

PRELUDE

My rhymes are rough, as of the land they're telling;
My pen is weak, unworthy of that land;
The atmosphere is pregnant, soul-compelling,
But the Things beyond vague gropings of this hand.

Begotten of the wilds of stern Alberta,
Upon the golden plains at sunset flush,
Beneath the shade of tamarac and poplar,
'Pon creek and mighty lake at twilight hush,

Amid prolific western cities' torrent,
In lonely shack remote of humankind,
On trail that bears along an endless current
To Homestead Land, a phantom fancy shrined.

Of that land yet mystic, real, would I be singing,
Of the pioneers who toil to break the spell,
Strong men and women to past eras clinging,
Who hew a home in th' echo of a knell;

The magic of the trail, the lure of ploughland,
The cruel, the soothing breast of western strife,
The Wanderers, life-woosers of the Now-land,
The vagaries that crowd the homestead life.

And you of whom they're written, manhood proven,
You whom I know, big-souled, and hewn in flint,
Look kindly on these verses pygmy-woven,
One sought to put your heart-throbs into print.