

Leroy E. Mosher

Selected Poems



Leroy E. Mosher

September 26, 1849 [Chautauqua County, New York] –

February 23, 1904 [Santa Monica, California]

[A prominent member of the staff of the Los Angeles Times, Mr. Mosher committed suicide on the beach at Santa Monica. A long tribute was written by Harrison Gray Otis and published in the Times of February 26, 1904.]

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The Stranded Bugle

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One eve, I, musing, paced the sands
That skirt a shore where sets the sun,
Where every ripple of the sea
Is warm as kisses, love to love;
I listened to the droning waves—
The lace-like waves which fret and lave
The tinted shells upon the beach.

Among the jetsam washed ashore
I found, deep in a sea-weed bed,
A bugle, with the rime of years
Corroded, tarnished, long since dumb.

I paused, and, wondering whence it came,
Stooped down and took it from the sand.

Long, long before, I, young, had stood
Where armies gathered and advanced,
Where sabers clanked and trumpets blared,
And I had been a bugler then.
I dipped the mouthpiece in the sea—
I dipped the bell into the sea—
I washed its battered, brazen throat,
Then held to lip and flung a blast
Out on the pulsing, starlit air.

The long-hushed bugle woke and rang
A limpid cadence 'long the shore,
Which drifted out to sea, and came
In ripples back upon the waves,
Which rocked its echoes back and forth
From cliff to cliff—against the crags—
Far up the heights, around and 'round

As though it pealed, "I'm found, I'm found!"

I blew again, a softer note,
Though full, which rang along the land—
Rang full, and clear, and sweet, and far;
I thought (but could it swell so high?)
I heard it echo 'gainst a star,
Then drop into the placid sea,
A strain of perfect melody.

I hear that last note ringing yet,
Like cry of lost one far away,
Adrift and drifting past recall;
I fancy it may be a soul—
Perhaps the soul of melody!

So let it drift, and sink, and swell
With every motion of the deep!
The bugle hangs against my wall,
And when I will I'll send once more
A blast upon it to the sea,
To keep the lost one company.

Army Jim

Ever know him
 Little Jim?
Eyes like stars
 Were set in him.
Hair like night
 When clouds are high,
Drifting lazy
 Cross the sky.

Such a daisy
 As was Jim.
When the bullets
 Went”bim, bim,”
And when trumpet
 Had to blare
“Boots and saddles,”
 Jim was there!

Was a bugler
 Such was Jim;
Tenth Ohio,
 Comp ny M,
And at Shiloh
 (So they say)
His brass bugle
 Saved the day.

Cannons thundered
 Cross the hills,
Blood of heroes
 Flowed in rills ;
Blue-clad lines
 And lines of gray
Tossed like billows
 Through the day.

Rank on rank
 They charge and fall;
Bayonet
 And minie ball
Soak the hillslopes
 Deep with blood;
Blue and gray each
 Swells the flood.

Down a long slope
 Jim s brigade,
Platoons dressed
 Like on parade,
Rode at "gallop,"
 Sabers high,
Swinging, smiting
 Hip and thigh.

'Cross ravine
 Like leap of fire,
Through the gray ranks
 Purpose dire
"Right cut," "left cut,"
 "Rear moulinet,"
Flashed they
 On their gory way.

Like mad demons
 Down they rode,
"Cut" and "parry,"
 "Fire!" "Load!"
"Charge!" and "Rally!"
 "Platoons wheel!"
See the gray lines
 Falter, reel!

"Halt!" Beyond
 That clump of trees

See the gray coats!
Swarm of bees
Never was thicker
Than those ranks
Reinforcements
Good-by, Yanks!

General saw them;
Turned to Jim:
"Sound retreat!"
But Jim, blame him,
Kissed his mouthpiece
Swelled up large
Then like a clarion
Sounded "Charge!"

God of Heaven!
See the Yanks
Smite the half-dazed
Rebel ranks!
See them, like a
Blast from hell,
Hush the taunting
Rebel yell!

Any previous
Charge that day
Had been only
Baby play ;
And the troopers
Guidon flies
Where the conquered
Moans and dies.

Did they hang him,
Do you say?
Jim, who saved
The fight that day?

Hardly, honey!
Shoulder straps
Fit him better n
Bigger chaps.

And he got em,
Pair of "bars,"
But I ll swear
He won two "stars!"
Such a brick!
My eyes just swim
When I think of
Army Jim!

—[1882.

The End of the Passage

There are no flaring torches
Where the passage ends
Not a glimmer of light,
Nor sound, nor perfume;
Only the dank, moist smell
Of newly-dug earth a rift
Cut through the greensward
A ghastly stab in the earth s
Big bosom a stab that does not bleed.
And all the sons of men
The daughters of mothers
Warm-veined, lithe-limbed,
Jocund and debonair,
Who dally day by day
Along the world s rose-leafed carpets,
Through the sunny days
Go down the passage,
Each alone,

 And there they wait
Wait for the years to roll away,
The centuries, the ages, the eons
There at the end of the passage.
Some there are that go down
That way crowned with
The blessing of youth the
Sun yesterday glinted and
Shimmered through the tresses of gold.
There were peach blooms in
Velvety cheeks, star-shine in
Twin eyes, and pulses that
Fluttered and danced;
But there, where there is
Not sight, nor sound, nor
Sun-ray, nor perfume
Only the dank, moist smell of
Newly-dug earth, they

Wait,

There at the end of the passage.

The curving arm on whose

Warm, supple surface another's head

Has lain in happy peace,

Lulled to blissful quiet

By the throb of a happy

Heart, is all a-cold;

The bloom has vanished

From the cheek of plush,

And the red in the lips has paled ;

It is dark there, and quiet,

And lonely,

There at the end of the passage.

—[March 10, 1895.

The Man With the Little Tin Pail.

Bead by the author at the opening of the Sixth District Fair, Los Angeles.

The poets have sung of the hero of wars
 Since time first began until date ;
They have lauded his valor, exploited his scars,
 And the blood that he shed for the state;
But mine is the theme of that everyday chap
 Who wears neither sword-knot nor mail ;
Whose battlefields everywhere down on the map
 The man with the little tin pail.

In the broad, yellow fields flooded over with sun,
 Where the harvester whirs out its song ;
Where the ground squirrel flits and the fruited vines run,
 And the furrows are many and long,
He follows the wake of the glittering plow
 As the snowy foam follows the sail
This jumper-clothed, valorous hero of now!
 The man with the little tin pail.

Where the nerve-racking thrasher high into the air
 Casts cyclonic breathings of chaff,
On the spot where the seed-sower late ruled its square
 To the tune of the tickled soil's laugh,
He labors with faith in a future benign
 A faith that no creed dare assail
And on Mother Earth's face he emblazons his sign,
 This man with the little tin pail.

In the mines dizzy deeps, in the winzes and drifts
 Where the ore bodies shrink from the view,
He flashes his pick as the creaking cage lifts
 The coin, in the rough, up for you.
And where the coal ledges their ebon veins hide
 Beneath the tall mountains of grail,
We find him, this base of all wealth, in his pride,
 The man with the little tin pail.

In the orchard's dark depths where the golden globes shine,
 And the apple trees shed their sweet blooms
Where the musical mocking bird lilts out his line,
 And the corn tassels shake out their brooms,
He holds in fee-simple the sun and the soil
 Direct from his Maker's entail,
And the lush harvest reaps as the toll for his toil
 This man with the little tin pail.

In the mills where the whirling wheels tremble and crush,
 And the white-heated furnaces glow,
Where thro chute and conveyor the yellow streams rush,
 To be changed to the daintiest snow,
He comes on the scene as a genie in white,
 Who walks with a floury trail
This everyday hero, but not less a knight,
 The man with the little tin pail.

At the forge where the iron bars sputter and flame,
 And the steam-hammer's baton beats time,
He creates, for far lesser men, money and fame,
 And improves the designer's design ;
To the throb of the engine he fashions the kedge,
 While the sparks, pouring out their red hail,
Coruscate a salute from this man of the sledge,
 This man with the little tin pail.

Not a tower or pinnacle climbs to the sky
 But sounds him a paean of praise;
Not a harvest-wain comes from the fields loaded high
 But exalts him and crowns him with bays!
Not a keel cuts a gash on the breast of the blue,
 Not a barkentine flutters a sail
O'er the tremulous surge, but exploits him anew,
 This man with the little tin pail.

So my rhyme it is tuned to the musical chimes

That the anvil and trip-hammer rings,
Whose cadences beat on the air of all climes
Like the rhythm of harps and of wings ;
Enraptured, I see him push into the dawn
A world that without him would fail,
And I pledge in these stanzas that hero of brawn,
The man with the little tin pail.

Don't Worry.

Things are all right, good people
If you only think so.
The stars shine just the same
These summer nights
As ever stars gleamed any time.
The sun is just as bright,
The breeze as sweet,
The odorous fields as gay
With lilt of larks
And twittering of other
Happy birds,
As e'er since time began.
Don't worry,
And say that times are bad
And money hard to get.
Great Scott! look up and
See how beautiful the world is
Every minute of the time
See riotous Nature
Smothering in joy of her
Own sweet self!
See how gay the rivers run,
And the ripples of the sea
How in the sun
They sparkle full of gems.
Go out upon the heights
At dawn
And see the big dew-wet
World wake up,
And thank your blessed stars
You're here to do it.
Don't worry
Everything's all right
I reckon!

—[August 13, 1893.

Am I Not A “Pioneer?”

I did not come around the Horn
 In a great big ship with flapping sails
A great big ship which churned the sea,
 And bumped the noses of the whales.

I did not come by Panama,
 Nor ride a mule led by a black,
Nor get the Isthmus fever some,
 Nor wish to God I could go back.

I did not come across the plains,
 And spend six months upon the way,
But took a sleeping car in mine,
 Speeding two hundred miles a day.

And yet I feel that I should rank
 Among the proudest of the line
For I am glad to own the fact
 That I was born in 49.

—[November 12, 1880.

The Governor's Ball.

Like a palace of light in the gloaming
The capitol loomed in the air,
And the stars through the translucent ether
Beamed down with a scintillance rare ;
From the breadths of the heavens the rain-clouds
Had swept with the coming nightfall,
And the hour was fit and propitious
That honored the Governor's ball.

To the high-pillared portals there hurried
The preciously freighted coupes,
And the streets of the city rang loud with
The hoof-beats of blacks and of bays;
Through the marble-paved corridors rustled
Silks, satins and velvets, which all
Caressed dainty feet that were going
To dance at the Governor's ball.

And the music rolled from the rotunda,
And ravished the listening ears
It swelled to the dome, through the doorways,
To swoon on the emerald parterres ;
While eyes that were bright as the stars are
Were sparkling in chamber and hall
For the State lent the pick of its beauty
To honor the Governor's ball.

There were jewels a gleam in the gaslight;
There were bosoms like roses of snow ;
There were willowy figures, and laces
As creamy as blossoms that blow ;
There were lips like the bow of Cupid;
There were feet just as cunning and small
As any Cinderella ever boasted,
That night at the Governor's ball.

There were militaire figures, bright-buttoned
 And corded with spasms of gold;
There were punch bowls top full and o erflowing;
 There were cavaliers stalwart and bold;
There were pates de foi gras and ices;
 There were just a few flowers called”wall,”
As well as the taste, wit and beauty
 Whch honored the Governor s ball.

And I think I saw something like flirting,
 Perhaps once or twice, on the stairs
Or it might have been but an engagement
 To”racquette”to one of Strauss airs ;
But I m sure I o erheard a sweet creature
 A divinity dainty and tall
Say, “Yes, Dick, I ll be yours forever,”
 That night at the Governor s ball.

And amid the small hours of the morning,
 When the stars in the east had. gone out ;
When the melody hushed and the dancers
 Had quitted the scene of the rout,
I thought as I saw in the dawning
 The capitol loom white and tall
“How sweet in my memory will linger
 This night at the Governor s ball.”

—[San Francisco Argonaut, February, 1881.

The Glorious Climate O Californy.

“Snatched from the jaws of death by the G. C. of C.”

Ho! Eastland, turn loose to this region
Each man with an asthmatic whoop,
The cerebro-spinal and so forth,
The baby with colic or croup!
Just give us one whack at your ailment,
And we ll knock it as cold as can be,
For this you will please to remember s
The glorious climate of C.

Send out to this God-favored section
Each banged-up, tubercled lung,
Or the worst disposition that ever
Was hitched to a villain unhung,
And fix it we will while a Paddy
Is dancing the tra-la-la-le,
For this I will pause to remark is
The wonderful G. C. of C.

Let the Bostonese come here and take it
As t the Hub he would toy with the bean;
Let Vermont send its suffering sufferers
Away from her mountains of green,
And we ll gamble our stock in the future
That almighty soon you will see
Health glow in each radiant feature
Placed there by die G. C. of C.

Let the lame and the halt and the tired
But rest for a time on these shores,
And appetite won t wait for dinner
To beat anything out of doors ;
For here where the golden spheres cluster
On the fragrant and dark-verdured tree,
Is the spot known from high-up to low-down s
The home of the climate of C.

And they re coming cross valley and desert,
 They re crowding each mountain-rent pass
Philadelphia, New York and the regions
 This side poureth westward en masse.
For they ll have it if money can buy it,
 Though it sloshes all round here too free
This bang-uppest thing on the tapis
 This lung-mending climate of C.

—[1883.

Postmaster "Lummis"

C. F. Lummis, the gifted writer, has been appointed postmaster at Isleta,
Bernalillo County Arizona Journal-Miner.

Ah! Lummis, old boy, you surprise me ;
I d never a thought to seen you
Behind a delivery window,
And passing the letters right through.
Who d you get, Lum, to sign your"petition?"
And where did you locate your"pull?"
Have you really got your commission?
Is the place of assistant yet full?

If not, Lum, I d like a position
A job such as licking of stamps,
Or reading the postal-card writing,
And standing off cowboys and tramps.
By the way, though, I m told that Isleta
S a country where shooting s the game.
Say, Lum, did you plug that paisano
That once gave you some of the same?

I suppose you will soon be au fait in
Such dod-blasted questions as these:
"Is the cars in yet, Mr. Postmaster?"
"Is there mail in the postoffice, please?"
"Can t you sell me three stamps for a nickel?"
"Mr. Lummis, how late is the train?"
Ah! Lum, I was once in the business,
And that s what is ailing my brain!

Well, Lum, when you re writing back yonder
To the boys in the capitol town,
I would like if you d say it s my notion
That for once they have done it up brown ;
With you in the administration
I m sure all-fired near right

Will be things in the P. O. Department
Cigarette s out please pass me a light!

The Exodus Jubilee.

Say, darkies, hab you heard from Kansas?

Dey say it s a bully place

Dey say it am the Ian ob Canaan

For dis yer cullud race ;

We see de smoke down on de ribber

Whar de great big steamboats lay,

So we ll pack our traps an leabe mighty sudden,

You bet we s gwine away.

CHORUS.

De darkeys go, ha! ha!

De white man stay, ho! ho!

We gwine away to happy Kansas

In dis year ob jubilo.

De "White League s" made us lots ob trubble;

Dey s made dis life a hell

We ain t been free and ain t been happy,

And ain t been treated well;

We s labored hard in de fields ob cotton

And cannot get our pay,

So we ll pack our traps and leabe mighty sudden,

You bet we s gwine away.

De white man prints in de newspapers

Dat our life am full ob song;

Dat we am all content and happy

As de sunny days am long.

But he knows well dat we hab no comfort

Dat our mules am dribben away

So we ll pack our traps and up de ribber

We ll go dis berry day.

Ole Massa Linkum made us free ;

We thought de time had come

When here in de Souf wha we was bo n

Dat we might make a home;
But de whip still cracks on de big plantation
In politics we ve no say,
So we ll hail de fust boat up de ribber
And go and go away.

We thought dat when de wah was ober
De Souf would learn some sense;
Dat de Ku Klux Klan and fire eaters
Would go away from hence;
But here in de Ian ob de sugar cane
Dey s taken root to stay,
So we ll wipe de tears from dese black cheeks
Pack up and go away.

De Souf may yet learn to its sorrow
Dat de black man had some right
Dat it isn t always bes for a giant
To use his iron might ;
We know we is poor and heaby laden,
And dat we cannot stay,
So out from de Egypt Ian of chains
We ll rise and go away.

Den take your coolie Chinee men
And see how dey will do;
Perhaps beneath de heel ob de tyrant
Dey will rise up, too.
Dey ll lib on a little bit ob rice
And work for a dollar a day,
But we is bound for de Canaan Ian
We s gwine, oh, gwine away.

—[Colton, 1879.

After Browning.

With a sharp stick.

Oh! sweet hereafter loom up on the sea,

Blue meditation gleam on the gilded horse-power,

Rapt, rapt, so rapt in all the mining boards

And tempest blubbering :

Git up and git, old saw-horse, drop astern, swing low

Bang out your chariots in the wild windgalls,

And list the humbug hum!

The Footballer

Hail! All hail the footballer!

Watch him, all gory,
Red and grimy-faced,
Hammering his brother
Into the gridiron field
With glee.

See his wild, tangled,
Angle-wormy mass
Of wriggling legs and arms,
And eke how the
Miscreant bleeds.

Note you his clouded eye,
Torn ear, skinned shin,
And lip swollen to
Twice as big as t ought to be
In mirthful sport.

Bring you the litter
For the maimed, the
Catafalque for the dead,
And lug him
In heroic style from
The ensanguined field.

Also, what ho! the
Arnica wagon and
The ambulance ;
Bring in the lint, the
Sticking plaster and the
Raw beefsteak, and
Let the repairs begin.

Patch up the broken
Men, bind up their
Sore places, and buy
You some crutches
For the limping.

No more they yell
The zip, boom, ah!

Wienerwurst, Shah!
Google, google, google,
And Yah! Yah! Yah!
But winded and torn
And mangled midst
The flying wedge
And in the rushline,
They behold what
A double-triggered
Wild ass of Tartary
A footballer is,
Anyhow!

