

SHOULD you ask me, whence these stories?

Whence these legends and traditions,  
With the odours of the forest,  
With the dew and damp of meadows,  
With the curling smoke of wigwams,  
With the rushing of great rivers,  
With their frequent repetitions,  
And their wild reverberations,  
As of thunder in the mountains?

I should answer, I should tell you,  
"From the forests and the prairies,  
From the great lakes of the Northland,  
From the land of the Ojibways,  
From the land of the Dacotahs,  
From the mountains, moors, and fenlands,  
Where the heron, the Shuh-shuh-gah,  
Feeds among the reeds and rushes.  
I repeat them as I heard them  
From the lips of Nawadaha,  
The musician, the sweet singer."

Should you ask where Nawadaha  
Found these songs, so wild and wayward,  
Found these legends and traditions,  
I should answer, I should tell you,  
"In the birds'-nests of the forests,  
In the lodges of the beaver,