

THE  
WATER-DRINKER



PATRICK SLATER

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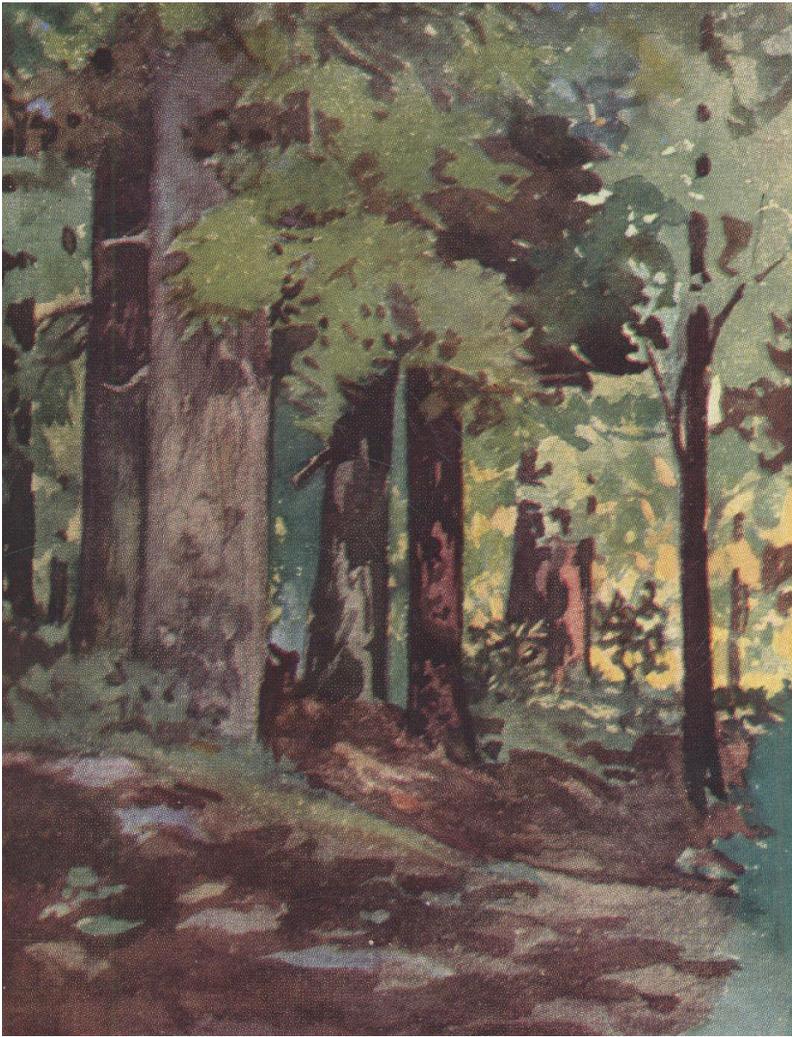
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PINE WOODS  
ALBERT H. ROBSON

*A pine grove is a holy place;  
Chaste columns form the temple's base;  
In its high dome green branches lace,  
    Their sombre shadows slanting.  
Thick rugs await the pilgrim's feet;  
Odours of myrrh his nostrils greet  
Down its dim aisles the winds retreat,  
    Their mournful numbers chanting.*

—THE CHINQUACOUSY.

# THE WATER-DRINKER

# THE WATER-DRINKER

BY

PATRICK SLATER

NULLA PLACERE DIU NEC VIVERE CARMINA  
POSSUNT QUAE SCRIBUNTUR AQUAE PORTORIBUS.

—Horace (Epistles 1.19.2).

Or as Englished:

*Beware the water-drinker's song!  
It does not please nor live for long.*

TORONTO

THOMAS ALLEN

PUBLISHER

*Save where a Christian and surname are both specifically set out, this book contains no direct reference either to the writings or doings of individual persons, now living, other than the writer and his mess mate.*

Set up and printed October, 1937

—

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by  
THOMAS ALLEN

Printed in Canada.

*I sing of brooks, of blossoms, birds and bowers,  
Of April, May, of June, and July flowers;  
I write of Youth, of Love, and have access  
By these, to sing of cleanly wantonness;  
I write of groves, of twilights, and I sing  
The Court of Mab, and of the Faery King.  
I write of Hell; I sing, and ever shall,  
Of Heaven, and hope to have it after all.*

—Robert Herrick. (1591-1674.)

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# THE WATER-DRINKER

## AN INTRODUCTION

*In which the author gives such hints by way of Bill-of-Fare as a reader might demand of right on opening the pages of any book.*

AN introduction of this kind is perhaps against precedent. A writer of verses is usually stricken by modesty about the time his book is set up in type. He blurts out with telegraphic brevity that the verses have been printed before,—and where; and that they are now thrown together at the earnest solicitation of admiring friends. The explaining is done afterwards in tails and over teacups. In the present instance, there has been no previous printing; unfortunately, there is no such nattering urgency; and we must not let slip the only chance that will present itself to do some necessary explaining. This will be of a general nature; because a writer of verses would rather die than explain the meaning of anything he has written.

### *Mea culpa.*

Since no man can blot out or alter what has been written down in the Book of Life, the wise course, in the present instance, may be to follow the advice that Horace gave—and tell the truth with a smile of fortitude. As the title suggests, these verses were written during the term of a long imprisonment. Of course this puts the author at a disadvantage; but it does not necessarily follow that his book is in like bad case. Interesting pieces have been written, one time or another, by men who have lain in prison and by others whose deserts might have justly placed them there. With the names of the poor miserable sinners all stricken out, an Anthology of English Poetry would become a lean volume made up principally of inspirational but uninspired verse. The generous minded will have the goodness to observe that this book comes out of a time of sorrow; and may be disinclined to visit the sins of its parent upon the helpless child of his fancy. What others may do is of little consequence.

### *On Commonplace Verse.*

In true poetry the written word catches emotions of beauty that thrill; but nuggets of that quality are of rare occurrence in the writings of any man. This book makes no pretensions to such. It merely attempts to set down honest thought and feeling in a pleasing way under the restrictions of rime

and rhythm. On the other hand, it hopes for something better than namby-pamby verse in which the dry bread of commonplace is smeared with sticky sentiment in the fashion of which Ambrose Philips was master; and which he aptly described:

*“Let others, more ambitious, rack their brains  
In polished sentiments and labour’d strains;  
To blooming Phyllis I a song compose,  
And for a rhyme compare her to a rose;  
Then while my fancy works I write down morn,  
To paint the blush that does her cheek adorn;  
And when the whiteness of her skin I show,  
With ecstasy bethink myself of snow.  
Thus without pains I tinkle to a close  
And sweeten into verse insipid prose.”*

Exercises in rime and rhythm help to while the hours away pleasantly; and such practice may help to a dexterity in the use of words. True enough, the learned Bysshe cautioned dabblers in rime that a man deserves a higher esteem in the world by being a good mason or shoemaker than by being an indifferent or second-rate poet. But this observation presupposes that the poetaster has a chance of success in some other useful line of effort; and obviously does not apply to an elderly person serving a term in prison. On the face of it, he is a ruined man and cannot even lay claim to being a successful criminal.

*Should be lucid.*

But writing verses, like every other game of solitaire, is governed by rules; and the player is put on his honour not to cheat. The principal rule for a verse-smith is that he say what he has to say clearly and with a decent brevity. Verse and rime do, at times, cause a writer to labour; but their cramping effect must not appear in the finished product; nor should a reader be asked to dig for meaning in a verse as one digs for meat in a hickory nut. Verses need more than lucidity to become poetry but obscurities plainly brand them as discards. If his ecstasy renders a writer unintelligible, it should go further and paralyze his writing hand. That the incoherent is dross may not apply to some esoteric mysteries of the present day; but assuredly it has proven true of everything that has been written down by the human hand from the beginning of the world to the present era. Anyone who finds a

fascination in pondering over the mysterious is advised to study his own soul and not waste his time on the verbal obscurities of others.

*Though shackled.*

A second rule relates to matters of rime and rhythm. If the verse-smith asserts that such are trivialities of no importance, he is at liberty to disregard them altogether—and go sulk in a tent of his own where he will have a lonely time of it; but if he professes allegiance to them, he must act the part of their loyal subject to the best of his ability. Once the player gets out of step with his tune and starts filling in gaps with “doths” and “prithees,” he has lost a game and must in fairness lay out his cards afresh. If his rime limps so badly as to hang “home” onto “come” and “love” onto “move” or “was” onto “grass”, it is time for him to quit for the night. He is seeing rimes that no modern ear can hear. Such torture of honest simple words, to make them fit, is permitted to great poets, such as Shelley and Keats, by special dispensation; but is abhorrent in the writings of ordinary persons. An imperfect rime, such as “fodder” with “water,” must however be permitted, now and again, lest a writer be struck speechless; but resort to such assonance involves no fraud or deception or mouth twisting. It is an open confession of a fault, which the reader is at liberty to correct—if he sees a way of doing so.

*Keep to the point.*

And again, if the magic of word-sounds gets the better of a man and dances him along merrily to the absence of clear sense that is worth the saying, his writing materials should be taken away from him. Only master mechanics are permitted to meander thus leisurely along making sweet senseless sounds like the babbling of a silly brook. This gives one an opening to repeat a remark touching the poet Longfellow, which got a hobbledehoy into the bad graces of a literary school m’arm over eight lusters ago, to wit: that a fellow had to boil down a lot of his sap to get any sugar. When that poet hexametered about a pretty young girl having a breath as sweet as the breath of a cow that feeds in a meadow (or words to that effect), I closed him up with a bang; because every country boy knows that the sweet odour of a grass-fed cow is a peculiarly nauseous animal smell. Not that I cast any disrespect on that gentle wet nurse of all the poets!

*Jemima Pail-filler, for me thy cud regurgitating!*

So strong were my youthful feelings on that occasion that I have not since made the acquaintance of Longfellow's works; and am, therefore, incompetent to pass an opinion upon them; but of other poetry I have since read, it may be said with safety that an honest application of the simple rules outlined above would boil down considerably any fat volume of verse in the English tongue. Any person in search of examples of doggerel, of clumsy expression, of false rhythm, of limping rimes and of cleft palate pronunciation will fill his creel full of them by fishing in the works of illustrious English poets who were prolific writers and is warned off my small puddle on pain of prosecution. Perhaps this is sacrilege; and if so, I vow a kid to Hermes come lambing time. I am not asserting that such passages were inappropriate nor questioning the startling and exquisite beauties that specialists find hidden in them. No! I am merely suggesting, gentle reader, what would have been said of them had they been written by thee or me. I am not suggesting that specialists become mentally off balance and incapable of exercising sound judgment.

*Genuflect to its betters.*

Let us assume, for argument sake, that an ordinary person feels that surge in the vital midriff which presages a burst of poetry, and dashes off the following:

*Song.*

*A widow bird sate mourning for her love  
Upon a wintry bough.  
The frozen wind crept on above,  
The freezing stream below.*

*There was no leaf upon the forest bare,  
No flower upon the ground,  
And little motion in the air  
Except from the mill-wheel's sound.*

A casual reader might deem the rime bad, the rhythm indifferent and the thought a trifle insipid. The creeping wind was obviously making more motion in the air than was the sound of the mill-wheel; and the sentimental

reference to “a widow bird” annoys any observer of Nature who knows that after each breeding season the hen closes her books and wastes no further thought on her brood or their daddy. But beware! This little gem was written by Percy Bysshe Shelley and has been included in *Representative Poetry, Selected and Annotated for Study in a University*.

### *Avoid affectations.*

Another rule requires that a verse-smith shall speak in the words of an honest mind. Fashions change in language as in women’s wear. An ornate, stilted, and rambling canto was thought a thing of beauty, because of its form excellencies, in the more leisurely Victorian days; and so also, for that matter, were deemed the ladies with their switches, rats, mutton-leg sleeves, high laced boots, whalebone corset stays and bustles on the ampersand. These things were agreeable to the tone and temper of the time; but their use to-day is unseasonable, and suggests an obvious affectation. At the moment, garments are worn for comfort and not to disfigure, and in like manner, to be read, a writer must clothe his thoughts with words that fit them as snugly as do the feathers on a bird. Perhaps this involves a loss of the delicate balance that comes from verbal tight-rope walking; but it helps to preserve some of that brutal vigour which lies immediately underneath any culture that is not sinking into decadence. The garrulous fashion in words persists sometimes, it is true, in political and theological discussions and in the phallic novels that women read. Readers are kept so busy deciphering hieroglyphics on the mounds in these departments that the poor bodies have no time left to do any thinking on their own account. The mind goes dream walking in jungles of abstractions and uncertain symbols whose hazy outlines are in a constant state of flux, and such ramblings end in a grotesque confusion which some term Learning and others designate as Art.

### *Avoid elegancies.*

But a writer of verse is not concerned with such wool gathering, dogma or pruriency, and has no right to send a reader crashing through a dense undergrowth of adjectives and mannered expressions. We go in for stream lines nowadays and are straightening the curves on our highways. Spencerian flourishes have gone out of fashion with the wax flowers and antimacassars. Much Victorian poetry has gone to the attic with the family picture album and the wooden bedsteads. Both in our minds and in our

gardens, clipped hedges and formal flower plots are giving place to flowering shrubs and herbaceous borders. As a result there are a whole pack of poetical tricks that are not available for present day use; and if a writer is caught using any of them, a reader may cry “Forfeit!” and break up the game. The writings of other days and other climes are available and should be read and enjoyed.

*“We feel ashamed to learn the truth  
From youngsters, or admit, when told,  
That what we conned in sprightly youth  
Deserves damnation, now we’re old.”*

—Englished from Horace by H. Darnley Naylor.

But whatever their merits, it is a vain thing to attempt to improve on them by laboured imitation, which is the negation of all art. It is for this reason that little of artistic merit has ever come out of colonies, as ancient writers observed and as we have seen with our own eyes. The explanation is obvious. Communities differ from one another in quality; and whether better or worse than our ancestors or others, to produce anything worthwhile, we must be frank and be ourselves.

*Be plausible.*

Next come the subjects available for treatment and these are as wide as life itself. We perceive that the restrictions which govern their verbal expression have gained for great poets the widest liberty in statement. Robert Browning thought it possible to ride a galloping horse a hundred and eighteen miles in a stretch without a single let-up—even to tighten the saddle girth; and skyscrapers are but nine pins when a modern writer takes his coat off and starts knocking them about in Free Verse. We admire such things, for fashion’s sake, as we do a woman’s hat; but such liberties are not for the like of us.

*Be sincere.*

The rule that limits the scope of a rimester’s activities is a simple one—he must ever be a true believer in the gospel he preaches: otherwise he is a

charlatan. Whatever the poets may whisper about Art for Art's sake, verses are obviously printed with the hope that they will be read; and those who sing of the simple things of common experience run a chance of finding an audience of some sort. This promising field is open to every one; but over on its sunny side stands a preserve into which some of us cannot enter; and that for conscience sake. In it are assembled those cheery voices whose inspirational songs combine a comfortable religion with good home cooking; and who assure our troubled hearts that in some mysterious way virtue yields a tidy profit in earthly goods. We admire their spirit and criticize neither their religion nor their cooking; but feel their reasoning is faulty. We have observed that at times sin pays in sound coin of the spirit but that at no time does virtue make any pretence of paying in current coin of the realm; of which Christ is our witness. We have observed that it is tragedy that develops integrity in human character, and we have also observed that prosperity and the taboos and conventions of life's routine have blown the light of love out in more lives than sin and poverty ever did. So as unbelievers we must not trespass here, though we pause to asseverate that there is more poetry in a pan of hot biscuits than can be found in seven hundred pages of morbid introspection devoted to a misshapen personality; and a deal more comfort also.

*Shun evil companions.*

And over against these inspirationalists—and in a shady nook of their own—are the sorrowful ones who pipe dark musings on man's mortality, on the inherent cruelty of life and the oblivion of the grave. The theme of their songs is the melancholy of puberty, which forms a lifelong undertone in every man's thought and feeling. Like Omar Khayyām, they bemoan the vanity of life generally, the while drinking wine or beer and weeping copiously because individual life will come to an end. It is worthy of remark that poets who sing of melancholy most effectively have been unable to sing effectively of anything else; which may be evidence of true sincerity. They are amiable souls at heart and their dirges thrill us at times; but after all is said, a little help is worth a deal of pity. Why ruin its dishes with salt and grieve between courses because the banquet will have an end? It is not given to some of us to develop and maintain this sad and gloomy outlook. Life may be cruel and unjust, but the privilege of living is in itself no mean gift. Nor is death other than the expiring of a lease which was granted at will to a tenant who is sitting rent free. He is in a miserable state, indeed, the man who does not thank his mother for the precious gift of life; for life at times is

sweet. Those who merely trespass in these groves of melancholy should be speedy about it, lest their sincerity be called in question; and it is sincerity of thought, feeling and purpose—sincerity, naked and unashamed—from which all spiritual beauty springs.

*Arrive at the Gates of Faith.*

A feeling of sadness and frustration encompasses the mind, once in a while, as one drifts on the stream of Time amid teeming human life that spawns in viscuous protoplasm to dissolve into earthly nothingness; and this sense of loneliness and of futility carries many minds over into the realms of Eschatology—to muse on the last judgment, on golden crowns and scorching tortures; and find a solace there. There is beauty in such Other-Worldliness; but the man who does not see his God in this world, which He made, may have difficulty recognizing Him in the next. True, a faith of some sort is necessary to any mind that is to remain sane; and any faith deserves respect providing it is sincere and not belligerent. But a faith is not founded on reasoning and becomes bedraggled amid disputations. Those who grub about in nature to find texts upon which to hang little sermons justifying their particular beliefs, and explaining the ultimate purpose of life to their satisfaction, are apt to prove unreliable observers and tiresome theorists. They travel farther, and in greater comfort, who admit with humility that faith deals with mysteries that are inscrutable and requires no justification by particular instances.

*And find content.*

What science demands and poetry should require is not the services of an argumentative person with preconceived notions but the faithful allegiance of an honest and accurate mind concerned only with the truth. Now sadness, as the wise know, is a permeating leaven without which human life would have no savour. In its own province, poetry, which deals with the art but not with the business of living, brings a comfort of its own by making the mind tranquil and the heart valiant and unafraid. One bothers less about the roughness of his path to-day when he has in mind the mysterious chasm of the morrow; and when he is able to laugh at himself, he is fit company for the gods.

*“Me imperturbe, standing at ease in Nature,  
Master of all or mistress of all, aplomb in the midst of irrational things,  
Imbued as they, passive, receptive, silent as they,  
Finding my occupation, poverty, notoriety, foibles, crimes, less  
important than I thought,  
Me toward the Mexican sea or in the Mannahatta or Canada,  
Me wherever my life is lived, O to be self balanced for contingencies,  
To confront night, storms, hunger, ridicule, accidents, rebuffs, as the  
trees and animals do.”*

—Walt Whitman.

### *On the uses of solitude.*

A prison cell may be an appropriate workshop for a writer of verses. Is he not expected to move gracefully with fetters on his feet? A writer there will feel no yearnings for retreat from life's maddening whirl; nor will he be trumpeting, like Thoreau, for a diet of green herbs and a quiet place in which to do a little thinking. His will be no back-to-nature gospel; nor will he be threatening like Jack Cade, to pasture his palfrey in Cheapside. He has a clean bed and a more nourishing diet at the public expense than he could possibly earn for himself in Canada at such a pursuit. He has time in plenty on his hands for taking counsel of his pillow; and what is written in a prison cell may be guaranteed to be the pure product of imagination and of emotional intoxication.

### *On poetic intoxication.*

Of course there are disadvantages. A fellow inmate, who has spent most of his adult life in prisons and who sees no prospects of ever getting out save for brief vacations, gives it as his considered opinion that much English poetry of the masculine gender shows internal evidence of an intoxication of a different origin; and he quotes learned authorities in support. Did not Robert Herrick, who sang like a hermit thrush, have some loving things to say of *canarie sacke*, which is an alias for sherry?

*“’Tis thou, alone, who with thy Mistick Fan  
Works’t more than Wisdome, Art or Nature can  
To rouse the sacred Madness: and to make  
Them frantick with thy rapture, flashing through  
The Soule like lightning and as active too.”*

And that modern, Housman, whose lines at times are bittersweet, does he not speak feelingly of the help a poet gets from a couple of pints of Burton’s bitters? Such a draught does, perhaps, carry the mind away from crippling cares into that purple land of the imagination which water-drinkers can only visit, and rarely, in the dusk before the dawning.

That a dry wine goes into the making of smooth poetry was officially recognized in England as early as 1630, when the Crown granted Ben Jonson “A terse of Canary Spanish wyne, yearely.” A similar annual bounty was thereafter given to each poet laureate; but Lord Tennyson, who was a beer drinker, commuted his butt of sack for an annual payment of £27. Space forbids that I give his argument at greater length; but if authorities like their wine, improve with age, I give my gaol friend the decision. Hark to Horace sing:

*“Water-drinker!  
Thy dull, dry song  
Will not live long.”*

Going farther, Herrick asks his reader to have a pot or bottle standing handy:

*“In sober mornings do not then rehearse  
The holy incantations of a verse;  
But when that men have both well drunk and fed,  
Let my enchantments then be sung or read.”*

*On water drinking.*

And his point may be well taken. A water-drinker is out of place at a convivial party. Try he ever so hardly, he cannot enter into its glowing spirit as do those who share in the bubbling commons; nor do their witty shafts seem to enter into him. He remains a kill-joy and should take an early opportunity of excusing himself and slipping away home. Unfortunately the reverse may be as true. An expert sampler of poetry may find no aroma in verse which the ruby vintage has not inspired. Of necessity mine are the

songs of a water-drinker; and to be fair to them the reader must be sober. “*Prithee not smile or smile more inly.*” Let mine be sampled on mornings or on days of abstinence.

### *On classical allusions.*

The principal faults of this Book, it may be well to point out thus clearly in this portion, which, being so far forward, may possibly be read by some. In prison-made verse, polished references to classical antiquity must of necessity be omitted. It would be a saddening experience, indeed, to labour for nights over the neat turning of an ancient myth only to find on regaining freedom, a year or so later, that in the absence of a suitable classical dictionary one had put the bloodstains on the breast of a robin instead of on the throat of a swallow. True it is that poetry concerns itself with the feelings, the fancies and the hopes of primitive man as he once was and is now in every one of us. Possibly the Greek realized more vividly than we do that life is in the nature of a dream and that man is the plaything of irrational circumstance. But at a pinch every writer has his own heart to look into; and, in any event, no Canadian need grope back through the haze of milleniums to find in remote antiquity the dauntless heart and the hope-dreams of Neolithic Man. Our grain grows on fields of which our fathers robbed him; and his soft tongue echoes to us in the names of rivers that flow past our doors.

### *On purse picking.*

In a prison cell, again, a writer is unable to prowl around, at nights, picking up what he can from men who are deep in their long sleep; and may thus be obliged to secrete some ideas out of his own head as the bees express wax out of their frail little bodies. True, they stole all their sweetness from the flowers; but having converted it to their own use as honey, the wax they make of this is their own, for which they are entitled to full credit. My friend of the tin dish tells me that poets have been known to steal from one another. A decayed thief and shoplifter himself, his objection is not to such lifting of ideas, since man is by nature a pick purse of wit. He disapproves of the clumsy amateur technique which he observes. He refers me to the lines of Blake:

*“To see the world in a grain of sand,  
And a heaven in a wild flower;  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,  
And Eternity, in an hour.”*

This he assures me is fat with pure poetry. Then he quotes me from Alfred Lord Tennyson:

*“Flower in the crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies;—  
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,  
Little flower—but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is.”*

It is obvious to my friend that Lord Tennyson, in his plucking, plucked this thought, root and all, out of the writings of William Blake. Before passing it on as his own, the poet laureate, he suggests, might have dusted it up a bit and taken the old shop ticket off.

“Do you twig the word ‘hand’ ”? he asks me.

But I tell him that Tennyson added a detail in carefully examining the roots of the wild flower.

*On growing old.*

Whether cribbed and confined or otherwise, it is a misery for a writer of verses to be getting old. Man’s divine raptures are of the morning hours of life and spring hot from the fires of daring youth. The obvious uncouthness in the lines in this book betray an ageing and inexperienced hand. To become an adept at the mechanical business of writing verses, or of milking cows, one must start practice young in life. However, this may be truly said: that the verses included are superior to others which the author had the sense to leave out. Had he consulted any judicious friend doubtless matters could have been further improved in this connection; but he feared to risk it, lest he be wholly dissuaded; and his publisher is a tender hearted man. Such hesitancy is, in itself, hanging evidence that one has gone down into the sea on the wrong ship. Is not every writer of good verse as proud of his fresh coinage as a mother of her babe or a girl of her first lover?

Yet, oddly enough, a plain homespun roughness in handling words does not, in itself, prevent a man from writing strong verse; nor has a startling brilliancy in juggling them saved many a fashionable author from becoming in time an unread poet. In the long run, it is the thought and its sincerity that count; but the thought, to register, must be expressed in simplicity, and with the power of conviction. The inherent weakness which has caused many a writer, once famous, to live on merely as a name, is the weakness that shows itself in the verses of this obscure book: namely, a helpless inability to write with the emotional vigour which one feels. It is not the absence of the thought, itself, perhaps; any little child thinks in terms of pure poetry. It is the inability to transfer such thought in the rainbow garments of pure wonder, which the child feels, and which the writer must both feel and express in order to make poetry.

### *On literature.*

And having come thus far, criticism of this book may as well go further. There is a clear distinction in quality between literature and the literary writing which it professes to contain. To be read for pleasure, or to be read at all, they both require thought fresh enough to be worth the saying; but literature says it with such subtle simplicity as to awaken the reader's interest and relieve him of all mental labour. The result is a direct and involuntary response such as music draws; and the thought is not only adopted as the reader's own, but becomes an integral part of his apparatus of experience. This is so evident, and has been so often better said, that perhaps I should not now be saying it. One does not study literature—one absorbs it. To effect this result, literature does not argue, any more than music argues; it eschews all smartness save the Homeric laughter of childhood; and above all else, it does not put on airs. It becomes humble enough in spirit to melt honest souls to tears; but I fancy its simplicity is that of the wax which little bees produce out of much labour.

### *On poetry.*

Literature of this quality is poetry; and to turn it into prose, one must take the song out of it. It concerns itself with our living world of Reality, the world of emotions, of feelings and impulses, of spiritual beauty in man and nature, and of undying hope in the human breast. Here lies the Kingdom of Happiness and here the fields of Amaranth blow. It troubles itself only

indirectly with the world of Make-Believe in which we sometimes play we are living, and which it is the special business of prose and science to describe and argue about, a world in which man with his telescopes has brought the stars nearer to him—in order to rob them of their friendly beauty and set them farther away. Knowledge, true, has its place in this wider world of Reality over which poetry reigns; but it should be kept in its place, else, like his wine, it will go to man's head and drive out wisdom, which is compounded of the spirit. It is useful so far as it increases man's opportunity of enjoyment, and thus helps him to a fuller life of the spirit. It is dearly paid for if its cost is the loss of man's liberty, of his sanity, and of his capacity of enjoyment. One thing is sure: that capacity science can not increase. It can describe; but it cannot explain. The deeper it delves the greater becomes a sane mind's humility before the inscrutable mysteries of life; and those who generalize do but show on the surface that streak of imbecility which is inherent in all of us.

*He came and took me by the hand  
Up to a red-rose tree,  
He kept His meaning to Himself  
But gave a rose to me.  
I did not ask Him to lay bare  
The mystery to me,  
Enough the rose was Heaven to smell  
And His own face to see.*

—Ralph Hodgson.

*And in conclusion.*

But any reader who has come thus far will be exclaiming as the poet did to the hesitating bride: "*On then, and though you slowly go, yet howsoever go!*" The conclusion is that, despite the excessive baggage of modern life, we are all primitive men and women in our hearts; and whether we are in gaol or out of it, we live in a world of poetry—and a cruel, lovely world it is. Before the mysteries of life and its spiritual beauties, modern man, if sane, continues to stand like the Red Indian, breathless, with hand to mouth, thrilled with the wonder of it all. And when he ceases to do so, he may as well die.



*Courtesy of The Art Gallery of Toronto*

THE BEECH WOODS  
J. W. BEATTY, R.C.A.

*Rich tinted leaves are carpeting the ground  
And in the woods ripe mast is shelling down.  
We have a gunny sack along,  
And thief what to the squirrels belong—  
The butternuts whose rinds with care  
Old maids brew down to stain their hair.  
We put these by until they'll taste less bitter;  
And search for sweetness in a beech leaf litter.*

—TO A DOG.

## TO A DOG

Hark to the throaty gossip from the air!

There is no note of hesitation there.

As high and south the wild geese fly,  
Their swift curved phalanx cuts the sky.  
Their chief's gruff orders sharply ring;  
His flock keep time with beating wing.

The air is clear—it is a warm, soft day;

But he is weather-wise nor brooks delay.

In driven sheets the Northlands slumber;  
For brief is stay of Arctic summer  
As that of joy or briar roses:  
Winter there his strength discloses.

On quiet, hazy nights his scouts prowl hither;

And leave their footprints where the flowers wither.

*In nutting time.*

“Come *Sheila* girl, we'll to the woods away!

Yon mellow slanting sun brooks no delay.”

Up the old quarry lane we go  
To gather puff balls white as snow;  
And watch the chattering red squirrels flee,  
Cursing us right indignantly.

Rich tinted leaves are carpeting the ground

And in the woods ripe mast is shelling down.

We have a gunny sack along,  
And thief what to the squirrels belong—  
The butternuts whose rinds with care  
Old maids brew down to stain their hair.

We put these by until they'll taste less bitter;

And search for sweetness in the beech leaf litter.

*Our  
winging hope.*

And now the frisking setter halts a'quiver,

To sniff and whine, and save for a shiver  
    Along her ruddy flanks would be  
    As motionless as statuary.  
My duty plain it is to see  
    Whence springs such wild expectancy.  
A plump spruce partridge flushes up and cleaves  
With startling whirr through crackling twigs and leaves;  
    Then rockets o'er ploughed fallow  
    To pitch in a distant hollow.  
    *Sheila's* brown eyes are on my face;  
    'Tis clear I am in sad disgrace.  
"I've found," I tell her, "that's the nasty way  
Man's fondest hopes take wings and fly away."

*The  
greedy world.*

"See how the sun shakes down his fleecy bed  
Dyed with the tints the fading leaves have shed.  
    Come, let's cease this idle roaming!  
    Down below warm milk is foaming  
    In the pails, and cats a'mewing  
    With sly eyes thy dish are viewing.  
Round thy sacred porringer they're waiting—  
Short commons there they'll soon be making."  
    From the orchard as we pass by  
    Comes a whiff of the Northern Spy.  
    "Attar of roses, who'd compare  
    With tang of apples on the air?  
That tree's a rose bush, I could prove it thee  
Out of a learned book on botany."

*The  
coming home.*

"So, *Sheila Rhu*, where'er we mortals roam  
The end of the journey is coming home.  
    The farm boy frets to get away  
    And make his stir on life's highway.

He goes and slaves industriously,  
Soul-worn and travel-stained to be;  
Yet the fancies that brighten his ageing face  
Are thoughts of quiet in a country place.  
But life is not an apple tree,  
Which blossoms sweetly for the bee  
From which its mellow ripeness springs.  
His boyhood heart hath taken wings.  
Into the frosts of life's drear winter goes  
The shrunk withered hip of a briar rose."

*The  
skies that smile.*

"Man and his dog should frolic while they may:  
The night is long that follows Life's brief day.  
The spade will put us both to bed;  
And skies will smile when we are dead.  
The price of life we each must pay.  
Why fret about it on the way?  
Thy heart in weak self pity ne'er will grieve;  
Nor cause for pity can thy brain conceive;  
Yet in thy pagan eyes I see  
The light of love and constancy,  
Of friendship without count of cost  
And loyalty that's free from dross;  
And a stout heart content, when life has flown—

*Envoi.*

"I give no food; on thee inflict no pain;  
A mystery to thee ever shall remain.  
My pay is but a casual smile;  
Sometimes for that one waits a-while;  
Yet leal art thou as was the hound  
Who died when he *Ulysses* found.  
Fain would I thus approach the Living God,  
Seeking no crown, fearing no chastening rod;  
Taking His purposes on trust

AS in my ignorance I must;  
Knowing man's only paradise  
Is found in Love and Sacrifice;  
Knowing in Beauty that His smile I see;  
And without chaffer,—tendering fealty.”

TO A BUMBLE-BEE.

Near-sighted, wheezy, bumble-bee,  
A fickle curiosity  
Fetches thee blundering down to see  
    This withered flower.  
Another tapped its nectary  
    In lovelier hour.

May crossed the woods in emerald dress,  
White cherry bloom upon her breast,  
    Chaste liver-leaf and golden crest  
Strewing her way.  
The peeping frogs their joy expressed  
    In roundelay.

Thou Sleepy Head! In last year's nest  
Of a field mouse content to rest!  
Spring could not coax thee out in quest  
    Of early bloom.  
In vain the maple added zest  
    With sweet perfume.

The sweltering *Dog Star* rose to rule  
'Mid flowers swathed in flaming tulle.  
Their pastures brown and dried-up pool  
    The cows forsook,  
Seeking in cedar shade the cool  
    Of water brook.

The East Wind breathes on parching fields;  
The turning wheat obedience yields;  
With drooping wings the robin shields  
    His panting brood;  
Each breathing thing a torpor feels,  
    And sullen mood.

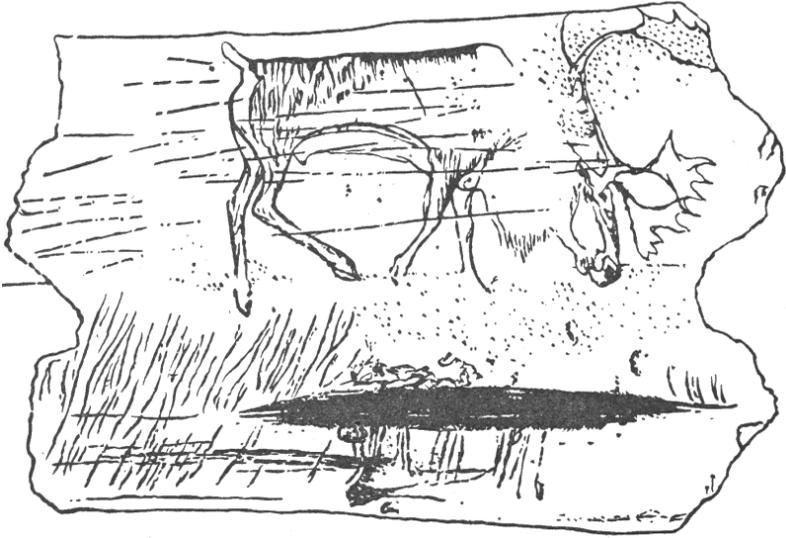
Now, Thou, a roving Devil-May-Care,  
Com'st bouncing on the scorching air  
To find the garden flowers bare

Of honey crop.  
Be off to seek thy tardy fare  
On thistle top!

Fat Lazy Bones and Gad-About,  
I fear our faults have found us out.  
Thou Snug-A-Bed, thou Hairy Lout!  
Thy spring hath fled.  
I messed about with sin and doubt  
Till hope lies dead.

Beyond for thee lie pleasant meads;  
To satisfy thy vagrant needs,  
Red aftermath and roadside weeds  
Thy sweets distil;  
The golden rod with pollen feeds  
Thy knapsacks fill.

For me there is no aftermath;  
My journey's down a lonely path.  
For sustenance all the spirit hath  
Is vain regrets.  
The flowers wither in their swath  
Till my sun sets.



“And on an antler bone his thought he wrote.”—*The Reindeer Man*.

## THE REINDEER MAN

In times remote beyond all hope of guessing,  
    Ten thousand years ago, 'twas still remote,  
An artist had a thought that gave him pleasure—  
    —Such thought itself is pleasure;  
And on an antler bone his thought he wrote.

The glacier cold was northerly receding;  
    Yet reindeer herds and woolly mammoths fed  
On southern slopes with elephants and horses—  
    —The fauna thus commingling,  
And lions roared where seas have now their bed.

His name and futile efforts all lie hidden  
    Beneath clay drifts and dripping cavern moulds.  
He lived his little life and is forgotten—  
    —And living loved and suffered,  
Like sixty billion other human souls.

We know man then was skilled in arrow flaking,  
    And made his needles and harpoons of bone;  
We know he had his cavern rites and worshipped—  
    —He feared cave bears and worshipped;  
And lit his cave with lamp of hollowed stone.

He fed on flesh of horses, deer and bison;  
    As kitchen midden with their débris show.  
His eyes beheld huge mastodons in motion—  
    —Their sweeping charging motion,  
This Magdalenian man of long ago.

And as a child will wish to draw a picture  
    Of common things, while playing all alone,  
This rude cave man of Palaeolithic Ages,  
    —A child of far off ages,  
Sat down to sketch a reindeer on a bone.

For burin, arrowflint was lying handy;  
    With single tap a nucleus he flayed;

Then pressing with his thumb he flaked its edges,—  
—To sharpen its rough edges;  
And thus a simple graving tool he made.

He drew a stag, mature, alert and restless,  
Whose skin was loose at time of shedding hair,  
Cropping lush grasses with an eye to windward,—  
—Still grazing yet suspicious,  
As human taint came drifting on the air.

No need that artist felt for affectation;  
No errors made he that a brush obscures.  
The man had seeing eyes and drew his picture—  
—'Twas truth that he depicted,  
And on his bone a Work of Art endures.

Upon a bone and with a stone he graved it,  
This rude cave dweller of the Old Stone Age.  
In sweeping strokes the thought he there depicted—  
—To please a passing fancy,  
Gives breath of freshness to a modern page.

The tides of change have since seen empires founder,  
Leaving their racks of débris and decay;  
But not an artist priest in all their glory,—  
—On tomb or stately palace,  
Could thus the truth in simple lines portray.

Their art was clouded with their vain conventions,  
As clouds of words befog our mental sky.  
We seek for truth by peering at abstractions,—  
—At ghostly mental phantoms,  
When Truth and Beauty in the concrete lie.

## THE STARLING

The setting sun strikes his last shaft of light  
Athwart the prison walls and shadows creep  
Out through grim iron bars to greet the night  
That comes apace the last death watch to keep.

Turnkeys on padded feet  
Pass on their rounds to check their count as right.  
Steel block gates on their beat  
Clang as the guards retreat.

O'er the dark scene a breathless silence falls,  
Save for thin muffled voices from the street;  
Whilst soul-sick men locked in their narrow stalls  
Await the thud that sounds a life's escheat—

But in gaol yard there's sleep.  
In death's cold cells none cares whate'er befalls;  
Nor sees fresh grave dug deep;  
Nor quicklime in a heap.

Through masonry is heard the sandbag's fall  
As hangman tests his rope and trap and spring.  
From the death cell along the death still hall  
“*Dies Irae*” drifts as broken voices sing:

“*Day of wrath and burning—*”  
Is He so harsh, the God on whom men call?  
“*Saints have told concerning,  
Earth to ashes turning.*”

Light fingers steal to tell rose dawn is breaking  
Whose skies are all that prison eyes will see.  
Loud footsteps tell that rope will soon be making  
An end to one poor mortal's agony—

If death an end will be.  
Thus draws to close night's long weary waiting,  
In fear and misery,  
And strained expectancy.

'Twas then the starling piped his matin song  
In hurried notes as dizzy with delight.

From the roof ledge he sees nor Right nor Wrong;  
Gaols are cathedrals in his joyous sight.

    He carols to the light  
That warms the love for which sane mortals long  
    And guides his busy flight  
    To feed his young aright.

# THE WILD WOOD CHERRY

The wildwood cherry all a'blow  
Had spread aloft its fleece of snow,  
The morn she left me with a smile—  
For a short while.

*“The fuchsia in its old tin pail,  
The turkey's nest beyond the swale,  
Were loaned to me as cares of thine,  
Old mother mine!”*

She went clear-eyed, and unafraid,  
To keep a tryst with surgeon's blade;  
Next day spring time her soul awoke  
With the far folk.

Her keepsakes of a happier time,  
And patch-work quilts with stitchings fine,  
They stand for me like rosemary—  
For memories.

But picture of her stooping frame  
Went with the messenger who came,  
Soft footed as the snow, to stay  
Life's slow decay.

Yet when at night the hearth burns low  
And restless logs give flickering glow,  
A smooth young face smiles out its joy  
As to her boy.

And when the moon lets down her hair,  
The soft wisps shaking on the air  
Feel like a breath of mother's love  
Bending above.

*“And when the larkspur sips its dew,  
I see thy gentle eyes of blue  
A'sparkling with the light divine  
—Young mother mine!”*

## THE PASQUE-FLOWER

The prairie crocus was the flower that bloomed earliest in the Red River Valley, and for this reason the French settlers called it the Pasque or Easter flower. Its hairy stems pressed up bravely on the heels of winter, spreading on southerly slopes a light blue haze as of drifting prairie smoke. It also goes by the name of the Windflower or Crocus Anemone. The Cree children knelt to whisper to the flower that it was a brave little warrior—to come so early and a wise one—to bring its buffalo robes along.

Marie Anne Gaboury, a daughter of Marie Tessier and Charles Gaboury, was born on the 6th November, 1782, in the Parish of Maskinongé in the Diocese of Three Rivers. She married Jean-Baptiste Lejimonière and, in May 1807, accompanied her husband on his return to the wild Red River and Saskatchewan country.

Madame Lejimonière was thus the first white woman to set foot in the Canadian North-West. She lived for the next eleven years in the skin tents of the Plains, and never went back down into her own country. In 1878 she died at the age of 96 years and was buried at St. Boniface on the Red River. We have it on the word of M. L'Abbé G. Dugas that, in 1887, six hundred and thirty-two (632) children had been born who were descendants of this brave Canadian pioneer.



*Courtesy of The Art Gallery of Toronto*

OCTOBER SNOW, BAIE ST. PAUL  
F. W. HUTCHISON

*Through skies of blue the distant sun shone coldly  
To tinge with mauve the sparkling waste below,  
Where all the wounds of winter now lay hidden  
Beneath fresh fallen snow.*

—THE PRIEST'S HOUSE.

I

*The Argument.*

Dwell as they may on the romantic story  
Of men who wrought in vain  
To build an empire to their monarch's glory  
Beyond the western main,

Of holy men who laboured on unshaken  
By threat of Mohawk flame,  
Of fighting troops who found themselves forsaken  
Beneath the oriflamme;

Down the slow changes of the years comes ringing  
History's eternal theme:  
A woman's hand behind the throne was bringing  
End to the French Régime.

And when abandoned to a foreign master  
On bleak Canadian shore,  
What brought a people through such grave disaster  
To build in pride once more?

'Twas laughing girls whose loyal hearts were laden  
With love and piety,  
Women who faced a world of ills unshaken  
Like Marie Gaboury.

## II

### *The Priest's House*

Her kitchen windows having frosted over,  
Marie had scratched a peeping hole to spy  
Across the village street on mass-day morning,  
And watch the folk go by.

Through skies of blue the distant sun shone coldly  
To tinge with mauve the sparkling waste below,  
Where all the wounds of winter now lay hidden  
Beneath fresh fallen snow.

The fences wore fantastic toques and ceintures;  
The spruce tree dropped beneath its crystal load;  
And fitful gusts with powdery silt were drifting  
The pitch-holes on the road.

With jingling bells and yelping dogs to tease them  
*Canayen* horses came jogging along,  
Hauling to church in cutters and red berlines  
Their muffled *habitants*.

Their toques were red but brighter far the faces  
The wind had swept along the open way;  
But not for glimpses at her friendly neighbours  
Did Marie watch that day.

She heard that Jean-Baptiste Lejimonière  
Out of the wilds was now at last come home,  
With his gay laugh and packs of furs and stories;  
And would no longer roam.

As servant at the priest's house she had waited  
For five long years, floor-scrubbing on her knees,  
Till she was twenty-five, who had been prettiest  
In the whole diocese.

And would Jean be at mass and come to see her?

Such was the query of her fluttering heart,—  
And care?—after so many years of waiting,  
So many years apart!

Not that Marie had failed to take precautions.  
In plaited coils her silken soft black hair  
And truant curls that knew to keep their places  
Repaid her constant care.

Whate'er their toll of grace, the years had left her  
Supple, plump-breasted and with shapely waist;  
And her dark lustrous eyes were tell-tale places  
Where love felt no disgrace.

She saw Jean pass; and after mass was over,  
She met the huge rough fellow at her door.  
Changes she saw; but time he thought had made her  
More lovely than before.

The curé Vinet chuckled at her blushes;  
The beau was of good *habitant famille*,  
And so her master gave his hearty blessings  
To his maid Gaboury.



*Courtesy of The Art Gallery of Toronto*

ON THE ST. LAWRENCE  
MAURICE CULLEN, R.C.A.

*But when the river ice went out in freshets of the spring  
The chill of ice to Marie's heart those waters seemed to bring;  
She heard the voices of the North as wild geese flew over—  
“Away! Away!!” their laugh would say, “Northward, old time rover!”*

—THE HABITANT FARM.

### III

#### *The Habitant Farm*

The couple moved onto a farm down by Lake St. Pierre,  
With neighbours living close at hand along the rivière.  
Here lay the long string holdings of an ancient settlement  
Where fields were small and wants were few, but hearts knew great  
content.

Marie was now the mistress of a farmhouse of her own,  
With a huge chimney, sharp pitched roof and limewashed walls of  
stone;  
And by it stood her milk house; and close to her only door  
She planned for pink geraniums and bleeding hearts galore.

And in her heart was great content, and in her house was store  
Of things that bring man comfort when his day's hard work is o'er;  
Folks thought her husband lucky and a man of discernment  
To get himself such pretty wife well trained in management.

Where finds a man such happiness as by his own fireside,  
With onions strung above him and a woman by his side,  
Whose needles keep on clicking when her tongue takes time to rest,  
And on the wall their silver cross by the good abbé blessed?

Often at night friends would drop in their compliments to pay.  
Then while men talked the weather in sedate and knowing way,  
The bride would show the women folk her bulging feather bed  
Bedecked with lace hemmed pillow shams and box work quilted  
spread.

Girls tipped the treacle jug to make bride's kisses for Marie,  
Boiling molasses taffy to that nice viscosity  
When spoonfuls make crisp patterns on a dish of driven snow  
And cooks become excited as the greased pans overflow.

And Telesphore was always there with fiddle on his knee,  
Twiddling with the catgut strings and waiting impatiently  
Till the game of cards was over and tables shoved away.

.....  
To clear the space for dancing to the tunes that he could play.

There are no feet like women's feet for tripping on a floor;  
But now and then a puffing man would weaken and give o'er.  
'Twas lucky then the fireplace had large smoke flues at its back  
For each man had his bladder pouch of *Canayen tobac*.

Ah! Simple, cheerful, homely hearts in their bright homespun stuff!  
They felt nor want nor plenty where each family had enough.  
They wore their better clothes to mass and to the village store  
To thrill at the simple service—and gossip by the door.

Peasant folk were they, deliberate, both in work and pleasure,  
Calm and brave to face life's ills nor fretting at fate's measure.  
And their anodyne in grief and solace amid labour  
Came from Church, the family, and nearby friendly neighbour.

But when the river ice went out in freshets of the spring  
The chill of ice to Marie's heart those waters seemed to bring;  
She heard the voices of the North as wild geese flew over—  
“Away! Away!” their laugh would say, “Northward, old time rover!”

She felt that Jean was discontent with simple farming life:  
No man can hide his secrets from the sharp eyes of his wife;  
But Marie kept on smiling and hummed her roundelay:  
“I loved you then; I love you now; you'll have my love alway”—

*Amant, que j't'ai donc fait  
Que puiss' tant te déplaire?  
Est-c'que j't'ai pas aimé  
Comm' tu l'as mérité?  
Je t'ai aimé, J't'aime,  
Je t'aimerai toujours—  
Pour toi mon coeur soupire.  
Toujours!*

Her heart may hope and woman love but fate goes its own way;  
And trivial sometimes are the things that fate's decisions sway.  
What was it drove Lejimonière far from his peaceful farm  
But *La Boule Blanche*, a sucking calf that meant the world no harm?

A man may be a man of parts and yet that man may fail  
To interest a sucker in the contents of a pail;  
When Marie said 'twas time to wean, her Jean the task assayed  
And to *Boule Blanche* right hopefully a drinking pail displayed.

On beestings fed, the moon-eyed calf, blithe, frolicsome and gay,  
Mistook the man's intentions and thought he came to play.  
But Jean would take no nonsense; and grabbing her flirting tail  
He held the calf's head downward, deep soused in the drinking pail.

He tried it twice, he tried it thrice, but no success had he;  
The coughing calf upset the pail and bawled distressfully.  
One fall, at least, Jean had to take before the bout was o'er;  
And, deep in thought, he wiped himself beside the stable door.

'Tis sad, he thought, *Boule Blanche* was born with this infirmity;  
Nor will a calf that cannot drink a milk cow ever be.  
So with his knife the hunter made a killing *toute de suite*;  
And in her milk house Marie found her *White Ball* hung as meat.

Now *Le Boule Blanche* a heifer was, the first born on their farm;  
And Marie wept to find her calf had come to cruel harm.  
Such growing thing, she thought, would add to their nice property:  
Namely, four cows, two horses, besides pigs and her poultry.

The tearful outcry that she made wounded her husband's pride;  
And Marie saw his anger flare the first time since a bride.  
"What value has one calf," he asked, "out where I feel at home—  
Out on the prairies where in millions wild cattle roam?"

Now *w'iske blanc* some men folk hold a sovereign remedy  
To wash away in gulping shots all human ills that be;  
So Marie sat alone that night humming her roundelay:  
"There is no pleasure in the house when the good man's away"—

*La maison de chez nous  
C'est un lieu solitaire.—  
On n'y voit pas souvent  
Divertir nos amants.  
Pour des amants qu'on aime  
Ou'on aim' si tendrement*

*Ōn aimerait les voire*  
—*Souvent!*

Whether it cures his ills or no, women with this agree:  
A husband's secrets all come out when he is on a spree.  
The *w'iske* broke down Jean's reserve; and ere the night was o'er,  
He told his wife that he proposed to go out West once more.

Her face was wan and tears welled up in her dark hurtèd eye,  
She loved her Jean yet pressed her heart to search a reason why;  
Sad story of strayed *voyageur* many a home could tell,  
Of lotus-eater in the wilds, who lived like infidel.

“ ’Twill grieve my heart,” sobbed Anne Marie, “to leave my own  
country  
And move away from Church and kin where we could happy be  
Into a savage land where folk all Christian comforts lack;  
But if you go—I'll go also, and see that you come back.”



*Courtesy of The National Gallery, Ottawa*

GEORGIAN BAY  
F. H. VARLEY, A.R.C.A.

*Through six hundred miles of wildland  
Without shelter night or day,  
Crossing forty carrying-places,  
They would come to Georgian Bay;  
And across its stormy waters  
Drive their low sunk, frail canoe,  
Sheltered by the Manitoulin,  
To their depot at the Sault.*

—THE VOYAGEURS.

## IV

### *The Voyageurs*

Up the river toward Two Mountains,  
Early in the month of May,  
Came a long canoe deep laden,  
Driving on its western way.  
At the bow sat Rouge Lapocane  
Leading off the Grande Brigade—  
And twelve paddles flashed in rhythm  
To the music that he made:  
*In our puddle . . . their bath to take  
Went two black duck . . . and one white drake.*  
*Roulite roulant  
Pulling along  
Who pulls who pulls  
En roulant ma boule?*

First to pole St. Anne's *décharges*,  
First to tote Lachine portage,  
Proudly up the stream he paddled,  
Off upon *the Long Voyage*.  
Red his whiskers and his jacket,  
Red the tasseled toque he wore;  
And his chanty, loud and breezy,  
Woke an echo on the shore:  
*A white drake . . . in the bright sunlight  
Preening his down . . . and feathers white.*  
*Pull deep, pull strong,  
Pulling along.*

Slim and fragile seemed his vessel  
With its forty feet of length.  
Shell of birchen bark gave lightness,  
Stays of cedar gave it strength;  
Built to serve *the North-West Company*  
On a thousand mile voyage,  
Strong to run the chutes and rapids,  
Light to tote on long portage.

Then came a prince . . . . the king's own son  
Out to shoot with . . . . his silver gun.  
Pull deep, full strong,  
Pulling along.

High was piled his western cargo,  
Sixty-seven bales of freight,  
Trade goods for the prairie stations,  
Eighty pounds a bale in weight;  
And a ton of pork and biscuits,  
With three bags of peas also,  
Brought the gunwales of his canoe  
To a hand's length of the flow.  
*The king's song aimed . . . . his fusil bright  
To hit the black . . . . but shot the white.*  
Pull deep, pull strong,  
Pulling along.

On the bottom of the vessel  
Packed as freight like bale or sack,  
Sat a woman, lone and weary,  
With a strut against her back;  
At the stern her husband, kneeling,  
Steered the course with paddle blade—  
He was Jean Lejimonière  
Serving with the Grande Brigade.  
*That cruel prince . . . . will have ill luck  
In shooting down . . . . my snow white duck.*  
Pull deep, pull strong,  
Pulling along.

All the hills were gowned in beauty  
With the coming of the day;  
And the river mists were rising  
Where the Indian Village lay.  
There the lonely church was standing  
Of the saint whom Bretons bless,  
Holding in her gentle keeping  
Hearts that face the wilderness.  
*His life blood falls . . . . in rubies bright,  
His diamond eyes . . . . have lost their sight.*

*Pull deep, full strong,  
Pulling along.*

“Mother Thou of God’s Own Mother,”  
Sobbed the woman, “pity me!  
Tender guardian Thou of rovers,  
Saintly Anne of Brittany,  
In Thy bosom where the Virgin  
Nestled when She was a child,  
Cherish me Her lonely namesake  
And protect me in the wild!”

*His golden bill . . . sinks on his breast,  
His plumes go float - ing East and West.  
Pull deep, pull strong,  
Pulling along.*

Loud and clear his chanty floated  
To the fleet that came behind,  
Stroking in a gay procession,  
Thirty canoes in a line,  
Off to face the long portages  
Up the tumbling Ottawa  
And the chain of broken waters  
Westward by the Mattawa.

*And ladies gather . . . his feathers white  
To make a bed . . . both soft and light.  
Pull deep, pull strong,  
Pulling along.*

Through six hundred miles of wildland  
Without shelter night or day,  
Crossing forty carrying-places,  
They would come to Georgian Bay;  
And across its stormy waters  
Drive their low sunk, frail canoe,  
Sheltered by the Manitoulin,  
To their depot at the Sault.

*A feather bed . . . they gather and heap  
Where couples cud - dle down and sleep.  
Pull deep, pull strong,  
Pulling along.*

When a breeze, that followed after,  
Stirred white ripples on the lake,  
Up they ran a bright red blanket  
Belying out upon a stake  
That was steeped as mast in keelson;  
And away the vessel bore,  
Brilliant as a cedar wax-wing,  
Flitting up the eastern shore.  
*And babies there . . . . to wives befall,  
Some babies big . . . . some babies small.  
Roulite roulant  
Boule roulant  
En roulant ma boule?  
Qui roule, qui route?  
En roulant ma boule!*



*Courtesy of The National Gallery, Ottawa*

THE HABITANT FARM  
CORNELIUS KRIEGHOFF

*Marie was now the mistress of a farmhouse of her own,  
With a huge chimney, sharp pitched roof and limewashed walls of  
stone;  
And by it stood her milk house; and close to her only door  
She planned for pink geraniums and bleeding hearts galore.*

—THE HABITANT FARM.

V

*The Portage*

As Marie went west in that pioneer way,  
The seagulls were skirring the white caps in play;  
And as the bark trembled her prayer beads she told  
To calm the dread terror such timid hearts hold.

Six leagues to the northward, the sheltering banks lay  
Where swift flowing waters discharged in a bay.  
In turbulent spate, on wild rush to the sea,  
The Ottawa there spued its driftwood débris.

At last on that river the *voyageurs* drove;  
And muscles and skill with its mad currents strove.  
Up fifteen miles farther, their camping site lay  
Where smudges would banish the pests of the day.

Twelve miles of stiff paddling and cascades appear;  
“Now ready, *mes canards* at bow and at rear!”  
And over sprang two mid the ice in the stream  
To hold the frail vessel and steady its beam.

Then waist deep in water, the sweating crew go  
To shoulder the cargo and wade through the flow.  
Jean’s Marie was carried like package or sack;  
And reached the shore dry on her husband’s broad back.

Eight shoulders then lifted the upturned canoe  
As over rough portage a path was cleared through.  
In six hundred paces smooth water was won;  
And promptly the *toting* of freight was begun.

Then thigh deep stand two in the swift flowing stream  
To hold the big *canot* and steady its beam.  
The freight was repacked and all clamber aboard  
To bend to the stroke with their vigour restored.

“*In our puddle . . . . a bath to take  
Went two black duck . . . . and one white drake.  
Roulete rouland  
Boule roulant*”

## VI

### *The Boiling Pot*

*“Le Rideau!” was a boatman’s cry  
As, on their left, a river leaping  
Hung like a curtain in the sky,  
And wimpled down its white frills sweeping  
Into the spume as they crept by.*

*Beyond them seethed The Chaudiere,  
Its waters as in cauldron boiling.  
The feel of night was in the air;  
And as respite to daylight’s toiling  
Came evening camp and river-fare.*

---

Of golden maize I sing and *succotash*,  
Of *samp*, of *hominy* and *usquamash*—  
Corn foods that put rich marrow in the bone—  
Of these I sing and make their virtues known  
To waddling friend whose widening middle span  
Proclaims him victim of the frying pan  
And to the Lean Kind who take little pills  
To drive away dyspepsia’s gnawing ills;  
To both, alike, of simple fare I sing;  
And loud may my *Heroic Couplets* ring—  
Yet kiss their neighbours in a friendly way  
Which Pope esteemed bad manners in his day.

Behold the *cannie* Scot on Grampian Hills!  
Unvexed was he by alimentary ills.  
On oaten meal and turnip water fed,  
To sup his *brose* he nimbly sprang from bed—  
Then sallied forth to foray where he could;  
And when have men the oat fed Scot withstood?  
His wife sat up awaiting his return,  
Eager his takings of the day to learn;  
And as a meal she gave him at its close

The turnip pulp she'd strained to make his *brose*.

Behold the Arabs by Great Omar led!  
Salt was their sauce; their fare was barley bread;  
And they were water-drinkers as they rode  
Through Africa and Asia and bestrode  
The Eastern World. Whence comes our present dread?  
—From eaters of spaghetti and rye bread.

But in such grains scant merits I discern  
Compared with maize uncrushed by stone or quern.  
When the Great Spirit gave man Indian Corn,  
Out of a wrestler's heart its soul was born.  
Lover of heat, it wrestles with the winds  
And in man's company strength and vigour finds.  
The more his hands disturb its tender roots,  
The faster upward its blue foliage shoots.  
Around each patch of maize, with hair unbound,  
Swarth women danced to the low piping sound  
Of Indian flutes, and on moist growing night  
Thus charmed away the boring weevil's blight;  
And when they saw its first blond tassels blown,  
They danced again at thought of fresh baked *pone*.

Sweet, sonsy kernel in thy golden case,  
Should brutal stone thy virtues e'er debase,  
Thy infant eye pluck out, thy endosperm  
And oily tissues crush with grinding turn,  
Thy hilum and thy cotyledon rend  
And out through spouts insipid *corn meal* send,  
Which sleep-eyed women stir in pots to make  
Mean *hasty pudding* and its lumps to break?

Faith no! Unbruised should thy body steep  
In warming liquids and its Spirit keep.  
We know full well—how could we help but know?  
The virtues which in thy *corn syrup* flow—  
A glucose formlessness thy body hath  
After it takes a hydrochloric bath.  
How sweet its viscous stickyness when spread  
On buckwheat cakes or home baked wheaten bread!

Better than mother's milk, such food, they say,  
When mixed with rum and bottle fed the day  
That babies come; and draughts of thee dispose  
Old men to frolic even at life's close.

Lo the Algonkins steeped thy grains in lye  
Till they were blanched; then spread them out to dry  
On their *aupukwa* mats of woven reeds;  
And laid them by to serve their warriors' needs  
While travelling light on broken waterways  
And through bush lands on distant war forays.  
Such uncooked food gave them mobility  
To swoop far south on Braddock's infantry—  
While creaking wains delayed his slow advance—  
And strike, a thousand strong, in aid of France.

In Northern wilds, Baron Lahontan tells,  
There were no fat men and no imbeciles.

Behold Lapocane and his *voyageurs*  
As in the dark their simple fare he stirs,  
Their faces lit by crackling cedar blaze,  
That licks the pot in which hard lye-shelled maize  
Breaks up and crumbles in slow even boil  
Under their patient stirring. Salt and oil  
From rendered fat are added to the mess  
On which eyes gaze with hungry eagerness.  
Four quarts of mush are each man's daily fare;  
Clouds are his blankets; and his couch is bare  
Save for the roots and branches which are found  
To keep away the dampness of the ground.

Such was the diet and the regimen  
*The North-West Company* gave its river-men.  
In vain they longed for beds that feathers make  
And for pea-soup with pork—and bread to break.  
Up-turned canoe and oilskins formed a shed  
And midst the freight, Jean's Marie made her bed.  
She wept—but dreams soon wiped her tears away:  
For she was back in Old Maskinongé.

---

*“Levè nos gens, the morning breaks!”  
While from the East faint dawn comes creeping,  
The foreman’s call the camp awakes;  
And rising stiff from outdoor sleeping,  
His crew another portage makes.*

## VII

### *Marie's Trip West*

Thus they laboured up the river  
    On the Old French Trading Route,  
Paddling up its winding channels,  
    Packing freight past fall and chute;  
And four hundred miles to northward  
    Reached the Forks and journeyed west  
On a broken chain of waters  
    Till at last they reached the Crest.

There they portaged to the rivers  
    That flow westward to the lake,  
And were camping in a month's time  
    Where they had whitefish to bake:  
They had made the Company's depot  
    At the portage by the Sault  
And were transferring their cargo  
    To a sailing vessel's crew.

Off they paddled toward Fort William  
    By the lake's bleak northern shore.  
Of their fragile fleet three floundered  
    Ere that stormy trip was o'er.  
They had reached the *Upper Country*  
    Where the Company then held sway  
And to gather in rich peltries  
    Gave wild Indians rum as pay.

## VIII

### *Le Grand Jamboree*

Behold the Fort and its baronial hall  
As special crews arrived from Montreal,  
—With chefs and bakers and large sleeping tents—  
Bringing the Partners for their Conference  
With Trading Members whose least word was law  
In lands beyond the Kaministiquia.

Around its double gate and high stockade  
Were pitched the skin tents of the West Brigade—  
The *Winter-ers*, who from each trading post  
Had brought the Company's fur packs to the coast.  
From sixty stations, some as far away  
As the Great Slave, they wait to draw their pay.  
On jerked meat fed, they eagerly await  
Their fortnight's *pique-nique* at the Company's fête,  
Where pork will fry and cooks white bread will bake,  
And rum will flow a Frenchman's thirst to slake.  
In leather leggings and a breech clout clad,  
Each wore bright feathers and his dagger had;  
And on white buckskin smock and belt displayed  
The gaudy quill work of some Indian maid.  
The *homme du Nord*, a gay French lad was he,  
Who as he passed back heeled one on the knee.  
Under canoe and tent, that July day,  
A thousand such were camped on Thunder Bay.

The guns are fired at the Fort's south gate!  
Within the Partners dine in lordly state.  
“Lords of the North,” they called themselves, and well  
That title fitted as their exploits tell;  
For robber barons never claimed such fee—  
Plunging a land in wild debauchery  
And by sheer rapine held monopolies—  
As did these men who posed as church trustees.  
*Dans pays d'en haut*, save up toward Hudson's Bay,  
These Scottish *Montreal-ers* then held sway—

-----  
Their motive to make profits and thus dwell  
As men of substance down by *Mont Royal*.  
There was no public conscience to restrain  
Their actions in that far and wild domain.  
When independent traders came, we find,  
They fled in haste or left their bones behind.  
The white men there were all in their employ  
Save *trappeurs* who to live there must enjoy  
Their confidence. They ruled, until the date  
Lord Selkirk came, like eastern potentate.

We here describe but do not criticize  
These men who took pride in their enterprise.  
The times were harsh. In England, in that year,  
A soldier, who in pub' o'er pot of beer,  
Had spoken frankly of a Royal Prince,  
Who then deserved scant praise—and gets none since,  
Was flogged; and on his quivering back were laid  
Four hundred lashes as a renegade.

Without, all revel as from Company Stores  
Come meat and bread; and from the bunghole pours  
Rum thick enough to cut each thirsty throat—  
And pours until it sets back teeth afloat.  
Such largess rose from careful Scottish thrift;  
One has respect on waking for a gift  
That put him off to sleep with such despatch;  
And when he fumbles for the storehouse latch,  
He gladly pays for what he badly needs  
To sober up—and no the tally heeds.

Nought knew that camp of laws or of police;  
And yet there were few breaches of the peace.  
Ethnologists of Boston little reck  
What things they say of Frenchmen from Quebec;  
And little love was lost in Olden Days  
Between *Les Canayens* and *Boston-nais*.  
But those who know the *habitant* expect  
To find in him a man who will respect  
The rights of others and defend his own—  
And stir no trouble if he's left alone.

Just how to keep some Liberty may be  
His contribution to ethnology.  
No richer gift a free man's spirit craves  
While nations bow as regimented slaves.

Some ancient author, perhaps Homer, said:  
Man reaps the loudest fame, before he's dead  
Who wins by strength of arm or speed of limb;  
But once o'erthrown his glory soon grows dim.  
'Twas here from every section of the West  
That champions came their rivals' strength to test,  
From *Fort aux Prairies* came Jean Paul Levaque,  
Who bore six hundredweight upon his back—  
A strapping stalwart he, who had more strength  
Than brains to use it with. His friends at length  
Arranged a contest, a grand *toting* race,  
Six packs the load, on four mile carrying-place.  
Perhaps you've seen a *trappeur* who packs freight  
With forehead strap to poise its bulky weight?  
Jean won; but he was slow in coming back,  
And when they asked him why he fetched the pack,  
He begged a live coal and his pipe alight  
Blew noisy "pouffs" through lips that strain pressed tight.  
'I'll see myself—," he grunted, "ere I'll lay  
Goods over any portage without pay."

The fighters, then as now, would not engage  
Without their back talk, boasts and badinage.  
So bulls will bawl and paw up clouds of dust  
And circle ere they close with vicious thrust.  
At times, an ear pressed close to prairie ground  
Could hear, at twenty miles, a humming sound  
That grazing herds of countless bison made  
When passion stirred the bulls to serenade.  
"Tell him," quoth Paul José, "I would have fought  
Scarface right joyfully if he had brought  
His woman with him who has practiced skill  
In setting bones and mixing herbs to fill  
His wounds. That Blackened Stick! To fight with me  
One must be *Top-Dog* in his own country."

But after treaty they at last engage;  
And Clerks and Partners lent their patronage.  
With fists and feet and teeth, the bruisers fought;  
And Paul José was carried from the lot.  
A man, part Cree, had won at Thunder Bay  
And puffed with pride was every *Bois-Brulée*.

'Twas thus each had his fling and spent his pay  
And ate again from pots of mush each day.  
The Business Partners and their staff depart.  
Each wintering crew then made a hasty start  
On toilsome journey to lone distant post.

There, round the tent fire of some dusky host,  
As snow came sifting through the skin tepee  
And time was passed with tales and repartee,  
The *Voyageur* would tell, in broken Cree,  
Of *wash-tá* times at Le Grand Jamboree.

## IX

### *The Ka-Ka-Be-Ka Route*

Big Jean is on his way out West  
    To dry meat on the Plain;  
And at Pembina he will ride  
    His hunting horse again,  
To run the bison when vast herds  
    Drift slowly north to graze  
And trample down the prairie grass  
    In shortening autumn days.

Half his journey lies before him  
    As in his light canoe  
He joins the freighters from the *Rouge*  
    At their first rendezvous—  
Where the Cleft Rock, *Ka-ka-be-ka*,  
    Hears her white waters fall  
And cascade swiftly toward the lake  
    In answer to its call.

They paddle westward for a month  
    By way of Rainey lake  
And through *Dubois*; and on the White  
    Its swirling rapids take—  
Then down the shore and up the Red  
    To where the rivers join,  
And make delivery at their Post  
    On the Assiniboine.

Up the stream by Fort Pembina,  
    The summer camp then lay  
Of Frenchmen with whom Jean had pitched  
    Before he went away.  
Within a smoke-stained skin tepee  
    Each lodged an Indian wife;  
And mid cracked bones and camp débris  
    Curs yelped in ceaseless strife.

'Twas here Lejimonière brought  
The first bride to the West.  
Of her brave heart and fortitude  
The simple facts attest;  
And those who talk of Early Days  
And kitchen troubles tell  
Might turn their thoughts to Anne Marie  
And on her trials dwell.

*White Buffalo*

Jean pitched her lodge hard by the waterside—  
 A cone of poles with base scarce twelve feet wide,  
 And clad with bison hides whose nipping smell  
 Of rancid things and unclean camp life tell.

It was a home; and as she washed her clothes—  
 And soused them, standing where the current flows  
 Across a shoal, a passing Indian came  
 To her tent flap and stooped beneath its frame.  
 The host away, he sate him down to wait  
 The host's return, nor did he violate  
 An etiquette as ancient as our race,  
 Which made each stranger welcome to a place.  
 "Eat meat," 'twas Homer sang, "that we may ask  
 Thy name and station and thy present task."  
 Whate'er they say of the wild pagan Cree,  
 He lacked no store of native dignity;  
 And yet a glance at this white woman sent  
 His hand to mouth in great astonishment—  
 And off he stalked to learn from Bte' Belgrade  
 How strong the magic was that Marie made.  
 She was a witch, he heard, and had been known  
 To fill one's stomach with a large flat stone.  
 Amazed by news of such a prodigy,  
 He rode to cry his camp of Prairie Cree.

The chiefs assemble and wise counsel take;  
 While men of magic lengthy speeches make.  
 "Behold," quoth one, "what magic power lies  
 In the white buffalo. Who here denies  
 This strange white woman may have craft to cast  
 Great evils on us that our health may blast?  
 Lo! through the world such spirit bodies range  
 To help or hinder and man's luck to change.  
 We thank the good ones—further help to get;  
 And caiole bad ones—that they may forget

~~And they can see that they may bring--~~  
To work their evil deeds; and in this way  
Wise men behave. Lo, I have said my say!”

Good words! And so a stragglng cavalcade  
Rode down to Marie; and a peace was made.  
“O pity us! We only come to gaze,”  
Their present-bearer tells her as he lays  
Their gifts before her tent. “Be not afraid,  
White Buffalo! We come to ask thy aid.”

## XI

### *Black Feather*

And shortly after, to the camp site came  
A smiling wife her family rights to claim.  
Behold Black Feather, with her pony drag,  
Its poles lashed shaftwise to a cayuse nag.  
While here and there her pots and pans are hung,  
Across its frame her tepee-skins are strung;  
And there young children ride on bags of clothes  
And whimpering puppies in a box repose.

On Jean's return she set right in to pack.  
"I am his first one—he must take me back—  
And if he loads him with a second wife,  
That's his affair and not a cause for strife—"  
Her thought flowed limpid in her pagan brain,  
For social codes all women's thought explain—  
"He travelled far—and left me here behind.  
If he were lost, Black Feather need not mind.  
His non-return misfortune might explain—  
Perhaps he drowned or in a fight was slain.  
But with him here—if I have not my place—  
And people hear—it is a black disgrace."

She gave Marie a friendly smile and set  
Her tent at hand as was good etiquette.  
Up went its poles; its coverings rose in place;  
Her goods were stored and soon in open space  
Her pot was boiling and their dogs had fought.  
'Twas fortunate, perhaps, Jean had not taught  
Black Feather French and Marie knew no Cree;  
For words avail not in high tragedy.  
The half-breed children told all need be said.  
When Jean got home Marie was ill in bed.  
"O why," she sobbed, "have me this journey make  
To this lone place a woman's heart to break?"

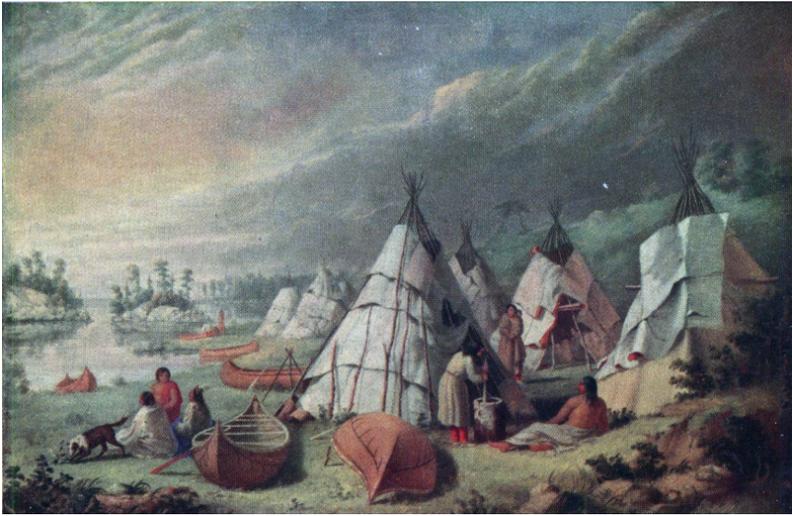
But weakness comes to numb such mental pain:

And Marie soon was sitting up again.  
She got wild turnips which the Indians eat  
To give them strength when boiled with fresh killed meat,  
Sweet, savoury morsels roasted on a spit,  
And wild duck baked in clay within a pit.  
Without a doubt Black Feather had a mind  
To cure the sick one and her heart was kind.

The compliments were moving all one way  
As Marie thought; and so she went to pay  
Her nurse a visit and before her spread  
Finery enough to turn the woman's head—  
Soft elkskin slippers quilled with porcupine  
And worked with threaded beads in bright design,  
Gaay belts, white smocks and leggings that displayed  
The tinkling baubles of the Western trade.  
Thus all the gifts the Prairie Chiefs had made  
Gladdened a heart and Marie's debt was paid.  
With flashing eyes, Black Feather packed to go  
Among her tribe and all her treasures show.

“What did she do, Jean, while you were away?”  
Asked Anne Marie. “O had a holiday,”  
*Respondit Jean*—“out with her roving Cree.  
'Tis tribal notions of propriety  
That brings the woman back.”

—And so anon  
Jean camped far North on the Saskatchewan.



*Courtesy of The Art Gallery of Toronto*

INDIAN VILLAGE  
PAUL KANE

*The rush thatch glowed in autumn haze  
And a ripe maiden braying maize  
Woke feelings of his younger days,  
Her eyelids did her talking.*

—MORNING LIGHT.

## TO A SUN FLOWER

With flirting eyes, beside the walk,  
A froward wench, the hollyhock,  
Beckons her lovers rest and sip  
The sweetness of her crimson lip  
    While life and youth are fair.

She thrills at kiss of brushing wings;  
Her make-up to the prowler clings.  
He casts her off in cold disdain—  
For what has one for all his pain  
    From such a painted lady?

Hail homely flower of the Sun  
Whose love directs the course he runs  
And guards at night his peaceful rest  
Behind rose curtains in the west,  
    Thou humble worshipper!

Much purer thou, and sweeter far  
Than all thy wanton sisters are,  
Who primp and prink in colours gay  
And flirt and fritter life away  
    To senile loneliness.

The Pagan Disc thy youth adored  
Has light and heat and water stored  
For breathing leaf and thirsty stalk;  
By Him in mould thou wast begot  
    Thy God to glorify.

Much wiser thou, and saner far,  
Than we, thy fellow mortals, are,  
Who live in God yet Him deny  
Who feel Him not—though He is nigh—  
    Till withering age draws on.

## MORNING LIGHT

A claim to ethnological accuracy is made for references that occur in this book to the customs and beliefs of the wild Algonkian Indian. Nothing has been gained elsewhere by devitalizing into a literary abstraction the athletic, fun-loving sportsman and daring warrior who gave us lacrosse and hockey, spring blood bitters, tobacco, breakfast cereals and maple syrup. In his original state he was a loyal friend and a generous sharer, and was well spoken of by every intelligent European who came in contact with him. In 1763, his hunting grounds extended from the Ottawa river to the Rocky Mountains.

Wabano, or Morning Light, was the great war chief who led the Ojibways south from the Lake Superior country and drove the Iroquois out of the beaver hunting grounds, the salmon streams and wild rice lands of Ontario. His river is the Credit, which the Indians called The Chinquacousy, because of the pines along its lower reaches.

## MORNING LIGHT

When age had turned his scalp lock grey,  
Wabano of the Ojibway,  
With pipe in hand, was wont to pray  
    To the spirit of a tree,—  
An ancient white pine in whose crest  
A pair of eagles made their nest  
And by whose roots he took his rest.  
    And agèd war chief was he,

Who in his youth, far in the West,  
By sprawling Turtle God was blest  
And led his warriors south in quest  
    Of scalp locks and victory.  
Each war canoe a black dog slew  
To their high god, Dread Manitou,  
Without whose aid each warrior knew  
    He went to death or slavery.

*The War Path*

Their route lay south from Georgian Bay,  
Where overgrown with war's decay  
Old gardens of the Hurons lay;  
    Nor felt spring's sweet renewing.  
As through dense woods the warriors steal,  
High in the clouds lone eagles wheel.  
"Eyes!" ravens croak, "Eyes for a meal!"  
    The body birds were gathering.

Harried throughout their northern land,  
The Mohawks made a desperate stand  
In pits dug in the beaches' sand  
    At the inlet to the Bay  
Of Burlington; and near that town,  
Where fall winds shake black walnuts down,  
Still stands the ancient barrow mound  
    Thrown up by the Ojibway.

Masters now they of hunting ground  
Through which wide flowing rivers wound  
To the Great Lakes within whose bound  
    Lay their rolling bush country;  
As each clan went its separate way  
To choose a range by stream or bay,  
Wabano of the Ojibway.  
    Pitched his lodge on swift Pine Tree.

## II

### *The Chinquacousy*

Cool, sparkling, clear, from limestone hills,  
Its waters oozed to purling rills  
That sped in cedar swamps to spill  
    'Neath bracken plumes a'quiver;  
Then witched by spell of lilted brooks  
Through beds of cress their courses took  
To fall in cataracts that shook  
    At drum-beat of the river.

Down banks of cedar and sumach,  
Of canoe birch and tamarack,  
Its waters flowed to southern track  
    With fat sea salmon teeming.  
On blue lake waves the white gulls rest;  
In reedy plash the wild fowls nest;  
High overhead on wooded crest  
    The lofty pine stood dreaming.

### III

#### *The Indian Dirge*

A pine grove is a holy place;  
Chaste columns form the temple's base;  
In its high dome green branches lace,  
    Their sombre shadows slanting.  
Thick rugs await the pilgrim's feet;  
Odours of myrrh his nostrils greet;  
Down its dim aisles the winds retreat,  
    Their mournful numbers chanting.

And sitting by its roots, alone,  
The Indian smoked his pipe of stone  
To send his soft words upward blown  
    On sacred smoke of willow.  
"Lo! As with cedar, slim and straight,  
Death's mark first shows on withering pate,  
My greying hairs foretell my fate,  
    Thy roots my lasting pillow.

"All things grow old and pass away  
Like smoke upon a summer's day.  
Where is Man's hope of yesterday  
    And price of human striving?  
The earth is a vast barrow mound;  
Thy roots have pride and beauty found  
Low and forgotten in the ground  
    Where loathsome worms are thriving."

On the stream torch lights were flashing.  
To his ears there came the splashing  
Of lithe salmon upward dashing  
    Faring home from salty sea.  
Down the sky night shades were falling;  
From the reeds a loon was calling;  
But dark thoughts his mind enthralling  
    Held him dreaming by the tree.

“Why, brother, art thou murmuring so?  
Or have trees pains we do not know?  
Or do they long to come and go  
    At their own wilful pleasure?  
Beware the demons of the wind  
That breed unrest in mortal mind,  
Telling of things that wanderings find  
    And yearnings without measure.

“Behold the Torch in heaven’s tent!  
The Sun has gone where he was sent,  
Straight as an arrow when bow is bent;  
    Nor loiters at his leisure.  
No selfwilled messenger is he,  
Who turns aside fresh sights to see;  
He serves his God obediently  
    And therein finds his pleasure.

“He serves a greater God than we,  
Who pays with immortality—  
A God who governs orderly,  
    His constant watches keeping.  
Our earth God loafs within his tent,  
On selfish purposes intent;  
He leaves his rule to accident,  
    Nor hears a mother weeping.

“Men seek for rest, yet no rest find.  
The world’s as changeful as the wind.  
While fear and dread their spirits bind  
    Still onward the captives press.  
The real, in a dim world of show,  
They seek who only shadows know;  
And in the end they stumbling go  
    Into death’s drear nothingness.”

## IV

### *The Sweat Bath*

The camp call broke his reveries;  
Then a snug lodge with mats for ease,  
And bowl of food between his knees  
    Made this world seem quite pleasant.  
Through fasts the mystics come to know  
True inwardness of human woe;  
When man's digestive juices flow  
    No gloomy thoughts are present.

And in the mellow morning light,  
Old camp scenes brought him fresh delight,  
As urchins waged their mimic fight  
    And played at great game stalking.  
The rush thatch glowed in autumn haze  
And a ripe maiden braying maize  
Woke feelings of his younger days.  
    Her eyelids did her talking.

Glad to live, joyous to be free,  
Some poison in my heart, thought he,  
Hath made me spurn my liberty  
    And crave a master's orders.  
Off to the vapour lodge he went  
To squat for hours in a tent  
As over steaming stones he bent  
    To sweat out such disorders.

Dripping with heat, he ran to take  
A swift plunge in the chilling lake;  
The shock made his slim body quake  
    And whipped each tingling tissue.  
Made fragrant now, with sweet grass fumes,  
He dons his trailing eagle plumes,  
And stalks to where the tall pine looms  
    To settle the old issue.

*The Valiant Heart*

“Lo! Evil breeds in stagnant scums;  
 Man’s thought should flow as river runs,  
 Sparkling in change as each brook comes  
     That truth may have its mirror.  
 Behold! O Spirit of a tree!  
 A proud war chief I come to thee;  
 Thy brother spoke not carefully,  
     And in my words was error.

“ ’Tis Chance that gives sweet zest to Life;  
 We think of Peace in terms of Strife.  
 Life is Desire running rife;  
     And what is Love but Longing?  
 As gusts against the wigwam beat,  
 Sifting dry snow about his feet,  
 ’Tis then man dreams of summer’s heat  
     And thoughts of spring come thronging.

“Hunger makes rabbit taste as sweet  
 As feasts with beaver tails replete;  
 Loss of Desire is Life’s defeat;  
     Want is Joy’s nursing mother.  
 Happy the youthful brave who goes  
 ’Mid licking flames to taunt his foes;  
 Strong from this life his passion flows  
     To nurse joys in the other.

“Life in its lengthening shadow leaves  
 To aged brave sweet memories,  
 And richest those that sorrow weaves;  
     They make no plaint of poverty.  
 The man with naught to live for here  
 Hath naught from decent God to fear.  
 His fainting heart and spirit sere  
     Deserve a demon’s pity.

“Maker of Souls! When life began  
Out of red clay Thou madest man,  
Mixing wet marl to suit Thy plan  
    As women form a kettle.  
Thine the hand that plants Desire:  
Thine the breath that fans the fire;  
And if the pot cracks will God’s ire  
    On his own potshard settle?”

“Whence do Goodness and Wisdom spring  
Save out of Sin and Suffering?  
Boastful the songs that mortals sing  
    Who have not fought temptation.  
A warrior to claim victory  
Must grapple with his enemy,  
And if he fighting fall should he  
    Suffer Thy condemnation?”

“In the heart is the only place  
That man Thy countenance can trace;  
I know too well Thy spirit face  
    To cajole for Thy favour.  
Lo! Thy great Spirit, bold and free,  
Hath no desire for mastery;  
Else why a freeman mad’st Thou me,  
    Thy liberty to savour?”

“Why fret we thus to pierce with light  
Into the clouds of darkest night,  
Who cannot know ourselves aright  
    Ourselves our deepest mystery?  
Reader of Hearts! I come Thy friend,  
Valiant of heart, to face life’s end  
And not as a cringing slave to bend  
    His trembling knees before Thee.”

## VI

### *The Tree Butchers*

In death's cold hands he found the keys  
To all such earth born mysteries.  
They buried him beneath his trees,  
    Upright, and not for sleeping.  
Four days, the forest gleamed at night  
As o'er his grave the flames burned bright  
To give his journeying spirit light,  
    Its distant soul-home seeking.

Begrudged the space in which they lay,  
His bones, his flints and pot of clay,  
Were shovelled out the other day  
    To get a drain connected.  
His is a tale of far-off days,  
Of fearless heart and wildwood ways;  
Yet as his spirit fronts our gaze,  
    We see our own reflected.

And if old skull had eyes to see  
And ears to hear what changes be,  
Of what would he now question me  
    Amid life's wild commotion?  
Not the bridge that spans his river;  
Nor mad rush of traffic thither,  
Hurrying thence to chase back hither,  
    Like fallen leaves in motion.

“Where are my trees,” the chief would ask,  
“And my broad stream where salmon bask?  
Has demon foul assayed the task  
    Of altering God's creation?”  
An artful race, old Chief, I'd say,  
Stole all your tribal lands away.  
They scatter your bones and shards of clay  
    And have destroyed your nation.

In naked hills they took delight  
And chopped trees to their own despite;  
Green pine crests waving on a height  
    Incited ruthless butchery.  
The beech, the maple, and the oak  
Fell crashing at the woodman's stroke;  
And as huge boles went up in smoke,  
    Men boasted as of victory.

In wrath your river god arose  
To take grim vengeance on such foes,  
And passed down where the Credit flows,  
    Colouring the lake's blue tides;  
And to him there spring freshets bring  
From valleys where lone piss-elms cling,  
As tribute to their angry king,  
    The strength of leaching hillsides.

And while our wealth thus runs away,  
Free as the Indian in his day,  
On his lean lands man now must stay  
    Slaving to gather fodder.  
After the freshets of the spring,  
His water brooks no longer sing;  
And as his crops lie withering,  
    His cattle bawl for water.

Our shaman tries his magic hand  
At witching wells in dried-out land.  
In vain he twists his willow wand;  
    Vain is his incantation!  
Your sugar of the maple trees,  
And curd red fish of salty seas,  
Are now infrequent luxuries,—  
    Such is our condemnation.

## VII

### *The Caching Squirrels*

You managed in your simple way  
For bed and food from day to day;  
And lived a freeman's life away.—  
    Proud of your manly vigour.  
Daily you swam in river's flow  
Or naked plunged into the snow  
To make your sulky muscles glow  
    And scorn the winter's rigour.

You took your time and did not worry;  
Whilst we like bustling red squirrels scurry  
That gathering nuts in frantic hurry  
    Forget where their treasure lies.  
From their vain hoardings sprout the trees;  
But genii strewing miseries  
With magic and black mysteries  
    Out of man's vain wealth arise.

What you then had was all your own;  
Nor can man lack what is unknown.  
What we now have comes as a loan,  
    Heavy with obligation.  
Behind these farms and roads you see  
Stand debts that never paid will be;  
Mere things now have man's mastery.  
    His is the servile station.

*Envoi*

*“There’s much, O Chief, thou didst not know;  
But wisdom like a tree must grow  
Sound from the heart; and can we show  
Thee a sounder heart than thine?  
Whate’er thy ignorance, thou could’st tell  
That Beauty, Truth, and Freedom dwell  
Together—indivisible;  
And man that he is divine.”*



*Courtesy of R. S. McLaughlin*

THE HABITANT HOME  
CORNELIUS KRIEGHOFF

*Peasant folk were they, deliberate, both in work and pleasure,  
Calm and brave to face life's ills nor fretting at fate's measure.  
And their anodyne in grief and solace amid labour  
Came from Church, the family, and nearly friendly neighbour.*

—THE PASQUE-FLOWER.

## THE MOURNING DOVE

The mourning dove  
Calls his sad note of love  
From thorn tree shade in woodland lot above:  
“*Come here, come near, lost love!*”

This sad refrain,  
As of hurt soul in pain,  
Flitting from orchard clump to quarry lane,  
Echoes again, again.

He does not grieve;  
Of care his mate relieves,  
Hushing their squirming brood of little ones  
At caw of threatening thieves.

The voice that's heard  
Out of sweet throat of bird  
Is that of Adjala, an Indian maid,  
Whose heart by love was stirred.

*The Indian Child*

A girl she'd be,  
 They learned through augury,  
 Because of daily tapping by a bird  
 Upon a nearby tree.

White rabbit fur  
 And mosses swaddled her.  
 On a low bough her *tick-e-na-gun* hung  
 For mother's hand to stir.

"Swing low! Swing high!"  
 Thus crooned her lullaby:  
 "Down, my little one! Cloud high, pretty one!  
 Fly, my cedar bird, fly!"

In forest glade  
 The Indian child had played,  
 Blowing flute notes on her *pig-gum-jew-gun*,  
 And when the faeries made

Green beams at night  
 To give their fire-fly light  
 She chased the *puck-gum-jennies* through the grass  
 To steal their candles bright;

And to requite,  
 A tiny warrior sprite  
 With his skull cracker, the *puggé-wa-gun*,  
 Tapped her to sleep each night.

*Bright Star of Dawn!*  
 Her childhood life flowed on  
 Smoothly as river to its water-fall;  
 And like a cloud was gone.

## II

### *The Maiden's Fast*

As maiden should,  
She fled to lonely wood  
By fast and prayer her spirit to prepare  
For change to womanhood.

In draw below,  
Shadows passed to and fro,  
Stirring the evening meal in earthen pots  
Above the camp fire glow.

The pine top high  
Murmured in troubled sigh  
As gods of thunder flapped their mighty wings  
Shaking the low'ring sky.

Then to the maid,  
Lone, famished and afraid,  
Her sacred vision came of snow white fawns  
Browsing in aspen shade.

### III

#### *The Flame Readers*

Her tears were dried;  
She sought the river side;  
And piling alder faggots shoulder high  
Thus to her people cried:

“I do not shirk  
Doing a woman’s work!  
Kindle my blaze and in its curling smoke  
Read what luck spirits lurk.

“Flesh pots to fill,  
A hunter on the hill,  
Babe for the breast, and after toil sweet rest—  
A woman’s hope fulfill.”

The witch crones came  
Chanting the sacred name  
Of Nhee-Tis, goddess of fecundity  
And viewed the leaping flame.

But spells twice laid,  
And choice burnt offerings made  
Could witch no omens of her happiness  
For Adjala, the maid.

IV

*Faery Fingers*

Her roving kin,  
The woodland Algonkin,  
Had pitched beside the swirling, black Saugeen  
Their smoke-stained tents of skin.

From the Blue Hill,  
Omudwa came to fill  
Her fresh young life with love's sweet ecstasy  
That hurts, and hurting thrills.

Hunter was he  
Fleet at the wapéte.  
His magic herbs subdued the timid deer—  
Too charmed were they to flee.

Sure as otter  
On any sort of water,  
His eagle clansmen, the Mississauga,  
Called him Rippling Water.

Love stole to her,  
Softly as through the fir  
The fawn at nightfall seeks its watering place,  
Claiming the heart of her,

Adding shy grace,  
And on her oval face  
Painting the crimson roses of the wild  
That faery fingers trace.

Her part to wait,  
—Such is a maiden's fate,  
With eyes downcast upon her needle work,  
Her yearning in full spate

For Omudwa,  
Young hunter whom she saw  
Stalk past her wigwam in his eagle crest,  
Flaunting his brave gew-gaws.

*The Aspen Dance*

When Autumn weaves  
Bright patterns with her leaves  
And on the wooded slopes each fitful breeze  
A flaming blanket heaves,

Wrapped in soft haze  
Came Indian Summer days  
When maidens made their fête to *Nah-ee-tis*  
At gathering time of maize.

'Neath aspen tree,  
Lithe girls danced merrily  
Their raven locks in ermine fillets bound—  
Emblems of chastity.

With nimble feet  
Tripping to tom-tom's beat,  
Adjala breathed her plaintive timid prayer  
A favour to entreat.

VI

*The Wampum White*

The prayer was heard;  
Without a spoken word,  
Around her Rippling Water threw his robe,  
Sudden as pitch of bird.

Her laughing eyes  
Sparkled like star-lit skies  
After the young moon drives his slim canoe  
Below the western rise.

She wore that night  
His wampum necklace white  
To let the village know she was betrothed;  
And as a tribal rite,

Down chaffing street  
With dish of fresh cooked meat,  
She went each day to place it at his door,  
And bid Omudwa eat.

## VII

### *The Jerky Warwhoop*

The woman wrought  
With fleshing bone and pot  
To cure their fresh killed meat for winter stores—  
Such drudgery was their lot.

With fall of night,  
Bold in the dim moonlight,  
Wolves slinked among the broken marrow bones  
To ululate and fight.

At break of day  
The camp in silence lay  
Save for lone whistling note of whip-poor-will,  
Now near, now far away.

Unhappy folk!  
Sudden as thunder stroke,  
The Nottawa war cry: “Hoi yoi! Hoi yoi!”  
Their sleeping village woke.

And at the sound  
War-painted demons bound  
Headlong, with tomahawk and scalping knife,  
Crowding from all sides round.

Adjala lay,  
Her head gashed in the fray;  
She saw her lover tortured at the stake—  
Wild-eyed she crept away.

Demented maid,  
She roamed the forest glade.  
“*Come here! Come here, lost love!*” she vainly cried.  
Ashes no answer made.

*Envoi.*

Soft, sweet and low,  
When wild wood flowers blow,  
The mourning dove repeats her timid plaint,  
First heard long years ago.

And on a day,  
In tearful laughing May,  
The blue bird whistles back as if to say:  
*“Far away! Far away!”*

## THE REVOLT OF PHARAOH

The Revolt of Pharaoh refers to the life and times of Amenhotep IV of the XVIII Dynasty, afterwards called Akhnaton, the Truth-Lover, who reigned in 1375 B.C., as king on the decadent throne of Imperial Egypt.

In those remote times, there was trouble in store for a king who resolved to live a normal life and thus fell foul of his state religion and of the taboos and traditions of his age and station. In the end, his spirit found conditions intolerable; and he moved out, bag and baggage, to buy freedom at its great price. However shocked his loving subjects may have felt, he comes down to us, clearly enough, out of the wrack of forgotten things as the first worthwhile individual in human history.

The reader is referred to *The History of Egypt* by the late James Henry Brestead. The 104th Psalm, a song to God as the Beneficent Father of all, sets out the thoughts and feelings which this Egyptian had previously expressed, and in phrases some of which are strikingly similar.

## THE REVOLT OF PHARAOH

While spading up a plot for garden ground,  
I knelt low down to view in wonderment  
The tragic doings in a little mound,  
Which ants had pulled together with intent  
To rear a state. In wild confusion blent,  
Black slaves and amber masters swarmed in fright  
As walls and galleries which my spade had rent  
Fell on the builders, putting them to flight;  
And settling sands then hid a monarchy from sight.

*By Grace of God.*

In the late Morning hours of Man's day—  
If this be Noon, 'twas scarce an Hour ago—  
Long lines of Pharaohs held imperial sway  
In the Twin Kingdoms where Nile waters flow.  
Proud figures were they as their stelae show—  
Lords of the Upper and the Lower Nile.  
What sort of men they were we'll never know;  
For human traits High Majesty defile;  
And drifting sands came on—after their little while.

*Long Live His Majesty!*

All that remain of some are boasts on stone—  
Those cut too deep for others to efface;  
“BEHOLD GREAT THUTMOSE ON HIS HORUS THRONE!  
LONG LIVE THE KING! HIS MAJESTY BY GRACE  
OF AMEN-RA WHOSE BEAUTY LIGHTS HIS FACE!  
BEHOLD HIS ROD ON FOREIGN BACKS IS LAID;  
AND EASTERN PRINCES GROVEL IN DISGRACE  
WHILST AT HIS FEET THEIR ANNUAL TRIBUTES PAID;  
AND THUS GREAT PHARAOH'S AWFUL HAND OF WRATH IS  
STAYED.”

*His Empire:*

About her flat lands rich with river silt—  
Once home of farm hand and of country squire—  
Egypt had seen her far flung empire built.  
Far to the South her rule had pushed up higher  
In Africa, that Pharaoh might acquire  
The Nubian mines where negroes dug his gold;  
And in the East, so great was their desire  
For Egypt's gold, that kings their fealty sold  
And wrote his Majesty to wheedle and cajole.

*His Foreign Stations:*

To the earth's pillars, even to the Bend  
Where the Euphrates takes its southern course,  
Egyptian garrisons his rule extend,  
And over nomad desert tribes enforce  
Great Pharaoh's peace. Far Babylon had recourse  
To sending trains of messengers to bring  
Rich presents to the Throne which was the source  
Of world-wide power and entreat the king  
To curb the vassal states that he was sheltering.

*His Trade Routes:*

Three thousand years ago, as in the day  
When others took the White Man's Burden on,  
Conquests made trade and empires paid their way.  
The old simplicity of life was gone.  
Mid luxury beyond comparison,  
Her lords and priests in Thebes had their abode,  
Of mighty cities then the paragon,  
As untold riches to her coffers flowed  
Through guarded sea lanes and across lone desert road.

*His Imperial Majesty:*

As Egypt grew in strength her might and fame

Exalted Pharaoh's august majesty,  
And spread afar the glory of his name  
As one who held the world in fealty;  
And yet Great Pharaoh had not liberty  
Himself, but sate a puppet and a tool  
Of state from crowning to his jubilee.  
A Prince of Royal Blood, trained in a school  
Of precedence, he reigned in pomp—but did not rule.

*His Seal-Keeper:*

If left unchecked prescriptive rights root deep  
Through centuries of growth and bloom luxuriant.  
The butler, Joseph knew, was charged to keep  
The wine jars sealed. His scion resplendent  
As Keeper of the Privy Seals now spent  
The public funds. A priestly house could claim  
The Chancellorship because of long descent.  
The onion-eating populace became  
The dupes of deep-voiced priests who chanted Pharaoh's name.

*The Royal Prerogatives:*

A General he—who never took the field;  
A Counsellor—who spoke as he was told  
To speak and kept his honest thoughts concealed;  
A Man whose private life the State controlled;  
Who hunted game empounded in a fold;  
A Fount of Honour—with no patronage;  
A King—who saw his Honours bought and sold:  
Acting a part from earliest youth to age  
He lived a lonely life upon a gaudy stage.

*A Prince of the Blood:*

Customs are growths that no one can explain  
Howe'er he tries. Three thousand years ago  
Unblemished youths were nurtured to be slain

A sacrifice to gods in Mexico.  
The nation knelt to see the life blood flow  
As on the Mound its victim faced the knife.  
Unthinkable it was that he should show  
Unwillingness to offer up his life  
And thus appease the gods and end all civil strife.

And so in Egypt in its glorious day,  
A prince was reared in luxury to be  
A living sacrifice to Form's decay  
And pattern of decadent Monarchy—  
To live beswathed with insincerity  
And hear the cheering populace acclaim  
His chariot, who yet lacked the loyalty  
To be his friends. A Symbol and a Name,  
The Kingly office thus a living tomb became.

*The People Pipe with Pipes.*

Unto this throne, by Grace of Horus-God,  
There came a Royal Prince (Long live the King!)  
Whose feet the farthest ends of earth had trod.  
Vast crowds hurraing made the welkin ring  
And Royal prayers the temple choirs sing.  
A very proper Prince, the people said,  
Who to his Station would fresh glory bring—  
A brilliant mind in sound tradition bred,  
To please the holy priests, his sister he would wed.

*The Truth-Lover.*

Think kindly of Akhnaton! For 'twas he  
Who first on earth our Loving God addressed  
As One who gives hurt birds His sympathy  
And in Whose arms a troubled soul finds rest.  
To him God's goodness was made manifest  
In blue of flowers and grace of birds in flight,  
In youth's lithe suppleness and babe at breast,  
In love of man for woman and the sight

On cloudless skies, star-sprinkled, on a moonless night.

*The Horn of Oil.*

Fat bellied priests in vested robes intoned  
Their pompous ritual to the populace:  
“BEHOLD AMENHOTEP, A PRIEST ENTHRONED!  
LONG LIVE THE KING! HIS MAJESTY BY GRACE  
OF AMEN-RA WHOSE BEAUTY LIGHTS HIS FACE!  
OUR OIL IS POURED HIS HEAD TO SANCTIFY.  
BEFORE HIS PRESENCE LET ALL MEN ABASE  
THEMSELVES, AND KNEELING, MAKE A LOUD OUTCRY  
AS IN HIS GOLDEN CHARIOT THE KING RIDES BY.”

*And it Came to Pass*

The Pharaoh donned the henna wig of state  
And led processions down the Avenue  
Of Sacred Sphynxes to the temple gate.  
Surrounded by a brilliant retinue,  
He saw his troops pass by in long review:  
His ears were deafened by the loud acclaim  
Of sailors cheering as his barge pulled through.  
He heard hosannas shouted as he came  
By men who knew him not but mouthed his ancient name.

*At the End of Two Full Years*

He moved amid a gorgeous pageantry,  
And saw his figure graced to mammoth scale  
By art that lost the truth in sophistry,  
Cluttering itself with meaningless detail  
As ever happens where old forms prevail.  
He trod alone the temple's path of gold  
To take his Station by the Sacred Veil  
Where the Shekinah glowed and there behold,  
Within electrum walls, its Mysteries unfold.

*That an angel appeared*

And then one afternoon as Pharaoh slept  
Upon his golden couch, he dreamed and lo!  
Across his court a youthful figure stepped,  
With garments radiant in the sun's warm glow,  
Who came and stood beside him without show  
Of deference; yet viewed him without guile.  
The boyish countenance he seemed to know;  
And Pharaoh wept. He saw the friendly smile  
That he, himself, had worn in youth—but lost awhile.

*Unto Pharaoh, saying:*

“Already, Sire,” the youth explained, “thy tomb  
Is building in the Valley of the Kings;  
In living rock they cut a sunken room  
To store thy body in and loudly rings  
The quarry tool. The Hawk with folded wings  
Awaits to bear thy shrivelled shade afar.  
They weave thy cerements and coverings;  
And on the wheel, the jackal-headed jar  
Is spinning that will hold thy entrails steeped in tar.

*Thou Art a Slave, O King!*

“Thy mortal soul they now eviscerate.  
Already art thou bound up in the thongs  
Of Place, of Circumstance, of Pomp and State.  
Think not, thou son of Tiy, thy cheering throngs  
Care aught for thee. They shout their unctuous songs  
To Ra with mealy mouthed hypocrisy.”  
Thy person is a symbol and belongs  
Unto the state. Where is thy liberty?  
A worker in thy mines can boast he is more free.

*Bound in Tradition's Chains.*

“Thy humblest subject has a chance to be  
A man, with friends who know his every fault  
And yet forgive because of loyalty.  
They’re not true friends who thus to heaven’s vault  
Acclaim thy name; and if thou madest default  
In humouring their conceits, Egypt would rise  
And strew the garden of thy fame with salt.  
No soul hath she, beneficent and wise  
For States have tiger hearts and treacherous, gleaming eyes.

*And Thy Name Enslaves Others*

“When they are moved, wild passions are aroused,  
And those who fan them win the crowd’s applause.  
Priests’ trumpets blare; have not the gods espoused  
As just and righteous every nation’s cause?  
Forgotten are those simple moral laws  
That conscience gives to every man, that he  
May know what’s right and at the cross-roads pause.  
States have no morals save expediency.  
To prate about their virtue is hypocrisy.

*Who Live in Fear of Change.*

“ ’Tis fear that binds thee and ’tis fear of Change  
That keeps thy throne established by the grace  
Of priests and privileged classes who arrange  
By pomp and foreign threats to keep in place  
The gaping, horny-handed populace  
Who slave for bread and onions, pulse and beer;  
Yet vaunt themselves as of a conquering race.  
They cling to old traditions out of fear.  
And quake each time they’re told some Hittite shakes his spear.

*Brief is Life’s Span, O King!*

“Time is; but soon, Time will have been for thee.  
I see grey hairs. I see Pharaoh’s growing old;

I see grey hairs. LO! Pharaoh's glowing old,  
Nor cans't thou buy of that commodity  
Which goes to waste but is not bought or sold  
The briefest measure with thy Nubian gold.  
Drink! Pharaoh, drink! Before life's stream runs dry.  
Show thou thyself a man and be as bold  
As others who its healing waters try;  
And live, sincere in heart, their God to glorify.

*Awake, Thou Son of Woman.*

“No man hath lived who merely samples life  
As do the actors on a mimic stage,  
Who there in scenes enact life's storms and strife,  
Feigning their smiles and tears and thus engage  
Themselves with fictions from a written page.  
Forgetting self, into life's vortex spring,  
Where boil real joy and bitterness and rage  
Of elemental passions that may bring  
Thee, risking all, a soul's content 'mid suffering.

*And Live*

“Vain Man! Does God, Omnipotent, Who swings  
The stars in endless courses through the sky,  
Yet breathes the gentle quickening warmth that brings  
To life the chick that chirps its feeble cry,  
Does He esteem in His All-seeing eye  
Thy vapid pomp? Thy trappings lay aside  
And unto Him with contrite heart draw nigh  
Whose marvels we behold on every side,  
In Whom we live and breathe—and in His truth abide.

*For Ever!*

“For what man lacks, for that he'll ever long!  
Ambition goads an obscure man to rise  
And lift his head above the general throng.  
A little public notice is the prize

A rare public notice is the prize  
For which some men their lives will sacrifice.  
But what, O Sire, counts such acclaim to thee  
Beneath whose Rule the farthest desert lies?  
If thou, O King, achieve obscurity,  
Thy name and fame will live while human life shall be.”

*The King Arose;*

The king awoke and lo! no one was there  
Save Nubian slaves whose fans with rhythmic beat  
Were stirring breezes in the sultry air.  
Pharaoh was wroth: his slaves fell at his feet.  
“Where went the youth, wise in his own conceit,”  
The king made question, “who thus boldly stepped  
Up to my couch as one a friend might greet  
And called his king a slave?” A Nubian crept  
And whispered, with his face toward earth: “Great Pharaoh slept!”

*And walking in His Garden,*

The Monarch laid his flaming wig aside;  
And feeling sorely troubled and dismayed,  
He took his staff in hand and went to stride  
Down sunken gardens where cool fountains sprayed  
Beneath a lotus-headed colonnade.  
He felt the fetters that his spirit bore;  
He saw his soul in nakedness displayed;  
For what Use makes Familiar, men ignore  
Until Truth’s piercing bolts their sanity restore.

*He Meditated*

He saw his high officials as they were,  
Self-seeking, pursy, pushing men who sought  
To cling and climb, and deemed it worthier  
To win than to be right. They fawned and fought;  
But joined to crush down others whom they thought  
Might rise. He saw the shabby littleness

might see. He saw the shabby richness  
Of hard, intolerant men, who ever brought  
A plausible excuse for deviousness  
And played on public passions and men's weaknesses.

*On the Angel's Words.*

He saw his temples each give God a name;  
Amen in Luxor, Ptah in Memphis reign  
And priests in Heliopolis acclaim  
The Sun-god Ra. He saw each temple strain  
To prove its god most fashionable and gain  
The patronage that gives priests wealth to spend,  
With all the pomp that follows in its train.  
No time had they to comfort or befriend  
Poor, struggling, stricken men, their broken lives to mend.

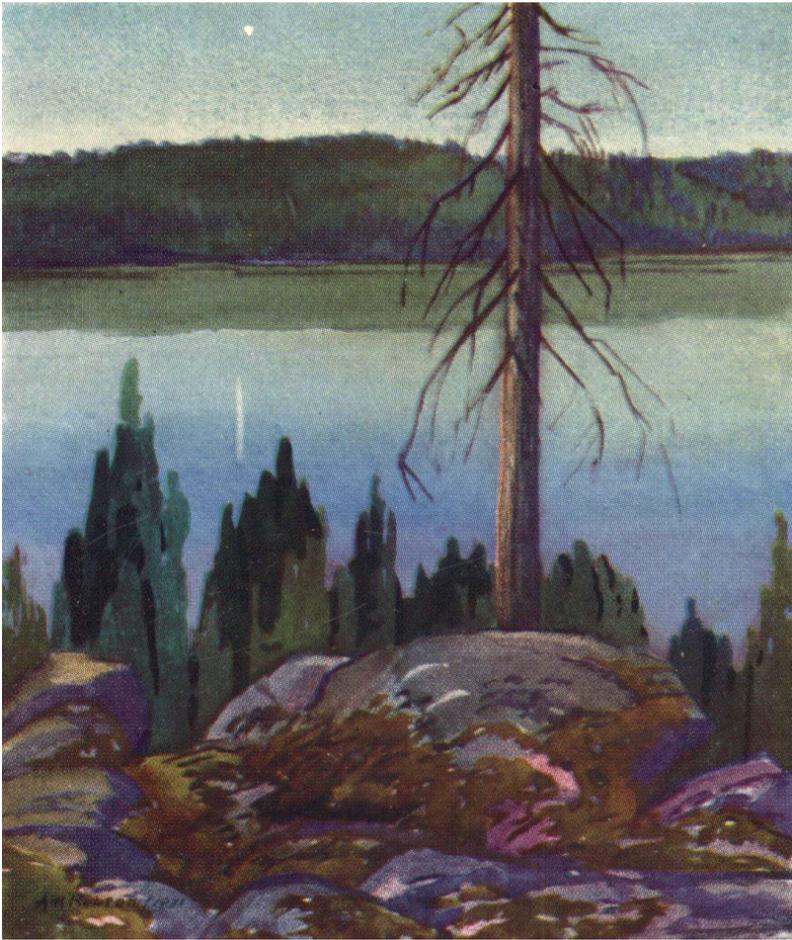
*And Afterwards, He Sailed Away.*

When forth he fared to live as others did,  
The scales had fallen from the monarch's eyes.  
He saw the evils Egypt's pride kept hid,  
The squalor and the poverty that lies  
Beneath an empire's pomp and high emprise.  
On such a King a people looked askance  
Who craved an idol decked in human guise.  
Such friend to man they kept on sufferance;  
And so he left them to their Pomp and Circumstance.

*Envoi.*

“THE KING BECAME UNFITTED FOR HIS TASK:”  
With truth, perhaps, old stones this verdict bring;  
For as a Man's accusers once were asked:  
“And what is Truth?” It is no simple thing  
For whistling farm boy or for worried king.  
Sands since have blotted out Great Egypt's Plan,  
Giving her boastful works deep covering;  
And when the Truth is winnowed by Time's fan

Perhaps the task became unworthy of the man.



EVENING IN THE NORTH  
ALBERT H. ROBSON

*They paddle westward for a month  
By way of Rainey lake  
And through Dubois; and on the White  
Its swirling rapids take—  
Then down the shore and up the Red  
To where the rivers join,  
And make delivery at their Post  
On the Assiniboine.*

—THE KAKAHEKA ROUTE.

## BUFFALO PATHS

The bison trails wind idly by,  
    Green where white bones decay.  
Soon all their shadowy forms will lie  
    By ploughshares hid away.

I trace them down the coulee's brow  
    To loaf by bluff and swale.  
I mark the wallows by the slough—  
    Long winding grass-grown trails,

Where shaggy lords their matrons led  
    Hump-ridged against the sky,  
And banished tooth-worn rivals off  
    In loneliness to die.

O would I could those days call back,  
    Those happy days gone by,  
When fresh these zig-zag paths were tracked  
    Beneath blue prairie sky.

Here herds of countless bison grazed,  
    Slow drifting to and fro;  
And lived in peace their long sweet days;  
    Nor knew the pale face foe,

Who came to torture Nature here,  
    And pillage on her plains,  
Too busy in their greed to hear  
    The price her Law ordains:

“By other trails your bones will lie,  
    Lone, crumbling and forgot;  
And overhead the winds will sigh  
    As sand dunes mark the spot.”

## THE FARM REVISITED

*Take the next turn, George! (Helen I insist,  
Round the old elms at the second twist  
The Highway makes; then drive us five miles west  
On the Gravel Road. (Mr. Smythe, our guest,  
Helen, has just expressed a wish to see  
The humble place of my nativity—  
Where my career began.)*

Yes, my wife, Sir,  
Was city bred and always feels a slur  
Is cast when any reference is made—  
As if it were some youthful escapade—  
To my mean start as a poor farmer's son.  
I deem such no disgrace; and having won  
A place in life, I have them emphasize  
In "WHO IS WHO," with due comment, my rise  
From such beginnings as a self-made man—  
Once freckle-snouted and with cheeks of tan!  
"Where he attains and whence he rose must be  
Both seen to test a man's efficiency."—  
To quote a speech that I have often made  
"On Tact and Push with Principle in Aid."

*A bad bump, that, for such a heavy car!  
Better drive easy, George, or you may jar  
The ladies.*

How about their spring road-work  
These wretched local councils seem to shirk?  
I call it a disgrace—such disrepair—  
A trap to take the Public unaware!  
I'll air this matter in the Press; and yet,  
The road seems better, unless I forget,  
Than it was twenty some odd years ago  
When last I passed along this way to go,  
In rough March weather, to the churchyard there.

Confound that mongrel with the tangled hair,  
Chasing and yelping at our car! Does he  
Expect to pull us down? Rare luck 'twould be

It in excitement he miscalculate—  
A bump like that 'twould pleasure me to take!  
Pardon, as I had started to remark  
When that fool dog disturbed me with his bark;  
'Twas blust'ry weather when I last was here;  
But duty called me to attend the bier  
Of an old man, and with uncovered head  
I caught a cold that kept me days in bed—

*Stop, George, a moment at that driving shed!*

—An unwise custom I have always said.  
But now that breezes stir the purple vetch  
Perhaps our legs would stand a little stretch?  
(What's that, Helen, you think you'll not alight?)  
*Then turn off, George, there's shade there at the right.*  
(We'll not be long.)

Now, Sir, this building here  
Was our old Circuit Church, where my career  
Began. Distinctly do I remember,  
At Fowl Supper Time, in late November,  
Declaiming about Norval and the rocks  
On which his father fed his bleating flocks.

Oh yes, Sir,—highly evangelical!  
Your thought, I trust, is not ironical?  
Long sermons, here, of sulphurous brimstone  
And of the grace and meekness that atone  
For Sin. A useful doctrine is it not  
To keep the poor contented with their lot?  
The beauty that was Greece, the power, Rome,  
Had slavery to support the cultured home;  
And where would we be, now, if not adroit  
In keeping those content whom we exploit?  
'Tis not from motives of propriety  
That churches hold their property tax-free.  
A man should give the church his warm support,  
At least I think so, and should there resort  
In seemly manner for example's sake.  
But, in my youth, I deemed it wise to make  
A change; and, joining The Saint James,

Became a sidesman, having worthy aims—  
A wealthy wife and a good connection—  
Which, to gain, I stood the changed complexion,  
And got to like it. 'Tis sheer poppy-cock,  
I feel, these pulpit thumpers feed their flock,  
Talking Reforms to gain Publicity.  
The Old Time Gospel's good enough for me.

As you say, it's crumbling in decay.  
The older families may have moved away  
Long years ago. My father always tried  
When he had any means—it was his pride—  
To keep up the repairs. Which, by-the-by,  
Reminds me, being here, to satisfy  
Myself his name has been correctly traced  
Where he left room for it the year he placed  
The stone up as my mother's monument.  
Perhaps you'll come? 'Twill only take a moment!

Can you conceive a more disgusting mess  
Than weeds here fighting in wild lawlessness  
To choke a graveyard up? Elecampane,  
Sweet clover, and the burdock, in the main,  
Have the ascendancy; but underneath,  
Briars and creepers form a matted wreath  
In choking sickly growth. We must defer  
Else we'll be busy picking hound's tongue burr.  
See where a ground-hog has his citadel  
Under the granite shaft old Bill Lavalle  
Put up to fame! He drove a spanking pair  
And left a rich young widow but no heir.

My father? Well, I'd say a simple man,  
Kind to a fault, but with no ordered plan  
Of life to give that keen efficiency,  
Which, as I apprehend, has been the key  
Of my success. To make my meaning clear,  
Observe this mess of rubbish growing here.  
In his late prime, the man spent many hours—  
He had a passionate love for flowers—  
Planting and grubbing in this graveyard plot.

The weeds which like plants flourish here

One rose, white lily, chaste forget-me-not,  
And the red bleeding heart bloomed for him there.  
You see what now remains for all his care!  
His creeping vine is like a charity,  
The more it spreads the more its wants will be.  
Do you not think, Sir, a sharp pruning knife  
Would cure great evils in our social life,  
Leaving established business to its courses  
And the Unfit upon their own resources?  
If weeds are given head and helped to grow,  
All flowers soon are weeds as graveyards show.  
We'll leave the old gate open as we pass;  
I saw sheep cropping on the roadside grass.

Not uniformed, No! Rather say artless  
In his ways. Father was all gentleness  
And conscientious to a fault. He thought  
That everybody was his friend nor sought  
To push himself ahead, content to be  
Himself a friend. Naïve simplicity  
Of that kind makes of men mere stepping stones  
Others may use; and yet, perhaps, atones  
For a dull life of labour in the ruck  
Of common things. I count it my good luck  
The old farm earned me an education.  
Butter money laid the sound foundation  
Of my career. Father had family pride  
And, like Achilles' ghost, his shade would stride  
Exultant in white fields of Asphodel,  
If any one he knew came down to tell  
Him of his son and of my rapid rise  
In social life.

Yes, the old homestead lay  
Close to the church. We'll pass it on our way.  
Some stranger took possession years ago;  
And doubtless has made changes. I shall show  
You where its house and nestling orchard stood—  
Once the model farm in the neighborhood.  
I charge its loss to inefficiency  
In management and the innocency  
Of father who deeded the place away,  
Close to my brother on his wedding day.

Clear, to my brother on his wedding day.  
Books of account must be kept, as I maintain,  
In any calling that's a source of gain;  
And any farmer keeping them would see  
That he is headed straight for bankruptcy.

'Tis not for me, perhaps, to criticize  
My brother, William. Some are born to rise;  
Others are here to play a lowly part  
In life's economy. Kindly of heart  
Was William; but his hard labour made him  
Large fisted and stiff jointed in the limb.  
To walk beside him on the city street  
Was mortifying. His large awkward feet  
Recalled to mind that Elegy of Gray  
Whose ploughman slowly plods his weary way.  
How condescending poets must have felt  
As with the lower classes they thus dealt!  
His wife, a harmless soul, for years had taught  
The local school; and she, poor woman, thought  
That Man's chief aim in life is canning fruit  
From recipes got at the Institute.  
She was a thrifty, competent, housewife;  
And father, for years, had a happy life  
Pottering about. But as I've often said:  
Postpone all gifts until the will is read.  
My rapid rise made brother discontent  
With humdrum farming life. His mind was bent  
On making money in some easier way.  
I cautioned him but nothing I could say  
Served to deter the man. Of course he thought  
That my advice would help him and he sought  
Suggestions from me. I explained with care  
The risks a man must take in an affair  
Where finance is concerned. But Bill seemed set  
Upon his course; and thought if he could get  
A hint from me success lay straight ahead.  
The fact that we were brothers thus misled  
The man. There was no reason I should make  
Him wealth, nor give it either for the sake  
Of sentiment. I told the man to stay  
On his own fields and keep out of harm's way.

On his own heels and keep out of harm's way.  
But when he failed to act on my advice  
And came again, I quoted him a price  
On common stock I had that might advance—  
But warned him every man must take his chance!  
He placed a mortgage on the old homestead  
To raise the money: and, as I have said,  
He lost the place. But let us hasten back.  
We must not let the ladies think we lack  
In courtesy.

Yes, father felt the change.  
His new surroundings for a time seemed strange  
To the old man. When brother moved out west,  
Somewhere, my wife and I both deemed it best  
To have the County Old Folks' Home take care  
Of father. He found kindred spirits there  
To listen to his lengthy anecdotes  
And bible passages an old man quotes.  
Not that such dotage came with life's decay  
Or second childhood. This peculiar trait  
Was always his. He took a keen delight  
In common things; for, in his childlike sight,  
Nothing was common; and his failing eyes  
Would fill with wonder at the night time skies.

Perhaps, Sir, you are right; and as you say  
Some brilliant minds of old were built that way.  
But in our present age it seems to me.  
Such turn of mind is imbecility.

Well! Here we are. You must assure your wife  
And mine, Sir, that our chat on farming life  
That thus detained us rose at your request.  
*Home, George, you'll find a highway two miles west.*

## A FRIEND IN NEED

As one who fears a wraith, I long have striven  
    To dull my wits and thus my fears allay  
Of that grim Presence who, with pale face hidden,  
    Is lurking in the shadows on Life's way,  
    Watching my steps each day.

His eyes were on me when my mother taught me  
    To toddle bravely—brave because of fright—  
From loving arms to loving arms that caught me;  
    And He will watch me grope alone some night  
    Through shadows to the Light.

Summer is gone; I strike my tent each morning  
    To travel farther West where leaves now strow  
The valley lands, whose narrowing trails give warning  
    That lonely paths lead down from Life's plateau  
    Where Youth and Friendship blow.

The turning years of friends have now bereft me  
    Whose tents once pitched in circles round my own.  
One after one, He beckoned and they left me  
    To find a rest that I have never known,  
    Who journey on alone.

“Why, little comrade, all thy frantic hurry?”  
    Death seems to question, but draws no reply.  
“A spell of thoughtful loafing and less worry  
    Would find men happiness for which they sigh  
    —And seeking, pass it by.”

“What matters all the gold and fame he's gathered  
    To one who leaves them as he journeys on?  
Whether or no, like fallen leaves, they're scattered,  
    Out of my cup he drinks oblivion  
    —Forgetting, once he's gone.”

Why should I fear this Friend and thus dissemble?  
    Why play pretend to nurse an idle pride?

Death knows my every thought and sees me tremble  
And at His nod, I, too, must turn aside  
And go where He will guide.

May I not go as craven who has ridden  
In creaking tumbril to a guillotine,  
To stumble forward while his view is hidden  
By someone walking backward as a screen  
To hide the grim machine.

May I be clear-eyed when my journey's ended,  
And turn without regret at Death's command,  
To greet a Friend who comes with joy attended  
To serve my need as He has wisely planned  
And lead me by the hand.

May we set off at dusk of early morning,  
When swallows spiral up to find the light  
Through inky haze that stars are still adorning,  
And as the white-throat pipes in pure delight  
His song to parting night.



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## TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

Some illustrations were moved to facilitate page layout.

[The end of *The Water-Drinker* by John Wendell Mitchell (as Patrick Slater)]