

# From the Alberta Foot-Hills



TWENTY years ago or more the author of this poem left Ontario and went teaching in a little wooden school in the foot-hills. Seven children came to that school from almost as many miles any direction. The teacher married a rancher, who had a lonely house back in the northward hills from the River Bow. Since that time she has lived constantly in the lap of the great hills that rise to the sky-pushing summits of the Rockies. From her house you think it possible to walk to the mountains and back before breakfast. Twenty miles. A few miles here or there mean nothing in that hill playhouse of the gods. But every mile of the ranges is full of beautiful scenes. The rancher's home is a quiet place in the midst of an almost nameless solitude. Housework, one child, many cattle, a band of horses—then after years of this glorious outpushing, one poem which is as truly Canadian as anything ever penned.

THE myriad black-soiled foot-hill slopes we see  
The slow cows range—The run of horses free  
Where woven is within the unseen mills  
Upon the serious flats and solemn hills  
This old dun dress which centuries has been  
But summer's brief glad mood drapes o'er with green  
Where all the curves and terraces are seen.

THE wide-flung hills untrammelled meet the sky  
The long slow plains—The empty lone bald space  
Teach dignity, give majesty—The face  
Looks out to find if here is answer why  
And in the sun or in the wind or rain  
The quiet settler delves on hill and plain  
His simple fortunes out, while in long lines  
Some come to trail for homes or range for mines.  
And close beside, where climbs the earth to greet  
The sky, while topped blue muffled mountains roll,  
Their changing face each day reveals the soul  
Of spirit there who lures unto his feet.  
Far in their depths for long the glacier lies  
And from their snows the great wide rivers rise.

WE hear the wind lyres in the jack pines tell  
The tales of space and all that there befel  
At night sounds river and the waterfall  
And echoing fir-clad wilds send call for call  
Of all the land September's yellow glory  
Great canvas has to paint translation's story,  
Through groves the partridge drums—The falcon soars  
And from her ledge the nesting eagle lowers.

GREY catkins swing from aspens in the fields.  
Bright golden hearts close clasped in purple shields  
The anemones in downy blankets shine—  
Pioneer dames and brave to Northern clime  
From vale and level bench to high sky-line  
They gather late or cluster just in time  
Demure and reverent Easter congregation.  
They muse mayhap upon the forming nation  
Which now doth conscious rise within old ways.  
For broods the wind-broke mystery of our past,  
Slow folds about her shroud of mist and haze  
Withdrawing more and more to go at last  
When grown this foster nestling 'neath her breast—  
Now though she croons and croons it will not rest.

IN mystery empurpled airs will hover.  
Men's thoughts that rise to pass up on the stair  
Or moving souls invisible in air,  
With sentient shadows all the hillsides cover  
Or copyist for the winds is writing there  
Elusive language all his own he takes  
And then a chronicle for men he makes.

THE long, long summer day has earned its rest,  
Its light hastes not but dallies in the west  
And lingeringly the twilight takes its leave  
And pensively as knight, one might believe,  
Whose heart's full love he scarce dare clothe with speech—  
Ah, passing light, what would you our hearts teach?  
You go as one who comes to friends with dead  
Tongue-tied departs, no word of comfort said.

THERE sweeps a warm chinook from out the gap,  
A great cloud swings above the valley's lap,  
It sends more clouds and more which all day long  
And all day long it floats with wild wind-song.  
Or swaying scarfs drift high of silken wool  
From West to East the lulled sky is full  
Of them or chill may be the wind that roars  
And fastly closed the old log cabin doors.

AH yes a land of wind and wintry weather,  
Kinic-in-ic willow and sage for heather.  
Short shifts of light and then the north god smites  
And sky-tides ebb and flow from Polar lights.  
You say "how dull!" "how desolate!" but whiles  
The soul of our plain friend shines forth in smiles  
Our strong brave love demurely casts her wiles  
And when we wander forestward she brings  
Her solitudes as pure as fire and then  
Her calm comes down on us and then  
We know man's kinship to the primal things.

under which our competitors work and under which we shall be working. 5. What improvement in selling and advertising machinery could be suggested for our foreign trade? To what extent might co-operation be possible between our various exporters? 6. What might our banks do to facilitate our foreign sales? 7. What will be the conditions of ocean shipping? Can any steps be taken to protect ourselves against probable shortage of tonnage? 8. Are there any opportunities in foreign markets that suggest the possibility of developing new lines of production in Canada?

Having settled the question of our export trade, having guaranteed employment for our population by insuring sale for our goods abroad, the next step to be considered—they reasoned—has to do with our purchases abroad. Although it is not practicable to cut off all our imports, it is quite possible to reduce the volume of these purchases. Furthermore, the study of our chief imports may reveal such a demand for certain goods in Canada as to suggest that encouragement of one sort or another might be given by the Government for the production of these goods in Canada. It would be well, therefore, to consider the following questions:

1. Study the main items of import. 2. Indicate the history of each. 3. Comment on these imports; why are some of them justified, and why are others not to be justified? 4. Show how Canadian manufacturers have failed to meet the home demand. 5. Indicate opportunities for Canadian enterprise in cutting down our imports. 6. What general criticism of the tariff might be made in this connection.

Now, then, having determined what our markets abroad may be, and having made clear just what our necessary and unnecessary imports are, steps should be taken to make sure that Canadian industry shall be as near 100 per cent. efficient as possible, in order that we may obtain a maximum of goods from a minimum of Canadian raw material. In short, in order to meet our competitors successfully, and in order to build up our national wealth as rapidly as possible we must eliminate waste.

This department of enquiry may be conveniently taken under three headings: Waste, due to friction in the handling of labour; waste, due to lack of co-ordination of industry; and waste, due to the lack of a proper conservation policy.

Study yourself. Or form little groups of practical men and women, and thrash these questions out at nights. Thus, in any part of Canada, whatever your age, or the state of your health—you render real National Service.