

But long and arduous were their labours ere  
 The rugged fields produced enough for all—  
 (For thousands came ere hundreds could be fed)  
 The scanty harvests, gleaned to their last ear,  
 Sufficed not yet. Men hungered for their bread  
 Before it grew, yet cheerful bore the hard,  
 Coarse fare and russet garb of pioneers ;—  
 In the great woods content to build a home  
 And commonwealth, where they could live secure  
 A life of honour, loyalty, and peace.

The century's last decade set in with signs  
 Of coming wrath over the forest land.  
 The sun and moon alternate rose and set,  
 Red, dry, and fiery, in a rainless sky ;  
 And month succeeded month of parching drouth,  
 That ushered in the gaunt and hungry year,—  
 The hungry year whose name still haunts the land  
 With memories of famine and of death !

Corn failed, and fruit and herb. The tender grass  
 Fell into dust. Trees died like sentient things,  
 And stood wrapped in their shrouds of withered leaves,  
 That rustled weirdly round them, sear and dead.  
 From springs and brooks, no morning mist arose ;  
 The water vanished ; and a hazy sky  
 Glowed hot and sullen through the pall of smoke  
 That rose from burning forests, far and near.  
 The starving cattle died, looking at man  
 With dumb reproach, as if the blame were his,—  
 Perhaps it was ; but man looked up to heaven  
 In stern-lipped silence, or in earnest prayer  
 Besought relief of God, or, in despair,  
 Invoked the fiercest storms from tropic seas  
 To quench the earth with rain, and loose the claws  
 And teeth of famine from the scorching land.

Slowly the months rolled round on fiery wheels ;  
 The savage year relented not, nor shut  
 Its glazing eye, till all things perished,—food  
 For present, seed for future use were gone.  
 " All swallowed up," the starving Indian said,  
 " By the great serpent of the Chenonda  
 That underlies the ground and sucks it dry."

While equally perplexed at such distress,  
 Despite his better knowledge,—“ Why is this ? ”  
 The white man asked and pondered ; but in vain.  
 There came no quick response. Nature is deaf