

The Poetry of
George Albert Leddy

Featuring Tales of the Rugged Trails



Illustrated by Jason W. Clark

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Compiled and Edited by Chris Abair

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Tales of the Rugged Trails

The Adventurous Ballads of
Vermont Poet

George Albert Leddy
(1883-1967)



Performed by his
Grandson Chris Abair

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**Dedicated in loving memory to
Mary Elizabeth (Leddy) Abair**

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A Storyteller's Story

An Introduction

My grandfather, **George Albert Leddy**, was born in 1883 in a logging camp near Underhill, Vermont. He was second-generation Irish-American and self-educated. The clan had farms in the area and worked in the lumber industry. They were always active in politics. Bert, as they called him, longed for adventure in the Klondike and Out West, but settled for work in Burlington. In 1923, he was partners with Floyd Myrick in an ice cream parlor on Church St. called Ledrick's. That led to employment at General Ice Cream and Sealtest. He went on and retired from the Strong Hardware Store in Burlington. Many of the poems he wrote in his later life were about the people he worked with there.

When my grandfather died in 1967, I was sixteen and had no idea how great his poetry was. We all knew he was very creative and his house was full of his inventions: like the candy-making machines, electric lawn-mowers, and motorized ice-sleigh. We called him Baboo because he'd always say "bah boo" to the babies when he held them. We called my grandmother Darling, and they were loving grandparents to us nine grandchildren. I only knew them in old age and mostly remember them sitting in their parlor watching westerns and soap operas on TV. Their daughter Mary, my mother, was their only child, and we grew up a few blocks away from them in the south-end of Burlington, Vermont.

We knew he wrote poetry and remember him typing away on his manuscripts in his bedroom. Occasionally, he would recite one of his poems or a Robert Service poem like "*The Cremation of Sam McGee*." At the time, us kids were more interested in Rock 'n Roll than poetry and paid little attention. As I got older and a little wiser, I realized we needed to preserve his works. So I first made photocopies of his two old manuscripts of poetry. Then, when PC's and word processing programs came along, I set out to transcribe and compile his poems into a book. In the process, I discovered poetry and, particularly, the oral tradition of storytelling.

The poems were mostly detailed stories, composed in perfect lyrical rhyme, and meant to be recited from memory—some take 15 minutes to perform. The manuscripts were typed-up with little punctuation, mostly dashes to indicate pauses between phrases. I needed to go through each poem thoroughly, line by line, verse by verse, to get the right meaning and expression in order to supply the correct punctuation. At the time, I knew little about proper grammar, punctuation, and poetic structure. I would recite the lines out loud to get the right expression and found some so full of emotions, like sadness and hate, they would bring tears to my eyes. I also found that I needed to stand up and use gestures to best communicate the verse. It was then that I realized that this poetry was not just meant to be read but heard, and it came to life when recited from the heart with passion and emotion.

After completing the book in 1998, I started memorizing the poems and performing them at coffeehouses, senior centers, and retirement homes. I was very encouraged. Now, I've memorized over three hours of poetry, including poems by others like Robert Frost and Robert Service. Calling myself a storyteller, I've gone on to perform for many organizations, at all types of venues, and at festivals around the region. I've even appeared on radio and TV—which today overshadow poetry as the medium for storytelling. Now, I'm using the computer and Internet to produce and publish media based on my grandfather's poetry.

I often wonder, if my grandfather were alive today, what he would think of what I've done with his poetry. I would have so many questions for him: Am I reciting the poems the right way? How had he been able to write so accurately about the West, the Arctic, and the sea, when he had little formal education and had never left Vermont? Where, when, and for whom, did he recite his poetry?

I really believe that my grandfather is somehow, somehow behind my passion and drive to preserve and publish his works. It may be his genes that give me the ability to memorize and naturally recite poetry, and his spirit that drives my efforts. Maybe this is how oral traditions, like poetry and storytelling, have survived through the generations, and I'm just doing my part.

– Chris Abair



George Albert Leddy

Tales of the Rugged Trails

Author's Foreword

by George Albert Leddy

List' to the tales of the rugged trails,
And the rugged, rawboned men;
Gruesome and weird, tainted and smeared;
Blackened with crime and sin;
Lonesome and sad, men that are mad;
Men with an iron will;
Men with a mind, weakened and blind;
Filled with a lust to kill;
Men who have loved, men who have lost;
But ever they want to try.
They have chosen their trail, and they follow it on;
They thrive where the weakling die.

Thrive; aye, thrive, 'though the soul be dead,
And the dry bones grind away;
And the flesh be drawn, and the eyes be wan,
And the hair and whiskers gray.
Painfully, slowly, stumbling along;
Feeling a joy in their pains;
Filled to the brim like the primitive men,
With the blood of an ancient age.
Coarse be their smile, rough be their song;
But never they pause to sigh.
They are the men, and they're out to win;
They thrive where the weakling die.

Arctic Love

by **George Albert Leddy**

THERE ARE MANY SONS
WHO COULD TELL YOU TALES
WHOSE DADS HAVE TRAVELED
THE ARCTIC TRAILS

I'll never forget the moon that night,
As it hung so low in the distant sky;
A tired moon with a hungry light,
An anemic thing and about to die;
But it showed me the way that I had to go,
As it cast weird shadows on the snow.

I'll never forget the way I felt,
As I said good-bye to the little shack;
To the little shack where we'd lived and loved;
And I dreamed of the day we'd be coming back.
But there're many things that we do not know;
As you live your life, you will find it so.

I'll never forget the night we met,
As she sang her songs in that Yukon hall,
To that reckless crowd who were cheering loud.
They called her The Little Baby Doll.
Be she good or bad, I did not know,
And I did not care, for I loved her so.

I'll never forget how she told me then,
By her father's death, she was left alone.
She had to sing, 'twas the only thing,
'Twas the only world she had ever known.
So I gave her my home, it was all I had;
But she loved it there, and her heart was glad.

I'll never forget how her laughter rang,
Rang through the hills and echoed back;
Cheering me on as I worked my claim;
Making a heaven out of my shack.
Silent now as I fought my way,
Only a bundle on the sleigh.

I'll never forget how the huskies strained,
Fighting their way through the drifting snow;
Lashing them on with the stinging whip;
Faster and faster, and yet too slow;
Praying to God in the distant sky;
Praying to God, "Don't let her die!"

I'll never forget how the miles behind
Had taken my strength, I was nearly through;
When I sighted the lights of a little town;
I knew there were lights, that was all I knew;
But they carried me in, and they cared for me;
As crazy a man as you'd ever see.

I'll never forget when I opened my eyes,
'Twas a bright spring, and the skies were blue;
The whitewashed wall, and sheeted bed;
And the crib in the corner, and then I knew;
And they showed me the grave in the churchyard lot,
And I prayed by the hour on the spot.

I'll never forget the way I feel
When I think of the shack that we called home;
Of the laughter and joy of a love so sweet.
Oh, God, I could never go back alone.
I am telling you this 'cause my life's near done;
And she was your mother, and you are my son.

Christmas Eve in the Arctic

by George Albert Leddy

MANY A MAN
HAS WISHED IN VAIN
THAT THE DAYS GONE-BYE
MIGHT COME AGAIN

I'll never forget that Christmas Eve
I spent in my shack alone,
In that lonesome land in the great-beyond,
That Santa has never known;
How the winds swept down from the frozen heights
Like the banshees' mournful cry;
And the pine on the hearth burned warm and bright,
And all alone was I.

Then I closed my eyes and there came to me,
In voices soft and low,
The Christmas Carols we used to sing
In days of long ago.
It carried me back to my home again;
A boy with no earthly care;
And the stockings were hung by the fireplace,
And Mother and Dad were there.

And my brothers were: Jim, Dan and Bob;
And my sisters were: Beth and Sue.
They'd told us that Santa would come tonight,
And of course, we knew, 'twas true.
There were apples, and nuts, and candy too;
We'd gathered it all ourselves;
And the popcorn we'd strung on little strings
Was hanging from the shelves.

There was love and joy, and the evening passed,
 And our little prayers were said;
And Mother had kissed us a sweet goodnight,
 And we were tucked in our little bed;
 To dream of Old Santa coming soon,
 With his pack overloaded with toys;
With his “Ha! Ha! Ha!” and his “Ho! Ho! Ho!”
 As he greeted the girls and boys.

Then I woke to the cry of a pack of wolves,
 As they fought to make their kill;
And I saw in the east a pale cold moon
 Rising beyond the hill;
 But I’d lived again, a Christmas Eve
 Like in the days of the long gone-bye;
While the pine on the hearth was burning bright,
 And all alone was I.

The Bandit

by George Albert Leddy

HIS GOODNESS IS BUT BADNESS
HIS LOVE IS BUT A HATE
HIS HAPPINESS IS LONELINESS
HIS LUCK IS BUT HIS FATE

Aye, search ye high and search ye lo';
Ye hound dogs of the law.
Yea, hound dogs, following on the trail
Of one ye never saw.
Ah, do ye hope to get me soon?
Well, let that hope be dead.
Ye'll only find wherein I've dwelt,
To find that I have fled.
I'd shoot ye down should ye come near;
I've done such in the past.
Ye'll never hear the cruel world say,
"Black Donald caught at last!"

When but a boy, I felt your sting
For just some childish prank.
Ye snared me like a savage beast;
My ship-of-hope ye sank.
And as I served my sentence
In your state industrial school,
My soul called out for liberty;
My heart grew hard and cruel.
I grew to hate your heartless laws
That branded me with shame;
And swore to wreck my vengeance
When the day-of-reckoning came.

The guards walked by like stately ghosts,
Within all were at rest.
A knife I'd used at work that day
Lay hidden in my breast.

I heard the watchman at his post
Send out the call, "All's well!"
And then I, like a sneaking-thief,
Crept from my dingy cell.
I sought a guard, my knife in hand,
One blow to set me free.
A moan, a groan, a pool of blood;
A dash for liberty.

But that was thirty years ago;
I've changed a bit since then;
A mountain bandit, cruel and bold,
My soul well lined with sin.
A monarch of the mountainside;
My name rings through the land.
The traveler fears Black Donald
And his notorious-band.
I've earned the name Black Donald
By the dark deeds I have done.
I never stop at anything
Until I know I've won.

I do not hug the mountainside
In dread or trembling fear.
Oft' when they speak of bandits bold,
Black Donald's standing near.
And when I hitch my faithful horse
And call the boys all in,
They drink and talk as if they thought
I were the "King of Men."
They ne're mistrust their liberal host,
The man they'd like to see
With lariat-collar 'round his neck
And swinging from a tree.

Why, I have read the posters
Of the price set on my head.
When searching for Black Donald,

I myself have searches led;
And left the searching party
In the evening when at rest
To rob, and then return again;
The spoils safe in my breast.
Ah, had they known their leader was
The man for which they sought;
They would have shown no mercy,
They'd have killed me on the spot.



I've waited by the mountain-pass
As watchful as a deer,
Until the welcome rumble of
The stage wheels I would hear.
And then, most calm and stately,
I would boldly take my stand.
A halt; a search; and then pass-on;
They'd heeded my command.
But if someone, more boldly,
My actions should decline;
The stage would pass on but to leave
One passenger behind.

And though I am a bandit; robbing,
Robbing night and day;
I haven't got a penny of
The treasure hid away.
And if ye think no friends have I,
Mistaken all are ye.
Ye'd aught to see the grateful ones
Who each night wait for me.
The widow and the orphan,
Whom on charity depend,
Would suffer cold and hunger,
But to them I proved a friend.

And when ye read the horrors
Of Black Donald's terrible band,
Just bare in mind my horse is all
The partner I command.
The deeds we've done, we've done alone,
My faithful steed and I;
And when we leave this rough old world,
We will together die.
And though I've robbed the rich man,
God won't judge me hard I'm sure,
For what I've taken from the rich
I've given to the poor.

And when the day of reckoning comes,
We'll meet on equal grounds;
We'll see your soul's as black as mine;
Ye haunting, heartless hounds.
And 'though you've been the nation's law,
The Bandit then won't fear;
All judged by one, who judges all;
Fair judgment's always here.
So search ye through the years to come
As through the years that's past;
Ye'll never hear the cruel world say,
"Black Donald caught at last!"

The Blackguard

by George Albert Leddy

*We meet strange things in the walks of life
‘Mid the moil, the toil, the hardships and strife;
And I always have found, as I trod the rough road,
That a heartbroken wretch seeks the mine camp abode.
And such is the tale that you’re going to hear
Of a man who had lived in the camp for a year.
He was toil-worn and hardened, grisly and old,
And this is his story as I heard it told.*

A drink? Well, I never refuse it;
‘Though, I haven’t the money to buy.
I’m now what I once deemed a sponger;
A cheap, drunken, rum-soak am I.
There once was a day I’d refuse it,
Without, I’d the means to repay;
And I’d do it now with a shame face,
But thirst takes that feeling away.
Failed in all claims I’ve prospected.
And yet I don’t feel it in vain.
If someone will blow for a grubstake,
Tomorrow, I’ll try it again.

The gold? No, ‘twas not gold that brought me;
I sort’o fell in, don’t you see.
I lived, and I had to live somewhere;
So I wandered up here to be free.
Free from the hounds and their servants,
Hounds of a civilized law;
Hounds who would tear you to pieces,
Lapping the blood from their paw.
Law? That’s not law by a damn-sight;
It’s hell, and no judgment is known.
But I blocked them, yes, damn them, I blocked them;
When they came for my hide, I had flown.

Yes, that was a long time ago, boys;
But to me, it is only a day.
This haggard, old face was a boy's then;
This heavy, old heart was gay;
This gray, knotted mat on my head was
A cluster of golden brown curls;
Those horny old bunches of knuckles
Were as soft and as white as a girl's;
And the voice was so soft and so airy;
And the smile was so sweet and so kind.
God, it don't seem that time could have changed so
Such a life, to a wrecked life like mine.

We lived in a small country village
Where people are few, but all friends;
Where a man's life is built upon merit,
And a girl's life on honor depends.
There came into my life in my school days
A face, I now see in my dreams;
A face, so like that of a fairy's;
A grace, so like that of a queen.
Together, we'd bundle our books up;
Together, we'd stroll down the lane
To the little old school on the hillside,
And together we'd stroll back again.

I oft' tried to tell her, I loved her;
She would smilingly push me away;
But I read in her eyes the whole story,
And I patiently waited the day.
Waited the day when in manhood,
I would tell her the story again;
For the day she would lie on my bosom.
Oh God, but I waited in vain.
And the years have past by all unnumbered,
Since the heart was crushed out of the child;
And my heart has grown hard with the hardships,
In the heart of the Great-Silent-Wild.

She was only sixteen when it happened.
You see, in the spring of the year,
The folks of the city would come there,
And stay till the autumn was near.
One cottage was built on the hillside
Where a master and servants did dwell;
His rich summer home in the country,
But his home in the future is Hell.
With his fine city ways, and his money,
His ponies, his dogs, and his gun;
And the stories he often would tell us.
Oh, we thought him a wonderful one.

A change had come over my darling;
She'd pass me with never a smile.
My heart, it would pound like the windlass
A-hoisting the muck to the pile.
My young blood flowed swift as the Yukon;
My heart felt like sixty-below;
My thoughts were as wild as the mountains,
And then came the terrible blow.
He had gone and had taken her with him;
Gone, and I couldn't tell where;
Gone, and no good-byes were spoken;
Gone, but left love everywhere.

A love that was hell in its burning;
A love that gnawed into the soul;
A love that was maddening, stinging,
Bitter, damning, and cold.
Like the wretch that rots with scurvy,
The man rotted out of my breast;
A fiend filled with fires of vengeance;
My hatred was never at rest.
Dead to my ears was her laughter;
Dead to my heart was her smile;
Dead to my eyes was her beauty;
But the hated love clung all the while.

I took to the lone trail to find her;
A trail filled with hardship and pain.
Till a spirit-crushed, broken-down hobo,
I returned to the old home again.
She'd returned. She was there. "Did I see her?"
Ah, no, but I knelt by her grave.
The hatred that burned in my heart then
Was a hate that was cowardly brave;
A hate that's not quenched by murder;
A hate that must glory in pain;
Must list' to the moaning and groaning;
Must lash in the blood of the slain.

To search him, it meant I must leave her;
But I stayed by her grave for a day.
I kissed the green sod and I whispered,
"Oh loved-one, just show me the way."
I passed down the streets of a city;
To me, 'twas a wild-raging sea;
The turmoil, the hurry, the worry;
The crowding as if to be free.
Each face seemed the story of trouble,
That rode on the restless wave;
Then vanished away like a bubble;
A mass moving on to the grave.

As I thought of my love that was sleeping
In that little, green grave far away,
I was caught in the whirl and jostled
Through the door of a swell cabaret.
Well, I sank to a chair by a table.
Oh God, but I'll never forget;
I sat face-to-face with my victim;
O'er my brow came a cold, clammy wet.
He smiles as he passes the bottle;
I grin with a devilish glee.
My plain, haggard face is a disguise;
My hatred my victim can't see.

I laugh as I fill up the glasses;
I laugh; see his head's sinking low.
I laugh, and I laugh, as I take him
To his cab that is waiting below.
Now, I whisper "Home" to the driver.
We are there; we are entering in;
Entering now, where she entered,
To a beautiful home of sin.
I search out the silks and the laces,
She bought with her honor and life,
And wore for awhile as his mistress.
Ah, no, she was never a wife.

I've found them; I don them; I'm waiting.
He moves; see he opens his eyes.
Ah! 'tis her that he sees; how he trembles;
How wild are the rum-reddened eyes.
His breath; see he chokes; he is frightened.
His voice; yet no words, just a moan.
He wreaths like a snake; he's a serpent.
He growls like a dog with a bone.
He swoons; then the smell of the brandy.
His eyes, they are opened again.
He sees her still standing before him;
A victim of immoral sin.



He tears out his hair in his anguish.
See him gnash at his flesh; see the blood.
He is mad; see a wild ragging madman.
Now, he falls to the floor with a thud.
And that is a long twenty years, boys;
He's never known naught since that day.
There he grovels and crawls like a serpent;
And snarls like a panther at bay.
And that is the reason I'm dodging
A law that would sentence me tight.
If vengeance was mine in the reckoning;
Please God, I have done naught but right!

The Blue and the Gray

by George Albert Leddy

THE LASH OF TIME SPEEDS FAST
THE TEAM OF PARTING YEARS
YET MEMORIES OF THE PAST
ARE HELD WITH REINS OF TEARS

Yes, I'm a lad of the South, Miss;
My coat, as you see, is the Gray.
I've come for a canteen of water.
Please, Miss, you won't turn me away.

You see, in the heat of the battle
I was wounded, and fell mid the slain.
I don't know how long I had lain there,
But Miss, when I waked-up again –

The battle was over and still, Miss;
The sun shone full, two-hours high;
The pain in my arm drove me frantic;
I was praying to God, I would die.

I heard someone stirring beside me,
And looking again I could see
A poor lad a-burning with fever,
And trying to speak to me.

His lips were so parched, and so dry, Miss;
And the cold sweat of death on his brow.
Were it not for my canteen of water,
He would not have been living now.

But he is, Miss; and I must go to him;
And Oh, I forgot to tell you:
That the lad is a lad of the North, Miss;
He wears not the Gray, but the Blue.

He gave me this locket and told me,
Should he never see me again:
To search, till I found the original –
My God, Miss, 'tis you!

And he said, the picture was that of his sister.
'Tis you, Miss! Don't cry, but be brave.
We will go to your brother at once,
And God grant that his life we may save.

'Tis over that way to the right, Miss;
You see, at the foot of that tree.
He's living! Thank God, he is living!
Go to him, and never mind me.

I have grown weak in my journey;
I will sit here a moment and rest.
I'll meet with My Maker in Heaven,
Ere the sun sinks again in the west.

I am happy to die in this way, Miss;
I've been true to my country, you see.
Now the battle is over and done, Miss,
And the angels are calling to me.

Good-bye, Miss – the sky's growing brighter.
I can see gates of gold in the west.
So go to your brother and tell him
That the boy in the Gray is at rest.

Consolation

by **George Albert Leddy**

I was tending the bar in a cheap café;
My spirits were light and my heart was gay;
I had a job and I knew I could eat,
And a bed to lie on when I wanted to sleep.
When a guy shuffled in; he looked like a bum,
And he threw down a quarter and ordered a rum.
Well, I'd been a bum, so it's easy to see
Why I gave him a smile and a welcome "Howdy!"

Then he looked at me with a sort-o a grin
That showed me the place where his teeth had been.
Then his eyes seemed to fill with a luminous light,
Like a man who is seeing a ghost in the night.
Then he looked at me, and he called me Lou,
And my heart stood still, for at once I knew,
'Twas the lad who once I had called my pal;
The lad who had stolen my Little Sall.

Then I thought of the years since I'd left my home,
With a broken-heart and to roam alone;
Cursing the traitor who'd wrecked my life;
Stolen my sweetheart to make her his wife.
Well, the days were dark and the nights were long;
The hate in my heart had become a song;
Singing to music to deaden my brain;
Singing to music to sharpen the pain.

I've traveled the mountains, the desert, the plain;
Fought through the cold, the heat, and the rain;
Slept in my bedroll on hard, frozen ground
With coyotes and wolverines sniffing around.
I've list'd to the whippoorwill calling at night;
Gazed at the stars as they twinkled so bright;
Listened to the thunders rending the sky,
But not for a moment, forget them could I.

Then my pal sort-o whimpered and dropped to the floor,
As a three-hundred-pound cyclone barged in the door;
 She was rugged and burley, her face it was red,
 And her hair, like a haystack, stood on her head.
Well, he ducked to the corner, but she was too quick,
And soon she was dragging him out by the neck.
Though I've found my pals, I'll continue to roam,
For I am convinced – there's no place like home!

Convict Sixty-nine

by George Albert Leddy

TWENTY YEARS IN A PRISON
WAITING FOR DEATH TO COME
PRAYING EACH NIGHT TILL THE MORNING
FOR THE MASTER TO TAKE ME HOME
TWENTY YEARS AND I'M WEARY
WEARY OF LIFE IN A CELL
MY LIFE IT IS CURSED YET I'M PRAYING
AND GOD HE MUST HEAR
AND HE WILL

The prisoner sits within his cell,
His home of twenty years;
Fond visions seem to come and go,
He sees them through his tears.
He seems to be a boy again
With heart that knows no care.
He seems to see a little girl
With sunny, flowing hair.
He reaches out to take her hand;
The vision fades away.
He rouses just to find himself
A prisoner old and gray.

Without, the scene is sadder still;
A hungry, half-crazed tramp
With shrunken cheek and furrowed brow;
A worthless, worn-out scamp.
His life has been a burden,
Filled with crime, and sin, and shame.
He'd wandered on, he cared not where;
Till weary, weak, and lame
He'd reached again the home he'd known
In happy days of yore.
A silent shadow leads him, blindly,
To the prison door.



The prisoner, in his cell, can hear
The conversation low:
“Why yes, a number man was sent here
Twenty years ago.”
“What was the name? What was the crime?
Was he sent-up for life?”
The answer came in muffled tones:
“They say he killed his wife.”
“Ah, Warden, let me see his face,
And if it should be he,
I swear to furnish all the proof
To set the prisoner free.”

The Warden said, "Among them all,
We have Old Sixty-nine.
For twenty years, he's been of all,
The best one on the line.
He's reconciled unto his fate'
He's faithful first and last;
But since the crime his mind is dead
To all the living past.
He can't remember who, or where,
Or how it all began.
I'll let you see Old Sixty-nine;
Perhaps, he'd be your man."

The door is wide; he steps within,
Then falls back with a cry:
"My God, that cannot be the boy
I knew in days gone-bye!
The stately lad, so proud, so stern;
Now shrunken and forlorn;
The handsome face, the noble brow,
Now haggard, old, and worn;
The handsome head of nut-brown hair,
Now shaggy, thin, and white;
The eyes that sparkled truth and love,
Now filled with deadly light.

"The boy who once I called my pal,
When life was young and gay;
The boy who loved the little gal,
The winsome little May;
The boy who won that fight for love;
For I his rival were.
The day they wed my poor heart bled;
My thoughts were all of her.
With jealous rage I cursed the love
She gave to him alone;
And swore by all, the day would come,
I'd claim her for my own.

“And like the wolf that waits the lamb
To wander from the fold;
I waited for the day to come;
My heart was cruel and cold.
Then came the day, the fatal day,
I tremble now to tell:
Disguised as man, but with a heart
And soul as black as hell,
I crept into their humble home.
She met me with a smile.
My God, that smile, I see it yet;
It nearly drove me wild.

“I clasped her madly to my heart;
She fought to get away;
But no, I held her like the jungle
Lion holds its prey;
I held her, and I kissed her lips;
Then one unearthly cry,
Which seemed to chill my very blood
And cause my soul to die,
Went ringing through the little room,
Then vanish into space;
And lo, my once-loved pal and I
Were standing face-to-face.

“His eyes were filled with mad-man’s hate;
I shrank like cowards will.
From what I saw within his face,
I knew he meant to kill.
And like a tiger brought to bay,
I thought but for my life.
I struck a blow, ‘twas meant for him;
But God, it killed his wife.
And as he raised the lifeless form,
He cried, ‘My love! My own!’
I shrank away, a frightened cur,
And left them all alone.

“For twenty years, I wandered through
This rough, old world alone;
No living soul to call me friend,
No place to call my home.
The pain I’ve suffered for my crime,
No tongue could ever tell.
If happiness is heaven,
Then my life has been a hell.
For every time I close my eyes
Her face I seem to see,
A warning me, through eyes of hate,
‘Go back and set him free.’

“But no, the coward in my heart
Was keeping me away.
She warned me in the dead of night;
She led me on by day.
But sure as right will win o’er wrong,
She won her fight at last.
To lay my sins before the world,
My hiding days are past.”
“Oh God!” he cried, “Thy will be done!”
And on a bending knee:
“He’s innocent! The crime is mine!
Go set the prisoner free!”

Alas, too late to free the form
That sits with bowed-down head;
A mighty hand has freed the soul;
Old Sixty-nine is dead.
Upon the face, a peaceful smile;
The first in twenty years.
The Warden stands with bowed-down head;
His eyes are filled with tears.
While he who caused this life of shame
So wildly does entreat:
“Oh God, have mercy on my soul!”
Then dies at his victim’s feet.

Another sun shines bright and clear
 To name another day;
Shines o'er two freshly mounded graves,
 Where two, who'd suffered, lay.
 One little slab marked "Sixty-nine";
 The other marked "Unknown."
While to a court of justice, far above,
 Two souls have flown.
And may the Judge, who judges all,
 Release them from all care;
For they have suffered here below;
 May they be happy – there.

Cook and Peary

by George Albert Leddy

“The Pole is cold and dreary,”
Says Cook and Peary, too.
“I reached it weak and weary,”
Say both, so it must be true.

“There’s nothing there but wind,
And cold, and sleet, and snow.”
Both of them have said the same;
So both of them must know.

Peary says that, “Cook’s a fake,”
But Cook says, “That’s not so,”
That he can prove he reached the Pole
By his faithful Eskimo.

Cook says that, “Peary is a bluff,”
That he never reached the goal.
And still insists, that he alone
Has reached the longed-for Pole.

If on this subject, Doctor Cook
And Peary can’t agree;
We’ll have to ask the sailor,
For the sailor’s been to sea.

Gambler Dan

by George Albert Leddy

THROUGH TWENTY YEARS OF LIVING HELL
OF MINGLED LOVE AND HATE
CURSING THE STRANGER
BLESSING HIS NELL
OH GOD WHAT A TERRIBLE FATE

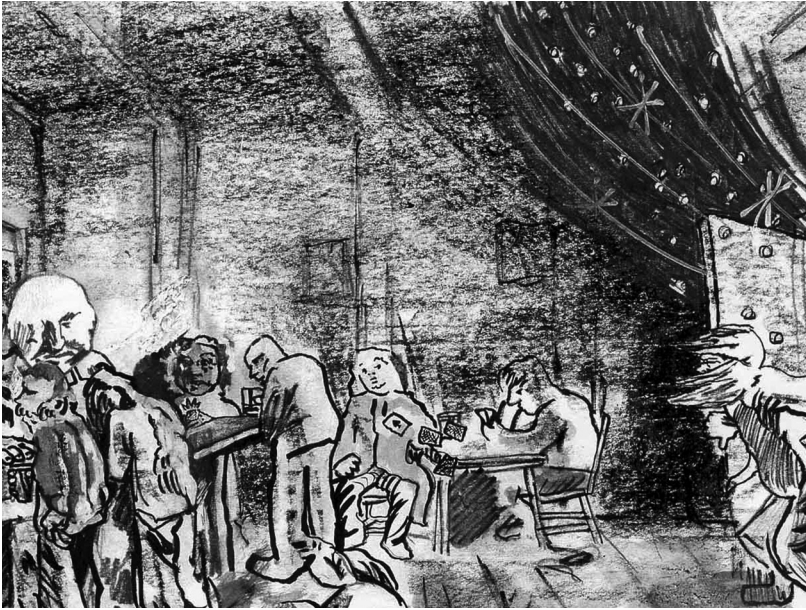
The Sea Dog Inn was gay that night;
The lights were all aglow;
From o'er the bar the whiskey glass
Was quick to come and go.
The organ in the corner
Filled the air with ragtime tune;
While sailor boys with lassies fair
Glide lightly 'round the room.
They do not heed the storm without,
For all is warmth within.
The lassies' hearts are light and gay;
The boys are home again.

The old box-stove that had for years
Bid welcome from the cold;
Far dearer to the sailors' hearts
Than were the shining gold;
Now crackled as the fire burned
The pitch from out the pine;
And shed a glow across a face
So wrinkled, yet so kind.
It was the face of Rising Moon;
The last one of a band
Of Redskins whom the Whites had driven
From this very land.

A sailor called the Redskin's name:
"Come, Rising Moon!" called he;
"We'll drink your health as one who's lived
As white as Whites can be."
The old man did not heed the words,
But gazed with steadfast eye,
Into that mass of burning coals;
Where embers glow and die.
Again they call; he heeds; he comes;
Holds high the sparkling glass;
Cries, "Drink, for e'er another sun
Some man will drink his last!"

"What mean ye?" cried the jolly tars,
As laughter filled the room.
"Be this a warning, or a threat?
Pray, tell us, Rising Moon."
"Jest not!" he cried in trembling voice,
"But pray, for death is near.
The vultures soar above the camp;
The very air feels queer.
The story that I read tonight
Among the living coals,
Will come as sure as ocean waves
Before the high wind rolls."

A sneering laugh resounded
From a corner over where
Slick Gambler Dan was lolling
In his big and easy chair.
"Come play the game; tonight, I'll stake
A hundred in the pool.
Don't waste your time a-list'ning to
That poor old Indian fool."
"Play not the cards!" the Redskin cried,
"But pray, ye, everyone;
For God will judge some crime-stained soul
Before another sun."



A gust of wind has swept the cards;
They scatter on the floor;
And there among them lies a form
That tumbled in the door.
Of man or beast, it's hard to tell;
They raise the shaggy head.
Within the bloodshot eyes they see
A soul by vengeance led.
In snarling, curring voice he cried;
His form convulsed with pain;
"Give me a drink of your cursed rum
To cool my burning brain!"

The brandy flask is quick to come;
He drains it to the last;
Then wildly springs upon his feet;
His breath is coming fast.
“Look, look!” he cried to Gambler Dan.
“Look, look!” he cried, “Tis I!
The man who saved your worthless life,
Who’d aught to let you die.
The man who sprang into that wild,
And roaring, watery hell;
And dragged from there a serpent
To bring home to Little Nell.

“Yes, Little Nell’s my daughter, men;
And motherless from birth.
To me she was the fairest creature
Ever on this earth.
Her mother’s hair, her mother’s eyes,
Her mother’s happy smile;
Her mother’s very heart and soul
Were with her all the while.
I loved her for herself, alone,
And for her mother, too.
The love I felt for Little Nell
Was ever staunch and true.

“Well on that day the mountain stream,
Swelled by the springtime rains,
Rushed madly down the rocky hill
To reach the spreading plain.
I stood upon the mossy bank,
Above that awful roar.
I heard a cry, ‘For God sake, help!’
I thought of nothing more;
Till later on the river’s bank,
I waked as in a prayer,
A stranger lying at my feet;
My fingers clutched his hair.

“I tried to speak; my mind seemed dead;
My heart seemed filled with fear.
The cry for help, ‘For God sake, help!’
Kept ringing in my ear.
And when I got the stranger home
And told the tale to Nell,
She said, “Twas God that sent you, Dad,
And brought you back as well.
He helped you fight, to win, to save.
Oh, praise His name,’ she said.
That’s just the way her mother’d talk,
Had she been there instead.

“Well, Nell, she brought the stranger in;
She worked and brought him to.
She held his hand; she smoothed his brow;
Just as a mother’d do.
And later when he told us that
He must be on his way,
She threw her arms around his neck
And begged of him to stay.
I could not see why Little Nell
Would grieve so much for him.
My God, I never thought the child
Could know a secret sin.

“He went; and as the summer passed,
My Nell had sadder grown.
My God, the truth; the bitter truth;
At last to me was known.
And as the leaves of autumn fell,
They covered o’er a mound
Where sleeps my darling, and her babe;
In death, sweet rest, she found.
And o’er her grave, I prayed to God
To send my soul to Hell,
Should I e’er cease before I had
Avenged my Little Nell.

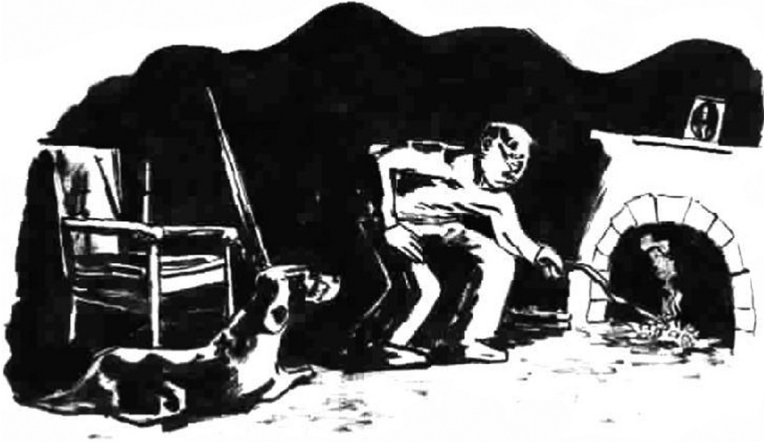
“He tried me hard to see if I were
Firm unto my prayer.
For twenty years, he sent me on,
And on, I knew not where.
Today, I fell; I thought ‘twas o’er;
But my spirit seemed to feel
A drawing to this lonely spot;
As the magnet draws the steel.
I rose and staggered on again,
My whole form filled with pain;
But I win, thank God;
For he and I are face-to-face again.

“The vows I made above her grave,
Tonight, I’m going to fill.
The cur who wreaked her sweet young life,
Tonight, I’m going to kill.
The cur who brought me twenty years
Of sorrow and disgrace;
Who thought me dead, now wakes to find
That we are face-to-face.
Prepare you cur; pray God above
To save your soul from Hell!
Tonight, your life will right the wrong
You did my Little Nell!”

A crash of glass; a window smashed;
Slick Gambler Dan is gone.
A beastly cry; a tiger spring;
The race for life is on.
The old man pauses where a cliff
O’er hangs the rocky shore.
Again, that cry, “For God sake, help!”
He knows that all is o’er.
With bowed-down head, he wanders back;
His step is weak and slow.
“He helped me win! ‘Oh, praise His name!’
Nell said, so long ago.”

He pushed the brandy flask aside,
He said, "No, nevermore."
He staggered and we laid him there
Upon the barroom floor.
His timeworn face, bright with a smile,
His eyes are open wide;
With outstretched arms, he cried, "My Nell,
I've found you!" then he died.

The wild waves lash the rocky shore
Like beasts on fury bent.
With lightning flash and thunder roar,
The blackened skies were rent.
Within, they do not heed the storm;
Strong men with bowed-down heads.
They murmur prayers they'd long forgot,
In honor of the dead.
The Redskin raised the sparkling glass,
Cried, "Drink, for all is well!
A noble soul's in Heaven, men,
And a crime-stained soul's in Hell!"



The Hermit

by George Albert Leddy

THIS IS THE TALE THE HERMIT TOLD
TO HIS DOG HIS GUN AND HIS KNIFE
OF A LOVE A HATE AND A BITTER WRONG
A DEATH AND A WASTED LIFE

*The Hermit with a wrinkled brow,
And weather-beaten face;
His unkempt beard, his knotted hair;
His slow, and weary pace.
Now in his cabin, dark and cold;
No loving voice to cheer.
He looks back o'er his wasted life;
He knows the end is near.
He sees the many happy days,
And loved-ones he has known.
He sees the many sorrows
In the swift years that have flown.
His only pals: his faithful dog,
His rifle, and his knife;
And there, alone, he tells them of
A lonely, wasted life.*

Ah, yes, I'll tell to you a tale;
A tale you've never heard.
I know you'll understand me,
For there's truth in every word.
I'll start back in my younger days;
The days I knew but joy.
The Hermit, old and haggard now,
Was then a fair-haired boy.

And loved a winsome Little Miss,
With eyes of heaven's blue;
And then, one day, Our Country called
For noble sons, and true.
With sword and musket by my side,
I marched away to war.
With kisses sweet, she vowed she'd wait
For me 'till all was o'er.

Then came the day on battlefields,
'Mid deadly shot and shell;
Where comrades fought for victory,
Till 'neath their flag they fell.
I've seen them dying on the field;
I've listened to them pray,
For glory and for liberty,
While life's blood ebbed away.

And there, my brother, whom I loved,
Was ever by my side;
Until one day I missed him,
And I thought that he had died.
With blinding tears, and aching heart,
I sought him 'mong the slain.
I thought of Mother, old and gray,
She'd wait for him in vain.

But when the cry of "Sacred Peace!"
Went ringing through the land;
And home again, our soldier boys,
A gallant little band.
And 'though our spirits seemed most gay,
Much sorrow filled our mind;
The thoughts of struggles, hard and cruel,
And dear-ones left behind.

But lo, the brother once beloved,
And whom I'd long thought dead;
Deserted from the rank-and-file,
And from Old Glory fled.
He told my sweetheart how I'd fell;
My wish before I died:
That he would come back home again
And claim her for his bride.

And for my sake, my sweetheart dear,
My brother's bride became.
And for a long and dreary year,
She suffered pain and shame.
Starvation stared her in the face;
And wrecked her life as well.
Deserting coward, heartless cur;
He made her life a hell.

His love for drink had made him blind;
A bum, a low-down bum.
He lost his pride; he cursed his life;
He sold his soul for rum.
He cursed and beat that faithful wife;
The girl he stole from me;
Until her soul from living-hell,
By death, at last, was free.

And when I heard the story
Of the misery and shame,
My soul cried out for vengeance;
And a madness filled my brain.
To think that he, my brother whom
I'd loved since childhood play,
Would wreck the life of one I'd loved;
I swore that he must pay.

I sought him, and I found him
In a dismal den-of-sin.
He greeted me with malice;
A scoff, a sneer, a grin.
He taunted me, and told me;
In a voice of drunken scorn,
How he had won my love from me.
My heart, with grief, was torn.

And like the lion held for years
Seeks freedom from the cage;
And like the jungle tiger tears
The small prey in his rage;
And like the hissing serpent
Strikes the poison to his foe;
And like the damned that suffer
All the tortures down below.

I lived it all, in one short space;
From God and world apart.
He'd struck the poison from his soul
Into my very heart.
To turn my brain; to drive me mad;
To fill my veins with fire;
To break the bars that bound me
To a coward, thief, and liar.

I did not wait to hear his words;
But with a savage cry, I roared,
 “You killed the girl I loved,
 And for the crime you die!”
He drew a pistol from his breast;
 The drunken, slinking cur.
I fought him then for life or death;
 I fought him then for her.

I grasped the villain by the throat;
 No knife or gun for me.
He struggled like a trapped coyote;
 Vain efforts to get free.
 He held the pistol in his hand;
 A shot, a fiendish yell.
A moan, a groan, and then a curse;
 He, by his own hand, fell.

I saw him lying at my feet;
 I heard his dying prayer.
He seemed to me a savage beast;
 A lion in its lair.
I heard a gasp; his soul then fled;
 His worthless life was o'er.
I left him there, a lifeless heap,
 In his blood upon the floor.

And then I fled; and since that day,
 The Law has pressed me hard.
I take the lead; they follow suit;
 I hold the winning card.
I hid away; they lost the trail;
 And that was years ago.
And though they search, they find me not;
 The truth they'll never know.

For Father-time, the reaper sure,
Who always wins the race;
He comes, and yet I do not fear;
I'll meet him face-to-face.
And should my soul departing from
This wasted weary life,
Reach realms above, I there will meet
She, who'd have been my wife.

My mother, whom in sorrow died,
Is kneeling by her side.
My comrades from the battlefield,
I'll meet again with pride.
My brother, whom my memory hates
Since at my feet he fell,
I'll meet no more unless my soul
Sinks to that brimstone hell.

*The Hermit, now, from memories past,
His heart is filled with pain.
His whole long-life, his wasted-life,
He sees it all again.
He sees the happiness he knew
In days that's long gone-bye.
He sees the misery brought by hate;
He knows that he must die.
He bids his dog, his loyal friend,
Good-bye for ever more.
He prays for God's forgiveness;
And then his life is o'er.
Next day, the Sheriff finds the door;
But justice has them barred;
The Hermit's dead upon the floor;
The old dog standing guard.*

License or Prohibition

by George Albert Leddy

THERE'S NOTHING SO BAD
BUT IT MIGHT BE WORSE
DON'T DECIDE IN A HURRY
THINK WELL OF IT FIRST

The politicians gathered;
'Twas nearing election time.
The subject for discussion
Was a prohibition town.
The Speaker said the License,
Which some thought would be so fine,
Had proven worthless; perhaps, this year,
They'd vote to turn it down.

Perhaps someone who'd voted Yes,
Each year throughout the past,
Had sadly learned a lesson
Each and everyone should know;
Through some loving son or brother
Who now treads the downward path;
Would waken to their folly
And their vote would be a no.

The Speaker grasped the bottle;
Held it high, and loudly cried:
"Behold the hideous reptile
With its fiery, poisonous fangs!
He's ruler of the chasm
Which is yawning deep and wide;
And waiting for the victim,
Who now o'er the high cliff hangs!

“We must unite and fight him;
Fight him to the bitter end.
We must unite an army;
Lay a snare and catch the foe.
The welfare of our country
On our victory, now depends.
Our war munition is our vote;
Our vote must be a No!”

He smashed the bottle crying:
“Start the war and set us free!”
When, lo, a fiery Dragon
From the bottle, did appear.
He jumped around and goaded
Like a hell-fiend in its glee;
And roared, “It is defiance, gentleman,
That brings me here!”

“For I defy you, boldly,
Do your worst; I’ll still exist.
For I have had experience,
Many, many years; ‘tis true.
I’ll live through Prohibition
When the License you’ve dismissed.
The better that you treat me, well,
The best ‘twill be for you.

“Just take me to your hotel
Where they have a decent bar;
And place me where the public,
Who desire, may stroll in.
And I will sit there calmly;
Come they near or stay they far.
I will not use my power
To influence temperate men.

“I will not bid a welcome
To the young or to the weak;
I’ll turn them from my portals
When they seek to enter here.
I cannot do the cursed work;
I’m held down so to speak.
The License law will hold me;
So there’s nothing much to fear.

“But when you kill the License,
Which protects you from my sting;
And call Old Prohibition in
To act as outer-guard.
It is then I’m free to ramble.
‘Tis then I’m in full-swing.
‘Tis then I strike the blow;
And the blow I strike is hard.

“‘Tis then you set me free,
Like a lion from the cage;
Like a panther, like a snake,
Like a devil; fierce am I.
Then I capture weaker men,
And I curse them in my rage;
And I hold them in my clutches,
Like a demon, ‘till they die.

“They will stumble through the alley
To the backdoor of some den.
I’m on every other street
Under Prohibition’s care.
And I swear to do my damnedest
To lead men into sin;
When there’s no License law
To disturb my precious lair.

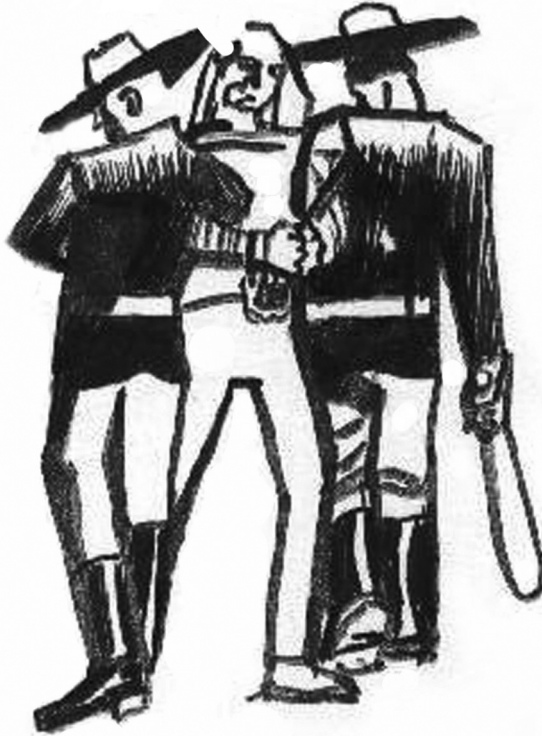
“I’ll grasp the young and simple;
Grasp the old and weak of mind;
Grasp the husband and the brother;
And I’ll hold them ‘gainst their will.
There is something ‘bout my dens
Makes them linger for a while.
At last, they learn to hate it;
But they linger, linger still.

“I’ll catch him and I’ll drag him
To some place I hold command.
I’ll give him good and plenty,
Till I craze the weakened brain.
I’ll take a sharp-edged dagger,
And I’ll place it in his hand;
Then bring him to his senses
Just to gaze on one he’s slain.

“And then the cry of ‘Murder!’
Will go ringing through the air.
The policemen then will enter;
Take the murderer to the Law.
He then receives the verdict:
‘Sentenced to the electric-chair.’
Ah, then is Prohibition right,
Or does it hold a flaw?”

“My last words!” roared the Dragon,
In a voice of snarling hate:
“Think well before you mingle;
Let, well enough alone.
Don’t vote for Prohibition
And regret when it’s too late.
Just leave it to the wise men
Whom experience has shown:
The License law is safer,
For it holds me in my place;
So close, I cannot do much harm.

To that, I must confess.”
A flash, a roar, a rumble heard;
And then a vacant place.
The Dragon vanished in a smoke.
The Speaker roared, “Vote Yes!”





Lost in the Desert

by George Albert Leddy

Well, I never was much of a man to pray;
From churches and preachers, I kept away.
And I used to laugh when they talked 'bout Hell.
What do they know of the things they tell?
When a man is dead, well, he's dead for good;
Same as the flowers, or pieces of wood.
But I changed my mind, and I'll tell you why;
When I thought that my time had come to die.

Twenty mules with the strength of one;
Struggling along 'neath the devilish sun.
Off' in the trail for mor' in a mile,
And gettin' farther all the while.
The water all gone, and the feed is low,
And the mules are weak, and can scarcely go;
And I cut each strap, and I said good-bye;
And let them wander away to die.

Now, here is the thing that is strange to tell
Of a man who didn't believe in Hell.
How I knelt in the sand, and I tried to pray;
But I had forgotten the words to say.
My tongue was swollen, my throat was dry,
But I raised my arms to the distant sky,
And I prayed to God to remember me;
To let me die, and set me free.

Well, the desert sun, it was sinking low;
And I saw in the distance, hills aglow;
Tinted with sun-rays, clear and cool;
And waters that sparkled in a pool;
Valleys of green with a rippling stream.
God, is it real or only a dream?
But something strange, and I know not what,
Kept urging me on, and I could not stop.

Never before were the skies so blue;
Never before such brilliant hue.
Then came the night with its stars so bright;
Never before had there been such a sight.
The vision would fade, and on every hand,
Not, but an ocean of burning sand.
Then I'd try to stand, but I'd only fall;
Lay on my belly and try to crawl.

Crawl like the lizards and rattlesnakes;
Crawl through the sands 'till my belly bakes.
Morning at last and the buzzards come;
Circling low in the desert sun;
Casting their shadows from the sky;
Watching and waiting for me to die;
Ever and ever, circling lower;
Devils of Hell and nothing more.

Do you know what it's like to be all alone
When the sun's so hot that the deserts moan;
With the visions of forests on far distant hills
With it's valleys of green and rippling rills?
Do you know how it feels when it's moving away;
Ever and ever, so far and so far?
Well, if you don't, then you best stay away;
For miseries reign where the desert sands are.



Then out of the hot sands like a fool,
Stumbled a weary, trail-worn mule.
One of my leaders; he'd always been
Trustiest mule in my whole damn team.
Water he'd found where he had been;
Stumbling back to carry me in.
Laugh if you will, I don't give a damn,
But I'd trust that mule where I wouldn't a man!

Now, that is the reason you find me today
Here in this pulpit to beg you to pray.
"Sky Pilot" they call me, but men I have been
A skinner of mules and a lover of sin.
I've drank, and I've gambled; had women galore;
But I've learned my lesson, and those days are o'er;
For God heard my prayers, and He sent back that mule
To save a poor sinner who'd been a damned fool.

The Mad Man of the Mines

by George Albert Leddy

You've never heard the story, man?
Well, that seems mighty queer.
I reckoned's how 'twas known to all
For miles and miles 'round here.
I reckoned's how each tongue that speaks
Had told it o'er and o'er;
And how each rough, old heart that beats
Has softened to the core.
I reckon's how you've just arrived,
Or else you would have known
The saddest story ever told
Throughout the miner's home.
And if you mean to settle here
For any length of time,
You sure should know the story of
The Mad Man of the Mines.

So if you have the time to spare,
Just step inside with me.
Excuse the roughness of the place,
'Tis the best I have you see.
I've lived alone here twenty years.
Ah, yes, 'twas built for two.
There used to be a little lad
With eyes of heaven's blue;
With smiles that cheered my lonely heart
When life was dull and sad;
And oft' I'd welcomed death's cold hand
But for that little lad.
The golden curls that crowned his brow,
I've kissed them many times;
And now, my God, to think my boy
The Mad Man of the Mines.

You see far back in sixty-three,
My life was filled with joy;
A cozy home, a loving wife,
Our little baby boy.
Till that sad day the Master called
From that eternal home,
And broken hearted Babe and I
Must face this world alone.
I watched them lay her in her grave;
I prayed to God that He
Might find a place in Heaven soon
For Little Babe and me.
To hide my grief, I came out here,
And later just to find
A sorrow that's far worse than death,
The Mad Man of the Mines.

For sixteen years we lived as pals;
I toiled the whole time through.
The little lad was like his mother,
Gentle, kind, and true.
And 'though he'd never known the joy
Of that fond mother's love,
I'd taught him how she watched o'er him
From Heaven up above.
Each time I looked into his eyes
Or stroked the sunny hair,
I seemed to hear her gentle voice
In love and sacred prayer.
And now when e'er I kneel to pray,
I know her prayers and mine
Are asking God to watch and love
The Mad Man of the Mines.

Well, Stranger, hand me that old pipe
That lays there by your hand;
And fill yours too, you'll find the weed
In that old powder can.
It sort'o seems to stay my nerve
When my heart's feeling queer.
My poor old brain is pretty weak;
I've taxed it hard I fear.
I guess I'm getting pretty old;
I'm not much at my best;
But God of mercy, let me live
To see him laid at rest.
I could not rest within my grave,
If he were left behind;
No one to love or care for him,
The Mad Man of the Mines.

Well, Neighbor Jones, my dearest friend,
He had a little girl;
The bright face of an angel shown
Beneath her sunny curls.
They grew together, he and she,
As playmates, then as friends;
Until, at last, their lives were blest
By love that Heaven sends.
To her he was a noble king;
And she, to him, a queen.
A brighter, gayer, happier pair
This world has never seen.
He loved her better than his life,
But fate was most unkind;
It was this love that wrecked the life
Of The Mad Man of the Mines.

Well on that day, the whistle blast
Had named the midday meal.
We saw them coming with our pails
Across the sunburned field.
He carried both, while she walked close;
Her bonnet on her arm.
So happy did they look that day;
No thought of any harm.
We heard him say as they drew near,
In voice so sweet and low:
“I love you as my daddy loved
My mother long ago.”
She seemed to like to look at him;
She watched him all the time.
That day, so handsome, and today
The Mad Man of the Mines.

We told him that he dare not steal
A tiny little kiss.
She puckered up her pretty lips;
The saucy little Miss.
And as he turned to kiss her lips,
In their fond childish way,
She quickly turned and says, “You can’t,”
And scampered fast away.
She ran into the yawning mine,
As oft’ she’d done before.
My God, that noise, I hear it yet;
Like a thousand cannons roar.
The very air seemed filled with dirt,
And rocks, and smoke combined.
That moment changed my handsome lad
To The Mad Man of the Mines.



And when the angry roar had ceased,
A silence worse than death
Prevailed throughout the mining camp,
And each one held his breath;
For well we knew her soul had gone
Back to the one who gave;
That God had called her home to Him;
The mine must be her grave.
With breaking hearts, we knelt and prayed:
"Oh God, thy will be done,"
Then I arose; "Oh God!" I cried,
"Oh, spare to me my son!"
I clasped his hand; he knew me not;
From grief his brain was blind.
Oh God, that he had died that night;
The Mad Man of the Mines.

He stood and stared; his eyes were wild,
And filled with deadly light.
A moment and his golden hair
Had turned to snowy white.
He tried to speak, instead there came
One most unearthly yell.
One moment changed his young life
From a heaven to a hell.
We tried to take him from the scene;
We tried to take him home.
He'd only say, "I'll wait awhile,
I know that she will come."
And so we built a cabin there,
And fixed it up quite fine.
It's called "The Home of Love and Tears
of The Mad Man of the Mines."

And there he's been awaitin', Friend,
For nigh on twenty years.
Each day I bring him food, and sit
And watch him through my tears.
But he's growing feeble fast;
His life is nearly done;
And soon he'll meet his loved-ones
In that bright and happy home.
And when he's gone, I'll pray to God
To find a place for me;
Unite us all in Heaven above
For all eternity;
Where Father, Mother, Sweetheart, Son
In Heaven, joy will find.
My Friend that ends the story of
The Mad Man of the Mines.

The Men That God Forgot

by George Albert Leddy

YOU MAY NOT LIKE THIS LITTLE TALE
THE MINER TOLD ABOUT THE TRAIL
WELL IF YOU DON'T
JUST PASS IT BY
WE'LL STILL BE FRIENDS
YOU AND I

*I've listened to your stories, men; now, I have one for you.
I'll tell it as I heard it; and I really believe it's true.
You see, I worked a line of traps beyond the Bighorn Range;
And nothing ever happened much; things stayed about the same.
Until one night while coming down the rough and rugged trail,
I saw two men a-making camp; whereby there hangs this tale.
I lingered in the shadows; and I listened to each word;
And in that fire's gentle glow; well, this is what I heard:*

I guess that old stub's dry enough
To kindle-up a flame.
We've traveled hard today, Old Pal,
And back and legs are lame.
We'll camp beneath this ragged cliff;
'Twill shelter-off the wind.
With good-luck, by tomorrow night,
We'll reach the Rivers Bend.

The Rivers Bend no doubt has changed
A lot in seven years.
In seven years, the old town's not
The only thing that's changed.
The hardship, toil, and agonies
That dries the eyes of tears;
And makes a man a morsel,
Where the giant mountains reign.

Just sit beside the fire, Pal,
And let me do the work.
You're older much than I, you know;
That's why we're going in.
We're two-of-nine, that's one a year
That we have left behind.
And tonight, as ne'er before,
I seem to see it all again.

The night we danced and drank the health
Of every maiden fair;
At the Mad Dog, by the Rivers Bend,
Where life was wild and gay.
Again, I hear that cry of "Gold!"
Go ringing through the air.
Ere morning light, like hungry wolves,
We're on our lonesome way.

O'er trackless trail; o'er hill, through dale;
By cliff, through rocky shoal;
A God-made man, a living thing;
All nine were then as one.
One mind, one thought, one lust, one craze,
One life cast-off for gold;
And all before the cruel trail
Had hardly yet begun.

But once when north of eighty-three,
And sixty-nine below;
Our huskies howled their lonesomeness
To a silence vast and deep;
And blankets rolled, and men inside
Lay covered o'er with snow;
The youngest member of our gang
Awoke me from my sleep.



He says to me, "Old Chap," says he,
 "I want to say farewell;
 The cold has got me going;
 And my spirit's fairly broke.
 And tonight it is a gamble
 To win Heaven or get Hell."
And before I got my arms loose,
 The little gun had spoke.

So we buried him beneath the snow
 Made scarlet by his blood;
And marked the grave "A Weakling,"
 And then were on our way.
 But we soon had lost a second;
 A healthy, burley cad
Who'd had rather die than labor;
 So he shot his life away.

And so, with that, I drew my gun
And cried, "Hands up you fools!
I'll kill the man who winks an eye
 Until I tell him to!
 From now on, I'll take charge
Of all those little six-inch tools!"
And just one man objected;
And I guess he wanted to.

So we wrote these words plain in the snow
 Above the Arctic graves:
 "The Objector" and "The Coward"
And with scorn we passed them by.
And the world behind seemed slipping back
 Like mist before the sun;
And the Northern-Lights, like human blood,
 Were flooding through the sky.

Then six bold men with faces stern,
 Through land that's sterner still,
 Did mush the huskies
 O'er the trackless snow.
And Bad Bill cursed and beat the brutes
 Who strove to do his will.
And I said, "Someday, they'll get you, Bill,"
 And I knowed it would be so.

And sure enough, one bitter night,
While in my blankets rolled,
I dreamed I heard Bill's voice;
He seemed to pray.
When I awoke, the lead-dog's jaws
Were dripping crimson gore;
And there lay Bill,
His throat all chewed away.

So we killed the snarling, red-eyed beast;
We dared not let it live.
The "Tormentor" and "The Killer"
We buried 'neath the snow.
A lone wolf howled beyond the ridge;
Perhaps, he'd caught the scent.
We didn't wait;
We didn't want to know.

Well through the snow, five sad men toil;
They'd prayed had they known how.
It seems my lips did form
A little prayer;
And I raised my eyes to Heaven;
And I knew that God had heard;
And was angry; for His wrath
Was written there.

The night skies wreathed in scarlet flame,
In crimson, gold, and green;
Then faded pale
In sickening yellow hue;
Then rippled back, like opals pure
As crystal-diamonds gleamed;
Within a wreath of pearls
The sky was blue.

Without the wreath, the sky appeared
A garden filled with love;
The flowers bloomed,
And love was everywhere.
Our eyes were wild;
Our hearts stood still;
Within that spot of blue,
His scared face was plainly outlined there.

The face was sad and filled our hearts
With love, and fear, and strength.
The hate that's felt by lonely men
Had changed to something new.
Five lonely men united by some
Unknown power, held.
Now, onward, ever onward toiled
Like brothers tried and true.

At last we reach the chasm
Where the mountains split apart,
Like the jaws of some great monster;
But the moose had entered in.
And we wander down the winding trail
To the waters, clear and clean;
And the stream is lined with gold
That gleamed and gleamed.

Five pair of eyes were staring wide;
Five weary brains were dazed;
Five weary hearts, forgotten men;
Five weary men amazed;
Five millionaires, five fortunes each;
Fortune and wealth unknown,
Buried there in that worldly grave;
A world, and all their own.

Five lonely years, five hearts grown sad,
 Long for the days of old;
Long for the inn by the Rivers Bend,
 Staked with a wealth of gold.
Loaded the sleigh, well on their way;
 Huskies are young no more;
Men that are wan, loosing their brawn,
 Heartsick and bodily sore.

Sun was so bright, one lost his sight;
 Froze as he sat on the sleigh.
One lost his mind, lingered behind;
 Jumped from a cliff by the way.
Hungry and cold, loaded with gold;
Three millionaires mush, sure-but-slow;
Till the dogs gave it up, and pup after pup
 Would stumble and die in the snow.

And through the long night, when the skies were alight
 With flashes that blinked and seared;
And the last dog was dead; and we dragged our own sled;
 And we cursed, and we prayed, and we jeered.
But we fought on, we three: Just Jim, you, and me.
 The saddest of all was Jim;
He fought so to live that the gold he might give
 To the lad who was waiting for him.

He still saw the lad as the youngster who had
 Said good-bye on that night long ago.
And his eyes filled with joy as he talked of the boy,
 As we tended him there in the snow.
He says, "Pals, old friends, I have come to the end
 Of my trail, and I'm happy to rest;
But promise you'll find that youngster of mine,
 And tell him his dad did his best."

Well his face looked so grand, as I clasped the weak hand;
A pal who'd been true to the end.
And I vowed, then and there, that the wealth we would share
With the lad who was waiting for him.
Then we all sort'o prayed, or an effort we made;
But I guess God knew that we tried.
I guess Jim knew it too, for I'm saying to you,
'Twas a smile on his face when he died.

I guess that old stub's dry enough,
It sure burns with a will;
It seems to speak a welcome, Pal,
To all we're loving still.
I guess we'll drink tomorrow night;
'Though, the gold is left behind.
There'll be a couple on-the-house;
I guess the Boss won't mind.

And then we'll get a grubstake, Pal,
And mush back without fail;
And gather up that bloody gold
We strew along the trail.
Why don't you speak to me, Old Pal?
Why, you are dead! – *he cried.*
Ah, yes; the picture's in the sky.
I'm coming too! – *he died.*

*Well, now that ends my story, men, 'cept I went back next-day;
And brought them in to Rivers Bend, and had the parson pray.
They're sleeping in the churchyard, now; a marble marks the spot;
The two-of-nine that came back home; The Men that God Forgot.”*
*You wonder when I tell this tale my eyes are wet with tears;
You wonder why I've not forgot through all these fleeting years.
If all the others had came back, I'd do the same for them.
The truth, perhaps you've guessed it, men; I am the son of Jim.*

The Miser

by George Albert Leddy

A GRAFTING CLINGING
MONSTROUS THING
MORE FIT FOR HORNS
THAN FIT FOR WINGS

The candle on the mantle shed a dim and lonely light;
The fire in the hearth was burning low.
The winds around the cabin seemed to wail in strange affright;
The windows seemed most ghastly decked in snow.
The Miser, gnarled and wrinkled, scanty clad, and scanty fed;
Who'd played the game for gold and always scored;
With many sins of selfishness now hanging o'er his head,
Crouched in the corner 'mongst his earthly hoard.

He chattered like a maniac; his weasel-eyes did shine;
His fiend-like form now trembling from the cold.
He gloated in his hellish glee: "All mine, All mine, All mine";
His claw-like fingers mingling in the gold.
When, lo, a dusky Raven came and perched above the door.
The Miser cried, "Begone, I know ye well!
You are the one who haunted me for twenty years or more.
You bought my soul for gold, you fiend of Hell!"

The Raven spoke in rasping voice: "Yea, twenty years ago,
There came a lonely stranger to your door.
He asked you for a lodging and protection from the snow;
And you replied, 'Begone, for evermore!'
He gazed a moment on the scene; it was your wedding eve;
He gazed upon your parents and your bride.
He cried, 'Beware, ye heartless, who my troubles won't relieve!
Then struggled on until he sank and died.

“And then the venging spirit placed a crown upon your head;
The crown was but the curse of shining gold.
You soon forgot your loved-ones; loved the shining gold instead;
And soon, for such, your happiness you sold.
Your father, whom had loved you well, you hastened to his end.
Your dear old mother died of broken-heart.
The ones who in your younger days had proudly called you friend,
Now wonder at so cruel and hard a heart.

“Your wife was kind and faithful; served you early, served you late;
And stood by you when you had not a friend.
But, lo, you cursed and beat her; all your love had turned to hate.
Alas, she met a cruel and bitter end.
Ah, tremble now, ye coward; ‘tis I who know your deeds;
‘Tis I who planned them all, and planned them well!
‘Tis I who’ll reap the harvest, for ‘tis I who sewed the seed;
‘Tis I who’ll drag you to eternal Hell!

“Why, if I wished to linger and recall the days of old;
Where I have been the Master, you the Slave;
Of men you’ve lured into your den and robbed them of their gold;
And sent them, boldly, to a cruel grave.
Of little children you have held for ransoms mighty high;
Of women you have lured into your fold;
And held them there as prisoners till they suffer, starve, and die;
Unless they satisfy your greed for gold.

“But, no, I cannot linger; we will go back twenty years;
To the night you cast the stranger from your door.
Ah, plead ye not for mercy; there’s no mercy for you here.
Your cursed life on Earth is nearly o’er!
And I will then escort ye, fiend, into that brimstone-cell.
Revenge is sweet; it fills my soul with glee!
And then I’ll go for evermore from that eternal Hell;
But you’ll remain - for all eternity!”

The Miser, old and stiff, arose and hobbled to the door;
He cried, "'Twas you who made me do those things!"
He clutched the Raven by the throat, and dragged him to the floor;
And gleefully, he clipped the Raven's wings.
And now the gloating Miser sits among the tainted gold;
The wild winds howl around the cabin door;
And where the candle sheds its light, the Raven sadly sits.
Alas! Alas! He'll sit for evermore.

My Gal Sue

by George Albert Leddy

As long as I live, I'll never forget
The night that I first met Sue.
I was roaming alone down a dingy street,
With not very much to do.
I strolled in a dive where the lights were low,
And mingled there with the crowd;
Where the liquor they drank was much too raw,
And the music was much too loud.

The girls all talked with a sort of a twang,
And laughed with a sort of a squeal;
And the perfume they wore from the ten-cent store
Was a thing you could really feel;
And the paint that they used, or really abused,
Would look pretty good on a barn.
But they were nothing to me, and so you can see
Why, I didn't give a gol-darn.

Till at last there came in, to that cheap den-of-sin,
A girl – like an angel she were;
And I saw how her face sure looked out of place,
And I said, "This is no place for her."
Then I noticed the emblem she wore on her cap,
And I knew right away what to do.
She's a Salvation Las, and she's out of her class.
That's the first time that I met Sue.

Now Sue, she goes out with her cap on her head,
And passes the tambourine 'round.
She always looks neat, and smiles very sweet;
She knows everybody in town.
Now life is more cherry; she brings home the berries;
No more do I ever feel blue.
You won't lose if you bet, that I'll never regret
The day that I married Sue.

My Pal Jim

by **George Albert Leddy**

I just came back from over thare;
I sat awhile with Jim;
Sat thare, sort'o helpless like;
Thare's nothin' I can do.
Thare's nothin' anyone can do
To be of help to him.
He's a-headin' for his sky-home,
And I'm feelin' mighty blue.
Could you let me have a Bourbon, Tom,
To sort'o stay my nerve;
It's mighty tough to have to sit,
And watch an old pal die.
Thare; thank you, Tom; God bless you, boy;
That's mighty fine of you.
I'll pay you back someday;
At least I'll try.

Did I ever tell you 'bout the time
When me and Jim met up?
We were younkers then,
And ridin' herd down on a Texas plain.
The life was wild and wooly,
But we loved it all you bet;
And between us grew a friendship
That the years could never change.
Well, Jim could sing a lull-a-bye
In voice so low and sweet,
'Twould calm the wildly milling herd,
And lull them all to sleep.
So is it strange that when he sang
A love song, sweet and low,
He won the heart of Little Juan
Down thare in Mexico.

Or is it strange that when the Texas moon
 Is ridin' high,
 And all the little stars thare be
 Are dancin' in the sky;
 And all the little breeze thare be
 Are playin' in the sand,
 That Jim would ride away alone
 Down to the Rio Grande.
Down where that silvery river winds,
 So silent like and staid;
Where the Yellow Rose of Texas blooms
 Beneath the mesquite shade;
 Where lazy waters catch the gleam
 Of dancing stars above;
He knows she's waiting thare for him,
 Her dark eyes filled with love.

Her gentle voice, so low, so sweet,
 To fill his soul with bliss;
Her gentle heart that's made to love,
 Her lips that's made to kiss;
The Spanish blood warm in her veins
 That speaks of centuries past;
 The little hand, so soft, so warm,
 A dream to sweet to last;
The wild rose bloom is on her cheek,
 The dark curls crown her brow;
She knows no sorrow, knows no care;
 Her heart is happy now.
He takes the small form in his arms;
 He holds her to his heart;
He whispers words of truest love,
 And vows they'll never part.

Then came the day he rode away,
And never to return.
As days passed into weeks, I felt
His fate I'd have to learn.
I bought a hoss from off the Boss,
A sturdy, steadfast roan;
And hoof and nail, we hit the trail
To the strange world all alone.
From north to south, from east to west,
From valleys deep, to mountain crest;
From spreading sagebrush-dotted plain,
To buffalo grass where cattle range.
For twenty years 'neath blazing sky
And burning sands, I could not die.
Yet, twenty hosses strew their bones
Along the trails that I have known.

And then, trail-worn and broken-down,
I settle in a desert town.
You know the kind of town I mean,
Where outlaw hide and miners dream;
A water-hole, where wild grass grow;
False-fronted shacks all in a row;
A barroom here; a stable thare;
A hash-house in the sunburned square.
All rest by day, at night they play;
They come, they go; few ever stay.
While me, a sort'o worthless chap,
Work here and thare at this and that.
It means a bed, and food to eat;
A drink, when someone pays a treat.
For I have settled down to stay;
I think, then comes another day.



My Pal Jim - Part Two

He dragged his feet down the dusty street,
Unconscious like of the midday heat;
His shoulders stooped, and his head hung low,
And his body bent like an archer's bow;
And close to his heels, and step-by-step,
A phantom-shape like a shadow crept;
Just the skin and bones of an old grey hound
As long as your arm, and as big around.
And they looked not left, and they looked not right;
And they never paused, as you'd think they might;
Till they came to the hash-house in the square,

Then they lift their heads, and they sniff the air.
Well, Biscuit Sue was cooking stew;
Smelt mighty good, I'm tellin' you.
'Twas just the kind'a grub you'd want
To feed a man who's belly's gaunt.
And Sue, she fed them slow until,
She felt that they had had their fill.
And then we gather 'round to find,
The dog is deaf, and the man is blind.
Two pals, but really only one,
Who know alone the things they've done.
The brain grown weak; the heart grown cold;
A living thing without a soul.
And 'though it's true, he'll never tell,
It's plain to see, they've lived through hell.
Those sunken features, gaunt and grim;
Yes, Tom, you're right – 'twas my pal Jim.

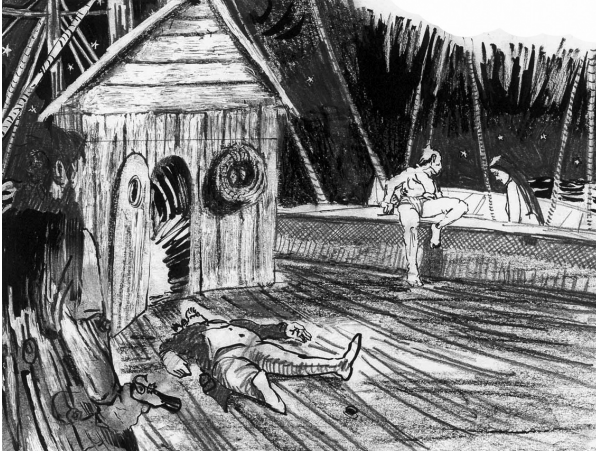
Some people think a desert-rat
Is jest a worthless sort'o cuss;
But through the years I cared for Jim,
Those desert-rats took care of us.
Their hearts are purer than the gold;
The bit they take from desert sands;
And they are counted in the fold
That God alone can understand.
And when Old Doc came into town,
And saw poor Jim a-settin' thare,
He sent us to a Miners Home,
Where we have had the best of care.
I've learned a lot by settin' 'round,
And hearin' him talk to that old hound;
As he lived again that merciless hell;
And I think I know his secret well.

Why, I've heard him say to that old grey hound,
As he sat with his hand on that shaggy head:
 "It came with a hissing sort of a sound,
 Out of the night and my Juan was dead."
Then he'd sort'o moan, and he'd talk of blood;
 Then he'd curse, in a pious sort'o way;
Then he'd rise and scream, to the God above,
That he'd get that Greaser, and make him pay!
And that dog would whine, and kiss his hand
 As so to say, "I understand."
And it seems to me, from what I've heard,
That in twenty years, he'd kept his word.

Why, I've seen him stand with his cane in his hand,
And strike at the sand, and swear.
 'Twas something he saw, that I couldn't see;
 Something that wasn't there.
Then his voice would break and his hand would shake,
And the cords in his neck would swell;
And he'd laugh, like I reckon the Devil laughs
 When he prods at the souls in Hell;
Then he'd call to the buzzards overhead:
 "Come on you fools, he'll soon be dead!
 You're due for a treat of rotten meat
 That only a vulture from Hell would eat!
 So tear him raw with your beak and claw,
And leave his bones for the wolves to chew!"

Well Tom, I guess I'll be traveling on;
It won't be long till my pal is gone;
And I want to be thare to say good-bye,
When he hits the trail to beyond the sky.
I want to be thare to hold his hand;
Perhaps, in the end, he'll understand;
And I want to be thare to sort-o pray
To the angels that come to light his way.
And I thank ye, Tom, for what you've done;
You're mighty kind, and I won't forget;
But the hours are long to the morning sun,
The hours are long, while I wait and fret;
While I sit and dream of the days gone-bye;
While I sit and wait for my pal to die.

And Tom, I know you're grievin' too;
You'd like to help me if you could.
Well Tom, I'll tell you what I think
Would really do the greatest good:
Just place two glasses on the bar,
Like me and Jim was standin' thare;
And fill them to the very brim,
And I'll drink one for me, and t'other for Jim.



The Old Buccaneer

by **George Albert Leddy**

IT COULD BE HE
OR PERHAPS THAT HE
THINKS IT IS ME
AND SO
EACH MAN MAY THINK
THE THOUGHTS HE THINKS
BUT LET NO OTHER KNOW

I stood all alone on the bridge that night
When I heard the Captain shout:
“What are ye doin’ there, ye swab,
And what is it all about?”
Then all was still, and I wondered why;
It wasn’t the Captain’s way;
For he’d holler loud, and he’d holler long,
When he had aught to say.
But the sea was rough, and I held the wheel,
And I dared not let it go;
So I rang the bell, and I called the Mate
To come and look below.

Well, what he saw, when he came aloft,
Was the Captain lying dead;
A belayin' pin is by his side;
A hole is in his head.
The burley brute, who'd fought the sea,
And ruled with iron-hand;
Yet never in his life was known
To harm a fellowman;
Was lying now, on his own ship;
A lifeless hunk of clay;
And somewhere on that ship there was
Someone who'd have to pay.

And once again a deed confirmed
A sailors firm belief:
To bring a woman board-a-ship
Is sure to bring it grief.
And that's the thing the Captain did,
A-grinin' broad and wide;
And introduced the lady as his
New and lovely bride.
And through the days we sailed along
Through waters calm and clear;
We part forgot the things we thought,
And part forgot to fear.

Then from the dark, grim-death reached out,
And stole a life away;
And no man on that ship did speak,
And none had aught to say.
It could be he, or perhaps that he
Thinks it is me, and so;
Each man may think the thoughts he thinks,
But let no other know.
While in the cabin waits the bride;
The one we scarcely knew.
We'd take her back to her own land;
It's the best that we can do.

'Tis night again; the moon appears
So big, so round, so bright;
The crested waves, like silver diamonds,
Sparkle in its light.

I stand alone and listen to
The murmur of the waves;
And one last prayer I offer there
O'er my lost Captain's grave.
I turn about; I nearly shout;
A shadow do I see;
Belayin' pin is in his hand;
He's coming now for me!

But I'm alert, and by an inch
It whistles by my head.
'Twas my good-luck he missed me,
And I had him now, instead.
The man whose brain was wrecked by hate,
Now trembled cold with fear.
He chattered like a maniac;
His words were hard to hear.
He'd stowed-away upon the ship;
He'd sworn to take the life
Of the man who'd come into his home,
And sole away his wife.

Well, I had known the Captain
As a man who'd always been
The kind that thought that stealing wives
Was really not a sin.
And all at once, I seemed to feel,
This man was in the right:
He'd fought to save the one he loved;
He had the right to fight.
So I lowered down a lifeboat,
And I placed them both inside;
And e'er a new sun kissed the sky,
They'd drifted with the tide.

Now, that is many years ago,
I'm sitting here today
In a tiny room, in the Sailors Home
That overlooks the bay.
I think of things that's passed and gone,
And I have no regrets;
But sometimes, often wonder if, ever God forgets.
I gave them life and liberty;
Yet, sailing 'aint so grand, in a measly little lifeboat,
A thousand miles from land.



The Sapphire Ring

by George Albert Leddy

IF YOU WANT TO READ
OF MOONLIT DELLS
OF ROSES RED
OF VIOLETS BLUE
THEN LOOK ELSEWHERE
DON'T LINGER HERE
THIS BALLAD IS NOT
MEANT FOR YOU

*He leaned on the bar, and lit a cigar;
And he ordered a bottle of rum.
His eyes they were bleared,
As he peered through his beard,
And his features were all out-of-plumb.
But he threw out his chest,
And he pulled down his vest,
And he cried:*

“Belly-up to the bar!
I am paying tonight, while the spirit is light;
So drink hearty, whoever you are!
“I’m just in from the trails, and I’m totin’ a tale,
I want you all to know.
Twill fill you with fright, and freeze you so tight,
The blood in your veins won’t flow.
So fill up your carafes, with rum that is hot;
And heed well every word that I say.
I don’t give a shot, if you believe it or not,
But it proves that a sinner must pay.

“Oh, I’ve been around, and I’ve hit every town
From Mexico City to Nome.
I never was much for the women or such,
And mostly I’ve traveled alone.
I’ve journeyed the land of the hot shifting sands;
I’ve roamed o’er the plain’s broad expanse.
Wherever they might report a new strike,
I was there with the first for my chance.

“Oh, I have had pals, and perhaps a few gals;
I’m not what you’d call ‘A Black Ace.’
‘Twas a dance and a song, then travel along;
But never stay long in one place.
‘Tis the call of the North, that invisible force,
That seeps through the blood in your veins;
‘Tis a land that you’ll curse, you’ll hate it at first;
But ever you’ll go back again.

“Why, I could tell you the names of dance-hall dames,
Who won fame in those ribald days;
They were life to the man with the pick and the pan;
The miner who always pays.
They painted their lips, and they padded their hips;
They smoothed-out their wrinkles with clay;
They’d dance and they’d sing; they’d stick and they’d cling,
To the man who had gold for the pay.

“For ‘twas gold they sought, and ‘twas gold they got;
Or they knew the reason why.
A petty Miss, with a little kiss,
Would hardly have to try;
For a lonely man, in a lonely land,
Is a careless man, and free;
And a pretty face, in a lonely place,
Is just what it ought to be.

“Why, I knew the dame that they called ‘The Flame’
‘Cause she set men’s hearts on fire.
I danced with her one Christmas Eve,
Then bought her a large sapphire;
A large sapphire in a little ring,
That shown on her finger, slim;
Like the skies of night, when the Northern-lights,
Danced forth from the polar-rim.

“I bought it off from a gamblin’ man,
And it took all the gold I had;
But what did I care, ‘twas Christmas Eve,
And the gift had made her glad.
And I thought me the thoughts, I had long forgot,
And I dreamed of a future divine;
And we danced and we sang, ‘till the rafters rang,
To the tune of ‘Auld Lang Syne.’

“Then she wanted to say, in her quiet way,
And her dainty little smile:
‘I’m tired, Dear; if you’ll wait here,
I’ll rest a little while.
Don’t go away, for Christmas Day,
I’ll meet you with the dawn.’
And like a Sprite, on an errant night,
My will-o’-the-wisp was gone.

“And I waited there, like the fool I were,
And the hours passed away;
And the night-skies paled, and the grey skies haled,
The birth of another day;
The birth of another sucker born
Who had thrown his gold away;
And that was a merry Christmas morn;
But to me, it was just a joke;
For what can a merry Christmas mean
To a man when he knows he’s broke.

“Did you ever sit in an Arctic camp when the gang had gathered in;
Where millionaire, and gutter rat unite?
Did you ever sit and listen to the old piano ring?
Did you ever feel your tired feet grow light?
Did you ever play at Faro; did you ever feel the thrill
To come in rich, then loose all on one throw?
Did you ever feel the burning kiss of painted lips of sin?
You didn’t; then there’s things you’ll never know.

“Well, that was me, now down and out;
A fool to a woman’s wiles;
A fool to a woman’s painted lips,
Her padded hips, and her smile;
To a game so old that it’s oft’ been told,
By your great-grandfather’s sire;
Of a little ring, just a dainty thing,
With a very large sapphire.

“Well, I didn’t sigh, and I didn’t cry,
And I didn’t curse or swear.
I took the loss, and I paid the cost,
As I would had the game been square.
But I marked them both, and I took an oath
That we’d meet again someday;
And we’d play a game of a different name,
And play in a different way.

“So I grubbed-a-stake from a mangy snake;
Oily and slick was he.
‘Twas five to him of the gold I’d take,
To the one that was kept by me.
Well, I was down, but I wasn’t out,
And the dogs were slick and strong;
So with loaded-sleigh, well on my way,
My heart was filled with song.

“For I loved the life, and I loved the trail,
 And I loved the biting cold;
 I loved the silence vast and deep,
 And the snows a century old;
 I loved the lights in the skies of night,
 Yet I cursed their blinding glare,
As they marched to left and they marched to right;
 An army of the air.

“I loved the whine of the sturdy pine
 As she battles a killing gale.
‘Tis proof again that the strong will win
 Where the weakling’s sure to fail.
 I love the whine of the snarling dogs,
 As they cringe from the bitter cold;
And the crack of the whip with the frozen tip
 Was music to my soul.

“Yes, I loved it all with a burning hate;
 And I cursed it with every breath,
 Like the dog will love his master,
‘Though, he’s beating him half-to-death.
Well, I will not dwell on that year-of-hell;
 ‘Tis enough that I should say:
That again I’d won, and my work was done,
 And I loaded up the sleigh.

“Well, the dogs were fast and the miles flew past,
 And the bleak hills fell behind;
And I laughed and sang ‘til the silence rang,
 And the dogs in the traces whined.
Then we came to the shack on the side of the track;
 I’d stayed there oft’ before.
It stood like a wart on the side of the hill
 With never a lock on the door.

“Well, the dogs knew the place,
And they quickened the pace;
And came to the door on the run.
They soon would be fed; I’d be making my bed;
The work of the first day done.
Well, I saw a sight in the shack that night
That would make a parson swear:
On the floor lay the dame that they called ‘The Flame,’
And her back and her breasts all bare.

“And the eyes once bright, now a gruesome sight,
And the painted lips now blue;
And the hair now white with a glistening light
Where the frost had sifted through.
And I touched a hand that was marble cold,
And I touched a breast, and I thought
Of the tale that I’d heard a parson preach
Of sin and the pain it wrought.

“I remembered well, what he said ‘bout Hell
With its fires all aglow;
And I thought that night, perhaps he’s right;
But I wondered – how he’d know?
But she did not atone for her sins alone;
Another followed soon.
I heard a sound and I looked around,
And just across the room;

“There on a stool sat a raving fool;
The man who had staked-the-game;
The man who had sold that sucker-ring
To each man who had loved ‘The Flame.’
The scurvy germ, just a filthy worm;
Sucking his life away,
Like the windlass sucking the yellow spew
From a hole in the frozen clay.

“There wasn’t a tooth in the sagging jaw,
There wasn’t a hair on the head;
The face like a piece of beefsteak raw,
The nerve in the body dead.
Deaf as an adder, blind as a bat;
But never he felt the pain.
‘Twas the story old, so often told:
The North has struck again.

“Can you imagine how I felt
As I sat in the shack that night;
With a pack of greedy, snarling dogs,
And a corpse all frozen tight;
And the fire, low, shed a ghostly glow
Of shadows on the wall;
And a man gone mad and a moanin’ bad,
And ice spreading over all.

“Then the wind’s low moan and the huskies groan,
As they dream as a husky dreams;
And the crackle and snap of the pine-knot sap
As it seeps from the wood and steams.
Then death crept in to the shack again,
With a grim and silent tread;
And the crazy fool fell off the stool
And lay by his sweetheart, dead.

“And then I knelt and I think I prayed,
At least I know I tried;
And I cried when I thought of the way they’d lived,
But I laughed at the way they died.
Then the short-lived sun on the distant rim
Turned the sky to a bright blood-red,
And shown on the ice on the windowpane
Like candles for the dead.

“Then I thought of the tale that the parson told,
The tale that I now believed;
And I thought of a lassie, sweet and fair;
Of a long-gone Christmas Eve.
Then the heavens scowled, and a wolf-pack howled,
As I loaded up the sleigh;
And the long whip nips the lead-dog’s hip,
And again we’re on our way.

“Now I think of the wolves on the opposite hill,
And I think of the pair on the floor;
And I wonder tonight,
Did I do right?
I didn’t close the door.”

*Now that is the story as I heard it told
By the man who leaned on the bar;
The man who ordered a bottle of rum,
And lit a big cigar;
Who swung the whip with the frozen tip;
Who prayed, or at least he tried;
Who cried when he thought of the way they lived,
And laughed at the way they died.*

*But they drank his drinks, ‘cause his drinks were free,
And the hot rum warmed their throats;
Thought: Just another poor lost-soul
Who had missed too many boats.
Then they moved away, and the crowd grew gay;
And the old piano rang;
And the dancers, danced; and the prancers, pranced;
Aye, and the singers, sang.*

*Then he turned around, and there came a sound
From his throat, and I wondered why;
Then I saw, he knew, that they thought he lied,
And a tear fell from his eye.
Well, I felt bad for the worn-out lad
Who was old, 'though, his years were few;
But I held my peace, for the time at least,
There's nothing I could do.*

*Then he sought a chair, and he slumped down there,
And soon was fast asleep;
And he dreamed the dreams that a miner dreams,
Of mountains dark and deep.*

*Now, I may be wrong, or I may be right;
The which, I dare not say;
But I got sight of a rose-pink light
Where his coat had fell away;
And pinned to his shirt, that was glazed with dirt,
O'er his heart, or a little higher,
Was a little ring, just a dainty thing,
With a very large Sapphire.*

The Tale of the Toreador

by George Albert Leddy

THIS IS THE STORY I HEARD ONE NIGHT
BY THE MAN WHO STUMBLED IN
WITH THE OLD BANDANNA 'ROUND HIS NECK
AND THE RAGGED SCAR ON HIS CHIN
AND THE COWHIDE BOOTS WITH COPPER SNOOTS
AND AN EMPTY GUT WITHIN

Let me sit here awhile by the fire;
It's cold as the devil tonight.
I've mused all the day through the mire.
I'm sick, and I long for a sight
Of some face that will smile at the meeting;
Some voice that will ring with a cheer;
Some hand I can clasp in a greeting;
Of a soul who will welcome me near;
For a man from the trails who will pity
Another who's down on his pins;
Who will buy me a drink then I'll tell you
Of a world and it's many sins;
A world that is not for the weakling;
A world that's a world for men.

There's a land where the hot sun is heartless,
Where the sands seem to glory in pain.
They that know it, they hate it, they curse it;
And yet, they will go back again;
Like the dog that is whipped by the master;
The critter once burned by the brand;
The outcast, the dope-fiend, the drunkard,
Will return at the word of command.

'Tis the spirit of those who have perished.
The call is: "Come, share in my fate!"
'Tis strange, but somehow, 'fore you know it,
You're back in the land that you hate;
Back, and you stick, and you linger;
You ponder, you wonder, you wait.

Such to me was the curse of that hell-land;
It held me a miserable slave.
All its horrors were joys in my madness;
My hopes were as dark as the grave.
But God, it was wild, and I loved it;
Its vastness, its freedom, its ways;
The flair and the glare of the dance hall;
The women, the wine, and the maize;
The cards, and the dice, and the betting;
The truce that is held by the gun.
Well, if groping with death is a pleasure,
Then I've had my share of the fun;
Playing, and betting, and cheating;
To win, then to lose what I'd won.

In the midst of that music and laughter,
The whirl and the twirl of the dance,
Shown a face that was bright as the morning;
A little of love in the glance
That I met, and I knew she was waiting;
The dance done, I called her aside;
It was love, and her promise she gave me;
On the morrow, I'd call her my bride.
But a half-breed, green-eyed in his passion,
Had followed us into the street.
There a shot in the dark told his story;
My sweetheart lay dead at my feet.
Stilled, was her heart so loving;
Stilled, was her voice so sweet.

Then the wild cries-of-hell were around me.
I tried to explain it at first,
But I soon saw that pleading was useless;
The half-breed had left me his curse.
Soon the blood-thirsty crowd had me silenced;
My lips were as dumb as the dead.
They had quickly prepared for a lynching;
A rope was thrown over my head.
But Two-Gun, the sheriff, then entered.
I cried, "I am innocent, Sir!"
"He's a liar! He killed her! I saw it!"
Was howled by the Mexican cur.
A cur, a fiend, and a liar;
A sneak, and a murderer.

I was locked in a jail – God have mercy
On those who had been there before;
Some were living apart from their reason,
Some rotting there on the floor.
There were smears on the wall where in anguish
Some battered their heads so to die;
And the hair and the brains marked a tombstone
O'er forms that were withered and dry.
On the floor of the den crouched a madman,
Making love to a skeleton-frame
Of some woman who'd once queened the dance-hall;
In the end, a prison and shame.
Shame, when her beauty had vanished;
Pride, while her beauty had reigned.

While I sat there, to me it was heaven,
Compared to the noise from without.
Those drunken, crazed, half-breeded devils,
Who circled my prison about;
Who thirsted my blood like a wolf-pack;
Who yearned for my heart as their pay;
But my comrades, within, were companions;
I loved them ere morning was gray.

When the rats came to feed on a carcass,
I frightened them off by the score;
To the skeleton, I sang some ragtime;
He grinned, so I sang him some more.
Sang, with the heart of a victor;
Sang, 'till my throat was sore.

With the first streak of dawn came the Sheriff,
With a posse to drive off the swine,
Who were waiting to swill-down my lifeblood;
Who swore it was their life or mine.
There were shots, there were howls, there were curses;
Fowl oaths that I feign to repeat;
Then the bolt, it was drawn, and the sunlight
Streamed 'cross the floor at my feet.
Oh God, how in hatred, I cursed it;
It's brightness had brought me once more
To the life that was cursed with my badness;
I loved the black dungeon much more;
Its horrors had filled me with pity;
A pity, I'd ne're felt before.

Then my trial was a stern, and a short one;
I told them the story all through;
But the half-breed, he called me a liar;
And swore that he saw and he knew.
But the Sheriff, who sat in my judgment,
Was fair, and I saw in his glance
That he doubted the words of the half-breed;
And decided to give me a chance.
Then he spoke, and his voice was a challenge:
"To prove that your story is true,
You will fight the Mad-bull in the bull-pit;
To win, means your freedom to you."
To freedom, to light, and to gladness;
Or to live and to suffer, anew.

Well, the news it spread fast like the fire
That lowers the grass in the plains;
That herds the wild cattle together;
That fires the blood in their veins;
That stampedes them on to the river;
That hurls them on into the flood;
Then stops at the banks, its fiery fangs
Shoot out o'er the river like blood.
Well, such spread the news of the bullfight;
The arena was jammed to the gate.
I stood all alone in the bull-pit,
Awaiting, in silence, my fate;
In wonder, in joy, and in gladness;
In horror, in madness, in hate.

Well, my soul seemed to die then awaken
In a land that is strange, and afar;
I saw not the glare of the bright-lights;
I saw not the things as they are.
It was dark, and I stood in a valley
By a deep, raging river of blood;
Where the rapids were raging and roaring
O'er the bones that were lodged in the flood.
On the banks, all around, was a gathering
Of skeletons, grinning and bold;
And there, among them, a face I remembered,
Smeared with the curse of a soul;
Sneered, and blanched, and frightened;
Trembling, painful, and cold.

There are men with the minds of an adder;
They crouch, and they crawl, and they spring;
They hiss, and they spit, and they poison;
They slink, and they cringe, and they sting;
They grin, and their grin is a challenge;
They sneer, and it drives you insane;
Till your soul is o'er pregnant with hatred,
And your heart is a-deadened to pain.
Such was he, whom I saw in my madness;
Who tempted me, sorely, until
My soul it was filled with a badness;
My heart was a-longing to kill;
Grewsome, morose, and despairing;
Helpless, hopeless, and still.

When the Devil arose from the river,
And drew back the gates of the flood;
From whence came a monstrous critter,
Lashing and splashing in blood.
His tail lashed his sides and he bellowed;
I stood like a man in a spell;
What I saw was a terrible demon,
With eyes like the windows of Hell.
In a moment, the brute was upon me;
His hot breath was singeing my brow.
But I fought, God, I fought like a demon;
I fought like I'd always known how;
I fought and, oh God, how I loved it;
The blood of the beast in my veins
Had filled me with longing to conquer;
I felt a strange joy in my pains;
A joy, a pride, and a glory;
The honor a fighter gains.

Again and again, he would charge me;
Again and again, I would score;
Till the point of my sabre struck squarely;
His eye was a pool on the floor.
He bellowed, he pawed, and he snorted.
My foot struck the slime, and I fell;
Then he bounded – his foot struck my chin, there;
See the cloven-foot brand-of-hell.
Then the crowd wildly roared, “Kill the critter!”
I shot, but the bullet went higher;
And the maggots grew fat on the carcass
Of the bastard that called me a liar.
Now his bones they are white on the desert,
Blanched by the hot sun’s ire.

The Bull seemed to know he was conquered;
He slunk back again to his pen.
My mind cleared, and once more I was living;
A man in the world of men.
Then the hoots, and the sneers, and the snarling;
The curses, the taunts, and the jeers
Of the Mexican hounds who were longing
To see me torn-up by the steer.
But I fled from the glare of the bright lights;
Pray God, I’ll go back never more;
But today, if you go there, they’ll tell you
The Tale of the Toreador.



Vengeance on the Sea

by George Albert Leddy

SAD TALES ARE TOLD BY SEAMEN OLD
BUT NONE MORE SAD COULD BE
THAN A LIFE THAT'S SPENT WITH A MAD INTENT
OF VENGEANCE ON THE SEA

You wonder why I live alone
Upon this storm-swept shore;
Where wild winds beat, where billows roll,
Where ocean breakers roar;
Like hell-fiends gnashing in their hate
The lands too high to reach;
Like demons rolling to me,
And breaking at my feet.
Don't think I stay because I like
In this living hell to be;
But I'll never leave until I've wrecked
My vengeance on the Sea.
She stole from me the one I loved;

My bride of one short hour.
Across the foam to my old home
Was to be our wedding tour.
The Sea was calm, and all went well;
The sun sank in the west.
A quiet reigned throughout the boat;
The crew had gone to rest.
We lingered in the moonlight,
My little bride and me;
And laughingly she asked me,
If I'd give her to the Sea.

I pressed her to my heart and said,
With firm but lover's pride:
"Nay! Nay! Ten thousand seas could never
Tear you from my side."
I glanced across the starry sky;
My God, there met my gaze
A typhoon cloud, my heart stood still,
My whole mind seemed a daze.
I seemed to hear an angry voice
From out the briny deep:
"Beware! Beware! You've challenged me,
And I no challenge take!"

The winds arose, the ripples changed
To mighty ocean waves;
The lightning flash, the thunder roar,
Spoke well of watery graves.
The waves soon grew to billows;
Mountains high and valleys deep.
I held my loved-one to my heart
And prayed, God, our souls to keep.
For of all the men in battle slain,
To the human mind can't be
More maddening than a lonely boat
Upon a storm-swept sea.



A mighty wave washed o'er the deck,
And tore me from my hold;
I slipped and fell; then all grew dark;
I slept while billows rolled.
When I awaked, from fainting sleep,
The Sea was calm again.
I called, and called, my sweetheart's name.
Alas, I called in vain.
The Sea had come with mighty hand,
And sole my love from me;
With maddened brain, I swore an oath
Of Vengeance on the Sea.

Each night she comes from out the waves,
To meet me in my dreams;
Her gentle face is pale and sad,
And yet her bright eyes beam.
Each time, I tell her of my love;
A love that ne'er can die;
And whisper, "Sweetheart, stay with me,"
She answers, "Bye, and bye."
And then I wake to find that I am
Calling her in vain;
Again my soul is filled with hate;
My heart is filled with pain.

And that is why, for fifty years,
I've lingered by the shore;
And lived a life of misery
Where demons howl and roar.
They seem to taunt me in their glee,
And say, "We hold her still!"
But I will get her back someday;
I swear, by God, I will.
For all the demons hell can hold,
Can't keep my love from me;
I'll never rest until I've wrecked
My Vengeance on the Sea.

The folks who see me living here
All seem to think me mad;
They've never heard the story
Of a life more cursed than sad.
And though my hair is frowsy,
And my unkempt beard is thin;
I am not hiding from the law,
Or hiding from a sin.
The day is sure to come, at last,
And I will then be free;
When I have kept that sacred oath:
My Vengeance on the Sea.

The Voice of the Bar

by George Albert Leddy

‘Twas payday – the boys were all gathered
At Dugan’s saloon; for ‘twas there,
In that “Gambling Hell,” as they called it;
Though the sign read “The Grizzly Bear”;
Where the gang from the boy in his twenties,
To the old, grizzly, bearded and gray;
Up from the underground coal mines
Would gather each night to be gay.

The room, it was scented with liquor,
And dimmed with the smoke of the weed;
And rough with the voice of a miner
Who bragged of some terrible deed.
When a voice, like the rumble of thunder,
Caused each ruffian to shrink in affright;
As the bar took the form of a demon,
And roared, “I am speaker tonight!”

“You must listen to me!” the Bar thundered;
“For years, I have listened to you!
You thought me a friend, good and faithful;
And I’ve stood by you well, it is true.
Why, I knew your grizzly ancestors;
I remember the day of your birth;
How they boasted and bragged of their offspring;
‘Twas I who knew well of your worth.

“I swore that my slave I would make you;
You’d toil, and I’d capture the gold;
And that oath I have kept, never failing;
I’ve held them, the young and the old.
I’ve watched them grow-up from the cradle;
I wait ‘till they pass by my door;
I hold out a glass of my liquor:
‘Just one, Boy; just one,’ I implore.

“At first, he hesitates, but I press him;
I urge him, ‘till I make him think
That he won’t be a man like his daddy,
Until he has learned how to drink.
One drink, then my heartless-breast holds him;
One drink, and my cursed work is done.
Then I sneer as I list’ to your boasting;
I sneer, for I’ve captured your son.

“I’ll tell you of crimes I have witnessed;
All done by agent ‘Old Rum;’
Whom I have trained ‘till he knows well as me,
The man with the gold from the bum.
The man with the gold, how I greet him,
And deal-out the best that I hold;
‘Till his brain is a wreck; his eyes blinded;
And my coffers are banking his gold.

“Though his pockets are empty, he lingers;
He pleads for ‘One-more,’ then he’ll go.
Then I scoff at the fate of the drunkard,
Who through me has fallen so low.
But I care not for him, and I cast him
A wreck on life’s wild, raging sea;
Where the cursed, famished waves of wrecked manhood
Will carry my victim from me.

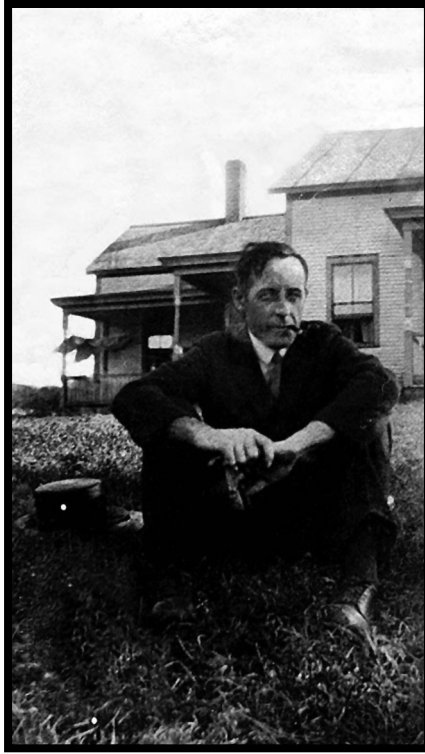
“The sweetheart, the mother, the children;
Who cursed me in hate from the start;
I get them; I hold them; I starve them;
And rejoice when I’ve broken their hearts.
I’ve gazed on the face of the widow,
And the children who feel the disgrace;
‘Till their poor hearts, from sorrow, cease beating;
And they pass to the last resting place.

“Why, I’ve seen men losing their fortunes;
By dice or by shuffling the deck.
I’ve seen men lay dying from gunshot;
I’ve seen men strung-up by the neck;
I’ve seen men cut-down in fair battle;
I’ve seen daggers thrust from behind;
I’ve seen loving brother, kill brother;
When friend, Rum, had stricken them blind.

“Now I gaze on a desolate churchyard,
Where my victims I’ve sent, one by one;
And I sneer like a miserable hell-fiend
At the damnable work I have done.”

Then the room, it grew dark, and the monster
Once again took the form as of old;
With it’s agent, “Old Rum,” standing promptly;
Waiting and watching for gold.

Then the smoke from the rear told the miners:
The Bar had been conquered, at last;
For a Power, more true, had invaded;
It burns to the ground, quick and fast.
And there every grizzly, old miner
Stood still in that liberty light;
Now freed from that damnable demon
By the lesson they’d learned that night.



George Albert Leddy
On the Sweet Side

The Butterfly and the Rose

by George Albert Leddy

*The Butterfly lit on the Rose one day,
And in butterfly talk I heard him say:*

You're a beautiful thing, I can't deny;
But neery a bit more fair than I.
You have a fragrance, rare and sweet;
Your petal-form, are most complete.
You are a treasure, rich and rare,
When you adorn my lady's hair.

Brilliant colors adorn your bed;
White and yellow, crimson and red;
Background of green decked with diamonds of dew,
To set-out your colors and brighten their hue.
You bring joy to the bride on the day she is wed;
Lighten the sorrow when they bury their dead;
You brighten the church, the home, and the school;
But underneath all are your thorns sharp and cruel.

Now me, I am proud, and I feel I'm as fine;
Though, they don't honor me same as you.
But you'll find, if you look, that I'm really streamlined;
And colors a real brilliant hue.
My wings are as light as the thistles' soft down,
As I float on the warm summer's breeze.
I don't have to stay in the same place all day;
I'm as free as the birds and the bees."

*Then a voice, I can hear;
It is soft, low, and clear:*

Don't be jealous of me, Butterfly.
I am proud as you say, and I'm happy today,
But tomorrow I wither, and die.
Why, the silver and gold that your wings do unfold
Has brought joy to my short summer days;
So stay close to me here, promise always be near;
And bring me sweet joys with your ways."

The Fairest Young Rose

by George Albert Leddy

Down in my garden, close by the fence,
Where the thistles and cockleburrs grow;
Where the ground is so rough, and the sod is so tough,
It's defiant to shovel and hoe.
Yet, the hummingbirds hum, and the honeybees come;
And I know there must be sweetness there.
The foliage is wild, yet the fragrance is mild;
There's a beauty about it that's rare.

There the frog and the toad make their secret abode;
They sleep through the heat of the day;
But from early twilight, until late in the night,
They come out in the garden to play.
I know they are happy; their tones are so snappy;
Though I can't understand what they say;
For they warble and croak 'til it seems they would choke.
Bet it's love in a sort of a way.

I found there one day, where the weeds dried away,
A shrub that was trying to live.
I saw at a glance that it hadn't a chance;
Not a penny for it would I give.
But by the sun's gentle light and the dews of the night,
It was nourished, and early that fall
It filled in a bed like an ocean of red;
The most beautiful rose of them all.

I walk down a street that is not very neat;
Where the houses are faded and gray.
There are little bare-feet that play in the street;
There are little young hearts that are gay.
And the laughter and mirth are the sweetest on earth;
And my garden I try to recall.
And I wonder tonight, if among them there might be
The Fairest Young Rose of them all.

The Old Picket Fence

by George Albert Leddy

“Tear down the Old Picket Fence,” you say?
Well, no; I guess I’ll let it stay.
I’ll patch it up and paint it white;
I guess I’ll make it look alright.
You see, that old fence means to me
A whole lot more than you can see;
It speaks to me of things I knew
When fields were green and skies were blue.

It speaks to me of long ago,
And yet it seems but yesterday;
Just Ma, and me, and Little Joe;
Our Little Joe just turning three.
He had to have a place to play
Where he’d be safe and wouldn’t stray;
And so I built that fence for him,
A sort’o place to keep him in.

And in the spring a tiny shoot
Peeped from the earth to seek the sun.
It seemed to know the picket fence
Would make a place for vines to run.
And o’er that fence, so white and clean,
It spread a wealth of verdant green.
It seemed to know it held a grace
To help to beautify the place.

And very soon in brilliant hue;
Violet, and rose, and pink, and blue;
As if to meet the coming day,
The Morning Glories held full-sway.
And as the warm June days drew nigh,
A tiny rosebud caught my eye;
And soon the Roses, rich and rare,
Sent their sweet fragrance on the air.

Then later came our Little Sue,
Then Mary Jane, then Little Bill;
Then Little Ruth, who couldn't stay.
She sleeps out-yonder on the hill.
We used to gather there each eve,
We felt she'd like to have us near;
But Mother's sleeping with her now.
I've been alone for nigh a year.

I see it now, that fence so white;
The Morning Glories all abloom;
The babes we loved a-playing there;
The Roses in the month of June;
And Mother waiting by the gate,
To greet me at the close of day,
To tell me all the pretty things
That she had heard the babies say.

Ah yes, I see it all again:
The yard is strewn with baby toys;
The swing beneath the Maple tree;
The dolls for girls, the carts for boys;
The happy children there at play.
The children now, all gone away.
Ah yes, I guess that we must be
Content with life's sweet memories.

I know we're getting pretty old;
That fence and me, we've had our day;
So just a little loving care
To keep us happy while we stay.
I'll patch it up, and paint it white;
I guess I'll make it look alright.

Decoration Day

by George Albert Leddy
(May 30, 1949)

Decoration Day is here again;
A year has passed, there is no change.
Perhaps, someday, I don't know when;
We'll meet upon some distant range.
Perhaps the Master in His might
Will find a way to make things right.

I only hope that when I'm gone
And in cold silence, laid away;
On Decoration Day you'll come,
And kneel beside my grave, and say
A little prayer for one you know
That when he lived, did love you so.

Saint Patrick

by George Albert Leddy
(1948)

SAINT PATRICK HAD HIS WEAKNESS TOO
AS ALL THE OTHER IRISH DO

Saint Patrick was a gentleman,
He came to Erin's Isle;
And when he'd meet a Colleen sweet,
He'd greet her with a smile.

He seemed to feel he had appeal
That no maid could resist.
He'd find those little Irish maids
That wanted to be kissed.

And when the maidens saw, by chance,
That fine young man just in from France;
They did not know what he was doing,
Until he started in a-wooing.

He caught one maid and started kissing,
And then he heard a funny hissing.
He didn't get an even-break,
For at his feet he saw a snake.

That snake was looking up at him,
And on its face there was a grin.
"Oh," said the snake, "I beg your pardon,
I am the snake from Adam's garden."

Well, Paddy boy was very frightened,
And on his staff his fingers tightened;
And that is why, I understand,
He drove the snakes from Ireland.

Saint Patrick

by George Albert Leddy
(1950)

Long, long, ago, in a village in France,
Lived a young man who had ants in his pants.
He had a fine home, but he'd much rather roam;
He wanted his freedom to sing and to dance.

He oft' had heard tell, of the Colleens so swell,
Who lived in the dells, in that Little Green-Isle;
So he said, "I'll go there, and have never a care;
I'll show the wee lassies a bit of my style.

"I'll stop in Killarney and pick up the Blarney;
And faith, I will talk like a son-of-the-sod.
I'll laugh and be merry; my smile will be cherry;
The lassies will think me a little glass-god.

"I'll have me plug-hat and me little shillelagh;
The stories I'll tell will be gentle and tame.
I won't be a Frenchman no-longer, be'gory,
I'll be a true Irishman – Paddy be' name."

So he sat on the stile; he was thinking of kissin'
The first little maidens who give him the breaks;
When down at his feet he heard something hissinn'
"Oh Adam and Eve, it's a bedlam of snakes!"

The snakes now were frightened; they soon stopped their hissinn'.
Said Mamma Snake, "Papa Snake, what can it be?"
So taking their young-ones they took to the water,
And every danged one of 'em drowned in the sea.

Then the maidens came 'round, there, they found Little Paddy;
Be'garry, he lay on the grass in a faint.
But from that day forward, he'd no use for women;
And that is the reason, that today, he's a Saint!



Bert Leddy and Pals
Humorous Personal Poems

Pals I Remember

by **George Albert Leddy**

(December 25, 1947)

‘Twas the day before Christmas, and what do you think?

Well, Gilbert suggested, we should have a drink.
But money was scarce, and good whiskey was high;
But what the hell, Bill, when your throttle is dry.

So I pulled out a smacker, and he did the same;
Then Scaffer suggested, he get in the game.
But we told him no, and it wasn’t a bluff;
For he acts like a jackass when he drinks the stuff.

Then Joe came along, and we asked him about it;
And he says, “Why sure fellows, we can’t do without it.”
Well, he wiggled around, he unbuttoned his collar,
Stuck his hand in his pocket, and pulled out a dollar.

Then Holcumb came round, with a sort-of a grin,
And said he’d donate, if we’d let him come in.
And we knew him of old, so we did not quite dare;
We remembered he always drank more than his share.

Then Charlie came round, and he looked kind’a tired
From the coal he had heaved, as the boilers he’d fired.
So we gave him a drink, and ‘twas no more than right,
For we knew when he had it he never was tight.

Now Fred is a fellow, and I’m here to say,
He’ll pay for good whiskey, and give it away.
I can’t understand how such things can be done;
But the way that he did it, we had plenty of fun.

Now there’s Leroy and Ralph, and Eddie and Jerry;
They never indulge, but they always are merry.
Well, now about Eddie, I may not be right;
For well I remember, I saw him one night;

And it sure makes me tremble to think of it now;
That son-of-a-sea-cock ate half of a cow.
He said it was tender, and suited his taste;
But on fellows like Eddie, it's only a waste.

And then there's the Major, a soldier at heart;
He'll wait on the trade, if you get him to start.
But it's hard on a fellow to make a good sale,
And do it up right, when there's six on his tail.

And then there is Izzie, his hair it is red;
And when you first see him, you'd think he was dead.
But give him a writ, and he'll bolt for the door;
"Two dollars for Izzie!" – to hell with the store.

Then there is Herman, the strangest of men;
He'll tell you a joke with a sly, silly grin.
And 'though he appears like a good natured lout,
I've never found out what he's grinning about.

And then there is Robert, if anyone cares;
He got his big start by sweeping the stairs.
He is a fine fellow, with courage and pluck;
You see what it got him – he now drives a truck.

And now there is Carrol, he's new on the job;
He's out in the stockroom, successor to Bob.
He came here quite recent, we don't know him well;
But we will if we listen to the tales he can tell.

And then there's MacDonal, so pious and meek;
I never saw him, but he's taking a peek.
He likes his gals fat; that's the way that I found him.
Well, he's all set now, for there's fat all around him.

There's a brand new Stenog', she's so quiet and meek;
I've seen her sweet smile, but I've not heard her speak.
I'll give Quinn credit, he knows how to choose 'em;
I hope he'll behave himself, then he won't loose 'em.

And then there is Gladys, with the golden brown hair;
I never remember a maiden more fair.
I often have wished, I could tell her about it,
But she'd slap me down – there's no reason to doubt it.

And then there is Marion, a sweet little doll;
No wonder the darling is loved by us all.

And Joyce is as sweet as a little baby;
The fellows all whistle, when her they do see.
She's short, fat and supple, and chucked full of life;
The sort of a girl to make some man a good wife.

Now, the girls are all working as busy as bees;
And praying to Santa: "Send me a man, will you please."

Now, there's Vernon and Markus, our white-collard men;
If they loaf, they get fat, so work to stay thin.
For they think themselves perfect, and don't want to change.
The way some people think, well, it sure does seem strange.

And as for myself, well, there's not much to say;
For I don't like to brag, so I think the best way
Is to wish you a future, both merry and bright;
Merry Christmas to all, and to all a Good Night!

The Adventures of Augustus T. Stanard

by **George Albert Leddy**

(November 1949)

He was born in a cabin, just over the track;
They called it a cabin, 'twas more of a shack.
The trains rattled by with their clinking and clanking,
And if the kid cried, well, he got a good spanking.
But he lived through it all, till about six-years-old;
Then he helped out the family by picking up coal.

Well, years passed away, and he thought 'twould be great
To have his own business, and he only eight.
He'd oft' heard the story about the fat hen
Who laid the big eggs for the nice gentlemen.
"Ah! Ah!" cried the lad, "This sure is a honey;
Let the hens do the work – 'twill be easy money."

Well, the years they flew by, and the business was paying.
How the chickens were fed, well, I'm not saying;
But when Brown sold his horse and purchased a truck,
Well, Guss and his chickens were sure out of luck.
No sight can be sadder, or more soul disturbing,
Than to see a poor chick starve to death on the curbing.

He entered first-grade at the age of fourteen;
A skinnier youngster, I never have seen.
He says, "I've been hungry but won't be no more;
I'll salvage my grub from some poor sucker's store."
So he picked out our place, and 'twas too bad because
We were having it mighty tough, as it was.

Well, we finally failed-up, and he'd no place to rob;
And so, sad and despondent, he got him a job.
Then he got sick of working and shirking around;
So he jacked-up the job and said good-bye to the town.
It seemed to the lad like some far foreign-shore,
For you see, he had never left his hometown before.

Well, his friends they were loyal, his friends they were true;
And often they wondered just how he would do.
Some thought he'd succeed, some thought he would fail;
But everyone prayed – that he'd not land in jail.
Well, he got him a partner and opened an inn;
And this is the way that his new life began.

He'd sit in the parlor and smoke a cigar,
While his poor little partner was tending the bar.
And when the bright summer sun set the new grass a-growing,
The poor little partner, done all of the mowing.
And when winter rolled 'round, with its mantle of white,
And the winds down the chimney would whistle each night;
Well, Gussie would sit in the fire's bright glow,
While the poor little partner would shovel the snow.

But time, it went on and the partner grew sore,
Said, "I'll be damned if I'll do all the work anymore.
Tis'nt that I am afraid of hard work,
But it sure gets my-nanny to see that guy shirk."

So he laid down the shovel and he laid down the broom,
And sought his abode in the little saloon;
Saying, "Here I will linger and here I will snooze;
While he smokes our cigars, I will drink up our booze."
So they smoked and they drank, till their money was gone,
And they couldn't get credit to carry them on.

So he bought a quaint store, on a quaint little street;
And his wife she got sore, she'd so little to eat.
"Oh, go find a job, my darling," she said;
And poor Gussie thought, she was tetch'd in the head.
"Well," says she, "I have worked and it wasn't a sin;
And before I will starve, I'll go working again."

“Oh, no!” cried poor Gussie, “That never can be,
For if you go to work – who will look after me?
Who’ll get me my meals, and who’ll make-up the bed?”
“Oh, God!” cried poor Gussie, “I wish I was dead!”
He was frightened to death, ‘fraid his wife she might leave him;
And he knew if she did how deep it would grieve him.

He’d worked hard to get her, now keep her he must;
He’d sure get a job, or he’d try till he’d bust.
So, sick and despondent, still wearing a grin,
He came to the store and approached Mr. Quinn.
He cried, “I’ve been sad ever since we first parted!”
And now, he is back again – where he first started.

The Story of Gilbert Hendry

by George Albert Leddy

I once knew a guy, his name it was Gilbert;
A nuttier nut than the one they call Filbert.
When he was young, something gave him the notion
He'd fall into wealth, if he'd sail o'er the ocean.

So he boarded a steamer, one very fine morning,
And bid a farewell to the land he was born in.
Now, he may have been dumb, but there're many that's dumber;
For he worked a free passage by aiding the plumber.

But he got here at last, and it sure was a pity;
The shape he was in when he reached New York City.
Why, even the statue that guarded the bay
Just stood there and wondered; had nothing to say.

So he started along down the street, he was hiking;
He didn't go far, 'twas not to his liking.
He wandered along 'till his belly was sagging,
And some other part, we won't mention, was dragging.

And, as night time drew near, he was ready to faint,
When he met with a feller – a seller of paint.
When the feller saw Gil, and the shape he was in;
So desperately weak, so pale and so thin.

His heart, it was touched as 'twould be for a brother;
So he took the lad home to his kindhearted mother.
“O'woorah!” she cried, as she paused in her baking;
“I'll tend to the lad – if you're sure he's not faking.”

“Acushla!” she cried, as she clasped the weak hand –
You see, she's a daughter of Old Ireland.
“Though your forefathers trated us jest loike a pig,
Shure I cenna do such, fer me heart is too big.”

So she made him a bed that was soft, warm and cozy;
To the downhearted lad things began to look rosy.
But the sun o'er the hilltop, too soon, began peeping;
Then he slipped out of bed, he was tired of sleeping.

So he crept down the stairs, and just got to the door;
And there was the good woman, sweeping the floor.
“God, forgive!” cried she, “‘Tis me be a sinner,
Should I let the lad lave me, without a foine dinner.”

So she filled up his stomach with bacon and eggs;
Put new life in his carcass and strength in his legs.
So he went on his way; he was blissful and happy
As a gold-digger baby who's found a new Pappy.

But that seller of paints, he has never forgotten;
‘Tho times might be good, or times might be rotten;
Through times when ‘twas hard to meet his expense,
But a seller of paints, he has been every since.

Now the Grand Duke of Windsor, he came to our land;
We greeted and cheered him, with flag and with band.
We showed him the honor that's due to a king,
But I'm here to tell you, it don't mean a thing.

But when Gilbert came over, as I understand,
There weren't no flags; no, not even a band;
Not even a Jew's harp, nor fiddle, nor drum.
I guess he was sorry, at first, that he'd come.

Then he got him a job, and he felt mighty fine;
Sold wallpaper and paint, and that was his line;
Sandpaper and brushes, and varnish and glue;
And sometimes, he'd give away color cards too.

And now he is happy, not a bit does he care
That when he came over, no music was there.
For music's no more than a ghost or a spook;
And we have our Gilbert – to hell with the Duke!

The Story of Ronald MacDonald

by George Albert Leddy

MacDonald was a bonnie lad; he came from o'er the sea.
He used to ware the kilties, just a wee-bit 'bove the knee.
He used to look sa moighty foyne, wi the tassel in the middle.
He loved to play the bagpipes, but he did'na like the fiddle.

One day, he told his mother: "Mither Dear, I'm going awhi.
I canna stay another day; I've come to say good-bye."
His eyes were kinda glassy, like a tear was pressin' through.
"Oh, werry!" cried the mother, "Son, what hey ye been up to?"

"Oh, Mither Dear, ye need not fear, but ye can plainly see,
I canna wear the kilties, just abo' me pretty knee;
For me legs are gettin' knobby, and all kivered o'er wi hair.
In fact, I sometimes worry I will turn into a bear."

So he went down to the harbor – very soon he was afloat,
Upon the Mighty Bounding Main, on an English cattle boat.
Well, the cattle lice were hungry, and they started eating free;
Had their breakfast off his ankle, and their dinner off his knee.

"I stowed away upon this boat to save some cash," says he;
"But I guess I am the looser, for their bordin' off of me."
But when he reached America, Sam took him by the hand:
"A welcome to you, laddie, from that fair and sunny land.

"Here we have wee maids, aplenty, and for happiness you're bound;
If you just forget the bagpipes, and just sort-a fiddle 'round;
And you soon will be my nephew, and I'm here to tell you that
You will never loose your freedom – if you are a Democrat."

To Arlene

by **George Albert Leddy**

(To Arlene Holcomb, June 26, 1948, Reception at Odd Fellows Hall)

There was a young maiden, her name was Arlene;
A fairer young maiden, you never have seen.
She met a young fellow, his title was Gene;
And they fell in love – you know what I mean.

Now, that is the reason we've gathered tonight:
To give her advice and to set her a-right.
We came here to tell you, and we hope you will listen:
There's a lot more to love than just huggin' and kissin'.

You'll find very soon there'll be things you'll be needin',
When your mom and your pop discontinues the feedin'.
There'll be rent to be paid and grub to be boughten,
And lots more expenses that can't be forgotten;
And you'll very soon find that you can't keep a man
If your aim is to feed him – just out of a can.

Now, love is a thing like a fire that's burnin',
To warm a young heart, who for friendship, is yearnin';
But one little mistake's like a bucket of water,
And again you will wish you had stayed Daddy's Daughter.

And as the years pass away there will be a chance, maybe,
In the form of a sweet, little, pink, darling baby;
And when the Old Man is a-walking the floor,
You'll be lucky as hell – if there's love anymore!

To Janet

by **George Albert Leddy**

There is a young maiden, her name is Janet,
A more persistent damsel, I never have met.
She grabbed a poor fellow, his title was John.
He tried to escape, but she kept hanging on.

At last the guy weakened, and asked her to wed,
And she was so happy, she nearly dropped dead.
Now we're here to tell you, I hope you will listen,
There's much more to love, than just hugging and kissing.

Though you are as sweet, as a bowl full of honey,
Remember my dear, that it takes plenty of money;
For meat and potatoes, and coffee and bread,
And rent just to keep a roof over your head.

Well Janet, my dear, don't mind what we say;
You're a sweet little girl, and we all hope and pray
Your life will be long, and each day will be happy;
And it won't be too long till John is a Pappy.

And in the wee hours, when he's walking the floor
You'll be lucky as hell, if there's love anymore!
But wherever you go, or whatever you do,
'Though days may seem dark, and you feel kinda' blue;

And if there be days, when your heart it is sad,
Just think of the fun, that together we've had;
And those thoughts, they will banish, the blues with a bang;
And good luck, to you both, from the Strong Hardware Gang.

To Marion

by George Albert Leddy

(Banquet at The Lincoln Inn, June 7, 1948)

So you're going to leave the old gang, gal;
Well, that seems mighty tough.
You've been with us for five long years;
Yet, it don't seem quite enough.
Of course we know, your greatest wish
Was just to get a man.
So disregard our breaking hearts,
And grab him while you can.

You're lucky leap-year came along,
In nineteen-forty-eight;
For you are slowly slipping,
And it soon might be too late.
We s'pose when Geanie spread the oil,
As we hear, Geanie can;
That right away your heart was gay;
You knew you had your man.

But bless his heart, he had his nerve,
With prices getting higher.
That "two can live as cheap as one—"
That statement is a liar.
With steaks so high, we must content
Ourselves with eating ham.
If Gean knew that, I'll bet the rat
"Would take it on the lamb."

Well, do not mind the things we say;
You have been mighty swell.
In everything you've done your part,
And always done it well.
And may God bless you, all your lives,
And always keep you happy;
And hope it won't be many years
—Till Geanie is a Pappy.

To Pauline

by George Albert Leddy

(To Pauline Peareault and James O'Brien, Banquet at Happy Acres)

Now you're pretty and sweet, and you may like your meat,
But two days a week, don't forget:
That vegetable stew, and one egg or two,
Is all the vitamin-B you will get.

Perhaps, if you wish, you could substitute fish;
That's really not satisfaction.
I have heard it explained, it is good for the brain,
But it's not brains you need now, it's action.

You won't believe what we say, but you'll look back someday
And murmur, "Alas, it is true,
That loves fondest young dreams, of peaches and cream,
Is mostly potatoes in stew."

There is no one to blame, and you'll find it the same,
No matter, wherever, you go.
I'm not speaking in dreams, you see what I mean,
I've been through it, and sure ought to know.

Well, Polly be gay, and don't mind what we say;
You are fine, and we hope all your life,
That happy you'll be, with your darling Jimmie,
And make him a wonderful wife.

For he is a boy, that a girl will enjoy,
No finer young man do I know;
And may God in His love, send you joys from above,
And no sorrows may you ever know.

To Our Izzy

by George Albert Leddy

There he stand, forlorn and shaken,
In a stupor, can't awaken;
Slowly, drying-up and shrinking;
Must do something, I am thinking.

Do you think he'd feel more frisky,
If he had a shot of whiskey?
But the whiskey he has tasted,
Seems to me the money's wasted.

Do you think in his condition,
He could ever have ambition?
Do you think there is no hope?
Will he always be a dope?

Do you think that in his head
There's a brain that isn't dead?
Now, my friend, I've no intention;
The guy's name, I will not mention.

T'would be wrong, I must confess,
So, will have to let you guess.
You might guess wrong, that is true.
Perhaps, my boy, it might be you –

Might be George, or Mac, or Eddie,
Ralph, or Bob, or Fred, or Leddy;
Might be Wakefield, Gill or Roy,
Herman, Joe, or Carl Old Boy.

I won't name too many others;
'Neath our skin, we all are brothers.
Don't forget our sisters, mister.
I will close this silly twister.

Time that I was getting busy.
Signed with honor – To Our Izzy.

To Wilfred

by **George Albert Leddy**

(To Wilfred Deseautelle, from the Strong HDW Gang, Christmas 1947)

A Merry Christmas, filled with cheer,
Followed by a glad New Year;
Lots of whiskey, plenty of beer;
Put your troubles in the rear.

That's the way we hope 'twill be,
For you old pal, as well as we;
A Merry Christmas, bright and gay,
To end the year that's passed away.

A Happy New Year to begin
The months we hope that God will send
His blessings down upon our land,
To make the whole world understand
That what we want, is love not sin;
And peace on Earth, goodwill to men.

To let

by George Albert Leddy

Just off the bar there was a room,
And Gus, he thought one day:
“That’s quite a busy little place;
I’ll have to make it pay.”

So he took the “i” out of the name,
And made it read: “To_let.”
You see, he wanted all the dough
He possibly could get.

And then he got a patent lock,
And nailed it over the door.
He sighed, “I wonder why I didn’t
Think of that before?”

“This room it came to me, you see,
With the hotel that I bought.
So to get in here, you’ll have to drop
A nickel in the slot.”



