

Fields of corn and feet of cities to the mighty river laves,
Where the Saxon sings his ditties o'er the swarthy warriors' graves.

Aye, before the birth of Moses—ere the Pyramids were piled—
All his banks were red with roses from the sea to nor'lands wild,
And from forest, fen and meadows, in the deserts of the north,
Elk and bison stalked like shadows, and the tawny tribes came forth;
Deeds of death and deeds of daring on his leafy banks were done—
Women loved and men went warring—ere the siege of Troy begun.
Where his wayward waters thundered, roaring o'er the rocky walls,
Dusky hunters sat and wondered, listening to the spirits' calls.
"Ha-ha!"⁷⁶ cried the warrior greeting from afar the cataract's roar;
"Ha-ha!" rolled the answer, beating down the rock-ribbed leagues of shore.
Now, alas, the bow and quiver and the dusky braves have fled,
And the sullen, shackled river drives the droning mills instead.

Where the war-whoop rose, and, after, women wailed their warriors slain,
List the Saxon's silvery laughter, and his humming hives of gain.
Swiftly sped the tawny runner o'er the pathless prairies then,
Now the iron-reindeer sooner carries weal or woe to men.
On thy bosom, Royal River, silent sped the birch canoe,
Bearing brave with bow and quiver, on his way to war or woo;
Now with flaunting flags and streamers—mighty monsters of the deep—
Lo the puffing, panting steamers, through thy foaming waters sweep;
And behold the grain-fields golden, where the bison grazed of eld;
See the fanes of forests olden by the ruthless Saxon felled,—
Pluméd pines that spread their shadows ere Columbus spread his sails,
Firs that fringed the mossy meadows ere the Mayflower braved the gales,
Iron oaks that nourished bruin while the Vikings roamed the main,
Crashing fall in broken ruin for the greedy marts of gain.

Still forever and forever rolls the restless river on,
Slumbering oft but ceasing never, while the circling centuries run.