



THE BALLAD OF THE MOSS TROOPER.

LAPRAIRIE LET THY GROVES DESPAIR,
WEeping THEIR YELLOW LEAVES;
THY COMMON LOOKS UNCOMMON BARE,—
FIELD OF THE FORTY THIEVES!

The summer's sun shone fierce and hot,
The sentry on his beat
Low whispered word of wrath and sought
The shade side of the street.

Where golden balls—a magic three—
High quivered in the breeze,
Hard by the portal halted he,
Halted and stood at ease.

Beneath the pendent symbols there
Outbore a goodly show,
Some things that were both rich and rare,
And some that were rather low.

And silently the sentry gazed,
In wonder mixed with doubt,
At gold and silver glistened and glazed,
Slumbering up the spout.

Silk and velvet side by side
Along with pistol and knife;
A dagger by a wedding ring,
Matched like husband and wife!

The flute beside the silver spoon,
All silent as in death;
And the trumpet gasped at the old bassoon,
Speechless for want of breath.

But over all, both great and small,
Above, around and below,
Ever the soldier's gaze would fall
Upon a gorgeous row.

Of warrior garb, collapsed and grim,
On ignominious peg;
With golden gleam adown the seam
Of shoulder, arm and leg.

And sabre bright with armed boot,
Casque and button and loop;
While saddles hung buff belts among,—
Signs of a swaggering troop.

Thirty and nine, beneath the sign
That quivered in the air;—
"What troopers they, O sentry say,
How came such troopers there?"

Romantic was that sentinel,
Old thoughts about him go,
But the only words from his lips that fell,
Were,—"blast me if I know!"

Adown, adown the block-paved street,
The street of Notre Dame,
With bristled beard and shoe-less feet,
A squalid man there came.

Much burthen on his back who bore,
Trappings of cavalry,—
Saddle and bridle, boot and spur,
A glittering panoply.

And on his footsteps followed slow
A steed of a sleepy eye,
Watched as he went by many a crow
Wheeling under the sky.

"God save thee, noble sentinel!
I see thy troubled brow,
Brief space have I my tale to tell,
Driven I know not how."

"Full forty on the plain were we,—
I mark thy wondering eye,—
We marshalled on the broad prairie,
The river it rushed hard by."

"One morn we heard the stirring word,
"Forty, to horse, to horse!"
There's battle down in yonder town,
And the river we must cross."

"Adown we rode to the river's brink,
Just at the Steamboat bell,
Ready to cross, both man and horse,
Unknowing of the spell."

"But the spell, the spell of the water-bound
Was on both horse and man,
And that Steamboat she always ran aground,
That tried to break our ban."

"We rigged us out with many a craft,
Bateau and barge and canoe,
But barge nor bateau nor lumbering raft
Would float with us for a crew."

"For the ban it followed us first and last,—
Brief word have I to say,—
That we never should pass that river fast,
While we were under pay."

"But the spell, the spell of the water-bound
Was changed upon man and horse,—
When they paid us off no rest we found,
Till we pledged our traps with Moss."

"Unto whose pillared portals I,
Last of the forty fold,
And driven by my strong destiny;—
Soldier, my tale is told."

Sarcastic was the sentinel,
Mayhap it was that he
From bayonet's use had learned well
To launch cold irony.

And he said with a wink, "young man, young man,
I'll bet you a fortnight's pay,
MOSS TROOPERS ye will nick-named be
For ever and a day!"

LAPRAIRIE YEEPS IN COLD DESPAIR,
SHEDDING HER YELLOW LEAVES;
HER COMMON LOOKS UNCOMMON BARE,—
FIELD OF THE FORTY THIEVES!