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| Anne Rutledge  Hamlet Micure  OUT of me unworthy and unknown The vibrations of deathless music; “With malice toward none, with charity for all.’, Out of me the forgiveness of millions toward millions, And the beneficent face of a nation Shining with justice and truth. I am Anne Rutledge who sleep beneath these weeds, Beloved in life of Abraham Lincoln, Wedded to him, not through union, But through separation. Bloom forever, O Republic, From the dust of my bosom! | Benjamin Pantier  TOGETHER in this grave lie Benjamin Pantier, attorney at law, And Nig, his dog, constant companion, solace and friend. Down the gray road, friends, children, men and women, Passing one by one out of life, left me till I was alone  With Nig for partner, bed-fellow; comrade in drink. In the morning of life I knew aspiration and saw glory, Then she, who survives me, snared my soul With a snare which bled me to death, Till I, once strong of will, lay broken, indifferent, Living with Nig in a room back of a dingy office. Under my Jaw-bone is snuggled the bony nose of Nig Our story is lost in silence. Go by, Mad world! |

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| Carl Hamblin  THE press of the Spoon River Clarion was wrecked, And I was tarred and feathered, For publishing this on the day the Anarchists were hanged in Chicago:  “l saw a beautiful woman with bandaged eyes Standing on the steps of a marble temple. Great multitudes passed in front of her, Lifting their faces to her imploringly.  In her left hand she held a sword. She was brandishing the sword, Sometimes striking a child, again a laborer, Again a slinking woman, again a lunatic. In her right hand she held a scale; Into the scale pieces of gold were tossed By those who dodged the strokes of the sword. A man in a black gown read from a manuscript: “She is no respecter of persons.” Then a youth wearing a red cap Leaped to her side and snatched away the bandage. And lo, the lashes had been eaten away From the oozy eye-lids; The eye-balls were seared with a milky mucus; The madness of a dying soul Was written on her face— But the multitude saw why she wore the bandage.” | Dora Williams  WHEN Reuben Pantier ran away and threw me I went to Springfield. There I met a lush, Whose father just deceased left him a fortune. He married me when drunk.  My life was wretched. A year passed and one day they found him dead. That made me rich. I moved on to Chicago. After a time met Tyler Rountree, villain. ImovedontoNewYork.Agray-hairedmagnate Went mad about me—so another fortune. He died one night right in my arms, you know. (I saw his purple face for years thereafter. ) There was almost a scandal. I moved on, This time to Paris. I was now a woman, Insidious, subtle, versed in the world and rich. My sweet apartment near the Champs Elysees Became a center for all sorts of people, Musicians, poets, dandies, artists, nobles, Where we spoke French and German, Italian, English. I wed Count Navigato, native of Genoa. We went to Rome. He poisoned me, I think. Now in the Campo Santo overlooking The sea where young Columbus dreamed new worlds, See what they chiseled: “Contessa Navigato Implora eterna quiete.” |

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| Emily Sparks  WHERE is my boy, my boy In what far part of the world? The boy I loved best of all in the school?— I, the teacher, the old maid, the virgin heart, Who made them all my children. Did I know my boy aright, Thinking of him as a spirit aflame, Active, ever aspiring? Oh, boy, boy, for whom I prayed and prayed In many a watchful hour at night, Do you remember the letter I wrote you Of the beautiful love of Christ? And whether you ever took it or not, My, boy, wherever you are, Work for your soul’s sake, That all the clay of you, all of the dross of you, May yield to the fire of you, Till the fire is nothing but light!... Nothing but light! | Doc Hill  I WENT up and down the streets Here and there by day and night, Through all hours of the night caring for the poor who were  sick. Do you know why?  My wife hated me, my son went to the dogs. And I turned to the people and poured out my love to them. Sweet it was to see the crowds about the lawns on the day  of my funeral, And hear them murmur their love and sorrow. But oh, dear God, my soul trembled, scarcely able To hold to the railing of the new life When I saw Em Stanton behind the oak tree At the grave, Hiding herself, and her grief! |

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| Eugenia Todd  Have any of you, passers-by,  Had an old tooth that was an unceasing discomfort?  Or a pain in the side that never quite left you?  Or a malignant growth that grew with time?  So that even in profoundest slumber  There was shadowy consciousness or the phantom of thought  Of the tooth, the side, the growth?  Even so thwarted love, or defeated ambition,  Or a blunder in life which mixed your life  Hopelessly to the end,  Will like a tooth, or a pain in the side,  Float through your dreams in the final sleep  Till perfect freedom from the earth-sphere  Comes to you as one who wakes  Healed and glad in the morning! | Lucinda Matlock  I WENT to the dances at Chandlerville,  And played snap-out at Winchester.  One time we changed partners,  Driving home in the moonlight of middle June,  And then I found Davis.  We were married and lived together for seventy years, Enjoying, working, raising the twelve children,  Eight of whom we lost  Ere I had reached the age of sixty.  I spun,  I wove,   I kept the house,  I nursed the sick,  I made the garden, and for holiday  Rambled over the fields where sang the larks,  And by Spoon River gathering many a shell,  And many a flower and medicinal weed—   Shouting to the wooded hills, singing to the green valleys.  At ninety—six I had lived enough, that is all,  And passed to a sweet repose.  What is this I hear of sorrow and weariness,  Anger, discontent and drooping hopes?  Degenerate sons and daughters,  Life is too strong for you—   It takes life to love Life. |

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| Lambert Hutchins  I HAVE two monuments besides this granite obelisk:  One, the house I built on the hill,  With its spires, bay windows, and roof of slate.  The other, the lake-front in Chicago,  Where the railroad keeps a switching yard,  With whistling engines and crunching wheels  And smoke and soot thrown over the city,  And the crash of cars along the boulevard,—  A blot like a hog-pen on the harbor  Of a great metropolis, foul as a sty.  I helped to give this heritage  To generations yet unborn, with my vote   In the House of Representatives,  And the lure of the thing was to be at rest  From the never—ending fright of need,  And to give my daughters gentle breeding,  And a sense of security in life.  But, you see, though I had the mansion house  And traveling passes and local distinction,  I could hear the whispers, whispers, whispers,  Wherever I went, and my daughters grew up  With a look as if some one were about to strike them;  And they married madly, helter-skelter,  Just to get out and have a change.  And what was the whole of the business worth?  Why, it wasn’t worth a damn! | Seth Compton  When I died, the circulating library  Which I built up for Spoon River,  And managed for the good of inquiring minds,  Was sold at auction on the public square,  As if to destroy the last vestige  Of my memory and influence.  For those of you who could not see the virtue  Of knowing Volney's "Ruins" as well as Butler's "Analogy"  And "Faust" as well as "Evangeline,"  Were really the power in the village,  And often you asked me,  "What is the use of knowing the evil in the world?"  I am out of your way now, Spoon River,  Choose your own good and call it good.  For I could never make you see  That no one knows what is good  Who knows not what is evil;  And no one knows what is true  Who knows not what is false. |

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| Yee Bow  They got me into the Sunday-school  In Spoon River  And tried to get me to drop Confucius for Jesus.  I could have been no worse off  If I had tried to get them to drop Jesus for Confucius.  For, without any warning, as if it were a prank,  And sneaking up behind me, Harry Wiley,  The minister's son, caved my ribs into my lungs,  With a blow of his fist.  Now I shall never sleep with my ancestors in Pekin,  And no children shall worship at my grave. | John Horace Burleson  I WON the prize essay at school  Here in the village,  And published a novel before I was twenty-five.  I went to the city for themes and to enrich my art; There married the banker’s daughter,  And later became president of the bank— Always looking forward to some leisure  To write an epic novel of the war.  Meanwhile friend of the great, and lover of letters,  And host to Matthew Arnold and to Emerson.  An after dinner speaker, writing essays   For local clubs. At last brought here—  My boyhood home, you know—  Not even a little tablet in Chicago  To keep my name alive.  How great it is to write the single line:   “Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean, roll!” |

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| Margaret Fuller Slack  I would have been as great as George Eliot  But for an untoward fate.  For look at the photograph of me made by Peniwit,  Chin resting on hand, and deep-set eyes i  Gray, too, and far-searching.  But there was the old, old problem:  Should it be celibacy, matrimony or unchastity?  Then John Slack, the rich druggist, wooed me,  Luring me with the promise of leisure for my novel,  And I married him, giving birth to eight children,  And had no time to write.  It was all over with me, anyway,  When I ran the needle in my hand  While washing the baby's things,  And died from lock-jaw, an ironical death.  Hear me, ambitious souls,  Sex is the curse of life! | Widow McFarlane  I was the Widow McFarlane,  Weaver of carpets for all the village.  And I pity you still at the loom of life,  You who are singing to the shuttle  And lovingly watching the work of your hands,  If you reach the day of hate, of terrible truth.  For the cloth of life is woven, you know,  To a pattern hidden under the loom i  A pattern you never see!  And you weave high-hearted, singing, singing,  You guard the threads of love and friendship  For noble figures in gold and purple.  And long after other eyes can see  You have woven a moon-white strip of cloth,  You laugh in your strength, for Hope o'erlays it  With shapes of love and beauty.  The loom stops short! The pattern's out!  You're alone in the room! You have woven a shroud!  And hate of it lays you in it! |

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| Mrs. Kessler  Mr. Kessler, you know, was in the army,  And he drew six dollars a month as a pension,  And stood on the corner talking politics,  Or sat at home reading Grant’s *Memoirs*;  And I supported the family by washing,  Learning the secrets of all the people  From their curtains, counterpanes, shirts and skirts.  For things that are new grow old at length,  They’re replaced with better or none at all:  People are prospering or falling back.  And rents and patches widen with time;  No thread or needle can pace decay,  And there are stains that baffle soap,  And there are colors that run in spite of you,  Blamed though you are for spoiling a dress.  Handkerchiefs, napery, have their secrets  The laundress, Life, knows all about it.  And I, who went to all the funerals  Held in Spoon River, swear I never  Saw a dead face without thinking it looked  Like something washed and ironed. | Washington McNeely  Rich, honored by my fellow citizens,  The father of many children, born of a noble mother,  All raised there  In the great mansion-house, at the edge of town.  Note the cedar tree on the lawn!  I sent all the boys to Ann Arbor, all the girls to Rockford,  The while my life went on, getting more riches and honors—  Resting under my cedar tree at evening.  The years went on.  I sent the girls to Europe;  I dowered them when married.  I gave the boys money to start in business.  They were strong children, promising as apples  Before the bitten places show.  But John fled the country in disgrace.  Jenny died in child-birth—  I sat under my cedar tree.  Harry killed himself after a debauch,  Susan was divorced—  I sat under my cedar tree.  Paul was invalided from over-study,  Mary became a recluse at home for love of a man—  I sat under my cedar tree.  All were gone, or broken-winged or devoured by life—  I sat under my cedar tree.  My mate, the mother of them, was taken—  I sat under my cedar tree  Till ninety years were tolled.  O maternal Earth, which rocks the fallen leaf to sleep! |