

Out West

"The sunflower turns on her god when he sets,
The same look which she turn'd when he rose."

A heavy-necked. "Commercial" who is sitting beside me has risked an inconsequential remark upon the weather, that introductory topic responsible for so much of the world's misery.

But it is always well to be civil to Commercials. They are experienced and knowledgeable men of the world—men of account.

This is one from the Land of Cakes. His speech bewrayeth him. I change the conversation from the weather to the sunflowers.

He is a canny chiel, this Scotsman, and tells me how the sunflowers may be utilised. The seeds, if roasted, will make a drink almost as tasty as cocoa, and, if ground into flour, make excellent cakes. Just before the flowers bloom, if well boiled, they will make a dish with a taste between the cauliflower and artichoke. Blotting-paper may be manufactured out of the seed-pods. The fibre of the stalk is useful for quite half a dozen things, and, when dry, is as hard as maple wood. The seedheads, with the seeds in, burn better than the best hard coal. The leaves can be used as tobacco. If planted in a malarial district, they are a protection against fever.

I bow in homage to you, Madame Sunflower!

The wild roses have fruited, and cover the low bushes like elfin bonfires.

The Commercial informs me that the flower of the prairie rose is a thermometer by which the knowing agriculturalist (he means farmer) can tell whether the land has an exposure to the early summer and late autumn frosts. It appears the tiny, crimson point of the bud which protrudes from the calyx is very sensitive, and more easily blighted by frost than any other bud.