

***BERT LESTON
TAYLOR***

A silhouette of a person standing on a cliff edge, looking out over a vast landscape under a sunset sky. The person is positioned in the center of the frame, with the horizon line below them. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue, with a thin white line of light visible on the left side. The overall mood is contemplative and dramatic.

***THE SO-
CALLED
HUMAN
RACE***

Bert Leston Taylor

The So-called Human Race

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Arranged, with an Introduction, by
Henry B. Fuller

New York



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[p v]
WORLD WITHOUT END

Once upon a summer's night
Mused a mischief-making sprite,
Underneath the leafy hood
Of a fairy-haunted wood.
Here and there, in light and shade,
Ill-assorted couples strayed:
"Lord," said Puck, in elfish glee,
"Lord, what fools these mortals be!"

Now he sings the self-same tune
Underneath an older moon.
Life to him is, plain enough,
Still a game of blind man's buff.
If we listen we may hear
Puckish laughter always near,

And the elf's apostrophe,
"Lord, what fools these mortals be!"

B.L.T.

[p vii] Foreword

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By Henry B. Fuller

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Bert Leston Taylor (known the country over as “B.L.T.”) was the first of our day’s “colyumists”—first in point of time, and first in point of merit. For nearly twenty years, with some interruptions, he conducted “A Line-o’-Type or Two” on the editorial page of the Chicago *Tribune*. His broad column—broad by measurement, broad in scope, and a bit broad, now and again, in its tone—cheered hundreds of thousands at the breakfast-tables of the Middle West, and on its trains and trolleys. As the “Column” grew in reputation, “making the Line” became almost a national sport. Whoever had a happy thought, whoever could handily turn a humorous paragraph or tune a pointed jingle, was only too glad to attempt collaboration with B.L.T. Others, possessing no literary knack, chanced it with brief reports on the follies or ineptitudes of the “so-called human race.” Some of them picked up their matter on their travels—these were the “Gadders.” Others culled oddities from the provincial press, and so gave further scope [\[p viii\]](#) />to “The Enraptured Reporter,” or offered selected gems of *gaucherie* from private correspondence, and thus added to the rich yield of “The Second Post.” Still humbler helpers chipped in with queer bits of nomenclature, thereby aiding the formation of an “Academy of Immortals”—an organization fully officered

by people with droll names and always tending, as will become apparent in the following pages, to enlarge and vary its roster.

All these contributors, as well as many other persons who existed independently of the "Line," lived in the corrective fear of the "Cannery," that capacious receptacle which yawned for the trite word and the stereotyped phrase. Our language, to B.L.T., was an honest, living growth: deadwood, whether in thought or in the expression of thought, never got by, but was marked for the burning. The "Cannery," with its numbered shelves and jars, was a deterrent indeed, and anyone who ventured to relieve himself as "Vox Populi" or as a conventional versifier, did well to walk with care.

Over all these aids, would-be or actual, presided the Conductor himself, furnishing a steady framework by his own quips, jingles and philosophizings, and bringing each day's exhibit to an ordered unity. The Column was more than the sum of its contributors. It was the sum of [p ix] />units, original or contributed, that had been manipulated and brought to high effectiveness by a skilled hand and a nature wide in its sympathies and in its range of interests.

Taylor had the gift of opening new roads and of inviting a willing public to follow. Or, to put it another way, he had the faculty of making new moulds, into which his helpers were only too glad to pour their material. Some of these "leads" lasted for weeks; some for months; others persisted through the years. The lifted wand evoked, marshalled, vivified, and the daily miracle came to its regular accomplishment.

Taylor hewed his Line in precise accord with his own taste and fancy. All was on the basis of personal preference. His

chiefs learned early that so rare an organism was best left alone to function in harmony with its own nature. The Column had not only its own philosophy and its own æsthetics, but its own politics: if it seemed to contravene other and more representative departments of the paper, never mind. Its conductor had such confidence in the validity of his personal predilections and in their identity with those of “the general,” that he carried on things with the one rule of pleasing himself, certain that he should find no better rule for pleasing others. His success was complete.

His papers and clippings, found in a fairly [p x] />forward state of preparation, gave in part the necessary indications for the completion of this volume. The results will perhaps lack somewhat the typographical effectiveness which is within the reach of a metropolitan daily when utilized by a “colyumist” who was also a practical printer, and they can only approximate that piquant employment of juxtaposition and contrast which made every issue of “A Line-o’-Type or Two” a work of art in its way. But no arrangement of items from that source could becloud the essential nature of its Conductor: though “The So-Called Human Race” sometimes plays rather tartly and impatiently with men’s follies and shortcomings, it clearly and constantly exhibits a sunny, alert and airy spirit to whom all things human made their sharp appeal.

[p xi]
The So-Called
Human Race

[p 1]
A LINE-O'-TYPE OR TWO

Motto: Hew to the Line, let the quips fall where they may.

SIMPLE

My readers are a varied lot;
Their tastes do not agree.
A squib that tickles A is not
At all the thing for B.

What's sense to J, is folderol
To K, but pleases Q.
So, when I come to fill the Col,
I know just what to do.

It is refreshing to find in the society columns an account of a quiet wedding. The conventional screams of a groom are rather trying.

A man will sit around smoking all day and his wife will remark: "My dear, aren't you smoking too much?" The doctor cuts him down to three cigars a day, and his wife remarks: "My dear, aren't you smoking too much?" Finally he chops off to a single after-dinner smoke, and when he

lights up his wife remarks: "John, you do nothing but smoke all day long." Women are singularly observant.

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NO DOUBT THERE ARE OTHERS.

Sir: A gadder friend of mine has been on the road so long that he always speaks of the parlor in his house as the lobby. E.C.M.

With the possible exception of Trotzky, Mr. Hearst is the busiest person politically that one is able to wot of. Such boundless zeal! Such measureless energy! Such genius—an infinite capacity for giving pains!

Ancestor worship is not peculiar to any tribe or nation. We observed last evening, on North Clark street, a crowd shaking hands in turn with an organ-grinder's monkey.

"In fact," says an editorial on Uncongenial Clubs, "a man may go to a club to get away from congenial spirits." True. And is there any more uncongenial club than the Human Race? The service is bad, the membership is frightfully promiscuous, and about the only place to which one can escape is the library. It is always quiet there.

Sign in the Black Hawk Hotel, Byron, Ill.: "If you think you are witty send your thoughts to B.L.T., care Chicago Tribune. Do not spring them on the help. It hurts efficiency."

[p 3]
AN OBSERVANT KANSAN.
[From the Emporia Gazette.]

The handsome clerk at the Harvey House makes this profound observation: Any girl will flirt as the train is pulling out.

THE GIRL OF THE PERIOD.

She formerly talked of the weather,
The popular book, or the play;
Her old line of chat
Was of this thing or that
In the fashions and fads of the day.

But now she discusses eugenics,
And things that a pundit perplex;
She knocks you quite flat
With her new line of chat,
And her "What do you think about sex?"

"Are we all to shudder at the name of Rabelais and take to smelling salts?" queries an editorial colleague. "Are we to be a wholly lady-like nation?" Small danger, brother. Human nature changes imperceptibly, or not at all. The objection to most imitations of Rabelais is that they lack the unforced wit and humor of the original.

A picture of Dr. A. Ford Carr testing a baby provokes a

frivolous reader to observe that when [p 4] />the babies cry the doctor probably gives them a rattle.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN “ALMOST”! **[From the Cedar Rapids Republican.]**

The man who writes a certain column in Chicago can always fill two-thirds of it with quotations and contributions. But that may be called success—when they bring the stuff to you and are almost willing to pay you for printing it.

WE’LL TELL THE PLEIADES SO.

Sir: “I’ll say she is,” “Don’t take it so hard,” “I’ll tell the world.” These, and other slangy explosives from our nursery, fell upon the sensitive auditory nerves of callers last evening. I am in a quandary, whether to complain to the missus or write a corrective letter to the children’s school teachers, for on the square some guy ought to bawl the kids out for fair about this rough stuff—it gets my goat. J.F.B.

Did you think “I’ll say so” was new slang? Well, it isn’t. You will find it in Sterne’s “Sentimental Journey.”

Formula for accepting a second cigar from a man whose taste in tobacco is poor: “Thank you; the courtesy is not *all* yours.”

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A number of suicides are attributed to the impending conjunction of the planets and the menace of world-end. You can interest anybody in astronomy if you can establish for

him a connection between his personal affairs and the movements of the stars.

**WHERE 'VANGIE LIES.
Rondeau Sentimental to Evangeline, the Office
Goat.**

Where 'Vangie lies strown folios
Like Vallambrosan leaves repose,
The sad, the blithe, the quaint, the queer,
The good, the punk are scattered here—
A pile of poof in verse and prose.

And none would guess, save him who strows,
How much transcendent genius goes
Unwept, unknown, into the smear
Where 'Vangie lies.

With every opening mail it snows
Till 'Vangie's covered to her nose.
Forgetting that she is so near,
I sometimes kick her in the ear.
Then sundry piteous ba-a-a's disclose
Where 'Vangie lies.

“This sale,” advertises a candid clothier, “lasts only so long as the goods last, and that won't be very long.”

[p 6]
THE SECOND POST.
(Letter from an island caretaker.)

Dear Sir: Your letter came. Glad you bought a team of horses. Hilda is sick. She has diphtheria and she will die I think. Clara died this eve. She had it, too. We are quarantined. Five of Fisher's family have got it. My wife is sick. She hain't got it. If this thing gets worse we may have to get a doctor. Them trees are budding good. Everything is O.K.

Just as we started to light a pipe preparatory to filling this column, we were reminded of Whistler's remark to a student who was smoking: "You should be very careful. You know you might get interested in your work and let your pipe go out."

It is odd, and not uninteresting to students of the so-called human race, that a steamfitter or a manufacturer of suspenders who may not know the difference between the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution—who may not, indeed, know anything at all—is nevertheless a bubbly-fountain of political wisdom; whereas a writer for a newspaper is capable of emitting only drivel. This may be due to the greater opportunity for meditation enjoyed by suspender-makers and steamfitters.

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Janesville's Grand Hotel just blew itself on its Thanksgiving dinner. The menu included "Cheese a la Fromage."

“It is with ideas we shall conquer the world,” boasts Lenine. If he needs a few more he can get them at the Patent Office in Washington, which is packed with plans and specifications of perpetual motion machines and other contraptions as unworkable as bolshevism.

HEARD IN THE BANK.

A woman from the country made a deposit consisting of several items. After ascertaining the amount the receiving teller asked, “Did you foot it up?” “No, I rode in,” said she. H.A.N.

The fact that Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, and other great departed whose names are taken in vain every day by small-bore politicians, do not return and whack these persons over the heads with a tambourine, is almost—as Anatole France remarked in an essay on Flaubert—is almost an argument against the immortality of the soul.

Harper’s Weekly refrains from comment on the shipping bill because, says its editor, “we have not been able to accumulate enough knowledge.” [p 8] />Well! If every one refrained from expressing an opinion on a subject until he was well informed the pulp mills would go out of business and a great silence would fall upon the world.

It is pleasant to believe the sun is restoring its expended energy by condensation, and that the so-called human race is in the morning of its existence; and it is necessary that

the majority should believe so, for otherwise the business of the world would not get done. The happiest cynic would be depressed by the sight of humanity sitting with folded hands, waiting apathetically for the end.

Perhaps the best way to get acquainted with the self-styled human race is to collect money from it.

TO A WELL-KNOWN GLOBE.

I would not seem to slam our valued planet,—
Space, being infinite, may hold a worse;
Nor would I intimate that if I ran it
Its vapors might disperse.

Within our solar system, or without it,
May be a world less rationally run;
There may be such a geoid, but I doubt it—
I can't conceive of one.

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If from the time our sphere began revolving
Until the present writing there had been
A glimmer of a promise of resolving
The muddle we are in:

If we could answer "Whither are we drifting?"
Or hope to wallow out of the morass—

I might continue boosting and uplifting;
But as it is, I pass.

So on your way, old globe, wherever aiming,
Go blundering down the endless slopes of space:
As far away the prospect of reclaiming
The so-called human race.

Gyrate, old Top, and let who will be clever;
The mess we're in is much too deep to solve.
Me for a quiet life while you, as ever,
Continue to revolve.

“Our editorials,” announces the Tampa Tribune, “are written by members of the staff, and do not necessarily reflect the policy of the paper.” Similarly, the contents of this column are written by its conductor and the straphangers, and have nothing whatever to do with its policy.

“What, indeed?” as Romeo replied to Juliet’s query. And yet Ralph Dilley and Irene Pickle were married in Decatur last week.

He was heard to observe, coming from the theater into the thick of the wind and snow: “God help the rich; the poor can sleep with their windows shut.”

We have received a copy of the first issue of *The Fabulist*, printed in Hingham Centre, Mass., and although we haven't had time to read it, we like one of its ideas. "Contributions," it announces, "must be paid for in advance at space rates."

The viewpoint of Dr. Jacques Duval (interestingly set forth by Mr. Arliss) is that knowledge is more important than the life of individual members of the so-called human race. But even Duval is a sentimentalist. He believes that knowledge is important.

Among reasonable requests must be included that of the Hotel Fleming in Petersburg, Ind.: "Gentlemen, please walk light at night. The guests are paying 75 cents to sleep and do not want to be disturbed."

We have recorded the opinion that the Lum Tum Lumber Co. of Walla Walla, Wash., would make a good college yell; but the Wishkah Boom Co. of Wishkah, Wash., would do even better.

Some one was commiserating Impresario Dippel on his picturesque assortment of griefs. "Yes," he said, "an impresario is a man who has trouble. If he hasn't any he makes it."

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What is the use of expositions of other men's philosophic systems unless the exposition is made lucid and interesting? Philosophers are much like certain musical critics: they write

for one another, in a jargon which only themselves can understand.

O shade of Claude Debussy, for whom the bells of hell or heaven go tingalingaling (for wherever you are it is certain there are many bells—great bells, little bells, bells in high air, and bells beneath the sea), how we should rejoice that the beautiful things which you dreamed are as a book that is sealed to most of those who put them upon programmes; for these do not merely play them badly, they do not play them at all. Thus they cannot be spoiled for us, nor can our ear be dulled; and when the few play them that understand, they are as fresh and beautiful as on the day when first you set them down.

“The increase in the use of tobacco by women,” declares the Methodist Board, “is appalling.” Is it not? But so many things are appalling that it would be a relief to everybody if a board, or commission, or other volunteer organization were to act as a shock-absorber. Whenever an appalling situation arose, this group could be appalled for the rest of us. And we, knowing that the board would be properly appalled, should not have to worry.

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Ad of a Des Moines baggage transfer company: “Don’t lie awake fearing you’ll miss your train—we’ll attend to that.” You bet they do.

The president of the Printing Press and Feeders’ (sic) union

estimates that a family in New York requires \$2,362 a year to get by. Which sets us musing on the days of our youth in Manchester, N.H., when we were envied by the others of the newspaper staff because we got \$18 a week. We lived high, dressed expensively (for Manchester), and always had money for Wine and Song. How did we manage it? Blessed if we can remember.

The soi-disant human race appears to its best advantage, perhaps its only advantage, in work. The race is not ornamental, nor is it over-bright, having only enough wit to scrape along with. Work is the best thing it does, and when it seeks to avoid this, its reason for existence disappears.

“Where,” asks G.N., “can I find the remainder of that beautiful Highland ballad beginning—

‘I canna drook th’ stourie tow,
Nor ither soak my hoggie:
Hae cluttered up the muckle doon,
An’ wow but I was voggie.’”

Women regard hair as pianists regard technic: one can’t have too much of it.

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The demand for regulation of the sale of wood alcohol reminds Uncle Henry of Horace Greeley’s remark when he was asked to subscribe to a missionary fund “to save his

fellow-man from going to hell.” Said Hod, “Not enough of them go there now.”

A few lines on the literary page relate that Edith Alice Maitland, who recently died in London, was the original of “Alice In Wonderland.” Lewis Carroll wrote the book for her, and perhaps read chapters to her as he went along. Happy author, happy reader! If the ordering of our labors were entirely within our control we should write exclusively for children. They are more intelligent than adults, have a quicker apprehension, and are without prejudices. In addressing children, one may write quite frankly and sincerely. In addressing grown-ups the only safe medium of expression is irony.

Gleaned by R.J.S. from a Topeka church calendar: “Preaching at 8p.m., subject ‘A Voice from Hell.’ Miss Holman will sing.”

Here is a happy little suggestion for traveling men, offered by S.B.T.: “When entering the dining room of a hotel, why not look searchingly about and rub hands together briskly?”

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What could be more frank than the framed motto in the Hotel Fortney, at Viroqua, Wis.—“There Is No Place Like Home.”?

As to why hotelkeepers charge farmers less than they charge traveling men, one of our readers discovered the reason in 1899: The gadder takes a bunch of toothpicks

after each meal and pouches them; the farmer takes only one, and when he is finished with it he puts it back.

If Plato were writing to-day he would have no occasion to revise his notion of democracy—"a charming form of government, full of variety and disorder, and dispensing equality to equals and unequals alike."

The older we grow the more impressed we are by the amount of bias in the world. Thank heaven, the only prejudices we have are religious, racial, and social prejudices. In other respects we are open to reason.

From the calendar of the Pike county court: "Shank vs. Shinn."

Strange all this difference should have been
'Twixt Mr. Shank and Mr. Shinn.

[p 15] HOME TIES.

Sir: Discovered, in Minnesota, the country delegate who goes to bed wearing the tie his daughter tied on him before he left home, because he wouldn't know how to tie it in the morning if he took it off. J.O.C.

THEY FOUND THEM IN THE ALLEY.

Sir: A young man promised a charming young woman, as a birthday remembrance, a rose for every year she was old. After he had given the order for two dozen Killarneys, the

florist said to his boy: "He's a good customer. Just put in half a dozen extra." M.C.G.

"When," inquires a fair reader, apropos of our remark that the only way to improve the so-called human race is to junk it and begin over again, "when does the junking begin? Because..." Cawn't say when the big explosion will occur. But look for us in a neighboring constellation.

When they junk the human species
We will meet you, love, in Pisces.

THE TOONERVILLE TROLLEY.

Sir: Did you ever ride on a street car in one of those towns where no one has any place to go and [p 16] />all day to get there in? The conversation runs something like this between the motorman and conductor:

Conductor: "Ding ding!" (Meaning, "I'm ready whenever you are.")

Motorman: "Ding ding!" ("Well, I'm ready.")

Conductor: "Ding ding!" ("All right, you can go.")

Motorman: "Ding ding!" ("I gotcha, Steve.")

Then they go. P.I.N.

O WILD! O STRANGE!

"That wild and strange thing, the press."—H.G. Wells.

It's now too late, I fear, to change,
For ever since a child

I've always been a little strange,
And just a little wild.

I never knew the reason why,
But now the cause I guess—
What Mr. Wells, the author, calls
“That wild, strange thing, the press.”

I've worked for every kind of pape
In journalism's range,
And some were tame and commonplace,
But most were wild and strange.

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I ran a country paper once—
Or, rather, it ran me;
It was the strangest, wildest thing
That ever you did see.

Some years ago I settled down
And thought to find a cure
By writing books and plays and sich,
That class as litrachoor.

And for a time I lived apart,
In abject happiness;
Yet all the while I hankered for

That strange, wild thing, the press.

Its fatal fascination I
Could not resist for long;
I fled the path of litrachoor,
And once again went wrong.

I resurrected this here Col,
By which you are beguiled.
I fear you find it strange sometimes,
And always rather wild.

A delegation of Socialists has returned from Russia with the news that Sovietude leaves everything to be desired, that “things are worse than in the Czarist days.” Naturally. The trouble is, the ideal is more easily achieved than retained. The ideal existed for a few weeks in Russia. It [p 18] />was at the time of the canning of Kerensky. Everybody had authority and nobody had it. Lincoln Steffens, beating his luminous wings in the void, beamed with joy. The ideal had been achieved; all government had disappeared. But this happy state could not last. The people who think such a happy state can last are the most interesting minds outside of the high brick wall which surrounds the institution.

When one consults what he is pleased to call his mind, this planet seems the saddest and maddest of possible worlds. And when one walks homeward under a waning moon,

through Suburbia's deserted lanes, between hedges that exhale the breath of lilac and honeysuckle, the world seems a very satisfactory half-way house on the road to the Unknown. Shall we trust our intelligence or our senses? If we follow the latter it is because we wish to, not because they are a more trustworthy guide.

One must agree with Mr. Yeats, that the poetic drama is for a very small audience, but we should not like to see it so restricted. For a good share of the amusement which we get out of life comes from watching the attempts to feed caviar to the general.

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THE POPOCATEPETL OF
APPRECIATION.
[From the Paris, Ill., News.]

For the past seven days I have been in inmate at the county jail, and through the columns of the Daily News I wish to express my thanks and appreciation to Sheriff and Mrs. McCallister and Mr. McDaniel for the kindness shown to me. I have been in jail before, here and at other places, and never found a like institution kept in such a sanitary condition. The food prepared by Mrs. McCallister was excellent. In my opinion Mr. McCallister is entitled to any office.

May Claybaugh.

A copy of the second edition of The Ozark Harpist is received. The Harpist is Alys Hale, who sings on the flyleaf:

“Sing on, my harp,
Sing on some more and ever,
For sweet souls are breaking,
And fond hearts are aching,
Sing on some more and ever!”

We quite agree with Mr. Masefield that great literary work requires leisure. Lack of leisure is handicapping us in the writing of a romance. We compose it while waiting for trains, while shoveling snow and coal, while riding on the L, while shaving; and we write it on the backs of envelopes, on the covering of packages, on the margins [p 20] />of newspapers. The best place to write a book is in jail, where Cervantes wrote Don Quixote; but we can't find time to commit a greater misdemeanor than this column, and there is no jail sentence for that. The only compensation for the literary method we are forced to adopt is that there is a great deal of “go” in it.

Replying to an extremely dear reader: Whenever we animadvert on the human race we include ourself. We share its imperfections, and we hope we are tinctured with its few virtues. As a race it impresses us as a flivver; we feel as you, perhaps, feel in your club when, looking over the members, you wonder how the dickens most of them got in.

Prof. Pickering is quoted as declaring that a race of superior beings inhabits the moon. Now we are far from claiming that the inhabitants of our geoid are superior to the moon folk, or any other folk in the solar system; but the mere fact that

the Moonians are able to exist in conditions peculiar to themselves does not make them superior. The whale can live under water. Is the whale, then, superior to, say, Senator Johnson? True, it can spout farther, but it is probably inferior to Mr. Johnson in reasoning power.

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The man who tells you that he believes “in principles, not men,” means—nothing at all. One would think that in the beginning God created a set of principles, and man was without form and void.

“Lost—Pair of trousers while shopping. Finder call Dinsmore 1869.”—Minneapolis Journal.

The female of the shopping species is rougher and more ruthless than the male.

“Ancient Rome, in the height of her glory, with her lavish amusements, Olympian games,” etc.—The enraptured advertiser.

The proof reader asks us if it was an eruption of Mt. Olympus that destroyed Pompeii.

GARDENS.

My lady hath a garden fair,
Wherein she whiles her hours:
She chides me that I do not share
Her rage for springing flowers.

I tell her I've a garden, too,
Wherein I have to toil—
The kind that Epicurus knew,
If not so good a soil.

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And I must till my patch with care,
And watch its daily needs;
For lacking water, sun, and air,
The place would run to weeds.

In this the garden of the mind,
My flowers are all too few;
Yet am I well content to find
A modest bloom or two.

My lady hath a garden fair,
Or will when buds are blown:
I've but a blossom here and there—
Poor posies, but mine own.

“Very well, here is a constructive criticism,” declared Col. Roosevelt, tossing another grenade into the administration trenches. The Colonel is our favorite constructive critic. After he has finished a bit of construction it takes an hour for the dust to settle.

Judgment day will be a complete performance for the