The Back of the World.

There is something to me strangely weird, strangely weird,
In this orb, with its mystery furled;
But I wonder most how it is steered, it is steered,
Down there at the back of the world.

If it's true that the earth is a sphere, is a sphere,
Then geography shows a strange lack
In providing no place for to steer, for to steer,
By neglecting to hunt up a back

We are taught in our books there's a pole, there's a pole,
Though its is-ness is doubtful, I ween;
But its back, I declare on my soul, on my soul,
Is a thing that my fancy has seen.

It is far, far away in the East, in the East,
Where the ossified lulla-bird sings,
With a squeaking that ought to be greased, to be greased,
At the ultimate backness of things.

Where the epitaphs leer at the cowls, at the cowls,
And the pachyderm giggles in glee;
Where the fungus in pain loudly howls, loudly howls,
The abnormal effects of a spree.

Save this, all is still unto death, unto death,
As the corpulent silence stalks by;
The redolent leek holds its breath, holds its breath,
And strangles a tear in its eye.

Here an almanac joke in disguise, in disguise,
Is waiting for victims to grow;
And hand-organs mourn the demise, the demise,
Of the author of "Beautiful Snow."

Two lolly-gags spoon on the shore, on the shore,
Where the sea-urchin polishes boots
For ocean swells, fresh from the store, from the store,
Where signs try to prove that "Spring Suits."

Oh, were I a Backling back there at the back,
Where never a human did pace,
All alone, out of range of the strikes, of the strikes,
I would gush o'er the peachblow vase.

Leona.

YOUTH is sad and gay; because of this dual nature it can hope. Childhood lives in the present; age in the past; but youth in the future.

To Piero the future opened in a long vista,—a sunny, shady, vine-clad arbor, where the leaves rustled applause when stirred by the lightest winds; where the rich, purple clusters of success hung just within his ready grasp; where he loitered carelessly along by the side of fair Leona. The future was a very pleasant thought to loving Piero; he was still young—he could hope.

He smiled when he thought of the winds moving the listless leaves into applause; it seemed to him a very quaint conceit. Applause was what he loved best in all the world,—next, of course, to Leona; and he wove the idea into a very passable sonnet, which, however, he was as yet too modest to present to the dear one. Her applause he had never tasted, but he felt sure he should attain it sometime. Meanwhile he would wait and hope!

It was some consolation that nightly he had the opportunity of making love to her under the safe cover of the footlights. There, before the audience, she was as responsive as his yearning heart could wish; and when the audience applauded his love-making, Piero was, perhaps, the only one who knew that it was not acting at all, but simply the irrestrainable outpouring of a real emotion. Still, acting or not, the audience liked it, and their approval made each evening's performance a fairy night of joy to Piero.

"Well, that is very good!" he would say to himself, when pit and gallery rang again; "but presently she shall praise me too!" It was for that he worked—that and her love;—he knew they would come together.

There was one person in the world whom Piero regarded as an enemy; in other words, he had a rival in his endeavor to engage the affections of Leona.

Sometimes it seemed to Piero that he could kill Giuliano, so fierce would his anger and hatred wax against the possible usurper of his place,—a place which at such moments he would not acknowledge as not his, but to which at other moments it would have seemed too high a fate ever to attain himself. Never could he get away from the trite consciousness that Giuliano could boast of great attractions, and so might win a favor to which he himself laid earnest claims. While that consciousness should last, Piero could never but be an enemy to Giuliano.

Perhaps Giuliano looked upon Piero with