

A great State was a desert, and the land  
Lay bare and lifeless under sun and storm,  
Treeless and shelterless. Spring came and went.  
And came, but brought no joy, but, in its stead,  
The desolation of the ravening floods,  
That leaped like wolves or wild cats from the  
hills,

And spread destruction over fruitful farms,  
Devouring as they went the works of man,  
And sweeping seaward Nature's kindly soils,  
To choke the water-courses worse than waste.

The forest trees, that in the olden time—  
The people's glory, and the poet's pride—  
Tempered the air and guarded well the earth,  
And, under spreading boughs, for ages kept  
Great reservoirs to hold the snow and rain,  
From which the moisture through the teeming  
year,

Flowed equably but freely—all were gone.  
Their precious boles exchanged for petty cash,  
The cash had melted and had left no sign;  
The logger and the lumberman were dead;  
The axe had rusted out for lack of use;  
But all the endless evil they had done  
Was manifested in the desert waste.

Dead springs no longer sparkled in the sun;  
Lost and forgotten brooks no longer laughed,  
Deserted mills mourned all their moveless wheels;  
The snow no longer covered, as with wool,  
Mountain and plain, but buried starving flocks  
In Arctic drifts; in rivers and canals  
The vessels rotted idly in the mud,  
Until the spring flood buried all their bones;  
Great cities that had thriven marv'lously  
Before their source of thrift was swept away,  
Faded and perished, as a plant will die  
With water banished from its roots and leaves;  
And men sat starving in their treeless waste,  
Beside their treeless farms and empty marts,  
And wondered at the ways of Providence!