the back, he vas alright, but ven I take him by the ear and lead him outside of the pen, he looks around and says, "boof!" -- and away he vent. He shtruck me with his schnoot nose and knocked me right over. Next he struck the front gate and took it right off da hinges, and up da street he vent - in the opposite direction from Mr Sphiggles. I vistles and called, "pig, pig, pig!", and up da street I vent after him. Vel, I never did tink dat a pig hog could run purty fast, but right den I found dat I was mistoocken. That pig runs three or von miles before I could overtook him. Vel, ven I finally comes up mit the pig, he vas layin by the side of the road fast aschleep, and I schlips up real quiet and now tinks me I'll tie my 'ankerchief around your be-hinte leg. Vel, vile I vas tying my 'ankerchief around his be-hinte leg, he said "boof" and kicked me right square in the face. Vel, I give him one in the side and I says, "Boo youself." Then he set up and look at me and I says, "Vel old fella, if you's rested ve'll make for home."

So I begins to schratch the pig on the back. Vel, as long as I shcratch the pig on the back, he vas alright, but ven I try to drive him, de harder I drive de harder he would sot still. Vel, I didn't know vot to done, so I vent to a man's house dat vas close by and axed him if he would borrow to me a broom 'andle. I told him I vonted to handle my pig and thought I could handle him mit a handle.

Vel, I took de handle, vent out in the road and the pighog vas gone. I looks around and sees the pig over in a man's turnip patch eaten up the man's turnips. Vel, I got over there and I begins to handle the pig mit the handle -- til I broke it into six or von pieces. Dat vas the handle, not the pig. Vel, ven the man sees the pig eaten up his turnips, he comes out mit his muscat gun and shoots dat pig all full mit holes and kicks me all over my trouser pants.

Vel, ven that pig hears the gun go off, away he vent, and he runs three or von miles again before I could get ahead of him. But I cut across lots and ven I finally comes ahead mit the pig, he vas mad and made a rush for me and runs right between my two legs. Vel, I grabs his ear mit one hand and his tail mit the other, and down the street we went mit me on the pig's back. Vel, I held on with all of my might, and a part of my mane, til all at vonce my hand schlipped mit his ear off, and I fell off in a muddle puddle. But I still hung onto his tail like 60 -- or 65 -- til all at vonce his tail pulled out by the roots. Vel, the pig turned off to the side of the road and got tangled up in a wire fence. There I had him. Now, right there would have been a beautiful landscape view for some artist. Dere vas me in a muddle puddle mit a laugh on my face and a pig's tail in my hand mitout no pig on the tail. And over there in the fence was the pig mitout no tail on the pig. Vel, I didn't know vot to done. I vas afraid if I turned the pig loose, he would run off vonce more. So I vent to a man's house dat vas close by and axed him if he would borrow to me a veelbarrel, a bed blanket and a clothesline. I wraps the pig up in the bed blanket, lays him in the veelbarrel, ties him down mit the clothesline and lays a great big schtone on him. Then I wheels him down to Mr Sphiggles. Vel, when I got down there, by schimminy huckleberries, I vas tired. And it vas the next night dat day ven I got home.