

BALLAD OF BILL THE BONE

A wench in disguise to her seamy eyes,
And the butt of brawls and fights.

Yet guns were drawn and Bill's own chum
Went down with a ghastly rasp;
And Bill the Bone with the heart of stone
Grinned with a gnawing gasp,
Demented most to the devilled point,
With a live gun in his grasp.

The sheriff, primed for spicy work,
And hard as chiselled flint,
Spoke wisely of the word "defence,"
And sent a little hint,—
A breezy hint for Bill to spur,
Or do a sudden sprint.

Yet drink was cheap; but cheaper still
Was bared life in these days;
And many went to their carnal mound
Through girls and the gambling craze;
So Bill, with another nick on his gun,
Went on his ill-starred ways.

Yet not all bad for the sake of lust
Was Bill, the frontier spark,—
A reckless care to do or dare,
With each stern pace, a lark,—