

### Extracts from the Writings of Chas. G. D. Roberts.

#### THE POTATO HARVEST.

A high bare field; brown from the plough, and borne  
 Aslant from sunset; amber wastes of sky  
 Washing the ridge; a clamor of crows that fly  
 In from the wide flats where the spent tides mourn  
 To yon their rocking roosts in pines wind-torn;  
 A line of gray snake-fence, that zigzags by  
 A pond, and cattle; from the homestead nigh  
 The long deep summonings of the supper horn.

Black on the ridge, against that lonely flush,  
 A cart, and stooped-necked oxen; ranged beside,  
 Some barrels; and the day-worn harvest folk,  
 Here emptying their baskets, jar the hush  
 With hollow thunders; down the dusk hillside  
 Lumbers the wain; and day fades out like smoke.

#### IMPULSE.

A hollow on the verge of May,  
 Thick strewn with drift of leaves. Beneath  
 The densest drift a thrusting sheath  
 Of sharp green striving toward the day!  
 I mused—"So dull Obstruction sets  
 A bar to even violets,  
 When these would go their nobler way!"

My feet again, some days gone by,  
 The self-same spot sought idly. There,  
 Obstruction foiled, the adorning air  
 Caressed a blossom woven of sky  
 And dew, whose misty petals blue,  
 With bliss of being thrilled athrough,  
 Dilated like a timorous eye.

Reck well this rede, my soul! The good  
 The blossom craved was near, tho' hid.  
 Fret not that thou must doubt, but rid  
 Thy sky-path of obstructions strewed  
 By winds of folly. Then, do thou  
 The Godward impulse room allow  
 To reach its perfect air and food!

—In *Divers Tones*.

#### THE WATCHERS OF THE TRAIL.

The trail through the forest was rough and long unused. In spots the mosses and ground vines had so overgrown it that only the broad scars on the tree trunks, where the lumberman's axe had blazed them for a sign, served to distinguish it from a score of radiating vistas. But just here, where it climbed a long, gradual slope, the run of water down its slight hollow had sufficed to keep its worn stones partly bare. Moreover, though the furrowing steps of man had left it these many seasons untrodden, it was never wholly neglected. A path once fairly differentiated by the successive passings of feet will keep, almost forever, a spell for the persuasion of all that go afoot. The old trail served the flat, shuffling tread of Kroof, the great she-bear, as she led her half-grown cub to feast on

the blueberry patches far up the mountain. It caught the whim of Ten-Tine, the caribou, as he convoyed his slim cows down to occasional pasturage in the alder swamps of the slow Quah-Davic.

On this September afternoon, when the stillness seemed to wait wide-eyed, suddenly a cock-partridge came whirling up the trail, alighted on a gnarled limb, turned his outstretched head twice from side to side as he peered with his round beads of eyes, and then stiffened into the moveless semblance of one of the fungoid excrescences with which the tree was studded. A moment more and the sound of footsteps, of the nails of heavy boots striking on the stones, grew conspicuous against the silence. Up the trail came slouching, with a strong but laborious stride, a large, grizzled man in grey homespuns. His trousers were stuffed unevenly into the tops of his rusty boots; on his head was a drooping, much-battered hat of a felt that had been brown; from his belt hung a large knife in a fur-fringed leather sheath; and over his shoulder he carried an axe, from the head of which swung a large bundle. The bundle was tied up in a soiled patch-work quilt of gaudy colors, and from time to time there came from it a flat clatter suggestive of tins. At one side protruded the black handle of a frying-pan, half wrapped up in a newspaper.

Had he been hunter or trapper, Dave Titus would have carried a gun. . . . Observant, keen of vision, skilled in woodcraft though he was, the grave-faced old lumberman saw nothing in the tranquillity about him save tree trunks, the fallen, rotting remnants, and mossed hillocks, and thickets of tangled shrub. He noted the difference, not known to the general eye, between white spruce, black spruce, and fir, between grey birch and yellow birch, between withewood and viburnum; and he read instinctively, by the lichen growth about their edges, how many seasons had laid their disfiguring touch upon those old scars of the axe which marked the trail. But for all his craft he thought himself alone. He guessed not of the many eyes that watched him.

In truth, his progress was the focus of an innumerable attention. The furtive eyes that followed his movements were some of them timorously hostile, some impotently vindictive, some indifferent; but all alien. All were at one in the will to remain unseen; so all kept an unwinking immobility, and were swallowed up, as it were, in the universal stillness.

The cock-partridge, a well-travelled bird who knew the Settlements and their violent perils, watched with indignant apprehension. Not without purpose had he come whirling so tumultuously up the trail, a warning to the ears of all the woodfolk. His fear was lest the coming of this grey man-figure should mean an invasion of those long, black sticks which went off with smoky bang when they were pointed. He effaced himself till his brown mottled feathers were fairly one with the mottled brown bark of his perch; but his liquid eyes lost not a least movement of the stranger.

The nuthatch, who had been walking straight up the perpendicular trunk of a pine when the sound of the alien footsteps froze him, peered fixedly around the tree. His eye, a black point of inquiry, had never before seen any-