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| Anne RutledgeHamlet MicureOUT 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 PantierTOGETHER 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 aloneWith 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 HamblinTHE 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 WilliamsWHEN 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 SparksWHERE 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 HillI WENT up and down the streets Here and there by day and night, Through all hours of the night caring for the poor who weresick. 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 dayof 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 slumberThere was shadowy consciousness or the phantom of thoughtOf the tooth, the side, the growth?Even so thwarted love, or defeated ambition,Or a blunder in life which mixed your lifeHopelessly to the end,Will like a tooth, or a pain in the side,Float through your dreams in the final sleepTill perfect freedom from the earth-sphereComes to you as one who wakesHealed and glad in the morning! | Lucinda MatlockI 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 HutchinsI 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 harborOf 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 ComptonWhen I died, the circulating libraryWhich 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 vestigeOf my memory and influence.For those of you who could not see the virtueOf 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 seeThat no one knows what is goodWho knows not what is evil;And no one knows what is trueWho knows not what is false. |

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| Yee BowThey got me into the Sunday-schoolIn Spoon RiverAnd tried to get me to drop Confucius for Jesus.I could have been no worse offIf 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 BurlesonI 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 SlackI would have been as great as George EliotBut for an untoward fate.For look at the photograph of me made by Peniwit,Chin resting on hand, and deep-set eyes iGray, 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 handWhile washing the baby's things,And died from lock-jaw, an ironical death.Hear me, ambitious souls,Sex is the curse of life! | Widow McFarlaneI 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 shuttleAnd 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 iA pattern you never see!And you weave high-hearted, singing, singing,You guard the threads of love and friendshipFor noble figures in gold and purple.And long after other eyes can seeYou have woven a moon-white strip of cloth,You laugh in your strength, for Hope o'erlays itWith 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. KesslerMr. 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 peopleFrom 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 secretsThe laundress, Life, knows all about it.And I, who went to all the funeralsHeld in Spoon River, swear I neverSaw a dead face without thinking it lookedLike something washed and ironed. | Washington McNeelyRich, honored by my fellow citizens,The father of many children, born of a noble mother,All raised thereIn 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 applesBefore 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 treeTill ninety years were tolled.O maternal Earth, which rocks the fallen leaf to sleep! |