Prairie Born

R. J. C. Stead

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PRAIRIE BORN AND OTHER POEMS

Prairie Born
AND OTHER POEMS

By

Robert J. C. Stead

Author of
"The Empire Builders," "Songs of the Prairies."



Toronto
William Briggs
1911

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TO EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD WHO HAS KNOWN THE LIFE OF THE GREAT PLAINS THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR IN COMRADESHIP AND GOODWILL . . . .

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PRAIRIE BORN
AND OTHER POEMS

Prairie Born and Other Poems

— — —

PRAIRIE BORN.

We have heard the night wind howling as we lay alone
in bed;
We have heard the grey goose honking as he
journeyed overhead;
We have smelt the smoke-wraith flying in the hot
October wind,
And have fought the fiery demon that came roaring
down behind;
We have seen the spent snow sifting through the key-
hole of the door,
And the frost-line crawling, crawling, like a snake,
along the floor;
We have felt the storm-fiend wrestle with the rafters in
his might,
And the baffled blizzard shrieking through the turmoil
of the night.

We have felt the April breezes warm along the plashy plains;
We have mind-marked to the cadence of the falling April rains;
We have heard the crash of water where the snow-fed rivers run,
Seen a thousand silver lakelets lying shining in the sun;
We have known the resurrection of the spring-time in the land,
Heard the voice of Nature calling and the words of her command,
Felt the thrill of spring-time twilight and the vague, unfashioned thought
That the season's birthday musters from the hopes we had forgot.

We have heard the cattle lowing in the silent summer nights;
We have smelt the smudge-fire fragrance—we have seen the smudge-fire lights—
We have heard the wild duck grumbling to his mate along the bank;
Heard the thirsty horses snorting in the stream from which they drank;
Heard the voice of Youth and Laughter in the long, slow-gloaming night;
Seen the arched electric splendor of the Great North's livid light;
Bead the reason of existence—felt the touch that was divine—
And in eyes that glowed responsive saw the End of God's design.

We have smelt the curing wheat-fields and the scent of
new-mown hay;
We have heard the binders clatter through the dusty
autumn day;
We have seen the golden stubble gleaming through the
misty rain;
We have seen the plow-streaks widen as they turned it
down again;
We have heard the threshers humming in the cool
September night;
We have seen their dark procession by the straw-piles'
eerie light;
We have heard the freight-trains groaning, slipping,
grinding, on the rail,
And the idle trace-chains jingle as they jogged along
the trail.

We have felt the cold of winter—cursed by those who
know it not—
We have braved the blizzard's vengeance, dared its
most deceptive plot;
We have learned that hardy races grow from hardy
circumstance,
And we face a dozen dangers to attend a country
dance;
Though our means are nothing lavish, we have always
time for play,
And our social life commences at the closing of the
day;
We have time for thought and culture, time for
friendliness and friend,
And we catch a broader vision as our aspirations
blend.

We have hopes to others foreign, aims they cannot
understand,
We, the "heirs of all the ages," we, the first-fruits of
the land;
Though we think with fond affection of the shores our
fathers knew,
And we honor all our brothers—for a brother's heart is
true—
Though we stand with them for progress, peace, and
unity, and power,
Though we die with them, if need be, in our nation's
darkest hour—
Still the prairies call us, call us, when all other voices
fail,
And the call we knew in childhood is the call that
must prevail.

THE OLD GUARD.

Knew you the men of the Old Guard? Men of the
camp and trail;
Guard of the van when Time began in the land of grass
and gale,
Of a sky-wide land they seized command where the
mightiest prevail.

Who were the men of the Old Guard? Giants of
strength and will,
Trained in the school of hard-luck rule and daring to
die or kill,
Staking their lives, and their young, and wives, on the
road up Fortune's hill.

Whence were the men of the Old Guard? Heroes of
'Eighty-two,
From swamp and ledge and ocean's edge they came to
see and do,
And they failed at first, and the land they cursed, but
they stayed and struggled through.

Hope of the men of the Old Guard? Little but hope
was theirs;
With empty hand in an untried land they clutched at
wheat and tares,
And home at night by the wood-fire light was answer
to their prayers.

Way of the men of the Old Guard? What of their end
and way?
You may find their bones by the lime-white stones
where the sun-dried sleugh-holes lay,
For the Goddess Trade is a costly jade, and they were
the ones to pay.

Joy of the men of the Old Guard? The joy of the brave
and true;
With joy they paced where Death grimaced and his icy
vapors blew,
And with steady tread they bore their dead with the
faith of the chosen few.

What of the men of the Old Guard? Ask of the arching
skies,
The grass that waves on their leafy graves is lisping
their lullabyes,
And the lives they spent are their monument and their
title to Paradise.

THE MOTHERING.

I had lain untrod for a million years from the line to
the Arctic sea;
I had dreamed strange dreams of the vast unknown,
Of the lisping wind and the dancing zone
Where the Northland fairies' feet had flown,
And it all seemed good to me.

At the close of a thousand eons of sleep came a pang
that was strange to me;
The pang of a new life in my breast,
The swell of a vast and a vague unrest,
And it thrilled my soul from East to West
As it fluttered to be free.

But I steeled my heart to the biped thing; of vast
presumption he:
He would lure my lonely thoughts away,
He would sport himself on the sacred clay
Where the dust of the prehistoric lay;
But he scorned the soul of me.

So I stretched my plains for a thousand leagues from
the mountains to the sea;
But he rolled them back with a steel-laid line,
And he crumpled space by man's design,
And he filled his life with the breath of mine;
But his love he gave not me.

Then I called him foes from the farthest North and the
snowflake fluttered free;
But he took him trees I had given birth,
And he delved him coal from my bowels of earth,
And he laughed at me as he sat in mirth;
But he cursed the cold of me.

Then I cut him off from his fellow-men that his
thought might turn to me;
But he strung him a line of copper thread,
And his fire-shod words swung overhead,
By the fiend of air his thought was spread
O'er hill, and plain, and lea.

Then I gave him hopes he could not define and fears
that he could not flee;
And he heard my cry in the long, still night,
In my spirit-thrall I held him tight,
And his blind soul-eyes craved for the light;
But the light he could not see.

So I held my peace till I saw him sit with children at
his knee;
And I sent them the sun and the wind and the rain,
And the ferny slope and the flowery plain,
And the wet night-smell of the growing grain;
And their love they gave to me.

In the last race-birth of the sons of men a travail
holdeth me:
But out of the night of pain and tears
A new life comes with the rolling years;
And I fondle the child of my hope and fears,
And it seemeth good to me.

THE SQUAD OF ONE.

Sergeant Blue of the Mounted Police was a so-so kind
of guy;
He swore a bit, and he lied a bit, and he boozed a bit
on the sly;
But he held the post at Snake Creek Bend for country
and home and God,
And he cursed the first and forgot the rest—which
wasn't the least bit odd.

Now the life of the North-West Mounted Police breeds
an all-round kind of man;
A man who can jug a down-South thug when he
rushes the red-eye can;
A man who can pray with a dying bum, or break up a
range stampede—
Such are the men of the Mounted Police, and such are
the men they breed.

The snow lay deep at the Snake Creek post and deep
to east and west,
And the Sergeant had made his ten-league beat and
settled down to rest
In his two-by-four that they called a "post," where the
flag flew overhead,
And he took a look at his monthly mail, and this is the
note he read:

"To Sergeant Blue, of the Mounted Police, at the post
at Snake Creek Bend,
From U.S. Marshal of County Blank, greetings to you,
my friend:
They's a team of toughs give us the slip, though they
shot up a couple of blokes,
And we reckon they's hid in Snake Creek Gulch, and
posin' as farmer folks.

"They's as full of sin as a barrel of booze, and as quick
as a cat with a gun,
So if you happen to hit their trail be first to start the
fun;
And send out your strongest squad of men and round
them up if you can,
For dead or alive we want them here. Yours truly, Jack
McMann."

And Sergeant Blue sat back and smiled, "Ho, here is a
chance of game!
Folks 'round here have been so good that life is
getting tame;
I know the lie of Snake Creek Gulch—where I used to
set my traps—
I'll blow out there to-morrow, and I'll bring them in—
perhaps."

Next morning Sergeant Blue, arrayed in farmer smock
and jeans,
In a jumper sleigh he had made himself set out for the
evergreens
That grow on the bank of Snake Creek Gulch by a
homestead shack he knew,
And a smoke curled up from the chimney-pipe to
welcome Sergeant Blue.

"Aha, and that looks good to me," said the Sergeant to
the smoke,
"For the lad that owns this homestead shack is East in
his wedding-yoke;
There are strangers here, and I'll bet a farm against a
horn of booze
That they are the bums that are predestined to dangle
in a noose."

So he drove his horse to the shanty door and hollered a loud “Good-day,”
And a couple of men with fighting-irons came out beside the sleigh,
And the Sergeant said, “I’m a stranger here and I’ve driven a weary mile;
If you don’t object I’ll just sit down by the stove in the shack awhile.”

Then the Sergeant sat and smoked and talked of the home he had left down East,
And the cold and the snow, and the price of land, and the life of man and beast,
But all of a sudden he broke it off with, “Neighbors, take a nip?
There’s a horn of the best you’ll find out there in my jumper, in the grip.”

So one of the two went out for it, and as soon as he closed the door
The other one staggered back as he gazed up the nose of a forty-four;
But the Sergeant wasted no words with him, “Now, fellow, you’re on the rocks,
And a noise as loud as a mouse from you and they’ll take you out in a box.”

And he fastened the bracelets to his wrists, and his legs with some binder-thread,
And he took his knife, and he took his gun, and he rolled him on to the bed;
And then as number two came in, he said, “If you want to live,
Put up your dukes and behave yourself, or I’ll make you into a sieve.”

And when he had coupled them each to each and laid
them out on the bed,
"It's cold, and I guess we'd better eat before we go,"
he said.
So he fried some pork and he warmed some beans,
and he set out the best he saw,
And they ate thereof, and he paid for it, according to
British law.

That night in the post sat Sergeant Blue, with paper
and pen in hand,
And this is the word he wrote and signed and mailed
to a foreign land:
"To U.S. Marshal of County Blank, greetings I give to
you;
My squad has just brought in your men, and the squad
was
"Sergeant Blue."

*There are things unguessed, there are tales untold, in
the life of the great lone land,*
*But here is a fact that the prairie-bred alone may
understand,*
*That a thousand miles in the fastnesses the fear of the
law obtains,*
*And the pioneers of justice were the "Riders of the
Plains."*

THE HOMESTEADER TO HIS DOG.

Well, sir, sitting there and winking,
Same's you'd like to talk to me,
How'd you know that I was thinking
Of the folks beyond the sea?
How'd you guess that in the gloaming
Of the snow-enshrouded night
All my thoughts had gone a-homing
To the days of old delight?

Through the light that leaps and glistens
In your soft and sober eyes,
I can see a soul that listens
To the harps of Paradise;
Snatched from me when the devotion
Of my heart was at her feet:
In a land beyond the ocean
Life is hard and incomplete.

Towser, what you know of sorrow?
Nought disturbs your sleep and play;
No ambitions for to-morrow,
No regrets of yesterday;
Yet your sympathetic fawning
As you read your master's mind
Hints that you may have a dawning
Of the aches of humankind.

Here I sit and dream and ponder
As the wintry blizzards roar,
And my starving soul grows fonder
Thinking of the friends of yore;
You alone of all creation
Throb responsive to my heart;
In the building of a nation,
Doggie, you have done your part.

Though I pine thus unavailing
    For the touch of human hand,
Profitless is my bewailing—
    Strange that I should love the land!
Love its grand, grim desolation;
    Storms that sift me like a sieve—
Here, alone, of all creation
    Seems the proper place to live.

What although the crust is scanty,
    And the loneliness intense,
You and I will share the shanty,
    Unconcerned for why or whence;
Let the whining blizzard rattle
    And the frost-imps snap and bite—
Come, it's time to feed the cattle
    Ere we roll in for the night.

THE SCHOOL-MA'AM.

No hope of worldly gain is hers,
  A yokel's wages for her hire,
  And every throb of self's desire
Resigned to childish worshippers.

A tiny school her citadel,
  A fenceless acre her domain,
  Her life a sacrifice; her gain
The gain of those she serves so well.

Though little more than child herself,
  A mother she to many sons;
  In every vein the child-love runs
And fondly floods each little elf.

Though hampered by the formal sense
  Of laws that check her usefulness
  And boards of rustic truthfulness
And kindly-meant incompetence,

She earns a price they cannot pay,
  Obeys a law they did not make,
  Enduring for their children's sake
The arrogance of human clay.

Oh, hide your littleness in shame
  Who think ye pay for all she gives;
  Within her sacred circle lives
The light of an eternal flame,

And growing down your country's page,
  The beauty of her sacrifice
  Shall glow again in other eyes,
And multiply from age to age.

The mothers of the race to be
Shall live her tenderness anew,
And her devotion shall imbue
The sons who keep our country free.

She gains no flagrant, pompous prize,
But men who move the world's affairs
Shall snatch a moment from their cares
To think of her with moistened eyes.

The conquerors of hostile lands,
The hearts the nation's burdens bear,
To-morrow's lords of earth and air,
To-day are moulded in her hands.

The lightest trifle from her lips
May charge some soul with fertile seed
That in the hour of direst need
Shall save your nation from eclipse.

The kings of action, speech, and brain,
The men your sons shall mark and raise
To shape the nation's destinies,
Shall earn her salary again.

I count the paltry dollars spent
Pay richer dividends than gold
When those who such position hold
Exert it for earth's betterment.

A RACE FOR LIFE.

(As related for the benefit of the New Arrival.)

Yes, Stranger, I hev trailed the West
  Since I wuz a kid on a bob-tailed nag,
I hev known the old land at its best,
  And packed most ev'ry kind of jag;
I hev rode fer life frum a prairie fire,
  An' tramped fer life through a snow blockade;
I hev crumpled "bad men" by the quire,
  But only once hev I been afraid.

I hev lain alone while the red-men crep'
  Aroun' me in their fighting-paint;
I hev soothed the widow while she wep'
  Because I'd made her man a saint;
I hev lassooed lobsters from the East
  Till ev'ry j'int in their system shook,
An' I'd never run frum man or beast
  Until I run frum a chinook.

The chinook had his lair in the Crow's Nest Pass,
  An' he foraged aroun' the Porcupine Hills,
But he'd loafed so long that the ranchin' grass
  Had a wool-white cover from the chills;
An' me, like a chap that wuz not afraid
  Of anything with hide an' hair,
Went out in a sleigh to the hills an' stayed
  Till the old chinook might find me there.

At last, when I thought I had tempted fate
Enough fer a man with a past like mine,
I hitched the bronks an' struck a gait
Along the slopes of the Porcupine;
An' the day wuz as cold as the Polar sea,
With a nip as keen as a she-wolf fang,
But frost wuz just like food to me,
An' boldly over the fields I sang:

"*I am the man from the Hole in the Hills,*
Where the Great G. Whiliken capers 'round;
I am the gent that pays the bills
When they plant a greenhorn in the ground;
I am the Finish of folks that think
They can run a bluff on the prairie-bred,
Fer I give their vitals a fatal kink
When I open up with a shower of lead."

An' the cold bit into my nose an' chin,
An' drilled itself to the marrow-bone;
My face wuz drawn in a frozen grin,
An' my fingers rattled like lumps of stone;
But my heart wuz as brave as an outlaw stag,
An' I laughed though the frost cut like a knife;
Till sudden I felt the hind bob drag,
An' I knew I wuz in fer a race fer life.

Out from his lair the sly chinook
Had hunted me with his fatal breath;
I dared not turn aroun' to look,
Fer to strand on the hillside there wuz death;
The hot wind sizzled along my back,
An' the sweat stood out on my shoulder-blade,
So I yelled at the team through the frozen crack
The roll of the tongue in my mouth had made—

“Get out o’ here; by the Polar star,
The fiend of the South is on your heels!”
An’ I felt the old sleigh cringe an’ jar,
An’ fer once I prayed—fer a pair o’ wheels;
But the sleigh stood still as the hind bob stuck
In mud that rolled to the bolster-rail,
So I slipped the tongue an’ cursed my luck
As I straddled a bronk an’ hit the trail.

Well, we beat it out by half a neck,
But the broncho’s tail was scorched a sight,
An’ I wuz a blistered, parboiled wreck,
An’ nearly dead o’ heat an’ fright;
An’ I squatted down in a shady spot,
An’ fanned myself with a wisp o’ hay,
An’ the boys on the lower ranches thought
They heard a voice in the chinook say:

“*I am the dope that was made to feed*
To fresh down-Easters just come out;
They’ll swallow it all in their greenhorn greed,
An’ send it home, beyond a doubt;
I am the caricature an’ bluff
That is part of the play of the Western men”—
What’s that? You say you’ve had enough?
Well, pass it on to your neighbor, then.

HUSTLIN' IN MY JEANS.

Yes, I'm holdin' down the homestead here an'
roughin' it a bit,
It seems the only kind o' life that I was built to fit,
For it's thirty years last summer since I staked my first
preserve,
An' I reckon on the whole I've prospered more than I
deserve;
An' my friends kep' naggin' at me for to quit this toil
an' strife,
An' to settle in the city for the balance of my life,
An' I ain't compelled to labor—I've cached a wad of
beans—
But I'm happier when I'm hustlin' on the homestead
in my jeans.

I've tried to loaf an' like it, an' I've tried to swell
about
Where the boozey run to red-eye an' the greedy run to
gout,
An' I've tried to wear a collar an' a fancy fly-net vest,
An' I've tried to think it pleasant just to sit around an'
rest;
An' I've mingled with the nabobs an' hee-hawed with
other guys
That were just as sick as I was of a life of livin' lies;
I've mingled in society an' peeked behind the scenes
—
An' I'm happier when I'm hustlin' on the homestead
in my jeans.

Then I got the lust for roamin', an' I rummaged round
the earth,
An' I got a big experience an' correspondin' girth,
But the more I roved an' rambled the less I cared to
live,
An' I only kep' on goin' cause I'd no alternative;
I learned through tips an' tickets an' the jostle of the
cars
That I wouldn't trade a homestead for a continent in
Mars;
An' I bid good-bye to Fashion an' her social kings an'
queens,
An' I filed my second homestead an' I bought a pair of
jeans.

'Course it's sometimes kind o' lonely on the prairie
here alone,
When the night-time settles round you an' your
thoughts are all your own,
An' old faces flit before you like a flock o' homin'
birds,
An' your heart swells with emotion that no man can
put in words,
An' you ponder on the Why-for, the Beginnin', an' the
End,
An' you know the only things worth while are Family
an' Friend—
From the trifles of existence your better judgment
weans,
An' you get the right perspective on the homestead—
in our jeans.

There are days the sweat-drops glisten on this sun-
burned hand of mine,
There are nights the joints go creakin' as I crawl to
bed, at nine,
But I hear the horses' stampin' and the rap of Collie's
tail,
An' it minds me of the Eighties an' the Old
Commission Trail—
Of the days we pledged our future to a land we hardly
knew,
An' the men whose brave beginnings made prosperity
for you;
There are men now worth their millions I remember in
their teens,
An' they made their start by hustlin' on the homestead,
in their jeans.

There are times when most folks figure that their life
has been a blank;
You may be a homeless hobo or director of a bank,
But the thought will catch you nappin'—catch you
sometime unawares—
That your life has been a failure, and that no one really
cares;
That the world will roll without you till the
Resurrection morn,
An' that no one would have missed you if you never
had been born;
An' I give you my conclusion—all that livin' really
means
Is revealed to those who hustle on the homestead in
their jeans.

Some day I reckon I'll cash in an' file another claim
Where the wicked cease from troublin' an' the good
get in the game;
Where the pews are not allotted by the fashion of your
dress,
An' the only thing that figures is inherent manliness;
Give me no silk-spangled horses an' no silver-plated
hearse,
But let some student preacher read a bit of Scripture
verse,
An' find a sunny hillside where the water-willow
screens,
An' plant me on the homestead where I hustled—in
my jeans.

LITTLE TIM TROTTER.

Little Tim Trotter was born in the West,
Where the prairie lies sunny and brown;
Never was, surely, so welcome a guest
In the stateliest halls of the town;
For Little Tim Trotter was thoughtful and brave,
And a lover of summer and shower,
And Little Tim Trotter took less than he gave
To the hearts that were under his power.

Little Tim Trotter would play in the sun,
Or lie in the buffalo grass,
And in fancy he saw the wild buffalo run
And the brave-riding Indians pass;
And with eyes that were deep as the infinite blue,
He would picture himself at their head,
For no one so young as this hunter-man knew
That the herds and the riders were dead.

Little Tim Trotter would lie in his bed
While the fire-light played low on the floor,
And strange were the thoughts that in Little Tim's head
Played low like the fire at the door;
The hopes that were his, and the wonders he knew,
And the yearning he had in his heart,
With the glimmering light of the future in view,
And Little Tim just at the start!

Little Tim Trotter has heard the long call,
And has answered with joy and surprise,
And the thoughts and the things that are hid from us all
To-day are revealed to his eyes;
And he rides in the van of his buffalo herd,
Or in camp with his Indians brave;
But Little Tim Trotter speaks never a word
Through the mound of a little green grave.

"A COLONIAL."

(In some circles the term "Colonial" is still allowed to imply inferiority and dependence.)

Only a Colonial!
Only a man of nerve and heart
Who has spurned the ease of the life "at home,"
Only a man who would play his part
In a new breed-birth on a distant loam;
Only a man of sense and worth
Who is not afraid of the ends of earth.

Only a Colonial!
Only a man who has cornered Fate
And matched his strength with the Unattained;
Only the guard at the Outer Gate
Who holds for you what he has gained,
That your children, seized of a better sense,
May share with him Toil's recompense.

Only a Colonial!
Only a man who has bridged the deep,
And stained the map a British hue,
Who builds an Empire while ye sleep
And deeds the ownership to you.
'Tis the Viking blood which gave you birth
That has driven him to the ends of earth.

Only a Colonial!
Wherever the flag that ye think is great
Is flown to the farthest winds that blow,
Wherever the colonists ye berate,
In their blind faith-vision onward go,
Ye may find ye hearts that are British still—
In your self-conceit do ye count them nil?

Only a Colonial!
Rough as the bark of his forest tree
His ways may seem to the fat and sleek,
But ye owe your Empire to such as he,
Though the hoar-frost glisten on his cheek;
He has carried your flag where ye dared not go,
And little ye reck of the debt ye owe.

Only a Colonial!
No doubt he is raw on your social laws,
And grates on your sense of caste and creed,
But he lives too near to Facts and Cause
To study heraldry and breed;
And, knowing man in his primal state,
He scorns the claims of the social great.

Only a Colonial!
The name in cheap contempt ye fling
Is not the whim of birth or chance,
We well ignore the flippant sting,
Or charge it to your ignorance;
The colonist, and sons of his,
Have made the Empire what it is.

THE HEALER.

Yes, I'm lookin' for a preacher; say,
You know of one around this way?
What, him? More like a hustler
On a cow ranch, cattle rustler,
River driver, or such creature,
But I guess he's not a preacher.

Straight? Well, Boss, you've got me guessin',
One can never judge by dressin';
But you don't wear no hoss-collar
Showin' you're a Scripture scholar;
Still, you'll maybe do the servus
If you ain't too scared or nervous.
There's a guy fell in the furrow
Of a steam plow; had to burrow
Under sods to get him out;
He's all in, I guess, about.

Packed a quite a jag o' sin;
Scared St. Pete won't let him in;
Asked me if I'd try and rustle
Some one to give sin a tussle;
Comin'? Well, then, climb your cayuse;
See if you can get this guy loose. . . .

Well, sir, seein' is believin',
But it's sometimes most deceivin';
What you think that preacher guy did?
Looked beneath the victim's eyelid,
Listened to his respiration,
Made a churchly exclamation:
"He needs neither prayer nor purgin' —
What you want here is a surgeon!"

Not within a whole day's canter
Could we find a doc. Instanter
That young preacher drew his knife,
Said, "He's just one chance of life
Bring some bandages and liquor;
We'll pull him through or kill him quicker."

Then he laid him on the bed,
And went carvin' at his head,
Cut apart some broken tissue,
Stopped the blood's "alarmin' issue,"
Spread the skull where it was dented,
Said, "He'd sure have been demented,"
Added then, the patient scanning,
"It's my first stab at trepanning."

Say, I've rode among the rangers
Since a gaffer; know the dangers
Of the foothills and the prairie;
Laughed at death; was never scary
Till I saw that preacher kid
Openin' up a human lid.

Surgeon came along next day,
Said, "Who carved him up that way?"
Pointed out the little preacher,
"Shake," he said, "I'm glad to meetcher;
Pretty good for a beginner;
Saved his life, or I'm a sinner;"
Clapped the preacher on the shoulder;
"He'll be heard of when he's older."

Never was much on religion;
Been a kind of rusty pidgeon;
Never thought of heaven or hell
'Cept as things to swear by. Well,
Took a sudden change that day
When I heard that preacher pray.

Didn't know what he was sayin';
Only knew a *Man* was prayin';
No soft-suited Sunday doper,
No theologizin' groper,
But a man of strength and worth
Spanned the gulf 'tween heaven and earth;
Never realized till then
That religion was fer *Men*.

ALKALI HALL.

When Lord Landseeker came out West to have a look
around,
And spend a little money if the right thing could be
found,
He hadn't breathed the prairie air more than a day or
two
Until he was the centre of a philanthropic crew
Who sought to show His Lordship all the shortcuts to
success
(Though why they should have troubled, His Lordship
couldn't guess,
For each was losing money, as he candidly confest,
Which seemed to be a fashion with the dealers in the
West).

Thus His Lordship grew suspicious that his friends
would turn him down,
And he quietly bought a ticket to a little country town;
But he didn't know the message that was flashed along
the wire
To a simple country dealer in the land of his desire;
And it read: "Look out for Goggles, he'll be with you
this a.m."
And the crowd around the station—well, he merely
smiled to them,
And thought it jolly decent they'd assemble, don't
cherknow,
And file along behind him as they followed, in a row.

The snow had fallen softly all the calm November night,
And the morning found the prairies with a covering of white;
But His Lordship took a citizen who “happened” in his way,
And they drove into the country for the most part of the day
Until they reached a section that was flat and free from stone,
And the citizen remarked about a fellow he had known
Who offered thirty dollars for this section in the fall,
But the owner wanted forty, or he wouldn’t sell at all.

Then His Lordship drove across it, and it seemed to catch his eye,
And he whispered to the driver, “That’s the section I will buy;”
So in town they found the owner, who was very loath to sell,
But he finally consented, if His Lordship wouldn’t tell
That the price was forty dollars by the acre; this agreed,
A lawyer drew the papers and His Lordship got the deed,
And he sailed across the ocean with the satisfying thought
That he’d followed his own judgment in the bargain he had bought.

The winter snows had vanished, and the spring was
growing late,
When Lord Landseeker came again to view his real
estate,
And he drove out in a buggy to where his section lay,
And his heart was very happy as he smoked along the
way
Till the section burst upon them, and he scarce
believed his sight,
For the land lay in the sunshine, flashing back a snowy
white . . . .
And his Lordship stooped and felt it, and he heaved a
little sigh,
As the knowledge dawned upon him that his land was
—*alkali*.

His Lordship did some thinking as they journeyed
back to town,
And his wonted happy features were o'er-shadowed
with a frown;
But he neither crawled nor blustered, neither bluffed
nor swore nor kicked
(For the men from little England never know when
they are licked),
But he advertised for tenders for construction on the
land,
And the buildings he erected were the best he could
command;
With a hundred rooms for students, and quarters for
the staff,
And the workmen often wondered what made His
Lordship laugh!

In the papers of Old England there appeared a little ad,
For the benefit of parents whose sons were going bad:
"Teach your boys the art of farming in the great
Canadian West;
Our instruction is unrivalled, our curriculum the best;
There's a grate in every chamber and a bath in every
hall,
And a full dress-suited dinner every ev'ning, free to
all;
There is tennis, polo, marksmanship, and half the day
in bed,
And we make them into farmers for a hundred pounds
a head."

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His Lordship's college prospers, and is crowded to the
doors
With "students" playing poker while the "servants" do
the chores;
What they do not know of farming they make up in
other lines,
They are judges of tobacco and connoisseurs of wines;
They are experts at the races and at sundry other
games—
Though they couldn't tell the breeching of the harness
from the hames—
Though they're far from home and kindred they
occasion no alarm,
*That was what their parents wanted when they sent
them out to farm.*

CLARENCE AND JOHN.

I envy no man what he fairly wins;
In Life's hard battle each must fight his fight;
But some, methinks, are honored for their sins
And some ignored because they do the right;
Some seem to find their fortune ready-made,
And others miss it, howsoe'er desired—
The man's a fool who thinks that he can grade
Society by what it has acquired:
The noblest souls are often least renowned;
In humble homes God's greatest men are found.

I.

Clarence and John were brothers; sons
Of honest, working pioneers;
Together, in their early years
They chased the gopher in his furrow-track,
And herded cows, and forked across the stack,
And bravely shouldered muzzle-loading guns,
And crouched where rushes grew beside the stream
Till silver stars came out o'er all the sky;
Whatever one did, would the other try;
Wherever one was, was the other near;
And neighbors said, "The boys are very dear
To one another."
Such as these would seem
Inseparable in walks of later life.

When nearing death the father summoned John,
And said, "My boy, to you, when I am gone
Your mother looks for comfort in her age;
See that she lack it not; her love your wage;
I am your father. Wisely take a wife
Of your own station; toil as I have tried,
And lift the mortgage when the crops are good;
Be to your brother all a brother should,
And send the boy to college if you can,
He has the fibre of a business man,
But you must be a farmer." Thus he died.

So Clarence went to college; John remained
And wrought a scanty living from the soil,
For times were backward, and his toil—
Though well he toiled from dawn till stars awoke—
Could scarce support them; land he broke,
And hoped the extra acreage he gained
Would raise the mortgage; oft his mother lay
In deadly illness, and the doctor's fees
And cost of Clarence at college—these,
With bills for wife and children of his own,
Well-nigh submerged him; he had older grown
By more than years; his hair was grey;
His youth was gone while he was still a youth;
But still he toiled, and strove to pay the debt,
And people thought him cold and stern, and yet
They knew him for an honest, toiling man.

From years of self-denial his health began
To fail beneath him; all his faith and truth
Had left the farm more mortgaged than at first;
And then in middle age he stared at Death,
And wept, and prayed the Man of Nazareth
Why it should be that he should fail in life,
And leave his helpless children and his wife
In ignorance and poverty. . . .

II.

Unversed

In all of Hardship's school, the younger son
Idled through college; then he took the road
For a cigar house, and the skill he showed
In loading men with stock they didn't need
Brought him some good commissions, which, indeed,
He spent as freely as they came, for fun
And worse. One day he bet his ring
Against a lot in some far western town
Upon the races; when the dust was down
He found himself a winner, but forgot
About the thing for years, and when he thought
Of it again he found that it would bring
A fortune in the nation's currency.

He shortly took to wife a wealthy jade
Whose wealth alone commended her, and made
A home—if homes be built of brick and tile—
And set himself to live his life in style,
But never thought nor troubled to display
An interest in the brother he had known
In loyal days.
He freely gave
To hospitals and charities, and, save
To those who knew his inner life, he seemed
A man to be respected and esteemed.

Meanwhile his brother tilled the farm alone.
With money came ambition; Clarence sought
Such honor as his country could bestow,
And honor came him quickly; in the glow
Of middle-age he found himself admired
By such as might have been by money hired
To so admire him.

Clarence bought
The best the world could offer for his sons;
He put them in the way of growing wealth;
His wife he sent to Europe—for her health—
His daughters are the centre of a set
Of gaiety, and yet—and yet—

I envy no man what he fairly wins;
In Life's hard battle each must fight his fight;
But some, methinks, are honored for their sins,
And some ignored because they do the right;
Some seem to find their fortune ready-made,
And others miss it, howsoe'er desired—
The man's a fool who thinks that he can grade
Society by what it has acquired:
The noblest souls are often least renowned;
In humble homes God's greatest men are found.

DADDY'S HELPER.

Wearily over her ironing
  Labored a woman in grey;
The setting sun through the window-pane
  Lit with an amber ray
The marks of toil on the young-old face,
  Of Beauty by Care defiled,
And she glanced at the waiting supper,
  And sighed to her playing child—
    "Daddy's a long time coming,
    Strange that he isn't home."

Daddy had gone for the cattle
  Over the plains away,
Daddy should be returning
  Now, at the close of day;
And the little lad from the window
  Looked for the coming herds,
Then quietly stole through the open door,
  Murmuring low the words—
    "Daddy's a long time coming,
    Baby will bring him home."

Quickly the darkness gathered,
  Quickly the night came on;
Brave little boy-feet travelled
  Where they should not have gone;
Weirdly blew the west wind;
  Stealthily stretched the plain;
Onward he went in the gloaming,
  Murmuring the refrain—
    "Daddy's a long time coming,
    Baby will bring him home."

Darkly the river windeth
Deep in its narrow bed;
Cruel are the rocks beside it,
Sharp are the rocks o'erhead;
Slyly the night beast lurketh,
Broadly the great plain lies—
Only the stars of heaven
Know how a young life dies.

Frantic they search the prairie,
All of his day-time nooks,
Places he played at cow-boy,
All through the fields of stooks;
Frantic they seek his footmarks,
Frantic they call his name;
Back from the depths of distance,
Seeming, an answer came—
"Daddy's a long time coming,
Baby will bring him home."

• • • • • •

Years that have lost their pleasure
Sullenly shamble past;
Grey are the heads with sorrow,
Bearing it to the last;
Still in the autumn evenings
They sit in the silent air,
When a sound from the gate of Heaven
Falls like a breath of prayer—
"Daddy's a long time coming,
Baby will bring him home."

KID McCANN.

Where the farthest foothills flatten to a circle-
sweeping plain,
And the cattle lands surrender to the onward march of
grain,
Where the prairies stretch unbroken to the corners of
the sky,
And the foremost wheat-fields rustle in the warm
winds droning by—
There a crippled cow-boy batches in the haunts of old-
time herds,
And the balance of the story is repeated in his words:

So you never heard how I lost my leg and hobble now
on a crutch?
So far as the story relates to me it can't concern you
much,
For it's really the story of Kid McCann and the price
that a girl will pay
For the fellow she sets her fancy on, as only a woman
may;
It isn't every girl who proves her faithfulness in
flames,
But fellows who listen with moistened eyes speak
softly of other names.

Ned McCann owned the Double Star 'way back in the early days;
He had come out here with a sickly wife and a kid he hoped to raise
Where the climate suited the feeble-lunged, but life was scarce at its brim,
Till a little mound by a prairie hill held half of the world for him;
And his double love would have spoiled the child, had she been like me or you,
But her only thought was for her dad and the mother she scarcely knew.

'Course she was bred to the ranges, and before she had reached her teens
She could straddle a nag with the best of us, and ride in her smock and jeans
Till we all caved in, and she thought it fun to camp with a round-up bunch,
And she shared our pillow and shared our sky and shared our pipe and lunch,
And all of us mad in love with her, but she was only a kid,
And she never dreamt what our feelings were, or the love-struck things we did.

But even girls grow older, and, though always kind and sweet,
There came a day when she realized that we were at her feet;
But I had never spoken, nor anyone in the camp,
When in came a foreign puncher, a thoroughbred black-leg scamp,
And we who had known her since childhood saw, in our unbelieving eyes,
This wily sinner setting himself to carry off the prize.

Of course it couldn't be stood for, and little as I might like,
It fell to my lot to intimate to him it was time to hike,
Which I did in straight-forward manner, in a way to be understood,
And he looked at me with a sulky scowl that boded none of us good;
But he did as he was ordered, to be absent before night,
And we lost his form in the shadowy East as he cantered out of sight.

Next day, as I rode on my cayuse, apart from the rest of the gang,
I felt a sudden rip in my leg like the jab of a red-hot tang,
And my horse went down below me, with my leg crushed in the clay,
And over me leered that fiendish face, and he grinned, and rode away;
Rode away to the eastward—I saw him fade in the sky,
And crushed and pinned from hip to heel I counted the hours to die.

How long I lay I could never tell, for the hours were days to me,
Till struck with sudden terror I tore at my wounded knee,
For the east wind carried a smoky smell, and I read in its fiery breath
That half-a-mile of sun-dried grass was all between me and Death;
With my hunting-knife I hacked my leg, but I couldn't cut the bone,
So I set myself as best I could to face my fate alone.

The fire came on like a hungry fiend on the wings of
the rising wind,
And I wouldn't care to tell you all the things were in
my mind;
I saw the sun through the swirling smoke, and the blue
sky far above,
And I bade good-bye to the things of earth, and the
dearer hopes of Love;
And I figured that I had closed accounts for life's
uncertain span,
When a smoke-blind broncho galloped up, and there
sat Kid McCann!

There wasn't much time for talking, with the death-
roll in our ears,
But we sometimes live in seconds more than we could
in a thousand years,
And before I could guess her meaning she had thrown
herself on my face
And spread her leather jacket, which her warm hands
held in place;
I felt her breath in my nostrils, and her fingertips in my
hair,
And through the roar of the burning grass I fancied I
heard a prayer.

'Twas but for a moment; the flames were gone;
unharmed they had passed me by;
God knows why the useless are spared to live, while
the faithful are called to die,
But the form that had sheltered me shivered, and
seemed to shrivel away,
And when I had raised it clear of my face I looked into
lifeless clay . . .
And darkness fell, and the world was black, and the
last of my reason fled,
And when I came to myself again I was back at the
ranch, in bed.

That was back in the Eighties, and still I am living
here;
I built this shanty on the spot; her grave is lying near;
And when at nights my nostrils sense the smoke-smell
in the air
I seem to feel her form again, and hear again her
prayer;
And then the darkness settles down and wild night-
creatures cry,
But stars come out in heaven and there's comfort in
the sky.

RETROSPECT.

I wondered why the fields were not
  Enchanting as in days gone by,
I viewed each memory-treasured spot,
Each path and nook still unforgot—
  Beheld them with unmoistened eye—
    And saw in old familiar scenes
    The graves of many might-have-beens,
Yet wondered why my spirit sought
Its old delight—and found it not.

I wondered why the breezes blew,
  But thrilled me not as in the past,
Nor re-inspired the thoughts I knew
And strange delights that warmed and grew
  When here their fancies held me fast,
    And felt the night wind on my face—
    The same old wind—the same old place—
And mustered memories in review
I knew of old when breezes blew.

I wondered why the summer skies
  Were not so fair as once they were,
I gazed on them with older eyes
And spirit sane and worldly-wise,
  But in the heaven's silver blurr
    No fancy linked beyond the dome
    To spread for me a broader home
In starry-studded Paradise,
That once I saw in summer skies.

I wondered why the summer wind
    And fields and skies of yesterday
And boyhood paths that still I find
Are impotent to fire the mind
    Now sorely schooled in manhood's way;
        And realized my tale of years
        Had stolen that which most endears—
The truths by little boys divined
Elude us like the summer wind.

THE TERROR.

The night is dark; the night wind moans; the clouded
stars hide in the sky;
A rasping insect somewhere drones his mate a
mirthless lullabye;
The hinges creak without a cause; the frost-sweat
gathers on the door;
A mouse in the partition gnaws, and shadows sneak
along the floor.

The night is dark; a she-wolf howls; strange noises
mingle in the air;
Who knows what form of demon prowls to drag
despondents to his lair?
It is no night for man to sleep; the rafters rattle
overhead,
And formless spirits gawk and creep from out the
prehistoric dead!

I hear them ride the chimney-tin—they sit astride the
collar-beams—
Through wooden walls they flutter in and light the
place with baneful gleams;
Their forces muster thick and fast, they sweep along in
fiendish glee—
The spirit-army of the past, of Blackfoot, Stoney,
Swampy, Cree.

The plowed-up bones of ages gone—they call across
the haunted plain,
The essence of a spirit drawn from Savagery's
speechless pain—
Of flint, and dirk, and scalping-knife and white men
dying in despair—
The settler slain beside his wife—and little tufts of
baby hair!

The walls are feeble—hark!—and thin; they barricade
the soul in vain
Where ghostly faces leer and grin and flit athwart the
window-pane;
The Night is crouched against the door—the swelling
Terror rushes in—
The echo of my forty-four is idle answer to the din.

"Aha, Aha!" You hear that sound? You fool! 'twas but
your crazy shriek;
When dead men populate the ground what boots a
living man to speak?
Aha! 'tis good when men are dead; 'tis very good
when red blood flows;
So place the muzzle to your head and touch the trigger
with your toes—

• • • • • •

Handcuff and shackle him and throw him in a cell;
Grab a leg along with me—never mind the yell—
He has plumb forgotten all the sense he had;
Simply prairie-crazy—raving, prairie-mad!

WHO OWNS THE LAND?

Who owns the land?
The Duke replied,
"I own the land. My fathers died
In winning it from foreign hands,
They paid in red blood for their lands;
Their swarthy *villeins* bit the dust
In founding the Landowners' Trust;
And many generations dead
Substantiate what I have said,
The land belongs to us because
We've had the making of the laws."

Who owns the land?
The Common Man
Said, "Government adopts a plan
By which the land is held in fee
For common folks, like you an' me.
The man who'd alter it's a crank;
I got the transfer—in the bank—
I've little time to think about
These theories silly fellows shout,
I have to work to beat the band
To pay the mortgage on the land."

Who owns the land?
The Statesman said,
"The land supplies our daily bread,
And raises wheat, and corn, and oats,
And simple husbandmen—and votes—
The land was won at awful cost
And many soldiers' lives were lost.
Too bad! They're mostly silly boys
Who go to battle for the noise.
Here's a quotation I admire:
'The people's voice is God's desire,'
And as I rule by right Divine
I half suspect the land is mine."

Who owns the land?
The Farmer said,
"What puts that question in yer head?
I own it. Tuk a homestead here
An' lived on it fer twenty year;
I bet a new ten dollar bill
That I could hold it down until
I got the patent, an' I won;
The land is mine, as sure's a gun.
When city blokes come here to shoot,
You bet, they get the icy boot!
But 't made me mighty mad when that
Danged railway came across the flat
An' cut my homestead plumb in two,
But there I wuz—what could I do?
But just set down, resigned to fate
Fer fear that they'd expropriate."

Who owns the land?
The Speculator
Said, "Land is just an incubator
In which to let your dollars hatch
And, some fine morning—sell the batch."

Who owns the land?
The Indian Chief
Said, "Ugh, the White Man mucha thief!
He steal my lan' because he's strong
(By gar, it take him pretty long),
He steal my lan' and call it law,
He turn me out, me an' my squaw;
He let us die because we not
Like him, can live in one same spot;
He talk so much of civilize—
He's civil—sometimes—an' he lies!"

Who owns the land?
The Over-Rich
Said, "All these people claim to, which
Is satisfactory to me
So long as they cannot agree.
Let them arrange it as they will
As long as some one pays the bill.
The present plan is, surely, fine;
The interest, at least, is mine."

Who owns the land?
In meek surprise
The child said, "Like the air, and skies,
And running water, flowers, and birds,
And lullabyes, and gentle words,
And rosy sunsets, clouds, and storms,
And God revealed in all His forms—
'Tis plain the land's the right of birth
Of every creature on the earth:
No man can make a grain of sand;
How can he say he owns the land?"

"OUT WEST."

You may read it in the papers, it is heard throughout
the East,
From the hobo and the banker, from the pagan and the
priest,
From the magnate in his mergers, from the tramp
along the trail,
From the most respected circles and the man just out
of jail,
From the good and bad and half-and-half, fair and
better and worse,
From those who leave with a whispered prayer and
those who leave with a curse,
For all unite in the common hope and sigh for the
common quest
Of life and home on the windy sweeps of the land they
call "Out West."

You may hear it in Toronto where the drummers gather
round
And with picturesque verbosity their theories they
expound;
You may hear it down in Hamilton where workmen in
the grease
Are rolling out machinery to handle the increase;
On the stately streets of Ottawa the legislators pause
For a moment's recreation from dissection of the laws,
And the sour grow optimistic, and the sick throw out
their chest
At the magic of the mention of the little words "Out
West."

You may hear it from the moneyed men in homes of Montreal,
They would fain forget their stocks and join the workers in the fall;
From Huron down to Halifax two words are in their mind
And the thing that mostly holds them is the folks they'd leave behind;
Fair visions float before them of a nation in the birth,
And a chance to share the fortune of the greatest land on earth,
And their old horizons broaden and life takes a greater zest
When they link their aspirations with the future of the West.

You may hear it by the fireside of the place you once called home
Before you settled somewhere between Emerson and Nome,
And old voices speak it sadly and old eyes are strangely dim
As they gaze into the embers and a vision comes of Jim,
Or Jack, or George or Tommy, Will or Harry, Charles or Fred,
And once again in memory they tuck their boy in bed.
To the fabric of the nation they have given of their best,
And they crowd a world of pathos in the little words "Out West."

THE VOICE.

There's a voice that is always calling,
  A voice that won't stay still,
"Peer ye into the forest,
  Look ye over the hill,
Portage ye up the rivers,
  Pack ye into the pass,
Pierce the unbroken thicket,
  Tread the untrodden grass."

There's a voice that is always calling,
  "Over the ledge is gold,
Under the rock is silver,
  Hid for the brave and bold;
Down through another valley,
  Up by another slope,
There is the Land of Promise,
  There is the place of Hope."

There's a voice that is always calling,
  "Seek it not here, my sons;
Back where the wild-goose nesteth,
  Up where the musk-ox runs,
There have I hidden the treasure,
  There are my choicest wares,
There's nothing for those who falter
  But all for the one who dares."

There's a voice that is always calling,
  And many who give it heed;
Some for the joy of roaming,
  Some for the lust of greed;
Some in the hope of future,
  Some to forget the past;
They answer the lure of the calling,
  And pay with their lives at last.

There's a voice that is always calling,
    Since the Danes swept over the seas;
Ever it calls the faithful
    Who scorn content and ease;
'Tis the voice of the Undiscovered,
    The voice of the vague Unknown,
That fills the soul with longing
    To follow it alone.

And the voice that is always calling
    Gives answer to those who hear,
To those who laugh at prudence
    And scorn the thought of fear,
To those who have plunged the farthest—
    To them is most revealed,
But to ears that will not hearken
    The word of the voice is sealed.

THE EARLY DAYS.

Yes, times have changed since the early days and
things are different now;
We used to tramp from dawn to dusk in the trail of a
walking-plough,
And sow our grain from a canvas sack with a barrel-
hoop for a mouth,
And we kind o' felt that Providence controlled the
frost and drouth;
And in the harvest work we always neighbored forth
and back,
And never thought of threshing till the grain was in the
stack;
And hauled our wood in the winter-time, and smoked
beside the fire,
And felt our lot was everything that reason could
desire.

True, we had little money; our homes were plain and
bare;
Maybe a box for a table, maybe a block for a chair;
Straw to repose our bodies at the end of the well-
worked day,
And the stars saw through the knot-holes in the
shingles where we lay;
Food that was mostly our raising, coffee from toasted
wheat,
Cottonade for our Sunday suits, moccasins for our
feet.
Hard were our frames with labor, knotted our hands
with toil,
And we went to bed at twilight to save the price of oil.

Hardship? Perhaps, but old-timers look back at the early days,
Before we had come to realize that practical farming pays,
Back at the times we were all so poor that none of us thought of wealth,
Back at the times when we found content in industry and health,
Back at the nights in the shanty, when the wolves howled in the snow,
Back at the old sod stable and the cattle in a row,
Back at the distances still unmapped, at the trails that were still untrod,
When round about were the wastes of earth and overhead was God.

Yes, times have changed since the early days; farming is now an art;
They're coming for land in motor cars—but we came in a cart—
They're tearing the prairie with steam and gas, turning the rivers loose
To water the arid regions and bring them into use;
Binding the earth with railway lines, netting the world with wires,
Leaving the mail at our corner-posts, pampering our desires;
They show us that times are better, prove it a thousand ways,
But we think of the old-time comradeship and sigh for the early days.

MAID OF THE WEST-LAND.

Heart that is free as the open air,
Eyes like the beams of the morn that rise
Over our prairies, bright and fair,
Brow like the silver of sunset skies,
Cheeks with a beauty that glorifies,
Tresses of sunlight, through and through,
Figure and form that we idolize,
Maid of the West-land, here's to you!

Hope that is broad as your face is rare,
Yearning that unto the uttermost cries,
Soul that itself is a breath of prayer,
Heaven-sent spirit in womanly guise;
Tender caresses that minimize
The labors of life with their pain and rue,
Loving affection that never dies—
Maid of the West-land, here's to you!

Courage that rises to do and dare,
Spell that entangles the sage and wise
From venturesome toe to your crown of hair
Ravishing beauties that hypnotize;
Many the man for your favor vies,
Well may he plead for the favor, too;
Twentieth Century's greatest prize—
Maid of the West-land, here's to you!

ENVOI.

Maid of the West, in your wistful eyes,
Tenderly deep as the western blue,
The glorious hope of our future lies—
Maid of the West-land, here's to you!

MY BELOVED.

I knew her in her infancy,
Before she laughed to other eyes;
I kissed her tresses all the day,
And sat with her in glad surprise;
And knew her heart entirely true,
And gazed into her azure blue,
And through her virgin laugh and play
Beheld the gates of Paradise!

I loved her in her infancy,
And held that she was wholly mine;
And worshipped her as one divine;
From Kicking Horse to Thunder Bay
I loved her in her infancy.

I saw her in her womanhood,
A thousand suitors at her door;
I hoped for her her greatest good,
Yet marvelled at the train she bore—
And hated prestige, if it brought
Her virgin purity to nought;
And held myself a jealous prude,
And for her faults I loved her more.

I loved her in her womanhood,
And wondered at her growing charm—
(God grant it bring her not to harm)
I trusted her as still I could
And loved her in her womanhood.

And still what time the night-wind blows
Across the primal-planted plain,
I see her rise through cloud and rain
To all the fulness beauty knows,
And feel my questionings are vain.

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.

[The end of *Prairie Born and Other Poems*, by Robert J. C. Stead.]